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Table of Contents

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Farooq Kperogi's Article on Pantami Professorship Saga ¹EZE, Patricia and ²ABDULLAHI, Hadiza Bello	1-10
Critical Discourse Analysis of the Speech of Former Senate President Ahmed Lawan on Xenophobic Attacks in South Africa Habu YUSUF	11-21
Overview of Systemic Functional Grammar Theory: Language as a Social Semiotic System ¹ABDUL, Mohammed Adem and ²DANJI Sabo	22-31
Tale of a Poor Girl in Need of a Long Lasting Marriage: An Analysis of Hausa Folktale Abubakar MOHAMMED Gombe Ph.D	32-38
A Morphological Study of Compounds in Twitter Posts on the Covid-19 Pandemic Saleh AHMAD Abdullahi	39-51
A Comparative Analysis of English Language and Nyimatli Language Sounds ¹Jamila ABUBAKAR Usman and Hauwa Kulu GEBI	52-58
An Analysis of Westernisation at Crossroad: An Exploration of Contemporary Hausa-Fulani Communities Abubakar MOHAMMED Gombe Ph.D	59-65
An Assessment of Early Grade Reading in Lower Primary Schools in Gombe LGEA, Gombe State ¹SULAIMAN, Jamila, ²DANGA, Luka Amos PhD, and ³IBRAHIM Adamu Mohammed	66-76
Linguistic Construction of Depression: An Appraisal of Personal Narrative ¹OGUNJIMI, Florence Taiye and ²MOHAMMAD Abubakar Musa	77-86
Monophthongisation of Closing Diphthongs in the Spoken English of Undergraduates of Federal University Wukari ¹Olusola Elizabeth OGUNRINDE, ²Kehinde Emmanuel OGUNRINDE and ³Ichonma Frank YAKUBU	87-100
Implicature in Viewers' Comments: A Pragmatic Study of AFCON 2024 Online Viewers' Responses ¹Jaafar Ahmad WAKILI, ²OLADIPO Abiola Mary and ³Auwal ABUBAKAR	101-109
Cohesion in Selected Essays of Final Year Undergraduate Students of English Hauwa K. GEBI Ph.D and Jamila USMAN	110-125
A Formalist Study of Sexual Metaphors in Achebe's <i>Girls at War</i> and Adichie's <i>The Thing Around Your Neck</i> Danjuma Garba MUSA	126-135

"The Play's the Thing": Illusion, Anti-illusion and the Politics of Femi Osofisan in Tegonni: An African Antigone ¹ Fatima INUWA and ² Christopher ANYOKWU, PhD	136-145
A Morphological Analysis of Acronyms in Nigerian English ¹ Sani GALADIMA and ² Kabiru MUSA	146-156
English Language, Literature and National Development ¹ Aishatu BELLO Umar and ² Mohammed Isa OGBOLE	157-164
Exploring the Theme of Ambition in Shakespeare's <i>Macbeth</i> Khadijah SALEH Abdu	165-171
Re-Inscribing African Women in Patriarchal Culture: A Study of Onwueme's <i>The Reign of Wazobia</i> ¹ Murjanatu Muhammad RILWAN and ² Ibrahim Kanti BALA	172-176
Identity Crisis in Abubakar's <i>Season of Crimson Blossom</i> : A Psychoanalytical Study Sani SAIDU Ibrahim	177-183
The Challenges of Teaching and Learning French in North-Eastern Nigeria: ICT as a Panacea ¹ Abdulkarim MUSA Yola and ² Samirah SALIHU Gwani	184-190
'A Sha Ruwa Ba Laihi Bane': The Sound of Cultural Change ¹ Mohammad ABUBAKAR Musa and ² IBRAHIM Ruth Ishaku	191-200
A Critical Multimodal Discourse Analysis of Sexual Harassment in Kunle Afolayan's <i>Anikulapo</i> ¹ Moshood ZAKARIYA and ² Balikis YETUNDE Isiaka	201-214

