

**Ethnic and Racist Discourse in Postcolonial African Text:
A Critical Linguistic Analysis of Uwem Akpan's *Say You're
One of Them***

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Abstract

Working within the tenets of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) with insights from the Theory of Conceptual Metaphor, this paper examines the construction of racist and ethno-religious oriented discourses that engender and legitimize acts of violence and domination in group relations in Africa. The study aims at exposing the ideology that underlies the construction of text and talk in Uwem Akpan's *Say You're One of Them*. The data were derived from two of his short stories: "Luxurious Hearses" (LH henceforth), and "My Parents' Bedroom" (MPB henceforth). While the former is a "factional" representation of the violent religious "wars" that engulfed Nigeria in 2000, the latter is on the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. Apart from the identity of discourse participants and the location of events which are fictionalized in some instances, every other detail of the texts is a factual account of the 1994 and 2000 ethno-religious crises in Rwanda and Nigeria. The texts show how groups use language to construct individual and collective identities, legitimize their actions, and justify acts of violence against others. Analyses show how the postcolonial African democratic context breeds a culture of hatred, intolerance, violence, exclusion, and curtailment of individual and group rights, and how these acts are enacted in text and talk.

Key Words: Ethnic and racist discourse, Ideology, Uwen Akpan, Exclusion, Legitimization of violence, Identity, Nigeria, Rwanda.

1. Introduction

Contemporary African literature has engaged social issues like military dictatorship, leadership failure, corruption, apartheid, unemployment, child soldiering, social inequality, and prostitution among others. However, the growing proclivity and passion for ethno-religious violence between groups and the asserting of intergroup differences are serious threats to the statehood/nationhood of many African countries. Consequently, contemporary African writers are beginning to focus on the twin evils of ethnicism and religious fundamentalism, and their consequences on sociopolitical development and intergroup relations in Africa. Mazrui and

Mazrui (1998:4) note the negative effects of internal conflicts on postcolonial African states. They observe that while conflicts across the borders, that is, inter-state/nation conflicts tend to strengthen the bonds of nationalism within the nation-state, internal conflicts, that is, conflicts within the nation-state weaken it. They contend that calculation and conflict are inevitable ingredients of strengthening statehood and nationhood but are quite detrimental when they are internalized. According to them "it can even be argued that, just as one cannot make an omelette without breaking eggs, one cannot build and strengthen statehood and nationhood without the stimulus of calculation and conflict. The only question is whether the conflict is with outsiders or with the state's

own citizens.” Unfortunately, most ethnic and religious conflicts in Africa occur within the state/nation between groups and sub-groups. This seems to have affected nationalism and socioeconomic growth in most African nation-states.

Peter Trachtenberg (2008:173) blames the mainly ethno-racial violence in places like Africa on institutional failures - when the institutions of state fail to protect victims and bring perpetrators to justice a cycle of revenge becomes a norm. As he puts it “Absent some intervention, vengeance might burn on indefinitely, consuming not just the original combatants but their children and grandchildren. And vengeance doesn’t just propagate vertically, across generations, but laterally, through the surrounding population. It makes no exception for neutral bystanders.” This aptly captures the sociopolitical situations in Nigeria and Rwanda.

This study focuses on Uwem Akpan’s use of linguistic resources to reveal intergroup relationship in Nigeria and Rwanda. It shows how language is used by groups to segregate, alienate, and to include. It also reveals how speakers and groups use language to assert identity, assert moral grounds, evoke fear, issue threats, assert authority, make claim to legitimate powers, seek/claim affinity with certain groups, deny allegations, make concessions, appeal to sectional sentiments, assert patriotic feeling and love for the nation, claim to be the victim, and the like, in order to orient themselves positively to the audience.

2. Background to Ethno-religious Conflicts in Rwanda and Nigeria

The ethnic conflict in Rwanda is a product of the colonial exploitation of ethnic, racial, religious, and social differences between groups to advance its own cause.

