

## **Metaphoric Logic in the Construction of Patriarchal Ideology: Euphemisms and Dysphemisms in Selected Nigerian Novels**

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### **Abstract**

*The significance of metaphoric uses of language is evident in their potential to convey understanding from what is known to what is less known. Nigerian novels are richly embedded with metaphoric logic which subtly resonates the ideological views of Nigerian people. Despite the vast array of studies on gender-based Nigerian novels, scholars are yet to examine euphemisms and dysphemisms as forms of metaphoric logic in constructing patriarchal ideology. This study investigates how these items are metaphorically used in the construction of patriarchal ideology in Nigerian novels. Three Nigerian novels with ample gender issues were purposively sampled – Helon Habila’s *Measuring Time*, Jude Dibia’s *Blackbird*, and Liwhu Betiang’s *The Cradle on the Scales*. The article draws significantly from critical discourse analysis, conceptual metaphor and dominance gender theory. It reveals that the patriarchal ideology is characterised by two metaphoric concepts, portraying how both genders adapt and opt for patriarchal provisions to promote cultural values.*

**Keywords:** *metaphor, patriarchal ideology, Nigerian novels, euphemisms and dysphemisms*

### **Introduction**

Metaphors and patriarchal ideology converge at several points. This is because metaphoric logic is largely allocated on the basis of belief differences and assumed principles of different sexes in a society. This metaphoric logic is used to uphold the language and culture of a people. And since Nigeria is a patriarchal society, there is a need to understand how this metaphoric logic is manifested in literary texts in the construction of patriarchal ideology. For instance, while role assignment on a sex basis has been metaphorically embedded at the detriment of one sex despite the continuous notion of gender equality, literary writers consciously and unconsciously portray such depending on their beliefs and principles as influenced by their sex category and society. It is against this background that this paper examines how euphemisms and dysphemisms are metaphorically represented in the language of Nigerian male novelists in the construction of patriarchal ideology. In language, metaphor is defined as an indirect or direct

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comparison between two or more seemingly unrelated subjects or types of comparisons using one idea to explain another. More generally, a metaphor casts a first subject (tenor) as being equal to a second subject (vehicle) in some way. Thus, the first subject can be economically described considering the implicit and explicit attributes of the second. Equally, euphemisms and dysphemisms are essential parts of any language and culture. They are, therefore, metaphoric tools that help in explicating the values of a society.

Allan and Burridge (2006:31) define dysphemism as “an expression with connotations that are offensive either about the denotatum or to the audience, or both, and [it] is substituted for a neutral or euphemistic expression for just that reason”. Dysphemisms are used to describe or talk/write about something or someone a speaker/writer despises or intentionally disparages. In political settings, opposing parties use dysphemisms to criticize, ridicule, and mock each other. They are usually motivated by hatred, anger, or fear and tend to be more colloquial and figurative; impolite or indecent behaviors are considered dysphemistic (Allan & Burridge, 2006). Therefore, dysphemism may be either offensive or merely humorously deprecating. On the other hand, euphemism is making use of agreeable, implicit, less irritating, indirect or ambiguous substitute that one cannot catch instantaneously to replace the tabooed language. But the range of application of euphemism is not restricted to the tabooed objects or concepts, and there are quite diversified forms of euphemism. Besides, in discourse or social intercourse, people sometimes purposefully break down the taboos by using dysphemism to vent their unpleasantness or express their contempt; or even to win group identity thereof. By and large, one can say that euphemism is, more often than not, used in formal and neutral occasions; whereas dysphemism is more often used in informal occasion; this is not unvarying. By implication, the higher the degree of civilization; the more people are likely to see that their speech and writing be civilized and elegant, which invariably characterises euphemism. And so, the range of application for a great deal of dysphemism has become narrower and narrower or replaced by some implicit words or expressions. As a result, the use for euphemism has, by contrast, become wider and wider.

All the same, the two can be used metaphorically to affirm superiority and dominance. Since patriarchy has to do with power and control, the relevance of these two tools in the construction of patriarchal ideology

in Nigerian novels will be examined to ascertain the metaphoric logic associated with their usage.

