



## **Language and Theme Symbiosis: A Stylistic Analysis of use of Language in Ifeoma Okoye's *Men Without Ears***

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### **ABSTRACT**

Literature has continued to be a vehicle for satirizing societal ills with a view to engendering value reorientation and sanity. This onerous task is achieved through a conscious use of language to subtly condemn vice and commend virtue. There is, thus, a mutual and profound affinity between language and thematic goals. What varies is the style adopted by authors in their art. This paper assesses the salient stylistic peculiarities of Okoye's use of language in portraying the corrupt practices, moral decadence, vanity and materialism that pervade a typical African state. It reveals that the author's stylistic dexterity, evident in her skillful combination of linguistic and literary devices, is superb. Okoye employs a simple diction, choice registers, connotations, pidgin, repetition, preponderance of complex and compound - complex sentences, parallelism, balanced construction, figures of speech, idioms, and proverbs to reinforce the themes. The enormous use of titles and aliases and the undue emphasis on their use before people's name not only speak volumes about vainglory but also give the work a touch of humour. The language is etched with meticulous detail that enables the reader to visualize in his mind's eye the loathsome nature of corruption and materialism.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The language used in *Men Without Ears* is striking in some respects and germane to the themes. These striking features are deliberately employed to advance the themes of vanity, materialism and corruption which are basically explored in the text. Language is aptly manipulated to satirize the unwholesome priority placed on opulence, materialism, and vainglory whose advocates strive copiously to subjugate moral principles by their words and

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deeds. Thus, as propagated in the world of the text, “It was not the man of character who was the greatest of men but the man of means” (75).

Language is a means to an end. The linguistic choices made by a literary artist whether consciously or otherwise are not only geared towards projecting a message but also form part of his uniqueness and individuality. Akwanya sees individuality as a feature of a work of art – a singularity which is marked by style (256). Thus, style involves a deliberate use of language that is conspicuously unusual or personal. The peculiarity of style makes it the linguistic habit of a particular writer or even the way language is used in a particular genre, period or school of writing (Leech and Short 11).

Azuike defines stylistics as “all the elements of language that aid a writer or speaker to achieve a pattern of writing or speaking identifiable as unique or peculiar to him (79).” Stylistics is concerned with analysing and describing those features of language that occur in a text. The aim is to identify from the general mass of common linguistic features the ones that are restricted to certain kinds of social contexts and to explain, where possible, why such features have been used (Crystal and Davy 10). Thus, in a stylistic analysis, it is pertinent to isolate and describe a limited number of distinctive linguistic features of a text drawn from an unlimited whole and, if possible, account for their occurrence in such contexts.

This paper examines the prominent stylistic features of the language Okoye uses in *Men Without Ears* to underscore her subject matter and drive the point home – features that portray her stylistic ingenuity and uniqueness. The aim is to evaluate the adequacy of the language to the advancement of the themes. As affirmed by Aire, “A true writer’s artistry can often be judged by his ability to consistently match the style of new work with its particular theme and setting (31).”

### **Plot**

The story begins with Chigo at the Lagos Airport waiting to obtain a boarding pass to Enugu. He returned a few hours back from Tanzania where he had lived and worked for five years. His father had sent him an urgent letter demanding his homecoming. Scared that his father may have died and the news withheld from him, he hurries home. At the Lagos Airport, Chigo is unable to obtain a boarding pass though he has an OK ticket. An airport tout notices his plight and offers to help him if he gives him fifty naira. Chigo refuses to offer the bribe with disgust and threatens to call the police. Another stranger later helps him to obtain the boarding pass in no time. He reveals to Chigo that he succeeded by bribing the officials. As Chigo is trying to get over the shock, a stampede ensues startling him. He learns that people are scrambling to secure seats on the plane and even reserve seats for passengers yet to arrive as the officials issue more boarding passes than the available seats. When Chigo tries to question this practice, the official retorts, “You think you are overseas, eh? .... This is Nigeria! (6).”

Chigo gets to Enugu and is warmly received by his elder brother Uloko. He is driven in a new Mercedes-Benz to his brother's large, well-furnished duplex and given a comfortable room. Uloko throws a lavish party to welcome Chigo and show him off. The party exposes Chigo to Uloko's ostentatious lifestyle and materialistic circle of friends evident in their extravagant apparel, and showy titles. The next day, Uloko and Chigo set out for the village to see their father. Chigo and his father shed tears of joy at their meeting. Chigo is surprised that Uloko has not been home to see their father for long despite the short distance. He also notices signs of estrangement between Uloko and their father who, despite all the money Chigo regularly sends through Uloko for his upkeep, is not looking good. It becomes clear to him that Uloko has been too busy to look after their father and he resolves to fill the gap.

