

The Ideological Square and Transitivity in the Poetry of Remi Raji Oyelade

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Abstract

This article examines the ideological square and transitivity in the poetry of Remi Raji with a view to revealing the interconnectivity of language and ideology essential for understanding well Raji's poetry. The theoretical framework combined van Dijk's approach to Critical Discourse Analysis and M.A.K. Halliday's transitivity framework. Data was obtained from eight poems which were purposively selected from three collections of poetry (Sea of My Mind, Lovesong from my Wasteland and A Harvest of Laughters) by Remi Raji. Excerpts from the poems were subjected to a qualitative linguistic analysis. Van Dijk's Us/Them dichotomy, constructed via transitivity choices, manifested itself in Remi Raji's poetry. This was consolidated through the discursive strategy of exclusion and inclusion. There was a constant and systemic strategy of exclusion of the ruling class and their supporters in the poems. The poet and other members of the in-group were positively represented. A strong link exists between transitivity and ideology in Remi Raji's poetry.

Keywords: *Remi Raji, ideological square, transitivity, Nigerian poetry*

Introduction

Anything that is written or said about the world articulates or is articulated from a particular ideological position. Every discourse is a possible destination for ideologies and ideologies need a medium to function. In studying Remi Raji's poetry it is assumed that "discourses take place within society, and can only be understood in the interplay of social situation, action, actor and societal structures" (Meyer, 2001:21). Further, as proposed by van Dijk (1998), ideology serves as the interface between social structure and social cognition. In addition, van Dijk (1998:191) opines that ideologies are "social representations that have specific social functions for groups", and that language use, text, talk and communication—subsumed under the term "discourse"—are used by group members to learn, acquire, change, confirm, articulate and persuasively convey ideologies to other in-group members, and to defend or conceal them from out-group members.

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A poet enacts power through control of the context of the communicative event. He or she chooses the topic, the participants in the communicative event and who appears in which subject positions. Analyzing control, dominance and power through a socio-cognitive approach, van Dijk (1995, 2001, 2003) claims that they can be exercised through mental models of positive self-representation and negative representation of other. He identifies coercive power, which is predicated on force, as well as power accruing from access and control of specific types of discourse. Explaining how control through discourse is achieved, van Dijk (1995, 1998) opines that it concerns the control of context by defining the communicative event, deciding on the time and place of the communicative event, the participants who must be present and who must not. For our present purposes, the poet not only selects a topic but also has the right of directing a communicative event in a way that is consistent with his or her perception. Van Dijk (1998, 2003) terms this phenomenon as control of knowledge. In the present study, it is used to reveal which knowledge about the society and social actors Remi Raji exposes the reader to and which one is concealed or suppressed. Language use is a means of establishing and maintaining relations, values and identities (Fairclough, 1989, 1995, 2010). Therefore, one can argue that one's use of discourse not only interpersonally positions one, but it also reveals one's affiliations. This paper examines the ideological square and transitivity in the poetry of Remi Raji. The paper argues that Remi Raji, a poet with a nationalist imagination, constructs an ideological representation that is largely anti-government and pro-masses. This representation is achieved through the transitivity processes at various levels. It is hoped that studies like this one creates an awareness of the ideological, constructive and functional nature of language in literary discourse.

A considerable number of studies have been done on Remi Raji's poetry. Notable among them are Oha (2003), Olaniyan (2014), Ayeomoni (2012) and Ogungbemi (2012). Little research on Nigerian fiction, more specifically on Nigerian poetry, has however focused on how transitivity patterns convey the ideological square or the Us versus Them dichotomy. Critical Discourse analysts in Nigeria have usually analysed news reports (Ogungbemi & Okusanya, 2016) and textbooks (Ibrahim, 2015). Analyses of Nigerian fictional texts, especially Nigerian poetry under CDA rubric, are rare, to the best of the researcher's knowledge. However, it is the case that poetry like other genres is a form of highly stylised language use and site which has the ability to promote polarisation and certain ideologies while

suppressing others. Further, Remi Raji's poetry has largely been an object of literary criticism and literary stylistics. Notable among the critics are Egya (2007, 2011) and Adegaju (2013). While these studies have made shrewd interpretations of the stylistic and thematic aspects they investigated, none has addressed the transitivity patterns employed by the author to encode his meanings and convey the ideologies in his poetry.

