

ACTIONS AND METAPHORS AS FUNCTIONAL INSTRUMENTS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN IKE'S OUR CHILDREN ARE COMING

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the functionality of actions of characters and metaphors as message projectors in Chukwuemeka Ike's *Our Children are Coming*. The paper relies on the theory of Functional Linguistics developed by Firth and popularized by M. A. K. Halliday and all those of the systemic school, who view language in terms of its social functions. Against this background, the Systemic Text-linguistic model for literary text analysis developed by Adejare (1992) was used in the analysis of those actions and metaphors that were selected for study. The essence of this message is to create awareness among the people in order that they can become conscious of the danger of corruption and bad governance that has become the hallmark of the Nigerian elitist society. What is found is good governance, as well as its sustainability. It discusses actions of characters and a number of metaphors, rich in local images, carefully chosen to serve as interpretive comments on the characters by the author, in order that these characters can be portrayed in a manner that is strikingly different from the manner in which they were struggling to project themselves – they were projected as apostates.

Keywords: Actions, Metaphors, Message Projection, Sustainability, Text-Linguistics, Sustainable Development, Apostates.

INTRODUCTION

This paper examines the functionality of actions of characters and metaphors in the novel *Our Children Are Coming* by Chukwuemeka Ike as devices used in projecting its message by the author. The discussion is based on the tenets of Systemic Functional linguistics which is so much concerned with the sociological aspect of language. Systemicists regard language as the most sophisticated and elaborate semiotic system – a system of making meaning by choosing (See Halliday 1994:XXII and Eggins 2004: 15). All choices people make are invested with meaning. The kind of cars that people drive, the design of houses that people build, clothes that they wear, all give credence to this fact. Eggins remarks that, while it is possible to use language to describe the semiotic system of all these things, it is not possible to use cars, clothes and houses to make all meanings that language makes. It is on the basis of this that Halliday's trio-level functionality of language becomes paramount, as every language to him evolves with the aim to satisfy human needs; its organization is functional in terms of these needs. The first two functions of language constitute the two general purposes of language uses: (a) to understand the environment (ideational function) and (b) to act on the others in the environment (interpersonal function).

The third functional level, which Halliday terms textual function, is concerned with the way in which the text is organized as a piece of writing or speech, which relates with the stringing together of what is said, and to what was said before it, as well as to the situation or context around them (See Jibrin 2012: 36). It is this third functional level that is of great relevance to this study. The text is regarded as a semantic unit and not a grammatical one by Halliday and Hasan (1976:1). This, they remark, is possible, owing to the presence of 'texture' which is what a text derive that it functions as a unit with recognition of its peculiar environment. This, Eggins (2004:24) explains, involves the interaction of two concepts, namely; coherence – "the text's relationship to its occurrence", and cohesion – the way the segments within the text are bonded as a "unified whole". The result of this interaction, Eggins asserts, is a piece of language, a passage for instance, that uses linguistic resources meaningfully in situational and cultural contexts. It is against this background that this paper discusses the ways in which actions of characters and metaphors in the novel, *Our Children are Coming* are used to project its message by the text producer. *This is against the background that the message projected by the author is geared towards solving the problem of corruption that has become a way of life among the Nigerian adults. The younger generation of Nigerians is portrayed weak by their parents in order that they (the adults) to justify their perpetual stay in political offices. The author tries to awaken the consciousness of the youth to rise to their responsibility as future leaders in order that they can nip the evil of corruption in the bud for the sake of national development and its sustainability.*

METHODOLOGY

This is a textual study where data were gathered directly from the text. The paper uses the systemic text-linguistic approach for text study developed by Adejare (1992) expounded by Jolayemi (2000) where it is remarked that every literary text has a message it projects. Adejare (1992)'s model is a functional linguistic model whose two concepts of "projection" and "procedure" were used in this paper for identification of linguistic features and their selection for analysis. "Projection" is a concept which makes possible an analysis of the linguistic structures of texts without having to go through all the linguistic elements in the text. It enables the analyst to select from the generality or multiplicity of data in the text based on the fact that

the linguistic structures that carry or convey the message of the text are evenly distributed throughout the text (see Adejare 1992:14 and Jolayemi 2000:18).