Uloko is madly preoccupied with one desire: being appointed as a member of the Igwe's cabinet. To qualify for this post, he is required to display his wealth via donations and to build a magnificent storey building in the village. He wants this appointment at all costs. Their father noticing this dangerous trend begs Chigo to help him advise Uloko wisely as his fatherly criticisms of Uloko's ostentatious lifestyle have not only fallen on deaf ears but have created a rift between them. Chigo accepts this onerous task but feels that getting a job and living in his own house will offer him a better platform to handle the matter firmly.

All Chigo's efforts to secure a job prove futile despite his qualifications, experience and good performance at interviews. Uloko pulls the 'appropriate strings' and gets him a job in a jiffy as chief accountant in a government-owned company. Chigo commences work with enthusiasm. On resumption, his MD Chief Dr Engineer Ozo Kelie assures him they can work together 'as long as you don't stick out your neck too far' (92). In his place of work, Chigo tries to eradicate some corrupt practices observed and this brings him hatred and antagonism rather than the deserved commendation from his superiors and subordinates alike.

Chigo's conscientiousness and prudence have not only aggrieved his colleagues but also Uloko and Young Millionaire, Uloko's friend. They see his strong, rare moral principles as abnormal and mean. Chigo vehemently refuses to obtain a loan from the bank for Uloko or lend him money so as not to encourage his ostentatious lifestyle. He advises him to change his ways to no avail. He turns down Young Millionaire's handsome offer geared towards falsifying his accounts to reduce taxation. Chigo's refusal to sign a fifteen-thousand-naira cheque for the frivolous refurbishing of the MD's house puts him in MD's bad books.

Chigo gets a houseboy from his junior colleague and sends him to live with his father. Uloko engages in smuggling against Chigo's advice. He runs out of luck and his goods are confiscated. This worsens his already appalling financial state. Chigo's father falls ill and sends for his two sons. Chigo is unaware of the illness as he is in Lagos for a course. Uloko ignores their father's message until Chigo returns after three days. Alarmed by the news,

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Chigo rushes to the village only to discover that his father's health has deteriorated and he refuses to be taken to hospital. Uloko returns later but their father dies that night. Before his death, he requests a quiet burial devoid of ostentatious exhibitions and warns sternly against putting his corpse in the morgue. Against the dead man's last wish, Uloko decides to put his father's corpse in the mortuary to enable him to prepare for his 'befitting burial'. Chigo refuses to give his consent as it amounts to scorning his beloved father's last wish. The extended family support Uloko and ostracize Chigo.

Chigo's MD compels him to sign the cheque despite the fact that the company's account is in the red. This leads to a delay in the payment of staff salaries. Chigo is asked by the workers why their salaries are not paid. He tells them the truth and they stage a boycott. Chigo gets information about his father's burial from the media. His name is removed from the list of mourners. He resolves not to attend. Anny, Uloko's wife visits and begs him to attend. Chigo attends his father's burial amidst protests from his hypocritical relatives who despise him and applaud Uloko. The burial ceremony is luxuriously performed and the guests are lavishly entertained. Chigo returns to Enugu with Nweke heartbroken and faces more tribulations. He receives a suspension letter from his MD. He decides to go back to Tanzania after exposing the MD's gross financial mismanagement. It surprises Chigo that despite all the evidence he presents to the investigative panel against his MD, Chigo is unjustly found guilty. Nweke gets missing. Chigo reports to the police and a search for him commences. To make matters worse, Chigo is relieved of his job the next day. The injustice of this act depresses him but for a chance acquaintance with Kenwe who shores up his spirits.

Uloko becomes ill and, while hospitalized, sends for his ostracized brother. Anny confesses to Chigo that Uloko has high blood pressure induced by his enormous debts. His friends have deserted him and his club has expelled him for failure to meet his financial obligations. Chigo goes to see him. Uloko renounces his ways, apologizes to Chigo, and blames himself for refusing to pay heed to good advice. Nweke reappears. He narrates to Chigo how he has escaped ritual murder masterminded by Uloko. Chigo is shocked to hear of Uloko's involvement in Nweke's disappearance. He keeps the revelation to himself and instructs Nweke to do likewise to protect his brother from being convicted. Uloko goes into a coma on hearing from his wife that Nweke has been found. He dies after a few days. Chigo cancels his plan of going back to Tanzania to enable him to stand by Anny.