When the Belgian colonists arrived in 1916, they produced identity cards classifying people according to their ethnicity. They considered the Tutsis to be superior to the Hutus and thus facilitated the unequal distribution of political and social capital between the two groups in a manner that favoured the Tutsi minority. Some Tutsi thus began to feel like aristocrats while the Hutus were downgraded as peasants. Resentment among the Hutus gradually built up and culminated in a series of riots in 1952 that left more than 20,000 Tutsis dead. After independence in 1962 and in the decades that followed, the Hutu led government “scapegoated” the Tutsis for every crisis in the country. The ethnic rivalry between both groups reached its peak in 1994. Between April and June 1994, an estimated 800,000 Rwandans, mainly Tutsis and moderate Hutus, had been killed in the space of 100 days. The killings, which have been described as the most gruesome genocide in modern African history, was sparked off by the death of the Rwandan President Juvenal Habyarimana, a Hutu, his Burundian counterpart Cyprien Ntaryamira also a Hutu, and a number of top government officials, when their plane was shot down in a rocket attack above Kigali airport on 6 April 1994. Within hours of the incident a campaign of violence spread from the capital, Kigali, throughout the country, and did not subside until three months later when the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) captured Kigali and declared a cease fire.

Ethnic tension between the majority Hutu and the minority Tutsi is a long one but the animosity between them has grown substantially since the colonial period. The two ethnic groups are actually very similar – they speak the same language, inhabit the same areas, followed the same culture and tradition, and intermarried freely. However, the Tutsis are often taller and thinner than the Hutus, with some saying their origins lie in Ethiopia. While the

Hutus were traditionally crop-growers, the Tutsis were traditionally herdsmen. For 600 years both groups shared most of their resources including their nationality but during the genocide the Hutu militia group, *Interahamwe*, supported by the soldiers, police and government officials forced Hutu civilians to kill their Tutsi neighbours including Tutsi wives and Tutsi husbands.

Nigeria has experienced a number of social and ethnic crises in the past. Rashes of religious violence still erupt intermittently, claiming lives and property, and dislocating social relations. Nigeria returned to democracy in 1999 after sixteen years of uninterrupted military rule dominated by Generals of Northern-Moslem extraction. Olusegun Obasanjo, the civilian President, is a Yoruba of Southern-Christian origin. Hardly had he settled in office when some northern states felt it expedient to introduce Sharia law in the mainly Moslem dominated north (Chiluwa, 2008). The attempt to introduce the Sharia practice in Kaduna, a State that has a balanced Christian-Moslem population, sparked off a peaceful protest by Christians. The peaceful protest however turned violent when some Moslem fundamentalists allegedly attacked the Christian protesters. The "Sharia war" in Kaduna was fought in two phases: one in February 2000 and the next in May 2000. The crisis was later to spread to some Christian dominated southern cities like Onitsha, Aba, and Owerri, where reprisal attacks were carried out against Northern-Moslems. The 2000 "Sharia war" remains the bloodiest ethno-religious crisis in the history of Nigeria as scores of people were either killed or displaced. The Sharia crisis of 2000 justifies Abbott's position that religious fundamentalism is not only a "regressive response to globalization" (2009:47) but an expression of "profoundly paranoid-schizoid culture" (48). Nigeria experienced other religious crises after the "Sharia war" including the Jos and Kano crises of 2001, 2004; Jos

2009, 2010, 2011; Bauchi, Borno, Kano, and Yobe "Boko Haram" (a non-conformist Islamic group) crises; and Bauchi 2010. Currently, the Boko Haram scourge has been the bane of the Nigerian nation. The group has claimed responsibility for scores of terrorist attacks across the nation, including the suicide bombing of Police Headquarters and the United Nations building in Abuja in 2011.

3. Review of Literature

Ethnic and racial prejudice is pervasive and constitutes essential parts of a society's social conditions. Studies reveal that prejudice based on race, colour or ethnic origin can be found in every society. For instance, a study on race and ethnic conflict in America by Fred Pincus and Howard Ehrlich (1999:1-2) shows that prejudice and discrimination against racial/ethnic groups in America is still a serious problem even though there is shift in the dominant mode of expression of prejudice. Rather than the former ethnic group stereotypes that were rooted in beliefs about the biological differences among people, the new mode favours the presentation of cultural difference. For example, minority groups are not rejected because they are innately inferior but because their "lifestyle" is unacceptable. Pincus and Ehrlich use the term "ethnoviolence" to describe all forms of violence that are motivated by ethnic prejudice. According to them, ethnoviolence "ranges from psychologically damaging slurs and name-calling through graffiti and group defamation, telephone harassment, intimidating acts and personal threats to property damage, arson, and physical assaults." They identified the five possible causes of ethnoviolence in the American society as (i) the history of prejudice and discrimination (ii) economic restructuring in the 1980s and 1990s (iii) political

polarization, (iv) a culture of denial of prejudice, and (v) the differentials of power in society.