The Nature of Remi Raji's Poetry

Remi Raji's artistic resourcefulness reeks through his volumes of poetry. His literariness investigates the complexities of African cosmology, thereby provoking a high sense of commitment on the part of his readers towards his poetry. Remi Raji's poetry evokes specific contemporary sensibilities to social injustices. He deploys simple and accessible poetic language drawn from elements of African culture and civilization.

Remi Raji's poetry reflects thoroughly the happenings in his society. The poet, Remi Raji, considers himself a poet in the words of Sule Egya (2011) with a "nationalist imagination." Explaining this, Sule Egya (2011) quotes Raji thus:

There are levels of nationalism. I mean there are false nationalisms and there are critical nationalisms. The idea was to look back at my country and to do a critique of society because most people, poets, sometimes, try to run away from the possibilities of connecting poetry and pure nationalism. Even though I wrote these poems all at different times, I suddenly realized that most of the things I was talking about had to do with the country, all forms of oppressions, different kinds of silences. One major thing that connects all of them is that nationalist imagination (Sou 'wester', 10).

Remi Raji's poetry is also political. In his poetry, one sees a constant dialogue and interrogation with his immediate society and beyond. His poetry questions tyrannical and oppressive regimes as well as the ills in democratic governments in Africa. He is basically concerned with happenings in the country. Further, he is ready to question through his writing societal ills and where necessary to confront the outrage of tyranny. Remi Raji has established himself as a notable poetic voice

that is well grounded in Nigerian literary tradition. His vision as a writer has been steady.

Theoretical Orientation

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

Critical Discourse Analysis is a discourse analytic method which focuses on how social power, dominance and inequality are enacted, reproduced and resisted in text and talk in the social and political contexts where they occur (van Dijk, 2001; Fairclough, 2010). Another aim of CDA is to uncover the ideologies which are encoded in language and which make the unequal distribution of power seem natural and given (Young & Harrison, 2004). Basically, CDA is concerned with the relationship between language, power and ideology, the relationship between discourse, social identity and social change, and the role of discourse in producing and maintaining inequality (Weiss & Wodak, 2003). These roles have been summarized by Fairclough and Wodak (1997) into eight principles, as follows: CDA addresses social problems, power relations are discursive, discourse constitutes society and culture, discourse does ideological work, discourse is historical, the link between text and society is mediated, CDA is interpretative and explanatory in intent.

Van Dijk's Framework

Van Dijk's (1998, 2001, 2006) framework is predicated on three dimensions: discourse, cognition and society. Under van Dijk's conceptual triangle, discourse analysis on the one hand, has to do with an interpretation of linguistic aspects of discourse, including syntax, local semantics, lexicon, topics, etc. On the other hand, social analysis involves the social context of discourse. Through cognition, van Dijk pays attention to the relationship between discourse and social structure. This implies that understanding a macro-level social notion such as power and dominance, and a micro-level notion such as discourse, one must give thought to mental representations that are socially shared and personal models that are based on personal experiences. How these representations and models are cognitively shaped determines the construction of meaning.

Van Dijk's conceptual framework accounts for three types of belief: knowledge, opinions and attitudes, and ideologies. To start with, knowledge is either shared by a specific group or is common throughout the society. The latter is known as Common Ground Knowledge and this is usually presupposed in discourse and taken for

granted. Further, opinions and attitudes refer to beliefs that are shared on evaluative grounds (good vs. bad) rather than truth criteria. Besides, ideology applies to different attitudes in different social domains (van Dijk, 2001). It is more fundamental or axiomatic. It occupies a central place in van Dijk's framework, as it shapes mental representations and models that define different groups. Van Dijk believes that ideologies can become shared so widely that they become part of the "generally accepted attitudes of an entire community (van Dijk, 2006:117), as beliefs, opinions, or common sense." To van Dijk (1995), they represent social characteristics of a group such as their identity, values and resources.