A FORMALIST STUDY OF SEXUAL METAPHORS IN ACHEBE'S *GIRLS AT WAR* AND ADICHIE'S *THE THING AROUND YOUR NECK*

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Abstract

*Sex as a theme in African literature is frowned at. It is considered a private affair not to be openly portrayed in literature due to the cultural and moral disquiets. On the contrary, In Post-modern European literatures, the treatment of sex as a theme is flagrant. The African culture, religion - old or given - and traditions are hortatory and that explains the total or partial absence of sex in the oral narratives and early literatures. On the other hand, sexploitation, sex and sexism are today enjoying a large readership and audience in the form of romance cum love fictions and home videos openly or metaphorically configured; 'defamiliarised' beneath elegant language. This paper, using Formalism as a theoretical framework, attempts to examine how Nigerian short story writers of the first and third generation portrayed sex in their works in the face of artistic, moral and cultural considerations. The analyses show that Chinua Achebe, a pioneer writer uses unconventional metaphors to defamiliarise sex with a moral message while Chimamanda Ngozie Adichie, a recent writer, uses conventional metaphors. The two short stories analysed bear the titles of the collections; *Girls at War and Other Stories* (1973) by Achebe and *The Thing Around Your Neck* (2009) by Adichie.*

Keywords: metaphor, connotation, formalism, defamiliarisation, commitment

Introduction

African literature has always been characterized as protest or literature of resistance and literature of commitment. This is the view of most if not all the African writers across the genres. They reject the notion of art-for-art sake of western literatures (Newell, 2006). But as literature mirrors life, although selectively, a plethora of issues compete for space within the undisputed profit and pleasure scope of African literature. On the other hand, literature by any definition is identified with the use of language figuratively in such a way that even the familiar is rendered unfamiliar. This is particularly subscribed to by the formalists, who define literature as an: "organised violence committed on ordinary speech" (Eagleton, 1996:2). This point of view does not underscore the content of a given literary production as to whether it is fact or fiction, imaginative or creative, committed or trivial but how language is used in atypical ways.

In addition, going by Ngugi and Yeats' assertion that literature does not grow in a vacuum, the task of mirroring the society will include all facets of the societies' life as a group or as individuals privately or publicly; to encourage or indict. Hence social and moral crimes have been captured by writers to expose the evil in them. This approach relegates the language of literary works or literariness to the back waters. Most African literary pundits belong to the content-based approach: Achebe, Ngugi, Laye, Armah, Nwapa, Soyinka and others. They tend to emphasize the moral, socio-political and cultural benefaction of literature as non-negotiable over its formal or linguistic potentials (Nnolim, 2007). Characteristically, the works of Achebe, Soyinka, Clark and other African writers of the first generation are templates of literature of commitment. However, recent writers have characteristically not been bound by these content strictures. Writers like Adichie, Habila, Kan and others, committed in their own right, are heavily influenced by western literary production, in form and content and

also fossilised by the works of the first generation of Nigerian writers. There is undoubtedly a strong relationship between form and content such that what is said is not more important than how it is said and vice versa. To capture this contiguity, sex is here nominated; what is said about it and how it is said by the first and recent generation of Nigeria writers.

Sexual harassment or abuse, prostitution, sexploitation, rape and so on represent the many facets of the sexual themes in Nigerian literature. In addition, human continuity is dependent on the institution of marriage with sexual intercourse as its power house. In reality sex is a fundamental and forceful instinct that defines and influences human behaviour. Therefore, as central as sex is, its absence in the oral narratives is unnatural and could not have evaded portrayal in the written medium. The selected writers, Achebe and Adichie, have a similar cultural orientation coming from the same part of the country with same cultural sensibilities but different periods of writing.

The assumption is that the recent generations of writers are heavily influenced by the western post-modern tradition of amoral writing in which sex is freely discussed and vividly portrayed (Nnolim, 1992). Going by this assumption will imply the absence of sex in the first literatures or its preponderance in the later generation. The short story form is apt for this paper, as economy of language, limited characters and themes are constraints that correspondingly sharpen the use of language. It is the quest to locate how this ambivalent potential has been handled by Nigerian writers, particularly in the short story form of prose fiction that informed this paper.

Methodology

The methodology used in identifying the use of metaphor in the selected short stories is that the stories that carry the titles of the collections are read in order to find

defamiliarised topics by looking for implicit contextual lexical connotations; where a word or phrase is used that does not apparently agree with its context of usage. The titles of the stories have guided the choice of the stories. "Girls at War" would literally be girls taking up arms or actively in a war or "The Thing Around Your Neck" to mean a necklace or some ornament hung physically on the neck or at best an objective problem, on the contrary, the context provided by the stories is not literal.