Similarly, Teun van Dijk in his *Discourse and Power* (2008:120) reveals the denial of racism by the majority and dominant white group in Australia. Van Dijk argues that ethnic and racial prejudices are expressed in diverse discourse patterns by the white dominating group. According to him “ethnic and racial prejudices are prominently acquired and shared within the white dominated group through everyday conversation and institutional text and talk. Such discourse serves to express, convey, legitimate or indeed to conceal or deny such negative ethnic attitudes.” Mazrui and Mazrui (1998:5) note that “Africans south of the Sahara are nationalistic about their race, and often about their land; and of course many are nationalistic about their particular ‘tribe,’ while Paul Simpson and Andrea Mayr (2010:22) assert that “it seems that people cannot do without ‘difference’ or without differentiating themselves from others at all.”

Critical linguistics (and of course critical discourse analysis) is interested in how the phenomenon of “othering” is linguistically represented or framed in discourse strategies and patterns. Studies in critical linguistics reveal that prejudice can pervade discourse and it can often go unnoticed except by those who are its target. Bloor and Bloor (2007:43) observe that “the most important function of CDA is to shed light on this kind of disguised attitude.” Critical Discourse Analysis is interested in the discursive presentation of “difference” because of its ambivalent nature. “Difference” on the one hand is necessary for establishing meaning, language and culture, social identities and a sense of self. However, it is a site of negativity, aggression and hostility towards the “Other”. This informs van Dijk’s (2008:1) submission that “racism is

wrong because racist practices are inconsistent with the norms of social equality.” Racial and ethnic discriminations or attitudes are “naturalized” ideological formulations and the goal of critical discourse analysis is to “denaturalize” them (Norman Fairclough, 1995:27). A critical approach to discourse analyses the unequal social encounters between individuals and groups.

Egins (2004: 10-11), working within the framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), notes that “a higher level of context to which increasing attention is being given within systemic linguistics is the level of ideology...just as no text can be free of context (register or genre), so no text is free of ideology. In other words, to use language at all is to use it to encode particular positions and values.” Critical Discourse Analysis, a multidisciplinary approach to textual analysis, is interested in the role of language in defining social relations along asymmetrical lines. Critical Discourse Analysis shows how ethnicity, religion, inequality, and group dominance are expressed, enacted, legitimated and reproduced in text and talk (van Dijk, 1995:19). Critical discourse analysts like Wodak, van Dijk and Meyer align themselves with political agenda that is committed to challenging the emergence of discourses that promote social, ethnic, racial, gender and class inequality.

4. Theoretical Framework

As highlighted above, this study is based on Halliday’s (1978) Systemic Functional Linguistics. SFL is a function-based approach that views language as ‘social semiotic,’ i.e. meaning is interpreted on semiotic terms and determined principally by ‘extended contextual evidence’ (p.10). Halliday analyses the lexico-grammar of language into three broad metafunctions: ideational, interpersonal and textual; with

all having meaning potential. Each of the three metafunctions is concerned with a different aspect of the world, and has a different mode of meaning of clauses. According to Halliday (cited in Jonathan Webster, 2007:184) “These components are reflected in the lexico-grammatical system in the form of discrete networks of options. In the clause (simple sentence), for example, the ideational function is represented by transitivity, the interpersonal by mood, and the textual by a set of systems that have been referred to collectively as ‘theme’”. Transitivity, the grammatical resource for construing experience, the flux of “goings-on” consists of: (i) the process itself (ii) the participants involved in the process, and (iii) any circumstantial (circumstances) factors such as time, manner or cause (attendant on it or associated with the process) (cf: Martin and Rose, 2003:70). As Halliday and Matthiessen (2004: 280/282) put it; transitivity is “characterized by process-participant configuration...it is based on the configuration of Actor+Process.” Process is realized by verbal group; participants by nominal group; while circumstance is realized by adverbial or prepositional group. Halliday and Matthiessen (2004: 170) further categorize process into material process, mental process and relational process. Material process involves “doing words”. It expresses the fact that certain entity “does” something or performs certain action (cf. Bloor & Bloor, 1995: 111). Mental process involves phenomena that reveal the states of mind or psychological events. It is the process of sensing, feeling and thinking. According to Matthiessen and Halliday (1997, online), the mental clause construes “sensing, perception, cognition, intention, and emotion; configurations of a process of consciousness involving a participant endowed with consciousness and typically a participant entering into or created by that consciousness”. Verbs like think, know, feel, smell, hear, see, want, hate,