To van Dijk, discourse analysis is ideological analysis; little wonder he opines, "any property of discourse that expresses, establishes, confirms or emphasizes a self-interested group opinion, perspective or position, especially in a broader socio-political context of social struggle, is a candidate for special attention in such an ideological analysis" (van Dijk, 1995:22–23). In a bid to identify ideologies and reveal group struggles, van Dijk identifies a number of discourse structures. These include: lexical items, propositions, implications, presuppositions, descriptions, semantic moves, etc., (van Dijk, 1995, 1998).

The ideological square is one of the principal concepts in van Dijk's framework. The central tenet of the ideological square is expressed in terms of emphasizing the positive actions of what a writer considers the in-group and deemphasizing its negative actions while, on the other hand, deemphasizing the positive actions of the out-group, and emphasizing its negative actions.

The Ideological Square

Van Dijk (1998) avers that ideologies are more often than not articulated and based on the ideological square. To van Dijk (1998:125), people "engage in intergroup discourse for reasons of self-presentation, self-defence, legitimation, persuasion, recruiting, and so on." Therefore, discourse is a platform for processes that help to create and sustain groups as well as intergroup relations. Often times, intergroup discourse is polarized between Us versus Them dichotomy. Van Dijk (1998:267) presents a four-dimensional classification that characterizes ideological intergroup discourse. The ideological square is reproduced below:

- A. Emphasizes positive things about us;
- B. Emphasizes negative things about them;
- C. De-emphasizes negative things about us; and
- D. De-emphasizes positive things about them.

By means of emphasis and mitigation, the ideological square polarizes the in-groups and out-groups. Emphatically, ideological discourses present the good *self* and the bad *other* and simultaneously mitigate the bad *self* and the good *other*. The motivations of the speaker/writer inform the above classification. Basically, it is in the interests of the speaker or writer to emphasize positive aspects of the in-group and de-emphasize any negative aspects. It is also in the interest of the speaker/writer to emphasize the negative aspects of the out-group and de-emphasize any positive aspects of the out-group. This works in favour of the speaker/writer and his/her own group. Van Dijk (1998: 267) sums these strategies as the “positive self-presentation” and “negative other-presentation”. Analysing ideology in discourse involves paying specific attention to properties that seem to demonstrate conflicting opinions, values and positions between groups, that is, between Us and Them, between in-groups and out-groups (van Dijk, 1995:22). The present study is greatly influenced by van Dijk’s ideas of ideology.

Transitivity Framework

Transitivity

Transitivity is the way meaning is signified in a clause. Choices made in the system of transitivity signify the way the writer sees the world around her/him. Transitivity is concerned with the transmission of ideas. Therefore, it belongs to the ideational function (Halliday, 1985). Transitivity realizes the ideational function by expressing processes. In the words of Halliday (1973:134),

Transitivity is the set of options whereby the speaker encodes his experience of the process of the external world, and of the internal world of his own consciousness, together with the participants in these processes and their attendant circumstances (...).

Thus, transitivity refers to how a writer represents who acts (who is agent) and who is acted upon (who is affected by the actions of others). Being a part of the ideational function, transitivity portrays the

writer's world-view. Consequently, many critical analysts have examined it as a means of uncovering the links between language and ideology, and which meanings are foregrounded, backgrounded or not included in a text.

Transitivity accounts for three basic elements in a clause. The first is the semantic nucleus of the clause, popularly known as a *process*. This usually involves an obligatory verb. Mainly, it includes the event or state of affairs described in the clause. This process is combined with one or more nouns or noun phrases which indicate the *participants* in the event or the state of affairs. Sometimes, the process is accompanied by one or more *circumstances*. Describing the participants, the doer of the action is known as the *agent*, and the persons or objects acted upon are called *affected participants*, or *patients*. A *circumstance*, which is the third element in the system of transitivity, is an expression which indicates the time, place or manner of the event described in the clause (Fowler, 1991:73–6).