The connotative usages are interpreted with the intended context and meaning. The appropriate figurative label is identified as metaphor. The context is further used to identify the topic or field of the metaphors that the writers defamiliarised. The suitability of the framework used is as a result of its prominence in analysing figurative language.

The Relationship between Metaphor and Context

A metaphor is a figurative or literary device that is conceptually conventionally or literarily used to convey a direct but implicit non literal comparison between things that are disparate and atypical for poetic or aesthetic effect. A metaphor is conventional when it is easily understood or known. In other words, there is no defamiliarisation. According to Zoltán Kövecses (2010) when a conventional metaphor is used speakers, listeners and readers hardly notice them as metaphors. The conventional metaphors are well known and more of clichés that they can be understood without context, a few examples have also been adduced by Kovecses (2010:34):

Argument is war: I *defended* my argument.

Love is a journey: We'll just have to *go our separate ways*.

Theories are buildings: We have to *construct* a new theory.

Ideas are food: I can't *digest* all these facts.

Social organizations are plants: The company is *growing fast*.
Life is a journey: He had a *head start* in life.

The second type of metaphor is the unconventional or literary. It is mostly found in poetry and the other genres. Its interpretations are based on the context created by the text rather than a conventional or background context. It is in the use of the unconventional metaphors that most effectively defamiliarises the topic of discussion. Imagination is at the heart of the “seeing-as” process in seeing the similarity or relationship between the comparisons. Therefore the more unconventional a metaphor is the more it creates the new knowing experience by creating a vision of the object and not a means of knowing the object. Literary metaphors according to Kovecses (2010) can be derived from extending, elaborating, questioning and combining conventional metaphors.

The Modern African Short Story

The short story according to the Encyclopedia Britannica is a “brief fictional prose narrative that is shorter than a novel and that usually deals with only a few characters”. As succinct and lucid as this definition is a number of features are derivable. Firstly, the short story is about a single effect captured in only one or a few momentous episodes or scenes. As such there is economy of setting, language, themes and characters. The term 'short story', according to Cuddon (1976), has relatives in the shape of the French *conte* and *nouvelle*, the Spanish *novela*, the Italian novella, the German novella and the Russian *kraz*. The short story is also referred to as: the yarn, the sketch and the tale, in some quarters.

The short story is the most elusive form of the prose genre and literature in general. It is definable in many ways with a history that dates back to antiquity. It has a fluid and dynamic form that allows it to accommodate the literary sensibilities of countries and

centuries. The most celebrated critical stance on the short story is that given by Edgar Allan Poe from a review of Hawthorne's *Twice-Told Tales*. Poe articulated some useful general precepts on the form of the short story as “a prose narrative (of indeterminate length) requiring anything from half an hour to one or two hours in its 'perusal'; a story that concentrates on a unique or single effect and one in which the totality of effect is the main objective” (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2010). In the same vein, in his preface to his *Complete Short Stories* Somerset Maugham maintains that the shortest story is between 1,600 words to about 20, 000 words (Cuddon, 1976:817). However these are mere guidelines and not rules. Chekhov's “The Cherry Orchard” is more than 20, 000 words, with many characters, several themes, and cannot be read in five hours, is still a short story. Similarly, most of Adichie's short stories are long-short stories with many characters and strands of themes. It is for that reason that the fluidity of the form is seen as the writers' license.

According to Larson (1971:11) “the short story strikes swiftly and drives home a point with economy of language and time.” The short story continues to enjoy a literary universality as it has remained a vehicle for the preservation of myths, legends, parables, fairy tales, fables, anecdotes, exemplum, essay, and so on which are found in almost all cultures. The short story form has been appropriated by African writers to capture and portray the African historical and contemporary socio-political experiences from different sociological and ideological standpoints. African short story writers have for the most part remained unknown.

In Nigeria and by extension Africa there are no prolific short story writers like the American Poe, Maupassant, O'hary, the Russian Chekhov and Gogol and so on. For instance, Achebe has a collection of short stories which have not matched the fame enjoyed by his novels. Adichie came to

limelight because of her novels even though she started her writing career with the short story form. Larson (1971) attributes this to the influence of oral literary traditions that constitute the bulk of the themes found in the short stories. Relatively, Larson's standpoint is out dated as the recent Nigerian short stories are hybrids of the Western and the African with trans-cultural and trans-national themes, like the super ordinate novel form.

