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An Exploration Of Stylistic and Literary Devices In Tess Onwueme's *The Broken Calabash*

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Abstract

Nigerian playwrights have over the years evolved a literary style that is unique in its commitment in the presentation and representation of issues that affect the underprivileged and marginalized members of the society. Their ideological concerns in their dramatic creativity are usually centered on issues ranging from protest against obnoxious cultural practices, to exposition of oppressive machineries; to affirmation of ideals. The awareness of the inhumanity of the oppressive forces by these playwrights in their socio-cultural, historical and political milieu shapes their thoughts and influences the central theme of their plays. Drama which is a genre of literature has always been seen as part, as well as a mirror of life and society because it is not known to exist in a vacuum. Rather, it reflects all aspects of life of the people in which the literary work emanates. Tess Onwueme in her play, the Broken Calabash demonstrates this fact. In this play, the historical and socio-cultural predicaments of Eastern Nigerian people are examined. Such issues as compulsory marriage or legal adultery and the issue of outcast and free-born are critically highlighted. However, Tess Onwueme in the course of her presentation of these issues for the main aim of conscientizing and liberating the oppressed and the under-privileged members of the society employs some stylistics devices to underscore the overall aim of her dramatic creativity. The thrust of this paper is to examine how the playwright craftily uses stylistic devices to present her messages in the play.

Keywords: Legal adultery, out-cast, free-born, stylistics, and exploration.



1. Introduction

Playwrights in their attempt to be relevant in their society, specifically focus attention to historical, socio-cultural, political and religious issues in their milieus. In their attempt to present and represent happenings in their societies, employ stylistic, employ stylistic devices to facilitate simplistic and comprehensive passage of their messages. Style varies from writer to writer. The nature of style employed by an individual writer is dependent on the general atmosphere of idea conceived in a dramatic composition. The word style is seen to be among the techniques of persuasion and is, therefore, studied under oratory. The concept of style has a strong connection with rhetoric (Missikova, 2003:10; Ajeigbo. 2007). It stresses that although rhetoric has developed, an aspect of it has become expanded. He reaffirms that there are other old rhetoric of style that are still relevant till today. He contends that "it was basic in traditional rhetoric and criticism to distinguish between manner and matter, that is, what was said and how it was said". Similarly, in Nigerian literature in English, what the dramatist has written and the manner in which it was written depict the style adopted by the playwright.

In order to understand the style used by an author, one must embark on an in-depth study of the writer's work. The study of style is, therefore, referred to as stylistic. Stylistics means scientific study and interpretation of texts from both literary and linguistic perspectives. It emanates from rhetoric and serves as a bridge between literary criticism and linguistics. Ajeigbe (p.12) contend that a stylistician knows that sentences are motivated, that one cannot only describe a sentence but explain why it was chosen over other possibilities. Stylistics is used to elicit worthwhile information about works of literature and therefore, enhances the interpretation of a written text. It makes readers aware of aspects of text that ordinary or simple reading cannot do, thereby enhancing readers' adequate comprehension of writer's work. Based on the foregoing discussion, this paper is preoccupied with the exploration of stylistic devices employed by Tess Onwueme in *The Broken Calabash*.

Different researcher in their scholarly writings have preoccupied themselves with exploring Tess Onwueme's plays as she presents socio-cultural, political, economic, religious and domestic lives of

her people. Most previous studies reflect the realities in the lives of people socially, politically, economically, religiously and even domestically. Moreover, attention has also been focused on the thematic preoccupations and the theoretical underpinnings employed in the play.

Based on the available literature, it appears that attention has not been specially focused on the stylistic devices employed in Onwueme's *The Broken Calabash*. In this study, special attention, is specifically given on how the playwright utilizes stylistic devices to aesthetically present her message in the play.

1.1 Synopsis Of The Play

The Broken Calabash is analogous to the general saying that: as far as the world lasts, there will be wrongs but if nobody protests or rebels, such wrongs shall last forever. The play examines the revolt of radical modernity against decadent traditional value. The play focuses on Ona, the jewel, the heroine, a female undergraduate and the only child of her parents. By Ogwashi-uku tradition, a female child as the only daughter automatically becomes an "Idegbe". She is not

expected to be married out but to bear children into her immediate family to ensure the continuity of her parental lineage.