To describe the events that go on around and within them in texts, writers can choose between different processes and participants, and between which of these participants will act or be acted upon; the choices made will be reflected in the syntax of the text. Therefore, the plain principle of transitivity can be articulated by a question: *who or what does what to whom or what?* According to Mills (1995:143), the analysis of transitivity choices “is primarily concerned with the roles of human participants.” The principal message of the transitivity framework is that every text could have been produced differently, and these diverse versions would have denoted alternative points of view.

Linguistically, a process may be expressed in a number of ways, each of them signifying a different way of seeing. Within the ambit of Critical Discourse Analysis, an investigation of transitivity aims at evaluating which cultural, ideological, political or theoretical factors have influenced the way a process is expressed in a particular text (Fairclough, 1992). There are six processes identified in the literature; they include: material, verbal, mental, relational, behavioural, and existential. For our purposes in the present study, we will briefly discuss three processes, material, mental, and relational.

Material processes are deployed to depict actions and events (doings and happenings) (Halliday, 1985). Material processes have two basic participant roles which are the Actor or Agent, an obligatory role, and

a Goal, a role which may or may not be involved in the process (Simpson, 2004). The Actor is the person or an object that does the action and influences the course of events (Halliday, 2004). The Goal is the entity, animate or inanimate, affected by the process (Fawcett, 2008). The role of Goal can also be taken by a Beneficiary. Beneficiary is a Recipient who benefits from goods or services, as evidenced in the sentence: *Tunde built a house for his family*, where Tunde is inscribed as Actor or Agent, *house* as Goal and *his family* as Beneficiary.

The mental process refers to the inner experience of our states of being, our reflection on, or our reaction to our 'outer experience' (Halliday, 2004). It is usually represented by a verb that relates to feelings (e.g. love), cognition (e.g. contemplating), and perceiving (e.g. hearing) (Halliday, 2004). Two participants are involved in mental processes: the Senser, and the Phenomenon. The Senser is the entity capable of, for example, understanding, sensing or tasting. The Phenomenon on the other hand is what is, for instance, felt, thought or perceived by the Senser (Simpson, 2004).

The relational process refers to the process of being (Halliday, 1994). It establishes a relationship between two entities (Simpson, 2004). To Halliday (2004), the relational clause has two inherent participants which are constructed as one element in a relationship of 'being'; with the help of such linking or copula verbs as *is*, *was*, *has*, or an equivalent. The first participant is the Carrier/Identifier and the second is an Attribute/Identified.

Methodology

A descriptive qualitative research design was deployed in this study. Data was obtained from eight poems which were purposively selected from three collections of poetry (*Sea of My Mind*, *Lovesong from my Wasteland* and *A Harvest of Laughters*) by Remi Raji-Oyelade. The study was informed by the theoretical underpinnings of Critical Discourse Analysis; more specifically van Dijk's (1995, 1998) model which views discourse analysis as an ideological analysis. Halliday's (1985, 1994, 2004) transitivity patterns served as an adjunct theory that provided the linguistic tools for analysis. The study was descriptive in nature, focusing on both micro and macro discourse analysis. At the micro or text level, analysis was hinged on investigation of transitivity patterns through the choices of process types in order to interrogate the Us versus Them dichotomy which is ideationally represented in the selected poems.

Data Analysis

Themes of Transitivity Processes in Raji's Poetry

Fighting Bad Leadership

An analysis of the different kind of actions that the poet and the people perform in the selected poetry of Remi Raji revealed the theme of fighting bad leadership. The majority of processes with the leaders as the affected participants in the selected poems relate to the theme of bad leadership. Relying on Fairclough (1989), such usage of 'the so-called 'inclusive' *we*' could indicate, in this particular case, that Remi Raji, the poet is speaking not only 'on behalf of' himself, but also all ('right-minded') members of the Self and US in-groups in the country. The processes through which this theme is shown are material, mental and relational. The material process is first presented, followed by the mental. The relational process is later presented. Some of the material processes identified in the selected poems are presented below.