“Procedure” on the other hand makes it possible to move from a study of an individual text to the identification and study of common features of language used by an individual writer in his texts, or by a group of writers in their texts. The two concepts have been used for selection of actions of the characters and metaphors, among several other actions and metaphors, and even other linguistic elements, in the novel to show how they contribute to the projection of the message by the writer. This was possible due to a preceding thorough study of the novel in order to identify the general message the text projects.

ANALYTICAL PROCEDURE

The features selected for analysis were analyzed using the Systemic model of literary texts analysis. The text is conceptualized by systemic linguists as a unit of language used by its author in a context that is specific, with an aim to communicate, using linguistic signs that do not exist in a vacuum. They rather exist in the semiotic universe of a language (see Adejare 1992:16). This presupposes that semiotic variation constitutes an integral part of linguistic interpretation of a text, especially when it is produced by a user of English as a second language.

Generally, systemic linguists recognize various levels of relationship in the communication of a message. These include “substance” – everything studied in phonology, which relates “form” – graphological or phonological features and those of syntax and morphology to determine meaning in a given context, which they classify into thesis, immediate and wider situations (see Berry 1975, Scott, F. S. et al 1978, Halliday 1961, 1976 and Eggins 2004). The classification is based on the semiological nature of systemic grammar. The theory concedes that an analysis of language should and must involve, in addition to its grammatical units, meaning and context. This theory recognizes three areas of semiotics, if the positions of Morris (1938:6), Carnap (1942:9), Lyons (1977:114) and Jolayemi (2000:116) are to be taken into account. These are syntax, semantic and pragmatics.

Adejare (1992) extends the frontiers of this theory to text analysis by categorizing texts into two groups of First Order – which is the group of non-literary texts and Second Order – which are literary texts. For the latter group which is our concern, Adejare identifies three different levels at which meaning can be projected. They include Primitive level, Second Order level and Prime Order level. This study is premised upon the last two levels, which are Second Order and Prime Order. At the Second Order level, Adejare asserts, meaning can be projected using three elements derivable from character metaphors. One of these elements is action. At the Prime Order level, there are also three different elements of interpretation, one of which is metaphor. Adejare (1992:9) further explains that characters are considered special metaphors; they are not more than linguistic signals because they are semiotic signs which represent the idea through which the message of the text in which they occur is projected, so are their actions, since they have no objective reality. Distortions of dialogue are, as a result, considered distortions of the writer’s idiolect, since he is the one in charge of his language and he constructs it in a manner that suits his message. Metaphors are, to Adejare, interpretive comparisons, which are an attempt to interpret the fictionalized situation in view of an experience that is external to the immediate situation of the text; this is what he calls the wider

situation of culture. All these elements, he argues, are parts of the author's efforts to translate his experience into a novel. Along this line actions of characters and metaphors were analyzed with recognition of semiotic universe of the text, based on their contributions to the projection of the message identified for the text. *The functionality lies in the fact that it is meant to perform social roles of educating the youth on their responsibility which was hitherto unknown to them. The text producer portrays them as agents of positive change in order that they can be motivated to fight all factors militating against the development of the Nigerian nation. This, if properly handled, leads to sustainable development.*

THE MESSAGE OF THE NOVEL

The message of the novel is the hypocritical nature of man who always likes to shift his guilt to another, as evident in the novel, which portrays the Nigerian elitist insincerity and hypocrisy. Devilish members of the Nigerian elite are found struggling to have positive image in society amidst permeating moral degradation culminating in the weakness of the young people. In trying to do this, they project themselves as having done all within their powers for the uplift of their youths, but that the youth have refused to improve on their hard work. This, they do with a view to projecting their children in negative lights in order that their children's failure would not be traced to their inactions as parents. This is what Adejare (1992) calls human apostasy – the fact that human beings are a combination of good and evil. The novel brings human nature under scrutiny. The same young people that were so painted negatively by their adult-parents became the messiahs that rescued the Nigerian nation in *Our Children are Coming* from the shackles of their parents' corrupt practices and moral decadence *through continuous and persistent awareness which eventually ushered in good governance that harbinger of positive development and its sustainability. The manner in which this message of human apostasy is projected in the novel, using actions of characters and metaphors, all harnessed to generate our awareness among the populace of Nigeria, especially the Nigerian youth is what follows.*

ACTIONS

Aside from the names given to characters, they are given peculiar descriptions and made to act in different ways in order that they project the message of the text. According to Adejare (1992:71), actions complement aspects of the second order level. The following constitute a few instances of such actions that are selected for discussion out of the many actions used by the author in the novel for message projection.

