

ASPECTS OF YORUBA DISCOURSE FEATURES IN TUNDE FATUNDE'S *LA CALEBASSE CASSÉE*

Kayode Atilade
Obafemi Awolowo University

Abstract

*That many Nigerian literary writers reflect their indigenous languages and attendant cultural values in their works written in English is an established fact in the discourse of African literature written in colonial languages. Although there are equally literary works written by Nigerian writers in French medium, the scholarly attention given such Francophone writers and how they give expression to their indigenous thoughts mediated by French language is negligible. This study focuses on Tunde Fatunde's *La calebasse cassée* with the aim of analyzing and describing the writer's literary idiolect with particular reference to his blend of Yoruba linguistic felicities with the French linguistic conveyor through which he delivers his message. Using Roman Jakobson's theory of metonymy developed by Aschcroft et al, the paper demonstrates how the playwright deploys Yoruba proverbs, wise-sayings and Yoruba worldview to authenticate his African identity. The study discovers that the writer also deploys these Yoruba discourse features to address cultural and socio-political problems in his homeland.*

Keywords: Yoruba discourse features, *La calebasse cassée*, Metonymic gap, Proverb, Nigerian Francophone Playwright

Introduction

African/Nigerian writers have often demonstrated their willingness to fill what Bill Ashcroft (2001) calls "the metonymic gap" in their literary discourse. This stimulates an interaction between the language of conception (normally the mother-tongue) and the medium of expression (the European languages). A good number of them conceive their imaginative thoughts in their mother-tongues and express (write) them in foreign languages, normally English or French language, imposed on them by the colonial incidence. My concept of the productive interaction between the language of conception/thoughts, i.e. Yoruba and the language of expression, that is French, for Tunde Fatunde, a Nigerian playwright of French expression, implies that he typically fills in the so-called metonymic gap, created in the French language, with the discursive features from his mother-tongue, Yoruba. The filling of this gap through the translation of his native discourse features such as proverbs, idioms and metaphors occurs as a result of the inability of the French language to convey semantic meanings of the writer's native language and also, even more importantly, the playwright's desire to authenticate his Yoruba identity within the Francophone linguistic context.

In this paper, I intend to highlight the process of this metonymic incorporation in Tunde Fatunde's *La calebasse cassée*, although the play is a satire showing the socio-political disillusionment and cultural disorientedness of a post-colonial fictive country, and critical works that have so far been carried out on the piece have been done from this perspective (e.g. Oketoyin 2006, Adeleke 2010). While I do not intend to discontenance the thematic focus of the work, my goal is to identify, describe and analyse the Yoruba discourse features deployed in the play to fill the metonymic gap, which do not only serve stylistic purposes, but also function (ideologically) to subvert the French language and, even in some cases, the Yoruba patriarchal canon. For instance, proverb, which is believed, among the Yoruba, to be exclusively reserved for elderly men's use in public discourse or dialogue, is found to be aptly and amply used by women as a major discourse feature in the play.

Tunde Fatunde hails from the Yoruba ethno-linguistic background in Nigeria. Yoruba language is, therefore, his mother-tongue. Although he was bred in Yoruba, he studied French in the University, another colonial/European language, which is considered as the 'second official language' in Nigeria. He also teaches it in the University. These account for his writing in French. He is a freelance bi-lingual journalist/presenter in Nigeria and Gabon. He is also a social commentator. He has written extensively on issues that bother on the socio-political life of his country, Nigeria. *La calebasse cassée*, which was written in 2002 remains the most popular play in French in Nigeria.