### **Methodology and Design**

Three Nigerian novels, namely Helon Habila's *Measuring Time* (henceforth *MT*), Jude Dibia's *Blackbird*, and Liwhu Betiang's *The Cradle on the Scales*, (henceforth *The Cradle*) were purposively sampled as the existing gender-based Nigerian novels that have sufficient discussions on gender issues. Because the sampled novelists are all males, only patriarchal-related euphemistic and dysphemistic elements were selected across the texts for analysis to see how such novelists support the assumed patriarchal society which they represent. Some excerpts were subjected to analyses deploying insights from aspects of socio-cognitive critical discourse analysis, conceptual metaphor, and dominance gender theory.

### **Patriarchal Ideology**

Patriarchy is a social system that promotes the institutions of male rule and privilege, and entails female subordination. Its origins can be traced through different stages of civilisation, and several views have been expressed regarding the origins of patriarchy and its universality. Its roots have been traced in history, religion and nature. For some, patriarchy as a system has a beginning in history; it is man-made and thus can be ended by historical processes in the future. For others, patriarchy is a natural phenomenon, i.e., it is based on biological differentiation of human beings into male and female categories. It is understood that patriarchy is universal, God-given, and natural and cannot be questioned. Evidently, this system establishes male dominance and control over women in society in general, and particularly within the family. Walby (1990) uses the term patriarchy to refer to the domination, oppression, and exploitation of women by men. It is also a system of hierarchical organization that cuts across political, economic, social, religious, cultural, industrial and financial spheres, under which the overwhelming number of upper positions in society are either occupied or controlled and dominated by men. Since patriarchy is perpetuated through a process of institutionalisation of the social, cultural, and religious practices in society, and legitimised through the political, legal and economic systems of society, it makes women to internalise as well as further perpetuate patriarchal ways of thinking, both in values and behaviours. Therefore, patriarchal ideology encircles

women consciously or unconsciously, within its control of exploitation, discrimination and oppression.

### **Critical Discourse Analysis, Conceptual Metaphor and Dominance Theory of Gender**

The present study is concerned with the dominant patriarchal influence on the other gender. This interest immediately necessitates the inclusion of ideology (CDA) in the framework for handling the data. This consideration is taken together with conceptual metaphor which explains the metaphoric set-up of reference items employed by euphemisms and dysphemisms from the novels. The dominance gender theory is relevant because of the connection between dominance and patriarchy.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is ...a shared perspective on doing linguistics, semiotic or discourse analysis (van Dijk, 1993). Its objective is to perceive language use as social practice. The users of language do not function in isolation, but in a set of cultural, social and psychological frameworks. CDA takes a particular interest in the ways in which language mediates ideology in a variety of social institutions by exploring the links between textual structures and their function in interaction within the society. In CDA, Wodak (2007) describes ideology as an important means of establishing and maintaining unequal power relations. Fairclough (2003:9) observes that ideology relates to “representations of aspects of the world which can be shown to contribute to establishing, maintaining, and changing of social relations of power, dominations, and exploitation”. This is done subtly, but at times overtly (Fairclough, 2003; van Dijk, 1998). In reality, ideology is institutional and beyond the individual since it resides in social groups. Obviously, genders, races, classes, and groups have ideologies which influence their perspectives and horizons. Consequently, Nigerian society as represented in Nigerian literary texts is a social institution and does not escape the clench of ideology which reflects in its patriarchal configuration and orientation.

Conceptual metaphor is an underlying association that is systematic in both language and thought. It is a linguistic approach to literature which claims that metaphor is not a mode of language, but a mode of thought. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) claim that our conceptual system, in terms of which human beings think and act, is basically metaphoric in nature. They claim that the way we as humans think, what we experience, and what we do every day, is very much a matter of

metaphor. Apparently, metaphor is a cognitive instrument thorough which we conceive our world. Conceptual metaphors typically employ a more abstract concept as target and a more concrete or physical concept as their source. Since metaphor is the imagination of one thing in the form of another; ...the mode in which nature, the being, the imagined extra-sensual essence of a thing, is represented by the identification with the apparently different; the image (or activity or concept) used to represent or “figure” something else is known as the vehicle of the metaphor; the thing represented is called the tenor” (Murfin & Ray, 1998:210). Metaphor can be direct or implied. Direct is the type in which the tenor and the vehicle are specified while implied is the type in which the vehicle is mentioned but the tenor is “implied by the context of the sentence or passage” (Murfin & Ray, 1998: 211). Therefore, the meaning of a metaphor is the product of an “interaction” between the meanings of the vehicle and the tenor of a metaphor and involves an interaction between elements that involve not only words but also fields of associations (Abrams, 1988:66). Euphemisms and dysphemisms in Nigerian novels are concretised and made more meaningful when in interaction with the implied tenor and other elements surrounding both the tenor and vehicle.