Mrs. Edo's Sexual Experience with Doe

In order to conceal the source of moral degeneration in the Nigerian society of the novel the government of the nation in pretence sets up a commission of enquiry into what it calls the disturbing fall of morality among the young people and to consider the possibility of engendering moral re-orientation among them. The two characters here, Mrs Edo and Doe, are supposed to be members of this re-orientation commission; yet they are portrayed as persons that are unfit for the responsibility they are saddled with – they are apostates. Edo's apostasy is in her extra-marital affair with Doe. The day that she had her first sexual experience with Doe, the two friends engaging in extra-marital sex had it as if it was normal, as if they were husband and wife. This shows that they had longed for each other ever since their days at Premier University.

Although sex is a good exercise that can lead to procreation, when it is misdirected it becomes a negative exercise. A woman breaking her marital vows ordinarily should feel a sense of guilt. Instead, Mrs. Edo felt fulfilled:

And to Edo's great surprise, the feeling of guilt expected of a woman breaking her marital vows for the first time was totally absent; in its place was a feeling of gratitude, of self-fulfilment and of bliss. (P.122)

Her apostasy becomes more conspicuous as she pledges her continuous love for Doe, which puts Doe in a first class position in her heart. The virility with which she bursts shows that her loyalty to Doe is greater than to her husband and that the reference to her husband is only an afterthought:

Since I came to know you, you have been the only man in my life, apart from my husband. I will never entertain another man. (P.125)

Edo's apostasy leads her to willingly combine two different kinds of sex effectively – lawful and unlawful types of sex. *This revelation helps to create awareness among the youth on the level decadence of their adult parents and the fact that they themselves actually were those in need of moral re-orientation and not the youth. This exposition serves as a source of motivation for the youth to courageously fight corruption to give way for morality and conscience which serve as a pivot for good governance and sustainable development.*

Excessive Parental Love for Witness 012

To love one's child is a good attribute of a parent. One shows love and care by buying material things for children. However, when it becomes excessive, rather than being a sign of responsibility, it becomes a way of spoiling the child. Witness 012's parents continued to shower him with gifts to the level that he felt he had got so much and his parents would not let him alone. All this was done because they were making it up to him since their plans of having five children based on a preferred gender ratio could not be achieved naturally. The fact that they could not give up and accept willingly what nature had given them was responsible for the (abnormal) care and love originally meant for five children being given to one. This reached an intolerable level that the child had to caution the parents politely on the danger of their openly well-intended actions:

I would love simply to be an ordinary boy. No. they must do this or that for me. Take, for example, the time they wanted to buy a Honda prelude for me. I thanked them properly for their tremendous gesture, but went on politely but firmly to tell them I did not want a car of my own that early in life ... they simply went ahead and bought the car. And when I refused to accept the keys, the family doctor was rushed in to examine my

head (P.265).

Their apostasy is fully exposed by their insistence that the child had what the child did not want. Then one begins to wonder whether they were doing all that for the child or for themselves. This brings to the fore the axiom in the wider situation of the novel that one who weeps louder than the bereaved has some thing to hide. *It is through awareness that the child becomes conscious of his parents' hidden intentions and motivations and rather than being grateful to his parents for their care, he becomes suspicious of every of their kind gestures, as O12's laments:*

Yes, sir. You'll find, sir, that many parents who
Ostensibly buy things for their kids, things like
toys, clothes, and even cars, are often either indulging
in their own fancies, or unconsciously trying to make
up for the things they were deprived of or could not
afford in their youth. (P.266).

