UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

A POSTCOLONIAL READING OF SOME SELECTED POETRY TEXTS OF LADE WOSORNU

DAVID JOHN NII MILLER

2023

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BY

DAVID JOHN NII MILLER

A thesis submitted to the Department of English of the Faculty of Arts, College of Humanities and Legal Studies, University of Cape Coast, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of Master of Philosophy degree in Literature in English

SEPTEMBER 2023

DECLARATION

Candidate's Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own original research and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere.

Candidate's Signature: …… Date: …….

Name: David John Nii Miller

Supervisor's Declaration

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of the thesis were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of thesis laid down by the University of Cape Coast.

Supervisor's Signature: ……. Date: ……...

Name: Dr. Rogers Asempasah

ABSTRACT

The study which is qualitative in nature analyses some selected poetry texts of Lade Wosornu through the lens of the Postcolonial literary theory, with the complement of the New Historicism literary theory. It shows that the poet presents postcolonial thematic issues that have and still affect, negatively, the growth and development of Ghana. With a masterstroke of satire and measured deployment of other tropes, Wosornu thematises that the postcolonial leadership of the country is systemically plagued with corruption, greed, insensitivity towards the plight of the masses, and an appalling attitude of recklessness towards the environment. Consequently, this ineptitude on the part of the self-seeking leaders / elites continues to plunge, further, the nation into distressing levels of public debt crisis, austere economic hardships, environmental pollution / degradation, aside from the political persecution / oppression and violence (sometimes fatal) meted out to perceived political opponents and critics. Finally, the study contends that Lade Wosornu hints at an imminent social explosion of the impoverished, despaired and incensed masses, especially the postcolonial disillusioned youth, and suggests that a way to avert that potential explosion is for Ghanaian leaders to value the lives of those they rule.

Keywords: Lade Wosornu, New historicism, Postcolonialism, themes, tropes

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To God be the glory: great things He has done; greater things He will do. I am exceptionally grateful to my lecturer and supervisor, Dr. Rogers Asempasah. What tower of patience, dedication and encouragement I had in you to lean on!

Sincerely, I express no less gratitude to all the individual lecturers in the Department of English, University of Cape Coast, especially to Prof. Opoku Agyemang, Prof. Owusu Ansah, Prof. Moussa Traore, Prof. Afful, Dr. Samuel Nkansah, Dr. Aba Sam and Dr. Xornam Atta Owusu (Dept. of Theatre and Film Studies). You are the true definition of support and encouragement.

To my indispensable friends – Justice Frederick Tetteh (High Court Judge), Dr. Alfred Ampah Mensah (IEPA, UCC), Prof. Charles Darkoh (University of Texas), Prof. Agya Boakye Boaten, Mr. John Boadu, Rev. Emmanuel Acham, Rev. George Quagraine (EMCC, Assin Atobiase), Mr. Emmanuel Akyemvi (from even the grave, you keep inspiring me), Miss Scortia Quansah (UCC), Mr. Paul Gyadu, Mr. Emmanuel Akyemvi (deceased) – how could this study have seen the light of day without your faith in me and encouragement?

My uncle, Dr. Clifford Clottey (deceased), Aunt Beryl, Aunt Bertha, my loving sisters – Robertha, Joan, Deborah, Priscilla, Georgina – and my ever-beloved, ever-living deceased Grandma Agnes: to say I am grateful for your support would be an understatement. My special gratitude also goes to Ruth Amponsah-Bio, the Administrators, Cleaners and Security Staff of the English Language Department, University of Cape Coast.

To all of you, especially those not mentioned here, I daresay that this study is the product of your "harassment", except the negatives which are mine only, if any be ascertained. I am deeply humbled.

DEDICATION

To my mother, Margaret Anokor Clottey

and

All who endeavour to rise above the odds to pursue their dreams

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Okpewho (1988), Ahluwalia (2001), Ogunyemi (2011), and Okon (2013), among other literary scholars, suggest that modern African poets do not only create poems for just their aesthetic values, but for practical purposes. Hence, by inference, many great African poets such as Wole Soyinka, Kofi Awoonor, Anyidoho, Niyi Osundare, and Syl Cheney-Coker, among others, have attracted great scholarly attention not only because of their creativity, but also for the utilitarian values their works display as revealed in the thematic issues they explore.

Currently, one of the Ghanaian poets whose poetry is slowly, but gradually attracting scholarly attention is Lade Wosornu. In recent times, a good number of his poems have been prescribed by the West African Examination Council for both the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) and West Africa Secondary School Certificate Examination (WASSCE). It, therefore, comes as no surprise when Adika and Klu (2014) observe that Wosornu's poetry employs good imageries and diction which task the imagination and thoughts of the reader. For instance, the critical reader would observe that, among others, Wosornu's poetry reflects critical thematic issues about the current socio-economic lot of Ghanaians and, by extension, Africans, in intriguing ways which do not seem to have been adequately explored, to the detriment of academia. It is in the light of the foregoing that I situate the importance of this current study—a study which seeks to explore postcolonial themes in some selected poems of Lade Wosornu.

I dedicate this chapter to the following aspects of the study: the background, statement of the problem, purpose, research objectives, research questions, methodology, ethical considerations, significance, delimitation, limitation, organisation of the study and chapter summary.

Background to the Study

Most literary works, primarily, aim at expressing theme(s) to the readers or audience. Thus, literary style, aside from its aesthetic function, and what Huemer (2007) refers to as "the cognitive function of form", must technically and ultimately be woven towards the realisation of theme(s).

Mention *theme* and, at once, various definitions come into mind. For Abrams (1971), theme refers to an abstract claim or doctrine, whether implicit or asserted, which an imaginative work is designed to incorporate and make persuasive to the reader. Shaw (1976) also states that theme is the central and dominating idea in a literary work; the message or moral implicit in any work of art. Cuddon (2013, p.721) contributes to the definition of themes by stating that "properly speaking, the theme of a work is not its subject but rather its central idea, which may be stated directly or indirectly. For example, the theme of *Othello* is jealousy". On his part, Hunter (1991, p. 536) makes specific reference to poetry, albeit applicable to the other genres, when he opines that "a poem's theme is the statement it makes about its subject". He goes further to explain that the subject could be war, love, religion, abuse, among others, while the theme is what, specifically, is put across (the statement) about the subject. Hence, for instance, *war brings about untold human suffering* is a statement or theme drawn from the subject of war. For Hunter, out of a subject, therefore, is a theme birthed.

Notwithstanding the various definitions alluded to from the above, the one central to this work is Thwala's (2017, p. 139) definition of theme:

> Themes are the messages about the real and authentic life and human nature that the poet shares with the reader. They remain the essential and dominating ideas, interconnected and unifying factors as well as the source of creative power and intelligence. They are detected after reading and visualising the images in poetry.

Thwala (2017)'s definition is not simply preferred by this study because it is superior in any way to the others; it is preferred because it goes further to identify the relationship between theme and the various elements of a literary work, especially poetry, by positioning theme as the end product of the connections among all the aspects, and the source of creative inspiration. In other words, the theme is the first aspect of a creative work to be conceived by the poet (writer) and, once that is done, it tasks the mind of the poet to now explore the various creative means like language, structure or literary style that would, for the poet, best "build" the creative piece and bring out the message(s) at the end. It is within this context that it is often said that while the theme is the first to be conceived by the writer, it is the last to be conceived by the reader or audience who, having put all the individual strands of the literary style together, then discerns how they effectively work together towards the realisation of the theme(s) (Hunter, 1991). It is worth noting, however, that not all the themes discerned in a literary piece may have been intended by the writer. That notwithstanding, perhaps, for some, it is this same possibility of discovering various interpretations leading to various themes, intended and / or unintended,

in a particular literary piece such as a poem, that makes for interesting reading and studying, as suggested by Bowditch (2013).

Generally, theme is more explicit in drama and prose than in poetry. This observation could be attributed to the varying natures of the three genres. For instance, the language of prose is commonly prosaic, that is, ordinary, as found in conversational expressions, with less connotative diction. Drama could infuse some amount of connotative diction, but the actions and reactions of the characters, setting, plot, among others, tend to offer further hints to help discern the theme(s). Poetry is most guilty of containing implicit themes—a view supported by Yeibo (2012), Adika and Klu (2014), Nur and Miranti (2018). Perhaps, the implicit nature of the themes of poetry would be better appreciated when one considers what poetry itself is.

Adzayawo (2014) observes that various definitions of poetry abound. However, one that cannot be overlooked is William Wordsworth's. In his "Preface to the Lyrical Ballads", Wordsworth opines that poetry is "[t]he spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings arising from emotions recollected in tranquility in the language of ordinary men". By "language of ordinary men", Wordsworth seems to allude to the use of expressions not limited to the highly educated in society, but ones that are down-to-earth. However, that does not entirely exclude the connotative use of words. Indeed, with regard to its language, many scholars in the literary field suggest that poetry, inherently, relies heavily on the *choice* and arrangement of words (right words in the right places, they often say) which can appeal to the senses of the reader / listener. Writing on the topic, "Salient Themes as Voices in African Poetry", Ogunyemi (2011, p.227) asserts that poetry employs "powerful words to x-ray profound

thoughts" about mankind. He suggests that such "powerful words" are used denotatively and connotatively, making poetry a literary genre that holds meanings that are more implicit than explicit. For many, it is the use of the "powerful words" to recapture powerful feelings and to reveal "profound thoughts" that make them lovers of poetry. For instance, in the opinion of Bowditch (2013), readers of poetry are moved by the excitable experience—experience they usually are able to identify with in their own lives—evoked by words. Ogunyemi (2011) further suggests that the chosen words, ultimately, should go a long way to reveal deep thoughts about man and society, and culminate in the development of themes that would shape society and give direction. Furthermore, Alexander (2013), in exploring the topic, "What use is Poetry?" suggests that shaping society and giving direction towards a better world includes, among others, not assenting to things that are wrong. Hence, in disapproving wickedness, injustice, immorality, atrocities and similar vices, poetry approves of love, justice, morality, compassion and similar virtues. Thus, poetry should not only show the aesthetic qualities of the poet, but also help to shape and direct society.

The need for poetry to satisfy both aesthetic and utilitarian functions, as suggested in the preceding paragraphs, is also supported by many modern African poets. For instance, Okon (2013) opines that modern African poetry criticises the prevailing political matrix of Africa with the messianic intent of changing the prevailing poor conditions of the masses who suffer neglect at the hands of their ruling elite. He further alludes to the dynamism of modern African poetry when he asserts that even in the present globalised world propelled by Information Communication Technology, modern African poetry

has ventured into the criticism of the degradation of the environment, in an effort to call for "political action towards preserving the ecosystem for the survival of man" (p. 1). He further states that though modern African poetry, as any other poetry all over the world, has been used to express various emotions and themes, "ranging from love, death of a loved one, hope and faith to praise of nature, among others, political theme has tended to dominate" (p. 1). According to Okon (2013), modern African poetry has been used to express the challenges, idiosyncrasies and prospects of culture, tradition and politics in the African world in the twentieth century and beyond.

Politics in modern Africa could be traced back to the era of colonial conquest and partition of Africa in the latter part of the nineteenth century by Europeans. The colonial phase to the current neocolonial eccentricities that are found in the guise of independent African states, together with the cultural trauma unleashed on the African mind through colonial religion and education, constitute the fundamental material for modern African poetry, without prejudice to other apropos themes (Okon, 2013; Okpewho, 1988).

However, without taking into account their historical or cultural connections, colonial politics changed many autonomous African tribal groups and grouped them into sizable geopolitical units (Hamilton, 2009; Okon, 2013). Many of these newly formed states had achieved independence from their colonial overlords by 1960. However, according to Okon (2013), the colonial rulers forced the "new democratic" political system of governance on the emerging African political leaders. Even worse, the new African political elites were given the "democratic governance" system too quickly, leaving them with little opportunity to become acquainted with its mechanisms. Thus, Okon

(2013) claims that "what resulted after independence in the states across the continent was a farce: political disorder, tribal genocide, corruption, civil wars, coups, and political assassinations" (p. 1). Addai-Munumkum (2019) also argues that several years onwards, the political canker does not only persist, but has taken a turn for the worse. In his poem, "The Leader and the Led", Niyi Osundare, like many modern African poets, alludes to the political turmoil in Africa and describes Africa as a "pack' that "…thrashes around / Like a snake without a head" (stanza 8). Consequent to the political and leadership turmoil is the deplorable state of the masses; the ever-worsening economic hardships, the misery, apathy of the masses, bitterness and incendiary feelings as a result of the betrayal of their hopes and dreams (Okon, 2013). It is within this largely bleak context that Niyi Osundare, like many modern African poets, believes that the African poet has no choice, but to make his or her poetry, thematically, criticise the political landscape of Africa and its horrifying effects on the masses:

> You cannot keep quiet about the situation in the kind of countries we find ourselves in, in Africa. When you wake up and there is no running water, when you have a massive power outage for days and nights, no food on the table, no hospital for the sick, no peace of mind: when the image of the ruler you see everywhere is that of a dictator with a gun in his hand…then there is no other way than to write about this, in an attempt to change the situation for the better (source: en.m.wikipedia.org)

Okpewho (1988) distinguished three periods in the history of modern African poetry: the era of slavery (16th to 18th century); the period from the start of colonial rule in the later 19th century); and the post-independence period. Okon (2013), in contrast, studied modern African poetry from the early 19th century through the post-independence phase and divided modern African poets into three groups: the Pioneers (Pre-Independence Echoes), who emphasized the politics of anti-colonial struggle in their poetry, including Gladys Casely-Hayford, R.E.G. Armattoe, D.C. Osadebay, Michael Dei-Anang, and Vilakazi; the Nationalists are the second group. Poets of Negritude, including Leopold Senghor, Birago Diop, David Diop, Bernard Dadie, and Tchicaya U'Tamsi, are included in this group; poets in the third category belong to the Post-Independence era, which spans the years from the early 1960s to the present. The third category is further subdivided into two: the younger generation, whose political concern is closely linked to their vision, which is masses-oriented; and the older generation, whose vision was private and individualistic, or who at best only showed social concern but never preached revolution. The latter set themselves apart as people's champions (Okon, 2013). In no particular order, Wole Soyinka, Niyi Osundare, Onu Chibuike, Syl Cheney-Coker, Oumar Farouk Sesay, Kofi Awoonor, Kofi Anyidoho, and Chris Abani are notable examples of contemporary African poets.

In recent times, one of the Ghanaian poets whose works seem to be slowly, yet gradually attracting scholarly attention is Lade Wosornu. Best known for his poem, “The Master Brewer”, he is the author of many more generally unfamiliar poems with profoundly perceptible socio-political themes which tend to do what many modern African poetry is expected to do—criticise

its society in an effort to, as it were, direct society, especially the ever-increasing number of callous, greedy and unjust African political leaders and the "Led" towards the path of "righteousness", for the "salvation" of the miserable and seemingly hopeless African masses.

Adika and Klu (2014) reveals a lot about the background of Lade Wosornu. They report that he was born at Galo-Sota, a village in the Volta Region of Ghana in 1939. His father was a herbalist who practised holistic medicine, including obstetrics. His mother was a gifted "Akpalu" (the poems and songs of the celebrated late twentieth century Ewe poet, Vinoko Akpalu) performer. As a professor of surgery on the one hand and a poet on the other, Wosornu appears to have been "gifted" in equal measure by both parents. He has three collections of poems: "Eté – A Woman of Africa and Other Poems" (1995); "Journey Without End and Other Poems" (1997) and "Celestial Bride and Other Poems" (2002). Adika and Klu record that Ladé Wosornu is very conscious of his background as a scientist in the exercise of his poetic inclinations. They report of a proclamation made by Wosornu at the Harare International Book Fair in Zimbabwe (Indaba 2001):

> Except that the house of my surrogate mother is full of test tubes, mathematical sets and microscopes. She compels accurate observation and methodical measurement. In that surrogate house, the pen is a late acquisition. This is why the ingredients which spice my poems include numbers, chemistry, physics and medical terms (p. 3).

They also record him to have asserted the following:

> By insisting upon precision and dissection, the surgeon in me wars with the poet in me. He compels the poet to walk another proverbial knife's edge. It is that line between being precise and being pedantic. It is your province, not mine, to judge whether I remain safe on the edge of discernment (p 3).

Deeply aware of the tensions inherent in his literary craft, Wosornu leaves its assessment to the community of readers and critics, Adika and Klu (2014) concludes.

In my personal and informal communication with Lade Wosornu on May 14, 2022, via mobile phone, and recorded at his own generous instance, he states that his poetry does not criticise society; it only reflects it. However, I am of the opinion that, as Alexander (2013) opines, in not assenting to things that are wrong, such as political wickedness, injustice, immorality, atrocities and similar vices, Wosornu's poetry approves of love, justice, morality, compassion and similar virtues. After all, he has elsewhere said that he leaves the assessment of his poetry to the reader (Adika and Klu, 2014). I, therefore, hold the opinion that Wosornu's poetry exposes political and socio-economic vices in the Ghanaian society in both subtle and strong satirical ways that call on both the leaders and the led in Ghana, and in Africa on the whole, to undertake critical reflections about their attitudes and, perhaps, in the slightest of hopes, change for the better.

Statement of the Problem

In writing the foreword to Wosornu's anthology titled, "Journey Without End and Other Poems" (1997), Professor Abena Dolphyne asserts that

Wosornu "[n]ow firmly establishes himself as a poet of repute". Indeed, the diversity of his themes which dwell on contemporary issues about the self, the nation Ghana, and the world, call for attention. In addition, the acceptance of his poetry by the West African Examination Council as examinable text for Senior High Schools, just like the poetry of the Sesays, the Peters, the Netos, the Osundares, among others, should evoke some good degree of academic curiosity in literary researchers to take a more critical look at Wosornu's poetry. Unfortunately, just a couple of scholarly works such as Adika (2011); Adika and Klu (2014; 2015) could be cited. I am not in the position to say whether or not other works, unpublished or on-going, exist but one thing is certain; the dearth of scholarship on Wosornu's poetry—a poetry which offers the literary scholar a plethora of topics, ranging from the rich use of imagery, through the use of medical diction to perceptible socio-political themes, among others, for exploration—calls for many more scholarly research into it than the currently existing ones suggest. Consequently, this research focuses on exploring the postcolonial themes in some selected poetry texts of Lade Wosornu.

I will provide a somewhat in-depth definition of the term 'postcolonial' in my literature review. However, to help define 'postcolonial themes', let it suffice now that 'postcolonial' literature deals with the cultural impact of colonialism on the former colonised states, and indeed on that of the colonisers (Esty, 1999; Tyson, 2023)). Thus 'postcolonial themes' in literature, refers to the messages or ideas raised in works of literature that border on how colonialism has affected and keeps affecting (politically, economically, culturally etc.) the former colonised states (Young, 2012; 2020), and the call for

the need for de-colonisation or the de-linking from the former colonisers towards real independence and sovereignty.

Purpose of the Study

The study seeks to analyse thirty (30) selected poetry texts of Lade Wosornu, focusing on the exploration of themes through the conflated perspectives of New Historicism and Postcolonial Critical theory. The identification of postcolonial themes is the main purpose of the study while the New Historicism theory is expected to help situate the postcolonial themes in the Ghanaian and, by extension, the African setting. In the process, an attempt would be made to explore how the major tropes the poet use help to develop the postcolonial themes.

Research Objective

The primary objective of this study is to explore the postcolonial themes developed in the selected poetry texts, to the end that Wosornu's poetry, in the utilitarian spirit of modern African poetry, provides sharp criticisms on the postcolonial socio-political milieu of the nation Ghana, in particular, and Africa, in general. Beyond this, the research also seeks to investigate the creative use of major tropes that help develop the postcolonial themes.

Research Questions

The study is guided by the following questions:

1. What are the postcolonial themes explored in the selected poetry texts of Lade Wosornu?
2. How do the major tropes deployed by Lade Wosornu help develop the postcolonial themes in the selected poetry texts?

Methodology

This section of the study describes the research approach and the methods adopted in gathering the data for this study. It discusses the research design, data collection procedures, sampling size, sampling technique, ethical issues and method of analysis.

A research design is a thorough plan that specifies how data relevant to a certain problem should be collected and analysed to complete a research or study (Kumar, 2011). This research adopts the qualitative research methodology since it seeks to use qualitative data in the form of poetry texts for its analysis. According to Creswell (1998), qualitative research is an understanding inquiry procedure built on diverse methodological traditions of inquiry that investigates a social or human problem. In this case, the researcher creates a rich, holistic picture by analysing words, reporting extensive informant perspectives, and conducting the study in a natural setting. Thus, qualitative research is multi-method in nature and takes an interpretative, naturalistic approach to its subject. This implies that qualitative researchers look at issues in their natural habitats, aiming to make sense of how we understand events through the lenses of the meanings we assign to them. The use and collection of a variety of empirical materials—case study, personal experience, introspective, life story, interview, observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts—that describe routine and problematic moments and meaning in individuals' lives are among the tenets of qualitative research (Strauss, & Corbin, 1998). More recently, Astalin (2013, p.118) has also defined qualitative research as "a systematic scientific inquiry which seeks to build a holistic, largely narrative description to inform the researcher's understanding of a social or cultural phenomenon".

The afore-cited definitions affirm that qualitative research is, primarily, an inductive process of organising data into categories and identifying patterns among them. With this conclusion, my choice of the qualitative research methodology, also the choice of method of most literary researchers, would enable me to carefully analyse the various carefully selected poetry texts by categorising and identifying postcolonial thematic patterns within them. The method would also aid in my selection of information to assist in the development of the background of the study. Again, the qualitative research approach would enable me to explore and obtain an in-depth understanding of the research objectives (Wolf, Mahoney, Lohiniva and Corkum, 2018).

As already indicated, this is a qualitative study which employs a textual analysis research methodology. The primary data for the study was gathered from two (2) of the present three (3) anthologies of Lade Wosornu: "Celestial Bride and Other Poems" (2002) and "Journey Without End and Other Poems" (1997). I ignored the third anthology of Lade Wosornu, "Ete – A Woman of Africa and Other Poems", because I did not deem any data there relevant to the objectives of this study.

I also communicated, informally, with Lade Wosornu, after the I was, informally, introduced to him by Professor Moussa Traore of the Department of English, University of Cape Coast. The communication was via mobile phone calls and WhatsApp messages. In the communication process, he forwarded soft copies of his selected poetry collections to me when it proved difficult to access a hard copy of the "Celestial Bride and Other Poems" (2002). He also confirmed that the particular collection I excluded from my data did not, in his estimation, contain any data that would be relevant to this study. At some point in the

WhatsApp message communication, and at the poet's own instance, I listed some of the poetry texts I deemed to contain postcolonial themes. He confirmed the list and drew my attention to other poetry texts he deemed relevant to my study in the two selected poetry collections without discussing them, adding the text message that "May the Lord Himself remain your personal Tutor in this field of creative activity" (May 24, 2022).

In addition to the above, I obtained secondary data from documented sources such as books, journals, periodicals, and unpublished works. The secondary sources were primarily used to help in the gathering of information for the study's background, theoretical framework of the study and the empirical literature review.

Another aspect of methodology a researcher needs to consider is the sample size and sampling technique. The process of picking a subset of objects from a defined population for inclusion in research is known as sampling. Individuals are the most common sample unit in social and behavioural research. However, groups, events, places, and points in or periods of time can also be used (Guest, Namey, and Mitchell, 2013). The degree of generalisability (or lack thereof) of findings, as well as their representativeness (or lack thereof) in comparison to the larger population, are determined (or limited) by one's sampling approach. Similarly, the reliability of research findings is dependent on sample size. Thus, if the "key informants" chosen for a study, for example, are not very knowledgeable about the topic under investigation, the ensuing data will not be very useful. The procedure of sampling, according to Dawson (2002), has two parts: a complete list of possible data sources and a population, as well as the selection of a specific sample from the population.

The data sources for this study are the current three anthologies of Lade Wosornu which represent his total published poetry collections: "Ete – A Woman of Africa & Other Poems"; "Journey Without End and Other Poems"; "Celestial Bride and Other Poems". I was guided by my study's objective of exploring the postcolonial themes in the poetry of Lade Wosornu.

I employed the purposive sampling technique to gather the required data for the study. The purposive sampling technique was used because it was envisaged that not all the poetry texts in the three poetry collections (the population) would have postcolonial themes, and so, the purposive sampling technique enabled me to select the poetry texts that are likely to echo postcolonial themes. In the end, I excluded "Ete- A Woman of Africa & Other Poems", since I did not obtain any data from it relevant to this study.

Ethical Consideration

Though I communicated informally with Lade Wosornu, I did not see that his messages qualified him to be described as an informant in my data collection. He merely forwarded soft copies of his anthologies to me to save me the trouble of typing all the selected poems for the study. Hence, in my estimation, there was no need for me to obtain an ethical endorsement. However, I must say that in my first communication with him on 22nd May 2022, I, carefully, introduced myself as an M.Phil. student of the University of Cape Coast who was conducting a research for academic purpose only. I indicated to him that his contact was forwarded to me by Professor Moussa Traore of the Department of English. It must be stated that the poet confirmed Professor Moussa Traore's prior informal discussion with him about my contacting him. In the very first communication with the poet—a lively and friendly one—

which lasted for almost thirty minutes on WhatsApp message and a call duration of almost twenty minutes, the poet, informally, expressed his willingness to offer any help I needed in this study.

Significance of the Study

The study which explores the various postcolonial themes in the selected poetry texts, and the effective use of major tropes to help develop such, would, particularly, broaden the scholarship on Lade Wosornu's poetry in academia and, generally, add to the existing world knowledge on literary studies.

Delimitations

The study focused on postcolonial themes in some selected poetry texts of Lade Wosornu from two out of his three poetry collections. It employed the combination of the postcolonial approach to literary criticism and New Historicism as both the theoretical and analytical frameworks. The researcher limited the study to two collections because they were those seen to contain poetry texts significantly relevant to the objectives of the study. Again, for the purpose of in-depth analysis, the researcher selected thirty (30) poetry texts, representing eighty-five percent (85%) of the total poetry texts identified to contain significant degrees of postcolonial themes.

Limitations

The delimitation of the selected poetry texts to thirty (30) out of the available number suggests that the findings of this research cannot be generalised to cover all the poetry texts of Lade Wosornu. Hence, other postcolonial themes not explored in this study are likely to emerge from the texts excluded from this study.

Organisation of the Study

This study is made up of five (5) chapters. Chapter one is presented under the following sub-headings: background to the study; statement of the problem; purpose of the study; research objectives; research questions; methodology; ethical considerations; significance of the study; delimitations; limitations; and organisation of the study. Chapter two constitutes a review of the theoretical and analytical frameworks, and the supporting literature. The chapter also reviews empirical studies which include studies on postcolonial themes in literary texts, and existing studies on the poetry of Lade Wosornu. Chapter three focuses on the analysis of the postcolonial themes while chapter four focuses on analysing how the major tropes help develop the postcolonial themes. Finally, chapter five provides the summary, findings, recommendations and conclusion.

Chapter Summary

In the present chapter, the researcher established the basic information required for the study. These comprised the background to the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research objectives, research questions, methodology, ethical considerations, significance of the study, delimitation and limitation. The chapter concluded by giving an outline of the chapters making up the study and how they were organised.

In the next chapter, I intend to review literature on the New Historicism and Postcolonial critical theories, relevant empirical studies which include studies on postcolonial themes or issues in literary texts, and existing studies on the poetry of Lade Wosornu.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The chapter one of the study presented the background, statement of the problem, purpose, research objectives and research questions. It also revealed the methods and techniques employed in carrying out the study, describing and discussing same. In this chapter, I seek to present a review of the underlying theoretical and analytical frameworks of the study as well as related literature. The review of the related literature provides an overview of some researches undertaken on postcolonial themes in modern African poetry, and on the poetry of Lade Wosornu with the view to identify gaps that require further research. Furthermore, the literature review provides the foundation upon which the arguments raised in this research are built.

As already indicated, the theoretical and analytical tools for this study are a combination of the Postcolonial literary theory and New Historicism. I find the two literary tools useful as they offer deeper and broader insight into my analysis of the socio-political, socio-economic and socio-cultural conditions "interpreted" by the poet, Lade Wosornu, in his poetry texts selected for this study. I have chosen my use of "interpreted" in the preceding sentence carefully to hint at what new historicists assert that a literary text holds the history of its setting (Tyson, 2023), and that writing of history itself is a matter of "interpretation", and not facts. This is in contrast to the view held by traditional historicists that history holds facts. I will attempt to expound this further as I, subsequently, look at what New Historicism is about, and its relevance to this study, in the ensuing paragraphs.

New historicism, as known in America, but in Britain referred to as Cultural Materialism, is also broadly referred to as socio-historical school of literary theory. It was pioneered in the 1980s by Stephen Greenblatt (Pieters, 2001; Sharma, 2014). According to Selden, Widdowson and Brooker (2013), the two key influences of the theory are Michael Foucault and Louis Althusser. Selden et al. (2013) state that the two key influences argue that "[h]uman 'experience' is shaped by social institutions and, specifically, by ideological discourses" (p. 189). They (the influences) "[c]onceive ideology as actively constituted through social struggle, and both show how at another level dominant ideologies sustain and keep social divisions in place" (p. 189). Giving further explanations, Selden et al. (2013) assert that Althusser abandons the orthodox interpretation of ideology as 'false consciousness' in favour of a theory which situates ideology firmly within material institutions such as political, juridical, educational, religious, among others. Althusser conceives ideology as a body of discursive practices which, when dominant, sustain individuals in their place as 'subjects'. Similarly, for Foucault, discourses are always rooted in social institutions, and social and political power work through discourse. Further, power does not emanate only from the top of the political and socioeconomic structure, but power circulates in all directions, to and from all social levels, at all times, and power circulates through the means of exchange, namely, the exchange of material goods; the exchange of people; the exchange of ideas (Tyson, 2023, p.284). Consequently, among other implications of the means of exchange of power, individual identity is neither merely a product of society, nor is it merely a product of our own individual will and desires. Instead, individual identity and its cultural milieu inhabit,

reflect, and define each other. Their relationship is, therefore, mutually constitutive and dynamically unstable (Tyson, 2023; Pieters, 2001).