please, repel, admire, enjoy, fear, frighten are used to realize the mental process. The mental clause involves a “Senser” – the subject or the person who experiences the process, and a “Phenomenon” – the thing or act being sensed or experienced.

Relational process involves the process of being. The central meaning of the clause of relational process is that something is. It is typically realized by the verb “be” or some verb of the same class (known as copular verbs) such as seem, become, appear, look, remain, smell, sound, taste, or sometimes by verbs such as have, own, process. The relational clause is sub-classified into two different modes: attributive process (attribution) and identifying process (identification). Halliday and Matthiessen (2004:170) recognize the process as “those of identity and classifying.” While the attribution ascribes an attribute to an entity, the identification process identifies it – in a manner of identifier and identified.

Mood (at the clause rank) is the grammatical expression of interpersonal functions. It is a means of achieving communication by taking on speech roles in a communication encounter. Mood is the grammatical resource of the interaction between speaker and addressee, expressing speech functional selections in dialogue. Thus, the mood system provides a range of semantic categories in a speech encounter such as: giving information (statement); demanding information (question); and demanding goods and services (command). Mood represents the range of grammatical potential or options that are available to the language user. The mood is mainly concerned with the situation of the subject, that is, whether the speaker has chosen a subject or not, and “where a subject is present, whether it is positioned before or within the predicator; where the subject is even absent, whether or not the speaker is one of the participants in the action mentioned in the utterance” (Osisanwo, 1999:75). The choice in the mood system

is between “indicative” and “imperative” mood. The indicative clause has a subject, while the imperative one has none at the surface level. The indicative mood has two more options within it. Thus, an indicative clause could be declarative or interrogative. The subject retains its normal position in a declarative clause, while the interrogative is either the WH INTERROGATIVE or the Non-WH INTERROGATIVE type.

Critical discourse analysts like Fairclough and Wodak have adapted the systemic functional approaches to CDA purposes. As the data for this study are derived from the use of language during the ethno-religious violence in Rwanda and Nigeria, it will be useful to strengthen our reliance on SFL by drawing from the cognitive model of van Dijk which recognizes not only how dominance is expressed, enacted and legitimated in text and talk but reveals how “powerful social actors not only control communicative actions, but indirectly also the minds of the recipients” (van Dijk, 1995:2). Van Dijk argues that discursive practices and constructions like religious sermons somehow influence the minds of the reader and hearer because they convey knowledge, affect opinions or change attitudes. This study is interested in the deployment of declarative, interrogative, and imperative clauses as a means of realizing interpersonal relations (tenor) and meanings between the interlocutors in the texts of study.

5. Methodology

The data for analysis were obtained from a collection of short stories by Uwen Akpan entitled *Say You're One of Them*. “Luxurious Hearses” (Nigeria) and My Parents’ Bedroom” (Rwanda) were purposively selected because of the similarity in their thematic and ideological concerns. Both texts represent and express new dimensions in African literature:

religious fundamentalism and ethnoviolence. The study adopts the qualitative approach to the study of discourse strategies employed in the presentation of ethno-religious ideologies in the texts.

6. Analysis and Discussion

The linguistic elements used to construe ethnic and racial discourse in the current study are examined at the lexicogrammatical levels of transitivity and mood.

6.1 Transitivity

This part of the study examines the rhetorical strategies used to frame the notion of ethnic and religious difference in LH and MPB. Analyses show that the ideology of difference evinces and entails the deployment of discourse of intolerance and hatred between groups. Further, the data lead us to infer authorial stance or speaker stance in the presentation of information and stance represents ideological positioning.

