

**MANIFESTATIONS OF HYPERBOLE IN THE IMAGINED VOICE OF SELECTED
AFRICAN YOUTHS' POETRY**

MWAMBURI, AUDILIA WAKESHO W.

**A RESEARCH PROJECT REPORT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS
IN LITERATURE, UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI**

OCTOBER 2020

DECLARATION

This research project report is my original work and has not been submitted for examination or the award of a degree at any other institution.

Signature. **A.W.**

Date. 21st October 2020

Mwamburi, Audilia Wakesho W.

C50/5851/2017

This research project report has been submitted for examination with our approval as university supervisors:

First Supervisor:

Signature.

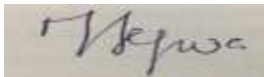


Date 21st October 2020

Dr. Tom Odhiambo

Second Supervisor:

Signature....



Date...21st October 2020

Dr. Judith J. J. Jefwa

DEDICATION

I dedicate this project to my loving mother, Rose Malale, who is my source of inspiration.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research project would not have been successful without the dedicated and consistent guidance of my supervisors, Dr. Tom Odhiambo and Dr. Judith Jefwa. I express my indebtedness and deepest gratitude for your priceless suggestions and making available research material for this study. Your genuine support, patience and belief in my ability provided me with the resilience to complete this project.

Special thanks to the lecturers in the department of literature for providing me with a strong knowledge base in the course of my studies: Prof. Indangasi, Prof. Chesaina, Prof. Rinkanya, Dr. Kitata, Dr. Musonye and Dr. Kimingichi. I am more than grateful to Dr. Muchiri for her invaluable insight in my project, her moral support and the wisdom she accorded me both in my academic and personal life.

I would also like to express my special appreciation to my classmate, Athanus Mutisya. You have mentored me tremendously. Thank you for giving me brilliant comments and encouraging me throughout this experience.

A special thanks to my sister, Anita Malemba, for your endless encouragement and hope that I can succeed. Words cannot express how grateful I am for all of the sacrifices you have made on my behalf.

To my loving husband, Davis Wafula Juma. Thank you for always being there for me. Your ever-present confidence in me, prayers and patience have sustained me this far.

Finally, I thank my Heavenly Father for taking me through all the challenges. I have indeed tasted your goodness! Thank you, Lord.

CONTENTS

DECLARATION.....	ii
DEDICATION.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
DEFINITION OF TERMS.....	vii
ABSTRACT.....	ix
CHAPTER ONE: BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY.....	1
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 Statement of the Problem.....	3
1.3 Objectives of the Study.....	4
1.4 Hypotheses of the Study	4
1.5 Justification for the Study	4
1.6 Literature Review.....	6
1.7 Theoretical Framework.....	11
1.8 Scope and Limitation	14
1.9 Research Methodology	14
1.10 Chapter Outline.....	15
CHAPTER TWO: HYPERBOLE IN THE DEPICTION OF THE IMAGINED VOICE IN EXISTENTIAL CRISIS	16
2.0 Introduction.....	16
2.1 Hyperbolic symbol of Time and Existentialism	17
2.2 Hyperbolic ‘I’ Persona and Identity as an aspect of Existential Crisis.....	29
2.3 Conclusion	37
CHAPTER THREE: HYPERBOLE AS A MIRROR OF THE DISILLUSIONMENT IN THE YOUTH IN CONTEMPORARY AFRICA.....	39
3.0 Introduction.....	39
3.1 Disillusioned Youth and the Hyperbolic Metaphor of Pain.....	39
3.2 Nostalgia and the Negative Impact of Globalization on the Youth	46

3.3 Conclusion	54
CHAPTER FOUR: CONCLUSION	57
WORKS CITED.....	61
APPENDIX.....	65

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Youth

The United Nation perceives youth “as a period of transition from the dependence of childhood to adulthood’s independence”. Although the term is quite fluid and age is, often, the easiest parameter to define youth. According to the editors in this anthology “the youth are described as the young people who are between the ages of 20 and 35 years”. These youths are conceptually understood by how they relate to their society’s socio-economic and political situations in contemporary Africa.

Imagined

According to Seamus Heaney (1995) poetry is the "imagination pressing back against the pressure of reality": the imagination is at the heart of poetical endeavour. One might argue that the critical foundations of deconstruction are to be found in a theory of the imagination and of the manipulations of the symbol which distinguishes three focal ideas: the creative strength of the imagination as employed through the symbol; the likelihood of an infinite scope of meanings and imaginative possibilities; and thirdly the acceptance of the production of meanings and imaginative possibilities between text, author and reader. From the notion of imagination, we employ ‘imagined’ which is an adjective of (something) believed to exist or be so. This term introduces the discourse of the imagined voice in existential crisis and disillusionment of the youth in contemporary Africa.

Voice

Elbow (1973) in defining voice puts it this way “in your natural way of producing words there is a sound, a texture, a rhythm-a voice-which is the main source of power in your writing”. Voice is hereby perceived as the force that will make a reader listen to a poet, the energy that drives the meaning. It is thus important when a writer places himself or herself into words, and providing a sense that the character is a real person, he or she conveys a specific message to the intended audience.