Thus, New Historicism, which hinges on the view that human experience is shaped by social institutions and, specifically, by ideological discourses, is a literary theory and an approach to literary criticism which is based on the premise that a literary work—a work which captures human experience—should be considered a product of the time, place and circumstances of its composition rather than as an isolated creation of genius (Greenblatt, 2006 as cited in Selden et al., 2013). In other words, the approach hinges on the argument that there exists a relationship between the text and the context within which the text is produced. Hence, new historicists opine that "[l]iterary texts are cultural artifacts that can tell us something about the interplay of discourses, the web of social meanings operating in the time and place in which the text was written" (Tyson, 2023, p.291). Thus, the literary text indicates the discourse in vogue at the time it was written and is, itself, one of those discourses. That is, the literary text shaped and was shaped by the discourse circulating in the culture in which it was produced. In further expounding the point, Tyson (2023, p. 292) asserts that, for new historicists, literary works are able to reveal the interplay of social discourses present within the setting of the writing of the text "[b]ecause the literary text is, itself, part of the interplay of discourses, a thread in the dynamic web of social meaning". Tyson (2023) further explains that for new historicists, the literary text and the context that produced it create each other, and so the text and context are "mutually constitutive". In a similar vein, our interpretation of literature shape and are shaped by the culture in which we live (p. 292).

It is essentially within the above-mentioned relationship between text and context that part of the differences between traditional historicism and new historicism is obtained. For the new historicists, traditional historicism only provides background material about literary works. Also, neither the assertion of traditional historicism that a literary work carries the spirit of the age that produced it, nor its assertion that literary texts are self-sufficient art objects that transcend the setting in which they were written is true (Selden et al., 2013; Tyson, 2023). New historicists argue against traditional historicists that the history of a place is not directly linked with the literary text produced from the place. Hence, one cannot, for instance, use the history of a place to determine the meaning of a literary text; at best traditional historicists can use information from the background of the author.

Perhaps, the argument of new historicists against simply using the history of a place to obtain the meaning of a literary text stems from their view that what constitutes history, as passed onto us, are merely interpretations, and not facts. They argue that 'master' historical accounts, usually the accounts of the powerful in society, are inevitably tailored, to mainly suit their purpose. Those interpretations, therefore, will not wholly reflect the views of all who live in that society. How about the views of the marginalised voices—voices of women, the poor, the weaker tribes or nations, among others? Does the "spirit" of the rich and powerful then reflect the "spirit" of the powerless and poor? Which of the "spirits" would, therefore, capture the true "spirit of the age"? For new historicists, therefore, plurality of accounts (from the powerful, powerless, rich, poor, conqueror, conquered) are needed to help create the accounts of

history, because one master account cannot wholly reflect the true "Spirit of the Age" (Pieters, 2001; Tyson, 2023).

By way of summary, the New Historicism literary theory is influenced by the view that human experience is shaped by social institutions and, specifically, by ideological discourses—discourses shaped by and shaping the lives of people from all walks of society. Literary works capture human experiences, and so, there exists a relationship between text and context which can be obtained through what new historicists describe as "thick description", that is, a close examination of a given cultural production, such as a literary text, to discover the meanings that particular production has for the people in whose community it occurs.

For this study, a socio-historical perspective, as offered by the New Historicism literary theory, with its ideology of text-context relationship, and how that relationship reveals the discourses of the time and place, is essential, as it allows the social, economic and political themes in the selected poems of the Ghanaian poet, Lade Wosornu, to be explored. The theory also allows for an examination and understanding of the setting (time and place) against which the poems were written, taking into cognizance the Ghanaian background of the poet.. The application of the poet's Ghanaian background, in turn, allows for the description, interpretation and evaluation of the poems within the Ghanaian context through the process of "thick description".

To conclude my argument on the relevance of New Historicism to this study, I re-assert that it allows an investigation into, specifically, the Ghanaian, and, generally, the African context, in relation to the selected texts of Lade Wosornu's poetry, and the exploration of their themes. Spencer (1998), Kelly

(1974), and Carr (1986 & 1994) agree that works of literature, especially those seen as most aesthetically remarkable, are usually expressive of the society, or culture in which they were produced. Thus, literature is a product of history, or for the new historicists, a product of the "interpretation" of history, and should reflect and shape the history that has produced it. African literature bears the influence of history, culture and the society from which it comes (Mushonga, 2018). As such, the approach on which this research is based has been influenced by Lade Wosornu's interpretation of the history and social circumstances of the Ghanaian, in particular, and the African, in general, in the selected poetry texts.

The Postcolonial Literary Theory

History and Development

As indicated, the main theory for this study is postcolonial literary theory. It is variously referred to as postcolonial critical approach, postcolonial criticism, and colonial discourse. Tyson (2023) is in sync with Selden, Widdowson and Brooker (2013) that the theory which deals with the analysis of the cultural dimension of colonialism or imperialism is as old as the struggle against it. Selden et al. (2013) trace the beginnings of the theory by affirming that:

> It entered the agenda of metropolitan intellectuals and academics as a reflex of a new consciousness attendant on Indian Independence (1947) and as part of a general leftist orientation to the 'Third-World' struggles (above all in Algeria) from the 1950s onwards (p. 223).

Postcolonial literary theory which belongs to the larger field of postcolonial studies thus evolved in the wake of the independence of many countries from the domination of European powers during the nineteenth century. Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (1989) details the beginnings of the theory:

> The idea of 'post-colonial literary theory' emerges from the inability of European theory to deal adequately with the complexities and varied cultural provenance of post-colonial writing…Post-colonial theory has proceeded from the need to address this different practice. Indigenous theories have developed to accommodate the differences within the various cultural traditions as well as the desire to describe in a comparative way the features shared across these traditions (p. 11)

Ashcroft et al. (2007) hold that it is possible to look back at the 1990s and see how important the humanities, in general, and postcolonial discourse, in particular, were to developing a new language to address the problems of global culture and the relationships between local cultures and global forces.

It must be mentioned here that the postcolonial theory itself is a multidimensional field of study which lends itself to various interpretations (Selden et al., 2013; Tyson, 2023). As a literary and critical approach, it examines many issues such as identity, nationalism, gender, among others, in societies that had been subjected to colonialism and attained independence from their former colonial rulers (Tyson, 2023). In another vein, postcolonialism looks at the progress (especially political and cultural) of these countries, years

after they had gained their independence, focusing on the inheritance the newly independent countries were bequeathed (Young, 2020).

The word "Postcolonialism" itself was originally used by historians after the Second World War in terms such as the "post-colonial" state, and the term had a clearly chronological meaning, designating the post-independence period.

However, from the late 1970s, the term has been used by literary critics to discuss the various cultural effects of colonisation (Tyson, 2023). Lois Tyson further argues that although the study of the controlling power of representation in colonised societies had begun in the late 1970s with texts such as Edward Said's "Orientalism", leading to the development of what came to be called colonialist discourse theory in the works of critics such as Spivak and Bhabha, the actual term, 'postcolonial', was not employed in these early studies of the power of colonialist discourse to shape and form opinion and policy in the colonies and metropolis. Spivak, for example, first used the term, 'post-colonial', in the collection of interviews and recollections published in 1990, called "The Post-Colonial Critic". Although the study of the effects of colonial representation were central to the works of these critics, the term 'postcolonial' as such was first used to refer to cultural interactions within colonial societies in literary circles (Mushonga, 2018; Tyson, 2023). This was part of an attempt to politicise and focus the concerns of fields such as Commonwealth Literature and the study of the so-called New Literatures in English which had been initiated in the late 1960s and called so until the 1980s. The term has, subsequently, been widely used to signify the political, linguistic and cultural experience of societies that were former European colonies (Tyson, 2023). According to Lois Tyson, postcolonial criticism has, largely, come to analyse

the ideological forces that forced the colonised to internalise the colonisers' values while at the same time promoted the resistance of colonised people against their oppressors.

As can be seen from the above, the term has nearly always been a subject of disciplinary and interpretive dispute, particularly when it comes to the consequences of the hyphen's absence or its signification (Esty, 1999). Ashcroft (1996) and Ahluwalia (2001) claim that the poststructuralist influence of the three main proponents of colonial discourse theory—Edward Said (Foucault), Homi Bhabha (Althusser and Lacan), and Gayatri Spivak (Derrida)—led many critics to insist on the hyphen to distinguish post-colonial studies as a field from colonial discourse theory by itself, which was only one of many approaches and interests that the term "post-colonial" sought to address. Gandhi (1998) argues that the unbroken term 'postcolonialism' is more sensitive to the long history of colonial consequence: colonialism and neo-colonialism. Even though colonialism has officially ended, Gandhi (1998) remarks that the word 'postcolonial' does not mean 'after colonialism', because that would suppose an end to the process of imperialism, and that would be to misread present realities. To support the view that colonialism continues in the post-independence African society as neo-colonialism, Said (1978) states that:

> Colonialism in the formal sense is over, but I am very interested in neocolonialism, I am very interested in the workings of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank … I care very much about the structures of dependency and impoverishment that exist, well certainly in my part of the world and in all parts. (p. 2)

Said suggests that even after independence has been achieved, the legacy of colonialism will continue to plague the recently liberated countries. Although African nations have technically achieved independence, Ahluwalia (2001) concurs with Said that the former colonial powers and recently formed superpowers still hold a significant influence thanks to international monetary organizations, which set prices on global markets, multinational corporations, cartels, and a range of cultural and educational establishments. Kwame Nkrumah's neocolonialism, according to Ahluwalia (2001), supports the case for colonial influence, but in a more sinister manner that makes it harder to recognize and oppose than the more overt colonialism of the past. As Young (2020) also opines, the continued dominance of the West serves as proof that political liberation did not bring economic liberation, and without economic liberation, there can be no political liberation. Thus, the term "postcolonialism", without the hyphen, for some, encapsulates the period of colonialism and neocolonialism. Shohat (1992) has, however, asked the critical question as to when to pin down the period implied by the term 'postcolonial", and to that Slemon (1997), as cited by Mushonga (2018), suggests that referring to the period after independence does not cater for the multifaceted nature of postcolonialism as a theory, as well as the heterogeneity of the term. To this end, Slemon (1997) explicates that the 'post-' in "postcolonialism" is something slightly different from the 'post-' in a compound word like "post-independence". Mushonga also argues that for Slemon, the word "has an extended meaning and it has interrogative and subversive tendencies", therefore, Slemon's 'post-' suggests the prefix 'anti-'. Olatunji (2010) adds to the argument that as a theory, postcolonialism also encapsulates the totality of

practices which characterise third world societies from the inception of colonialism to the present. This fluid and shifting quality, according to Olatunji (2010), allows the theory to move easily from pre-independence to post-independence, and to the present, without difficulty. Olatunji seems to concur with Atwell (2006) who states that postcolonial theory captures contemporary reality well because it is neither bound to, nor before or after, one epoch.

Olatunji (2010) asserts that postcolonialism addresses the subtleties present in these societies, such as concerns about identity, culture, and family, in addition to the political and economic difficulties that newly independent nation states face.

I use the terms "postcolonialism" and "postcolonial," both without the hyphen, to refer to the direct rule of African politicians or elites throughout the period of political independence as well as the period of direct colonial presence and authority.

Other sources of contestation from outside and within which for some indicate a weakness of the postcolonial theory is that it lumps together vastly different cultural phenomenon in a lose historical model; it defines the present in terms of a European past; and it applies Western theory to non-Western cultural objects (Esty, 1999). However, Ahluwalia (2001) argues that instead of the disciplinary boundaries of the postcolonial theory being seen as a crisis, it is important to view such developments in the postcolonial theory positively as part of its vibrancy, especially in this millennium as the processes of globalisation intensify. Ahluwalia (2001) again opines that the current issues of neocolonialism, as indicated by Kwame Nkrumah, suggests a strong link between the present cultures of the colonised and that of the colonisers. I will

indicate how some scholars have addressed the third charge against colonialism when I look at how such scholars have discussed the topic, Postcolonialism and Africa—a topic I find relevant to further support my choice of the postcolonial theory to examine an African poetry text.

Despite the controversies in the field, particularly, surrounding the term 'post-colonial' / 'postcolonial' and the legitimacy of the use of the term, the relevance of neo-imperialism and the issues emerging from the engagements of post-colonised societies in the current age have demonstrated the usefulness of post-colonial analysis (Abrahamsen, 2003; Ahluwalia, 2001; Esty, 1999; Tyson, 2023). Many of the issues surrounding the topic of globalisation which includes the function of native states under the pressure of global forces, and the connection between imperialism and neoliberal economics are addressed and continue to be addressed by the post-colonial analysis of imperial power (Abrahamsen, 2003; Ashcroft et al. 2007).

Postcolonialism and Africa

I deem it important to look at the use of postcolonialism in Africa, because of the arguments in some quarters with regard to its legitimate usage. For instance, Ahluwalia (2001) presents the argument of Kwame Anthony Appiah, one of the first to examine the topic, Postcolonialism and Africa. Ahluwalia (2001) cites Appiah's (1997) assertion that postcoloniality has been commodified for consumption in the West by a relatively small, Western-style, Western trained group of writers and thinkers who mediate the trade in cultural commodities of world capitalism at the periphery. Such writers, as projected by Appiah (1997) present their own invention of Africa to the world and also present their own view of the West to Africa. Both Ahluwalia (2001) and

Abrahamsen (2003) cite the argument of another African work, Williams (1997), that the key problem of postcolonialism is that it has failed to infuse an authentic and well-sustained African input into the paradigm, and that postcolonialism, by inference to the development of intellectual traditions in India and Africa, belong, unequivocally, to India. For African critics of postcolonialism, the theory does not solve Africa's current political and economic crisis, and so, it is of little relevance to the continent (Abrahamsen, 2003). Indeed, Williams (1997) as well as critics such as Shohat (1992) and Dirlik (1994) contend that the term postcolonial is an attempt by the West to avoid using the terms imperialism and geopolitics, situations which, they argue, are currently in existence.

In expounding his view on the "African" arguments against postcolonialism, Ahluwalia (2001) contends that postcolonialism is not Indian-centric, as suggested by Williams (1997), but it is a term inaugurated with the publication of "The Empire Writes Back", written by Australian writers, as reported by Ashcroft et al. (1989). Ahluwalia (2001) further argues that Australia, as a Commonwealth state, shares similar experiences with other Commonwealth nations, and as Said (1993) also argues, one country's experience as a Commonwealth nation should be seen as a common one. Ahluwalia goes on to argue that, for instance, the destabilising tendencies in India, a legacy of the Western colonisers, are very much experienced in Africa. The writer concludes his argument in this direction by asserting that:

> Postcolonialism has to be seen necessarily as Western metaphysical violence underpinned by the process of imperialism which continue even after the formal dissolution of empire. In the

> case of Africa this can be witnessed, for example, in the way in which the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank continue to discipline the continent (p 11).

On her part, Abrahamsen (2003) argues that though postcolonialism brings along a myriad of contestations, its conceptualisation of power and the recognition of the relationship between power, discourse and political institutions and practices have cast new light on colonial and postcolonial experiences, and so, there is the need for further dialogue between postcolonialism and African studies for the benefit of the two.

From the foregoing, Ahluwalia (2001) and Abrahamsen (2002) seem to argue for the legitimate use of the term postcolonialism in Africa's current experience and, implicitly, endorse the application of the postcolonial literary theory in the analysis of literary works that fall within the periods demarcated by the term itself.

Finally, looking at the postcolonial literary theory, I arrive at the conclusion that the various contestations in the field seem to partly stem from the different interpretations the theory affords scholars. This inherent fluidity of the theory seems to be a mixed blessing, and it is this fluidity which it lends that yet makes it a useful theory for this study—a study concerned with the exploration of postcolonial themes in selected texts of Lade Wosornu.

On 6th March 2023, Ghana attained sixty-six years of independence from British rule, a rule that dated back several years when the country was known as the Gold Coast. Political power and governance was handed over by the British to the natives led by Kwame Nkrumah who became Ghana's first President. Later, the assassination attempts, coups d'état, over-throw of

governments, political persecution and violence, and the resultant repressions that followed and still follow, howbeit in less obvious forms in the current dispensation of democracy, have provided the context within which any literary text of the times would rest. It is partly against this backdrop that I find the postcolonial literary theory relevant to this study.

Now, having looked at the history of and what postcolonial literary theory is, some pertinent controversies involved in the field, especially with regard to the term "postcolonial", its fluidity as a literary theory, its legitimate use for the African situation, and relevance in literary studies, I move on to look at the tenets of the postcolonial literary theory. Hopefully, the tenets would further help establish the relevance of the theory to this study. In looking at the tenets, I refer to Dobie (2011) who asserts that:

> Postcolonial analysis begins with the assumption that examining the relationship between a text and its context will illuminate not only the given work but also the culture that produced and consumed it. In the end you may not agree with everything you find in either of them, but you will emerge with a deeper understanding of how and why a text is meaningful (p. 190).

In its literary investigation, postcolonial criticism makes certain basic assumptions. The assumptions include the colonisers' physical and cultural conquests of the colonised. The colonisers did not only assume the reigns of governance of the conquered lands of the colonised; they also superimposed their culture on the natives to the extent that much of the native culture was lost. Tyson (2023, p.419) for instance asserts that:

> [decolonization often has been confined largely to the removal of British military forces and government officials. What has been left behind is a deeply embedded cultural colonisation, the inculcation of a British system of government and education, British culture and British values that denigrate the culture, morals, and even physical appearance of formerly subjugated peoples. Thus, ex-colonials often were left with a psychological "inheritance" of a negative self-image and alienation from their own indigenous cultures, which had been forbidden or devalued for so long that much pre-colonial culture has been lost.

Thus, as part of its tenets, postcolonial criticism explores the ways in which the colonisers imposed their culture and values on the natives, and thus distorted or suppressed their past. One of such explorations is the colonisers' creation and use of the ideology of "othering". The "othering" ideology propagated by the colonisers was that *other* people, the colonised, who were racially different from them, were inferior. The ideology projected the colonisers (the British) as constituting the ideal human beings, the civilised and the proper, while the colonised or "demonic others" were savages and evil, and if anything at all, possessed a beauty that was only "primitive". Bluntly put, this colonialist ideology projected the colonised as not "fully human", to borrow the words of Tyson (2023, p. 420). One notable effect of the "othering" ideology was that the colonisers created two "worlds"—"they" and "us"—the world of the native savages and that of the civilised colonisers. Unfortunately, the "othering" ideology, which is vastly Eurocentric (the use of European culture as the standard to which all other cultures are negatively contrasted) has, up till today,

influenced the attitude of Africans, as seen in the western oriented curricular of our educational institutions; the strong and often fatal desire to legally and illegally migrate to Europe or the United States of America with the view of seeking a "better" life; the native political elites' insensitive attitude towards the native masses; the mimicry of European ways of life (even in basic practices such as in speaking, dressing, choice of food) while, like the Lakunle character in Soyinka's (1963) drama, *The Lion and the Jewel*, the African often and wholly, belittles the African culture; the continuous practice of the hastily bequeathed "farcical" (farcical as expressed by Okon, 2013) governance structures largely characterised by the "they" (the oppressed masses) and the "us" (political leaders) "worlds" among natives, reflecting what Ahluwalia (2001) terms the "Divide and Rule" strategy of Westerners, and its breeding of political disorder, tribal genocide, corruption, civil wars, coups and political assassinations. Hamilton (2009) also suggests that the repressions and societal divisions of the worlds of the African elites and the African masses map unto the colonisers ideology of "othering".

While Dobie (2011, p.188) calls the effects of colonialism a "loss or modification of much of the precolonial culture", Esty (1999) calls it ruins, and asserts that most postcolonial African writers strive to build a democratic continent on the ruins of colonialism. They do so by critiquing the negative attitudes of African leadership, political and corporate misdeeds, greed and bureaucratic corruption of African intellectuals and elites in post-independence Africa. This is one of several means through which such writers assert Africa's independence from its colonial masters (Esty, 1999).

In the light of all the above, I adopt, for this study, the postcolonial literary approach for a number of reasons. First, postcolonial theory privileges fluidity and ambivalence, so that it is well suited to accommodate all social, political, economic and cultural issues that are projected in the selected poems. By and large, the post-independence literature in Ghana and Africa is largely influenced by the social and political events of the society.

Second, I take a cue from Tyson (2023) who opines that:

> [b]ecause colonialist and anti-colonialist ideologies can be present in any literary text, a work doesn't have to be categorised as postcolonial for us to be able to use postcolonial criticism to analyse it (p 431).

Then again, the two literary lenses, new historicism and postcolonial criticism, with their primary focus on the relationship between text and context, seem to well complement each other in the in-depth exploration of the socio-political and socio-economic issues that are portrayed in the selected poetry texts of Lade Wosornu for this study.

Previous Studies

To place this research within the context of previous studies on postcolonial thematic issues in modern African literary texts, be it prose, drama or poetry, I look at what some of those previous researches have shown so far.

Scholars have attempted to explore not just specifically postcolonial thematic issues, but themes in general in modern African literary texts. However, regardless of their focus, one is likely to discern postcolonial tones in their works. One of such works is Ogunyemi (2011) who explores postcolonial themes in African poetry. The researcher employs the meta-critical technique

paired with realism, within sociological approach, to investigate the diverse voices in African poetry, as expressed in the developing themes. This combination method, according to the study, is employed since the poetry under examination were really representing African worldviews and distinctive customs. The study employs a selection of poems from Soyinka's edited collection "Poems of Black Africa" as its source material and classifies the themes according to Soyinka (1999). The study analyzes the primary topics as the voices of the people that the poets strive to exemplify artistically, referring to the subject areas of the chosen poems as "salient voices." African poets, the study concludes, employ their subjects as echoes to salvage various inherences found in the deteriorating political, economic, and social landscape. Ultimately, the research recommends a coordinated endeavor to foster creativity and capitalize on the advantages of globalization for the advancement of humankind in Africa.

Another study worth reviewing is Sadek (2013). The study embraces the viewpoints of eminent critics like Nkrumah, Fanon, and Ngugi. The study looks at some of the postcolonial themes that Tanure Ojaide's chosen poetry from various collections addressed. It addresses some of the most prominent ecological, neocolonial, and postcolonial themes that are present in the poet's writings. The analysis captures the poet's intense worry about how the neo-colonial elites are turning the country from a utopia to a dystopia. The ecological imperialism brought about by the destruction of indigenous natural resources is also covered in great detail. Ojaide's concern about the betrayal of the independence movement by those who were its authors and how this intensifies the sufferings of the Niger Delta people in particular is also dealt with.

According to Sadek (2013), Ojaide's works represent a comprehensive satire of the neocolonialists who betray their homeland and collaborate with the foreign colonisers. Sadek (2013) adds that Ojaide satirises the "incestuous relationship between compradors and colonizers". He contends that the African middle class has to abandon the colonial-era mindset of looting in order to right the wrongs done to the populace and the environment. The aesthetics of Ojaide's poetry, according to Sadek (2013), also revolves around his attempts to subvert the powers of evil embodied by the imperialists and their proxies in order to recreate African traditional heritage, culture, and environmental philosophy. Sadek (2013) comes to the conclusion that Africans cannot be freed from the bonds of neo-colonialism unless the lost collective sentiments are restored.

Another study on postcolonial themes is Sultan (2015). The research employs an analytical and descriptive methodology, whereby the investigator explores the primary subjects (themes) in Soyinka's poetry in addition to the characteristics and factors that shaped his work. The study concludes that Soyinka's primary quality is that he does not treat creative subjects with an elitist perspective. Conversely, "Soyinka is the writer of the people whose role in cultural enlightenment and the struggling against political injustice, especially in post-independence Nigeria, is unmistakable" (p. 75). According to the study, Soyinka's poetry stands apart from that of his contemporaries because he aims to close the communication gap between readers and himself as a writer by using straightforward language. His poetry thus addresses both regional and global themes. Many people, meanwhile, do not believe that Soyinka's poetry is written in an understandable or straightforward style. For example, according to Ogunyemi (2011, p. 11), Wole Soyinka has been charged with employing

complex vocabulary that is beyond the grasp of the average reader by the rebellious critic Chinweizu. According to Ogunyemi, poet and critic Niyi Osundare also charged Soyinka for employing phrases that were difficult for some readers to understand. According to reports, Osundare has "are we supposed to read it or toss it back to the shelves in endless desperation" (as cited by Ogunyemi, 2011, p.11). Osundare is of the opinion that poetry should be written in the simplest form. Sultan (2015) makes a controversial claim that Soyinka connects with the general public by using straightforward language. However, scholars cannot disagree with Sultan (2015) that Soyinka's themes, in addition to incorporating elements like Yoruba myth and traditions, echo the brutality, corruption, and insensitivity of Nigerian political leaders in their practice of the colonizers' hastily bequeathed political system in post-independence Nigeria. This is true regardless of the arguments that could be made for or against Soyinka's use of language.

There is also Ajibade and Adetomi (2015). The study adds to the body of knowledge regarding the factors behind African states' post-colonial challenges. It uses Achebe's *A Man of the People*, Soyinka's *The Interpreters* and Armah's *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born* to portray the theme of postcolonial disillusionment. It notes that these poems both capture and denounce the postcolonial decay of African society. According to this opinion, the writers' works have strayed from the custom of frequently criticizing their shared foe, colonialism, and instead have attempted to understand African realities today in terms of human traits without taking historical context into account. The paper presents the authors' opinion that the excesses of Africa's new black rulers, rather than the shared foreign foe of the past, are to blame for

the current woes facing Africans. The study concludes that the novels effectively expose the follies and mistakes made by post-independence African officials and citizens. The novelists voice their displeasure with the way Nigerian affairs are being conducted. They raise awareness of the most important socio-political concerns of the day. The study goes on to say that the novelists are social critics who offer a qualitative assessment of current African life, much like a number of contemporary African poets and dramatists. While Ajibade and Adetomi (2015) point out that African leaders themselves are to blame for the political and economic difficulties that have led to disenchantment in the post-colonial African governments, other research have made the opposite claim. For instance, Addai-Munumkum (2019) argues that the attitude of African political leaders stems from colonial influence. Also, Okon (2013) contends that regardless of compatibility, ties to history, or culture, colonial politics bonded the mostly independent African ethnic groupings into big geographical units. By 1960, the new states had gained most of their independence. However, the "new democratic" political system of governance imposed by the departing colonial powers was handed over in a hurry to the new African political elite; so, these new leaders did not have enough time to get acquainted with its workings. In view of the foregoing, what resulted after independence in the states across the continent was a farce: political disorder, tribal genocide, corruption, civil wars, coups, and political assassinations. Again, for the novels to suggest that Africans, after political independence, were really independent, is to underestimate the post-independence influences of the former colonial rulers. What governance structures were bequeathed to the natives? For instance, what sort of leadership did the colonisers exhibit with

their "Divide and Rule" attitude, as suggested by Ahluwalia (2001) and Hamilton (2009), among others? Then, looking at the bigger picture, as Young (2020) opines, can there be political independence, for that matter freedom from Western influence, for African political leaders to lead their people without economic independence? Arguments for either side seem plausible.

Another postcolonial thematic study worth reviewing is Victor's (2017). The study seeks to investigate into the presence of lachrymation in the mentioned poetry collection. The study is conducted against the background that poetry has over the years become a vehicle in Nigeria for the expression of the grim historical past which was darkened by cataclysmic events such as slave trade, colonialism, imperialism and the devastation of the Nigerian cultural heritage and social ethos. It argues that in the post-colonial era, the poet becomes lachrymal and the lachrymator is but the bad political system and leaders, corruption, capitalism and stasis as a function of the degeneration of socio-political and cultural systems and structures. One of its concluding points is that lamentation has become a dominant theme of postcolonial Nigerian poetry. The study suggests two levels of lamentation: The poet laments the degeneration of his society using poetry as a medium, and the disillusionment of the people in the society which provokes the poetic impulse. It then concludes that stasis is a major aspect of postcolonial Nigeria, and since there is a massive decline in the standard of living of the people, poets have taken to lamentation as a means of protest and calling the attention of the world and the people to the cancerous growth eating into the socio-political and cultural systems of the country.

Then there is Ikiche (2018). The study investigates the poetry of two contemporary Nigerian poets and how they have been able to reveal postcolonial realities in their societies. The study adopts Postcolonial Criticism for the analysis of the primary texts. Through the poetry of Iquo Eke and Ifeanyi Nwaeboh, the problems in the post-colonies are publicised. The focus of the study is to reveal how Eke's "Symphony of Becoming" and Nwaeboh's "Stampede of Voiceless Ants" have been able to celebrate the numerous cultural aesthetics in Nigeria through elements of cultural hybridity inherent in their poetry and how they attempt to portray positive image of Africa and post-colonial Nigeria in particular. Eke and Nwaeboh's thematic concerns are topical and they adhere to the ideological vision of Chinweizu and Madubuike. In their critical essay entitled, "Towards the decolonization of African literature", the latter duo assert that:

> A writer does have a minimum professional responsibility to make his Work relevant … to his society and its concerns. He may do this by treating the burning issues of the day … or … by treating themes germane to his community's fundamental and long range interest (p.152).

Ikiche (2018) concludes that Eke seems to have highlighted significant aspects of Nigerian traditional and cultural aesthetics in her poetry, and draws significant attention to the fact that postcolonial Nigeria has myriads of problems exemplified in some of her poems analysed, but also indicates the beauty and splendor inherent in the post-colonies. Also, Nwaeboh reveals the plights of Nigerians and Africans in the post-colony which has been characterised by bad leadership, corruption, exploitation, extra-judicial killings

and dictatorship. Nwaeboh also makes an attempt to show that Africans have also been able to become successful in their various fields of human endeavour irrespective of the limitations.

Nwosu and Adesshina (2021) is a study that utilises the New Historicism literary theory to show how issues of corruption captured in poems of Nigeria's post-civil war era map onto the corruption in the Nigerian society. The study recognises the role of poets such as Soyinka, Ojaide, Okara, among others, in exposing corruption in the Nigerian societies. However, it pays greater attention to poems of contemporary poets such as Niyi Osundare, Idris Amali and Musa Idris Okpanachi. It concludes that these poets do not only expose the acts of corruption in the Nigerian society, but also condemn the acts. It also asserts that but for the acts of corruption, Nigeria, a nation rich in oil, could have been one of the richest nations in Africa.

Similar use of the New Historicism literary theory to link creative writings to the historical context of a place is evident in Nyagemi (2017). The study examines how history is textualised in selected poems from Cook and Rubadiri. It establishes a one to one mapping between the messages in the selected poems and the historicities suroounding such personalities as Martin Luther King, Yatuta Chisiza, and Major Christopher Okigbo, among others. Again, it found out that indicated wars such as the war in Vietnam and Angola mirror the current wars in parts of the world.