***La calebasse cassée*: A Synopsis**

La calebasse cassée was written at the dawn of the third republic of the writer's country, Nigeria, to satirise the greed and the selfishness of the so-called democrats who pretend to be doing the biddings of the masses. In this piece, the political elites, under the guise of reconciling the citizens and promoting true democracy, keep lying to their people, through propaganda, about organising a 'Conférence Souveraine Nationale [Sovereign National Conference (SNC)]', which never sees the light of the day. The plot of *La calebasse cassée* revolves around the family of Eteki, the protagonist. He is a friend of Mr. President and collaborator of M. Pierre, a Swiss banker in whose financial institution the looted monies are kept. He gives himself to corruption and immorality, which leads to crisis in his home. The discovery of his escapades by his wife and the decision of his son, his wife, his daughter-in-law as well as Christophe, Pierre's son to testify against him and his accomplices at the SNC marks the beginning of the hullabaloo in the play. These also create sharp division among characters in the play. The linguistic blend of French and Yoruba in the play helps in no small measure in the understanding of the thematic preoccupation of this playwright who understands both the contexts of situation and of culture of his homeland. The strategy of filling what has famously been referred to as the "metonymic gap" appeals to a number of Nigerian writers, including Tunde Fatunde whose work I am discussing in this work. The gap is obviously created by the interface between the indigenous language and the foreign one, the process of thinking in one and writing in the other.

Metonymy/Metonymic gap as Discursive Style in Postcolonial African Literature

The notion of metonymy, as propounded by Roman Jakobson, has been appropriated in literary stylistics and, more particularly, postcolonial African literary criticism by scholars such as David Lodge (1977), Bill Ashcroft et al (1989), and Brenda Cooper (2008). Just as George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's *Metaphor We Live By* (1980) pioneered scholarship in metaphor, it is also believed among scholars that Roman Jakobson's "The Metaphoric and Metonymic Poles" (Jakobson and Halle, 1956) primarily influenced the interests in the study of metonymy. While Jakobson extensively discusses the distinctions that exist between metaphor and metonymy, Lakoff and Johnson maintains that there is a real, concrete connection between elements within metonymy. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) posited that metonymic connections are based usually on contiguity; that is, "those elements that find themselves next to each other, rather than the deep, symbolic, figurative and imaginary bonds, which exist in metaphor" (p. 36). In essence, where metaphor emphasizes similarity, metonymy accentuates contiguity.

Metonymic gap is a term for what is arguably the most subtle form of abrogation in postcolonial writings (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 1989). The metonymic gap is that cultural gap formed when appropriations of a colonial language include translated/untranslated words, phrases or passages from a writer's first language (mother-tongue), or concepts, allusions or references that may be unknown to the reader. Such words become metonymic of the writer's culture, the part that stands for the whole. Thus, the inserted language stands for the colonized culture in a metonymic way and its very resistance to interpretation in the colonizer's language constructs a gap between the writer's culture and the colonial culture. The local writer is thus able to re/present his or her world to the colonizers (and others) in the colonial language, and at the same time to signal and emphasize a difference from it. In effect, the writer is saying, as put by Ashcroft et al, "I am using your language so that you will understand my world, but you will also know by the differences in the way I use it that you cannot share my experience" (1989, p. 60). There are many ways in which the language can do this. These include syntactic fusion, neologisms, code-switching, and translated or untranslated words. An example of the latter occurs in Ngugi's *A Grain of Wheat*, in which Gikonyo sings a song to his future wife Mumbi in Gikuyu. The song itself is densely ironic and yet inaccessible to a non-Gikuyu reader. It reiterates that absence that lies at the point of interface between the two cultures. The insertion of a Gikuyu song in the text, as noted by Ashcroft W. D. (cited in Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 1989), presents a cultural 'gap' that emphasizes difference yet situates it in a way that makes the piece accessible.

Abimbola Adunni Adelokun, a Nigerian writer of Yoruba extraction, also inserts (untranslated) Yoruba orature in her drama, first to reflect the Yorubanness of her literary discourse and second, and more importantly, to fill the metonymic gap created by the inadequacy of the European language to convey the Yoruba worldview. In her drama, *Under the Brown Rusted Roofs*, Iya Agba, an elderly female character, chants the lineage praise-name to welcome the newly born baby into the family. We also have examples of untranslated Yoruba words in the poetries-in-English of Niyi Osundare and

Remi Raji-Oyelade as well as in the works of Beninese novelist, Adelaïde Fassinou. These writers, among other things, have used their writings to project their respective cultures through the insertion of local languages and dialects into their foreign language expressions. There are cases of translated thoughts of Yoruba worldview and philosophy into European/colonized languages in the drama of Tunde Fatunde, *La calabasse cassée*, where he decides to translate, (via modifications and adaptations), all his indigenous thoughts into French.