Hyperbole

Hyperbole is an exaggeration. It is a figure of speech where the speaker says something while meaning another thing (Stern, 2000). In the use of hyperbole, poets in this study transcend the thresholds that the readers expect by using exaggeration. Burgers et al. (2016) define hyperbole as ‘An expression that is more extreme than justified given its ontological referent’. As such, they propose that there are three main principles that will assist us define what hyperbole is. The first is exaggeration. The second is the significance of the shift from the propositional meaning into what the speaker intended to say. Finally, there must be a specific referent assigned when speaking hyperbolically. It is with this understanding that the study looks at the manifestations of hyperbole not just as a tool for emphasis but one that mirrors the elasticity of the youth imagined voice in the state of disillusionment and existential crisis.

Existentialism

Harold H. Titus (1970) has defined existentialism as “an attitude and outlook that emphasizes human existence — that is, the distinctive qualities of individual persons — rather than man in the abstract or nature and the world in general. The term “existentialism” was explicitly adopted as a self-description by Jean-Paul Sartre. Existentialism is associated with the view of the absurdity of human condition. It places an individual in a strange world. This is a philosophical theory or approach which emphasizes the existence of the individual person as a free and responsible agent determining their own development through acts of the will.

Existential Crisis

Existential crisis is defined as a moment at which an individual questions the very foundations of his life: whether his life has any meaning, purpose or value (James, 2007). This is a moment in life, when individuals question if their lives have meaning, purpose, or value. In some instances, the crisis is lifelong while in others it’s ephemeral. An existential crisis is internal as it includes inner conflicts and anxieties that accompany human responsibility, independence, freedom, issues of purpose and commitment (Gilliland & James, 1993).

ABSTRACT

The study is premised on the nexus between form and content. It looks at the manifestations of hyperbole by poets to exploit the underlying concerns of the referent subjects and persona(s) in the poems under study. Hyperbole is explored in its diverse existence in which the various poems analyzed, address. Its effectiveness is hereby critiqued in the analyses of youth agency and the prominent concerns of existentialism and disillusionment in the African context. In particular, this study examines how Ebenezer Agu's, *20.35: Africa: An Anthology of Contemporary Poetry* makes use of hyperbole to depict the imagined voice of the contemporary youth in Africa. The study argues that the imagined voice acts as a representation of the youth in contemporary Africa by exploring their concerns through hyperbole, hence significant in the understanding of questions familiar to most young people of African lineage. Using the postcolonial and new criticism literary theories, the study focuses on the analysis of sixteen selected poems that make use of exaggerated literary elements which are geared towards depicting the African youth's imagined voice hypothesized to be in existential crisis and disillusioned. I observe that the selected poets in this anthology present their poetic imagination in a pessimistic way as an optimistic challenge to the African youth to live freely by reaffirming a sense of self.

CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

Poetry is an artistic form in which the writer presents his or her deep-seated feelings of all kinds, for example, joy, fear, anger, anxiety, triumph and shame. It is an art that serves as an outlet to express such feelings through the use of form and language.

It is key to point out that form comprises a detailed analysis of structural and literary elements in a given poem with the aim of exploring the subject matter or content relayed. Simply put, it is a holistic presentation of the aesthetic quality in a poem. It primarily focuses on the artistry the writer employs in composing a literary work. Form explores how writers creatively use words so as to convey certain feelings and ideas in a precise way to suit their authorial intention.

Language, on the other hand, consists of the use of words to communicate meaning. The language in poetry can either be relayed in a conventional or unconventional way depending on the poet's artistic needs. In *Images and Impressions: An Oxford Senior Poetry Course*, Kolawole Ogungbesan and David Woolger, state that, "the words of poetry are compressed, charged with meaning and significance." This is to say that words are intentionally used to strongly appeal to human emotions and intellect.

The study of form is vital in foregrounding the subject matter since the two are interconnected in the sense that through form, one understands the content of a literary work. This interconnection is shown in Mark Schorer's *The Words We Imagine*, which posits that, "For technique is the means by which the writer's experience, which is his subject matter, compels him to attend to it; technique is the only means he has of discovering, exploring, developing his subject, of conveying its meaning, and finally, of evaluating it" (3). This suggests that the poem's stylistic dispensation is also a conveyor of the subject matter portrayed. For example a poem that uses symbolism as a technique, assures the reader of the intensity of the content (subject matter) relayed since it will carry the poet's attitude and feelings within it. This interrelationship of form and content helped me analyze the literary features in the selected poems to show how they helped

in the depiction of the youth's imagined voice on pertinent concerns in contemporary Africa.

In regard to language, the concerns (content) that are depicted by the poets might be similar or not, depending on the choice of words. The choice of words give direction about an individual poet's perspectives, intentions, feelings, and attitude towards the concern.. This enables one to clearly have a deeper understanding of each poet as he/she relays his\her words in capturing an imagined moment or experience from a personal point of view. In the same note, I focus on the imagined voice of the youth in contemporary African poetry from which I intend to form a basis of this imagination in discussing the youth concerns as put about in the earlier generations of African poets and how different or unique these issues are portrayed by the contemporary poets.