Ex 1:

The text below (LH, 210)¹ is the dialogue between Mallam Yohanna Abdullahi, a moderate Muslim (non-extremist), and a band of Islamic fundamentalists (radical Moslems).

Fundamentalists: “Quick, quick, bring out de inpidels!...You dey hide dem por house?”

¹ The dialogue is presented in dramatic format for emphasis and the use of the word “fundamentalists” is mine.

Mallam Abdullahi: "I get no stranger for my house" Fundamentalists: "One last time, we say bring dem out o"

Mallam Abdullahi: "I say I no get visitor for house...I be Mallam Yohanna Abdullahi...I be teacher, serious Mallam...so why I go hide infidel for house"

Fundamentalists: "We know...because some of us Muslim be traitors...some of us dey helf dis souderners escafe when Allah done give dem to us to wife out...dis Igbo feofle...dis delta feofle, dis Yoruba feofle, de whole menace from soud, all of dem must die! ...Dem no like us Hausa feole"

Mallam Abdullahi: "Me, I be Hausa man too...How can I protect anybody who no like my tribe, you understand?"

What is important here is the type of attribute used by the fundamentalists (or Moslem fanatics) to classify certain outgroups in order to justify acts of violence against them. The fundamentalists ascribe the attribute of "infidels" (inpidels) to their Southern compatriots (souderners) whom they further identify with an ethnic label as "Igbo feofle" (people), "Delta feofle" (people), and "Yoruba feofle" (people). Mallam Abdullahi, however uses an alienating attribute of "stranger" and "visitor" to refer to the same Carrier - Igbo, Delta, Yoruba who are further identified with the superordinate term "Southerners" (souderners). The discourse context reveals that while the Mallam is constrained to use such form of appraisal in order to save the Christians hiding in his house, the fundamentalists' use of the word "infidel" is to justify an extremist Islamic ideology that supports the elimination of outgroups regarded as unbelievers. According to them, Allah (the Muslim God) has given the infidels (dem) into the hands of the fundamentalists (us) to wipe out. The Christians are thus described as "de (the) menace from soud (south)" who "must die!" The ideology behind the framing metaphor, a negative appraisal - "the menace" is to demonize the referent and present the whole of south as evil and thus validate the act of genocide against them. The text, therefore, shows that what is at stake here is not just

a case of Islamic fundamentalism but also that of ethnic jealousy and rivalry. The narrator describes the sharia war as part of the "recurring religious and ethnic cleansing in the north" (174). The fundamentalists hinge their prejudice on the suspicion that the southern-Christian tribes dislike their Hausa-Muslim compatriots while Mallam Abdullahi also speaks in defence of his tribe (Hausa). The mental process "like" is used twice in the texts to show how the groups perceive each other and this perception seems to be primordial. The author uses Hausa accent to index the identity of the participants in the discourse. Also significant is the use of pronouns of exclusion and polarity like "them" vs "us"; "you" vs "me", and of course the presence of racially exclusive nominal groups like "Igbo", "Delta", "Yoruba" vs Hausa; "south" vs the implied "north".

Ex 2:

The negative other presentation as a strategy for ethnic cleansing is evident in the Hutu-Tutsi conflict in MPB (285)². The text below is the climax of the story where a Hutu husband is being compelled by "his people" to kill his Tutsi wife in the presence of their young and innocent children.

Papa: "My people...let another do it. Please."

Extremist 1: "No, you do it, traitor!"

Extremist 2: "If we kill your wife for you...we must kill you. And your children too. Otherwise, after cleansing our land of Tutsi nuisance, your children will come after us. We must remain one. Nothing shall dilute our blood. Not God. Not marriage."

Extremist 1: "Shenge, how many Tutsi has Papa hidden..."

² The structure of presentation and the use of the word "extremist" are mine.

Extremists: "If you let any Tutsi live...you're dead!"