Mushonga (2018) adopts a two-dimensional approach as a literary tool of analysis. Just like the current study, Mushonga (2018) fuses the Postcolonial theory with the Socio-historical critical approach. The study uses data from post-independence anthologies by Kahengua (2002; 2012), Molapong (2005;

2015) and Thaniseb (2011). The study's primary goal is to investigate the conception and articulation of social themes in a representative sample of English-language Namibian post-independence poetry. As portrayed in the chosen poems, the study clarifies the socio-political, socio-economic, and socio-cultural issues that work against Namibia's complete emancipation. The study reveals that Namibian post-independence experiences and concerns, as reflected in the selected poetry works, such as persistent poverty, unemployment, and corruption among Namibians, are the most frequently addressed issues by the poets. According to the study, the poets depict independence as a complete failure on all fronts—politically, economically, and culturally. Thus, the poets use poetry as a platform to protest against the prevailing status quo. Poetry concerning socio-political protest not only criticizes how independence has undermined the socio-cultural dignity and identity that come with being Black, but it also shows how neo-colonialism and corruption have prevented government from fulfilling most of its promises. The study proves that achieving full freedom requires a strong sense of identity and culture. On the socioeconomic front, poetry, at last, exposes and protests the misery of the average Black Namibian in the post-independence era brought on by poverty and unemployment. All things considered, it seems that post-independence poets and the general public are disappointed with independence. Addai-Munumkum (2019) concurs with Mushonga (2018) on the failure of African political leaders, and its attendant hardship faced by the masses in the post-independence era. Addai-Munumkum (2019) uses Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People*, *Anthills of the Savannah* and Sembene Ousmane's *Xala* to discuss the postcolonial African political state in West Africa in particular, and Africa,

in general. The study delimits its use of "African state" to the period from the 1960's when many African countries attained independence (politically) from European colonialism. It lays the foundation that the structure of authority in the post-colonial period is indebted to the colonial period. This is in sync with Alfani (2021); Bayeh (2015); Esty (1999); and Okon (2013). By way of analytical framework, Addai-Munumkum (2019) uses the metaphor of an impotent masculinity, and draws from Saint-Aubin (1994) who indicates that:

> this phallic metaphor has both negative and positive articulations. Positively, to be phallic means to be penetrating: inquisitive, persistent, steady, courageous and objective. Negatively, to be phallic implies intrusiveness: violent, unyielding, discriminating, domineering and exploitive (Addai-Munumkum, 2019, p.17).

The study observes that by design or default, the negative tendencies of phallic masculinity appear prominently in leaders who are autocratic and domineering. It applies a phallocentric reading to its data, and argues that "an obscene attachment to phallocentric definitions of masculinity in the texts has birthed political leaders who are impotent in the discharge of their duties" (p. 18). It further argues that the titles of the texts as well as their protagonists indicate the centrality of the man in African politics, representing traditional metaphors of phallic masculinity. The study further observes that from the inception of independence to the period of democracy, the political state in Africa has been faced with injustice, corruption, the ever-widening gap between the rich and the poor, and above all, failed leadership, and it seems it is becoming more difficult to overcome them. It finally concludes that the rejection of the phallic man, and

the attendant rejection of the overemphasis on the penis as the symbol of masculinity is recognised in the failure of these men-leaders, and the opening of the door to women as leaders further supports the fact that a new notion of masculinity is needed in state building (p. 27). Therefore, the time has come for the birth of new leaders who are not hampered by traditional definitions of their gender, the paper concludes.

Almost all the above-cited works seem to refer to bad leadership, corruption, insensitive political leaders, economic hardships as characteristics of postcolonial Africa. Though some of the works seem to argue that Africa's woes can be blamed on the legacies of their colonial masters, others point to the bad character of the native rulers. Whatever stand one takes, the fact still remains that Africa's situation is dire, and perhaps, a more recent study that goes to reveal the lot of Ghanaians in particular, and Africans in general in the current post-colonial period is Asempasah (2022). The aim of the study is to reflect on how Amma Darko's (1995) *Beyond the Horizon* could help Africans think about Africa's future in "dark times" like the COVID-19 pandemic. By "dark times," the study refers to "a period of time characterised by a set of conditions that expose humanity to incalculable vulnerability and grief, calling into question existing norms" (p 4). The study opines that the coronavirus pandemic has exposed Africa's precarious position within the global system and so for the umpteenth time, Africa looks to the West for salvation in the form of vaccines and loans. Perhaps, the researcher (a Ghanaian) would be further alarmed at Ghana's 17th time of return to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for loan under the current economic crisis in the second term of Akufo Addo's tenure as President. However, what seems more alarming for Asempasah (2022) is that

"beyond the economic crisis, however, perhaps the most telling impact of the pandemic is not death but the shame of being postcolonial—shame that arises from the painful realization that the postcolonial is still a condition of dependency" (p 2). The paper goes on to say that the epidemic has revived discourses about crises, reliance, postcolonial failure and shame, and alternative futures in nations of the Global South, particularly in Africa. Rethinking postcolonial emancipation is, once again, crucial in these times. According to the study's findings, Darko's ethical and political vision may be found in her subtly endorsing of Fanon's argument that Third World nations should deliberately sever ties with the West and Europe in order to realize and begin a true postcoloniality.

A critical look at all the literature mentioned above brings to light that African literary writers usually base their writings on the social, economic and political issues in their countries, and Africa as a whole, with the messianic intent of changing the prevailing poor conditions of the masses who suffer neglect at the hands of their ruling elite. As Niyi Osundare has stated, an African writer cannot keep quiet about the situation of Africa, but to write about it in an attempt to change the situation for the better. Thus, a postcolonial literary exploration of the concerns raised in the selected poetry of Wosornu for this study situates well in the context of other related researches on the African postcolonial situation.

Empirical Studies

There appears to be a few published scholarly works on the poetry texts of Lade Wosornu. It is, therefore, not surprising that though he is advanced in age, and some of his poems are popular among sections of senior high schools

in Ghana and in some West African countries, many still refer to him as one of the *new* Ghanaian poets.

One of the few works on Wosornu's poetry is Adika (2011). The study examines Wosornu's call for Ghanaians to look at the alternative source of a religious journey through Hinduism as a means towards the attainment of the sublime that seems to have eluded the nation throughout the times. The study adopts Lade Wosornu's own poem, "Journey Without End" as its conceptual framework, with the aim to examine how Hinduism has influenced Lade Wosornu's artistic voice, his projection of the Ghanaian situation, and his construction of a response to the problems identified.

Specifically, the researcher tracks Wosornu's exposure to a variety of religions and contends that in his poetry, Wosornu decides on and defends Hinduism as a source of moral and attitudinal rejuvenation for the nation. The study contends that the Bhagarad-Gita and yoga are two aspects of the Hindi religion that have a significant impact on Wosornu. According to the study, the core of yoga is developing self-discipline in order to manage one's body's reaction to one's soul's lusty and greedy cravings. It continues by citing Assimeng (1996) as describing the widespread cynicism, hopelessness, and yearning for redemption in Ghana—all of which need to be altered. In addition to Assimeng (1996)'s observation of the Ghanaian situation, Adika (2011) also asserts that Wosornu himself laments about the political opportunism, materialism and social injustice in the country. The study goes on to project, among others, Wosornu's lamentations about the fallen standards of education and the exploitation of the masses by the Christian religious leaders.

Thus, against the Hindu background of Wosornu and the Ghanaian situation, Adika (2011) examines some of the poems of Wosornu as indicative of the poet's call for Ghanaians to portray a sense of "discerning receptiveness" and to embrace Hinduism, a foreign religion which offers a meaningful spiritual journey towards the attainment of a state of sublime.

There is also Adika & Klu (2014), a study which analysises Wosornu's poems, "Chemistry" and "The Street" in an attempt to explore the meeting point between scientific diction and literacy. The aim of the study is to demonstrate how the poet's use of scientific diction can enhance the literacy horizon of the reader.

The study defines literacy as "the individual's capacity for self-expression and critical thought" (p 2). It draws on Cartwright (2007) which provides a conceptual framework for incorporating literature and science into teaching.

Cartwright (2007) divides the study's data into eight categories: science as a source of metaphors, images, or explanatory devices (the subject of Adika & Klu (2014)); science as a source of ridicule, rejection, and satire—the foolish virtuosi; science as a source of cognitive dissonance necessitating intellectual accommodation and negotiation; science celebrated—the scientist as hero, or science praised as proof of divine power; didactic verse—poems of science; the repudiation of science by the Romantics as being aloof and inhumane; scientific negligence: characters like Faust and Frankenstein; literature or science asserting ontological supremacy (p. 2).

The analysis comes to the conclusion that Wosornu's lyrical objectives are facilitated by the abundance of imagery and ideas from chemistry, physics,

biology, and general technology in the poems "Chemistry" and "The Street." It continues by saying that the reader is forced by the scientific diction to respond to different interpretations of the text and that a thorough understanding of dictionaries, creative thinking, and critical reasoning are necessary in order to properly enjoy the poems. The above scholarly works on Lade Wosornu's poetry have drawn from background information on the personal life of the poet (the poet as a medical doctor and the poet as Hindi). Yet, Adika (2011) asserts that Lade Wosornu is concerned with the political opportunism and state of injustice in Ghana. His concerns do not seem to be different from those of modern postcolonial African poets such as Soyinka, Ojaide, Niyi Osundare, among others. In spite of that it seems a study is yet to be fully done to examine the extent to which Lade Wosornu projects his concerns of social injustice and political opportunism in his poetry. It is in the light of this that this research which attempts to examine the poetry of Lade Wosornu through the Postcolonial and New Historicism literary theories proves important within academia.

Summary

This chapter has reviewed relevant literature on the theories underpinning the study as well as related studies on the poetry of Lade Wosornu. It began by discussing the origin and development of New Historicism, and its relevance to the study. It then looked at the Postcolonial literary theory, tracing its origin and some of the contentions the theory attracts. It also looked at the current argument on the relevance of the theory in Africa before narrowing on its tenets. Again, it reviewed relevant works on the postcolonial theory. Finally, it reviewed related studies on the poetry of Lade Wosornu, concluding that there is a dearth of research in that area. In the next chapter, I focus on the primary

concern of this study—an exploration into the postcolonial themes developed in the selected poetry texts of Lade Wosornu.

CHAPTER THREE

EXPLORATION OF POSTCOLONIAL THEMES

In chapter two, I presented a review of the underlying theoretical and analytical frameworks of the study as well as related literature. The review of the related literature provided an overview of the related researches while identifying gaps that require further research. This chapter therefore explores the postcolonial themes developed in the selected poetry texts of Lade Wosornu. I observed that in several instances, a text portrayed more than one theme, with some of the themes constituting what one could refer to as major and minor themes, in terms of their copious development or otherwise, and their frequency in the selected texts. For the sake of organisation, I looked at the texts according to their thematic areas. For the purpose of this study, I settled on the following seven thematic areas that I consider major: leadership corruption, postcolonial disillusionment, economic hardship, environmental degradation, political oppression / persecution and violence, hopelessness and despair, and greedy and insensitive political and religious leaders.

Theme of Corruption

The analysis of the selected texts reveals that Lade Wosornu projects and decries the corruption among political, religious and judicial leaders in Ghana, and suggests that the corruption which, in turn, has infected the masses, is a major cause of the poverty of the masses and the under-development of postcolonial Ghana. So extensive does Lade Wosornu project the corruption among politicians and religious leaders that I deem it necessary to treat them under separate headings, as found below.

Corruption Among Political Leaders

Postcolonial Ghana, like most African nations, is battling with acute poverty among majority of its citizens, economic hardships, unemployment and basic infrastructural challenges. The cause of this status quo has long been traced to the high level of corruption among succeeding political leaders over the years. Several political leaders, since independence, have failed in their promises to fight and stop corruption, or at least, reduce it drastically (Addai-Munumkum, 2019; Akingbe, 2014; Mushonga, 2018).

In a good number of the selected poems for the study, Lade Wosornu projects a high level of corruption among the postcolonial political leadership in Ghana. For instance, his reference to the political leaders as being corrupt is suggested in his poem, "Ashes at Harvest Time" (CB, P 7) in which he minces no words at all about their outright guilt:

We have our caves where kings are the knaves. (s 1, l 6)

The irony in the line above—a situational one in which the "kings" or, suggestively, the Ghanaian political leaders who are supposed to be noble or, honourable in character and, by oath, the watchers of the national coffers, have rather become the "knaves" or thieves—does not only produce a satirical humour, but also heightens the level of Wosornu's disappointment in the leaders. The meaning of "knave" as a person who is dishonest and base in intention suggests the poet's attitude of disgust towards the corrupt political leaders. Another point worthy of note in the line is the poet's comparison of African nations to "caves". The comparison evokes the picture of under-developed African societies with their characteristic low economic status and struggle for economic sufficiency. Thus, the use of the word "caves" itself is an

indictment on the performance of the political leadership. Yet, these same political leaders of the economically-challenged African states live lavishly like kings of wealthy nations by stealing from the meagre public purse. The poet's calculated alliteration of the /s/ sound in "caves", "kings" and "knaves" as well as the /v/ sound in "caves" and "knaves" suggest some level of mischief or calculated actions deliberately undertaken by the leaders to steal from the national purses of their already economically-challenged nations. Further evidence from line 8 of his poem, "Donor Fatigue" buttresses Wosornu's bold assertion that the political leaders in Africa and, particularly, Ghana are corrupt:

And, the princely pilfering never stops. (Line 8)

Once again, the poet's creation of a situational irony in which princes or political leaders who are expected to be noble and honourable steal from the national purse. The poet's use of "pilfering", also termed petty theft is remarkable. The meaning of "pilfering" suggest that the political leaders have lost all sense of shame and stooped so low in their corruption to become petty or common thieves, stealing from the meagre wealth of their people. The situation is made to look more serious when the reader considers that Wosornu's reference to the "pilfering" which "never stops", symptomatic of kleptomania, seems to suggest that such political leaders are mentally disoriented, to say the least.

To further concretise his bold projection that the political leaders are repulsively corrupt, the poet states thus in his poem, "if you would look again" (CB, P 8):

If you would look again at the glaze

You will see and smell the ooze:

Lives moth-eaten at the edges

Are often rotten from the centre.

(Lines 9 – 12)

In lines 9 – 12 above, Wosornu suggests that to critically look beneath the façade of nobility (suggested by the word "glaze") showcased by postcolonial political leaders/elites is to diagnose the source of the symptoms of the prevailing repugnant corruption among the masses. According to Sayed (2013), the neocolonial successors in the form of African political leaders tend to maintain the colonisers' division of the world hierarchically into centre and periphery, and they (the African politicians) consciously subjugate the periphery to poverty by stealing the natural wealth and economic resources of their nations. Thus, by the assertion that "Lives moth-eaten at the edges / Are often rotten from the centre", Wosornu suggests that the repulsive (rotten) corrupt life of the Ghanaian political leaders (the "centre") has infected the moral fibre of the masses (the "edges" or periphery). Under no circumstance has the poet revealed his support for the corruption perpetuated by the economically oppressed masses of Ghana; his projection of the corruption among the masses as a direct consequence of the corruption of the political leaders only goes to underpin his projection of the tragic consequences of having corrupt leaders.

Wosornu does not simply stop at showing that the political leaders are corrupt; rather, he goes further to indicate the modus operandi of their calculated "pilfering" of the wealth of the nation. For instance, in "The Boundary Lines" (JWE, P 8), he indicates in the following lines:

Musical chairs were played; they joined the touts.

Electric poles ringed the countryside

Erect but unwired and impotent

(Like penises in priapism)

Competing with Leesen and Maxwell

For fraud of bank-breaking proportions. (l 6 – 11)

With the expression, "Musical chairs were played; they joined the touts", Wosornu refers to political elections (musical chairs) and the current ignoble phenomenon (touts) of people going into politics to become "honourable" and wealthy overnight. Suggestively then, he projects that the political leaders are only opportunists who vie for political leadership positions with the selfish intention of enriching themselves while in power. Consequently, they siphon public funds meant for national projects, rendering the projects incomplete in reality, yet declared completed in the books, as symbolised by the "Erect but unwired and impotent" electric poles which "ringed the country side". For Wosornu, such corrupt acts perpetuated by the political leaders can be equated to fraud—one comparable to the bank fraud of Leesen and Maxwell. Wosornu's allusion to Leesen and Maxwell evokes the true story of Robert Maxwell who was reported to have siphoned about 1.2 billion dollars from businesses and pension funds he controlled (The Washington Post, December 9, 1991). Effectively, the poet's allusion to the bank fraud of Leesen and Maxwell underscores his sense of revulsion towards the gross corrupt practices of Ghanaian political leaders, especially to the detriment of national development. Lade Wosornu projects further evidence of the fraudulent modus operandi of Ghanaian political leaders in the following lines of part three (3), stanza six (6) of "The Celestial Bride", (CB, p 15):

Upstream, hamlets drowned in the man-made lake.

Inheritors were fed harmatans of promise: Fake

Compensation from government benches.

The cash got stuck in the gills of Nile perches

Beached in the Ministry of Power and Plight.

O Dam built when we were keen, a raped sub-teen

You: Inadequate by day! Inadequate by night!

From the lines above, the poet alludes to the Volta River in Ghana and the historic construction of the Volta Dam (Akosombo Dam) on it, between 1961 and 1965, to provide hydroelectricity for the nation. In the process, habitats (hamlets) were affected by the flooding, and promises of compensation were made by the political leaders, at the instance of the courts or "government benches". However, Wosornu suggests in the following lines that though the monies were recorded to have been released by the government, it never got to the beneficiaries, as according to him, "The cash got stuck in the gills of Nile perches". Note the metaphoric presentation of the corrupt political leaders as "Nile perches". Thus, suggestively, while the records indicated that the monies were released to the victims, in reality, the corrupt politicians siphoned the funds for their private and selfish use.

Aside from the fraudulent acts of stealing and the siphoning of public funds to enrich themselves, Wosornu yet projects another stratagem employed by the corrupt politicians, evinced in the following lines of the poem, "A Celestial Few" (CB, p.1):

And some are given an overdose

of things good and sure.

In times lean and hard

they feed on yesterday's stores of fat.

All land marks remembered

all lost gems recovered

they set up private shrines to Beauty

and drink deep at her secret taverns. Lines 1 – 8

The title of the poem, "A Celestial Few", suggests, satirically, how the political leaders see and project themselves as divinely special or divinely chosen to live above the poverty and want prevalent among their people. Hence, they ensure they live lives of luxury by allotting to themselves an "…overdose / of things good and sure" or great wealth, often stashed into private and secret "stores" or accounts in order to ensure their extravagance at all times, while their people seem to perpetually go through "times lean and hard". Usually, this form of *authorised* corruption is seen in the outrageously high salaries and several allowances that the executives allot to themselves and their cronies in government establishments, in spite of the alarming and ever-increasing yearly budget deficits. In recent times, for instance, civil organisations and the general public in Ghana have had cause to question the rationale behind the comparatively outrageous high salaries, allowances, ex-gratia and end of service benefits given to "Article 71 office holders", as stipulated in the constitution. Indeed, many, except the "celestial few" (politicians) themselves, have called on the law-makers to take a critical look at the provision in the interest of the economically ailing nation.

If Wosornu seems to be worried about the corrupt practices of the Ghanaian political leaders or elites, then the impunity with which they practise their acts of corruption, and what Yaw Nsarkoh, a Ghanaian Pan-Africanist,

calls "elite compromise", in his lecture on the topic, "Has the 4th Republic Delivered?" prove more worrying for him (Wosornu). This finds expression in the following lines of his thought-provoking poem, "The Lamentations of Janet" (CB, p. 3):

> But, does it have to come to this:
>
> They no longer care to conceal
>
> corruption in high places?
>
> They plunder the nation and squander the loot. (Lines 8 – 11)

By asking the question "Does it have to come to this?" as many as six times in the entire poem, and with two of those in the first and last lines of the poem, the poet seems not to just draw the attention of his readers to how lamentable the situation of corruption among the leaders is, but to ponder on the impunity with which the political leaders now undertake their corrupt practices, without shame and fear of protests from the impoverished masses. This is not to say that the poet would rather have the corrupt leaders and elites conceal their acts of corruption; what he seems to project is that, perhaps, it is the silence of the Ghanaian people that has given the political leaders and elites such impudence to perpetuate their corrupt practices. Thus, with the question, "Does it have to come to this?", the poet attempts to provoke the thoughts of the masses on the anomaly of the situation. The question also encapsulates the poet's disappointment at the turn of events in Ghana. Wosornu's disappointment resonates with Ayi Kwei Armah in his novel, *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born*—a novel which focuses on life in post-independent Ghana, and reveals the rotten morality and avidity of the new Ghanaian elite, exemplified in the characterisation of Koomson.

Corruption Among Christian (Religious) Leaders

Corruption among religious leaders is another type of corruption that Wosornu finds prevalent in postcolonial Ghana; he projects the decadence extensively in the selected poetry texts for the study. Once again, the blunt poet minces no words at all when he refers to corrupt Christian leaders as "priesthood of crooks" (l 14) in his poem, "The Boundary Lines", (JWE, P 8), and projects their fraudulent reasons for becoming priests, as evinced in the following lines:

> Steeped in the reddening dye of need,
> Debts piling higher and deeper,
> They switch to the priesthood of crooks
> And, in God's name, fleece their flock. (Lines 12-15)

Lade Wosornu brings to the fore the "crook" priests or religious leaders who are only motivated by their own selfish desires to rescue themselves from the pervasive life-stifling poverty in which they find themselves in the country, and not as a result of their passion to rescue the perishing. According to the poet, their sole motive is to use God's name to "fleece" or defraud their flock. Note the poet's use of the expression "switch to" to convey the corrupt mental attitude of the charlatan priests, indicating how shamelessly and morally easy it is for them to assume the fake personality of priests, simply to satisfy their "need". At the same time, by the poet's projection of the prevailing reality that any poverty-stricken person or greedy person in Ghana is able to successfully "switch" into priesthood and be easily accepted by the masses, he projects the religious gullibility of Ghanaians. On the other hand, without holding brief for the fraudulent priests, Wosornu's projection of the acute economic hardship that pushes people to "switch to the priesthood of crooks" is an indictment on the

political leaders who have plunged the masses into that economic plague. In looking at the causes of what he calls the "commodification of worship" through selected writings of Soyinka, Marchie (2015) argues that the harsh economic situation in the African society is also a key factor, stressing that the quest for economic survival has given birth to fraudsters and impious religious leaders who seize the opportunity to exploit the gullible masses. Also, Mireku-Gyimah (2013) cites Asamoah-Gyedu (2003)'s assertion that sub-Saharan Africans rampantly troop to religious leaders for mediation, and the situation which has assumed paranoid proportions, especially in Ghana and Nigeria, is becoming worrying as it usually involves fraudulent priests who often abuse, especially their women clients.

In his poem, "Unfinished Business" (JWE, p. 9), Wosornu projects the Ghanaian situation of paranoid congregation and priestly exploitation, as exemplified in the following lines:

Churches filled to the doors.
Robes of miracle-buffs sweep the floors.
Priests, newly rich, air-feed their flock
from pulpits of grass, and, take stock
of fresh kills. The man-trap is sprung
In God's name. And, millions are flung! (s 2)

From the lines above, the poet exposes the scheme of Ghanaian Christian leaders in brainwashing the vulnerable poor masses into believing that economic salvation for them rests in the hands of their priests and the church. By the expression, "Robes of miracle-buffs", the poet reveals how the fraudulent priests make the congregation believe that even their priestly attire is

endowed with spiritual power for the miracles the congregation seek to turn around their lot. Again, the poet uses the expression "air-feed" in reference to the unproductive and brainwashing messages the Christian leaders give to their congregation. Then by the expression "pulpits of grass", he suggests that such priests are charlatans who do not have real divine calls. Indeed, Wosornu portrays that the priests only use the name of God to entrap the unsuspecting vulnerable masses. He uses the expression "fresh kills" to show that the priests see their congregation as prey or game for food. Ironically, and sadly so, the brainwashed congregation believe that their economic "salvation" rests more on miracles performed by the priests than on honest hard work, and so "millions" fill the churches "to the doors". In all of this, Wosornu points out that the priests are the ones made "newly rich", suggestively, by the tithes and offerings of the same impoverished masses, and, ironically, not by their (the priests') own "Robes of miracle-buffs" that they prescribe for the vulnerable congregation.

So strong is Wosornu's suspicion of religious leaders that he portrays them as people who take the least opportunity to, in his own words "fleece" (JWE, P 8, l 15) any group of people they reckon vulnerable, and this is exemplified in the following lines of his poem, "Deadheat", (JWE, p. 1):

> This remnant-rag of a woman sets to work
> and seeks to lighten the loaded yoke
> Of this unhappy lot — by prayer power.
> Heads are bowed no longer in guilt or shame
> but in prayer. "God cares. God looks on.
> He has granted your visa. Say Amen!"
> The crowd believe and inhale her words

like men strapped for air at altitude.

How heart'n'soul the final 'Amen!'

O! Revealing, redeeming final laugh!

Look! The priestess passes round

a black plastic bag, and, clowns for alms. (s 17 & 18, l 1-6)

In the mentioned poem, Wosornu highlights the frustrations of Ghanaian youth migrants at the American Embassy in Accra, as they queue to acquire visas. Then comes along, in Wosornu's own words, "This remnant-rag of a woman" who seems to need prayers herself, but seizes the opportunity of the open frustrations of the teeming visa applicants to exploit them, using religion as her tool. The woman prays for the despaired lot for God to grant their visas, but her real intentions are quickly exposed in the last two lines above: "Look! The priestess passes round / a black plastic bag, and, clowns for alms".

Just as he provokes the thought of the masses on the blatant corrupt practices of the political leaders, Wosornu does same with the corrupt practices of the fraudulent religious leaders which he finds despicable and deeply worrying. He asks in "The Lamentations of Janet" (CB, p. 3):

Does it have to come to this?

Catechists plunder the offertory.

Confessors rape repenting wives.

Celibate monks elope with nuns.

(And, Rome remains silent on the pill.) (Lines 29 – 33)

By projecting the religious leaders as sexually exploitative and promiscuous in their "raping of repenting wives", Wosornu portrays the religious leaders as so unfit as not to possess even the basic requirement for priesthood—self-control.

The impression he gives is that the religious leaders further and, ironically, plunge the very "sinful" congregation they claim to rescue deeper into the pit of sin. Thus, for Wosornu, the church in Ghana has become a den of thieves and a brothel of sexual perverts, and not a place of prayer and true worship of God. The reference to "catechist", "monks", "nuns" and "Rome" directly fingers the Catholic Church as culprits of the gross immoral and fraudulent practices of the religious leaders that Wosornu projects. However, being the origin of the many Christian churches which seem to multiply in kind and type, it is arguable that Wosornu uses the Catholic Church as a representative of institutional Christianity. In all of this fraudulent practices perpetuated by the religious leaders, what seems to shock Wosornu the more is that "Rome remains silent on the pill". By the use of the word, "pill", Wosornu seems to make reference to the expression, "bitter pill", usually used to refer to an unpleasant and painful situation that one is forced to experience. By projecting "Rome", which houses the Pope, the head of the Catholic Church at the Vatican, as being "silent" on the fraudulent activities of the priests and church leaders, with the attendant unpleasant and painful effects on the brainwashed unsuspecting congregation, Wosornu portrays the topmost leadership as shameless accomplices. Consequently, he, suggestively, projects the Christian Church, a legacy of the colonialists, as a total sham.

Going further, Wosornu expresses his anger that in the midst of all the corrupt activities of the religious leaders, they expect to be revered:

> Are we then to hail and acclaim
>
> the whores and studs of our private Vaticans?
>
> Those boars and duds

ordained into the priesthood of bullies…

trained in deception and mass seduction?

Induced into halls of infamy…

The violent, vitriolic vampires? (CB, P 11, L 13 – 19)

The poet's use of "whores", "studs", "boars", "duds", "vitriolic vampires" to describe Christian leaders sums up his anger and scorn towards them. He is of the opinion that they are "trained in deception and mass seduction" to brainwash and exploit the vulnerable masses—the hallmark of the religion introduced to Africans by the western colonisers and oppressors. Marchie (2015) observes that Christian religion, one of the major legacies of the colonisers, has influenced the morality of Africans, in general and Ghanaians in particular. The replacement of a Christian God who is merciful and forgiving of sins, as opposed to the God of African religion who punishes and kills instantly for sins committed is a major factor in the prevailing moral decadence in African societies. It is little wonder that corruption among religious leaders is prevalent, and for Wosornu, the situation cannot be entertained, to say the least.

Theme of Postcolonial Disillusionment

Arguably, the most daunting challenge that the entire continent of Africa has faced and still faces is the disappointment of the people with regard to the high hopes and expectations of development in their political, social and economic lives (Lazarus, 1986; Orhero, 2017). Independence from colonial rule promised not just political liberation, but also liberation from socio-economic oppression and poverty. As Orhero (2017, p.12) observes,

> The prospect of independence and self-rule brought about high expectations. Africans thought that self-rule would bring forth an Eldorado and the continent would transform into a utopia. Unfortunately, this was not the case. African leaders became grossly corrupt and dictatorial. Expectations were shattered. There was disappointment which later metamorphosed into disillusionment.

In the selected poetry texts for this study, Wosornu represents Ghana's own bitter dose of postcolonial disillusionment in the social, economic and political lives of the masses, and lays the blame squarely at the door step of greedy, insensitive, corrupt and largely incompetent political leaders.

Butted and bruised in all areas of their lives during the colonial period, the masses, especially the youth, scholars, the educated, farmers, women and all saw Ghana's political independence from British rule as the panacea to both national and personal under-development. The fun fare with which independence was celebrated was an indication of the expected hope of the Ghanaian masses for economic and infrastructural development. As Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah himself declared on the eve of Ghana's Independence Day, in March, 1957, the new nation, Ghana, was ready to fight its own battles and show to the rest of the world that the Black man is capable of managing his own affairs and re-shaping its destiny.

