

**A LINGUISTIC STYLISTIC ANALYSIS  
OF CHUKWUEMEKA IKE'S NOVELS**

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**DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that this work is the product of my own research efforts, undertaken under the supervision of **Professor M.N. Azuike**. It has not been presented elsewhere for the award of a degree or certificate. All sources have been duly distinguished and appropriately acknowledged.

\_\_\_\_\_, August, 2010.

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**CERTIFICATION**

This is to certify that this thesis has been examined and approved for the award of the degree of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY in ENGLISH LANGUAGE.

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**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

	<b>Page</b>
TITLE PAGE - - - - -	i
DECLARATION - - - - -	ii
CERTIFICATION - - - - -	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS - - - - -	iv
DEDICATION - - - - -	vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS - - - - -	vii
ABSTRACT - - - - -	xi

**CHAPTER ONE****BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

1.0 INTRODUCTION - - - - -	1
1.1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM - - - - -	4
1.2 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY - - - - -	5
1.3 METHODOLOGY - - - - -	6
1.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY - - - - -	8

**CHAPTER TWO****LITERATURE REVIEW**

2.0 INTRODUCTION - - - - -	9
2.1 STYLE: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE - - - - -	9
2.1.1 Rhetoric and the Evolution of Stylistics - - - - -	11
2.2 STYLE VERSUS STYLISTICS - - - - -	19
2.2.1 The Reception Theory and Affective Stylistics - - - - -	20

2.3	THE CONCERN OF LINGUISTIC STYLISTICS	-	-	22
2.4	FORMS OF CRITICISM: STRUCTURALISM, POST-STRUCTURALISM, DECONSTRUCTION	-	-	33
2.5	DEFINING STYLE	-	-	41
2.6	THEORIES OF STYLE	-	-	43
2.7	CHOICE OF MODELS	-	-	47

### CHAPTER THREE

#### THE USE OF DICTION IN THE NOVELS

3.1	<i>TOADS FOR SUPPER</i>	-	-	51
3.1.1	Synopsis	-	-	51
3.1.2	Diction in <i>Toads for Supper</i>	-	-	52
3.1.3	The Use of Pidgin English in <i>Toads for Supper</i>	-	-	57
3.2	<i>THE BOTTLED LEOPARD</i>	-	-	65
3.2.1	Synopsis	-	-	65
3.2.2	Diction in <i>The Bottled Leopard</i>	-	-	67
3.3	<i>THE NAKED GODS</i>	-	-	71
3.3.1	Synopsis	-	-	71
3.3.2	Diction in <i>The Naked Gods</i>	-	-	74
3.4	<i>THE POTTER'S WHEEL</i>	-	-	84
3.4.1	Synopsis	-	-	84
3.4.2	Diction in <i>The Potter's Wheel</i>	-	-	87
3.5	<i>SUNSET AT DAWN</i>	-	-	102



3.5.1	Synopsis	-	-	-	-	-	-	102
3.5.2	Diction in <i>Sunset at Dawn</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	105
3.6	<i>THE CHICKEN CHASERS</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	128
3.6.1	Synopsis	-	-	-	-	-	-	128
3.6.2	Diction in <i>The Chicken Chasers</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	131
3.6.3	Peer-group Slang in <i>The Chicken Chasers</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	142
3.7	<i>EXPO '77</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	146
3.7.1	Synopsis	-	-	-	-	-	-	146
3.7.2	Diction in <i>Expo '77</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	149
3.7.3	The Use of Pidgin English in <i>Expo '77</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	157
3.8	<i>OUR CHILDREN ARE COMING!</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	159
3.8.1	Synopsis	-	-	-	-	-	-	159
3.8.2	Diction in <i>Our Children are Coming!</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	162
3.9	<i>THE SEARCH</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	179
3.9.1	Synopsis	-	-	-	-	-	-	179
3.9.2	Diction in <i>The Search</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	182
3.10	<i>CONSPIRACY OF SILENCE</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	187
3.10.1	Synopsis	-	-	-	-	-	-	187
3.10.2	Lexical Foregrounding in <i>Conspiracy of Silence</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	190

#### CHAPTER FOUR

#### SENTENCE AND PUNCTUATION PATTERN/FUNCTIONS;

#### PARAGRAPH STRUCTURE AND

#### ITS EFFECT ON THE NOVELS

4.1	SENTENCE PATTERN IN <i>The Bottled Leopard</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	197
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4.2	SENTENCE PATTERN IN <i>The Naked Gods</i> -	-	-	204
4.2.1	The Use of Punctuation Marks in <i>The Naked Gods</i>	-		215
4.3	SENTENCE PATTERN IN <i>The Potter's Wheel</i>	-	-	218
4.4	SENTENCE PATTERN IN <i>Sunset at Dawn</i> -	-	-	234
4.5	SENTENCE PATTERN, PUNCTUATION, PHRASAL AND CLAUSAL TYPOLOGY IN <i>The Chicken Chasers</i>	-		248
4.6	SENTENCE AND PUNCTUATION PATTERN/FUNCTIONS IN <i>Our Children are Coming!</i> -	-		257
4.7	PARAGRAPH STRUCTURE AND ITS EFFECT ON THE NOVELS			269
4.8	PARAGRAPH STRUCTURE IN <i>Toads for Supper</i>	-		271
4.9	PARAGRAPH STRUCTURE IN <i>The Bottled Leopard</i>	-		281
4.10	PARAGRAPH STRUCTURE IN <i>The Potter's Wheel</i> -	-		284
4.11	PARAGRAPH STRUCTURE IN <i>The Search</i> -	-	-	294

## CHAPTER FIVE

### LINGUO – LITERARY FEATURES IN THE TEXTS

5.1	HUMOUR	-	-	-	-	-	304
5.2	IDIOMS AND PROVERBS-	-	-	-	-	-	314
5.3	AMERICANISM	-	-	-	-	-	318
5.4	RHETORICAL QUESTIONS AND REPETITION AND THEIR DRAMATIC EFFECTS	-	-	-	-	-	320
5.5	THE USE OF 'YOU'	-	-	-	-	-	327
5.6	ECHOISM IN <i>The Potter's Wheel</i> -	-	-	-	-	-	332
5.7	ONOMASTICS IN <i>The Potter's Wheel</i>	-	-	-	-	-	335
5.8	FORMS OF PROPAGANDA IN <i>Sunset at Dawn</i>	-	-	-	-	-	341

5.9	THE USE OF SYMBOLS IN <i>Sunset at Dawn</i>	-	-	360
5.10	THE USE OF PROVERBS IN <i>Sunset at Dawn</i>	-	-	366
5.11	THE USE OF DIALOGUE AND DREAMS IN <i>The Search</i>	-	-	370
5.12	AYO'S DREAM, THE DĒNOUEMENT AND SUSPENSE IN <i>Conspiracy of Silence</i>	-	-	381

## CHAPTER SIX

### SUMMARY, FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS,

### RECOMMENDATIONS AND

### CONTRIBUTIONS TO KNOWLEDGE

6.1	SUMMARY	-	-	-	-	-	391
6.2	FINDINGS	-	-	-	-	-	399
6.3	CONCLUSIONS	-	-	-	-	-	400
6.4	RECOMMENDATIONS	-	-	-	-	-	400
6.5	CONTRIBUTIONS TO KNOWLEDGE	-	-	-	-	-	402
	WORKS CITED	-	-	-	-	-	403

**ABSTRACT**

This work is a linguistic stylistic study of Chukwuemeka Ike's novels. It involves a rigorous analysis and synthesis that examine how a special configuration of language has been used in the realization of a particular subject matter, quantifying all the linguistic means that coalesced to achieve a special aesthetic purpose. These linguistic means as applied here to Ike's novels include how, through a network of lexical selection (diction), the various tones in the texts are revealed; how the stylistically significant phrasal and clausal typology, sentence structures and punctuation patterns have combined to produce the aesthetics of the novels under study. The linguistic means also extend to paragraph structure and other linguo-literary schemes Ike used for the internal ordering of the message structure in each of the novels. In undertaking this research, we have relied on primary and secondary sources. An intensive research into related published works and internet material helped to provide adequate theoretical framework, which paved the way for the application of linguistic standards to the novels. Ike's lexical selection delivers the message of the novels in spite of the presence of native words, some idiosyncratic coinages and his flair for neologistic style. His clausal nesting, even when it appears heavy, does not blur comprehension; it is woven to match the prevailing situations in the stories. Truncated sentence patterns signal fast movement of scenes. Thus, Chukwuemeka Ike has established himself as a prolific writer with great aptitude for presenting the socio-cultural and political themes of his novels with amazing flexibility and linguistic dexterity.

## CHAPTER ONE

### BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

#### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Stylistics, which has variously been regarded as an eclectic and relatively new concept, in fact, has its origin in traditional rhetoric. Scholars such as Richard Bradford and Graham Hough have linked the 20<sup>th</sup> Century stylistics with the art of rhetoric as obtained in ancient Greece. In those ancient times, the Greeks recognized the informative, cohesive and persuasive qualities of a good speech in public speaking. The skills of this ‘oral forensic craft of rhetoric’, with the discovery of writing in the 5<sup>th</sup> Century B.C., began to be taught and learnt as a practical discipline. The ancient forensic orators developed the techniques known as *figures of speech*, which included *schemes* and *tropes*. These were employed in the structuring and elaboration of an argument. They were also used to move the emotion. The Renaissance period in Europe (14<sup>th</sup> Century – 16<sup>th</sup> Century) when there was a great revival of learning in art and literature influenced by Greek and Latin, saw the study of these figures under the heading of *Elocutio*. *Elocutio* was technically one of the five divisions of rhetoric. What can be regarded as modern stylistics can be seen as a development from this main branch of rhetoric. Its interest lies in the relations between *form* and *content*, concentrating on the characteristic features of expression. One of the attempts to fuse modern linguistic insights with traditional rhetorical figures was by Geoffrey Leech (1969) in what he termed *descriptive rhetoric*. In the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, linguistics as a science

invaded the field of style such that any discussion in the area of style was regarded as a discussion in linguistics. This is because any use of language in a literary work operates within the confines of the 'scientific rules' of the language. The credit for this development goes to Ferdinand de Saussure. At his demise, his student, Charles Bally – the expressive stylistician – became the acclaimed father of modern stylistics.

The concept of linguistic stylistics has to do with a stylistic study that relies heavily on the 'scientific rules' of language in its analysis. Such rules will embrace the lexical, grammatical, figures of speech, context and cohesion categories. Literary stylistics differs from linguistic stylistics in that the latter abstracts and describes the elements of language used in conveying a certain subject matter whereas the former dwells heavily on external correlates (history, philosophy, source of inspiration, etc) to explain a text, with occasional leap into the elements of language used.

Literary stylistics and linguistic stylistics have different emphases and different methods of operation. The former operates on values and aesthetics while the latter presents a scientific analysis, working with such tools as grammatical, syntactic and phonological components of the language. With the application of linguistic standards to literary works, the literary critic felt 'threatened' and some like Bateson stoutly 'fought' to resist the 'encroachment'.

With this linguistic invasion of the field of literature, came a 'war of words' among scholars – those who identified with linguistic stylistics and those

who think that literary stylistics alone can do the job of explication of a literary text. When Winifred Nowotny, in the 1960s, advised that the prudent analysis of a work (poetry for instance) is that which begins with ‘what’s there’, she was only lending credence to an academic debate staged by I.A. Richards in the 1920s. Wimsatt and Beardsley, who were extreme defendants of subjecting works of art to linguistic frames, developed I.A. Richards’ propositions. Richards’ treatise was criticized for its basic contradictions concerning *affectism*, while Beardsley and Wimsatt were flawed because of classification of genetic materials. However, the point was already made: *any objective examination of a literary work has to be by a thorough linguistic analysis devoid of the reader’s responses because such responses are variable, irresponsible, undiscoverable, and demonstrably erroneous*. A literary giant such as Bateson, however, fumed at what seemed a linguistic invasion of their field. In some quarters, the literary critics regarded linguists as ‘a generation of vipers’, and Bateson himself swore never to have anything to do with a linguist in his family. People like Roger Fowler and Rene Wellek certainly see the importance of subjecting a work of art to appropriate linguistic frames, but they caution that exclusively linguistic stylistics or exclusively literary stylistics would be going to the extreme; each needs the support of the other in the common goal of explication of literary works. (See the introductory part of R. Fowler.)

In spite of these initial conflicts, linguistic stylistics has come to stay. It is a term coined in 1968 by Donald Freeman, apparently to put to rest the verbal feud between literary critics and linguists (Freeman1990:120). Scholars have done

works aimed at guiding the linguistic stylistic student on the procedure of linguistic analysis. Geoffrey Leech and Michael Short have provided a checklist arranged in four categories – the lexical, grammatical, figures of speech, context and cohesion. Crystal and Davy have also outlined the methodology of describing the linguistic features of a text. In a more recent study, M.N. Azuike gives a systematic guide on how to analyse a work of art both from the standpoint of the linguistic stylistician and that of the literary stylistician.

Chukwuemeka Ike's fiction is, in this thesis, subjected to such linguistic frames as diction, phrasal, clausal and sentence patterns, paragraph structure, with a view to exposing the stylistic effects of these in conveying the message in each of the novels.

## **1.1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Firstly, there exist innumerable literary assessments by scholars, especially the literary critics, on the creative works by African writers. The volumes of African Literature Today (ALT) series and other critical works that are available at present attest to this. Renowned creative writers in Africa have received some level of attention by critics. Nevertheless, as if there is some conspiracy, a prolific creative writer like Chukwuemeka Ike, with seventeen books to his credit, has scarcely been given due attention. At the student level, as noted by Ugbabe (2001), only eleven essays by NCE and B.A degree students in various institutions all over Nigeria have been written on this writer. None of these has dwelt on a linguistic stylistic study of Ike's works. More remarkably, none has



been at the thesis level. The linguistic stylistic study available is Igboanusi's PhD thesis (1995) which looks at Igbo English in John Munonye, Chukwuemeka Ike and Nkem Nwankwo. Yet Ike is a man whose beautifully complex sentence types and structures, appropriate diction and intricate but fine paragraph architecture convey his message in each of his novels. Secondly, students interested in researching into the field of linguistic stylistics need a coherent and current work in the field to update their knowledge. Both problems coalesce to inform the desire to work on the title of this thesis: *A Linguistic Stylistic Analysis of Chukwuemeka Ike's Novels*.

## **1.2 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The main objective of the study is to conduct a linguistic stylistic analysis of Chukwuemeka Ike's novels. This we have specifically done by examining the following texts:

- i. Toads for Supper
- ii. The Naked Gods
- iii. The Potter's Wheel
- iv. Sunset at Dawn
- v. The Chicken Chasers
- vi. Expo '77
- vii. The Bottled Leopard
- viii. Our Children are Coming!
- ix. The Search
- x. Conspiracy of Silence

The study also examined the aesthetic features, those extra-linguistic – linguo-literary – features prevalent in the novels.

At present, there are ten standard novels, a collection of short stories, a travelogue and five non-fiction books to the credit of Chukwuemeka Ike. If there is a directory for successful writers in this part of the world and Ike's name is missing from it, the directory is incomplete. Igboanusi, in his unpublished University of Ibadan thesis (1995), recognizes the importance of lexical innovation in some of the writings of Chukwuemeka Ike, John Munonye and Nkem Nwankwo. He refers to the works he studied as 'Igbo English novels'. The study merely scratched the surface, and thus cannot be seen as an indepth linguistic stylistic analysis of Chukwuemeka Ike's novels. In spite of Ike's literary output, and besides the recent collection of critical writings edited by Kanchana Ugbabe (2001), not much again is heard of this literary giant in the world of criticism. And out of the eighteen articles in the Ugbabe collection, only Macpherson Azuike's and (slightly) Victor Aire's articles are actually on the language and style of Ike's *The Bottled Leopard* and *Sunset at Dawn* respectively. Specifically, Azuike's article succinctly captures the diction and stock phrases that constitute the beauty of *The Bottled Leopard*. Victor Aire's article discusses the lexico-syntactic characteristics of *Sunset at Dawn*, the stylistic effect of translations of dialogues naturally done in the vernacular. Other articles in the Ugbabe collection concentrate on literary analysis. These reasons, then, underscore the importance of a linguistic stylistic study of the ten novels by Chukwuemeka Ike for posterity to see that this man is worthy of being studied.

This research also hopes to act as a reference point for students interested in researching into linguistic stylistics.

### **1.3 METHODOLOGY**

This thesis relied heavily on an intensive and extensive research into related published works. The aim of this is to provide adequate theoretical framework for the present study. The methodology derives from a framework that is classifiable as structural. This is not in the very strict sense of Bloomfieldian or Post-Bloomfieldian structuralism. It is thus classifiable as structural because this thesis sees the text as a harmonious (not discordant) network of linguistic schemes – linguistic elements – that coalesce to realize a particular work of art. This is in line with John Lyons' observation on structuralism '... that the units which we identify, or postulate as theoretical constructs, in analyzing the sentence of a particular language (sounds, words, meanings, etc) derive both their essence and their existence from their relationships with other units in the language-system....'(230). The framework paved the way for the application of linguistic standards to the novels.

Analysis of the novels was done systematically, isolating and discussing the style markers. This stage of the work combined linguistic discrimination and literary discrimination in the analysis, with greater percentage of the analysis on the former. The study provided adequate confirmation of whatever point that was made with adequate references to the texts. Any antecedent occurrences of the style markers were isolated and analysed. Each of the novels was subjected to the

various linguistic frames as contained in the organization of this work. For example, lexical selection as a frame was examined throughout the novels; the same thing was done at the levels of phrasal and clausal typology, sentence and punctuation patterns, etc. Where any of the frames did not feature significantly in the realization of the message, such a frame was skipped for that particular novel. All that were discovered from our literary discrimination were pooled together as Linguo-Literary features that constitute Chapter Five of this thesis.

#### **1.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

This study is limited to ten novels by Chukwuemeka Ike. For two obvious reasons, the research did not consider the other writings because they are non-fiction; secondly, the research is not on General Stylistics – which analyses non-literary variety of language or registers. The other writings not considered are *University Development in Africa*, *How to Become a Published Writer*, *Creating a Conducive Environment for Book Publishing* and *Meeting the Book Needs of the Rural Family*. *The Accra Riviera* and *To my Husband from Iowa* will not be considered for the reasons that the former is an anthology of short stories, while the latter has been adjudged a travelogue.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines different scholarly treatise in stylistics. The discussions in the chapter dwell on contributions by scholars engaged in the study of language and literature, wading through stylistics as a broad term, literary criticism, practical criticism, structuralism and deconstruction. Several stylisticians who have looked at the linguistic angle of African literature as it relates to our topic are equally presented.

The chapter traced the gradual development of stylistics from traditional rhetoric from the ancient Greek era to the modern times. It has explained such concepts as style and stylistics. The study finally anchors on linguistic stylistics, which forms the fulcrum around which this thesis revolves. In this chapter, there are some theoretical postulates that juxtapose the modus operandi of both linguistic stylistics and literary criticism. Finally, there is a note on the grammatical models that are relevant to our study.

#### 2.1 STYLE: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

The use of language in ancient Greece was geared towards speech creation – speech as it served a practical function of language in politics and the judiciary. There was the aesthetic function of speech in ceremonies. The art of speech creation was referred to as rhetoric, a word derived from the Greek *techne rhetorike*. Rhetoric was taught as an important subject in schools with the aim of

training future speakers on how to create effective and attractive speeches. In ancient Greece, the creation of poetic works was another language activity from which we have poetics – the process of artistic creation, which focused on the problems of expressing the ideas before the actual moment of utterance. Aristotle's *Poetics* is seen as a pioneer work in this area. In the same ancient Greece, the creation of dialogue, the discussion and study of methods of persuasion became known as dialectics. This was credited to Socrates. Whatever further development of stylistics there was, a scholar such as Missikova believes, stemmed from these three ancient sources: rhetoric, poetics and dialectics. Poetics created the present field known as Literary Criticism while Rhetoric and Dialectics metamorphosed into Stylistics (Missikova:10). This same scholar suggests that the development of stylistics in ancient Rome some 300 years later brought about the distinction between the analogist style of speech presentation and the anomalist style. The former was credited to Caesar, while the latter, known for its highly ornamental style, was credited to Cicero. The characteristics of the analogists are:

- i) they stressed regularity and system rules
- ii) they focused on facts and data
- iii) their aim was to create simple, clear and straightforward speeches
- iv) other representatives were Seneca and Tacitus.

But the anomalists:

- i) aimed at the creation and development of *Ornate Dicere*, that is, a flowery language
- ii) used unnatural syntactic patterns, sought for innovative often artificial sentence structures
- iii) created anomalies on all language levels
- iv) due to their approach, where the true message and communicated content were secondary to the form of presentation, Rhetoric was called the ‘mother of lies’
- v) built their theory of rhetoric on the distinction between three styles: high, middle and low.

According to Missikova (10), there was little or no progress in the development of stylistics in the Middle Ages. As a result, Cicero’s anomalism became a model for public speaking, making aesthetically attractive speeches popular, and helping speakers develop their individual styles.

### **2.1.1 Rhetoric and the Evolution of Stylistics**

Rhetoric in antiquity was the precursor of what we know from the 20<sup>th</sup> century as stylistics. Societies in those ancient times had no writing culture but they were aware of the fine qualities of a good speech – a speech that is informative, cohesive and memorable. Various skills were involved in the art of

public speaking as a means of persuasion. The oratorical devices of persuasion involved during that time include the use of words (diction) to evoke mental images, proverbial expressions, apt description, rhythm, repetition, ellipsis, antithesis and parallelism. These devices, and more, referred to as the figures of speech, helped to structure and elaborate the form of an argument and to arouse the emotion. The awareness of these expressive devices of language and their goal have been in existence from the pre-writing era of man, and thus we can safely say that they provided the rudimentary and skeletal framework for the recognition of style in later centuries. This intrinsic connection between Stylistics and traditional rhetoric is corroborated by Graham Hough (1 – 4) when he says:

The modern study of style, i.e. stylistics, has its roots in classical rhetoric: the ancient art of persuasive speech, which has always had a close affinity with literature, probably because it was regarded as a persuasive discourse, too.... classical rhetoric was prescriptive in that it provided guidance as to how to be persuasive, whereas modern stylistics is descriptive in that it seeks to point out the linguistic features that can be associated with particular effects.

These persuasive devices crystallized into bodies of organized knowledge. During the same period (already writing had been invented) Greek settlers of Sicily began to teach and learn this art of rhetoric as a practical discipline. Richard Bradford remarks that

The best-known names are Corax and Tisias who found that, in an island beset with political and judicial disagreement over land and civil rights, the art of persuasion was a useful and profitable profession. Gorgias, one of their pupils, visited Athens as ambassador and he is generally regarded as the person responsible for piloting



rhetoric beyond its judicial function into the spheres of philosophy and literary studies. (3)

During the same century, there was a general awareness about the popularity of this oral forensic craft of rhetoric, logic and law. And with the return of exiles to Syracuse, people hired the services of the sophists (kinds of itinerant philosophers learned in this art) to present and argue their various claims and compensations in the best way possible. Exponents of rhetoric in that ancient era were Gorgias of Sicily, Isocrates, Plato and Aristotle. With the discovery and propagation of writing in those early times, elements of rhetoric found their way into poetry and prose. In prose, efforts were made to harmonize the rules of speech and writing with those of logic. Certain manuals were compiled on the collection, arrangement and presentation of one's material. Such works usually listed the five canons of rhetoric generally credited to Corax of Syracuse. The five cannons have have been italicized here because they have Greek names. A paraphrase of McArthur's notes on them is given below. (780).

1. *The inventio.* This had to do with researching, or the collection of one's material. The speaker or writer assembles the necessary material for his line of argument.
2. *The dispositio.* This had to do with arranging or organizing the material, starting with the exordium, that is, the formal opening, the narration, arranged according to the points of view, with proofs and regulations. The last segment of dispositio is the conclusion. These three aspects of the dispositio agree with the three structural parts of an

essay: opening, body and conclusion – which form the basis of present day pedagogical prose composition.

3. *The elocutio.* This had to do with the fitting of language to audience and context through any of three styles: the high-and-grand, the medium, and the low-and-plain. In this ‘style’ section are included the traditional rhetoric devices and figures of speech.
4. *The pronuntiatio/or actio.* This had to do with the delivery mode of speeches. Here, we have performance, including the arsenal of techniques to be used in proclaiming, narrating, or acting. This aspect concerned live audiences as well as work on papyrus and parchment.
5. *The memoria* had to do with mind training to ensure accurate recall and performance in public assembly or court of law.

Actual formal study of these canons and the expressive devices developed in the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C. became renewed with vigour in the European Renaissance period and subsequent centuries. This fact is attested to by Bradford (4 – 5) who, in discussing Plato’s Socratic dialogues entitled *Gorgias* says that

The Plato-Aristotle exchange is not so much about rhetoric as an illustration of the divisive nature of rhetoric. It is replayed, with largely Aristotelian preferences, in the works of the two most prominent Roman rhetoricians, Cicero and Quintilian; it emerges in the writing of St. Augustine and in Peter Ramus’s *Dialectique* (1555), one of the founding moments in the revival of classical rhetoric during the European Renaissance. *Most significantly, it operates as the theoretical spine, which links rhetoric with modern stylistics, and stylistics in turn with those other constitutions of the contemporary discipline of humanities: linguistics, structuralism and post-structuralism.* ( Italics mine.)

Rhetoric as a formal study became prominent in the humanities in England, Scotland and France during the European Renaissance period. During this period, a series of books on the proper use of rhetorical devices was published. Prominent among them is *A Treatise of Schemes and Tropes* (1550) by R. Sherry. Schemes and Tropes are traditional conventional divisions of the figures of speech into schematized form, syntactic or phonetic patterns of foregrounded regularity. Examples include parallelism, anaphora, etc. Other books on the discipline of rhetoric in the Renaissance period include T. Wilson's *The Arte of Rhetorique* (1553), R. Rainold's *A Book Called the Foundation of Rhetorike* (1563), H. Peacham's *The Garden of Eloquence* (1557) and G. Puttenham's *The Arte of English Poesie* (1589).

In the last book above, Puttenham's thesis, according to Bradford (10 – 11) is that 'literary and non-literary texts do not belong in the same category of functional, purposive language as the judicial, ruling or the theological tract. This begs a question which modern stylistics, far more than rhetoric, has sought to address. How do we judge the difference between literary and non-literary discourse?' And by 1762, Hugh Blair was appointed to the first Chair of Rhetoric in the University of Edinburgh from which developed all Chairs of English and Literature studies (McArthur:781). This period began the fragmentation of rhetoric, and by the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, some subjects gained independence from traditional rhetoric, notably stylistics, semiotics and pragmatics. Modern stylistics can therefore be said to have evolved from that branch of rhetoric called Elocutio, with emphasis then on the relationship between

form and content and the characteristic features of expression. Elocutio provided rhetoric in antiquity the style for expressing ideas.

While there were Ciceronian and Aristotelian traditions, other theories developed in the New Age; among them are the individualist, emotionalist, functionalist and formalist. The French classical theory of style (apparently modelled on Elocutio) advocated a high (grand) style for verbal works of art but low (plain) style for everyday communication of common people. Thus, there were:

- i) *stylus altus* (works of art)
- ii) *stylus mediocris* (style of high class/society)
- iii) *stylus humilis* (style of low class/society, also used in comedies). (Italics mine).

This classification reflects the French initial attempt to see style from the standpoint of a 'selection of expressive means'. A French school *Explication de Texte* developed the text analysis and interpretation known as *close reading*, which tries to correlate historical and linguistic information, and the connection between aesthetic responses and specific stimuli in a text.

By the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, what used to be studies in *Elocutio* metamorphosed into Stylistics, having gone through the stage of traditional study of the relationship of languages, Philology, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The development of stylistics out of comparative philology in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century became prominent with the work of Charles Bally, Ferdinand de Saussure's student.

There were some linguistic schools and concepts that predate Ferdinand de Saussure in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The New Idealists in Germany had scholars like Leo Spitzer, Karl Vossler and B. Croce. This school focused on the search for individual peculiarities of language as elements of expressing a psychological state of mind. Their approach was thus individualistic or psychoanalytical, and perhaps for this reason, unfortunately, could not have followers.

The new era of linguistic stylistics is represented by the emotionalistic conception of the French School of Charles Bally. A student of Ferdinand de Saussure, Charles Bally, widely acclaimed the father of modern stylistics, is known for his emotionally expressive conception of style. This is because Bally strongly believes that any linguistic information embodies in part, the language and in part, aspects of the man who interprets or announces the information. Charles Bally's stylistics was writer-centered. Thus *expressive stylistics* was a somewhat old-fashioned approach that aimed at the revelation of the personality or the 'soul' of the writer. It is widely acclaimed that stylistics began with Charles Bally of the Department of General Linguistics, University of Geneva (1905). His major concern then was the emotive elements of language, how diction affects the emotions: evaluative words revealing the attitudes (of approval or disapproval) of the writer or speaker. This use of language to manipulate the emotions is one of the surviving strands of *elocutio* from traditional rhetoric. Charles Bally's was a two-volume treatise on French stylistics published in 1909. With this publication, interest in stylistics spread throughout Europe.

As Bally's expressive stylistics reigned in the Romance countries, Croce's individual stylistics had dominant influence in Germany. In Russia, almost simultaneously, a linguistic and literary movement known as *Formalism* developed. Formalism adopted the formal method used in linguistics based on the analytical view of the form. The content of a literary work was seen as a sum of its stylistic methods. Emphasis was on how not what about a literary work. It was a movement that was born in 1916 in Russia and came to its peak between 1920 – 1923 but practically collapsed in the later part of the '20s. Jakobson and Vinogradov were the exponents. Some of their ideas however, were modified and they became part of structuralism, and ten years later traces of formalism found their way into the Prague school. The crux of structuralism as a linguistic movement is 'What is language and what is its organization like?' The tenets of structuralism were contained in Ferdinand de Saussure's fundamental work *Cours de linguistique generale* (1916) post-humously published by his pupil, Charles Bally. Further elaboration on structuralism comes up later in this chapter. But suffice it to say here that its tenets permeated various fields: aesthetics, history of art, drama, theatre, ethnography, linguistics and literary criticism.

It is important to note at this juncture that the Prague School Linguistic Circle of a decade later (1926) had their programme and methodology strongly modelled on structuralism. The Prague School introduced systematic application of structuralism, which influenced stylistics a great deal. Founders and leading exponents of the Prague School Linguistics include R. O. Jakobson, N. S. Trubeckoj, F.X. Salda and K. Hausenblas. A similar structuralist movement also

was going on in the United States, with Edward Sapir and Leonard Bloomfield as leading exponents. Aspects of the Prague School linguistics as enunciated by Missikova (13) include:

- i) distinction between the aesthetic function of poetic language and the practical, communicative function of language;
- ii) language is seen as a structure, supra-temporal and supra-spatial, given inherently (in the sense of Saussure's language);
- iii) literary work is an independent structure related to the situation of its origin/creation;
- iv) individual parts of literary or linguistic structure are always to be understood from the point of view of a complex structure;
- v) the analyses of particular works were based on language analysis because it was assumed that in a literary work all components (that is language, content, composition) are closely inter-related and overlapping within the structure.

Then there was the other school of philological stylistics whose exponent was Spitzer (1948). He proposed a rejection of the impressionistic judgment of a text, and advocated a detailed examination of linguistic features for objective linguistic evidence in criticism. The ultimate aim was to find the 'inward life-centre', the creative principle of a piece of work.

While structuralism was blooming in Denmark, the U.S.A and Czechoslovakia, another and similar movement *The New Criticism* developed in

Cambridge, Britain. The main figures here were I. A. Richards and William Empson. These introduced the concept of *Close Reading*. They devoted much effort to the study of metaphor and introduced the terms *tenor* and *vehicle* in relation to the study of metaphor. Michael Halliday (1960s) heavily influenced what can be called British Stylistics with his structuralist approach to the linguistic analysis of literary texts. And by the 1960s, stylistics flourished in Great Britain and the U.S.A as a result of post-war developments in descriptive linguistics.

## 2.2 STYLE VERSUS STYLISTICS

Simply put, style is the manner of expressing one's thoughts. Just as there are various ways of doing things, there are stylistic variations in language use. Style is also distinctive in the sense that the language used in some way is significant for the thematic design of any genre. This distinctive aspect of style is predicated upon the fact that from a variety of items of language, the writer chooses and arranges them, depending on the genre, form, theme, author's general disposition, etc. A style can be good or bad, plain or unmarked. A style is said to be unmarked when the writing is of *zero degree* – 'degree zero' being a term first used by Roland Barthes (1967) to denote 'absence of style' in the classical French writing by Camus. The appropriateness of the term has come under attack by scholars (notably Wales:484) since no writing can exhibit 'zero style' or 'neutral style' or 'transparent style'. In fact, the very 'absence' of a marked style can itself be seen to be syntactically significant.



On style, C.H. Holman says it is

The arrangement of words in a manner which at once best expresses the individuality of the author and the idea and the intent in the author's mind. The best style, for any given purpose, is that which most clearly approximates a perfect adaptation of one's language to one's ideas. Style is a combination of two elements: the idea to be expressed and the individuality of the author. (432)

Peter Verdonk (4, 6 – 7) opines that 'stylistics, the linguistic/scientific study of style (sic), can be defined as the analysis of distinctive expression in language and the description of its purpose and effect. How such analysis and description should be conducted, and how the relationship between them is to be established are matters on which different scholars of stylistics, or stylisticians, disagree....' He further recognizes that 'style does not arise out of a vacuum but that its production, purpose, and effect are deeply embedded in the particular context in which both the writer and the reader... play their distinctive roles... we should distinguish between two types of context: linguistic and non-linguistic context. Linguistic context refers to the surrounding features of language inside a text, like the typography, sounds, words, phrases, and sentences, which are relevant to the interpretation of other such linguistic elements.... The non-linguistic context is a much more complex notion since it may include any number of text-external features influencing the language and style of a text.' These we here refer to as linguo-literary features. Stylistics is the scientific study of style. Analysis in stylistics therefore involves a range of general language qualities, which include diction, sentence patterns, structure and variety, paragraph structure, imagery, repetition, emphasis, arrangement of ideas and other cohesive devices.

Stylistics, Literary Criticism and Practical Criticism have certain things in common. Stylistics studies and describes the formal features of the text, that is, the levels of expression vis-à-vis the content, thus bringing out their functional significance for the interpretation of the work. The stylistician may rely on his intuition and interpretative skills just as the literary critic, but the former tries to keep at bay, vague and impressionistic judgment. To achieve this, stylistics draws on relevant and influential models of linguistics – the scientific study of language. Thus, as K. Wales observes, in later 1960s, Generative Grammar was influential; in the 1970s and 1980s, it was Discourse Analysis and Pragmatics. In the 1980s, there was a shift from the text to the reader and his responses to the text – with the birth of Affective Stylistics and Reception Theory.

### 2.2.1 **The Reception Theory and Affective Stylistics**

The *reception theory* of the 1960s and 1970s flourished in Germany, especially in the University of Konstanz, and its rays extended to Britain and the U.S. This theory is not entirely text-centred, but it draws from other disciplines such as Linguistics, Literary Criticism, Psychology, Sociology and Aesthetics. In the reception theory, according to Katie Wales

...literary texts only fully exist with the active participation of the reader: they require concretization. Inevitably in any text there will be ‘spots of indeterminacy... or information gaps... that readers must fill in from their own cultural knowledge in order to make the text fully coherent and consistent... such cultural knowledge, along with intertextual knowledge, makes up the horizon of expectations by which any text will be measured.... (392)

A completely text-centred criticism, especially the type advocated by Wimsatt and Bardsley, who see literary criticism as subjective exploration into a

work, is regarded by some scholars as narrow. So, whereas the text-oriented criticism of Wimsatt's school of autonomism, for example, was a reaction against the 'subjectivity and impressionism' of literary criticism, the reaction against Wimsatt's 'narrowness' saw the birth of Affective Stylistics. Affective stylisticians, such as Stanley Fish, want a combination of emotional responses and mental processes involved in reading a work to be taken into account in criticism, hence the model referred to as Processing Stylistics. Scholars seem to believe that these analytical methods and their practical applications were stimulated by the writings of European structuralists and Russian formalists. For example, Afam Ebeogu (1988) recognizes the fact that all linguistic analyses have their roots in the propositions of Ferdinand de Saussure – a name synonymous with structuralism. He notes that:

... In the nineteenth century,... the explosion in the scholarship of Linguistics as a science also engulfed the area of Style. Linguistic scholars claimed that any discussion in the area of style was a discussion in Linguistics, since individual manipulation of language, no matter how idiosyncratic, could only be done within the ambience of the "scientific" rules guiding the operation of the language. Ferdinand de Saussure, the Swiss linguist played a fundamental role in this linguistic invasion of the domain of style. (207)

### **2.3 THE CONCERN OF LINGUISTIC STYLISTICS**

Some scholars may find the terms literary stylistics and linguistic stylistics confusing. Stylistics is the scientific study of style. Any such study that leans heavily on external correlates with none or just a smattering of attention to the 'rules guiding the operation of the language' can be regarded as literary stylistics.

The converse of this premise (i.e. a study that relies heavily on the rules guiding the operation of the language in the explication of a literary text) is what we regard here as linguistic stylistics. Enkvist (1973) consistently refers to linguistic stylistics as **stylolinguistics** in his book entitled *Linguistic Stylistics*. Stylolinguistics, he observes, differs from literary criticism, ‘where brilliant intuitions and elegant, often metaphoric, verbalizations of subjective responses are at a premium’ (92). Stylolinguistic investigations rely on the rules of the language.

What, we may ask, are these rules guiding the operation of the language? Geoffrey N. Leech and Michael H. Short (69 – 79) believe that every stylistic analysis involves selecting some features, and ignoring others. It is a highly selective exercise, which may be one feature or a number of features. The stylistic selection involves the relation between the significances of a text and the linguistic characteristics in which the significances are manifest. Two criteria are therefore involved: *a literary criterion and a linguistic criterion*. A combination of linguistic discrimination and literary discrimination gives us those particular features of style, which call for more careful investigation. Such important features we regard as **style markers**. Leech and Short also provide for the linguistic stylistician a checklist of style markers in four categories: *the lexical category, the grammatical category, the figures of speech and the context and cohesion category*. Under these categories, the authors list the following sub-parts.

- A. Lexical Categories: i) *general*, ii) *nouns*, iii) *adjectives*, iv) *verbs*, v) *adverbs*.
- B. Grammatical Category: i) *sentence types*, ii) *sentence complexity*, iii) *clause types*, iv) *clause structure*, v) *noun phrases*, vi) *verb phrases*, vii) *other phrase types*, viii) *word classes*, ix) *general* – here, note any general types of grammatical construction used to special effect.
- C. Figures of Speech, etc: i) *grammatical and lexical schemes*, ii) *phonological schemes*, iii) *tropes*.
- D. Context and Cohesion: consider ways in which one part of a text is linked to another (cohesion) and whether the writer addresses the reader directly, or through the words or thoughts of some other character.

David Crystal and Derek Davy (1980) writing on ‘the concern of stylistics’ in *Investigating English Style* say that the aim of stylistics is to analyse language habits so as to identify from an array of linguistic features common to English, those features restricted to certain kinds of social context. It also aims at explaining why such features have been used. It classifies the features into categories based on their function in the social context. Crystal and Davy believe that

The stylistician, ideally, knows three things which linguistically untrained people do not; he is aware of the kind of structure language has, and thus the kind of feature which might be expected to be of stylistic significance; he is aware of the kind of social variation which linguistic features tend to be identified with; and he has a technique of putting these features down on paper in a

systematic way in order to display their internal patterning to maximal effect. (12-13)

Crystal and Davy also outline the methodology of describing the linguistic features of a text. These are aspects of the 'theoretical preliminaries' of the book. The second part of the book dwells on practical analyses of the language of conversation, that of unscripted commentary, the language of religion, newspaper reporting, legal documents. Further on, Crystal and Davy assert that

The process of stylistic analysis we are recommending is therefore one in which ordered selection and comment are carried out within parallel frameworks, one stylistic, the other linguistic. The stylistic framework contains the dimensions of description and their subclassification; the linguistic framework contains the levels of analysis and their sub-classification. There are two distinct places where stylistic decisions enter into the analysis: at the beginning, when they may be used intuitively, as the motivation for selecting a text and a set of linguistic features to talk about; and at the end, when the aim is to formalize intuitions by establishing the entire range of linguistic correlates, and by pointing to the pattern which is felt to be there. The process should enable statements to be made about the range of varieties which exist within a language, and thus provide a basis for comparing languages from a stylistic point of view. (87)

Like other forms of criticism (literary, for example), linguistic stylistics is concerned with the quest for matter and manner in a work of art. It concerns itself with a scientific study, applying linguistic techniques to a work of art with the aim of presenting the merits and demerits. It rigorously analyses and synthesizes the work, examining how a special configuration of language has been used in the realization of a particular subject matter, quantifying all the linguistic means that coalesced to achieve a special aesthetic purpose. The result is supposed to be a somewhat objective evaluation based on realistic criteria.

Azuike (1992) has an elaborate systematic guide on how to analyze style both linguistically and literarily. He observes that different stylisticians devise their own methods of analysis; hence, there may be many procedures of analysis. Reading and grasping the message of the text is the first step because subsequent aspects of the analysis will be related to the success or failure of the writer in conveying the message. A synopsis of the text is necessary at this stage. The next step is the level of diction, and Azuike explains:

By diction, we mean the choice of words. The level of diction selected by the writer has a tremendous effect on the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the message. The writer can decide to operate at different levels of diction to suit different purposes and different audiences. The writer may choose simple and concrete words and expressions. He can also settle for the abstract, ornate or latinate words and expressions. However, the diction of a writer should reflect sufficient audience sensitivity because the ultimate goal of a writer's message is consumption by a targeted audience. (121)

This level of diction also considers the register, that is, the appropriateness of the words and expressions in relation to the subject matter. Through diction, the writer's tone can be identified. At this level too, 'the phrasal and clausal typology can be considered where it is seen that their occurrence is stylistically significant in the presentation of the subject matter'. But if not, they can be ignored.

Still on the level of diction, Rolf Sandell identifies 'particularly three types of vocabulary measures that have caught the attention of quantitative stylisticians: vocabulary variability, the use of exceptional words, and key words. Vocabulary variability has probably been subjected to more extensive and more sophisticated discussion than any other. It relates to a particular author's size of active vocabulary or his ability or willingness not to repeat words but rather seek

synonyms. Of course, it might also (sic) be regarded as a measure of non-redundancy, or, at any rate, non-redundancy probably also (sic) affects this variable' (25 – 26).

Another level of analysis considers the sentences – their types and combinatory patterns in the text. A good combination of the various types is necessary for effective discourse. This is at the grammatical level, but at the rhetorical level, we consider them in terms of their functions: statement forms, questions, etc.; are they loose, periodic, balanced? Then consider the punctuation patterns and their role in the text, noting that the punctuation patterns have a way of determining the sentence types. Other schemes involved in the creation of balance should also be examined. They include parenthesis, antithesis, parallelism, etc. Significant co-ordination and subordination patterns should be discussed; then comes paragraph structure. Azuiké (1992:123) suggests that

When we have examined these various elements of the text, it is important that we make general statements on how they combine to give the text a unity i.e., how they have been combined for the communication of the subject matter. The conclusion we can reach from this step by step analytical procedure may be that the message has been effectively or ineffectively conveyed. However, this conclusion may not always be a matter of success or failure as the writer can achieve some measure of success in conveying his message even when there are obvious lapses in his analysis. For the linguistic stylistician, he can sign off at this point since he claims that his analysis is objective as it is intratextual and intertextual, that is based on the content of the text under analysis.

Here then is the boundary between linguistic stylistics and literary criticism. The latter may touch on some of the points above and delve into extra-linguistic and extra-textual considerations (history, biography, philosophy, psychology, etc.) to



explain certain issues in the text. The usual reason for this being that no writer writes in a vacuum – he is a product of his age, his peer group, events around him, etc, and these influence his work.

Stanley E. Fish's article 'What is Stylistics and why are they Saying such Terrible Things about it?' in *Essays in Modern Stylistics* (1981) says:

Stylistics was born of a reaction to the subjectivity and imprecision of literary studies. For the appreciative raptures of the impressionistic critic, stylisticians purport to substitute precise and rigorous linguistic descriptions, and to proceed from those descriptions to interpretations for which they claim a measure of objectivity. Stylistics, in short, is an attempt to put criticism on a scientific basis. (33)

There is a venerable thinking in the literary world, which has it that 'the style is the man'. This statement is capable of eliciting disputations. The originator of the idea of the style being the man is Buffon, the French Naturalist. Our interpretation of it is thus: in trying to say what he has to say, the writer brings his person, his attitude, prejudices, command of the language, his oddities and idiosyncrasies to bear on the work. Precisely: '... the specific linguistic form of a text and their arrangement in some sense duplicate the traits of the author's personality, which is the aggregate idiosyncrasies and peculiarities which differentiate him from other men....' (Louis T. Milic in S. Chatman ed.:71). And we know that what constitutes the author's personality will include his learning, his experiences and the environment where he spent his formative years. If this personality is brought to bear on his work, then there is apparently no reason why literary criticism, in its examination of a text, should not explore such extra-

linguistic areas as the author's biography to reveal facts about his learning, experiences and formative years.

Both linguistic stylistics and literary criticism are concerned with the quest for matter and manner in a literary work of art. Like literary criticism, stylistics is interested in the message of the work, and how effectively it is delivered. Both linguistic stylistics and literary criticism rigorously analyze and synthesize a work of art with a common aim of presenting both the merits and the demerits of the work, and in so doing, elucidate the work. In spite of such common factor existing between linguistic stylistics and literary criticism, one finds that there lies a difference in their modus operandi, and consequently a difference in their evaluations. Whereas linguistic stylistics begins and concludes its analysis and synthesis from the literary text itself, rigorously examining how a special configuration of language has been used in the realization of a particular subject matter, quantifying all the linguistic means (including imagery) that coalesced to achieve a special aesthetic purpose; literary criticism does not suffer that restriction to the work of art under analysis. In its own analysis, it intermittently works on the text, but occasionally wanders off and brings in extra-linguistic, extra-textual material (may be from philosophy, psychology, biography, social history, etc.) to bear on the work. The result is that, whereas linguistic stylistics comes up with a somewhat objective evaluation, based on realistic criteria; literary criticism comes up with that which is generally imaginative, speculative, subjective, and impressionistic. There lies the major difference between linguistic

stylistics and literary criticism – a point more lucidly corroborated by Leech and Short while discussing ‘Style, Text and Frequency’:

Aesthetic terms used in the discussion of style (urbane, curt, exuberant, florid, lucid, plain, vigorous, etc.) are not directly referable to any observable linguistic features of texts, and one of the long-term aims of stylistics must be to see how far such descriptions can be justified in terms of descriptions of a more linguistic kind. The more a critic wishes to substantiate what he says about style, the more he will need to point to the linguistic evidence of texts; and linguistic evidence, to be firm, must be couched in terms of numerical frequency.... So, quantitative stylistics on the one hand... may provide confirmation for the ‘hunches’ or insights we have about style. On the other, it may bring to light significant features of style which would otherwise have been overloaded, and so lead to further insights; but only in a limited sense does it provide an objective measurement of style. Moreover, the role of quantification depends on how necessary it is to prove one’s point... intuition has a respectable place both in linguistics and criticism.... (46 – 47)

Sibley’s observation is that much of criticism is *aesthetic*, whereas that of linguistics is largely non-aesthetic or descriptive. We use the non- aesthetic (i.e. the descriptive approach) to provide evidence for the appropriate use of certain aesthetic terms. (Leech: 71, note 4)

We may ask a common question at this juncture: how does the critic decipher the intention or message submerged in a work? It is a question that echoes Wimsatt (4), and his answer is that, ‘If the poet (or writer) succeeded in doing it (that is, in conveying the message) then the poem (or work) itself shows what he (the writer) was trying to do. And (sic) if the poet (or writer) did not succeed, then the poem (or novel) is not adequate evidence, and the critic must go outside the work – for evidence of an intention that did not become effective in

the work'. The implication of Wimsatt's answer is that a work whose message does not come to us without reference to some external correlates is deficient and it is only in trying to make up for that deficiency in the work that one should wade into something existing outside the world of the work. Wimsatt identifies with a certain school of '*autonomism*', which stoutly rejects the critic's evidence unless it is linguistically quantifiable. Everything the critic brings in from outside the words on paper should be discountenanced and the literary text should be regarded autonomous because, '...each text – poem, novel, or whatever – is unique... self-sufficient: everything that can be said about it has to be learnt by concentrated study of the text itself and only the text' (Roger Fowler: 15 – 23).

Granted that in the search for objectivity, linguistic stylistics centres on what is '*there*' on the pages, but one still finds that such a study, however rigorous, is somewhat amputated because not all the elements of a literary work are discernible from the mere words on paper. At times, in a very successful work, there are symbols, 'private symbols', the interpretation of which may require the genesis of the work.

But this is not to leave us with the inference that literary criticism alone can cope with all the aspects of a work. For one thing, the substance, or message of a work is conveyed by means of language – language in use. It is the work of linguistic stylistics to delve into linguistics (the scientific study of language ) and abstract linguistic techniques appropriate for the description and explication of the work. When one reads a work of art, one would want to know why the utterances are given the forms they have, the various facts about vocabulary, the syntactic

movement, sentence patterns including paragraph structure and other linguistic aspects that contribute to the success of the work, and also in what proportions they occur. At times, we are aware that a certain work tends to command a tone of urgency, animation, dejection, or frustration. But the question then arises: how best can we decipher and describe this awareness? This requires one to be grounded in relevant linguistic techniques.

So, both the linguistic tools employed by stylistics and the extra-linguistic explorations employed by literary criticism are necessary towards better analysis and explication of a work of art, as Edward Stankiewicz metaphorically puts it – the literary scholar devoid of linguistic techniques and methodology is a hunter with a gun but no ammunition. So that a literary scholar who takes advantage of the linguistic techniques and methodology proffered by linguistic stylistics will certainly make better explication of a work of art, just as the hunter with both gun and ammunition will make better hunt (Sebeok: 71) – which is why Chapter Six of this research dwells on the linguo-literary features of the texts under study.

#### **2.4 FORMS OF CRITICISM: STRUCTURALISM, POST-STRUCTURALISM, DECONSTRUCTION**

Forms of literary criticism include: pragmatic – criticism which is concerned with the relationship between the work and its audience; expressive criticism – concerned with the relationship between the work and its author; mimetic – based on the relationship between the work and the outside world, the society it sets out to represent; formal or objective – concerned with the formal characteristics of a work, from within the work itself, and this is based on the idea

of art for art's sake. (D. R. Bishop:37) The formal criticism comes very close to, but not exactly the same as linguistic stylistics.

Formal criticism was a dominant linguistic and literary movement in Russia in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Two main groups existed: the Moscow group (1915) and the St. Petersburg group (1916). It was Roman Jakobson, after his emigration to the US, that provided a significant link with the Prague School and Western Structural Linguistics and Poetics. The formalists were inspired by the ideas of Saussure on the structure of language, but their analysis was mainly on poetic texts, relying on purely linguistic criteria in identifying stylistic patterns. Their methodology became popular among Generative Stylisticians of the 1960s.

Structuralism is an intellectual movement that flourished in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, directly influenced by Formalism and the Prague School. (F. J. Newmeyer: 3 – 15) The movement is greatly indebted to the ideas of the Swiss Scholar, Ferdinand de Saussure (1916) and his structural linguistics. From the 1930s through the 1950s, all structuralists in one way or the other saw language the way Saussure stated in his book.

It would be interesting from a practical viewpoint to begin with units, to determine what they are and to account for their diversity by classifying them.... Next, we would have to classify the sub-units, then the larger units, etc. By determining in this way the elements that it manipulates, synchronic linguistics would completely fulfill its task, for it would relate all synchronic phenomena to their fundamental principle. (Newmeyer: 6)

The central thesis of structuralism is stated by John Lyons (230-231):

...that the units which we identify, or postulate as theoretical constructs, in analysing the sentence of a particular language (sounds, words, meaning, etc) derive both their essence and their existence from their relationships with other units in the language-system. We cannot first identify the units and then, at a subsequent stage of the analysis, enquire what combinatorial or other relations that hold between them: we simultaneously identify the units and their interrelations. Linguistic units are but points in a system, or network, of relations; they are the terminals of these relations, and they have no prior and independent existence.

Methodologically, structuralism aims at beginning with a corpus of utterances and constructs a grammar through segmentation and classifications. Of primary importance to the development of structuralism are the four Saussurean categories in which he made a distinction between *langue* and *parole*; between *substance* and *form*; between *paradigmatic* and *syntagmatic* relations; between the *synchronic* and the *diachronic* investigations of languages. The first is the distinction between the language-system (*langue*) and the language-behaviour (*parole*). The language-system underlies the language behaviour of a particular language-community. When we speak a language, we are engaged in a sort of behaviour or activity (producing vocal signals, that is utterances, and even non-vocal signals to help the utterances) which is different from the system of units and relations underlying that behaviour. When we speak, therefore, it means that we have acquired the principles which govern that kind of language-behaviour. The principles we acquire (*langue*) make possible our language-behaviour (*parole*). Both *langue* and *parole* approximate Chomsky's competence and performance, respectively.

The second distinction has to do with substance and form. Saussure observes that languages result from the imposition of structure (form) on two kinds of substance: sound and thought. The phonological composition of a word-form is a complex of phonemes, each derived from the structure imposed by the language system.

Saussure also distinguished the relationships between units in the language system. The two types of relations are syntagmatic and paradigmatic. By syntagmatic relations we mean the relationship a lexeme has with others in a unit of construction. By paradigmatic relations we mean the relations which hold between a particular unit in a given construction and other units which are substitutable for it in the construction.

The fourth of the Saussurean distinctions lies in the distinction between the synchronic and diachronic investigations of languages. Synchronic analysis has to do with investigation of the language as it is, or was, at a certain time. Diachronic analysis has to do with the study of the changes in the language between two given points in time.

Ferdinand de Saussure views language as an interwoven structure in such a way that every item making up the structure is important only in relation to the other items in the structure. His explanation draws a popular analogy between the game of chess and language structure. In the game of chess, he points out, a piece of chess in isolation is of no significance, but a move by a single piece has repercussions on all the others. To discover the importance of an item in the



interwoven nature of language, one has to examine those items that co-occur with it and those that can be substituted for it. Ferdinand noted the arbitrary relationship between a sign (the signifier) and what it signifies (the signified). The signifier is the concrete linguistic sign, spoken or written, while the signified is the concept represented by the sign. The third element he recognized is the referent (Bradford: 7). Structuralists are generally influenced by Ferdinand's propositions.

But in the U.S., the pioneer work in structuralism was by Leonard Bloomfield. Bloomfield pioneered the work of incorporating the tenets of empiricism into linguistics with his book Language (1933). Bloomfield influenced the field of linguistics a great deal, especially the Structuralists School in the U.S. Linguistic analysis had to be anchored on observable phenomena as opposed to statements about universals such as were common to the Prague School phonologists. Linguistic description came to be a 'catalogue of observables'.

Immediately after the Second World War, the Post-Bloomfieldian School of structuralism was dominant in the United States. But scholars have come to point out that many of the principles of post-Bloomfieldian structuralism were both alien to and at variance with Saussurean structuralism.

Post-structuralism has been seen as a reactionary movement against the tenets of structuralism, especially the contention about such things as 'structures' that are stable and have determinate meanings. Post-structuralists maintain that the relations between the signifier and the signified are not stable, and meaning is

indeterminate, and thus difficult to grasp. To them, textual unity is an illusion. Wales feels that “the aim of post-structuralist criticism is to tease out the contradictions of logic and meaning inherent in the works themselves, to ‘deconstruct’ them” (367).

Deconstruction is at times synonymous with post-structuralism. The former is only one of such subversive schools of thought aimed at demolishing structuralism. Its aims were to ‘de-construct’ a text, ‘undermine its presuppositions, de-stabilize it, de-centre it. Interpretation of a text is not seen as recovering some deeper “given” objective meaning which controls and unifies the text’s structure....’(Wales: 108). The originator of deconstruction is the French scholar, Jacques Derrida.

When, in the 1920s, I.A. Richards challenged the whole corpus of literary criticism in Europe and America with his scholarly demonstrations in *Practical Criticism*, he sounded like a heretic among Catholics. The kernel of Richards’ propositions was to eliminate the fuzzy and imprecise nature of the speculations rife in literary studies, and to dissociate a work of art from the author’s intentions and experiences and reader’s responses because such are ‘variable, irresponsible, undiscoverable, demonstrably erroneous....’ The idea behind this was to attain a level of objectivity in the explication of a literary work of art. The reaction of literary Catholics is epitomized in a much later comment by F.W. Bateson (in Roger Fowler: 75):

Would I allow my sister to marry a linguist? It is a good question. And I suppose, if I am honest, I must admit that I

would much prefer not to have a linguist in the family. But at least, I would not forbid the banns....

Roger Fowler himself, aware of the 'war' between linguistic critics (such as Nowotny, Wimsatt, Stanley Fish) and literary critics (such as F.W. Bateson, Mrs Vendler) advises the warring parties:

Whether one is proceeding only to stylistics or beyond the language to interpretative or evaluatory criticism, one must, and can without falsifying, select for description certain features, which one feels to be significant.... The linguist's 'formal meaning' perhaps provides a clue to the limits of stylistics as a branch of criticism.... (39)

The importance of linguistic tools challenged the age-old persistent description of a literary work by reference to its genesis or source of inspiration because, as many like W.K. Wimsatt, M.C. Beardsley and Winifred Nowotny felt, it was prudent to begin with what is 'there' in the text – 'there' in the sense that it can be described and referred to as unarguably given by the words. And to ensure objectivity in the criticism of a literary work, the linguistic elements used in the realization of the work should be abstracted and described. Roger Fowler, discussing theoretical standards in the introductory part of his book, *The Languages of Literature*, discountenanced everything the critic brings in from outside the literary text because '...each text – poem, novel, or whatever – is unique ...self-sufficient: everything that can be said about it has to be learnt by concentrated study of the text itself and only the text' (32).

This approach to stylistics poses two main problems:

- i. Practical problems arising from the highly complicated nature of stylistic analysis which Stanley E. Fish, a die-hard literary critic (in D. C. Freeman ed.: 55) extensively explored as aspects that make some people impatient with stylistics and its baggage. ‘The machinery of categorization and classification merely provides momentary pigeonholes for the constituents of a text, constituents which are then retrieved and reassembled into exactly the form they previously had. There is in short no gain in understanding; the procedure has been executed, but it hasn’t gotten you anywhere....’
- ii. Restricting stylistics to a “concentrated study of the text itself and only the text”, some scholars believe, makes the study somewhat amputated because not all the elements of a literary work are discernible from the words on paper. The interpretation of a work may require its genesis – and the genesis of a work lies outside the domain of linguistics. From Richard Altick’s book, *The Art of Literary Research* (1981), we learn that: no writer exists in a vacuum. To understand his work, we must also understand the manifold socially-derived attitudes – the morality, myths, assumptions, prejudices – which the writer brought to it: his cultural heritage. Since he did not write for himself but a specified audience of his contemporaries... we must try to find out precisely how the mingled ideas of his world and the world of his target audience affected the shape and content of the book. And since a book has both antecedents and history of

its own, it is therefore important to know the immediate source of inspiration. And in some cases, the key to an obscure passage or to a crucial aspect of the author's thought may be found in an odd corner of intellectual or social history. (Adaptations from R. Altick, Ch. 1&3). Rene Wellek in Chatman ed., would certainly see the importance of subjecting a work of art to appropriate linguistic frames, but he stoutly holds that:

No grounds of total evaluation can... be established by linguistic or stylistic analysis as such, though an intricate sound texture, a closely-knit grammatical structure, or a dense web of effective metaphors may contribute to the total aesthetic value of a work of art. (73)

## 2.5 DEFINING STYLE

C.H. Holman (1980) sees style as 'the arrangement of words in a manner which at once best expresses the individuality of the author and the idea and intent in the author's mind'. But this is scarcely all there is to the definition of style. In a recent paper entitled 'Style and the Mad Man' in *The Anchor* (77 – 78), M.N. Azuiké chronicles the various angles of defining style from various scholars. "Coleridge in Wetherill (1974: 133) defines style as 'nothing else but the art of conveying the meaning appropriately and with perspicuity, whatever that meaning may be'. Similarly, Middleton Murry in the same reference insists that 'style is a quality of language which communicates precisely emotions or thoughts peculiar to the author.' For Sir Authur Quiller-Couch (1920: 248), style is 'the power to touch with ease, grace, precision, any note in the gamut of human thought and emotion. But essentially it resembles good manners. "With this dizzying array of characterizations, any attempt to rehearse the uncountable, often repetitive

definitions of style in existence is comparable to the stridulating of a swarm of crickets.” He offers this solution:

If defining style has become an arduous task for the linguist, a temporary relief is provided by the fact that regularity of pattern and features is a sure base line to take off from. If there is no observable regularity of occurrence of certain peculiar linguistic artifacts in an individual’s speech or writing, then we might be hard pressed to identify what constitutes his style.... The point we want to make here is that for us to identify and meaningfully talk of the style of an individual, we must look out for the recurring linguistic decimals in his writing or speech. Such linguistic decimals must be objectively verifiable in the individual’s speech or writing and in mundane consideration, intuitively apprehendable by an interested observer.... The linguistic stylistician will insist on the former, the literary critic on the latter.... (78)

The tendency for people from various fields who have some connection with the word to define it from their different perspectives has been well documented by Azuike, M.N. (1992: 109 – 127) whose findings can be reduced thus:

- i. there is no *final* definition of style in existence
- ii. there is neither a consensus amongst linguists on what its aims are, nor a uniform approach or methodology for its analysis
- iii. all those who practise stylistic analysis agree that the concept of style is ‘nebulous’, ‘elusive’, ‘slippery’, and a ‘sitting target’ for all its practitioners.

And to Nils Eriks Enkvist in Chatman (50), the concept of style is ‘notoriously slippery and difficult to codify into concrete terms that allow operational study’. However, as a working definition, Enkvist(1978) offers that ‘the style of a text is a function of the aggregate of the ratios between the

frequencies of its phonological, grammatical and lexical items, and the frequencies of the corresponding items in a contextually related norm' (28).

## 2.6 THEORIES OF STYLE

Nils Erik Enkvist and others (1978) and Azuike, M. N. (1992) have looked at six broad moulds into which style can be cast.

- i. Style as a Deviation from a Norm – norm here means the accepted and normal usage within specific speech communities. A deviation would then mean a departure from the accepted norm. In this theory, Linguists try to make explicit the role of frequencies and statistical analysis in formalizing the difference between the text and the norm. Bernard Bloch, quoted in Enkvist (1978) says that ‘the style of a discourse is the message carried by the frequency distributions and transitional probabilities of its linguistic features, especially as they differ from those of the same features in the language as a whole’ (25).
- ii. Style as the Individual – Originating from the French scholar, Buffon, in 1753. Azuike here explains that the theory of style as the individual “seeks to establish a symmetry between a person’s expressive capacity and his other characteristics”. Although in what seems an earlier essay, Louis Millic (in Jacob Leed, ed. *The Computer and Literary Stylistics*) cautions that

To relate the devices of style to personality is “risky” and “difficult” and “the chances of error great” because “no personality-syntax paradigm is available” and so “neither syntactic stylistics nor personality theory is capable of making the leap”. (104)

However, in a much later work edited by Chatman, Millic accepts the theory, though not without some reservation:

...the specific linguistic forms of a text and their arrangement in some sense duplicate the traits of the author's personality, which is the aggregate idiosyncrasies and peculiarities which differentiate him from other men.... (71)

- iii. Style as Content and / or Form – here are highlighted such views as monism, pluralism, subjective and objective approaches to style.
- iv. Style as Choice – we see that different linguistic structures can generate the same meaning, and which of the structures the writer employs is a matter of choice. The choice between two lexical items that suggest the same meaning (e.g. *salt* and *sodium chloride*) is context-dependent, and the same applies to features at various levels of linguistic analysis. Stylistic choice has to do with the choice of style markers. Non-stylistic choice involves the choice from syntactically neutral items. ‘Style markers are those linguistic items that only appear, or are most or least frequent, in a certain context.’ They are contextually bound linguistic elements (Enkvist et al: 34).
- v. Style as a Product of Context – here style is ‘deemed to be conditioned by the socio-cultural factors which influence the making of an utterance, whether written or spoken’. The writer is regarded as part of the context of what he writes. Every text is a constellation of contexts and style. John Spencer and Michael Gregory, in their joint essay ‘An Approach to the Study of Style’ in *Linguistics and Style*, believe that the linguist should



...give an intelligent realization of the consequences of seeing language as part of human social behaviour. Language events do not take place in isolation from other events; rather they operate within a wider framework of human activity. Any piece of language is therefore part of a situation, and so has a context, a relationship with the situation. Indeed, it is this relationship between the substance and form of a piece of language on the one hand and the extra-linguistic circumstances in which it occurs on the other, which gives what is normally called 'meaning' to utterances. At some stage or other, any linguistic description, if it is to be complete, must take this relationship into consideration. (68)

- vi. Style as Good Writing – considering a text from the aesthetic perspective (whether the text is well written or badly written).

Other scholarly articles related to our topic include Omole's 'Linguistic Experiment in African Literature' in which he observes that African writers like Achebe and Soyinka employ 'nativised rhetorical strategies' in their writings (W. Cummins ed. 1991: 589 – 600). Afam Ebeogu's (1988) survey of stylistics is also useful.

Gabriela Missikova (2003) has the same title as N.E. Enkvist (1973) *Linguistic Stylistics*. She examines stylistics and style from a historical perspective, tracing from ancient times through developments in the 20<sup>th</sup> century of linguistic schools and conceptions down to recent development of stylistics in the United Kingdom. This book also examines the various expressive means and stylistic classification of English vocabulary into various layers: neutral, special literary, special colloquial, etc.

Paul Simpson, in his book *Stylistics*, cites Jean-Jacques' publication of 1993 that condemns contemporary stylistics:

...nobody has ever really known what the term 'stylistics' means, and in any case, hardly anyone seems to care. Stylistics is 'ailing'; it is 'on the wane'; and its heyday, alongside that of structuralism, has faded to but a distant memory. More alarming again, few university students are 'eager to declare an intention to do research in stylistics'. By this account, the death knell of stylistics had been sounded and it looked as though the end of the twentieth century would be accompanied by the inevitable passing of that faltering, moribund discipline. And no one, it seemed, would lament its demise.(2)

Simpson challenges this allegation by Jean-Jacques Lecerle. He shows how, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, stylistics is waxing stronger, and witnessing a proliferation of sub-disciplines that utilise stylistic methods. He cites the examples of feminist stylistics, cognitive stylistics and discourse stylistics. Simpson theorises that the practice of stylistics conforms mnemonically to three Rs: it should be rigorous, retrievable and replicable. He further identifies the following levels of language that should be of interest to a stylistician. (2 – 5)

Levels of language

The *sound* of spoken language;  
the way words are pronounced.

The patterns of *written* language;  
the shape of language on the page.

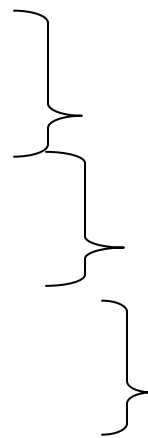
The way words are constructed;  
words and their constituent structures.

Branch of language study

Phonology; phonetics

Graphology

Morphology



The way words combine with other words to form phrases and sentences.	}	Syntax; grammar
The words we use; the vocabulary of a language.		
The <i>meaning</i> of words and sentences.	}	Lexical analysis; lexicology
The way words and sentences are used in everyday situations; the meaning of language in context.		
	}	Semantics
	}	Pragmatics; discourse analysis

These basic levels of language can be identified and explored in the stylistic analysis of a text, which in turn makes the analysis itself more organized and principled, more in keeping so to speak with the principle of the three Rs. However, what is absolutely central to our understanding of language (and style) is that these levels are interconnected: they interpenetrate and depend upon one another, and they represent multiple and simultaneous linguistic operations in the planning and production of an utterance.

## 2.7 CHOICE OF MODELS

Enkvist (1973) has suggested rightly that it is not possible to claim to know all the theories of stylistics, just as no one can claim to master all the research done in stylistics all over the world. The study of style, therefore, should ‘not be tied to any single grammatical model, though many of these models have virtues that other models lack’. (5) Here are some relevant models.

*The Traditional Grammar Model* – Grammarians dealt with aspects of the language that seem important and interesting. They could, if they chose, ignore other aspects. The traditional grammarian aimed at providing *norms* for writers and speakers. Traditional grammar noted certain structures as appropriate to certain occasions, and others unsuitable, (often using the terms *right* or *wrong*).

*Behaviourist-structuralist Model* – This concerns mainly ‘an objective description of the language actually occurring in a definite corpus’ – which could be spoken or colloquial language. Structuralists were anti-normative, and they insisted on *immanent descriptions* which did not encourage the comparison of different texts. Their concern with the surface of language distanced them from style. These are some of the reasons why the behaviourist-structuralist model was not adaptable to stylolinguistic description, though scholars of this model did not neglect stylistics completely. Bloomfield wrote *Language* (1933). Bernard Bloch defined style as ‘the message carried by the frequency distributions and transitional probabilities of its linguistic features, especially as they differ from those of the same features in language as a whole.’ (Quoted in Enkvist: 73). Enkvist cites other behaviourist-structuralists as Zellig Harris, Archibald A. Hill and Kenneth Pike. In spite of these efforts, Enkvist feels that ‘it would be a distortion to say that the focus of behaviourist structuralism lay on stylolinguistics’.

*Transformational Grammar Model* – Transformational Generative grammar is a grammatical model associated with Chomsky. The aim of his model is to describe and “generate” all and only the *grammatical sentences* of a language. The generation (or production) is through a set of transformational rules (T-rules) that

transform one syntactic constituent/element (or ‘string’) into another. Simple sentences transform into compound or complex sentences via T-rules of *conjunction* or *embedding*. There are also T-rules for *negation*, *deletion*, etc. A pioneer attempt to use transformational grammar in the analysis of styles was by Richard Ohmann (1964). He was reconstructing kernel sentences, listing and counting the optional transformations between the kernel sentences and the textual surface. He demonstrated the applicability of transformational generative grammar to the description of styles.

*Systemic Grammar Model* – Original ideas of this model were from J.R. Firth. The ideas became popularized by M.A.K. Halliday from the late 1960s. This was a development from his earlier work tagged ‘Scale and Category grammar’. Here is one of the British achievements that are relevant to students of stylistics. Halliday established the major units of linguistic analysis (morpheme, word, group, class, system). He believed that these would enable an analyst to deal thoroughly with any text. Halliday stressed that systemic grammar is *systemic-functional*; the systemic component forming the rhetorical aspect of a more comprehensive grammar which interprets grammatical patterns in terms of their configurations of social and linguistic functions. He gave three divisions of functions of language – *ideational function*, *inter-personal function* and *textual function*. This model provides a fairly exhaustive and semantically sensitive taxonomic and functional approach to style. Scholars have therefore come to regard systemic grammar as a particularly useful framework for stylistic analysis. Halliday’s model also integrates essential areas other models found difficult to

deal with, e.g. *transitivity* and *theme*, and also stimulates other works such as the cohesion of sentences in texts, which is highly relevant to stylolinguistics.