This helps to charge the youths up against their parents and eventually their parents were left with no choice than to succumb to their revolutionary pressures. The following is a product of such awareness, as O12 laments:

Witness 005's Parents' Choosing University and Course of Study for Her

While it is good to guide one's children in their areas of study, it is not too healthy to impose a particular course of study on a child. The couple who are 005's parents both could not fulfill their dreams of being doctors and preferred that their daughter should take over the battle of working hard to produce a doctor in the family. This is done without consideration for the child's interest and capability. When she declared to them that she wanted to study Chemistry, it was as if they had lost a member of the family. They sent her to England to attend a highly rated boarding school for girls, to study Physics, Chemistry, Botany and Zoology for A' levels with the aim of studying Medicine, her parents' dreamed course (see P. 227). In spite of her parents' love for a degree in Medicine, her mother's love for ethnicity made her withdraw her daughter from the school in England, lest her daughter got to marry a foreigner or a Nigerian that is not of the same ethnic group. In order to prevent that totally, she encouraged a young man, Bolaji who was of the same ethnic group with her to live with her daughter. Morality was thrown away for ethnicity. Her love for her ethnic group is expressed thus:

The last straw came soon after 005's graduation.
She had gained a brilliant Second Class Honours,
Upper Division, and the university had awarded
her a scholarship for Ph.D. in Biochemistry, tenable
at the University of Cambridge.....Her parents
thought differently. Which Ekiti man, her mother
asked, would propose marriage to a Doctor of
Philosophy in Biochemistry? Yes; 005's husband
must not only be a Nigerian, he must be Ekiti. (P.231).

This presupposes a level of awareness that makes the child feels that her mother's love for her ethnic group is greater than her love for her and that she is used to settle inter-ethnic scores by her mother. This is meant to serve a means of detachment of the young people from their parents which is expected to lead to a breakaway from moral decadence and corrupt practices in order that they will become agents of stability. This translates to the transformation of the youths that leads to good governance and its sustainability in the Nigerian society of the novel.

Inter-Professional Animosity over a Girl Friend

Witness 001 and her BF (boy friend) were denied marital blessings by their parents. 001 was a quintessence of morality. She considered premarital sex which is common among her colleagues nauseating and immoral. To her dismay, her father and her BF's would not allow them to get married due to their long animosity over a girl friend. Their parents were great academics who were both professors of medicine. Their high level of literacy did not matter much. Immediately 001 mentioned her prospective husband to her father, he unequivocally condemned the idea not because he knew anything about the boy in question, but because his father was "totally unreliable and untrustworthy", and he would not allow his daughter to marry such a "pernicious man's son" (P.198). 001's boyfriend's father dismissed her as a bastard and as a result he would not even waste anymore time to listen to any tributes on her by his boyfriend. At the end of the day, their apostasy becomes exposed by a consultant who knew both professors and the source of their animosity:

The consultant had spoken sadly about the long standing animosity between the two professors, regarding it as inexplicable vagaries of nature. Two brilliant minds, allowing trivialities to poison their minds against each other! ... They had fought over every conceivable matter in their younger years at Premier Teaching Hospital, but the last straw, which subsequently turned them into deadly enemies, was their fight over an English nursing Sister. Delectable, pretty, lissome; but one could have said the same for a dozen other nursing sisters around at the time, white and black. (PP. 299&300).

They had selfish reasons for not allowing their children to be married, yet they gave what sounds a good justification for their stance. Preventing what is legitimate over an age-long animosity occasioned by illicit relationship is apostasy of a serious kind. There are several of these actions that are spread across the text by the text producer to project the message of the text. *This message is anchored on spreading the awareness of the evil of insincerity and corruption as well as moral decadence and the need for positive change for sustainable national development. These instances discussed among others are used as illustration.*

Metaphor

This is one of the elements in the fictionalized situation in addition to descriptions and imagery which are transmuted into projecting the message using the text's wider situation (See Jibrin 2012:79 – 81). There is preponderant utilization of metaphor in this novel to the level that it becomes difficult to select which ones to discuss from the generality. Here, the term metaphor is used to cover both direct and indirect comparisons (metaphor and simile), as well as proverbs. The following is a list of selected metaphors from the different parts of the text.

(a) ... of the people currently in ...are resisting any attempts to tear the milk laden breast away from their mouths..(P.329).