However, in some of the selected poetry texts, Wosornu reveals that years after independence, and with the many different leaders, Ghana's postcolonial landscape has been marked by fatal political turmoil, and acute and embarrassing economic hardships that have created and still creates postcolonial

disillusionment among the youth and the general population. For instance, Wosornu presents that one area that held hope for employment and, therefore, socio-economic success for the teeming youth and the "new" Ghanaian, upon the attainment of independence, was education. Thus, in his poem, "The Faded Blue Print" (CB, p. 4), he terms education as the "Blue Print" for success while in the poem, "Standard Seven" (JWE, p. 7), he projects this "Blue Print" and what it meant for the success of the teeming youth in the following lines:

> Stan' seven School Leaving Certificate!
> We clutched you with pride and framed you with light.
> We stepped out, lion-like, to replicate
> Gladsome scenes of heroes returning home
> To heroes' welcome. Mere lads and lasses
> Between fourteen and twenty-something.
> (Who was checking birthing papers?)
>
> Future secure. Unemployment? Unknown!
> A teaching profession to train for
> (Teachers sat with chiefs at durbars and feasts.)
> Vibrant men in uniform to vie for —
> Police, Border Guard, Navy, Air Force:
> Disciplined, barracks-bound guardians of Home
> Respected and honoured, but never feared.
>
> The gentle nobility of priesthood
> Beckoned from the cold climes of Akropong
> Or the mystique hills of Amedzofe.

(Amedzofe, our Eden, the origins of Man.)

Priests were priests, not raiders of flocks — their own.

The Civil Service promised promotion:

A sailing up-stream sped by breeze and tide.

So did trade: UAC or UTC.

Liventis, Olivant, the GPO.

Equal chance. Prospects real and prospects bright.

Messenger to manager; cook to chef.

Sweet honest sweat swapped for sweet honest bread. (s 3 – 6)

From the lines above, the poet projects the expectations of a bright destiny and secured future for Ghanaians in the immediate post-independent era, courtesy of formal education which enabled the training of various types of noble professionals. According to the poet, with the competency attained from completing "Standard Seven" education, one had "Equal chance" for socio-economic success. Indeed, so great a success was education expected to give in the form of national and individual socio-economic progress that the poet describes the educated as "heroes" (s 1, L 4). In the midst of the expectations, many of the youth were encouraged to seek formal education to fill positions in state institutions such as the security forces, commercial organisations, the education service, among others. In all this "Who was checking birthing papers?" the poet asks, to suggest that no limitation was placed on all willing to be educated, and with the assertion of "Prospects real and prospects bright", the poet projects a people whose only limit was the sky. However, lamentable for the poet, too soon, the expectations have turned into disappointments and

disillusionments for the Ghanaian people. He projects the disillusionment in the two lines below that form the last stanza of the poem:

But, where are you now?

And, what have we now? (s 8)

Worth-noting is Wosornu's contrasting use of the several lines in his structure to suggest the myriad of expectations of Ghanaians upon attainment of independence, while with just the two lines of the last stanza of the poem, he suggests the brevity of the hopes of the people, as they find themselves too soon disappointed in a state of postcolonial disillusionment. Critically looked at, it is not the change of the educational system per se which has necessitated the poet's asking of the whereabouts of the "Standard Seven" educational system which is no longer the educational practice of the nation. Indeed, Adu-Gyamfi et al. (2016) trace the various educational reforms that have taken place in Ghana under various political dispensations, suggesting the numerous capricious political interference in the educational system of the nation. What actually seems to be a distressing concern for the poet is the prevailing situation where all the various educational reforms seem to continually shatter the dreams and hopes of the Ghanaian people in their quest for socio-economic development. For the poet, it seems that the current prevailing postcolonial situation of unemployment, corruption which does not offer "equal chance" and "prospects real and prospects bright" to the people, the reduction of the "heroes" and nobles of education into disrespected lots, among others, arouse nostalgia for the "Standard Seven" educational policy. Note how Wosornu projects the disappointment and disillusionment of the masses by the use of "But" and "And" respectively as the initial words of the last two lines of the poem, while

he maintains same with the question marks at the end of the same lines. Further postcolonial educational disillusionment is buttressed by the poet in the following lines of the poem, "The Faded Blue Print" (CB, p. 4) which suggest that the Ghanaian educational system no longer holds the key to success for the many under-paid educated workers and the many unemployed graduates in the country:

> Paid in peanuts, aliens to candy
> Dons have degrees but dare not dandy...
> Dare not broadcast sweat and courage.
> Water bills remain an outrage.
> M.A's no longer draw applause
> nor Ph.D's one envious pause.
> Living is a daily dying from shame
> scheming for cash to salve your fame. (Lines 26 – 33)

From the lines above, Wosornu depicts the shameful lives of graduates and scholars whose lives have been reduced to "shame" (Line 32) on daily basis due to the socio-economic hardships into which the capricious political leaders have plunged the nation. Sadly, as the poet projects, the hardship has forced graduates and scholars to resort to "scheming for cash to salve your fame". Note how the word, "scheming" accentuates the image of fraudulent undertakings.

The general postcolonial disillusionment is further projected in "The Lamentations of Janet" (CB, p. 3). This time, the poet projects the postcolonial socio-economic disillusionment and despondency among the general Ghanaian population in the following lines:

> The disciplined rains

paint gardens greener than green

and create illusions of plenty

amidst skeletons in castled cupboards. (s 1, Lines l 3 – 6)

Stone stew and rawlings' chains we know.

But, does it have to come to this:

They no longer care to conceal

corruption in high places? (s 2, Lines 1 – 4)

The poet's reference to "disciplined rains" and "gardens greener" in the lines above suggests nature's endowment of natural resources to the nation, Ghana, and that should, expectedly, culminate into the development of the lives of the people. However, for the poet, the reverse is true. All the endowments of nature have not guaranteed the socio-economic development of the people. He diagnoses that what is missing in Ghana's equation of natural endowment which should lead to economic growth and development is good leadership. Thus, natural endowment of abundant wealth plus dubious leadership is what has resulted in the socio-economic illusions of Ghanaians. Note how the poet projects the dubious nature of the political leadership of the country with the line "Amidst skeletons in castled cupboards" (l6). The use of "castled" evokes the Christianborg Castle which was the seat of government of the Jerry John Rawlings' PNDC military regime. Further reference to Rawlings' military rule is captured in line 1 of stanza 2: "Stone stew and rawlings' chains we know". The term, "rawlings' chains" is an allusion to the economic hardship (starvation) in Ghana under the rule of Jerry John Rawlings' Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC), a military government in the 80s and early 90s before the 4th Republic. So severe was the economic hardship that almost

every Ghanaian had his / her clavicle protruding, a sight satirically compared with wearing a neck chain, and which, consequently, was seen as an indictment on the ruling PNDC government. Note how the poet reveals his scorn for what he projects as the dubious and corrupt political leadership of the regime by the use of the lower cap "r" in the spelling of "rawlings", a proper noun.

Another aspect of the postcolonial disillusionment experience of the Ghanaian people is what Wosornu sees as the failure of the Ghanaian political leaders to walk their talk of political freedom for their people. He projects the ironic situation in his poem, titled, "Mirage" (CB, p.13), a title which summarises the political disillusionment of the Ghanaian people in thinking that with the end of colonial rule, a rule which saw the political persecution of freedom fighters such as Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, the nation would finally experience freedom from political persecution and oppression. However, in the lines below, Wosornu highlights a nation experiencing postcolonial political oppression and persecution from its own native political rulers:

> And, knights who sweat to champion our causes…
> Clinch the deals to recover the losses
> For our ransomed and televised release
> Turn foxes for the off-screen re-seize. (Lines l 9 – 12)

Note how Wosornu describes Ghanaian politicians as "knights" turned "foxes". This metaphoric description underscores his view that the Ghanaian politician cannot be trusted because they are hypocritical and crafty in nature, and while they publicly proclaim to the whole world that they fight to free their people from colonial and other political oppressions, they betray, persecute, and

oppress the very people for whose freedom they claim to fight, when in power (Mushonga, 2018; Okon, 2013).

To further project the general high degree of disillusionment among the broad spectrum of Ghanaian masses, Wosornu reveals in his poem, "No Guarantees" (JWE, p.12), the worrying situation of a nation that, it seems by default, does not guarantee or support the socio-economic development of its ordinary, yet hardworking citizens. He makes this projection in the preceding line about the nation, Ghana:

There are no guarantees here. Line 1

The finality of the tone of line 1 above, which is in itself put in simple and bold terms by Wosornu, is as frightening as it is thought-provoking. In the subsequent lines, he compares the ordinary Ghanaian who is without socio-political connections, yet hardworking to "seed" and reveals in the following lines why "There are no guarantees here" of it ever bearing fruits or succeeding in the country:

It out-grows better-connected seeds.
But, before the first fruits ripen and fall,
Rain, – always welcome in the Sahel –
Overshoots its mark, and, the flash floods
Sweep it away: root, shoot, fruit and all…
To Lavender Hill…Gulf of Guinea.
Another dawn breaks.
Another heart aches. (Lines 12 – 19)

Wosornu's use of the devastating and destructive rain imagery denotes the default devastating and destructive socio-political forces that fight against the progress and innovation of the hardworking ordinary Ghanaian.

Filled with "heart aches" (l 9) at a time expected to be the "dawn" or hope for their socio-economic development, and the subsequent disappointment from their disillusionment under their Ghanaian political leaders, many of the hardworking productive youth turn to other nations, mostly Western European and the United States of America, for economic salvation. In the poem, "Deadheat" (JWE, p.1), the poet projects migration as a major consequence of the postcolonial disillusionment of Ghanaians. In the said poem, the poet, satirically, with mixed feelings of empathy and scorn, projects the prevailing attempt by the teeming youth of Ghana gathered at the embassy in search of visas to migrate to the United States of America, and, suggestively, elsewhere outside Africa:

Sloths, economic refugees!
Paupers, stateless Fulanees!
Your sole aim is to flee your shores
to a land of jobs and ores (Lines l 4 – 7)

Wosornu's tone in the above opening lines of the poem seems harsh, and his attitude towards the youth at the embassy seems to be one of vehement disapproval laced with anger. However, his explanatory tone in lines 11 and 12 suggests that the teeming youth are only the indirect object of the poet's anger when he says,

But, when a nation is broke and black
her children were wipers of muddy floors.

The direct object, implicitly, is the political leaders and their cause of the postcolonial disillusionment of a "broke" nation that seemed to have, inevitably, turned the youth into the "economic refugees", "paupers" and "stateless Fulanees" to which the poet refers. "Fulanees" (also Fulanis) are nomadic herdsmen from mostly Northern Nigeria, Mali, Niger, among other Western African countries, who frequently come to Ghana in search of pasture for their cattle. Thus, by referring to the Ghanaian youth in search of visas at the American Embassy in Accra as "Fulanees", the poet succeeds in showing the harsh economic terrain in Ghana which has necessitated the migration of the youth to seek greener pastures. Another point worthy of note is the poem's title, "Deadheat", which implies a fierce competition involving two or more competitors. Effectively then, the word foregrounds the fierce competition among the frustrated teeming Ghanaian youth to acquire visas to migrate. As Wosornu further projects in the poem, "The Patriot" (CB, p. 6), the situation is so dire that even the aged encourage the youth to flee the land of disillusionment for the sake of their own economic salvation:

> But, who is a patriot?
> These icons in a riot:
> My sons – my sons!
> Some I pest to flee the nest.
> Not because I hate them so:
> (Dough…The dough…It is the dough) (Lines 1 – 6)

From the lines above, Wosornu suggests that under the dreadful postcolonial condition of chronic joblessness, frustration and helplessness, patriotism becomes a questionable virtue. In "Deadheat" (JWE, P1), Wosornu suggests

that not even the ordeal the youth go through as they are exposed to the extreme cold and rainy June weather conditions, and the emotional torture in the hands of a lowly IQ-rated American "clerk-consul" at the Embassy is able to deter them from running away from the disillusionment in their own nation, and even when they are aware, as projected in the following lines of "The Patriot" that success does not come on a silver platter in those foreign lands, the youth are undeterred:

> Out there, it is a shit farm.
>
> Rich in maggot, it stinks. Stay calm.
>
> Nip your nose, and, brave the brand.
>
> For my sake…Your Motherland (Lines 21 – 24)

Perhaps, the disillusioned postcolonial youth are able to go through the ordeal of obtaining visas to travel outside and the ordeal of working on the "shit farm" of Western nations and America, because, at least, those lands, unlike their native land, Ghana, which offers "…no guarantees here", offer some guarantee of livelihood, no matter how much of a "shit farm" they are. In portraying the challenges abroad, the lines also are a plea to the youth to stay, at least, for the sake of the "Motherland". However, the fact that they will not heed to the plea is precisely the postcolonial tragic condition. This postcolonial tragic condition is exemplified in Amma Darko's, *Beyond The Horizon* which deals with the myth that, for Africans, salvation lies in the West. Looking at the expectations of Mara before she travels to the West, and the turn of events in her life there, Asempasah (2022) shows that a radical reading of the novel suggests that Africans must de-link from the West through the process of decolonisation of

the "beyond" if Africa will progress, and not wait for crumbs from Western tables.

For Wosornu, therefore, the whole idea of an independence that would salvage the lot of Ghanaians is simply a "Mirage", and he seems to have summarised the postcolonial disillusionment of Ghanaians in his words, "forty years of hollow independence", in line 10 of his poem, "Povertometer". Today, looking at his projection of the Ghanaian situation forty years ago, and the current situation twenty-two years onwards and still having to resort to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for the seventeenth time for financial bail-outs, it is evident that contrary to what independence promised, the Ghanaian has not been able to manage his own affairs, contrary to the vision of its founding fathers, and so, sixty-six years into the postcolonial era, the disillusionment still persists.

Theme of Economic Hardship

Economic hardship has been one of the dominant themes in modern African poetry and, why not? Young (2020) opines that without economic liberation, there can be no political liberation. The independence of African states is meaningless if they still depend on the Western world for economic support. Thus, even though the West is not ruling directly as they did as colonial rulers, they are ever dominant in their influence on the affairs of African states. For African literary scholars, therefore, the continued presence of economic hardship, especially one seen to be perpetuated by the greedy, corrupt and incompetent African leaders, is of great concern (Adebola, 2014; Alfani, 2021). In the selected poetry for this study, Wosornu shows that the Ghanaian population is plagued by economic hardship. The poet portrays that even though

the masses work hard, they toil in vain, as they do not obtain even the basic needs of life such as food, a situation which has reduced them to "bones", without any economic hope in the foreseeable future. Yet, in the midst of the suffering of the masses, the political leaders enjoy abundance, obtained from the siphoning of public funds.

Wosornu's poem, "Developing Country" (JWE, p. 2), written in just six lines, serve as an introduction to the treatment of his theme of economic hardship among the masses in Ghana. The poet borrowed the expression, "Developing Country", a Eurocentric expression from former colonisers of the African and South American continent to refer to Ghana, as opposed to the expression "developed country" used to refer to most countries in the West and the United States of America. Dobie (2011) reports that Alfred Sauvy uses another term, "Third World", for developing countries. Wosornu satirically used the expression "Developing Country" as the title for his poem to foreground the socio-economic hardship prevalent in Ghana, to the mockery of the failed greedy leaders. The poem is divided into two parts: the first three lines constitute a sentence, and it lays bare, in few but thought-provoking words, the economic hardship experienced in Ghana.

In this land
Arrival is not the problem:
It's the survival

By his observation that "It's the survival" that matters in his equation of "arrival" plus "survival" equaling life, Wosornu projects the harsh economic situation as not just prevalent, but proving fatal to many a Ghanaian living in Ghana; a situation that suggests the near-impossibility of anyone born "In this

land" making a livelihood, and, therefore staying alive. The projected harsh economic situation makes bleak even the life of those yet to be born, and the thought-provoking question that Wosornu asks here is: Why? Why is "survival" such a huge problem in "this land" (Ghana)? In "Ashes at Harvest Time" (CB, p. 7), Wosornu gives a vivid description of the prevailing acute economic hardship of the "survival of the fittest" to which he seems to refer in the poem, "Developing Country":

> Our bans bear mice, not bags of rice
>
> Pots for oil are filled with empty toil (s 1, Lines l 1 & 2

The poet references the scarcity of generally common food items such as "rice" and "oil" to project how dire the economic situation is. Worthy of note is the word, "toil", which suggests that the economic hardship is not as a result of laziness on the part of the workers and general population. Perhaps, for Wosornu, what seems to be a worrying factor projected in his expression "empty toil" is the suggestion that in Ghana, honest hard work hardly guarantees a fruitful result, and a lot more of such hard working masses are barely surviving under acute economic hardship. It is in this light that the issue of "survival" in Ghana is a great concern for him, for if the youthful hardworking population find their toil to be "empty" at the end of the day, and so that plunges them into acute economic hardship, then what about the economic lot of the non-working and aged population? To that Wosornu gives a clue of the situation in his poem, "The Faded Blue Print" (CB, p. 4), as seen in the following lines:

> A whole life's pension can't pay the price
>
> of one crummy bag of paddy rice.
>
> Meat and fish are the stuff of dreams…

Bellies replete with betraying screams. (Lines 38 – 41)

The lines above summarise the economic lot of the aged who, in spite of the several years of working, cannot afford basic food items such as "paddy rice", "meat" and "fish". Thus, the poet presents a tragic situation of complete economic hardship that plagues both the young and old, the working and non-working masses. Wosornu emphasises the idea of a worsening economic situation in the following lines of his poem, "No Questions Asked", (CB p. 10):

The deserts of our lives expand…

Thickets of our joy slashed and burned.

Our cups run dry.

Bore holes rust.

Hand breaks seize. (Lines 14 – 18)

Wosornu buttresses his worry and dissatisfaction about the worsening economic hardship by projecting its terrible impact on the people. Physically, he projects a people grossly emaciated with the satiric allusion to "rawlings' chains":

Stone stew and rawlings' chains we know Line 7 (CB, P3)

The allusion recalls into memory the era of the ruling Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) under the leadership of the then Head of State, Flt. Lt. Jerry John Rawlings in the 80s. The era saw Ghana go through terrible famine and economic hardships, especially in 1983. The hunger mirrored on individual Ghanaians who had their clavicles protruding under the skin to form what was satirically called "rawlings' chain" by Ghanaians. The expression "Stone stew" alludes to the popular Ghanaian folktale about how a mother was able to put her hungry children to sleep without eating because she had nothing to give them. The story has it that she put stones in a bowl containing water and

placed it on fire, with the information to her hungry children that she was preparing food. One by one, the children fell asleep while waiting for the food (stone) which never finished cooking.

Wosornu re-echoes the physical toll of the economic "Hardtimes" on the masses in the following lines of "The Driftwood's Song" (JWE, P4, s 3):

> Judge me not by these rags on view.
> The ancient leveler-down, Hardtimes,
> Indifferent to your starting point,
> Reduces all to these bones you see.

The reference to "Hardtimes" recalls into memory Charles Dickens' "Hard Times", a novel which highlights the attendant socio-economic hardships of the industrial revolution in England, in spite of its promises of a new era of progress and modernity for the whole of Europe at that time. In Ghana, freedom from colonial rule also came with its promises and socio-economic hard times, and Wosornu paints the picture of the severe postcolonial economic challenge of Ghanaians by the use of "Hardtimes". By referring to "Hardtimes" as "The ancient leveler-down" in the poem, Wosornu suggests that from time immemorial, from one postcolonial government to the other, Ghanaians have been afflicted with acute economic hardship. Note how by the reference to "Hardtimes" being "indifferent", the poet personifies it as being merciless in its affliction. Indeed, so merciless does he find the "Hardtimes" that afflict the Ghanaian people that he captures in his poem, "The Lamentations of Janet" that not even babies are spared the acute hunger and undernutrition:

> Single mothers, aged 16, suckle
> paper-weight babes at wafer-thin breasts (Lines l 17 & 18)

Wosornu projects in his poems that from the cradle to the grave, poverty has been made an age-long and sure companion of anyone born "In this land". In "The Street", he portrays further the socio-economic woes of the ordinary man on the street in the following lines:

The street is an extension of home.
It is market, battlefield, play-pen, loo.
It is the living, dining and guest room.
The street is unforgiving. For some
It is bridal suite and the final berth. (Lines 11 – 15)

There seems to be a certain sense of the use of the word "street" by Wosornu which draws similarity with Blake's use of it in his poem, "London". Just like Charles Dickens' novel, "Hard Times", Blake's "London" is set in the era of the industrial revolution in England. In his poem, Blake captures the socio-economic woes of the ordinary citizens on the streets of London, largely brought about by the industrial revolution which seems to have created wealth for a few individuals in their palaces found on chartered streets while the neglected masses of London suffer. Similarly, Wosornu shows the postcolonial socio-economic woes of the ordinary Ghanaian on the street in his poem, "The Street". Note how in both poems, the "street" seems to symbolise modernity. However, the paradox is that modernity has created poverty for the majority of the masses. Sadly, Wosornu does not see any shade of light at the end of the tunnel, and he re-iterates in the following lines of "Uneven Turf" (CB, p.11) that the hardship grows worse with each passing moment in the lives of the Ghanaian masses:

The dry winds of national debt are still lowing.
The acid rains of private tears are still boiling. (Lines 24 & 25)

The poet's projections of a bleak economic future are not unfounded, for in the lines above, he shows his awareness that the political leaders in charge of the economy keep piling up national debts, and the effect is that the masses are plunged into the pain of economic hardships usually by the incompetent politicians and the austere economic demands made on the government by the International Monetary Fund and other financial agencies, as prerequisite for offering an economic salvation which continues to elude the nation. Recently, the Vice President of Imani Africa, Bright Simons, traces Ghana's public debts since independence, and concludes that, in spite of the several borrowings of successive governments which have turned Ghana into "a nation that begs", the lives of ordinary Ghanaians have not seen any development (Source: Joy News Television Documentary, "A Nation That Begs", 25 June, 2023). Perhaps, what makes Ghana's situation lamentable for Wosornu is that while the masses wallow in acute economic hardship and poverty, and, consequently, shed "acid rains of private tears", the political leaders who have plunged the nation into the terrifying level of public debts through their incompetence and corrupt practices live lives of affluence.

Theme of Environmental Degradation

One of the major current concerns of literary writers which they capture in their writings is the way post-independence African governments have reacted to their environment, and the ramifications of their reactions on the African continent (Esamagu, 2020; Maledo and Edhere, 2021). In the selected poems under study, Wosornu projects Ghana's culture of lack of maintenance of the environment, and the masses' recklessness in polluting the environment as major contributing factors to the degradation of Ghana's environment.

In his poem, "The Street" (JWE, p.3), Wosornu projects the degradation of the environment as a result of the culture of low or no maintenance, as captured in the lines below:

Built to please the eye and sub-serve the foot
Our streets are no longer beauty's domain.
With dust untamed by asphalt, grass or tar
Without pavement, foot-path, embankment
Potholes filled and re-filled with loose, red earth
Our streets were open and foetid trash cans,
Man traps, roads unworthy of vehicles. s3

The poor maintenance of state property is projected by the reference to "Potholes filled and re-filled with loose, red earth" (l 5) in the description of the nature of the roads. Indeed, so bad is the state of the roads the vehicles ply on that the poet ultimately describes them as "Man traps" and "unworthy of vehicles". Motor accidents are not the only danger the roads pose; suggestively, the "dust" which is "untamed by asphalt, grass or tar" also poses health hazards. The reference to the absence of "grass", "pavements" and "foot-path" in relation to the roads and streets in the country, is indicative of the lack of the sense of environmental beautification as well as environmental safety. Thus, by using the poor and dangerous state of the roads which are used by both political leaders and the masses of the country, and the lack of environmental beautification, the poet projects the general lack of maintenance culture especially state property, and the attitude of indifference towards the environment. All in all, the poet projects a sad situation of Ghanaian political leaders and individual citizens who react or, perhaps, fail to react to their

environment by not adding any value or beautification to its natural state. It is as if God's commandment in Genesis 2:15 for man to dress the land and to keep it is not applicable to the Ghanaian environment, or the dressing part of the commandment is regarded unimportant.

The Ghanaian's attitude of the neglect of his / her environment is re-enforced by Wosornu in the following lines of his poem, "The Faded Blue Print" (CB, p. 4):

> Gardens, once the haunt of teens
> rose trees the envy of queens
> and lawns the object of kings' lust
> are no longer lush. Bush to bush.
> Sand to sand. Everything to dust. (Lines l 9 – 13)

With the lines above, Wosornu re-enforces his projection that Ghanaian governments and the citizens have not made any conscious effort to either maintain or improve upon their environment. Wosornu's tone is satiric in his references to "Bush to bush" and "Sand to sand", suggesting the indifferent attitude of the people towards the environment, and questioning their whole psyche about their understanding of environmental beautification and development.

As if the neglect of the environment is not enough a problem, the citizens contribute to the degradation of the environment with no regard at all for the health ramifications of their activities. The indiscriminate littering with plastic waste that are found on the streets, water bodies, gutters, and virtually everywhere is again highlighted by Wosornu in stanza two (2) of the poem. "The Street":

Shops spill their plastic contents

Like dismembered pregnant uteri—

Blood, foetal parts, liquor and all. (stanza 2)

What at once strikes the reader is the poet's projection of the disgusting sight of the waste spilled about in his comparison of it with "…dismembered pregnant uteri - / Blood, foetal parts, liquor and all". Such a messy sight, even to a medical surgeon as the poet, seems disgusting, and he seems to have used his comparison aptly. Another point worthy of note is the poet's projection of the senseless catholic degradation of the environment by ascribing the act of spilling to "Shops" in the first line of the stanza: "Shops spill their plastic contents". Shops are non-human entities without brains. Hence, by projecting shops as the undertakers of the spillage, when in reality, the spillage is undertaken by the human beings at the shops who are expected to know better, Wosornu subtly, yet effectively, questions the state of mind of the citizens who degrade the environment in such disgusting terms. The "shops" also seem to be a metonymy of capitalism and signs of modernity. Hence, the paradox that progress is actually destructive to the environment.

In all of what the poet projects as a senseless and disgusting environmental tragedy, perhaps, what seems to be a more worrying situation is that even the intellectuals of the nation who are expected to impact positively on the general citizenry are themselves guilty of environmental neglect and causing its degradation, as he depicts in the following lines of "The Faded Blue Print":

We no longer seem to care

about looks, beauty and flair

in our seats of higher learning

where eager youth flock… l 1 – 4a

The indifferent attitude of the young intellectuals towards their environment is extremely worrying for Wosornu. Coming from an older stock of Ghanaian intellectuals with partly pre-independence background, the poet recalls the attitude of care then given to the environment, as captured in the first stanza of his poem, "Standard Seven" (JWE, P 7):

I call you to witness, Assembly Hall,

Dining hall, and manicured fields of sport!

You, too, zinc roofs and broom marks in the sand

Board-starched khaki uniforms and pink frocks

Lime-washed stones and sisal, chairs in the sand

Coconut and mango trees in whiter socks

Desks scrubbed altar-clean, though done for the year!

You saw us come and go. Don't be mute now.

Fields "manicured", sand bearing "broom marks", stones "Lime-washed" and trees painted at the stem-base, desks "scrubbed" seem basic and unremarkable actions, yet they effectively depict a conscious effort to inculcate a sense of environmental upgrade or maintenance in the youthful intellectuals. Interestingly, Wosornu projects that the dressing of the environment does not necessarily require money; what it takes is awareness and energy. The picture of environmental maintenance and beautification depicted in the lines above, however, is in sharp contrast to what Wosornu finds today, typified in his assertion that "we no longer seem to care" about the environment.

The recent reports of the menace of illegal mining activities on our lands, forests and water bodies is enough testimony as to the lukewarm attitude of both the ordinary and the Ghanaian intellectual, the political leaders and the masses towards the degradation of the Ghanaian environment.

Theme of Political Oppression / Persecution and Violence

Upon the independence of most African states in the 1960s, the "new democratic" political system of governance imposed by the departing colonial powers was handed over in a hurry to the new African political elite. Consequently, the new leaders did not have enough time to get acquainted with its workings. In view of that, what resulted after independence in the states across the continent was a farce: political disorder, tribal genocide, corruption, civil wars, coups, and political assassinations (Bayeh, 2015; Hamilton, 2009; Okon, 2013; Robinson, 2019). The situation in postcolonial Ghana has not been different from those of other African states. Typically, Ghana's political terrain has been marked by series of political persecution and coup d'états which have led to violence, bloodshed, death, and migration to seek political asylum in the lives of a people who were hitherto "unaccustomed", to borrow the word from Lade Wosornu, to such horrors (Hettne, 1980; Opoku Dapaah, 1992).

In the selected poetry for this study, Wosornu projects that even when Ghanaian political leaders have managed to resort to some semblance of democratic rule, elements of political oppression have and still prevail. The poet does not only portray the political oppression / persecution and violence, but also depicts the political leaders as inhumane in their nature, and unrelenting in their atrocious acts of persecution and violence against perceived political

opponents. For instance, in his poem, "Hollow Corner" (CB, P 5), the poet laments:

In this corner, who is counting?