Moreover, the Modern African short stories have again like the novel form entered into the post-colonial discursive paradigm; valorising the African identity and culture through ideological decolonisation. The works of Adichie are templates of the Modern African short stories. They are realistic stories about everyday things, events and ordinary people. Markedly, the Nigerian short story form is as well dynamic and a product of the various social changes that characterise other literary productions in the brief length of Nigeria's literary history where a predetermination of literary content can be much simpler than a stylistic literary forecast. This is because the province of literary content is that of human predicament whereas the formal structuring of the content cannot be pinned to a particular mode or style. There are also content archetypes for the Nigerian short stories and novels but there hardly exists any archetypal style or technique.

Therefore to capture adequately the criticism whether of form or content of the short story form a parallel must be drawn from the developments in the novel form. This however does not preclude a standalone criticism of the short story form. In this line of argument, Mark Schorer's advocacy for the primacy of craft and technique over content in literary analysis is a clarion. Schorer maintains thus: "Modern criticism has shown that to speak of content as such is not to speak of art at all, but of experience; ..." (1966:141). It is in support of this argument

that this essay is bent on using Formalism to analyse the selected short stories.

Formalism as a Framework

Formalism is derived from 'form' and form refers to the relationship between different elements within a specific system. In Literary discourses form is the medium or *the how* of a literary work. In the history of literary criticism, a number of approaches have emerged that try to establish methods of literary appreciation. Mario Klarer (2004) attempts a grouping of these approaches into four: text, author, reader and context based approaches. The text-based approach pay attention to the material reality of the literary text itself; they approach a literary text from the language, style, and other formal structures of the literary work like the genre and the use of literary devices (Klarer, 2004). Formalism and Structuralism belong to the text-based approach, though they differ in some aspects. They both focus on artistic forms and techniques on the basis of linguistic studies. They see the language of literature as the supreme ideological phenomenon and not the human content (Habib, 2005). To the formalist, therefore, the subject of literary scholarship is not literature in its totality, but literariness.

Formalism emerged in Russia in the opening years of the 20th Century before the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, and flourished throughout the 1920s, until they were silenced or forced into exile by Stalinism, Roman Jakobson, Viktor Shklovsky, Osip Brik, Yury Tynyanov, Boris Eichenbaum and Boris Tomashevsky are the notables of the movement. They comprised of scholars and students of the Moscow Linguistic Circle and the Opyay group. There are neo-formalists in England and America such as the New Critics (Eagleton, 1996; Lodge, 1988). Criticism according to the formalists should divorce literatures from mystery and concern itself with how literary texts actually worked. Literature to them should not be seen as pseudo-religion or psychology or sociology

but a particular organization of language which has its own specific laws, structures and devices that are to be studied in them rather than relegated. The literary work is neither a vehicle for ideas nor a social mirror nor the repository of some transcendental values: it is a material fact, "whose functioning could be analysed rather as one could examine a machine" (Eagleton, 1996:3). It is made of words, not of objects or feelings, and it is to them a mistake to see literature as the expression of an author's mind (ibid).

The formalists sought to establish a scientific and objective basis for the study of literature by collapsing the form and content dichotomy and insisting on literariness. To achieve these, they developed the concept of *ostranenie* or 'making strange', later to be called 'defamiliarization'. They developed a narrative theory; *syuzhet* (story) and *fabula* (plot) (Cuddon, 1976). The formalists also see the language of literature as autonomous and self-referential; the language talks about itself (Eagleton 1996).

For the purpose of this essay, defamiliarisation is more central. It is Shklovsky's invention in his seminal essay "Art as Technique" (1917). Defamiliarization is "...to make fresh, new, strange, different what is familiar and known". According to Shklovsky, (cited in Lodge, 1988:20; Cuddon, 1976:214): The purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived, and not as they are known. The technique of art is to make objects 'unfamiliar', to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty of length and perception, because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged. Art is a way of experiencing the artfulness of an object; the object is not important. A formal approach to literary texts did not altogether start with the formalists, they merely re-echoed it and institutionalised it. According to Aristotle, a poetic language must be lofty and grand and centuries later Longinus came up with the concept of "The Sublime" and Horace's *Ars*

Poetica deals with the art of literary composition. Remarkably, Shklovsky's *Ostranenei* is by far more specific in institutionalising 'making strange' literary experience and perception. Lodge maintains that there are no permanent referents for the object of literature nor are the complexities of life immutable the purpose of language of literature is not to make us perceive meaning, but create a special perception of the object – "it creates a vision of the object instead of serving as a means of knowing it" (1988:25).