- (a) We have **put** a curse on the household of graft
- (b) We have **followed** the thieves to the lip of the gallows
- (c) We have **set** flames to the barn of ignorance
- (d) We have **sent** termites and locusts in the path of greed

(Run, Country, Run – *Sea of my Mind*, 52)

In excerpts (a-d), Raji describes the masses using material processes which give prominence to action. Expressions such as 'put', 'follow', 'sent' and 'set' for instance, are concrete and more directional. These transitive material processes in which the poet and the people are Agents, acting intentionally upon bad leadership and its attendant effects project the poet and the people as members of the in-group. This positions the poet and the people as entities which not only take control of what is happening, but also affect the physical phenomena around them. The goals in (a-d) include the following: 'a curse', 'the thieves', 'flames', and 'termites and locusts'. The beneficiary elements ideationally construct what the people will do to bad leadership and its attendant effects. This positions the poet and the people in a very strong position. They are taking their destinies into their own hands and will no longer tolerate bad leadership, corruption and indiscipline in its different forms. The poet and the people are associated with positive actions; acts of cleansing the land from corruption, indiscipline, and bringing to book those who are responsible for the backwardness seen in the land.

These material processes show more assertive manifestations of positive self-representation. The poet and the people are presented as following a balanced, reasonable course of action by making moves to getting rid of bad leadership in the society. The ideological effect construes the poet and the people as custodians of their society while the leaders are portrayed as corrupt. The result is a one dimensional positive self-representation of the poet and the people with the ideological by-product of negative inference toward the Other (the ruling class and whoever associates with them). Using material processes in (e) below, the poet portrays himself and the inclusive we as actors who are ready to do everything it takes to rid the land of bad leadership. Thus, the poet says:

- (e) We must **seize** the day and **wring** the neck of night
(BUT I HAVE LEARNT THE REWARD OF PATIENCE – *LOVESONG FOR MY WASTELAND*, 50)

The material processes in (e) reveal who is doing what to whom. Analyzing the clauses where the poet and the people are the actors revealed that the material processes found in the data belong in the semantic field of war and liberation. The material processes in (e) above are signalled by the verb ‘to seize’ and to wring. These are processes of action, which denote responsibility of the Actor, namely the poet and the people. The Goal in (e) realized by ‘the day’ and ‘the neck of night’ symbolize the ruling class whose reigns of terror are experienced in broad day light and at night as well.

The ideology that is established by this representation is that the poet and the people are very powerful and are the primary causal factors in returning normalcy to their land. The poet rhetorically classifies himself and the people as a staunch force for peace, security, honour and interest of their land. The structure in this material process again, is ideologically formulated to represent Us (the poet and the people) as virtuous, while equating the Other (the ruling class) with abstract entities as ‘the day’ and ‘night’ which clearly polarize them.

Relational processes also contribute to the Us/Them dichotomy in the selected poems. In f–h below, the poet emphasizes the positive self-representation of the in-group which he and the majority of the people belong to. The following utterances attest to the above assertion.

- (f) We are the trance in the rain, and we are the rains in the lust of heat
- (g) We are the rage of deferred dreams
- (h) We are the beauty in the land's ugliness (We are the Rage – *Sea of my Mind*, 56)

Excerpts (f–h) are instances of intensive relational processes. The pronoun “we,” represented by the poet and the people, is placed in the subject position and it is the identified participant of the relational process. The poet represents himself and the rest of the people in terms of what they are like, and not what they do. The attributes following the intensive processes here, are mostly positive, and relate to the poet and the people’s abilities to bring succour and relief in the face of problems created by the ruling class. It is evident that what the poet is doing is to emphasize the positive attributes of himself and the suffering masses while emphasizing in metaphoric terms what problems the leaders have brought on the people.