(b) ...their private jets are already to-ing and fro-ing, evacuating 'cartons of bear', other movable valuables to their holiday resort mansions abroad. (P.330)

(c) We have worked round the clock...to ensure that we strike while the iron is hot. (P.190).

(d) The handshakes he received from every member of the high table, assured him that he had treated the hungry press to a sumptuous brunch! (P.190).

(e) It is to the effect that John's teacher cannot teach Latin to John successfully unless, in addition to his sound knowledge of Latin, he knows John well. (P.193).

(f) The kettle is currently investigating the pot,... we hold the view that the transformation can not be complete unless the pot also investigates the kettle. (P.189).

(g) There were times he wondered whether he had been drugged, considering the risks he took in his burning desire for Apo's vitamin Q (P.109).

(h) Student unions were comparable to male monkeys. Once on the move they never looked back. (P.92).

(i) When the young man arrived in America,... every test they gave him, he passed like a hungry dog licking the plate of food set before it. (P.81).

(j) The truthis that the schemeis sugar-coated

slave labour,... (P.186).

(k) A man bitten by a snake, as the saying goes, runs at the sight of an earthworm. (P.327)

(l) It is from the parent snake that the baby snake inherits its venom. (P.327)

The first metaphor is used by the author in achieving verisimilitude. This metaphor compares the kind of benefits (lawful and unlawful) that those in government derive from being in power with the milk that a child gets from the mother's breast. This metaphor makes much sense in the text's semiotic universe. A child who sucks his mother's breast does not want to leave it for even his baby sibling to take over because of the sweetness and the nourishment that are involved. This is used to project the text's message that man is by nature selfish. He does what gives him an advantage over others, unless it becomes inevitable, he does not live to forsake selfish tendencies. *This is a functional device used by the author to sensitize the youth on the selfishness of their tired parents who do not want to quit governance even when they have ran out of developmental ideas. This is a device of tearing the youths apart and getting them inspired into taking their destiny in their own hands. This leads to a permeating awareness that becomes the basis of the struggle that leads to the overthrow of corrupt leadership by the conscientious youths who through morality and good governance set the pace for national development and its sustainability in the novel.*

The 'cartons of beer' as referred to using quote marks draws attention to the metaphoric sense of it. The cartons are of beer by inscriptions but the content is different from the label. These cartons are of naira rather than of beer. This shows apostasy of humans. In order to deceive the masses, naira notes are stashed in cartons of beer. The money they cart away to foreign countries will be in foreign banks and will have no benefit to the country. Instead, it yields interests for foreign banks. All this is done by people who are voted to run the country but they are rather ruining it.

"To strike while the iron is hot" is used to describe the action of the NAS by the NAS president. This metaphor can be appreciated better when the semiotic universe of the text is considered. In blacksmithing, you try to bend the iron when it is hot, because it is malleable and can be manipulated. Delaying it till when it becomes cold will prevent a possible manipulation by the blacksmith. This means that the NAS would not delay their action because of the danger associated with delay. This shows the alternative faces of human beings. If they delay the action, the rank and file of the NAS may be penetrated and they will no longer speak with one voice. Time determines what human beings do and what they can become.

In "treating the hungry press to a sumptuous brunch" as in (d) above the author through the character metaphor uses a metaphor to project the message of the text. The press conference granted by the president of the NAS is done in secret. What is expected to be silly and preposterous turns out to be sumptuous? The men of the press are information disseminators who ordinarily are curios. The release, even though grand, is also compared to a brunch. This indicates that the release, in spite of its being delayed, has made a lot of impact. The word "brunch" is a kind of meal that is abnormal. It is a blend of breakfast and lunch. The press men who attended the press conference were to leave with the satisfaction that their hunger had been

quelled, but at the same time, some were uncomfortable with the action-charged release which they knew would herald a revolution that the adults and the government might not be prepared for, since the majority of the press members were among the adults whose nakedness would be made known.