As already pointed out by Enkvist (1973:5), in stylolinguistic analysis, no single model is regarded complete in itself. A combination of models provides a more in-depth analysis. For the present work on Chukwuemeka Ike's novels, we shall adopt an **eclectic approach**. This involves a combination of models to enable us to take cognizance of most of the stylolinguistic markers which the author employed in conveying the message of each of the texts. The theoretical framework is therefore structural in outlook but not in the strict sense of *structuralism*.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE USE OF DICTION IN THE NOVELS

#### 3.1 *TOADS FOR SUPPER*

##### 3.1.1 Synopsis

Chukwuemeka Ike's first novel, *Toads for Supper*, published in 1965, is set in a typical Nigerian university: the University of Southern Nigeria. The novel is woven around such key characters as Amadi, Aduke, Chima, Sweetie and Nwakaego. Amadi Chukwuka, a freshman History student of this university, hails from Ezinkwo, a rural community in the eastern part of Nigeria. Miss Aduke Olowu, also an undergraduate of the same university, comes from Ilesha in the western part of Nigeria. Chima, a second year History student, presented as pessimistic and opportunistic, is also from the eastern part. Sweetie M. Akpore is seen somewhat as a Lagos-based street-girl, though with some level of education. Miss Nwakaego Ikwuaju is not a university undergraduate but betrothed to Amadi, who comes from Ezinkwo.

With a typical undergraduate exuberance, Amadi tries to blend social life with academic life. His preoccupation, first and foremost, is to win a girl's favour by himself. Aduke turns out to be his target, in spite of the prevailing tribal prejudices on campus. Love or marriage outside one's tribal enclave is an effort in futility, as hinted by Chima from the outset. The novel opens and folds with Amadi's vibrant efforts to win Aduke's hand in marriage. Meanwhile, it is common knowledge that Amadi has a 'beautiful and unspoilt' girl betrothed to

him from childhood – an idea Amadi considers old-fashioned and undignifying. Left to Amadi, to win a girl's hand in marriage by oneself is vogue, more fulfilling, and leaves one with a 'feeling of achievement'.

While financial indebtedness to the Improvement League increases in their effort to support Amadi in school, and while the level of moral and psychological attachment between the Ikwuajus and the Chukwukas deepens, Amadi is busy with a web of plans to win Aduke. Chima, his friend, suggests that as a freshman who is already betrothed, all that Amadi needs is 'an occasional fling' which he could get somehow without much effort. It is one of such 'occasional flings' that brings Sweetie into the scene. Amadi is accused of impregnating her. The consequences of this are far-reaching: strained relationship with his parents, with his betrothed, with Aduke; rustication from the university; loss of the chance of becoming the Assistant District Officer at home after graduation.

Amadi spends the rustication period teaching History in Uwhuvbe Grammar School, Benin Province.

Back from rustication, Amadi intensifies his advances towards Aduke whom he is able to convince with, among other things, the letter from Chima and that from Sweetie. The contents of both letters seem to disengage Amadi from the grips of both Nwakaego and Sweetie. By the next holiday, Amadi, unaccompanied by either friends or relatives, thoughtlessly undertakes a trip to Ilesha to negotiate his proposed marriage to Aduke with her relations. Back from the trip, he is summoned home where, before his father dies, he is informed that



Nwakaego is still waiting for him, not for Chima. This information threw Amadi into further confusion since already Aduke is proudly wearing his engagement ring. His letter to Aduke on the issue literally drives her mad, and she is taken to Abeokuta Mental Hospital.

### 3.1.2 Diction in *Toad's for Supper*

The setting of the novel is precisely a Nigerian university campus. As expected of such a community, one of the outstanding things to observe in *Toads for Supper* is Ike's handling of the typical linguistic habit of undergraduates in Nigerian universities: the habit of moving from Standard English to peer group slang, to Pidgin English, and frequently code switching into Yoruba or Ibo (the two major languages of the South). (From here throughout the analyses of the texts, all figures in brackets, unless where otherwise stated, represent the pages of the novels under analysis.)

The novel opens with an Ibo word '*Akwasa*' (9) uttered by Chima. It is a typical teenage expression in the language denoting approval or admiration. From this Ibo word, Chima code-switches to English with a jocular peer-group slang 'she certainly belongs!' (9) – implying that Aduke is of a higher class or she is of an acceptable grade. As the conversation becomes more enchanting, his linguistic choice shifts to a pidgin exclamation constructed with two concessional pidgin interjections 'Bo' and 'O!': 'Bo, dat one catch O!', (9) meaning, 'that one is attractive, captivating'. Even phonologically, the voiced dental fricative /ð/ normally generated by the 'th' spelling transforms into a plosive – the voiced

alveolar plosive /d/. This phonological shift could be attributed to the mother-tongue interference usually identified with Ibos, or could be attributed to the fact that Chima is trying to retain the jocular or familiar air excited in him by the presence of a pretty girl. But the moment he hears the name, a Yoruba name, the familiarity identified in his choice of words stiffens. His choice of expressions changes with his mood and we notice an air of formality and seriousness.

Is that the girl who, I hear, is giving you sleepless nights?...  
*My friend* this is the University of Southern Nigeria and you are a freshman. Like a chicken transported to a strange environment, you should stand on one leg till you are sure of your ground....Let me cut the matter neatly like a scarf. That girl is Yoruba, you are Ibo. The *twain* cannot meet. (9)

Chima unequivocally tells us that ‘the twain cannot meet’. ‘Twain’ is an ancient or archaic word for ‘two’. The choice of ‘twain’ instead of ‘two’ underscores Chima’s pessimistic feelings, and indicates that tribal prejudices amongst ethnic nationalities still prevail even in a university setting. A couple of minutes before, Chima had used various schoolboy expressions of affection to describe Aduke. Now he resorts to the use of unfriendly words and negative counselling against the same object of admiration. Thus, with this shift in the strength of expression – from the familiar to the serious, from endearments to invectives – Chukwuemeka Ike has stylistically and strategically introduced the dominating theme of his story – tribalism in, of all places, Nigerian universities where people are supposed to be enlightened.

It is important to note that certain words and phrases common in the university setting acquire meanings that are different from what Standard British

English would ascribe to them. The undergraduates use vulgarisms, slang words and phrases to establish some kind of social identity, solidarity and cohesiveness. Hitherto, in Nigerian universities, the cafeteria was usually a convenient forum for student union political campaigns, which go on amidst the clatter of cutlery. So, the expression ‘lend me your knives and forks’ (23) is an undergraduate expression that pleads audience for a temporary suspension of the noise coming from students’ cutlery. After the elections, Amadi and Chima are assessing situations. Chima dismisses Obafemi’s campaign strategy thus:

‘Campaign my yash!’ (26), ‘yash’ being a peer-group corruption of the English vulgar word ‘arse’. The meaning centres on the worthlessness of Obafemi’s campaign. Any male student in a love affair becomes ‘the driver’ to the female who is regarded as an ‘organic bus’ (31), or simply referred to as ‘dame’ – ‘I’ll ask one of these dames for a dance’ (29). Amadi bought two tickets for himself and Aduke for the End-of-Year Party with the intention of establishing his claim over Aduke beyond dispute.

He bought a double ticket for the dance, in the hope that she would go with him. This would proclaim him her ‘*driver*’, any other student attempting to befriend her after that would be contravening accepted ‘*traffic regulations*’.  
(23)

‘Traffick regulations!’ – in line with the ‘driver/bus’ metaphor.

To make love advances is to ‘*attack*’ the girl (31). If one lacks the courage to woo a girl, one is branded ‘*backboneless*’ (31).

Apprehensive of Amadi's obsession in proclaiming himself 'driver' to a Yoruba '*organic bus*', Chima admonishes his friend.

You're still a freshman. By the time you've spent some years here you'll think differently. In any case you're engaged to a beautiful girl at home. You have no need for a serious friend here; all you need is perhaps an occasional fling and this you can get from some other quarters without much effort.... (10-11)

Here, the word 'fling' has a much deeper import. It is an undergraduate euphemism for carnal pleasure without serious commitment.

Sometimes Ike employs, as part of his rhetorical strategies, periphrastic and euphemistic use of words and expressions in telling his story.

What then did he want with Aduke? An occasional fling, as Chima had described it? As he paced slowly round the convocation Hall, he realized he had never given the matter serious thought or any thought at all. He had been told about *a special part of the University town where 'occasional flings' were readily available* for a few shillings. The older women, worn out by the rigours of *their profession*, would accept even a shilling for '*one trip*'. Sometimes they brought *their wares* to Campus at no additional expense to customers. 'Money for hand, back for ground!', that was the Ezinkwo description for *cheap women*.... (12)

The italicized expressions above can be understood thus:

*An occasional fling* – occasional sexual intercourse,

*A special part of the University town where occasional flings were readily available* – brothel, red-light district, house of ill fame,

*Their profession* – prostitution, harlotry;

*One trip* – one round of sexual intercourse or ejaculation;

*Their wares* – their female genitalia;

*Cheap women* – harlots, prostitutes, whores.

One great advantage of this rhetorical strategy is that Chukwuemeka Ike succeeds in presenting the vulgar and absurd without offending the senses and sensibilities of his readers with obscene words and expressions – the same reason that must have informed Sweetie’s selection of such localized phrases as ‘...he would try to use me’ (109) (he would try to have sexual intercourse with me); ‘you entered fully’ (111) (You penetrated fully during the intercourse); ‘...She had missed her time’ (131) (her menstrual cycle is suspended owing to pregnancy).

From the foregoing analysis, we have seen that Ike uses selected diction stylistically to effectively handle the theme of tribalism at Nigeria’s highest place of learning where people are expected to know better. In this text also, Ike chooses the diction that is appropriate to the various classes of people. In addition, while he does all his vocabulary selection, he remains mindful of the feelings of his readers; hence his frequent and conscious use of periphrastic and euphemistic words and phrases.

### **3.1.3 The Use of Pidgin English in *Toads for Supper***

Sociolinguists regard a pidgin as ‘a marginal language which arises to fulfill certain restricted communicative functions among groups with no common language’. This definition given in McArthur (699) is derived from *Concise*

*Columbia Encyclopedia* (1983): pidgin is ‘a lingua franca that is not the mother tongue of anyone using it and that has a simplified grammar and restricted, often polyglot vocabulary’. The type of pidgin identified in *Toads for Supper* is Pidgin English. This is because the principal lexifier or base language, that is, the language from which the type of pidgin in *Toads for Supper* draws most of its vocabulary, is English. Jowitt (13) observes that:

The situation today is that Pidgin flourishes as a medium of inter-ethnic communication, especially among less educated people, especially in the south, and especially in large cities with many non-indigenous residences (Lagos, Benin, Port-Harcourt etc.) or throughout States with many small ethnic Groups (Bendel, Rivers, Cross River).

Omole in Erim O. Erim ed. (5 – 11), discussing the growth and development of pidgin in Nigerian literature, notes that ‘...the gradual infiltration of pidgin into Nigerian literature is the natural consequence of its wide use in Nigeria. It came in mainly as bits of conversation incorporated into the text, often to delineate characters. It seems to have started with the Onitsha Market Literature....’ Pidgin English further serves as a lingua franca in higher institutions of Nigeria; it is a vehicle of informal communication. Among educated peers, it is ‘a sign of intimacy or for some kind of jocular effect – suggesting, for example, that the common man’s problems and his defencelessness in the face of authority are shared by the educated also. The use of pidgin thus bristles with potential symbolism, and it is not surprising that its resources have been exploited by Nigeria’s writers....’

This is exactly Ike's idea in *Toads for Supper* where he makes very effective use of Pidgin English in portraying the uneducated class, especially for the reason that pidgin lacks grammatical complexity and has small vocabulary. The places where the use of Pidgin English occurs in the novel are pieces of conversation involving the illiterate or semi-literate. Porters in the university hostels, street girls, and nightclub girls are prone to the use of Pidgin English in *Toads for Supper*. Chima presents the disappointing case of one Mr Obi and Miss Solanke to buttress his point about the reign of tribalism on campus.

“Look my friend,” the porter said in a low tone, “if na me be you I go back read my book!”

“Why?” Obi asked.

“Your name no be Obi?”

“Yes” and Obi drew nearer, his pulse quickening in anxiety.

“Miss Solanke don tell us say any time Obi come aks for am make we tell am say she no dey for Hall. Make you no tell am na me tell you O! Na only because me I no like de way you dey waste your time come here everyday (sic). Das why I tell you de troot.” (10)

Sometimes the porter's communication competence in pidgin deliberately avoids this type of arrogance. Here is an encounter between the porter and Amadi:

‘Morning, Sir,’ he saluted.

‘Good morning, Porter. Anything?’

‘No, Sir. One lady.’

‘Where is she?’ asked Amadi anxiously,....

‘e don go, Sir. Somebody say you no dey for Hall’.

‘Nonsense,’ Amadi retorted, ‘Who said I was not in when I have been in all morning?’

‘Na one student, Sir. ‘e say ‘e see de time you de go away from Hall by ten o’clock’.

‘So that means I must be away from Hall all day. How did you know I was back now?’

‘I no know Sir. I jus’ dey pass from room 58 and I say make I check should in case anoder person ask of you’.

‘All right, who was the girl?’

‘She no tell me her name,’

‘What a whole bunch of *makakwus* you Porters are!’

‘Make master no curse me; O! I never curse master before.’

‘I am not cursing you, my friend, but what’s the point of telling me that someone looked for me when you would not bring her to my room, neither can you tell me her name.’ ‘e say ‘e no go tell me her name because ‘e go meet you for one *Oyibo* man house tomorrow evening.’ (135-136)

We can see that at the height of the conversation, the porter deliberately avoids the second person pronoun as a show of humility. And Ike further exposes the porter’s lack of proper education with a display of his phonological inadequacies: *de*, *anoder* and *aks* for *the*, *another* and *ask* respectively.

Another significant encounter with Pidgin English is at the Night Club. While dancing with the first girl, Amadi asks her how she is enjoying the evening. Her answer is ‘small, small’. When Amadi wants to dance Waltz with her, she declines.

‘I no dey dance dis kind.’ Amadi thanks her and walks away, and she replies: ‘You no go buy me somethin’ make I drink?’ ‘My friend’, you dey go because I say make you buy me stout?’

‘Just a minute,’ was all he could reply as he walked away. Then he tries a second girl who sighs and replies:

‘Bo,...I want to took some beer first’.

‘Took on!’ he replied spontaneously, and walked away....

(29-30)

The first girl’s answer to how she is enjoying the evening is ‘small, small’. The duplication of the word ‘small’ is not a result of pidginisation but a



remarkable direct MT translation, one of the duplicated lexemes acting as an adverbial intensifier for the other. Such examples in mother tongue (MT) are:

How are you enjoying the evening?

Ibo – obere obere

Hausa – kedan kedan

Yoruba – dea dea - Direct MT translation – small small. But this linguistic practice has been carried into pidgin.

This, of course, is one of the ways Ike has tried to nativise his language use in his novels. Amadi's encounter with the second club-girl is worth noting. Her answer is 'Bo, I want to took some beer first'. To have the past tense preceded by the infinitive 'to' is syntactically deviant; it is the type usually identified with the stark illiterate who by some social interaction, are struggling linguistically to belong. So, what stylistic achievement has Ike derived from this nightclub conversation? This small patch of nightclub conversation has been carefully used, first to delineate characters, secondly to create humour, and finally to depict the reality of the Nigerian social stratification and interaction. Three segments emerge from this nightclub episode:

the educated – Amadi, recognized for his good English

the semi-literate – the 1<sup>st</sup> girl, recognized for her fluent Pidgin English.

the illiterate – the 2<sup>nd</sup> girl, recognized for her broken English.

Jowitt (54) makes it clear that Pidgin English and broken English are not the same thing. Broken English is ‘the language of learners, or users, who have reached only a low level of proficiency, and its syntax tends to be idiosyncratic’.

The first club-girl tries to ridicule Amadi’s inability to provide even a bottle of stout beer: ‘My frien’, you dey go because I say make you buy me stout?’ (30)

Amadi’s answer is a smart telegraphic ellipsis: ‘Just a minute’ (30) – a common syntactic device in everyday language of the educated. By implication, where Amadi is lacking in pecuniary provision, he is abundantly apt in expression. The second club-girl’s is comic: ‘Bo, I want to took some beer first’ – the type of broken English reminiscent of the comedian, Zebrudaya of the radio and television fame. And Amadi’s answer, ‘Took on’ extends the humour.

The ‘cheap women’ who sometimes brought their ‘wares’ to campus readily provide ‘occasional flings’ for a few shillings at no additional expense to their customers. The older ones condescend to accept one shilling for ‘one trip’. These women are described, not by the campus community, but by the Ezinkwo villagers as ‘Money for hand, back *na* ground’.

This description of prostitutes by people of Ezinkwo is couched in polyglot vocabulary or hybridization typical of pidgin. In that description, all the lexical items except ‘*na*’ are drawn from English. The lexeme ‘*na*’ in pidgin lexicon signals a verb-to-be. Examples: Me *na* Ibo (I am Ibo). Im *na* Hausa (He/she is Hausa). But Ezinkwo people, we are told, call the cheap women ‘Money for hand, back *na* ground’ – ‘*na*’ here does not exemplify the

malfunctionality of words in pidgin. Rather, it is an Ibo lexical item, which can function as a conjunction as well as a preposition. So that instead of ‘Money for hand, back *for* ground’ the Ezinkwo people hybridize the expression by co-opting an Ibo preposition.

There is another scene where Sweetie and her mother confront Amadi in the Academic Registrar’s office. We notice that Sweetie, in spite of her ugly side, is educated up to the Teacher Training College. So, she, like Amadi and the Academic Registrar, speaks plain good English. Chukwuemeka Ike leaves Sweetie’s mother to communicate in Pidgin English throughout the encounter. This depicts her low level of education and social standing.

‘You go see today!.... If you think say you fit spoil other girls and run away, you no fit lef’ my own daughter. You squirrel wey de chop palm fruit everyday(sic), today you go knock your mouth for thorn!’ (108)

And when Amadi tries to deny having sent his photograph to Sweetie, the woman fumes:

‘You dey min’ that liar?... Big big lie no reach am. Na we and you today.’ (108)

When Amadi feels that he cannot endure the insult any longer and threatens to leave, the woman retorts:

‘Why you dey move?... Insect sting you for bottom? Sit down, my friend. When de ting dey sweet you, you no move!’ (109)

And for Amadi’s derisive look at the women, here is her Pidgin English rendition of a popular Ibo Proverb:

‘when eye look pot finish, make ‘e take am break for ground.’  
(110)

Here is how she put her request to the Academic Registrar:

‘My daughter lef’ Teacher Training College last December. Gov’ment bond hol’am for two years. Now as ‘e get belly when ‘e never get husband, dem go sack am from teaching and ask am to pay for bond wey ‘e break, unless dis man giv’ am paper say him wan marry am’ (111)

Even when the trio (Amadi, Sweetie and her mother) are in Amadi’s hostel room, and Aduke comes knocking at the door, it is Sweetie’s mother’s voice that chides Amadi in Pidgin English:

‘Why you dey make like small pikin? Abi you no know  
na person dey knock for door?’ (101)

So, we can see that truly, part of Ike’s style lies, as pointed out by B.E.C. Oguzie in K. Ugbabe ed. (10 – 16), in his consciousness of the language his dialogue participants use. That is why Ike says ‘...The educational and social background of my characters is often reflected in the language of each dialogue.’ That the language of each dialogue is important to Ike can be seen from the way he chooses to wind up his tale. Amadi, as an undergraduate, has not known much about the vagaries of life. Ike portrays him as a young man whose every step is a mistake. He writes to Aduke in obedience to ‘the voice within’, oblivious of the psychological trauma the letter could plunge her into, and also oblivious of the stigma of psychosis running in her family. The outcome of Amadi’s letter is devastating. Ike tries to step down the tempo of events by assigning to the not-very-important class of people, the porters, usually given to gossips, the use of Pidgin English in order to unveil to Amadi the inanity of his escapade with Aduke. She has a family history of congenital mental problem, a fact for which

Akin her former suitor abandoned her with the reason that: ‘the only fly in the ointment is that unfortunate aspect of your family....’ (160). Ike then leaves the reader to connect this ‘fly in the ointment’ with the porter’s Pidgin English version:

Ah! I hear say ‘e get one letter so from ‘im boy friend – dat “Kobokobo” boy dem call Mr Chukwuka. Me I no know wetin ‘e write for dis letter. After Miss Olowu read am ‘e begin do as if ‘e mad. Dem don carry am go Abeokuta Mental Hospital. Some people we know-am proper for Ilesha say na de same ting wey kill ‘im papa. Dem say ‘e run mad one afternoon, kill one of im own pikin with matchet(sic) run inside bush... (186)

### **3.2 THE BOTTLED LEOPARD**

#### **3.2.1 Synopsis**

The setting of the novel moves between Ndikelionwu community and Government College, Ahia. Ugochukwu Amobi enters Government College Ahia, where he encounters strict discipline and deliberate effort to discourage students from thinking and behaving like Africans – a way characterized by all sorts of credulous beliefs, superstitions, rituals, exorcism and necromancy.

Ndikelionwu exemplifies an African society with characteristic African beliefs and traditions. Government College, Ahia, epitomizes reformation through strict adherence to rules and regulations.

Ugochukwu Amobi, the protagonist, enters Government College from his Ndikelionwu background. Amobi’s nightmare and his exposure to Government College become the hub of the whole story woven in twenty-two chapters. In school, he learns to respect seniors. He also learns the brutal consequences of

non-compliance to rules and regulations, and the consequences of sticking to the superstition of his people. The initiation ceremony is conducted by second year students. He becomes friends with Chuk, the mulatto, after lending him a sympathetic hand after the latter was made to drink, 'Solution A' by the seniors.

Youthful exuberance leads both friends into breaking the rules of the college. Such escapade as 'making for the uppers' earns them two weeks' suspension. Tunji, Amobi's school guardian, advises both of them to spend the suspension together in Amobi's family at Ndikelionwu. While at Ndikelionwu, Amobi meets face to face with Nma, his dream girl, who had once written a letter to him when he was in school.

But Amobi's leopard-associated ill health causes Chuk to be moved to the primary school teacher, Mr Okonkwo's house to complete the days of the suspension. Mazi Eze, Amobi's father, cannot find an explanation for the tufts of black and white hair found between Amobi's teeth during one of those nightmare seizures. This brought father and son to seek explanation and solution from Dibia Ofia who successfully 'bottles' Amobi's leopard.

Chuck carries the rumour back to school in spite of the promise to his friend never to reveal what happened during the suspension. This revelation sullies the relationship between Amobi and Tunji, and causes a fight between him and Chuk. Capitalizing on the leopard rumours, Benjamin the labourer, masks as a leopard and terrorizes students, and steals their belongings in the dormitory at night. Joseph the messenger unravels the Benjamin-leopard mystery. The story

winds up leaving Amobi still wondering whether the white leopard mystery is a fact or a farce.

### 3.2.2 Diction in *The Bottled Leopard*

We shall begin by first recognizing the salient words and phrases Chukwuemeka Ike has employed in telling his tale. The novel kicks off with two main events:

- (i) Amobi's leopard nightmare
- (ii) Amobi's (and other freshmen's) initiation into the secondary school world.

(i) A close examination of Amobi's dream of the prowling leopard reveals that what strikes Ike more than a distinct use of diction, it seems, is the search for a narrative hook, an opening device to arrest the attention of his reader. This he achieves with words of everyday use and with the technique of suspense, thereby planting curiosity in the reader. But this technique of suspense does not operate in isolation of words. Consider his description of the scene:

*the leopard sailed effortlessly  
landing noiselessly  
teleguided by the omu nkwu  
advanced stealthily  
eyes sparkling in the pitch of the night.(1)*

With this carefully chosen description, the vivid picture of an action-packed beginning is created.

(ii) The suspense over, the reader realizes, as does Amobi, that it is all a dream. And Ike glides gently into the second aspect of his beginning: boarding school life in Government College, Ahia. In the boarding house, there is very strict enforcement of discipline. The hierarchy is such that fresh students are made to endure all forms of indignity and atrocities. In the initiation of fresh students, the writer is in top form, charged with the appropriate words and expressions. Azuike in K. Ugbabe ed. (50 – 51) has captured a great deal of what Chukwuemeka Ike is doing with diction and stock phrases:

This occasion (the initiation ceremony) gives us the opportunity to re-live our schoolboy days when the penchant for the bombastic was a mark of erudition and source of hilarity to all. It is not surprising therefore that in the encounter between Chuk and the M.C. at the ceremony, stock phrases such as “assault-without-battery”, “august assembly”, “green fag”, “bully”, “bushman”, “insubordination”, familiar in school boy interchange are freely used. At this point also, Chukwuemeka Ike demonstrates for us in a most graphic manner, the seniority complex that exists in secondary schools founded on strict discipline and ritualistic observances.

Chukwuemeka Ike uses the freshman initiation ceremony to unfold the inhumanity meted out to the new students. He carefully selects the vocabulary and phrases appropriate in secondary school setting. The ceremony, usually championed by second year students who are the most frenzied by the seniority complex, is meant to rid them of their ‘rustic and outlandish ways’ (11). Any ‘insubordination by any fag’ is met with ‘dire consequences’ (10). And the encounter Chuk has with the M.C. invokes such dire consequences – verbal and physical. He is a ‘bloated fag’, ‘a scaly-wag’ (9), ‘a green fag’, ‘a swollen headed idiot’ (8), ‘a tail-dangling fag’ (17) who ‘should be seen, not heard’ (10). The



‘Fags Pledge’ is such that the first year students must follow a particular order laid down by the seniors. The essence of the whole exercise is to humiliate and cow the juniors into self-denigration:

My name is Professor.... And then give this august assembly your bush name.... I come from the bush village of... where people eat toads for supper. I am a fag, a stinking fag. I am like all fags, to be seen, not heard. As from this day, I promise to discard all my rustic and outlandish behaviour, and to become a worthy student of this great college. With your very kind permission, I beg to entertain you with a song entitled.... (10)

Chuk’s carefree nature irritates the M.C. who shouts venomously: ‘Don’t plant your mouth on the mike, whatever you call yourself!... We don’t want to be poisoned by CO<sub>2</sub> from your stinking mouth’ (7-8). Chuk’s non-compliance earns him such phrases as ‘swollen headed idiot’, ‘green fag’, ‘stinking faggish hands’ (9). And when he protests ‘I ain’t stinking’, the M.C.’s anger soars:

“Sharrap!”, barked the M.C. stamping his right foot on the floor, “Who’s there?” He turned towards the stage. “Bring me Solution A. We have to knock sense into this scaly-wag who cannot pronounce his father’s name!” (9)

During Amobi’s turn, the M.C. shouts him down claiming that he is a liar. Here are his words:

‘Were you not the boy SMG described as the fat pig from bush Ujari where you sat on mud beds and your teachers used charcoal for chalk?’ (11)

And whatever the situation, no fag is expected to nod to a senior boy. It is either ‘yes, please’ or ‘No please’.

There are other note-worthy words and phrases employed or deliberately coined by Ike to suit his story. Examples include ‘Igbotic’, to have ‘murdered an

English word' (10), 'Igbo made white' (17), 'making for the uppers', 'yeoman', 'cockroaching', 'Lights out' (18), 'mumbo-jumbo and cock-and-bull' (55), 'mammy water' (74), 'Saturated with swatting' (106), 'Nma squared', 'Coutma Ube', 'Ejighiato variety', 'make so so fari' (87), 'to mazoo the corn' (86), 'Mind you bu' (71), 'Agencies of Denudation' (78), 'afternoon prep' (33), 'Nnewish' (51), 'catalyst' for 'pear'. These words and phrases have been effectively employed as 'house slang' understandable not only to the peer groups of Government College Ahia, but also to a discerning reader.

On the whole, one wonders whether the profuse injection of Igbo words and phrases into the novel has any stylistic value. Does this practice enhance or blur the reader's understanding of the novel? Some of the injected words and phrases may not pose problems to an Igbo reader, but most of them really are problematic in spite of the glossary provided at the end of the novel. For one thing, having to read and turn to the end of the novel for explanations slows down both speed and comprehension. For another point, some of the phrases given (in the glossary) are meaningless, examples:

(a) *chi-charara mgba*

(b) *ode-re* (42)

*chi-charara mgba*

*kuya mgba*

*kuya mgba*(41)

(c) *otolo mmiri Agu* (58)

If these are given as meaningless, and thus have no semantic connection at all with the story line, why then are they woven into the story? We are not told

directly that Chuk does not know what is meant by ‘come’ in Igbo. Rather we are told:

His manners were extremely casual. He did not know what ‘bia’ meant in Igbo.... (17)

It is normal that an Igbo boy like Amobi can scream in Igbo, *Chineke!* on sighting a snake, or *Nkem O! I’m dead O!* (2) on waking from a nightmare. Or when Nma’s mother looks sympathetically at Chuk and utters: *Ewo, Nwannem!* (108), it is easy, even without a glossary at the end of the novel, to understand that it is an exclamation. But what of:

Amobi concluded that he must have offered himself one *ngalasi* of gin... (125), ...the little hut roofed with corrugated iron sheets, provided shelter for the *akpati agwu*, a medium sized wooden box.... (134)....At the foot of the iroko tree, it deposited the carcass, disengaged its tail, and made for *oda agu owuru*’ (149)?

The Igbo words woven into the story stamp activities in the text as taking place within an Igbo socio-cultural milieu as they reflect Igbo cosmology. This is true. Igboanusi (2002:55) recognizes the importance of such lexical innovation in Igbo English novels. Nevertheless, the excessive adornment of the story with Igbo words presents a stumbling block to smooth reading and comprehension.

### **3.3 THE NAKED GODS**

#### **3.3.1 Synopsis**

The setting of the novel is an African university – Songhai University – located at Onuku. It is a university in its infancy, established by the American

government under the American Save-the-underdeveloped Nations Scheme. Dr Mal Wilson, an American, handles this nurturing process; an assignment he is to carry out for three years when it is expected that he should have modelled the university in line with American purposes and policies. He is also expected to groom an indigenous Vice-Chancellor to take over from him. His successor should be one able to project and defend American interests in that part of Africa. The Home Office pours much money into Songhai, much more money than it does into any other underdeveloped country. Reason: it is of strategic importance to America; with an airbase and a naval base in Songhai, British interests and designs in Africa would be thwarted.

The problems besetting the young university are many: traditional rulers and illiterate businessmen influence events and try to influence standards. British members of staff suspicious of American influence in the region take the slightest advantage to checkmate or stultify American influence; serious infighting for the post of Vice-Chancellor among the indigenous staff; ethical and moral decadence among members of staff; and students' insurrection. In one camp are Professor Brown and Dr Toogood (the Registrar) who appear to camp with Professor Ikin – a man generally scorned for being a marionette remotely controlled by his wife. On the Vice Chancellor's camp are Professor Textor, Professor Turner and Dr Okoro – the latter being highly favoured by the Vice-Chancellor as his would-be successor. Some others do not belong to either party; they choose to be on the fence: Professor Shastri, Etuk, Opara, Osita. Amidst the tussle, the campus bubbles with amorous escapades among staff. There is the relationship between

Mrs Ikin and His Royal Highness Ezeonuku III of Onuku; there is the love triangle involving Dr Okoro and Julie – the Registrar’s wife, Julie and Professor Brown. There is also the Babinda episode where the native girl (Babinda) is ‘arranged’ by His Royal Highness for a sex session with the Vice Chancellor (Dr Wilson). Because of the act, she ‘missed her time’ and the Vice Chancellor, to prevent scandal, spends £150 to procure an abortion and quieten her people.

As the tussle for indigenous Vice-Chancellorship deepens, Dr Okoro employs conventional and unorthodox strategies to win the coveted position: the obnoxious editorial in *The People*, the charm episode in Ikin’s residence and then the anonymous letter to the Vice Chancellor accusing him of presiding over pagan rituals on the campus. Members of staff are divided, and students are factionalized. A major student riot rocks the campus. Events come to a head when Dr Mal Wilson prepares a memorandum to be presented to the Governing Council on his choice of Okoro as the indigenous Vice Chancellor.

Then comes some anti-climax: the American Ambassador summons Wilson, tells him that the American Intelligence Bureau has ‘a whole dossier on that son-of-a-bitch’, Okoro and his activities. He then advises Wilson to drop Okoro and present Ikin. The whole thing fizzles out and Ikin rejects the offer, feeling slighted by Wilson for initially side-tracking him and trying to ‘pitchfork’ Okoro into the Vice-Chancellorship. Ikin’s decision embarrasses the Ambassador who considers it ‘a staggering blow to American prestige and influence in Songhai’. Wilson is held responsible and is immediately replaced on the recommendations of the Ambassador.

### 3.3.2 Diction in *The Naked Gods*

In *The Naked Gods*, Chukwuemeka Ike's diction is at its sharpest when he delineates his characters. He portrays events with the exactness of realism. This he is able to achieve by presenting the characters and describing events with apt and carefully selected words and phrases, some of which come with vibrations of humour. The story line is set in an infant university located in Africa. True to expectation, we see 'a prefabricated temporary residence', 'a log hut' (5) for the Vice-Chancellor. The Vice-Chancellor introduces his residence to His Royal Highness (HRH) as 'my humble home', (5) and HRH ironically and sarcastically sees it as 'a curious type of house... imported from America' (6). The Vice-Chancellor's humble presentation, vis-à-vis the bloated presentation of His Royal Highness by Ike smacks of real life situation. His Royal Highness Ezeonuku III

stands six feet in height and over two hundred pounds in weight, exuded royalty and dignity as he walked, as he talked, and in the slow and seemingly deliberate manner in which he rolled his neck from side to side. (5)

Everything about His Royal Highness is big, and he acts in character, always talking big, he is the 'First class chief of Onuku'. His entire entourage is described as 'simply wonderful', his type of friends: ministers, governor-generals, prime ministers. No surprise then that he tells the Vice-Chancellor authoritatively 'this is my place, this university is my own' (7). Ike jocosly calls him 'the local Maharajah' (28). When Ike presents His Royal Highness' own house, we hear that it is 'too marvelous for words' (130) and through Mrs Ikin, we are amazed at 'the superb finish of everything in the palace, indeed it was a higher quality than the

finish of any of the buildings on the campus' (31). It makes His Royal Highness 'feel good' to learn that nothing compares with his palace, not even in the Whiteman's land (131). His Royal Highness' entourage showers him with praises and Chukwuemeka Ike notes that he

absorbed the encomiums with the dignity of his office, nodding slowly but continuously as encomium toppled over encomium.... (5)

His Royal Highness' has always been 'a dignified smile' (6), 'a royal smile' (8), and within the vicinity of Onuku, 'his word was law' (7). His car is an expensive milk white Buick Electra, the latest model of it. Through Professor Turner, Chukwuemeka Ike reveals the contrasting reality he is intent upon creating in the figure of His Royal Highness:

It's always struck me as a contradiction in terms, ...to see a man driving such a luxury car among people stricken with abject poverty. (10)

Ike uses Dr Okoro's obnoxious actions and other people's perception to give a pungent picture of Okoro (as a horrible character) on the campus. To start with, the younger academics such as Etuk, Opara and Osita see Okoro as an academic mediocre:

...When an intellectual believes that he can rise to eminence through politicking, he sees no value in learned publications...Okoro seems to be like one of those fake intellectuals who choose to rely on nocturnal visits and unscholarly activities for their progress.... (162)

Prof. Brown's agitated mind pours out these words:

Dr Okoro. *That nigger! That Knave! That swollen-headed, over-ambitious, shallow-minded, favour-seeking nincompoop!....* (127)

One can visualize these words being voiced between clenched teeth. The tone here is unmistakably that of anger and utter hatred. The absence of finite verbs in the structure of these statements reduces the entire flow of words into angry expletives. The whole tone reaches a crescendo as Brown pours further invectives:

That tool in American hands, used by them to adulterate university standards in Songhai! That everything detestable! (128)

And immediately following this is Ike's narration with words and phrases that leave no one in doubt about his attitude of disdain towards Okoro, as seen from the italicised below:

It was *incredible*. The incident presented another insight into Dr Okoro's *deplorable character: a man who spent his working day abusing everything British but sneaked off at night with a British wife!* (128)

Ike further tells us that 'What hurt his (Brown's) pride most was the thought that the creature had achieved success where both he (Brown) and the Registrar had proved woeful failures' (128). The choice of the word 'creature' here has nothing to do with a genuine feeling of compassion. Rather, it reinforces the writer's tone of disgust and contempt for Okoro.

The only person that seems unaware of the truth about who Okoro really is, is Dr Wilson, the Vice-Chancellor. The reason is that he is blinded by the fact that Okoro is a Ph.D. from one of the 'top-flight universities' (173) of America. The



Vice-Chancellor is also too naïve to distinguish between standards in the US and standards in Songhai, a fact which the American Ambassador put straight to him, warning him to be ‘a little more careful in choosing which horse to back...’ (173). This is because a dossier issued by the American Intelligence Bureau revealed Okoro’s moral bankruptcy and involvement in juju. While an undergraduate at Wesley, Okoro was an active officer in an anti-Caucasian guerrilla movement. The Ambassador insists that Okoro was ‘an amalgam of everything objectionable’ (174). Thus, the words used each time Okoro is described or featured are carefully chosen to present him the way he really is – a despicable and undesirable academic.

Another character that appeals so much to Ike’s word power is Mrs Ikin (Inyang Ikin). Here is a housewife (not a member of staff of Songhai University) who is actively aware of every event on campus. The first time we hear of her in the novel is from Dr Toogood (the Registrar) who knows her as garrulous, and often prying into other people’s affairs. Ike observes that some housewives to highly placed academics are also part of the confusion holding down the proper development of the university system in Songhai. And his disgust for such a wife is succinctly expressed in the portrait of Mrs Ikin. She is somewhat domineering, and has a reputation for rumour peddling. Ike sharply contrasts her with her husband, Prof. Ikin – ‘a taciturn man who neither smokes nor drinks and does not utter one word too many...’(32). It never ceases to baffle the community that such a professor with an established ‘outstanding stoicism’ (33) ‘should be

matched to such a chatterbox and busybody of a wife' (33). Notice the contrast in the following passage:

Mrs Ikin was in many ways different from her husband. Unlike him, who was *tall* and *slim*, she was *under 5 foot*, with a waist that her houseboys likened to *the trunk of a baobab*, and which earned her the nickname of *gwongwolo*. One could hardly say she had a waist, for the space between her hips and her chest appeared to have been very carefully filled in. But for her breasts, her *circumference* would have been uniform from armpit to hip. These were proportionately large. One housewife, who had observed her when she was wearing low-cut blouses, remarked that *each breast was wound like a clock-spring* under her brassiere. The final effect was of *two rounded mounds* in front of her chest, separated by *a shallow valley*, its depth being minimized by the folds of her blouse. As she took her characteristic long strides, the breasts heaved up and down in unison. (32)

Ike's success here lies in his use of simple, everyday words to create a curiously complex character. Her description assumes an exaggerated and humorous extent as we imagine her 'as nimble as a goat' (32) though with "elephantine thighs' (33), and we are told that as she walks, 'the tremor caused by her footsteps shook nearby houses' (32) – *Tremor*, a word suggestive of landslides and earthquakes. Ike says that 'In conformity with the tradition held by her husband's family, she was sent to the fattening room to be fed up and prepared for her husband's nourishment' (33). This description of Mrs Ikin's fattening humorously suggests the way animals are fattened for man's consumption. At the party when she dances Ike tells us that

Gradually she lowered her *baobab trunk*, with her head held up and *her eyes struggling to see the bar*, but obstructed by *her heaving breasts*.... Her feet trembled, then she crashed. Something gave way as she fell on her

back, and *her breasts struggled free* of the brassiere. She clutched her chest with both arms, the men turned their backs as the hostess and another lady threw a shawl over her and wrapped everything up. (34)

The whole essence of the description here is to ridicule Mrs Ikin with the exaggerated description above. Notice the emphasis on her podgy physique with such words as ‘heaving breasts’, ‘baobab trunk’ (34), and in a reporting clause, Ike reckons that ‘Mrs Ikin squeezed her torso through the single door as she spoke’ (77). And to the younger lecturers, she is ‘a chunk of superfluous flesh’ (22). ‘...One striking feature about Mrs Ikin was her corpulence’ (122). ‘...She has a secret propeller buried in the folds of her corpulent body’ (78). When she visits Mr and Mrs Strongface, Ike again focuses attention on her physique:

*Her weight squeezed half of the cotton wool cushion through the springs. She lifted herself, pulled up the unco-operative cushion and slumped back, this time with greater care. The springs sagged under her weight and nearly rested on the floor.* (142)

But Ike is not totally unfriendly to her person, for he tells us that she has ‘a sweet smile. In spite of her disarming girth, she had a pretty face and a perfect set of teeth whose whiteness sharply contrasted with the dark gum surrounding them...’ And in his characteristic humorous way, Ike tells us that “the small head on a massive frame looked very much like a cashew nut sticking on to the large, succulent part of the fruit” (135). Even the illiterate Chief Ibe has this impression of her:

‘Dat woman?’ Chief Ibe shook his head sorrowfully. ‘Dat kin’ woman no be person me I wan’ see first thing for mornin’. If you fill one big jar of *tombo* for ‘im husband, make de man drink am finish; man pikin dey carry plenty load for ‘im chest!’ (227)

The way she canvasses for the elevation of her husband to Vice-Chancellorship, meeting dignitaries like His Royal Highness, the Chairman of Council (Mr Coker), Mr Strongface, (142) and her reveries about trips to the US and being wife to a Vice-Chancellor speaks volumes about her character as an inordinately ambitious housewife. Prof. Ikin himself is generally seen as ‘a marionette remotely controlled by his wife’ (177).

Ike chooses the meeting between the Registrar – James Toogood – and Professor John Brown to give his reader what he thinks about the two men – the former married to Julie, the latter engaged in amorous escapades with her and with Mrs Ikin, while his own wife, Pearl, is still in Britain. The description of these two men is also garnished with humour. Prof. Brown is in his thirties but already ‘prematurely bald’, his face trailing ‘a luxuriant beard’, his frame so lean that he closely resembles ‘Enwonwu’s impression of the risen Christ!’ (27). For James, Ike says that he has ‘the broad chest and shoulders of a professional heavyweight, tapering down to a narrow waistline. He always wore a belt or a pair of braces, to keep his trousers from slipping down his hardly existent hips’ (28). His ‘wiry legs’ support his ‘gorilla-sized trunk’ (28). The whole description of this man gives a picture of one with a ‘wrestler’s physique’ (70). But ironically, James Toogood, we learn, is not that good after all, at least in bed. We are told that in spite of his wrestler’s physique, he cannot satisfy his wife (Julie) sexually. One can point out here that Ike’s descriptive powers, using uncomplicated words to create vivid mental pictures, seem to be at their summit when describing the love life of each of the characters. The delineation of Julie’s lust, juxtaposed with

Professor Brown's pathetic sexual inadequacy, smacks of the exaggerated and humorous:

He had never in his life come across a girl so passionate. To describe her as passionate was an understatement. *Every bit of her participated actively in the act.* The body of a child battling with convulsion could not have trembled as much as she did. From her face down to her navel *she was soon enveloped in sweat.* She called him the sweetest of pet names, *she muttered incomprehensible phrases, she bit her lips and sometimes his, she kicked her left foot like a stammerer* struggling to force out an obstinate word, *she clung like a tick* whenever she feared he was relaxing. When he finally withdrew, he cut the sorry figure of a runner fainting at the end of the first round of a twelve-round race. Julie was only just warming up.... It was clear that he could not give Julie what she needed. There was some consolation in the fact that even the Registrar with his wrestler's physique had proved unequal to the assignment; it wasn't only Brown who had failed. Julie was *the type of woman who could suck a man completely dry* till he dropped down dead. She was the exact opposite of his wife. *Pearl always wanted it snappy*, often so snappy that he wondered whether the whole thing meant anything to her. No.No single man could satisfy Julie; *what she probably needed was a relay of at least five deprived soldiers!* (70 – 71)

The portrait of the Minister of Home Services and that of His Royal Highness Ezeonuku III are just the same. These are men in the society who believe in being big, sounding big, being 'connected', and therefore have the power to alter standards to get what they want. The Minister arrives in a flashy Chevrolet car to "discuss something of tremendous importance" (16). And what is it? – the admission of an unqualified female candidate. He arrives in person, fuming about the failed admission, angry with The Registrar and angry at the entire university system. He introduces the girl (Miss Cinderella Fyneface) as neither a sister, nor even from his constituency, but as a third class clerk in his

ministry. He calls her a pet name ‘Cy’. Ike names her ‘Fyneface’ and notes that she is unqualified academically. However, it makes no sense to the Minister since she has attractive physical credentials and knows a minister who can mount pressure for her – these, to the Minister, are criteria enough for admission to the local university. Chukwuemeka Ike narrates:

*A tall, beautiful, fair-skinned and large-eyed girl walked into the office, smiling shyly and exposing a set of perfect white teeth which appeared separated into two halves by a partition in the middle. Her nipples pressed against her pink nylon blouse as if they would pierce through the fabric. The Vice-Chancellor unconsciously offered her his own chair.*  
(19)

This description in a short paragraph of three sentences creates a mental image of some not-well-educated though captivating beauty, so captivating the Vice-Chancellor, apparently charmed by such a figure, “unconsciously offered her his own chair”. She is one of such ladies who use prominent personalities in society to subvert standards. And one cannot but surmise from the cluster of ironically favourable adjectives used in describing her that Ike is alluding to what he feels is part of the moving forces of retardation besetting the infant University of Songhai.

The minor characters do not escape Ike’s descriptive powers either. The Mission Rest House steward, Obadiah, is sarcastically depicted.

...His name, Obadiah, seemed appropriate for a religious environment. He was of average height, lean and *charcoal black*. Probably, but for *his bow legs which automatically formed an egg whenever he stood at attention*, he would have been three inches taller; *nobody would make him goal-keeper in a game of hockey*. He was always smiling. It was only when you got to know him well that you notice

that he was *hard of hearing*, and that the perpetual smile was intended to cover up when he failed to catch a remark or question. (122)

On Matthew, the head messenger to His Royal Highness, Ike demonstrates his consciousness for what Azuike (2000:9-10) refers to as character-code concordance. Of Matthew, Azuike says he ‘is interesting because of his elaborate and exaggerated speech habits and wry sense of humour. When he was sent by His Royal Highness to invite Professor Ikin to the Palace, it was the steward he met. When Matthew complained of having been left for ten minutes at the door, the steward asked why he didn’t ring the door bell. And that was the trigger Matthew wanted. He struck his chest and exploded: “Me ring bell? Me, Matiu, ring bell? Which time I becomes medical vending? (193). Not quite long after, Ike informs us of “Matthew’s English which ignored all the acknowledged rules of grammar, and which he nevertheless spoke confidently and authoritatively as if he spoke the Queen’s English” (ibid). When the steward could not produce his master who had gone out, Matthew queries: “You tink I arrives here for monkey play?” (194). But when Mrs Ikin appears and asks after His Royal Highness, Matthew replies in the superlative, “We are hundred-hundred”, (ibid).

Ike’s preoccupation in the novel is encapsulated in Professor Gerald Moore’s comment on the novel:

...the naked gods of his title are the academic “masters” of Songhai University, a new institution in a newly independent country. The Americans are determined to dominate the development of the university through their control of the post of Vice-Chancellor and their big financial stake; but the British are well posted to oppose them through the Registrar and the fact that the most senior

African academic is British trained. Everything is set for a remorseless struggle between the two national factions, supported fairly consistently by “their own” Africans on the staff. (Ugbabe: 66)

Ike is bitter about many of the unethical practices in the universities in the developing world. His worry and bitterness are reflected in the bitter and negative words and phrases with which he describes those responsible for the unethical practices and decadence of the university system. Osita himself remarks with this tone of hopelessness that ‘there are no more than one or two intellectuals in this University!... This is the only University in which dons spend all their time scheming or dispensing charms or running after village girls and colleagues’ wives – concerned with everything but the traditional preoccupation of intellectuals....’ (159)

### **3.4 *THE POTTER’S WHEEL***

#### **3.4.1 Synopsis**

*The Potter’s Wheel* is a novel set in the 1940s during the Second World War. Events centre around one family – Mazi Lazarus Maduabuchi’s family – and shift from Umuchukwu village to the semi-urban Aka town, depending on the whereabouts of the protagonist, Obu.

Mazi Laza and his wife have seven children. All except Obu (the last but one in the series) are girls. The birth of Obu is a psychological relief to both parents. To them, the boy is *Obiano*, *Onyibo*, *Nwokenagu*, *Ezenwa*, *Obuechina*, each of which portrays the psychological dispositions of the parents. His birth



brings much solace to the mother, especially as it put off the pressures on her husband to marry a second wife who could give birth to a male issue.

Mama Obu thus becomes a typical doting mother, glaringly showing her preference for Obu in word and deed. Her happiness on the arrival of a baby boy is still shaky, as she believes that Obu is an *ogbanje*, as evidenced by the short vertical line on Obu's left cheek. He was born with that scar, and the mother believes that it is a mark given to him by the family he had gone to in his previous life. Mazi Laza does not quite believe in this, and so contrives an alibi the day Nwomiko (the female exorcist) comes on Mama Obu's invitation to cast off the *ogbanje* spirit by digging up and impounding Obu's *ogbanje* stone.

Obu is brainy. Mama Obu pampers the 9-year old to a fault and gradually the young brain drifts into doing only the things he likes to do and detesting hard labour.

Aware of this drift, Mazi Laza, with the belief that 'there is no sweet without sweat; unless you suffer you cannot develop common sense', decides to send young Obu to Aka town as houseboy to Teacher Zaccheus, accompanied by his mother.

At Teacher's house, everything is in marked contrast to what obtains at Umuchukwu. Aka is a semi-urban centre, unlike Umuchukwu that is a village, a rural setting. Back at home, Obu was spoilt and cosseted by his mother; but here he is face to face with a somewhat irascible Deborah. Life at Teacher's place is sharply stringent, unlike the childish, carefree living at his parents' at

Umuchukwu: his '*sala sala*', '*egwu na amu*' father as opposed to the '*no-nonsense*' Teacher Zaccheus Kanu. Here at Aka, food is drastically rationed and measured, and discipline is strictly enforced. Every servant devices means of surviving. The servants in Teacher's place are six, and each has a reason for being there.

Teacher's early morning routine is a stereotype. This ritualistic early morning routine presents one remarkable gruesome Saturday morning for the servants.

Obu and others attend Aka CMS Central School where Obu stands out as a brilliant boy. As days go by, in the harsh realities of Teacher's correctional home, nostalgia grows to a point where Obu fakes a letter purported to have been written by his mother requesting Teacher to permit him home to look after his younger sister. But the wrong date betrays the whole trick.

Nearly twelve months from January since Obu has been in Teacher's home, Madu is sent by Mazi Laza and wife to visit Obu at Teacher's. He returns to Umuchukwu with him to spend the Christmas period. Even at Umuchukwu, Obu has nightmares about Madam. He resolves not to go back to Teacher's. Reasoning that he is underfed and lanky, his mother supports him, but finds it difficult to convince Mazi Laza. She asks Obu to try to talk to his father. Obu chooses the most auspicious moment and best way to broach the matter to his father.

But with the Edmund Okechukwu/Caleb Okeke analogy whose lesson is 'Nothing without labour.... Nobody who does not suffer can succeed in life', Mazi

Laza closes the chapter, and Obu returns to Aka to resume his stringent training in Teacher's house - this time, unaccompanied by his mother.

### 3.4.2 Diction in *The Potter's Wheel*

Generally, the word *motif* stands for an idea or a dominant element that runs throughout a work of art. The dominant theme of *The Potter's Wheel* is unequivocally captured by Ike in his narration.

... It did not matter to Mazi Laza how many trips Obu made to the farm on one day, nor the number of yams he carried per trip. *All he wanted was to establish the principle that every person who breathes must regard work as an essential ingredient to life, and everybody who eats food must work for it. Anybody who shunned work was bound to end up a ne'er-do-well,....* (28)

This is Mazi Laza's philosophy of life, and it runs throughout the text in different phraseology. Ike continues his narration:

... The way Obu was developing, there was no sign that he would develop much common sense. *No man had been known to acquire common-sense without suffering; there could be no sweet without sweat, not even for thieves.* (59)

Mazi Laza informs his wife bluntly that 'Onyibo will leave home two *Nkwo* market days from today, to live with Teacher Zaccheus Kanu'. (65) The woman's fears and objections at the mention of Teacher Zaccheus are obvious. And Mazi Laza chooses to diffuse her fears with his usual maxim:

'*He who does not suffer hardship cannot develop any common-sense. Zaccheus Kanu does not swallow any person alive...*' (65)

When advising Obu before the latter's departure for Teacher's house, we hear Mazi Laza:

‘... You are going to Teacher as a houseboy, as a servant. You should therefore *humble yourself and accept whatever amount of suffering may come your way. There is no sweet without sweat; unless you suffer you cannot develop common-sense....* (87)

After some months at Teacher’s, Obu is brought home for Christmas celebration. He resolves not to go back to Teacher’s house, and informs his father of his resolution. Again, we see Mazi Laza’s rhetorical choice of the Edmund Okechukwu/Caleb Okeke analogy, unveiling for the last time, the rationale behind sending Obu to serve Teacher Zaccheus.

‘Mazi Ekeneme bought a lorry and had inscribed on it *NOTHING WITHOUT LABOUR*. That is the reason. *Nobody who does not suffer can succeed in life*. Edmund is what he is because his father forgot yams, forgot cocoyams, forgot meat and sent him to suffer in Teacher’s hands. It was Teacher who made him, Teacher tells me your brain is even hotter than Edmund’s. So there is no reason why you should not drink tea with the white man and study in the white man’s land. But if you want to be like Caleb, you should come home and live with your mother, eating goat meat, drinking palm wine and dancing with masquerades. But when the time comes, don’t say that I did not warn you. You can go.’ (214 – 215)

This is Mazi Laza’s final advice which Ike uses to wind up the text. Embedded in the words of this advice is the educative age-old proverb that storms make oats take deeper roots. So, for Obu to develop into sensible manhood, he has to be sent to a hardliner. He is brilliant, Mazi Laza is aware, but that is not all, for, as Ike narrates, ‘the opportunity (for the boy) to stretch his potential was not there...’ (58) and as Madam once mentions ‘... Learning without common-sense is nonsense’ (189). The entire logic of actions, events and characterization in the novel is encapsulated in these final words by Mazi Laza.

From these words, one understands the state of Mazi Laza's mind and the uphill task he faces, from the outset when he tries to convince an indulgent mother: 'The main thing I want to tell you is that I have decided to send Obuechina away to serve as houseboy to a teacher.' Ike wants his reader to understand and feel Mazi Laza's problem the way he (Ike) does, and so he immediately follows Laza's speech with these words: 'He *shot his bolt* neatly and awaited his wife's reaction which he was sure would be violent.' (63) In spite of the fact that this 'bolt' actually hits Mama Obu's sensitive nerves, we hear Mazi Laza:

'Before you go, Missus, I forgot to add that Onyibo will leave home two Nkwo market days from today, to live with Teacher Zaccheus Kanu. *That's all.*' (65)

Consider Mazi Laza's words here and his last words to Obu: 'But when the time comes, don't say that I did not warn you. *You can go.*' The latter has a serious tone of finality which is admonitory, advisory and decisive; hence on the appointed day, Obu leaves for Teacher's house unpersuaded, unaccompanied. The tone of the former is comparable to the resolute, 'man-of-the-house' tone with which he overcomes the resistant, doting mother.

Stylistics, as we know, tries to analyse how elements of content (plot, characterization, events, theme, etc) are actualized in linguistic forms. ( Wales: 92) Chukwuemeka Ike starts by carefully choosing the wording of his title: *The Potter's Wheel*. This, we can say, is a catch-all type of title. The wording is carefully chosen to capture metaphorically the theme and events of the novel. We can analyse the title thus:

- i) A potter is one who makes/shapes pottery; in the context of this novel, he is represented by Teacher and his wife who help to ‘refine’ other people’s children.
- ii) The potter’s material is raw-clay in its tenacious, wet form, like the ‘unrefined’ children brought to Teacher’s house for ‘shaping’/’refinement’ so as to have “common-sense” – the type Mazi Laza is dreaming of, for his son, Obu; the type Mary’s betrothed expects her to learn as part of ‘housewifery’. Madam’s confirmation of the ‘raw’ nature of the children brought to her house for refinement is reflected in her comments at various points when she is angry.

... People wait until their children *rot like breadfruit* and then *dump* them on Deborah to *salvage* the seed from the *putrid waste*. (96)

After the aborted plan (with a fake letter) by Obu to trick Teacher into releasing him to go home, here is the comment by disgusted Madam:

Every parent dumps his headaches on me.... Each of those rats eating my food here has a hot brain for becoming a rogue! (143)

And in Obu’s nightmare, we hear Madam’s true voice:

‘May the hyena tear you to bits if you think you can fire your own question at me instead of answering my question! Of course I have been washing and scrubbing you for one year, so you can now tread on my eyeballs without fear! Bastard!’ (206)

- iii) A potter’s wheel is a device that incorporates a horizontally revolving disc. As instruments, the potter uses this disc as well as

high temperature fire (and with his hands) to shape the raw, ductile, wet clay, subjecting the shapes to intense heat, as in baking; thus various types of fine clay vessels are made: bowls, jugs, dishes, vases, pots, etc. The instruments, a revolving disc and intense heat can be likened to the instruments of ‘refinement’ in Teacher’s house, and these are severe discipline which incorporates strict monitoring of the servants’ activities, deliberately reduced and controlled meals, severe beating and tongue-lashing. In the end, the servants become better human beings, hardworking, well behaved, full of common sense, the same way the raw clay goes through fire and turns out into fine bowls, dishes, etc.

- iv) Teacher and his wife are thus potters. And like in the job of pottery where the potter never escapes suffering some rays of the intense heat, Teacher and his wife never escape the ugly outcome of various forms of resistance from the servants. For instance, Madam is often at loggerheads with the quietly obstinate Ada (116), and on one occasion, the latter deliberately splashes dirty water used in washing plates on Madam (157). At another incident, Bright spatters Teacher’s shirt with “drops of oily water” (114).

Chukwuemeka Ike recognizes the multi-functionality of words, and in his linguistic craftsmanship, he uses the metaphorical analogy embodied in the title to capture succinctly Mazi Laza’s philosophy of life, which is the motif, the

dominating theme of the text: No sweat, no sweet (28); No hardship, no common sense (65); Nothing without labour (214).

Another remarkable evidence of Ike's captivating phraseology is in his effort to create contrasting situations to convince the reader of the seriousness of the theme: No hardship, no common sense. Here is a son, an important only son. Ike tells us that his mother 'literally worshipped him' and 'showered on him all the names they have been saving up for boys who never came' (9). The pressure on Mazi Laza to marry a second wife is no longer a thing to bother her: 'she could sleep in spite of thunder'.(9). This is an apt expression. It is typical of Ike's creative use of language. It is not a conventional English idiom. But the freshness of the imagery is compelling. Literally, the crash of thunder is bound to disturb one's sleep. But if one can sleep in defiance of the rumble of thunder, then it means that one's level of contentment is extremely high. The long-sought-after son brings 'solace to her soul'. Thus Ike chooses his words and phrases to create a mother who pampers her son to a fault. She shields him from physical labour (the contrast of Mazi Laza's philosophy of 'Nothing without labour'). She provides excuses for his inadequacies (like not learning to ride a bicycle) and his bed-wetting (25). She labours single-handedly to break the *ogbanje* jinx. Ike's choice of words evokes a powerful image of the relationship between a strongly doting mother and her seriously cosseted son: 'Mama Obu's superabundant love for her only son gushed back as if it had been held in check by a powerful dam' (47). Mazi Laza's protest against his wife's indulgence towards Obu is couched in simple words that hit the nail on the head:



... For the moment, I want to say that things happen every day which convince me that we are *spoiling, rather than helping the child*. (57)

... That boy was slowly but surely developing into *a useless boy*. (58)

And in the mind of Mazi Laza, Ike provides this apt expression:

... Mazi Laza admitted that he could not exonerate himself entirely from blame for shutting his eyes and mouth while *Obu cascaded downhill every day*. (59)

Obu is not just going downhill, he is *cascading downhill* – an expression suggestive of very swift deterioration. Ike's description of the downhill trend presents lurid details about Obu. Ike informs the reader that even after his ninth birthday, Obu's sleeping habit is less than satisfactory.

... He was *sprawling right across the bed in his characteristically disorganized manner....* Only a doting mother could have tolerated *his appalling sleeping habits....* He *grunted involuntarily...* his mother detected *a trail of saliva stretching from the corner of his mouth to his chin...* his *erect genitals* suggested that he might soon wet the bed. (67 – 68)

Thus in word and deed, the doting mother aids the gradual degeneration of her son. The boy is seen growing up and acting in sharp contrast to his father's principles and ideals: he prefers playing masquerades, whiling away time in childish wooden contraptions, sleeping, waking and eating at will, and detesting physical labour. The extent to which this mother-son relationship has worried Mazi Laza, and the after effects of such a relationship are captured by Ike with some pinpoint accuracy in the following words:

... Now that the *ogbanje* had been removed, Mazi Laza pondered, was there any justification for continuing to

pamper the boy?... it was ruining Obu's future. No child brought up that way could make good. He must put a stop to it, and without delay, otherwise *that boy would constitute a painful nuisance, like a boil which chooses to flourish in the public area.* (60)

The momentum of the boy's downhill descent, Mazi Laza feels, can only be checked if he is sent as a houseboy to Teacher. And this is because 'you (Mama Obu) have not trained him very well that I'm talking about sending him away before he dissolves completely like a bag of salt' (64). What Ike has succeeded in doing up to this point is to manipulate words and expressions in such a way that a remarkable level of contrast is built, thereby justifying the boy's being sent to Teacher's reformatory.

Other areas Ike uses his word power effectively are in the sketches of the characters and description of events. Mazi Laza is a character Ike holds in high esteem. Ike's great respect and admiration for Mazi Laza shows in every aspect of the portrait. With the humble occupation of dealing in assorted clothing materials, Mazi Laza is shown as a man who is emotionally and psychologically well-adjusted: he is full of 'humour and lightheartedness', full of 'fun and laughter', full of 'carefree cheerfulness'; he is a man with a 'contented and relaxed mind' (12). Ike's words and phrases depict him as a role model of a father, not quite given to superstitious beliefs, but to practical reality and hard work. His scepticism about the *ogbanje* belief is clear from some of his utterances. For instance, his wife starts a discussion about Obu's *ogbanje*, and he answers: 'Hm... And what do *your ogbanje* experts advise you to do?' (43). In fact, he stages his absence with the alibi of going 'to collect money from his several debtors' (44) on

the day Nwomiko (the *ogbanje* exorcist) is to come for Obu's *ogbanje*. After Obu's ninth birthday, and Obu is still alive, his words to his wife are:

‘... I know you invited Nwomiko, and she *claimed* to have removed the boy's *ogbanje*. *Whether she did or not, or whether or not the boy was ever an ogbanje, neither you nor I know.* That is why I said we should thank God that the boy is alive. He knows what is what.’ (63)

But when these are viewed against the backdrop that ‘he dissociated himself from the *ogbanje* ritual... only to establish an alibi...’ because of his commitment as a member of the Church Committee, as narrated by Ike (62), we begin to see in Mazi Laza, a man sensible enough to manage a balance between two opposing forces.

Physically, Mazi Laza is ‘tall and handsome; a great dancer in his youth, sought after, to his mother's dismay, by many girls’ (12). His idea of hardwork as key to success runs throughout the text: ‘No sweat, no sweet’,(28), ‘Nothing without labour’ (214). As an itinerant hardworking trader, ‘Mazi Laza was hardly ever at home except on Sundays or during the planting season when he stayed back to plant yams. He carried his bales of cloth, mostly brightly coloured *jioji*, from one large market to the next, from one town to another...’ (12). With the persuasive tongue and demeanour typical of good salesmanship, he would beckon on customers:

‘Nwanna, .... Don't be put off by this display of so-so *jioji* material. Egwu na amu has what you are looking for.... If you don't know it, this is Win-the-War stuff. As you can see, I deal in *jioji* but I brought this piece specially for you because I know it will solve all your problems. That's all I have in stock – what you see here. Our soldiers say this is what Germans wear, hence British bullets can't

penetrate their bodies. If I tell you how I managed to get this cloth, you will not believe me. James, the church teacher at Ududonka, brought a jar of palmwine to thank me for selling two yards to him. The poor man had patched and repatched his jumper till his ingenious wife gave up any further efforts at patching it.... It was at that point that Egwu na amu sold this same stuff to James. Since then James's prayers have been for long life so that he can enjoy his jumper world-without-end. If you doubt my words, go to Ududonka and ask for James; if he is not wearing this material, return yours to me and take back your money....'

(14)

We draw attention to the expression I underlined above. Mazi Laza's good salesmanship taps not only from his natural intelligence, persuasive tongue and demeanour, but also from his experience as a member of the Church Committee. And from his church experience, he extracts the expression 'world-without-end', which is the end of the short Christian prayer: *Glory be to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, ever shall it be, world without end*. Using the terminal point of this prayer, Mazi's persuasive logic here suggests eternity – forever. Although highly exaggerated, for no clothing item lasts until eternity, the expression signifies his creative salesmanship, which is reminiscent of exaggerated claims that dominate the world of advertising.

Chukwuemeka Ike's description of Teacher, on the other hand, is in fact from the servants' perspective, and Ike presents him almost like a monster, very much dreaded. We are told that Teacher lost an eye in his youth and had it replaced with an artificial one (96). Ike gives him the name Zaccheus that biblically alludes to Teacher's 'dwarfish' stature. (68) He is portrayed as 'a dare-devil who carried out his intentions without caring whose ox is gored' (68). Ike contrasts the physical characteristics of Teacher and those of his wife, Deborah.

Externally, she looked the antithesis of her husband – tall, slim, elegant, of pawpaw complexion, with the ostrich-length neck and Caucasian nose which brings to mind the famous stature of Queen Nefertiti of Egypt. The modest clothes Teacher provided for her sat attractively on her figure in the way ordinary dresses appear distinctively elegant on the dummies in a boutique. (69)

Even at a tender age of six, her ‘granite heart’ made her the theme of a song. (69).

In spite of the physical contrast between Teacher and his wife, Ike tells us: ‘Many believed that God produced her specially for Teacher; no other woman could live with Teacher, and no other man could stand Madam as a wife’. (69).

Ike chooses his words carefully: Teacher’s ‘corrugated belly’ (97); shouting at servants, he ‘bellowed like a lion’ (97) and refers to himself as a tiger. (97) Ada is ‘quietly obstinate’, but Ike’s descriptive words for her suggest that she is pretty almost in every way: ‘her aquiline nose’ that is ‘appropriate for her face’, her ‘ebony skin’, but she has one ‘comma’ in her make-up: her dentition is ‘the only misfit’. The teeth ‘appeared to be intended for a carnivore’ (116). And ‘her normal sized mouth could not cover them gracefully’. Of Mama Obu, Ike says that ‘nothing is superfluous about her – average height, an athletic body that was slender without being thin’ (10). Chapter 14 presents a graphic description of Teacher’s stereotype routine – a description which, in some kind of drab simplicity, compares well with the description of Mr Sands’ mode of dressing in *The Bottled Leopard* (51), except that Teacher’s is more detailed and thus more picturesque. The graphic details of Teacher’s routine:

The Catechist’s first bell for pre-dawn prayers served as the rising bell in Teacher’s house. As soon as it

sounded at 5 a.m. prompt every servant scrambled up from the sleeping mat.

By 5:30 a.m. when the Catechist rang the second bell for prayers, the servants whose turn it was to fetch water were already half way to the one mile distant stream, while the others swept the compound with palm fronds trimmed for the purpose, cleared the previous day's ash from the kitchen, boiled water for Teacher's bath and cooked breakfast for Teacher and Madam. They took turns in laying out the face water and chewing stick for Teacher....

Teacher's early morning routine followed clockwork regularity. At 5:10 he left his bedroom and picked up the lantern waiting for him outside the room. He also detached some leaves from past examination scripts or discarded exercise books and made for the pit latrine.

As soon as he emerged from the masters' mud-walled latrine tucked away at a rear corner of the compound, he made for the water in the basin. The servant on duty handed him a slice of bar soap and received it back when Teacher had scrubbed his hands. Next the chewing stick; the servant knew he had to stand away from the direction of Teacher's mouth for soon he began to spit out tiny pieces of chewing stick.... After a vigorous face wash, he took the brownish towel from the servant's outstretched hand, dried his face and hands up to the elbow and returned to the bedroom for his shirt and the special crocodile skin bag in which he carried his Bible, hymn book, prayer book and churchman's pamphlet. (110 – 111)

A vivid picture of the Education Officer's snobbish attitude towards Aka CMS Central School Headmaster is put down thus: 'He gave the headmaster the condescending, colonial grim and drove off' (153). For Nwomiko, Ike describes her as 'pint-sized' (44), that is of very small stature, and calls her 'the fleet-footed woman' (46) aptly because of her nimble movement. Cromwell has 'a stoop' – shoulders that bend forward – making him 'resemble a giant semi-colon' (121). In the two-year-old-Evans episode, Madam orders Obu to give 'two spoons. Two

spoons' (only) of rice to Evans, her God son. Ike's narration of what follows is simply accurate.

... Obu's mouth *watered* as he inhaled the flavour which *gushed out* of the pot as soon as he opened it.... As Evans unsuspectingly strained his eyes searching for a non-existing lizard, Obu *transferred a generous helping* of jollof rice into his mouth.... Madam had appeared at the door, as *mysteriously* as a witch, just as the spoon emptied its contents into Obu's mouth. With the speed of lightning she *landed a staggering blow* across Obu's face.... Obu was *enveloped in pitch darkness*, except for the glittering stars dancing all over the place. Madam *struck again* – on the same spot and with the same weapon.... Obu shouted as Madam *thrust him with terrific force* away from the controversial pot of jollof rice and, in his *momentary blindness, he bashed his head on the door frame.* (207)

The words and phrases italicized are action-packed. Ike uses them to capture photographically every crucial move in the drama. This is so vivid that the reader tends to forget that this is a dream scene.

Teacher's house is indirectly presented as a sort of correctional home, some kind of reformatory where life is sharply stringent and discipline is strictly enforced. True to such homes, food is drastically rationed, fish and meat are entirely excluded from their menu. Survival is a matter for the fittest. 'Fittest' here is not in the sense of physical strength. For this survival, Ike selects the familiar expression: *to learn the ropes*.

...Obu was learning the ropes. The ability to hoodwink Teacher or Madam constituted the greatest asset of any servant finding himself in their service. The spontaneity with which he told a plausible lie, the dexterity with which he had conveyed a kernel past Madam's observatory indicated that he was picking up fast from his more experienced comrades. There was no alternative, you

either licked your lips or the harmattan licked them for you.  
(134)

*To know/learn the ropes* means to know/understand details of how to do something, or the procedure for doing something. In this context, it implies getting to know the details of how to survive under tight conditions. This is an informal idiomatic expression, an ancillary of the popular circus idiom: *to walk a tightrope*, meaning to be engaged in a difficult situation where you do not have much freedom of action, and need to be extremely cautious of what you do. *Tightrope* literally is a taut rope on which feats of balancing and acrobatics are performed. To survive in Teacher's reform home, the servants have to learn expedient strategies or develop personal survival procedures. Fish or meat, they have to steal from the soup pot – Ike's expression for this is 'desecrating the soup pot' (160) – or by helping an ailing fowl to die since that is the only time they can eat meat. Part of 'learning the ropes', Ike tells us '... A ball of foofoo, half the size of a tennis ball, could be smuggled from one side of the kitchen to the other in the armpit!' (140). At some point, Obu is said to have developed 'houseboy's crocodile skin' (109), that is, a tough skin, a tough character to contend with the severe life at Teacher's house. This, of course, is part of what Mazi Laza means by sending him to Aka to 'develop common-sense' by 'suffering' because there is 'no sweet without sweat' (29).