This is the reign of the full moon. (Lines 1 & 2)

The tone here is terrifying. Another meaning of "Hollow" (from the title of the poem) is "dead". Thus, a "Hollow Corner" suggests a place (suggestively, Ghana) where there is no activity or excitement; a place where there is no life. Effectively, the title, "Hollow Corner", foregrounds a "Corner" or nation associated with death. Reference to the "reign of the full moon" also brings into mind the myth that certain evil humans turn into werewolves during the full moon, and so, "the reign of the full moon" suggests the reign of werewolves. Thus, in the lines above, Wosornu projects that Ghanaian political leaders are, metaphorically speaking, werewolves or blood-sucking creatures, sucking the blood of the masses over whom they rule. Since werewolves are associated with terror and death, the poet projects the political leaders as perpetrators of terror, fear and death among their people. This point is further iterated in the following lines of "Hollow Corner":

But the dying pile upon the dead

The gray bury the green

And few attain the dignity of gold. (Lines 3 – 5)

One alarming projection in the lines above is the poet's suggestion that many of those who are fatally persecuted in the country are the productive youthful population—"the green". Consequently, and as suggested by the poet, only a few lucky ones of the population live beyond their middle ages. Those left are the "gray" or mainly unproductive aged who themselves are naturally close to

their grave. The image of "the dying pile upon the dead" evokes an atmosphere of terror and mood of fear among the masses. The terror associated with the reign of the Ghanaian political leaders is further projected by the poet in the following lines of his poem, "No questions Asked" (CB, P 10):

It is that time of the reign again.
And chaotic fleets of bats
from assembly halls and city bans
invade the privacy of village skies
where locusts rendezvous with death.
In beasts' feeding frenzy, insects fall.
With no questions asked. (Lines 1 – 7)

By the use of "again" in "It is that time of the reign again" (l 1), the poet highlights the high frequency of the reigns of terror of succeeding political leaders, and how frustrating it is for the Ghanaian masses. In what seems to be a symbolic representation of political leaders and citizens with "bats' and "locusts", respectively, in a fatal situation, the poet describes as a "...beasts' feeding frenzy" in which "insects" (the locusts) "fall" (die), he buttresses the atrocities meted out by the political leaders to the citizens. Bats are known to eat moths, crickets, locusts, among other insects, and each bat can consume between 600 and 1,000 insects, including locusts, in only one hour (https://bugmanonline.com). Hence, by that comparison, Wosornu projects an alarming situation of postcolonial political persecution and insecurity in Ghana. Again, by the expression, "invade the privacy of village skies", Wosornu projects how the once peaceful life of the Ghanaian people is destroyed by the postcolonial tyrant political leaders. Note also, the use of the expression "where

locusts rendezvous with death" (l 5) to suggest that the life of Ghanaians is constantly at risk. In all of this, as the title of the poem "No Questions Asked" suggests, Wosornu reinforces his projection of the fear politicians evoke in Ghanaians, and its resultant 'culture of silence'. Ankomah (1987), titled, "Ghana's Culture of Silence", admits the existence of a "culture of silence" among Ghanaians, and traces the public's notion of its inception in Ghana to the one-party system reign of Kwame Nkrumah, and its re-birth to the military rule of Jerry John Rawlings. In the selected poetry for this study, the poet makes references to the rule of Jerry John Rawlings; a typical example is the allusion to "rawlings chain" in the poem, "The Lamentations of Janet" (CB, P 3). Thus, it is not out of place for this study to link the inference of the culture of silence in the poem "No Questions Asked" to the reign of Jerry John Rawlings. This notwithstanding, Hamilton (2009) argues that political oppression and persecutions in sub-Saharan Africa can be measured using the state of institutions such as the Judiciary, Prisons, Civil Society and Electoral Commission, and suggests that even in multi-party democracies of African States, political oppression and persecutions linger. Arguably then, Wosornu's concerns about the political oppression / persecution and violence in Ghana cannot be limited to the reign of Jerry John Rawlings' PNDC government.

Wosornu's presentation of the "mean and menacing" tyrant-leaders as inhumane in their oppression and persecution of the Ghanaian people is further reinforced in his poem, "Omens", (JWE, P 13), as evinced in the following lines:

Chased by serpents mean and menacing
The brood eagles have all flown away.
Migrant wildebeest have not returned. (Lines 1 – 3)

Note the poet's metaphorical comparison of the leaders with "serpents" and the youthful productive citizens with "brood eagles". The poet suggests that the productive citizens are forced to run away from the oppression and persecution by migrating to foreign countries. Again, for Wosornu, so brutal and blood thirsty have Ghanaian political leaders proved themselves that he compares them to "Priests of Neo-Aztecs" in the title of the poem JWE, P11. Historically, the Aztec priests were known for their insatiable hunger for blood through human sacrifice:

> Priests, priests, neo-Aztecs!
> Your swords strike true and deep
> Leave no scar to tell the tale
> Living corpses mark your trail. s 4

Note Wosornu's use of the exclamation mark at the end of line one of the stanzas to foreground his shock and strong disapproval of the brutal behavior of the political leaders towards the masses. In lines 2 and 3, he projects the brutalities against the Ghanaian people with the suggestion that the political leaders commit the atrocities in such intentional but measured ways as to conceal obvious traces. The result of their brutalities, according to the poet, is the transformation of the people into the human oxymoron of "living corpses", suggesting that there is no difference between life and death for the politically oppressed and persecuted masses. The projection of the fatality of the brutalities meted out by the "Neo-Aztec" political leaders to the masses is reinforced in the following lines of Wosornu's "Two Songs from Home" (JWE, P 5), a poem which by inference evokes the AFRC's 1979 military coup d'état in Ghana—a coup famous for its bloodshed and mad calls of "Let the blood flow!" as political

opponents and perceived corrupt military and civilian personnel were slaughtered:

Nine priests were shot. (They were the lucky ones.)
Ten drowned, thirteen tortured, bleeding, bowels burst.
Altars, once pearls, turned tar with clot and dust
Mingled with ash from yesterday's incense.
The holy water was drained to the lees,
its dozen jugs unwashed, unreplenished.
All the choristers had fled in their robes.
Music sheet flew in the trespassing breeze.
Temple doors were unbarred, windows unlatched.
I walked alone.

No flags drooped at half mast.
No one wore black. No dirge was broadcast.
A people unaccustomed to a flood
of brutality and a reign of woe
were seduced with a wine of blood.
And they sang (not in whispers):
"Let the blood flow!" (s 3 & 4)

The poet portrays in the lines above that so brutal were the political leaders in their atrocities towards their political opponents (both politicians and civil) that even priests perceived to be opponents of the military junta and their churches were not spared. Once again, Ankomah (1987) cites an example of an incident which happened on 7th April, 1982 in a church in Kumasi, in the Ashanti Region

of Ghana, under the rule of Jerry John Rawlings, which eventually led to unrestrained soldiers shooting and killing a pastor, church members, a policewoman, and the hunting down of others. Wosornu's portrayal in the lines above of attacks on churches whose "Temple doors were unbarred", and "windows unlatched", altars desecrated, "…choristers had fled in their robes", "Music sheets flew in the trespassing breeze", and people shot, tortured, bleeding, bowels bursting and drowning is reminiscent of the events of 7th April, 1982 and its immediate aftermath to which Ankomah (1987) refers. In stanza 4, the poet suggests that the people themselves had, shockingly, grown so accustomed to the violence, persecution and death brought upon the nation that no one expressed sorrow and regret for the loss of lives. According to the poet, a people who were not accustomed to such degree of violence now bellowed, "Let the blood flow". The allusion to the chant of "Let the blood flow" brings into mind the events of the 1979 military coup d'état in Ghana which saw the execution of some military officers, and the wild acclamation of a section of Ghanaians in support of the killings. Note how by the expression, "were seduced with wine of blood" (s 4, l 5), the poet suggests the influence of the blood-thirsty "Neo-Aztec" leaders on the masses. Again, note how the last line of stanza 3, "I walked alone", suggests the atmosphere of mistrust and fear among Ghanaians which characterised the era.

In the midst of the persecutions and violence, which marked the deaths of some political leaders and the led, the fleeing of political opponents and business men and women perceived as political opponents, and incarceration of others, Wosornu questions the presence and role of the judiciary in administering justice when he asks in "The Lamentations of Janet" (CB, P 3):

To whom can you turn

when magistrates legislate against hope (s 5, l 6 & 7)

According to Hamilton (2009 :1), in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA),

> Judiciaries were often fused with the executive branch and were denied legitimate power. Today judicial systems in SSA are still intimately linked to the executive – this negates their ability to serve as a check on executive power.

Magistrates and judges who are perceived to have gone contrary to the interest of political leaders are often persecuted in one way or the other.

In projecting the theme of postcolonial political persecution / oppression and violence in the selected poetry for this study, Lade Wosornu does not only show that the political persecution / oppression and violence on the Ghanaian people has proved fatal, but also suggests it has stalled the economic development of the nation and hindered social justice.

Theme of Hopelessness / Despair Among the Masses

In the selected poetry for this study, Lade Wosornu projects the state of hopelessness and despair of the Ghanaian masses. The poet suggests that the hopelessness and despair are as a result of the failure of the political leaders to lead the nation towards socio-economic growth. He reckons that the dire economic hardships, as a result of the incompetent, insensitive and greedy leaders seem to have eroded any hope Ghanaians have for economic growth.

Does it have to come to this:

We steal plants to survive? (S 1, l 1 & 2)

From the lines above, from his poem, “The Lamentations of Janet” (CB P 3), the poet projects a worrying despair of the Ghanaian people who have been

plunged into what he projects as a shocking and distressing state of economic hardship. Wosornu's rhetorical question in line 2 above provokes the reader to reflect on the harsh economic situation projected in the poem, amidst the blessings of nature. In the same stanza one of the poem, the poet indicates that nature in the form of the "disciplined rains" (l 3) has given the nation "…gardens greener than green" (l 4). With the depiction of "…gardens greener than green", Wosornu brings into mind the abundant natural resources with which the nation Ghana has been notably endowed. Some of the resources include gold, diamonds, cocoa, timber, fertile land and waterbodies. Thus, for the poet, it is unthinkable that Ghanaians would be brought to that point of ground zero where their only hope for survival is to "steal plants". Note how with the word, "steal", Wosornu suggests how the economic hardship has eaten into the moral fibre of the Ghanaian people, culminating into their loss of dignity in their quest to "survive".

In "Ashes at Harvest Time" (CB, P 7), the poet re-echoes the economic hopelessness and despair of the masses in the following lines:

Our bans bear mice, not bags of rice

Pots for oil are filled with empty toil (Lines 1 & 2)

Aside from the word "Ashes" in the title of the poem, the expression "empty toil" in line 2 buttresses the mood of despair experienced by the masses who, suggestively, work hard, yet have nothing to show for it at "harvest time". In the following lines of the same poem, the poet highlights the "empty toil" of the masses and their despair:

The stones we kick and break our teeth!

The roads we take that lead nowhere!

The loose ends that refuse to be tied!

And, the gods that rig our boats with despair! (Lines 7 – 10)

The line "The stones we kick and break our teeth!" captures the painful hard work and efforts undertaken by Ghanaians for economic survival. Yet, the people never find any economic relief as indicated by "roads" that "lead nowhere" and "…loose ends that refuse to be tied!" The word "roads", in line 8 above, is a common motif in African literature. For instance, in Ben Okri's novel, *The Famished Road*, the "road", among other significances, is used to suggest the path of poverty and dirty politics. For Wosornu, "roads" seem to suggest independence (freedom) or ideologies and policies of Ghanaian leaders that, ironically, seem to "lead nowhere" towards national development. Thus, the "roads that lead nowhere" suggests the vicious cycle of lack of progress in the postcolonial socio-economic lives of Ghanaians. The poet further argues that the vicious cycle of the unprogressive economic life of the masses has culminated into such despair that, for the people, it was as if the very "gods" of the land had a divine hand in their despair, a suggestion made plausible by line 10 above. An alternative suggestion is that the word "gods" is used to refer to the political leaders who seem to see themselves as "gods", that is, beyond reproach and criticism, yet responsible for the economic hardship and its resultant emotional despair on the masses. Note poet's use of the exclamation marks at the end of each of the lines above to project the shocking height of despair. Again, note how the poet identifies with the despair of the Ghanaian people by the use of the second person plural pronoun "We" and the plural possessive pronoun "our" in the lines above.

Lade Wosornu reinforces culpability of the political leaders in the socio-economic despair of the masses in the following lines of the poem, "The Lamentations of Janet":

They plunder the nation and squander the loot.
Rulers indifferent to subjects' plight
lose no sleep o'er inflation on wings. (s, 2, l 5 -7)

From the lines above, he portrays the political leaders as free from the life of despair and hopelessness experienced by the masses. The very political leaders, contrary to their promises of bringing about economic liberation, have rather plunged the nation into economic hardship, without any indication of regret and concern for the "plight" of the people. What is painful and worrying for the poet is the realisation that the political leaders shamelessly "…plunder the nation and squander the loot" while the masses continue to experience an ever-heightening level of despair. Wosornu's projection of the theme of hopelessness and despair in the poem is extensive, and the following lines of stanza three (3) indicts the religious leaders as well:

Does it have to come to this?
In priests' homes, three meals a day
is ancient as human sacrifice.
Single mothers, aged 16, suckle
paper-weight babes at wafer-thin breasts.
Mother and child are outcasts both
like dogs speared by wind-blown masters
and dumped in streets to bleed to death.

From the lines above, Wosornu indicates that even religious leaders, who are supposed to be more compassionate and helpful to the economically-challenged masses are themselves exploiting the masses for their own economic gains, while the masses continue to wallow in economic despair. The abundance of meals in the homes of priests, as captured in lines 2 and 3, is juxtaposed with the extreme want that has caused emaciation among the youth and even babies, described as "paper-weight", captured in lines 4 and 5. Like the political leaders, the religious leaders remain "indifferent" to the despair of the masses. It is this that underpins the great height of the hopelessness and despair. Remarkably, Wosornu's comparison of "Mother and child" with "…dogs speared by wind-blown masters / dumped in streets to bleed to death" (lines 6 – 8) depicts more than just leaders who are indifferent, but also ones who do not even recognise that the masses are humans just like them. The atmosphere Wosornu portrays is one of extreme hopelessness and despair.

If the political and religious leaders have failed the Ghanaian masses, how about the courts where the people could go for redress? To this, Wosornu responds in stanza five (5) of the same poem:

To whom can you turn

When magistrates legislate against hope. (Lines 34 & 35)

From the lines above, Wosornu projects a people for whom justice is denied so much so that it has become useless and hopeless to seek for redress even in the courts. In the concluding stanza of the poem, Wosornu finally leaves his readers with a bleak situation of the hopelessness and despair of the Ghanaian masses when he says in the following lines:

Does it have to come to this?

Guinea's Gulf we still churn with the oar.

Swedru's soil we still till with the hoe.

And, eggs we farm but rarely eat.

Nothing seems to change. (Lines 1 – 5)

Reference to "Swedru's soil" reinforces the Ghanaian setting, and in turn, places the concerns of Wosornu in the Ghanaian context. Altogether, the lines project the Ghanaian citizens as hardworking people who endeavor to exploit all natural resources on land and water for their livelihood. However, "Nothing seems to change" their economic lot, for they "rarely eat". The resultant situation can only be one of despair for the masses. Also, the poet hints at the lack of technological progress and misplaced priorities, as lines 2 and 3 above, with their references to "oar" and "hoe" portray the image of stasis. In other words, they portray the lack of industrialisation and continual dependence on primitive technology. The question then is: how can such a nation develop? No wonder Wosornu stresses that "nothing seems to change".

A similar bleak situation of despair is projected by the poet in the poem, "No Confetti Here" (CB P 9), portrayed in the lines below:

The day closes like a book

The sun rides to its grave

Casting shadows of private terrors.

The starving sigh at moon's beams:

Empty bellies, nasty dreams. (Lines 29 – 33)

On daily basis, as the "sun rides to its grave" and night approaches, all hopes of obtaining daily livelihood is lost, for no labour can be executed again at sunset. Even if there is a possibility of working at sunset, the question then is this: what

can be achieved at sunset when nothing is obtained during the day? At the philosophical level, Wosornu seems to use "day" as a symbol of youthfulness and strength. Thus, the expectation is that the individual should work and progress economically, among others, when still full of youthful strength. As the individual nears his or her grave, he or she naturally loses the strength and zeal to work hard. The idea of a day that "closes like a book" is also applicable to the situation of the nation Ghana. As a postcolonial nation, Ghana can be described as a youthful nation, and for Wosornu, Ghana's failure to take advantage of the zeal of youthfulness and inspiration of independence to ensure national development "casts shadows" of national "terrors", especially as "The sun rides to its grave". There is nothing to show for Ghana's attainment of independence, and the resultant hopelessness and despair create feelings of great apprehension among the people. Note how Wosornu suggests the life of despair and hopelessness in the line, "Empty bellies, nasty dreams". The expression, "Empty bellies, nasty dreams" does not only suggest hunger; it also suggests the dearth of innovations and creativity (empty bellies) and unpatriotic (nasty) dreams of the people, all of which have plunged the nation into despair and hopelessness, even at its youthful postcolonial age. This is what, among others, underpins Ghana's postcolonial tragedy.

Again, in "Uneven Turf" (CB, P 11), Wosornu highlights similar sentiments of hopelessness and despair among the Ghanaian people. By referring to the land of Ghana as an "Uneven Turf" and "Treacherous terrain", he establishes the idea that the "turf" or "terrain" itself of the country works against the well-being and development of the ordinary working people. The suggestion is that the "Uneven Turf" favours certain people while it works

against the others. Wosornu projects the idea of "Uneven turf" and its resultant dichotomy of the Ghanaian world into the world of the "cream" and the world of the "brine" in his poem, "If you would look again" (CB, P 8), stanzas 4 and 5:

> If you would look again
> at the river whose bed is asphalt
> you will see the brine and the cream:
> Two currents trapped in the same stream
> rubbing bellies, but never a kiss.
>
> If you would look again
> and stare hard at the air
> you will see two ships in space
> whose orbits, at tangents, touch
> but not intersect.
> Or, intersecting, halt and hug.
> Only waves of hello and hisses of good riddance.

Alfani (2021) asserts that African Literature has often projected oppositions between social classes, with the elite exploiting the masses as did the white man. Alfani goes on to offer various definitions of "elite", among which is the following:

> …the elite are all those who, in diverse activities, are at the top of the hierarchy and occupy privileged positions of prestige and importance. They are those who occupy the most important positions in the state apparatus and can be seen as the holders of the political power. They are often those who have replaced the

> white man and carry on exploiting the masses. We identify this group as being the political elite (p. 7).

Wosornu calls the political elite in Ghana the "cream" and the exploited masses the "brine", and asserts that though they are "two currents trapped in the same stream" or geographical location (Ghana), they "never kiss". Again, he compares the political elite and the exploited masses with "two ships in space / whose orbits, at tangents, touch / but not intersect". The poem resonates well with Nana Kwame Ampadu's Twi song, titled, *Ebi Te Yie*, to wit, some (the political and economic elites) are sitting / living well and, suggestively, others (the politically and economically weak and vulnerable) are not. Once again, Alfani (2021) attempts an explanation of the hostility that exists between the two classes and opines that:

The nature of the relationship between the political elite and the masses is that of the jungle. Everyone fights for his own survival and enrichment, not caring at all about other people's misery; such is the new turn taken in the relationship between the political elite and the masses. Some elite's ideas about the poor masses are:

> 1. We have not made them poor and, therefore, their condition of poverty is none of our business;
> 2. They are poor because they lack intelligence, imagination, enterprise or capacity for work, or a combination of all or some of these attributes… (p. 8)

In that "jungle relationship" between the political elite and the masses, it is the latter who suffers most. Indeed, the political elites hardly suffer any socio-economic hardships that result in despair and hopelessness for them. However, for the masses, the despair is huge, and Wosornu portrays such mood aptly in the following lines of "Uneven Turf":

> we are dingos barking at elephant.
> We are the sickly spaghetti stems
> of beans sprouting in darkness
> seeking greening light, but in vain… (Lines 8 – 11)

By comparing the masses to dingoes (wild or half-domesticated dogs) that bark at elephants (the political elites), and "sickly spaghetti stems", the poet projects the vain attempts and hopelessness of the masses in their quest to better their lot, in the face of economic hardships, exploitation and neglect by the powerful and rich political elites. Indeed, Wosornu sums up the lot of the Ghanaian masses when he refers to them as "untouchables" in line 11 of the poem, "No

Questions Asked". The term is also used in Mushonga (2018) and it brings up the image of the untouchables in India, a group of people who are, by way of status, regarded as lower than animals. They are mainly confined to menial, despised jobs, and they are shunned by the rest of the society. Perhaps, Wosornu may seem to be exaggerating. However, it goes to indicate the extent of his disappointment in the current social status of the majority of Ghanaians, against the backdrop of the promises and hopes of independence.

Wosornu goes on to highlight the consequential effect of the despair of the Ghanaian masses in the poem "If you look again" (CB, P 8) in the following lines:

If you would look again
you can see beneath the smiling ripples
near, very near the surface
ill-concealed reefs of rage
soon sunned by swirls of strife.
Down there, the craft of Trust
constructed with lumbers of time
soon founders and sinks without a trace. (stanza 1)

The despair leads to mistrust which, in turn, leads to anger and "hisses of good riddance", as the concluding line of the poem projects. Wosornu's expression of "hisses of good riddance" seems to suggests the wish of the despaired masses for the overthrow of the political leaders who they see as the cause of their despair. Alfani (2021) cites Taleb (2020a, 2020b) as stating that one of the main features of post-independence Africa has been the high rate of successful coups d'état, and several African writers have used coups d'états to end their novels

to show the state of the political affairs in their nations. Typical examples are Achebe's *Anthills of the Savanah* and *A Man of the People*, and Armah's *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born*. Though there is no evidence in his poems that he calls for such a costly intervention to end the despair of the masses, Wosornu demonstrates his awareness of the rancor and societal division to which the continuous despair of the masses can lead in Ghana.

Theme of Insensitive and Greedy Leaders

The theme of insensitive and greedy leaders (political and religious) features prominently in the selected poetry of Lade Wosornu for this study. In developing the theme, Wosornu brings to the fore that while the masses suffer massive poverty through economic hardships perpetuated by the greedy leaders, the very same leaders flaunt their ill-gotten wealth before the hungry masses, and neglect the welfare and development of the lives of the masses. In the following lines from his poem, "If you would look again" (CB P 8), Wosornu summarises the insensitive attitude of the leaders towards the plight of the masses:

> If you would look again in the palace
> you will see all our thrones
> occupied by porcupines:
> All bristle, no flesh…
> All teeth, no smile. (S 3, Lines 1 – 5)

By the title, "If you would look again", Wosornu suggests that the real cause of the prevailing economic hardship can only be seen with a much more critical look. Such critical look is what Wosornu himself takes, leading to his projection of the theme of greedy and insensitive leaders. By the use of "all" in "all our

thrones", the poet projects that none of the political leaders of the nation can be absolved from the guilt of greed and insensitivity towards the suffering masses. The use of the word, "thrones" also suggests that the political leaders see their leadership positions as their right, something that they have assumed, based on some 'special right' they think they have. Again, the words "palace" and "thrones" broadens the leadership groups to encompass the traditional leaders as well. The recent phenomenon of traditional leaders living in luxury, almost in competition with politicians, buttresses this point. For Wosornu, the insensitivity of the leaders makes them inhumane and he compares them with "porcupines", animals that are covered with "bristles" and, according to Wosornu, have "no flesh" and wear "no smile". The "porcupine" image projects the leaders as unfeeling and unsympathetic towards the suffering masses. Wosornu exemplifies some of the activities / behaviours of the insensitive leaders in lines 1-5 of his poem, "Hollow Corner" (CB, P 5):

In this corner, who is counting?
This is the reign of the full moon.
But the dying pile upon the dead
The gray bury the green
And few attain the dignity of gold. (Lines 1 – 5)

"Hollow" means without value or significance. It also implies death. "Corner" also suggests isolation. Hence, with the title, "Hollow Corner", Wosornu projects the idea that Ghana is a land associated with death. The idea of death is further developed when the poet says, "But the dying pile upon the dead" (Line 3). The general impression created by the lines is that Ghana is a place where lives of people are not valued by the political leaders who are compared to

werewolves, as suggested by the line, "…the reign of the full moon" (line 2). Thus, the question in line one, a rhetorical one, projects the insensitivity of the leaders in not valuing the lives of the masses. Further projection of the insensitivity of the political leaders can be seen in the following lines of Wosornu's poem, "Celestial Bride" (CB, P 15; Part 3, s 8):

> We have roads, which for accidents, are acclaimed.
> (In this corner, who is counting the maimed?)
> A man crawls out from beneath a crushed car.
> (He has been to church, not a flaming bar!)
> A bruised chest is the sole outer sign
> Of inner ruin. And, for that, orphans shall whine.
> Six pairs of ribs have snapped like legs of hens.
> And his chest were the broken wings of wrens.
> "My chest's all wrong. Please fix it fast. Else I die."
> But where is one healing knife? In this sty?
> He gasps. He turns blue. He coughs in a fit.
> He will not make it. He does not make it.

The poet uses a common occurrence of the numerous road accidents on the bad roads in Ghana which continually take the lives of especially the hardworking masses and bread winners of families. He suggests that though the political leadership of the nation are in the know of such dangerously constructed and dilapidated roads, they show no concern. Such political leaders often ride in luxurious four wheel vehicles, and as much as possible, avoid going to areas with bad roads, except when they are campaigning for the votes of the masses during political elections. Note the poet's comparison of the broken ribs of the

accident victim to “legs of hens” (Line 7) and his broken chest to ‘broken wings of wren” (Line 8) to suggest that the political leaders do not consider the masses as humans, and so like those of birds, the lives of the masses are not valuable. The poet calls the hospital a “sty” and suggests that there is virtually no tool for doctors to work with to treat the sick and injured patients. Finally, the accident victim, an archetype of the ordinary Ghanaian bread-winner, loses his life.

Then again, in the above-mentioned poem, Wosornu projects the affluent lifestyle of political leaders in the midst of the general poverty experienced by the masses. Specifically, he uses the extravagant celebration of a wedding by the political elites to expose their insensitivity as political leaders, for as they greedily and ostentatiously spend the wealth of the nation, the masses, just as the accident-victim, suffer from extreme poverty and the lack of basic amenities. Note in the lines below how the poet points to the extravagance of the political elites:

Solomon’s faméd glory fades
Against the ladies’ robes of dazzling shades.
Kéntés speak tomes, and, fascinate.
Kabas out-riot peacocks’ feathers.
And, the hair-do’s: How intricate!
What taste! What class! Napoleon’s Josephine
Cannot match my place-honoured heroine.
Bridesmaids, seven pairs picked for mystic airs
(Matched for height and weight) are all aged eight.
Look! Joan. In town, the fastest-rising debt!
Her Daniel, of Zzielle and the Met.

The Minister of Peace, and Juliette

His Coptic wife. Ambassadors, kings, queens

Men of affairs, women of private means

Promising parasites and socialites:

All here at mid-week. An occurrence

Mightier than time decrees their presence. (Part 1, s 3 – 5)

The poet alludes to the biblical Solomon character and the historical Josephine, the wife of Napoleon of France, both famous for their wealth and extravagance, and suggests that the extravagance of Ghana's political elites surpasses those of Solomon and Josephine. Even if Wosornu's projection seems exaggerated, it effectively brings to the fore how unreasonable the extravagant life-style of the political elites is, for even Solomon, at the peak of his wealth, claimed all to be vanity, more so when the masses continue to wallow in poverty and the nation lacks good basic amenities to ensure their health and safety. Most disheartening is the poet's suggestion that the cost of the extravagant life-style of the political elites whom he describes as "parasites" and "socialites" is borne by the nation which includes the already suffering masses: "Look! Joan. In town, the fastest-rising debt!"

Wosornu does not limit the attitude of insensitivity and greed to the political elites; the religious elites are, sadly, equally guilty, or perhaps, guiltier, looking at their expected roles in society. For instance, in his poem, "The Lamentations of Janet" (CB, P 3), the poet shows the insensitivity of religious leaders in the following lines:

Does it have to come to this?

In priests' homes, three meals a day

is ancient as human sacrifice.

Single mothers, aged 16, suck

paper-weight babes at wafer-thin breasts.

Mother and child are outcasts both

like dogs speared by wind-blown masters

and dumped in streets to bleed to death. s 3

The poet highlights a life of abundance for the priests who are able to afford "three meals a day" as against the life of extreme poverty for teenage single mothers and their babies, representatives of the current and future Ghanaian society. Expressions such as "wafer-thin breasts" and "paper-weight babes" sum up the conditions of mother and child. Again, the fact that the mothers are "aged 16" and so teenagers who are likely not to be workers and are of school going age, speaks volumes of the absence of social support from both the state and the churches for the vulnerable and less privileged. Note how the poet juxtaposes the situations of the priests and the teenage single mothers in the same stanza to project the two as close neighbours in society, yet the church fails to be its neighbour's keeper, as the bible they preach from demands of them.

As if the neglect of their duties was not morally indicting enough, Wosornu further indicates that the religious leaders exploit the suffering masses, without an iota of shame and dent on their conscience, as exemplified in the following lines of his poem, "Priests of Neo-Aztecs" (JWE, P 11):

Weary-armed from the slaughter

Priests grow fat with their laughter.

Our blood flows without ceasing

Yet their altars remain dry. (Stanza 3)

The lines above highlight insatiable greed as the reason for the insensitive attitude of the political and religious leaders towards the suffering masses. Further reference to such insensitivity is made in the following lines of the poem, "Ashes at Harvest Time" (CB, P 7):

To billy-goats
Rose wreaths are just another snack.
To ex-convicts
Aborigines' burial grounds are casinos
And, to Mayfaireans
The bison can be shot to extinction.
(Give them this day their daily fix) (Lines 12 – 18)

What seems to be Wosornu's suggestion in the lines above is that just as it is natural for the "billy-goats" not to be knowledgeable and sensitive enough to distinguish between valuable and "worthless" plants in their quest to satisfy their hunger, the political and religious leaders are also not sensitive enough to consider the value of the lives of the people under their care; just as "ex-convicts" do not seem to care about anything that happens to them anymore, political and religious leaders do not care about the suffering masses; just as "Mayfaireans" do not care about the number of 'bison" killed because of its abundance where they are, political and religious leaders do not care about the number of suffering masses that perish. In effect, the political and religious leaders are so insensitive that they do not value the lives of the masses who perish daily on the roads through avoidable motor accidents; who are forced to

live on the streets due to poverty; who perish in structures called health facilities but cannot boast of basic health equipment, among others.

Wosornu concludes the development of his theme of insensitive leaders (political and religious) by indicating the need to "fix" the leaders when he says in the parody, "Give them this day their daily fix" (line 8). Thus, Wosornu makes a prayer to God to "fix" the leaders of Ghana. Perhaps, those who have recently been calling on the government and leaders of the country to "fix the country" would take a cue from Wosornu that the prerequisite for the fixing of the country is to first fix the leaders themselves. Wosornu is not oblivious of the daunting task to, as it were, cure the political and religious leaders from the plague of insensitivity, as the following lines from his poem, "Hollow Corner" (CB, P 5) suggests:

O task most daunting:
To teach
Men trapped in the fire of want
To see beauty of things neat and lovely
And, to value the invaluable –
Life! (Lines 6 – 10)

The expression "Men trapped in the fire of want" seems to refer to the greedy and insensitive political and religious leaders the poet portrays in his poems. In conclusion, Lade Wosornu portrays the political and religious leaders of Ghana as insensitive to the plight of the masses, and their insensitivity stems from their greed and blatant refusal to "value the invaluable – / Life".