According to Chris Ajibade and Adeola Adeniranin in "African Poetry as an Expression of Agony," African poetry "is a large and complex subject, partly because of Africa's original linguistic diversity but primarily because of the devastating effect of slavery and colonization..." (22). This assertion is largely acceptable. In it, they explain that African poets make an escape from personality in their poems by writing from their own experience as they talk about the ills predominant in their society. This means that African poetry has and will always express many concerns which focus on the African ethos and traditions. Quite distinctly, modern African poetry asserts the eminence of naturalness, sensation and vibrant imagination in poetic creation, as key features of creative poetry. The modern African poets strikingly present their poems to the brink of everyday ordinary language, in the portrayal of identity, colonial experience, contemporary post-independence and development of humanity in the African discourse. These become part of the innumerable issues as thematic preoccupations and imagination in their poetry.

In reference to Mathias Orhero's *Trends in Modern Africa Poetic Composition: Identifying the Canons*, he classifies modern African Poetry in terms of canons that can as well be appropriated to generations. He explains how the African poets in each generation expressed a particular concern of that era in line with what Africans were experiencing in their nations. For instance, the first generation of African poets presented concerns of the African identity in the struggle for African liberation while the second generation of poets was not concerned in idealizing Africa but on the individual self and the environment. Similarly, the third generation of poets and the fourth

had different concerns as well, where the former focused on post-colonial experience while the latter laid emphasis on Marxist ideology against issues of dictatorship and corruption.

The current generation of the contemporary young poets is referred to as authors of the 20th and 21st century. Orhero states that Okon calls these poets “Recent Echoes from a Globalized Africa.” These contemporary poets express concerns of globalization, modernity influences, identity, disillusionment and existential crisis. Examples of such poets are: Joe Ushie, Imo Okon, Akachi Ezeigbo, Nninmo Bassey, Olu Oguibe, Isidore Diala and others. The contemporary poets have worked on communicating their intolerance on the prevailing issues of their countries in a highly robust and brutal candidness. With this in mind, this study focuses on the selected contemporary African poets who have imparted their poetry on the youth concerns against the thriving of a country and family as part of their imagined voice.

As pointed out in *20.35: Africa: An Anthology of Contemporary Poetry*: edited by Ebenezer Agu with Safia Elhillo and Gbenga Adesina as guest-editors, the contemporary young African poets in this anthology are a new breed -relatively unknown in contemporary African poetry whose ages are between 20 and 35 years. For a majority of the poets, their poetic works were from the 2018 shortlist in the Brunel International African Poetry Prize. The anthology comprises a total of thirty-three poems, each by a different poet of an African descent, either a resident on the continent or in the Diaspora.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The strength of poetry lies in its literariness and aesthetics brought about by the poet’s stylistic choices. The selected poems in the anthology, explore the concerns that affect the contemporary youth in Africa. The study thus probes the poems by bringing to the fore their imagined voice and stylistic choice in portraying the contemporary issues which the poets explore. This study secures its relevance by examining the claim on the youth’s imagined voice as it examines the use of hyperbole in the selected poems to reveal the contemporary issues affecting the youth in Africa. In so doing, I hope to open up the field for more critical analysis.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

1. Analyze how hyperbole depicts the imagined voice in existential crisis as presented in selected poems;
2. Evaluate hyperbole as a mirror of the disillusionment among the youth in contemporary Africa.

1.4 Hypotheses of the Study

1. The existential crisis of the youth in contemporary Africa is shown through the imagined voice depicted by hyperbole in the selected poems.
2. The selected poems prominently feature hyperbole to mirror disillusionment of the contemporary youth in Africa.

1.5 Justification for the Study

In Zahir Akbari's "Role of the Young Generation", "The youths are often heralded as the future leaders, yet in reality they are already leading important change today since they hold a key to the future of all societies in the world. Therefore, supporting the youth by any society is crucial in securing its own posterity and national heritage."

Youth's voice refers to what young people are saying about matters affecting them and others. Poetry is increasingly positioning itself for this pivotal space where youth are articulating issues affecting them. The youth have been perceived through binary lenses of either being victims or perpetrators of anything imaginable. There is a need to have a conscious and deliberate departure from this approach to one that leads to an understanding of the heterogeneous nature of the youth that is embedded within them as well as how they react to what concerns them in life. The youth should be envisioned as economic or political actors who contribute to societal transformation (Kemper, 2015) and as Becker highlights (2012, 7), consulting and including the voices of young people is the first step in inclusive programming.

Youth identities and experiences are multilayered and multifaceted. This reality calls for a deeper and broader conceptualization of the youth. A number of more recent studies have sought to redress the absence of youth voices through qualitative research (Pruitt, 2013; Uvin, 2007; MacKenzie,

2009; Denov & Maclure, 2006). These have provided examples of the manifestation of youth voice by seeking to engage those young people who have been afforded little attention. They have, however, focused on what has been written about the youth with little on what the youth have written about themselves. A study of the concerns of the youth is only complete when what they say receives attention. This study goes beyond what the youth say to how they say it. This is a study on how hyperbole addresses concerns of the youth in contemporary Africa with a focus on existentialism and disillusionment.

Poetic structure has been studied for long and with diverse approaches. This study takes a departure from the motif-led approach taken by previous studies. Motif-led approaches pay attention to the central or recurring image or action shared in related works of art. In previous studies, the focus is inclined more on the renowned poets or familiar poems, at the expense of the growing poets or new poems, and not in the critiquing of the poetic structure and content. It is here that my need to diversify and widen the scope of knowledge in poetry is intensified by engaging my study in the text that was published in 2018: *20.35: Africa: An Anthology of Contemporary Poetry*, so as to give a hearing and appreciation of the young upcoming writers as a way of reflecting on emerging contemporary African young writers against the presentation of their poetic structure and content. It is in hope that this will act as a clarion call for a concerted effort to stimulate contemporary African poetry research and criticism in depth and a catalyst of intellectual growth to many aspiring young poets, some of whom may not have a rich literary orientation to enable them gain confidence that they can also write poetry.