In order to ensure perpetual entrenchment of the ossified tradition of Isah people of father marrying his only female daughter, Ona's freedom of movement and expression are completely denied. She is neither allowed to visit friends nor is she allowed to be visited freely even by her female friends. However, due to Ona's western education and the civilization brought by the fast growing Nigerian society, she could not be freely informed of her role as the only female daughter of her father. Ona's effort to present Diaku, her fiancé, as her proposed husband is met with criticism and insults. Ona therefore, lives a lonely and pathetic life. Due to her isolation, frustration and discontentment, Ona who is said to be patient, faithful and obedient turns out to be violent, unfaithful and disobedient to her parents.

As her final resolution, having been denied the right to marry her preferred fiancé, and now that Ona's fiancé has finally married to her closest friend, Ona in her pessimism felt that her life has been messed up, with these frustration and dehumanizing condition, adopts the ideology



of a saying that: “He who pelts another with pebbles asks for rock in return”. In her vengeance, Ona in pretense, falls on the ground and indicates to the priest that she is pregnant and her father is responsible for the pregnancy. This is a bad omen in a contemporary fast growing society of Isah people. All efforts made by her father who now shows his readiness and willingness to give her out to her proposed husband fail. This singular allegation leads Courtuma, Ona’s father to his untimely death by committing suicide. Ona, in her rebellion to her father’s irrationality and unreasonableness did not only insult her father but also sends him to his untimely grave.

2.0 Stylistics

The words “Style” and “Linguistics” are the two key words in the word “Stylistics”. Leech and Short contend that stylistics is the linguistics study of style (1981). Crystal (2008:460) stresses that stylistics is “ a branch of linguistics which studies the features of situationally distinctive uses (varieties) of language, and tries to establish principles capable of accounting for the particular choices made ... Abubakare (2012: 262) maintains that : “stylistics is a branch of applied

linguistics that deals with scientific study of language”. Stylistics can also be located at the borders of two distinct disciplines: literature and linguistics. Niazi (2013), in his opinion maintains that “literary stylistics refers to the study of style used in literary language. It can be regarded as a fusion of form with content”. Lawal (2003: 26) in his analogical position on what style in stylistics is affirms that: “style is to stylistics what language is to linguistics” Based on these scholarly notions on style, it is emphatically clear that style and stylistics are interconnected and closely related. It could unequivocally be said that style serves as the bedrock of stylistics “without stylistics, style will not be appreciated and without style, stylistics will not be possible” (Jide, 2011).

Stylistics describes features of text and enhances its interpretation. Commenting on stylistics, Abuakare, 2012:263 opines that it is: “the aspect of linguistics which deals with occasions of distinctive language use objectively by providing both the literary and functional interpretation of such usage in literary and non-literary discourse”. Through identification of features of texts and their function, stylistics offers a more in-depth

and scholarly examination of a written discourse.

2.1 Transition Theory

For many decades, different fields such as psychology, anthropology and education have been very prominent in the employment of transition theory as basis for analysis in their various fields. In psychology for instance, it is employed to explore the psychological character of an individual as he navigates through different stages in life, from childhood to adulthood. In the field of anthropology, it appears in 1960 work of Van Genep and was further developed by Turner in 1969, highlighting the way that “Rites of passage” through the stages of human life are marked by socio-cultural rituals’ Rites of passage occur where there is a “transition in cultural expectation, social roles and developmental or situational changes to being in the world” (Schlossberg and Anderson, 347). In the field of education, it has been used to study the various changes that occur as children progress from one level of education to another and to trace child development. Also, in the field of medicine, transition theory has been employed to understand how people cope with life-changing illnesses.