The formalists have identified the use of literary devices as the chief ways of defamiliarising. It is in this stance that the contributions of Jakobson come to the fore. Jakobson identified the use of rhetorical figures, metaphor and metonymy as fundamental ways of organizing a literary discourse (Lodge, 1988). An example of the employment of defamiliarization in composition is in handling erotic subjects especially when the author intends to lead us away from their recognition. Metaphors such as lock and key, hand and mouth, pestle and mortar, bow and arrow e.t.c. are used for the human sexual organs. There are many things in human experience that can be defamiliarised and not only erotic objects or subjects. From the foregoing, two important considerations can be used to interrogate Formalism. Firstly, the centrality of context in measuring defamiliarization is deterged. This is to say that defamiliarisation is context dependent, for instance, the definitions of metaphor and irony or there realization is context dependent.

Secondly, Formalism's rejection of the relevance of the world, the writer and the reader has rendered it in effectual in ideological and cultural discourses thus undermining the relevance of literature and literary analysis. It is for the same reason that it does not have a place in the postcolonial discourses. However, metaphoric analysis is an effective method of literary interpretation because a metaphorical statement is a

product of the relationship between word and context, and there is an indeterminate nexus between the metaphors in a text and the text itself. Delaney (2004:12) posits thus: "The context of an entire work contributes to the meaning of the individual metaphors and in turn; all the metaphorical statements contribute to the meaning of the text". This shows that a Formalistic analysis is not an end but a means to an end. In other words, its relevance is contingent on the generation of meanings.

Metaphors in "Girls at War"

Girls at War and Other Stories (1973) is Achebe's only short story collection. The fame of the collection has died down and has received little or no critical attention, like his other works. To appreciate the extent of its popularity one needs only to start looking for it in libraries and bookshops. There are thirteen short stories in the collection with simple titles that capture the preoccupations of the stories. "Girls at War" is the main story. It is set during the Biafran struggle for secession from Nigeria are somewhere around 1967-1970. It chronicles the traumatising sufferings of the Biafrans during the war that ensued between the Nigerian Armed Forces and the Biafran mercenaries. In the story, Achebe indicts euphemistically the Nigerian soldiers and Government for the massacre of women and children through shelling and the economic blockade policy that brought starvation and "shortages of every imaginable necessity" (Achebe 2012:199). On the other hand is the question of integrity with survival at stake on the part of the Biafran men and women during and after the war. It is the lot of the women that seems to carry the weight of the story as the effect of the war has rendered them vulnerable to prostitution for livelihood. The story is more or less autobiographical as Achebe later reveals in his last work *There was a Country*.

It is the story of Reginald Nwanko and Gladys. Nwanko is a conscientious chauffeur driven

technocrat of the erstwhile Biafra, who is wading through the atmosphere of social and moral decay characterised by prostitution, corruption and apprehension. Gladys is a displaced young woman out to survive with all her body as a result of "war sickness". The works of Achebe have largely been ignored aesthetically or formalistically whereas if the works are to be distanced from their sociological background a great deal of literary ingenuity would be revealed. In the "Girls at War" Achebe has trodden on the sociologically 'forbidden' subject of sex in the African literary domain, even though with a commitment, that an average reader would yet hardly detect as they are defamiliarized; metaphorically couched.