Another fine aspect of Ike's diction is his use of words and phrases in such a way as to make the embarrassing, or the unpleasant, appear acceptable to his reader. Euphemism, which Tom McArthur (357) sees as a rhetorical use of 'mild, comforting, or evasive expression that takes the place of one that is taboo,



negative, offensive, or too direct,' is used scantily in *The Potter's Wheel*, but serves the same purpose as in *Toads for Supper*. Here, Nwomiko, the *ogbanje* exorcist, is accompanied in her mission by 'a young girl carrying a long market basket *for the fruits of her labour*' (44). This is a euphemistic way of referring to Nwomiko's assorted collections of gifts and offerings. Madam, while in school, 'could throw any boy or girl... and was dreaded' such that even up to the age of 25 years, there were no suitors before Teacher. Teacher is 40. And avoiding the unpleasant word 'barrenness', Ike says: 'Teacher and Deborah became man and wife, and *since two men cannot procreate, they had no issue*' (69). Chairs in Teacher's lounge are intended to be used with cushions but Teacher deliberately puts no cushions on them because he does not believe that 'the African *backside* was fashioned for such pampering' (95). Here, Ike uses the softer inoffensive word to mask such revolting word as *bottom* or buttocks. The manner in which 'We shall see' gets ready to sit down in class by holding properly each leg of his pair of white shorts at the rear, we are told, 'eliminated *a source of distraction for the pupils* on the front bench' (103). What is this source of distraction? The exposure of his pants (inner wear) while sitting down carelessly. Ike does not want to be blunt, the same way he tells us (instead of Silence's *prick* or *penis*) that 'the cheers became intermingled with laughter as fingers pointed at *something peeping out between Silence's legs* (74). Madam's monthly menstruation is referred to, by the servants, as '*monthly ailment*' (139). During the Evans episode, Ike tells us that 'Evans understood from the (Madam's) instructions that he should be given some rice. He did not eat rice often in his father's house. His father, an

Arch A.T. – as the chronic uncertificated teacher was nicknamed.... *Evans was soon to become elder brother to the eleventh*' (206). In this description, some hard facts are ingeniously concealed by Ike's use of euphemism: Evans father is battling with abject poverty which is a result of his meager income (as an uncertificated teacher) coupled with over a dozen mouths to feed. When Mazi Laza employs the Edmund Okechukwu/Caleb Okeke analogy to convince his son, Obu, we hear him say, 'He (Caleb) is a truck pusher and people say *he occasionally takes things that are not his*' (214). This is a soft way of telling the hard truth: Caleb is a thief. From Ada's lips about Madam, we hear '... there is nothing she carries which you (Mary) and I do not carry' (157). Here she is talking about their distinct female features of *breasts* and *genitalia* in a mild and indirect way.

Although Ike consciously avoids offending the senses of his readers, in just one instance throughout the text he says that Mama Obu rushes off to see her returning child, 'forgetting to hold *her flapping breasts*' (200). In this only instance, because of the tense atmosphere generated by the expectation of Obu's return, the woman forgets, and Ike too forgets to mask his language euphemistically.

### 3.5 *SUNSET AT DAWN*

#### 3.5.1 Synopsis

*Sunset at Dawn* is a war novel that chronicles the thirty-month war between Nigeria and Biafra, in which the latter made a desperate effort to secede

from the former. The setting is predominantly the Biafran enclave, with flashes of actions and events told about some mid-western parts of Nigeria. Immediate causes of the war are firstly, the death of two prominent politicians of Northern Nigerian origin in the 1966 military coup that brought the army into the Nigerian political arena. Because no prominent Igbo was murdered in the coup, the Northerners launched a reprisal attack on Eastern Nigerians (especially the Igbos) living in the North. This resulted in what was tagged 'the pogrom'. Some thirty thousand Igbos were brutally murdered, their property looted and/or destroyed. This happened on 29 May 1966, during which an Igbo supreme commander was assassinated, and another mass killing of Igbos took place on 29<sup>th</sup> September the same year. May 30, 1967, the Republic of Biafra was proclaimed. War broke out 6 July, 1967, with the Biafra sun as a distinguishing emblem. At first, Nigerian government declared it a mere police action.

The whole story revolves round Dr Amilo Kanu his family and relations and Duke Bassey from Anang Province, Professor Emeka Ezenwa from Onitsha, Barrister Chike Ifeji and Dr Osita.

Biafran forces are ill-trained, ill-equipped, hurriedly assembled. By August, surprisingly while Nigerian troops from the Nsukka sector are slowly gaining grounds, Biafran forces gallantly capture Mid-West and proclaim it the Republic of Benin. Nigerian Federal Military Government now declares full-scale war on Biafra.

In spite of all these, by late September 1967, there is an abortive coup by some highly placed Biafran army officers and civilians. The fate of Enugu seems to be uncertain since the first enemy mortar landed, and more continue to land. The propaganda explanation is that they are from enemy collaborators among Biafrans.

Biafran government makes contingency evacuation plans to relocate every establishment away from Enugu. In spite of all the confusion and the loss of several Biafran towns to Nigerian forces, there is tremendous enthusiasm on the part of young Biafrans to join the Biafran Army.

October 4, 1967, Enugu is finally overrun by Nigerian forces, Calabar is captured; Biafra is compelled to evacuate Onitsha.

Meanwhile, Fatima and her surviving son do not find it easy staying in Obodo village where Dr Kanu does not even own a hut. Then arrives Halima Uche, who narrates how brutally her husband was murdered in the North.

By January 29, 1968, Biafra changes currency notes and postage stamps, following Nigeria's change of theirs. The change of currency is particularly painful to Obodo people in many ways. March, 1968, the famous Abagana battle is fought.

The fall of Port Harcourt implies that Nigerian troops have practically surrounded Biafra, cutting off sources of petroleum and electricity. By now, Biafra is heading towards a major famine; interest in voluntary military service is waning. Halima and her son are killed in the Obodo air-raid. There is also the

great Umuahia air-raid. Then there is the fall of Obodo. Dr Kanu sends his orderly to evacuate his old parents from home.

Dr Kanu joins the army. His wife is sent to Libreville. H.E. tries to dissuade him, not willing to waste rare gems like him any longer. Dr Kanu goes to war front, and is badly wounded. He is later killed in one of the air raids. Meanwhile, Biafra is practically exhausted. But in Nigeria, life has been normal.

January 14, 1970 comes the final surrender, and the Republic of Biafra is erased from the map.

### 3.5.2 **Diction in *Sunset at Dawn***

*Sunset at Dawn* is not a story of love. It is not a story of growing up. It is still not a story of campus life. It is a tale of war, hardship, destruction. Where there is too much stress, too much pain, too much suffering, too many lives cut down at their prime – where all these exist every second of a people's existence, what would one expect from the language of such a people if not a language coloured by their bitter experiences? Such language can be anything but pleasant.

Thus, in this tale of war, Chukwuemeka Ike carefully chooses such words that portray the inner feelings of those at the receiving end (the Biafrans). He tells us from the outset that 'every Biafran called their former compatriots now turned enemy *Vandals*' (9). We note that this first introduction of the word in the text is enclosed in quotes, rightly as it detaches the author's feelings from the feelings of his characters. Thereafter, the word never appears in quotes throughout the text. Etymologically, the word *vandal* is a person who engages in willful and

senseless/capricious destruction of lives, property. To the Biafrans, every Nigerian (civilian or military) is a vandal (92). There are other words and expressions which are not synonymous with *vandal*, but they have a semantic ring of disapproval and bitterness. They are also used by Biafrans to refer to Nigerians: *Vampires* (31), *those Nigerian sho-sho* (14), *jigger-infested vermin* (60), *blood-thirsty sex maniacs* (65), *god-less people* (113), *murderers in the North* (94), *rag-tag Nigerian Army* (73). The irony in referring to the Nigerian Army as rag-tag is that the Nigerians have soldiers that are better equipped, better organized and better war planners. We cannot reverse the situation and say the same about the Biafran Army. Still in the same vein of selective vocabulary reflective of attitude of disapproval towards the enemy, Nigerian warplanes are *harbingers of death*, (114) and figuratively referring to the motorized Second Division of the Nigerian Army at Abagana as *the python that was forced to uncurl itself*. (116) Their ferret is a *shelling monster*. (30)

These words and others in the same class of invectives depict the bitter state of mind among Biafrans. But what marks *vandal* out stylistically in the text is its relative frequency compared with others. The word *vandal* appears some sixty times in the text as against the relatively single digit occurrence of the other invectives.

Although the narrator does not dig deep into the way Nigerians think and feel about Biafrans, the bit we are given are *rebel* (223), *rebel enclave* (93), *misguided kinsmen* (94), *nyamilis* (98). Thus, one can surmise that Nigerians use words that are not vigorously bitter against their enemy but in action they

perpetrate atrocities, inflict more hardship and destruction. Biafrans use words that are intensely loaded with hatred, bitterness, but in action, inflict less casualties – in fact, in the fall of Biafran towns, Biafran soldiers are there only to *delay* not prevent Nigerian Army advancement. Part of what accounts for this Nigerian-Biafran polarity is the self-confidence on the Nigerian side resulting from adequate training, adequate arms and ammunition and all sorts of modern military hardware, and of course, world support. Thus, everything is relaxed and normal in Nigeria, as opposed to the Biafran forces who are ill-trained, ill-equipped and hurriedly assembled. The writer makes an apt comparison with the Americans fighting Vietnamese in Vietnam (243). True to life, the extent of shock, suffering, stress, strain, destruction of lives and property encountered by Biafrans has conditioned the way they see the enemy, hence the rampant hostile words and phrases.

The other class of words and expressions frequently used by the narrator in the text are those meant to capture the nature of the vandalism perpetrated by Nigerians. They include *pogrom* (14), *carnage* (32), *atrocities* (14), *massacre* (2), *genocide* (135), *extermination* (31), *barbarous acts* (142), *cold-blooded slaughter of innocents in Biafra* (143), *cold-blooded murder* (145). Let us call this group ‘envelope vocabulary’, which the writer has used to wrap up the gruesome truth about the way the pogrom, or genocide was perpetrated. For instance: ‘...those nauseous scenes of gouged eyes, ripped womb and headless bodies’; (10) of Halima’s husband (Uche) in the hands of her fellow Hausas, they ‘plucked out his two eyes, ripped open his stomach and then left him in the open to die

painfully...’ (94); of the returnees to Biafra ‘ – an estimated two million Biafrans who had returned home after being hounded from other parts of Nigeria, most of them with nothing more than they had brought to the earth at birth, some with an arm or a leg or an eye less’ (16); of ‘ten Hausa soldiers taking turns to rape Fatima’s school friend in Ogoja, the last of them going through it all without even caring that their victim was by then already dead’ (92). At the Obodo raid, ‘Bits of human flesh and fleshless bones were strewn over the entire area... The bomb shattered knife repairer, woman, child... except for the bits of reddish human flesh stuck here and there (138/139). At the Umuahia raid, ‘Five Biafran Red Cross workers were killed; one of them... neatly chopped in two. A woman... had been disembowelled, her intestines spread over the staircase.... (180). By using the said ‘envelope vocabulary’ frequently, Chukwuemeka Ike tries to spare his reader the constant repetition of such factual but gory details as outlined above.

Being a tale of war, Ike taps greatly from his apparently inexhaustible stock of vocabulary associated with war and military – a vocabulary build-up greatly enriched by his personal experiences of the said war. Outside the commonly known military vocabulary such as *rockets, rifles, bullets, bombs, battalion*, there is a host of others that may not be common to the uninitiated reader. They include: *commandeer, conscript, armada, napalm bomb, stragglers, saladin, mig* for *mirage planes, ferret, bazooka, bull’s eye, shore battery, bunkers, strafe, light arms, cannon balls, etc.*

Also of note is Ike’s artistic fusion of Igbo lexical items and expressions to which he gives parenthetical explanations or translations in a glossary at the end



of the text. For instance, about Dr Kanu and Love, the cradler, Ike narrates ‘The first day he had her he had spontaneously rechristened her *Enenebe ejegh olu*’, which he (Ike) explains with an anticipatory colon – ‘*she was so pretty that you could spend the whole day just admiring her beauty and forget all about work!*’ (185). Victor O. Aire (Ugbabe: 27/28) has pointed out the importance of the lexico-syntactic characteristics of the text.

... In fact, it is evident that some of the characters speak only Igbo but have their speeches translated into English. For instance, early in the novel, a Sergeant resorts to “the vernacular when it became clear to him that no person in the compound spoke English”. (50) Similarly, Mazi Kanu leaves Chief Ukadike and Fatima Kanu “as soon as the couple began to speak in a language which meant nothing to him”....(83)

It is therefore obvious that most of the time, and especially in rural areas like Obodo town, conversation is carried out in Igbo. To corroborate this impression, the narrator retains many Igbo words and expressions, which are distinguished from the English by being printed in italics (the same, of course, applies to words from other Nigerian languages, which also have their place in the glossary). Some of such expressions highlight the creative way in which Ike applies linguistic interference, as can be surmised from the following examples. First of all, the sound of shelling transcribed as *kwapu kwapu unu dum* (49) is interpreted phonostylistically as an “Igbo onomatopoeia for the sound of mortar. Literally: Pack and quit, pack and quit, all of you”. (250)

Of importance again is Ike’s use of peer-group slang. Prof. Ezenwa tells his friend, Barrister Chike Ifeji, that what ‘the Rising Sun lacks in draught it compensates for in skirts! They satisfy all tastes’ – meaning Biafran girls. And that one of them he gave a lift was ready for him but no ‘where to sample her’ (36) – meaning some privacy where to have erotic relaxation with her. As some

kind of pastime, these friends go ‘bird hunting’ (37) – meaning running after girls. After the great Umuahia air raid, Love visits Dr Kanu, and Ike narrates: ‘As soon as they got to the house he lost no time in *peeling his ripe pawpaw* (162) – meaning stripping her naked. This is peer-group corruption of the expression ‘to peel off’ meaning to remove one’s clothes. Here Ike fuses Dr Kanu’s point of view with the narration. Still from Dr Kanu’s point of view, Ike narrates that “No matter what your views on morality, the Cradlers were making an invaluable contribution to the war effort. ‘Man must wack’ ” (184). Victor Aire explains that these are caused by ‘the state of siege’ and ‘the fact that much of the action takes place in an urban setting which is usually more prone to a laxity of language.’

Thus, ‘go-slow’ (48) for *fever*, ‘generator’ (65) for *groundnuts mixed with popcorn*, ‘headlight’ (162) for *a woman’s breasts* and ‘push me I push you’ (162) for *the local gin*, are all slang expressions associated with the urban environment. As is to be expected, there are more slang words inspired by the warfare and, despite the tragic nature of the latter, some of the coinages are quite humorous, as in “shelling” (163) for sexual intercourse, “moneyokor” (115) for shortage of money, and “troop carrier” (162) for condom. Other examples are hairstyle dubbed “take cover”, (136) the nickname of “armoured car” given to crabs (184) and the trading called “afia attack” (227) that goes on between Biafrans and Nigerians despite the official hostility.

Typical of Ike, he uses words with such dexterity that leaves in the mind of the reader sharp and vivid picture of events. His descriptive force derives from personal experience and ample command of vocabulary of everyday use, thus resulting, at times, in a factual description and at times a mixture of factual and coloured descriptions. Early in the text, at the training ground, Enugu, he gives his

reader what air raid means to the people. He tells of everyone reacting to the sound of the plane

...as if he had a split second to escape from the vicinity of the examination hall before Kill-We (the Biafran Superman) smashed the building, roof, wall and all. Chairs and volunteers were jostled and trampled upon in the stampede to take cover outside. One volunteer made for one of the glass panels on the folding door with the speed of a ram and the blindness of a millipede. He did not notice that he had any cuts until he was a safe distance from the building, squatting inside a cassava farm whose leaves offered him the protection he badly needed from the enemy plane. (12)

Here we see the use of the funny to narrate the serious. The image of Kill-We, though with a tinge of exaggeration, is an interesting picture, especially to those who knew the superman in person. In those days when those who made their daily bread as supermen were not common, the sight of the Nkwere-born superman Kill-We Nwachukwu was more than a terror to behold. Hence the author's choice to compare the air raid situation with the presence of Kill-We.

Ike's description of Halima and her son is note-worthy. 'The symptoms of Kwashiorkor (or *Kwashiokpa*, as it had been renamed at Obodo) were clearly evident' on the boy. The description of the boy – *distended stomach, swollen feet and ankle, pale complexion, wavy, reddish or golding hair* (96) – presents a pathetic picture of an innocent infant, scraggy and almost famished. For Halima, acute deprivation can be seen from her description: *dirty blouse full of holes*, through which the narrator sees *two dangling breasts, as flat as pancakes*. Ike is not only gifted in the art of dexterous English syntactic constructions but also in the art of morphologically complex formations. The killer disease, Kwashiorkor,

results from acute nutritional deficiency, caused by lack of protein in the diet. Etymologically the word is Ghanaian, and it found its way into the English lexicon in the 1930s. Obodo people have a reason, albeit unscientific, for renaming it *Kwashiokpa*. The disease has as part of its manifestations, swollen extremities, especially the feet. And in Igbo, *okpa* is feet. Again, when all the Nigerian currency notes in use in Biafra are withdrawn from circulation, the replacement is not immediate. The general atmosphere of anguish moves to the next level. Ike says that *moneyokor* sets in, joining forces with the existing kwashiorkor (115). The morphological blending that results in *kwashiokpa* and *moneyokor* is a testimony of Ike's word-minting linguistic craftsmanship.

There are other fine descriptions characteristic of Ike's word power and creative use of language. The September 1967 aborted coup, he says, 'dealt its most devastating blow to the army, *grinding to stockfish powder* the unparalleled rapport which had existed between soldiers and civilians.... The ten thousand youths parading on the grounds of the university campus symbolized the spontaneous reaction of the people to *the mid-ocean desertion* by the men trained and equipped to defend the republic' (10 – 11). The two italicized phrases above are meant to be understood idiomatically. The first implies that the emotional bond, the trust, the friendship existing between the army and civilians *has been irreparably crushed*. The phrase is not an established English idiom but no reader misses out its semantic freshness. The second phrase above is a slight departure from the established English idiom 'midstream' meaning 'in the middle of doing something; while something is still happening'. In the English language, there is

‘mid-river’, ‘mid-sea’, ‘mid-stream’, ‘mid-ocean’. But it is only ‘mid-stream’ that has an established idiomatic status. Why then does Chukwuemeka Ike choose ‘mid-ocean’? In the hierarchy of the waters of the earth, the ocean is the largest, and covers the most part of the surface of the globe. The writer must have considered the enormity of the coup before making his choice of ‘mid-ocean’ instead of ‘mid-stream’. The linguistic creativity here is obvious: an attempt to match a grave deed with a vigorous language!

Dr Amilo Kanu is a character the writer has a soft spot for, and so the description of his physical outlook is impressive and favourable. The Director for Mobilization wears *a broad infectious smile* and stands *just short of six foot*. He is *remarkably handsome with the appearance of a teenager* (11). For the orderly (The Sergeant) ‘his moustache stood six inches in front of him’ and he is ever ready with his ‘fly-catching salute popularized by Biafra’s Head of State’ (11). Love, the cradler, sitting up on Amilo’s bed, is *a nude model any artist would pay a fortune for* (153). She is *pretty* and wears *a bashful smile, bushy eyebrows, unusually moist and large eyes, with a sex appeal which challenged everything masculine* in Amilo. Ike further sees her breasts as *the nearest approximations to the text-book illustrations of craterless volcanic mountains...* (162). Professor Ezenwa’s wife’s box of trinkets is ‘valued in four figures’ (21) – implying that they are very expensive, their cost running into thousands. Ike observes that Chief Ukadike did not *care one grain of garri* about Chief Ofo’s feelings (57). This is a localized way of saying that *he cares not a jot*. The Biafran radio jingle normally preceding news hours is described as ‘the fast tempo characteristic of

the shoulder-vibrating dance common in the old Owerri Province' (77). To a stranger, this description may not appear striking, but to those who belong, 'shoulder-vibrating dance' is a phrase that captures exactly the pattern of dance in that area of Biafra. While ruminating over her stay in the village, Fatima thinks it is a tactful way of keeping a Hausa out of Government circles and wonders if her husband could be 'bowing to such *whitemail*' (99).

One of the finest bits of description following the triple loss of Nsukka, Ogoja and Bonny early in the war reads:

The hastily assembled and ill-equipped Biafran forces could not dig in anywhere. Biafran territory *shrank like a cheap fabric after its first wash*. The yellow-on-black Biafra Sun lost its dazzle and much of its authenticity.

Then came August.

The August break began with *geography book regularity*, sweeping the rain clouds off the horizon and rescuing the sun from obscurity. The week before, the sun had been *driven into hiding, abdicating its exalted throne for ominous clouds*, which had enveloped the earth in daylight darkness and unleashed torrential downpours on a saturated earth.... (18)

The italicised phrases above evoke vivid images by the use of a forceful simile that likens the Biafra military inferiority and weakness to 'a cheap fabric after its first wash,' and the metaphoric fusion of the Biafra Sun emblem and the sun that is being suffocated by the heavy rains of the season. 'Geography book regularity' expresses the unmistakable constancy of the August break.

Another aspect of Ike's diction concerns his choice of names and their meanings in relation to the story. This is onomastics. Although the onomastic

intensity in *Sunset at Dawn* is not as much as what Ike has in *The Potter's Wheel*, there are important aspects pointed out by Aire:

For instance, the Igbo name Amilo means “I do not know the enemy,” which is quite appropriate since it is the first name of the war-hero Amilo Kanu killed in the bombing of a Biafran military hospital. Amilo Kanu’s father, bereaved twice during the war, bears the name *Onwubiko* which is a supplication to death. Perhaps the most appropriate Igbo name is that of the egocentric, boastful veteran, Ukadike meaning “A big man talks big...” he claims the title *Ezeahurukwe* – “the chief you acknowledge at sight” (57), a title which “focused attention on the contrast between the diminutive, inconsequential size of the anointed Chief and the domineering, impressive personality of the pretender” (57).

A non-Igbo name, Fatima means *the faithful, obedient one*. Halima is *the trustworthy, the just*. A somewhat related point is Ike’s handling of the name of the Biafran Head of State in the text. With the exception of once (166) and in two songs (12/13, 122), the Biafran leader is never mentioned by name; he is ever on people’s lips as ‘H.E.’ This is a solid indication of deep reverence and unequalled mass support which Dr Amilo acknowledges and even mentions to H.E. himself: ‘The civilians had given every possible support to the war effort, more support than he (Amilo) had read or heard about in any other war.... This unflinching support had come in spite of the severe hardships and deprivations confronting so many civilians’ (209). Another reason for the near-anonymity of the Biafran leader borders on onomastics. That he is just referred to as H.E. helps to mystify the man behind the wheels of Biafran state – a mystery that sustains the fictive nature of *Sunset at Dawn*. We know that *Sunset at Dawn* is a fabrication of fiction

from facts, and as such, it is mature creativity to be reticent about most of the intriguing truths about the war, in spite of any compelling urge to tell it as it is. We also cannot miss recognizing the said leader's choice of words in trying to dissuade Dr Amilo from his 'pet wish' – joining the army, which turns out ironically to be his own death wish:

I want to speak frankly to you. Biafra has *wasted* several of its intellectuals in this war. Chris Okigbo, Dr Imegwu, Joe Uchendu, Amamchukwu Okeke, Nathaniel Okpala, and so on. I do not want to *waste* any more if I can help it. Biafra needs their talent and their training for the realization of the goals of Biafranism, both now, and perhaps even more *after the noise of war has died away*. I do not want to add you to their list. (211)

Note the ring of uncertainty in the clause 'after the noise of war has died away' as opposed to a categorical optimism in, for instance, 'when we eventually stand as a nation'. Again, he chooses the word 'wasted' not 'lost' – with the semantic implication of *bereavement* in the above context, but the difference is that the former (which Ike chooses for H.E.) presupposes self-guilt.

Chukwuemeka Ike's descriptive powers rise to a crescendo with four most important narrations in the text: the Abagana miracle, the Obodo raid, the Umuahia raid and the final fate of Obodo.

#### *The Abagana Miracle*

With the help of the Biafran shore battery and the inaccessible Niger River terrain, Biafran forces keep the Nigerian forces at bay. Onitsha town is shelled for over five months, inhabitants sacked, yet the town remains *odi nso elu aka* (110).



The motorized column of the Second Division of the Nigerian Army, to which had been assigned the task of taking Onitsha at all costs, had the men and the materials for the cross-country invasion, and it did bulldoze its way through. The deadline for the capture of Onitsha was set for 31 March 1968. The advancing column, more than a hundred vehicles strong, carried more military hardware than Nigeria required to capture every inch of Biafran soil, and estimated at more than three times the armament stocked by the entire Nigerian Army before the blackout. A BBC commentator who appeared to have waited a lifetime for this final act in the Nigeria-Biafra drama, was unequivocal in his prediction that the end of Biafra was in sight. Africa's largest army, Africa's deadliest weapons, were on the march to Onitsha and Biafra lacked the capability and the ingenuity to delay the advance. The stage was at long last set for the capture of Onitsha, and the establishment of the much shorter and more direct link with Lagos across the Niger. With the capture of Onitsha, more men and materials could be poured into Biafra at will. By every enlightened calculation, Biafran resistance was short-lived. Radio Nigeria and Radio/TV Kaduna echoed the good news.

The column advanced steadily. Caterpillars cleared new routes wherever necessary. Army engineers quickly threw Bailey bridges across the narrow streams where Biafran engineers had blown the bridges. Biafran soldiers fought brave battles at Oji River, Ugwuoba, Awka and Enugu-Ukwu. The sum total of it all, however, was to delay the advance temporarily, not to stop it. The BBC prediction was correct. The column was now at Abagana, some twenty miles, or less than an hour, from Onitsha.

Then came the Abagana miracle. A Biafran bullet hit one of the fuel tankers in the column and set it ablaze. That was end of the invincible Nigerian armada. Hardly any person who had the courage to get near enough to the scene had the mouth to tell the story. It was miles of tankers, trailers, armoured vehicle, military hardware and human beings burnt, burning, charred, exploding, and smoking. A Biafran 'leader of thought' fainted at the sight of the trail of destruction....

...The 1966 pogrom had already established the Nigerians as a godless people. No god-fearing nation could have perpetrated such carnage on the peace-loving people

of Biafra. The trail left behind the Nigerian motorized column as it bulldozed its way to its Waterloo had given further proof of their godlessness. It must have given the vandal soldiers heathenish satisfaction to defecate within the sacrosanct altar of a magnificent Roman Catholic church on their route, in preference to the empty bush all around the church. (111 – 113)

In the wild excitement that follows the Abagana miracle, everybody – Prophet James, Chief Ukadike, the Public Enlightenment Officer, the Chairman of Obodo War Council – sings praises to God. The Youth Front chant ‘songs of the revolution’ about Nigerians who do not know God. At this point, the narrator cannot help joining the bandwagon. He carefully chooses the words that clearly show the narrator’s side in the whole drama: ‘The 1966 *pogrom*... Nigerians as a *godless people*.’ Nigerians have ‘*perpetrated such carnage on the peace-loving people of Biafra*.’ ‘... the Nigerian motorized column... bulldozed its way to its *Waterloo*’ as a ‘further proof of their *godlessness*. It must have given the *vandal soldiers heathenish satisfaction* to defecate within the sacrosanct altar of a magnificent Roman Catholic church on their route, in preference to the empty bush all around the church, ‘leaving an inscription on the archway: ‘WE HAVE COME TO DESTROY NOT TO SAVE... *Their humiliation and utter destruction at Abagana*....’ (113/114). From the semantic import of the italicised words and phrases, one sees an authorial sympathy for the Biafran forces but a collective antipathy for the Nigerian forces. With such subjective register selection that clearly suggests approval of the predicament of the motorized column of the Nigerian Army, the narrator unequivocally shows the side he belongs. Notice also the author’s tacit disapproval of the BBC commentator ‘who *appeared to have waited a lifetime* for this final act in the Nigeria-Biafra drama....’ Thus, the

motorized Second Division on a sinister mission to ‘destroy not to save’, by some misadventure is completely destroyed, no one saved. The writer tags the Abagana episode a *miracle* – sure, because in the eyes of the people and even the narrator, what has happened is a wonder, and has religious implications. It is all by Divine intervention since Biafran soldiers can only ‘delay the advance... not stop it’ because they do not have the military capability to stop the advancement.

The noticeable swinging of the action verbs from simple narrative past to the progressive mood: *burnt, burning, charred, exploding* and *smoking*, is an indication of eye-witness account of what *just happened* and what *is still happening* at the scene of the destruction. This eyewitness posture has contributed in fuelling the narrator’s emotions, and consequently his choice of words and phrases.

#### *The Obodo Raid.*

The author’s lexical selection here is remarkably different from what he has done with words in his description of the Abagana miracle. The first thing to notice in the narration is that the evidence of eyewitness account – the on-the-spot type, as in the Abagana miracle – is not discernible here. Narration is mainly based on second-hand information, with much concentration on the aftermath of the raid, the nature of the destruction. Thus, the Obodo raid narration starts with evidence of a non-eye-witness account in the Italicized words below.

Everyone at Obodo saw it as a callous, unprovoked and unprecedented slaughter of human beings.... *Those who saw it ...thought* it was one of the B-26 jets *alleged* to have been acquired by the Biafran

Government.... A white man *was seen* piloting it; *some said* they also saw an African sitting beside the pilot, pointing at the locations to be destroyed. *One woman was prepared to swear* that.... The plane could not have been over them for more than a minute or two.... *An old man dressed like a sunbather...told the pathetic story* of the unprecedented disaster. (136 – 138)

Whatever pieces of information the narrator has thus collected he presents vividly. ‘...all that remained of Prophet James’ church was the red laterite which previously constituted its walls. The thatched roof simply disappeared.... It was impossible to identify the prophet’s remains, or to tell from the ruins how many worshippers perished in the disaster. Bits of human flesh and fleshless bones were strewn over the entire area....’ (137). In a newly completed bungalow, the disaster struck, ‘wiping out an entire family – father, mother, and all the children except the eldest daughter...’ and ‘the aluminium sheets used in roofing the house looked like crumpled tinfoil.’ Another family: ‘The devastating bomb took care of them all, father, mother, and five children, smearing what was left of the battered gate with their blood and fragments of their flesh.’ A few yards away, the first son of the dead man, his younger brother and two sisters – ‘The bomb turned all four of them into minced meat.’ A knife repairer with his bicycle at the gate, who came to repair a knife for a refugee woman lodging there with her son, when the jet ‘swooped down noiselessly’ was not spared. ‘The bomb shattered knife repairer, woman, child, bicycle and knife. The scrap which survived it all resembled a rare archeological find...’ the wife to the owner of the house, their two children – ‘All three perished. All that remained to testify that life once existed there were the dilapidated mud walls, the burnt-out yam barn and the brownish, drooping, banana trees.... Two other houses were razed to the ground....’ Three children

there ‘were smashed to death’, their mother breastfeeding a child is unhurt, their walls perforated by bullets and ‘bits of reddish human flesh stuck here and there’ (137 – 139).

These powerful descriptions present a blood-chilling account of the nature of the destruction in the Obodo raid. The narrator chooses his words and phrases, and spares his reader no details: the jet-bomber he refers to as ‘harbinger of death’, the area that is bombed, he calls ‘circle of death’ – and this phrase is used ten times in this horrendous description of the Obodo raid to underline the intensity of the whole carnage. More of the choice phrases are ‘demolition bomb’, ‘napalm bomb’, ‘unprecedented disaster’, ‘unprecedented degree of suffering’, ‘inexplicable misfortune’ (139), amongst others. No reader fails to note the stylistic force of the adjectives here, especially in the pre-nominal positions – the intention of which is to convey, by these adjectives, the intensity of what even the rural people in a remote village of Biafra are going through in the war.

#### *The Umuahia Raid*

This shares the qualities of second-hand information with the Obodo raid. The narrator concentrates on the nature of the destruction. Second-hand information here is evidenced by such phrases as: *some of the spectators who saw him emerge.... At least ten tenants were said to have been killed.... A trader... recounted his story....* (179)

The lightning speed of the raid resulted in *conflicting accounts of what actually happened. Some eyewitnesses said.... Some others said.... An army officer claimed*

*that...* What was in no doubt was the disastrous outcome of the raid. (177)

And as in the Obodo raid, the narrator spares no detail of the destruction.

A crash followed, the noise of which could hardly be described. It was a combination of horrible sounds – exploding bombs, machine-gun fire, collapsing buildings. The house in which the young men had played *Whot* seconds earlier,... was immediately reduced to debris, as if a giant bulldozer had gone over it in the twinkling of an eye.... His undergraduate friend lay full length on the wreckage, his head completely smashed by a falling wall, like the head of an unlucky lizard smashed by a lorry.... a wealthy businessman, one of the many who had transferred their foreign exchange holdings abroad to the account of the Biafran Government to help with the war effort... lay in a coma,... his wife and six children crushed to death... his massive thirty-bedroom house, which brought him a regular income every month, was razed to the ground. At least ten tenants were said to have been killed as well.... The man's two lorries... were smashed beyond recognition.... Suitcases, a radio and record player... were smashed to smithereens.... It was in front of the (trader's) house that the war planes scored a bull's eye. Five Biafran Red Cross workers were killed; one of them... neatly chopped in two. A woman caught running down the external staircase had been disembowelled, and fell with her intestines spread over the staircase.... At the typing school across the road, items of clothing turned out to be the only clue for assembling the different portions of the students' dismembered bodies.... (178 – 180)

What Chukwuemeka Ike has achieved with his word power in these selections is to *tell it as it is*; there is no masking the true nature of the physical sufferings of the people of Biafra who, as long as the war lasts, are forced to live on their nerves with daily experiences of property destruction, human beings dismembered, disembowelled, chopped up like pieces of minced meat. Ike's linguistic stamina must have been heightened by his personal experiences in the Nigerian-Biafran war. Thus, his descriptions are highly coloured by his feelings,

and so his intention in these selected episodes is to present an eerie picture of unmitigated inhumanity of mankind as a result of war.

*The Fall of Obodo*

The fall of Nsukka, Ogoja, Bonny, Enugu, Onitsha, the Anang Province, Aba, Owerri, and other villages around these towns has one thing in common: people's determination to defend their towns and villages, with threats of 'fire and brimstone' on any 'vandal' that sets his foot on their soil. But each time, Biafra always falls below expectation. The case of Enugu, for instance, people are prepared to employ *street fighting, machete operations, wonder-striking mysterious medicine pot* from Anambra herbalists, etc, just to defend Enugu. But when the time comes, it turns out an appalling travesty on the part of Biafra. The author's tacit tone of utter disappointment at the Enugu debacle is evident in the story in the way he expresses it:

October 4, 1967.

Down came, the curtain. The melodrama had ended.  
*Enugu changed hands.*

Enugu simply *changed hands*, with no battles to defend it. (73 – 74)

Ike's choice of a theatre phrasal idiom, *down came the curtain*, signifying the end of a performance, is rephrased in the next sentence, *the melodrama had ended*, for the purpose of emphasis. The whole saga about Enugu is to the writer, unbelievably melodramatic.

When it comes to the turn of Onitsha, no one has the courage to stop and ask who is firing or where the shots are coming from:

... nobody in Onitsha at that time would have thought of doing so.... Even if you had stopped to asked, there would have been no one to answer.... Nobody had time to think. The natural reaction was to run for dear life, and to do so immediately.... No one had time to look for anybody. The traders... abandoning thousands of pounds' worth of wares. It was more chaotic than the stampede which followed the unannounced total eclipse of the sun in Eastern Nigeria in 1947. There was no question of running to the house to look for your family or to collect your personal effects. Every child in Biafra had of course been drilled in what action to take in such a situation – to move with the crowd rather than to roam about looking for the parents or next-of-kin. (104 – 105)

Prior to the fall of Obodo, a village meeting called by Chief Ofo is to map out how to defend Obodo. Individual speeches recount individual anger points and reasons why they, as Chief Ofo puts it, 'cannot stay as full-blooded men and stink like putrefying corpses' (57). But when the time comes, and the ferret closes in with the usual *kwapu kwapu unu d-u-u-um!* ('pack and quit all of you') sound, we are told: '...even the lizard runs without further warning' (194).

Ike narrates:

It was the sound of the *ikoro*, at first hardly discernible, but soon its clear sonorous message filled the air. *The spontaneous screams from the women as most of them abandoned their wares to rush home announced the end of the world.* (195)

And in fact, it announces the imminent end of the Biafran world! Ike reads Chief Ukadike's face '... a picture of utter hopelessness' (200). A mortar lands at



Nnewi junction – some 400 yards away, and Ike’s description details, in a somewhat uncomplicated diction, the final fate of Obodo.

It immediately disintegrated, hurling lethal shrapnel in all directions. An agonized shriek defied the resultant silence as one victory was registered for the advancing enemy: an old widow, hard of hearing, on her way to Chief Ofo’s compound to find out why the *ikoro* had been sounded, was cleanly disembowelled. She slumped down over the bloody mess. *The war was over for her.* (201)

For Geoffrey, the orderly sent to evacuate Dr Kanu’s parents, ‘The thought that he stood within reach of a live ferret sapped whatever courage still remained in him.’ He ‘hurriedly and nervously removed the things that would give him away as a soldier.... With luck, he might take advantage of the confusion as a civilian....’ (202). Ike continues with the details:

The race – ...the mass exodus from a town about to capitulate – the race away from Obodo began *like the uncoordinated and confused movement of soldier ants disturbed by the foot of an unobservant pedestrian*. Many villagers headed for the trunk road to Obia, while many others ran away from the same road as if death stalked them there. Ubaha villagers ran towards Mbom village, while Mbom villagers headed for Ubaha village. A woman who was warming her pot of bitterleaf soup when the ominous *ikoro* sounded put the pot in a basket and ran from the house with the basket on her head leaving behind the cassava *foofoo* which was to go with the soup. The soup spilled as she ran, trickling down her head. When she paused for breath, a safe distance on the footpath to Obia, what remained of the soup was not enough to go with more than a few balls of *foofoo*. She restrained herself from throwing it away, pot and basket included, when someone told her that the pot and the basket would come in handy in a refugee camp.... (203)

As Reverend Nehemiah Anwuna remembers the inscription on a church at Abagana – ‘We have come to destroy not to save’ – ‘He tiptoed out of the vestry,, as if he was escaping from an ambush, and made for the footpath to Obia, ignoring his driver who held the car door open for him and forgetting his Holy Bible, Book of Common Prayer and his reading glasses’ (203). Nduka had owned a supermarket at Onitsha, but with the Onitsha siege, Ike says ‘*All that remained of his supermarket was the bunch of keys in his pocket.*’ He is mad as a result. A middle-aged woman (his relation) is leading him. Another man is ‘*leading a goat with one hand and a child with the other*’. And within two hours, ‘*the disorderly ants had regrouped into one unending flow*, avoiding the trunk road for fear not only of the ferret but also of supporting enemy planes’ (203 – 204). Of note in Ike’s description here is his attention to details using simple plain diction. We note also the forceful deployment of simile when the shock, uncertainty and confusion level of the villagers is fresh and high, but within a space of two hours, the natural adjustment to shock, which is human, equates metaphorically to that of the soldier ants. And in the midst of the Obodo cataclysm, Ike drops spices of wry humour – about Rev. Anwuna, about madman Nduka, about the funny man leading a goat and a child and who later slings the hefty goat on his shoulders allowing the child to trudge along (because the goat, not the child, will become a source of income at the refugee camp). We notice also how the lexico-syntactic movement of the description assumes a somewhat demotic style, trailing the villagers’ uncertain movements, as they drift into a refugee camp, without their being aware of it, without the reader being aware of it too. At the camp:

Nobody spoke. A refugee lay dead on the verandah only yards away.... The dead man belonged to the group who had been refugees for over a year.... The dead man's corpse was still warm.... He lay on his right side, his face to the wall and his back as it were, to the world, to Nigeria and Biafra, to a war of which he had become completely oblivious. Close by, in the open... a man stirred the contents of a small earthen pot boiling on the fire – some vegetation collected from the nearest bush, boiled without salt, without pepper, without palm oil.... His skin from the waist up looked as if it had received a first coating of white wash. It was no longer thick enough to hide the outline of his ribs. He carried a mysterious lump on his left side just above the waistline... it gave him a stoop.... He hardly took any notice of the corpse. His fellow refugees took little notice of the corpse either.... It happened to be that particular man's turn today, nothing more.... The next day it would be someone else's turn.... Lying stark naked at the end of another school block was one refugee who looked ready to follow the yet unburied corpse. But for the upward and downward movement of his ribs as he breathed you would have counted him already dead.... The *cocoyam* leaf with which he received his ration of the cups of *garri* was abandoned on top of his ribs; he was too weak to throw it into the bush. His own brother – also fast emaciating, but with enough flesh still left on him to be able to wear a pair of Khaki shorts – his own brother walked past him unconcerned as if it meant nothing to him if his brother did not see the light of another day. Only the Camp Director... suspected he might be thirsty and ordered water for him. The water disappeared immediately, and so did a second cup.... The (man's) eyes closed again, shutting out the misery and hopelessness around him. (224 – 225)

The fascinating aspect of Ike's descriptions from the sack of Obodo to their ultimate drift into St David refugee camp lies in his successful use of uncomplicated diction to capture even the minutest details of the predicament of Obodo people. Thus, his description at this point adopts a lexico-syntactic simplicity, with words and expressions within the vocabulary range of the average

reader, unlike in the three other blood-chilling descriptions (discussed above) whose lexical selection is intent upon painting a gory picture of what obtains in an air raid or military ambush. The simple diction here is justified since the tale is winding up with the sack of Obodo. One might wonder what makes the fall of Obodo remarkable to the writer, or why it is different from the fall of other Biafran towns. It is common geometric knowledge that when a graph reaches its highest point, it falls. Chukwuemeka Ike's graphic description in *Sunset at Dawn* reaches its peak with the sack of Obodo and the subsequent refugee status at Camp David. From the outset, Ike has used Obodo as a typical Biafran village, and he locates the protagonist (Dr Amilo Kanu) there. Obodo falls. Amilo dies. The war ends. Biafra is erased from the map. And Ike's story ends!

### **3.6 THE CHICKEN CHASERS**

#### **3.6.1 Synopsis**

The novel is set in an imaginary place, Plassas, one of the seven fictive countries making up the African Cultural Organisation (ACO). The current Secretary General (SG) of the organization (not named) and his assistant (Saki) are from Manu. Mrs Peace Bozo (aka Baby Face) is Manu's Chief Delegate. Here in Plassas, there is a Manu High Commissioner (un-named).

Delegates arrive in Plassas. Baby Face is the centre of attraction. Saki, Prof. Fumi and Dr Stom (ACO Chairman), all nurse the ambition of becoming the new SG. Baby Face's hatred of the SG stems from sexual jealousy, the SG's denial of her desperate advances. She engages Mat who has a pathological hatred for the

SG to prevent a second term for the SG. Baby Face promises him the fun of sleeping with her when their plans work out.

The first day's deliberation ends in wrangling about logistics, mode of grouping of members, car allocations and sitting arrangements. The Chairman adjourns until 9:30 tomorrow morning.

Intrigues, counter-intrigues and private meetings take up the rest of that day. Afua (aka Black Beauty) grossly overcome with shock at the extent of the gang-up against the SG, laments in her hotel room.

On the request of Baby Face, the High Commissioner arranges a lunch in his house for all chief delegates present. The SG is excluded. The High Commissioner is sceptical about what Mat and Baby Face say about the SG. It baffles him that Manu Government would expose itself to international ridicule, and ethnic disaffection back at home. Dr Stom recounts his plans so far to the Plassas Minister of Youth and Culture. The Minister reminds him not to ignore the vital point about persecuting an innocent man.

Baby Face makes a surprise visit to the SG in his room. She tries some of her amorous antics on the SG, who rebuffs her. She admonishes him for being too self-confident. She cynically refers to Afua as the SG's 'Public Relations Officer'.

The next meeting, Baby Face feigns ill, and sends The High Commissioner to pass the information to Dr Stom that matters about SG's reappointment should be deferred until she rejoins the meeting tomorrow. Diplomatically, the

Commissioner considers it absurd to preside over the pulling down of his own nation in international circles. He decides to feign ill too, and sends the Head of Chancery to take the Baby Face message to Dr Stom. The message puts Dr Stom off, and he postpones the meeting to tomorrow.

Prof. Fumi is taken round on sightseeing, and then to a joint called 'The Saint' to 'unwind'. Phebean, the ' virgin', is arranged to satisfy his sexual urge.

The Plassas delegates meet to discuss Stom's candidature vis-à-vis Prof. Fumi's. The hit man who had arranged the 'virgin Phebean' returns a two-hour cassette tagged 'Operation Prof.' – Stom's intrigue that bugged the Prof.'s love escapades with Phebean.

The atmosphere at the conference venue on the 4<sup>th</sup> day is tense. Many delegates look distraught. Chass is shattered. Hotel reception confirms that Prof.Fumi checked out about 3 a.m.; nobody knows his whereabouts. Dr Stom is happy to have Baby Face speak. She conveys Manu Government's happiness at the good job the SG is doing and so, he is recommended for a 2<sup>nd</sup> term. This sudden twist disorganised Mat. Dr Stom's usual attacks of migraine and haemorrhoids suddenly return.

All members in support and in opposition visit the SG to congratulate him, Baby Face sends a car to bring SG to her new hotel room. Afua enjoins him to avoid Baby Face. At Baby Face's room, she narrates her life history, and the reason for convincing the Big Man not to grant the SG a 2<sup>nd</sup> term. But for some

reasons, she had to ask the Big Man to reverse the decision. Before they part, she enjoins the SG to avoid Afua.

### 3.6.2 Diction in *The Chicken Chasers*

Ike's success in *The Chicken Chasers* lies not much in stylistically outstanding sentence structures or paragraph designs, but in expert character delination, using simple everyday words. Another prominent aspect of diction in *The Chicken Chasers* is the use of peer-group slang.

One can see Mrs Peace Bozo as the most important character here because her actions direct the movement of the story in several ways. She whips up so much hatred and activities about the SG from Manu government (through the Big Man). She raises so much hopes among the SG's opposition. She dictates the pace of the ACO meeting. When she finally decides to change her mind, she gets Manu Government to retract their earlier decision. And in this sudden U-turn, the ACO meeting is shattered, all political and sexual ambitions from the opposition deflated. Ike has been able to web the whole story around her by using an uncomplicated selection of words.

First, he endows her with physical appearance that is incredibly outstanding, but with a level of jealousy beyond imagination.

... she was fifty: her sweet, wrinkleless face, always illuminated with a mesmerizing smile when she beamed her eyes on you, made her look no more than thirty. It was that face which had earned her the nickname Baby Face, a nickname which became so widely used that most people either forgot or did not care to find out her real name – Mrs Peace Bozo. (3)

With a *sweet face* devoid of wrinkles even at fifty, with eye-balls and smile that spell-bind men, with numerous artificialities to complement (artificial eye lashes and nails, and splashy outfit all the time), an enigmatic and complex character is created. She likes to be in the spotlight. Ike selects his words for her:

Baby Face knew she was the *cynosure* of all eyes, and made the most of it as she made her way *slowly, gorgeously*, and with *feline grace* down the gangway of Boeing 727 jet. She had wanted it that way: hence her choice of the *eye-catching dress*.(9)

She dreads age, (1,102, etc), and we learn that ‘she did not want anybody to know that she had clocked half a century’ (31). She is described as an ‘electrifying lady’ and ‘one of the Creator’s most exquisite, artistic creations’(33). Her greatest arsenal is her female charm. She knows it and would use it at any auspicious moment on anybody to achieve any objective – a destructive disposition which the SG refers to as ‘Bottom Power’.(181). Ike’s choice of words in reporting her speech is also suggestive of ‘a gorgeous woman’ (9) with easy virtue, as can be seen from the italicized adjectival and adverbial modifiers below.

“That’s better!” Baby Face pronounced happily. Then she changed her voice to something *flirtatious*... (1)  
 ‘You know what I mean,’ Baby Face replied, *blinking coyly*. (1)

When Dr Stom refers to her as ‘a captivating, heavenly body’, and tells her ‘You make me blush!’, Baby Face blinked *coquettishly* several times.... (30/31). This is why the general impression is that her body is some kind of “national cake” (3). But the enigma about this character is that even though every man that comes across her is captivated by her charm and coquettish nature, and wants to take her to bed, the truth is that she genuinely wants only one man – the SG. Ike



graphically describes, in a mixture of complete and choppy sentences, one of her coquettish displays while with the SG:

Her hands moved with surprising agility. Snap here. Snap there. She pulled out her bra, flung her blouse aside to expose a pair of breasts resembling well-rounded yam mounds. You had to look at them from the sides to observe that they sagged a little. She undid her wrapper, and in no time her pink nylon underwear was on the back seat of the car. Then her left hand landed on the zip of his pair of trousers. All in the twinkling of an eye. (101)

Not all the promises she makes, and the hopes she raises about the possibility of the men going to bed with her ever come through. Dr Stom also nurses the hope of ‘having Baby Face immediately as a condition for his continued support’ (81). Nothing of that sort ever happens throughout. Professor Fumi for example, feels that if Baby Face ‘needs the support of the Shika delegation, then she must play ball’ – that is, she should submit to having sex with him as Shika Chief Delegate (45). He continues to ‘hope for a bedtime reward’ from her (45) until the Phebean scandal chases him away from the meeting.

Three days ahead of time, Baby Face sends Mat to Plassas to: ‘... see anybody worth seeing. Do anything worth doing. Spend any amount of money you consider necessary... (so as to) achieve success’ (2) in the bid to dethrone the SG. Her last injunction to Mat is ‘Whatever you do, you must keep all your masculinity intact until I join you. You’ll find you’ll need all of it!’ (2). This is the reason why a friend to Mat advises him to ‘enjoy his own share of the national cake whenever he had the opportunity, and thereafter run as fast as his legs could carry him!’ (3). Mat does not understand the complexity of the woman he is

dealing with. He feels that he is all out to pull down the SG. ‘Not even the most enchanting mammy water would swing him away from that primary objective. He hoped Baby Face would see things the same way and keep her thighs shut until victory had been won’ (4). Saki confesses that ‘... each time I have tried to pin her down, she has proved more slippery than the eel’ (127). ABC says ‘... That woman is one of the most dangerous women in my country, even though she looks one of the sweetest and most desirable...’ (75). Mat adds that

Ever since she set foot in this country, I have been remonstrating with her to keep her waist on a leash. If only she can wait until we accomplish our mission, she can spend one extra week here and open her thighs for every passer-by. I intend to spend two extra days myself. But, no! Baby Face can’t sleep alone, they say of her at home. I didn’t know she is such a nympho. (128)

But far from this, she is only using Mat to achieve her aim; and when (as she later confesses to SG) she finds the facts gathered by Mat and Saki ‘as worthless as ever’, she declares: ‘I will file a full report on Mat when I get back’. (81)

The Manu High Commissioner, a highly reasonable and astute diplomat understands Baby Face perfectly, even though this is the first time he ever met her. Ike narrates the High Commissioner’s assessment of Baby Face using the High Commissioner’s focalization:

... she was the kind of charming lady a sensible diplomat must handle as he would handle a raw egg. She had dropped sufficient hints for even a man stone deaf to pick up – that she had the Big Man in her pocket (– perhaps, more appropriately, in her panties!) That alone was sufficient to keep a man with a family to feed a respectable distance from her, her tantalizing bodily charm notwithstanding.

The more you got to know her, the more it became obvious that she was not seriously interested in you as a human being. She saw you as a tool, pure and simple. You were at her disposal, to be used at will to meet her wishes, and to be disposed off when you had served her purpose. He doubted whether your ethnic origin or your rank as such meant anything to her! She would discard you all the same as soon as she was convinced you were no longer of use to her.

Thank goodness one of the qualities his diplomatic career had inculcated into him was the art of duplicity, the ability to kill with the immortals and mourn with the mortals! If Baby Face could penetrate the veneer of pleasantness and commitment on his face to the real feeling in his heart, she would have got him fired with immediate effect and automatic alacrity.... (111)

The SG himself (not named) is portrayed as an exemplary character, somewhat near Christ-figure – diligent, accepting his fate with calmness and fortitude. In fact, on several occasions the Biblical allusion to Christ is made. (74, 77) Ike presents him as a catalyst exposing the moral turpitude of people in authority, and the senselessness characteristic of leadership in developing Africa – where decisions are manipulated, distorted, maneuvered by selfish and sensual pleasures, where mediocrity murders merit. This is a place where the Big Man and others at the helm of affairs are bereft of their sense of goodness by ‘bottom power’! The SG stands out morally, especially as Black Beauty (a delicate temptation) and Baby Face (with her blind, destructive tendencies of love) could not mar the quality of his morality, even at very critical moments. We can sift out further words of proof from the light-hearted conversation among ABC, Black Beauty and Junior below.

*I can swear that all the stories and documents being peddled by Mat, Chass, Saki and others are completely*

*false and unfounded,*’ affirmed ABC. ‘So the stories of Afua being his mistress. Anybody who knows the SG as I do, and knows the relationship between him and his adorable wife, *will not think of charging him with sexual immorality.*’ And in a whisper he added, ‘I wish, though, he would pass on Afua to me! I wouldn’t be as naive!’

‘You’ve seen a chattel, to be passed around!’ Black Beauty protested.

‘Seriously,’ continued ABC. The only fly in the ointment is that the SG lacks political instinct. Because *he is an honest man*, he has the naivety to assume that every other person around him is honest. He has that religious belief that truth will fight back his adversaries with their own weapons. Because *he brings a high degree of probity to his work*, he deludes himself into believing that his good work will speak for him. But we all know that things don’t go that way in this world. The rain, they say, falls more on the just than on the unjust. Why? Because the unjust has stolen the just’s umbrella!’ (71-72)

Another interesting thing about SG’s portrait is that all his adversaries admit privately/inwardly that he is impeccable; but greed and inordinate ambition (material and sensual) subdue their good senses.

From the date the special conditions of service for the SG were approved by the Executive Board, Professor Fumi had secretly sworn to be the next SG. He could not even wait for the SG to complete his first term. Unfortunately, none of the various traps he set for the SG caught him. It was not easy to trap a man who keeps his distance from wine, women or easy money. Worse still, much as he did not wish to admit it, the SG was doing an excellent job. The ACO under him was making positive contributions to cultural renaissance in the various Member Countries. (29)

Baby Face confides in Dr Stom:

‘We are finding it difficult, I must confess, to come up with any serious grounds,’ (against the SG)... (Mat)

produced quite a dossier for the Government on the SG. It seemed so watertight. That was how the Government came into the show in the first instance. The Government acted swiftly and organized quite an extensive and expensive probe into the allegations. In all honesty, nothing was found against the man. Nothing at all. I am telling you this in confidence.’(35)

And much later, she inadvertently states the obvious facts about SG’s personality:

‘Tell me,’ she shouted from the bathroom. ‘Why are you always so confident? So cock sure of yourself that even without opening your mouth you make your opponents lose confidence in themselves?’ (107)

Ike’s sketch of Dr Stom is thus given:

From the very first day he met the SG, following his election as Chairman, Dr Stom had been struck down by inferiority complex. As if with the deliberate intention of humiliating him, a female delegate to the very first meeting he attended as Chairman had made the unkind remark that the SG standing side by side with him reminded her of the long and short of life. From that day on, he had avoided any occasion that would bring him and the SG together standing. But even when they sat down around the same table, when the difference in height was not that obvious, Dr Stom still felt overshadowed and engulfed by the SG.

What particularly hurt his manly pride was the fact that none of the girls employed in the Secretariat appeared in the least interested in him, notwithstanding his high office and the expensive gifts he lavished on them. And yet they took obvious delight in milling round the SG.

He swore he would do everything possible to get the SG out. (38)

Dr Stom, well known in his university where he is Vice-Chancellor, is a man

‘Everyone at the university knew... as a master schemer. A most vicious and ruthless one at that, who would stop at nothing to achieve his ambition. Everyone

knew the obnoxious methods he adopted to achieve the position of Vice-Chancellor, including using his wife to trap a very highly placed member of the Government who had to buy his manhood and honour by getting him the Vice-Chancellorship at all costs.... Dr Stom's moral bankruptcy had further escalated his unpopularity on the campus. When on heat, he knew no bounds' (79). The Minister for Youth summarises: 'Dr Stom had confirmed that he was a master schemer. A man to be dreaded! (136) ...you could not brush Dr Stom aside and get away with it in Plassas.... To attempt to topple him was tantamount to castrating yourself' (80). This can be seen from the way he is weaving his plans, as intrigues topple intrigues in the four days of ACO meeting. He sees the opportunity that Manu is championing the removal of her citizen to replace him as SG. Mesmerized by Baby Face's appearance, he, like a drunk, counts five irrelevant points against the SG, but right in his mind, that the SG is truly impeccable is the unnumbered point. When he learns of the Professor's ambition, he vows 'to deal a knockout blow' on him and his Shika supporters (81) and to 'teach him that I have crushed more eminent Professors in my career!' (81). This he accomplishes with *Operation Prof* involving the Phebean scandal at *The Saint*. For the four days of ACO meeting, he does nothing but plot how to satisfy his political interests and moral depravity. Ike has a powerful description of his reveries about Baby Face at a time when, by his calculations, all things are moving according to his intrigues: 'The firm and uncompromising grip which he now had over the meeting would take care of whatever remained, anticipated or unforeseen. At the end of it all, he would devote the rest of the day to

champagning, dining and loving Baby Face’ (155). Apparently, he has tilled all grounds for his ascendancy to the post of SG by unanimous votes, hoping that Baby Face’s pronouncement would be the crowning speech from the wealthiest member nation of the ACO. But his greatest self-undoing is his underrating of Baby Face’s enigmatic disposition. The bombshell from Baby Face in a ‘slow, dignified, unruffled voice’ that Manu Government has approved the incumbent SG’s 2<sup>nd</sup> term crashes all his plots. Ike narrates the level of tension in Dr Stom at this moment with such a direct and unmitigated diction that leaves the reader with the impression that that serves him right.

The Chairman shut both eyes tight as he pressed his left palm on his temple. *His migraine had suddenly descended on him, this time with unprecedented viciousness.* He was sure *his head would split right down the middle.* Lower down, *his hemorrhoids had suddenly come back to life.* He had to end the meeting in no time if *his pounding heart would not explode* as well. *Everything just spun round and round and round and round in front of him, as if he was in a trance.* (161)

Dr Stom truly epitomizes those African politicians who have ‘no qualms in using the most detestable underhand methods to achieve power’ (138).

Miss Afua (aka Black Beauty) is from Shika, and she knows the Shika delegates so well that she has a mental dossier on each of them. From her experience in the ACO, she knows Saki (the ASG) very well. Ike allows her to use venomous diction on Saki and each of the Shika delegates just to demonstrate her loaded mind, a state of mind crammed with hatred and revulsion. She thinks of Saki as ‘That archeological specimen. That pig which will always remain a pig

no matter what grooming or scrubbing you give it!... No wonder, he seemed to be endowed with the maturity and intelligence of a ten-year-old!... Blinded by his ambition, he allowed soulless people like Mat to turn him into a Judas Iscariot! A thoroughly incompetent man, who spent more time planning intrigues than in work, hoping to become the SG just like that!’ (59). For Selah, she tags him ‘number two Judas.... He hated change. He abhorred speed, anything that smacked of urgency: files were to be sat on, not dealt with expeditiously’ (59). She reveals that Professor Fumi is ‘A man who was said to have cheated in the School Certificate examination. A man who, when on heat, was unable to distinguish between his wife and his niece, nor between a nun and a prostitute. A slippery character who would stop at nothing to achieve his ambition. Professor, professor, Professor all the time. All everyone knew was that he achieved his professorship by being a shrewd, calculating grasshopper. A master opportunist, in the good books of every group in power (59 – 60). Chass, described by Ike as the Professor’s ‘alter ego’ (145), is seen by Black Beauty as ‘A once brilliant scholar who mortgaged his conscience for a mess of pottage, and became a boot-licker. That human chimney, constantly belching smoke from his mouth and nostrils. A man older than Afua’s father but who, because he was a member of the Executive Board, saw every female employee of the Secretariat staff as his for the asking. The brute who thought he could get her with a bottle of brandy!’ (60).

She is a character presented as a litmus test to the SG’s morality. True to her nickname, she is extremely beautiful, and every man that comes her way finds her beauty irresistible, except for the SG. Alhaji showers gifts on her which she does



not regard. For her sake, Francis (her first love) committed suicide (54). She is equally extremely intelligent, with a first class honours degree at 23 years (54). Loveday was one of the early acquaintances she had. From Loveday's focalization, Ike creates a character whose physical, mental and moral disposition is a sleeping temptation to the SG.

Afua exuded the natural beauty which made men crash their cars in an attempt to catch another glimpse of her as she walked past. A little above average in height, there was *a glossy blackness* about her skin which made men wonder whether God had used *a pebble to smoothen her skin* while in the creator's mould. *Her nose was straight like a bamboo, but not sharp like Caucasian noses.* Everything about her was nicely rounded off. The hair on her head was so luxuriant and glossy that many people would bet she wore a wig. *Her dense, black eyebrows provided cover for a pair of rather large eyes.* (55)

Ike continues in Loveday's focalization.

Her physical charm, including even her rather small bust, stirred up his love of art, *and portrayed her as the masterpiece of a master artist, to be handled with utmost respect and reverence.* It was a joy simply to sit in front of her and watch her talk, her face perpetually lit with her disarming, un-dimpled smile. Her *razor sharp wit* and her logical reasoning impelled a mental alertness in him each time they were together. (56)

Her attachment to the SG is platonic, even though she admits to her detractors: 'Which girl would not like to have such a tall, masculine, internationally famous man as husband, boy-friend, or whatever name you give it!' (70)

And her last conversation with the SG (when the drama of 2<sup>nd</sup> term is over) smacks of innocent jealousy:

‘And, please, do your best to avoid being alone with Baby Face,’.... ‘Nothing is beyond such a woman when she is on heat.’ (171)

And it is a misconception of this innocent and platonic relationship that excites the animal jealousy in Baby Face, a jealousy that shakes the credibility of the Manu government, exposing it to international ridicule. Baby Face’s last communication with the SG: ‘Everything I have is waiting for you, as the water in the broken pitcher waits for the thirsty dog!’ ... (185). ‘Don’t let your Executive Assistant get anywhere near you, honey. Okay?’ (184) can be compared with that from Afua (quoted above) – the former being naïve, harmless and normal human jealousy, while the other, a fiery, destructive, animal jealousy.

Generally, she is created, in the novel, to serve two roles: as a yardstick for measuring the SG’s morality and as an instrument that helps in whipping up the animal jealousy in Baby Face – the jealousy that prompts the entire four-day events of the novel.

### **3.6.3 Peer-group Slang in *The Chicken Chasers***

In *The Chicken Chasers*, Ike does not only succeed in using simple everyday words and phrases to delineate complex characters, he goes a step further to varnish his story with peer-group slang. Fowler (316) reminds us that ‘Slang is the diction that results from the favourite game among the young and lively of playing with words and renaming things and actions; some invent new words, or mutilate or misapply the old, for the pleasure of novelty, and others catch up such words for the pleasure of being in fashion....’

Katie Wales (424) remarks that ‘slang reveals a remarkable expressiveness and creativity... making considerable use of neologisms.... etc’

On their arrival at Plasssas, Ike presents the conversation between Professor Fumi and Chass.

‘How’s the Liberty Hotel?’ enquired Professor Fumi...

‘As *fertile* as ever,’ Chass replied....

‘Am I likely *to stretch my spine* tonight?’

‘Everything laid on, sir: a room at your disposal throughout the week, and a seventeen year old *poodle* to *soothe* your nerves at eight.’ *The poodle* was their current nickname for a young, pretty, shapely girl. (23)

To say that the hotel is *fertile* implies rich in the kind of girls they like. ‘To stretch my spine’ is a slang phrase between Chass and the Professor for ‘having intercourse’. And ‘to soothe your nerves’ follows the same line of metaphor.

At the meeting between Professor Fumi and Dr Stom, the former asks the latter: ‘should I ask Chass to lay on a *poodle* for our distinguished Chairman, Sir?’

‘Boy, oh boy!’ Dr Stom rubbed his palms together with glee. ‘As if you know I’m not an abstainer! I sure need a *poodle*, but maybe later. Right now my eyes are on a *much bigger catch!* (Baby Face). (44/45)

To *lay on a poodle* is a slang phrase they derived from the idea of *carefully arranging and putting the girl in a proper place to wait for the man*. Here also Dr Stom introduces the peer-group fishing metaphor ‘catch’ for *girls*. And between Chass and Professor Fumi, the latter says, ‘If she (Baby Face) needs the support of the Shika delegation, then she *must play ball*’ (45), that is, she has to submit to

his sexual advances. *To mow her down* (122) means to have carnal relations with her. *Troopcarriers* (120) is their slang word for condoms.

When Junior is surprised that an Irish priest was looking through a girl's album, ABC snapped at him: 'Wasn't he born by a woman?... Or doesn't he carry a *pendulum* as you do?' (71). *Pendulum* here refers to the male organ which swings/or dangles like a pendulum. This image of the male organ dangling proudly is Ike's favourite and he expresses it in various forms: in the amorous wrestle Chass had with Afua in *The Chicken Chasers*, Ike's narration tells us 'It was as if Afua sensed his trick, as if she knew he was still *sporting his naked manhood* in front of him, determined to make no mistake this time....' (62). In *Sunset at Dawn*, Chief Ofo says, '...I agree that the *ikoro* should be sounded to summon every Obodo human being who *sports a penis*, to plan how to save our town' (197). In the said novels, the phallic image created is either *symbolic of male authority and strength* or simply implies *to have, or wear, or display proudly, the male organ*.

Black Beauty (Afua) doubles as Executive Assistant to the SG and as his Public Relations Officer. But to Baby Face and members of the opposition, the nomenclature *Public Relations Officer* is twisted to drop the 'l' in *public*, thus they nicknamed her the SG's *Pub-ic Relations Officer* (102), *Pubic Relations Officer*, in this sense, means that Black Beauty is the officer that takes care of SG's private part. This is a mischievous slang, which the opposition uses freely to tarnish the SG's image.

Talking about Black Beauty, Mat tells Saki:

‘She can’t do anything in this matter, except try to corrupt every delegate with *her bearded meat*. But who cares for *smoked acada meat* when there’s such a variety of *fresh meat* around you, begging to be eaten?’ (125)

“Her bearded meat” is her sex organ, ‘bearded’ in the sense of pubic hair; “smoked acada meat” as opposed to the appealing “fresh meat” implies *old and wizened* as opposed to *new and succulent* females. *Acada* suggested that such women have spent so much time in the academia, hence age is no longer on their side.

When Dr Stom feels everything is moving in consonance with his intrigues, he dreams big of making Baby Face Chairman of ACO and to make her happy in bed as much as possible since no woman could accuse him of deficiency in *bedmatics!* (135). Here is a crude coinage that clips off the initial syllables of the word *mathematics*, substituting with the word *bed* to imply proper knowledge of sexual activities in bed.

While discussing with Samjo, Junior and ABC after the victory, SG denies any carnal relationship between himself and Afua. Here is Junior shouting gleefully: ‘You’ve all heard him wash his hands off her.... *When I tumble her*, no one should accuse me of snatching my friend’s girl!’ (164). *When I tumble her* implies *when I get her to fall for me*.

To *unwind* which is a standard expression for ‘to stop worrying, and relax’ is commonly used by them, and Baby Face adds *to disvirgin* the bottle of wine

(175). This is not an English word, but it is coined by prefixing the morpheme *dis* to the base word *virgin*. In this type of prefixation, the morpheme *dis* implies the opposite, or a reversal, of the action of the base word. So, the un-English coinage refers to ‘opening and tasting’ a hitherto cocked wine.

The use of female charm and sexual advantage is what the SG recognizes as *bottom power* – which is what Baby Face uses to sway the Big Man and the Representatives of Manu, a power which fails to have effect on the SG; and it is the *power* that is central to the entire story of *The Chicken Chasers*.

When we look at these words and expressions we recognize, as the slangs show, that their imports point to one direction: sex.

What Ike has done with peer-group slang here is deliberate: he has used these indecent slang words and phrases to further emphasize the level of moral depravity among the ruling class in the African Organisation.

### **3.7      *EXPO '77***

#### **3.7.1    Synopsis**

*Expo '77* is a novel with a triangular setting: moving from Lagos to the East, then to the north and back to Lagos. Dr Buka is the Acting Registrar of National Exams Board (NEB). There have been rumours and petitions about leakage of the 1977 Secondary School exams.

The Chairman of the Board hires private detectives (Tutuntu and Company) to investigate the cases. Mora is the Managing Director of Tutuntu. Dr Buka, at

first, gives a frosty reception, certain that the investigation would come to naught. Nelly, Buka's secretary, advises him to co-operate with Tutuntu.

Meanwhile, three young friends: Jibril, Olusegun-Shege and Comfort from different schools are partners in a desperate daily hunt for question papers which they code-name "cronjes". Comfort narrates how the five hundred candidates of her school contributed money tagged *Exam Comfort Fund* for the supervisor to give them question papers a day before the exam. He defaulted, and as a compensation, teachers were allowed into the exam hall to help.

Mora pays a surprise visit to a secondary school in Edoben. He discovers that the students are at the Principal's backyard copying from their textbooks.

Next, Mora makes a trip to Owerri. Before Owerri, at Amuda, he notices a crowd of students on the verge of mobbing someone they claim came to sell geography II question papers. He takes hold of the five question papers recovered from the vendor as exhibit and hands the vendor to the police.

At the exam hall of Girls' Secondary School, Owerri, he apprehends one Stella Awojobi. On a search of all the girls, virtually every one of them has a sheet folded like a sanitary pad and tucked away into her panties! Crest-fallen and supplicatory, the Principal and the Supervisor plead to no avail. Stella names her friend, Bunmi Omotosho. She schools in Lagos. With 'Bunmi's photograph, Mora follows the lead back to Lagos.

Meanwhile, the trio who represent daily hunters of question papers meet. Comfort reports how their supervisor and teachers devised a means of using

number of “raps” on the invigilator’s table to determine which letter to shade in a multiple-choice paper. When the Supervisor and the students disagreed on how to handle the essay type, irate students burnt the supervisor’s car. Comfort informs them that an NEB official invited her to Sugar-Daddy Rest House. The man said he could help since he is Head of Marking and Awards Department. Olusegun prefers that line of assistance to the daily hunt for ‘cronjes’.

Mora arrives back in Lagos, straight to ’Bunmi’s school. The principal of Girls’ Secondary School Lagos is Rev. Sister Evangeline Angelica Anya. She recognizes ’Bunmi by the photograph. Mora apprehends ’Bunmi, and a boy from Tudu Seminary in the North named. Mora’s investigation goes up north.

Meanwhile, Mora’s junior colleague (Koko) narrates how far he had gone with his own investigations at Lagos. Diokpa, another of Mora’s workers narrates his own experience with one Godson Ekeocha.

Meanwhile, Jibril tries to steal question papers from their principal’s office (to please Comfort) but he is caught. Comfort meets her own side of the arrangement with Dapri the NEB official.

Mora arrives Tudu Union Seminary, and the boy involved is Innocent Paul Chikere. Mora confirms that Innocent sent the questions to ’Bunmi. On re-inspection of the question papers in the Director’s office, he discovers that all the papers had been ingeniously tampered with.

From Diokpa’s side of the investigation, an employee in the Exam Administration Department of NEB is in league with Godson. A detective from



Tutuntu, in the guise of a vacation student, is deployed to assist Dapri in the office. Dapri uses him to sort out the scripts belonging to Comfort and Olusegun, and he is nabbed in the process.

Koko and Mora hatch a plan, and Koko feigns mad so as to discover the extent of a herbalist's involvement in the expo saga. They discover that Innocent was once ill, and the herbalist cured him, and through this acquaintance, he convinced Innocent and his peers to steal question papers from the Director's custody.

### **3.7.2 Diction in *Expo '77***

The history of cheating in examinations is as old as the evolution of examination itself; it is not geographically restricted, nor is it ethnically or linguistically localized. As a result, the vocabulary and expressions for the act of cheating in exams vary according to ethnic, linguistic and peer groups. Outside the realms of the novel, we hear such words as:

To giraffe – a form of cheating involving the culprit stretching out eyes and neck in order to copy what someone else is writing in an exam.