As a body of knowledge, transition is premised on the notion that the individual, like society, is in a constant state of transition. It holds that transition is an inevitable experience and it characterized every stage of human life. To this end, an understanding of this experience is important to every individual and society in order to cope with transition and in order to live healthy life. As a method of analysis, transition theory is based on what Goodman, Schlossberg and Aderson called the “Four S” (4S’s) - self, situation, support and strategies. The self defines the key character or identity and how this character processes growth; situation refers to the environment where the self manifests and explains what happens or occurred and or did not occur; support explains who, what and or event available within the environment to help the self through the situation and; strategies refer to the how and what was done by the self in response to the situation given the available support. Transition theory as analytical tool simply examine how an individual or subject matter goes through life changing processes. In the context of this study, transition is employed to explore the experiences and

growth of Isah people as well as the transition in the character of the heroine. Individually, it is evoked to explore the essential characters of the heroine, the environment or situation within which she had to find and actualize herself, as well as the support and strategies available to the heroine in the chosen play as she evolves from childhood through maturity. Furthermore, transition theory furnishes this study with the necessary tools to examine how these characters interact with the environment or situation through series of events, experiences and role changes. The theory reveals how the heroine gained support through associates and mentorship; and how these trends explain the current state of Tess Onwueme's dramatic text. Transition theory is thus employed to explain the changing phases of feminist drama of Tess Onwueme.

2.1 Empirical Literature Review

In a book titled, *Female Empowerment and Dramatic Creativity in Nigeria*, Ewrierhoma, 2013 asserts that different thematic concerns are explored in Tess Onwueme's *The Broken Calabash*. Some of the themes explored include: women

empowerment, imposition of gender roles in a fast growing modern Nigerian society, family values that are structured on the need for male progeny and conflict between traditional Igbo values and Christianity. In the resolution of these conflicts, traditional Igbo values are given an upper hand but their rigidity is regarded as decadent outright. Furthermore, unethical fatherly love is also focused on while absence of freedom of choice, of movement and expression by individuals are equally emphasized.

Similarly, Chidi Amuta (1989) in *Nigerian Female Writers: A Critical Perspective*, reveals that the calabash is crucial to the over all message the playwright tries to present. The calabash shows Diakus's family intention to seek the female protagonist's hand in marriage. The eventual breaking of the calabash therefore, depicts not only the heroine's shattered emotional aspiration and stability but also the destruction of the traditional values which Courtuma tries so hard to protect. In addition, he concludes saying that Courtuma's action results in a cock-crow in the afternoon which is a bad omen that brings about series of misfortunes not only to the protagonist

Courtuma but also, to the entire Isah community.

Furthermore, Ekwierhoma (2002) having been aware of the injustice, inequality and unfairness experienced by the underprivileged members of the society directs her dramatic creativity towards liberation of not only women but also men and youth. Some of the ideas posited in her plays include the need for women and men to transform their situation for the better. *The Reign of Wazobia* and *The Broken Calabash* reveal this idea. It is the quest for societal good that underscores the humanist angle of her plays. Being aware of oppression faced by numerous individuals and the need to liberate them, what we view is a commitment by Onwueme to a liberation struggle which is fought from the dramatic and theatrical spheres in order for her people to be free

record her people's ways of lives without a questioning or critique of this aspect. It is in doing this that dramatist become responsible, intelligible and relevant to the society for and in which she writes (p. 252).

He stresses that Onwueme is not merely preoccupied with merely recording or presenting the happenings in her but also questions every wrong doing in her society in order to ensure human emancipation.

From the foregoing discussion, it has been observed that different researchers have embarked on critical examination of Onwueme's plays. These works are related to the current research. Interestingly, none of these researchers have explored how the playwright utilizes stylistic devices for the presentation of her message in her play, *The Broken Calabash*.

Chinweizu et al (1980) also affirms unambiguously that in the drama of Tess Onwueme are the reformatory and emancipator roles. It is her questioning of certain wrong doings committed in her society that make her works meaningful and relevant in her society. She alludes:

It does not suffice for the dramatist to merely

2.2 Methodology

The method to be adopted in this study is intensive close textual analysis. There will be intensive study of relevant materials to ensure a scholarly examination in the study of Onwueme's *The Broken Calabash*. Since the study will focus primarily on literary stylistics, a qualitative approach will be used for

textual study. Attention will particularly be focused on literary stylistics rather than linguistic stylistics. Moreover, since transition theory is employed as analytical tool, effort will be made to discover whether there is transition in the playwright's portrayal of Isah community and Ona, the heroine of the play. In the heroine's transition as presented through the plot of the play, attempt will be made to examine whether Ona, the heroine has experienced the "four S's" as championed by (Goodman, Schlossberg and Aderson, 2006). Attempt would be made to discover whether the subject, the heroine who is the self, in the course of her transition, experiences support, situation and develops strategies to enable her cope with the situations or circumstances she finds herself as earlier stressed by the exponents of the theory. It is on these key words that the heroine of the text is examined.