### **Okoye's stylistic peculiarities in *Men Without Ears***

#### **Diction**

Words are carefully chosen to depict the vanity and corruption prevalent in the text. The corrupt state of affairs which typifies the Nigerian society is

vividly captured in everyday language presumably to illustrate that these ostentatious, phony characters are not far from the people we encounter in real life situations. As the characters reveal themselves in their use of language, the words are carefully chosen to advance the stance of the two worlds portrayed in the text whose divergent philosophies of life compete frantically for dominance. The conformist world championed by Uloko not only struggles to subjugate the non-conformist world represented by Chigo but also to drown it.

Although the words are generally simple and not far-fetched, their semantic density is heightened to drive home the satire on corruption and vain practices. Thus, one finds words like 'blackmail', 'contemptuous', 'exhibitionists', 'atrocious', 'agbada', 'ostentatious', 'phony', 'make-believe', 'ingratiate', 'palm-greasing', 'bribe', 'vaingloriously', 'hypocritical', 'obsession', 'opulence', 'intimidate', 'embezzlement', 'god-fatherism,' 'lavish,' 'luxurious' and so on.

Many of the lexical items are drawn from the world of fashion:

- Three rows of coral beads and a long gold chain with a pendant as large as a saucer feminized his neck. (10)
- Long gold chains with ponderous pendants (24), expensive lace and brocade (23)
- Enormous glittering rings on some of their toes and all of their fingers (24)
- Cumbersome pendants (85), two piece tunic suit (20), European suit (20), agbada (24), *buba* (24)

The presence of grammatical modification makes these nouns conspicuous and determined thereby shedding clearer light on their ostentatious undertones. In conformity with the themes pursued, there are expressions that specifically depict the unwholesome and unpalatable taste of the flamboyant appearance.

- Never had I come across people so gorgeously overdressed. (24)
- She wore a pale blue headscarf intricately folded to fit her head. To me the scarf looked very broad and very high, and I felt sorry for whoever will sit behind her at the party. (83)
- His wife carried a mountainous head-dress precariously balanced on her head. As she walked, she kept her head steady for fear of throwing off the contraption. When on one occasion she had to look back, she turned her head as slowly and as cautiously as if she had a stiff neck. (85)

There are also instances of religious register: 'philistine' (61), 'Jesus of Nazareth' (62), 'prodigal son' (32), 'Jews' (68), 'Christian' (68), 'priest' (68), 'Bible' (68), 'self-righteous' (75), 'preacher' (76), 'church' (75), 'sermon' (76), 'hypocritical' (76), 'altar' (116), 'blessings' (116), among others. There is even a quotation from the bible:

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- ‘Your left hand should not know what your right hand is doing when you are giving alms so that your alms may be secret and ... your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly’ (68).

The use of religious register is not surprising as the work pursues value reorientation and moral rectitude.

### **Connotations**

Some words are used in a special sense in which case they connote meanings beyond what is explicitly stated. Some of these words are either enclosed in quotation marks or italicized in the text. Examples are:

- ‘From there I watched with utter disgust as **‘ladies’** and **‘gentlemen’** struggled for a place in the queue in front of the checking-in counter, and later jumped the queue in order to speak directly to the officials’ (2)

This depicts that the ladies and gentlemen’s behavior does not jibe with their appearance. Thus, they are not really who they are supposed to be.

- ... my *humble*, yes very *humble* donation (77).

The donation was apparently not humble in any sense but was given to attract commendation and publicity while the real humble donation of thirty naira made by Chigo was booted.

Other words used in like manner are ‘Palace’ (40), ‘decent burial’ (148), ‘sympathizers’ (148), ‘saw’ (91), ‘gross indiscipline’ (150), ‘*order*’ (119), ‘progressive’ (73). ‘Palace’ connotes that the occupant, the Igwe, lacks the qualities associated with the position. ‘He got it because he knows which strings to pull, the right people to bribe or intimidate or even blackmail’ (41). ‘Decent burial’ connotes the folly of Uloko’s giving of a luxurious burial to a father he denied decent livelihood and care while he lived. The ‘sympathizers’ so to speak have no pity for the bereaved family but are merely concerned about the lavish entertainment. ‘Saw’ connotes ‘bribe’ in this context in which Uloko ‘saw’ some people before he could secure a job for Chigo. The connotations of these words in their contexts of use have derisive undertones that reinforce the themes of corruption and materialism.