In dominance framework, language patterns are interpreted as manifestations of a patriarchal society order which gives political as well as cultural privileges to men. The consequence of patriarchy is inequality in power relations between two sexes. Such inequality is manifested in the political system, and institutions (churches and families). It promotes how men dominate women, to demonstrate their power. The dominance approach provides a traditional, negative evaluation of women’s speech, and authors contend that it is a direct consequence of women’s political and cultural subordination to men. In fact, dominance is seen to be in the same category as “weakness,” “passivity” and “deficiency” (Uchida, 1999:286), effectively portraying women as disempowered members of society. Thus, women’s linguistic inadequacies are attributed to societal inequalities between men and women, where men’s conversational dominance appears to reflect the wider political and cultural domination of men over women (Freeman & McElhinny, 1996). Lakoff (1975) argues that women’s manner of speaking, which is different to men, reflects their subordinate status in society. Freeman & McElhinny (1996) divide Lakoff’s (1975) ideas on women’s language into three categories; firstly, the lack of resources that would enable women to express themselves strongly;

secondly, language that encourages women to talk about trivial subjects, and finally, language that requires women to speak tentatively.

### **Analysis**

The patriarchal ideological engagement of euphemisms and dysphemisms is examined under two metaphorical resources; THE MAN IS A GOD (man is powerful), and THE WOMAN IS A SEX OBJECT (woman is exploited for sex). Each of these metaphoric concepts are characterised by three underlying structures, which are discussed in turns.

#### **The Man is a God (The Man is Powerful)**

In this perception, the male-folk is associated with power, influence, authority, control and dominance. Man is viewed as a representation of a god, a controller and organiser in the family and society at large. This concept also equates man's behaviour, actions, or instincts with that of a supreme being, somebody who is in power, in charge and whose decisions are absolute. Thus, this metaphorical resource envisages man as an overbearing, forceful and domineering personality in the society. It showcases the authoritative and manipulative nature of man and its effect on the other gender. It is mostly manifested in exposing the oppression and imposing nature of the dominant over the dominated. The three underlying structures that support this metaphoric construct are: It is used to (1) sustain that man is associated with possession (women are always in their custody as daughters and wives); (2) promote the cultural notion that man can never be disadvantaged; and (3) recognize marriage as a source of power for men and a form of respectability for women. Examples of euphemisms and dysphemisms that illustrate this metaphor in the sampled novels are shown below:

...Your greatest ruin is this woman who rules your heart and house. A man is a man. Else if she were man enough she should have married you into her father's house ...  
(*The Cradle*, 81).

The above instance is a direct speech spoken by Ukandi (Unimke's grandfather) to Catechist when he discovered Unimke's disappearance from Catechist's house. He blames the Catechist and his wife for his grandson's disappearance. In the process, he uses the euphemism; *a man is a man* to link man with authority and power, projecting

structures from source domain of physical man into abstract target domain of symbolic man. This implies that to be a man is to be in charge all the time. Evidently, the preceding dysphemism, *your greatest ruin is this woman who rules your heart*, buttresses it by denoting that woman is linked to destruction. Therefore, the dysphemism is offensively used to describe the attitude of Catechist's wife which the speaker/writer despises. It is motivated by anger and hatred which Ukandi has towards the woman. Hence, any man who compromises his powerful position and perhaps gets influenced by a woman is doomed for wreck. Euphemistically, the name *man* connotes power while *woman* connotes destruction. The last phrase, *else if she were man enough, she should have married you into her father's house*, is dysphemistically used to stimulate the disparity between man and woman by drawing a line to what one can do which the other cannot. From the foregoing, it is evident that Ukandi uncovers directly and indirectly the unorthodox discourse strategy of a woman being in charge in a core Nigerian home, thereby presenting Catechist euphemistically as lacking control as a man as well as being reduced into rubble by allowing his wife to man the affairs of his home. These euphemistic and dysphemistic items are used by Ukandi to acknowledge marriage as a source of power for men. In the context of the novel, as in the socio-cultural knowledge that is shared by the discourse participants, marriage is a union between a man and woman. However, the person who takes the other home becomes the powerful. Illustratively, Ukandi's belief is informed by the exogenous ideology that a woman changes her name, takes a new one, moves in to a man's house, and bears children for him in the name of marriage, otherwise, it becomes an abnormality. These items expose obliquely and openly the relevance of the intrepidity of man in manning the affairs of his home in traditional Nigerian cultures. They prop up the ruin that may result on the contrary.