3.0 Data Analysis

In this section, an in-depth critical examination of the primary data is carried out. Other relevant secondary materials are cited to ensure a scholarly examination and novelty of the current study.

3.1 Theme

Tess Onwueme's *The Broken Calabash* explores the theme of revolt of radical modernity against the ossified traditional culture. Ona, an undergraduate and the only child of her parents is an "Idegbe". By Ogwashi-uku tradition, a child as an "Idegbe" cannot marry outside her immediate family. On the realization of this inhuman and animalistic act common in her father's culture, and having realize that she will be subjected to her people's barbaric cultural practice as the only female daughter in the family, Ona thus revolts fearlessly and save her neck from the jaw of her people's unholy cultural heritage.

Similarly, the events, actions and interaction of the characters in this plays stress the fact that when the rhythm of the drummer changes the step changes too. That is, any tradition that cannot stand the force of change must be uprooted or be blown into the oblivion. As Ona is told that as the only female child in the family, as tradition requires her to marry her father so as to ensure the continuity of the family, she rebels by saying:



I say – to hell with your
tradition. Homestead!
Norm! All!

Let the wind blow. Let the
shaky homestead be blown.
Anything which cannot
stand the force of change
must be uprooted or be
blown into the oblivion by
the storm heralding the
new season. p.109

3.3 Town-Crier

One of the stylistics devices employed by the playwright in conveying her message is the employment of a town-crier. In traditional African society, a town-crier is charged with the responsibility of disseminating information to members of the community. The narrator introduces the background of the play and lays foundation for the development of the plot of the play. Through the town crier, we are made to know the setting of the play:

Kom! Kom! Kom!

Ogwashieboiteeñ.

The sun has passed the Centre of
the head!p.69

Through the town crier, we are also introduced to the coming of “Ine” festival, the new yam-festival in which Ogwashi people are expected, prior to the planting season, to clear their barns in preparation for the storage of new yams. The narrator also introduces the central characters, Ona and her

parents, Courtuma and Oliaku. As the maidens are seen singing, dancing and expressing their jubilation over the coming of “Ine” festival (the new yam festival), Ona and her parents are seen peeping. This act marks the beginning of Ona’s predicament in the play. She is thus kept under lock, denied the freedom of associating with her fellow maidens.

3.4 Symbolism

Tess Onwueme uses symbolism. That is, a thing that represents or typifies something else. This is the idea of using symbols to convey messages. When a symbol is used in literature, the purpose is to give it a meaning which goes beyond the physical representation. Thus, whenever we see drawing of a crescent and the moon strategically placed in its hollow centre we know the reference is to Islam while the sight of a cross quickly brings back to memory, the religion of Christianity. For instance, salt in the play is symbolic. It symbolizes happiness, contentment, continuity and regeneration. Ona in the play is the symbol of happiness and contentment to her parents being the only daughter in the family. Ugo has this to say of Ona: “Of course you are, otherwise how could you of all people be talking about



worthlessness of life? You who are the salt of this place". (p.72)

Snail in the play has two symbolic interpretations. To the traditionalist, snail symbolizes evil or sacrifice while to the modernist, it means a harmless or peace loving animal. Ona has this to say about her perception of snails: No, Ugo. I have always known and my mother also tells me that snails are evil. 'Uke' signifies sacrifice. (p.77) Ugo on the contrary, sees snail as: 'A mere harmless and peace loving animals. Not even risking conflict with a lover'. (p.78). Jewel in the play is symbolic of the most cherished or valuable property. Ona is referred to as a jewel being the only child in the family. Courtuma alludes: Oliaku, thank God for our singular fortune. No seer could have convinced me that we would still be married today but for our jewel. (p.81)

Gospel is the symbol of divine revelation. Gospel is not only metaphorically used but also, has a symbolic interpretation. Oliaku, while responding to Courtuma on who should intimate Ona on the topic of her being an 'Idegbe' says: 'Why don't you introduce the topic to her yourself?. You are more tactful with such delicate matters than

I am. Moreover, your words are gospel'. (p.84) From the above discussion of Ona's parents, Courtuma and Oliaku, the playwright clearly revealed that neither of the two is willing to inform Ona on the subject of her being an "Idegbe," that is, the only female daughter who is culturally forbidden to marry outside her immediate family. She is rather required to marry her father in order to ensure family's regeneration.