Metonymy can manifest itself at both micro and macro levels of the African literary discourse. At the micro level, African writers, particularly Yoruba writers, inject in their texts proverbs, idioms and other linguistic items to either fill in the gap for the inadequacy of their media of expression (European languages) in communicating the indigenous worldviews or cultural thoughts, the situation which Ayeleru (2011) described as fossilization; or to authenticate their African identities. The entire work of a writer can be said to be metonymic by becoming a self-projecting discourse that is distinctively subversive. This describes the macro level of metonymy. A lot of postcolonial African works have taken this macro-level form of metonymy. References could be made, here, to Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* where Igbo culture is metonymised, and Camara Laye's *L'enfant noir* (translated as *African Child*) whose story 'stands for' the local Cameroonian culture, which had been flippantly speculated by Europe during colonial period. However, it is instructive to say here that metonymy at the micro level leads naturally to metonymy at the macro level as observed by Ashcroft et al (1989). For instance, the works cited above, that is *Things Fall Apart* and *L'enfant noir*, gain their metonymic statuses first by being injected with the local linguistic elements to fill the gap. And having had the gap filled with local words and expressions, they become the embodiment of macro metonymy.

According to Ashcroft et al (1989: 52), metonymic gap is a common phenomenon in postcolonial writings. Within the literary text from a post-colonial state, they argue that:

... language variance itself becomes the metonym, the part which stands for the whole. That 'overlap' of language which occurs when texture, sound, rhythm, and words are carried over from the mother tongue to the adopted literary form, or when the appropriated *English* is adopted to a new situation, is something which the writer may take as evidence of his ethnographic or differentiating function – an insertion of the 'truth' of culture into the text... (lower case and italics in the original)

They opine that the maintenance of 'gap' in a cross-cultural text is of profound importance to its ethnographic function. Brenda Cooper (2006) noted that the harnessing of the metonymy or the "playfulness with language is a linguistic politics marshalled to contest the deepest quests, myths and tropes of hegemonic forms of the European languages" (2). It is, therefore, obvious from the foregoing that the incorporation of the indigenous linguistic items into the postcolonial African literary discourse is a deliberate attempt at de-colonizing the European languages and cultures in the African Literature.

Analysis and Discussion

Beginning with the title of the play, that is "La calabasse cassée", one could see that it indicatates the writer's affinity to his culture. The noun phrase is borne out of Yoruba wisdom thought that believes in the absolute uselessness of a broken or shattered calabash. The Yoruba even have a couple of proverbs or speech wisdom that portrays the value of calabash. There is a saying that "Igbá tó ti fò kò se mu omi, Kèrègbè tó fò kò sé mú rodò" [A broken calabash cannot be used to drink water; a broken pot cannot be taken to the river to fetch water]. This expression is often used in a situation of hopelessness when one feels that there is no remedy or, rather, to give early warnings to prevent such situation. Anytime this saying is used within the Yoruba discourse context, it points to the fact that the situation has gone bad beyond reparation and the discussants, consequently, must begin to look for another option. The phrase, "la calabasse cassée" [broken calabash] is therefore borne out of this Yoruba philosophy. The writer chooses to use the noun phrase to symbolise the condition of the fictive nation where the situation on ground has been so damaged that not even the method being adopted by the leaders can bring about the desired solution. The author's thought as expressed in this phrase may only be understood by non-speakers of his mother-tongue, Yoruba, through the metaphoric implication of the object involved, i.e. the calabash.

The calabash is known in every culture as a useful but fragile container, which can break at any slightest carelessness. It is the image of this delicateness of calabash that gives the non-native audience of Tunde Fatunde an idea of what to expect of his fictive nation. It may, however, be difficult for this writer to get an equivalent of this metaphorical phrase that will adequately carry the weight of his thought and communicate it, with the same degree of meaning, in the language in which he writes, i.e. French. Translation, therefore, becomes the only strategy for this author to fill this metonymic gap. This title indeed welcomes readers into the huge signature of the writer's cultural identity.