Equally, Habila expresses a similar ideology in *MT* when Tabita's father called Lamang into his room and asked him to marry his daughter, Tabita.

"Musa," the old man said to Lamang, which was Lamang's first name, though everyone called him Lamang because of his striking resemblance to his grandfather of that name, "marry my daughter and I promise you will not regret it" (*MT*, 14).

It is difficult to read a strictly patriarchal meaning into the realizations of the above expression, merely based on the words and the varying syntagmatic occurrences. Tabita is a beautiful young girl with a sickly disposition. She has sickle cell anaemia. Yet her father believes that the only way to add meaning to her life is to hook her up with Lamang in marriage. This is evident in his imperative and declarative types of sentences, *marry my daughter* (dysphemism) and *I promise you will not regret it* (euphemism). While the declarative sentence explicitly commands Lamang to marry Tabita, the declarative implicitly denotes mildly the unseen reward afterwards. The sentences are ideologically embedded as they touch the socio-cultural conception that woman is subordinate to man, is incomplete without man, and needs to be married to a man so as to get *respect* from the society. The implication is for Tabita to have a 'name' before death. Evidently, in Nigerian sub-cultural contexts, a woman who dies unmarried is assumed a waste. The ideology is that *nwoke di uko* 'man is scarce', and this gives men a great power because they are the ones to take the women as wives. Since men are in short supply, the implication is that women should strive for available ones. Metaphorically, Tabita's father uses the sentences to vent his worry (Tabita's marriage) and entice Lamang into marrying Tabita through the act of promising because of Tabita's sickly disposition. As it is not the traditional pattern of Nigerian people for a lady or her people to ask a man to marry her, the writer employs euphemisms and dysphemisms to make inherent the significance of marriage in the life of a woman. They reveal the unsaid said in the contextual belief of marriage among Nigerians and describe the high value attached to man, and the derogation associated with spinsterhood for adult women in the Nigerian cultural settings.

It is observed that a woman's position is not only elevated in marriage but her ego, self-importance equally; hence, the Igbo phrase *Di bu ugwu nwanyi* 'Husband is the pride of woman'. An example is shown below when Nduesoh in *Blackbird* acknowledges this patriarchal belief as she compares herself with other spinsters whom men rally around without giving meaning to their lives.

She, more than anyone else, understood that Edward gave her status. That alone surpassed anything Omoniyi, and most other men could offer her. It surpassed a sense of freedom. It surpassed a sense of control. It surpassed sexual bliss. Her Edward gave her



power and his name behind hers gave her status  
(*Blackbird*, 221).

The woman-subject here submits to the patriarchal order by allowing herself to be carried along with man. She sees marriage as an institution that gives her and women, generally, status; a kind of respect they may not get as single ladies. And this is a tendency which many African traditions and their mainstream patriarchal ideologies advance. Nduesoh in the above context dysphemistically states that the gift of her husband (her position as a wife) surpasses a sense of *freedom, a sense of control, and sexual bliss*. By implication, many Nigerian women go into marriage as a result of societal disposition about it; that it gives women power and status. Metaphorically, this is explicitly confirmed by Nduesoh; *her Edward gave her power and his name behind hers gave her status*. Even the Bible acknowledges the superiority of man in marriage where it declared that “Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the Lord” (Proverbs 18:22). It implies that a man should find a woman who soothes him as a wife while a woman has to comply and adapt to the ideals of the *finder*, an order which has permeated the Christendom and Nigerian cultural settings. That marriage gives women status and respect simply entails that, for women to acquire status and respect as described by the society, they must be someone’s appendages as wives. Nduesoh, as presented above, is married to Edward. She has no freedom and does not enjoy her marriage yet she claims power because of her position as a wife. Invariably, a man is linked with power; he gives and takes power because the power ends when a woman ceases to be a man’s wife. Through the dysphemistic expressions, Nduesoh illustrates how she intentionally disparages (dysphemism) old single ladies because she has formed the ideology from the society. She therefore criticizes such by promoting wifhood, associating it with power and status, irrespective of any bitterness experienced therein. This is motivated by fear of losing her position as a wife because of the ideological notion of the society on the concept of wifhood.