Wolves in the play are also symbolically used. They are predatory animals which feed and destroy their prey. Wolf is used when Courtuma feels that Diaku's association with Ona is dangerous and tantamount to the destruction of his immediate family.. When Diaku enquires on why Courtuma is not relaxing after a whole day work. Courtuma bluntly responds: "Not when I still have this much life in me and when wolves prey around my chicks. (p.93)

Vulture in the play signifies anyone who feeds on what he has not worked for. It symbolizes the fact that Diaku's mission and presence in Courtuma's house is dangerous and inimical to Courtuma's plan for his daughter. Moreover, when Oliaku suggests that the palm-wine left by Diaku's



parents and kinsmen should be taken and consumed, Courtuma angrily tells his wife: 'Do you take my kinsmen for vulture?' The broken calabash itself is symbolic of abomination or bad omen. This could be understood from the narrator's revelation: '...Exit dancers each throwing a palm frond on broken pieces of the calabash as an indication of mourning.(p.104)

Courtuma's suicide at the end of the play is a symbol of destruction, extermination and death of not only the cultural fanatic, Courtuma, but also the death of decadent cultural practice of "Ogwashi-uku" people in "Aniocha".

3.5 Instruments

It is also essential to note that the playwright, in her attempt to enhance and facilitate easy comprehension of her message, portrays the use of traditional instruments. The instruments include: gong, beads, calabash, hoes and cutlasses, bottles of gin, head of tobacco (packet of cigarette) and palm-frond. All these are required for the performance of the characters in the play. For instance, the town-crier uses his gong as a means of disseminating information to the people. Prior

to the period of harvest, the town-crier is seen with his gong announcing to the people on the need to prepare for the harvest of the new yam and the celebration of the 'Ine' festival (the new yam festival).

The town-crier also uses gong prior to the period of rainy season to inform the people on the need to satirize those who have in one way or the other pollute the land. He also reminds them of the necessity for weeding their farm before new planting can be done. The town-crier announces:

Isah ! The Ine to purge the land of the evil of the old year is at hand. Our hope lies in you, the youths. Therefore, you must heartily satirize those sons and daughters of inequity who, year in, year out pollute our land by their ways and deeds. This is the time for weeding...This is the message :-kom ! This is what I have been instructed to tell you:-kom !p.86)



Similarly, the town-crier uses his gong to announce Courtuma's suicide. He reveals that the new yam which is supposed to mark a period of excitement and jubilation is turned out to the period of mourning and displeasure by a fanatic traditionalist, Courtuma. The town-crier reveals: 'kom, kom, kom! The moon is full. The old season dies! A new crop is sown. What harvest did you foresee? ... The new yam will be eaten but it is streaked with blood. At sun down, Courtuma, son of Awali-ego took his own life...And shall we eat the new yams with blood? Why must they turn our rites of joy to tears?'(p.116)

Calabash, a bottle of gin and a head of tobacco are also the traditional instruments used in the play. During the formalization of the marriage proposal of Diaku and Ona, the parents of the fiancé OtuAgada and his kinsmen present a calabash of palm-wine, a bottle of gin and a sealed head of tobacco. The tradition requires these instruments for the formalization of the marriage proposal. Moreover, besides the satirizing of the polluters of the land by the youths, they also require hoes and cutlasses for clearing the land in preparation for another new planting.