Here, we have a world portrayed in terms of a strongly demarcated polarization. On the one hand, there is the poet and the masses, self-portrayed as defenders of the land; they engage in positive, generative processes such as improving the lots of the people and commending themselves for what they are doing. The association of the poet and other members of the in-group with righteous acts contribute greatly to the ideological square. On the other hand, emphasizing negative-Other attributes, the Other – a coalition of bad leaders and other undesirable elements are presented as the opposition. Expressions such as ‘deferred dreams’, ‘lust of heat’ and ‘the land’s ugliness’ are deployed by the poet to construct the Other. It is a constructed view of reality where the poet and the people as ‘a staunch force for comfort, liberty and hope’ are locked in a just dispute with an Other that has brought ‘a lust of heat’, has ‘deferred the people’s dreams’ and has brought ‘ugliness on the land’, (f–h). In the next section, Remi Raji emphasizes negative things about the leaders. He focuses on the violence meted out to the masses and the land by the leaders in the land.

Violence towards the People and the Land

Analysing the kinds of processes associated with the ruling class in the selected poems showed the theme of violence. In most cases, the Other (the ruling class) openly raped the people and carried out violent actions against them and the land. Through material and

mental processes, Remi Raji brings to the fore the violent behaviour of the leaders against the people and the land. Some examples are shown below:

- (a) we mine the coal
- (b) **they** spend the gold
- (c) we mint the coins
- (d) **they** spend the notes
- (e) we mend the bridge
- (f) **They** break the dam
- (g) we mind the gate
- (h) **they** break the door
- (i) we till the land
- (j) **they** loot the soil
- (k) we kill the game
- (l) **they** hunt the stew
- (m) we bless the meal
- (n) **they** steal the meat
- (o) we slash the dark
- (p) **they** steal the light

(A Dozen Monologue – *A Harvest of Laughters*, 67)

In excerpts (a–p) above, we have sixteen lines. Eight of the lines (b, d, f, h, j, l, n, p) are used by the poet to project the irresponsible behaviour exhibited by the leaders. Nigerian leaders amass the nation's wealth for themselves while the masses are left to flounder in poverty. To the poet, the leaders are destructive; they are also looters and traitors. In lines (b, d, f, h, j, l, n, p), 'they' is the Actor of the material processes – 'loot', 'steal', 'hunt', 'break', 'spend' in the above lines of the poem. The negative image of the leaders recurs in almost all the lines where the leaders are the Actors. It can then be argued that in Nigeria, the society being depicted, one of the identities traditionally associated with leaders both military and civilian is that of looting, stealing and other corrupt practices. Leaders in Nigeria are notorious for corruption. Raji is only confirming what the leaders are known for by the majority of Nigerians. They are not nation builders; they are like termites known only for their destructive values. These material processes 'loot', 'steal', 'hunt', 'break', 'spend' demonstrate that the implicit ideological intent embedded in texts is to covertly humiliate the ruling class who are members of the out-group.

Raji uses the pronouns “we” and “they” to demonstrate the ideological square. “We” stands for the poet and the masses, while “they” stands for the leaders. While the masses are working assiduously to make the country great, the leaders frustrate their efforts. The poet is in effect saying that the leaders are enemies of progress. Leadership should be about fighting the subjects’ plight but the poet posits that the leaders in Nigeria aggravate it. To further delegitimize the leaders, the poet refers to them as oppressive and inhuman in (q) below:

- (q) They **milked** the mule of her mirth
And left us the hind and the rind

(THERE CAN BE NO ARGUMENT ON WHERE I STAND – *LOVESONG FOR MY WASTELAND*, 28)

In excerpt (q), we see the continued rhetoric of polarization in the discursive construction of a world divided by ideology. They (the ruling class) in the subject position representing the Other is portrayed as cruel and inhuman through the material process ‘to milk’. They deprive the people of all the goods in the land. The panorama painted in excerpt (q) is that of slavery. The masses are treated as slaves and inferior people; they do not benefit from the fruits of the collective labour in the country. This equals the enslavement of the people by their leaders who occupy various positions of leadership to protect them. It is evident that the actions associated with the Other are negatively represented.

