

## Chapter 16

### THE DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTION OF IDENTITY AND RELIGIOUS FUNDAMENTALISM IN UWEM AKPAN'S *Luxurious Hearses*

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#### Introduction

Art, in its diverse forms, is used to capture the realities of human experiences. This may be in the form of written or spoken discourse or in other symbolic/ visual artistic patterns such as painting; sculpture, filmic or cinematographic representations. Other semiotic regimes such as pictures, music, sound and gestures are also means of encoding experiences. These semiotic dimensions encode and communicate certain ideologies. Haynes (1992) and Fraser (2000:10) argue that ideology permeates every level of human endeavour such as language and social situations. It also conditions our social activities including artistic production. Hence, the perspective from which a text is produced and presented is also ideological. Sandikcioglu (2008) contends that ideology should be taken into consideration in the analysis of a text. To him, 'ideologies of language are important for social analysis because they are not only about language. They envision and enact connections between linguistic and social phenomenon.' The writer's linguistic choice, and the socio-political vision expressed in the work are ideologically determined.

Writers develop 'literary forms that match their social vision' (Ngara 1985: vii). Thus, it is the nature of the social problems and the writer's ideology that inform the type of linguistic form or style that will be developed to express them. Soyinka opines that 'the identity of the African writer is determined by the vision of society underlying his works' (Simonse, 1982:454). This reinforces the argument that linguistic choice is determined by the socio-political and economic circumstances of the writer.

Uwem Akpan uses visceral and apocalyptic metaphors to construct the ideology of social conflict in the Nigerian society. The metaphorical mode enables him to provide the frames and social schemata through which the reader can comprehend the socio-political and religious upheavals in Nigeria. This study focuses on Uwem Akpan's use of linguistic resources to reveal inter-group relationship in Nigeria. 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, etc in order to orient themselves positively to the audience.

## **2. Background to Ethno-religious Violence in Nigeria**

Nigeria has the unenviable record of being one of the most religiously turbulent nations in Africa. Rashes of religious violence 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, a retired military General who became the civilian President, was 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 Christians protesters. The 'Sharia war' in Kaduna was fought in two phases: one in February 2000 and the next in May 2000. The crises were 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 crises of 2000 justify 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' like the Jos and Kano crises of 2001, 2004; Jos 2009, 2010; Bauchi, Borno, Kano, and Yobe 'Boko Haram' (a non-conformist Islamic group) crises; and Bauchi 2010.

## **3. Theoretical Perspective and Review of Relevant Literature**

The study is located within the framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) with insights from the theory of conceptual metaphor and critical discourse analysis. This enables us to tease out the meaning potential that is encoded in the ideology of the text. The Systemic Functional Linguistics is the umbrella name for the various models of the systemic orientations and practices. Butler (1989: 25) summarizes them into two main streams of generative oriented models and non-generative models.

The Systemic-Functional model asserts the interdependence of meaning and context of situation. It is a linguistic model that combines the formal properties of language with its situational dimensions, thus recognizing both the linguistic and the extra-linguistic forms and functions of language. Bronislaw Malinowski was the first to use the phrase 'context of situation' and to argue that 'language was primarily a form of action' (Bloor & Bloor 1995: 248). J. R. Firth, like Malinowski, perceives meaning as function in context. Both Malinowski and Firth have been criticized for so many reasons, which include their views of 'context' and lack of explicitness and coherence (Butler 1985, 1989; Pride 1979; Bloor & Bloor, 1995). It was M. A. K. Halliday who developed a systematic and comprehensive theory of language, with a new terminology of its own. This theory he later expounded and refined into what became known as Systemic Functional Grammar. Eggins (2004:2) argues that one of Halliday's 'major contributions to linguistic analysis is his development of a detailed functional grammar of modern English.' Malinowski and Firth are however regarded as the precursors of systemic

functional linguistics, having established the basic theoretical framework upon which the model developed.

Halliday's systemic functional linguistics recognizes both the formal and situational levels of language description. The lexical, grammatical, phonological and/or graphological dimensions of language are accounted for at the formal level while the situational or contextual variables are highlighted at the situational level. Halliday emphasizes that meaning underlies linguistic forms and recognizes grammar and meaning as being co-existent. He also recognizes the existence of shared knowledge and context of situation. Halliday analyses the lexico-grammar of language into three broad meta-functions: ideational, interpersonal and textual, while he identifies the contextual features of language as: field, tenor and mode. SFL is interested in how people use language with each other to accomplish everyday social activities. SFL views language as a semiotic system, a conventionalized coding system, organized as a set of choices. Eggins (2004:4) observes that 'this semiotic interpretation of the system of language allows us to consider the appropriacy or inappropriacy of different linguistic choices in relation to their contexts of use, and to view language as a resource which we use by choosing to make meanings in contexts.'