This usage is derived from the animal, giraffe, with a long stretching neck.

To dub – a form of cheating that involves either the above, or copying from an extraneous material illegally brought into the exam hall. This originates from the film industry where an original language of a programme is replaced with another.

To 'kwashe' – of Hausa origin, implying 'to carry' something illegitimate into the examination.

To 'mapia' – a slang derived possibly from Igbo *kopia*, meaning 'to dub' (as implied above).

Depending on how the culprit feels about the size and strength of the illegitimate material brought in, various English nouns are used to describe them: *bullet*, *bomb*, *missile*, *microchips*. The last here has its origin in computer technology – referring to a very small piece of material that is a semi-conductor, used to carry a complicated electronic circuit. On a small piece of paper can be copied very tiny information that can be developed into large volumes of information in the examination. The hand writing here is so tiny that most of the time, only the writer can decode it. Students of Igbo origin translate *microchips* as *kiri-kiri*.

*Expo '77* exposes several ways students cheat in secondary school examinations in Nigeria. The different ways of cheating have provided the reader with some kind of thesaurus on each way: (a) *the sanitary pad method* and its indecent and putrid vocabulary, (b) *the daily hunting of question papers* and their slang and code. There is a third aspect of the cheating wherein the culprits are loosely organized to help one another in the exam hall in any way possible. Here, the system of information passage borders on kinesics and proxemics, that is, various aspects of non-verbal communicative behaviour, as shown in the following narration:

Comfort divulged how they received assistance in respect of the multiple-choice objective type questions. A

code had been agreed with the invigilators beforehand. A rap on the invigilators desk meant that the candidates should shade option (a) on their objective answer sheets. Two raps meant option (b), three raps option (c), and four raps option (d). As soon as the packet of question papers was torn open, a copy of the question paper was taken away by the teacher of the subject. He went through the questions rapidly, shaded the answers, and either came in to serve as invigilator for the session or handed the completed answer sheet to the invigilator who then rapped out the answers to the candidates. (71)

A fourth aspect involves highly individualized culprits who, in various modes, smuggle extraneous material into the examination, as exemplified by the girl caught during Biology practicals with diagrams on *her breasts and thighs* (122).

The daily hunters of question papers are represented by the trio: Olusegun, Jibril and Comfort. The question papers they are hunting for are referred to in their own slang as *cronjes*, (26, 31, 117) *sure bankers* (26, 45). To them, to pass is a must, by either hook or crook, ‘We... have to use our brains if we are to *survive*’ (28). Olusegun tells Comfort, ‘I don’t know why you didn’t meet him (the NEB man) earlier. We would not have wasted our precious time running after *cronjes* and *bankers* and *perms!*’ (147). *Cronjes* is a slang of indeterminate etymology, but *bankers* and *perms* have their history in the game of football pools. When they contribute money to bribe the supervisor, it is not bribe, but Examination Comfort Funds (31). To others at Apapa, it is ‘a hunt’ (99) for ‘drugs’ (100), and the dealer Joe is the ‘doctor’ (100). A superintendent of Police tells Mora:

The whole thing is like smuggling. I remember when I was posted to the East, the Igbo people called it “*afia akpa*”. The men carried their contraband “*panya*”

brandy and whisky in large, black handbags. They never displayed them in the open market. (125)

At Amuda, some 20km to Owerri, the question paper vendor says each is selling at two hundred Naira because ‘Dis one na proper one, .No be *panya!*’ (46) implying that his wares are genuine, not fake. Ironically, the geography II paper he is orchestrating as ‘proper one’ turns out to be fake. In the conversation between Mora and Buka, after it has been narrated to the latter that question papers actually leaked, the latter asks: ‘Had they been *compromised* by then?’ Mora responds: ‘of course, sir. They were *compromised* before the first paper was taken.’ (185)

The use of *compromise* here may be obscure but it is educated and conveys the meaning of ‘expose’, especially that which is supposed to be secret. Buka refers to the cheats as *future bandits, budding criminals* (13). The sanitary pad method (53): here is Ike’s description:

As he approached the door into the hall, looking over the dwarf wall he observed that a girl sitting at a far corner was tugging at something *under her skirt*. He stopped dead, curious to find out what she was doing, and yet conscious of the impropriety of staring into *a girl’s open skirt*. (50)

After searching them, each of the thirty-four girls Mora caught, ‘had a sheet of paper folded like *sanitary pad* and tucked into *her panties!*’ (51). And he tells the principal that it is inconceivable that ‘all your girls were having *their monthly periods* at the same time’ (51). The notes were found in their *intimate parts* (56), in their *undies* (58). When the girls are brought in a Black Maria for interrogation, Ike’s words are pungent in description:

The armed escort jumped down from the side of the driver, slung his rifle to his side, and walked briskly to the back of the lorry. He unlocked the huge, copper-coloured padlock which secured the steel bar across the double steel doors, and ordered the inmates to jump down. As the girls scrambled down, there were jeers from the curious crowd, mingled with expressions of sympathy.

Smack! Sparks flew out of the girl's eyes as the escort's wizened palm struck her face: 'Remove your hand from your bloody forking face, idiot! When you dey hide exam paper for your wetin call, you no shame!' (61)

*Wetin call* here is a somewhat euphemistic pidgin expression that tends to avoid mentioning the private parts of the girls. To crown it all, here is Ike's narration of Mora's thoughts:

How he wished the pieces of paper extracted from the *inner recesses* of the girls had yielded some readily identifiable evidence. The notes on the pieces of paper followed no pattern. The girls had obviously adopted the *sanitary pad* method, not because they had pooled their resources together to prepare identical notes, but because they had invented a unique and ingenious method for smuggling notes into the examination hall. Not even the most conscientious Supervisor would dare request a female candidate to bare her *holy of holies*!(54)

The italicized words are very remarkable in the present circumstances: *sanitary pad*, *inner recesses* of the girls, their *holy of holies*. The use of *sanitary pad* directly evokes the image of their pudenda, the *inner recesses* suggests the hidden or secret part of their body, while *their holy of holies* has the religious undertone of *the most sacred* part of their body. It is ironical therefore, that that most sacred part has been most desecrated.

In the novel are certain words of non-English origin but whose meanings are clear in the contexts the characters use them: *wahala* (117, 94), *molue*,

*footroen* (99), *ojare* (144), *inyanga* (145), *wayo* (24), *koboko* (177). These words can be seen as aspects of sociolect, which the writer uses to locate the novel in its social context.

At Edoben, the cheating going on in the principal's office involves the supervisor and the female students as they solve the examination questions together in the privacy of the principal's office, amidst some carnal misdemeanor. Ike's narration here is masterly:

The Supervisor, *his* shirt unbuttoned, *his* trunk bathed in sweat, *his* feet in socks without shoes, *his* belt unbuckled, stared at the Principal and then at Mora, tongue-tied.

‘He’s an Inspector sent by the Examinations Board,’ the Principal answered the unspoken question. ‘I’ll explain later.’

‘Yes, each of you will explain shortly,’ Mora replied, brushing past the Supervisor who was still in a daze. ‘And you too,’ he addressed a teenage girl who had been trying hard but unsuccessfully to zip her dress behind. The zip had caught on the unfastened bra. (38 – 39)

Note the repetition of *his* above as an antecedent marker emphasizing the state of the supervisor – in a daze! This first sentence is a deliberate absolute construction. An absolute construction is a highly formal construction whereby the parenthetical clause has its own subject and an *-ed* or *-ing* participle as its verb (or sometimes no verb at all). Where the parenthesis involves a phrase; no subject is involved in the parenthetical phrase. Absolute construction is rare in Ike's novels. He has deliberately employed this unusual construction here to a masterly

effect: using the unusual linguistic construction to describe the unusual anti-social behaviour of the Supervisor.

Another aspect that could be classed under Ike's diction has to do with the description of Dr Buka's secretary. Chukwuemeka Ike describes the Acting Registrar's secretary:

A bashful smile of appreciation illuminated Nelly's *pretty face*. Dr Buka had always maintained that *if beauty contests were won by the most beautiful girls around, Nelly would capture the Miss World trophy effortlessly*. No matter from what angle he looked at her, she was a *smasher*. *Fair skinned*. Somewhere between a ripe pawpaw and a ripe banana, but without the freckles associated with albinos and many white women. *A pair of innocent brown eyes, separated by a distinguished beautifully rounded nose. A lovely pair of cheeks, full without being excessively chubby, specially modelled by the Creator as if to prove that cheeks could be lovely without having dimples. Luxuriant, jet black hair....* (8)

This description is given early in the novel. Then later, with equally captivating phraseology, Ike talks of her 'breathtaking beauty, her disarming smile and sweet singsong voice... an entirely different breed of secretary, with a rare, no, unique, combination of youth, beauty, and pleasantness.... The secretary had not only a Miss World face, a sweet voice, and pleasant manners but also an artistic figure, the type any sculptor would love to carve in the nude' (151). We remember Ike's portrait of Afua (Black Beauty) in *The Chicken Chasers* almost in the same way as Nelly here. We noted that Afua's description is for a purpose – creating her with so much sex appeal introduces a sleeping temptation to the Secretary-General of ACO, thereby using her as a standard for measuring the SG's moral rectitude and exposing the moral turpitude of those in opposition to the SG. So,

the level of diction devoted to her description is truly purposive. But Nelly's description here is even higher in terms of vocabulary selection. What then is Ike trying to do with the superlative beauty he adorns with lavish and exquisite vocabulary? The beauty does not function beyond evoking mere admiration from those who come in contact with her: the Acting Registrar, the Exam Controller (Afam) and men of the Tutuntu Organization. If anything, she is created to balance the Acting Registrar's embattled psyche; but within the realms of the novel, this purpose is scantily explored, except the mere mention that she convinced the Acting Registrar to support the Tutuntu investigation so that it would not look like he was hiding something. But this does not have anything to do with the physical charm and 'Miss World' carriage Ike's diction makes of her.

In telling his story, Ike's choice of names and institutions leaves some question marks. The narrative plot presents a semi-literate herbalist, a Reverend Sister Principal and Tudu Union Seminary as the linked sources of the leakage in *Expo '77*. How? A seminarian once had a bad headache which defied orthodox medicine as well as all religious fasting and praying in a seminary, but was miraculously cured by a native doctor. The idea of 'driving away' a seminarian's headache by a native doctor described as possessing 'mystical' powers to 'strike terror in an erring agent' who would 'drop down dead' instantly, and also with the 'mystical power' to 'obliterate everything about the question paper' saga from the students' brains (188) is a piece for the credulous mind. And with this scathing contrivance to close the novel, Ike's creative instinct succeeds (albeit inadvertently) in sullyng ecclesiastical names and institutions: 'Bunmi is from



Reverend Sister Evangeline Angelica's school, from where the questions were disseminated to 'the sanitary pad' zone in the east; the Rev. Dr Andrew is Director of Union Seminary, Tudu, where Innocent Paul Chikere, the original source, is a student; Innocent the seminarian turns out after all, not innocent – a sharp onomastic irony!

### **3.7.3 The Use of Pidgin in *Expo '77***

In *Expo '77*, there is sparse deployment of Pidgin English, unlike its profuse use in *Toads for Supper*, though the purpose is virtually the same: to foster communication between characters of diverse linguistic and educational backgrounds. As expected, the semi-illiterate vendor of geography II question paper is not of the same educational background/level with the students. Therefore, he communicates with them in Pidgin English:

I get only de geography paper for today. Dis afternoon, I mean. But if una wan' more, my oga go come for night time. 'E promise me 'im go bring de rest ones if people wan' buy. (45)... Dis one na proper one... No be panya. (46)

Also, for the purpose of communication, the herbalist, and the girls in attendance discuss with Koko and Mora in Pidgin English. The girl tells them: 'If una no believe wetin I talk, make una siddon dere' (171); and the 'doctor' himself asks them: 'Dat girl no tell una say I no wan' see any purson at all?' (171). Koko feigns mad, and charges at the herbalist, but Mora pretends to hold him down. The 'doctor' instructs Mora: 'Lef am, 'E no fit do any forkall to me'.... As I don' tell una before, dis place don' full so I no dey take any other purson' (173). When eventually Koko is admitted and they pay fifty Naira, Mora asks for a receipt

from the lady attendant, and she retorts: ‘You tink dis place na General ‘ospital?... Bring am follow me’ (173). Pidgin here bridges the linguistic gap between the well educated Mora and Koko on the one hand, and the non-literate herbalist and his attendant on the other. Not only this, the loss of the initial sound /h/ in the word *hospital* (‘ospital), and the faulty pronunciation of *person* as *purson* provide an additional linguistic clue to the locale of the on-going action in the novel, as well as the linguistic identity of the speakers as Yorubas.

Other people that make use of Pidgin in the novel are the police. Ike allows them to communicate in Pidgin to buttress certain facts mentioned in the novel about their low level of education. One of the reasons why Mora left the police force to start his company of investigators is because of the advice of one of their instructors at the police college:

‘But if your father were alive today, I would have been the first to tell him to save you further humiliation. Mark you, you do us a lot of honour by joining us. Many people now look at me twice whenever I mention that one of my students is a university graduate. But, my son, one man’s laughter causes tooth decay. One man’s dance is madness. Look at all the people around you. What education do they have? You know people are already beginning to ask whether your “eyes are all right”, as we say. The police force is not meant for people with university degrees. I would even say that a full secondary education is too high...’ (42)

With such deliberate self-denigration coming from a police instructor about the level of education of the police generally, it is proper that they use Pidgin English in their communication with other people. Thus, when the ASP in charge of

Amuda Police Station hears of the *sanitary pad method* of cheating in examination by girls, he exclaims, mixing Yoruba and Pidgin English:

‘Jesu Christi Oluwa wa!’ the ASP exclaimed. He was Yoruba. ‘Jehova Witness dem people say Armageddon go come in five year time. ’E don’ come patapata! Olorun!’ He snapped his fingers. (53)

And when he is told that the geography II being hawked is not genuine, he vows to deal with the vendor who is already in their net: “We no go lef am o! Na big fraud wey ‘e perpetrate. Selling fake question papers, with intent to defraud!’ (54). There is a bit of a mixture here: Pidgin English mixed with good English and vocabulary that is somewhat complex for Pidgin English – *fraud, perpetrate, intent to defraud*. The reason is that by the exposure and rank of an ASP, such words that could be classed under legal forensics have become common to him.

### **3.8      *OUR CHILDREN ARE COMING!***

#### **3.8.1    Synopsis**

The problems of the young have prompted government to set up a Presidential Commission on Juveniles below Twenty-one. Hon. Justice Solomon O. Okpetun is Chairman of the Commission. Hearings are in camera. Chief Ayodele Olabisi is the *first Witness* to appear for oral memorandum. His problem is his only son, Ayo Junior who among other youthful misdemeanours, was caught with a governor’s wife holidaying at Copacabana.

The very Reverend Jeremiah Chukwukadibia Obi, an archdeacon, is *second Witness*. His problem is his daughter, Apolonia, who had been engaging in

international prostitution with high-ranking Nigerian government officials. She always came home with lavish gifts for her parents and relations, telling them lies about her source of wealth.

When her true source became obvious, her parents confronted her with the facts. She owned up, and tried to justify her actions, threatening to do even worse because those men had stolen the money from the country and she would use her body to recover as much of the money as possible. Unknown to the archdeacon, the Chairman of the commission has privileged knowledge of his daughter. Other witnesses, including an illiterate widow, give their various presentations. Then comes the delegation from the National Association of Students (NAS) led by Comrade Yekini Falase (President). They demand representation in the commission.

Meanwhile, there is news in the *Times* newspaper, where NAS sues that the members of the commission are not qualified for the assignment by virtue of their corrupt records, which the NAS is prepared to expose.

The Chairman works secretly to ensure that the NAS suit is thrown out on technical grounds. Members take off on their overseas trip. Comrade Falase gives a press conference, adding that the NAS has decided to set up their own National Commission on Parents over Twenty-One years. Barrister Dipo Taiwo (legal adviser to NAS) is the sole Commissioner. *Witness 001* is a mulato, pregnant for a Nigerian, and blames her father's unruly temper. *Witness 002* is a young man whose father is intellectually and physically charming, but keeps an illicit

relationship with his daughter's form 5 classmate, habitually taking such girls as 'Protocol officers', all expenses paid, on overseas trips; it's 'a national assignment'. He is also a ritualist. The young man vows never to be like his father. *Witness 006* – commends his dubious parents for teaching him dubious ways to succeed in “this our great country, where honesty never seems to pay” (245).

At this point, armed security operatives arrest NAS President and Chief Taiwo. Comrade Abubakar Bello gives a press conference on the corrupt state of the nation and gives government a 48-hour ultimatum to release their members. A week after, cartons of a 45-paged incendiary pamphlet are impounded on their way from London to Nigeria. Some copies still reach the state capitals.

Mr President gives a radio/tv broadcast, dissolving the Okpetun Commission and the illegal NAS commission. He sets up a National Moral Reorientation Commission. The Chairman is a retired Inspector General of Police; members come from various facets of the society. All public rallies are banned; all institutions of higher learning closed. Meanwhile, the NAS President had sneaked out of the country to grant a world press interview where he details the causes of their struggle, and advocates the ban of all political parties.

The novel ends with Justice Okpetun and his members returning from their shopping spree and held hostage by Falase and his own members. The Lagos State Commissioner of Police orders the arrest of Yekini and his men, but when he hears that he is the NAS President, he immediately orders his release.

### 3.8.2 Diction in *Our Children are Coming!*

Chukwuemeka Ike's characteristic simplicity of diction is prominent in this novel. We can see the diction here in three ways: the selection of vocabulary in descriptive passages, the use of forensic diction, and a few idiosyncratic coinages.

Here is Ike's description of Apolonia, the archdeacon's wayward daughter:

A week before the end of the long vacation, the purring sound of an air-conditioned car heralded her arrival at the parsonage. Every millimetre of the Peugeot 504 SR car was taken up with tantalizing presents for her parents and relations. And when she gleefully announced that she was leaving behind the brand new air-conditioned car with upholstery as soft as the belly of a pussycat, the parents momentarily lost their power of speech. How did she find the money? Their allowance in America had been excessive, so she had saved up almost all of it, bought many lovely things there, the kinds of things rich women in Lagos would pay any price to possess. (33)

Many will not complain of complicated diction from the above passage, yet the level of description achieved is masterly: '...the *purring* sound of an air conditioned car had *heralded* her arrival at the *parsonage*.' The sound of the car was a sign that she has returned. Ike has the appropriate word *herald*. A *purring* sound is a soft low sound usually associated with cats. Its other connotations have to do with *a sound of contentment*, and by extension when applied to vehicles, suggests a good running order. The mental picture of a cat and its soft sound continues in the third sentence of the above passage: 'And when she gleefully announced that she was leaving behind the brand new air conditioned car with

*upholstery as soft as the belly of a pussycat*, the parents momentarily lost their power of speech'. Thus, the image started with the choice of the word, *purring*, terminates appropriately with a simile still evoking the image of a cat. The parents are overwhelmed, no doubt, and Ike's description reveals that they 'temporarily lost their power of speech'. And when, in some two months, rumours of her escapades become rife, Ike drops another of his descriptions with simple words, and with a classic simile, he likens the rumours to the putrid smell of a decaying corpse.

Some two months later, the rumours began to filter in. The parents dismissed them. Such rumours generally sprouted whenever one person began to outshine the others. But the rumours persisted like stench from a decomposing body, and soon became suffocating. The archdeacon sent for his oldest son, to decide on the next line of action. They agreed that the son should take his mother to Akan University, and confront Apo with the rumours. (34)

When Apo can no longer continue to hoodwink her parents, Ike presents her like a hardened criminal – bold and remorseless. '....she did not feel sorry....Rather she was planning to do more! She had prepared a list of all those men who had stolen the wealth of this country, right up to the most highly placed of them. She would go to bed with them one by one, until she had recovered as much of the stolen money as possible! After all, she merely allowed them to get in and get out; no love was lost....'(37). For the fact that two wrongs do not make a right, Apo's reasoning here is faulty; it is a self-justifying logic typical of teenagers who do not, or refuse to understand the full implications of their actions.

Ike's description of Chief Olabisi (1<sup>st</sup> witness at the Okpetun Commission) is interesting in terms of vocabulary selection. The same can be said of the archdeacon's. But a close look at both descriptions reveals a marked attitudinal imbalance on the part of the narrator. The initial face-off between Chief Olabisi and Justice Okpetun results from the former's desire to be recognised for his ten chieftaincy titles. Here is a character reminiscent of His Royal Highness in *The Naked Gods*.

Chief Ayodele Olabisi rose as the commission filed in. The thirty-minute interval had been *most humiliating for a man of his social and financial standing who could pay the annual salaries and allowances of most members of the commission from his petty cash account*. At one stage, he had been tempted to invite himself to the refreshments in the adjoining room, when the clearly discernible *clinking of teaspoons and cups had triggered off a civil commotion* inside him. But he was not sufficiently enraged or famished to forget that the 'contempt of court judge' who presided over the commission had a penchant for humiliating acknowledged heroes. He swallowed his saliva, determined to focus his gaze on the water he had come to draw rather than on the insanitary surroundings. (17)

The Very Reverend Jeremiah Chukwukadibia Obi was *a copybook model of a man in holy orders* as he advanced to take his seat at the witness desk. *Tall, spare, but not hungry looking*, with hands clasped reverently in front of him and *humility inscribed all over him*. His clean-shaven face was illuminated with *an infectious smile*, his head covered with a black, four-cornered, soft cap worn by archdeacons, and his lanky frame with a long, spotless, white clerical robe made of wrinkle-free, drip dry material. (28)

The two contrasting worlds of the chief and the reverend can first and foremost, be visualized from their apparels. Ike chooses his words for each of these men's outfit. The reverend is putting on 'a black, four-cornered, soft cap...' and 'a long,



spotless, white clerical robe made of wrinkle-free, drip dry material'. For the Chief, we are told (during the preliminaries) that on his head is a 'heavily embroidered navy blue velveteen cap with golden tassels....'(8). The thirty-minutes' adjournment for tea by members of the Okpetun Commission is considered by the Chief as 'humiliating' especially as by 'his social and financial standing' he could pay their annual salaries and allowances just from 'his petty cash account'. Ike narrates that the 'clinking' of cutlery from the tearoom 'had triggered off a civil commotion in him' – a selection of diction that matches perfectly the malcontent traits going on in his mind! We cannot fail to see the Chief as a pompous fellow whose degree of affluence and regard for materialism could drive into bulldozing his way through any situation except one that could bring down his pride. But for the reverend, Ike has such pleasant words and expressions: 'a copybook model of a man in holy orders,' of 'lanky frame', 'tall, spare, but not hungry looking,' with 'an infectious smile' and with 'humility inscribed all over him'. And to further underscore the Chief's semi-literate and rather myopic perception of things, Ike winds up the above description of the Chief with a perfect translation of a local proverb going on in Chief's mind: 'to focus his gaze on the water he had come to draw rather than on the insanitary surroundings'. That is, he would remain focused on the more disturbing problem for which he has come (Ayo Junior's matter) than to mind the unbecoming treatment from the commission.

Both men have identical problems about their children. The chief's problem is his son, Ayo Junior, an 18-year old turned into 'a male prostitute' and

caught 'red-handed' (16) 'enjoying life' with the wife of a governor 'in a hotel in Copacabana Beach, Rio de Janeiro' (14). The reverend's problem is his daughter, Apolonia, also a teenager, who makes much money from the 'carnal use of her body... selling herself to rich men' of high status in government including State governors, speakers, ministers, judges. She usually accompanies them on what they tag 'working leave'(36). Both the Chief's and the archdeacon's presentations are a serious indictment on those in authority who set up the commission to investigate the young. The Apo saga in particular, unknowingly to the archdeacon, scores a bull's eye and unnerves the Chairman. Ike's words present vivid pictures as 'The Chairman's pen dropped from his hand. He mopped up the drops of perspiration on his forehead, struggling to conceal his nervousness' (38). The narration also refers to 'The twitching' of the Chairman's fingers, and his efforts to avoid splashing tea all over the place 'like an epileptic' (39). The underlying dramatic irony is further sharpened by the humble reverend's unfinished words of plea: '...please, remember to keep the whole thing secret, to protect...' (38). Thus, with razor-sharp phraseology, Ike uses the cases of Ayo Junior and Apolonia to exemplify how far the upper class of adult society has used, abused and accused the young generation. The similarity in both men's problems notwithstanding, the narrator's attitudinal difference spelt out by his careful word selection conveys to the reader the world of difference between the ecclesiastic and the mundane. Not only this, Ike uses the experiences of both men, in spite of the differences in their world views, to make a strong statement on a particular societal rot: sexual promiscuity among the upper class of the adult

society, adults who feel that sexual promiscuity, laziness and indiscipline among the young are uncontrollably high, the same adults who set up a commission to investigate the young; the same adults who are members of the commission, and the same adults are judges in the commission!

The amorous escapades between Apolonia and Justice Okpetun provide another opportunity for the narrator to demonstrate his mature word power. His words show Apolonia as irresistibly attractive while the Justice is morally debased. Ike tells us of the Justice's 'glimpse of her *plump, tender-looking breasts* which he *spied through the neck of her blouse* as she stooped to get into the car. An *electrifying impulse* had flashed through him straight away, *fertilizing his imagination*' (107). The image here is compelling: the sight of the breasts and the feeling it generates in him have nurtured his lustful imagination. That is not all. Ike tells us again that 'Apo's sudden appearance, in a glossy grey frock which clung to her body and exposed a pair of long, straight legs, had *catapulted his body temperature uncontrollably*' (108). Yet another:

...When she reappeared, her clothes had been folded and she deposited them on the chair she vacated. Without saying a word, she walked to the far side of the double bed. The learned judge had *gaped at the breathtaking sight of the nude model*. (109)

The italicized words are highly functional and reminiscent of Ike's two other novels. With the words (*breathtaking, nude model, in the nude*) Ike conceptualizes Apo the same way he does Love, the cradler, and Nelly, Dr Buka's secretary, in *Sunset at Dawn* and *Expo '77* respectively. In *Sunset at Dawn* – Love is a *nude model any artist would pay a fortune for* (153). In *Expo '77*, Nelly is a

*brehtaking beauty... an artistic figure, the type any sculptor would love to carve in the nude* (151). Here in *Our Children are Coming!*, Apo's is *the breathtaking sight of a nude model*. Ike's fanciful description of his favourite female characters is obvious here. The learned judge (all this while presented in the fashion of a dirty old man) is so dazed by his exciting carnal experience of Apolonia that he is sometimes lost in reveries about 'fantastic Apo' and her 'unique' sexuality which he muses upon as *Apo's 'Vitamin Q'* (109).

Another aspect of Ike's word power that is stylistically prominent in *Our Children are Coming!* is the use of forensic diction. Forensic linguistics is an aspect of Applied Linguistics involving the relationship between language, crime and the law. Forensic language embraces evidence presentation, cross-examination, police interviews, and in recent works by such forensic linguists as Courthard and Johnson (2007: 162-163), Eagleson (2004: 362-373) and Olsson (2008: 32), evidence abounds on the importance of this field of study in the identification of disputed authorship of all types including suicide notes, anonymous texts and phone calls. Forensic diction has to do with words and phrases pertaining to courts of law and legal proceedings. Such words and phrases are predominant in law courts, or legal proceedings, or even in crime investigation. They are remarkably used in this novel, much more than they are used in any other of Ike's novels. In this novel, there are two broad types of forensic diction: the words and phrases that are English, and those that are direct Latin expressions. Examples of both types are:

**English****Latin**

to adjourn (16)	prima facie (45)
This session hereby stands adjourned (46)	Adeste Fideles (72)
my lord (8)	Bon appétit (91)
contempt of court (8)	inter alia (91)
legal redress by aggrieved persons (49)	volte-face (94)
pending the determination of their substantive suit (92)	ipso facto (96)
plaintiff (96), the accused (40)	modus operandi (136)
counsel (96)	modus vivendi (158)
evidence; court sessions; hearings	infradignitatem (160) in camera (4)
as the court pleases (169)	in loco parentis (166)
as your lordship pleases (171)	locus standi (175)
co-respondent (172)	Aluta continua (256)
defence counsel (174)	to plead habeas corpus (280)
attorney-general (174)	
no jurisdiction to hear a case (174)	
to all intents and purposes (175)	
substantial grounds of law (175)	
verdict (176), to award costs (176)	
and/or (176) – We note here that this expression is used in legal documents to avoid the ambiguity involved in using the inclusive disjunction ‘or’.	
legal luminary (181)	
acquittal of the convicted (210)	

The density of this kind of specialised vocabulary is unique to *Our Children are Coming!*, and the impressive thing is that whether English or Latin, they neither obscure the message nor the syntactic flow of the entire story. Ike uses them to create some kind of simulation of legal proceedings to settle the feud between the young and the older generations over the corruption and general moral laxity of the nation. There are two commissions, one by the older generation and the other by the younger generation (the Okpetun and the Dipo Taiwo, respectively) each of which is chaired by a legal luminary. With one holding its sessions in camera, the other in the open, the whole story comes to the reader like aspects of presentations in real law courts, and so Ike cannot help but employ the diction that suits the situation of his story. And that makes a perfect contextual matching of message and diction!

The third striking aspect of Ike's diction in *Our Children are Coming!* has to do with a few idiosyncratic coinages. *Idiosyncratic*, not in the strict synonym of *eccentric*, but in the author's stylistic choice of such words/lexical items and their morphological transformations as 'contextually bound linguistic elements'. The frequency of these linguistic elements may appear insignificant, but they are style markers in their own right, following Enkvist's definition of *style markers* as *those linguistic items that only appear, or are most or least frequent, in a certain context* (34). We hereby situate the few of them in their various contexts.

*Bottom power* (67). This is not a standard English phrase; it is a local coinage that implies the use of female charm and sex to obtain an undue favour. It is a derogatory phrase, and thus anti-feminist. It is used only once in the text, by

Alhaji Adamu. The phrase echoes the moral decadence prevalent in the Nigerian society. The same phrase occurs only once in *The Chicken Chasers* (181). It is used by the S.G to refer to Baby Face's ability to use all her sexual charm to sway the Big Man and trigger off all the political wheeling and dealing that dominates the whole of *The Chicken Chasers*.

*Streetlights* (131). This is a slang among undergraduates of Akan University and it refers to any of the female undergraduates who loiter along the streets at night anticipating to be picked up by any interested male. Dr Chu Nwoke, a member of the Okpetun Commission, had once picked up one of them, and this singular immoral act disturbs his conscience when the NAS threatens to expose the ills of the Okpetun Commission members. This coinage has no antecedent occurrence in any of the Ike novel's under study.

*Every millimetre*. 'Every millimetre of the Peugeot 504 SR car was taken up with tantalizing presents for her parents and relations' (33). Ike's diction here goes metric; but in *Sunset at Dawn*, it is imperial: 'The advancing column, more than a hundred vehicles strong, carried more military hardware than Nigeria required to capture *every inch* of Biafran soil....' (111). The idiom *every inch* means *the whole (completely, entirely)*.

This reminds us of H.W. Fowler (79) who refers to the 'cast-iron nature of idiom', which is 'conservative, standing in the ancient ways, insisting that its property is sacrosanct, permitting no jot or tittle of alteration in the shape of its phrases.' For the foregoing reasons, in spite of McArthur's 'creative adaptations'

of idioms, idiomatic phrases in English are better not dented, not fractured, not amputated!

*Cashiokor* (228). Here is Ike's narration where this word occurs:

Halfway through her second year, Nigeria's foreign exchange earnings took a sudden nosedive. The government drastically reduced the amounts permissible for transfers overseas. It went further, and introduced new procedures for foreign exchange transfers, the hidden aim being to frustrate as many applicants as possible into giving up their attempts. The '*Cashiokor*' virus became so widespread that the *dare-you-disturb-me* illegal foreign exchange mart outside the Bristol Hotel in the heart of Lagos went into voluntary liquidation.

There are two eye-catching coinages here: *dare-you-disturb-me* and *cashiokor*. The former is a compound adjective formed by hyphenating four words. The same type of compound adjective of four words is used humorously when he refers to Apo's love-making to Justice Okpetun as 'the *yet-to-be-patented* Vitamin Q' (106). Though somewhat clumsy, the uniqueness of these two compound adjectives lies in their morphological complexity. For the latter, there is a related antecedent coinage we had discussed under *Sunset at Dawn* where Ike refers to *kwashiokpa* (96) and *moneyokor* (115) which are morphological blending with *kwashiorkor*, the deadly wartime disease. It is the same type of blending that has, in this novel, formed *cashiokor*, implying acute shortage of cash. In *Expo '77*, the undercover detective, Koko, in the midst of question paper 'hunters', goes to Mushin, from Mushin to Agege, "part of the journey by 'molue' and the rest by 'footroen' " (99). The blend of *foot* with *citroen* (the brand name of a car) results in *footroen* – a popular and humorous coinage {as popular and humorous as



*bedmatics* used in *The Chicken Chasers* (135) which we had discussed} – *footroen* implies a means of transport for one who has no car but makes his journey on foot. All these coinages – *footroen*, *kwashiokpa*, *moneyokor*, *cashiokor* – are Ike’s creative morphological adaptations.

There are more instances of creative morphological adaptations. We notice the writer’s use of *teleguided* twice on p1 of *The Bottled Leopard*. When *tele*, a morpheme of Greek origin combines with English nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs by prefixation, it has the semantic impact of *from*, *at*, *over*, or *to a long distance*; *far*. Many acceptable English words are possible by this process. So that the reader has no problem decoding ‘The leopard, again as if *teleguided*, instantly changed course...’ or ‘*Teleguided* by the omu nkwu, the leopard advanced stealthily...’ (1) in *The Bottled Leopard*. But can we still talk of creative morphological adaptation in the use of the words, *matchet* and *dane* in *Sunset at Dawn?*

‘With *matchets*?’ The question came simultaneously from at least a dozen volunteers.

‘Of course, with matchets!’ Dr Kanu shouted... ‘if you knew how we obtained these ten thousand matchets at short notice....’ (14)

Men were requested to arm themselves with guns, matchets, anything available, and to be prepared for street fighting with the enemy...

‘Did you hear of the enemy plane shot down with a dane gun?’ Basse asked... (67)

These words appear severally in *Sunset at Dawn*. *Matchet* has an antecedent occurrence in *Toads for Supper* (186). Considering their semblance of English words because of their morphological and phonotactic structure, and given the context in which they appear, a reader of the texts may understand the meaning the writer intends by these words. But the truth is that they are non-existent in the English lexicon, and they are unlike adaptations such as *bedmatics*, *footroen*, *cashiokor*, *teleguided*, *moneyokor* and *kwashiokpa* which are stylistically important coinages with humourous effects. We shall not put *matchet* and *dane* on the same linguistic pedestal with the types we meet in *Conspiracy of Silence: familylessness, parentlessness, husbandlessness, wifelessness, and moneylessness* (33, 36). We see these as deviant negative noun coinages which Ike has used not only to demonstrate his own flair for neologistic style but also to create humour amidst a pervading mood of despondency caused by increasing fatherlessness in Igboland. The words *matchet* and *dane* are different. *Matchet* must be a local corruption (albeit unknown to the author) of *machete*, whose orthographic and phonological realisations are different from those of *matchet*, but whose meaning is exactly what the writer has used *matchet* for. The other word, *dane*, used to modify ‘gun’, implying the type of local rifle powered by gunpowder and pellets, is not a local corruption of any known English word, and its etymology in the context it is used here to designate a type of firearm is indeterminate. So, what is Ike doing here? It amounts to creative oversight to make readers think that any lexeme that has the morphological and phonotactic semblance of an English word has to be accepted as an English word.

On the use of *Whitemail* (57) by Ike, we sense his feeling that the word *black* in the English language, for some inexplicable reason, has suffered unfair racist undertones. The English lexicon is replete with phrases in which the word *black* is semantically negative. We can exemplify this from *Chambers* (2004).

*black looks* = angry, threatening

*black mood* = sad, gloomy or depressed; dismal

*black-hearted* = wicked or sinister

*black coffee/tea* = without milk (the brightener) added

*blackamoor* = (derogatory) a dark-skinned or black person

*blacklist* = a list of people convicted or suspected of something, or not approved, or to be excluded, etc.

*black art* = black magic = magic which supposedly invokes the power of the devil to perform evil. In English, there is also *white magic* = the type used for only beneficial purposes.

*blackly* (adv.) = in an angry or threatening way

*the Black Death* = a virulent pneumonic plague

*black market* = illegal buying and selling, at high prices, of goods which are scarce.... Also *black economy*.

*black sheep* = a member of a family or group seen as a source of shame or embarrassment, etc, to the rest

*black leg* = a person who refuses to take part in a strike, or who works in a striker's place during a strike

*to blackout* = to lose consciousness

*black widow* = a species of venomous spider

*black water fever* = a type of malaria

in someone's *black books* = in trouble or disgrace, or out of favour with

to come from the garden with *black hand* = dirty, soiled

the future looks *black* = promising trouble; likely to be bad in some way

*black cap* = the type worn by English judges to pronounce death sentence

*the black dog* = depression, melancholy

*black eye* = bruises around the eye due to a blow or a fall

*blackguard* = a rascal, or villain; a contemptible scoundrel

*black mass* = a blasphemous ceremony parodying the Christian mass, in which Satan is worshipped rather than God

Chukwuemeka Ike obviously feels bad about the racist undertone of *black* and what it stands for. His obsession with the ugly connotations associated with the word *black* in the English Language is discernible from his use of *whitemail* to

replace *blackmail*. We had discussed the same word in *Sunset at Dawn* (99). In *Sunset at Dawn*, Ike uses *White sheep* (59) instead of *black sheep*: ‘fifty young men were dispatched to the compound which had harboured such a *whitesheep* and such lethal weapons....’ A related antecedent occurrence can also be found in *Expo '77* (61):

A large crowd assembled from nowhere as the infamous police cell on wheels, for some strange reason widely known as the *Black Maria*, groaned to a halt in front of the Amuda Police Station. (‘Black’, yes, because the huge, steel, prismatic body of the lorry was painted black. But why ‘Maria’?)

His justification of why it is called ‘Black’ notwithstanding, the intriguing point to the writer here is why it is even called Black Maria. *Chambers* (2004) provides that it is believed that ‘*Maria*’ refers to *Maria Lee, the landlady of a Boston lodging house, because when police needed help to constrain someone, they are said to have called upon the services of Maria Lee, a very large strong black woman*. The origin is the United States; and even though it sounds like a folk tale, this explanation is intriguing.

But Ike’s battle against the ugly connotations of the word *black* is far from over. The battle ignores the non-logical nature of the English language as well as what we may refer to as the accident of semantics involved in the compound formations with *black* or *white*. As we have mentioned in this thesis, we do not apply elements of logic overtly in dealing with a natural language such as English. For instance, *tall – taller – tallest, long – longer – longest*; but *good* is not *good – gooder – goodest*; nor *bad – badder – baddest*. Even Ckukwuemeka Ike himself

frequently uses the word *manhood* euphemistically to refer to the male organ (as in *The Chicken Chasers* 62, 101, 109; etc), but he does not by that logic refer to the female genitalia as *womanhood*, for he knows that semantically that would be nonsense logic.

In the next novel, *The Search*, Ike's obsession prevaricates: at some point (187) he infuses *whitemail* into Dr Ola's mouth, 'No, your Hausa/Fulani cousins!...They know that once the South can speak with one voice,...That's why they'll bribe, they'll whitemail, they'll do anything possible to stop the South....' At some other point, ( in *The Search*) the writer's obsession seems to decide that 'things without all remedy should be without regard,' as the saying goes. He now avoids the word *black* in *The Search* completely, and avoids substituting it with *white*, as can be seen from Dr Ola's reminiscences of the 'bloody aftermath of the abortive coup attempt':

He remembered seeing the six prominent citizens said to have masterminded the coup attempt jumping down from the infamous "Maria" truck used to convey accused persons and convicts. (5)

The avoidance of the word *black* here is only on the surface structure; the deep structure reality of *infamous "Maria" truck*, however, embodies a silent protest.

Some may frown at Ike's unconventional adaptations and coinages so far: his semantically illogical forms as *whitemail*, *white sheep*; the tendency for his syntax going metric as in *every millimetre*; his morphologically weird formations as in *bedmatics*, *footroen*, *cashiokor*, *kwashiokpa*, *moneyokor*. The fact is that these lexical dislocations are justifiably of high stylistic value, as Leech and Short

would uphold, ‘It is a justifiable paradox in language, as well as in other spheres, to be truly creative, an artist must be destructive: destructive of rules, conventions and expectations. But in this sense, creativity of the writer also requires creativity from the reader, who must fill the gaps of sense with an associative logic of his own....’ (29)

Thus far, Ike’s success linguistically, in this novel, rests on the grand sense of the lucidity he maintains throughout: by the use of uncomplicated vocabulary selection in the descriptive passages, by the use of matching forensic diction and easy-to-decode personal coinages – some of which have antecedent occurrences in his other novels – as well as his ability to adorn the persona of each of the witnesses, making them to use the words and phrases the characters are likely to use in their different circumstances.

### **3.9            *THE SEARCH***

#### **3.9.1        Synopsis.**

The setting is Bauchi, a state in Nigeria, with a predominantly Hausa/Fulani population. A military coup has just taken place, ousting Alhaji Jambo of the Rulers’ Party (RP) who was victorious in the elections as President. The coup leader is Brigadier Izayes Buba. The announcement accuses the ousted President and his group of ‘unparalleled economic disaster’ and ‘irredeemably inept and corrupt’ leadership. A Federal Military Government is thus set up, aspects of the National Constitution are suspended, political parties and activities are prohibited.

Dr Ola's obsession over Northern domination of the South stretches into a nightmare in which Dipo Ajayi, his friend, is bound hands and feet by election thugs and set ablaze.

Ola and his wife drive to Professor Eni's house where Dr Shehu Abubakar meets them. Dr Ola does not like Shehu for what Shehu stands for: a crop of young Hausa/Fulani who avidly exploit their favourable situations as a result of geographical considerations, totally oblivious of the injured feelings of their better-qualified fellow nationals (48). He detests the social and religious systems which make it so easy for mobs to slaughter innocent human beings and burn their material possessions without provocation and without remorse.

In their discussion, Shehu confirms the rumour about a failed coup by junior officers. He also affirms that 'election rigging has come to stay in this country, whether we like it or not...'

In the course of their discussion, Ola's contribution hints on Northern perpetual domination of the South, which Shehu justifies by citing economic and religious domination by the South.

When Ola asks Luka, 'are we Southerners destined to be ruled perpetually by you people?' (96). Luka calmly explains his own predicament as belonging to the Sayawa – a minority tribe. They talk on history, how Lord Lugard hatched the present suffering. They discuss the total domination by the Hausa/Fulani/Moslem oligarchy, the attempt to launch a jihad and dip the Koran into the Atlantic Ocean (99), the Kaduna Mafia and its attributes (105), etc. Ola asks Professor Eni 'do



you think we can ever make it as one nation?’ (107). Professor Eni’s answer is ‘we have to make it’, arguing that during the civil war, Ola’s people (Yorubas) teamed up with Simon’s people (the North) to force Easterners back, how could he (Ola) turn around to ask whether it is possible to make it as one nation?

Responding to Kaneng’s complaint that everything that goes wrong in this country upsets her husband, Dapa feels that it is because Ola is young and is “still imbued with a vision of a great future for this country....”(126). And she tells Kaneng: ‘...my dear, I don’t think this country is worth dying for...(127).

Eni, Ola and Shehu meet, and as usual, engage in an explosive discussion, this time, on Ola’s worry that it is as if the Hausa/Fulani have ‘a divine right to rule everybody else perpetually, whether military or civilian regime, otherwise it is overthrown’ (170). Shehu’s defence is dismissed by Ola as ‘illogical and irrational’.

On the issue of ‘federal character’, Shehu says it is ‘merely a catch phrase’. Before both men part that night, Professor Eni advises Ola to learn not to accept responsibility for the collective sins of this country.

At night, in a reverie state, a spotlight surfaces, and Ola sees ‘The Nigerian Ship of State’ grounded. Three voices dialogue with him, explaining why the ship cannot move – it is too massive, unwieldy and uncontrollable, suggesting that two or three smaller, seaworthy ships would be better than one big-for-nothing one (216). Ola is also shown large conduit pipes plugged to the ship of state, through which its life is siphoned away by past and present leaders.

Then comes the news that Dr Shehu Abubakar has been announced Minister of Education. Ola is further disoriented. The Minister arrives in person, offers Ola the position of Director General of the National Universities Directorate. When the Minister returns, Ola declines the offer, giving as part of his reasons, his personal ‘strong reservations’ about military rule in general. But the real reason is that accepting the job from Shehu is tantamount to endorsing their “divine right” to rule the country perpetually (252).

### 3.9.2 Diction in *The Search*

Nigeria, from the perspective of the novel, seems condemned to socio-political and economic stagnation since independence. The stagnation is caused and perpetuated by *poor leadership, corruption, and flagrant injustice*. These are the three major factors that give the novel its dominating mood of utter despondency.

Chukwuemeka Ike has reasons for articulating his story by means of extensive dialogue involving several ethnic groups in Nigeria, both the major and minor ones. The dialogue is such that we have a combination of the loose vocabulary and syntax of conversational style and the tight constructions and idioms of standard English.

The protagonist, Ola, is the most affected by the bad state of affairs. His words for himself and for the state of the nation are usually vigorous, and his own show of concern reaches a paranoid level. His good wife, Kaneng, suggests consulting a psychiatrist. He says about himself, ‘it’s only that I’m allowing the

frustrations of being a sensitive citizen of an irredeemable country to drive me crazy!’ (45). Even though Dr Shehu Abubakar extends his hands of friendship to Ola and his family, his impression of Shehu is anything but pleasant. Ike narrates;

...His *aversion* for Dr Abubakar was simply because the young man typified a social class he had grown to *resent*. A class of young men in their 20s and early 30s, holding university degrees or professional qualification, *avidly exploiting* the very favourable situation in which they found themselves as a result of geopolitical considerations, *totally oblivious* of the *injured feelings* of their *better qualified fellow nationals* from the rest of the country. (47 – 48)

Embedded in these words and phrases is the natural jealousy resulting from flagrant injustice suffered by certain sections of the country. The comparison he draws between himself and Shehu shows how intimidating Shehu’s profile is, just at the age of 29. Each time he sees Shehu, we are told, ‘he could not help counting his own teeth with his tongue: chairmanship of governing councils – nil, chairmanship of boards of directors – nil...’ (48). Virtually, his profile is nothing to compare with Shehu’s. The jealousy and hatred excited in him over this injustice may appear misplaced, and he explains his attitude toward Shehu:

‘But I guess I react to him the way I do because of *what he symbolizes*. I just don’t accept the idea that *a bunch of people* should *perpetually hold the rest of the country to ransom*. I also *detest* their methods, you know. And the social and religious system which makes it so easy *for mobs to slaughter innocent human beings and burn their material possessions without provocation and without remorse*’. (185)

Not only this, Ola and his wife knew before now that ‘Conditions were ripe for a coup’. Election results were rigged. Corruption permeated all facets of Nigerian society. Irresponsibility and lack of sense of direction on the part of the

government, ethnic, religious and other selfish considerations seem to blur national vision. The nation is endowed with ‘superabundant natural resources’, no natural disasters but leadership disaster. The writer’s words from Ola’s point of view are vigorous, ‘With superabundant natural resources, with nature being very benevolent – the country was spared such major natural disasters as typhoons, earthquakes, volcanoes, and even serious drought – all that was required to set the giant on the path of greatness was good leadership and good management of resources. Unfortunately that *good leadership had consistently eluded the country. Compounded by instability*’ (179). His wife, who understands him very well, summarises the state of the nation and her husband in the following words:

‘*Corruption* of the highest magnitude, *ethnicity* compounded by *statism* and the *minority syndrome* – I see I’ve picked up some of the vocabulary!... You know the rest of them. Each time something went wrong, it was as if a dagger had been thrust into Ola’s heart’. (137)

She certainly has an uphill task calming down her husband. She confides in Dapa, ‘I did everything possible to keep him under control, ...Everything that goes wrong in this country upsets him. It is as if he holds himself responsible for our inability as a nation to learn from history’ (126).

Ike narrates: ‘The acknowledgement that he was incapable of demolishing the wall (of religious bigotry, corruption, ethnicism) had thrown him into bouts of despondency....’ (203). Professor Ijoma and his wife are aware of the trauma Ola is going through, and like the elderly man he is, who has waded through the rough roads of Nigeria as a nation, he advises Ola:

‘...If I may now attempt to answer your question, the only sensible answer is that we must keep searching. The answer must be found some day, not likely by my generation, may be yours, or by our children and grandchildren. You mustn’t let news of military coups, election rigging, divisive actions of mafias, and such shocks destroy your principles, your faith in one Nigeria. If my experience over the years is anything to go by, however, I would be reluctant, if I were you, to put myself in the position in which I feel I must accept responsibility for the collective sins of the nation’. (188)

Dapa’s words of advice to Kaneng, like her husband’s to Kaneng’s husband, are full of the wisdom acquired with age and experience in a country stagnated by all sorts of problems. There is a defeatist tone of resignation in the final part of her advice to Kaneng:

‘From what I’ve seen of him (Ola), he is still imbued with a vision of a great future for his country, and he gets worked up whenever everything happens which distorts that image or makes the attainment of that great future less likely.... What I have seen with my eyes in this country is sufficient to destroy any illusion that this country will achieve true greatness in my lifetime. Somehow I fear we’ll continue bungling and stumbling as a nation until we’ve taken sufficient battering and become alive to our responsibilities, until we have expropriated our resources to the point where there is nothing left to steal. More importantly, my dear, *I don’t think this country is worth dying for....*’ (126 – 127)

Thus, Ola’s despondent mood, as well as the disenchantment of others throughout the one-day life span of the novel, informs his expressions throughout the novel. The expressions hit hard on such disturbing issues as *bad government, northern domination, divine right to rule, holding others to ransom, religious bigotry, massive corruption, flagrant injustice, manipulation of ‘federal character’,* and the inability to serve the country.

Another aspect of diction worth noting in *The Search* is Ike's use of special verbs that have apt descriptive force. At the announcement of the coup, Ola and Kaneng drive round, the latter taking the wheel. Before they leave, the narrator says, 'she *dispensed* her final instructions before *sailing* towards the front door....' (35), suggesting the manner in which she issued the instructions and walked confidently towards the door. At the Awallah Hotel junction, 'she *forked* left, cruising on....'(36). She changes gear as they approach the post office junction, 'and *filtered* into the new Jos Road....' 'She *negotiated* the round-about, ...*filtering* into Dandoka Road (38). As they cruise and Ola accepts to be taken to a psychiatrist, 'Kaneng *slammed* the breaks'(45). When Professor Ijoma takes over the steering, and shifts the gear lever to R, and releases the parking brake, 'The car *backed out* smoothly from an improvised garage'. He takes a right turn, and 'The car *glided down* a quiet road....'(75). Eni releases his foot from the brake pedal, and 'the car *headed for* Wunti Gate. Eni starts the engine, drives to the end of Ran Road, 'and *swung* left up the New Maiduguri Road. They converse as they drive round, '*skirting* the Old Post Office roundabout and *veering* right along....' (84). Afraid of the traffic, Kaneng '*steered* her Honda Prelude into Gombe Road'. She '*meandered round* the avoidable potholes....'(127). The Honda Prelude '*negotiated* the curve... and *made for* the Main Market roundabout where it *forked* right into Ran Road' (128). 'Kaneng paused, *tensing* every nerve to take the last speed bump.... And then *nosing* the car towards the Kano/Maiduguri junction' (49). These italicised verbs are carefully chosen by the

writer to give apt descriptions of the nature of the cruise around by these two families as they chat along over the new government that is just announced.

Generally, the success of the novel lies partly in the fearless use of words and phrases that could be considered offensive, explosive and likely to foment trouble in presenting what people know are hard facts, but would not want to say them, or hear them said. Chukwuemeka Ike uses such words and expressions to unveil the myriad of problems and controversial issues facing Nigeria.

### **3.10 CONSPIRACY OF SILENCE**

#### **3.10.1 Synopsis**

The setting of the novel is Enugu and some surrounding towns. Highly upset by her apparent fatherlessness, and her mother's refusal to give her any clues, Nwanneka, a consultant paediatrician, confers with her friend, Gozie, to take the matter about her fatherlessness to Ayo Femi, the author of *The Orphan*. She pleads with him to write another novel about her as a fatherless child. She narrates how she was brought up by Mazi Uche Obioha and his family, and she became part of the family, bearing their surname. Her trauma started when she was eleven. She was compelled to change from Obioha to Ofoma as her surname. This was strange to her. Daddy Uche Obioha, Mummy Amuche and Aunty Ukamaka had no explanation to this or the issue of who her father was.

Gozie meets Ayo in his office and discusses the many fatherless children in Igbo society suffering various degrees of psychological problems. Nwanneka is the only courageous one to present herself as a guinea pig. Gozie gives an

instance of the experiences of an anonymous friend of hers whose story she wishes to be kept secret.

Mazi Uche Obioha and his wife call on Ayo to protest against the idea of writing a book on Nneka. They argue that with her education, love bestowed on her by the Obiohas and her uncle, Barrister James Ofoma (the Senior Advocate), she should have got over this problem of her fatherlessness. After some deliberations, the Obiohas give their consent. Mrs Obioha reveals that Ukamaka, while in secondary school became pregnant, and refused bluntly to disclose who was responsible for that, and vehemently rejected abortion. The Senior Advocate advised that they should wait until Nneka graduated. By then she would be mature enough to accept an explanation about who her father is. But Ukamaka ignored this advice, and insisted, during the Common Entrance, that Nneka's surname should change from Obioha to Ofoma (her maiden name).

Architect Chijioke Madu arrives, and laments that such a brilliant person (Nneka) should be wasting away because of fatherlessness. He tells Ayo the story of a friend of his who is in as much a complex situation as Nneka but who accepts things as they are and tries to make the best of the situation. A funeral of a popular woman leader holds at Umuada, and Ayo and his friends attend the ceremony. A woman there is the 'wife', the 'widow' of the deceased woman. Tradition permits a woman to marry another woman!

Under the false pretext of representing International Children's Foundation, Ayo goes to Ukamaka at Ihiala where she is principal and tries to



extract some valuable information from her. The trick fails, but he learnt from her that Nneka's father is still alive.

Barrister Ejindu from the Ofoma Chambers at Onitsha meets Ayo in the office. Ayo talks about the book project, and asks how he can be connected with Barrister Ofoma. Ejindu advises him to leave the Senior Advocate out of it because he is a very busy man. Moreover, he is hypertensive - a condition which Nneka's hypersensitivity over her fatherlessness has contributed to. He advises Ayo that as he writes his novel, he should beware of libel.

Ayo visits Nneka, and she narrates how she had refused two suitors because of her fatherlessness. Ayo advises her not to refuse suitors anymore. She should tell them the whole truth about her parentage. When Ayo recounts this advice to the Madus, it touches their conscience. As a result, husband and wife confess to each other the secret of each other's fatherlessness and how each of them had lied to the other and to the children.

In a dream, at Onitsha High Court, Ayo is accused of writing a malicious story portraying Barrister Ofoma as a sex maniac incapable of distinguishing between a prostitute and his own daughter. Later, in the morning, Chijioke brings the news of Barrister Ofoma's death in real life. After the burial ceremony, Ukamaka and Nneka meet as agreed, and the former reveals to her that her biological father is Uncle Ik. Nneka can no longer stand this. She flees to London, and vows to remain celibate and childless for the rest of her life.

### 3.10.2 Lexical Foregrounding in *Conspiracy of Silence*

The entire story of *Conspiracy of Silence* is brought home to the reader through the author's good sense of foregrounding: lexical, syntactic, and semantic. We shall briefly refer to Leech and Short (48 – 49) who, discussing 'Style, Text and Frequency' say: '...we may define deviance as a purely statistical notion: as the difference between the normal frequency of a feature, and its frequency in the text or corpus. Prominence is the related psychological notion... "the general name for the phenomenon of linguistic highlighting, whereby some linguistic feature stands out in some way".... We assume that prominence of various degrees and kinds provides the basis for a reader's subjective recognition of style.... We shall associate literary relevance with the Prague School notion of *foregrounding*, or artistically motivated deviation.... Foregrounding may be *qualitative*, i.e. deviation from the language code itself – a breach of some rule or convention of English – or it may simply be *quantitative* i.e. deviance from some expected frequency....' In addition, Wales says:

... within the literary text itself linguistic features can themselves be *foregrounded* or 'highlighted', 'made prominent', for specific effects, against the (subordinated) background of the rest of the text, the new 'norm' in competition with the non-literary norm. It is this 'internal' foregrounding that critical attention is largely focused.

Foregrounding is achieved by a variety of means, which are largely grouped under two main types: *deviation* and *repetition*, or *paradigmatic* and *syntagmatic* foregrounding respectively. Deviations are violations of Linguistic norms: grammatical or semantic, for example. Unusual metaphors or similes (the traditional tropes) produce unexpected conjunctions of meaning, forcing fresh realizations in the reader. ...Repetitive patterns (of sound or syntax, for

example) are superimposed on the background of the expectations of normal usage, and so strike the reader's attention as unusual. (182)

There is a remarkable level of lexical foregrounding both in the context of the traditions and in the interplay of the personal experiences of the characters and others as they are narrated to Ayo. First, the writer, wants special attention focused on the two young women in his story: Nwanneka and Gozie, the former “to play the role of a guinea pig” (18), the latter to play the catalyst – corroborating the role of the former. Nwanneka is the first to come on board, and Ike adorns her with captivating descriptive words: ‘A slim, young woman in a beige jacket and black skirt suit, with a pretty, expressionless face....’ Around to see Ayo, ‘she settled into the lounge chair, screened off both knees with her skirt, and discreetly positioned them away from Ayo’s eyes’ (1). And as she speaks to him, ‘She guided her knees from right to left of Ayo’s eyes....’ (2). She is a remarkable beauty, no doubt, and this stuns Ayo so much that talking to his colleague, Ugo, Ayo describes his visitor as ‘A charming young professional woman.’ (13). And within a space of five pages, this description, without any lexical or semantic alteration, is repeated *eight* times. This syntactic order is retained unaltered for the first four times, thereafter, a minor syntactic (without semantic) alteration occurs, and we have, ‘the young, charming professional woman’. We are aware that there are rules for the correct order of adjectives, and that an adjective of age should precede a participle adjective. The syntactic rearrangement in the first four does not imply semantic alteration; it is characteristic of the flexibility of the spoken, informal style of language. Ike is aware (and wants his reader to note it) that the pretty Nwanneka is conscious of

how she sits, to cordon off parts of her body she does not want the prying eyes of a man to see. This is an immediate demonstration of a woman whose psyche is conditioned by bitter experiences and her Christian background, and who has come for business and not for any indecent seductive exposure whatsoever. When the discussion with Ayo is over, Ike concludes the chapter with ‘She withdrew without a smile’ (7). During her second visit to Ayo in his office, Ike narrates that ‘Ayo had hoped for a smile of appreciation, but Nwanneka’s face remained as placid as ever’ (52).

Immediately Gozie arrives in the story, Ike says that ‘her figure reminded Ayo of Dr Nwanneka Ofoma, the young, charming professional woman’. She is slightly bigger without being overweight....’ Hers is a ‘captivating outfit... and the warm disarming smile she beamed at him as they shook hands, suggested the addition of two extra adjectives, elegant and vivacious,’ to those used to describe Nneka: ‘Young, charming, elegant, vivacious, professional woman!’ (17).

What Ike is doing at this early stage with these two women is purely artistically motivated foregrounding, the quantitative foregrounding referred to by Leech and Short, which Wales puts forward as syntagmatic foregrounding (quoted above). With this, he focuses attention on the two women, one to play the role of a guinea pig to unearth the problems of fatherlessness throughout the novel, while Gozie plays the catalyst – a corroborative role which exposes another way of tackling the problem of fatherlessness: creating a credible lie, and sticking to it consistently, by which subterfuge, the fatherless can get married, and live out

their lives normally without the usual bouts of despondency, depression and other psychosocial outcome of fatherlessness.

When the novel is read against the backdrop of the Igbo traditions, the semantic interpretation of certain lexical items quickly reveals the underlying ethical muddle plaguing the Igbo of Ike's novel. We meet such words/lexical items as *biological father* (26, 41), *natural father* (20, 67), *natural kids* (30), *de facto father* (56, 83, 84), *foster parents* (10), *wife* (45), *widow* (45), *woman 'husband'* (twice 132), *bastard* (22, 75, 94), *incest* and *fatherless*. *Biological father* and *natural father* mean the same: real father, not adoptive. *Natural kids* are the real kids, not adopted. *De facto father* implies the father figure, playing the role of a father, but not legally the father. Foster parents, like de facto ones, play the role of parents – taking care of the child without becoming the legal parents. Etymologically, *wife* means a woman to whom a man is married; *husband* being a man that a woman is married to; *widow* presupposes *demise of a husband*, that is, a woman whose husband is dead and who has not remarried. But *woman 'husband'* is a complex coinage the import of which does not exist in the semantics of English. A *bastard* is a child born of parents not married to each other. The concept of *fatherless* implies without a father, either because he is dead, or does not live with the children. An illegitimate child is the child born to parents who are not married; this implies that the child is a *bastard*. But in the society in question, there is an absence of the concept of illegitimate child (130), which tends to cancel out the concept of *bastard* in that society. So, one wonders why Gozie thinks that 'she cringes like a bastard' (22), or the features editor

referred to as a bastard by his biological father's wife (75), or why Nwanneka keeps referring to herself as a bastard while talking with Ayo. By fashioning out ancillary and contradictory meanings for *wife*, *husband*, and *widow*, such that a woman can become 'husband' to her fellow woman; can become wife to her fellow woman; can become a widow at the demise of her woman 'husband', Ike's Igbo society perpetuates the cultural aberration that results in fatherlessness.

These foregrounded lexical items, like essential arteries in human anatomy, provide a sense of direction for the plot and theme of the novel, and the semantic conflict between the denotation and the society-imposed connotation of some of them is responsible for the general mood of despondency and depression, which those regarded as fatherless have in common. The syntagmatic foregrounding Wales is talking about has to do with the prominence achieved by the repetition of these lexical items. These lexical items are of uppermost importance in realizing the message of the novel. The frequency ratio of *fatherless*, for instance, in a novel of a little above 180 pages, underscores the importance the author attaches to that phenomenon. The adjective, *fatherless*, the noun *fatherlessness* and their phrasal forms (*no father*, *without a father*) occur no less than 160 times in the novel, thus highlighting them as the hub around which the title and the message rotate.

From the traditions, we see that there is the 'unnatural' practice of a woman (married or unmarried) marrying her fellow woman; thus there exists a nomenclature as 'woman husband', which implies the existence of 'wife of a wife'. But the tradition has no place for a man marrying a man, so there is nothing

like ‘husband of a husband’, for that is purposeless as far as the culture of the author’s Igbo land is concerned.

And curiously enough, nothing in the tradition reflects the problem of incest. One may argue that semantically, *incest* can be subsumed under *adultery* or *fornication*, which has a place in the tradition, but the truth is that *incest* has a shade of meaning much darker than *adultery* or *fornication*. It does appear that hitherto the practice of incest is almost non-existent in the society; hence, it is taken for granted in the mores of the people as gathered by the author. This is deliberate. The structure of the novel survives on a robust technique of suspense. The suspense hinges on the single word, *incest*. To sustain the suspense to the end, the writer deliberately avoids the word, even in his weaving of the traditions of the people. But immediately the suspense is broken by the ‘carrier’ of the suspense (Mrs Ukamaka Okafo – Nwanneka’s mother), the word rolls out 10 times within a space of eight pages, and the story winds up. We note that it is Nwanneka that first used the word in a hysterical outburst: ‘Mummy, you are a beast! Oh my God! You drugged Uncle Ik and went on to commit incest with him! I feel like killing you!’ (180). We note also that her mother never used the word, instead, she and the narrator articulate the intensity of the offence with such words as *abominable*, *horrible*, (183) *heinous*, *damnable*, *despicable*, (185) *grievous* (186). With the revelation comes a serious interior monologue highlighting the level of anguish Nwanneka is plunged into by her mother’s incestuous act. She finds herself wrangling with an inner voice which argues with, criticizes and admonishes her for every step she took to uncover the truth about

her paternity, from not letting sleeping dogs lie (187) since the incidence of fatherlessness is a common phenomenon in the society, to the attempted suicide and homicide. Like a final verdict, the inner voice wakes her to the stark realities ahead of her:

‘Talking about children, have you considered that any child you bear will carry the incestuous imprint for life, and so will any children born to your children, and children born to your children’s children, and so on down the line?’ (187)

And this inner voice verdict informs her final decision to flee to London, become a missionary doctor, to minister to the medical needs of children in any Christian hospital or relief agency in any part of the developing world. And to minimize distractions, she decides to remain celibate and childless for the rest of her life (188).

We have seen that the interior monologue is stimulated by Nwanneka’s discovery of who her father is, and that she is an offspring of an incestuous relationship between her mother and her most cherished Uncle Ik. We have also noted that the author craftily avoids the use of his final arsenal, the key lexical item, *incest*, until when the bitter truth is out. And when it does, a ravaging inner voice engages her in a fierce internal debate and admonition. The interior monologue, for one thing, depicts the level of mental activity going on inside of Nwanneka; for another, with different grades of exclamation, a barrage of questions and answers reminiscent of an inquisition, the interior monologue steers the story to a fast dramatic close.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### SENTENCE AND PUNCTUATION PATTERN/FUNCTIONS; PARAGRAPH STRUCTURE AND ITS EFFECT ON THE NOVELS

#### 4.1 SENTENCE PATTERN IN *The Bottled Leopard*

This chapter deals with two related aspects of our analysis: sentence patterns and punctuation patterns. They are related in the sense that from ancient times, a sentence has been seen as representing ‘a complete thought’ and in written language, sentence status is signalled by punctuation (McArthur 837). Syntactically, a sentence can be seen in terms of its clausal components, how they are linked to one another by co-ordination and/or subordination. In either case, punctuation is important in determining the structural type of a sentence.

Examples:

- i) She dislikes the rainy season. It disturbs her business.
- ii) She dislikes the rainy season because it disturbs her business.
- iii) She dislikes the rainy season, for it disturbs her business.

In (i) two ‘complete thoughts’ have been separated by a full stop, which makes each of them a simple structure. In (ii) what we see as two ‘complete thoughts’ have been put together, one being subordinated, or made to lose its independent status, thus we have a complex structure. In (iii) the status of each of the two ‘complete thoughts’ is retained in a construction that employs the conjunction ‘for’ preceded by a mandatory comma to give a compound structure. The three

presentations above convey the same meaning but their different structural rendition depends on the writer's choice. There is also the compound-complex structure. Sometimes too, 'complete thoughts' are conveyed for special effects by a single word or phrase, and in each case, punctuation marks are inevitable.

One can identify the predominant occurrence of four sentence patterns in *The Bottled Leopard*:

- i) the normal simple, compound and complex sentences
- ii) the one-word type
- iii) the two-word type
- iv) the truncated type.

Azuike (2001: 53) in dealing extensively with patterns (ii) and (iii) above has this to say:

What appears like the absence of a pattern in Chukwuemeka Ike's handling of sentences actually masks a consciously crafted sentence formation that is systematically arranged. While at the grammatical level we can identify the simple, compound and complex types of sentences in the text, we do not feel that they are stylistically significant at this level. What is stylistically significant indeed, are the strategically placed and perhaps disturbingly numerous, choppy, simple sentences, which begin or end several utterances in the text.

Consider the following sentences from the novel:

- i) One clean jump, and the leopard sailed effortlessly over the wall, landing noiselessly inside Nma's father's compound.
- ii) It made straight for the pen. (1)

- iii) All these have happened seven good years back, and Amobi had long forgotten about leopards and leopard ‘owners’.
- iv) Before he went to sleep, he made a resolution. (6)

The first sentence above, which is the opening sentence of the text, is a long compound sentence and is immediately followed by the second which is a short simple sentence. But this pattern is not consistent. For example, (iii) and (iv) above are compound and complex sentences respectively. At times, we have a sequence of simple sentences:

Amobi’s heart jumped out of his mouth at the  
 mention of his name. The dreaded moment  
 had at last arrived. (98)

Although one can argue in favour of this inconsistency on the grounds of variety being the spice of composition, these demonstrations point to the fact that the occurrence of these sentences is stylistically non-significant. The significant patterns appear to be the one-word and two-word complete thoughts, examples of which are given below.

No. No question of camouflaging himself to resemble a leopard. (5)  
 He wanted Chuk first. Period. (7)  
Envy. Chuk was strikingly handsome. (7)  
Yes. SMG had described Amobi in those words (11)  
 Tunji shrugged his head after Amobi had shut the door  
 behind him. Impossible. (154)  
No. A white man could not be so poor – to wear only one  
 blue shirt, one pair of white shorts and a pair of brown hose  
 every day of the week. Impossible. (51-52)  
 Amobi joined the drift back to bed. Mystified .( 151)  
 Had she also been suspended for the two weeks? No. (94)

Some of the two-word complete thoughts include:

It was in his hometown, Ndikelionwu, when he was about the age of his younger sister, Adaobi. Six plus. (3) No goat! Instead some red blood. And some impressions in the sand... (4) Chuk had a way of making everything sound like Child's play. Except Mathematics. (16) Chuk had spotted a ripe bunch earlier in the day. He led the way towards it. No luck (21) Sweetheart. My everything endearing. So possessive. (69) He spontaneously changed direction, like a millipede hitting an obstacle, with no immediate destination in mind. Too late. (64)

Azuike has pointed out what he referred to as 'a ring of finality' about these one-word sentences and is of the opinion that they are 'not only concise and direct but also stylistically emphatic'.

The fourth group, so numerous that they occur in more than thirty passages throughout the text, is made up of truncated or incomplete sentences but with complete thoughts – incomplete in the sense that certain grammatical elements necessary for a syntactically complete sentence are deliberately chopped off for some stylistic effects. The first that strikes the reader is on page 3.

Suddenly, up they sprang! And... ma-a-a!

- i) From a goat sleeping just off the verandah.
- ii) One agonized bleat, but piercing enough to wake even the heavy sleeper, Obiageli.

The first above is only a prepositional phrase while the second is a noun phrase both of which are artistically submerged in the midst of complete sentences. The same art is exhibited on page 7:

His first surprise was the absence of prefects and the other senior boys.

- i) Mainly the form one boys, for whom attendance was mandatory.
- ii) And the form two boys, very much in evidence, bubbling over with inflated ideas of their seniority and importance.

Several of such amputated sentences are worth documenting here.

With Ugochukwu out of harm's way, his father would feel free to map out his strategy for the final resolution of his lifelong tussle with his arch-rival.

- i) A tussle bound to end in Mazi Eze's favour.
- ii) No need wasting time and money consulting a dibia over that (p. 48) And he had promptly forgotten all about leopards.
- iii) Until the Sunday service the previous day. (54)

Note that none of these numbered (i – iii) has a finite verb. The last but one above is a string of adverbial phrase made to survive semantically and stylistically with the complete sentences in its environment.

Chuk walked in through the open door. Had he been inside a prefect's room before? No...yes. Once. \*In the first term. \*His House Captain's room. \*Sheer curiosity. (65). 'Hammer' swung the hard bell twice. \*With an air of authority. ...\*Notwithstanding their growling inside. (67) 'Computer' made for the staff car park instead of the staff room. \*On the far side of the AD block.... \*No possible eavesdroppers. (81) \*No chalk marks anywhere on his body. \*Nothing to distinguish him from any other middle aged, handsome, bearded, hairy chested man. \*No sign of grey hair anywhere. (128)

With those words, dibia Ofia nipped back into the secret room, and sounded the Ogene. \*Followed by the rattling of the ide. \*The invocation of his deities(128).

The wild pig was as big as a cow.