Further, the delegitimization of the Other is at times blatant as it is shown through a mental process in excerpt (r) below:

- (r) I have **known** the land long enough to know her enemies

(THERE CAN BE NO ARGUMENT ON WHERE I STAND – *LOVESONG FOR MY WASTELAND*, 28)

In the mental clause of perception: *I have known the land long enough to know her enemies*, I is a Senser and, *the land and her enemies* the Phenomena. What is significant about the senser is its capacity to invoke feelings and display affection for the land. A close analysis of the clause in transitivity terms reveals that the poet represented by the first person pronoun I is ideationally represented as being concerned with Phenomena or processes that call for not only courage,

but also perseverance. The way the poet represents himself conforms to the moves of the ideological square. The poet emphasizes the good about himself; he is a guardian of the land. He protects the land, first by unmasking her enemies, and second by identifying them so that the people can go after them. Virtually every representation of the poet and the people is positive (the moves are to ‘emphasize’ positive things about Us, and de-emphasize negative things about Us). For the purposes of negative other-representation, the second phenomenon ‘her enemies’, is discursively disconnected from those who care about the land and the masses. In the next section, the poet, Remi Raji uses the material and mental processes to emphasize positive things about himself and the masses. This aligns with the tenets of van Dijk’s ideological square.

The Poet and the People as Nation Builders

The analysis of the material and mental processes also revealed that the poet and the masses are positively presented as nation builders. They are presented as engaging in acts that put the nation first.

- (a) We mend the bridge
We mine the coal
We give the tithes

(A Dozen Monologue – *A Harvest of Laughters*, 67)

The speaker of lines 1–3 in excerpt (a) is the poet. He is using the pronoun ‘we’ to show that he is not alone in building the nation. There are still patriots like him who are ready to expend themselves in the building and rebuilding work in the land. The material processes in the above transitivity structures are signaled by the verbs ‘to mend’, ‘to mine’ and ‘to give’. They represent a process of repairing, creating and contributing which denotes responsibility of the Actor participant, namely we (the poet and the masses). The ideology that is established by this representation is that the above ‘we’ is very powerful and is the primary causal factor in rebuilding the nation. The poet represents himself and his ideological associates (the masses) in subject position, which draws attention to them through foregrounding their activities. This strategy syntactically foregrounds the poet and the masses, so that they are represented as nation builders. In ideological terms, these may be construed as biased exemplifications in the attempt to reinforce positive self-/negative other-representation. The positive self-

representation of the poet and the masses as nation builders is also represented by the following mental processes.

- (b) I loved my country with a vengeance
My generation loved the land with wasted efforts!

(THERE CAN BE NO ARGUMENT ON WHERE I STAND – *LOVESONG FOR MY WASTELAND*, 28)

- (c) We love our land and its history of shame...
(On Behalf of Silence – *A Harvest of Laughters*, 55)

The mental process, ‘love’ is associated with feelings. The poet and other members of in-group are individuals who act on the land to transform it through their actions. In transitivity terms, the Phenomenon may be construed as having more agency since it is the one that triggers the process on the Senser. In this case, the poet and other members of the in-group (Phenomenon) cast themselves as the victims trapped by the country’s love which ideationally positions them as the Senser of the Phenomenon (country’s love). In other words, love for the country dominates the poet and other members of the in-group by transforming their course of life, thereby constraining them to give their all for their country. From the following, one could theorize that at the heart of the representations by the poet concerning the in-group and the poet himself is the discursive act of legitimization. Legitimization is accomplished by pursuing the discursive strategies of the ideological square: that is, legitimize Us by portraying the processes we are involved in, and the attributes ‘we’ possess as positive, and foreground them. Other examples, projecting the poet as a nation builder are shown below in (d–f):

- (d) I know the colour of your silence
darkly as dark could be
in this deathly dawn
where a padlock
in every mouth
solves the mystery
of rude savings.