Metaphor represents one of the ways language can be used to construe experience and meaning in a social situation. It provides the frames through which experiences and ideologies can be envisioned. Halliday and Matthiessen (2004) recognize the place of metaphor in linguistic studies. They locate metaphor within the MOOD system of the interpersonal meta-function of language. However, most scholars attribute the theory of conceptual metaphor to Lakoff and Johnson (1980). Kovecses (2002: viii) argues that a 'new view of metaphor that challenged all...aspects of powerful traditional theory in a coherent and systematic way was first developed by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in 1980 in their seminal study: *Metaphors We Live By*.' Lakoff and Johnson were however influenced by Michael Reddy's classical essay: 'The Conduit Metaphor' (1979, 1993). Lakoff (1993: 203) admits that Reddy's was the first contemporary theory of metaphor that shows that metaphor is 'primarily conceptual, and part of the ordinary system of thought and language.' Koller and Davidson (2008) demonstrate that grammatical metaphor (as in Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004) and conceptual metaphor are not mutually exclusive.

Lakoff and Johnson contend that everyday English language is largely metaphorical, thereby dispelling the traditional view that 'metaphor is primarily in the realm of poetic or figurative language' (Lakoff 1993: 204). Lakoff and Johnson based their argument about the conceptual view of metaphor on five grounds: (i) metaphor is a property of concepts, and not of words; (ii) the function of metaphor is to better understand certain concepts, and not just some artistic or aesthetic purpose; (iii) metaphor is often not based on similarity; (iv) metaphor is used effortlessly in everyday life by ordinary people, not just by special talented people; (v) metaphor, far from being a superfluous though pleasing linguistic ornament, is an inevitable process of human thought and reasoning. Metaphor, in this sense, is 'understanding one conceptual domain in terms of another conceptual domain' (Kovecses 2002: 4), that is, the mapping from a source domain to a target domain. Source domain is the conceptual domain from which we draw metaphorical expressions to understand another domain, while the conceptual domain that is understood this way is the target domain. Fauconnier (1997:1) is of

the opinion that 'mappings between domains are at the heart of unique cognitive faculty of producing, transferring and processing meaning.' Metaphor, therefore, enables us to see how our everyday utterances encode different ideologies and perspectives. An awareness of this fact enables us to resist or challenge dominant ideologies which are usually framed in metaphors.

Eggins (2004: 10-11) 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 (CDA), a multidisciplinary approach to textual analysis, is interested in the role of language in defining social relations along asymmetrical lines. CDA shows how issues of 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 a political agenda that is committed to challenging the emergence of discourses that promote social, ethnic, racial, gender and class inequality.

Locke (2004: 37) contends that the 'power of discourse relates to its subscription base and the social status of its subscribers. On this basis, some discourses are more powerful than others and subscribers of non-powerful discourses are therefore marginalized and relatively disempowered.' Thus, the question of who has access to discourse, and to what discourse determine social relevance. The group that subscribes to more powerful discourses control and dominate the other groups with non-powerful discourses. Locke (2004:38) further argues that CDA is 'concerned with the ways in which the power relations produced by discourse are maintained and/or challenged through texts and practices which affect their production, reception and dissemination.' He also maintains that CDA's 'concern is with the opacity of texts and utterances' – the discursive constructions or stories that are embedded in texts as information that is less readily available to consciousness.' CDA therefore reveals the ideologies and assumptions that are concealed in texts. CDA is a socio-politically conscious and oppositional study of the discursive practices of elites, groups and institutions in the exercise of social power that results in domination and inequality, as well as the discourse of resistance against such regimes of power.

Critical discourse analysts like Fairclough (2004) and Wodak have adapted the systemic functional approaches to CDA purposes. While Fairclough's is essentially social in orientation, Wodak's (like van Dijk) is cognitive in the main. As our data is an investigation of how discourse was used in the religious violence that occurred in Nigeria in 2000, it will be useful to draw 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 reader and hearer because they convey knowledge, affect opinions or change attitudes. An insight into the cognitive model of CDA (Wodak 2006; van Dijk 2006) will enable us connect our data with the discursive mind control of the powerful. According to van Dijk (1995:22), the cognitive approach will show how 'powerful speakers self-servingly control the minds of others in a way that is in the interest of the powerful.' This

shows that the powerful use discourse to manipulate, influence and control people (van Dijk, 2006) and legitimize their actions (Van Leeuwen, 2007). The patterns of manipulation are usually concealed in rhetorical figures like metaphor and other linguistic forms.