The dialogue reveals the intention of the Hutu extremists to perpetrate ethnic cleansing against the Tutsi. As in Ex. 1 above, there is the use of decivilizing language to justify an act of genocide against the other. The attributive "nuisance" ascribes to the Tutsis the quality of an irritating entity or presence that needed to be eradicated. It is also an expression of xenophobia against the Tutsi group, and the framing ideology is derived from the common knowledge that whatever that constitutes a nuisance should be got rid off. This is a negative appraisal or representation of the other to support the ideology that ethnic cleansing against the Tutsi group is justifiable hence nuisance as threat to public wellbeing should be eradicated. Also, the attributive term "traitor" is a negative appraisal intended to present 'Papa' negatively as an ally of an out-group interest. The speaker wants other members of the in-group to perceive Papa as working against the collective interest of the Hutus. The speaker had earlier ascribed the attribute "my bastard brother" (272) and "the coward" (269) to the referent (Papa) for not being in support of the agenda to cleanse Rwanda of "Tutsi nuisance." Thus, the material process "cleansing" is a euphemising phrase for "genocide" or "pogrom". The declarative and imperative structures "We must remain one. Nothing shall dilute our blood. Not God. Not marriage" is an affirmation of collective will and determination to eliminate other outgroups – an ideology influenced by prejudice. The last three sentences in imperative form stress the extremist ideology of the speaker. Particularly, the eliding of the verbal group in the last two clauses underlines the seriousness of the speaker to carry out his threat.

Pronominal referencing is strongly used in the discourse to index group alignment or alienation and identity. Simpson and Mayr

(2010: 23) contend that "the use of pronouns is an effective means of interpersonally representing in-and out-group status." They also observe that pronouns are used to "construct identities, draw or erase boundaries between groups, and stress social distance or resentment against the other group" (23). Papa uses the possessive pronoun "my" to show his oneness with the extremists and appeal to their sense of reason but the latter deploys pronouns of segregation "you" and "your" vs "we" to exclude him from the group. Thus, Papa becomes an outsider in the estimation of his people for shielding his wife and other Tutsis from harm. Identity assertion is such an issue in Rwanda that Maman (narrator's) mother advises her (Shenge) to align with the extremists: "When they ask you...say you're one of them, ok?" (266) and the Wizard confirms that "Shenge is one of us!"(271). The texts therefore show that pronominal referencing is an effective way of creating linguistic "Othering." The texts show that ethno-religious violence usually throws up circumstances that demand the assertion or denial of identity. The protagonist of LH is also troubled by identity crisis as Shenge who is both Hutu and Tutsi as Ex 3 below reveals.

Ex 3:

...he felt like one on the verge of discovering something very important, something that could give him the identity his troubled nation had failed to provide...He had waited with the crowd, aware that he was not one of them (185).

Jubril's identity conflict sees him switch ethno-religious allegiance as often as circumstance permits him. The narrator informs us that "like his multireligious, multiethnic country, Jubril's life story was more complicated than what one tribe could claim" (172). Thus when his identity is challenged by his fellow Muslim fundamentalists he asserts his oneness with them: "Ok now, I be one of you" (180). The fundamentalists counter his membership claim with an interrogative:

“One of who?” (180) and further use identifiers and classifiers that are potentially negative in the circumstance to place him: “traitor”, “Christian”, “infidel”, (infidel), “souderner” (southerner), and an “enemy widin” (81-82). He is thus labelled a traitor and an enemy within to justify his exclusion from the fundamentalist group. Aware that his Hausa-Muslim (his maternal origin) claim cannot save him, he decides to run south, the place of his father. When Jubril, in a twist of fate, falls into the hands of Christian fundamentalists he also asserts alliance with them: “I be your blood. I be one of you...I no be enemy...I be your blood broder...I accept Christ” (238); “Chief, I be one of you” (259). Jubril is eventually killed by a Christian fundamentalist group “not so much at his northern-southern claims, but at his supposed Christian-Muslim identity” (172). Jubril did not expect reprisals from the Christian south but unfortunately the people have decided to challenge the “recurring massacre of their people in the north” (225). Thus, there is the emergence of “ethnic cleansers at both ends of their country” (255), a situation which has pitched the country on “the verge of a north-south war” (256).