In (e) above, the metaphor symbolizes apostasy in the sense that, Chief Taiwo uses it to describe the ill-motivation and injustice that characterize the foundation, operation and structure of the Presidential Commission. This, he uses to justify his accepting to serve as the Sole Commissioner of the NAS' parallel commission when the government refused to allow for the NAS representatives on the presidential commission. How can Jack's teacher teach Latin to Jack when he does not know Jack well? Where is he going to start from? This shows that Jack's teacher's insistence is based on a hidden intention, which is not meant to help Jack but to serve Jack's teacher's selfish ends. A commission that is saddled with the responsibility of studying the disorientation of the youth with a view to solving the problem should seek information from the youths, if truly it is meant to solve the problem of the youth. This shows metaphorically the kind of hypocrisy with which human beings, especially those in authority, handle programmes of government. At last what comes out is contrary to what society expects, but in conformity with the original intention of the policy formulators. All these comparisons are done with the intention to persuade the youths to develop interest in correcting the political anomaly of the Nigerian nation for the purpose of sustainable national development and its sustainability.

The metaphor of "the kettle investigating the pot" is taken from a popular idiom of "the kettle calling pot black". In the universal application of the idiom, the kettle is darker than the pot, yet it is first to sight the darkness of the pot without taking cognizance of its own darkness. Here, the adults are referred to, via idiom, as more corrupt and more engrossed in decadence than their young people. Yet they tend to make too much noise about the moral bankruptcy of their children in order to cover up for their own. When the kettle investigates the pot, it is okay, but when it comes the turn of the pot to investigate the kettle, everything is said to be wrong with it. This metaphor shows the hypocrisy of the adult society. Aside from the universal application of the idiom, black is associated with evil, while white is associated with good. Here the mention of the kettle and pot symbolizes evil; what is the difference now is the degree, which is achieved through comparison. This shows the pervading apostasy in the Nigerian society. The effort made to correct such ills is a fact that in the open, some persons are portrayed as trying to correct the ills, but in their inner minds they are out to cover up for their own inactions by shifting what is evil from themselves to the young people who are not so bad but are projected so terribly, so that no body thinks about their immoral acts. The pot has to investigate the kettle in order to fully exhibit the extent of darkness of both the pot and the kettle so that the world of both can be a better one. This enables the author to project the message of the text that man is gifted with double faces-an apostate. *What matters is how he directs them. It serves as a persuasive means of pushing the youth who painted so black that there is always light at the end of the tunnel. As a result they remain consistent until there succeed in the fight against corruption by changing the corrupt government of the Nigerian society of Our Children are Coming.*

The metaphor of "Apo's vitamin Q" is used to refer to the pleasure and the body nourishing sweetness that Justice Okpetun derived from making love to Apo. Her genitalia were referred to metaphorically as vitamin Q, since he desired them so much

to the level of being bewitched. His desire for “Apo’s vitamin Q” at a time turned the Justice Okpetun into a water hawker when he took water to Apo’s hostel at night during water scarcity, in disguise. However, the vitamin Q that he got from Apo was a double-edged type. The fear of being discovered coupled with the scandal and the shame that would follow made it a peculiar type that had both negative and positive effects-positive to the body but negative to the name and status in society.

The metaphor of “students as male monkeys” is used within the text’s semiotic universe to project the apostasy of man in the novel. Male monkeys are a symbol of strength and determination. Once they set out to unleash terror, there is no amount of dissuading that will prevent them from reaching the terminus of the action. This reveals how determined the students are in spite of the efforts of their adult parents to break their ranks using sentiments of all sorts. This shows that although they are perceived to be bad there is still some good in their generation *and that it is their responsibility to ensure that they do not loose focus in their determination and resolve to fight to the end since their mission is a noble and patriotic one of ensuring good governance and its sustainability.*

The metaphor of the brilliant Nigerian who was passing all the tests given to him “like a hungry dog licking the plate of food set before him” can be interpreted in the light of the projection of the message of the text. His being compared to a dog is justified in the semiotic universe of the text. A dog has both negative and positive attributes. It can guard the home of the owner by alerting him when there is a threat and can be used for hunting. At the same time when it wants to be disobedient, it can go to the extreme. The brilliant young man whose brilliance was appraised with high expectations turned out to be a misfit whose brain earned him no respect at the turn around of events. Having acquired so much knowledge as evident in the acquisition of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, all he knew how to do was how his ideas would bring a revolution to a country. He sold everything he owned and was left without shelter since he could no longer pay his rent. This is human apostasy. *This, the author uses to direct the focus of the youths in order that they do not derail in the struggle for good governance and sustainability.*