The study shall use the qualitative approach to unearth the frames used by the writer to construct the discourse of identity and religious fundamentalism in Nigeria.

#### 4. Analyses of Rhetorical Strategies

Here the study focuses on the use of language to enshrine ethno-religious identity and create the ideology of irreconcilable social differences between groups.

##### 4.1. Language as ethno-religious Identity

One significant aspect of the text is the use of accent to distinguish some of the major participants along ethno-religious lines. Nigeria is a multi-ethnic society with more than 400 languages. The variety of English spoken by most Nigerians is coloured by mother tongue influence. Thus, it is a bit easier for most Nigerians to guess a speaker's tribe by his accent than by other indices. The data shows that the refugees who spoke English 'did so with accents peculiar to their tribes' (157). Besides using accent to delineate participants along ethno-religious lines, accent is also used to reveal ethnic ideology, biases, and assumptions. Accent is used to project inter-group relationship in a multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-cultural society like Nigeria. This explains why Ngugi (1997: xiii) argues that the 'question of identity...revolves around the issue of language'. Bucholtz and Hall (2005) and Mayes (2010) maintain that identities emerge as speakers use discourse to perform social roles.

##### TEXT 1: Hausa/ Fulani accent

The linguistic peculiarities of the Hausa/Fulani English were used to identify speakers of Hausa/Fulani extraction and their ideology. Jubril and other Hausa/Fulani in his class speak with heavy accent. This can be seen in the following conversation between Jubril and two of friends turned accusers:

- Accuser: 'Where your leap?'  
 Jubril: 'My friend, wetin dey haffen...kai, wetin be de froblem dis time?'  
 Accuser: 'You no come frotest, huh?'  
 Jubril: 'Which frotest? Gimme time... make I fark de cow pirst. I dey come'  
 Accuser: 'Your mama no allow you pollow us be almajeris in dose days...'  
 Jubril: '...come, pollow me go fark dis cows, and I go join.'  
 Accuser: 'OK, we no go fay you de money we owe you.'  
 Jubril: 'You must fay me my money. Oderwise I go refort you to de alkali. Dis one we go hear por Sharia court.'  
 Accuser: 'Also we go hear por court say you be pake Muslim!' (179-181)

From the accent of the interactants the average Nigerian speaker of English can easily infer they are of Hausa/ Fulani extraction. Typical speakers from that region of the country have certain linguistic peculiarities, especially with the English consonants, that distinguish them from other Nigerians like the use of plosive /p/ sound for fricative/f/ sound as in "leap" for "leaf"; "pollow" for "follow"; "por" for "for"; and "pake" for "fake". Surprisingly, the labio-

dental fricative /f/ is used in contexts where bilabial plosive /p/ sound should occur naturally like "refort" for "report"; "fark" for "park"; "fay" for "pay". The interaction also shows how participants use language to issue threat, 'oderwise I go refort you to de alkali...'; 'Also we go hear por court say you be pake Muslim.' Jubril's accusers used language to evoke fear in him by accusing him of being a fake Moslem; a charge that carries death sentence under the Sharia law. The discourse shows the accusers making claim to legitimate powers as ultimate defenders of Islam in Nigeria, which the accused is not.

#### TEXT 2: Igbo accent

The female participant, Ijeoma, is used to depict the Igbo ethnic group, especially those from Anambra State. Even before she asked Emeka, 'Oh, you come from **Anambra**' and later declared 'Na my prace o' (195) most Nigerians would have figured out from her previous utterances that she was Igbo. The average Igbo, especially those from Anambra State, indiscriminately interchange the alveolar liquid/rolls /r/ with the lateral /l/ sound in their utterances.

- (a) 'Abeg, no halass de boy...cally your anger meet de porice' (184).
- (b) 'We civirians better pass soldiers' (185).
- (c) 'Who make you crass plefect for dis:bus?' (189).
- (d) 'Gabliel, you dey claze!' (217).