Summary

This chapter explores the postcolonial themes in the selected poetry texts, being the main concern of this study. It organises the themes into the following areas: corruption among political and religious (Christian) leaders; postcolonial disillusionment; economic hardship; environmental degradation; political oppression / persecution and violence; hopelessness and despair; insensitive and greedy political and religious (Christian) leaders.

In the next chapter, the study explores the deployment of tropes in the selected poetry texts and how they help to develop the postcolonial themes.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS OF MAJOR TROPES

The previous chapter explored the postcolonial themes in the selected poetry texts of Lade Wosornu. It organised the themes into the following areas: corruption among political and religious (Christian) leaders; postcolonial disillusionment; economic hardship; environmental pollution / degradation; political oppression / persecution and violence; hopelessness and despair among the masses; insensitive and greedy political and religious (Christian) leaders. In this chapter, the study explores the deployment of tropes by Lade Wosornu in the selected poems, focusing on how they help to develop the postcolonial themes.

The importance of language in communication and, therefore, in literature, cannot be over-emphasised (Nur and Miranti, 2018; Ogunsiji, 2000; Yeibo, 2012). On the use of language, Ogunsiji (2000) affirms that:

Language use works in two broad dimensions, namely, literal and figurative. The literal dimension of language use deploys words in their usual and obvious sense, without any additional suggestions. On the other hand, the figurative dimension deals with the suggestive or connotative use of language (as cited by Yeibo, 2012, p.183)

Thus, figuration implies extended or associative meanings, that is, the use of language in an imaginative manner to elaborate a thesis or proposition and also to appeal to the emotions of the reader or listener (Yeibo, 2012). Nur and Miranti (2018) add to the discussion on the use of language by intimating that the language with which people communicate holds two meanings—explicit and implicit— and this is in sync with what other scholars have asserted.

In looking at what makes language figurative or implicit, Mothersbaugh et al. (2002, p.589) cites McQuarrie and Short (1996) as asserting that:

Figurative language is a deviation from expected use of language; it involves an expression rather than its content. Also, figurative language follows a set of fixed templates or structures that are variant across content or context, which, in effect, does not render the expression meaningless.

Thus, it can be stated that figurative language is used in ways that reflect the style of the user, and which, ultimately, reflects the message of the literary piece. Placing figurative language or figures of speech under style, Leech and Short (1981) cite examples such as irony, simile, metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, paradox, among others. Ogunsiji (2000, p. 56) as cited by Yeibo (2012) asserts, in a simple way, that figurative language is "a form of picture language".

Figurative language or figures of speech impact on communication, and they enhance the techniques of communication. The deployment of figures of speech in language (communication) represents different ways by which different ideas are expressed (McQuarrie and Short, 1996, as cited by Djafarova, 2017). Thus, the form of the expression alternates, depending on the type of figure deployed, while meaning is maintained (Corbett, 1990).

In literary studies, aside from lending aesthetic values, figurative language also conveys implicit or connotative meanings which enrich the texts and make their meanings more precise and concrete (Yeibo, 2012). Perrine (1982, p. 118) adds to the discussion on the importance of figurative language in literature by offering the following as its characteristics:

1. concretises abstract ideas through the introduction of imagery into the verse
2. adds emotional intensity to informative statements
3. helps to say much in brief compass
4. gives readers imaginative pleasure of literary works

Nur and Miranti (2018), however, opine that poetry, among the three genres of literature, makes more use of figurative language. Consequently, with poetry, the readers need to "…predominantly look beyond the ordinary denotative meaning of the language to its connotative or implied meaning" to arrive at a full appreciation (Balogun, 1996, p. 349 as cited in Yeibo, 2012).

Figurative language or figures of speech in themselves come in two categories—tropes and schemes (Arvius, 2003; Leech and Short, 2007; Maula, 2013; McQuarrie and Mick, 1996; Mothersbaugh et al., 2002). Leech and Short (2007) define tropes as clear violations of or departures from the linguistic code; and schemes as figures of speech that deal with the order or arrangement of words, syntax, letters, or sounds. They deal with form rather than the meaning of the words. McQuarrie and Mick (1996) attempt to draw a clear distinction between the meanings of schemes and tropes. They make this distinction by adopting the term "in-depth Processing analog" to establish a point of convergence and divergence between tropes and schemes. They argue that tropes have their meaning hidden in the structure or expression whereas schemes are created based on the manipulations issuing from the manner in which the expressions are arranged. Mothersbaugh et al. (2002) also assert that schemes and tropes differ according to how each deviate from normal usage of language in a text. They add that schemes deviate by focusing on the surface of,

or sensory aspects while tropes represent the semantic (deeper meaning) aspect of an expression or structure in a text. Nkansah (2009, p. 87) contributes to the discussion by asserting that the recurrent nature of schemes is one characteristic that makes them more compactible than tropes, and asserts that "scheme is a woven manipulation of varied forms where the recurrence occurs in the line or in the text", while "tropes are words or phrases used in a sense not proper to it, and thus, a departure from the plainest meaning of an expression".

The brief review above suggests the importance of figurative language in, especially poetry—a genre of literature which by virtue of its nature of economising words, uses a lot of figurative or coded language which calls for greater attention in its interpretation (Nur and Miranti, 2018; Yeibo, 2012). It is in the light of all the above that the researcher finds the exploration of Wosornu's deployment of tropes (an aspect of figurative language) important in arriving at a fuller understanding of his communication of the postcolonial themes in his selected poetry texts.

As already hinted in the preceding paragraph, the study limits its focus to tropes, and explores how their deployment in the selected poems of Wosornu helps to develop the postcolonial themes discerned in the previous chapter. My decision to look at the tropes is in line with my second research question: how do the major tropes deployed by Wosornu help develop the postcolonial themes in the selected poetry texts?

For the purpose of organisation, I have treated the tropes according to types, and provided analysis which support the stated themes they help to develop. Notable among the tropes that Lade Wosornu deploys in the selected

texts are metaphor, symbolism, simile, personification, allusion, irony, sarcasm, and satire. These are discussed in the next sections.

Metaphor

The greatest thing by far is to have command of metaphor

– Aristotle (Poetics)

According to Djafarovo (2017, p.38), "metaphor is the basis of figurative language, commonly used not only in literature, but also in day-to-day communication and other types of texts". In looking at the definition of metaphor, Yeibo (2012, p.181) cites Halliday (1985, p. 320) as asserting that it is "the variation in the use of words such that words have transferred meaning". Arvius (2003) contributes to the discussion on what metaphor is by asserting that it is a kind of figurative language that makes comparison between two things that are different in order to identify the one with the other. Msuya (2016, p. 1), however, observes that scholars agree the structure of metaphor consists of *tenor* (the literal part of the expression), the *vehicle* (the figurative part of the expression), and the *ground* (the likeness perceived between the tenor and the vehicle). For instance, in the expression, "The boxer is a beast"; "The boxer" constitutes the *tenor*; "a beast" constitutes the *vehicle;* the *ground* is the perception or quality such as ruthlessness that "the boxer" and "a beast" may have in common. Agnes (2009, p. 20) also looks at the structure of metaphor as constituting a "target domain and a source domain". The domains are concepts and the idea is to understand one in terms of the other through the process of mapping. For instance, using the expression, "The boxer is a beast", the target domain is "The Boxer" and the source domain is "a beast". Agnes (2009)) opines that usually the target domains are abstract in nature, such as "Life",

"Death", "Love", among others, while the source domains are concrete or physical.

Metaphor is used in poetry to explain emotions and relationship with other elements that could not be described in ordinary language (Djafarovo, 2017). The function of metaphor is not just to provide an enjoyable picture in the mind of the receiver; metaphors encourage a re-conceptualisation of what is already given. They can be mental models for sense making, aiding the communication (Davies and Chun, 2003). Nkansah (2012) corroborates Davies and Chun (2003) when he asserts that metaphor extends beyond the transfer of meaning to the creation of mental images that relate the abstract with the actual.

In the selected poems for this study, Lade Wosornu exhibits good "command" of (to borrow the word from Aristotle) and deployment of numerous metaphors to aid the reader not only to enjoy pictures in his or her mind, but also to re-conceptualise what he portrays in his poems, thereby helping to realise the themes (Davies and Chun, 2003; Nkansah, 2012, Perrine, 1977). One such deployment of metaphor is discerned in line 1 of the poem, "Donor Fatigue":

The wells of funds have all dried up

The metaphor here is interesting for it seems Wosornu brings together four domains in this single line. He mentions two of the domains, "wells" and "funds". The omission of the other two domains, "water" and "accounts" makes the metaphor implied (Cuddon, 2013). According to Young (2020), metaphors make us look at new associations by drawing links between the source domains and the target domains. Thus, in the deployed metaphor, "wells" are associated with water, just as "funds" are associated with accounts (bank accounts).

"Wells", therefore, becomes the source domain for the omitted target domain, "accounts", while the omitted "water" becomes the source domain for the target domain, "funds". In other words, the poet compares dry "wells" which should have contained water to empty "accounts" which should have contained "funds". Using the tenor-vehicle-ground structure of metaphor to further explain, the omitted "accounts" is the tenor and its vehicle is the "well". Also, the stated "funds" is the tenor and its vehicle is the omitted "water". The ground or association expressed by the comparison of wells without water and accounts without funds is the picture of emptiness, and the feeling of disappointment it creates among the masses. Effectively, what the metaphor does in the context of the poem is to force the reader to link dry or waterless wells to empty bank accounts, and, consequently, aid in the understanding of the postcolonial theme of corruption among political leaders / elites, economic hardship, and the consequent feeling of disappointment, frustration and hopelessness among Ghanaians.

In the same poem, "Donor Fatigue', Wosornu deploys another sight-evoking metaphor:

And the man-drains have multiplied (Line 6)

From the line above, the poet compares the corrupt political leaders or elites to drains or outlets. The target domain or tenor is "man" while the source domain or vehicle is "drains". The association or ground common to the tenor and vehicle is the attribute of outlets that take away something from a source. Hence, by asserting that the "man-drains have multiplied", the poet creates an imagery of several men (political leaders and elites) all connected directly or indirectly to the national kitty, and siphoning money (funds) from it, same time as donors

are bringing in funds intended for national development. Consequently, the kitty remains empty at every point. Effectively, this metaphor enhances the poet's development of the themes of corruption, and greedy and insensitive political leaders or elites.

Another deployed metaphor which helps in the poet's development of the theme of corruption, this time among religious or Christian leaders, can be found in the poem, "Uneven Turf", as indicated below:

Are we then to hail and acclaim

the whores and studs of our private Vaticans? Lines 13 and 14

In the context of the poem, the poet compares nuns and priests of the Catholic Church, and by extension, of the various denominations, to "whores" and "studs". Once again, the tenors for the vehicles "whores" and "studs" are omitted by the poet in this implied metaphor. Effectively, the comparison of the nuns (omitted tenor) to "whores" and the priests (omitted tenor) to "studs" (sexually active young males regarded as good sexual partners) forces the reader to map the attribute of sexual promiscuity of whores and studs onto the nuns and priests and, consequently, aiding in the development of the theme of corruption (moral) among Christian leaders.

Another striking metaphor deployed by Lade Wosornu is found in the poem, "No Questions Asked", and in lines 24 and 25 below:

The princely mice are known, by name

but flee unpursued

Once again, the poet deploys an implied metaphor. The omitted target domain is political leaders or elites. The source domain is "princely mice". One commonly known attribute of mice is that they are naturally good at stealing

food items secretly. Hence, the metaphor helps the reader to map this thievery attribute of mice unto the political leaders or elites, helping to portray the leaders or elites as thieves stealing from the national purse. Also, the consequent economic destruction the mice cause is also mapped unto the economic destruction caused by the political leaders and elites, suggesting that they (the political leaders and elites) are not just corrupt, but also their corrupt activities destroy the economy of the nation, to the despair of the masses. Here, the word "princely" points particularly to the leaders or elites, and also broadens the scope of leadership to the traditional authorities as well.

There is another use of a metaphor worthy of note in the poem, "Uneven Turf"—poem that highlights the theme of despair and hopelessness among the Ghanaian masses:

> We are dingos barking at elephant.
> We are the sickly spaghetti stems
> of beans sprouting in darkness
> seeking green light, but in vain… (Lines 8 – 11)

In this particular metaphor, the poet compares the masses, "We", with "dingos" (wild or half-domesticated dogs) and also the same "We" (the masses) with "sickly spaghetti stems / of beans…". He also compares the political leaders or elites with "elephant". In the first comparison, the reader is forced to associate "We" (the tenor) with the attribute of "dingoes" (the vehicle), known for their small sizes, in contrast with the huge size of the "elephant", the vehicle for the tenor (political leaders or elites). With that imagery of the differences in their sizes, and the associated fearlessness of the "elephant" in the face of the barking of the "dingos", the reader is forced to appreciate the futility of the efforts of the

masses (We) to draw the attention of the political leaders or elites (elephant) towards their plight. Likewise, the comparison of the masses to "sickly spaghetti stems / of beans" conveys similar idea of despair and hopelessness among the masses. As the poet indicates in the metaphor about the sickly stems (the poor masses), they are "sprouting in darkness / seeking greenlight, but in vain…". Together, these two metaphors which take the mind of the reader off into the world of fauna and flora (nature), effectively, help the reader to further make sense of the theme of despair and hopelessness among the masses even on their land of existence where nature has placed them.

There is again the use of the following metaphor in the poem, "No Questions Asked":

We are pebbles tossed into trouble seas:

our ripples do not carry far. (Lines 8 and 9)

In the above-cited metaphor, the poet compares "We" (the target domain), suggestively, the masses, to "pebbles tossed into troubled seas" (the source domain). Note that "pebbles" alone will give rise to the reader mentally bringing in several attributes of the pebble. However, with the expressions "tossed into troubled seas" and "our ripples do not carry far", the poet directs the reader to the one attribute of pebbles tossed into troubled sea—the negligible effect of its ripples (effects). Thus, the impression is that the political leaders see the complaints or plight of the masses as something negligible. In effect, the imagery created by the metaphor aids the reader to better grasp the poet's message of insensitivity on the part of the political leaders or elites, and the hopelessness and despair of the masses.

Symbolism

Symbolism is one of the most important aspects of serious imaginative literature (MacMahan et al., 1986, p.58, as cited by Kadhim et al., 2022, p. 1)

Symbolism is another trope used by Lade Wosornu. Arvius (2003) defines symbolism as a kind of figure of speech that uses symbols such as animals, plants, or things to substitute something else. That is, the use of symbols (something or someone) to represent another thing, person or idea. In explaining symbols, Fontana (1993) asserts that symbols relate to culture, and they are understood in cultural contexts. Fontana (1993) adds that anything such as plants, animals, mountains, roads, characters in literature, colours, among others, could be symbolic or used to represent other things, persons or ideas. However, he cautions that symbols are understood in their cultural context, though some are universal. Just like other figurative language, the use of symbols enhances the meaning of a literary work.

Many African literary writers have employed the use of symbols in the forms of visuals, objects, characters, sounds, among others, in their works (Ulogu and Okunna, 2022). For instance, one can cite the symbolic use of the "Cathedral" in Kofi Awoonor's poem, "The Cathedral" to represent the Christian religion; the symbolic use of the character called Koomson in Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born* to represent the corrupt and materialistic Ghanaian elite in the post-colonial era; the use of kola nuts, traditional masks and talking drums in Achebe's *Arrow of God* to represent peace and communion, ancestral spirits and traditional authority, respectively (Ulogu and Okunna, 2022).

In the selected poetry texts for this study, and in the spirit of "serious imaginative literature", Lade Wosornu deploys various symbolisms which help develop the postcolonial themes. For instance, symbolism is deployed in the use of "Ashes" in the title of the poem, "Ashes at Harvest Time". Thematically, the poem highlights the vain "daily sweat" (to borrow the words of the poet) or efforts of the Ghanaian masses to obtain their daily bread, and the consequent feeling of despair and hopelessness that engulf them. Denotatively, the word "Ashes", or ash refers to the powdery residue left after the burning of a substance, especially wood. For the Ghanaian, such residue is commonly seen in households where cooking is done with charcoal or firewood. The ashes or ash is deemed a waste material which cannot be used again for cooking. Again, "Harvest Time" is a time to reap the produce of the farm. However, the poet uses "Ashes" connotatively in the title of the poem to represent the produce at harvest. Effectively, the symbolism creates the impression that nothing useful is reaped by the Ghanaian masses in spite of their hard efforts. Thus, this symbolism enhances the poet's development of the theme of despair and hopelessness among the hardworking Ghanaian masses.

Similar use of symbolism, as in the above, can be found in the following lines of the poem "if you would look again":

if you would look again
at the river whose bed is asphalt
you will see the brine and the cream:
two currents trapped in the same stream
rubbing bellies, but never a kiss. (Lines 22 – 26)

From the lines above, the poet uses "river" and "stream", both running water, to represent the "running" or developing nation of Ghana. The stage of Ghana's postcolonial development in the modern world is represented with "asphalt" (in current times used to create smooth, durable surfaces for roads, driveways, among others). Thus, in context, "asphalt" represents modernity in Ghana. Again, "brine" (natural salty water or salty wastewater from industrial processes) represents the masses while "cream" represents the elites. Thus, by the use of the symbolism in the lines, the poet represents two worlds in postcolonial Ghana—that of the rich and that of the poor—and indicates the hopelessness of the poor becoming rich, or having anything in common with the rich, even though both live in the same country even as neighbours.

There is also the use of symbolism, this time to enhance the poet's development of the theme of political persecution / oppression and violence in the following lines of the poem, "No Questions Asked":

It is that time of the reign again.
And chaotic fleets of bats
from assembly halls and city bans
invade the privacy of village skies
where locusts rendezvous with death.
In beasts' feeding frenzy, insects fall.
With no questions asked. (Lines 1 – 7)

From the lines above, the poet uses "bats" to represent soldiers and security personnel working for ruling political leaders or elites. The use of the expression "chaotic fleet' to describe the behavior of the "bats" brings into mind the behavior of unruly soldiers during, especially, the rule of the Armed Forces

Revolutionary Council (AFRC) and the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) under the reign of the late Jerry John Rawlings (Ankomah, 1987). That notwithstanding, "that time of the reign again", as in the lines above, can represent any reign of terror and political persecution under other political leaders or elites. There are also the symbolic uses of "locusts" and "insects" to represent the opponents of political leaders or elites and the masses. Thus, for the reader, the symbolic use of "bats" that eat "locusts" with relish to represent unruly soldiers and state security (errand boys of the political leaders or elites) and the weak and vulnerable masses does not only portray the tension between the two sides, but also enhances the poet's theme of political persecution and fatal violence.

The development of the theme of political persecution / oppression and violence is reinforced by another symbolism in the poem, "Hollow Corner". Indeed, the title of the poem itself is symbolic. The poet uses it to represent Ghana. The word "Hollow", contextually, means without life or dead. Thus, "Hollow Corner" also means dead corner. The symbolic use of the title is further enhanced by the expression "The gray bury the green / And few attain the dignity of gold" (lines 3 and 4). The poet uses "gray" or grey to represent the aged; "green" to represent the youth; "gold" to represent success or great achievement. Thus, the colour symbols combined with "Hollow Corner" which represents Ghana aid the development of the poet's theme that Ghana is a place where the able-bodied and enterprising youth are so much persecuted and oppressed by the political leaders or elites that they (the youth and general masses) do not stand a chance of achieving any remarkable feat in their lives.

Moreover, a particular poem that is entirely built on symbolism, and which encapsulates almost all the postcolonial themes developed by Wosornu is "No Guarantees":

There are no guarantees here.
The seed which probably
(Just probably might)
Have done you proud
And hold high the tribal name
Is the seed which falls by the wayside.

Unsnatched by any bird
Uncrushed by any boot
Survivor's medal won
Proof of good things to come…

And, with crack in rock garden enough,
It out-grows better-connected seeds.
But, before first fruits ripen and fall,
Rain, – always welcome in the Sahel –
Overshoots its mark, and, the flash floods
Sweep it away: root, shoot, fruit and all…
To Lavender Hill…Gulf of Guinea.

Another dawn breaks.
Another heart aches.

From the lines of the poem, "seed" (line 2) is used to represent an ordinary person of hope or the hope itself of the ordinary person; "bird' (line 7) represents

nature; “boot” (line 8) represents potential destructive devices of men; “rock garden” (line 11) represents harsh socio-economic and political conditions; ‘better-connected seeds” (line 12) represents the socially, economically and politically privileged or connected persons, perhaps children of the political leaders or elites; the “flash floods” (line 15) represents powerful destructive socio-economic and political forces; “first fruits” represents initial achievements that would inspire more achievements. Thus, through the symbols, the poet creates a complex, yet meaningful picture of a near-impossible situation of the ordinary hardworking and determined person attaining success in the country due to the harsh socio-economic and political conditions created by the political leaders or elites.

The exploration of Wosornu’s use of symbolism cannot be fully accomplished without reference to his symbolic use of several of his titles aside from the few already mentioned. For instance, the title, “The Patriot”, which, contextually, represents the faithful citizens of Ghana, but who are forced to flee the land due to economic hardships, thereby questioning the virtue itself in being a citizen of Ghana; also “Uneven Turf” which, contextually, represents a land of socio-economic and political discrimination in opportunities for self-development; then again, “No Confetti Here” with the absence of “Confetti” and ‘wedding bells” (line 4) used as symbols for the absence of joy / happiness / celebration to foreground the development of the theme of political persecution in the poem itself.

Simile

Zain (2013) cites McArthur (1996, p.935)'s definition of simile as a figure of speech in which a more or less fanciful or unrealistic comparison is made using "like" or "as". Alm-Arvius (2003) seems to lend further explanation to what McArthur's "fanciful or unrealistic comparison" suggests, when he asserts that simile is a figure that makes comparison between *two different things* (emphasis mine), using "as", "than", "seem", "so", "appear" and "more than". From the above, metaphor and simile are both means of comparison; however, one being direct and the other, indirect. For instance, in the metaphor, "Life is a circus", there is a direct comparison of "Life" with "a circus" while in the simile, "Life is like a circus", the comparison is indirect, courtesy the word "like". Wosornu uses simile to create imageries that arouse the senses of the reader to both appreciate his aesthetic skills and to enhance the development of his themes. An example of his deployment of simile to enhance his theme of environmental pollution and degradation is captured in the following lines of his poem, "The Street":

Shops spill their plastic contents
Like dismembered pregnant uteri –
Blood, foetal parts, liquor and all. (Lines 8 – 10)

From the above-cited lines, the poet compares "Shop" with "Uteri" in terms of the way the two get rid of unwanted substances or waste material. The focus or the target domain is the "Shops" and the source domain is "uteri". The mixed feeling of disgust and alarm evoked by the mental picture of a "dismembered pregnant uteri" spilling out, without discrimination, all the unwanted "Blood, foetal parts, liquor and all" helps the reader to appreciate the poet's disapproval

of and disgust at the environmental pollution and degradation caused by the masses in their indiscriminate disposal of waste. Interestingly, the use of "Shops" and "plastic contents" which seem to connote modernism enhances the development of the theme of environmental pollution and degradation in the current postcolonial Ghanaian society. Another similar use of simile that enhances the development of the above-mentioned theme is exemplified in the following lines of the poem, "Unfinished Business":

Ageing roads in government plots
sprout giant boobs of laterite.
Then, die, abandoned, like old harlots
without clients for many a night. (Stanza 4, Lines 1 – 4)

From the above-cited lines, the poet compares public "Ageing roads" to "old harlots" and asserts that their common attribute is that they have been "abandoned". The abandoned fate of the "Ageing roads in government plots" represents the fate of government infrastructure in postcolonial Ghana. The "old harlot" is abandoned after being used many times by clients who no longer have use for her, probably, because they have found a younger and more appealing harlot. Hence, by comparing the abandoned public "ageing roads" to the abandoned "old harlot", the poet highlights the attitude of the culture of lack of maintenance among Ghanaians, which partly accounts for the neglect of the environment, and its subsequent degradation.

Further uses of simile in the selected poems are cited below:

Example 1:

The wells of funds have all dried up
Like dams no longer fed by streams out there.

("Donor Fatigue", lines 6 and 7)

Example 2;

Mother and child are outcasts both

like dogs speared by wind-blown masters

("The Lamentations of Janet", stanza 3, lines 6 and 7)

From the first example which helps the poet develop the theme of corruption among political leaders or elites, he indirectly compares dried up "wells of funds" with dried up dams "no longer fed by streams out there". Based on the cultural familiarity with wells and dams, the association of the two with dryness enhances the readers' understanding of the poet's depiction of the extent of the empty national coffers, and the high level of the corruption among political leaders or elites of the country. Then in the second example from "The Lamentations of Janet", a poem which highlights the theme of insensitive political leaders or elites, among others, the poet indirectly compares the outcasts "Mother and child" with "dogs" that are "speared by "wind-blown" or thoughtless masters. The associative attribute of dogs "speared" or stabbed by thoughtless masters or political leaders or elites, and the outcasts "Mother and child" is a feeling of hopelessness and despair – a postcolonial theme.

Personification

Personification is "the master trope of poetic discourse" – Paul de Man

Personification (also prosopopoeia) is the depiction of a thing or abstraction as a person or by the human form. In other words, personification is a figure of speech in which something not human is given human face or characteristics (Cuddon, 2013; Deyin, 2018; Fata & Aprilya, 2021; Melion and Ramakers, 2016;). According to Melion and Ramakers (2016, p.1),

personification "operates in multiple registers – sensory and spiritual, visible and invisible, concrete and abstract – and it deals in facts, opinions, and beliefs". They further opine that discussing personification implies discussing allegory since allegories very often contain personifications while the use of personifications usually create allegories.

Deyin (2018) cites Zhu (1991)'s classification of personification as living creature personification (ascribing human actions, behaviours, qualities, thoughts, feelings, among others to plants and animals); non-living creature personification (ascribing human feelings, behaviours, actions, qualities, among others, to natural objects such as mountains, sun, moon, rivers, among others, and unnatural objects such as cars, houses, among others); abstraction personification (attributing human speeches, actions, behaviours to abstracts such as opinions, time, love, diseases, hunger, among others). Deyin (2018) also asserts that by personification, the thoughts and feelings of the author are expressed while adding a sense of wit and humour to the literary work. Suryanto (2018) also contributes to the importance of personification with the assertion that it focuses on the imaginative and the creative, and can force the reader or listener to apply his or her imagination to what the writer creates.

According to Cuddon (2013, pp. 529–530), "personification is inherent in many languages through the use of gender, and it appears to be very frequent in all literatures especially in poetry". In the selected poems, Wosornu uses personification to enhance the development of his themes. This is exemplified in the following lines from the poem, "The Driftwood's Song":

Judge me not by these rags on view.

That ancient leveler-down, Hardtimes,

Indifferent to your starting point,

Reduces all to these bones you see (stanza 3)

Strive to join our lucky few:

With us the same Hardtimes

Sings her other song. She would spew

And ram down our souls, strong

Inner cores of tempered steel:

(She is a pelican force-feeding her young)

Our insurance against stress fatigue. (stanza 5)

From stanzas 3 and 5 cited above, the poet personifies "Hardtimes", not just by his presentation of "Hardtimes" as a proper noun as in names of persons, but also by referring to "Hardtimes" as "She" (Cuddon, 2013). Again, the poet ascribes the human actions "Sings", "spew", and "ram' and the feeling of "indifferent" to "Hardtimes". Thus, the poet personifies or concretises "Hardtimes" in the imagination of the reader. The overall effect is that the reader of the poem, sees "Hardtimes" as a palpable opponent that unleashes hardship that is physically evident from the looks of the masses. Invariably, this personification of "Hardtimes" enhances Wosornu's development of the theme of economic hardship among the masses.

Another example of the use of personification is found in the following lines of the poem, "Donor Fatigue":

The wells of funds have all dried up

Like dams no longer fed by streams out there.

The rains have not failed

Nor has the tropical sun turned thirstier.

Only the begging bowls have deepened (Lines 1 – 5)

From the lines above, and specifically in line 4, "Nor has the tropical sun turned thirstier", the poet personifies the "tropical sun" by giving it the human attribute of being thirsty or not. In the poem itself, the poet portrays a postcolonial situation in his country in which though nature has magnanimously blessed the country with a good balance in natural endowments which should aid in the country's development, there is an extreme poverty caused by the greed and corrupt practices of the political leaders or elites. By this personification, the reader imagines the "tropical sun" as a thoughtful person which is in sharp contrast with the thoughtless political leaders or elites of the country. Consequently, this use of the non-living creature personification enhances the development of the theme of greedy and insensitive political leaders or elites.

Further use of personification which this time enhances the poet's theme of environmental degradation is exemplified in line 34, "Walls wailing for paint", in the poem, "The Faded Blue Print". The personified "Walls" have been given the human attribute of "wailing". The personification evokes the reader's senses of sight and hearing, points to the poet's sense of wit, and generates humour (Deyin, 2018), while at the same time reveals the poet's disappointment, especially at the failure of the leaders and in the entire system to ensure a neat environment. Again, there is an interesting use of personification in the following lines:

The day closes like a book.

The sun rides to its grave

casting shadows of private terrors. (Lines 29 – 31, "No Confetti Here")

Here, the "sun" which could also represent joy or hope has been personified with the human action "rides". By personifying the non-living "sun", the poet invests it with the abilities to live and die, as supported by the use of "grave". Hence, the reader's imagination is aroused to picture hope, represented by the "sun" coming to its death. Consequently, this aids in the development of the theme of hopelessness and despair among the masses.

Allusion

Allusion is another trope Lade Wosornu employs in the selected poems. Regarding the meaning of allusion, Irwin (2001) is in sync with scholars such as Leddy (1992), Cuddon (2013) and Abrams and Harpham (2014) that, generally, allusion is an inferred or indirect reference to another work of literature, to a person or an event. Irwin (2001), however, emphasises that the reference "…is indirect in the sense that it calls for associations that go beyond mere substitution of a referent" (p. 2). He argues that it is not enough for the reader to identify the referent; further knowledge about the referent is needed by the reader to arrive at what he calls the "authorial intent" (p. 8) for creating a particular allusion. Thus, for instance, in an allusion that makes reference to the biblical Solomon, it is not simply enough for the reader to identify Solomon as a son of David and King of Israel. What is associated with Solomon—wisdom, wealth, women, among others—is the core of the allusion. To reinforce his argument, Irwin (2001) traces the origin of "allusion" to its Latin root, "alludere", meaning "to jest, mock, play with", and as part of the play or fun, he asserts that "we are asked to fill in the missing piece of puzzle, to draw on some knowledge to complete the written or spoken word in our own minds" (p. 6). Thus allusion, somewhat, is an appeal to a reader or audience to share some

experience with the writer (Cuddon, 2013; Irwin, 2001). The sharing of experience comes about because allusions are founded on the premise that the author and the reader share a body of knowledge, and that the reader would, in the words of Cuddon, "pick up" the reference. That notwithstanding, Cuddon (2013) observes that some allusions challenge the reader or audience to grasp multiple references, making such allusions evidences of intertextuality.