### **Use of pidgin**

Pidgin is used in the text to indicate the language of the uneducated and also to connote that even an airport tout that has bribed the airport officials stands a better chance of getting a boarding pass than a legitimate traveller with an OK ticket. Instances of use of pidgin are:

- ‘You don get boarding pass, sir? I fit help you get one’ (2).
- You go see. Maybe you new for this place. Nobody fit give you boarding pass unless you give am money’ (2).

### **Titles**

Titles are excessively used and unduly emphasized. The characters derive tremendous pleasure from being addressed by their titles and aliases. Even professions that ordinarily do not precede people's names as titles are contrived to do so. This trend is subtly mocked when Chigo addressed Engineer Akah as 'Mr. Engineer Aka.

'I'm Engineer Akah,' he introduced himself.... 'I'm grateful for all your help, Mr Engineer Akah, I said. 'I'm Chigo Adaba.' His expression changed suddenly. 'Engineer is not my first name,' he corrected me. 'It's only a title.' (4).

Sometimes these titles are stacked as seen in 'Chief Dr. Engineer Ozo Kelie' (92). That even the educated ones among them are part of this craze makes it more worrisome as seen in the way Dr Uba's countenance changed when Chigo addressed him as 'Mr Uba' (25). Other ridiculous titles that feature in the text are: 'Young millionaire,' 'Money Maker,' 'Ichie Gold,' 'Osi na ami ego – the tree that bears money as its fruits! ,' 'Orimili – the sea that never dries! ,' 'Aka –Ji-Aku – the hand that makes money! ,' 'Cash Madam,' 'Madam True Money,' 'Swiss Bank,' among others (21-24). Addressing these people as such elicits a glowing countenance and affected smiles since the title 'Mister' is viewed as 'common, classless and uninformative' (27). The use of pompous titles in the text and the pleasure it elicits in the bearers serve to expose the glaring vanity and materialism that saturate the world of the text.

### **Repetition**

This involves the repetition of words, phrases, clauses or parts of clauses that occur in succession in the same or different sentences. This device gives emphasis to the words or aspects of the sentence so repeated. There are instances of lexical repetition. This repetition foregrounds the words and serves to reinforce the themes. Some of these words are 'false', 'ostentation', 'materialistic', 'vain', 'conventionality', 'conscience', 'money', 'naira', 'success', 'bank', 'account', 'wealth', 'borrow', 'lend,' humble donation', 'palm-greasing', 'nauseating', 'principle', 'dilemma', 'blackmail', 'pride', 'fashion', 'gorgeous', 'bride', 'coral beads', 'lace' and 'agbada'.

Of all these terms, 'money' seems to be omnipresent in the spatial context and thus well grounded. A few examples will suffice:

- 'Without money you are nothing....' (7)
- '... without money you're a nobody.' (12)
- '... without money you are *nothing*.' (41-42)
- 'You can't be successful without money.' (64)

Other examples in which parts of a sentence are repeated for emphasis include:

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- ‘**I want you home** for many reasons. First, **I want you home** because **I want to show you a few things. I want to tell you a few things** before death strikes.’ (64)
  - ‘**It is all because I have tried to stop him** from the big chase for naira. **It is all because I have tried to stop him** from becoming a slave to debt for life.’ (48)
  - ‘I can’t.’ ‘I just can’t.’ ‘It’s not done’. (124)
  - ‘**You don’t seem to understand** the impropriety of the thing **you want me to do for you. You don’t seem to understand** that what **you want me to do for you** could ruin my career.’ (124)
  - ‘**I wished** I could run away....’ ‘**I wished** Iruka, my fiancée, was around....’ ‘**I wished** I could go back to Tanzania.’ (125)
- In each example, the repetition emphasizes the subject matter pursued.

### **Sentence types**

Okoye’s dexterity in sentence construction is stylistically significant. She employs a variety of sentence types. However, due to her detailed and meticulous description of incidents, most of the sentences are composed of trailing constituents in which satellite structures such as adjuncts and subordinate clauses follow the main verb, or anticipatory constituents in which the satellite elements occur before the main subject-predicator matrix. These techniques engender ‘grammatical sprawls’ (Simpson 63).

#### *Simple sentence*

A simple sentence contains only one finite verb. It is mainly used in the text in dialogues among the characters; otherwise, its use in the sentence is minimal and, in many of the instances, it is used to create a frenetic effect and tension. Examples include:

- This is Nigeria! (2)
- I dislike conformists. (18)
- This was atrocious. (119).