The text shows the speaker use the /r/ sound in contexts where the /l/ sound should be appropriate and use the /l/ sound in places where the /r/ sound should occur like 'halass' for 'harass'; 'cally' for 'carry'; 'porice' for 'police'; 'civirians' for 'civilian'; 'crass' for 'class'; 'plefect' for 'prefect'; 'Gabliel' for 'Gabriel'; and 'claze' for 'craze'. The texts reveals how the speaker uses language to interrogate abuse of power: 'Who make you crass plefect for dis bus?'; show solidarity: '...no halass de boy...'; pass judgement: 'We civirians better pass soldiers'; and issue threat: 'Gabliel, you dey claze!'. The text reveals the ideological differences in the Nigerian society and how speakers use language to assert identity and power relations.

#### TEXT 3: Niger Delta (Urhobo) accent

Pidgin English is the dominant medium of communication across all social groups in the Delta region, yet speakers betray their tribe of origin through their accent. Thus, Urobho accent is different from Ijaw, Itsekiri, Edo, Isoko, Isan, etc accent. Tega, a female participant from Urobho ethnic group, speaks with an accent indicative of her tribe. The data shows that 'Tega and Ijeoma joined her (Monica), cussing the man in Urobho and Ibo' (225). Urobho accent in Tega's utterances can be found in the following:

- (a) 'chut up!' (240)
- (b) 'I no be against Catholic Shursh o' (236)
- (c) 'No mind dis chakara boy' (189)
- (d) 'I sure say you want all of us to call you shief...Shief dis, shief dat' (204)

It is evident from Tega's utterances that she uses the palato-alveolar affricate /tʃ/ sound for palato-alveolar fricative /ʃ/ sound and vice versa as in 'chut' for 'shut'; 'shursh' for 'church'; 'shief' for 'chief'; and 'chakara' for 'shakara'. Her utterances also indicate the use of imperative sentences to assert authority: 'chut up!', 'No mind dis chakara boy'. Declarative sentences are used to deny allegations: 'I no be against Catholic Shursh o'; and interrogate social disparity: 'I sure say you want all of us to call you shief dis, shief dat.'

#### TEXT 4: Niger Delta (Calabar) accent

The writer used the accent of Colonel Silas Usenetok (mad soldier) to reveal his identity. His accent shows he is from the Cross River/ Akwa Ibom States area where Efik and Ibibio languages are widely spoken. Speakers of these languages and a cluster of other related dialects and languages speak English with certain accent generally known by other Nigerians as 'Calabar' tongue or accent.

- (a) 'And jou want to eyect me from the bus because of my reliyion' (233)
- (b) 'If not for my minority tribe, I would've been a yeneral by now' (232)
- (c) 'Government still hasn't paid me for a jear now...I didn't steal jour oil money!' (230).
- (d) 'Jou're the mad people!' (231)

Col. Usenetok's accent is distinctive in the way the palato-alveolar affricate /tʃ/ is replaced with the palatal glide /j/ sound as in 'eyect' for 'eject'; 'reliyion' for 'religion'; and 'yeneral' for 'general'. We can also see him interrogate the use of religion to segregate; highlight the plight of minority groups; deny affinity with dubious generals; and threaten the autonomous face wants of his addressees. The text shows the unequal social relations that obtain in the Nigerian society.

Our data show that all the speakers in TEXT 1 – 3 speak Pidgin English with accents that are indicative of their tribe. The soldier speaks Standard English that is strongly accented. Pidgin is usually associated with the lower and middle classes although some in the upper class speak it. Elugbe (1995:287) notes that even 'highly placed government officials ... speak Nigerian Pidgin' and Nigerian Pidgin English is 'clearly the most widely spoken language in Nigeria today' (288). This apparently shows that Pidgin English is not necessarily the language of the lowly placed in the society.

#### TEXT 5: Standard Nigerian Pidgin English

There are speakers in the text whose variant of Pidgin English is not coloured by their accent. This group is represented by Monica and the police. And because they speak with little or no accent it is difficult to guess their tribe. This can be seen in the conversation between Monica and the police:

- Monica: 'Who dey give dis Muslim kids dis fuel?...Nobody go touch our oil again...Dem dey use our oil money to establish sharia, yet dem done pursue us out of nord!'
- Police: 'You be against national interest...national security!'
- Monica: 'Na our oil!'
- Police: 'Who's talking?'
- Monica: 'Na me...I say, na our oil...we dey democracy now, you hear?'
- Police: 'Who be dis woman?'
- Monica: 'Daughter of oil...And who be you?'
- Police: 'You are asking me?'
- Monica: 'Yes?'
- Police: 'I dey warn you o, stupid woman. You done lost your mind to dis Sharia wahala!'  
(192-193).