Tunde Fatunde judiciously explores the Yoruba discursive resources to condemn diverse social vices that pervade his society. These vices include hypocrisy, adultery, corruption and the likes. My intent in this paper is to show how Yoruba language interacts productively with French in the play, *La calabasse cassée*. As we shall soon see, Yoruba language remains the language of conception whereas French is the medium of expression. This, instead of putting Yoruba at a disadvantage as one may think, stimulates a robust dialogue between the two languages in the play. This is evident in the way Yoruba linguistic elements (coloured in French language) permeate the text. The liberal use of proverbs in particular shows that the author concurs with Yoruba belief in the importance of proverbs in discourse. The Yoruba believe that proverb is the horse upon which word rides, hence its significance in every discourse. Proverb is a concise but very important feature of the Yoruba discourse that is used to warn against acts that may have grave consequences on an individual or group of people as well as to correct or condemn social and cultural vices within the society. For instance, we see how Fatunde deploys Yoruba proverbs (translated into French) in the text to address social problems such as political recklessness and moral weakness. Some of the proverbs used in the piece are discussed below. « Le fermier apeuré qui croise un lion affamé risque de s'évaporer » (1) [a frightened farmer/hunter who meets a hungry lion risks being consumed]. This proverb happens to be the first used in the play and by a woman, the wife of Monsieur Ngouza Eteki, the Director of the National Gas Company (la Compagnie Nationale du Gaz). A collaborator and associate of the President, Eteki is very corrupt and immoral; he is a drunkard and womaniser who cares less about the well-being of his family. He is indeed an epitome of moral weakness. Sabine, who uses nearly all the proverbs in the play, uses this proverb to communicate her intention of not giving it up on her husband. The man just arrives home drunk and he is messing around the living room. Frustrated, this woman starts lamenting. She eventually realizes that she may lose her husband and ultimately her life, hence the use of the proverb.

The implication of the proverb to the context of its use is that it is believed among the Yoruba that an act of cowardice is enough to kill a hunter who sees a lion; it takes only a courageous hunter to kill a lion when they both come face to face. For her, her husband's (mis-) behaviour is a challenge thrown at her and she can only face it with courage or else she will lose it all. Here, the woman is the hunter who must be strong while the husband (through his behaviour) is the usually hungry lion who is ready to devour the hunter. Although the proverb occurs in a family discourse, it can be applied to the national life in the play. The proverb and its context is akin to the socio-political situation of Nigeria and Africa in general where the politicians and political office holders have become the symbolic devouring lions who are feeding fat on the resources of the nations, without any respect for human rights and dignity of the helpless citizens. The author, through the proverb as used by the helpless woman, calls on the masses not to be frightened because it takes the courage of a hunter to kill a lion. The woman knows fully well that if she can conquer the excessiveness of the husband who is also a leader in the country, the entire nation would be delivered. The context of this situation can, therefore, be understood by non-native readers of the play through the metaphor of the lion and the hunter. Lion is a deadly animal who devours its prey mercilessly. Thus, readers understand that the situation in which the woman (and by extension her nation) finds herself is deadly and it takes courage to contend against it and conquer it. This poor woman also uses another proverb to establish the fact that her suffering is real and not exaggerated when asked by her son and daughter-in-law the reason for her ranting; she thus says: "quand on pleure, on voit tout de même. Quand on nage, on essaie d'ouvrir les yeux afin d'éviter les écueils (1-2) [when one is crying, one sees all the same. When one is swimming, one tries to open the eyes in order to avoid a reef]. In essence, the import of the two proverbs is to call the Nigerian/African masses to take responsibility for their sufferings and fight against political intimidation and rascality of their leaders. Like the woman acknowledges, conscientiousness and courage are two important weapons needed to overcome repressive tendencies of the 'political lions and lionesses' in the society.

Hypocrisy is a moral weakness that permeates the Nigerian society. This is one act that the Yoruba do not take lightly as it is being condemned in any social discourse. In the piece, Sabine

expresses her displeasure over the unwarranted attitude of her husband's driver with a translated Yoruba proverb that condemns hypocrisy. To warn the driver against divided loyalty, she has to encapsulate everything in one Yoruba proverb, which the writer translates into French: "Tu ne peux pas diner en même temps avec Dieu et le diable"(5) [you cannot dine with God and the devil at the same time]. Here, it has always been that the woman is responsible for the payment of the driver's monthly salary and whenever he is in need, the woman has always been there for him. Now, it is his turn to reciprocate this by telling the woman everything the husband has been doing behind her back including visiting his concubines, which the driver is fully aware of as he regularly drives him around. This proverb originates from Yoruba cosmology that believes in absolute loyalty as it is practically impossible for one to be able to serve two masters faithfully at the same time. The Yoruba frown at divided loyalty and they always discourage it by emphasizing its consequences through proverbs and wise sayings. The original Yoruba proverb that conveys this message is "Èniyàn kii je ní ilé Orò kí ó tún lo je ní ilé Egúngún"[one does not eat with Orò deity and still goes ahead to eat with Egúngún deity].