In some of the examples, the simple sentence contains both anticipatory and trailing constituents to give detail.

- Even in his sleep one could see a kind of weariness on his face. (8)
- At nine in the morning, Uloko and I left for the Motherless Babies home in the town. (68)

In the underlined examples, equivalent constituents are placed on either side of the subject and predicate.

#### *Complex sentence*

This contains one main clause and at least one subordinate clause.

- I dislike people who are guided by what other people think; men who are influenced by the crowd around them and who let others think for them. (18)



- It seemed to me that their every action was phony, something put on as one would put on a suit, and worse still, a suit that did not quite fit but had to be worn because it was in vogue. (24)
- When I finished my studies overseas and informed him that I would like to work abroad he did not object, probably because he, too, had worked in a foreign country in his younger days. (8)

Each example has one main clause marked by underlining. The subordinate clauses are layered using trailing constituents and anticipatory constituents for emphasis and clarity. Complex sentence ranks highest in the kind of sentences used in the text.

### ***Compound sentence***

A compound sentence contains at least two main clauses. The clauses must be in a symmetrical relationship to each other.

- I offered him some beer, but he declined the offer. (122)
- They took me home and gave me food. (152)
- They story had taken him a long time to tell and had put him under a heavy emotional burden. (158)

This kind of sentence is the rarest in the text presumably because it does not allow for the inclusion of subordinate details favoured by the author.

### ***Compound-complex sentence***

It consists of two or more main clauses with one or more subordinate clauses.

- I wondered again if he was another tout but something about him indicated he was not. (3)
- The invitation card had indicated that the party would end at nine-thirty, but curiously enough that was just about the time that it gathered momentum and most of the guests were just beginning to enjoy themselves. (25)
- I introduced myself to him immediately I walked in and he offered me a chair. (92)

This type of sentence is also common in the text because it allows for subordinate details. However, it is not as common as the complex sentence.

### **Parallelism**

Parallelism is a device in which a series of structurally related words, phrases and clauses are arranged to show their similarity in an emphatic manner. Examples of this abound in the text:

- 'Coats flapped untidily behind their owners, while tie snapped discourteously to the wind as the men ran.' (5)
- '...no amount of preaching and threats from father, nor cajoling and hysterics from mother at that time would make him go back to school.' (15)
- 'I found the Igwe's assumed airs of superiority irritating and his affected manner of speech nauseating.' (39)

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- ‘Never had I seen a person so full of himself, so puffed up by pride.’ (85)
- ‘I want to rebuke him for donating borrowed money; for joining his friends in engaging in such senseless waste: for engaging in the extravagant expenditure and display of vain.’(89)

### **Balanced construction**

Some balanced sentences occur in the text to show the relationship between two opposing views. In some of the sentences, antonymous lexical items were juxtaposed in order to emphasize their full import and relevance to the themes:

- ‘... in my country efficiency, scholarship and creativity were shunned while incompetence and ignorance were acclaimed.’ (90)
- ‘... the average worker in the company (and presumably in the whole country) was, slothful rather than diligent.’(102)
- ‘... punctuality was anathema to the majority of the worker while malingering was common.’ (102)
- ‘...nothing about it was genuine; everything about it was make-believe.’ (88)

### **Figures of speech**

Figures of speech are expressions that usually evoke mental images giving rise to a special effect in the perception of the message. They types that feature in the text are:

#### ***Simile***

Simile makes a comparison between two dissimilar things using ‘like’ or ‘as’.

- You know how we doctors work like donkeys. (27)
- He wore a cap with a brim as wide as canopy. (38)
- ... tall and huge as the elephant. (46)
- My tasks lay before me clear as the day. (50)
- He was chewing the food noisily like a dog. (62)

#### ***Metaphor***

It likens one thing to the other like simile but does not use ‘like’ or ‘as’.

- Just then one well-dressed gentleman breezed past me. (5)
- Lagos Airport is a madhouse. (10)
- ... a prestigious and well-maintained car with a radio aerial that towered into the sky. (12)
- Uloko thundered. (4)
- ... tears of joy began to stream down my face. (32)
- ... fanning the embers of misunderstanding. (71)

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- Shopping is hell for me. (113)

***Hyperbole***

This exaggerates or overstates a fact.

- You are a son in a million. (114)
- My curiosity knew no limits. (157)
- Uloko's anger knew no bounds. (70)

***Personification***

This figure of speech endows an inanimate object or abstract idea with a human attribute.