The first use of metaphor is in the title, *Girls at War*. The meaning as captured in the context of the story is not the literal war. No girl is at the war front. The title is repositied in this context: Gladys tells Nwanko how her friend Augusta is getting the bounties of the war flying from one place to another on shopping spree through her powerful boyfriend during the war:

Great!' said Nwankwo as they drove away. 'She will come back on an arms plane loaded with shoes, wigs, pants, bras, cosmetics and what have you, which she will then sell and make thousands of pounds. You girls are really at war, aren't you? (Achebe 1973:54)

War in the above context is commerce or trade with sex as the currency. The metaphor here is couched in a situational irony: as the girls' trade in the war times and their means of transportation is the arms plane. They also get the capital for the trade by prostitution. Achebe has sustained the war metaphor in the interaction between Nwanko and Gladys. Another use of metaphor is when Gladys tries to justify the new way girls do things and the reason for the kind of war they fight when

Nwanko tries to draw her attention to the need for her to embrace moral uprightness that he had once seen in her, and she says:

"That time done pass. Now everybody wants survival. They call it number six. You put your number six; I put my number six. Everything all right" (Achebe 1973:53).

"You put your number six; I put my number six" is based on the context referring to the sexual organs hence the use of 'your' and 'my' to stand for the male and female organs which is taken to be an additional sense organ in this context that should be used, in a two-can-play manner, in the war of survival. Conventionally, number six is the brain which is not intended in this context as 'put' is used instead of 'use'. A further support for the interpretation of the number six metaphor is when Nwanko goes literal in telling us the business of the girls, he says: "Even these girls who come here all dolled up and smiling, what are they worth? Don't I know? A head of stockfish, that's all, or one American dollar and they are ready to tumble into bed" (Achebe 1973:53).

As though, conscious of the possibility of an average reader missing the metaphors, Achebe follows up his metaphors with contextual interpretations. For instance, in Nwanko's apartment Gladys was reluctant to leave as there was no arrangement for her passing the night there. The following scene arose:

'She gave him a shock by the readiness with which she followed him to bed and by her language.

'You want to shell?' she asked. And without waiting for an answer said, 'Go ahead but don't pour in troops!' (Achebe 1973:54)

'Shell' is also a metaphor for sex; based on the context it can be replaced with 'Do you want to have sex?' This is an apt metaphor as there is no explicit relationship in meaning

between sex and shell. In the second part of the utterance 'Go ahead (and do it) but don't pour in troops' the phrase 'pour in troops' is not literal considering the fact the context is no longer a war situation but sexual intercourse defamiliarised as one would think of soldiers dropping from planes with parachutes. Troops are dropped not poured. The troops here intended are sperm. This is also an apt metaphor as there is no explicit relationship between troops and sperm. In a way, Achebe has achieved extending the war metaphor by the use of shell and troops. The metaphor would have lingered longer as the succeeding lines show: "He didn't want to pour in troops either and so it was all right. But she wanted visual assurance and so he showed her" (Achebe, 1973:55). Questions like what visual assurance did Gladys want and what Nwanko showed her would have achieved defamiliarisation by further sustaining the metaphor if not for the subsequent paragraph that reveals to the reader what he showed her - condom.

Metaphors in "The Thing Around Your Neck"

The Thing Around Your Neck (2009) is the title of Adichie's short stories anthology. There are 12 short stories in the collection including "The Thing Around Your Neck". The anthology can be described as a hotch-potch of radical thematic inclinations with bizarre narrative techniques that characteristically continued in her historico-literary attempt to feminize Nigerian literature. She signed the attendance register of Nigerian writers with the publication of her play titled *For Love of Biafra* (1998) and *Decisions* (1998), a collection of poems. *Purple Hibiscus* (2003) and *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006) are the two novels that brought her to limelight. These works have earned her encomiums from literary and non-literary circles across the globe.

There are also palpable endorsements of literary pundits on the back covers of her works. Achebe describes Adichie as: "Here is

a writer endowed with the gift of ancient storytellers ... Adichie came almost made.” (Back covers of *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006) and *The Thing Around Your Neck* (2009). On the back cover of *Purple Hibiscus* (2003), Femi Osofisan commends her performance with language thus: “She beautifully manipulates syntax and trope, as well as control irony and suspense.” Adichie is by all standards a recent, modern and a contemporary Nigerian writer. She is not only an epitome of recent Nigeria literature but essentially a bridge between Nigerian and American literature; hybridism and juxtaposition.

Unlike the first generation of Nigerian writers, the contemporary Nigerian writers or the third generation of writers, at home and in diaspora are pathetically labelled as “fleshly” writers whose characters are restless epicureans always on the move from one place or country to another. In other words, the works are full of blatant debauchery, homosexuality, hedonism and lack thematic focus. Nnolim (2009) identifies Toni Kan, Maik Nwosu, Wale Okediran, Omo Uwaifo, Chim Newton and Fola Arthur-Worrey as belonging to the third generation.