Palm frond is also used as an instrument in the play. After Courtuma's rejection of Diaku's marriage proposal, with his daughter, Ona, and his subsequent breaking of the calabash of palm wine brought by Diaku's father, the event is preceded by ritual dancers who throw palm frond at the broken pieces of the calabash on the ground as a symbol of mourning. The narrator alludes:

Exit town crier followed by a group of ritual dancers who dance round the broken calabash. Ona, Courtuma and Oliaku in a circle. The dance is very brief. Exit dancers each throwing a palm frond on the broken pieces of calabash as an indication of mourning.(p.104)

3.6 Musical Interludes

Before the commencement of the new planting in Isah land, both boys and girls participate in the 'Ine' satirical songs and dance. Young men and boys dress in brassieres, wigs, lips stick, rags, ladies clothes and high heeled shoes and the girls dress in men's clothes beards, one eyed goggles etc. In this appearance, the two groups sing and dance to satirize those who have transgressed against the customs of the land. Ona due to her pathetic situation,



her loneliness and isolation, more often, listen to Jimmy Cliff's music. When Ona is prevented from attending church service for confession, she simply returns to her room and sings Jimmy Cliff's music. The music is very essential in that it throws light on the situation surrounding her frustrating and pathetic life. She sings:

I am inside out, upside down; I am
inside out, upside down
aun, I am the wildest thing in the
town. Could someone tell me,
what life is all about? I' m so
frustrated I could shout ...(p.87)

During the 'Ine' festival, that is the new yam festival both boys and girls sing and dance. In the play however, Courtuma pollutes the land by not only breaking the calabash of palm-wine presented to him by Diaku's father and his kinsmen, but also by his suicide. After this event, the village women assemble in mournful state dancing and singing dirge song round Courtuma's house

It can be emphatically stated here that, the playwright has effectively used songs in different occasion in the play. She uses dirge on sad occasion. Similarly, singing, dancing and merry making are done to mark the celebration of 'Ine' festival, the new yam festival. Satirical songs are sung to

correct the evil or corrupt practices of the people in the community.

3.7 Use of Language

Any African dramatist, who writes plays in his African language based on his competent knowledge of the language, is communicating directly to his people. Tess Onwueme, in her search for the most appropriate language in her plays, seems to have Nigerian audience in mind. Her approach in most of her plays is that of careful selecting and finding words or phrases, symbols and images that run close to the vernacular parlance.

Though Tess Onwueme writes in English, she has deliberately tampers its phraseology in her play, *The Broken Calabash*.

The language used in *The Broken Calabash* gives credence to the Igbo tradition, as there is a blending of English and Igbo. For instance, there is the use of praises. Adagor sings the praise song of Ona saying:

Ona! Ona the star in the
middle of the night!

The one piece of yam that
reaches the whole world!

Nnanyi, now the hen is
cackling, is time to keep
it to roost, so it doesn't
drop the eggs on
stone...(p.80)



Similarly, OtuAgada before presenting his mission of formalizing the marriage proposal of his son, Diaku and Ona, Courtuma's daughter, chants praises of Courtuma. He says:

Ede, chief Courtuma

Rapu, Rapu son of Awali.

They who scoop money like sand from the ground. They who can boast of knowing Oyinbo more than the whiteman who owns it. I salute you. I salute you.

OgwashiKwenu! (3 times)p.99

The playwright effectively modifies the phraseology of English in the above praises by giving it distinct Igbo colouration.

Figurative and proverbial expressions are also persistently used in the play. For instance, when Adagor, Courtuma's sister tries to intimate Ona about her role as the only female child, Eketé, Courtuma's brother says:

Hmm, Hmm...

You, woman, with tongue as sharp as the edge of a cutlass. Don't you know that the itch in the eyes must be done with extreme caution.p.80

Similarly, Oliaku while thanking gods for giving her Ona uses proverbial expression:

Indeed, it is the gods that chase away flies that pester a tailless cow
Obiadanwangene, I thank you.p.82

The above proverbial expression is effectively used by the playwright to ensure that the English language has traditional speech pattern of Igbo as an African language, Igbo in particular.

Incantation is one of the stylistics devices used by the playwright in the presentation of her message. When Courtuma commits abomination by breaking the calabash of wine presented to him by the family of his daughter's fiancé, the medicine-man chants the following incantations:

Emene, Emene

Adiaegbuogoli!

A set tradition does not kill a bride. A barrage of stone does not kill the pear tree!

The vulture is not beaten by rain in its nest!

The squirrel's child is never born dumb!

Ine is for each year. Each youth is for Ine

As we did last year, so shall we this year...p.105



3.8 Costume

The costume of a character usually presents the image and the role such a character performs in the play. For instance, at the beginning of every year, the “Ine” is always observed so as to purge the land of the evil of the old year. The scene is satirical in that the boys use costume like brassieres, wigs, lip stick, rags, skirts, ladies’ clothes and high heeled shoes while the girls wear Men’s clothes using costume such as beards, one-eyed goggles, and sing satirical song against the polluters of the land.