\*Too big to carry in the mouth, as a cat would carry a mouse.... He knew precisely where under his bed he had hidden the trap. \*The huge, steel trap, the type used to trap leopards, antelopes,boars and other big game. \*The trap which he had acquired on the advice of the dibia, and which Ofia had consecrated at the family shrine. \*With a special sacrifice..... \*Without a scratch. \*With all the aches and pains gone. \*As

if nothing had ever happened to the hand... \*Instantly healed. \*All aches and pains gone...

\*Something brushing against metal. He opened his eyes wider.  
(148 – 149)

Amobi joined the drift back to bed. Mystified.

\*Unable to explain the relationship between his dream and the leopard's visit. (151)

A curiously very long one appears on page 19.

\*Chuk, who had spent so much money sending frantic cablegrams to his father to rescue him from the primitive conditions at the school and who would be only too glad to be expelled for any reason, if only to convince his father to abandon the old fashion idea that his first son must develop roots in his culture by going to school in Africa.

This disturbingly long 'sentence' has been forced to survive in spite of its lack of a predicate. We can identify four clauses from the above.

- i) who had spent so much money sending frantic cablegrams to his father to rescue him from the primitive conditions at the school – a non-restrictive relative clause,
- ii) who would be only too glad to be expelled for any reason – another non-restrictive relative clause,
- iii) if only to convince his father to abandon the old fashioned idea – a conditional clause which embeds within its matrix a fourth, a that-restrictive relative clause: 'that his first son must develop roots in his culture by going to school in Africa'.

This lumpy clausal nesting stops short of the predicate. And Ike leaves it hanging like that with neither the preceding sentence nor the subsequent one to

rescue it in terms of grammatical well-formedness. But the interesting thing is that in spite of its limitation, the sense is still conveyed.

When Amobi finds that the sword of expulsion is hanging over him for ‘making for the uppers’, Chukwuemeka Ike fuses into him fear and a barrage of such truncated sentences. Of course, in line with the way the human thought ruminates on crucial issues, there is no time for the troubled mind to waste on constructing syntactically completely-formed sentences, but the message is not lost.

The dreaded moment had at last arrived. Expulsion. Oh God!  
 \*The shame of it. \*Worse than the death of a cockroach. \*All  
 because he wanted to eat oranges and bananas. \*Oranges and  
 bananas which were yours for the asking at Ndikelionwu,  
 where nobody ever planted them for money... \*Free of  
 charge... \*Naked greed, which must be curbed right away.  
 (98)

The experience on the Fags’ Day and that of how to develop some dexterity in manipulating the cutlery nearly weigh Amobi down, and Ike allows him to release his outbursts with:

\*Curious institution, but undoubtedly the most prestigious  
 in Eastern Nigeria and the Cameroon.  
 \*Reputed to provide the best available secondary education  
 at the lowest possible cost.  
 \*And for transforming young African youth into English  
 gentlemen.\*Hence the jubilation at Ndikelionwu when the news of  
 Amobi’s admission came through. (12)

Most of the passages cited contain no finite verbs. What would have emerged as compound or complex sentences are dissected, thus amputating the common subject and its auxiliary verb or the entire predicates, but maintaining the inter-

and intra- sentence connections by the use of co-ordinate conjunctions or other word class to start the clauses. With this type of syntactic surgery, Ike has stylistically shuffled aside the rules of the English grammar in order to achieve the precision he wants. And to leave no reader in doubt of what he is doing with syntax, he concludes the whole story not with a complete sentence but with an adverbial clause of condition: \*‘Provided *dibia* Ofia continued to keep his leopard bottled tight’ (168).

#### 4.2 SENTENCE PATTERN IN *The Naked Gods*

The sentences of Ike’s second novel, *The Naked Gods*, can be seen from various functional and clausal groups. There are sentences used in the narration or description which display normal clausal hypotaxis and asyndeton. There are some choppy patterns that cannot be conveniently tagged sentence fragments or elliptical sentences, but the messages they convey are understood. These sentence types, clausal patterns and their locations within the body of the novel are not spontaneous. They are a result of careful, selective syntactic arrangements that suit the prevailing circumstances in the novel.

In our discussion of sentence and clausal patterns from here on, we shall borrow from Quirk *et al* (1988 – 1991) such terms that are deemed synonymous by scholars:

Main Clause can be variously termed *independent clause*, *principal clause*, *head clause*, *matrix clause*, *superordinate clause*.



Subordinate Clause is also referred to as *dependent clause*, *constituent clause*, *embedded clause*, *included clause*, *syntactically bound clause*, *sub-clause*, *downgraded clause*.

These terms will be freely used for the purpose of variety.

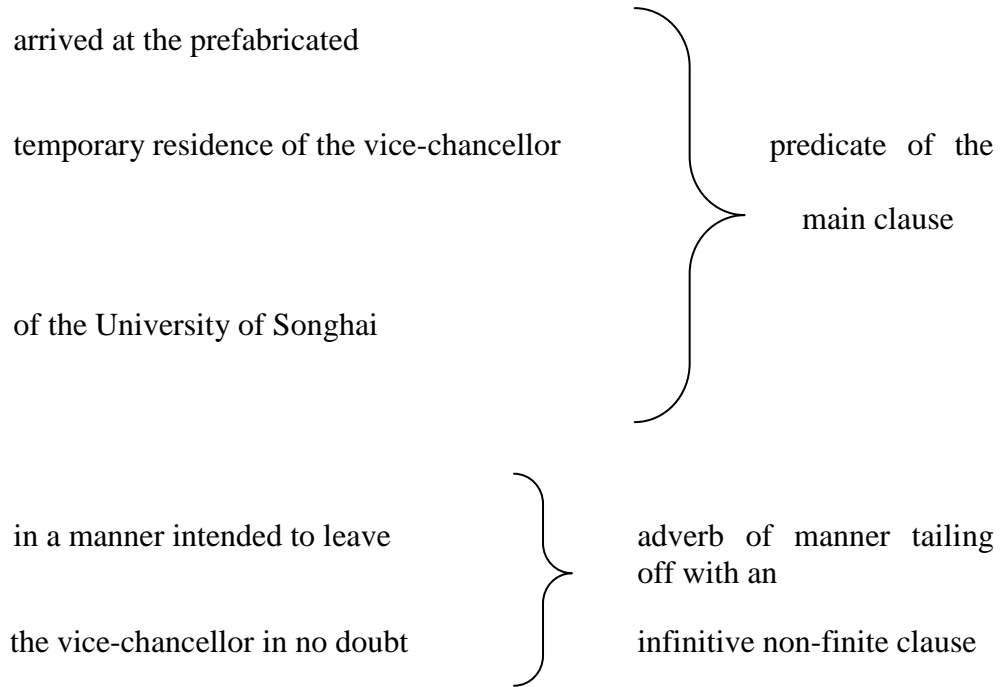
The opening of the text is a paragraph of five sentences. The sentences are of different lengths and clausal types. Ike sees the sentence as truly a network of clauses, and his clausal nesting capability is in line with the scenario one finds in the text.

(A) His Royal Highness, Ezeonuku III of Onuku, arrived at the prefabricated temporary residence of the vice-chancellor of the University of Songhai in a manner intended to leave the vice-chancellor in no doubt that he was the First Class Chief for Onuku Province, member of Songhai's Upper House, the most influential personality for miles around, and the bosom friend of the Governor-General, the prime Minister, the Minister of Education Affairs, and every important personality you could name in Capital City. (B) Never was a title more becoming to its bearer. (C) His Royal Highness, nearly six feet in height and over two hundred pounds in weight, exuded royalty and dignity as he walked, as he talked, and in the slow and seemingly deliberate manner in which he rolled his neck from side to side. (D) On this occasion, he brought with him his court musicians, who rarely accompanied him except on very major occasions such as the opening sessions of Parliament (E) This was a sure means of adding the Vice-chancellor to his ever growing list of V.I.P. friends and admirers.

The first sentence (A) above is a complex weaving of ten clauses: One main clause, others being sub-clauses of different functional categories.

His Royal Highness, ⇒NP (the subject of the entire sentence) separated from its predicate by an appositive noun clause whose compressed subj/vb (*who is*) are actually recoverable in the tradition of verbless clauses (Quirk *et al*: 997)

Ezeonuku III of Onuku, ⇒Appositive noun clause inserted as a renaming embellishment to the NP, (*His Royal Highness*).



- (i) that he was the First Class Chief for Onuku Province,
- (ii) \_\_\_\_\_ member of Songhai’s Upper House,
- (iii) \_\_\_\_\_ the most influential personality for miles around, and
- (iv) \_\_\_\_\_ the bosom friend of the Governor-General,
- (v) \_\_\_\_\_ the Prime Minister,

- (vi) \_\_\_\_\_ the Minister of Educational Affairs,  
 and  
 (vii) \_\_\_\_\_ every important personality  
 (viii) you could name in Capital City.

(i) – (ii) above are downgraded clauses. By some syntactic compression, the downgrading element *‘that’* and subj/verb of the (i) clause govern clauses (ii) – (iv), and by a more stringent syntactic compression these elements extend to clauses (v) – (vii) by asyndetic style of construction which gives the sentence some rhetorical flavour. The (viii) clause is a zero relative clause with its relative pronoun element *‘that’* suppressed. This is an analysis of Ike’s first sentence in *The Naked Gods*. Ordinarily, pedantic writing would consider this sentence deviant for lack of unity. A unified sentence handles one main idea, other ideas are merely ancillary. But the beauty of Ike’s sentence here is that all the ideas are carefully knit together with good internal punctuation and skilful use of clausal down-graders.

Immediately following this very long complex sentence is a short simple sentence (quoted as no. B above). This is expected, for, any repetition of such length of sentence in a row would have been amateurish on the part of the writer, and boring to the reader. The short and simple nature therefore offers a stylistic relief and beauty to the writing. Here there is a sort of subject-operator inversion involving the fronting of the negative frequency adverbial *‘never’* and its verb *‘was’* before the subject *‘title’*. The essence of this fronting of the negative is to

make prominent the writer's level of perplexity at the unusual chaining of titles for one man.

The third sentence (C) is also complex like the first, but with a reduced number of syntactically bound clauses: one head clause and five sub-clauses.

His Royal Highness, ⇒ subject

nearly six feet in height and over  
hundred pounds in weight,

} simple co-ordination of two  
dependent clauses belonging to  
the same functional category,  
with subj. + vb. ellipsis of '*who  
is*'.

exuded royalty and dignity ⇒ predicate of the main clause

as he walked,  
as he talked,  
in the slow and deliberate manner in  
which he rolled his neck from side to side.

} adverbial sub-clauses  
and of the manner  
category

Sentence No. D is a short, complex structure of one main clause, one downgraded clause: *On this occasion, he brought with him his court musicians, who rarely accompanied him except on major occasions such as the opening sessions of Parliament.*

The final sentence of that first paragraph (E) is a fairly long but simple structure: *This was a sure means of adding the vice-chancellor to his ever-growing list of V.I.P. friends and admirers.*

Ike's sentence weaving is stylistically interesting and significant in some ways. He is careful with the first paragraph of the chapter. This paragraph, as we have seen, is made up of sentences that are somehow stretched tight and arranged thus: complex + simple + complex + complex + simple. The close of the same first chapter relaxes the taut nature of the constructions and tapers off with a paragraph of two sentences: one simple, one complex.

The royal drummers played His Royal Highness into his limousine. The music petered out as the vehicles drove away from the vice chancellor's hut. (9)

In the last sentence, there are clearly two independent clauses:

The music petered out  
the vehicles drove away from the vice chancellor's hut.

Ordinarily, one would have labelled the sentence *compound* considering the presence of two main clauses and zero sub-clause, but Ike skillfully chooses the conjunction 'as', not to amalgamate the two main clauses to produce a compound sentence, but to act as an adverbial downgrader of time to the second clause. Here it implies 'while' – hence a complex structure.

One can see His Royal Highness' portrait as highfaluting: he embodies arrogance, pomposity. He exudes royalty and dignity in his words and deeds. The whole thing about him is high to the superlative degree. We are told that he 'absorbed the encomiums with the dignity of his office, nodding slowly but continuously as encomium toppled over encomium in quick succession' (5). And in line with the prevailing high atmosphere and scenario, Ike starts the novel with

high clausal nesting possibilities, demonstrating the dignity of his language to his reader, allowing syntactically bound clauses to topple over syntactically bound clauses the way ‘encomium toppled over encomium’ in his portrait of His Royal Highness.

The novel presents the stiff competition between American and British academics, with serious infighting among their African counterparts, and the not-very-literate ones lurking in the background, fomenting trouble, and mounting all sorts of pressures. Ike succeeds in disclosing this motif by the close of chapter two with a remarkable combination of sentence patterns.

- (A) The Impala drove away, leaving the vice-chancellor in one of his moments of depression. (B) Student demonstrations over puerile demands, local dignitaries seeking all manner of favours, hypersensitive council members who allow nationalism to blind them to the most obvious facts of life. (C)... These were problems he had not imagined would plague a university vice-chancellor. (D) As if they were not enough, he had to stand constantly on his toes if he was not to be tripped by the Registrar and Professor Brown who constantly irritated him by their worship of standards – their own standards. (E) How could any well-meaning Registrar be so rigid as to disqualify a candidate accepted for a degree programme by Pineapple State University? (20)

The first above is a complex sentence woven with one main clause and one ‘-ing’ participle marked non-finite clause type. This is the author’s sentence that introduces to the reader the following curious sentence fragment in the fashion of interior monologue (sentence (B) above). Then another complex sentence (C) of the pattern: 1 main clause + a zero relative clause whose downgrading element ‘that’ is suppressed: (that) he had not.... (20). Then another complex of the pattern: 1 main clause + 3 sub-clauses coming before the question agitating the

vice-chancellor's mind: (E). Thus the stage is set for Ike's exposition of what Gerald Moore (Ugbabe: 66) refers to as 'the remorseless struggle' that runs throughout the text.

Chukwuemeka Ike's descriptive ability is worth noting. His descriptive sentences are carefully patterned, whether he is intent upon realistic description or the type that smacks of the exaggerated. At the early stage of the tussle for indigenous vice-chancellorship, Okoro goes to seek advice from his parents on how to deal with the only adversary he perceives – Professor Ikin, an Okanu man. One of the five sentence patterns of description is presented below.

(A) She snapped her fingers and again spread her hands in supplication to Obasi. (B) Then she rose from her seat and did some dance steps, punctuating them with the raising of the hands and eyes to Obasi. (C) She rounded off by embracing her beloved son, detaching herself from him, staring at the wonder boy and embracing him again. (D) Mazi Okoro Uduma uttered some incomprehensible remarks, turned his arms also to Obasi in humble gratitude and ladled a generous quantity of snuff into each nostril. (E) When the snuff had penetrated deep into him, he cleared his throat, produced a shrill sound as he blew each nostril in turn away from everybody, and spoke slowly:  
(45)

(A) above is a compound sentence – an amalgam of two simple structures. (B) is a compound-complex structure with two amalgamated matrix clauses and one '-ing' participle marked non-finite sub-clause. (C) is complex with one matrix and four participle sub-clause types. (D) is a compound construction with three simple sentences, the first two sewn together by asyndetic amalgamation, the last by a coordinator *and*. (E) is another compound-complex of the structure: 2 syntactically bound clauses of time (one clearly introduced by 'when', the other

by ‘*as*’ semantically used as an adverbial downgrader of time implying ‘*while*’) and 2 matrix clauses carefully punctuated by commas and a conjunction.

The description of Professor Brown in just three sentences is presented with Ike’s characteristic mixture of sentence types.

(A) He was prematurely bald for a man in his early thirties, but he found baldness and a luxuriant beard helpful in boosting his age. (B) He was about 5 foot 9, though his lean frame made him appear a six-footer. (C) Someone once remarked that he closely resembled Enwonwu’s impression of the risen Christ! (27)

(A) is compound, (B) a complex, (C) a complex.

Sometimes, exaggerated descriptions, like the signs of imminent rain (35) are done with careful sentence mix.

(A) A dazzling flash of lightning lit the room for a second. (B) Before the two men could recover from the shock of his sudden intrusion into their privacy, a deafening crash of thunder followed. (C) It was a combination of many sounds – the objectionable sounds of a sports car with a broken silencer, the sound of a huge iroko tree breaking in two, the deep sound of cannon shots fired at funerals, the sharp sound of hundreds of kobokos in the expert hands of the cow Fulani; finally it trailed off like the growl of a disgruntled dog.

(A) is a simple sentence, a structure which, Ike seldom uses in this text. (B) is a compound pattern, with a periodic force and suspending the main information to the final position. (C) is a compound-complex structure whose first super-ordinate is separated from a catalogue of noun clauses by a dash; while the second superordinate is marked off by a heavy punctuation mark, the semi-colon. The common test for noun clause appositives is to link the apposed units with a verb-



to-be. In this case, the copula introduces four noun clause structures before the semi-colon.

The sounds are:

the objectionable sound of a sports car with a broken silencer,

the sound of a huge iroko tree breaking in two,

the deep sound of cannon shots fired at funerals,

the sharp sound of hundreds of kobokos in the expert hands of the cow Fulani.

The other prevailing sentence types are those that come as fragments, most of the time depicting the working of a protagonist's inner feelings. Dr Mal Wilson, the Vice-Chancellor, is caught in the web of the tussle between Okoro and Ikin. Ike explores his inner mind with such sentences.

- (A) To place a wedge between Okoro and Ikin in order to rule!
- (B) Okoro who had earned his Ph.D. only a year ago, who would count himself lucky if he won any job higher than that of an Instructor back home in the States!
- (C) And that piece of dead-wood bearing the name of Ikin.
- (D) A B.A. who would not qualify for certification as a grade school teacher at home!
- (E) It was inconceivable that he should need to plan anything to qualify to rule over Ikin and Okoro, he, Dr Mal Wilson, a Ph. D. of the leading American private university, a full professor in his own right, for five years Dean of the Faculty of Applied Sciences before his appointment in Asia.... (96)

The first above is simply a non-finite clause with 'to' infinitive. The second (B) is a lump of two relative clauses + an adverbial clause of condition which is contingent upon a main clause that is missing in the train of thought. These sentence fragments have the stylistic effect of exposing the thought processes of the protagonist, Dr Wilson. His agitated mood is easy to see from the heavy

exclamation marks used. The last above, numbered (E) is the only complete sentence. It is cast as a complex structure with three noun clauses attached appositively by asyndetic co-ordination and it is intended as a summary clearance of Dr Mal Wilson's internal doubts. Sometimes also, the 'sentences' come as mere NPs with their predicates chopped off. These choppy sentences have the same stylistic value with the ones made up of only dependent clauses whose independent clauses are missing. Another good example is Brown's level of astonishment (at the sight of Dr Okoro and Mrs Julie Toogood) captured with a barrage of NPs without predicates.

Dr Okoro. That nigger! That Knave! That swollen-headed, over-ambitious, shallow-minded, favour-seeking nincompoop! That tool in American hands, used by them to adulterate university standards in Songhai! That everything detestable! That was the man bedding Julie, a white woman, a Briton, wife of his friend the Registrar! (127)

These NPs are a surge of invectives and the exclamation marks give away Brown's mood. Complete sentences are usually constructed. By this we mean that elements of calculated thinking, planning, arranging, ordering are involved. But here we are treated with nothing but emotional outbursts from a mind so confounded that the idea of complete sentence construction is skipped. The surge of anger in the mind provides no time for sentence construction. In the above, we note Brown's consistent use of '*that*' – a deictic formative which deliberately distances/dissociates speaker from the subject, such that the proximity becomes third person proximity as opposed to '*this*' which in sentence construction shows a close relationship to the speaker. When this is taken together with the content of that passage, the deep-seated racist part of Brown is exposed.

#### 4.2.1 The Use of Punctuation Marks in *The Naked Gods*

Generally, the punctuation patterns employed by Ike are fascinating. Because Ike relies much on the technique of interior monologue, the use of dots to mark the graphological omission of certain words is rampant. The use of three dots to signal ellipsis is recognized by Harbrace (148). In the text, we have this pattern on various pages: 20, 29, 160, 203, etc. In addition to such good use of the dots, his use of the semi-colon is appropriate. Examples:

Only a handful of them, however, slept on campus; nearby villages provided greater security. (239)

This compound sentence construction by the use of the semi-colon shows the semantic relationship between the first clause and the second one. It also indicates artistically the syntactic relationship existing between the two clauses as members of equal grammatical rank. A look at one of Ike's fine descriptive paragraphs – the description of Mrs Ikin's physique – is also instructive.

Her fatness developed after her betrothal to her husband who was then a humble elementary school teacher. In conformity with the tradition held by her husband's family, she was sent to the fattening room to be fed up and prepared for her husband's nourishment. Her stoutness became permanent. Her arms turned outwards as she walked; for no longer could she get them parallel to her body. (32-33)

Two long complex sentences followed by a short simple one. Then the final sentence, a compound-complex structure that presents, by way of summary, the result of the contents of the previous sentences in the paragraph – the fattening of Mrs Ikin. Here in the last sentence, there are two matrix clauses and a sub-clause

introduced with ‘as’ implying ‘while’. The semi-colon here appropriately establishes a cause-effect relationship between the two matrix clauses and consequently the other clauses in the paragraph: Because of excessive fattening, her arms turned outwards, and are no longer parallel to her body. The second matrix clause of the last sentence is curious because of its deliberate inversion of normal word order. There are two verbs: could = an auxiliary (helping) verb and get = a lexical verb (i.e. main verb). She = the subject of the clause while no longer = adverbial of frequency. Certain syntactic rules of grammar expect adverbs of frequency (as well as those of comment) to be located between the subject and the verb. But in the presence of an auxiliary verb, such an adverbial should be positioned between the auxiliary verb and the lexical verb. Where there are two or more auxiliary verbs, the location of the comment or frequency adverb is immediately after the first auxiliary verb. Thus, the clause in question should normally read, ‘for she could no longer get them....’ Ike is aware of such syntactic rules. So, we would not regard what he has done here as a syntactic fracture. Rather, it is a deliberate syntactic variation akin to Mrs Ikin’s physical disfiguration caused by deliberate abnormal feeding.

The same good use of the semi-colon can be seen in the following delineation of Julie:

... There was some consolation in the fact that even the Registrar with his wrestler’s physique had proved unequal to the assignment; it wasn’t only Brown who had failed. (70) ... No single man could satisfy Julie; what she probably needed was a relay of at least five deprived soldiers! (71)

In spite of the good use of punctuation marks, there are a few doubtful uses. Strunk and White in *The Elements of Style* (6) and *Harbrace College Handbook* (Ch. 14) point out that independent or matrix clauses should be joined by semi-colons, not commas. But here is what we have on page 131 of the text:

... There was space for extending the pool. H.R.H. occasionally mentioned that he would build a diving tower, this would necessitate extending the pool area and increasing the depth to 14 feet for safe diving.

... Mrs Ikin was amazed at the superb finish of everything in the palace, indeed it was of a higher quality than the finish of any of the buildings on the campus.

The latter is a compound sentence with two matrix clauses that should be linked by a semi-colon. The former is a compound-complex with two superordinate clauses and one sub-clause attached to the first superordinate by a downgrader 'that'. The subject of the second superordinate is 'this' and it refers to what H.R.H. mentioned in the first part of the sentence. The second superordinate is therefore a consequence of the information in the first part. For this, a comma is considered too weak for the link. The same can be said of:

... Wives and children were first removed to safety, they were followed by moveable valuable personal effects. (238)

In these three examples, the comma is not strong enough for the constructions. The semi-colon or the period can be used.

Generally, in this text, Chukwuemeka Ike's interest is in the profuse use of compound, complex and compound-complex structures with sub-clauses that are artistically chained. The use of simple structures is seldom. A simple structure has

a single clause unit. The chain of titles for H.R.H., the intricate web of struggles for supremacy among the academia (both locals and foreigners), pressures from influential natives – all these account for Ike’s choice of sentences that are loaded with clauses.

#### 4.3 SENTENCE PATTERN IN *The Potter’s Wheel*

On the concept of markedness, Wales (287) explains that ‘in linguistics and stylistics, *markedness* is used to refer to any features or patterns which are prominent, unusual or stylistically deviant in some way. So there is *marked* focus, for example, *marked* word order....’ etc. In *The Potter’s Wheel*, there are no marked sentence types in terms of clausal composition: we have simple, compound, complex and compound-complex sentences freely used in the entire narration. Choppy, one-word complete thoughts rendered as sentences are rare, unlike the profuse use of such in *The Bottled Leopard*. Part of the reason is that there is more of the inner mind probing in *The Bottled Leopard* than there is in *The Potter’s Wheel*. The same is absent in the two-paged narration of Mazi Laza’s disturbed mind about the way his son is drifting downhill (58 and 59). Ike simply chooses the third person narrative mode to unearth Mazi Laza’s mind using complete sentences of different clause structures. Even in one of the secondary modes of narration (the free indirect speech, which Ike scarcely employs in this text) there are no one-word or incomplete structures representing Obu’s mental activity as would have been the case in *The Bottled Leopard*. Here is the narrated monologue:

What should he do? Return the bicycle until David recovered sufficiently to teach him? No, he could not do that, after being so emotionally worked up. Should he go to Oti to seek his advice? No. Oti would be angry with him for not turning up to help with their new vehicle. Or Oti might beg him to let him ride too, a situation he had tried to avoid by making the arrangement with David alone. (33)

By convention, Ike the narrator accesses Obu's mind, reporting the internal communication going on in his mind as he rolls the bicycle from David's house to Oti's in search of someone to teach him how to ride. Here Ike uses backshift in tense forms and changes in pronoun and other deictic formatives to show the reader that it is a report but in the free indirect mode. He does not employ choppy, incomplete structures.

However, in just about one instance throughout the text, in Obu's childhood at Umuchukwu, his childhood bully (Samuel) haunts him, and the level of his dread of the bully is captured by Ike using this narrated monologue with bits of choppy structures.

Samuel. That bully. That cheat. That trickster. He and Oti had an identical hatred for Samuel. Was it hatred or dread, or pathological fear? Samuel was older and clearly outside their age grade.... (16)

Here, NPs with amputated predicates common in *The Naked Gods*, as well as the clausal nesting that characterizes the start of the first chapter of *The Naked Gods* are all not marked in *The Potter's Wheel*. So, we see that such one-word, phrasal or sentence fragment constructions are not Ike's preoccupation in *The Potter's Wheel*.

But of note is his deliberate use of one sentence as a paragraph in two strategic instances in the text. The first is when Mazi Laza retires to his Obi to get ready to grind his tobacco by himself.

With his loin cloth tucked under him and the grinding stone held in place between his outstretched legs, he began the long and painstaking process. (58)

The second is the one-sentence paragraph that closes the novel:

On 14 January, 1994, Obuechina Maduabuchi returned to Teacher's house at Aka CMS Central School, unaccompanied by his mother. (215)

Broadly speaking, sentences may be grouped into two: the periodic and loose sentences. Each type has its features and functions. The former, also known as the suspended sentence, delays the main information until the end, thereby creating suspense. Besides the suspense, the periodic structure tends to lend rhetorical force to a passage. On the other hand, the loose sentence is that which announces its main information first before other embellishing phrases and ideas. Loose structures are predominant in informal or conversational style. Whereas the periodic structure creates suspense and adds vigour and force to the story, the loose structure has the single advantage of simplicity.

In connection with the first single-sentence paragraph quoted above (58), with nobody around to distract/disturb Mazi Laza's train of thought, he critically examines Obu's situation: how brilliant he is, but detests physical labour/suffering; how far his own absence from home (as a father) is to blame; how far, in spite of the *ogbanje* having gone, the mother still pampers him and



thus the boy ‘cascades downhill every day’. Mazi Laza argues and convinces himself that ‘no child brought up that way could make good’ (60). He decides to ‘put a stop to it’ immediately. It is this resolution that brings about sending Obu to serve Teacher Zaccheus. For Ike’s story to come to this climax, he allows Mazi Laza some privacy in his *obi* to ruminate and come to a resolution. Mazi Laza being thus isolated, Ike isolates as a paragraph, one complex sentence of one main clause and two co-ordinated syntactically bound clauses. The two co-ordinated syntactically bound clauses appear first in the sentence while the main clause is located last – a fine periodic structure! This periodic structure delays the main information until the end, capturing the main information with the main clause terminally located: ‘... he began the long and painstaking process.’

In connection with the second single-sentence paragraph quoted above (215), the main information is clearly stated first: Obu returns to Teacher at Aka. The information that this time he is not accompanied by his mother is only of secondary importance to the story. The sentence is woven with one main clause and a syntactically compressed subordinate clause, hence a complex structure.

On 14 January, 1944, Obuechina Maduabuchi returns to Teacher’s house at Aka C.M.S. Central School – the main clause;

Unaccompanied by his mother – the sub-clause.

The sentence, as a whole, with its main information stated first before the ancillary information, presents a loose structure, but the type we may hereby refer to as an amphibious loose structure. Amphibious, because of its double/doubtful nature: displaying the features of a loose structure but with a somewhat formal

tone. Ike is conscious of how to round off his tale. He chooses to end it with an isolated paragraph of one complex sentence. The formal tone of the sentence lies in Ike's choice to spell out details: full date, full names of the protagonist, full address of Teacher's house. The clause 'unaccompanied by his mother' implies that his return to Teacher's house is now of his own volition. And this action brings to the fore the gripping power of Mazi Laza's rhetorical analogy (213 – 215) and further indicates that the boy is truly learning, unlike in the first occasion when he was accompanied by his doting mother.

Therefore, besides these two strategically located complex single-sentence structures, there is no marked sentence pattern in *The Potter's Wheel*. What we find stylistically marked is Chukwuemeka Ike's deployment of the reporting clauses in the text.

A reporting clause accompanies direct reports of somebody's speech or thought. It specifies the speaker/thinker, the addressee (sometimes), the type of act (*ask, say, think, etc.*). The reporting clause may be placed in initial, media, or final position.... (Biber 196)

On the various aspects of the reporting clause, Biber (921) continues:

Reporting clauses are appended to direct reports of a person's speech or thought and are on the borderline between independent and dependent clauses... Such clauses contain some kind of verb, either a straightforward verb of speaking/thinking (e.g. *Say, think*) or a verb identifying the manner of speaking (eg. *Mutter, shriek*), the type of speech act (e.g. *Offer, Promise*), the phase of speaking (an aspectual verb such as *begin, continue*), etc. such clauses frequently have inversion....

Again, a translation in *Intercultural Studies*, Department of English, University of Helsinki, further describes the reporting clause as

... a type of reporting expression which characterizes the communicative situation. It offers a frame of interpretation for the sequence of reported speech taken from another context. The prototypical form of the reporting expression is the reporting clause whose subject is the speaker of the reported speech and its verb a communicative verb such as *tell, pronounce, suggest, and admit*. Moreover, the reporting clause can also contain reference to an addressee.... The communicative verb which is most neutral and broadest in meaning is *say*. The speaker can convey more information on the manner of communicating with other communicative verbs (*tell, shout, write*) or show his/her interpretation on the nature of the communicative event and his/her attitude to the speaker whose speech is reported (*brag, whine, demand*).

From the foregoing, and from Randolph Quirk *et al* (1020 – 1112) we can abstract the following information about reporting clauses generally, and shall examine same in relation to Chukwuemeka Ike's deployment of reporting clauses in *The Potter's Wheel*. The reporting clause is an expression used by writers in presenting the exact language of a speaker (direct speech). It is an expression, which characterizes the communicative situation. The reporting clause introduces the direct speech mode. The exact words could be the spoken words of a speaker in a 'physical' dialogue, or the unspoken words in an internal communication (mental activity) taking place within an individual. A reporting clause may take any of the following syntactic structures:

- i) The speaker + a reporting verb that denotes the act of communication in terms of *speaking, thinking, writing* (SV).

- ii) The speaker + a reporting verb identifying the circumstances of the speech act, and or the aspectual phase of the verb (also SV or SVA of time, place, reason, etc.)
- iii) The speaker + a reporting verb + an adverb of manner (SVA)
- iv) The speaker + a reporting verb that embodies the manner of speaking (also an SV pattern)
- v) The speaker + a reporting verb + an addressee which syntactically functions as indirect object, and is optional (SVO indirect).

The reporting clause in fiction and other writings has three possible locations: initial, medial and final. Medial position is generally favoured by scholars as the most frequent in occurrence (Quirk *et al.*: 1021).

When the reporting clause is located medially or finally, subject-verb inversion may occur if the verb is in the simple present or simple past, especially when the reporting clause is a pronoun, subject-verb inversion is regarded as unusual and archaic.

Syntactically and semantically the reporting clause resembles the most important type of comment clause, and thus reporting clauses perform similar roles as do some comment clauses: they may express the author's emotional attitude towards the speaker of the direct speech or towards the direct speech itself (e.g. *Strongly objected, gladly added*, etc); they may 'hedge', that is, express the speaker's tentativeness over the truth value of the matrix clause (eg. he guessed,

*thought, felt*); they may express the speaker's certainty (eg. *know, agree, remember, admit*, etc).

We have pointed out that the medial location of the reporting clause is regarded by scholars as the most frequent in occurrence, but this is not the case in *The Potter's Wheel*. In this text, initial and medial positions for the reporting clauses are not common. The initial position is, in fact, almost non-existent in the text. We can spot isolated cases. 'We shall see' wants to find out how many of the pupils actually memorised Psalm 23, Ike writes:

*Cromwell cut him short*: 'One question has been puzzling me since last night...' (120)

And the same teacher, 'We shall see', in his routine humorous way of beginning his classes, Ike reports;

*The teacher went on*: 'I can cut a broad road through the winding Milliken hill in one day. By what means?' 'With the mouth!' the class echoed. (119)

Here is the exchange between Obu and Samuel (80 – 81).

'Is it true that you are going to serve as houseboy to that person called Teacher?' he asked with a sneer. 'I'm going to live with him,' Obu had replied guardedly. *Samuel burst into wicked laughter*: 'Is that not the man they say is shorter than the Nri dwarfs?'

These italicised expressions are isolated reporting clauses in the initial position in the text. In these instances, the punctuation mark separating the reporting clause from the direct speech is, in each case, the anticipatory colon introducing the direct speech. In the first reporting clause above (120), the reporting verb '*cut*'

and its particle '*short*' (given above) together give out the manner in which the direct speech is uttered by Cromwell. Ike has a reason here to select the initial position for the reporting clause. In the present situation, if the direct speech had been first, the impression to the reader would have been that Cromwell's speech was a *sudden, rude* and *forceful* interruption of the teacher. By positioning the reporting clause first here, Ike plays down the sudden, rude and forceful tone. The second above contains the verb '*went*' and its particle '*on*' both of which point to some circumstances surrounding the communication. The last above can pass as a reporting clause in the initial position with the anticipatory colon that ushers in the direct speech. It is a form of reporting clause modified to direct the reader clearly on what is going on. It is not just a question from Samuel, but also a question amidst wicked laughter. The dearth of the reporting clause in the initial position in this text is partly because of the archaic nature of that style. The medial position for the reporting clause is also scant in the text not because of any reason of outdated style, but by author's choice. When Mazi Laza is to send Obu to invite some of their neighbours to their house, Ike writes:

‘To make sure you don't miss out even a single name,’  
*suggested his father*, ‘go and get paper and pencil so that  
 you can write the names down.’ (55)

Between Obu and his dotting mother over learning to ride a bicycle, Ike says:

‘Mama,’ *whispered Obu*, ‘I don't want to come out until  
 Papa leaves for the farm. If I do he will take me to the  
 farm...’ (29)

Here is another medial occurrence used to report Mama Obu's speech:

‘If that is what you are heading for, he told me that he had something urgent to do,’ *she interrupted*, ‘so I decided to send the girls.’ (57)

The day before Obu leaves for Teacher’s house, Mazi Laza’s family is besieged by relatives and well-wishers.

‘Did not Chukwudifu name his son Jidelundimuo?’ observed Mazi Nwokike, Oti’s father, as he and Mazi Laza sipped the palm wine he had brought to help Mazi Laza in entertaining his many callers. ‘If I may speak the truth,’ *Mazi Laza interjected*, ‘that is a very bad name to give your own child....’ (82)

Between Oti and Mama Obu when Obu is anxiously expected home for the Christmas, Ike reports:

‘Good morning, Ma,’ greeted Oti.  
 ‘Morny, my son,’ Mama Obu replied....  
 ‘The person who went to see Obu, ‘*Oti*  
*continued rather* *timidly*, ‘has he returned?’  
 (194)

The italicised are the medial reporting clauses throughout the text, and Ike varies the structures as a matter of choice by observing the subject-operator inversion which is a syntactic possibility in medial and final reporting clauses: *suggested his father; whispered Obu*; then the normal SV pattern – *she interrupted; Mazi Laza interjected; Oti continued rather timidly*. The first in these SV pattern clauses (*she interrupted*) is one of the ways Ike shows his careful treatment of reporting clauses, recognizing the fact that subject-verb inversion in a reporting clause with a pronoun as subject is archaic.

We have seen that reporting clauses in the initial and medial positions are scantily utilized in *The Potter’s Wheel*. What we do have is a preponderance of

reporting clauses in the final position with their syntactic characteristics of SV and the inversion VS flexibly deployed.

The first chapter of the text contains just three reporting clauses, each positioned terminally. The first is appended to Obu's hysterical beckoning of his mother.

*'Mama! Mama!' Obu shouted from the gate leading into  
the compound. (10)*

The second is appended to the mother's response.

*'I'm here, Obiano,' his mother replied. (10)*

The third is attached to his mother's question, apparently seeking clarification.

*'What did you say?' Mama Obu spoke as if she did not  
believe him. (11)*

These three reporting clauses have in common two mandatory grammatical properties of the first above; there is the subject (*Obu*), the verb (*shouted*) and an adverbial clause of place. The second reporting clause is different; it is just the SV pattern of a simple sentence with the verb itself referring to the circumstances of the speech act (*she is giving a feedback or response*). The third contains, in addition to the mandatory grammatical features of the reporting clause, an adverbial clause of manner. The three verbs in these reporting clauses: *shouted*, *replied*, *spoke* are intransitive; hence, they require no complementation by direct object. This same point can still be made about the three strategic areas of the novel: Chapters 9, 14 and 26.



Chapter 9, which climaxes the story, incidentally presents Obu's 9<sup>th</sup> birthday. It is the chapter, where Mazi Laza's decision on *how* to check the way Obu has been 'cascading downhill' is unequivocally announced to his wife: '*The main thing I want to tell you is that I have decided to send Obuechina away to serve as houseboy to a teacher.... Onyibo will leave home two Nkwo market days from today, to live with Teacher Zaccheus Kanu. That's all.*' (63, 65). This is barely three days after Obu's 9<sup>th</sup> birthday. Here we have some communication exchange between husband and wife over the pattern of the boy's upbringing. Since Mazi Laza's announcement has a tone of finality, it does not allow detailed discussion, suggestion or any change of plans by his wife. So, Chukwuemeka Ike uses fifteen reporting clauses to present the communication at this point. Here are ten examples.

1. Mama Obu *reminded* him.
2. Mazi Laza *asked* after Mama Obu had said nothing.
3. *Persisted* Mazi Laza who genuinely wanted reassurance that he had hit on the right idea.
4. Mama Obu *replied* curtly.
5. Mama Obu *pleaded*.
6. Mazi Laza *replied*, waiting for the boiling pot to throw off its lid.

7. *exclaimed* Mama Obu, forgetting that she should not shout so loudly at night.
8. Mama Obu *asked* as she heard the noise in the kitchen when Nkechi slipped on a banana peel and fell.
9. Nkechi *replied* faintly.
10. She *called* as she smacked him with maternal gentleness.

Chapter 14, which Ike devotes entirely to the typical nature of the ‘explosive atmosphere’, the physical thrashing, tongue-lashing and ‘brutality’ prevalent in Teacher’s home, has twenty-two reporting clauses, but here we exemplify with ten.

1. *ordered* Teacher.
2. *pleaded* Monday, still retreating.
3. Teacher *thundered*, in his most masculine voice.
4. he *asked* as Monday stood in front of him like a private before a major-general.
5. *grumbled* Madam as she searched her bag for shea butter for the wounds on Monday’s body.
6. *muttered* Ada, audibly enough for the other servants to hear.
7. Ada *cursed* for the benefit of her fellow servants, before....

8. Madam *ordered*.
9. She *bellowed*.
10. *grunted* Ada, instinctively moving towards the exit...

Chapter 26, the last chapter of the text, takes place at Obu's home, Umuchukwu. It starts with Obu's nightmare about Madam and the Evans-two-spoons-of-rice episode; Mama Obu's concern for Obu not to go back to Aka; a brief argument on whether Obu should return to Teacher's house or not; Obu asks if he is still to return there – his mother directs him to his father. His father invokes the Edmund Okechukwu/Caleb Okeke analogy with which he finally instills into the boy the philosophy that the inevitable route to success is hard work. Ike captures all these exchanges with forty reporting clauses, but ten examples will suffice here.

1. Mama Obu *announced*, for the benefit of her husband, as they harvested their seed yams, assisted by three Agbenu labourers.
2. Mazi Laza *said* to Udo, one of the labourers, pretending not to hear his wife.
3. Afoka, the second man, *affirmed*.
4. *teased* Mazi Laza.
5. Mazi Laza *replied*.
6. *asked* Mazi Laza.

7. Nkechi *replied*.
8. *whispered* Ogechukwu.
9. *added* Mazi Laza.
10. Mazi Laza *went on*.

The ten reporting clauses selected in each of the strategic sections are only representative of what Ike is doing with reporting clauses in *The Potter's Wheel*. On the whole, out of a total of 15 reporting clauses in Chapter 9, 12 take the normal SV pattern while three respond to inversion. Chapter 14 has 22 reporting clauses, 12 are SV pattern while 10 are VS. Chapter 26, the last chapter of the text, has 40 reporting clauses out of which there are 29 SV and 11 VS patterns. For those that respond to inversion, the reporting verbs precede the subjects. Since subject-operator inversion is a syntactic marker of clausal subordination, the medial and terminal reporting clauses identified here as VS pattern are structurally dependent on their various direct speeches, which, in turn, are the matrix/independent clauses.

Chapter 9 presents the normal exchange between husband and wife on the issue of how the boy is being brought up. For the reporting clauses here, Ike selects straightforward, neutral, somewhat colourless intransitive verbs. The same thing can be said of the reporting clauses and their verbs as used in Chapter 26. Then compare these with the reporting verbs in Chapter 14. In Chapter 14, while Teacher deals with Monday for the burst tyre, tongue-lashing Bright for not

bringing him water for washing hands, Madam and Ada slug it out in their own way in the same chapter. Ike captures the whole wrangling and discordant atmosphere prevalent in Teacher's house with reporting verbs that are highly charged and emotive. Particularly, the reporting verbs in the altercation between Madam and Ada (an offshoot of that between Teacher and Monday) can be contrasted: Teacher *ordered, shouted, thundered*; Monday simply *pleaded*. Madam *grumbled, ordered, bellowed*; Ada *muttered, grunted, cursed*. These reporting verbs depict the belligerent moods of the participants in the exchange.

Another feature of these reporting clauses is that some of them come in their 'expanded' forms, with words and phrases pointing to the circumstances of the communication. For instance, *Mazi Laza replied, waiting for the boiling pot to throw off its lid....*; *exclaimed Mama Obu, forgetting that she should not shout so loudly at night; she called, as she smacked him with maternal gentleness; Mama Obu asked as she heard the noise in the kitchen when Nkechi slipped on a banana peel and fell....*; *grumbled Madam as she searched her bag for shea butter for the wounds on Monday's body*. The last three examples above are introduced by as performing the circumstantial function of time adverbials. The as is replaceable by while in each of the three examples.

Some of the reporting clauses take the pattern SVA, as in: *Mama Obu replied curtly; Nkechi replied faintly; Mama Obu cut in impatiently; Udo replied cautiously; Oti continued rather timidly*; etc. Each of these is an adverbial showing the manner in which its reporting verb operates. There are several other reporting clauses that exhibit the pattern SV without an overt A, but their

reporting verbs embody the manner of speaking. For instance, Obu *interrupted*; *muttered* Ada; she *bellowed*; Teacher *thundered*; *grumbled* Madam; etc. Each of these reporting verbs can answer a how question, revealing the speaker's tone and mood.

Overall, because these verbs of the reporting clause depict, among other things, the act of communication, they direct the movement of the dialogues and thus act as propellers to the story line. They also demonstrate Ike's ability in choosing apt descriptive terms that match the atmosphere of the dialogues he has created. With these reporting clauses and their appropriate verbs of speaking, Ike ensures coherence and effective exchange among his characters. Not only these, the reporting clauses also act as effective and adequate clues to the reader as to the unexpressed circumstances surrounding a particular direct speech. The reporting clauses, therefore, act as the hub of the entire narration, enhancing the dramatic movement of events throughout the text.

#### **4.4 SENTENCE PATTERN IN *Sunset at Dawn***

We can group the sentence choice in *Sunset at dawn* into three: the conventional sentence patterns determined by their clause structure and punctuation patterns. The stylistically outstanding ones occur in ten instances in the novel. We had said that the English sentence is essentially a network of clauses, and had demonstrated, especially in *The Naked Gods*, Ike's flair for *clausal nesting*. By this, we mean the fanciful webbing of clauses through subordination, co-ordination and asyndeton. The complexity of Ike's clausal

nesting points to his maturity as a practised writer. In *Sunset at Dawn*, the weaving of clauses and phrases takes us a step further into the pattern of *cataloguing*. This is the second stylistically remarkable choice of sentences in *Sunset at Dawn*. The third group is the chopped-up, telegraphic pattern reminiscent of entries in a memoir, as presented in the *Postscript*.

One of the opening sentences of the book exposes Ike's aptitude for clausal nesting. The first paragraph that comes immediately after the opening revolutionary song is made up of two sentences: the first is the direct rhythm of matching feet to which is attached an expanded reporting clause indicating that the direct rhythm is *shouted* by 'a young Second Lieutenant': 'Lep! Ai! Lep! Ai!...'shouted a young Second Lieutenant, trim and smart in his well-starched green khaki uniform, shiningly ironed in a manner that displayed three horizontal lines across his back.' The expanded reporting clause actually embeds three sub-clauses, two of which have their downgraders syntactically compressed by the process of ellipsis – ellipsis of Subject and Verb (who was) *trim and smart in his well-starched green Khaki uniform*; ellipsis of Subject and Auxiliary (which was) *shiningly ironed*, then followed by an adverbial clause – *in a manner that displayed three horizontal lines across his back* (9). The second sentence of the said paragraph (as quoted below) is a compound-complex structure of *nine* clauses ingeniously woven together with two highly functional heavy punctuation marks – the colon and semi-colon – and eight commas working as appositive guides and also intonation indicators to that long sentence.

(i) The brand-new Biafra Sun emblem, a yellow half sun on a black background, a symbol of the four-month old nation, Biafra, distinguished him from his trainees: (ii) he was a soldier, (iii) an officer, (iv) albeit commissioned only the week before; (v) his trainees were young volunteers (vi) who had poured into Enugu like soldier ants from all over the young republic, (vii) to save their capital from the Nigerian ‘vandals’, (viii) as every Biafran called their former compatriots (ix) now turned enemies. (9)

(i), (ii), (iii) and (v) are matrix clauses while the rest are downgraded clauses. In

(i) we have

*The brand-new Biafra Sun*  $\Rightarrow$  NP with the compound adjective *brand-new* premodifying the head *Biafra Sun*;

*a yellow half sun on a black background*  
*symbol of the four-month old nation* } by apposition, the postmodifier  
 to the NP

*distinguish him from his trainees*  $\Rightarrow$  Predicate of the NP.

(iii) is a matrix clause just as (ii) and (v), except that unlike (ii) and (v), (iii) is a compressed clause with ellipsed Subject and Verb (*he was*) and attached to the preceding complete clause by asyndetic co-ordination using a comma. (iv) is a sub-clause whose downgrading element *albeit* is replaceable semantically by *although*. (vi) is a sub-clause with *who*, the antecedent of which is *trainees*, as Subject of the clause. (vii) is an infinitive clause while (viii) is adverbial, introduced by *as*. The last (ix) is recognizably a sub-clause whose Subject + Aux have been syntactically compressed. The colon is anticipatory in that it opens the gateway for the apparent comparison between the trainees and their instructor.



Then there is the semi-colon, separating the facts about the trainees from those about the instructor. The commas mark off the clauses in the fashion of listing. This sentence therefore displays four matrix clauses and five sub-clauses, hence a compound-complex type ingeniously handled. The deployment of heavy and light punctuation marks at the beginning of the text, much more than is normal for a sentence, slows down the tempo of the sentence while heightening the underlying emotions of the war.

The same ingenious application of the colon can be seen in the following.

The extended family system which had always enabled the ‘have-nots’ to share in the bounty acquired by the ‘haves’ had well-nigh been stretched to its elastic limit: it was not designed to absorb two million people overnight. (117)

*The extended family system had well-nigh been stretched to its elastic limit*

⇨ the matrix clause

*which had always enabled the ‘have-nots’ to share in the bounty acquired by the*

⇨ ‘haves’ an embedded restrictive relative clause which defines for us the purpose of the extended family system

*it was not designed to absorb two million people overnight* ⇨ a matrix clause.

The subject of this clause is *it*, a pronoun whose antecedent is the subject of the first matrix clause, *The extended family system*. The colon is deployed to serve an amalgamation purpose, unifying the two matrix clauses structurally separated by a defining (restrictive) relative clause.

Another impressive use of the colon and the semi-colon can be found in the last sentence of the following.

The loss of the Mid-West had been disappointing, but it was in fact the loss of territory that was never Biafra's and it did not change Biafra's territorial boundaries. Ogoja had fallen to the enemy, and so had Nsukka, the university town, and Bonny in Port Harcourt Province. *These were border towns; their fall in the first month of the war could be explained away: Biafra needed some time to organize its hastily assembled army and to set up the supply line.* (75 – 76)

This is a compound-complex structure of the pattern: MC + MC: MC + inf. sub-clause. The two MC's before the colon are marked off by a semi-colon, which is just a matter of choice for the author, for, a full stop could still have done the work. But by choice, he wants to chain them together, and the semi-colon comes most appropriate. The colon here, as in the other ones discussed, plays an anticipatory role, taking the place of a phrase like *and that is* or *viz*, with which we always anticipate an expansion or explanation of the substance of the clause preceding the colon.

The colon performs a special appositive function in *When the ominous sounds persisted, a more plausible explanation had to be found: they came from enemy collaborators among the Biafrans* (36).

In grammar, the appositive is a sort of *re-namer* of a preceding noun, and to be sure of the appositive use, a handy test takes this form:

The + (the preceding noun) + is + (the next clause) as in these examples.

There still remains one *mystery: how the thief knew your name.*

Test: The mystery *is* how the thief knew your name.

You cannot deny the *fact that you lied under oath.*

Test: The fact *is* that you lied under oath.

In Chukwuemeka Ike's sentence above, he deploys the colon to perform a special appositive function, the type exemplified above. This becomes clear if we apply the handy test: *The more plausible explanation is that they came from enemy collaborators among the Biafrans.* What makes Ike's construction unique here is that whereas the special appositives deal with the preceding nouns and their *re-naming* noun clauses which are sub-clauses, Ike's construction here *re-names* the preceding noun, *explanation*, not with a sub-clause, but with a matrix clause, *they came from enemy collaborators....* Ike makes this possible by the use of the chain-like power of the colon.

The use of parenthetical explanation can be found in (96) where the dash performs an enumerative role, and the brackets parenthetically embedding additional information on *kwashiorkor*.

The symptoms of kwashiorkor (or *kwashiokpa*, as it had been renamed at Obodo) were clearly evident on him – the distended stomach, the swollen ankles and feet, and those features hitherto found only on the white man: a pale complexion, and the white man's wavy, reddish or golden hair.

Another fascinating use of the dash as a parenthetical marker is given below (202):

The race – that is the literal translation of the Igbo word describing the mass exodus from a town about to capitulate – the race away from Obodo began like the unco-ordinated and confused movement of soldier ants disturbed by the foot of an unobservant pedestrian.

This sentence, which marks the beginning of Ike's description of the capitulation of Obodo and the confused mass movement which eventually lands them in St. David Refugee Camp, is constructed using the dashes parenthetically to mark off the interpolated complete sentence: *that is the literal translation of the Igbo word describing the mass exodus from a town about to capitulate*. We note also the repetition of the subject of the sentence *the race* at the close of the second dash. This repetition, and the embedding of the interpolated sentence within the matrix clause by parenthesis, gives this sentence a powerful rhetorical force.

At the eventual fall of Enugu, the writer chooses very short simple sentences – just three of them for a paragraph – to show how appallingly simple and easy it was for the Nigerian soldiers to overrun Enugu. Ike presents the whole scenario thus:

October, 1967.

Down came the curtain. The melodrama had ended.

Enugu changed hands. (73)

The fronting of the adverbial, *down*, emphasizes the writer's feelings about the fall. The story continues:

There had been no street fighting, either, nor any last-ditch defence. The loudspeaker pronouncements along every major street and back street of Enugu in the dying days of September, threatening fire and brimstone on any vandal who set foot on Enugu and commanding every male Biafran to stay on his toes in readiness for the grueling battle ahead, must have been intended to scare the enemy believed to have been in hiding in the surrounding hills from where they lobbed shells into the city. When the long-awaited moment came, there were no battle orders; no officers; no men. (74)

The fascinating observation here is the relationship between the first sentence and the last in the above paragraph. The first stands as the topic sentence of the paragraph. The last sentence is just a rhetorical repetition of the topic sentence in another form, showing the depth of the writer's feeling about the cheap fall of Enugu, the Biafran capital city. That is the functional aspect of these two sentences that are harping on the same thing: the appalling cheap fall of Enugu. Structurally, the last sentence is a compound-complex construction, with three matrix clauses and one adverbial clause of time. Beginning the sentence with the time adverbial is appropriate since we are told that it is a 'long-awaited moment', and it renders the sentence periodic. The three matrix clauses present parallel structures, hence by syntactic compression, Subject + Verb ellipsis takes place in the last two of the matrix clauses, each of them separated by a heavy punctuation mark – the semi-colon – which by the slow rhythm it imposes on the sentence, signifies the writer's heavy mood at the fall of Enugu without an iota of resistance from Biafrans.

Let us consider the following extracts:

(A)

Biafra was steadily losing territory to the enemy, and if this pattern was allowed to continue ( ) it was only a matter of time – the enemy was sure to engulf the entire country. The civilians had given every possible support to the war effort, more support than he had read or heard about in any other war – and he had read all the literature on warfare assembled by the Research Division of the Directorate of Propaganda.... There was, however, one thing they could not do – win the war at the war fronts. (209)

## (B)

... His television set, hi-fi equipment, most of their clothes, his wife's electric sewing machine, his grand piano, their silverware and china, his books – his entire library and his unpublished research papers – he had left behind, assured that the Biafran Army would guard the campus. Even if the vandals were to set foot on the campus – which God forbid – they would be looking for Biafran soldiers, not for abandoned property. If they strayed into one or two houses to ensure that no Biafran soldiers were hiding inside, they pick up a souvenir or two – a camera, a work of art, the kind of thing they could tuck away into their knapsack. (20)

## (C)

... He was not the adventurous type, and the way his wife moaned over the precious things she left behind at Nsukka – her precious Singer electric sewing machine, her irreplaceable wedding album, her box of trinkets valued in four figures, her expensive silverware, her precious wedding presents, her boxes of clothes, her precious this and irreplaceable that – he knew that if he remained at Onitsha he would either die of hypertension or give in to her pressure to take a lorry to Nsukka and evacuate their personal effects. (21)

These passages, and more in the text, demonstrate Ike's love for the dash. In passage (A), the first sentence is missing a vital punctuation mark, a mandatory comma that should mark off the co-ordinate time adverbial clause, and the dash used here is replaceable by the conjunction, *and*. The dash in the last sentence is replaceable by the phrase, *and that is*. Here the role assigned to the dash coincides

with the anticipatory role of a colon – a necessary explanation of the preceding clause. The second sentence contains a dash, which introduces an interpolated coordination of a single matrix clause: *and he had read all the literature on warfare assembled by the ... Directorate of Propaganda*. In (B), the dashes of the first sentence introduce additional information on the preceding NP, *his books*, and their usage here approximates the use of brackets in such a construction. In the second sentence, brackets can also take care of the appended exclamation marked off by dashes. But in the third sentence, the writer assigns to the dash an enumerative role approximating the use of the colon in listing a series. Like the first sentence of (B) passage, the sentence in (C) clarifies by giving further information on the things the woman left behind, and the dashes do the job of brackets. The repetition of the possessive pronoun, *her*, (seven times) modifying each of the phrases, emphasizes how deeply she (and not Professor Ezenwa, her husband) feels and moans about the loss of the listed items, hence her constant nagging.

After the Obodo air raid, Fatima decides to go and stay with her husband, Dr Kanu, at Umuahia. Without notice, Geoffrey (her orderly) is to take her to the place. On reaching Gate Zero, he plays a smart trick that the car has developed a fault, and dashes down pretending to go and ask Moses to bring Dr Kanu's car to assist them. The intention here is to prevent Fatima from taking her master by surprise, in case he is with another woman. And surely, he is in bed with one of the pretty Cradlers, Love, as confirmed by the Sergeant (Dr Kanu's bodyguard). Hear the Sergeant's consternation at the information that Madam is already at

Gate Zero: ‘*Nmagwu Okoro!*’... And Doctor has just gone in with one first class baby he picked up recently! Darkness has descended in broad daylight!’ (153)

With Fatima there at Gate Zero, Geoffrey and Sergeant here at the door, uncertain what step to take, their master just in bed with another woman, the writer knows that time is crucial. ‘The sands are running out,’ and here is his narration at this juncture.

A quick conference. Agreement reached on the procedure to be followed. No time to draw Doctor’s driver and cook into the full picture. Neither was it necessary. Something had to be done at once. Every second was precious. (153)

With Fatima impatiently at Gate Zero, her husband and Love just naked in bed, it is just like a time bomb, and the story has to move fast: no room for co-ordinated and subordinated sentence constructions. These short, simple sentences with slashes of ellipsis are most appropriate in the present circumstance. They enhance the dramatic movement of the story, and are stylistically captivating to the reader.

The foregoing are the sentences, which by their clause structures and choice of punctuation marks stand out stylistically in the text. Another group of sentences worthy of note is the catalogue type. In sentence cataloguing, clauses, phrases or words are presented in a series, usually a systematic order, one by one, each marked off by a punctuation mark, and the last in the series followed immediately by a dash, then the main sentence which sometimes uses the plural demonstrative (*these*), or a combination of the demonstrative and a determiner to say something about, or comment on, the preceding listed series.



The university dons who had fled for their lives from the universities of Ibadan, Lagos, Ahmadu Bello and Ife; the businessmen and industrialists who had been compelled to abandon their concerns in Lagos, and in Northern and Western Nigeria; the students who now had to find new schools, colleges and university places for themselves in Biafra; the civil servants who had given up exalted positions in the Nigerian Federal Public Service, including the highly sought-after diplomatic service; the employed and unemployed, farmers, traders and others who had lived in Eastern Nigeria all along and who were now required to carry the burden of providing for several thousands of their dispossessed kinsmen – all looked to the Biafra Sun for security and for a brighter future. (7)

Note that this is a single sentence constituting a single paragraph. The fascinating thing here is that the sentence, though uncomfortably long is sustained by perfect internal punctuation with heavy marks (semi-colons) separating the various clauses, and at the end of the listing, the characteristic *dash* followed by the determiner *all* referring to the preceding catalogue of supporting groups of people. This omnibus catalogue sentence is functionally appropriate to the situation it describes: a situation of euphoria for a new Biafran nation where declaration of support and loyalty comes from everybody and every group in the Biafran enclave, and everybody is carried along in the same Biafran ship of state. The heavy punctuation marks slow down the tempo of this long sentence while at the same time highlighting the level of people's expectations.

The last of the stylistically significant choice of sentence pattern in the text is the use of one word, fragmented and choppy sentence forms, as deployed in the postscript. There are instances of date jottings in the text, and it is from such memoir jottings that Chukwuemeka Ike makes out his story. Chapter three is allocated to the jottings made in September, 1967; October 4, 1967 is the final

capitulation of Enugu, while the postscript is dated January 14, 1970. It is easy to see that by this date of the postscript, Ike had completed his story; whatever comes next is an attachment, a sort of afterthought. Thus, the postscript reveals the inner thought processes, the mental activities going on inside of the writer at the close of his story, the end of the war. So, the postscript is appropriately captioned.

The content of the postscript presents the reality of Akwaelumo's earlier premonition and Dr Kanu's too. Early in the story, we are told:

The imminent collapse of Enugu presented a tremendous challenge to every Biafran, particularly to the prominent Biafrans who had stuck their necks out in the attacks on Nigeria and the declaration of secession. Dr Kanu knew this, and was certain he numbered among the Biafrans to be eliminated by the Nigerians at the earliest opportunity. There was also the matter of pride. Surrender by Biafra was tantamount to a subjugation of the Easterner to a position of inferiority in Nigerian politics for a long time to come. The Hausas and the Yorubas would see to it that the Easterner, particularly the Igbo, constituted no further threat to them in the Nigerian scene. (72)

And when, towards the end, it is clear that Biafra's chances of wading through the war successfully are narrow, Akwaelumo ruminates over the crucial, haunting question: *what if Biafra lost?* His rumination takes the question-and-answer pattern.

Yes, what if Biafra lost?

... Between removing his Biafra suit and tying his wrapper for bed his thoughts returned again and again to that haunting question: *what if Biafra Lost?*

The aftermath of the war would be blood-curdling. The Nigerians would make sure that the Igbo man would never again constitute a threat to the rest of the country. The Nigerian Army would go on a rampage – with instructions to kill every Igbo man of substance at sight....

Even if you survived the rampage, Mr Akwaelumo wondered, what future awaited you in Nigeria? The person who described Nigeria as a geographical expression was not a numbskull.... Aguiyi Ironsi had been brutally murdered in July 1966 because, as Supreme Commander and Head of the Federal Military Government, he had set himself the goal of turning Nigeria into one united and strong country.... To be forced back into Nigeria would be a return to the tribal politics and ethnic bitterness of the post-independence era.... (244)

The narration in the postscript is rendered like an interior monologue; this time, using fractured sentences to x-ray the writer's mind and of course, the minds of the surviving participants in the struggle. Ike metaphorically equates the surrender to a total eclipse.

January 14, 1970.

Total eclipse over Biafra.

The soul of Biafra had ascended into the heavens. In full military regalia. Complete with human and material resource, like a great soul journeying to another world.

*No sign of the Biafra Sun* both as a symbolic emblem of the nation – since there is *instant moulting*, and everyone has *discarded his Biafran skin* – and as the land of the rising sun (the physical sun) which from the start was a *beacon of hope for all Biafrans* (16) – no sign of it, not even at noon!

Radio Biafra broke the ominous news... No Biafran fanfare. No invectives. Instead the voice carried an

obituary. The Republic of Biafra had been erased from the map. Overnight. (246)

The eastern part of Nigeria is Biafra. The River Niger separates the east from the west. Where the Niger empties into the sea, there are two wide bays: the one on the western side is named Bight of Benin while on the eastern side is Bight of Biafra. It is from this geographical feature that the eastern part picked up the name Biafra. But with the total eclipse, the name is erased from the map. The Bight of Biafra, overnight, is renamed the Bight of Bonny.

The writer's thought processes in the postscript, in some ways, echo Akwaelumo's premonition, and the whole thing is presented in fragmented, choppy sentences. Even the rhetorical questions about the whereabouts of the sun (the beacon of hope) are rendered in a form without their NPs. And the answer rolling out of the writer's mind makes a short, complete but ominous sentence: *No one could tell*. It is a general set-back, 30 months' set-back!

#### **4.5 SENTENCE PATTERN, PUNCTUATION, PHRASAL AND CLAUSAL TYPOLOGY IN *The Chicken Chasers***

The stylistically outstanding aspects of Ike's language in *The Chicken Chasers* come as rhetorical questions, choppy sentences and repetitions. The rhetorical questions and sentence slashes come as aspects of narrated internal communication, in the form of free indirect speech. Filled with deep revulsion at the political wheeling and dealing among the S.G's opposition, Afua bares her loaded mind on each of the opposing delegates. Ike uses his omniscient narrator's power to x-ray the depth of her hatred for those men. Ike introduces the free

indirect thought with two statements, one a complete simple sentence structure, the other just a distributive adjective which, in a normal sentence pattern should be attached to the simple sentence where it should modify them, which is the object of the verb 'list': *She attempted to list them. One by one* (59). This deliberate separation of the distributive adjective, One by one, from its simple sentence prepares the reader's mind for the barrage of mental activities going on inside of Afua. The internal communication here (like a mental dossier on each of the Shika delegates) is narrated via the free indirect mode. Just as Ike's sentence is severed from its post-modifying distributive adjective, Ike's narrated monologues here are replete with truncated sentences.

She attempted to list them. One by one.

Saki. That archeological specimen. That pig which will always remain a pig no matter what grooming or scrubbing you give it!... A thoroughly incompetent man, who spent more time planning intrigues than in work, hoping to become the S.G just like that!

Selah. The number two Judas. While Saki served as the tool of the S.G's Manunese adversaries, Selah played a similar role for the Shikan group....

Professor Fumi. A man who was said to have cheated in the School Certificate examination. A man who, when on heat, was unable to distinguish between his wife and his niece, nor between a nun and a prostitute. A slippery character who would stop at nothing to achieve his ambition....

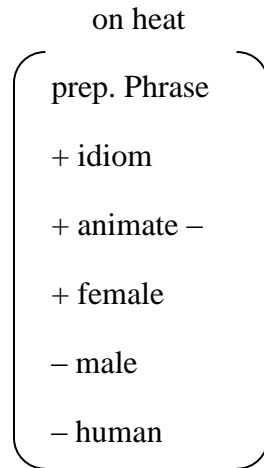
Chass. A once brilliant scholar who mortgaged his conscience for a mess of pottage, and became a boot-licker. That human chimney, constantly belching smoke from his mouth and nostrils. A man older than Afua's father but who, because he was a member of the Executive Board, saw every female employee of the Secretariat staff as his for the asking. The brute who thought he could get her with a bottle of brandy! (59 – 60)

These truncated sentences, some of which are in the form of Noun Phrases (NPs) without their Predicate Phrases (Pred. Ps), others in the form of complex NPs with embedded clauses, are an indication of a highly loaded mind. Afua's thought processes are heavily under pressure because of the gang-up against, and unjust treatment of the S.G by these men in opposition. The situation is worsened by her inability to provide a solution to the imbroglio. Faced with this helpless predicament, she is not in the mood to construct complete sentences.

The incomplete nature of the sentences aside, two of the embedded clauses and phrases pose some comprehension problem. How, for instance, is the reader to comprehend the embedded clause on Chass: 'who... saw *every female employee of the Secretariat staff* as his....?' Employee of the Secretariat can be understood as the staff of the Secretariat. The former does not make sense with the repetition of 'staff' after 'Secretariat'. And on the Professor, again Afua's loaded hatred affects her ability to sort out her phrases. Her impression of Professor Fumi's sexual malady is couched in the following italicized phrase: 'A man who, when *on heat*, was unable to distinguish between his wife and his niece, nor between a nun and a prostitute.'

Again, gripped by the euphoria over the SG's re-election victory, but with an inward dread of a powerful adversary in Baby Face, Miss Afua pleads with the SG: '...please do your best to avoid being alone with Baby Face.... Nothing is beyond such a woman when she is *on heat*' (171). And, filled with revulsion for Dr Stom's moral bankruptcy, the narrator says, 'When *on heat*, he knew no bounds' (79). The use of the phrase, *on heat* in these places in the text is

semantically deviant. If we borrow procedure and terminology from Transformational Grammar (TG), we can sketch out the qualities of the phrase, *on heat*.



These properties give us the *dictionary entries* for the phrase, *on heat*.

Thus, the prepositional phrase, *on heat*, is idiomatic, used of animate subjects. The animate subject is female; it is not male. And it is not used of human beings, hence we can technically put it that the expression, *on heat*, semantically does not include males (whether human or non-human) in its *bundle of distinctive features*. It is exclusively used of female non-human mammals. Yet Afua uses it for Professor Fumi and Baby Face. The mistake is only natural, coming from her at times when she is psychologically not well adjusted. It is her metaphor for their psychological maladjustment. The narrator's use of the phrase purely reflects his hatred for Stom's moral bankruptcy. Even when she speaks out to ABC and Junior, we hear Afua commend her master thus: 'The S.G is the *most perfect* gentleman I've ever met in my life.... That's why all the girls in the Secretariat are fond of him' (71). Here again, the italicized phrase is problematic. Some

adjectives in the language do not accept being raised to the comparative and superlative degrees because by the nature of their meanings, they are already absolute. They do not accept modifiers or intensifiers. *Perfect, superior, excellent, unique*, are just a few of them. So, we see the semantic problem in *the most perfect*.

*The Chicken Chasers* can also be seen as a demonstration of, or an exploration into, the depths of blind destructive tendencies of love. The intense political confusion that engulfs ACO for the four days of the meeting is prompted by Baby Face. She had made all efforts to have the S.G make love to her, but to no avail. The last straw that broke the camel's back was the UNESCO party in Paris. She was there, the SG also was there, but dancing with another girl. Here is the full length of Ike's narration of this important single episode that generates the animal jealousy in Baby Face.

Then came the final act. She was attending a UNESCO General Conference in Paris. The head of the Manu Mission to UNESCO gave a huge party that went far into the night. The S.G was at the party. Prior to the party, he had said a polite 'hello' to her after the formal opening ceremony, mentioning that he and two members of his staff were attending as observers. No sign of intimacy. Just a polite exchange of greetings, as if they had never met before, and he had melted away. The man she had done so much to catch!

All through the party she was watching the S.G hoping he would come over to her. No. he was chatting away with a tall, pretty, fair-skinned African girl. Who could she be? Baby Face wondered. Had she not seen the two of them together at the formal opening ceremony? Could she be a girl-friend? His Paris mistress? A chance meeting at the Conference? She observed that the girl had no wedding ring. Not even an engagement ring. That inflamed her curiosity.



As the S.G and the girl stood chatting away, Baby Face had to admit that the girl was naturally beautiful, without any make-up. She also had the advantage of youth – she could not be more than twenty-four. Her twinkling attentive eyes gave away the intensity of her feelings for the S.G, and this made Baby Face envious. Intensely possessive.

She hardly allowed her Honourable Commissioner who had been dancing with her to detach himself from her before she made straight for the S.G. No mincing of words. ‘I want to have a dance with you,’ she told him. He thanked her courteously, profusely, and said he would bear the tempting offer in mind whenever he was in the mood for dancing. Baby Face felt insulted, but decided not to lose her temper.

Fifteen minutes later. Baby face was dancing with the host. Suddenly she noticed the S.G dancing, with the tall, fair skinned, beautiful, unmarried, African girl. And he was obviously enjoying it. Baby Face danced her way towards him, followed by the unsuspecting host.

‘I see you’re still not in the mood for dancing, eh?’ she scolded the S.G.

‘At the time I ...’

The tall, beautiful, fair skinned, unmarried, African girl dancing with the S.G would not let him complete the sentence. With her left hand, she swung his cheek away from Baby Face, as if he had no business talking to a strange, old woman when he was dancing with her! That was not all. She threw her slim arms around the S.G’s neck and promptly buried her face in his chest.

Baby Face had a sudden attack of migraine, and had to be taken back to her hotel.