- The setting sun had slipped through the window of the room. (132)

***Metonymy***

An object is made to represent something which is closely associated with it.

- Can I help myself to some golden waters (22)? 'Golden water' here refers to whisky.

***Synecdoche***

A part is used to represent the whole.

- Remember you have an additional mouth to feed. (117)

***Symbolism***

Symbolism is the use of an object to represent another thing.

- I looked at Father. The setting sun had slipped through the window of the room, casting a beam on his face. Was it the setting of his own sun, too? (132)

The setting sun symbolizes the imminent death of Chigo's father.

***Rhetorical question***

This is a question which does not require an answer because the answer is already suggested in the context.

- But whoever challenged a preacher? (76)
- Was it the setting of his own sun, too? (132)
- I wished I had taken him to a hospital before, even against his will. But would he have submitted? (134)
- But is it too late? (155)

***Situational irony***

Despite the wealth that Young Millionaire commands, his children are undernourished as portrayed by their protruding bellies while his steward is shabbily dressed and dirty. The description of his sitting room is also insightful depicting that he lacks taste, his wealth notwithstanding. 'The sitting room was expensively furnished. Everything in it was giant-sized, but the colour combination was repulsive. The heavy curtains were of a lurid

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yellow; the upholstered arm-chairs, a dirty green; and the carpet, scarlet' (60-61).

This underscores the fact that the quality of a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his wealth.

### **Proverbs**

The language is embellished with proverbs. Proverbs express general truths and give advice on many issues of life. These proverbs seem to be prophetic in nature and are used to give premonitory warnings against disastrous incidents that lay ahead. This is not surprising considering that the title itself is taken from an Igbo proverb which says, 'When one comes to the land of people without ears, one has to cut off one's ears, too. Examples of proverbs used in the text are:

- Uloko has come to the land of people without ears and is bent on cutting off his ears too. (48-49)
- The rat that joins a lizard for a frolic in the rain will remember only when it is too late that he will not dry himself as easily as the lizard. (48)
- Our elders say that a fly who refuses to heed advice follows a corpse to the grave. (115)
- All dogs eat shit but only those who carry some remnants of it around their mouths give themselves away. (125)

These proverbs are both instructive and insightful. More significantly, it could be said that the calamity that befalls Uloko at the end is apparently tied to the negligence of the moral implicature derivable from these proverbs. The effective use of proverbs in the text adds pep to the development of the themes of materialism and corruption.

### **Idioms**

The author's linguistic ingenuity is demonstrated in her profuse use of idiomatic expressions. An idiom is a fixed expression whose meaning is not deducible from the meaning of the individual words that constitute it. Ability to use idioms effectively is one of the basic ingredients of a good command of the applicable language. Examples in the text include:

- Those men and women who wore headgear fought tooth and nail with the wind for their possession. (5)
- ...when I found my tongue. (29)
- Her wings must be clipped. (44)
- I did not want to burn all my boats in case I had to go back. (60)
- ...you'll be a laughing stock.... (75)
- ... in the twinkling of an eye... (88)
- I don't want you to stir up a hornet's nest. (119)

Like metaphors, these idioms evoke mental pictures in the reader, making him perceive the persons and things described in a clearer light.

## CONCLUSION

In *Men Without Ears*, Okoye succeeds in satirizing the craze for opulence and honour. Language is used to condemn, in strong terms, the sharp practices people indulge in to amass wealth so as to be recognized in society. Through careful use of language and characterization, the text depicts two worlds fighting for dominance: the conformists and the non-conformists. Uloko's regret, self condemnation and death at the end buttress the vanity of vice and ostentatious lifestyle and the triumph of virtue.

The stylistic peculiarities of the text are visible in the analysis. The diction, although generally simple, reflects the corruption, vanity and misplaced emphasis on materialism. The registers of fashion and materialism are foregrounded for the sake of emphasis. Pidgin and some of the words are used in a special sense to connote their derisive undertones. The author employs a variety of sentence styles among which complex and compound-complex sentences are preponderant. The complexity in the structure of the sentences is as a result of profuse use of trailing and anticipatory constituents as the description is etched with meticulous detail. Furthermore, repetition, parallelism, and balanced construction are used to draw the reader's attention to some pertinent remarks that advance the themes.

The chronologically woven plot sustains the reader's interest while the copious use of figures of speech, idioms, and proverbs adds aesthetic value to the discourse. The enormous use of titles and aliases, and the undue emphasis on their use before people's names not only speak volumes about vainglory but also give the work a touch of humour.

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