For Tunde Fatunde to modify the proverb by substituting the two Yoruba deities with God and Satan reinforces the metonymic gap, which the appropriation of the colonial language creates in postcolonial writings. The deities in Yoruba tradition may be unknown to the readers who are aliens to the writer's culture, hence the need for him to look for the nearest equivalents (God and Satan) as substitutions for the two deities (*Egúngún* and *Orò*). In Yoruba mythology, *Egúngún* and *Orò* are two opposing deities; just as God and Satan are. They are both unseen and powerful. The adherents of each of these deities dare not attempt to do the biddings of the two at the same time. Obviously, every culture believes in the existence of God as well as of Satan, and it is clear that both of them cannot be courted at the same time. The consequence, rather than being positive, is usually grave. This is exactly what the woman is trying to tell the driver who has hitherto refused to tell her about her husband's escapades. The driver's divided loyalty will rather make him to lose on both sides. Beyond being a warning to the driver, the proverb also sends a warning signal to characters within and beyond the context of the play that hypocrisy will rather mar than make them. The Nigerian political scene is one characterized by hypocrisy and sycophancy and these are what Tunde Fatunde subtly addresses through the instrumentality of this proverb coming from the mouth of a woman to a man. Religious hypocrisy is a monster that threatens the development and peaceful co-existence of Nigeria. Each time politicians find themselves in power through election rigging and gangsterism, they find willing allies in religious leaders with whom they loot the treasury and commit all manners of atrocities, while claiming to be representing the interest of the people. These elites muzzle the masses into oblivion as the masses' silence becomes more pronounced than their presence.

Nigerian political elites hide behind conventional religion (Christianity or Islam) to milk the nation and exploit citizens. In the text, Sabine, while criticizing the hypocritical attitude of Kolingba, Eteki's bossom friend and partner-in-crime, uses another Yoruba proverb to express her shock and disappointment, though with some modifications to the proverb. "tous les poissons ont le même regard innocent, mais personne ne sait ce qu'ils pensent. Quelqu'un te sourit le jour et il t'empoisonne la nuit" (11) [all fishes have the same innocent look, but nobody knows what they are thinking. Somebody laughs with you in the day and he poisons you in the night]. Kolingba is a well-known church leader who always gives an impression of a man of integrity; he preaches at least twice in a month and sometimes he preaches on television. People consider him to be a great believer (11). Kolingba uses his church as a recruitment centre where ladies are hired and sent to the politicians as prostitutes. However, his friendship with Eteki actually exposes his hypocrisy at least to his friend's immediate family. The Yoruba believe that human mind is deep and cannot be comprehended, and, therefore, physical appearance or outward look is not enough to determine character or personality. Hence, these proverbs and sayings; "Ojú gún rẹ́gẹ̀ kò jẹ́ ká mo inú asebi" [A beautiful face does not allow us to know the wicked/evil-doer]. "A di èjẹ̀ dúdú sínú tu itó funfun jáde" [He/She who has black blood inside him/her but spit white saliva]. "A fi òsán s'èniyàn fi òru s'eye"[He/She who acts as human being in the day but is a beast in the night] and so on.

These proverbs and wise-sayings are usually used to describe hypocrites or wicked individuals within the Yoruba socio-lingual milieu. In spite of the slight modifications observed in the piece, the context in which the proverb is used portrays the Yoruba's displeasure over any attitude of hypocrisy. The understanding of the context of situation in which the proverb is used by non-native readers is embedded in the trope of fishes who carry innocent look but no one can tell what their thoughts are in the first sentence; whereas in the second sentence, it is in the contrasting verbs 'sourit' and 'empoisonne' [laughs and poisons]. The fishes are all beautiful to behold and good for consumption.