The conference lasted one whole week. Not one word of apology from the S.G. Not one attempt to explain away his rude behaviour, or to reprimand the impudent tall, beautiful, fair skinned, unmarried African girl... (20 – 21)

One cannot but recognise the centrality of this single incident in the whole of the S.G’s dethronement saga. Sexual jealousy, we know, is one of the deadliest of all forms of jealousy. Baby Face has made innumerable unrequited advances to the

S.G. She considers each of them a rebuff. Her decision to avenge, to teach the S.G. a bitter lesson, is not masked in Ike's narration. Throughout the passage, Ike's sentences come with rhetorical questions indicating the agitated state of Baby Face's mind. First, Ike starts with the fronting of the time adverbial, *Then*, giving us a simple sentence of uncommon clause pattern: AVS instead of the normal SVA. But the inversion is emphatic; it is crucial – it is a befitting opening sentence for an episode that is central to the entire story. From the passage too, we notice that parts of several sentences are deliberately chopped off either because of the worried state of Baby Face and the workings of her mind, or because the writer wishes to increase the tempo of events, allowing things to move a bit faster. When he observes, before the passage, that Baby Face expected just a line of letter from the S.G, Ike's narration says: *Not one word*. Then from the narration of the Paris party episode, we have the following: *No sign of intimacy. His Paris girlfriend? A chance meeting at the conference? Not even an engagement ring. Intensely possessive. No mincing of words. Fifteen minutes later. Not one word of apology from the S.G. Not one attempt to explain away his rude behaviour, or to reprimand the impudent, tall.... African girl.*

All the italicized above are some forms of embedded or syntactically bound clauses. *Fifteen minutes later* is just a time adverbial phrase which under normal circumstances is supposed to be separated from its principal clause by a comma, not a full stop, giving us the simple sentence structure: *Fifteen minutes later, Baby Face was dancing with the host.* *Intensely possessive* is a compact elliptical clause, a syntactic compression that involves the ellipsis of subject and verb. The

passage is mere recollections in Baby Face's mind. The sentence slashes signal the fast movement of scenes as her mind reels them off.

Finally, the stylistically striking aspect of this crucial passage is the deliberate use of repetitions. The girl in question is not married, not engaged. She is much younger than Baby Face and appears to have lots of feelings for the S.G. Baby Face agrees within herself that her adversary is 'naturally beautiful, without any make-up'. To emphasize the beauty of the girl, the beauty that has 'made Baby Face envious. Intensely possessive', Ike repeats the sentence that describes the girl four times:

He was chatting away with a tall, pretty, fair-skinned African girl.

Suddenly she noticed the S.G dancing with the tall, fair-skinned, beautiful, unmarried, African girl.

The tall, beautiful, fair-skinned, unmarried, African girl dancing with the S.G.... Not one attempt to explain away his rude behaviour, or to reprimand the impudent tall, beautiful, fair-skinned, unmarried African girl....

These repetitions are designed to intensify the girl's beauty and emphasize the reason behind Baby Face's destructive sexual jealousy which is the root of all the four-day political wheeling and dealing, all the frenzied gang-up to destool the S.G. The entire novel hinges on this single episode. When, eventually, all the efforts come to nought, and Baby Face comes to the S.G's room, and further 'unsolicited and unnatural overtures' from her still rebuffed, Ike says 'The S.G watched the dancing figure through the peep-hole on his door.' Then follows a barrage of rhetorical questions presented in the form of free indirect mode x-

raying the depths of the S.G's internal revulsion at Baby Face's 'unabashed, unsolicited and unnatural overtures (which) always turned him off and shrank his manhood!' (109)

'Serpent!' he muttered, as he wondered whether he had handed out the appropriate treatment to the calculating slut.

Should he have accepted the challenge, and then beaten her at her own game? Should he have played ball and raised her expectations to the pitch where he could have held her dangling helplessly until he extracted every undertaking he wanted from her – in writing? Could he not have applied to her the technique which seasoned women use effectively on the male victims they rob of trick in other ways? No. He knew his limitations. It would have been tantamount to playing with fire. Baby Face's acrobatic tongue alone was proof of her superiority in the game of love. She would simply have seized the controls from him, and he would have looked on helplessly as she satiated her lust and left him, cursing himself. (109)

When Ike describes landscape, his sentences present vivid, true-to-life images. The following short paragraph is a combination of complete sentences (with embedded repetitions) and sentence fragments. The repetition of *rising and tumbling over* actually tries to imitate the physical shape of the waves, and their long unending stretch akin to the long second sentence of the paragraph. The last two sentences are appropriately truncated in tune with the 'retreat' of the wave being described.

The view from the Manu High Commissioner's dining room resembles a reproduction in colour of a master artist's painting of an ideal landscape. The long, sandy Old England beach trails off into the horizon at one end, with the energetic blue waves rising and tumbling over like waterfalls, rising and tumbling over, rising and tumbling over, until what looks like an approaching wave of whiteness spends its energy on the sandy beach and beats a hasty retreat into the Atlantic Ocean. Upsetting the peace of the tiny crabs which burrow into the

sand for shelter. Littering the white sand with empty shells, dried leaves and other debris. (63)

#### 4.6 SENTENCE AND PUNCTUATION PATTERN/FUNCTIONS IN *Our Children are Coming!*

Emenyonu in Ugbabe ed. (117) has this to say on *Our Children are Coming!*:

The grammar is correct. The vocabulary is clean, as if almost fresh from laundry, but it sounds too inflexible to relax the mind and please the ear. There are many instances of this throughout the novel. Yet at other places in the same novel Ike displays excellent prose. He is at his best when reporting dialogue.

That the grammar is correct is correct. And here we are not only interested in the correctness, but also in the contextual appropriateness, the matching of message and language and situation – character-code concordance.

One striking thing is that a great proportion of the novel is direct speech, mostly from the witnesses/presenters. Ike tries to maintain the verbatim nature of the presentations by producing them with the syntax of colloquialism, and introducing most of them with reporting clauses. We know that the syntax and idiom of speech are different from those of the written English, a fact corroborated by G.H. Vallins, ‘There may be and often is between the two – spoken and written – a wide and obvious gap.... The syntax and idiom of the voice, in common conversation, are not the syntax and idiom of the pen. Indeed, the spoken often tends to looseness and vulgarity while the written... literary...’

and formal' (9 – 10). Chief Olabisi's presentation in direct speech reveals sentences that are informal with some form of hybridization that co-opts Pidgin English expressions. The loose nature of the sentences defy the organized and stiff nature of the written form, especially as the sentences here come as direct translations from the native language. Compare the sentences in passages A and B below.

**A**

“Thank you, my lord. For six years after marrying my second wife, I tried and tried with her, and nothing happened. My first wife had sealed her womb with her witchcraft. I sent people to my first wife, to beg her to reconcile herself with me and return to my house. Maybe if I tried again with her, she might have a boy. Whossai! She refused.” (10)

**B**

Chief Olabisi recounted his utter discomfiture at the contents of the letter, which he had had to read through *four* times, after which he reached for a bottle of whisky to steady his frayed nerves. At first, Junior would not discuss the letter. In the first place, his father had no business ransacking his personal effects in his absence. Secondly, it was ungentlemanly to read someone else's private letter without his prior authority.... (12)

The A passage, though written by Ike, is purported to be the exact sentences by Chief Olabisi – a semi-literate. Passage B above is also written by Ike, this time, reporting Chief Olabisi's story.

Passage A cannot be faulted on grounds of grammaticality, but when we consider the sentences, we notice a clear conversational tone. ‘*My first wife had sealed her womb with her witchcraft*’ at best is a direct translation from the Chief's mother tongue, lifting the sub-standard idiom ‘*sealed her womb*’. The

next sentence following this is structurally a complex construction. The principal clause, which is the first, is in order, but the whole sentence falters semantically with the onset of the *to-infinitive sub-clauses*:

- to beg her
- to reconcile herself with me
- and (to) return to my house.

The subject of the first two of these sub-clauses is ‘people’ understood from the principal clause. If we retrieve that subject, we have:

people to beg her

people to reconcile herself with me....

Standard written English would not have the reflexive pronoun *herself* as object of the verb *reconcile* and then followed by the preposition *with* to get the meaning of what Chief Olabisi has in mind. If we suggest (albeit erroneously) that *she* becomes the subject of the second sub-clause, that is *she to reconcile herself*, then the preposition is not *with* but *to* and what follows is not somebody (*me*) but something or situation (*my situation/my way of life*, for example). Thus, it would read *she to reconcile herself to my way of life* meaning *to get herself to accept my situation/way of life even though unpleasant because it is not possible to change things*. But if we suggest that it reads *people to reconcile*, then what follows is the object pronoun *her* not the reflexive *herself* and the preposition is *with* and what

follows is *me*, that is *people to reconcile her with me* – meaning *to get her to be friends with me again*, which is exactly what Chief Olabisi has in mind. The Chief's next sentence, *maybe if I tried again with her, she might have a boy*, is in order, but its accompanying negative interjection degenerates into Pidgin '*Whossai!*' meaning '*impossible!*'. Chukwuemeka Ike allows this because he is aware that the syntax of spoken English is open-ended enough to accommodate such deviations. Then compare passage B which starts with a complex sentence of one main clause, three sub-clauses. The first sub-clause is a non-restrictive relative clause whose antecedent, the only main clause, is marked off by a mandatory comma, signalling formal writing. The second sub-clause is a time adverbial with a complex down-grader, *after which*, then followed by the non-finite clause type introduced by the infinitive *to*. The controlled nature of the sentence, its limpid syntax and the wording suggest a conscious, premeditated construction for which a formal written style is known.

The archdeacon's presentation is carefully narrated in two different modes. First, the indirect speech mode where Ike tries as much as possible to report (using the archdeacon's focalization) the experiences the man of God had with his daughter up to a point when he discovered the extent their daughter, Apo, had hoodwinked them into accepting her explanations about the sources of her wealth. Second, the direct speech mode where Ike presents verbatim, the archdeacon's sentences, from their discovery of the truth to the confrontation with their daughter. This second, characteristically, uses the inverted commas to signal the direct mode.



**C1**

Barely a week later, she breezed in, loaded with breathtaking presents for her parents, brothers and sisters: gold trinkets, eye-catching George materials, head ties (the type which stood like church towers on women's heads), long-sleeved shirts, ties, shoes, assorted handbags,...

**C2**

Where did she get the money to go to Europe in the first place? And the money to buy all those expensive presents? Sheer luck, she had gladly announced. A classmate had called her attention to a raffle organized by a foreign airline. The questions had been so easy, and you paid no entry fee. So, she decided to try her luck. To her surprise, someone knocked on her door one morning to announce to her that she had won the first prize, a week's trip to London and Paris, all expenses paid, plus a generous allowance for shopping. Who was she to say no?

**C3**

Both parents had thanked God for the windfall, and particularly for giving them a daughter who remembered her parents, brothers and sisters, when she suddenly landed a bonanza....

**C4**

A week before the end of the long vacation, the purring sound of an air conditioned car heralded her arrival at the parsonage. Every millimetre of the Peugeot 504 SR car was taken up with tantalizing presents for her parents and relations. And when she gleefully announced that she was leaving behind the brand new air conditioned car with upholstery as soft as the belly of a pussycat, the parents momentarily lost their power of speech. How did she find the money? Their allowance in America had been excessive, so she had saved up almost all of it, bought many lovely things there, the kind of things rich women in Lagos would pay any price to possess. Back in Lagos, she had sold everything off just like that, many of them at more than twenty times the value. Rather than keep the money and squander it, she decided to buy the car for her parents. That would save her further nightmares each time she visualized her father on his scooter.

**C5**

That was not all. She had won a state scholarship based on her brilliant academic performance at the sessional examinations. The

scholarships went to only ten students of her university each year. When her parents saw her results sheet, the archdeacon promptly arranged a thanksgiving service before she went back to begin her second year. Everything about medicine and change of university was forgotten.

### **C6**

Some two months later, the rumours began to filter in. The parents dismissed them. Such rumours generally sprouted whenever one person began to outshine the others. But the rumours persisted like stench from a decomposing body, and soon became suffocating. The archdeacon sent for his oldest son, to decide on the next line of action. They agreed that the son should take his mother to Akan University, and confront Apo with the rumours.

### **C7**

The first day, there was no sign of Apo on the campus, not even in her room in Emotan Hall. The second day, no sign of Apo. The third day, no sign of Apo. But they found her room-mate, who had no idea who they were, as Apo inherited her father's facial features rather than her mother's, unlike her oldest brother. When asked point blank whether Apo had been sleeping in their room, her room-mate replied off-handedly: 'How can I tell you when she slept here and when she didn't? When last did I sleep here myself?' (32 – 34)

### **D1**

"You cannot imagine our shock, and our shame, when we knew the truth," Archdeacon Obi summed up. "All that money our daughter said she made trading, all the money she used in buying us a car and in planning a mansion for us at home, came from carnal use of her body! My daughter had been selling herself to rich men, men older than I, her father!...."

### **D2**

"When it became obvious to her that we knew everything, she could no longer deny it. Instead, she defended her action. Even tried to justify it. All those men she had slept with had stolen the money belonging to everybody in this country. Otherwise how could they have found the money to buy jet aeroplanes for their exclusive use? Or the money to buy private mansions in

Hollywood, when many honest, hardworking people like her father had no money to eat three proper meals a day?

### D3

“My tears immediately dried when I heard her say that she did not feel sorry for what she had done. Rather she was planning to do more! She had prepared a list of all those men who had stolen the wealth of this country, right up to the most highly placed of them. She would go to bed with them one by one, until she had recovered as much of the stolen money as possible! After all, she merely allowed them to get in and get out; no love was lost, and none of them took anything from her body. So, why not? (36, 37)

The sentences in passage C are reported, that is, they are in the indirect mode. The reporter is the writer, Ike. Generally speaking, the indirect speech mode is used to report the sentences of others. The salient features of this mode include taking the form of a nominal *that-clause* and some changes in wording since the situation of the utterance by the reporter may differ in certain respects from that of the utterance by the original speaker. The differences affect the use of deictic features of the language, those features that relate to the time and place of the utterance and to the persons referred to in the utterance. They include such changes as in (a) the tense forms of the verb such that if it is *present* in direct mode, it is backshifted to *past* in the indirect mode; if *past*, it becomes *past* or *past perfective*; *present perfective* and *past perfective* become *past perfective*, (b) other time references, for example: *yesterday*, *now*, *last week*, *next time*, etc. (c) place references, for example: *here*, *there* (d) the personal pronouns, (e) the demonstratives: *this*, *those*. (Randolph Quirk *et al.*: 1025 – 1026).

The sentences in passage D are clearly in the direct speech mode as signalled by the presence of quotation marks and the reporting clause. We note that for all the sentences in passages D1 – D3, only one reporting clause suffices: *Archdeacon Obi summed up*. The reason for having only one reporting clause for the whole of the direct sentences here is the writer knows that it is obvious to his readers the identity of the speaker as the lone voice at this point of the narration. The reporting verb here, *summed up*, climactically indicates the close of the main stream of the archdeacon's presentation (which the writer undertakes in the indirect mode); what comes next in his own (direct) sentences follows from the unmasking of the truth. And it is just stylistically appropriate to allow this climax to come from the horse's mouth, so to speak.

How far has Ike's sentence patterns in C1 – C7 reflected the aforementioned salient features of the indirect mode of reporting? C1, which is one long unfinished sentence making up the paragraph, comes clear as reported because *her parents* signals the presence of the original speaker, the archdeacon. But what of the eight sentences of C2? And all the sentences of C7? *The first day, there was no sign of Apo.... The second day, no sign of Apo. The third day, no sign of Apo.* Impressive parallel structures, made more impressive by the syntactic compression of the verb element in the second and third – thereby ensuring a colloquial style of presentation. There are three interrogatives in C2, one of them a fragment, also signalling the informal nature of the indirect mode adopted here. None of them is rendered in the dependent *wh-clause* pattern for reporting direct questions. The pronouns and tense forms of the verbs in C2 do not point to

reported speech from Ike. If not for the absence of quotation marks, it would be impossible to label the sentences indirect. For, if we imagine inverted commas at the beginning and the end of that paragraph, the eight sentences, including the interrogatives, without the addition or subtraction of any lexical item, could pass as the exact sentences from the archdeacon. The point here becomes clearer if one compares the sentences in C2 with those in D2 and D3. With the exception of the inverted commas, the pronoun *we* in D2 and *I* and *my* in D3, all the sentences – interrogative and exclamatory – in D2 and D3 paragraphs could pass in the form of indirect mode employed by Ike in narrating the archdeacon’s experiences. The clause, *when many honest, hardworking people like her father had no money...*, does not counter this point, since in his speech, he is reporting his daughter’s language. The zero-subject sentence, *Even tried to justify it*, is indicative of an informal tone of presentation. This ingenious reporting technique results from Ike’s ability to adorn the persona of every witness, and allow his sentences (whether in the direct or indirect mode) to flow in consonance with the situation/context as well as the level of the witness’s literacy.

With the appearance of the Vice-Chancellor of Tudun Wada University before the commission, the linguistic voltage steps up in terms of calculated diction, straight-forward syntax and logical presentation. Here is a scholar with an impressive academic record: a first class degree from Yale, a PhD degree, a Vice Chancellor. No wonder then Ike leaves him to make all of his presentation in direct speech! The preliminary face-off between him and Justice Okpetun results from the latter’s pompous and erratic nature, with the tendency to intimidate

witnesses that appear before him. But the feisty Vice-Chancellor will not be cowed.

“Mr Chairman, Sir,…”

“You address me as ‘my lord’,” cut in the chairman.

“When, and if, I appear in your court, sir!”

“You are appearing before a presidential commission over which I, a high court judge, am presiding.”

“With due respect, Mr Chairman,” the vice-chancellor picked his words deliberately, “a presidential commission is not a judicial tribunal, and the fact that you, the chairman of the commission, are a high court judge is totally irrelevant to the issue. The president could have appointed a market woman, a schoolmaster, or a medical doctor to serve as chairman of this commission. In any case…”

“Will you now get on with your presentation?” cut in the Chairman, after reading a note shuffled to him by Alhaji Adamu. “Let’s not allow the issue of mode of address to deflect us from the crucial task given to my commission by Mr President. Address me whatever way you like; it does not detract from my status as high court judge!”

“Thank you, Mr Chairman. The only point I wanted to add was that I would not have appeared before you if this were a tribunal, knowing the unpardonable atrocities committed by quite a few tribunals, headed by high court judges, during the military…”

“Will you get on with your presentation?”

“I will presently, Mr Chairman, but I cannot lose any opportunity to condemn in unequivocal terms the intellectual dishonesty and blatant injustice characteristic of the reports of some of those tribunals. All because each tribunal was insulated from any legal redress by aggrieved persons. And the utter revulsion of all decent people when the military boys went further to confer high national honours on the judges who headed some of those odious tribunals…” (48 – 49)

The unfinished last paragraph above contains loaded diction, functionally vigorous sentences that make a scholarly distinction between ‘a presidential commission and a judicial tribunal’, and in the process deflate the Chairman’s ego by exposing some of the decay in the Nigerian judicial system. The fragmented structure of some of his sentences signals oral presentation.

Then comes the illiterate widow’s presentation. And the linguistic voltage steps down! Ike’s narration of her plight is syntactically different from those of the rest. The woman’s problem was her only son.... The boy’s brilliance earned him the nickname, *Professor*, while in primary school. ‘In the grammar school, the story was the same. Always first or second in class, and yet it never *spoilt his head*’ (80). When he got an American scholarship to study in the US, ‘Every test they gave him, he passed like a hungry dog licking clean the plate of food set before it. First B.S. then M.S. and in his seventh year there, the Ph.D.’ (81). He even attained the rank of Professor which was his nickname. Here we are dealing with sentences that are not sub-standard or incorrect, but are mid-way between the colloquial and standard.

Come home now? He said not yet. He had started something he wanted to complete before coming home. How long would it take? He could not say. What about marriage, especially as he was the only child of his mother? He said such a thing had not even crossed his mind.

She began to spread out her hands to any person she thought could advise her. So did his father. Had too much *book* at last spoilt the boy’s head? One year. Two years. Three years. He still refused to come home, even to see his mother. Instead he wrote angry letters, annoyed with his mother for worrying unduly about his welfare. After that, his letters began to come in trickles.

Then, no more came from him. No letters, no money; for all this time he had not sent one dollar to his mother, or to anybody else, even though he had once claimed to be earning higher pay than any university professor in Nigeria, and to have bought himself a brand new Mercedes Benz.

His father suddenly fell ill and died before he could be carried to any hospital. A cable was rushed to the boy, as the first son. He sent a cable in reply, wishing his father's soul eternal rest. Finish! No letter to condole his mother, nor to his father's second wife. No word about the burial arrangements and expenses, or to say when he was coming home. Nobody had ever behaved that way in their village. (81 – 82)

The fact here is that Ike, assuming the interpreter's persona, works within the confines of the English language while narrating the woman's experiences with much of colloquial idiom, vocabulary and syntax:

*Come home now? He said not yet.  
How long would it take? He could not say.  
Had too much book at last spoiled the boy's head?  
One year. Two years. Three years.....(when his father  
died,)  
A cable was rushed to the boy, as the first son.  
He sent a cable in reply, wishing his father's soul  
eternal rest.  
Finish!...*

In fact, Ike's ability to situate the woman's presentation in a context devoid of complex vocabulary and convoluted syntax is a mark of narrative dexterity.

#### *A note on the title*

Readers of fiction know that titles can be couched in various forms: one word, a phrase, a clause or (somewhat uncommon) a complete sentence. The first two are the commonest and best forms. When it is couched in the form of a clause, it is better done in the sub-clause form. The main clause form makes a title a complete sentence or statement form. Ike's title here takes the complete sentence form. But



the exclamatory punctuation mark that closes the title transforms it into an expression of emotion. The way events fizzle out at the end of the novel explains it all. There is the shock tactics of the NAS, with members of the defunct Okpetun Commission (unknown to them) picked up at the airport as they return from their shopping spree abroad. The NAS leaders keep them under ‘house arrest’. The mere mention of the NAS President’s name (Comrade Yekini) emasculates even the police commissioner. All these are a demonstration of embarrassment mixed with dread on the part of the older generation. They are now flustered and jittery, such that the sight of their children sends shivers down their spines, hence the interjectory mark that punctuates the title: *Our Children are Coming!*.

#### **4.7 PARAGRAPH STRUCTURE AND ITS EFFECT ON THE NOVELS**

Traditionally, the paragraph contains a unit of thought. This unit of thought is the main idea. By containing only one dominating idea, other ideas embodied in the same paragraph working merely as ancillary, we recognize such a paragraph as *unified*. Such ancillary ideas help to build up or sharpen, or project or amplify the main idea. Some of the supporting details may include examples/illustrations, definitions, comparison and contrast, and sometimes the use of anecdotes and stories that may appear highly incredible. A paragraph that provides all the details required for the proper development of the paragraph is said to be *complete*.

The theme or main idea of a paragraph may be traced to a single sentence in the paragraph. Such a sentence that embodies the principal idea is the topic

sentence. This sentence can be located in two main positions of the paragraph: as the first sentence of the paragraph or as the last sentence of it. The topic sentence located at the initial position has the stylistic effect of immediacy, capturing the reader's attention immediately he starts reading the paragraph. It is an emphatic position that arms the reader with the principal information to be developed in the rest of the paragraph. This way, the paragraph is working from the general to the particular, providing (graphically) some kind of inverted pyramid structure. Where the topic sentence is located at the final position of the paragraph, it is also stylistically emphatic, but the effect is different. For one thing, there is a movement from the specific to the general, thus providing (graphically) a kind of pyramid structure and curiosity being built up by the supporting sentences preceding the topic sentence. The supporting sentences work towards a climax, and the climax becomes the topic sentence, which graphically is the broad (general) base of the pyramid structure. These two conventional locations may sometimes be ignored by writers. In that case, the main idea, though discernible, cannot be traced to a single sentence at the beginning or end of the paragraph, but is couched in some phrases, words or even sentences that are not primarily constructed to embody the main idea. Sometimes too, practised writers, for the sake of variety, deliberately locate the topic sentence in the middle of the paragraph.

Generally, novelists have their narrative paragraphs interspersed with paragraphs of dialogues or speeches. This has the effect of swift action, change in the thinking of the characters. When the story line becomes animated, the

tendency is for paragraphs to be short, and without regard for the construction of topic sentences. In this case, the writer is ‘rushing headlong, event following event in rapid succession. The break between such paragraphs merely serves the purpose of a rhetorical pause, throwing into prominence some detail of the action.’ (Strunk and White: 12)

#### **4.8 PARAGRAPH STRUCTURE IN *Toads for Supper***

A close examination of Chukwuemeka Ike’s *Toads for Supper* reveals some kind of paragraph design and development largely enriched by the technique of interior monologue. He uses the monologues extensively not only to flesh out his paragraphs but also stylistically to unveil the thought processes of the characters. There are no less than thirty paragraphs of various types of monologue in the novel.

The interior monologue is one of the techniques by which the stream of consciousness is presented. It was first used in French literature to describe a technique in the novel representing the thought processes of characters. It was popularized by Valery Larbaud who applied the term to James Joyce’s *Ulysses*. (1922) Generally, the term presumably represents an unrestricted and uncensored portrayal of the totality of a character’s interior experiences in a novel. The linguistic markers or characteristics of internal monologue include:

- i) the use of first person pronoun
- ii) present orientation in tense and deictics
- iii) absence of a reporting clause

- iv) no graphological marks of quotation
- v) no sign of a narrator
- vi) focalization is entirely internal and subjective.

There are two major types of interior monologue: the direct interior monologue, synonymous with Free Direct Thought, is that which presents the interior self of the character straight, as if the author does not exist. It is as if the reader overhears the words and feelings directly. The characteristics include first person pronoun, present tense orientation, and absence of a reporting clause, which reinforces the absence of an apparently controlling narrator. There is also the indirect interior monologue, synonymous with Free Indirect Thought, sometimes referred to as the narrated monologue. This device is marked by absence of a reporting clause, present deictic orientation, prevailing indirect mode such as back-shifting of tense to past, third person pronoun replacing first and second person pronouns thus signalling the presence of the author who serves as selector, presenter, guide and commentator.

In *Toads for Supper*, the technique of interior monologue helps Ike a great deal in his presentation of paragraphs of agitation and debates boiling in the minds of the characters, especially the protagonist, Amadi. Most of the time, such paragraphs present a series of questions which, on the surface, would look like rhetorical questions, but what comes before or after them often turns out to be responses to the questions. Sometimes they are indicative of interior agitations. The pattern of these questions has something in common with classical rhetorical questions in that both are useful emotive devices used to suggest a character's

outburst of natural feelings. The difference between traditional rhetorical questions and the type employed by Chukwuemeka Ike here is that whereas the former plead no answer, coming without the intention of eliciting a reply, the latter are such that their responses or answers are proffered within the context of the interior monologues.

Ike has used the questions as a linguistic cohesive device signalling internal debate in the characters. These questions combine with their apparent responses to produce the interior monologues which, inter alia, act as body fillers to the suspense created by events. For instance, Amadi returns from the thoughtless journey to Ilesha looking thoroughly spent. He is told that there is a visitor waiting for him in his room. He cannot tell who that could be. The porter himself has no idea who the visitor is. No one knows what the visitor's mission is. Some unpleasant suspense builds up. Amadi is agitated. At this juncture, Ike uses the technique of interior monologue to fill the suspense as well as to x-ray the state of Amadi's thoughts before meeting with the emissary. The author starts with a short paragraph of direct interior monologue characterized by the first person singular pronoun, a present tense orientation, no reporting clause and so no sign of authorial presence.

'Only debtors run away from their houses. I do not owe anybody anything. But who could this mysterious visitor be? Could it be Sweetie? I hope not! In any case what could she be doing in my room? She could not have recovered sufficiently from her recent delivery to be setting another trap for me. And even if she has, she would have to be more foolish than a sheep to think that I would fall into her clutches again.' (174)

Note that this paragraph is enclosed in quotes, thus differentiating it from the one immediately following it, which is also an interior monologue, but an indirect type with its characteristic third person pronoun. And even when we can see the presence of the author in deciding what to select and present in the narration, and even without the graphological marks of quotation, the reader is aware that the expressions are Amadi's.

He dismissed the idea. Anyway, Sweetie would be too ashamed of herself to show up on the University campus so soon. Who then could it be? It could not be the Hausa hawker who had promised to bring him a set of ivory beads and earrings, in exchange for his old tweed jacket and two pairs of trousers. The set was intended as a surprise present for Aduke. There would have been no need for the Hausa man to wait, since he came to the campus almost every day.  
(174)

One could surmise from the examples above that Chukwuemeka Ike uses quotation marks for direct interior monologue since it can be likened to direct speech, which will leave the indirect interior monologue bare – without quotation marks – since it can be seen in the same light as indirect speech. But this is not consistent. The inconsistency may have been as a result of the level of confusion or complication agitating the character's mind. For example, Chima arrives on campus for the graduation ceremony. The old schoolmate playfulness for which Amadi knew him is gone. He announces to Amadi that he is now the Assistant District Officer of Amagu, in Amadi's home. His attitude towards Amadi is snappy, and with an air of superiority. And as a sort of mortifying last straw for Amadi, Chima drops the news that shortly he would formally be married to one

Nwakaego (Amadi's betrothed), pretending that he is not sure Amadi will know the girl in question. In the midst of this shock and confusion:

Amadi read the letter over and over again. That explains it; that explains it. I knew there was something fishy. Chima is not the man to behave like an Englishman for nothing. He knew he had hit me below the belt. He knows my connection with Nwakaego; after all, haven't I always gone to him for advice? To give the impression he was not sure if I knew her was a very cheap thing to do (147).

This paragraph is understandably a direct interior monologue, though without the marks of quotation. The author then decides on another paragraph of indirect interior monologue to present Amadi's silent appraisal of Nwakaego.

...Nwakaego was beautiful, naturally beautiful, without the help of make-up. She was innocent, the kind of girl who went to her husband's house intact. She had been brought up in a home where the wife accepted the authority of her husband and the husband knew the woman's role. She came from his village, spoke not only the same language but also the same dialect as he spoke. She was acceptable to his parents who had longed to call her their daughter-in-law. Yet he had been reluctant to marry her. Why? Because she was not sufficiently educated? Because she was not fit to become the wife of a District Officer, precisely what Chima would soon make her? Aduke had dazzled him so much that he had become blind to Nwakaego's good points. What an idiot he had been! And what a price he was paying for his blindness, his stupidity! (148).

One of those moments of vigorous doubts Amadi has about Nwakaego is done in two paragraphs of unequal length. The first is an evaluative angle of vision issuing from Amadi presented via the technique of indirect interior monologue. The second is a sort of resolution captured in a short advisory direct interior monologue enclosed in graphological marks of quotation and with direct

second person pronoun signalling the imperative and the presence of an inner voice.

Nwakaego was beautiful in every sense of the word and had received excellent home training. Granted. But she was immature and there was a wide education gap between her and Amadi. Things would be all right as soon as she obtained the Higher Elementary Teachers' Certificate – then she would be fit even for a Vice-chancellor. But how soon would she attain that goal? With the best academic records, certainly not less than five and a half years, and longer if she suffered a setback. Was it wise to commit himself to a girl for that length of time? Perhaps yes, if the girl possessed exceptional qualities. Was there any guarantee that at the end of the long wait things would work out smoothly? What if he decides he did not like her anymore? Or what if she decided at the end of it all that she preferred another man? It had happened to Simon, the Local Helper, and it had meant making a fresh start elsewhere. Of course, the parents could use their authority to prevent any such embarrassment but would he be glad to marry a girl either against her will or his own?

A voice speaks to him: 'You can't back out now. Remember you have all the time given your support. However long you may wait, Nwakaego will turn out to be what you make of her. Give her a fair chance. Show that you appreciate her problems. Don't compare her with Aduke...' (79).

These two paragraphs are stylistically significant. The first commands a somewhat stilted tone because of the apparently impossible situation in which Amadi finds himself. The prevailing indirect mode of tense back-shifting to past and the third person pronoun are linguistic markers to this. The barrage of internal interrogatives and their responses are pointers to a highly loaded mind. The subjective evaluation the protagonist appears to give the situation further deepens his dilemma and heightens his confusion. The second paragraph is devoted to the



inner voice. The voice is admonitory in tone. It is rendered in a more or less informal style with the use of the colloquial contractions *can't* and *don't*, the deliberate omission of the nominal that-clause functioning as object in *Remember (that) you have all the time given your support*. Combined with this air of informality is the deliberate omission of the implied second person subject pronoun (in the underlined sentences above), the stylistic significance of which is to tone down the intensity of the admonition.

It appears that very critical moments present Ike with the opportunity to poke into the minds of his characters using the technique of monologue. The news of Amadi's involvement with Sweetie and his eventual rustication spreads in Ezinkwo. Amadi's father, Mazi Onuzulike is filled with disgust and disappointment at his son. He is further embittered by the fact that he, as a reverend church leader, his family supposed to be exemplary to other families at Ezinkwo at this critical moment of Mazi Onuzulike's life. Ike runs three successive paragraphs of indirect interior monologue with the characteristic backshifting of tense to past, without a reporting clause, and third person pronoun replacing the first and second person marking the presence of a narrating author. This is so beautifully woven that the voice of the narrator blends smoothly with Mazi Onuzulike's focalization without causing a break in the flow of the narrative.

Amadi had made it possible 'for goats to eat palm fronds off his head'. He had dragged him in the mud and given the village gossips something to talk about. How could he stand before his people another day to decry immorality unless he made an example of his son? How could he in one breath

invoke the wrath of God on prostitutes and other dangerous township women, and in another welcome one of them to his house as a daughter-in-law? How could he encourage his son to disclaim his child? His own blood, his own first-fruit? For who knew whether such a child might not grow up one day to take up arms against his own father without knowing it?

No, he needed no oracle to point out the way. Amadi must accept full responsibility for his indiscretion. He must marry the girl, but he must not bring her to his house. He had broken his father's commandments. Like the arm about to lead its owner to damnation,... he had to be cut off.

But not very easy.... He did not mind even if he went naked in order to save money for his son's education; one day God would send him clothes in superabundance.... Could he shut his mind to all this? Could he cut off his nose to spite his face....? (125-126)

At the demise of his father, the reality of life dawns on Amadi. Mentally he is not prepared for the sudden metamorphosis from a carefree undergraduate lover-boy to a father to his siblings and a son-cum-husband to his mother. Returning to campus, Amadi resolves to avoid Aduke as a step towards ending the relationship.

But this is weak, so he decides to write to her to tell her everything. But then:

'How can I tell her that the pendulum has swung over to Nwakaego? Was Nwakaego not the same girl I had sworn by my ancestors that I could never marry? How can I convince Aduke that I was not feeding her on lies when I told her that I had written Nwakaego off? How can I convince her that I have not merely been making a fool of her, turning her into my football?

'Why, in any case, should I kick Aduke out? She is the girl of my choice. How can I dismiss her after buying her an engagement ring and travelling to Ilesha to announce to her people my intention to marry her? Is it fair to break my promise to her in order to carry out another promise?' (182-183)

These paragraphs are a barrage of interior interrogatives with no answers proffered, an indication of a mind on the brink of disintegration. This is then

followed by paragraphs of interior dialogue taking place between Amadi and an inner voice. The dialogue, like physical wrangling, moves rapidly in slashes suggesting very high mental anxiety on the part of the protagonist, Amadi, as he summarizes his anguish in a short paragraph of direct interior monologue made up of choppy sentences.

‘Most unfortunate. Lose my father. Get involved with two girls with conflicting claims. My degree examination round the corner. Most unfortunate. Terribly unfair!’ (183)

In the Student Union Presidential election, three out of five contestants resign, barely a day before the election. The three came from the same tribe, an election gimmick which students are made to understand as tribalistic. Events culminate into a protest march to the Academic Registrar’s house because he is the Electoral Officer. The ‘Minority Elements’ in the student union demand, among other things, the ‘postponement of the presidential election, if the union is to be saved from a major crisis’. The Academic Registrar, returning from a midnight movie, comes face-to-face with an overwhelming crowd of protesting students. Here is the paragraph of monologue Ike designs at this juncture.

The Academic Registrar’s mind rapidly surveyed all the ground covered by his schedule of duties. Could this demonstration have anything to do with students who were frustrated by Heads of Departments not allowing them to proceed to Honours courses? If so, he thought, would they be appeased if I tell them that I will present their cases, with all the sympathy at my command, direct to the Vice-chancellor instead of to the Council of Deans? (88-89)

The first sentence above is clearly reported as can be seen from the pronoun and tense selection. So the paragraph takes off with entirely the ‘voice’ of the narrator. But what of the interrogative second sentence? This is clearly the Academic

Registrar's focalization, and Ike uses the deictic formative *this* to locate the proximity of the utterance not to the narrator, but to the Academic Registrar. Then the third sentence, which is also an interrogative: what of the clause, he thought, signalling that what is expected is a reported sentence? The sentence moves on leaving the first person direct mode intact but with no characteristic graphological marks of quotation to rescue that paragraph from some kind of authorial grammatical mix-up. Does the writer want his readers to see this paragraph as a sort of departure from the grammatical rules associated with reported speech, and as such, an experiment in grammatical deviation? If so, of what linguistic value is it, considering the fact that literature is a repository of the fine aspects of language, which often times younger readers and writers, try to imitate? We cannot, using this reason as a touchstone, comfortably regard this as a linguistic experiment since it is an isolated case that we cannot identify in any other paragraph in the text. What then does Ike want us to make of the paragraph? We can only suggest here that the paragraph is a blend of the author-narrator's voice and the Academic Registrar's focalization in what is truly a direct interior monologue without marks of quotation – perhaps akin to the complex technique which Pascal (1977) refers to as the Dual Voice. (Wales: 135)

We have seen this far that the entire scaffold of the story rests on a robust deployment of a 20<sup>th</sup> century novelistic device, the interior monologue. The technique has two types – the direct and indirect – which the author uses judiciously to erase boredom. Stylistically, Ike uses the technique effectively in projecting and propelling events in the paragraphs. He has utilized this in

presenting the ‘voice within’, showing the characters introspectively and retrospectively philosophizing, admonishing, advising, agitating, rationalizing and appraising situations. Ike’s consistent and compact use of paragraphs of the interior self therefore has helped to concretize the inner feelings of the characters, thereby rendering such feelings potentially dynamic, and at the same time ensuring the dramatic movement of events in the text.

#### **4.9 PARAGRAPH STRUCTURE IN *The Bottled Leopard***

In prose writing, paragraphs should be unified and coherent. Being unified implies that one paragraph should embody one main idea encapsulated by a sentence – the topic sentence, which sets the scene for the discussion/narration in that paragraph. By coherence we mean that in constructing the paragraphs each of the sentences should flow from, and empty into another by the use of cohesive devices. In structuring the paragraphs of *The Bottled Leopard*, Chukwuemeka Ike discards the above pedagogy to produce paragraphs of various lengths – some comprising sentences running up to a page, while a few others are just one or two sentences. Here is the beginning of Chapter 1.

One clean jump, and the leopard sailed effortlessly over the wall, landing noiselessly inside Nma’s father’s compound. It made straight for the pen. At the last count in the afternoon, before the knotted *omu nkwu* was flung backwards into the compound, the pen held five adult goats, two of them nursing mothers.... The money it would fetch him at the next Ikeji festival, he reckoned, would pay the bride price for a new wife any time Mama Nma began to pass water like a man.

Teleguided by the *omu nkwu*, the leopard advances stealthily, its eyes sparkling in the pitch darkness as they closed in on its target, the defenceless Hausa goat, sleeping unconcerned on its side like a sack of grated cassava.... (1)

‘Wow! Wow!!’ barked Waggy, Nma’s father’s dog. The leopard, again as if teleguided, instantly changed course, to silence the audacious dog before making for the goat. A window sprang open, revealing a double-barrel shotgun. Its nozzle pointed at the leopard’s heart.

The first paragraph above has five sentences that run through fourteen lines in the text, and then followed by a one-sentence paragraph, and the third, two sentences. The three paragraphs stress one main idea: the leopard trying to get at the goat. When a new idea is introduced, in fact, a counter idea, that is, when a window opened and a double-barrel gun is pointed, one should have expected that to be the beginning of a second paragraph, but Ike lumps it, though undeveloped, into the third paragraph. This pattern, however, is not consistent, for, in some parts of his narration, one paragraph, no matter how small, embodies one major idea or a minor one. At Ndikelionwu while on suspension, Amobi and Chuk come to meet Nma. During the introduction and exchange of pleasantries, Ike narrates,

Chuk demanded more than the slim fingers Nma extended to him for a handshake, but his efforts to kiss her cheeks met with much stiffer resistance than he had anticipated.

Nma disappeared, and soon reappeared with two bowls of fruit salad which she placed on a low table before Amobi. Then she whispered shyly to him in Igbo: ‘They are for both of you. That’s the only thing I can offer to your white friend at short notice’. (109)

At a very crucial moment in Amobi’s school life, when the principal announces that ‘... The punishment for an offence of this magnitude is outright expulsion...’, Chukwuemeka Ike drops a one-short-sentence paragraph:

Hot drops of urine fell into Amobi’s pant .( 99)

Chukwuemeka Ike's handling of paragraphs in this text, from what we have seen so far, agrees with McArthur's idea of paragraphing (669) that in constructing paragraphs

Two influences are: relationships with material in preceding and following paragraphs, and the 'eye appeal' of different lengths of paragraph arranged in relation to the size of page and typeface used. Paragraph construction is therefore as much a matter of layout and visual balance as of content and logical relationship between preceding or subsequent paragraphs. For purposes of highlighting or emphasis, longer paragraphs may be divided up, sometimes turning a proposed topic sentence into *a topic paragraph*.

One of the interesting aspects of Ike's paragraph weaving in *The Bottled Leopard* is the connection between the first and last chapters of the text. Chapter 1 introduces the mystery of human 'possession' of leopards and the last paragraph of that chapter reads:

Before he went back to sleep, he made a resolution. He would take advantage of his entry into Government College to get at the full facts about leopards and their 'possessors'. From the little he had seen of the college there could be no mystery beyond the powers of the learned masters all over the place to unravel (6)

This concluding paragraph of Chapter 1 is, in fact, the topic paragraph that sets the scene. Other paragraphs, from the second chapter of the text to the last chapter serve to develop the idea captured in this topic paragraph. The paragraph presents a thesis: there is a mystery and Amobi hopes to unravel it with the help of his exposure to Government College. But unfortunately, the scope of the novel does not see him through more than the first year experience before Ike winds up the last chapter with a paragraph whose thesis is: the mystery is yet to be unravelled. Here is the last paragraph of the text.

No. He would not raise the issue with the Principal or with any other master. Let things be as the Principal had said. That would at least leave him free to continue with his studies unmolested. He would chew his stick in the privacy of his bedroom. Hopefully, one day his discrete but determined search for the truth would yield fruit, and help to throw light on some of the mysteries of African science. Provided *dibia* Ofia continued to keep his leopard bottled tight. (168)

The connection between these two highlighted paragraphs must be a conscious one: the resolution in the topic paragraph, and a note on the slippery nature of the mystery in the last paragraph. What Ike has done with his technique of paragraphing in this text therefore is to use the last paragraph of Chapter 1 as a topic paragraph with which he announces an impending resolution, thereby rekindling the narrative hook of suspense he had started with the Amobi leopard incubus. He then juggles with this impending resolution for the number of paragraphs making up the twenty-two chapters of the text. The paragraphs are stylistically and highly periodic since Ike reserves the resolution to the end. The curiosity aroused in the reader with this narrative hook hits a disappointment when Ike exposes in the last paragraph of the last chapter that the mystery is yet to be resolved (as if to urge his readers to look out for a part II of *The Bottled Leopard* for the resolution proper).

#### **4.10 PARAGRAPH STRUCTURE IN *The Potter's Wheel***

Chukwuemeka Ike's choice of paragraph structure and development in *The Potter's Wheel* is not a deviation from the common conventional idea of paragraphing. By 'conventional idea' of paragraphing, we mean the traditional



method or the age-old method of paragraph construction accepted and practised by scholars.

The conventional points about paragraph construction are well observed by Ike in *The Potter's Wheel*. The opening chapter of the novel has seven narrative paragraphs of varying lengths. These are interspersed with paragraphs of dialogues. With the exception of the first narrative paragraph, the other six narrative paragraphs are carefully constructed with their topic sentences located at the beginning of the paragraphs. The topic sentence of the first paragraph is curiously located in the middle: 'He came top of Standard 1 in the end of year examinations, thereby qualifying for the privileges generously conferred by the headmaster on all end of year 'firsts': exemption from fetching firewood for teachers all through the first term of the ensuing school year' (9). This medial location of the topic sentence here serves the purpose of variety, since the rest of the six have their main ideas constructed at the initial positions. Here are the first and second paragraphs.

Obu could not contain his joy as the headmaster read out his name.... He came top of Standard I in the end of year examinations, thereby qualifying for the privileges generously conferred by the headmaster on all end of year 'firsts': exemption from fetching firewood for teachers all through the first term of the ensuing school year. He was itching to gallop home to announce his distinguished achievement to his parents....

Obuechina was the only boy out of seven children born to Mazi Lazarus Maduabuchi and his wife. The names of the five girls who preceded him – Uzoamaka (the road is excellent), Nkiru (that which is yet to come is greater), Njideka (hold what you have), Nkechi (whatever

God gives) and Ogechukwu (God's time is the best) – showed with how much anxiety and faith his parents had awaited his coming. Little wonder they literally worshipped him and showered on him all the names they had been saving up for boys who never came – Obuechina (the compound must not revert to bush), Ezenwa (infant King), Nwokenagu (a male issue is desirable). He was also Onyibo – a companion – to his father, and Obiano to his mother because his arrival brought solace to her soul....(9)

The first sentence here immediately strikes the reader with the fact that Obuechina is an only son out of seven siblings. All the other supporting sentences of the paragraph somehow explain, by the use of parenthetical definitions, the names of the other children who are all females, how they were born and why they were given the names they bear. The topic sentence having thus armed the reader with the principal information, leaves him to see from the other (supporting) sentences *why* the boy is given several names the parents 'had been saving up for boys who never came, why the boy's arrival has 'brought solace to her soul', *why* his mother's place in the family has been 'firmly secured', *why* the woman pampers him and 'literally worshipped him'. The sixth and seventh narrative paragraphs are relatively shorter. The sixth has its topic sentence at the initial: 'Ogechukwu sneaked in, weeping as if she had broken a precious pitcher at the stream'.

Ogechukwu sneaked in, weeping as if she had broken a precious pitcher at the stream. Mama Obu asked her superfluously whether she had failed. She replied with a crescendo of weeping. The weeping only stopped when Ogechukwu saw that her mother was too engrossed with Obu to take notice of her penitent sobs.

'I'd always maintained that this big head contained nothing but brain for book work,' Mama Obu teased

Obu. ‘That was why your father and I did not take you seriously when at the age of five you said you did not want to go to school...’

As she packed her basket for the market, she recounted Obu’s earlier refusal to go to school. That was nearly four years ago. It was a story she had told many times over. She repeated it every time Obu excelled in an examination or his teacher extolled his academic ability. Yet on each occasion she told the story as if she had never told it before. Now it did not matter to her that she did not have an audience. (11)

The rest of that short paragraph explains *how* and *why* about the Ogechukwu weeping. The last paragraph above analyses the same way: an initial topic sentence about Obu’s earlier refusal to go to school. Other sentences in that paragraph simply amplify the fact about Obu’s earlier refusal to go to school – presented as a piece of ruminative of Mama Obu’s mind. There is something about one of the paragraphs not included in the seven.

‘I’m here, Obiano,’ his mother replied. She could tell from the boy’s excitement that he had passed his examination. She carefully arranged the pumpkins she was taking to the market for sale inside her long basket, smacked the sand off the palms of her hands and moved towards Obu’s voice. Obu ran to her, shouting: ‘Mama! I’ve passed! I came first in the whole class!’ (10)

A look at the above paragraph shows that it is a paragraph made up of a mixture of dialogues and narration. Strunk and White (11) maintain that when a writer mixes up dialogues with narration without setting off the dialogues in paragraphs, such a writer is ‘seeking to create the effect of *rapid talk*’. This is true in this context considering the atmosphere of excitement on the boy’s part not just for passing an examination but also for coming top of the class.

As events build up to show Obu as a spoilt child, Ike's narrative paragraphs become fairly longer, and the paragraphs can run more than seven in a row without being interspersed with paragraphs of dialogue (58 – 60).

He detached the two tobacco leaves he wanted to grind from the head, tied up the remainder meticulously in brown cement bag paper to preserve its flavour, and packed it away in the round wooden box....

With his loin cloth tucked under him and the grinding stone held in place between his outstretched legs, he began the long and painstaking process.

As his two hands gradually crushed the tobacco on the grinding stone, his mind went in quest of his son, Obu. That boy was slowly but surely developing into a useless boy....

The only positive quality Mazi Laza had so far discovered in his son was his academic brilliance.... His own teachers had acclaimed his hot brains, but the opportunity to stretch his potential was not there.

Since God had endowed his son with a replica of his hot brain, he hoped his son would climb the educational tree to its tip and pluck from it all it had to offer. All the same, academic brilliance could not flourish for long without a measure of common-sense to back it up.... No man had been known to acquire common-sense without suffering; there could be no sweet without sweat, not even for thieves.

Obu appeared to have come to the world to enjoy the sweet side of it.... Mazi Laza admitted that he could not exonerate himself entirely from blame for shutting his eyes and mouth while Obu cascaded downhill every day.... Obu's mother was always around to protect and defend him, creating the impression in Obu's mind that his mother loved and cared for him, while his father did not.

Mazi Laza dismissed the idea that he did not love and care for his son. If he did not, how many other sons had he?... The price tag he and his wife

placed on Obu's head had been very high. Obu knew this and exploited it to the utmost. The suspicion that Obu was an *ogbanje* had further revalued that price tag upwards.... Above all, it was ruining Obu's future.... He must put a stop to it, and without further delay, otherwise that boy would constitute a painful nuisance, like a boil which chooses to flourish in the pubic area.

These paragraphs have no dialogues between them. Part of the reason for this is that Ike is gradually driving up to a climax whereby he wants his reader to 'sail' along with him into Mazi Laza's mind to see that the cosseted boy, for obvious reasons, has to be sent to Teacher's reform home. One may wonder why the second paragraph above is remarkably a single sentence. The first paragraph narrates the physical preparation Mazi Laza is making to commence the tobacco grinding. The single-sentence paragraph is separated from the first because the latter sets the stage with preparations, while the single-sentence paragraph settles Mazi Laza down for the grinding proper. Immediately he settles down to the long process of grinding, his mind goes into ruminations. Stylistically therefore, the single, complex sentence constituting the paragraph is deliberately constructed to match the 'long and painstaking process' of tobacco grinding.

The rest of the quoted paragraphs are narrative explorations into Mazi Laza's innermost mind. Ike uses his omniscient narrative power to get the reader aware of Mazi Laza's private feelings about his son, Obu. He is academically brilliant, no doubt, but the degree of his mother's indulgence towards him leaves the boy 'surely developing into a useless boy' (58). He is 'cascading downhill every day' (59). This is at variance with Mazi Laza's philosophy: 'No man had been known to acquire common-sense without suffering; there could be no sweet

without sweat, not even for thieves' (59). 'No child brought up that way could make good' (60). So, the omniscient narrator, Ike, working in Mazi Laza's mind, weighs logically the deteriorating circumstances about Obu. These paragraphs have the effect of preparing the reader's mind for Mazi Laza's decision to put a stop to the boy's deterioration. This decision ends the first part of the novel, and opens up a new part with a shift in setting (from rural Umuchukwu to the semi-urban Aka town), and thus a completely different chapter in the protagonist's life. That crucial decision that is to re-model Obu's life is strategically made in Chapter 9 of the novel, exactly 5 January, 1943, when Obu hits 9 years of age.

The 14<sup>th</sup> Chapter of the text, which Ike devotes to the explosive atmosphere at Teacher's house, is carefully designed starting with seven paragraphs of uneven lengths, not interspersed with dialogues, describing Teacher's stereotype early morning routine. Immediately after this, follow slashes of narrative paragraphs interspersed with dialogues, and paragraphs that mix dialogue and narration. This mixture is because of the swift movement of events and actions showing the typical tense atmosphere under which the servants live.

Another important aspect of paragraph development content-wise is Ike's use of dreams to structure and boost his story line. Dreams are generally believed to be a re-enactment of events 'in the mind when the objective senses have withdrawn into rest or oblivion' (Miller: 34). The events in the mind, in our present context, are when the objective senses have withdrawn into rest and sleep is in progress. The events could be past, whereby the dreamer dramatizes or watches the drama of some events/discussions/experiences that took place in the

immediate past (before going to sleep) or in the remote past (of experiences cherished or detested) stamped indelibly in the dreamer's psyche. A dream could also come as a prefiguring of events/experiences that are yet to come. Sometimes dreams present direct opposite to reality, with grossly exaggerated characters, events and scenes incongruously traversing landscapes and boundaries. Environments, experiences, aspirations and state of one's mind are some of the factors that influence and shape dreams a lot. These points come into play in the dream episodes in *The Potter's Wheel*. We identify four dream episodes here. The first is a paragraph of twin dreams (92) which Mazi Laza feels are bad because they involve snakes, and Obu drowning in a river. This paragraph is to show the worried state of Mazi's mind as he sends Obu to Aka. The whole of Chapter 16 is devoted to Obu's dream of Umuchukwu, thereby showing the increasing level of nostalgic feelings in him as life in Aka sharply contrasts with that at Umuchukwu. It is worth noting that this growing nostalgia brings about the phoney letter episode in Chapter 17. Again, after being humiliated and flogged in school because he pilfered meat from Madam's pot of soup, the dream that follows (168 – 170) is given in short animated paragraphs, each flashing a different scene, with no concentration on the traditional skills of paragraphing. The scenes are presented rather phantasmagorically.

The tears gathered strength, soon becoming a fast current which swept Obu from the world of heartlessness and misery, the world of Teacher and Madam, to the world of never-ending jubilation at Umuchukwu. His age grade was presenting the *atilogwu* dance as the highlight of Nwohuruanu's wedding ceremony....

The spectators closed in on the dancers, ignoring the cloud of dust raised by the dancers' feet as they struck the ground....

Mama Obu exuded happiness and pride as she ran into the dancers to stick one whole shilling on Obu's wet forehead.... As if the current had waited for this climax, it swept Obu and his fellow *atilogwu* dancers off the scene. It swept bashful Nwohuruanu, her teacher husband, Mama Obu and the entire wedding reception off the scene....

Obu, now the fearful *Odo* masquerade, crowed proudly as women flung away their pitchers or market baskets and dived into the bush at his approach. The sight of Samuel diverted his attention from the sprawling women. Samuel the bully! ...he landed a cracking stroke on Samuel's back....

... As if by magic, the current swept Samuel aside, replacing him with Teacher and Madam. Obu could hardly believe his eyes. Teacher and Madam, completely at his mercy!... He raised the whip he had just used on Samuel and struck Madam. Teacher moved with amazing agility and received the stroke on his backside....

'Hold this for me!' Obu gave Teacher the kind of stroke for which Teacher was dreaded by his pupils, expecting him to cower like Samuel. Teacher took it with incredible equanimity, retaining even the smile on his face. The *Odo* masquerade could not let even Teacher get away too lightly. Otherwise everybody would henceforth regard *Odo* as a child's plaything.

'Teacher, *du-me!*' he shouted, carefully selecting the cane which inflicted instant leprosy.

Before accomplishing this task, Madam opens the door to find Obu still fast asleep on the floor, and she shouted: 'Get up at once, you *ogbanje!*.. Get up before I kick you to death.'

...Then the current swept away the leprosy inflicting *Odo* masquerade, leaving domestic



servant Obuechina Maduabuchi at the mercy of  
terror-striking Mrs Zaccheus Kanu, his Madam....

And the cinematic paragraphs come to an end, with Obu back to reality: he is not the *Odo* masquerade; he has no leprosy inflicting powers; he is merely the domestic servant Obuechina Maduabuchi, face to face with Madam the terror.

The last dream in the text is woven into Chapter 26 – the last chapter of the novel. Again, the protagonist, Obu, is the dreamer. The dream takes place at Umuchukwu. It involves the two-year-old Evans episode. Ike treats the dream in slashes of narrative paragraphs interspersed with dialogues, indicating rapid movement of events, especially as the story is ending. These slashes of animated paragraphs of narration cum dialogues in this Evans episode are used to present some salient aspects of Madam: she is a nightmare to the servants. Even as Obu is at home (Umuchukwu), the thought of her re-enacts in a dream, Madam's true qualities: miserly, cruel, literally spooky, like a witch. The dream also points to Ike's craftsmanship in paragraph content development by the use of specific details and episodes.

The most interesting and compact paragraph is the last paragraph of the text. After the nightmare about Madam, Obu and Mama Obu decide that he will not return to Teacher's house. Obu manages to introduce this decision to his father, who rhetorically uses the Edmund Okechukwu/Caleb Okeke analogy to convince the boy against his decision not to return to Teacher's. And without many words, in just one-sentence paragraph, Ike winds up the tale.

On 14 January, 1944, Obuechina Maduabuchi returned to Teacher's house at Aka C.M.S Central School, unaccompanied by his mother.

We had discussed this sentence in Section 4.3 of this thesis. It is important to note the metaphor embedded in this one-sentence paragraph: Obu is learning, but has not completed his 'apprenticeship' at Teacher's house, and so, in the potter's metaphor, the half-baked clay has to go back to the pottery! The beauty of this paragraph lies in its formal, isolated and compressed nature.

#### **4.11 PARAGRAPH STRUCTURE IN *The Search***

*The Search* is rendered predominantly in dialogue. As a result, there are many paragraphs of direct speech. It is important to note that the discussants are representatives of various ethnic groups, the large ones, the minor ones. Ike makes it possible for every one of them, irrespective of educational, ethnic, religious or occupational background to have some contribution to make in the socio-political and economic situation of the country. As Emenyonu in Ugbabe (121 – 122) says:

...the author keeps them talking, underlining the importance of dialogue rather than war and acrimony in the solution of the socio-political problems that Nigerians face as a people. Through the tirades and vituperations of the characters at these encounters the reader is exposed to their individual fears, hopes, aspirations, failures and successes, as well as those of the groups they represent and whose sentiments they articulate. Through these, the author leads the reader to appreciate that each group has in its peculiar way contributed in varying degrees to the collapse of mutual trust in Nigeria as well as its perpetual political instability as a country.

Each contribution by each character is rendered in a direct speech, which by convention, is a paragraph in its own right. Some of the direct speeches are composed of one sentence, or just a few sentences; others that try to explain or argue issues are produced in paragraphs of some length. In the paragraphs, whether the short direct speech or the long ones, the contents border on the corruption that has reached alarming proportion not only among highly placed individuals and government officials but also among the hoi polloi, as exemplified by the dialogue between Azuka's driver and shop assistant.

*Shop Assistant:* Dat Benin armed robber, 'e tough O!

*Driver:* De one who make Inspector-General of Police declare curfew throughout Bendel?

*Shop Assistant:* Yes.

*Driver:* De man tough pass Oyenusi! You no see how Inspector-General offer ten thousand naira for any person who fit catch am dead or alive, and de man himself come offer thirty thousand naira to any person who fit catch am!

*Shop Assistant:* Dem say 'e don kill de woman who make juju for am, make de woman no put sand sand for 'im garri.

*Driver:* Which mean no person fit catch am again?

*Shop Assistant:* Yes, unless dem catch am on top of woman!

*Driver:* Dat man na de only hope for common man in dis country O! You see how every time he rob bank or big company he come scatter de money for common people in de market?

*Shop assistant:* No more monkey dey work baboon dey chop for dis country. You know my broder fight for Federal against Biafra? Any car any soldier struggle bring out for liberated area, one senior officer go take am and write 'im own name on it. Another senior officer who don' become general now order my broder dem to bring out everything from one big house in one liberated area, including electric wire. De officer take two trailer carry everything go 'im village and build one big house

for imself. Anoder big officer order im soldiers to kill dem fellow soldiers, and carry all de cash dem remove from one bank in liberated area.

Me I no dey for dat kind service now. If anoder war break out for dis country, I go join army. But I go fight for my own pocket, so dat if I survive de war, I go become rich man! (73 – 74)

These paragraphs of dialogue, though myopic in scope and vision, help to expose the fact that corruption is rife amongst the lower class of people, such that their dream always is how to become rich by any means other than hard work. In their conversation, they hint at the Nigerian problem: diversity in virtually every facet of life. Existence therefore implies battling against the odds (or perhaps, oddities) of this diversity. As a result, corruption permeates every facet of existence in Nigeria: ethnicism, tribalism, religious bigotry and fanaticism – all contribute to the socio-political and economic stagnation of the Nigerian nation. In the dialogue involving Eni, Dapa, Ola, Kaneng and Azuka, these issues come to the fore, with Azuka putting forward, from his personal experiences the nature of extreme discrimination, corruption and injustice meted out to the Igbo community he serves as their Sarki in Bauchi. Responding to Professor Eni’s probing on what his opinion is about Dr Ola’s (albeit quixotic) thinking of ‘integrating all the various ethnic groups... into one national community... having come up North to integrate with Northerners,... not to establish a pocket Yoruba land or of the Anglican Church in Bauchi,’ Azuka opines:

‘Doctor,... I and my people support national unity, with everybody living together happily like one big family. If we had such a family in Bauchi, there would be no Igbo

community, or Yoruba community, or Hausa community or Tiv community or Itsekiri community. If the whole country were similarly united into one big family, everybody will be happy and behave like brothers and sisters.’

‘Are you saying,’ Ola asked, ‘that until the ideal of national integration is achieved, we have to have these ethnic communities?’

‘It was not my people who built the ancient wall round Bauchi city, to separate the indigenes within the city from the strangers in the *sabon gari* outside the city. You people are employed by the federal government, so you have no idea what we strangers suffer here....’ (64)

Immediately after this paragraph of direct speech comes a paragraph of indirect speech where the author relieves Azuka of his story, and reports part of Azuka’s experiences, then returns the reader to paragraphs of direct speech. This pattern of paragraph alternation runs throughout the novel. An interesting direct/indirect speech paragraph alternation occurs when Professor Eni and Dr Ola take a drive round. In their regular pattern, they discuss ‘the frustrating state of affairs in the country, each discussion ending in utter despondency’ (76). As a demonstration, we hereby present in reduced forms, eleven paragraphs of alternating direct/indirect speech modes spanning pages 77 – 80.

1. Eni drove the car into the grounds of the Abubakar Tafawa Balewa monument and switched off the engine.
2. ‘You know what brought me up North,’ he began as the two men paced the gravelled walk leading to the rear of the massive but artistically striking concrete structure which encircled the tomb of Nigeria’s first Prime Minister. ‘It was all part of the euphoria which followed the return of civilian rule. Being Rector of a non-degree granting institution was nothing to be excited about.... I took it as a demonstration of faith in my fatherland.’
3. ‘As I did too, in my humble way, sir,’ Ola echoed.

**4** ‘I don’t think I’ve prayed for the success of any government as I did for the success of the Jambo administration,’ Eni went on. The portents had been good. The many-starred generals who had ruled the country before then had...voluntarily abandoned the scarlet corridors of power for the less glamorous role of millionaire farmers and shipping magnates....

**5.** What came of it all? Escalating corruption and moral decadence, precipitated by unimaginable greed; ethnic bigotry; naked abuse of power....

**6.** ‘You can imagine my disgust on getting home to learn that our development union .... had decreed mass return of all people resident outside home and taken other decisions calculated at inflating the figures of eligible voters. I promptly accosted the chairman of the union ....’

**7.** ‘The chairman did not argue with me. Instead he invited me to a meeting later in the day at the Eze’s place....’

**8.** ‘Eni’s first surprise came when he learnt of a calculated plot to reduce progressively.... Something to do with the age-old misunderstanding between his people ... and the people who claimed to be the true indigenes of the land....’

**9.** ‘I was shown instructions issued by the Assistant Returning Officer for our Local Government Area repeating the error,’ Eni went on, ‘and establishing only two registration centres for the town,....’

**10.** Eni had gone up to the Local Government headquarters, to draw the attention of the Assistant Returning Officer to the implications of his instructions, only to learn that the instructions came from the Chief Returning Officer for the State....

**11.** ‘I said I hoped urgent remedial action could be taken,’ Eni went on.

The first paragraph is just *one* functional sentence from the author – functional in two ways: besides reminding the reader who is behind the wheel, it also provides the reader with the spatial location of the characters engaged in the dialogue. The second paragraph begins with a graphological mark of quotation,

with a medial reporting clause whose subject is the antecedent marker (he), pointing to the subject of the only sentence of the first paragraph. The use of this pronoun (he) as an antecedent marker ensures a good sense of cohesion between the first and second paragraphs. The reporting clause here is prototypical, identifying the speaker with an antecedent marker, and refers to the circumstances of the speech act (*as the two men paced the gravelled walk leading to the rear of a massive... structure*), and also points to the aspectual phase of the reporting verb (*began*). The third paragraph is a one-sentence direct speech whose owner is identified with an SV reporting clause structure (*Ola echoed*) whose verb, *echoed*, provides a form of semantic cohesion with the last sentence uttered by Professor Eni in the second paragraph.

The fourth and fifth paragraphs are enigmatic: we cannot determine the boundary between the direct speech and the narrated one sentence. The cause of the enigma is mechanical – it is either a deliberate or an inadvertent omission of an opening quotation mark, which should signal the resumption of Professor Eni's direct speech in the second paragraph. It is the penultimate sentence of the fifth paragraph that cracks this structural riddle: *Eni had taken the trip home during the registration period...* In spite of the enigma pointed out here, there is a solid structural coherence between the two paragraphs (4 and 5) and this is achieved by beginning the 5<sup>th</sup> paragraph with the classic *wh*-information question type. The writer uses this question as a linguistic cohesive device signalling internal communication within the character, Professor Eni. The pronoun (*it*) in the information question is an antecedent marker referring to what is said in the 4<sup>th</sup>

paragraph, and the *wh*-information question performs an anticipatory role which the subsequent sentence complements by enumerating: *Escalating corruption... moral decadence... unimaginable greed... ethnic bigotry... abuse of power... prostitution of the print and electronic media... inept leadership etc.*

With the sixth and seventh paragraphs, the quotation marks show them as direct speech, and because their speaker is obvious, the writer rightly deems reporting clauses unnecessary. These two paragraphs could conveniently be merged as one since both have one dominating theme: *the speaker accosting their development union over plans to inflate voters' figure*. But the decision to split them results from the eye-appeal consideration occasionally involved in paragraph structuring.

In the eighth paragraph, Ike picks up the narration from where Professor Eni paused while in the ninth paragraph, the professor resumes with his direct speech – the quotation marks and the reporting clause being pointers. In the tenth paragraph, Ike relieves him again, while in the eleventh paragraph, the Professor resumes. Then a direct speech paragraph, followed by an indirect speech paragraph. This pattern runs throughout the novel: a pattern whereby paragraphs of indirect mode are structured to alternate and blend freely with paragraphs of direct mode. This direct/indirect mode alternation technique removes from the reader the boredom of reading long paragraphs of the story couched in only one mode of narration.



There are also paragraphs artistically designed to expose or develop fully certain characters in the text, for example, Mason and Shehu. Besides what we make of him from the dialogue paragraphs where he is involved, Ike runs a narrative paragraph on this barely literate man, showing how and when he arrived Bauchi, how his trade as a Mason took over his real name which was David Oludotun Adebola, from Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State. The paragraph refers to him as ‘an all-purpose man’, which is appropriate – he was a Christian, now a Moslem; he was David, later Mr. Mason, then Alhaji Mason; he was a mason, then a general contractor, then a businessman, a transporter, furniture maker, hotelier, large-scale farmer. He is Yoruba, his Hausa is perfect, and his dressing now, *baban riga*. With these preliminary facts about him done in one long narrative paragraph (6 – 7), the reader is left to watch further development of his character as an astute businessman in subsequent paragraphs of dialogue (13 – 18). He is fully developed as a sycophantic character from the beginning to the end. In certain paragraphs of monologue, he envies the unwavering spirit and level of education of Dr Ola. In his ‘next world’, he would be both ‘Doctor’ and ‘Alhaji’: ‘Doctor Alhaji David Oludotun Adebola!’ The news of the coup makes him happy and he scouts round for ‘the names of the next crop of gods to be cultivated and worshipped’ – that way, he would ‘map out his own strategy for keeping his head above the water.’ With the announcement of Shehu as Federal Minister of Education, he is all excitement. His paragraphs of dialogue with Ola are worth citing.

‘Why congratulate me?’ Ola was taken completely unawares.

‘Because when your brother or friend is in power you know your turn has come to chop!’

‘How do I come into all this?’ Ola was still puzzled.

‘The thing with you learned people is that you are too humble. Who, in this town, does not know of your friendship with Doctor Shehu Abubakar, that you can drive to his house any time, and he will listen to you? Were you and the Rector not with him last night? Your turn has come to chop, doctor, and I beg you to remember to put me in your bag whenever you visit him.’

‘I’m afraid I still don’t understand you,’ Ola sad, shutting his eyes to fight back a mild headache. ‘You are probably better known to Dr Abubakar than I. is there any Bauchi dignitary you don’t know?’

‘Thank you, doctor,’ Alhaji Mason acknowledged with a grin.

‘So why congratulate me?’ Ola drove his point home.

‘All right, I congratulate you, you congratulate me, that our friend is now a powerful minister. I know I must get some big big contracts from him. Any of my children who takes common entrance to federal government colleges or any who takes JAMB must be sure of admission! As for you, I’m sure anything you want from him, he will do it for you. That’s why I decided to come and see you now now. You know his ‘phone number where he is staying?’.... ‘The immediate thing I want from him is to help me to win big contracts. Doctor is not a contractor, so your own request will be different. May be you want to be a Rector. The yam and the machet are in his hands, as one Igboman says. This is your chance. It will be a long time before a Yorubaman becomes Head of State of his country. The Hausa/Fulani will rule us until they tire, or until our people in the South learn to work hand in hand. Therefore my policy is that any Southerner who can obtain anything from these Northerners should do so without wasting time...’ (240 – 241)

For Dr Shehu, Ike wants his reader to understand part of his character from Dr Ola’s honest and personal assessment of him. The assessment is rendered as internal communication with the use of free indirect mode of reporting. The facts are presented in one of the conventional modes of paragraph development – *the*

*use of comparison and contrast.* And one can see how, using Ola's focalization, Ike develops the content of these paragraphs on Shehu.

No. Ola could not put his finger on anything Shehu had done to hurt him personally.... His aversion for Dr Abubakar was simply because the young man typified a social class he had grown to resent. A class of young men in their 20s and early 30s, holding university degrees or professional qualifications, avidly exploiting the very favourable situation in which they found themselves as a result of geopolitical considerations, totally oblivious of the injured feelings of their better qualified fellow nationals from the rest of the country.

Dr Shehu Abubakar, a Fulani from Bauchi State, was Senior Lecturer in Islamic Studies at Ahmadu Bello University. He alone held the part-time positions of Chairman, Bauchi State Tourism Commission (which entitled him to a guest house in Bauchi and a chauffeur driven car) Chairman, Governing Council of the Federal Institute of Advanced Studies, Bauchi (which entitled him to another guest house in Bauchi and a chauffeur driven car on request), Director of three companies in which Federal Government owned controlling shares, all three based in Lagos and each providing him free guest house accommodation and free transport in Lagos. The Federal Institute of Advanced Studies leased one of his housing estates in the G.R.A., comprising three bungalows, at an inflated rent of ₦36, 000.00 per annum for the three. A Federal parastatal in Bauchi leased another of his estates at ₦48, 000.00 per annum. Another estate, on the new Maiduguri Road, was nearing completion. His age? 29.

Each time Ola saw Shehu, he could not help counting his own teeth with his tongue: chairman of governing councils – nil; chairman of boards of directors – nil; company directorship – nil; real estates – one partially completed residential house in his village, for family use; current position – Principal Lecturer, and Dean, School of Humanities, Federal Institute of Advanced Studies, Bauchi, on Salary Grade 14; other sources of income – nil; academic qualifications – B.A., M.A. PhD; age – 38; nationality – full-blooded Nigerian, same as Shehu.

Dr Shehu Abubakar also belonged to the decision-making mafia. (47 – 48).