The selected poems in this anthology reflect the contemporary concerns that affect the youth in Africa. On the issue of stylistic choice, the poems are relayed in a manner that captures how contemporary youth in Africa encounter and navigate issues that affect them. Since the poems are described and narrated through young people's perspectives, they offer vital lessons and clues to the young readers as to how to grapple with issues in their lives' developmental challenges.

The close reading of the poems, conveys the likelihood of demonstrating how they comprise meanings suitable for the critical challenge "of opening...spaces for new narratives of becoming..." as pointed out by Couze Venn's "A Note on Assemblage". This is why the study

is based on how the imagined voices of the selected young African poets are depicted through their expression of their own lived and imagined experiences. On the other hand, the choice to study sixteen selected poems is justified by their distinctiveness in imagination concerning some of the issues affecting the young people of contemporary Africa.

Lastly, the strength of the selected poems lies in their aesthetic appeal. In this way, they help in the cultivation of enthusiasm, interest, a love of reading and reading culture among the youth thus developing their competence in language skills. Therefore, a critical analysis of the selected poems would greatly help in bringing to the fore the youth's imagined voice in contemporary Africa.

1.6 Literature Review

In order to provide a context for this research, I have sought to review various works on poetic features, contemporary issues on youth writing as well as writings on New Criticism theoretical framework and studies of modern African poetry. In reference to the reviews of the selected poems for the study, there were no comprehensive studies carried out on this anthology, other than a feature from *Brittle Paper: An African Literary Experience* entitled, "In Conversation: Cheswayo Mphanza & Nkateko Masinga Discuss Language, Trauma, Identity Politics, and the Poems in 20.35 Africa Anthology". All the literature reviewed has a bearing on this study and therefore serves as the fulcrum upon which this study is pegged.

The feature in *Brittle Paper: An African Literary Experience*, is significant to the study as it lays an overview on what the poems in the anthology are about. Whereas this article is inclined toward psychology, it provides a platform for a philosophical and literary analysis. The conversation notes that the poems are positioned in the discourse of New Criticism in terms of affective fallacy ("a term from literary criticism used to refer to the supposed error of judging or evaluating a text on the basis of its emotional effects on a reader" as posited by Wimsatt and Beardsley, 1949). This is an ideology that most, if not all, modernists are dealing with. As clearly put, "reconstruction of the fragmented..." that evokes any reader's attention and emotions. Similarly, in the study, I aim to concentrate on the very fragmentation and the poets' impressions and attitudes in putting forth the youth's imagined voice on issues in contemporary Africa. Mphanza,

in the conversation, states that the poems are an articulation of the postcolonial traumas that have somehow affected how we articulate whatever anxiety is within us. She posits the question of familiarity with the poems in the context of the poetics it represents, in view of contemporary Africa. Mphanza's viewpoint calls for further scholarly scrutiny and this study will explore this.

Similarly, Masinga echoes the traumas as major youth concerns that are visible in some of the poems in the anthology such as: Nica Cornell's *Thirteenth* that is emotionally channeled on sexual violence which can be interpreted differently by one who is exposed to sexual violence and one who is not, should be given a trigger warning. However, he asserts that the "trigger warnings are useless in Africa because the truth is triggering" as shown in Tairo Ndoro's *Asphyxia*. Masinga also says that the poems are strange as they talk of the reality of living in Africa hence making a claim on whether there is a difference in writings between Africans living in Africa from those in the Diaspora. This is indeed crucial as the study examines such triggers as part of the youth's imagined voice on issues in Africa. Moreover, in view of the criticism, the study is not aiming at giving a comparative study of the selected poems but on the analysis.

Ojaide observes that there is some aesthetic strength unrealized in the new works of modern African written poetry that have adopted oral poetic techniques as applied in the written. In a statement that indicates his appreciation of aesthetics is echoed in *Poetic Imagination in Black Africa* when he states, "Modern African poetic aesthetics are unique in possessing a repertory of authentic African features. This authenticity manifests itself in the use of concrete images derived from the fauna and flora, proverbs, indigenous rhythms, verbal tropes, and concepts of space and time to establish a poetic form." (30) It is in this knowledge I note that modern African poetry is characterized by traditional African oral forms. My study of the youth's imagined voice in the selected poems also analyzes the influence of oral forms on the poems.

Furthermore, Ojaide in *New Trends in Modern African Poetry* posits that "every age of artists struggle with the medium for relevance; whence the relevance itself becomes a key feature for aesthetic distinction since the experiences and reality among people differs, hence the variety of works leading to pluralism for positive growth. In this case, he notes that the new trends in modern African poetry are a deliberate reaction from the earlier trends, especially those of

Okigbo, Soyinka and Clark; who as opposed to them, the younger poets are not self-conscious as “they seem to reject the conservative poetic practices, which are too formal and imitative of western tradition.” (116). He asserts that Eliot and Pound influence on Okigbo, Hopkins on Clark and Shakespeare on Soyinka; while the younger generation of poets shed off such foreign influences and gained ground of change- a strong trend in decolonization of African poetry. This complements the study as the selected poets in the anthology employ their stylistic choices to portray the imagined voice on contemporary youth issues that speak of a number of changes which need to take effect in Africa for holistic social and personal development of humanity. However, the study is not based on comparison of what is modern or earlier trend of poetry as Ojaide suggests.