The interaction shows it is difficult to know the speakers' tribe from their accent. However, our data reveal that the writer uses language to construct the tribal identity of speakers and their social experiences. From their use of language we can infer their perception of issues such as religion, democracy and resource control. The interaction between Monica and the police signifies the use of language to make claims – 'Na our oil'; appeal to sectional sentiments – 'dem dey use our oil money to establish sharia, yet dem don pursue us out of nord!'; issue threat and assert patriotic feeling – 'You be against national interest...national security!'; and interrogate and resist the power of oppression – 'we dey democracy now, you hear?', 'And who be you?' The interaction foregrounds the uneasy social relationship between the agents of oppression and forces of freedom and resistance.

#### 4.2 Lexical items as identity markers

Uwem Akpan uses certain lexical items associated with groups to construct their social experiences. They enable the writer to firmly situate the discourse within the Nigerian context. Some of the items are so typically Nigerian that non-Nigerian readers or readers without sound knowledge of the Nigerian socio-linguistic environment will find it difficult to comprehend. Most of the items are from the domain of religion, culture, politics and ideology. The lexical items appear relevant to understanding discourse contexts because they are used to construct group experiences, show solidarity, inclusion and exclusion, and encode the ideology of social conflict. The items include:

- |                             |                            |                       |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| (i) Luxurious bus (156)     | (ii) Mami wata (174)       | (iii) okada (159)     |
| (iv) Resource control (160) | (v) wrappa (166)           | (vi) babariga (176)   |
| (vii) Zobo (176)            | (viii) akara seller (179)  | (ix) Sharia war (215) |
| (x) Shakara (188)           | (xi) kpom kwem (195)       | (xii) biko (201)      |
| (xiii) Almajeris (177)      | (xiv) harmattan (157)      | (xv) motor park (156) |
| (xvi) Deeper Lifer (175)    | (xvii) settle police (157) | (xviii) wahala (193)  |
| (xix) Amebo woman (200)     | (xx) talakawas (201)       |                       |



### 4.3 The metaphorical conceptualization of *Self* and the *Other*

The most significant element of *Luxurious Hearses* coheres in the type of metaphors that are used to conceptualize social situations and experiences. Metaphors enable us to make meaning of abstract and complex situations. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) contend that our conceptual system plays a role in defining our everyday realities because all our thoughts and actions are metaphorically structured. Our reactions to people and situations have much to do with how we conceptualize them. The data reveal the use of metaphor to reveal the internalized and expressed perceptions of groups in the Nigerian society. Metaphor enables us to understand how the Nigerian society is polarized into two mutually exclusive categories and the type of social relations that is engendered in the process. In this part of the study we shall attempt to deconstruct how groups use language to segregate and to include; show in-group and out-group; and construct positive face for *Self* and negative face for the *Other*. It is therefore this sense of *Otherness* that gives rise to the kind of social realities that are expressed in the text. Leudar, Marsland and Nekvapil (2004) point out how speakers use the 'Us' and 'Them' distinction to justify past violent actions and prepare grounds for future ones. The analyses shall be carried out in the frame of two dichotomous categories of *Us vs Them* image schema.

#### 4.3.1 *Islam vs Christianity*

The dominant metaphor in the text presents the struggle between the Moslem North vs the Christian South. It is a conflict that sets Nigeria 'no war footing' (156) because it involves the 'mass transportation of corpses from one end of the country to the other' (155). The text shows that the current Shari'a crisis was not the first of its kind in the country and 'people had developed a tolerance of such common sights' (191). It turned Khamfi, a 'multiethnic, multireligious city' into the 'corpse capital of the world' as 'churches, homes, and shops were being torched...charred corpses sizzling in electric blue flames' (191). Street urchins, popularly known as almajeris in the Moslem North, firebombed the 'businesses of their southern compatriots' (191) in the name of religion. The text also shows physical resistance by Christians, and because the city of Khamfi has a balanced Christian-Moslem population the TV shows that 'at times the Christians gaining an upper hand, then the Muslims dominating' (195).