Constructing difference by means of pigmentational classification is another discourse strategy used to index ethnicism and racism in the texts. While the West may employ a generic label “black” to classify Africans south of the Sahara, the various peoples of Africa use colour differentiation to mark ingroup and outgroup membership. This is the formal form of identification in the Rwandan and Nigerian experiences as shown in Ex 4 & Ex 5 below.

Ex 4:

My mother is a very beautiful Tutsi woman. She has high cheekbones, a narrow nose, a sweet mouth, slim fingers, big eyes, and a lean frame. Her skin is so light that you can see the blue veins on the back of her hands, as you can on the hands of Le Pere Mertens, our

parish priest, who’s from Belgium. I look like Maman, and when I grow up I’ll be as tall as she is. This is why Papa and all his Hutu people call me Shenge, which means “my little one” in Kinyarwanda...Papa looks like most Hutus, very black. He has a round face, a wide nose, and brown eyes. His lips are as full as a banana. He is a jolly, jolly man who can make you laugh till you cry. Jean looks like him (MPB, 266)...Without his ID, you’d never know that Tonton Andre is Papa’s brother. He’s a cross between Papa and Maman – as tall as Maman but not quite as dark as Papa...Tantine Annette is Maman’s best friend. Though she’s Tutsi, like Maman, she’s as dark as Papa. Sometimes on the road, the police ask for her ID, to be sure of her roots (MPB, 268).

Ex 5:

Though he was still a teenager, Jubril looked mature for his age. He was fair-skinned and wore a blue oversized long-sleeved shirt (LH, 155)...Looking at his skin color, he had no problem believing he would fit in where he was going (LH, 172).

The two texts above show the role of skin colour as a mark of ethnic identity. The amount of time dedicated to painting a graphic physical distinction between the Tutsi and Hutu groups in Ex 4 by a child narrator reveals that the ethnic consciousness and difference between the two groups have become “naturalized.” The narrator presents two characters, Papa and Maman that are “typical” of their ethnic groups and another two, Tonton Andre and Tantine Annette, as cross between. The writer thus uses the latter pair, a hybrid construct, to parody the myth of ethnic superiority and bigotry. The fact that an extremist Hutu like Tonton Andre looks more like a Tutsi while his wife, a Tutsi, looks more like a Hutu repudiates any effort at establishing strong ethnic boundaries between groups that centuries of intermarriage have technically merged. The inability of the authorities, like the police, to place Tantine Annette and Tonton Andre, without their IDs, interrogates the rationality of sustaining any forms of sociocultural signifiers of ethnic discrimination introduced by the

Belgian colonists to serve their own imperial interest. The underlying ideology of the text, therefore, negates the erection of ethnic boundaries between groups and the use of negative ethnic group stereotypes as a dominant mode of group representations in Africa.

6.2 Mood

As noted above, mood is the grammatical expression of interpersonal functions. It is the grammatical resource of the interaction between speaker and addressee, expressing speech functional selections in dialogue. This part of the study deals with the use of declarative, interrogative, and imperative clauses as a means of realizing interpersonal relations (tenor) in a speaker and addressee encounter. For constraints of space, only a few examples of interrogative, imperative, and declarative clauses (as markers of identity and power), will be examined in this section.

6.2.1 Use of Interrogatives

The interrogatives perform different rhetorical functions in the discourse. Analysis reveals that while there is a preponderate use of interrogatives in LH the strategy is scantily applied in MPB.

Ex 6:

1. "How will my father receive me when I reach Ukhemehi? What will I tell him about Yusuf? Would my leaving Islam for Deeper Life placate him and the extended family? What does justice demand of me? When would I tell my father the whole truth? What do I tell them about my hand? How long could I keep it hidden?" (LH, 216)
2. "Who sent you to condemn the children of God?" (LH, 237)
3. "Who asked you to touch a royal father?" (LH, 195)
4. "Wait a moment, who are you? I say who are you? You said thief...who are you?" (LH, 163)
5. "Do you know who I am? (LH, 214)

6. "Young woman, who made you the judge between a royal father and this rascal? (LH, 214)
7. "Shenge, do you have it?" (MPB, 270)
8. "Tonton Andre is now friends with the Wizard?" (MPB, 274)
9. "But I cannot do it. How can I do it?" (MPB, 280)
10. "Shenge, how many Tutsis has Papa hidden..." (MPB, 285)

The different narrative techniques used to present the events of the stories and the nature of the events themselves may be responsible for that. The traditional first person narrative technique is used in MPB while the omniscient point of view technique is used in LH. For example, sentence 1 above shows the invasion of Jubril's subconscious mind to project the thoughts and worries of his mind. Even though he seems to be the "sayer" of those chains of questions, analysis shows that the omniscient technique has been introspectively applied to enable the reader gain access to the inner consciousness of the character. Sentences 2-6 dwell on identity clarification while sentences 7-10 are questions in search of facts or reasons/justifications for certain actions.