In the study of style, a researcher can engage in an in-depth analysis of literary device. Bressler avers that, “Each device or compositional feature possesses peculiar properties that can, as in any science, be analyzed ...this new science of literature became an analysis of the literary and artistic devices that the writer manipulates to create a text.” (51) This illustrates the need for literary scholars to be versatile in the creative aspects of style such as imagery, symbolism, irony, parallelism, hyperbole and any other aspect which comprise the literariness of a text. Bressler’s work is essential to this study since it emphasizes the approach to literary interpretation. In reference to Bressler’s views; the study analyses the selected poems as autonomous entities by looking at their use of literary features. Bressler’s work is thus important in the way it complements this study.

Robert Di Yanni in *Research and Critical Perspective* claims that a work’s greatness is determined by the manner in which a poet manipulates both linguistic and artistic tools to produce a literary work. He observes that, “the greatest literary works are ‘universal’, their wholeness and aesthetic harmony transcending the specific peculiarities they describe”. (1581) On this note, artistry is key in determining the greatness of a literary work. The study will make use of Di Yanni’s views to emphasize the artistic use of hyperbole by the selected poets in this anthology.

Egudu clearly defines modern African poetry “is intimately concerned with the African people in the African society and in the Diaspora, with their lives in its various ramifications — cultural, social, economic, intellectual and political” (5) In this note, he explores the predicaments of Africans all over the world in instances such as: apartheid, colonization, postcolonial politics, war and social disparity that has for long been captured in African poetry and still is in modern African poetry. He also observes that “there is some natural compulsion about commitment in Literature to what is happening around the writer.”(2) Similarly, I analyze the selected poems in examining the youth’s imagined voice on issues that are prevalent in Africa today, especially in the lives of the youth.

Bamgbose comments on the authenticity of modern African poetry that is characterized by the “intricate ties between African verse and African life in its diversities and complexities.” (1) This is to imply that modern African poetry is a reflection of life in Africa. The selected poets in the anthology showcase the lives of young people in the African countries as a means of communicating to their audience the feelings they harbor about certain youth issues through their poems hence the imagined voice. Bamgbose's argument is that the modern African verse is shaped by the understanding that ‘modern’ nature is inclusive of “its oral roots, its treatment of colonial, and cultural nationalist issues, and issues of negritude, the language question, radical consciousness, gender, and its “international” nature. (4) Indeed, these are some of the contemporary issues that affect the youth in Africa, hence the importance of Bamgbose’s work to this study for its complementary purposes.

Orhero notes on the poetic composition under the contemporary poetry canonization which he highlights that the poets from this period other than addressing issues that affect their societies; they also write using philosophy of art for art’s sake. “They write of love, emotions, grief, hope, pain etc.” (161). Similarly, the selected contemporary poets in the anthology have relayed their imagined voice on issues for a better Africa upon the contemporary young Africans.

Okiche examines the portrayal of cultural aesthetics and employment of cultural hybridism elements that are ingrained in the poetry of Eke’s *Symphony of Becoming* and Nwaeboh’s *Stampede of Voiceless Ants*. He avers that the poet’s aptness in using the cultural elements helps to “...elevate Africa’s cultural heritage, oral elements/tradition and promotion of positive national

identity for Africa...” (58) In my study, a number of the selected poems draw in their imagined voice on the issue of African identity as a way of celebrating what is African by way of appreciating the various ethnic languages within the continent and also castigate the youth who are submerged in westernization influence leading to identity crisis.

Akingbe observes on the mastery of language patterns by modern African poets that have made their poetry not only inviting but also exciting to read and understand. He adds that the epochal approach in the crafting of poetry has significantly heightened emotions which endear poems to the readers. In contrast to Ojaide’s claim that satire is a feature for the older generation of poets; Akingbe praises this use of satire that is still common to contemporary poets, “The over-arching argument of various studies is that satire is grounded in the poetics of contemporary poetry in order to criticize certain aspects of the social ills plaguing society.” Though my study does not focus on satire, it appreciates the use of hyperbole to heighten the reader’s appreciation of the poems.

Tambari also investigates the language patterns but more specifically on the pattern of deviation in Osundare’s poetry. He states that deviation is an essential aspect of literary style that is key in interpretation of message and evaluation of the poet’s artistic style. Tambari highlights the patterns of deviation in the “perspective of graphology, capitalization, italicization and parallelism.” (2) He claims that these patterns of deviation help in the reinforcement and emphasis of ideas within the lines in the poem. Tambari’s work is important as it complements my study especially in identifying and analyzing the literary elements employed in examining the imagined voice on contemporary issues affecting the youth in Africa.

Stephanie Norgate in *Poetry and Voice* corroborates with words of Michael Wilson in “*Last Least of Her Voice*”: *The Voice of Poetry*.