However, one does not know which one would allow you to eat it or the one that wants to eat you. Therefore, the innocence of a fish does not mean that it is harmless. In the second clause, the act of laughter and of poisoning are two contrasting deeds that one is not expected to find in one individual. So, for a man/woman to laugh in the day and to poison in the night is an indication to the fact that such a person possesses double character and this can be summarized as hypocrisy. Another proverb used by Sabine to convey and condemn the hypocritical and pretentious acts of Kolingba is the following: "Un chat qui prétend d'être ami finira, un jour, par manger la viande de la fête si la porte de la cuisine n'est pas bien fermée" (12) [A cat that pretends to be a friend will, one day, end up eating the festival meat if the door to the kitchen is not well shut].

Proverb is also used to address exploitation and oppression of the less-privileged in the text. The Yoruba place premium on human right and dignity and, therefore, condemn any form of exploitation. This informs the deployment of relevant proverbs and wise-sayings in their daily discourse to address this. Expression like "òógùn aláàárù kó gbodò gbe" meaning "the sweat of a labourer must not dry" is common in work-related discourses among the Yoruba. The saying connotes that a labourer is entitled to his pay and this must be done without hesitation. Fatunde aligns himself with this belief and expresses his thought over it through the deployment of proverb. Joseph, the driver is being sacked because of his revelation of his master's promiscuity. This sack is not shocking to the driver who considers it as a way out of exploitation and oppression. Immediately after the announcement of his sack, he recounts his ordeal as a driver to all present: "A quoi sert-il d'être votre chauffeur? Cela fait six mois que vous ne m'avez pas payé mon salaire". [Of what use is being your driver? It is six months now that you have not paid my salary]. He concludes there and then with this proverb: "Tavailler comme un nègre sans être payé un sou" (53) [Working like a nigger without being paid a penny]. The proverb actually captions the Yoruba's stance against exploitation and oppression especially in master-servant relationship. The original Yoruba proverb that explains this is "A sisé bíi erin, kí a máa je ìje èlìírí" that is: "One works like an elephant, but eats like a mouse". It is obvious, at least from the proverb, that the driver has never enjoyed his working condition with the man in any way as the latter often deprives him of his right. This is common in the Nigerian political-economic landscape as the case of exploitation and oppression characterised by unpaid salaries, refusal to pay corresponding dues to workers, inability of successive governments to honour agreement and indiscriminate sacks are not far-fetched. This situation often leads to industrial crises across the country. Strike is now a commonplace in Nigerian social discourse because it is the only weapon in the hands of the workers to demand for equity and fair treatment. From health workers to academic unions, the sweat of the Nigerian workers seems to dry perpetually as a result of insensitivity and bad leadership.

Beyond the context of this proverb in the piece, one can observe that the writer also subtly uses it to allude to the colonial/racist experience of Africa across Europe and America. Little wonder he chooses to modify the proverb in order to suit this purpose. The head-word in the proverb, i.e. 'nègre' [nigger] as used in the play, which is a derogatory term for the Black is used in place of animal, i.e. elephant in the original. Obviously, the experience of the Black in racism is better imagined than experienced. The proverb as used in the piece also reminds readers of the era of slavery when Africans were taken away into Europe and America for hard labour in plantation. It is, therefore, worthy of note that the writer deliberately modifies the original proverb in order to criticize not only the colonial masters, but also their successors, the African leaders who exploit and oppress the poor masses. The driver, like Eteki's wife, now becomes a metonymy of other oppressed Postcolonial African masses, as his experience with his boss, a government functionary and political leader, represents the whole.