The data show that the Moslem North construct their Southern compatriots in the frame of 'strangers' and 'infidels' (210) who must be exterminated hence the Moslem invaders have to 'search for infidels in the kitchen...in the barns...in the inner chambers' (210) of Mallam Abdullahi. The text shows that the metaphorical conceptualization of one group by the other is responsible for all the religious wars in Nigeria. The Manzikan Governor introduced Shari'a law because he believed that 'Muslims had been cheated by Christians all along' (181). He argued that common law was rooted in the Bible and Christianity, and did not protect the rights of Moslems. He 'maintained that with Shari'a the state would be cleansed of all the vices and immorality that plagued the people' (181). The metaphor of cleansing the state of immorality reveals the underlying ideology that everything about the Christian South is evil and therefore must be 'cleansed.' The protagonist, Jubril, 'equated southerner with infidel' (198) and Shari'a practices forbid interactions with infidels, who are evil. With the Shari'a fever ravaging the land, the text informs that 'it was a terrible time to accuse someone of apostasy or coming

from the south' (182). The metaphor used by the Moslem-north conceptualizes the Christian-south as evil and the Moslem-north as good; Christian-south as immoral and the Moslem-north as pure; Christian-south as infidels and Moslem-north as faithful/true believers; Christian-south as oppressors and Moslem-north as victims. These metaphors were used to justify the religious killings in the north.

The Christians, on their part, perceive Islam as a 'barbaric religion' (206). The Nigerian Christians have such avowed revulsion for Islam that the refugees have to decree: 'Let no one say Muslim or Islam again on this Bus', reason being that 'We have suffered too much already at the hands of Muslims' (170). The mere mention of the word 'Muslim' changed the atmosphere of the bus and 'it was as if a sacrilegious word had been uttered in the holy of holies' (169). The refugees and in fact other Christians perceive Islam as a violent religion and Moslems as evil. Christians frame themselves as 'God's children' (170) who are being persecuted by followers of a 'barbaric religion' (206). The Christian-south perceives the Moslem North as a region of death because of 'recurring religious and ethnic cleansing in the north' (174). The data show there are now 'ethnic cleansers at both ends' (255) of the country. The reprisal attacks in the South were to justify the argument that 'nobody has a monopoly on violence' (223) and the implication now is that 'religious divide ...had torn the country apart' (254).

The data metaphorically reveal that politicians, generals and external influences are behind the Shariah carnage. From the utterances of participants in the discourse, like Emeka (192), Chief Ukong (215-216, 221), Colonel Usenetok (233), and Yohanna Tijani (254) the reader and analyst can see how discourse is being manipulated by dominant ideologies for their own interest. The ideology of the text shows that the elite and other powerful groups manipulate the mind of their (religious) followers to create a situation that will enhance the continued domination of one group by another. Thus, religious discourse becomes a resource for the propagation of parochial ideologies that encourage asymmetry in social relations.

#### **4.3.2 African Traditional Religion vs Others**

There is also ideological conflict between African traditional religion and other religions; Christianity and Islam. Chief Ukong and Colonel Usenetok are used to frame the African traditional religion while Emeka, Mrs Aniema, and other refugees on the bus are metonymic representations of the Christian faith. The data illustrate how groups present themselves positively and represent others in the negative.

The stage for conflict between African religion and Christianity started with the latter representing the former as evil for engaging in human sacrifice and ritual like the Moslems: 'you pagans are like the Muslims...' (206). The Chief protests the perceived negative representation as 'an insult to compare my religion to that barbaric religion!' (206). Chief's utterance is a threat to the autonomous face wants of Moslems, like Jubril. The refugees classify Chief and the soldier as 'fellow idol worshippers' (229).

It is this negative representation of African traditional religion as evil and barbaric that makes Emeka engage the soldier in a 'spiritual war' (241) that sees the soldier triumph over 'Jesus Christ and Muhammad' (244) in the land. The soldier thanks Mami Wata, the river goddess, for his victory and promises to 'clean and restore her rivers in the delta to what they

were before the Christians and Muslims dirtied them with sacrilege and greed for oil' (242). Emeka, the Christian fanatic, for whom the Christians had prayed to 'conquer the juju soldier' (241) in the 'spiritual war' loses his face and becomes 'the misguided spirit-man who fought you (the soldier)' (245). The underlying metaphor reveals that traditional worshippers perceive Christianity and Islam as strange and greedy religions while Christianity perceives traditional worshippers as evil.