From early perceptions we grow used to voice as a representation of something personal yet ineffable. It is something individual to us and in some way represents our identity and self and yet it is not altogether under our control. These qualities are then employed usefully by the poet, whose art form is in some ways a kind of ‘voicing’. How engaged with voice as ‘self’ are we when we encounter poetry? (111)

The view above, asserts the notion of voice as the ‘self’ when a reader engages with a poem. This is majorly the primary focus in my study since I interrogate this notion of voice as my title states, ‘imagined voice’ to mean the imagined ‘self’ as presented by the selected poets in the anthology who claim to represent the youth and how they are affected by certain contemporary issues in Africa.

The relevance of this literature review is to clearly show the extent of literary studies in the stylistic choices and contemporary concerns that affect the youth in Africa hence the knowledge gap the study strives to fill. The review of literature reveals paucity in critical and comprehensive studies on the selected poems in the anthology.

1.7 Theoretical Framework

To articulate my set objectives, this study is guided by the Postcolonial and New Criticism literary theories. These two sets of theories may appear to work at cross purpose on the surface in that the postcolonial theory acknowledges the historical environment as a key factor in studying a text while New Criticism argues that the text is self-sufficient for analysis however, the selection of these two as the basis for my analysis is deliberate in that the lives of the youth in contemporary Africa are the embodiment of the contradiction the two theories seem to present. In the poems selected for this study, the youth appear to live in an existential crisis that is both self-standing on one hand and appended to the historical past on the other. They are presented as being disillusioned by the isolated present and also by the continuum to the past that life is. I explore how the works identify as “other” or stranger by the content and form expressed in them. This angle positions the selected poems in their agentive role as a youth voice and the cultural discourses appended to it. However, the same poems function as self-contained, self-referential aesthetic objects. The poems can thence be analyzed in their intimate connection between meaning and structure.

Postcolonial theory gained profoundness through Edward Said’s *Orientalism*, which seeks to debunk the west by attempting to understand the relationship between the colonizer and colonized societies. Emphatically, the text focuses on the West which has historically imperialized its colonies such as Africa. Said believes that “...the consequences of colonialism are still persisting

in the form of chaos, coups, corruption, civil wars, and bloodshed, which permeates many ex-colonies.” This is to say that the powerful colonizer imposed a language and a culture that undermined those of the Oriental people by way of distortion. In order to continually exploit its colonies; the West has fabricated a false image of the orient: strange, weak, feminized “other”, contrasted with the rational, familiar, strong, masculine West. It is imperative to state that what has been written about the non-western societies is no more than false assumptions. As a matter of fact, the long European colonial rule of the non-western societies has negatively influenced the mindset of its colonies as evidenced in the political instabilities: ‘chaos, coups, corruption and civil wars’ experienced in the African countries.

In this regard the non-western societies constantly keep on resisting the western ideologies that have been imposed on them. A good example is in *The Empire Writes Back*, where Bill Ashcroft et al strongly convey this resistance by relaying the condescending view of the West upon Africa and Africans. More pronounced is the issue of brainwashing that the west has on Africans. A methodology that makes many Africans, especially young people denounce their own African identity, language and heritage. In *Can the Subaltern Speak?* Gayatri Spivak deals with the problem of "how the third world subject is represented within Western discourse" (1427) She shows that even now the powerless are unable to express themselves, and that the experiences of such groups are inevitably distorted by the perspectives of the elite, such as academics, who are describing them. As Omutiti is quick to point out that Micere Mugo’s poem *Daughter of My People Sing*, communicates that “African people are not identity-less; they have a rich cultural fountain to draw from...and that the poet-persona desires the re-integration of her and the younger generation into progressive African cultural and artistic modes.” (22) This foregrounds my study which seeks to bring forth the youth’s imagined voice on issues of postcolonial traumas, fear and anxiety for instance, as part of African cultural identity that needs to be projected to the youth in Africa who have been influenced by the western thinking.

New criticism aims at devising new understanding and conceptual tools with which to evaluate a text. The theory argues that the reader does not need to rely on outside sources, such as the author’s biography to fully understand a text, since such information has little bearing on the work’s merit. It seeks to consider a text as an autonomous piece and “closed” meaning that

everything needed to comprehend a work is present within it. The New critics have emphasized “close reading” as an ideal tool to engage with a text by simply paying close attention to the form and meaning. In addition to close reading, the new critics focus on the variety and degree of literary devices employed in a text. Furthermore, the new critics have formulated principles to the term ‘New Criticism’ and associated it as ‘intentional fallacy’ and ‘affective fallacy’. Where the latter as aforementioned, refers to evaluation of a text based on a reader’s emotional effect. Arguably, the reader’s response to a poem is a definite indication of its value.

In contrast to affective fallacy, intentional fallacy aims to assess or evaluate a text based on the author’s intention. However, Wimsatt and Beardsley posit that, “the design or intention of the author is neither available nor desirable as a standard for judging the success of a work of literary art, and it seems to us that this is a principle which goes deep into some differences in the history of critical attitudes.” Simply put, an author’s intention cannot be the standard criterion of judging, assessing or evaluation a work of art. The article continues to assert that; “...a written work has meaning because of its words, and its success or failure to communicate hinges on its perceived relevance”. It argues that as we constantly read to understand ourselves better, we tend to look at how a work of art might relate to us; hence the words in a text will still remain the same, although we will judge them differently due to our different life experiences we are subjected to.