The significance of this essay will then be articulated in substantiating how Adichie metaphorically or otherwise depicts prurience. Formalistically, contemporary Nigerian writers, like Adichie, break new grounds, particularly, through the use of complex narrative point of view. In “The Thing Around Your Neck” she uses the second person narrative point of view which places the reader and the narrator/character on the same level of drawing directly from the mind of the narrator/character. The reader is subconsciously subsumed in the narrative with the ‘you’ of the consciousness of the narrator/character. For instance the story opens thus: “You thought everybody in America had a car and a gun; your uncles and aunts thought so, too” (Adichie, 2009:115). The effect of the narrative technique is

reflected in how Adichie has virtually flouted the conventions of the story by featuring many characters, themes and settings.

“The Thing Around Your Neck” is a reminiscence of the ordeals of the main character, Akunna, who leaves Nigeria to study in America and how she oscillates from embarrassment to harassment, love to depravity and hope to despair. The main character has a persistent wanton or innate desire for sex which is the thing around her neck.

The title of the work is metaphorical, as earlier pointed out, ‘the thing around your neck is not literal, as it does not refer to anything that is hung around the neck; there is no relationship between the neck and what the context provides. In the story Akunna recounts:

“At night, something would wrap itself around your neck, something that very nearly choked you before you fell asleep” (Adichie 2009:119). There is an appropriate use of metaphor in the above excerpt as sexual urge has been defamiliarised. It is in the other parts of the story that the reader would be able to deconstruct the defamiliarised. However this is about the only instance that Adichie defamiliarised sex. In other words, she did not characteristically sustain the metaphor. In another instance, Adichie uses a conventional sexual metaphor when Akunna recollects:

“You lost your appetite, the region deep in your chest felt clogged. That night, you didn’t moan when he was inside you, you bit your lips and pretended that you didn’t come because you knew he would worry.” (Adichie, 2009:123-4).

‘When he was inside you’ is a conventional sexual metaphor as the expression is not literal. The ‘he’ and ‘you’ are synecdochical of the male and female sexual organs. More so, the last ‘yous’ are literal and personal with Akunna as the antecedent. “You didn’t come”

is another conventional sexual metaphor: 'come' implies orgasm. Another use of conventional sexual metaphor in the story is: "You made up and made love and ran your hands through each other's hair...." (Adichie, 2009:125). Making love is a conventional sexual metaphor.

Finally, it is after Akunna had these prurient escapades that according to her: "The thing that wrapped itself around your neck, that choked you before you fell asleep, started to loosen, to let go." (Adichie *ibid*). As in the title, this is also unconventionally metaphorical based on the context, there is no literal reference to sex. It is also from this that the meaning of the title becomes obvious that the thing around your neck is a sexual metaphor.

Conclusion

This paper arrayed the critical tenets and methodology of formalism as a literary theory in the analysis of the use of sexual metaphor in the works of two renowned modern Nigerian short story writers. One of the significance of studying sexual metaphors in Nigerian short stories is to capture the content from the form and to distinguish the code from the message. The short story form would continue to appeal to Modern critics as its relative short length, economy of language and setting are shortcuts to grasping the literary landscape, receptivity and aspirations of Nigerian fiction. To the formalists, literature, irrespective of the genre is a code without a message. The identification of sexual metaphors, though differently exploited by the two writers shows how the writers treated sexual themes in their works, especially as the titles of their anthologies. This adds up to the subject of sex in Nigerian and African literature in English. Achebe represented sex as a perversion, a pandemic and male inflicted while Adichie narrows it to an individual discretion by codifying it down to a basic instinct in every human and uncontrollable. Markedly, therefore, Achebe's "Girls at War" has achieved defamiliarisation in keeping with his commitment as a

visionary writer through the use of literary metaphors by making the object less important than the experience of knowing the object. Whereas, Adichie uses conventional metaphors by making the topic of discussion an object rather than a means of knowing the object, this implicates a moral interrogation of the purport of modern Nigerian literature as defamiliarisation does not only show aesthetics, it also reticently reflects the moral sensibilities of the readers and writers alike.

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