In the selected poems, Lade Wosornu uses allusions that aid in the development of his postcolonial themes. A typical example of the use of allusion is in stanza two (2) of the poem, "The Boundary Lines":

Musical chairs were played; they joined the touts.
Electric poles ringed the countryside
Erect but unwired and impotent
(Like penises in priapism)
Competing with Leesen and Maxwell
for fraud of bank-breaking proportion

For the reader to be able to make any association with what the poet says about the "they" (Ghanaian political leaders or elites) and their ringing of the countryside with "Erect but unwired and impotent" electric poles with the referent Leesen and Maxwell, and the event of bank fraud, there is the need for the reader to recognise, remember and realise who Leesen and Maxwell are, and what they represent or are associated with in the referred bank fraud, and then connect with the Ghanaian political leaders or elites (Perri, 1978 as cited by Irwin, 2001). Leesen and Maxwell evokes the true story of the American, Robert Maxwell, who was reported to have siphoned about 1.2 billion dollars from businesses and pension funds he controlled (source: The Washington Post,

December 9, 1991). Effectively, the poet's allusion to the bank fraud of Leesen and Maxwell enables the reader to associate the duo's criminal acts of gargantuan corruption with those of the Ghanaian political leaders or elites, in order to highlight their repulsive corrupt natures which, invariably, prove detrimental to Ghana's development.

There is also the poet's allusion to the 1979 June 4th coup d'état and its related events that took place in Ghana, indicated in the line "Let the blood flow" (Line 25 of "Two Songs from Home". This reference effectively evokes the feeling of fear and insecurity, and recalls images of brutality and death caused by the arrests and killing of some military officers and citizens deemed corrupt, or opponents of the Jerry John Rawlings led Armed Forces Revolutionary Council. The expression, "Let the blood flow", was chanted by some of the citizens who supported the brutal actions of the coup makers. A similar allusion that helps in the poet's development of the theme of political persecution / oppression and violence is captured in line two (2) of the poem, "Hollow Corner":

This is the reign of the full moon.

This is an indirect mythical reference to werewolves and vampires that operate during the "full moon", evoking feelings of terror in people at night. By the reference, the reader associates the terror unleashed by those mythical creatures with the terror unleashed by the Ghanaian political leaders on their citizens.

Another use of allusion which helps to develop the theme of economic hardship among the Ghanaian masses is found in line seven (7) of the poem, "The Lamentations of Janet":

Stone stew and rawlings' chains we know.

By the term, "rawlings' chains", the poet indirectly alludes to the economic hardship (starvation) of 1983 in Ghana under the rule of Jerry John Rawlings' Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC), a military government in the 80s and early 90s before the 4th Republic. So severe was the economic hardship that almost every Ghanaian had his or her clavicle protruding, a sight satirically compared with wearing a neck chain, and which, consequently, was seen as an indictment on the ruling PNDC government. By the allusion, the poet associates the consequential effects of the starvation of 1983 with the current situation of economic hardship among the masses. Wosornu's use of allusions is further exemplified in the poem, "Celestial Bride", as indicated in the lines below:

> Solomon's famed glory fades
> Against the ladies' robes of dazzling shades.
> Kentes speak tomes, and, fascinate.
> Kabas out-riot peacocks feathers.
> And, the hair-do's: How intricate!
>
> What taste! What class! Napoleon's Josephine
> Cannot match my place-honoured heroine.
> Bridesmaids, seven pairs picked for mystic airs
> (Matched for height and weight) are all aged eight. (Part 1, stanzas 3 and 4)

The poem presents contrasting situations of lives of extravagance led by the greedy and insensitive political leaders or elites, and that of poverty experienced by the disillusioned masses in postcolonial Ghana. According to Campbell (1994), allusions help the reader to recollect information absent in the text itself, but needed to fully understand what the poet intends to communicate. Alluding

to "Solomon's famed glory" and the high class and taste of "Napoleon's Josephine", the link the reader is to draw between the referents and the political leaders or elites is the display of wealth and extravagance which is described by the biblical Solomon as vanity of vanities. Historically, Josephine, the wife of Napoleon of France, was known for her extravagant life style and taste for quality and expensive things. Interestingly, the poet, with a sting of exaggeration, asserts that the extravagance and high taste of Josephine is no match for the political leaders or elites. Thus, the allusions, against the backdrop of the postcolonial situation of economic hardship among Ghanaians while the leaders incur public debts by spending on those Wosornu describes as "promising parasites" and "socialites", enhances the development of the theme of insensitive and greedy political leaders or elites.

Lade Wosornu's use of allusions in the selected poems for this study creates puzzles for the reader to work on by bringing in pieces of information not mentioned in the poems directly, yet needed to fully understand the postcolonial themes of the poems, while at the same time, the multiple allusions indicate evidences of intertextuality (Campbell, 1994; Irwin, 2001).

Irony / Sarcasm / Satire

Irony has its origin from the Greek term "dissimulation"—concealment of a person's feelings, thoughts and character. The term is first recorded in Plato's *Republic*, and means "a glib and underhand way of taking people in" (Cuddon, 2013, p. 371). Plato's use of irony seems to refer to verbal irony, that is, to say one thing, but to mean the opposite (Abrams, 1971; Chia et al., 2021; Cuddon, 2013; Singh, 2012). Chia et al. (2001) for instance asserts that "an ironic statement usually involves the explicit expression of one's attitude or

evaluation but with intended implications being very different and often opposite, to the literal attitude or evaluation" (p. 6). Aside from verbal irony, scholars refer to situational and dramatic irony. This study draws on Chia et al. (2001) for the definition of situational irony, which, nonetheless, resonates with the definitions provided by other scholars: "…an unexpected or incongruous event in a specific situation that fails to meet an expectation" (p. 6). Dramatic irony occurs when the audience plus a character or some characters in a drama are in the know of an information or incident which remains unknown to a particular character and, consequently, acts in ignorance of the information or incident (Cuddon, 2013). In Cuddon's view,

> Irony is such an oblique quality or expression that in many works, we find not so much direct or overt irony but rather an ironic temper or tone, an ironic way of looking at things and feeling about them (p 372).

His view is manifested in a lot of the ironies identified in the selected poems of Lade Wosornu for this study. However, before looking at those specific examples, it is important to indicate here that scholars have posited several arguments as to whether irony can be used interchangeably with sarcasm, and even with satire. For instance, looking at the interrelation among irony, sarcasm and satire, Singh (2012) cites irony, burlesque, caricature and parody as some examples of satire. He also cites sarcasm as an example of verbal irony. However, in sarcasm, the tone of mockery tends to be harsh. Sarcasm is considered an overtly aggressive type of irony (Chia et al., 2021).

According to Singh (2012), "satire is a technique employed by writers to expose and criticise foolishness and corruption of an individual or a society by using humor, irony, exaggeration or ridicule. It intends to improve humanity by criticising its follies and foibles" (p. 4). Singh asserts that a common feature of satire is strong irony and sarcasm, although it usually focuses on the weakness of the person more than the weak person, and usually implies moral judgements and corrective purpose. It must be mentioned that satire is the general term for irony and sarcasm. According to Balogun (2010), as cited by Ogonna (2015), in African societies where there are no prisons, satire plays pertinent role. Tools like mimicry, derogatory songs, mock praise, overstatement and many others were used and this kept men on the right path. Postcolonial African literary writers have found irony / sarcasm / satire useful tools to criticise, especially African politicians, and to put forward their themes in their writings (Ogonna, 2015). In view of the above, this study uses irony / sarcasm / satire as same.

In the selected poetry texts for the study, Lade Wosornu employs irony / sarcasm/ satire. A typical example is found in the following lines of the poem, "If you would look again":

If you would look again at the glaze
you will see and smell the ooze:
Lives moth-eaten at the edges
are often rotten from the centre.

If you would look again in the palace
You will see all our thrones
Occupied by porcupines:

All bristle, no flesh…

All teeth, no smile. (Lines 9 – 17)

The lines above contain situational ironies. According to Sadek (2013), the neocolonial successors in the form of African political leaders tend to maintain the colonisers' division of the world hierarchically into centre and periphery, and they (the African politicians) consciously subjugate the periphery to poverty by stealing the natural wealth and economic resources of their nations. In lines 1- 4, the poet suggests that the emerging rot of corruption among the poor masses, ironically, directly emanates from the repulsive corrupt acts of the political leaders or elites who are expected to be noble and honourable. A more "militant" (to borrow the word from Singh) irony is present in lines 5 – 9. The poet caricatures the insensitive and self-seeking leaders or elites (political and traditional) as porcupines "All bristle, no flesh…" and "no smile". As leaders, Wosornu expects them to serve the people, and he strongly pokes fun at them to register his disapproval of the ironic turn of events in which the Ghanaian leaders prove insensitive towards the plight of the masses. This particular example satirises Ghanaian leaders with the hope that they would change for the better.

There is also the use of irony / sarcasm / satire in the poem, "Ashes at Harvest Time". Indeed, the title of the poem itself resonates with an unexpected outcome, for the expectations of harvest is produce, not "Ashes". The irony is further strengthened in the lines of the poem with the poet depicting the political / traditional leaders of the people as "kings" who steal from the public purse instead of protecting it, and as "gods" who fight against the people's progress, instead of promoting it. The satire heightens to the point where the poet, in a

parody, says sarcastically to the "gods": (Give us this day our daily sweat) (line 11). Note how the use of parenthesis by the poet suggests the use of a satiric tone, indicating that the masses are fed up with the insensitive attitude of the political leaders or elites, for while in the Lord's Prayer, the conviction is that a merciful God will indeed answer by providing the daily bread of the hardworking, the tragedy of the postcolonial situation is that the gods (political leaders or elites) are insensitive to the needs of their own people. It is through this disjuncture that the poet conveys his criticism of postcolonial leaders of Ghana. The satire reaches its climax with another parody by the poet: (Give them this day their daily fix). This particular parody suggests the poet's belief that the political leaders or elites are so corrupt and insensitive that only God can change them. By this "militant" irony / sarcasm or mockery, the poet hopes that Ghanaian leaders will change for the better.

Another example of irony / sarcasm / satire is in the poem "Developing Country":

In this land
Arrival is not the problem:
It's the survival.
In their inns
Servers outnumber the served
And, hangers-on the lot.

The poem is an example of how the entire plot of a literary piece can be structured on irony (Singh, 2012). Once again, just as in the case of "Ashes at Harvest Time", Wosornu foregrounds his satiric tone with the poem's title, "Developing Country". The satiric tone of the title is aimed at the political

leaders who rule over the developing country with its attendant high-birth rate, economic hardships and low development, yet clamour for leadership positions simply to seek their own personal interest. The tone of the whole poem is satiric, and the expression "Servers outnumber the served", suggests the quest for political power by politicians, in order to misappropriate state funds. This resonates with the "Agye Gon" lyrics of the Ghanaian musician, A-Plus, who satirises corrupt Ghanaian politicians, typified in the line "Aban sika na mode bi ayɛ moho fine", to wit, "you (politicians) have used some of the public funds to live well" (Nartey, 2015). Wosornu's poem generates irony, and mocking humour which is intended to satirise greedy leaders. What pride does a leader have when he or she rules over a land that does not guarantee the survival of the people? With the expression "hangers-on", the poet also satirises the supporters of such greedy leaders, and the whole political status quo in Ghana.

McQuarrie and Short (1996), as cited by Djafarova (2017:5) asserts that "figures of speech have a great impact on communication and they aim to enhance the techniques of the communication". The above exploration of the use of tropes in the selected poems, especially in how they enhance the development of the postcolonial themes attests to the fact that Wosornu has been, aesthetically and technically, successful in their deployment.

Chapter Summary

The ultimate aim of this chapter has been to explore Wosornu's use of tropes that enhance the development of the postcolonial themes looked at in the previous chapter. The analysis brings to the fore the use of metaphor, symbolism, simile, personification, allusion, and irony / sarcasm / satire. The

mentioned tropes aid in communicating the themes of the poet to the readers / audience.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The present study focused on some selected poems of Lade Wosornu, one of the Ghanaian poets whose poetry is slowly, but gradually attracting scholarly attention. Aside from the recent scholarly attention on Wosornu's poetry, the researcher was motivated by the suggestion that Africa's great modern poets are not only noted for the aesthetic values of their works, but also for the utilitarian values or practical purposes of such works, especially as seen in their thematic concerns relevant to the present circumstances of the continent (Okon, 2013; Okpewho, 1988; Ogunyemi, 2011).

Two primary research questions guided the study:

1. What are the postcolonial themes explored in the selected poetry texts of Lade Wosornu?
2. How do the major tropes deployed by Lade Wosornu help develop the postcolonial themes in the selected poetry texts?

Summary

The study was divided into five chapters. Chapter one discussed the background of the study, focusing on the aesthetic and utilitarian values of modern African literature as essential qualities of works of great African poets. The background provided information on the statement of the problem, purpose of study, research objectives, research questions, and detailed research methodology. A major realisation in the chapter was that the aesthetic values should ultimately aid in the development of the themes, which in themselves are

the source of creative power and intelligence. Again, there was the recognition that modern African poetry dwells mainly on political themes without prejudice to other apropos ones.

Then chapter two dwelt on a detailed review of related literature. The study employed the New Historicism and Postcolonial literary theories as its theoretical and analytical frameworks. In addition, it reviewed some related empirical studies. Under the theoretical and analytical frameworks in chapter two, the study first traced the history of New Historicism to its pioneering days with Stephen Greenblatt in the 1980s. The review looked at the vital contributions of Michel Foucault and Louis Althusser towards the formulation of the New Historicism literary theory with their views that human experience is shaped by social institutions and, specifically by ideological discourses. Also that social institutions, social and political power work through discourses, and power circulates in all directions, to and from all levels, at all times. This exchange of power thus ensures that individual identity and its cultural milieu inhabit, reflect, and define each other. The implication then for literature, according to Greemblatt, is that a literary work which captures human experience should be considered a product of the time, place and circumstances of its composition, rather than as an isolated creation of genius (Greenblatt, 2006, as cited by Selden, Widdowson and Brooker, 2013). Hence, it was recognised that the New Historicism literary theory, with its ideology of text-context relationship, and how that relationship reveals the discourses of the time and place was essential to the study as it allowed the social, economic and political themes in the selected poems of the Ghanaian poet, Lade Wosornu, to be explored.

With regard to the postcolonial theory, the study traced its history, and looked at its formation which stemmed from the inability of European theory to adequately handle the complexities and the different cultural contexts of post-colonial writing. The review arrived at the relevance and legitimacy of the theory in Africa as supported by Ahluwalia (2001) and Abrahamsen (2002), against the backdrop of arguments of works such as Appiah (1997) and Williams (1997). It further looked at some of the tenets of the postcolonial theory arriving at the conclusion that a combination of the New Historicism and Postcolonial literary theories would afford the researcher the needed text-context relationship analytical tools to help situate the postcolonial themes in the selected poetry texts within the Ghanaian setting.

The main purpose of chapter two was to identify a research gap that the study aimed to fill, and so, the researcher evaluated various scholarly research articles which enabled the research to be contextualised within the domain of similar researches. The review of previous studies identified that though researches on the poetry of Lade Wosornu have been undertaken, these are but a few aside from the fact that no exploration seemed to have been carried out on postcolonial themes in his poetry. That served as a prompt to the researcher to undertake further research into Lade Wosornu's poetry to fill the gap identified.

In chapter three, the study focused on its main purpose—the exploration of postcolonial themes in the selected poetry texts of Lade Wosornu. The exploration revealed major developments of the following postcolonial themes in the Ghanaian context: leadership corruption, postcolonial disillusionment, economic hardship, environmental degradation, political oppression /

persecution and violence, hopelessness and despair, and greedy and insensitive Ghanaian political and religious leaders.

Then in chapter four, the study explored Wosornu's use of tropes, focusing on how they aid in the development of the discerned postcolonial themes. The analysis revealed that the predominant tropes the poet deployed in the selected poems were metaphor, symbolism, simile, personification, allusion, irony, sarcasm and satire. The exploration also confirmed Wolfgang Iser's assertion, as cited by Irwin (2001, p. 8), that "indeterminate elements of literature represent a vital link between text and reader. They are the switch that activates the reader into using his own ideas to fulfil the intention of the text". Thus, Wosornu's use of the identified tropes does not only indicate his aesthetic prowess as a poet, but, most importantly, it aids the reader to bring in information and ideas that enhance the full development of the poet's intentions—the development of the themes.

Findings

The study finds that for Wosornu, postcolonial leadership in Ghana has been nothing but a sham, and in revealing his strong disapproval towards the postcolonial status quo in Ghana, the poet does not fail to hint at an imminent social explosion, a natural consequence of the ever-heightening anger of the ever-impoverishing Ghanaian masses, especially the disillusioned youth. Again, for the nation to shirk off the western or colonial derogatory tag of "Developing Nation", Wosornu strongly suggests that the political and traditional leaders or elites must learn to dearly value the lives of the very people over whom they rule and depend on for political power.

Then with regard to the second research question: how do the major tropes deployed by Lade Wosornu help develop the postcolonial themes in the selected poetry texts? The study identified the following major tropes: metaphor, symbolism, simile, personification, allusion, and irony / sarcasm / satire. Masterfully, by the tropes, Wosornu draws on the reader's knowledge and experience of the postcolonial situation in Ghana to complement the full development of his postcolonial themes. Among the tropes Wosornu deploys, irony / sarcasm / satire stands unique, coming out as his style. In many of such instances, the satire, directed at the leaders and citizens, is subtle, yet its tone of mockery adequately serves the purpose of biting. In other instances, the satire is fierce, especially in his censure of the insensitive and greedy natures of the political leaders or elites. Indeed, the study reveals that Wosornu's deployment of metaphors, symbolism, similes and allusions are tinged with satiric tones, reinforcing his use of satire as an essential element of his style.

Recommendations

It is the hope of the researcher that this study will serve as a catalyst for other researchers to explore more of the poetry of Lade Wosornu. Researchers who are interested in Wosornu's poetry can look at his poems from different theoretical perspectives to harness the full implications and import of his poetry, thereby augmenting the body of discoveries on them for academia.

Again, interested scholars can undertake an analysis of Wosornu's poetry as witnessing to aspects of Ghanaian history, to the end that Wosornu's poetry textualises aspects of Ghana's history that currently affects the Ghanaian society.

Conclusion

This study has revealed that Lade Wosornu's poetry, as discovered from the analysis of the selected poems, puts across postcolonial themes with respect to the postcolonial situation in Ghana. Also, the themes are highly enhanced by the poet's use of tropes, indicating his aesthetic and technical skills as a poet. It can be concluded that Wosornu's poetry shows his disapproval for the postcolonial socio-economic and political situations in Ghana, and his desire to see a change in the status quo is aptly reflected in his fine strokes of satire.

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APPENDIX A: Celestial Bride and Other Poems

A Celestial Few (CB P 1)

And some are given an overdose
of things good and sure.
In times lean and hard
they feed on yesterday's stores of fat.
All land marks remembered
all lost gems recovered
they set up private shrines to Beauty
and drink deep at her secret taverns.
She is their beam on the hill
seen from every ship, from every door.
To them wisdom bequeaths Beauty
inevitable as death
inescapable as earth.

Donor Fatigue (CB P 2)

The wells of funds have all dried up
Like dams no longer fed by streams out there.
The rains have not failed
Nor has the tropical sun turned thirstier.
Only the begging bowls have deepened
And the man-drains have multiplied:
Like malignant suckers of unholy octopi.
And, the princely pilfering never stops.

The Lamentations of Janet (CB P 3)

(To Mrs. Janet Adu-Boahene)

Does it have to come to this:

We steal plants to survive?

The disciplined rains

paint gardens greener than green

and create illusions of plenty

amidst skeletons in castled cupboards.

Stone stew and rawlings' chains we know.

But, does it have to come to this:

They no longer care to conceal

corruption in high places?

They plunder the nation and squander the loot.

Rulers indifferent to subjects' plight

lose no sleep o'er inflation on wings.

Does it have to come to this?

In priests' homes, three meals a day

is ancient as human sacrifice.

Single mothers, aged 16, suckle

paper-weight babes at wafer-thin breasts.

Mother and child are outcasts both

like dogs speared by wind-blown masters

and dumped in streets to bleed to death.

Does it have to come to this?

Starving snakes raid unfinished nests

of weaver birds arriving out of season.

Able-wingéd buzzard duck the thermals

and hitch a ride on hippos' back

competing with ailing egret

for rich pickings of parasites.

Does it have to come to this?

Catechists plunder the offertory.

Confessors rape repenting wives.

Celibate monks elope with nuns.

(And, Rome remains silent on the pill.)

To whom can you turn

when magistrates legislate against hope.

Does it have to come to this?

Guinea's Gulf we still churn with the oar.

Swedru's soil we still till with the hoe.

And, eggs we farm but rarely eat.

Nothing seems to change.

Or, changing, change for gold:

Not an ounce in the crucible.

Our crucifix is still made of brass.

The Alchemist chose the other church.

Does it have to come to this?

The Faded Blue Print (CB P 4)

We no longer seem to care
about looks, beauty and flair
in our seats of higher learning
where eager youth flock, yearning
for light, and, the keys to life's
citadels and halls of fame…
For gold standards of acclaim.
For fortune and future wives.
Gardens, once the haunt of teens
rose trees the envy of queens
and lawns the object of kings' lust
are no longer lush. Bush to bush.
Sand to sand. Everything to dust.
Streets teem with learned whores.
Like the front teeth of kwashiokors
broken windows bring no reproach.
And, halls of residence garner roach.

Can we not even sharpen
the hoes with which we happen
to till the forests of knowledge?
Altars where we weep and forage

for favours from friars and fairies

bear thumb prints in their dust. Iris!

Witness! Rogue roes roam each culvert

Flaunting antlers of vermin'd velvet.

Paid in peanuts, aliens to candy

Dons have degrees but dare not dandy...

Dare not broadcast sweat and courage.

Water bills remain an outrage.

M.A's no longer draw applause

nor Ph.D's one envious pause.

Living is a daily dying from shame

scheming for cash to salve your fame.

Walls wailing for paint…The credit squeeze…

Cars hug blocks…Slips kissing the breeze.

Before the cheque's confirmation

Salaries are scalped by inflation.

A whole life's pension cant pay the price

of one crummy bag of paddy rice.

Meat and fish are the stuff of dreams…

Bellies replete with betraying screams.

If the shell is a mirror

for the human interior

Is this the model we parade?

The sacred hymns we serenade?

Heavens! If seats of higher learning

Are the show rooms for nations' earning,

Blueprints for all their tomorrows

How well we sew the seeds of sorrows!

Hollow Corner (CB P 5)

In this corner, who is counting?

This is the reign of the full moon.

But the dying pile upon the dead

The gray bury the green

And few attain the dignity of gold.

O task most daunting:

To teach

Men trapped in the fire of want

To see beauty of things neat and lovely

And, to value the invaluable –

Life!

The Patriot (CB P 6)

"*Some have got to stay*

As some must away"

But, who is a patriot?

These icons in a riot:

My sons-- My sons!

Some I pest to flee the nest.

Not because I hate them so:

(Dough… The dough… It is the dough.)

My words are gales for their sails:

“Let go comfort of my skirt.

Split! Hit those foreign trails

And, with rocky risk, flirt.

There’ll be no sword or spear

Blood and entrails everywhere...

"All their daggers are in cloaks.

Though no gun ever smokes

your bleeding will never cease:

Jeers…Jeers… And, jeers breed no peace.

Black eyes are not always clot

Beneath patches of yellow skin.

Taunts strike deep and bleed a lot

More than a wounded assassin.

“Out there, it is a shit farm.

Rich in maggot, it stinks. Stay calm.

Nip your nose, and, brave the brand.

For my sake… Your Motherland."

Heroes, too, who kiss my bones

Hear me sob and wring their eyes.

(We once drank soup of stones

With moldy maize and fleecy rice.)

At sight of dog fights on the Net

And mayhem on the market

These take fright and swap the bytes

For home-brewed tits and sights.

If all my sons fly to camps

Like moths to killing lamps

Who will hear these knees creak

Or shut the gates when crickets shriek?

Heroes all. Patriots all – my sons, my sons.

I draw no lines. I ask not: "Who is tops?"

I love no more those glued to my hair

Nor less the un-returning, save when set fair

With gold shrouds to gild my undying corpse.

For, some must away

As some choose to stay.

Ashes at Harvest Time (CB P 7)

Our bans bear mice, not bags of rice

Pots for oil are filled with empty toil

Bedrooms on fire not fueled by desire

Men ride to war in armors of straw

And shed unawares tears not borne of joy.

We have our caves where kings are the knaves.

The stones we kick and break our teeth!

The roads we take that lead nowhere!

The loose ends that refuse to be tied!

And, the gods that rig our boats with despair!

(Give us this day our daily sweat.)

To billy-goats

Rose wreaths are just another snack.

To ex-convicts

Aborigines' burial grounds are casinos

And, to Mayfaireans

The bison can be shot to extinction.

(Give them this day their daily fix.)

If you will look again (CB P 8)

If you would look again

you can see beneath the smiling ripples

near, very near the surface

ill-concealed reefs of rage

soon sunned by swirls of strife.

Down there, the craft of Trust

constructed with lumbers of time

soon founders and sinks without a trace.

If you would look again at the glaze

you will see and smell the ooze:

Lives moth-eaten at the edges

are often rotten from the centre.

If you would look again in the palace

you will see all our thrones

occupied by porcupines:

All bristle, no flesh…

All teeth, no smile.

Imagine! To have fled

the clutches of rulers of waves

only to fall prey to drop-outs

who, of smelly hair, seek to make vogue.

If you would look again

at the river whose bed is asphalt

you will see the brine and the cream:

Two currents trapped in the same stream

rubbing bellies, but never a kiss.

If you would look again

and stare hard at the air

you will see two ships in space

whose orbits, at tangents, touch

but not intersect.

Or, intersecting, halt and hug.

Only waves of hello

and hisses of good riddance.

If you would look again

you will see it is the blare

from our captain's ball jams

the SOS from nearby ships.

Their sails in tatters

masts in splinters

hull a sieve.

Rudderless, lost and drifting

their crew sweat overtime bailing out

invading seas of want and disease.

If you would look again…

If you would but look again…

No Confetti Here (CB P 9)

O! For something, anything to celebrate!

The owls and the doves are flying low.
In swoop the vultures and clarion crow.
For too long, wedding bells have not tolled.
Corks have not popped, nor tearful jokes told.

Only aging trammels, deserted podiums…
The carefree child, his simple idioms
understood like Greek in Ouagadugu.
Shocked by the friendly smile, an "after you"
like thieves stunned by sprays of after-shave
we harvest corpses for a shallow grave.
(Christ, You are right: The fist is tight.)

Ill at ease with common courtesy
wearing empty laurels, synthetic garlands
we dance to the music of wailing winds
with distant thunder for percussion notes
sweating bullets in rocking boats.
And, just when you think the fog is far
be sure dust storms shall howl
and make night of the noon day star.

New matches lost, old trophies tossed

to the gleeful care of pawn brokers' heir.

Cash'n carry…Work-and-pay."

But where the work, and, where the cash?

We long to feel again slaps on the back…

To hear the sobs of gangs of giggling girls…

To have the time to pause, pick and pack

Flowers and wrap them in perfumed curls.

The day closes like a book.

The sun rides to its grave

casting shadows of private terrors.

The starving sigh at moon's beams:

Empty bellies, nasty dreams.

O! For something, anything to celebrate!

No Questions Asked (CB P 10)

It is that time of the reign again.

And chaotic fleets of bats

from assembly halls and city bans

invade the privacy of village skies

where locusts rendezvous with death.

In beasts' feeding frenzy, insects fall.

With no questions asked.

We are pebbles tossed into troubled seas:

our ripples do not carry far.

Deaths of our heroes make no news.

We are untouchables. We have no views.

And, when our notes lose their value

who baits the bats: "Suck you our blood?"

The deserts of our lives expand…

Thickets of our joy slashed and burned.

Our cups run dry.

Bore holes rust.

Hand breaks seize.

Rain clouds over our Gobi's…

Deepest indigoes and midnight blues

of ancestral robes are soon bleached

by the drying winds of empty pledge

from ghost-men who feed upon our flesh.

The princely mice are known, by name

but flee unpursued.

With no questions asked.

We, too, by roses ringed and fires pure

incense burning, sphincters tight

make obeisance and propitiate

the gods for rain and grain.

We turn our faces to the wall. We weep sore.

But, where the rain? And, where the grain?

And, where the extension -- by fifteen years?

And, when the sun will not stay at our behest

whom do you ask: "Why not? Why not for us?"

Uneven Turf (CB P 11)

Uneven turf! Treacherous terrain!

We light no candles for the dead

Nor lay wreaths on their graves.

Graying with milk teeth intact

(aging without living)

fraying around the ankle

and baying at advancing deserts

we are dingos barking at elephant.

We are the sickly spaghetti stems

of beans sprouting in darkness

seeking greening light, but in vain…

(The tallest pine often has the weakest stem.)

Are we then to hail and acclaim

the whores and studs of our private Vaticans?

Those boars and duds

ordained into the priesthood of bullies…

Trained in deception and mass seduction?

Inducted into halls of infamy…

The violent, vitriolic vampires?

To whom can we write?

If we cannot save ourselves

Who will save us?

And how can the children be saved?

The dry winds of national debt are still lowing.

The acid rains of private tears are still boiling.

Fish Unpreserved (CB P 12)

It bodes well for all.

The Zodiac has proclaimed:

"The few shall serve the many!"

Service is fish unpreserved:

It stinks with the hoarding.

When received through one door

Be rid of it through seven.

Mirage (CB P 13)

Freed from bondage to a venomous sage

We are taken hostage by giggling girls.

Birds trap-sprung but destined for the cage

Trade jungle prisons for gilded cells.

And, knights who sweat to champion our causes…

Clinch the deals to recover the losses

For our ransomed and televised release

Turn foxes for the off-screen re-seize.