## CHAPTER FIVE

### LINGUO-LITERARY FEATURES IN THE TEXTS

In this chapter, we shall examine schemes other than those linguistic techniques previously discussed. Such schemes, some of which may not play prominently in every novel, help in the development of the story line and contribute to the internal ordering of the message structure in the novels. Such features that are important in the realization of the texts include:

- i) humour
- ii) idioms and proverbs
- iii) echoism
- iv) rhetorical questions and repetition
- v) Americanism
- vi) onomastics
- vii) propaganda and symbolism
- viii) the use of the second person pronoun
- ix) the use of dialogue, dreams, denouement and suspense.

#### 5.1 HUMOUR

McAuthor (446) clearly explains humour as a disposition towards pleasantry, often realized in the enjoyment of anecdotes, jokes, puns, repartee, riddles, wisecracks, and witticisms. In *The Bottled Leopard*, there abound bits and pieces of humour, which challenge the reader's 'disposition towards pleasantry.'

The setting of the novel in a secondary school environment provides Chukwuemeka Ike the opportunity for humour with which he garnishes his tale. The tale dwells on such serious issues as nightmares, voodoo, mammy water and exorcism. Students adopt for themselves, their fellow students and teachers nicknames that are funny. Mr Sands, the white man, is nicknamed *Iambuc* because of the way he pronounces the iambus metric measurement in poetry. Mr Meniru, the Geography teacher is named *computer*. Besides the funny name his pronunciation has earned him, Mr Sands' mode of dressing (which Ike wonders if he is so 'Nnewish') is capable of evoking laughter: dozens of the same type of blue shirts and trousers, each shirt he deliberately perforated on the same spot, making it look like it is the same pair that he puts on every day. Ike's description of it is deliberately out to cause laughter:

...One day a boy spotted a hole in the shirt. On the left hand side, some distance below the pocket. A small hole which could have been made by a cricket when the shirt was spread out to dry. He drew the attention of his classmates to the hole. And they immediately mounted 'operation search for the hole'! (51)

And the humorous way he begins his lessons each day with his 'ground rules' is worth noting. It is a religious studies lesson, and he arrives:

'Before we begin, let's make sure we remember our ground rules. The first one, Chidi?' Chidi sprang to his feet: 'Don't all speak at once! 'Good! And the next, Ekong?' 'Questions on the Bible fall into three categories: (a) Questions the master and the Archbishop of Canterbury can answer; (b) questions which the master cannot answer but the Archbishop of Canterbury can answer; (c) questions which neither the master nor the Archbishop of Canterbury can answer.' (55)

These ‘ground rules’, ridiculous as they may seem, are in fact, a witty way the master wants to prevent students from asking absurd questions. In spite of their parrot-like recitation of the rules, their questions violate the rules. Amobi is worried about the human spirit taking possession of an animal and controlling the behaviour of that animal (54), while Karibo is concerned about witches and wizards. These, the teacher dismisses as ‘mumbo-jumbo’ and ‘cock-and-bull stories’ and concludes in a somewhat amusing note: that when they come to form three, he is sure that ‘Karibo will laugh his fat head off to hear a new student tell stories about people having eyes on their heels....’ (56).

From the way the chemistry master’s name (Mr Egbe) sounds, like *Egbe* in Igbo meaning ‘gun’, the students jokingly nickname him *Sub-machine Gun* (SMG). Ike introduces him as kind-hearted, humorous and carefree. One of his memorable humorous memory aids appeals to Amobi: the case of poor Joe who died for mistaking  $H_2SO_4$  for  $H_2O$  (24) – a pathetic but humorous piece. Although harshly misapplied by the M.C during the initiation, SMG’s words for describing almost every new student raises a laugh – ‘a fat pig from bush Ujari where you sat on mud benches and your teachers used charcoal for chalk’ (11).

The principal’s physique gives him away, and the students refer to him as *Dewer* after the similarly shaped Dewer flask – ‘his distinguished pot belly’ (25), his ‘moon shaped head’, ‘His pot-belly stood out in front of his black academic gown, like a seven-month pregnancy....’ (97-98).

Notice how, in *The Bottled Leopard*, Ike perfectly employs his sense of humour at the juncture where the tension about the Benjamin leopard terror is still lingering, and Joseph apparently has put an end to that terror. Ike creates a funny figure of him with this description:

Joseph, the messenger, was the happiest, most elated man on earth as he marched at the head of the triumphant procession. You would have thought he was leading the march-past on Empire Day. His boots – the weather beaten pair, strapped with tie-tie from the raffia palm and worn primarily to the farm or on dark-night – hissed and squeaked as he marched, sending any loitering scorpions and puff adders scurrying away to safety (161).

This amusing description immediately defuses the Benjamin-leopard tension. Among the students themselves, non-prefect seniors are branded *Yeomen*. One of the non-friendly prefects is called *Hammer* and when his prefectship is stripped of him, they rename him *Volcano*. Ike's masterly sense of humour can be seen in his description of Tunji, Amobi's school guardian.

The more plausible version of the rumour was that Tunji was too diminutive in front for a boy of his age. Perhaps the creator had intended to make him a girl, but the barrage of prayers from his influential parents have made Him change His mind shortly before Tunji left the production line! (29)

This, indeed, is an impressive piece of wisecrack. Kalu, we are told, is named *K.K. Luxury* (K.K. Lux), because actually his life tends towards luxury – he is well-provided for and does not like manual labour. The jest about him is that he remains in 'the bottom half of his class' during examinations but he shows off with an Ovaltine Drinkers' Certificate as though it is such a meritorious qualification. For Chuk, one cannot help laughing to hear that this 'Igbo-made white' that 'spoke through the nose' and as if 'he had water in his mouth', usually

has the pockets of his shirts and trousers forcibly sewn up to prevent him from putting hands in the pockets while talking to his teacher or senior. Another beautiful leap into humour occurs when Ike allows ‘Computer’ to have a private discussion with Amobi in connection with the leopard rumours in school. When ‘computer’ was a student in England, the story of the chewing stick was such that the white boys were bewildered “when they entered the bathroom one morning and saw the black man eating wood!” (83). And we are told that to this ‘Amobi could not suppress a giggle’.

One can see from these examples that part of Ike’s style in the text is to use the frequent leap into humour to reduce the tension generated by the aspects of mysticism handled in the novel.

Generally speaking, Chukwuemeka Ike’s writing taps much from the relationship inherent in humour - metaphor - exaggeration. *Metaphor* is seen as an implied analogy. An analogy is the comparison of two things that are not naturally the same but they have certain similarities, thus one field of reference is carried over or transferred to another. The comparison is such that one object/thing is the other, as in such proposition: X is Y. This makes it more forceful than in the case of simile which proposes that X is like Y. This is the logic behind some scholars’ referring to metaphor as compressed or condensed simile. Metaphor is a trope based on similitude and recognized by Aristotle (4<sup>th</sup> Century B.C) in his *Poetics* as “the greatest thing by far.” I.A. Richards (1936) of the *New Criticism* identifies three parts of metaphor: the tenor, the vehicle and the ground. The tenor is the idea being expressed or the subject; the vehicle is the image by which the idea is



conveyed/communicated. The shared element among the compared objects is the ground. Wales (295) further observes that tenor and vehicle must have some similarity in order for the analogy to seem appropriate. In the case of Mrs Ikin, in *The Naked Gods*, for example, the tenor is Mrs Ikin's size/fatness; the vehicle is the image of an elephant, while the ground is 'big legs'. Mrs Ikin's thighs or legs are equated to those of an elephant. This is exaggeration in metaphor.

McArthur (360) sees the word *exaggeration* as "presenting something as larger, greater, more important, or more awful than it is". Exaggeration, among other things, can be used to ridicule, to pass a grotesque message, to make fun of or to create humour. Generally, Ike does not spare his characters – whether the very important like Mrs Ikin of *The Naked Gods* or the very lowly like Joseph the messenger in *The Bottled Leopard*. In his attempt to expose the characters completely, Ike is carried away by his quest for the exaggerated. He tells us that Joseph's 'tie-tie' boots 'hissed and squeaked as he marched, sending any loitering scorpions and puff adders scurrying away to safety' (161). The image here is, of course, exaggerated. Ike tells of Mrs Ikin's 'elephantine thighs' (33) and that 'the tremor of her footsteps shook nearby houses' (32). The metaphor is understood: the image of huge thighs of the elephant. Tremor is a good word suggestive of landslides and earthquakes. But the semantic reality is that when an elephant moves, it does not cause tremor that shakes nearby houses! Here we see that the reader is expected to suspend or in fact, suppress the actual semantic details, treating the shape and objects of comparison as irrelevant.

Again, in *The Naked Gods*, Ike describes Julie's lust, and the climax of that description comes with the following:

...There was some consolation in the fact that even the Registrar with his wrestler's physique had proved unequal to the assignment; it wasn't only Brown who had failed. Julie was the type of woman who could suck a man completely dry until he dropped down dead....

...No single man could satisfy Julie; what she probably needed was a relay of at least five deprived soldiers! (71)

Julie is really an 'assignment' – a difficult 'assignment'. The image created by this euphemistic substitution is clear and interesting. The reader does not have to be told what 'the assignment' about Julie is. But Ike does not want to offend his reader's sense of decency, in conformity with what Geoffery Leech (1983) advocates as the politeness principle.

A 'relay' here implies one actor taking over from another in a continuous stream; 'soldiers' – not just civilians – suggests super-strength and vigour; not just soldiers but deprived ones! When five of such super-strength that are sexually starved are to meet one woman in succession.... This is the gory image Ike is trying to paint. Considering Julie's sexual escapades and desires, Ike chooses to cut through her character with some kind of extreme exaggeration. But a close reading reveals the inadequacy of this type of exaggerated portrait. It is common medical knowledge that abstinence and sexual deprivation are causes of premature (too soon) orgasm in men. Then 'a relay of five deprived soldiers' would not perform as much arduous task as Ike thinks (and wants his reader to think) in order to satisfy the woman. If the soldiers were not deprived, each would take a longer time to reach orgasm, thereby achieving exactly what Ike has in

mind. Exaggeration, we have observed, can be a good tool for humour, but when the writer is carried away by his quest for the exaggerated, the portrait becomes some kind of overkill.

The trap in this kind of image that is cast in extreme exaggeration is that the reader tends to skip semantic realities. He is swept away by the apparent aptness and vigour, and thus the writer succeeds in getting the reader to think and feel the way he wants. But really, most of these are images or metaphors that are fraught with patent violations of the maxim of quality. The philosopher Grice (1975) identifies four maxims that are important in our communicative behaviour: the maxim of quality, the maxim of manner, the maxim of quantity and the maxim of relations. The maxim of quality concerns truthfulness – which most metaphors flout, yet the reader accepts the falsity as conventional. (See further information in Wales, 1991.)

In *The Potter's Wheel*, there are slashes of humour in the description of Obu, the protagonist, Mama Obu, Mazi Laza, Nwomiko and some other minor characters. Ike tells us that Obu's head is very big, and that it 'swung from side to side on a torso that was so thin proportionately, that he sometimes reminded you of a tadpole'. The big head is believed to carry 'a giant-size brain for outstanding scholarship' (10). His nose, so diminutive that it seems like an afterthought to his face. His bow-legs are such that 'a rugby football or fluted pumpkin could pass between them when he stood to attention' (10). With these physical features and the other unseen side of him as an ogbanje, Ike creates a young protagonist with a funny physical form and a pathetic spiritual side. For Mama Obu, Ike says that

‘there was nothing superfluous about her,’ but strikes some humour by way of exaggeration when he sees each row of tattoo from each corner of her mouth ‘terminating just short of a crater-sized dimple’ (10). Mazi Laza’s ‘impressive height’ comes from childhood bow-legs that eventually straightened out. Mazi is naturally humorous, thus he is variously referred to as *egwu na amu* (fun and laughter) and *obi sala sala* (carefree cheerfulness). His bicycle has inefficient brakes, so ‘he had to run several yards after jumping down from the bicycle before he could bring it to a complete stop’. The humour in this is heightened by Ike’s narration that ‘Mazi Laza deliberately gave the impression that it was all part of his infectious humour and that he could have stopped his bicycle dead without running one inch if he so desired’ (12). Mazi Laza’s salesmanship thrives on his intrinsic humour.

‘Nwanna,’ he would call to a passer-by in a torn jumper. ‘Don’t be put off by this display of so-so *jioji* material. *Egwu na amu* has what you’re looking for.... Our soldiers say this is what the Germans wear, hence British bullets can’t penetrate their bodies.... *Egwu na amu* sold this same stuff to James. Since then James’s prayers have been for long life so that he can enjoy his jumper world-without-end!’ (14)

Mazi Laza’s words smack of glib salesmanship with no iota of truth in them but actually intended by the writer to amuse the reader. That the Germans wear Mazi Laza’s type of khaki material as bullet proof against British bullets is a double-edged ridicule – on the Germans, for using ordinary khaki material as bullet proof, and on the British, for using ammunition that cannot penetrate ordinary khaki material. The joke is carried further by his quick reference to poor James (the church teacher) who since he bought Mazi’s khaki stuff and discarded his

‘patched and repatched’ jumper now prays for nothing but long life so as to enjoy his jumper forever. The entire humour Ike builds around Mazi Laza taps from Ike’s attempt to liven up people’s spirits, especially as a World War is raging.

For other characters we can group as minor, Ike tries to poke fun either at their physical appearance or at their idiosyncrasies. Nwomiko (the *ogbanje* exorcist), we are told, is ‘pint-sized’, that is, she is diminutive in stature. This may not be humorous – that she is extremely small. But one cannot but suppress a laugh to learn that her small stature is in spite of ‘the innumerable cocks she received as part of her professional fees’ (44). Because of his ‘Caucasian nose’, wavy hair and light complexion, Monday is seen by his friends as ‘an Igbo made white man’ (99). Obu’s teacher at Aka wears the ‘I don’t care’ hair style, and is nicknamed ‘we shall see’ because of the frequency with which he utters the words as fillers in his speech. He is a humorous person by nature. He makes his class lively with his bits of humour: Obu to spell his name, and then to spell the word ‘*tintinnabulation*’. On getting the spellings correct, the humour goes on with the teacher’s exclamation: ‘Wonderful! Terrifious! Marvellous! We shall see this year!’ (104). Describing Cromwell, Ike says he ‘might have been 5 feet 9 but for a stoop which reduced his height by about two inches and made him resemble a giant semi-colon...’ Cromwell who is repeating the class cannot memorise a simple verse, so the teacher warns him to hold himself responsible if he fails Standard 2 again. Some element of wry humour underlies Cromwell’s reply: ‘if you fail me again, will my mother’s soup pot fail me, too?’ (121).

Whereas in *The Bottled Leopard*, Ike uses humour extensively to defuse the frequent tension generated by the leopard mysticism, here in *The Potter's Wheel*, the slashes of humour are used primarily as spices to keep the reader in a lighter mood.

## 5.2 IDIOMS AND PROVERBS

The use of idioms and proverbs is not as profuse as one would expect considering the fact that *The Bottled Leopard* deals with so much traditional beliefs and practices – a fact already observed by Azuike (58):

We are only surprised that the *dibias* consulted by characters in the text did not have extensive recourse to proverbial and idiomatic language. As elders, custodians, and repositories of the spiritual and cultural wisdom of their societies, it is expected that they should employ more idioms and proverbs in their speech than is the case in the text.

Mazi Eze has used them in some situations. When reports reach him that his yam mounds in the farm have been levelled by a ‘python wrestling with a leopard’, he quickly replied, believing strongly that it was Nwafo:

Nothing is beyond that coward...but it is not every day that the squirrel lands on ripe palm fruit. The powers which drive away the flies from a tail-less cow sent the python to deal with him. I'm sure he will not go near my farm next time.... (47)

Note also that when Emebo, the leader of the Nara team, arrives to report this matter, the extent of this atrocity of mound-levelling is captured by the transliteration of an Igbo idiomatic expression which usually indicates that the speaker is overwhelmed: ‘Mazi, it is not work that brings me here. It is something that has completely eaten my mouth!’ (46). We are also told that during Amobi's

first encounter with a live leopard when he was ‘six plus’, Mazi Eze ‘nearly brought down thunder’ to show the level of his anger towards Nwafo. And the following proverb ensues:

It is Nwafo’s leopard!... It is Nwafo! And this is not the first time! But it will be his last! The hen which tramples on soldier ants must not take to its heels thereafter! (4)

By implication, that Nwafo should wait for his vengeance. Again, Mazi Eze sends for Amobi to return from school, first, in connection with the eclipse of the sun, and second, for him to take part in the *igba ndu* ceremony fixed for the following day because ‘when something is discovered in the pubic area of a young goat which did not exist in its mother’s, something must be wrong’ (39).

As Amobi battles in his mind over the consequences of ‘making for the uppers’, Ike furnishes him with ‘What would he tell his parents? That his throat had grown so long that he could no longer control it...’ And as he muses that Chuk is in a better position to get fixed up in any other school in America, we hear him release an Igbo proverb appropriate to the situation:

What would then become of Amobi? He would be stranded like the proverbial rat which foolishly accompanied the lizard on a swimming adventure without first weighing the consequences! (18-19)

Amobi returns with his ‘white’ friend, Chuk, to spend the two-week suspension at his home. Nma’s mother, excited by Amobi’s explanation that he is mandated by the school to take Chuk home ‘to show what life is like in an Igbo village’, demonstrates her approval with a befitting proverb: ‘my son, to tell a child to hold

fast to what he has is a mark of approval, that he is going the right way. Hold on to what you have' (108).

But Chuk who has been welcome in Amobi's family soon turns out a problem as Amobi's leopard nightmare resurfaces causing Amobi to be sent to the *dibia*. Chuk's presence from then becomes undesirable as shown by Mazi Eze's idiom to Mr. Okonkwo, the teacher: 'I sent for you because of the little boil I have in a delicate location...' (117). Here the once welcome Chuk has become 'a little boil' in 'a delicate location'.

Nma's six-paged letter tells of a form two girl's mysterious nocturnal movements which became too much for the girls to endure. The unbearable extent of the incident is captured by a fragmented local idiom: 'the handshake had gone beyond the elbows....' (73).

Some English idiomatic expressions can be traced to Chuk: '...he did not want to stir up a hornet's nest' (143), 'You're making a mountain out of a molehill' (71). When Tunji arranged that Chuk and Amobi should spend the period of the suspension together at Ndikelionwu, Ike's narration is idiomatic: "Chuk had, to Amobi's amazement, immediately lapped up the idea of accompanying him home" (105). That is, he readily accepted the idea. Again in (105), Ike's narration tells us that sewing up the pockets of Chuk's clothes 'aimed at pulling him down from the clouds and assisting him to develop firm roots in his culture', and that Chuk is 'steeped...in Western civilization from birth.'



For the principal's posture in the leopard hunt in his college, Ike's narration indicates that

If any student of Government College had chosen, by whatever occult powers, to operate at night as a leopard, let him stew in his own juice! (155)

– a somewhat obscure English idiom implying that such a student would reap the consequences of his own actions. This idiom, to students in a school where there is stiff discipline and rather starchy adherence to rules and regulations, is of grave semantic implication.

Amobi, our narrator tells us, is sent to the Health Science Laboratory 'to get it spick and span' (20) for Saturday morning inspection, that is, to get it in perfect condition. Our narrator also tells us that on visiting *dibia* Ofia: 'As soon as he beheld Amobi something clicked. He immediately applied brakes' (123). This is a standard English idiom but is commonly used locally to mean to restrain oneself. *Dibia* Ofia promises to bind, or bottle up Amobi's leopard so that whenever they like to utilize it, they can unbind it. We are told that both father and son exclaim simultaneously 'God forbid!' But *dibia* Ofia advises them not to say so, that they should 'Remember that tomorrow is pregnant!' (139). This idiom is so appropriate to the situation that not long after the saying, the reader confirms that nobody can predict the future when Nma's father's farm becomes constantly ravaged by wild pigs. And the narrator tells us:

Only a leopard could eliminate the menace. And what better choice than Amobi's leopard. Amobi gave his consent in no time. How would he say 'no' to a request for help from Nma's father (147).

This confirmatory incident underscores the wisdom in tomorrow being pregnant.

‘Computer’ the Geography master provides an impressive proverb for Amobi. In answer to Amobi’s mammy water tale, ‘Computer’ tells him of his own experience as a student in England, about the bewilderment of white boys who noticed and made fun of them, that ‘queer black men’ are found in the general bathroom every morning ‘eating wood’ (83) – all in the name of taking care of their teeth in the morning. ‘Computer’ therefore advises Amobi ‘to chew your stick thoroughly in the privacy of your bedroom and use your toothbrush in the public places’ (83). The veracity of this idiom enables Amobi at the close of the text to make a decision – whether or not to discuss with the Principal or with Computer” his own leopard experiences and the bottling rituals by *dibia* Ofia. This dilemma lingers in his mind until his thought stumbles on ‘Computer’s’ story and advice, and so the decision:

No. He would not raise the issue with the Principal or with any other master.... He would chew his stick diligently in the privacy of his bedroom. (167-168)

This idiom, Azuike in Ugbabe (58) observes, is an adaptation from the English idiom ‘do not wash your dirty linen in the public’. These idioms and proverbs, as we have seen, have been stylistically used by Chukwuemeka Ike to add some colouring to his narrative.

### 5.3 AMERICANISM

Chuk is a mixed breed – his mother an American, while his father is a Nigerian. Chuk grew up in Palo Alto, California. This has affected Chuk’s way of

life, including his speech. To the students of Government College, Ike tells us, ‘He spoke through the nose’ and sometimes it is as if ‘he had water in his mouth as well’ (17). His manners are extremely casual. Sometimes Ike narrates as if it is Chuk speaking. We hear Chuk’s thoughts about his African surname. He does not mind being considered bush, after all ‘he himself could not pronounce the damned thing correctly’ (8). The phrase ‘the damned thing’ we know is Chuk’s, and not the narrator’s, and that is from his stock of American slangs. Before ‘making for the uppers’, Amobi is full of fears that they may be caught. Chuk’s reply is one of those exclamations that are typically American: ‘Oh boy! Who’ll catch us?.... That janitor who dozes off before ‘lights out’? The word ‘janitor’ is the American equivalent of the British ‘porter’ or ‘caretaker’.

His spellings ‘were unique’ and his mates ‘marvelled at the ease with which he handled the English language, blissfully brushing aside any uncooperative rules of grammar’ (16-17). A typical example of such brushing aside of standard rules is his omission of the ‘ly’ adverb morpheme in his speech: ‘To the spot where we can scale the wall nice and easy’, (19) Another example is when he tries to allay Amobi’s fears about snakes: ‘Oh boy! Snakes can’t do you no harm’. This is a case of double negative which American colloquialism accepts as a positive statement which is not so in Standard English.

Chuk’s encounter with the M.C. at the initiation ceremony introduces more of his American expressions such as ‘come off it, man!’ (8) ‘I ain’t stinking!’ (9) ‘I sure do’ (65) – his answer to ‘Hammer’. And when Amobi tries to lure him to a fight unknown to him, and promises to play with him after, we hear him:

You bet!... Off we go. But make it snappy before other boys grab the table! (157).

Furthermore, he dismisses Nma's letter to Amobi thus: 'What's all the fuss?.... Though it had some juicy stuff, but it's all voodoo and such shit!' (71).

Chukwuemeka Ike introduces this character who is physically, attitudinally and linguistically different from those of the setting of the novel – Government College, Ahia, where the background is British type of education. In introducing him as a different species to that background, Ike allows him that linguistic freedom to speak like American boys, thereby craftily demonstrating the linguistic flexibility of the American type, and the sad linguistic rigidity of those on the other side of the Atlantic. The juxtaposition is smartly veiled.

#### **5.4 RHETORICAL QUESTIONS AND REPETITION AND THEIR DRAMATIC EFFECTS**

In *The Bottled Leopard*, Chukwuemeka Ike has used a good dose of rhetorical questions and repetition; both techniques provide impressive dramatic effects. One of the outstanding ones is his description of Mr Sands' dressing.

In his ever constant blue shirt, white shorts, and brown hose. Blue poplin, long sleeve shirt, with the sleeves hurriedly rolled up. The boys swore he owned dozens of those blue shirts and white shorts, to be able to wear them every day, including Saturdays and Sundays. Until one day a boy spotted a hole in the shirt. On the left hand side, some distance below the pocket. A small hole which could have been made by a cricket when the shirt was spread out to dry. He drew the attention of his class-mates to the hole. And they immediately mounted 'operation search for the hole'! The first day, they found a hole in Mr. Sands' blue shirt. A small hole, which could have been made by a cricket. On the left hand side, some distance below the pocket. The day after, they found a hole. A hole which

could have been made by a cricket. On the left hand side some distance below the pocket. The day after, they found a hole.... (51)

The first impulse, on reading this, is to ask what Ike is doing with this description using this type of seemingly flat repetition. It seems that Ike here is trying a description of the situation from the standpoint of the students, so that it would not be surprising that the narration reads somewhat puerile and oversimplified. This seemingly oversimplified repetition could be boring to some readers and could even be open to misinterpretation. For instance, is it the same set of students spotting the same hole in the same corner of the same shirt, or the same students another hole in the same corner of another shirt of the same colour, or is it Ike's graphic way of wondering that 'a white man's shirt could be so incredibly perforated'? As if Ike himself foresaw the apparent confusion this presumably misleading simplicity and drab repetition would create, he explains:

No. A white man could not be so poor, or so Nnewish, to wear only one blue shirt, one pair of brown hose every day of the week. Impossible! The small hole must be there for a purpose. A special vent, to beat the African heat, and added to each of his dozens of blue shirts. Part of Mr. Sands' uniqueness! (51-52)

The drab nature of the repetition is in fact, quite appropriate stylistically considering the fact that here is a man who wears clothes of the same type, the same color, perforated the same spot, meeting the same students every day! Just as it is part of Chukwuemeka Ike's uniqueness to use this type of description to a dramatic effect, it is exactly what happens during one of Amobi's seizures. As Amobi lay on the bare floor, groaning in pain:

Mazi Eze's eyes raced from floor to roof, from roof to floor, and from one wall to the other. Nothing. He brought the lantern inside, raised the flame, cautiously searched around the bed, and under the bed, expecting to see a deadly snake, or a scorpion, or a thief. Nothing. He searched the entire room much more thoroughly. Still nothing.

Meanwhile, Amobi continued to groan in pain. He searched the corridor. The only door leading out into the compound was securely bolted. Meaning that whatever it was could not have entered or escaped through the door. He opened the door, and searched right round the house. Nothing. He went round the compound. Nothing...No unusual footprints or marks on the sandy ground. (44)

Ike, here, has used simplicity and repetition to a great advantage, re-creating and drawing attention to incidents, thereby making the reader visualize the entire dramatic scenario.

The same dramatic effect can be visualized from Mazi Eze's account of the eclipse of the sun:

We decided to die together inside the church, so we went there. But by the time we got there, it was difficult to see where to stand. You could hear one voice trying to shout louder than the others in the attempt to direct activities inside, but who had the heart to listen? Some sat, some stood, some were on their knees. Some sang 'Jerusalem on High'. Some 'Nearer my God to thee'. Others sang other songs. Some shouted their prayers. Some wailed. All at the same time. When one man standing outside the church exclaimed that the entire sun had been swallowed up by the mysterious object and had completely turned black, the wailing drowned everything else. I had pleaded with my ancestors never to allow such a thing happen again in my lifetime. God forbid!.... (38)

Azuike in Ugbabe (55) has made a remarkable observation here:

In this report we notice the repetition of some which occurs seven times; the use of sat, sang, stool, song, shouted, same and several other words with the sibilant/s/ fricative sound in

them, such as knees, Jerusalem, others, prayers. The repetition here gives a rhythmic tempo to the passage. It is just musical.

Just musical, really, but for the fact that in the disarray one visualizes from the incident, a rhythmic, musical description is absurd – where some people were singing, some were shouting, some were wailing, all at the same time. And Ike himself tells us that ‘bedlam had taken over’ (37). What, but a deliberately staccato description, would have been more appropriate? In the present circumstances, we cannot but assume that Ike is trying by his description to force some kind of order out of the whole disorder for the purpose of creating an impressive dramatic effect.

Another point of drama is set out with the encounter between *dibia* Ofia and Amobi and his father, Mazi Eze. Usually a visit to a *dibia* shows that their antics and practices have lots of dramatic occurrences, from the manner of speaking, addressing the subject, poking the psychology of their client and tossing about their paraphernalia, Ike tries to capture every bit of the drama. Mazi Eze has just presented Amobi’s problems, and here is the drama that ensues.

“You seem to have left out one incident.” The *dibia* observed looking grimly at the ground in front of him. “No...” Mazi Eze racked his brain, ‘No, there has been no other incident’.

‘Think clearly,’ the *dibia* persisted, ‘Or didn’t he tell you about it?’

Mazi Eze, puzzled, turned towards his son: ‘which one is that?’ ‘I can’t remember another one,’ Amobi replied. A wasp flew into the room, buzzed around Amobi and flew out.

‘I knew you would come, he who never forgets a friend, to greet our important visitor yourself!’ Ofia addressed the departed wasp, smiling gratefully at the positive sign that he was on the right path. Then turning to Amobi; he said: “What about the incident at school?”

Amobi felt uncomfortable. Yes, there had been an incident but he had deliberately hidden it from his parents so as not to heighten their anxiety over him. But how did Ofia know about it? Or was he simply being clever? And what was the rubbish about the wasp? "I still can't remember." Amobi persisted, determined not to assist the dibia in his tricks. 'Mazi', the dibia turned to Mazi Eze, 'I suggest you come back another time, to allow your son to search through his brain properly. I too will talk to the ancestors again, in case what they showed me pertains to another person, which I doubt.'

Amobi gave up. "Oh, I remember! It was not exactly like the two incidents at home, that is why I didn't think of it earlier. There were no lumps on my body, for instance...." "You don't get lumps when you visit somebody's compound, do you? The dibia cut in.

'I don't understand,' Amobi pleaded, genuinely confused. 'By the time we are through you will,' the dibia replied. (127-128)

The use of rhetorical questions, as observed by Tom McArthur (782) is often for dramatic effect. Ike uses rhetorical questions to enhance the dramatic effect of the text as well as to probe the minds of the characters, especially at crucial times. When Amobi finds himself in the dilemma of whether or not to go with Chuk 'for the uppers' we hear his thoughts question vigorously the rationale behind the act:

As they made for the senior staff tennis courts which separated them from the orchard, Amobi suddenly grew restless. What if they were caught? What would he tell his parents? That his throat had grown so long that he could no longer control it? That he had never eaten bananas or oranges in his life? Was he wise to follow Chuk sheepishly? (18-19)

At this point, the reader could just hear Amobi's heart pounding against his ribs. When eventually the escapade is undertaken, the repercussions imminent, Ike again digs into Amobi's mind:



Was it not widely believed, after all, that the orchard was deliberately built by the first Principal of the college to force the spirit of adventure among the boys?... (95)

What convincing evidence could they produce against a College Prefect? Would they not merely be jumping from the frying pan into the fire? (96)

Amobi's state of mind after each of his seizures can best be viewed through these rhetorical questions. We are told that since seven years back, Amobi had long forgotten about leopards and leopard 'owners'. So the present nightmare in school reveals his mind through the rhetorical questions.

Why then, he wondered as he lay restless on his bed, should he now have such a vivid dream of a leopard? Did the dream portend anything? (6)

During the eclipse of the sun, the ensuing confusion is registered rhetorically through Mazi Eze:

...Something eating up the sun? Was the world coming to an end?... (And for his family and his son at College) How could he bring all of them together? (37)

Chukwuemeka Ike tries to measure dramatically the degree of the commotion in the air by using a barrage of rhetorical questions issuing from Amobi's mother as an index of the level of the pandemonium.

.... She burst into tears at the sight of her husband. Was that how it would all end? How could she go without Ugochukwu?.... Should she run to the farm for her husband or rush to the house for her children? What of Ugochukwu? How could she get to him, to make sure he was safe and bring him home immediately? (37-38)

After the suspension, Chuk promises never to breathe a word of what Amobi went through at home to anybody. But to Amobi's dismay, Chuk never kept his

promise. This fact is worsened by the talk of another leopard terrorizing the school. Some rhetorical questions rattle Amobi's mind: 'Chuk had given his word. See how he kept it?...' The major cause of his depression was the presence of a leopard at their college. Could it be that the assurances from Ofia were empty boasts, and that the *dibia* had no control over his leopard? But if it was his leopard, why had he not undergone those unpleasant experiences?" (156) When eventually Benjamin is discovered to be the leopard-in-mask, some rhetorical questions help Amobi unpack his loaded mind:

Tears of relief. Tears of joy. That the college leopard had not been his. How many nights had sleep eluded him as he weighed the chances of *dibia* Ofia making a mistake? What if the *dibia*'s efforts to seal off his leopard and thereby restrict its movement failed? (166)

Yet not everything is off-loaded, as he muses further:

But how safe, how realistic, would it be to swallow the Principal's words as gospel truth? How would he explain away his own recent experiences? Should he go to the Principal and tell him all he knew? Everything... including *dibia* Ofia's explanations and rituals?... Yes. He would go to the Principal, When?... Wait.... Would it be a good idea to go through 'Computer', the master who had shown an appreciation of the problem? 'Computer'.... Ah! Had 'Computer' not warned him against raising the issue anywhere else at the College? (167)

One can see from these demonstrations that Ike uses this technique of profuse rhetorical questions to x-ray the minds of his characters, thereby allowing the reader some access into the privacy of a character's mind. The ultimate thing is to achieve some dramatic effect, especially as the questions come as if in some dramatic monologue.

## 5.5 THE USE OF “YOU”

Hugh C. Holman (1980) sees the term ‘persona’ as the implied author or the ‘second self’ – “a voice not directly the author’s but created by the author and through whom the narrative is told”. One can safely say that the writer, Ike, has told the story of *The Bottled Leopard* through the persona of Amobi. Several proofs point to this fact. For instance, immediately Amobi is suspended from school, nothing is heard of the school again; the story trails Amobi down to Ndikelionwu. When he and his friend return from suspension, the story returns to Government College Ahia. During the visit to *dibia* Ofia, we are told:

Amobi took a quick view of the house before stepping in. He had never been to a *dibia* before, and would have paid anything to be nowhere near where he now found himself. Fortunately, he had regained his full consciousness. He would keep his eyes wide open. No magician, black or white, would dupe him and get away with it. (122)

Here is a boy in his first term of his first year at school, and the first time before a *dibia*, and he comes thinking critically of being duped by the *dibia*. There seems to be a problem of credulity of narration here considering his tender age and young experience – a point which leaves us with the surmise that the critical thinking is the author’s. Again, when the *dibia* retires into his inner room, the sound of the *ekwe* confirming that he is conferring with his ancestors and the deities, the narration has it that:

Amobi wondered why he should choose to do so behind closed doors. Probably afraid that he would be caught red handed? Amobi decided to keep his ears wide open, to pick up every sound if he could not see everything that transpired. (125)

When the *dibia* asks about a yet-untold incident that took place at the college, we are told that ‘Amobi felt uncomfortable... But how did Ofia know about it? Or was he simply being clever? And what was the rubbish about the wasp?’ (127). To imagine that a *dibia* revered by elders, including Amobi’s father, is seen by Amobi as playing ‘tricks’ which he (Amobi) is poised to unveil, is not plausible in the circumstance we find Amobi, unless we accept that the author, Ike, is assuming Amobi as a mask, a persona, through whom he questions the authority of the *dibia*.

This frequently stepping in and out of his mask, Amobi – this technique of using Amobi as an implied author – may not be of much interest to a linguistic stylistician. But this technical fusion of Amobi (the protagonist) and Chukwuemeka Ike (the writer) becomes more apprehensive when we take a close look at the operation of the second person pronoun ‘you’ in the novel. In Ike’s narration, this pronoun appears in no less than five passages in the text. For instance:

‘Curious institution!, he grumbled as he wondered whether he could stick it. A school where you could earn a sentence of two hours detention with hard labour for speaking your own language. Your mother tongue: Igbo, Efik, Ibibio, Yoruba... Even to your own brother. No matter where. It must be English morning, afternoon, evening and night. Presumably you must dream in English too! A school where dexterity with the fork was a visible determinant of your success in discarding your ‘rustic and outlandish’ ways. You had to learn to manipulate the fork with your left hand, while your right hand clung helplessly to the bluntest knife you had ever come across in your life....

It made little sense to Amobi, using your left hand to convey grains of rice with a four-pronged fork from your plate to your

mouth, when a spoon lay idle in front of your nose, itching to come to your rescue.... (11)

The underlined 'he' in the above quotation is an antecedent marker referring to Amobi. The 'you', 'your' in the narration could not be Amobi referring to a second person. Again, on page 58, Amobi is running round his dormitory enjoying the rhythm of raindrops on his body.

His muscles, anticipating a barrage of hail-stones, flexed involuntarily as he ran into the rain.... You could never tell the direction from which to expect the next frozen ball of water, nor whether it would strike your forehead or your shin bone. To add to the fun, you competed with your play mates to see who would harvest the largest number of hail stones. Throwing a hail stone into your mouth and feeling it disappear on your tongue was something else!

Amobi receives Nma's letter. He runs out of sight – to the old disused 'bucket latrines' – to read the letter. At the juncture where the letter begins the story of a girl possessed by mammy water, Ike's narration is thus:

The first warning bell for siesta rang out. Five clear strokes. In another three minutes, two strokes would follow. And two minutes later, one lone stroke if you were not tucked in under your red blanket at that lone stroke, your name was on its way to the detention book. (70)

On page 78, the 'you' is second person plural. The antecedent is 'the boys' anaphorically used. Immediately the topic of 'Agencies of Denudation' is introduced, the writer narrates:

A new topic: Agencies of Denudation. The boys exchanged glances and nods as he pronounced the word 'denudation'. Musical. Impressive. Bound to enhance your status if in your next letter to one of those boys attending the less privileged grammar schools you mentioned that you had already covered 'agencies of denudation' in Geography!.

And Amobi has just asked a question on the possibility of men ‘possessing leopards’ and of a secondary school student being possessed by mammy water, Karibo asks about witches and wizards. Before ‘Computer’ could reconcile how appropriate such questions are in his Geography class, our narrator goes into the boys.

The boys rated “Computer” very highly, and Amobi thought he could cash in on that. Generation after generation of boys had established beyond doubt that all you required to score at least a credit in School Certificate Geography was to digest and faithfully reproduce the material contained in the notes he dished out to you in class..... (80)

In prose, the use of the second person pronoun ‘you’ where the third person indefinite pronoun ‘one’ can be used is not common. For one reason, it does not make for objective narration. Secondly, it tends to force an informal involvement of the ‘real’ second person which is the reader into the subject of the narration. But what is happening in *The Bottled Leopard* is that in telling his story, Ike frequently speaks through his characters, especially Amobi. This profuse use of the second person ‘you’ makes it easy for the author, Ike, to wade into, and address the inner recesses of his characters, especially the main character, Amobi.

The use of the second person pronoun (you) in *The Potter’s Wheel* appears in some eight passages. The pronoun *you* and its possessives are used more in hypothetical situations, the same way the indefinite pronoun *one* can be used. Lennox Cook *et al* (18 – 19) have assisted in distinguishing between *people*, *you*, *one* and *they* used in an impersonal sense:

*People* means people in general, an indefinite number of people;... it does not include the speaker; nor does it include the person spoken to; *one* means people in general too, but it must include the speaker, at least potentially; *they* refers to groups or categories which do not include the speaker or the person spoken to. It is used especially in reference to the authorities, experts,... It is a vague term, but not so vague as *people*; definition is always implied, even if in practice. *They* is often used precisely in order to avoid closer definition; *you* is used in the same way as *one*, but is rather more colloquial, and must, at least potentially, include the person spoken to.

In addition to the above, the English Language now accepts *they/their/them* to refer to antecedent indefinite pronouns where the gender is not specific. This use is gender-neutral, and helps to eliminate the cumbersome colloquial expression *he or she(he/she)*. The use of *man* or *he* as a generic term that subsumes *woman* or *she* is gradually disappearing for the reason that such a word is gender-specific. The word *person* is considered neutral. For instance, *Anyone* can help if *they* want; *Everybody* adheres to what *their* doctor advises; If *anyone* calls in my absence, tell *them* to call back tomorrow; A *person* who does what *they* like usually gets what *they* do not like; If a *person* is convicted of a crime, *they* are sent to gaol.

The person spoken to in our context (in *The Potter's Wheel*) is the reader while the speaker is the writer. Ike, the writer, uses the hypothetical *you* to establish some closeness to the reader, and thus carries him along. The hypothetical stance of *you* is further confirmed in each of the passages by their accompanying auxiliaries in hypothetical past. During the flute saga between Samuel the bully and Obu, Ike narrates:

Obu did not have the courage to report the fate of his flute to his father. His father always began with the assumption that *you* were careless if *you* reported any loss to him, even before he had heard *your* case.... (19)

As soon as Samuel heard her voice and the threats it carried, he dropped the flute with his mother and disappeared. He knew how to hide when wanted for a reprimand: search as scrupulously as *you* wish *you* would be unlikely to find him.... (21)

During one of the Christmas festivities, we are told by the narrator that ‘The harmattan air outside the church was dry and dusty making *you* thirsty and drying up *your* lips so that *you* could not even smile naturally without bleeding...’ (50). Finally, in one of Obu’s dreams, the hypothetical *you* comes into play as Ike describes:

...*You* fed in two bullets one after the other... firing the first with a pop as *you* pushed in the second.... The bullets were made of paper; *you* tore them off one at a time as *you* needed them. A hammer struck the ‘bullet’ when *you* pulled the tiny trigger....(130).

The foregoing are a few of the passages where Ike makes use of the second person pronoun. It is clear here that Ike uses it in place of *one*. His choice of *you* in place of *one* in telling his story removes the distance inherent in *one*, and establishes closeness with the reader.

## 5.6 ECHOISM IN *The Potter’s Wheel*

Another remarkable aspect of *The Potter’s Wheel* is the use of echoism. Echoism is a term coined by J.A.H Murray, the editor of one of the most complete and scholarly dictionaries, *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED). The term, in our



context here, includes words and expressions that echo, allude or make reference to the on-going war between the Allies (Britain, America, Russia, etc) and the Axis Powers (Germany, Japan, Italy, etc). That is the Second World War of 1939 – 1945.

*The Potter's Wheel* is not a tale of war. It is a tale of child upbringing but with substantial references to the war very much in the foreground. The reference may come as part of physical portrait of a character. Obu's diminutive nose is nicknamed 'when the war is over' (10) because it is only after the war that things will be in abundance, so that then he will get a sizable nose. His first pair of shoes is nicknamed 'stand by' – a familiar expression in military parlance. In Mazi Laza's salesmanship, he tries to convince prospective buyers of the reliability of his cloth items.

... If you don't know it, this is Win-the-War stuff.... Our soldiers say this is what the Germans wear, hence British bullets can't penetrate their bodies.... (14)

This is obviously a glib talk. The truth is that British bullets did penetrate the bodies of German soldiers. But the reference here shows one of such myths about the Axis Powers, especially the Nazi soldiers during that war. In some other areas in the novel, Ike mentions the war in passing, or uses names or expressions that are suggestive of the war in question and even mentions dates, or uses songs of war given by soldiers. For instance, he tells us that 'We shall see' is the nickname given to Obu's teacher at Aka by his 1942 class (102) – a year which clearly falls within the period of that historical war. The flute Mazi Laza bought as gift for Obu for doing well in school is 'made in Japan' (15) – Japan being one of the

Axis Powers. In the words of Samuel the bully, commanding Obu ‘...Come on, do like a German prisoner of war’ (19). Sometimes, Ike lifts war songs usually sung by soldiers then. Example:

Good morning, Mister Joe.  
 Good morning to you all.  
 I’m coming to ask you about a famous war.  
 The people of the city, they had no sense.  
 When a rocket was falling, they shouted mewo!  
 mewo! Mewo! Mewo! Mewo mewo mewo!  
 When a rocket was falling, they shouted mewo!  
 mewo! (125)

Ike, in fact, devotes the whole of chapter five to the war proper. ‘The second World War, then entering its fourth year, was being fought in far off lands, but some of its tremours were felt at Umuchukwu as in several other Nigerian towns and villages’ (38). Nigeria, as one of the Commonwealth countries, was technically on the side of the Allies in that war. Mobile Cinema Vans come to entertain the villagers and at the same time brainwash them with war propaganda by the Allies. Films show shots from war fronts where gigantic buildings are reduced to ruins by demolition bombs. The film usually portrays the British as humane and courageous, while the Germans are avaricious, heartless and senselessly destructive (37). Then Ike runs some paragraphs on survival activities amidst real hardship during the war. In that war, scarce commodities like salt are rationed, cloth materials are scarce, recruitment exercises sweep off bad guys like Uke and King Kong who are terrors in Umuchukwu.

All these bits and pieces of World War II frequently referred to in the novel serve two main purposes: to remind the reader of the temporal location of the story, and as a result circumscribe the critical reader’s scope of judgement in

connection with certain themes highlighted in the novel. For instance: the prevalent traditional practice of sending a child to live with a teacher so that the child will be properly trained. A betrothed could be sent to be acquainted with the rudiments of good housewifery. And one could send one's child as mortgage servant where one is financially indebted (as in the case of Bright). Secondly, the slashes of World War II help in the coherent rendering and internal ordering of the tale. Echoism has thus been used in *The Potter's Wheel* not only to ensure thematic coherence, but also to inform the reader on certain aspects of the mores of Umuchukwu society.

### **5.7 ONOMASTICS IN *THE POTTER'S WHEEL***

Leech, N. Geoffrey and Michael Short (75 – 79) in presenting a stylistic checklist for stylisticians ask, among other questions, 'What use is made of proper names?' in the novel. By this, they enjoin the stylistician to explore the text and find out why the author has chosen the names for the characters, and sometimes for the places. This is important, and it borders on onomastics, a word whose origin is the Greek *onomastikos* – having to do with names.

The word *onomastics*, in recent times, has to do with the study of proper names, including their forms and uses, especially the names of persons. Under this broad field is a subdiscipline known as *literary onomastics*, which examines the use of proper names in literary works. The focus of literary onomastics is often on names of characters used in fiction. This is known as *characteronym*. The special feature of the characteronym is that it usually represents its bearer in some

appropriate way. It is common in the literary world to provide characters with names that indicate or hint at their qualities, or befit the roles assigned to them in the literary work. Writers, and novelists in particular, generally choose the names of their characters with care, to achieve the right connotative effect. (McArthur: 652 – 655).

A striking aspect of the novel is Ike's careful selection of native names and their translations into English. Here is a rural setting where the socio-cultural values of the people prevail. It is a setting where there is the conscious preference of male children to female ones. The reason is deep-rooted in the mores of rural Umuchukwu. No matter the number of female children, the feeling of insecurity remains since all of them would eventually get married and the compound would become overgrown with bushes because there is no male to maintain it and retain the name of the lineage. Thus, the name of each of Mazi Laza's children depicts the psychological disposition of the parents at their birth time. Chukwuemeka Ike's parenthetical translation of each serves two main purposes: to give the reader an insight into the thinking and expectations of the protagonist's family, and secondly, to circumscribe the meaning of each of the names thereby foreclosing any deliberate or inadvertent misconstruction that may arise from negative onomastic interpretation. Thus, Ike opens the novel with a roll call of the Laza family members.

Obuechina was the only boy out of seven children born to Mazi Lazarus Maduabuchi and his wife. The names of the five girls who preceded him – Uzoamaka (the road is excellent), Nkiru (that which is to come is greater), Njideka (hold what you have), Nkechi (whatever God gives), and

Ogechukwu (God's time is the best) – showed with how much anxiety and faith his parents had awaited his coming. Little wonder they literally worshipped him and showered on him all the names they had been saving up for boys who never came – Obuechina (the compound must not revert to bush), Ezenwa (infant King), Nwokenagu (a male issue is desirable). He was also Onyibo – a companion – to his father, and Obiano to his mother because his arrival brought solace to her soul. After the birth of her fifth daughter, her husband's family had intensified their pressure on him to marry another wife who could give him male issues. With Obu's arrival, his mother's place had been firmly secured; she could sleep in spite of thunder, no matter how many other wives her husband decided to take. The memorable event – Obu's arrival – had fallen nearly nine years back – in January 1934. Hopes of having a second boy disappeared when, a little over two years later, Mama Obu gave birth to another daughter, Amuche (no one knows God's mind). (9 – 10)

The use of proper names in this novel to underline the socio-cultural values of rural Umuchukwu continues with Mazi Laza's wife, who throughout the novel is referred to as 'Mama Obu'. The absurdity of this rural psychology is even emphasized by the clause Chukwuemeka Ike attaches to the name: *'as if she had no other children'* (10). Mazi Nwokike's wife is referred to, in the same vein, as 'Mama Oti' (Oti being her son's name). Samuel's mother is 'Mama Samuel' (21). The popular thinking in this rural setting is that each of these women apparently has no prior identity without their male children.

But in a sharp contrast, we see Teacher's wife called by her first name, Deborah. On two occasions, we are flashed with her mid-name, Onuekwucha: first, by the narrator, Ike, using Mama Obu's focalisation (69), second, by Madam herself while lashing out at the servants *'May the wolves tear all of you to bits there if you think you can use Onuekwucha as your football....'* (184) Although

Chukwuemeka Ike does not provide a translation of this name, its meaning is implicit in her portrait: as early as the age of six years, her notoriety has made her a theme for songs (69). *Onuekwucha* means ‘the mouth cannot stop talking’ – which also reflects in her management of her household. The servants never stop ugly gossips about her. She is ‘a stone-hearted wife’ (207), ‘a witch’ (137), in the habit of smacking, flogging or trampling upon them, ever sitting in the observatory pretending to be knitting, but actually eavesdropping on their conversation, and never allowing them full rein (136, 139).

Her first name, Deborah, is not by accident either. The novelist has carefully chosen this Hebrew word for ‘bee’ typically reflective of ‘her granite heart’, a girl ‘dreaded by all’ (69) during her school days, and even now, she is a terror to the servants. The writer introduces her as ‘Mrs Deborah Onuekwucha Kanu, better known as Madam’ (69). And henceforth the novel moves on with her as Madam. ‘Madam’ here is *not* in the courteous sense of address to a woman, especially an elderly or married woman, but in conformity with the local conception of Umuchukwu village which connotes ‘a formidable woman; a capricious or autocratic woman’.

Madam’s husband is introduced by Ike as ‘Mr Zaccheus Kanu, known to all as Teacher, was as dwarfish as his name suggests, being barely five feet tall’ (68). This biblical connotation of Teacher’s dwarfish stature is highlighted by Samuel: ‘Is that not the man they say is shorter than the Nri dwarfs?’ (81), and in a contrast during the burst bicycle tyre episode Ike observes that: ‘Monday retreated as fast as Teacher approached him: Alakuku the giant retreating from an Nri

dwarf' (112). Even the name, Teacher, which runs throughout the novel, to the people, has a ring of *sternness, no-nonsense, stiff discipline, being economical to a miserly point*. Lazarus is another proper name Ike carefully fetched from *The Holy Bible*: the story of the Rich Man and Lazarus. The latter symbolizes physical suffering, poverty and deprivations in life preparatory to eternal bliss with angels and Abraham. (Story found in Luke 16 vs 19 – 31). Mazi Lazarus' philosophy that runs throughout the novel points to hardwork, physical labour, suffering – all preparatory to one's development into a better human being and ultimate success as a human being full of common-sense. Silence is a prankster who got the name because one of his pranks is to keep silent to the call of his name until the caller (Teacher or Madam) calls up to three times. Nwohuruanuputa, Oti's beautiful sixteen-year-old sister, is so named because she was born on a Christmas eve when animals are usually slaughtered, and thus there is plenty of meat for the festivity, hence 'the child who emerged at the sight of meat' (168).

The nicknames are equally carefully chosen. Ugbabe (103) catalogues them:

There is also ingenious use of language in the nicknames associated with children. Obu's diminutive nose is called "When the war is over", implying as Ike puts it, "that a larger nose would be ordered for him at the end of World War II when all rationing would have ended." (10) His first pair of shoes is called "stand by" and is a size too big for him. Samuel the bully becomes Nwa *etoghampio* meaning "he who would never grow taller than the drainage hole at the foot of the compound wall". Cromwell, the overgrown schoolboy in Standard II wears a hair style that is popularly known as "Sahara", Obu's class teacher at Aka CMS Central School is given the nickname "We shall see" by the pupils. Each detail in the text is based on a fusion of context and insight adding to a total picture of the social role of children.

Both *When the War is over* and *Stand by* are related to the on-going war (World War II). The latter is a familiar military expression indicating something or someone available for use in an emergency. ‘Sahara’ implies a haircut that leaves little or no hair, like the Sahara desert with scant vegetation. ‘Aka’ is an acronym which Ike coined from the initial letters of Afufa, Kita and Aguana – the three hitherto warring communities over a piece of land which now is Aka CMS Central School, now a symbol of unity (100). Obu’s teacher at Aka got the name ‘We shall see’ because of ‘the frequency with which he uttered those words in class’ (102). We understand the teacher as light-hearted, cheerful, apparently unburdened and free from anxiety; hence, Ike selects for his hairstyle the ‘I don’t care’ type (103). Obu’s haircut on return from Aka is described by Ogechukwu as ‘Kumba-draw-back’ – a hairstyle popularized by the name of a Cameroonian town, Kumba. Evans’ father is called an ‘Arch A.T.’, that is, Arch Auxiliary Teacher because he is a ‘chronic uncertificated teacher’ (206).

In spite of his careful choice of the characternym in the text, there are some names which Ike chooses arbitrarily, not because there is nothing in them as characters, and also not because such names have no socio-cultural cachet, but because in the present theme, setting and role, any proper name can suffice. So we have David, Samuel, Cromwell, Edmund, Caleb, Monday, Ada, Bright, Mary, Margaret. Mary’s betrothed is an important character, no doubt, but not sufficiently important for the writer to consider him worthy of a name. The writer introduces him to the reader as ‘Mary’s fiancé’, an ‘up and coming businessman’. His brief appearance exposes Madam’s ability to keep her servants ‘under



surveillance' (155) and reveals to some detail, the reasons why Mary has been sent to Teacher's house for training. In Madam's focalisation as noted by Ike, we hear:

That is if she gets married. Unless she can exercise greater control over her desires, she may have a baby from another man while her husband is still training her for marriage. The incident beside the sour sop tree near the football field had confirmed Madam's fears that Mary was the type of girl who would hardly say no to a man. She had been so pampered as a child that her physical development appeared to have outstripped her mental development. Send her to plant a cassava cutting and she would plant it upside down. She could neither cook soup nor pound fofooo when she arrived. Madam would have rubbed pepper into her private part that day she and Monday were caught beside the sour sop tree, but for the fact that Monday was her cousin and she could not punish Mary and leave him out. (156)

## 5.8 FORMS OF PROPAGANDA IN *Sunset at Dawn*

*Sunset at Dawn* is a novel replete with propaganda, some overt, others covert.

Some evidence outside the realms of the text point to the working of intense propaganda in Biafra. In a national address by General Gowon on October 1, 1967, as the war was on, he says:

The Government-sponsored Radio Enugu and all the newspapers in the East were organized to whip up the emotions of the people; rumours were spread of impending attacks on Lagos and on several important installations elsewhere in the federation.... It is well known however, that Ojukwu has been putting out false propaganda about military victories, which the rebel forces had never won. Unfortunately Ojukwu's propaganda is being re-echoed in the foreign press and radio, with tragic consequences for

his rebel soldiers and innocent civilians who are constantly being pushed by the deceit.... (*The Nigerian Compass*, 3)

Part of the workings of propaganda machinery is to work on people's psychology and use every available means to lure people to the side of the propagandist. Thus, with words, phrases, anecdotes, songs, symbols, popular quotes taken out of context, sharp and splashy acronyms, predigested information (some of which may be true, half-true, or downright falsehood) – with these, propaganda works to blur people's visionary insight into events, erase their critical power, making them docile and amenable to the wish of the propagandist. Such a system brainwashes people into accepting whatever comes their way uncritically; if it is oppression or deprivation, they are conditioned to accept it and still manage a smile.

The word 'propaganda', is popularly seen as the systematic effort to manipulate people's beliefs, attitudes, or actions by means of words, gestures, banners, monuments, music, clothing, insignia, hairstyles, designs on coins and postage style, etc. The propagandist has a specified goal or set of goals, primarily to change the 'cognitive narrative' of the people (that is, to alter a people's perception of the true situation). To achieve his goal, the propagandist deliberately selects facts, arguments, and displays of symbols and presents them in ways he thinks will have the most effect. To maximize effect, he may omit pertinent facts or distort them, and he may try to divert the attention of the reactors (the people he is trying to sway) from everything but his own propaganda. In times of war, propaganda is a powerful weapon.

Some forms of propaganda include: propaganda of the deed – example from *Sunset at Dawn*, the sudden change of currency notes and stamps in Biafra; covert propaganda – example, the series of purported diplomatic negotiations, clandestine misinformation such as ‘no people ever lose a war of survival’, ‘We shall win’, etc.; overt propaganda – where the propagandists are known to the reactors; brainwashing (i.e. intense political indoctrination) – example, the public execution of military and civilian defectors in Biafra shortly after the Mid-West saga as a deterrent. Another aspect of brainwashing is the constant blame of Biafra’s failings on saboteurs. The coup came in just two months after the declaration of war. With this background fact about the existence of saboteurs, the Directorate of Propaganda anchors every explanation of Biafra’s shortcomings on ‘sabos’, and the writer puts it thus:

The second, and the most widely accepted explanation, was that the discovery of the abortive coup and the public execution of the four principal characters had come too late. The saboteurs had all along been in close touch with the enemy, passing on Biafra’s military secrets, and turning the weapons manufactured by Biafra’s Science Group against Biafra.... (102)

With this and with the cases of Justus and Sandy, Professor Ezenwa’s ministry weaves propaganda explanations that divert people’s thinking from the ill-equipped, ill-trained, hurriedly-assembled Biafran forces to some ‘sabos’. The fall of every Biafran town is explained in the same way, as can be seen from the conversation among three friends on the fall of Onitsha (104):

The Onitsha story was different. Bassey began: ‘It was as if everybody had been at the starting blocks for a cross-

country race, waiting for the starter's gun to go off! The explosions were terrifying, ....'

'Was it enemy mortar?' Barrister Ifeji asked.

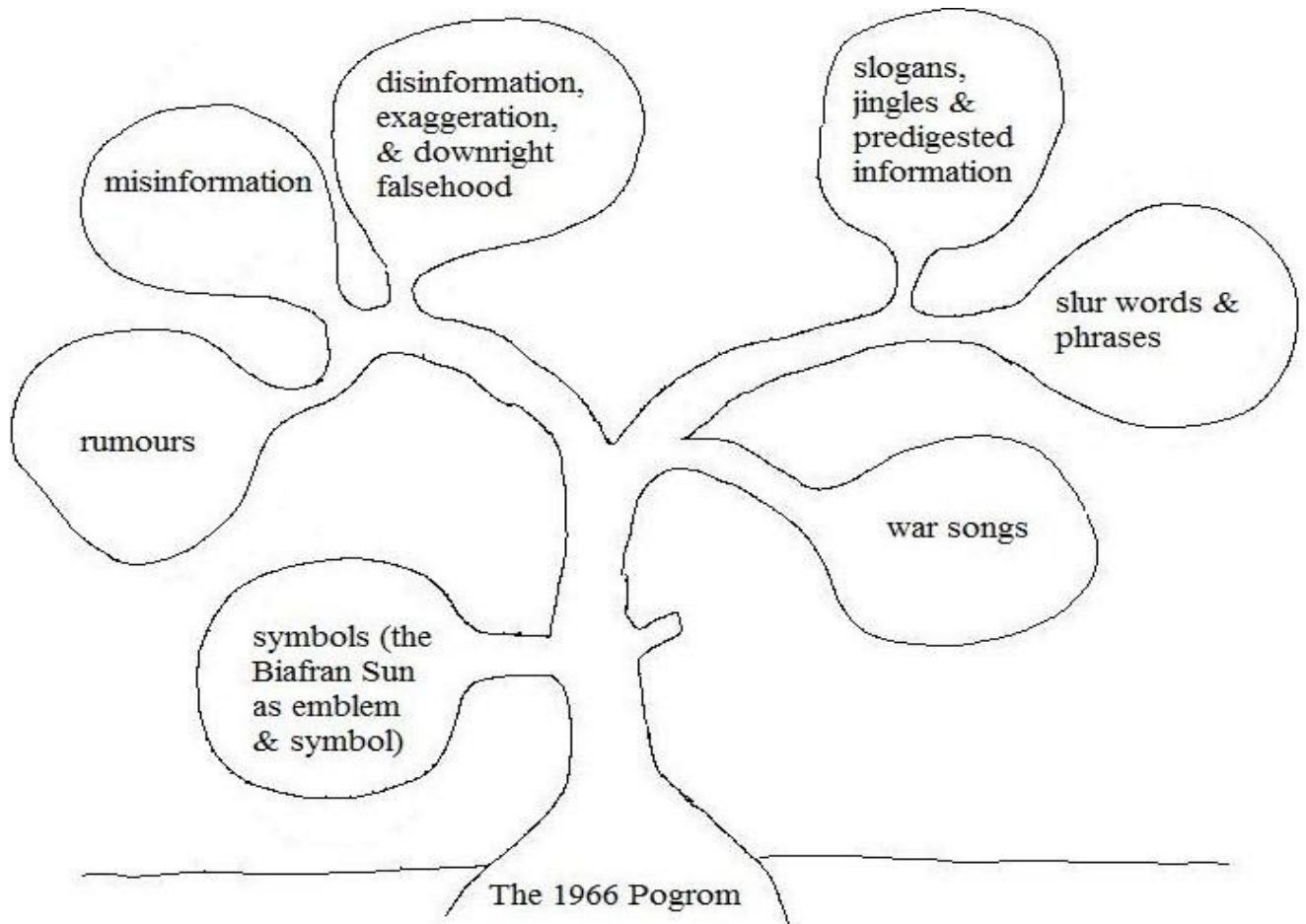
'I very much doubt it,' Onukaegbe said. 'I told you that there's strong suspicion in Government circles that the whole incident was the work of saboteurs. Their aim is to cause panic, thereby facilitating the infiltration of the enemy.'

The thirty months of Biafran existence was a period during which propaganda was the greatest weapon at the disposal of the Biafran government. The thirty months was a period of severe suffering, stress, strain, crushing hardship and high insecurity, which the people of Biafra had to undergo in the hands of Nigerians. The story of *Sunset at Dawn* is essentially a mixed bag of truths, half-truths, rumours, indeterminate information and misinformation and author-coloured views. The author, in writing the story, is evidently struggling with this mixed bag, trying to fabricate fiction from facts in his memoir jottings. As Ike himself says:

I wrote *Sunset at Dawn* while I was in Biafra experiencing the Nigerian civil war. It was a difficult thing because the tendency is that because you were part of it, can you detach yourself? I tried to write a novel which I would be part of, yet detached.... (Interview with Chukwuemeka Ike, *The Daily Sun*, Tuesday, September 18, 2007, 32)

Thus, some factual elements of the story are evident in the use of the real names of actual towns, roads, bridges, airports and seaports. Other factual elements are the use of actual historical events and dates, like the peace moves, official recognition of the sovereignty of Biafra by Tanzania and Gabon, dates of the fall of Enugu, Ibibio and Anang Province. The attempted coup in Biafra, the currency change, the Abagana episode, refugee situations in Biafra and foreign relief

materials and organizations are other factual elements. In all these, Ike employs some kind of chronological documentation of events as a cohesive device to sift out comprehensible information amidst an otherwise chaotic mass of events, actions, decisions, counteractions, and all that are characteristic of a war situation. Here Ike uses deliberate and sophisticated flashbacks to intersperse the major events. The postscript at the close of the story also gives a vital clue to some factual elements of the story. Biafra is erased from the map. What used to be Bight of Biafra from which the republic got its name is renamed Bight of Bonny.



Tree Diagram of Biafran Propaganda Machinery

One of the key ingredients used by the Directorate of Propaganda in Biafra, where Professor Emeka Ezenwa works as a researcher, centres on the pogrom meted out to the easterners, especially the Igbos, prior to the war. The pogrom (as mentioned in Chapter 2) is the first incident that gives stimulus to the easterners' secession. They see in the eagle (the Nigerian symbol) a failure of duty to protect its citizens, and thus the race to the Land of the Rising Sun. Emeka Ezenwa, the History Professor, without being told, does his research well in the Propaganda Directorate. The pogrom quickly becomes the *root* of the propaganda tree. If interests in the war are waning because of severe hardship, the directorate tries to ginger them up with allusions to the 30 thousand murdered in the north in the most horrendous manner, some with 'gouged eyes, ripped wombs, headless bodies.' Such 'atrocities perpetrated on Biafrans by the Nigerians, particularly in Northern Nigeria, were enough to unsex damsels and turn them into Abam head hunters. Hardly any family in Biafra escaped donning the black cloth of mourning in 1966 as a result of the massacres' (14).

As in the case of most propaganda, there may be background facts from which the propagandist may choose. He may deliberately omit pertinent details or even distort them in order to alter people's perception of a situation, thus swaying the people to his side of reasoning. Thirty thousand as a large number is one good point. The horrendous manner of the killings is another good point – these, propagandized out of proportion could yield devastating results. No wonder University dons, businessmen, industrialists, students of all calibers, civil servants including diplomats, the employed and unemployed, farmers and traders, etc. –

everybody in the Biafran enclave is ready to make even the ultimate sacrifice. Enthusiasm is written on every face. ‘Contributions’ of ten thousand men and girls who volunteer to fight come from the twenty provinces of Biafra. Each is willing to fight and ‘bring back three heads and avenge the pogrom’ (14), even with just machetes, wooden guns, double-barelled shot-guns and Mark 4 rifles as against the sophisticated modern weaponry used by Nigeria: ferrets, bazookas, shelling machines, heavy artillery, armoured vehicles, jet fighters and bombers. The enthusiasm generated by propagandizing *the number* and *manners* of the killings in the north is such that even people rejected in one recruitment centre turned up for selection in another centre. Dr Kanu acknowledges this fact to the Biafran leader (209).

The solidarity generated by the propagation of a common cause (to avenge the 1966 pogrom), which is adjudged to be just by the Propaganda Directorate, is overwhelming. The narration further affirms the overwhelming enthusiasm:

Yes. Everyone knew that the road was bound to be rough. But they thought it was better to walk on thorns with dignity and self-respect than to accept the role of tenth-class citizen in Nigeria, hiding in roofs or in toilets to escape torture and death at the hands of their fellow countrymen. (17)

Having thus established the *root* of the propaganda tree (the pogrom and the inhuman killings) which has rekindled in the Biafran populace the burning anger and thirst for vengeance, ‘Living Biafrans regarded it as their duty to the spirits of the departed to avenge their deaths, and this was the opportunity’ (15). The Biafran Propaganda Directorate experiments with all other available propaganda

cannons in its arsenal: use of (a) powerful, purpose-driven and incendiary songs (b) rumours – misinformation and disinformation (c) jingles, slogans and predigested information (d) slur words and phrases.

(a) *The use of songs*

In the text, eleven catchy war songs are used, some repeated at auspicious moments. The songs are powerful, purpose-driven and incendiary in content. The writer says that they are ‘war songs’, otherwise known as songs of the revolution’ (11). The contents of the songs are constructed to whip up the emotion of the singers, and of bystanders and hearers. The first that opens the story is informative and supplicatory – the former by announcing what their purpose is (fighting for freedom), the latter expressing a wish to be victorious ‘in the name of Jesus’. At this point, expectations are high. The harassment from the Nigerian warplanes at the training camp sends a ripple of fear through the volunteers and bystanders. To ginger up their quaking spirit once more, Dr Kanu (the Mobilization Officer) strikes up a tune which declares Ojukwu king of Biafra, alludes to the Aburi accord between Ojukwu and Gowon (leader of Nigeria) who with all their weaponry cannot defeat Biafra. It is a song that is aimed at reassuring the volunteers and restoring their enthusiasm, which is shaken by the enemy planes. And Dr Kanu continues with the propaganda of the ruling class:

‘Yes,’ ridiculed Dr Kanu, (note the author’s use of the disparaging word *ridiculed*) ‘let those Nigerian *sho-sho* come with their armoured cars, shelling machines, and heavy artillery. With these matchets, and with God on our side...’ (and they echo ‘We shall vanquish’) (14)



With the Biafran incursions into the Mid-West and its capture, young boys around The Progress Hotel Enugu burst into another revolution song: this time jubilating over the victory in the Mid-West, which is a loss to Nigeria, hence Gowon has woken a sleeping lion and the disastrous consequences are partly the Mid-West experience (19).

The Abagana miracle set the stage for a more vigorous morale-boosting revolution song by the Obodo Youth, jubilating over the trail of destruction suffered by Nigerian troops in the hands of Biafran troops. The song urges Biafrans to rise and do battle with Nigerians because they do not know God; hence they are not God-fearing. On reaching Prophet James' church, they switch over to the Prophet's favourite (117). They sing the remembrance of what led to the war, calling on Biafra's friends to remember the thirty thousand murdered in the North, the assassination of Aguiyi Ironsi, Major Nzeogwu and Chris Okigbo the poet – all Biafrans who died in the battlefield (104). Such a roll call performs the propagandist role of re-opening old wounds and inflaming the vengeance spirit of Biafrans.

At a very critical period in the life of Biafra (167) we learn from Akwaelumo, the Procurement Director, that vehicles in Biafra are grinding to a halt, no new ones replacing them, no spare parts – all because of the economic blockade – food for the armed forces was becoming more and more difficult, to provide, and the entire Biafra was heading towards a major famine, and with interest in voluntary military service seriously waning, even to get good distilled wine became impossible. Then Ifeji, Ezenwa and Onukaegbe burst into one of the

propaganda songs of the revolution, as they dance round the table with local drinks and hot *ngwo-ngwo*, with Bassey standing by. They sing that everything is in abundance in Biafra; Biafra is self-sufficient; Death is universal, and is the only thing Biafra cannot brag about (170). The irony in this propaganda is strikingly scathing – the song comes directly from the mouths of the agents of Biafran propaganda, and is a mockery of the propaganda machinery at a time they themselves complain of dearth of even good wine.

With the death of Dr Kanu in one of the incessant air raids by Nigeria, and the impending surrender of Biafra, as officers and men of Kanu's battalion heap red earth over his corpse, they start a consoling revolution song enjoining Biafrans to take heart, that fortitude pays dividends, and that Biafra shall vanquish (255). And in the end when everybody, everything is badly spent, the penultimate chapter sings the same song that started off the first chapter of the text. In the first chapter, the song, we are told, comes with 'gusto to the tune of "John Brown's Body"', switching to another revolution song that eulogizes what Biafra stands for: '*Truth and Justice. Solidarity forever.... We shall not be moved, like a tree planted by the water*' (9, 10, 11). The revolution songs at the start of the war, we are told, 'had the effect of marijuana on the singers' (11). 'They sang their war songs with great emotion and enthusiasm' (9). But this time, at the close of the story, the song is rendered in a play entitled 'We Shall Vanquish' – ironically at a point when all is over, and surrender imminent.

One point is not clear about these songs of the revolution within the scope of the text – no hint on their originators; but the point that is clear is that they are

purposefully composed to brainwash the people and rekindle in them the spirit of vengeance in the war, and the writer deploys each of the songs appropriately to match the prevailing mood of each moment of Biafra's existence.