Beads are also another costume used in the play. Chief Courtuma uses beads as part of his costume. Courtuma at the apex of his down-fall, when nemesis catches up with him, pulls off his beads and goes off into the bush where he finally commits suicide.

3.9 Suspense

Suspense is employed as one of the stylistics devices in the play. The device enables readers and audience to be anxious of what follows a particular event. Umukoro et al 2001: 7) defines suspense as: “a state of anxious expectation or uncertainty usually brought about by keeping the reader or audience wondering or guessing the

possible trend of action or likely outcome of the conflict. This arouses and sustains the eagerness of the reader or the audience to the very end”. For instance, Ona keeps the priest, her father, Courtuma and Oliaku in suspense when she is asked the person responsible for her pregnancy, she stays silent lying lifelessly on the ground in pretense.

Courtuma also puts the readers and audience in a state of anxiety when he puts off his beads and without saying a word goes into the bush. The readers and audience are left curious to see or know what happen there after.

The crowing of a cock in the market during the day also puts the readers and the audience in suspense. It is believed that the crowing of the cock during the day is a bad omen. However, readers and audience are kept in the dark as to the house where the crowing cock dwells. is not known to both the readers and the audience. Thus the town crier strikes his gong and announces:

Kom: Kom: Kom:

Ogwashieboiteeni! A
strange thing has
happened in our land.

At Abuna, as the market was in its fullness today, a cock crows in the market, who owns this



cock? In whose domain
does this animal dwells?
Our Omu is enraged.
Prepare; prepare to
purge our gods
scandalized. Seven
market days from now,
the next moon will be
out...p.104-104

To this end readers and audience
are not only anxious to know
the domain and the owner of
the cock but also want to know
the repercussion of its crowing.

3.10 Comic Relief

When serious action is enacted in a
play, it is usually followed by a
comic scene which therefore
serves as a relief to the already
heightened tension in readers
and audience. For instance,
Ona's request from her father
to attend confession is not
approved by her father. Her
insistence and subsequent
displeasure on her father
disapproval of her request
creates tension in the minds of
the readers. The heightened
tension is eased up by a
satirical song sung by a group
of girls. They sing:

Nene akwazie – o
Nene akwaziekamgbanite –
o
Baba akwazi – o
Baba akwazi – o
Kamgbanitenigenweego ..
p.87

Moreover, when Ona tells her
father that she want to attend
catechism with her friend, Ugo,
Courtuma does not only
disapproved her request but
also insults Ugo for indecent
dressing. This scene also
creates tension in the minds of
the readers. Courtuma angrily
says:

Leave her, Ona, let her go.

Why

Must she come dressed like
that to my house? Does
she think this is a whore
house?p.91

Similarly, Courtuma, after rejecting
Diaku's marriage engagement
with his daughter, Ona, and his
subsequent intimating Ona
with his intention of marrying
her, Ona revolts and condemns
her father's unbearable request.
Her revolt and blatant
condemnation of her father's
unreasonable request creates
tension in the minds of readers
and audience. There is a relief
when they hear a frightening
voice of warning directed
against Courtuma to reduce his
excesses. The voice warns:

Courtuma, courtuma,
the moon will soon
be out. It shall be
full but it shall be
red. A new season
comes, Courtuma.
Let the wind blow
courtuma. Can you
see the moon
planted in the sky,



Courtuma? Can you
see it seated with
the tip of its head?
Courtuma?p.111

3.11 Dramatic Irony

This is another stylistics device used by Tess Onwueme in , *The Broken Calabash*. In this device, the character can be seen acting but is unaware of the consequences or repercussion of his action but the reader or audience knows. (M MUmukoro et al 2001, p. 8) States: "Dramatic irony is a situation in drama in which a character says or does something contrary to the real trend of action purely out of ignorance, although the audience is fully aware of the true situation of things". For instance, when Ugo first visits Ona, she meets her singing and dancing to Jimmy Cliff's Music. Having seen how Ona is engrossed and emotionally attached to Jimmy Clif music, Ugo remarks:

Hmm, my dear Ona, you
must be enjoying
yourself, to be singing
and dancing and playing
your music in these hard
austerity times. Your
star must be hotter than
the sun or perhaps you
have passed all your
exams.p.72

The above is a dramatic irony in that Ugo is addressing an isolated, traumatized and frustrated character and not a contented and satisfied character as Ugo feels.