6.2.2 Use of Imperative Constructions

The imperative structures show how power relations between individuals and groups are enacted in discourse. All the imperative constructions in LH are in command form.

Ex 7:

1. "Let no one say Muslim or Islam again on this bus" (LH, 170)
2. "Then stop behaving like a democrat!" (LH, 222)
3. "Remove that stupid finger from your mouth. You are disgusting!" (LH, 196)
4. "Don't hang around me! (LH, 196)

5. "Quick quick, bring out de inpidels" (LH, 210)
6. "Swallow all your questions now, bright daughter" (MPB, 265)
7. "Don't turn on any lights tonight" (MPB, 265)
8. "Let another do it. Please" (MPB, 285)
9. "Forgive us, Monique" (MPB, 287)
10. "Get this dead body off me" (MPB, 287)

The use of command underlines the seeming asymmetrical power relations between the speaker and the addressee. The addressee is, therefore, expected to defer to the instructions of the speaker given the charged social climate of the society except they have the resources or social power to resist them. Except for sentence 9 which is a request, the remaining sentences from MPB are in the form of command. The predominant use of command in LH and MPB is occasioned by the social conditions of the speakers' societies and the social power at the disposal of each speaker.

6.2.3 Use of Declaratives

Both LH and MPB manifest preponderant use of declarative sentences. The declaratives make what is being expressed to appear more factual, forceful and convincing.

Ex 8:

1. "Ok now, I be one of you" (LH, 180)
2. "We just dey enforce government order!...Government order! (LH, 193)
3. "...I am truly one of them" (LH, 199)
4. "It's an insult to compare my religion to that barbaric religion" (LH, 206)
5. "You pagans are like the Muslims" (LH, 206)
6. "I love the crucifix; all my relatives do" (MPB, 267)
7. "...I will kill you" (MPB, 269)

8. "Tonton Andre is bitter and restless...I'm angry at him too, because he lied to get in..." (MPB, 271)
9. "We owe Andre our cooperation. He's a madman now" (MPB, 281)
10. "We want to live; we don't want to die. I must be strong" (MPB, 286)

Unlike imperative constructions that conceal the doer or recipient of certain actions, the declarative tends to reveal the agent making the statement or the referent of the utterance. Significant to the study is the use of declarative sentences to convey ingroup and outgroup relations as in sentences 1, 3, 4, 5, and 6; unequal power relations as in sentence 2; intention or wish as in sentences 7 and 10; and attitude as in sentences 8 and 9.

7. Conclusion

Analysis reveals the diverse strategies that groups use to include and exclude members. It was discovered that groups use positive ingroup presentation for themselves even when their actions and underlying ideologies appear unacceptable, and employ a negative outgroup presentation to legitimize and justify condemnable acts like genocide or ethnic cleansing against the other. The data under consideration also expresses implicit indictment of the imperial West for the ethnic and religious crises in Africa. The narrator in LH talks about how "Britain arbitrarily joined the north and south together...forged the Muslim-majority north and the Christian-majority south into a country" (228). The adverbial group "arbitrarily" shows that the 1914 amalgamation of north and south was a huge historical mistake. Also, the use of IDs to determine one's roots (MPB, 268) in Rwanda is a colonial creation by Belgium. The ideology underlying the intertextual references to the amalgamation and the use of IDs wants the reader to hold the West responsible for introducing policies that favoured their own selfish

interest at the expense of individual and collective interests of the different nationalities that constitute the modern African nation-states. This study therefore concludes that the postcolonial African democratic context that breeds a culture of hatred, intolerance, violence, exclusion, and curtailment of individual and group rights, is product of Western colonial policy in Africa.

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