With this knowledge, as new critical theorists stress the uniqueness of form and language, so will this study analyze the literariness of each selected poem in the anthology in its own terms and distinctiveness whilst revealing the Africa youth’s imagined voice on contemporary concerns, without any primary reference to an outside source whether of history or biography.

Using Postcolonial and New Criticism theories, I will analyze nuanced and holistic identities of youth in contemporary Africa in a way that gives a broader understanding of their voice and concerns. The study explores isolation and connectedness, dependence and independence, reality and perceptions, all as expressed by the disposition of hyperbole in the selected poems.

1.8 Scope and Limitation

In any critical analysis of a work of art, a critic can focus on the many facets of it: be it themes, language or style and many more. In my study of *20.35: Africa: An Anthology of Contemporary Poetry*. In this study, I focus on examining the African youth's imagined voice on issues in contemporary Africa from selected poems, as well as the styles used. Since the text consists of thirty-three poems; I opt to scale down my scope to only sixteen poems for a more comprehensive coverage. Each of the poems represents a particular region of Africa: the East, West, North or South as well as the Diaspora. Additionally, the poems are a collection of ideas from both genders, this helps in having an equal insight on contemporary issues affecting young women and men of the African descent.

It is prudent to state that out of the vast contemporary poems in Africa, my study takes interest in the perspective of the young people's new poetry work and limits the wide theme umbrella to only those that are projected by and for the youth in contemporary Africa, thus my choice of the recent published text that is written by and for the young people who are between the ages of 20 and 35 years.

1.9 Research Methodology

This study attempts to exhaustively work on the manifestations of hyperbole and its connectedness to the concerns of the youth in contemporary Africa through the analysis of selected poems. This is the centrality upon which the study hinges and forms the basis of my argument. The study is qualitative in nature. It is based on extensive library research which involves reading, analysis and interpretation of data from primary and secondary sources. A reading of the primary text of the selected poems has been undertaken and the contemporary issues emerging thereof have been linked to the real world in order to evolve a comprehensive perspective of Africa from the youth's point of view.

The study also embarks on the close textual reading of the poems in the anthology to gain new insight and perspective about the imaginary voice on issues relayed. My reading of information from relevant written records, texts, articles and journals on youth literature and contemporary issues formed a strong base for complementary and vital insights into the selected poems.

1.10 Chapter Outline

Chapter One provides a background and introduction to the study. It introduces the main issues that are germane to the topic. It also outlines the research objectives and the hypotheses that the study seeks to argue. The chapter also offers a justification of the study as well as the study's scope and limitations. A detailed literature review is presented in this chapter and so is a theoretical framework on which the study is hinged. Finally, the chapter gives the research methodology employed.

Chapter Two assesses the depiction of hyperbole in the African youth's imagined voice in existential crisis as presented in the eight selected poems by Akpa Arinze, Michelle Angwenyi, J.K. Anowe, Cheswayo Mphanza, Aremu Adams Adebisi, Afua Ansong, YasminBelkhyr and Gloria Kiconco respectively. The chapter discusses the youth issues in depth with a primary focus on how the poetic style brings them out.

Chapter Three explores hyperbole as a mirror of disillusionment of the youth in contemporary Africa. It draws the nexus between poetic structure and thematic concern, between form and content. The chapter focuses on the presentation of the eight selected poems by Ama Asantewa Diaka, Nica Cornell, Sarah Godsell, Tariro Ngoro, Lillian Akampurira Aujo, Victoria AdukweiBulley, Lydia Kasese and OlatundeOsinaike respectively.

Chapter Four, the final chapter of the study, is the conclusion in which the findings of the study are presented.

CHAPTER TWO

HYPERBOLE IN THE DEPICTION OF THE IMAGINED VOICE IN EXISTENTIAL CRISIS

2.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I analyze how hyperbole demonstrates the imagined voice in existential crisis of African youth who often find themselves at crossroads as regards identity and existence. The selected poets present a 'self' in their poems that is in conflict with itself due to innumerable concerns against the nation and family. I argue that the selected poets have formed an imagination that the 'conflicted self' acts as a representation of the contemporary youth in Africa who has been disconcerted by existential crisis.

Under the poems' stylistic disposition, I seek to lay emphasis on the deployment of hyperbole through literary elements such as symbolism, description, 'I' Persona, imagery, irony, paradox, diction, as well as the structural aspects and sound features like repetition, rhyme, alliteration, enjambment and many others. I also aim to identify the language use in line with the poets' attitude and tone as they convey the imagined voice in existential crisis. This holistic composition will unearth the poets' reason for using them to reveal the imagined voice in existential crisis.

The chapter comprises the analysis of eight poems which draw on the imagined voice in existential crisis. There are also highlights on quotes from various scholars regarding the concept discussed as the imagined voice. My choice of these poems has been guided by the unique way in which they have exploited language within the scope of this study. In each of these poems, I try to analyze each instance of style with a view to accounting for and justifying their use. This is done in light of the poet's imagined voice for the youth in contemporary Africa.