(b) *The use of Rumour*

The next arsenal at the disposal of Biafran propaganda machinery is rumour. The rumours come as misinformation, disinformation, exaggeration, downright falsehood – all with the goal of blurring people's perception of the real situation. Prior to the final decision to evacuate Enugu, the writer narrates:

The fate of Enugu had become a major concern. Most people were already wondering how much longer the Biafran forces could hold out. The first sound of enemy mortar had been widely believed to have come from Biafran forces trying out new equipment. It was inconceivable that the enemy could be that close to Biafra's capital. When the ominous sounds persisted, a more plausible explanation had to be found: *they came from enemy collaborators among the Biafrans.* (36)

This piece of downright falsehood is aimed at masking from the people the inadequacy of Biafran military capability, thereby creating a false impression and undue sympathy for Biafra. When the fate of Enugu becomes unmanageable, we are told that:

It was clear that Biafra did not have the military capacity to keep the Nigerians out of Enugu. It had therefore been decided to move the War Directorates, Government Ministries, Banks, University of Biafra, University Teaching Hospital and other important establishments in Enugu to different locations. The war must continue, no matter what became of Enugu. (66)

At this point, Radio Biafra, Enugu moves to Aba, from where it still broadcasts as Radio Biafra, Enugu. All other establishments also are relocated but retaining Enugu address. The post office is advised to note the changes in addresses. This contingency rearrangement is, on the surface, a prophylactic military tactics to confuse the enemy, but underlying this is the propagandist make-believe, which deceives people into thinking that Biafra is still in full grip on Enugu.

Sometimes, especially when Biafran forces suffer serious set-backs, the shock forces Radio Biafra to keep mum, for at such times 'it was better to be silent in moments of serious military reverses than to broadcast lies. No news had become bad news. On such occasions, the Voice of Rumour immediately took over from the Voice of Biafra' (77). This, they humorously call 'Radio without Battery' (43). Sometimes the rumour takes the form of 'bar-joint' news, the origin of which is indeterminate, but in the fashion of most propaganda, may contain some vestiges of truth, which have been transformed to achieve a purpose. For instance, Biafran incursion into the Mid-West triggers off the following rumours:

i) 'One of our (Biafran) soldiers who came from the front said that the Nigerian soldiers are packing up and have sent emissaries to our boys proposing an immediate caesefire.' (41)

ii) '... that the Yorubas have toppled the Hausas in Lagos? And that the Yorubas have announced over Radio Nigeria that they will let us (Biafrans) go our own way in peace....' (40)

iii) Onukaegbe is informing his friends: 'Have you heard of the message which our boys intercepted?... It's the usual transmission line, Oturkpo to Markurdi. Oturkpo was asking Markurdi to confirm the story that the big men in Lagos were escaping in large numbers to Dahomey. It appears that the news of the capture of Ore by gallant Biafran forces had hardly filtered into Lagos when the big shots began to flee to

neighbouring Dahomey! Our Air Force boys who sprayed a few bombs over them with the B26 confirmed the story. They talked about the terrific commotion in Lagos. I don't now remember who told the story about the people of Ondo in the West. They are already composing new tunes on their talking drums, for welcoming our gallant boys into Ondo town. Trust the Yorubas!' (22)

Rumours (i) and (ii) above are outright disinformation, of clandestine origin, and are in fact, a false morale-boosting piece of propaganda. These and others from the *Voice of Rumour (Radio without Battery)* can sometimes have retrogressive effects on the morale they are intended to boost. This is why we are told that 'The Director for propaganda says it's nothing short of sabotage deliberately thrown in to give us a false sense of security and make us relax our vigilance, thereby giving the vandals easy entry into Enugu. He says Government is trying to smoke out the peddlers of the false rumour' (47). But the truth is that the scope of the story does not show any incident where Government actually smoked out rumour peddlers. When the incessant air raid of Enugu does not take place for some two days, nobody knows why. *The Voice of Rumour* fills the information gap with the rumour that it is because an enemy plane was shot down with a 'dane gun' by a hunter. The details of this rumour are given by Basse while chatting with his friends over some bottles of Whisky and brandy (68). One can view the veracity of Rumour (iii) from Nigeria's independence anniversary broadcast, which we had quoted previously. So, rumour (iii) above contains elements of truth, albeit exaggerated, and the bit about Ondo people and their talking drums is just an additional spice to the morale-boosting propaganda.

To the Civil Defence, for instance, some baseless rumours galvanize them into stiff vigilante job. For example, Fatima does not see the need for so many checkpoints usually manned by the Civil Defence. Ukadike strikes on two of such rumours: ‘Don’t say that o, madam. Did you not hear of the white reverend father carrying the coffin of a child in his car? When vigilant Civil Defenders at Ndikelionwu checkpoint opened the coffin, they found that it contained explosives, which were to be used in blowing up the Hotel Presidential. But for the vigilance of the men at the checkpoint ....this newspaper reported it.... This newspaper – I’ve forgotten the name of the newspaper. Anyway, what of the woman who was caught carrying a bomb inside her brassiere? ...In this war, there’s nothing I can’t believe’ (84 – 85). Ukadike’s credulous nature, as revealed by his last statement, results from psychological brainwashing, intense indoctrination – which is one of the goals of propaganda, especially in war times.

When Calabar and the Anang Province fall, depriving Biafra of the services of Calabar port, Ndiyo gives Bassey a popular version of the rumour on what happened.

‘...People say it was Chief Inyang. They say the Hausas established contact with him through one Ibibio boy fighting with the Hausas who had been his house-boy before the war broke out. The Hausas sent Inyang tobacco and hot drinks. They promised to make him a Commissioner in the government they intend to set up if he helps them to come in. I don’t know how they did it, but people say the town is now full of Hausa soldiers.’ (130)

This is akin to what is dished out at the fall of Enugu; the Directorate of propaganda anchors the blame on hypothetical saboteur – Justus Chikwendu – the

fifth columnist. Basse pieces all the rumours about the fall of Calabar and the Anang Province together in another form whose goal is also to bail Biafra out of its inadequacies.

‘They say the vendetta unleashed on the villages around Ikot Ekpene following the infiltration of Nigerian soldiers was unprecedented. It wasn’t so much Nigerian soldiers slaughtering at random. I believe our propaganda machinery and mounting world opinion against Nigeria has helped to reduce such genocidal tendencies among the Nigerians. It was rather our own people using the bloodthirsty Nigerian soldiers to eliminate anyone they disliked.’  
(175)

Another rumour, this time about the flying *ogbunigwe*, given by Onukaegbe, which Professor Ezenwa quickly debunked, has it that ‘the Nigerians are now so mortally afraid of *ogbunigwe* that each advancing battalion is now preceded by a herd of cattle. If our boys have buried any *ogbunigwe* in their line of advance, it will go off on the cows....’ (169). Another, in the spate of rumour-mongering whose origin and purpose are unfathomable, is the unofficial ceasefire purported to have been agreed upon by Yoruba members of the Nigerian army and Biafran soldiers in their trenches in the war front. As usual, we are told that ‘it is not clear how the initial contact was established’ (166).

The phrase ‘According to the rumour’ takes the story some length further. And the content of the rumour helps to quench the information thirst which people in a war situation suffer from.

Generally, the pattern of delivery of rumours expects the listener not to quote or cite the speaker, or the listener is enjoined to keep what is said secret

(26), or the speaker claiming that he has forgotten who told him. Page 48 of the text is unequivocal on this pattern: *'If anybody reports that I said such a thing, I shall deny it outright'* (Egwuonwu) and Andrew adds *'Let nobody say that I said it, either, but I heard Eleazar Nwankwo say that his brother Peter, who works in the Public Works Department at Enugu, ran home last night. He said that Peter said that....'* (48 – 49). Usually the immediate peddler of a retrogressive type of rumour prefers not to be quoted for fear of being arrested for *'starting a bush fire with his mouth'* (48).

In *Sunset at Dawn*, these rumours serve triple functions: their contents and patterns are exploited by the writer in the development of the story line; the contents are spicy and captivating to the reader; and to the Directorate of Propaganda, they are an effective tool for exonerating Biafra from its various inadequacies and also for boosting and sustaining the morale of soldiers and civilians.

After the air raid on Obodo, Mr Sandy is fished out as the scapegoat, and the Directorate of Propaganda holds a rally. Addressing the crowd, the Secretary of War Council employs the rhetorics of propaganda and sways people's thinking to genocide and vengeance.

*'...This is not the first time the vandals and their Anglo-Soviet-Arab collaborators have committed an act of genocide on the peace-loving people of Biafra.... Today every man, woman and child in Obodo has seen the vandals in their true colours. What crime did the old women, old men, and other innocent people wiped out, commit?... Those men, women, and children mercilessly massacred by the*



vandals are not asking you to cry for them.... They want you to avenge their deaths, and you can only do so by pressing on with the war more vigorously than ever before....' (142)

Biafran government recalls all Nigerian currency notes used in Biafra. But the tragedy is that there is no immediate arrangement to replace them. People's suffering move to another level. The Propaganda Directorate has to do something to reassure the people. Here is Ike's narration:

It required all the ingenuity of the Public Enlightenment Officer for Obodo to get the people to accept the currency change as yet another challenge. It was no more than part of Nigeria's effort to exterminate the peace-loving, god-fearing people of Biafra for no cause. What they had failed to achieve on the battle front or by the blockade they had decided to try to accomplish through the sudden currency change. But they were sure to fail. Biafra was destined to triumph over even that obstacle. (115)

At a critical point when Obodo is on the verge of collapse, Government of Biafra is worried, and there is tension all over Obodo. Here is the Director of Propaganda, Chief Ukadike, frantically dishing out disinformation to downplay the intensity of the panic, and portray the enemy as abhorrent. He hopes to restore some level of (albeit false) hope and confidence in the people of Obodo.

'The Nigerian Field Commander of the rag-tag Federal troops in Okigwe has already claimed that he "liberated" Obodo.... The vandals are therefore throwing in all they have to enter Obodo. Their hope is to drink champagne at Nnewi, H.E.'s home town, with British and Russian journalists on Christmas day... thanks to our shore batteries.... But the Brigade Commander assured me that our gallant Biafran forces will not allow their jigger-infested feet to touch Obodo. We are expecting planeloads of ammo from abroad tonight.... the

Head of State has directed that at least one planeload of ammo should be sent immediately to this sector. Once our boys receive that ammo, they will flush out all the pockets of vandals from this area. Meanwhile, R&P has been asked to send the Commanding Officer plenty of *ogbunigwe*.' (196)

And when Obodo citizens find themselves in St. David's refugee camp, the above piece of disinformation has to be transformed in the interest of the people's psychology and the credibility of the Public Enlightenment Office. The narration explains:

Their hopes were shattered by external forces fighting for Nigeria which thwarted all Biafra's attempts to import ammunition. Thousands of rounds of ammunition which finally arrived turned out to be useless: they were the wrong size for the rifles.... The Nigerian soldiers were thus able to dig in and, having dug in, it was not easy to dislodge them. The Obodo refugees had to accept their lot as refugees. (220)

At some point in the twenty-first month (of the thirty months) of the war, with Biafran losses in men and material unusually high, the air all over the place 'tense and ominous', and with everything pointing towards an impending catastrophe, a camouflaged mini-bus moves slowly blaring this piece of overt disinformation in a desperate effort to restore hope:

THERE IS NO CAUSE FOR ALARM. THE ENEMY MADE A SUICIDE ATTEMPT TO CAPTURE UMUAHIA IN ORDER TO FORESTALL PEACE EFFORTS. THEY WERE HOWEVER REPULSED BY GALLANT BIAFRAN FORCES, WHO INFLICTED HEAVY CASUALTIES ON THEM. HIS EXCELLENCY APPEALS TO EVERY BIAFRAN TO REMAIN CALM, AND ASSURES THE NATION THAT THERE CAN BE NO QUESTION OF CONCEDING UMUAHIA TO THE VANDALS (205)

All the above are bits of overt propaganda emanating from Professor Ezenwa's directorate.

(c) *The use of Jingles, Slogans, Predigested Information, Slur*

The use of slur or smear-words and phrases to present the enemy as bad has been extensively treated in Section 3.5.2 of this thesis. Such words and phrases help to spur the Biafrans and sustain the struggle. But most of the time Biafrans are said to be 'peace-loving' and their soldiers 'gallant forces'. Elements of predigested thinking can be seen from the information credited to the Biafran 'Big Man' (that is, H.E.) that

'Our sons who studied history assure us that no nation fighting a war of survival as we are now fighting has ever been defeated. As the Big Man says, by the grace of God we shall van –' (63)

The echo of the last syllable of the word 'vanquish' by the audience is a show of how deep-rooted such a slogan is in the Biafran struggle and psyche. After the Obodo air raid, the Directorate of Propaganda, in one of its usual propaganda rhetorics reassures the people that 'History tells us that no war of survival has ever been lost. Will ours be different?' (142). When Obodo is on the brink of collapse, and gunshots are heard from close range, Chief Ukadike reminds Chief Ofo and Udeji 'Have you not heard our Head of State say that no power in Black Africa can conquer us? You think he can talk like that without knowing what we have in stock?' (121). The slogans and jingles (some of them embedded in the songs of the revolution) are cast in a way that tend to resuscitate the waning spirit of the people and brainwash them with promises that turn out to be unrealizable

within the scope of the novel. *Biafra Win War; No Power in Black Africa; We shall vanquish; The price of liberty is eternal vigilance; To save Biafra for the free world is a task that must be done.* And to foster harmony and the spirit of oneness which is highly necessary for the struggle, we are told that ‘Every Biafran is his brother’s keeper – a slogan upon which the success of the war effort largely depended’ (63).

Generally, the propaganda machinery operative in Biafra succeeds in doing to the Biafrans what propaganda in war times does to the reactors: blurring their vision of reality by feeding them with distorted and often downright false information, using revolutionary songs, slogans, jingles and splashy words and phrases to fire up emotions and sustain the spirit of vengeance for the thirty thousand massacred in the north. The propaganda unleashed insidiously blow up atrocities perpetrated on Biafra by the enemy (including the saboteurs), while playing down the myriads of Biafran inadequacies. The writer uses the image of ‘a sinking ship’ early enough, and in the same ‘tradition of the captain of a sinking ship’ (74), the Biafran leadership struggles painfully on in the face of mounting inadequacies, relying heavily on instruments of propaganda. But there is a limit to which one can push a broken-down vehicle. And by the 30<sup>th</sup> month of the war, not even the network of propaganda is strong enough to dispel the ‘total eclipse over Biafra’ (246).

## **5.9 THE USE OF SYMBOLS IN *Sunset at Dawn***

In *Sunset at Dawn*, two distinct symbols enhance the artistic beauty of the story. These are *the sun* and *the ikoro*. These two, in addition to their immediate

nature and purpose, are vested with some symbolic status. The *ikoro* itself, we are told in the glossary, is ‘a huge musical instrument, made from a hollowed-out tree trunk with a slit on one side. Its sound is heard from all corners of the village. The *ikoro* is sounded only in times of grave emergency.’ In the text, it is sounded twice – during the news of Justus’ betrayal of his fatherland working as a fifth columnist against Biafra (58 – 59); secondly during the actual fall of Obodo (195). Sometimes the *ikoro* is heard once in a life-time. It is a symbol of alertness when ‘something grave, very grave must have happened’ (54). The last sound of the *ikoro* in the text tolls the knell of the eventual fall of Obodo, and by extension, the metaphoric ascension of the soul of Biafra into the heavens (246). The *ikoro* here is not a symbol of propaganda in its pejorative sense, but serves the immediate purpose of disseminating crucial information to the rural populace. Its symbolic status in the novel has no propaganda connotation.

The other symbol is the sun. The sun rising in the east is believed to have some pleasant, soothing and warm effect on the people of the east. Thus, the land of the rising sun, Biafra, is vibrant and full of hopes.

At the opening of the text, we are told ‘The brand-new Biafra Sun emblem, a yellow half sun on a black background, symbol of the four-month old nation, Biafra....’ (9). The writer wastes no time in fusing the physical emblem (the Biafra Sun) as a symbol of hope for the seceding easterners with the natural sun. We note the renewed sense of hope, security, national identity and pride – all rolled into the symbolism of the sun.

The Rising Sun, beacon of hope for all Biafrans, had been born four months earlier on 30 May 1967, the day the Republic of Biafra was proclaimed. The Green Eagle – Nigeria’s emblem – had failed to protect the lives and property of Eastern Nigerians, the people from the Land of the Rising Sun. Rather it had behaved like the vicious hen which eats its own offspring. The campaign against the Eastern Nigerians, and in particular the pogrom of 1966, had driven the Biafrans to reject the Green Eagle on 30 May, and declare their loyalty instead to Biafra Sun.

The Biafra sun shone brightly from 30 May until the outbreak of war on 6 July. Its presence as an emblem on a soldier’s uniform instilled in him a sense of national identity and pride. Civilians clamoured for the emblem as a keepsake, or to sew on to military uniforms made for their little boys. The Sun’s dazzling rays dispelled the clouds of insecurity and hopelessness which had eclipsed the lives of Eastern Nigerians, particularly the Igbo, for over a year. They infused a new determination and hope in the ‘returnees’ – an estimated two million Biafrans who had returned home after being hounded from other parts of Nigeria, most of them with nothing more than they had brought to the earth at birth, some with an arm or a leg or an eye less. (16)

The choice of the Sun as an emblem, which even civilians clamour to identify with as a symbol of motivation, determination, hope and solace, provides the Biafran propaganda Directorate an overwhelming following. The fusion of the natural sun and the emblem continue as Nsukka, Ogoja and Bonny sectors prove the inadequacy of Biafran forces:

The Nigerians did decide to go to war, and when the fighting began on 6 July 1967 the hollowness of Biafra’s confident proclamations of its readiness to crush any Nigerian invasion – be it by land, sea, or air – became obvious. The first week of the war had hardly ended before the tragic fact was established that Biafra had neither the trained military men nor the military hardware to repel any serious invasion. The pattern was consistent in each of the three initial sectors of the war – on the Nsukka, Ogoja and Bonny sectors. The hastily assembled and ill-equipped

Biafran forces could not dig in anywhere. Biafran territory shrank like a cheap fabric after its first wash. The yellow-on-black Biafra Sun lost its dazzle and much of its authenticity.

Then came August.

The August break began with geography book regularity, sweeping the rain clouds off the horizon and rescuing the sun from obscurity. The week before, the sun had been driven into hiding, abdicating its exalted throne for ominous clouds which had enveloped the earth in daylight darkness and unleashed torrential downpours on a saturated earth. The August break enabled the sun to assert its supremacy once again over the powers of darkness, and the sun responded by showering down its rays lavishly.

The Biafra Sun burst free from near ignominy and shone radiantly from its position of supremacy, triumphant as a cockerel descending heroically from the back of a hen it has conquered. Even the BBC carried the news, so it could not be dismissed as mere Biafran propaganda. While Nigerian troops were gaining ground slowly in Biafra, Biafran forces sprang a surprise on them by taking the war onto Nigerian soil. The success of the lightning operation stunned even the Biafrans, most of whom had no inkling that any such invasion was contemplated. It was one of the few secrets which remained secret inside Biafra. An unbelieving world woke up one morning to hear that gallant Biafran forces had captured Mid-Western Nigeria an independent state under the new name of the Republic of Benin. A BBC reporter announced that the advancing Biafran forces had already reached Ore, some seventy miles beyond Benin on the way to Lagos. (18)

When the going is good, the Biafra sun which ‘had lost much of its dazzle and authenticity’ from the loss of Nsukka, Ogoja, Bonny, now springs up surprisingly bright once more after the heavy rains of August; the initial heavy losses of territories having nearly smothered it. Reason: the surprising speedy inroads of Biafran forces into the Mid-West. The sun brightens up, as expected, a sign of hope for Biafrans. Again, September 1967 (26 – 27), the sun’s brightness, the emblem’s brightness, the fine weather (physically and symbolically) come to an

abrupt end. The triumph from the incursions into the Mid-West is short-lived because of an attempted coup d'état. The coup is said to be motivated by the desire to take Biafra back to Nigeria. Akwaelumo's speech is premonitory as well as propagandist in nature, using the people's fears in the pogrom saga and the expectation of even worse than that to brainwash the people and sustain the struggle in spite of the odds.

‘It would be a shame to be forced back to Nigeria,’ Akwaelumo remarked. ‘Apart from the utter humiliation, we must be prepared for even more outrageous pogroms, if anything can be more outrageous than the 1966 massacres.’  
(71)

Thus, in the text, the sun as an endearing emblem, has a more or less latent propagandist force binding the seceding people of Biafra together, causing initial general euphoria and mass following for Biafran leadership.

Ike's symbolic treatment of the sun heightens with the fall of Obodo.

In the ancient traditions of Obodo the sun bluntly refused to appear in its usual splendor, as if reluctant to preside over such an abomination. Only once in the history of Obodo had the sun hidden its face for so long at a time. That occasion was shortly before the influenza epidemic early in the century, when a middle-aged farmer debased himself and his kinsmen by cohabiting with a she-goat. The sun had hidden its face for the whole day. The ancestors demonstrated their revulsion by unleashing an influenza epidemic on the town which claimed thirty lives. The farmer had been tied to a rope and dragged round the town, after which his bruised and battered body was dumped into the evil bush, to propitiate the ancestors.

To abandon the town was an even greater abomination. It was tantamount to utter betrayal of all the ancestors of the town, to run, leaving their mortal remains behind to be desecrated by the enemy. It was tantamount to leaving the ancestral homes to grow wild, as if the ancestors had died



without male issue. Who would pour libations to the dead and offer them *cola* every morning? Who would attend to the Obodo?

The sun knew it was an abomination which would provoke the ire of the ancestors, and so refused to show its face. The wind knew it, and so sought an alibi by migrating to other towns, leaving Obodo without the mildest breeze. (204)

And in the *Postscript*, there is total eclipse over Biafra. No sign of Biafra sun (both as an emblem and as the natural sun) not even in the afternoon. Reason? The Republic of Biafra, the republic that cherishes the sun, the land of the rising sun, has been erased from the map. Victor Aire expounds on the central role of the sun as a word and as a concept, but not as an element in the propaganda set-up in Biafra. (Ugbabe: 31)

In the case of *Sunset at Dawn*, it would seem that the title informed the writing probably because of the Biafran emblem “Land of the Rising Sun.” It is therefore not surprising that the solar imagery runs right through the novel and is deliberately emphasized on two occasions. Early in the novel, the fledgling state of Biafra is positively symbolized by the sun: “The Biafra Sun shone brightly from 30 May until the outbreak of war on 6 July” (16). Two pages later, one reads: “The Biafra Sun burst free from near ignominy and shone radiantly from its position of supremacy, triumphant as a cockerel descending heroically from the back of a hen it has just conquered” (18). However, even before the final surrender, there are instances of the momentary “eclipse” of the sun as a symbol of Biafra. Thus, at the end of the Biafran occupation of Mid-Western Nigeria. “The Biafra sun found itself...chased off the sky” (26). Similarly, as refugees

learn of the travails of their hometown, a character laments: “Darkness has descended on Obodo in broad daylight” (221). After the surrender, the final “eclipse” of the Biafran sun is cryptic, somber and speculative: “Total eclipse over Biafra...No sign of the Biafra sun. Not even at noon. Hibernating, like a migratory bird? Gone with the soul of Biafra?” (246).

### **5.10 THE USE OF PROVERBS IN *Sunset at Dawn***

In *Sunset at Dawn*, proverbs are used predominantly by those we can regard as custodians of tradition – the old people at Obodo. In the Biafran towns of Enugu, Onitsha, Umuahia, Port Harcourt, Owerri, the author does not tap from the traditional setting, perhaps because the Biafran Government is constantly on the move from Nsukka, Enugu, Umuahia, etc. All these towns fall with astonishing rapidity one after the other. Moreover, in the towns, most of the characters are directly preoccupied with the war, unlike the elders at Obodo. Obodo is the author’s favourite village because it is where he locates the protagonist and his parentage. To the writer, Obodo is key to the struggle, and its fall symbolizes the total eclipse of Biafra.

So, the Obodo elders adorn their speeches with proverbs that are appropriate to the situation at hand. We notice that when the story goes outside the Obodo clan, virtually nothing is rendered proverbially, but whenever the story moves to Obodo, proverbs come to play. This is because in traditional setting, proverbs are indispensable ingredients of speech act both morally and didactically. Mazi Kanu Onwubiko, Dr Kanu’s father, on receiving the news of the death of Amilo Junior

by air raid at Enugu, equates it to sitting in his own house with goats eating palm fronds off his head (51). The implication here is the affront a man has to endure even when you have not offended anyone. The Sergeant orderly is sent to inform Mazi Kanu that Dr Kanu's child and wife will be coming home. Other villagers confront him with the question whether Hausas have entered Enugu. His proverbial reply 'I am not one of those who can see the moon from under a shade so I cannot stay at Obodo and talk about what happened at Enugu...' (52), clearly shows that he is not competent to answer that question, perhaps, he is being economical with the truth. Of Prophet James' preaching, which amazes some people because his voice never fails him, a workman who has a cynical view of James' amazing preaching, asks 'If the hen loses its *kwom*, with what will it feed its brood? It is his voice that fetches him his food, so how can he allow it to fail him?' (53). By implication, the prophet is hardworking, for that is where his daily bread lies.

The *ikoro* summons the Obodo people at Chief Ofo's *ogbagburugburu* to discuss Justus Chikwendu's fifth columnist activities and how Obodo can be defended from attack since it is only twenty miles off Enugu. Chief Ofo's opening speech is replete with emotionally charged proverbs (56), which indirectly allude to Justus Chikwendu's treachery against his fatherland.

The image of the she-goat and the she-goat's offspring refers to the older and younger generations respectively. The image of some growth in the offspring's private part points to the abnormal behaviour of the latter generation, a behaviour that is not exhibited by the 'she-goat'- the elders and the parents. Thus,

the act of treachery found in the younger generation is a non-congenital phenomenon since the older generation is not known for that. Still talking about the monetary motive behind Justus' act, Chief Ofo says 'no food can be so sweet that a sensible man will for its sake bite off and swallow his tongue' (56). And to emphasize the abominable nature of the motive, he reinforces this last proverb with another of the same intensity: 'I cannot remember any Obodo man who, because of love of meat, has ever eaten a deer stricken with hernia' (56). *Hernia* is an abnormal protrusion. *A deer stricken with hernia* is a metaphorical extension of Chief Ofo's earlier reference to a non-congenital growth in the private part of the she-goat's offspring. Having done with these chastising proverbs, he concludes by enjoining everybody to 'wash his eyes in water and get at the root of this matter,' metaphorically that people should ruminate over the matter and resolve it.

In response, Ukadike adds 'We cannot stay as full-blooded men and stink like putrefying corpses' (57) – indicating that the people of Obodo are capable of defending Obodo, and should not act below expectation. Some members of the crowd who feel that Obodo has nothing that will attract Hausas express it thus: 'How much soup must stick to the bottom of the soup pot before a sensible man takes the trouble to get at it?' (60). Having discussed the major points of Justus' treachery and the defence of Obodo, Mazi Kanu decides to bring up the case of the returning daughter-in-law who is Hausa. 'Our people say that the time a dead man's funeral arrangements are being discussed is also the best time to discuss who is to inherit the dead man's widow' (61).

After discussing with Fatima, Chief Ukadike tells Mazi Kanu: ‘... She is not happy at being left here by Doctor,... If care is not taken, *she may expose the head of a masquerade in the market place. A grown-up man does not stay in the house and let a goat go through the process of delivery in tether...*’ (87)

The two proverbs above are revealing: if Fatima exposes the head of masquerade in the market place, she has done the abominable. This proverb is necessitated by her scepticism as observed by Ukadike during their conversation – she argues against the Civil Defence and too many indiscriminate checkpoints; she bluntly and fearlessly dismisses as false the brainwashing rumours Ukadike presents as reasons for the existence of the checkpoints. The second proverb implies that if Fatima is thus capable of the unthinkable, Mazi Kanu, as the old man at home, should not sit and watch an abomination take place. This is appropriately advisory to Mazi Kanu, hence his thankful response and explanation: ‘Welcome, my son who has also become my father! Your words are excellent... Is it not a big shame that my son should be the long-mouthed mouse which waits until labour pains set in before building a nest for its use? (87) – implying that Dr Kanu never bothered to build a house at home before the war, now there is war, he thinks of coming to erect one for his wife and child.

The Fatima-Halima episode presents the writer an opportunity to drop a proverb in his narration: ‘The river which Halima thought had dried up suddenly flooded its banks’ (96). This comes in the wake of Fatima’s acceptance to do all she can to assist the suffering Halima.

Chief Ofo's words to Uduji come at a time when everybody is completely worn out by the war: 'Something stronger than the cricket has found its way into the cricket's hole!' (120). The war is that 'something' which is stronger than the cricket (the people of Biafra) As Mazi Kanu, Ukadike, Chief Ofo and Uduji discuss, shots are heard close by. Ukadike is sure it is from the enemy, and with the following proverb he justifies the truth of the situation and indirectly advises that they should be sensitive to the import of the close gun shots: 'When a dog heads to his death he loses the sense of smell' (122) – a proverb which in fact points to the sound of the gun shots as a premonition of the disaster that is to befall Obodo.

On the whole, the writer has presented Obodo people with the prerogative to speak in proverbs, using the proverbs metaphorically or didactically to perform advisory functions. At times, they are used to project a universal truth, or even to prop up arguments, or emphasize some points. People of other Biafran towns are too preoccupied with the rumbles of war and survival efforts to engage in the luxury of the flowery language of proverbs. Obodo is the last town to fall to the enemy, and so, its people have more time to tap from the rich culture of their language – the proverbs.

### **5.11 THE USE OF *DIALOGUE* AND *DREAMS* IN *The Search***

*The Search* is a detailed presentation of the socio-political and economic rough roads Nigeria has been treading since independence. Although Chukwuemeka Ike's preoccupation spans from post-independence to the present, there are flashes into the colonial era. Ike wrote this complex novel that treats

complex issues in a heterogeneously complex society, using complex characters. The characters, from different ethnic, religious, linguistic, educational and occupational backgrounds have something in common: the understanding and acknowledgement of the fact that Nigeria has not made any appreciable progress since its inception as one entity, because of a myriad of problems.

With the exception of Jambo and Izayes, Ike uses the other characters from a variety of backgrounds to tell his story by way of extensive dialogue without much of descriptive passages. Nigeria is blessed with superabundant natural resources, with no natural disasters, but leadership disaster resulting in resource management disaster. There is scarcely any facet of Nigeria's socio-political cum economic existence that is spared by Ike's critical arrow. With extensive dialogue among the characters, he exposes the myriad of problems clogging the progress of the nation.

As Emenyonu points out in Ugbabe (121):

Ike's technique of handling the multiple characters in the novel is to create mini assemblies for the characters at which they unleash strong words at each other in their argument and discourse over national issues. Ike uses dialogue as a means of bringing about the salient views in the encounters. The individuals discuss and argue from the perspective of their individual and collective experiences as persons in their own rights, and groups with particular sociological sensitivities.... Shehu is appointed the minister of education to the chagrin of the other members of the 'vocal' group. In their encounters, nothing that has relevance to Nigerian history and society is left out of the often explosive arguments. Included are sharp disagreements over the minority groups in their midst; the Hausa-Fulani hegemony and their often well crafted

mechanisms to “sustain the concept of a monolithic North”; interethnic animosities and religious fanaticism.

The myriad of problems besetting the nation gave signs prior to and after the election, that the nation was ‘ripe for a coup’. The general elections turn out to be the most fraudulent and unreliable in the history of the country. There is widespread corruption in high and low places. It is common knowledge that Jambo surrounded himself with ‘the most voracious and greedy daylight thieves in Nigerian history.’ Uncountable number of privately owned jet planes grace each occasion of turbaning or taking a new wife. They loot the treasury dry, and resort to foreign loans with built-in kickbacks for their individual coded accounts in foreign countries. Ethnic, religious and other selfish considerations made it seem unlikely that the military, dominated by northerners would overthrow a Northern President that belongs to the ruling class. All the same, Ola and his wife had discussed and agreed that ‘The country perched precariously on a keg of gunpowder, and anything could happen, especially if the presidential election went to a candidate from the South. The safest arrangement for any Nigerian... was to stay in his home State during the presidential election which came first...’ (21). Alhaji Mason, in a conversation with Dr Ola, had sensed the possibility of a coup in which Jambo’s brothers in the army would replace him with their own brother. Dr Ola had refuted Mason’s line of argument, but it has come to pass. In Dr Ola’s consternation, he confesses to Mason that he ‘still can’t figure it out’, to which Mason, who has lived 35 years among the Hausa/Fulani remarks, ‘All those years, I have studied them like the Koran’ (13). And goes on to explain to a bewildered Dr Ola:



‘Our people make the mistake of thinking that Northerners have no brains. That is why they play us about like football. When the big man from the East visited Northern Nigeria before the 1959 elections, they gave him a white horse, danced all their dances for him, and promised to make him Prime Minister after the general elections. What happened in the end? They made their own man Prime Minister and left the Big man to enjoy his dreams?’

See how they have dribbled our people in the RP. Our people helped them to make their own man President. Because at the next general election it would be our turn to produce a President, they arranged a coup to put another of their brothers on top. Mark my words. When these army boys who are just coming in have ruled to their satisfaction, they will start a new political party which will present their own brother as President. And our people will rush to join them!’ (15)

This is one of the many ‘well crafted mechanisms’ employed by the North to remain perpetually in power – a fact Ola is already aware of, that there is the possibility that the Hausa/Fulani might try to pull a fast one when the need arises, to perpetuate their hold on power’ (28). This is a fact Barrister Dipo is oblivious of, and defects to the RP. Here is part of the dialogue between him and Ola.

‘The presidency of this country was to have rotated to the South this year, wasn’t it?’ Ola pointed out. ‘But when nomination time came, a new theory of “incumbency” sprang up from the Northern magic hat, to give the Northern incumbent another four years....’

‘If that was true, which I doubt, it wouldn’t carry them far. At the end of his second term, the present incumbent will be barred by the constitution from seeking a further term.’

‘The speculation in Bauchi is that at the appropriate time they will pull something new out of the magic hat to ensure their continued domination,’ Ola observed. (27)

The dialogue sometimes, especially when Dr Shehu joins them, can be so heated that we are told (53) that ‘Kaneng’s pulse quickened’. Ola asked Shehu whether it

is sheer coincidence that the new Head of State belongs to the same ethnic group as the ousted President. Ola's wife is always there to try to calm down her husband physically and psychologically. Shehu has just come in, and Dapa, Professor Eni's wife asks:

‘So there was truth in those rumours soon after the announcement of the election results?’

Shehu replies:

‘Sure. It's only that... am... gov't did not want to issue any statement on it. Am... am... our foreign detractors would have twisted the whole thing round to imply that the re-election of the President, and the landslide victory achieved by the RP were manipulated and rigged.’

‘Weren't they?’ Ola heard himself ask.

‘Which political party didn't rig, especially where they had the opportunity to rig?’ Kaneng fired a smokescreen.

‘Thank you, my sister!’ Shehu flashed an appreciative smile at Kaneng. ‘Election rigging has come to stay in this country, whether we like it or not... am... even in such things as importing personal cars.’ (51)

And this last bit Shehu chipped in about importing personal cars turns out a source of mental torture to Ola (59). Dr Ola has an unmasked bitterness against the North/South dichotomy and the forces making it possible for the North to arrogate upon themselves the ‘divine right’ to rule the rest of the country perpetually. Dr Ola's morbid fear and suspicion of the Northern oligarchy forms the basis of his disturbed psyche throughout the 22 hours life span of the novel. The fear, suspicion and animosity couched in Ola's contributions in the dialogues are directed at Shehu, not as a person, but as a symbol of Northern domination. As an individual, Shehu is a family friend, but the entire travails of the nation, all the

wrongs, all the injustices of the country loaded in Ola's brain have to have an outlet, and Shehu becomes the scapegoat. The fact is that the South wants a level playing ground with their Northern brothers, some rotational leadership, some share of the 'national cake' since it is one Nigeria. The North also votes for one Nigeria as a family provided it is the type where they are the senior brothers. Shehu, a member of the Northern ruling class and a member of the Kaduna mafia, at the age of 29, already has an enviably mesmerizing profile (48).

In their dialogue, Professor Eni asks Ola specifically 'why do you feel hostile to Dr Abubakar? He obviously likes you; otherwise he wouldn't have championed your cause at the mafia'. Ola replies: 'I've asked myself that question too, Prof. But I guess I react to him the way I do because of what he symbolizes. I just don't accept the idea that a bunch of people should perpetually hold the rest of the country to ransom. I also detest their methods, you know. And the social and religious system which makes it so easy for mobs to slaughter innocent human beings and burn their material possessions without provocation and without remorse' (184 – 185). The military junta announces Shehu Minister of Education. He quickly extends his hand of friendship to the Olas' – asking Dr Ola to consider being made a director general (D.G), and for Kaneng, something yet to be named, but juicy – but it all depends on Ola's response. Ola's eventual refusal of the post as a matter of his principles of life demonstrates his pure and untainted nature from the beginning to the end. If he had been swept off his feet by the tempting and irresistible offer, what he himself stands for: *opposition to Northern domination*, would have been defeated.

Chukwuemeka Ike, in telling the story of *The Search*, has effectively deployed dialogue more than he has ever done in any of the texts under study. He has used dialogue to allow the characters tell it as it is from their various perspectives. The dialogue also ensures some kind of cross-fertilization of ideas among the characters. Here is a novel that chronicles the socio-political and economic problems of Nigeria, and the worries about these problems are reflected in every character's contribution in the dialogue. In so doing, the dialogue system provides a safety valve, some psychological relief from the burden hitherto weighing them down. As Professor Eni observes: 'I suppose talking things over the way we have done is one way of dealing with the matter' (108). Emenyonu points out in *Ugbabe* (121): 'And the author keeps them talking, underlining the importance of dialogue rather than war and acrimony in the solution of the socio-political problems that Nigerians face as a people. Through the tirades and vituperations of the characters at these encounters, the reader is exposed to their individual fears, hopes, aspirations, failures and successes, as well as those of the groups they represent and whose sentiments they articulate.' In addition to these are their assumptions and prejudices. The pidgin conversation between Azuka's driver and his shop assistant is used to show that even the members of the lower class in the society aspire to become rich, not by hard work, but by fraud and illegality. Some aspects of the dialogue perform an advisory function, especially from the elders to the youth. For example, Eni and his wife, somewhat older, have resigned attitude to the whole idea of saving the country from the crippling

problems, even though they wish it done in their life time. Professor Eni's wife (Dapa) in her dialogue with Kaneng, advises her:

'Your husband... is still imbued with a vision of a great future for this country, and he gets worked up whenever anything happens which distorts that image or makes the attainment of that great future less likely.... I'm afraid I no longer have any such clear vision, and I fear I have dragged my poor husband along with me.... What I've seen with my eyes in this country is sufficient to destroy any illusion that this country will achieve true greatness in my lifetime. Somehow I fear that we'll continue bungling and stumbling as a nation until we've taken sufficient battering and become alive to our responsibilities, until we've expropriated our resources to the point where there is nothing left to steal.

'More importantly, my dear, I don't think this country is worth dying for....' (126 – 127)

And with what he calls 'the closing sermon', Professor Eni winds up his own discussion with Dr Ola by enjoining him thus:

'You mustn't let news of military coups, election rigging, divisive actions of mafias, and such shocks destroy your principles, your faith in one Nigeria. If my experience over the years is anything to go by, however, I would be reluctant, if I were you, to put myself in the position in which I feel I must accept responsibility for the collective sins of the country.' (188)

The novel was published in 1991, that is, eighteen years ago, and this year (2009), Nigeria marks a decade of uninterrupted democracy. What about the shortcomings of the nation as articulated in *The Search* since 18 years ago? While discussing with Ola and others, Azuka says that whether it is military or civilian, '...what was crying is still crying' (70), which would be a mild assessment of Nigeria today. For the 10 years of Nigeria's democracy, Chukwuemeka Ike says, 'We've only gone nuclear in election rigging.' (*The Sunday Sun*: 11) He says,

‘Previously, electoral malpractice manifested itself through inflation of electoral figures, snatching of ballot boxes, and possibly thuggery. But this time around, there was nothing called election yet there were results, and people announced as having won.’ Thus, what was crying is not just crying, but also now screaming! This point, the perpetual domination of the entire country by the North, the constant unprovoked slaughter of Southerners in the North and the looting and burning of their property under the guise of religion, the constitutional injustice embedded in the *federal character* clause, which form the subject of the dialogues in the text, all these endorse the substance of *The Search* as an evergreen treatise on the formidable socio-political predicament of the Nigerian nation.

Besides the use of extensive dialogue to put across the message of *The Search*, Ike also uses dreams as another technique for exposing the tortuous and stagnant times the country is going through. This is not the first time in his writing that Ike is delving into the realms of dream. He used it extensively in *The Potter’s Wheel*, but there the dreams serve more for paragraph development. In *Conspiracy of Silence* also dream plays an important role. In *The Search*, his use of dreams goes beyond paragraph development, and ventures into symbolic analysis of the complexity of the socio-political and economic problems of the nation. There are two dreams in *The Search*, both by Dr Ola.

In the first (28 – 29), there is a frantic call from one Yinka, to inform Dipo and his household, including their guest (Ola) to evacuate from the house immediately. They should disappear without delay. Their lives depend on this information. Before they knew it, masked men burst into the premises and grab

Dipo, strap his hands behind his back, sprinkled petrol on him and set him ablaze. The police arrive, bundle the family into a van and head towards their headquarters. The murderers return, finding nobody, they set the whole premises ablaze and all that the Dipo had are gone.

This dream, besides its effect on paragraph development, is a grotesque re-enactment and re-shaping of discussions and events shortly before Ola's 'objective sense' withdrew into sleep. The grotesque nature of the murder and arson re-enact that aspect of the Yoruba people Ola and Dipo discussed before the sleep, in connection with Dipo's defection to RP, where Dipo told him 'We have always been a volatile people. Moreover politics can turn men into beasts' (25). When Kaneng, Ola's wife, wakes him from this nightmare and tells him that she heard his voice in distress while he was asleep, and suggests meeting a psychiatrist, he blames her for always reminding him about 'human barbeques'. It was just before he went to sleep that he teased Kaneng that Berom people were superstitious, and Kaneng fired back that Ekiti people were primitive and cherished human barbeques. So, it was this dialogue, and the one with Dipo that were grossly exaggerated and re-enacted in Ola's dream. Again, this nightmare was possible because all the socio-economic and political problems of the nation have almost shattered his psyche.

The second dream (211 – 234) comes in the form of a spotlight the size of a full moon. In the foreground is the grounded 'massive Ship of State', which metaphorically represents Nigeria. This is artistically presented in a series of phantasmagoric scenes, with 'conduit pipes' attached to the massive ship,

siphoning all the life there is from the 'massive giant of Africa'. The symbols are very telling! The reader is made to understand that it is a vision. Ola is obviously in some kind of trance. After all the explosive dialogues about the socio-political problems of Nigeria, in the night, Ola's wife lulls him to sleep. However, the high-level obsession he suffers because of the problems of the nation would not let him go far in the sleep. He is already up, in the wee hours, to ruminate over pressing issues. And while in a somnolent state, a spotlight appears, and he dialogues with three different voices. Through these voices, Ike re-enacts Nigeria's predicament. The country is symbolically visualized by Ola as the massive Ship of State that is grounded by socio-political and economic problems, too much for the ship to make any advancement. Economically raped, the Ship of State stays stagnant, with innumerable conduit pipes plugged into her belly, through which the economy of the nation is vigorously siphoned for selfish use by those in power and those who were once in power. They siphon the economy to Europe, America, etc, and buy up estates and shipyards abroad. They virtually suck the nation dry. The voices also go ahead to proffer solutions such as stringent laws and jail terms for corruption and electoral offences. They also suggest rotation principle to apply from presidential down to local government elections, thus rendering political parties and their activities unnecessary.

All these, and more, Ola sees in a dream-like somnolent state, a state made possible by his high obsession and near demented state of mind caused by the myriad of problems facing the Nigerian nation.



## 5.12 AYO'S DREAM, DĒNOUEMENT AND SUSPENSE IN *Conspiracy of Silence*

Ayo's aborted novel on Nwanneka's fatherlessness is conceived by Chukwuemeka Ike to serve as the thread with which to hold together the bits and pieces of first hand and second hand experiences relayed by respondents. The plot is such that Nwanneka, the chief character, is fatherless, and nobody seems to know who her father is. Her mother, who got pregnant as a teenager while in secondary school, refuses to disclose who her biological father is. This singular act of a teenage pregnant schoolgirl refusing to disclose who is responsible for her pregnancy and refusing to terminate the pregnancy is the artistic foundation on which the robust suspense of the novel is built. Holman defines suspense as 'The poised anticipation of the reader or audience as to the outcome of events... particularly as these events affect a character in the work for whom the reader or audience has formed a sympathetic attachment. Suspence is a major device for the securing and maintaining of interest in all forms of fiction....' (434). With the foundation of the suspense firmly laid, the interest of the reader is held tight with all the desperate efforts made by the character (Nwanneka) to uncover her paternal roots. She had asked her mother (Ukamaka), and there was no favourable answer. She had asked her foster parents (Mazi Uche Obioha and his wife, Amuche), and got no favourable answer. She had tried to extract information from Amuche using her two sons (Nneka's cousins). This also did not yield the answer. She had pretended to be compiling a biography of her mother on her 50<sup>th</sup> birthday; interview with some identified school friends of her mother's yielded no

fruit. A most daring attempt was on newspaper and television, and responses proved to be fraudulent people. She considered hiring a private detective to trace who her father is, but Gozie discouraged her. Then she approaches Ayo, the novelist 'to use the novel to stem the alarming incidence of fatherlessness in our society' (9), to use her 'unpleasant experience to draw public attention to the problems of fatherless children' (7).

With the background thus set, the reader cannot control his imagination about who it was that had impregnated the teenage schoolgirl (Ukamaka), the biological father to Nneka. Why did this teenage schoolgirl refuse to disclose the secret to anybody whatsoever; why did she say that abortion would be over her dead body? (28). These points set the stage, and provide the suspense for the reader who is convinced that somehow Ayo's investigative machinery would 'break the Nsugbe coconut'.

Ayo's machinery involves interaction with Nwanneka, her friends, her relations, the media. But the ironic twist of events later reveals that Gozie and her husband are both fatherless, but each told the other a lie when they were to get married. Gozie is actually the 'Gozie's friend' in the story she presented to Ayo. When Chijioke Madu comes to see Ayo, the discussion that leads to Madu's story about his own friend is crucial. He tells Ayo that what baffles him is that such a brilliant, pleasant young lady would just waste away, vowing to remain single for life just because her mother refused to disclose who her father is. This idea of remaining single for life is an echo whose vibration reminds us of, and underscores the importance of an earlier narration (11). At the same time, it is

premonitory – a presentiment of what turns out to be the final act and decision in the novel. The narrator had earlier told us:

The idea of approaching a novelist to write a novel on her experience as a fatherless person had come as a brainwave before she was halfway through *The Orphan*. A novel woven around her fatherless life, could serve as a mirror of the trauma some traditions inflict on innocent young people, and could create something positive for posterity out of a bitter life experience.

Her fatherlessness had triggered off other brainwaves. Her choice of a career as a paediatrician, for instance, had begun as one such brainwave. Specializing as a paediatrician seemed an ideal avenue for reaching and assisting socially and psychologically disadvantaged children.

Remaining single for life had also come as a brainwave after she had hit one of the brick walls in her life as a fatherless child. Larger than life portraits of Florence Nightingale and Mother Theresa had chased away her earlier dream of an early marriage with a caring husband and adorable children of her own to take her mind off her problems as a fatherless child. Lipsticks, nail polish, trinkets, trendy fashion and hairstyles ceased to fascinate her. She avoided anything that could result in love relationships or give the wrong signals to the male sex. (11)

On further prodding by Ayo, Chijioke sees a great deal of wisdom in one Igbo proverb that there is no perimeter wall without a crack somewhere, and another that there is no homestead in Igboland without lizards and wall geckos. There is no human being that does not have a problem. The problem for some may be fatherlessness, for some it may be *motherlessness*, for some it is *parentlessness*, for some it is *husbandlessness*, for some *wifelessness*, for some *childlessness*, for some it is *moneylessness*, while for some it is *homelessness*. Then he asks Ayo, ‘Would I, because I fit into one of these categories feel that life is not worth living, forgetting my pluses?’ (36)

Chijioke's argument is sound and plausible. He is not alone in this line of reasoning. Mazi Obioha feels that having completed her education and secured a brilliant career, everyone has rallied round her: her uncle – the Senior Advocate, who is extremely fond of her, the Obiohas who take her as their own daughter, and even her mother. Mazi Obioha continues, 'We thought that by now she would have got over the fact that she does not have a biological father, accepted one of the fine young men itching to marry her, and settle down to make her own family and face the future with confidence. But it appears to be either her father of nothing' (26). Embedded in Mazi Obioha's line of argument is a solid irony resulting from the robust suspense around which the novel is structured. Nneka does have a biological father, but unknown to Mazi, he has just mentioned the biological father without being aware of it. Another pillar of irony from the suspense comes from Barrister Ejindu who in response to Ayo's request to meet with Barrister Ofoma (SAN) says:

'I would suggest you leave him out of it. As I told you earlier, he is extremely busy. Moreover, he is hypertensive, and I suspect Nnwanneka's hypersensitivity over her fatherlessness has contributed to his condition. I've heard him advise her to forget all about a father she never knew as such and carve out a happy and fulfilled world for herself.'  
(80)

In their discussion, Ayo extracts from him, some aspects of the motivating force behind actions resulting in fatherlessness. There is the age-old desire to maintain the continuity of the family line at all costs. When males are in danger of extinction, females are made to remain in the family and bear children, to help save the family from extinction. Another reason is the desire to maintain family

continuity, especially in the case of impotent husbands, thus divorce is taken care of in Igboland. Yet others are young widows who could not produce children before the death of their husbands. There are also single girls who did not receive acceptable offers of marriage, who go ahead to produce fatherless children. He tells Ayo that he himself is fatherless, and that his mother refused to tell him who fathered him, but he has always had a de facto father, as Nnwanneka has. He concludes that 'I see this hullabaloo about fatherless children as a storm in a teacup. It is a non-issue' (85). He left after advising him to be careful 'that the law of libel exists in our statute book'.

The appearance of Barrister Ejindu is strategically important to Chukwuemeka Ike's story line. Besides providing Ayo with another piece of evidence of fatherlessness (i.e. himself as fatherless), also besides providing information on some motivating forces behind fatherlessness, he bridges the gap between Ayo and the SAN. His mention of Barrister Ofoma (SAN), and the advise that Ayo should be careful not to be liable to libel are two past events exploited by the dream to present to Ayo a foreboding that all is not well. And like dreams, the clues are not straightforward. Chukwuemeka Ike no doubt makes use of dreams in his novels for special effect, especially in *The Potter's Wheel* and *The Search*. Ayo's dream in *Conspiracy of Silence* takes the same pattern, and performs almost the same function. Ayo's objective senses had withdrawn into rest, and sleep was in progress. In the dream, his past contact with Barrister Ejindu, the nature of their discussion, and Ayo's state of mind all come to play, giving him some premonition of events/experiences that are yet to come.

Curiously, the setting of the dream is High Court, Onitsha – Barrister Ofoma’s station: the plaintiff is Barrister Ofoma himself; the charge concerns writing the book on Nwanneka the niece to the plaintiff, in which (Ayo) the defendant, ‘maliciously painted a scurrilous picture of the plaintiff as a sex maniac incapable of distinguishing between a prostitute and his own daughter’ (135). The dream is ominous in two ways which Ayo’s psyche cannot decode: it prefigures the death of Barrister Ofoma at exactly that midnight hour when Ayo was battling with the dream; secondly, from the charge that Barrister Ofoma is painted as a sex maniac who does not know the difference between his daughter and a prostitute, the dream indirectly points at Barrister Ofoma as the yet-undisclosed biological father of Nwanneka.

It is important to note that Barrister Ofoma (SAN) is created to exist only in name and fame, not as a physical character performing in the story. We hear about him and his achievements; we do not see or hear him physically. This is deliberate, for Ike has to help to mask the man who is the pillar of the story. The only person who knows (Ukamaka) does not disclose the man, Barrister Ofoma. So it is clear that the author conspired with Ukamaka to keep Barrister Ofoma influential but physically absent and inactive in the story. With this top-secrecy, Ukamaka succeeds in protecting her own image. For the author, the secret helps to sustain his suspense technique.

Everybody seems to have the same feeling as Mazi Obiora, Chijioke and Barrister Ejindu that Nneka’s depression, her paranoid state is self-inflicted, and unwarranted. Ayo’s response to Chijioke’s views on the matter (36) is:

‘Wouldn’t you agree it’s a matter of degree?’ Ayo asked. ‘A homeless, childless, moneyless, husbandless, or wifeless person has some hope that his fortunes may change one day and he could own a home, a child, money, a husband, or a wife. But if you are faithless, no change in your circumstances can ever alter that.’ (37)

This response by Ayo is only logical, but the truth-value is rickety as later events come to unfold; for he is yet to learn that a hitherto fatherless child who is made aware of his father can legitimize his existence by performing certain traditional ceremonies so that his mother acquires the status of the biological father’s wife. Tradition respects this. The newspaper features editor was ‘born fatherless’, found himself ‘a fatherless child, ...suffered the pangs of fatherlessness, and ...decided to set things right instead of grumbling perpetually’ (77). The Akukalia case (117) is also another good example. Chijioke’s final response suggests two options for anyone who is fatherless: ‘commit suicide, or accept that what has happened has happened and make the best of the situation. It is the second option we have repeatedly suggested to Nwanneka but she finds it difficult to accept. It is the option which has helped a very close friend of mine to keep his sanity in a situation much more complicated than Nwanneka’s’ (37). Chijioke’s two-value orientation argument here is deliberately brought into the discussion by the author for a purpose. The logic of two-value orientation posits only two phases/options, no more, for any given situation; that is, it is either A or B, no other. Ike uses this aspect of Chijioke’s close friend’s fatherlessness – an episode that the author uses not only to develop the story line further, but also to enhance the ironic twist of events. It stuns the reader to learn later that ‘Chijioke’s close friend’ in fact, is Chijioke himself (like his wife’s friend in her own story).

One thing which these characters fail to see is that Nneka is a revolutionary of a sort. People have repeatedly told her, and she knows it, that a promising young lady with a good profession can put behind her her fatherlessness and get married, like other such people, if possible by subterfuge. But she feels that marriage is a life-long matter which should not be founded on lies. This is a principle she cannot compromise (93). Nneka used lies to ward off two suitors she cherished because she could not fancy a marriage built on lies. Granting that the foundation of marriage should not be laid on lies, Ayo's frank advice is, 'When the next suitor comes, do NOT tell him lies. On the contrary, ...tell him the truth!' (94). From her mother's teenage pregnancy through her education and establishment by her uncle (the SAN), to her present status, no lies should be told. We notice here that she uses lies to ward off suitors, which is bad. Using lies to build a marriage is bad, all the same. By her reasoning, the latter is 'a life-long relationship'. So, lies about her paternity so as to get married are worse than lies about her paternity to ward off suitors. Therefore, she prefers the latter to the former. This crooked reasoning by Nneka is what Ayo merely scratches upon when he observes, '...on both occasions you told lies to terminate relationships which you yourself cherished, so it isn't that you are averse to telling lies....'(93)

In *Straight and Crooked Thinking* (1974), R.H. Thouless explains that in logic, it is common knowledge that every bad thing has a comparatively worse one. Thus, the existence of a worse thing does not make us accept a bad one as right. Chukwuemeka Ike is aware of the illogicality of Nneka's reasoning here, but he stiffens her character with this 'principle' she 'cannot compromise' so as to



enable her to perform the role he has set out for her. In her is imbued the revolutionary feeling that those obnoxious aspects of the tradition which create the nomenclature *fatherlessness*, with the attendant psychosocial effects on the child and the society, should, like unwanted pregnancies, be terminated (following the image of her mother's blunt refusal to terminate the teenage pregnancy that brought her to life). Gozie recognizes this revolutionary role when she tells Ayo that Nneka is playing the role of a guinea pig. And we hear from Nneka herself, using the image of a cadaver drawn from her field:

‘You may consider me queer, Gozie, but after I had made the request to Mr Femi, I suddenly felt like someone willing her body to the anatomy department as cadaver for pre-clinical students after her death, except that in my own case, I’m offering myself rather than my corpse to be opened up by a novelist!’ (9)

We have observed that the title of the text is *Conspiracy of Silence*, the theme is pandemic sexual promiscuity and adultery in every facet of Igboland resulting in fatherlessness and its psychosocial effects, with the society apparently endorsing it, the Church keeping guilty silence, and by half-hearted application of sanctions, gives a tacit approval to the overt and covert immoralities of the society. Basically, Nneka's revolution is meant to take care of this. We have mentioned Chukwuemeka Ike's use of robust suspense in this novel to stimulate the imagination of the reader, making him extremely curious to find out who had impregnated the teenage schoolgirl (Ukamaka), why she refused to disclose the person, and would prefer death to committing abortion. The reader, in his curiosity, anticipates that Ayo's investigative machinery would uncover these mysteries, and Nneka would eventually be happy to unite with her biological

father. But at the climax, what Ike treats his reader with is nothing short of a heartbreak. This sudden change and unanticipated turn of events or circumstances for the main character leads us to the dēnouement which plays effectively upon the expectations of the audience or readers, and so heightens the emotional intensity. Holman (123) sees dēnouement as *the solution of the mystery...an ingenious untying of the knot of an intrigue....* The closer dēnouement is to the end of a story, the more dramatic it tends to be. And this is exactly where Ike has located this technique. At the climax of the whole story, when Nneka comes face to face with the truth she has been pining away for, she finds it so abnormal, so unnatural that her revolutionary spirit surrenders to the truth: her father is Uncle Ik; Uncle Ik is a blood brother to Ukamaka; Ukamaka is her mother; she is therefore the offspring of an incestuous relationship. This point of dēnouement needs a strong will to stand and face the odds. However, unfortunately, she crumbles. Her revolution fails. Ayo's impending novel is aborted.

## CHAPTER SIX

### SUMMARY, FINDINGS, CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS TO KNOWLEDGE

#### 6.1 SUMMARY

Style in language use is the arrangement of words in a way that best expresses one's thoughts. This can be good or bad, plain or unmarked. An unmarked style is regarded as a style of zero degree by Roland Barthes, but other scholars have come to agree that a style of degree zero can, in fact, be syntactically significant. Stylistics is the linguistic study of style, and this study analyses and describes distinctive expressions in language use vis-à-vis the content, thus bringing out their functional significance in a work of art. Modern stylistics (i.e. dating from the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century) has its origin in traditional rhetoric, specifically the branch referred to as *elocutio*, having gone through the stage of comparative philology in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. This metamorphosis of rhetoric in antiquity into modern stylistics through comparative philology is the brainchild of Charles Bally, Ferdinand de Saussure's student. The new era of linguistic stylistics is represented by the emotionalistic conception of the French School of Charles Bally. Charles Bally's stylistics was writer-centred, thus *expressive stylistics*. While Bally's expressive stylistics reigned in the Romance countries, a linguistic and literary movement known as *formalism* developed in Russia. At the collapse of this movement, some of its ideas were modified and they became part of structuralism. Structuralism later found its way

into the Prague School Linguistics, which influenced stylistics a great deal. A similar movement was at the time going on in the U.S., with Edward Sapir and Leonard Bloomfield as leading exponents. While these were going on, the *New Criticism* developed in Britain with I.A. Richards and William Empson. M.A.K. Halliday's structuralist approach influenced British stylistics a great deal.

Linguistic stylistics differs from literary criticism. If a style study leans heavily on external correlates, bringing to bear on the text, extra-textual material from social history, philosophy, biography or psychology, etc, with intermittent textual reference, coming up with explication that is generally imaginative, speculative, subjective and impressionistic, that is literary criticism. But if a style study begins and concludes its analysis and synthesis from the text itself, rigorously examining how a special configuration of language has been used in the realization of a particular subject matter, quantifying all the linguistic means that coalesced to achieve a special aesthetic purpose, that is a linguistic stylistic study. The term *linguistic stylistics* was coined by Donald Freeman in 1968. It is what Enkvist also refers to as a stylolinguistic study. Stanley Fish feels that linguistic stylistics is an attempt to put criticism on a scientific basis, having come into existence as a reaction to the subjectivity and imprecision of literary criticism.

Much of literary criticism is aesthetic. Such aesthetic terms as urbane, florid, lucid, etc are not directly referable to observable linguistic features in texts. Linguistic stylistics utilizes the non-aesthetic to provide evidence for the appropriate use of any aesthetic term. The scientific nature of linguistic stylistics

includes the attempt to make explicit the role of frequencies and statistical analysis in formalizing the difference between the usual and the unusual. The rise of this 'scientific' study of style brought about a season of 'war of words' between linguistic stylisticians and literary critics. However, scholars have come to agree on the necessity of a symbiotic relationship between the linguistic approach and the literary approach in achieving an indepth explication of a work.

It is in recognition of this last point that this research subjected Chukwuemeka Ike's novels to such linguistic frames as diction, phrasal, clausal and sentence typology, and paragraph structure. In addition to these, the research explored the linguo-literary schemes used in achieving the internal cohesion of the message structure in the texts.

Going by their diction, the texts studied are of a reasonable level of readability. This is evidenced by the predominant use of simple lexical items of everyday use in all the texts. *Toads for Supper* is rendered in the typical linguistic habit of undergraduates of Nigerian universities – the tendency to start a conversation in Standard English, from which they veer into peer-group slang and to Pidgin English, frequently code-switching into the native language of the environment. This linguistic flexibility is context-determined, and Ike handles this effectively to enable smooth flow of communication among people of diverse linguistic and educational backgrounds. In *The Naked Gods*, Ike's concern is to use diction to delineate character, with some of the words and phrases coming with vibrations of ridicule by exaggeration, sometimes with outright humour. Words of everyday use are deployed as 'house-slang' by students and their friends

at Government College Ahia, in *The Bottled Leopard*. The house-slang employed is readable and comprehensible within the context of usage. The major problem here is the profuse injection of Igbo words, some meaningless, some slotted in without any stylistic value. *The Potter's Wheel* shows the multi-functionality of words, using the metaphoric analogy in the catchall type of title to a highly stylistic advantage. Ike also makes effective use of euphemistic words and phrases to avoid offending the reader's sensibilities. He attaches great onomastic importance to names, especially native and biblical names. *Sunset at Dawn* chronicles the sufferings and experiences of people in the Nigeria/Biafra war seen through the writer's own lenses. Diction here is vigorously bitter, matching the perils and bitterness of the war. This is proved by the relative frequency of such bitter words as *pogrom* and *vandals* in relation to the single digit occurrence of other invectives. Ike uses such words effectively in the description of the prevailing tension, hardships and incidents. Some peer-group slang and very high symbolic use of the word, *sun*, are identified. The onomastic intensity here is not as much as the writer deployed in *The Potter's Wheel*. *The Chicken Chasers*, like *Sunset at Dawn*, exhibits phallic images as symbol of male authority and strength. The indecent slang words and phrases are used to underscore the level of moral depravity among the ruling class in the ACO. Young secondary school boys and girls, in *Expo '77*, use peer group codes for cheating in examinations. The deployment of Pidgin English in this text is to ensure communication with the less educated question paper vendors, and also with the Nigeria Police – which supports the impression created in the text that the police are not well educated.

*Our Children are Coming!* displays Ike's characteristic simplicity of diction, apt descriptive passages, a relatively high frequency of forensic diction and idiosyncratic coinages. From *Sunset at Dawn* to *The Bottled Leopard* and *Our Children are Coming!*, Ike demonstrates very bright creative morphological adaptations: *footroen*, *bedmatics*, *teleguided*, *kwashiokpa*, *moneyokor*, and *cashiokor*. In several of the texts, Ike finds the word, *black*, and its compound formations, offensive because of the racist undertone attached to them. He tries to replace them as in *whitemail* (for *blackmail*), *white sheep* (for *black sheep*). But one or two lexical items (*matchet* and *dane*), because of their misleading morphological and phonotactic structures are regarded by the writer as English words but they are not.

*Conspiracy of Silence* deals with the objectionable traditions of the Igbo, and Ike does this story with a good sense of syntagmatic foregrounding. The semantic interpretation of selected lexical items used vis-à-vis their society-imposed meanings reveals the underlying ethical muddle plaguing Igboland. The key lexical item, *incest*, is deliberately avoided until the end as a technique to sustain the robust suspense upon which the story structure is built. In this text also, Ike demonstrates further his flair for neologistic style with negative noun coinages as *familylessness*, *parentlessness*, *husbandlessness*, *wifelessness* and *moneylessness*. In most cases, the relative statistical frequencies of certain key words, unusual phrases and neologisms in the texts are indices for determining the message structure.

The realisation of the message of *The Bottled Leopard* is by four sentence patterns: the normal simple, compound, and complex structures, the one-word type, the two-word type and the truncated type. Some of such strings are very long forms with zero predicates, and sometimes numbering up to sixty-four words to give us a kind of NP with zero Predicate. This is obviously some sort of syntactic surgery that tries to shuffle aside the rules of the grammar to achieve some level of precision. In *The Naked Gods* we meet sentences that display normal clausal hypotaxis and asyndeton, fragmentation and ellipsis. Generally, the sentences here are heavily clogged with too many co-ordinate and subordinate clauses and phrases. The opening sentence for instance is a complex weaving of ten clauses. There is a remarkable punctuation pattern, with the author's preference for the use of the semi-colon. This is because of the many clausal nesting Ike is weaving in the text. What partly accounts for this heavy sentence pattern is the nature of the protracted struggles for supremacy among the University of Songhai academia, and all sorts of pressures from influential natives. What is stylistically marked in *The Potter's Wheel* is Ike's skillful deployment of reporting clauses, with a preponderance of terminal reporting clauses as against the initial and medial. This is unique, since scholars generally believe that medial position is the most frequent among writers. The reporting clauses, with their action verbs, are used by Ike to direct the movement of the dialogues, and thus they act as propellers to the story line. Ike captures the wrangling and discordant atmosphere prevalent in Teacher's house with reporting verbs that are highly charged and emotive. Ike's clausal nesting capability through



subordination, co-ordination and asyndeton goes a step further into the pattern of *sentence catalogue* in *Sunset at Dawn*. Here, the author demonstrates his liking for the heavy stops – the colon and semi-colon, with the latter playing a special appositive function while the former plays an anticipatory role. Characteristically he uses the dash parenthetically to mark off interpolated complete sentences. There are also chopped-up sentence patterns reminiscent of entries in a memoir, as in the *Postscript*, where fragmented and telegraphic ‘sentences’ and rhetorical questions are rendered with zero NPs. This, Ike used to signal the fast dramatic close, ominous future and instant moulting’ taking place among the Biafran survivors. In *The Chicken Chasers*, choppy sentences and repetitions are used. Compact elliptical clauses and rhetorical questions come as aspects of narrated internal communication in the fashion of free indirect speech. The narrated monologues are replete with truncated ‘sentences’, which by our analysis are forms of syntactically bound clauses that are made to assume the status of sentences. The preponderance of the sentence slashes signal fast movement of scenes in the minds of the characters. The repetitions intensify the conflict that is at the core of the text. With *Our Children are Coming!*, we see an appropriate matching of message, language and context. Ike’s effort here makes a careful distinction between the syntax of colloquial presentation and that of Standard English. Of stylistic importance is the interjection mark that punctuates the title.

In paragraph structure, *Toads for Supper* exhibits paragraph design and development largely enriched with interior monologue. The barrage of interior interrogatives and dialogues are used to flesh out the structure of the paragraphs

and stylistically unveil the thought process of the characters, especially at moments of high mental activities. *The Bottled Leopard* has paragraphs of varying lengths – some up to a page, others just one or two sentences. There is a remarkable connection between the last paragraph of Chapter one and the last paragraph of the last Chapter. The former is stylistically the *topic paragraph* that presents a thesis which the latter debunks as unfathomable. The other texts exhibit paragraph structures that are conventional in form. What we have in *The Search* are paragraphs of dialogue, which are mainly direct speech. There is also a conscious design of direct/indirect speech paragraph alternation. This is consistent to a high degree in *The Search*.

There are some non-linguistic schemes this research explored, which Ike employed in the development of his story line and in the internal ordering of the message structure of the texts. The features include humour, idioms and proverbs, Americanisms, propaganda, echoism, onomastics, symbolism, dreams, the use of *you*, suspense and denouement. Some of these identified linguo-literary features come into play in varying degrees in some of the texts while others, though of schematic importance, do not feature prominently in the texts.

## **6.2 FINDINGS**

The following are the salient findings from the research.

- i) In telling his stories, some of the texts are replete with Igbo words and expressions.
- ii) Some of the Igbo words are meaningless in the contexts they appear.

- iii) There are morphologically deviant formations, and also formations that demonstrate Ike's flair for neologisms.
- iv) In Ike's quest for neologistic style, he sometimes goes beyond limit, resulting in some creative oversights as in *matchet* and *dane*.
- v) There are instances of linguistic evidence of the writer's rejection of the racist undertone in the word, *black*, leading to some illogical substitutions with *white*, as in whitemail/for blackmail, white sheep/for black sheep, etc.
- vi) Ike's network of lexical selection, generally speaking, makes the texts highly readable, comprehensible and enjoyable.
- vii) Ike's diction succeeds in delivering his message effectively in all the texts studied. It is also discovered that Ike consciously adheres to character code concordance – a stylistic norm in which there is appropriate linguistic matching between character and language.
- viii) His clausal nesting, even when it appears heavy, does not blur comprehension. The clauses are so woven to suit the various situations of the stories. Truncated sentence patterns are deliberately employed when scenes are moving fast.
- ix) For the punctuation pattern, the heavy marks are employed when lots of coordination and subordination are needed.

- x) The deployment of linguo-literary features in the texts is effective. For instance, the way he uses dreams to venture into the realms of incorporeality and task man's limited psyche is admirable.

### 6.3 CONCLUSIONS

In spite of the lumpy clausal nesting in some of the texts, giving them heavy syntactic movement, and in spite of the excessive adornment of some of the texts with Igbo words, Ike's novels make very interesting reading especially for one with an eye for good language. By good language here, we mean good lexical selection, sentence structures that match the prevailing scenario in the texts, and good paragraph designs. For instance, when highly educated people are involved (such as a Vice-Chancellor before a High Court Judge), we experience a language very rich in vocabulary, sentence structures and logical presentation. This is not so when an illiterate widow, or a semi-literate person, for instance, is presented. Ike is indeed a practised writer with incisive morphological and syntactic creative adaptations that challenge the intuition of the reader. His sense of humour is infectious as it relaxes the reader and aids the processing of his story line.

### 6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

This research recommends the following:

- i) Students at this level of research can abstract the features of stylolinguistics as given by Enkvist, Leech and Short to research into the areas of *readability* and *textual complexity*. They should note that these areas are highly influenced by

such factors as the level of diction (how generally difficult/easy), clause structure, sentence structure (are these obscure, heavy, involving too many co-ordination and subordination), inter- and –intra sentence cohesion and connectivity in texts, density of rhetorical figures, symbols (abstract/easy to decode) and allusions (obscure/easy).

- ii) Students can go further than what we have done here to conduct full anatomy of reporting clauses in texts with a view to discovering how effectively the writer has deployed the reporting verbs to show writer's feelings towards the speakers, towards the subject matter, or even how they depict the general mood of the texts or crucial parts of the texts.
- iii) A researcher could conduct a study of Ike's language use from a type of diachronic perspective, looking at the progression of his language from *Toads for Supper* (1965) to *The Bottled Leopard* (1985) i.e. two decades of his writing.
- iv) Another could examine one or two linguistic aspects of his works from 1985 to present day.
- v) The novels could be subjected to one of the linguistic moulds we have used in this research (diction or sentence patterns for instance, could be used).

## **6.5 CONTRIBUTIONS TO KNOWLEDGE**

- i) The research has demonstrated how a constellation of linguistic schemes that coalesce to produce a work can be analysed and synthesized.
- ii) It has shown how the relative frequencies of certain lexical and syntactic items can provide the clue to the message and the dominating mood of the text.
- iii) The thesis has also established a plausible connection between rhetoric in antiquity and what is regarded as modern stylistics.

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