Women, on the other hand, comply and surrender themselves to various unpleasant social practices. They have consciously and unconsciously become accustomed to the patriarchal societal notion that man gives power to woman, and that woman must respect such power by being submissive. The following example from Betiang’s *The Cradle* explains this point.

He loved the willing submission she gave him, and in that state he brutalized her, and by so doing proved his manhood and superiority over this incubus of his life (*The Cradle*, 139).

The foregoing discourse illustrates Unimke's expression of Iyaji's submission to him during sexual intercourse. Unimke and Iyaji are in a relationship; they live together with Unimke playing the role of a husband and Iyaji playing that of a wife. However, Unimke brutalizes her in the process and she never complained because of the already formed ideology of a woman's submission to man during sex. The possessive nature of man and submissive nature of woman are illustrated above with metaphorical euphemism and dysphemism. The dysphemism: *he loved the willing submission she gave him, and in that state he brutalized her* is a compound sentence that categorically indicates the powerful man, exposing the impolite behaviours associated with his abuse of such privilege. This metaphorically signifies that some men take advantage of women's submission because of the ideological construct of power associated with their gender. The euphemism: *by so doing proved his manhood and superiority over this incubus of his life* implicitly explains the unpleasant way by which men showcase their supremacy over women. Metaphorically, these items project structures from source domain (sexual intercourse) into the abstract target domain (brutalization to establish superiority). The ideology is that one; women should always be submissive to men so as to get loved in return. The Holy Bible supports the ideology in the book of Ephesians 5 verse 22- 25: "Wives, submit to your husband as to the Lord. For a husband has authority over his wife just as Christ has authority over the church; and Christ is himself the Saviour of the church, his body. And so wives must submit completely to their husbands just as the church submits itself to Christ." Two; in the process of demonstrating his manhood and superiority over woman, man shows some levels of brutality. When one begins to analyze the word 'completely' as used in the Holy book, one discovers that woman is absolutely enslaved while man capitalizes on that. Equally, this superior nature of man in form of brutality is symbolized with the word *incubus*, which means a male demon believed to have sexual intercourse with sleeping women. In essence, man's rascality extends to the act of sexual intercourse with the opposite sex to showcase dominance.

Habila, in the subsequent example, portrays another aspect of man's brutality to confirm his superiority. Zara is submissive to her husband in their marital union. However, Captain Hamza, her husband, abuses her submissiveness by going after other women and beating her in the process. To worsen the case, nobody (even her mother) supports her; they all work under the cultural axiom that a woman must have endurance so far as the man discharges his responsibility of taking care of his home as a man in some Nigerian cultural contexts.

When I went to my mother, she told me that was how military men behaved, that I had to be patient, that he'd soon get tired of running around and come home, and that afterall he had bought me things, jewellery and recently a car (*MT*, 106).

It is noteworthy to reflect that woman is not entirely exempt from her own subjugation. In most instances, woman orchestrates such oppression. Zara's mother's role in asking her daughter to be patient, that her husband would soon get tired of running around and come home, accentuates this fact. The fact that a man can never be disadvantaged prompted Zara's mother to state euphemistically that Zara's husband, Captain Hamza, *behaves like every other military man*; that he would soon get tired of *running around*. The metaphoric undertone is that all military men are womanizers; a quality that showcases their powerful position, and that every good wife should endure and not complain. This recognizes marriage as a source of power for men and associates man with possession (women are always in their custody as daughters and wives). In essence, man is powerful within and outside marriage context and is never underprivileged. Dysphemistically, *that afterall he had bought me (Zara) things, jewellery and recently a car* draws attention to the metaphoric logic of associating man with possession over woman. Invariably, it connotes the fact that women should remain faithful and humble to their husbands in marriage even if the man misbehaves, especially when he provides all or most of the woman's financial needs, making her comfortable. Significantly, all these project the metaphoric concept that MAN IS GOD; this is portraying his relationship with the Supreme Being which is powerful. Dibia uses dysphemisms below to express connotations that are offensive, to describe the societal recognition of marriage as a source of power for men and a woman's respectability in association with that (marriage).

Gabriel was killed. As Angela said those words, Idara closed her eyes and she saw all her dreams fall to pieces. Angela had become the harbinger of the bad news, the angel of death. There would be no wedding for Idara. There would be no husband to give her respectability among her peers (*Blackbird*, 285).