There is also conflict between the two adherents of traditional religion. The Chief, trying to orient himself positively to the audience discriminates between true and false traditional religion: 'This madman's worship is not the true religion of our ancestors! I know the religion of my ancestors. We don't know what mad juju he brought back from his travels...' (232). The Chief wants to demonize the soldier's religion by asserting spiritual superiority as the only true worshipper of African traditional religion. The discourse shows the ideology of intra-religious and inter-religious conflicts within the Nigerian society. The data shows attempts by religious adherents to decivilize each other.

#### **4.3.4 Intra-group conflict and the metaphor of a divided house**

The text also presents cases of intra-religious conflicts between conservative and extremist groups in Islam and Christianity. The extremist groups desire to effect social change through violence while the conservatives/moderates prefer dialogue and persuasion. The ideological disparity between the two groups often pitches them against each other. The Manzikar Governor, Jubril, Musa, Lukeman, and the faceless mob that invade the house of Mallam Abdullahi are the faces of Islamic fundamentalism in Nigeria. They are adherents of the new Sharia law that preaches the elimination of infidels through ethnic cleansing.

Yusuf (Joseph) and Emeka are used to frame Christian fundamentalism. Yusuf left the Catholic Church to become a 'firebrand Deeper Lifer' (175). His zeal brought him into open confrontation with Islamic fundamentalists who stoned him to death at Meta Nadum. Emeka, a member of the 'Pentecostal Explosion Ministries' (238) is opposed to Catholic teachings and some of the basics of Catholicism: 'Mary is an idol in Catholic worship...and child baptism prepares a child for hell' (238), he declares. Even the Catholic down grade other churches. A certain catholic declares their superiority over others: 'We no be like all dis nyama-nyama churches.' (235). 'Nyama-nyama' metaphorizes inferiority and lack of value. Jubril and the soldier are lynched by Christian fundamentalists for not being one of them.

Mallam Abdullahi is the face of conservative Islamism which is gradually losing grounds to fundamentalist ideology. He incurs the wrath of the extremists for hiding Jubril and other Christians in his house. Mallam Abdullahi is used to frame Islam as a religion of peace while the politicians, the generals, and the foreign sponsors of religious violence are presented as religious aberration. Madam Aniema, a conservative Catholic, is used to frame the fading influence of orthodox Christianity in the face of fundamentalist Pentecostalism.

The intra-religious tension shows there are in-groups and out-groups within the two main religions. The *Us vs Them* dichotomy within the religions heightens social tension and polarizes group membership along mutually exclusive lines.

The metaphor of drug addiction is used to depict religious fanaticism. Emeka, at the height of his spiritual excitement and glossolalia, is described as a 'man on drugs' (241). The

metaphor conceptualizes fanaticism as having strong grips on its victims as hard drugs on addicts.

The metaphor used in framing the conflicts reveals the asymmetrical power relations in the society. It shows how dominant ideologies construct discourses that favour their interest. It also highlights how dominated groups articulate alternative discourses that enable them to interrogate and resist the ideology of domination and oppression.

#### 4.4 Identity search and identity assertion

The ethno-religious crisis in the country brings the issue of identity to the fore as interactants constantly struggle to assert who they are as evidence of inclusion or exclusion from certain groups.

Monica refuses to be intimidated by the police because she could legitimize her claim as a 'Niger Deltan', the 'owners' of Nigeria's crude: 'Na our oil' (192), 'I say, na our oil' (193). This is revealed in the conversation below:

TEXT 1:

Police: Who be dis woman?

Monica: Daughter of oil....And who be you?

Police: I dey warn you o, stupid woman...

Monica: I say you get ID? Or dem done send you to kill us?

Police: I D? Why should I show you my ID? (193)

The text shows that while Monica is able to assert her identity as the 'daughter of oil' the police could neither say who they were nor produce their identity cards to prove their background. The police are surprised that a civilian and a woman for that matter could interrogate their authority so fiercely even when they tried to explain that they were enforcing government order: 'We just dey enforce government order!...Government order!'. Monica reminds them of the imperatives of democracy: 'We no dey military government...We dey for democracy now' (193-194). The intertextual reference to the military reconnects the text to the days of military dictatorship in Nigeria. It juxtaposes the military with the civilian and implicitly downgrades the former. Monica is used to construct an alternative discourse that resists the dominating ideologies of the police, military and the elite. She is used to frame resistance against oppression and exploitation in a male dominated society. The police could not harm her because she is able to put up a stubborn resistance to their highhandedness and interrogate the legitimacy of their power. Tega, another female participant, advocates solidarity and group resistance to oppressive regimes: 'My advice to all of una be say make we poor people dey learn to protect ourselves...' (216). The utterance shows the polarity between 'We' (us) 'poor people' and 'Them', the implied rich and oppressive group. Women seem to be the new face of resistance against domination in Nigeria.