The author also incorporates other Yoruba discursive elements as strategy to fill the metonymic gap in the play. He deploys certain expressions that convey Yoruba worldview in some peculiar situations to achieve ideological purpose. For example, the Yoruba believe that when one is faced with a difficult situation that is beyond one's power, it is often attached to one's fate/destiny. This informs why Sabine, when faced with marital challenges, starts her lamentation on this note: "Pourquoi mon sort est-il ainsi? Qu'est-ce que j'ai fait au destin?..." (1) [Why is my lot like this? What have I done to destiny?...]. This expression actually has its origin from the Yoruba's belief in fate or destiny as the source of every good or bad occurrence to an individual. The symbolism of 'ori' as destiny is a very strong element in Yoruba traditional belief. 'Ori', which literally means head is often used as metaphor for destiny among the Yoruba. A lot of significance is so attached to it that they believe it must be worshipped and that whatever happens to anyone is determined by their 'ori' (destiny). This is evident in expressions such as these: "ori eni la ba bo, ka fi orisa sile" [one's head should be worshipped instead of the deity]; "ori eni l'awure eni" [one's head determines one's fortune]

and so on. Sabine's initial response to her circumstances in this manner portrays her as a typical Yoruba woman who appreciates the importance of 'ori' (destiny) in human life. The character's subsequent decision to take her chance by fighting it out with her problem shows that, in spite of the strong significance of destiny, the Yoruba still believe that every individual has the capacity to turn bad situation around for his/her own good. This exactly is the case with Sabine.

Another expression that portrays Yoruba worldview in Tunde Fatunde's play is used by the main character, the chauvinist Eteki. He says: "nous sommes tous au bout du monde" (3) [we are all at the end of the world]. This kind of expression is often used among the Yoruba whenever a situation appears threatening or unfavorable. When evil tends to be gaining upper hand, there is the feeling that it signifies the end of the world. This can also be alluded to the Bible, which says that the end of the world shall be signaled by evil occurrences (see Matthew 24; 2Timothy 3). Eteki however uses this expression in a chauvinistic manner because of his belief that his hiterto male dominance is being threatened by his wife and children. He, therefore, alludes this to 'the end of the world'. Eteki and his accomplices also take advantage of certain Yoruba worldview to attempt to cover their acts of corruption and infidelity. It is already a thing of shame for a woman to have an infidel and a corrupt husband, and more shameful it becomes for such a woman to now make it public. For the Yoruba, any woman who does this does so at her own peril because there is no way she will not bear from the brunt. Here are examples of such expressions used in the play to convince Sabine and her children against testifying against Eteki at the SNC: "En Afrique on résout les querelles à la maison et au sein de la famille" (54) [In Africa, we resolve quarrel in the house and at the heart of the family]. "...nous ne sommes pas ici pour nous salir en public" (55) [we are not here to wash dirty linen in the public]. "...dans la culture africaine, un fils qui accuse son père devant un tribunal ruine celui-ci à jamais." (43) [...in the African culture, a son who testifies against his father before a tribunal ruins him forever].

This 'negative' worldview as expressed in the play as well as many others has served to subjugate many African women to perpetual sufferings as they would prefer to keep shut instead of opening up. There are cases of rape here and there among young girls and ladies but because of the 'shame' that they fear if they open up, they decide to keep quiet and suffer both psychological and emotional trauma in silence. Many married women remain in their matrimonial homes in spite of the molestation and embarrassment they face daily as a result of their husbands' indecent acts all because they do not want to face the 'shame' of being labelled. Fortunately, Sabine's resolution to damn the consequence of exposing her husband in the face of the culture that treats her unfairly and her eventual victory (as her husband agrees to her demands of having the will in her favour) provide leverage for other women who are victims of male chauvinism to also take their destiny in their own hands. She actually exposes her husband's infidelity in the presence of family and friends when she laments: "... je n'ai aucune vie privée parce qu'il (Eteki) ose amener et faire l'amour avec ses maîtresses jusque dans notre chambre conjugale" (56) [... I do not have any private life because he (Eteki) dares to bring and sleep with his mistresses even in our matrimonial room] (addition mine). She thus becomes the metaphor of liberation, a trope of hope. The characterization of Sabine in the text reveals the writer's subversive mode to challenge patriarchy, which still pervades the contemporary Nigerian society in spite of claim for gender equality. That most of the proverbs are said by this female character in a male-dominated society foregrounds the writer's discursive strategy to give voice to the voiceless and to bring the ones at the margin to the centre in public/social discourse.