It appears appropriate to say that Dibia is reflecting above the situation, as it exists in his society: the premium placed on marriage as a form of respectability especially for women. Every woman is expected to settle down at a certain age, as marked by the society, otherwise she loses her respectability among her peers and society at large. This is why the writer uses the dysphemism and euphemism *there would be no wedding for Idara. There would be no husband to give her respectability among her peers* in describing Idara's situation as a spinster when she lost her proposed husband at a stage in her life which the society sees as 'overdue for marriage'. In the process, he uses the items to criticize, ridicule, and mock the despised. The use of these items has been motivated by anger and fear on the part of Idara as expressed by the writer. Therefore, these dysphemisms are metaphorical in their humorous ways of deprecating single ole ladies. It invariably means that a lady gets no propriety among her peers and from the society if she has no husband. Therefore, the society recognizes marriage as a source of power for men because they are the initiators, and a woman gets respect only when a man is associated with her in form of marriage.

### **The Woman is a Sex Object (Woman is Exploited for Sex)**

In this metaphoric resource, female-folk is portrayed as a body or entity which is composited of sexual meaning. This concept regards womanhood as a sex piece: an item to be used as toy for sexual satisfaction by man. In this concept, woman is exploited for sex by man; it expresses womanhood as an entity for sexual gratification. It is characterised by words/expressions relating to sex, sexuality, or the sexual organs of women. The three underlying structures that support this metaphoric construct are: It is used (1) to maintain that woman is exploited for sex; (2) uphold man's promiscuity/polygamous nature as an expression of power and a woman of such trait as a disgrace; and (3) identify how women utilize their sexuality in manipulating men. Examples of euphemisms and dysphemisms that demonstrate this metaphor in the sampled novels are shown below.

In the first instance, Betiang uses deictic items in euphemistic ways to portray woman as a sex object. It was used when Iyaji was narrating her experience as a maid at her aunt's house to her friend, Akomaye.

“This is nothing. There's more for you wherever this comes from. Your sister doesn't have to know about it.”  
When he warned me against my sister I became a bit worried. It was now he held me, pulling close to him.  
“Please...come and sleep here with me tonight.” He said and started stroking me in the wrong places.  
“Uncle...why? No Please...!” (*The Cradle*, 68).

Many important metaphoric expressions with degrading references to women as sex objects interweave in the above excerpt. First, the expressions; *This is nothing. There's more for you wherever this comes from. Your sister doesn't have to know about it* project the idea that women are seen as a sex piece: an item to be used as toy for sexual satisfaction by man. In this concept, the deictic item, *this* dysphemistically refers to the money which Iyaji's uncle intends to trade with her body. He wants to use financial benefits to lure her to bed metaphorically. Another metaphoric item is seen in the expression *Please...come and sleep here with me tonight*, which means that she should come and satisfy his sexual urge tonight. The euphemism *sleep with*, which means to have sex or be involved in a sexual relationship, emphasizes the fact that Iyaji's uncle has the intention of exploiting her for sex using money as a trap. Iyaji's refusal did not convince him as he proceeded in stroking her in the *wrong places* (another euphemism) indicating woman's sexual parts which are metaphorically mentioned with an indirect substitute that one cannot catch instantaneously. We can equally locate other implicit and explicit expressions in Iyaji's response in her struggle to refuse her uncle's sexual advances: *Uncle...why? No Please...!* Iyaji euphemistically uses the first expression *Uncle...why?* to convey her surprise and disgust towards her uncle's actions, and to metaphorically put across in form of rhetorical question, a known fact (that women are seen as sex objects) in the society as illustrated by the writer. The second expression (an exclamation) is dysphemistically stated to express Iyaji's shock and fear towards her uncle's actions. It connotes strong emotion of pain and cry women face in trying to antagonize the societal stand on their sexuality. Therefore, Iyaji's remark expressing surprise suggests that women are categorized in

that circle by force, not by choice. The society (invariably men) places the standard, and others comply.

Perhaps it is expedient to point out again that among the two genders it is only the woman that can be disadvantaged because of the way society has structured man-woman relationship. In *Blackbird* below, Boma got pregnant and received huge shameful remarks from the neighbourhood especially when her parents confronted the parents of the supposed accomplice.