Class and identity crisis is also played out in Jubril-Chief relationship. Jubril (Gabriel) could not answer Chief Ukong's barrage of questions that border on his identity: 'Who are you?...Who are you?' (163); 'Wait a moment, *who* are you?'; 'I say, who are you?...who are you?' (196). The narrator informs that 'Chief Ukong's sarcastic "*Who are you*" cut deep into

Jubril's soul' (198). Jubril is used to frame the contradictions in the Northern-Moslem vs Southern-Christian relationship. He is a southerner-northerner; and a Christian-moslem (199) caught up in the web of ethno-religious conflict that requires the assertion of a definite identity. His 'estrangement from the group' (157) of other Christian refugees was obvious and he was 'aware that he was not one of them' (158) even though his father was a Christian 'from the oil-producing village in the delta region' (158). He was proud of his Moslem-northern identity until circumstances forced him to think otherwise. He is 'disowned by Muslims and now captured by Christians' (208). He escapes from the hands of Moslem fanatics only to fall 'into the hands of Christian fundamentalists' (208). In his current predicament in the court of Christian fanatics he quickly discovers the need to assert his Christian-southerner identity:

'I be your blood. I be one of you...I no be enemy...I accept Christ' (238). 'I be Catholic. I do child baptism. Mama say once you be Catholic you be Catholic porever... My village get oil...Ukhemehi!' (259).

The contradiction is apparent; a Christian-southerner with a Sharia amputated right hand, speaking in strong Hausa/Fulani-Muslim accent, cannot be 'one of us'. Jubril is eventually killed by Christian fundamentalists not so much because of his 'northern-southern claim' but 'at his supposed Christo-Muslim identity' (260).

The text shows how discourse is used to construct identity and fanaticism along ethno-religious boundaries. We can see how language is used to include and exclude groups and individuals in social interactions.

Chief Ukong is used to frame asymmetrical social relations in the Nigerian society. He is conscious of his social class and would like that to be recognized by all. He asserted class consciousness when he addressed Jubril:

'You can't be talking to me...in which world? Just because they say 'democracy, democracy' you can't address me as you like. Who are you?...I must be addressed properly. Chief...chief! I'm not your equal.' (163). He later reminded a fellow refugee: 'Look, I'm not even supposed be in this bus with you...look, I'm not one of you!' (204).

Most of Chief's Ukong's language is assertive, showing power and class consciousness. The Mood system enables us to see how he asserts his identity and class at different discourse contexts. Our data show that the chief favours the use of interrogative, declarative, and imperative sentences to establish the ideology of asymmetry in inter-group relationship.

- (1) Do you know who I am? (214)
- (2) Young woman, who made you the judge between a royal father and this rascal? (214)
- (3) Who are you? (163)
- (4) May Mami Wata drown your stupid head! (163)
- (5) I am not your equal (163)
- (6) Let no one say Muslim or Islam again on this bus (170)
- (7) Colonel Usenetok, you are one of us! (261)
- (8) Then stop behaving like a democrat! (222)
- (9) Remove that stupid finger from your mouth. You are disgusting! (196)
- (10) Don't hang around me! (196)

The data indicate how groups and individuals manipulate discourse in matters of conflict and cooperation. Discourse is used to construct social identity that is steeped in ideological domination and resistance. The writer uses discourse manipulation in the text to expose the unequal power relations between social groups in the Nigerian society.

### **5. Conclusion**

The study reveals the writer's conceptualization of Nigeria as a nation with irreconcilable differences; a dead nation awaiting interment. It illustrates how the elite and other powerful groups manipulate the mind of the oppressed by constructing the type of discourses that are favourable to the interest of the dominant ideology. The data also show that groups use language to seclude and to include. Discourse is only used in the text to show solidarity, oneness, or group affinity in a negative sense, that is, among groups that pursue common ideology, like the Moslem and Christian fundamentalists. There is no place in the text where language is used to engender solidarity in the interest of the nation.

The text shows that the underlying ideology behind discourse manipulation is to serve the selfish interest of certain groups and sustain the continued domination of the weak by the powerful. The writer seems to be challenging the Nigerian masses to construct alternative discourses that will interrogate and resist the domination of one group by the other.

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