The author also expresses Yoruba perspective on extra-marital affairs. Sabine openly condemns her husband's sexual immorality, which has become so embarrassing to the point that the man brings mistresses into the matrimonial bed (56-57). Yoruba culture frowns at such an act without any inhibitions. The attitude of Eteki, which is at the height of marital indiscipline that could be imagined, is a replica of common occurrences in the 'corridor of power' within the Nigerian political system. Most political office holders and politicians in Nigeria now measure the level of their affluence and popularity by the number of concubines they have or could have while in office. Stories have even been told of Local Government chairmen and States executives who secure permanent lounges and suites in five-star hotels across the country for their mistresses all on the expense of the State, using the tax-payers' money. Tunde Fatunde, therefore, in a typical Yoruba mode of 'not using the whole mouth to speak' deploys the character of Eteki to metonymise Nigerian political leaders who have given themselves to political wrecklessness and immorality right from the inception of the democratic dispensation in 1999. In all, the writer has been able to use the medium of the colonial language (French), like many of his predecessors and contemporaries at the Anglophone end, to share his Yoruba world and to portray and condemn certain social vices in his society.

Conclusion

Nigerian writers from the first generation to the present, in spite of the different linguistic poles they might have chosen to hold - English or French, have demonstrated willingness to deploy specific linguistic and stylistic approaches to address certain social and political problems in their works and communicate such to wider audience in a manner that their world could be understood. Many of them, including the one studied in this paper, have demonstrated their linguistic innovations with ingenious *mélange* of both colonial and local languages in their works. Tunde Fatunde, in *La calabasse cassée*, has been able to take his audience into his Yoruba world through his linguistic innovations. Our analysis has demonstrated that the piece is embedded with Yoruba cultural felicities characterized by concise and meaning-laden expressions. Although Tunde Fatunde did not deploy direct local words and expressions like most of his contemporaries in the Anglophone divide, this study has demonstrated that his writing cannot be said to be of the standard French medium or of Yoruba language, which is his mother-tongue. It is evident that the language of the piece is a fusion of both, which gives birth to productive interaction. My idea of productive interaction in Tunde Fatunde's play has been inspired by the fact that both language of thought (Yoruba) and language of expression (French) complement each other in conveying the writer's thematic and ideological preoccupations. That the author could successfully co-engage the two languages is indeed a proof of his mastery of both languages. Therefore, instead of saying that one language is corrupted by the other, it is rather that it is enriched by the interaction as it has been demonstrated by Tunde Fatunde in this play. This process of interaction, consequently, accentuates the process of filling the metonymic gap, which the appropriations and incorporations of Yoruba discourse, features in *La calabasse cassée* has actually achieved.

Works Cited

- Adeleke, J. A. (2010). Image de l'Afrique contemporaine dans *La calabasse cassée* de Tunde Fatunde. In E. N. Kwofie, & B. Ayeleru (Eds.) *Language, literature and criticism: essays in honour of Professor Aduke Adebayo*. Ibadan: Zenith BookHouse. (pp. 97-112)
- Ashcroft, B, Griffiths, G., & Tiffin, H. (1989). *The empire writes back: theory and practice in post-colonial literatures*. London: Routledge.
- Ashcroft, B. (2001). *Post-colonial transformation*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Ayeleru, B. (2011). Linguistic innovation in the new West African europhone novel: between interlanguage and indigenization. *California Linguistic Notes*, XXXVI (1) Spring, 1-32. Retrieved from <http://www.english.fullerton.edu/publications/cln/clnarchives/2011winter/Ayeleru%20NOVEL.pdf>.
- Cooper, B. (2008). *A new generation of African writers: migration, material culture & language*. Woodbridge & Scottsville: James Currey & KwaZulu-Natal UP.
- Fatunde, T. (2002). *La calabasse cassée*. Ibadan: Bookcraft.
- Jakobson, R., & Halle, M. (1956). *The fundamentals of language*. The Hague: Mouton.
- Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1980). *Metaphors we live by*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.
- Lodge, D. (1977). *The modes of modern writing: metaphor, metonymy, and the typology of modern literature*. London: Arnold.
- Oketoyin, J. A. (2006). Le réalisme dans *la calabasse cassée* de Tunde Fatunde. Unpublished MA dissertation submitted to the Department of European Studies, University of Ibadan. Nigeria.

Author's information

Kayode Atilade
Department of Foreign Languages
Obafemi Awolowo University
Ile-Ife, Nigeria
ayodestiny@yahoo.com