Mistaking passion for compassion

Possessiveness for protectiveness

Saints who fast to show us freedom's birth

Often succeed enslaving us till death.

Shall I who once led the liberators

Now captain the villainous captors?

Shall the breeze and the preacher of freedom

Now turn dungeon and touter for serfdom?

Shall the sacred sword of hope

which once cleaved the bonds of dope

now spawn needles threading the fragments

to yield a stouter, rougher rope?

If you nurse a dove mend its broken wing

Point it sky-ward, and, hear it recite

Eagles' love affair with heaven and flight.

Freedom is not jailors' toy to fling.

Freedom is slaves' gold. But you must pan

For yours in the miserly rivers of man.

Friend: Guns which blew the prison gates

Can turn hostage-takers' trusted mates.

Therefore, if by virtue of battle scars

You win Freedom's crowns and tiaras

Wear them wisely and guard them well.

The fire next time is harder to quell.

The Flight of Flies (CB P 14)

Father, when will these flies go away?

My child, not until the bleeding stops

And all wounds have healed.

And, the starr-stirred dust has settled

Or takes a hiding from a higher house.

Not until dead leaves turn to loamy soil

And frozen seas to foamy waves.

Then will Time have renewed our souls

And replaced our ravishing rags

With flowing robes of whitest light.

Then would the horseman ride again

For, messengers would no longer be slain.

Celestial Bride (CB P 15)

Part 1

Here comes the bride astride clouds heading East.

Come. Let us go to the wedding feast.

Passers-by stop, snared by the throng.

For, what breathing being can be spared for long?

Convoys of cars, women sighing…

White balloons flying low, vying

With wave upon shimmering wave

Of homing pigeons as they soar.

The motorcade…The flight past's roar

And the trumpets' blare stir the air.

Solomon's faméd glory fades

Against the ladies' robes of dazzling shades.

Kéntés speak tomes, and, fascinate.

Kabas out-riot peacocks' feathers.

And, the hair-do's: How intricate!

What taste! What class! Napoleon's Josephine

Cannot match my place-honoured heroine.

Bridesmaids, seven pairs picked for mystic airs

(Matched for height and weight) are all aged eight.

Look! Joan. In town, the fastest-rising debt!

Her Daniel, of Zzielle and the Met.

The Minister of Peace, and Juliette

His Coptic wife. Ambassadors, kings, queens

Men of affairs, women of private means

Promising parasites and socialites:

All here at mid-week. An occurrence

Mightier than time decrees their presence.

My honoured dove, like a woman in love

Worms her way into hearts. Her reign begins.

"When the slow march down banquet lane begins

My hair re-arrange, my make-up encore

And, cloak me in fresh clouds of D'ior."

She reads my needs and provides on cue.

What cause have I to kneel and kiss a pew.

Ghost-like, she knows her place: back and discreet.

There, like Africa, she stands, a footman

policing trammels at others' Canaan.

(Trammels must trail, not snare brides' air-borne feet.)

The best man, Abel Kissei, the bore

Breezed in by presidential yacht.

He won't stay beyond tonight. Watch.

Froth cannot be pinned to any shore.

Drum beats belie the youth of drummer boys.

This traditional troupe, a nation's envoys

At Arts Festival, Belgium '92

Were winners of prizes, and, hearts too.

Dance girls, curvaceous bodies gleaming

Gyrate in rhythmic, serpentine ripples

Cone-shaped breasts, bare, with biro-tip nipples

On paler shades of brown, their smiles beaming.

This troupe's rainbow costumes hijack the eye.

Red, green, gold and turquoise, the noisy dye.

Somehow, these blend, and, blending, please no end.

And, pleasing, seem subdued like a vanquished shrewd.

Part 2

Hush! See! The Master of Ceremonies.

Toasts to be proposed… Toasts to be consumed.

Speeches, speeches, speeches. Some cronies

Rejoice in these, it must be presumed.

Not I. Not now. Not here.

My tale you've got to hear.

I have eyes only for my Husband.

I shut my eyes that in the lit darkness

I'll see Him true, and, purr: "How well I stand!"

I plug my ears that in my mind's silence

I can hear His unvoiced words of desire.

I'll pluck my hair to set my scalp on fire

to have it balm'ed by His healing glance.

His touch I shall save for our nuptial dance.

Here, His touch would electrify

Etherealize, transmogrify.

Here and now, it is enough for me to tack

In the radiant shade of His frame

Wearing around my little neck

The unfailing talisman of His name.

Now that I have him, who is quite like me?

I need nothing more. No, nothing at all.

He is not just Husband, wedded may be

In a sleepy church or a steamy hall.

That's a civic affair framed in fanfare

Penned, signed and witnessed for mutual care

Sealed by a ring given, a ring received.

Certificates can be burned. Rings you can pawn

And, midnight's warmest vows broken at dawn.

To me He is more than husband.

He is the wine of my life, the hand

Which crafts my fate, my very soul mate.

This day He is mine. The ties that bind

are stronger than seals and rings combined.

I am sweetly irresponsible.

Brides maids shall do all things possible

To doll me up to outshine the stars.

All I need do is be -- Like a queen of czars.

I need no bread though tables are spread:

I am a female…A tarantula.

My Hubby's flesh is my caviar.

Tonight, I'll suck him dry and make him die.

Hush! Enter the court jesters!

Perfect sorcerers all

Always at my husband's beck and call

On-stage to infotain the feasters.

But, what is this strange foreboding?

My heart sinks, my head's imploding.

It is September's sunny haze.

I must be in a little daze.

My Hubby sighed, and, smiling, said:

"Let no one be taken unawares.

Sorcerers are schooled to flaunt their wares."

This is it! Do I believe him,

Or my own eyes? I am not dim.

I have senses, mind, intellect

A consciousness, a re-collect

And free will: I can think for myself.

Let the show commence.

Or, is it? Really? A bluff?

On this plane of existence

Is perception a deception?

Part 3

Under the baobab tree, my mother sobs.

On her lap my brother sleeps. Red blobs

On the crown ill-conceal a man in pain.

With teeth and jaws locked, he jerks and jerks again.

With back an arc and head on heels

He were a rod on some steel bender's wheels.

That grin, that satanic grin!

From end to end it spreads.

But, nature is not therein.

Lockjaw: the death the devil dreads!

Nearby an uncle squats doubly bent by a bursted disc.

He is a jack-knife half-shut and friction-held. With fly whisk

in left hand, kill-me-quick in right, his mouth will droop.

(How long is he to stay in that most unholy stoop?)

His sticks are egg-shells. His eyes have turned to stones.

See his cascade of grey. (You aren't younger than your bones.)

Before half his time is done, the man sings his last hurrah:

"To vendors in this village, I am the chief pariah.

Soon my back will break. Tell my sons, if they call

I am the crippled elephant. I die where I fall."

Where indeed are his sons? His self-promised future tons

As he ages -- his insurance against zero wages?

The river is dead. The mighty Volta is dead.

Down-stream. The strangle hold of the dam has shed

Its droppings downstream: skeletons of trees and huts

And, the stench of dogs speared by prowling nuts.

Down-stream, things are bad. In their fight

For dry fish, the eagle shall splay the kite.

Death by desiccation tests Torgbi's dedication

To the cause of power for industrialisation.

It rocks his faith in the cross. He sees no solace

In the blood-filled cup. (Of the bread, there is no trace.)

Like flea-infested rats trapped in a sinking ship

Youth in dying villages have let slip:

"We wont hang around where corpses abound."

Upstream, hamlets drowned in the man-made lake.

Inheritors were fed harmatans of promise: Fake

Compensation from government benches.

The cash got stuck in the gills of Nile perches

Beached in the Ministry of Power and Plight.

O Dam built when we were keen, a raped sub-teen

You: Inadequate by day! Inadequate by night!

I see next the mechanical carnage

We love to buy: Road traffic accident!

Bloodiest boon of our bloody times! An outrage!

Another bottomless man-made rent

To be primed with human blood and bondage

And, needless pain. In one such wreckage

The mangled head of a cousin lies

Oozing blood and mushy brains. The flies

Hail the trail of blood in the red sand.

Else you cannot see the mark. With a wand

In mock salute, she groans: "Here terminate

My first toils. But my soul shall re-germinate."

We have roads, which for accidents, are acclaimed.

(In this corner, who is counting the maimed?)

A man crawls out from beneath a crushed car.

(He has been to church, not a flaming bar!)

A bruised chest is the sole outer sign

Of inner ruin. And, for that, orphans shall whine.

Six pairs of ribs have snapped like legs of hens.

And his chest were the broken wings of wrens.

"My chest's all wrong. Please fix it fast. Else I die."

But where is one healing knife? In this sty?

He gasps. He turns blue. He coughs in a fit.

He will not make it. He does not make it.

Too many lives are lost that need never be lost.

(In this corner, who is counting the cost?)

Hives, too are lost. We used to keep bees.

Though no drone, my brother (not alone)

Was shut out by mounting tuition fees.

The fire next door strides towards our home.

Our roof too is thatched. It's not a dome.

The smell of hay in the heat of summer…

Of earth freshly kissed by distant shower:

We know their dope effect. But what a hope!

When, for many a month, it hasn't rained

Bush fires can leave the best of men drained.

You cannot even weep.

We are ruined. Are we insured?

They do not come this deep.

All is lost. Lost! Lost!

When breezes fall, flags stall.

Funeral bills are tall.

And, living becomes a burden.

Which came first? Hell or Eden?

What does it matter?

With nothing to batter

What does it matter?

Part 4

The master sorcerer himself

Scans my soul with beams of darkness

And, these pilferings for the ear:

"Pawn the ring! Quick! The gold ring!

Pawn the wedding ring!

The gown! The wedding gown:

Take it down town and pawn it there.

The lace, the trammel…Your trammel:

Yank it off and sell it. Sell! Sell!

Sell all you possess

and come sleep with me."

Who tempts me with this thought?

I would rather die than be a slut.

Part 5

Good God! My Lord and my Husband!

My recall is no elephant's.

My vows are no sycophant's.

Cobwebs were cords of steel.

You said: "The show will seem real."

I have senses, mind, intellect

A consciousness, a re-collect.

And, a free will. Or, is it?

Is my will free? Really free?

On this fence of existence

Is perception a deception?

All my stripes are from ignorant entanglement

With painted players playing parts they're paid to play.

No matter what the sorcerers say

The performance is mere infotainment.

My Husband is the playwright and director.

And me He cast in double role -- bride and spectator.

Trammels of life, trail on with the Shamels.

Though my soles share you with the Mace

Ensnare not the feet you were bought to grace.

My love, let's bail out. Away from this hoax!

And, please, no more wicked, practical jokes.

“Practical? Always.

Jokes? Some ways.

Wicked? No ways.

The wickedness stalks in your mind:

The price of pride of the worst kind

The burden of free will unrefined.

There is nowhere else to go.

All you need do is to know.

Know who you are and why you're here

Know who I am and that I'm near.

You are my wedded wife.

You simply be yourself."

I am a bride, a celestial bride.

And God is my Groom, my eternal pride.

APPENDIX B: Journey without End and Other Poems

Deadheat (JWE P 1)

Suspects all! Lepers!

Addicts and pushers of dope!

Carriers of AIDS! Men without hope!

Sloths, economic refugees!

Paupers, stateless Fulanees!

Your sole aim is to flee your shores

to a land of jobs and ores

devoid of mobs and whores:

Mighty USA.

Lies in a velvet pack!

But, when a nation is broke and black

her children were wipers of muddy floors.

The consul, no older than 30

No sample of masculine beauty,

A mediocre graduate from a mediocre college . . .

Care-taker in a city-village —

Accra or Kinshasa, Abuja or Banjul:

This jingler of keys is himself

Pusher of keys on Pcs.

Staff-starved loner! Things must be bad:

Uncle Sam too now counts dimes?

This unmissed man decides the future of youth

whose IQs, in truth, rank leagues higher

than his. But he is American!

“Six dreams of grasping the stars, come true!

Three hundred others, be ye dashed

into a thousand tears-born private rainbows!”

Thus spake the clerk-consul. Within these gates

His words have the finality of death.

Beads of sweat crown shaking heads on a cold

morning in June. The rain starts. They queue, exposed,

outside the high outer fence of iron rods

Blood-rust in colour with black, spear-shaped tips.

Gagged by some unseen star-spangled banner

a pious people deserted by ancestral deities

are robbed (but not for long) of native gaieties.

(Like a stud castrated in his prime.) They stand and gaze.

Even coughs induced by the chilly winds are suppressed.

In this uneasy hush, at his beggars’ mall

the clerk-consul struts into the view of all

and squeaks: “Listen up! Order! Or else, out!”

The iron gates revolve, grating, parting with pain

like thighs of nuns at the point of rape.

The day’s quota, a hundred or so, enter, disdained

bald sheep in a shearers' hall.

The hard, unfriendly bench offers reluctant

but welcome break to swelling feet.

The clerk-consul (himself) inspects papers —

for the nth time. Hear his unwritten brief:

"Each bank statement, each certificate is fake.

Take none at face value. Check and re-check.

Our requirements are legion. And, natives,

Blacks, can count only: 'One' . . . 'two' . . . and 'many'! "

In a perambulation, he hands out

yellow cards: inedible wafers

at an unholy, wineless communion.

Silence. The crowd waits, heads bowed

in an inexplicable sense of guilt.

An invisible chain of steel links their necks.

Sweaty palms clutch files in plastic bags.

Irrational fear and natural hope conspire

And melt the crowd into one amorphous heap.

Hearts race in the unison of midwives

at parturition probing a foetus for signs:

Flickering breath — "Life." Blueing tongue — "Death":

They scan faces of fellow visa-hunters.

See them tumble from that hell: the interview cell.

(O, willing slaves, selling selves at lower bids!

Where are you heading? Is home that bad?)

"He did not get it." Unspoken epitaph!

Engraved in gold across furrowed brows,

Frown is your lettering, and, blood-shot eyes

the lamp which reveals you in its pity-less

shadow-less light. The emorphous heap

averts its collective eye, refusing to spy

the death throes of a fallen mate. No tears.

No groans. They cannot even mourn their dead:

Numbed by the sting, too tired to stir

too sunk to plumb the depths of despair.

But, why was he denied the visa?

"I am not convinced." Thus spake

the clerk-consul. Period! Fiat!

"He's got it!" Infrequent pronouncement,

"Not Guilty!" in a Nazi camp. New Jews:

You're held guilty until proven innocent.

The amalgam-crowd ripples with hope, fear-laced,

fleeting stolen kisses in darkness and fog.

(The fear never leaves you. That's the worst part.

If only you know exactly what your crime is!)

The clerk-consul can pluck from the cold air

any unwritten requirement, play judge-advocate

in his own court, and, hiss: “Convince me!”

He is alone. He consults no one. Not even his kind.

You too are alone. But who will weigh your casket?

Or, read your pedigree to prove your worth?

O, tongueless slave in a buyers’ market!

In the midst of that joylessness, Gaiety

suddenly re-appears: a faithful dog

to its war-wounded master. Humour

shields the crowd from the acidic ash:

The insult which rains more from mien than lips

of the tar-hearted clerk-consul. (Poor chap!

Imagine being paid cash to play the carp!

And, to be missed not at home, not abroad!)

Lo! A street preacher. A priestess. A woman!

“Let us pray . . . Say ‘Amen!’” she commands.

“Say ‘Amen!’”she repeats. And you’d better believe it.

A chorus of ‘Amen’ rings out, mixed with laughter.

And, this cheerless crowd, on this cheerless morning

in front of these demeaning gates, did laugh.

See! A she-Zaccheus in Gypsy garb.

Bare-feet on the red laterite, 30,

but a turtle, well wrinkled. Yet, her voice?

A BBC news-reader: so articulate!

An Oxford don: so rich in vocabulary!

A saint: so resonant, so intimate.

This remnant-rag of a woman sets to work

and seeks to lighten the loaded yoke

Of this unhappy lot — by prayer power.

Heads are bowed no longer in guilt or shame

but in prayer. “God cares. God looks on.

He has granted your visa. Say Amen!”

The crowd believe and inhale her words

like men strapped for air at altitude.

How heart’n’soul the final ‘Amen!’

O! Revealing, redeeming final laugh!

Look! The priestess passes round

a black plastic bag, and, clowns for alms.

Driven insane by hunger and want

she, who once struck plastic gold: the green card,

must now roam the streets of Accra

and beg, or die. (O! dew called luck.)

What a lot these have in common! Count with me.

One. Aren’t all in that queue mildly lunatic?

You’ve got to be mad to go through that!

For, what is obsession if not a mother madness?

Two. Aren't they all beggars? Without clout.

Without rights of appeal? They at the mercy

of a clerk, and she at theirs? It rains still.

But, three. Together they laugh. (He laughs best

who laughs when there is little to laugh about.)

Four. Drained dry of the nectar of human compassion,

The consul's madness is the worst kind.

And, his misery is perfect: he cannot even laugh.

Developing Country (JWE P 2)

In this land

Arrival is not the problem:

It's the survival.

In their inns

Servers outnumber the served

And, hangers-on the lot.

The Street (JWE P 3)

Built to please the eye and sub-serve the foot

Our streets are no longer beauty's domain.

With dust untamed by asphalt, grass or tar

Without pavement, foot-path, embankment

Potholes filled and re-filled with loose, red earth

Our streets were open and foetid trash cans,

Man traps, roads unworthy of vehicles.

Shops spill their plastic contents

Like dismembered pregnant unteri—

Blood, foetal parts, liquor and all.

The street is an extension of homes.

It is market, battlefield, play-pen, loo.

It is the living, dining and guest room.

The street is unforgiving. For some

It is bridal suite and the final berth.

The Driftwood's Song (JWE P 4)

(To Mr Seth)

Come and see where I live.

My dear people, you ought to know

where my driftwood has beached.

Ask not which currents dumped me there

Nor where the tides shall bear me next.

Faithful sentinels of tides' mark,

Soon-wreathed by seaweed and sand,

Driftwood leave no mark of their own.

So shall be my lot. The needles' too:

"We stitch many a garment, but don not one."

Judge me not by these rags on view.

That ancient leveler-down, Hardtimes,

Indifferent to your starting point,

Reduces all to these bones you see.

Though my face breeds miles

Of lines deepening by the day

Like footprints on wet paths of clay,

I can yet sleep, and, flash smiles.

Strive to join our lucky few:

With us the same Hardtimes

Sings her other song. She would spew

And ran down our souls, strong

Inner cores of tempered steel:

(She is a pelican force-feeding her young)

Our insurance against stress fatigue.

For all that, there comes a time to die.

Now, as always, you must only know

Where to find my body — ailing

Or else a corpse. I ask no more.

Come in, and see where I live.

Two Songs from Home (JWE P 5)

An inner voice accustomed

to obedience, willed in whispers:

"Dawn is breaking. Up! To vespers!"

How strangely sleepy church bells had fallen!

Conscripted into false-heaven silence,

Crocks forgot to crow. Crickets too stayed low.

Like a man brain-bruised in a swoon

They would not be drawn by even the moon.

Nine priests were shot. (They were the lucky ones.)

Ten drowned, thirteen tortured, bleeding, bowels burst.

Altars, once pearls, turned tar with clot and dust

Mingled with ash from yesterday's incense.

The holy water was drained to the lees,

its dozen jugs unwashed, unreplenished.

All the choristers had fled in their robes.

Music sheet flew in the trespassing breeze.

Temple doors were unbarred, windows unlatched.

I walked alone.

No flags drooped at half mast.

No one wore black. No dirge was broadcast.

A people unaccustomed to a flood

of brutality and a reign of woe

were seduced with a wine of blood.

And they sang (not in whispers):

“Let the blood flow!”

Unholy song! Go! Down the windless trail!

Prevail nowhere! May you never again

Be heard in our grain-rich and shaded land.

And I saw Innocence: Children

wrapped in white, seamless garments

of dew-wet lilies and mimosas

singing (not in whispers)

this new song:

“So shall the hills shed borrowed fog

and reveal wooded peaks and lush

well-watered fields. Flowers, sing!

You mutes’ tongue and wings for the maimed.

“We are Love Herself cloaked

in uncoverable light of beauty

trailing an invisible, lingering

trammel of fragrance and joy.

You drink it long after Her nearness

has been dimmed by distance and time.

But, that faithful servant, Memory

recreates Her. For, Love will not be dimmed:

Neither by distance nor time nor death."

The Sacrificial Lamb (JWE P 6)

Gamboller on greener pastures!

Chosen one, Shepherd's favourite!

Other lambs tripped and tapped their way

through thorn, flint and burning dunes.

She was carried shoulder high.

Others braved fog and sand storm,

scorching sun and freezing snow.

She was shielded in a padded cloak

and Jinie'd away to reserved pastures.

What if the other lot should perish.

(They also drank at the same brook!)

"Let these perish." Was that voice

the Shepherd's? "You have been saved."

(But, saved for what?)

And so lived the sacrificial lamb:

Pampered, fed fat. See her spotless fleece

Spring in heels, gaiety in every leap

Jollity, frivolity, care tossed to the winds

Forbidden to see beyond here and now.

The butchers came to town in jeeps

And proclaimed it with music at dawn.

Not with trumpets' blare or tumult of war

The clanging of swords, unsheathed

Nor the grating of teeth, bared.

The sky was not overcast in Harmattan

Nor did breezes freeze in hell.

No flower cloaked its bloom in gloom

Nor hung its head in grief

No leaf fell before its time

There was no hissing of serpents.

The owl did not howl at noon

No crows cried the cry of death

No raven flew across the northern sky

There was no smell of singeing hair

Nor stench of death in the air.

There was no sweat on any brow

Nor blood on any hand.

Only smiling faces. And, as usual,

The smooth, smooth turning of the wheel

The continuing flow of honey and milk

The greenest grass, the choicest herb.

The best of all things. As usual . . .

Nothing has changed.

No, nothing at all has changed

The day the butchers came in jeeps

And drove away the sacrificial lamb.

Standard Seven (JWE P 7)

Our paths parted six and forty years back.

I call you to witness, Assembly Hall,

Dining hall, and manicured fields of sport!

You, too, zinc roofs and broom marks in the sand

Board-starched khaki uniforms and pink frocks

Lime-washed stones and sisal, chairs in the stand

Coconut and mango trees in whiter socks

Desks scrubbed altar-clean, though done for the year!

You saw us come and go. Don't be mute now.

The golden three: to read, to write, to add.

Multiplication tables, memorized.

Spelling, mental 'rithmetic, civics.

Religious knowledge, prodigious courage.

The propping three: to run, to leap, to swim.

The rod was not speared; very few were spoiled.

Stan'seven School Leaving Certificate!

We clutched you with pride and framed you with light.

We stepped out, lion-like, to replicate

Gladsome scenes of heroes returning home

To heroes' welcome. Mere lads and lasses

Between fourteen and twenty-something.

(Who was checking birthing papers?)

Future secure. Unemployment? Unknown!

A teaching profession to train for

(Teachers sat with chiefs at durbars and feasts.)

Vibrant men in uniform to vie for —

Police, Border Guard, Navy, Air Force:

Disciplined, barracks-bound guardians of Home

Respected and honoured, but never feared.

The gentle nobility of priesthood

Beckoned from the cold climes of Akropong

Or the mystique hills of Amedzofe.

(Amedzofe, our Eden, the origins of Man.)

Priests were priests, not raiders of flocks — their own.

The Civil Service promised promotion:

A sailing up-stream sped by breeze and tide.

So did trade: UAC or UTC.

Liventis, Olivant, the GPO.

Equal chance. Prospects real and prospects bright.

Messenger to manager; cook to chef.

Sweet honest sweat swapped for sweet honest bread.

Stan'seven School Leaving Certificate!

No ordinary decorated cardboard!

A sufficient and worthy prize, a crown

Fought for, and hard won at this Olympaid:

Good, solid, old fashioned education.

But, where are you now?

And, what have we now?

The Boundary Lines (JWE P 8)

Your dreams of golden tomorrows they cannot share.

Harassed by debt collectors for rent and bread

They juggle tired notes 'tween corn vendor and fish monger.

They chop wood by brawn, but the season is wrong.

No water bills to pay: the Volta never runs dry.

Musical chairs were played; they joined the touts.

Electric poles ringed the countryside

Erect but upwired and impotent

(Like penises in priapism)

Competing with Leesen and Maxwell

For fraud of bank-breaking proportions.

Steeped in the reddening dye of need,

Debts pilling higher and deeper,

They switch to the priesthood of crooks

And, in God's name, fleece their flock.

Your dreams of golden tomorrows they cannot share.

How can they reckon, and reckoning, accept

That corn cannot fructify before three months?

Nor cassava twelve. Cattle take for ever.

That sowers are not always the reapers

Nor cooks the feasters, nor masons the dwellers

Nor are trail blazers always the strikers of oil.

A shadow stalks in darkness.

The deaf-mute howl in silence.

The blind tumble and crush the lame

And they all fall into muddy gutters.

Who decides? Who carves the boundaries?

For these players, inside this eighteen,

The lines have not fallen in pleasant places.

But, you must flee this sentimental bog.

Hit the rocky shores of true compassion

And woo its pair of fair and impartial twins

Wisdom and detachment, and heed their song:

"Some are born poor, and, seem doomed to die young."

Unfinished Business (JWE P 9)

Two Ds and a C. Good. But no toast

for Legon, Kumasi or Cape Coast.

Oh, house stuck at lentil level.

Yet castle for a poor devil.

Fisher-boy geared to the rafters.

But, not for home's crowded waters.

Churches filled to the doors.

Robes of miracle-buffs sweep the floors.

Priests, newly rich, air-feed their flock

from pulpits of grass, and, take stock

of fresh kills. The man-trap is sprung

In God's name. And, millions are flung!

Scars of a hideous smallpox,

potholes deface city streets and parks,

and quaff illicit engine oil.

See municipal drivers toil

to mend orphaned vehicles.

Guess who rides home on bicycles.

Ageing roads in government plots

sprout giant boobs of laterite.

Then, die, abandoned, like old harlots

without clients for many a night.

Heaped soil is no friend of the rain.

Another billion down the drain.

Povertometer (JWE P 10)

Hootmania, audible emblem of rags

Roams our dusty-muddy streets day and night

Drivers of cabs, vans filled with gari bags

Presidential motorcades in full flight

Hearses, bridal convoys, private parties

And, of death-traps on wheels we call lorries:

None is spared this collective madness.

Hootmania paints yellow men who wield swords.

None has the guts to slay this rabid hound.

Forty years of hollow independence

And, Hootmania remains unchecked, unbound.

It barks and spreads the noisome pestilence

While soldiers hunt girls selling groundnut pods

(Price control. O! what utter sadness!)

Shouts, howls, screams, flags of folks not in the pink

Stark, more indelible than Indian ink

Surer than the blackest propaganda

Strickier stigma than AIDS in Canada

Self-crated, self-inflicted deadly shots

Separator of haves from have-nots

Sordid zones have huge vocal decibels

seething from homes, street and steamy brothels.

We have not ocean's booming restlessness

Nor forest's crowded but pristine vastness

to tame. Yet, across one oleander,

or muddy turf, where foot-paths meander,

We blast ears with colossal howls and screams.

We waste vocal energy like sun beams.

We wreck the peace in neighbourhools. O peace!

Devalued by us, like yesterday's news.

(Our national currency fares worse!)

Yardstick most sure, Povertometer!

The higher the reading on your dial,

(Like a loathed but unerring richter scale)

The deeper the squalor you measure.

O inverse gauge of silver and gold:

The lower our voice, though bell-clear and bold,

The higher our standing on your ladder.

If awareness be correction's envoy

If voice control be the tape men deploy

To sort man from man, and, man from ape,

Tell me, countrymen, how can we escape

This pique: they are nowhere near the peak?

Priests of Neo-Aztecs (JWE P 11)

Pride and joy of the clan

Bred and reared with ancient care

Braided hair all gem-bedecked

We are picked with great fanfare.

Paths are lined by faceless crowds.

They see us all as we go

But dare not say a single word:

Mum and dad are in the know.

Weary-armed from the slaughter

Priests grow fat with their laughter.

Our blood flows without ceasing

Yet their altars remain dry.

Priests, priests, neo-Aztecs!

Your swords strike true and deep

Leave no scar to tell the tale

Living corpses mark your trail.

Temples, temples tall and clean

Altars soft and gleaming white

Drapèd not with new granite

But feathered-quit of silken sheen.

Bound, gagged but not blind-folded

Our eyes speak sermons:

Ruby-eyed from sleepless nights

Are our gifts from demons.

Priests, priests, neo-Aztecs!

Strong and sure like death itself.

These may be your hour. But

Even the hills don't live for ever.

No Guarantees (JWE P 12)

There are no guarantees here.

The seed which probably

(Just probably might)

Have done you proud

And hold high the tribal name

Is the seed which falls by the wayside.

Unsnatched by any bird

Uncrushed by any boot

Survivor's medal won

Proof of good things to come . . .

And, with crack in rock garden enough,

It out-grows better-connected seeds.

But, before first fruits ripen and fall,

Rain, — always welcome in the Sahel —

Overshoots its mark, and, the flash floods

Sweep it away: root, shoot, fruit and all . . .

To? Lavender Hill, Gulf of Guinea.

Another dawn breaks.

Another heart aches.

Omens (JWE P 13)

Chased by serpents mean and menacing

The brood eagles have all flown away.

Migrant wildebeest have not returned.

There is budgeting in the heavens:

Rain clouds, dew and sunlight are rationed

But, smoke and haze of sand and dust blindfold

And, the clap of distant thunder deafens.

Omens for a good year are far from here.

Reserved Seats (JWE P 14)

Claim for yourself from Yourself

Seats of respect and dignity

Reserved for temples of the Most High.

Seek them not of men.

These aren't theirs to give.

If it were so, if it were so . . .

They would not give you.

They will not give you.

The Vexatious Tart (JWE 15)

Troop not to airports to meet me.

I take no joy from hugs in streets

Nor salutes with lutes in fleets.

When our ancestral homes burn

The smoke spells fire-fighters' hearse.

Even angels splutter and curse.

I'd rather see our children churn

honey pots, munching tangerines,

dancing to flutes and tambourines.

Peace is a vexatious tart.

Desired by all, she's had by few.

You sweat blood to win her heart

only to lose her from view.

She is daughter of Herodias:

Her mother waits near the dais

for nothing short of your neck.

APPENDIX C: WhatsApp Communication with Lade Wosornu