Likening the Nigerian Youth Service scheme to “sugar-coated slave labour” is a metaphor also used to project human apostasy. The open aim of the scheme is such that should have positive impact on the youth of the country. At the same time it has become a labyrinth or a means of exploitation of the youth by the adults. When Corps members leave orientation camps, they are deployed to all the nooks and crannies of society, where their labour will be exploited in schools, in companies, in government parastatals and in agencies. What they are given as stipends is a far cry from what they should have got if they are to be placed on graduate’s normal salary scale. The essence of the metaphor is that the scheme, aside from its objective of uniting the youth of the country as leaders of tomorrow, has a hidden advantage to the adult group that started it. *Hence the youths as a result of this awareness and persuasion become determined to transform the political institution that is perceived to be against their future as future ambassadors of the nation for future self development and sustainable growth.*

The last two metaphors in the list are proverbs. Proverbs constitute the palm oil with which words are eaten among the Ibos (Achebe 1957). The author uses the first to also project his message. The proverb is based on the author’s ignoble

experience of the Nigerian civil war which makes him have reservation for the word 'revolution', and which the youth of Nigeria under the auspices of the NAS are about to start. He uses this to sound a note of caution so that what ordinarily is meant to foster positive change will not be turned around by mischief makers for negative intentions that will bring untold hardship on the generally of the masses. In that vain, the author uses Dr. Chinwuba (a character) to project this message using the metaphor "A man bitten by a snake, runs at the sight of an earthworm". The snake and the earthworm here are used to achieve verisimilitude between the Nigerian civil war and the NAS' revolution. This projects human apostasy in the sense that their good intentions can as well be turned around for negative causes, which might degenerate to civil unrest *that will prevent the desired sustainable development and lead to further under-development.*

The second which is the last in the list is a metaphor derived from a Nigerian proverb used by the author to describe the misinterpretation of the youth, which is the major concern of the adults. What the metaphor achieves is that, the so-called laziness and sexual promiscuity, among the youth constitute part of their inheritance from their parents. Instead of complaining so much about their children's inactions and setting up a commission to probe the youth alone, they should also watch their own ways using another instrument. This they did not do. And unless there is balance, there cannot be any solution to the problem. This justifies the setting up of the NAS commission, since the government refuses to accept the representatives of the NAS on its own commission. This also projects the message of the text. The metaphor, 'it is from the parent snake that the baby snake inherits its venom' achieves a verisimilitude between the adults and the youth. Looking at the two proverb-metaphors, it becomes glaring that the snake is an important imagery among the people of Eastern Nigeria. It is used to depict negative attributes of humans, both young and old. Therefore, it is a projection of the fact that apostasy is ageless. Hence, they found the need for them to jettison the ways of their old parents who have failed to turn around their wisdom for positive national development and sustainability.

CONCLUSION

This paper discusses the ways in which the author of *Our Children are Coming* uses actions performed by characters and metaphors to project the message of human apostasy in this novel. It argues that many at times human actions are seen to be premised upon open good intentions, but are based on unseen bad causes. There are several actions of characters used as instances of this assertion, which portray them in negative lights other than the positive responsibility with which the members of the commission were saddled. It shows a possible mismatch between the right job to be done and the wrong persons deployed to do the job. This position is expressed using a number of metaphors derived from the wider situation of the novel. These include proverbs, simile and traditional metaphors that are replete with local imagery whose meanings can best be understood, only when familiar with the semiotic universe of the novel. This shows that the text's wider situation of culture is an important component of textual interpretation. *This can be used to properly create awareness and sensitization of the populace for national development and its sustainability. The overall argument re-invigorates Adejare's position that every second order text should have a central message that it projects, since it is considered a functional semantic unit. This implies that it is not all writers that write for the fun of it but because they have a message they want to put across to their readers that can lead to awareness and sensitization of the populace with the aim to mobilizing them for positive change. This is aimed at fostering national development and its sustainability.* This also reveals that the age long belief in multiple

messages for a Second Order text may not lead to the full realization of the true communicative potentials of the text *and a disservice to national development and its sustainability*.

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