- (e) I know the colour of your silence
yellow
as the feverish
voice-

lessness
of a groggy dream... (Silence – *A Harvest of Laughters*, 50–51)

- (f) I **feel** the outlaw's pain
I **know** the anguish of exile.

(TRAPPED, DOUBLE TRAPPED, TRIPLE- TRAPPED – *LOVESONG FOR MY WASTELAND*)

The poet persona is represented as being the Senser participant of the mental processes, 'to know' and 'to feel', in relation to issues involving inhumanity from the leaders to the people. It emphasizes the act of making sacrifices by the poet persona on behalf of the people. This type of process indicates a human, rational activity and therefore portrays the poet as the voice and the eyes of the people against injustices in the land.

A careful analysis of the transitivity patterns in this excerpt also reveals that the poet uses these mental processes to confirm the role of the poet in the African society. The poet is always ready to carry the burden of others in the land. Excerpts (d and e) attempt to overtly credit the poet through emphasizing his involvement in positive mental processes. The poet knows the colour of the silence emanating from the leaders; a deafening silence that is deadly. This means that the poet can accurately read and interpret the actions of the leaders in the land. This aligns with van Dijk's ideological square that highlights positive things about oneself or one's group and deemphasizes the negative about oneself or one's group.

It is also notable that the poet's choice of the mental process: 'to feel', (I feel the outlaw's pain) constructs the poet as someone who suffers because of his agitation against the powers that be in the land. This is especially true in Nigeria. Individuals who go against the leaders have been treated as outlaws and imprisoned or sometimes eliminated. Raji is letting the readers know that poets who oppose these governments are making huge sacrifices and should be accorded the honour they deserve because they have done a lot on behalf of the people. The poet constructs himself as someone who has followed a reasonable course of action. He has suffered on behalf of the people and his country; he has been ostracized and banished because he chooses to fight for his people. This is clear from the expression, 'the anguish of exile'. This is a positive self-presentation of the poet. Self aggrandizement is also

evident in excerpt (f). This conforms to the moves of the ideological square. While the poet represents himself in the way he would like to be perceived, the unmentioned individuals or the individual who caused him so much pain and made him feel like an outcast is not portrayed in positive light. He is described as one who enjoys when the masses suffer and keep shut at the same time.

Conclusion

The specific focus of the study was explicating how transitivity patterns are used to index the Us/Them dichotomy in the poetry of Remi Raji. Three principal arguments guided this study. First, a poet's words can be used to communicate a broad sense of meanings, and the meaning conveyed through those words is identified by their immediate social, political and historical contexts. Second, a poet's words are never neutral, but rather they are carriers of the ideology that reflects and supports the interests of the poet. Third, literary writers play a significant role in determining and legitimizing discourses and social relations, since their words are often taken as unadulterated truth.

Investigation of the transitivity choices in Remi Raji's poetry revealed two competing discourses: the discourse of the good Us and bad Them which are discursively co-articulated and mutually reinforcing in a manner that serves to legitimize and naturalize the positive representation of the poet and the masses (in-group) and the negative representation of the ruling class (out-group). Through the use of material, mental and relational processes, Remi Raji has constructed the Us in agentive positions as in charge of positive actions. The in-group members are largely inscribed as Actors in material processes which depict them as nation builders, and fighters against oppressors and bad leadership. They are also Sensers of Phenomena who have to do with accomplishment of feats, who love the country that is being bastardised by the ruling class. In the same vein, members of the in-group (the poet and the masses) are also inscribed as Carriers of attributes such as physical strength and cognitive or mental capacity which depict them as protectors of the land, who love the land unconditionally.

However, in the selected poems discourse is characterized by transitivity choices that portray the ruling class as the Other and reinforce their position in the society as members of the out-group. For example, material processes cast the ruling class and anybody

supporting their course as wicked and violent. This kind of disabling discourse ideologically excludes and ‘others’ them.

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