Nduesoh remembered how her mother had denied vehemently that her first son had anything to do with Boma's pregnancy. She had even gone as far as causing a scene in the middle of their compound the day Boma's parents came to confront them. Her mother had called Boma a harlot and her parents shameless for raising such a loose child. She did not stop there, but reeled out the names of all the boys Boma had supposedly slept with in the neighbourhood (*Blackbird*, 36).

Despite the seemingly divergent views concerning a young lady getting pregnant before marriage in Nigerian cultural contexts, one consistent view is that such a lady is disadvantaged; it affects the kind of suitors she gets afterwards. This is expressed in the example above with euphemisms and dysphemisms. One, to deny *vehemently that her first son had anything to do with Boma's pregnancy* is metaphorically euphemistic because of its implicit way of emphasizing that Mfoniso, Nduesoh's brother, never impregnated Boma without stating it categorically. The cultural axiom of the society the writer represents expects Boma's parents to bring her up properly so as to prevent any unwanted pregnancy. However, their failure to do so brought shame to the whole family, hence Dibia's dysphemistic use of *a harlot* and *shameless for raising such a loose child* to describe Boma and her parents respectively. Inasmuch as *a loose child* is an instance of euphemism that suggests a child who is wayward, and engages in illicit sexual activity, its usage in the above context and co-text is very explicit. Boma is a representation of womanhood, and Nduesoh's mother's method of *reeling out the names of all the boys Boma had supposedly slept with in the neighbourhood* is an indication that a woman is seen as a sex object. This clue is dysphemistically illustrated to portray the transparency of the concept in the society as presented

by the writer. Metaphorically, the items uphold man's promiscuity as an expression of power and a woman of such as a disgrace.

Equally, Betiang portrays the personality of woman as sex object in the next example. It reveals how Utimgil, the personal assistant to Kugaba, erstwhile speaker of the national assembly, sleeps with every woman who comes to see the Honorable Speaker before allowing them to see him.

Akomaye remembered Utimgil, the celebrated personal assistant to Kugaba, erstwhile speaker of the national assembly, Utimgil made it the norm to sample and personally test each of the thousand women who lined up every day to see the Right Honorable Speaker. Only those who passed his own litmus test on the very vulnerable soft centre were forwarded to experience the good graces of His Honorable (*The Cradle*, 195).

The basis of gender inequality is always expressed in the complexity and dynamism of Nigerian novelist's linguistic discussion and multifaceted engagement. This is why Betiang's use of the verb *celebrated* and phrase *sample and personally test each of the thousand women who lined up every day to see the Right Honorable Speaker* to refer to Utimgil, the personal assistant to Kugaba, because the society sees him as a distinguished fellow despite his atrocities of exploiting women sexually. The writer's use of euphemisms such as *celebrated*, *sample and personally test*, and *who passed his own litmus test on the very vulnerable soft centre were forwarded to experience the good graces of His Honorable* is metaphorically loaded, projecting woman as the exploited and man, the exploiter. The phrase *sample and personally test* is an implicit way of conveying Utimgil's degrading technique of exploiting women sexually. On the other hand, *litmus test* is a Chemistry register which implies a decisive test using litmus. Litmus is a dye obtained from certain lichens that is red under acid conditions and blue under alkaline conditions. By implication, Utimgil's exploitation of those women is significant for their meeting with the honorable. Sexual exploitation of the women in the process of *litmus test* is further explicated in the next euphemism, *on the very vulnerable soft centre*. Precisely, one can metaphorically conclude that *litmus* symbolizes man's sexual organ, the *test* connotes sexual act, while *vulnerable soft centre* indicates woman's sexual part. Invariably,

as the *litmus test* is conducted *on the very vulnerable soft centre*, a decision is taken whether the lady has passed the stage of seeing the Honorable. As well, a woman utilizes her sexuality in manipulating man because she succeeds in seeing the Honourable (her desire) after satisfying Utimgil sexually. This is supported by the last metaphoric euphemism, *were forwarded to experience the good graces of His Honorable*. To *experience the good graces* means to have an opportunity of meeting with His Honorable.

It is a common cultural practice among many African communities for men to sleep around with women, without the society frowning at it. Similarly, the notion that men always want fruit salad (variety of women) is rampant in patriarchal societies as presented by Dibia below:

...his libido was insatiable. Nduesoh gave it to him good, but it was simply not enough. Making love to her was like driving blindfold down a well-known alley. There were no surprises and he could navigate every u-turn, sharp bend or junction while avoiding the potholes and dead ends. Making love to the same woman every night was like that, a well-trodden road (*Blackbird*, 120).