When Ona reveals to her friend, Ugo of her loneliness and over restriction, Ugo assumes instantly:

... All your problem will
evaporate the
moment you show
him a fiancé. He will
then understand
that you're no
longer his helpless,
loving baby, but his
hopeful loving
daughter. He can't
keep you in the
house forever.
Neither can he
marry you?p.75

The readers are aware of the fact that to Courtuma, no fiance will be accepted to seek the hand of his daughter in marriage. Moreover, Courtuma is willing and ready not only to keep Ona in the house forever, but also to marry her so that she can bears children for him.

3.12 Satire

Equally employed by the playwright as one of the stylistic devices is satire. The dominant features of satire are strong irony, sarcasm and humour. Raj Kishor Signh contends that "In satire, irony



is militant but parody, burlesque, exaggeration, juxtaposition, analogy...are all frequently used in satiric speech and writing" ((2012: 70). This militancy in the satiric use of irony is properly captured in Onwueme's *The Broken Calabash*. The playwright though the plot of the play has unambiguously reveals that it is the culture of Isah people of Ogwashi Uku tradition, that a girl as the only child in the family automatically become an "Idegbe". That means she has to marry her father in order to ensure family regeneration. At a point when Ona finally loses her fiancé, Diaku to Ugo, her friend, she promises to implicate her father. To achieve her retaliatory decision, in pretense, Ona is seen lying unconsciously on the ground. When she is asked the cause of her problem she indicates that she is pregnant. On realizing this, Courtuma feel relief, goes to his room, brings another bead and puts in his neck. He says with contentment: "Ona, do you fear I might be angry with you? No, Ona. Tell me for the boundless joy is mine. I, Elope, Courtuma, a "grandfather" to my Ona's children..." p.114

Courtuma's action of happiness and petting of Ona to reveal the true owner of the pregnancy is

essentially not only satirical but also ironical in that, Courtuma who is presented as a traditionalist, who champions the culture of his people is now seen acting towards the destruction of the same cultural practice. In addition, satirical element in the play could be observed when Courtuma and his wife, Adagor, could not freely intimate Ona with role she is expected to play as demanded by the culture of her people. The reluctance by both Courtuma, the culturalist and his wife, Adagor to inform their daughter her role as an Idegbe is indeed, satirical.

3.13 Lighting

Most playwrights use lighting as one of the stylistics devices to bring out the message in their plays. It is a means of illuminating the action in a play. The importance of lighting in this play cannot be fully grasped when reading the play. It will be fully appreciated when staged in a conventional theatre building. Another obvious importance of lighting is to enhance the changing of the scenes and events. For instance, after the first movement in the play, there is a black out. This shows a transition from one movement to another.



4.0 Conclusion

Tess Onwueme's *The Broken Calabash* is passionate and unapologetic representation of protest or revolt of the contemporary modernity against the decadent traditional cultural practices. In the presentation of this controversial but significant matter affecting the lives of people in her community, the playwright employs varieties of stylistics devices for simplification and adequate conveyance of her message to her people. The dramatist utilizes stylistics devices such as town crier, symbolism, rhetorical question, properties, song and music, direct insertion of indigenous language, proverbs, incantation, costumes, suspense, comic relief, dramatic irony, satire and lighting. Onwueme artistically employs these stylistics devices to register her dissatisfaction to the unethical cultural practices in her fast changing modern Nigerian society. The analysis in this paper also reveals how the stylistics devices utilized enhanced easy thematic and general textual comprehension of the play, *The Broken Calabash*.

In conclusion, as could be observed in this paper, the playwright's pre-occupation towards sensitizing her people has been

achieved. For instance, Tess Onwueme conscientizes her people on the danger of their decadent cultural practices and strives to show her people the possibility of establishing a new social order even if it will be at the detriment of blind and dogmatic traditionalists. In presenting this, the playwright has appropriately employed stylistic devices which facilitate adequate textual comprehension of the play.

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