From the above context, one does not need to be told that Edward, who is being described as only concerned with his sexual satisfaction. His acknowledgement that Nduesoh, his wife, does not starve him sexually, yet he wants variety, is a clinical explication of female as a sex object; the basis, despite the fact that Edward sleeps around, Nduesoh tries her best to give it to him good. Specifically, she ensures that her husband is sexually satisfied, regardless of how she feels. The first metaphoric item (dysphemism); *his libido was insatiable* simply means that Edward's sexual desire is unappeasable. That *Nduesoh gave it to him good, making love to her was like driving blindfold down a well-known alley* metaphorically suggests in inherent ways in which Nduesoh satisfies Edward sexually, and connotes how Edward described Nduesoh's sexual organ as a proverbial thing because he has authority over her. Evidently, *there were no surprises and he could navigate every u-turn, sharp bend or junction while avoiding the potholes and dead ends* are euphemistically loaded, establishing in metaphoric ways the fact that men exploit women for sex to boost their sexual ego by having mild astonishment, to capture, attack, and discover suddenly and unexpectedly the sexual objects of his



exploitation. By implication, anything short of that does not dignify his personality, and makes the sexual object uninteresting. Euphemistically, the above excerpt is filled with implicit or ambiguous substitutes that one cannot grasp directly to replace the inviolable expressions. The ideology is that the interactants clearly understand the concepts and work in line with the philosophical contents of the society.

In the next instance, Habila presents a social gathering where women are used as sex objects by men. As indicated below, military parties are used to signify gathering where there are excess of girls who manipulate men and for his exploitation.

“There is never a shortage of girls at these military parties. I never miss them. Ha-ha,” the Waziri said. “Get one of your friends to keep my friend here company. A beautiful one. Good clean girl.” (*MT*, 246–247).

Habila showcases how military domain explicates the way the dominant class oppresses the dominated at various points. Waziri attends the party always because of the availability of girls in satisfying his sexual urge while the girls visit there because of the financial benefits they get from military men. Hence, Waziri engages himself in a sexual play with a young girl immediately they entered the party arena, advises his friend Mamo on the relevance of such, as he makes arrangement for *a beautiful, good clean girl* to be brought to him (Mamo). Therefore, *a beautiful one, good clean girl* is metaphorically used to state the category of young ladies the men desire for sex. In essence, they are dysphemisms in form of adjectival phrases. Euphemism is seen in *Get one of your friends to keep my friend here company*. It signifies bringing of a companion to satisfy Mamo’s sexual libido. The writer, therefore, uses party setting to capture the routine happening in gender relations within the society. It is pertinent to state that the meaning of the phrase *keeping company* is extended to accommodate a sexual posture and play between man and woman. The expression *keeping company* is a phrase which metaphorically implies providing care for somebody, especially in a sexual way. Similarly, there is a hidden undertone in the phrase ‘company keeper’ who does other things which are not overtly stipulated in the construction; she provides sexual pleasure to

the guest as part of the 'company keeping'. All these dysphemistic and euphemistic items are metaphorically used to point to the fact that military men use women to unwind during parties after relating to matters of peace and security probably during the day. Waziri's statement to Mamo as stipulated above also reveals how language is entrenched in the activity of sexual encounter in exerting control over the dominated. The concept of control which Waziri demonstrates in his speech is rooted in the matrix that women are obliged as sex objects to satisfy men's sexual desire even in the process of utilizing their sexuality for their personal advantage.

### Conclusion

This paper examines the relevance of euphemisms and dysphemisms in the construction of patriarchal ideology in the language of Nigerian male novelists to ascertain the metaphoric logic associated with their usage. It reveals that patriarchal ideology is characterised by two metaphoric concepts; MAN IS A GOD and WOMAN IS A SEX OBJECT. Another observation is that patriarchal ideology secures and maintains its hegemony through the reproduction of gendered subjects considering its successful simulation of universality and naturalness in promoting cultural values. Therefore, euphemisms and dysphemisms are metaphoric logics that indicate the novelists' sustenance of the assumed patriarchy which they represent, consciously and unconsciously identifying society's ideals of man's supremacy and of quiet subservience of woman. Equally, they are essential parts of any language and culture, and it is the metaphoric tools that help in explicating the values of a society, such as affirming superiority and dominance.

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