In my analysis, I have made an attempt to group the poems that seem to address the imagined voice in existential crisis. Additionally, the grouping is determined by the hyperbolic use of the different literary elements that cut across the poems. This is to say, I will discuss the hyperbolic symbol of time and existentialism against aspects of existentialism like death, absurdity, anxiety and alienation. I will also discuss the hyperbolic 'I' Persona and identity as a means to investigate the identity crisis which is an aspect of existent crisis as presented in the poems. It is important

to point out that the categories in terms of hyperbole and imagined voice might be in no way exhaustive hence a challenge to an extended study.

2.1 Hyperbolic symbol of Time and Existentialism

“When life is a woe
And hope is dumb,
The world says, “Go!”
The Grave says, “Come!”
(Arthur Guiterman)

Following the speed at which the human’s life is progressing, the lines above theorize the meaning of existence. Some of the youth in contemporary Africa live their lives in self-confinement where they isolate themselves from the world, believing that one’s life has no real purpose, meaning, or value, hence experience existential crisis- which “is a stage of development at which an individual questions the very foundations of his or her life, whether his or her life has any meaning, purpose or value” as stated by Sonakshi Ruhela in *Existential Crisis amongst Youth*. This existential crisis is often caused by a shocking event in a person’s life such as loss, change, death of a loved one and many more.

Soren Kierkegaard, the existentialist philosopher talked about existential crisis as a mid-life phenomenon, but, unfortunately in our today’s society it is often experienced by the youth; the ones who experience loneliness, alienation and stress in dealing with various issues involving their future, broken families or fear of losing parents. In *The Circle of Courage: Developing Resilience and Capacity in Youth*, Brendro, Brokenleg& Van Bockern, Wheatley noted from their work that “today’s youth feel disconnected and question their existence, purpose, and the meaning of life. These youth face traumatic societal, familial and cultural shift. They are eye witnesses to maladjustment in the family, wrecked relationships, the nation's political atmosphere, unemployment and angst about their unknown and uncertain future and inability to achieve the desired success. “Basically, they are a living witness to hopelessness, castigation by society and crave for basic needs of love and affection. This view forms the backdrop for my study in examining the existential crisis of the contemporary youth as presented in the subsequent selected poems, which have applied the hyperbolic symbol of time to establish this imagined

voice in existentialism.

In the poem, “After Suicide”, Akpa Arinze narrates a persona in desolation who eventually ends up in existential crisis due to the death of his father. Arinze hyperbolically explores the symbol of time by using the image of night as a representation of nothingness being an aspect of existential crisis. The poem comprises of nine stanzas, each with two lines of short and medium length. The poem reverberates with a low, persistent voice of ache and trembling which foreshadows a sense of confusion between the meaning and meaninglessness of life:

When you died mum moved your bed,
I took your place.

It was not difficult changing the television channel
From keeping Up with the Kardashians to Black-ish.

At night your dog kept barking,
We thought it was learning to accept the heat.

...Hoping you won't be found in me.
The leaves scatter, decomposing.

The title of the poem, which is laden with despair, suggests the time after the demise of a father who committed suicide with no apparent reason known to the persona. The word ‘After’ alludes to time that arrests the attention of the reader, who is eager to read on in order to discover the cause of suicide.

In the first and second stanza, the poet uses elaboration to describe in-depth how the persona delves straight into a rebut abrupt acceptance that the living must strive on to exist no matter what life throws at them, “When you died mum moved your bed, I took your place.” The word ‘moved’ signifies a separation of the living and dead. However, in the third stanza, the persona tells us that “At night your dog kept barking, we thought it was learning to accept the heat” ‘Night’ here symbolizes gloominess (nothingness), that despite the supposedly ‘moving on’ there is still sadness that reminds the persona about his/her father. This tells the reader that the persona is

undergoing an emotional pain of losing a father.

The fourth and fifth stanzas paint a grim picture because of the vulnerability drawn by the persona who remembers his father's words against their wishes "We wanted happiness, you wanted flowers..." and admittedly shows candidness in speaking his truth " ...I said no, because denial eases the pain." This takes the reader back into realizing that the persona is still not yet recovered from the pain of losing the father. This builds up on the idea of existentialism which makes the persona to start questioning life "We are always wanting what we can't have".

In stanza seven and eight, the persona falls into a crisis where he pretends to be his father in order to find meaning, at the same time, in retrospect writes his father's name but he couldn't. " /...I pretended I was you just to dance... This night I write your name first & I can't..." The repetition of 'night' in this stanza echoes the gloomy state where one cannot see anything, symbolizes nothingness. Similarly, the persona is in an existential crisis where he can't see anything meaningful after the death of his father, as much as he tries to imitate him or pretend that all is well.

In the last stanza, "Hoping you won't be found in me...The leaves scatter, decomposing." the persona resolves to make a choice of not to be like the father despite the meaningless of life after his death, respectively. The picture in which the 'leaves scatter and decomposing' alludes to death. This means, the meaning and meaningless of life is in the choice to accept or not accept how life throws itself on you, hence an existential crisis. The poem ends in a state of suspense for the reader to internalize the paradox used in the last stanza, provoking the reader's intellect of what he/she would do in a state of existential crisis.

In conclusion, the symbol of time 'night' represents 'nothingness' as an aspect of existential crisis in an individual. Arinze's poem clearly amplifies this imaginary voice (self) to posit that it is in times of death or loss of a loved one where many of the contemporary youth dwindle in existential crisis for they see life to be meaningless and with no purpose to live in. However, he offers a solution of making an individual choice to find meaning despite the seemingly meaningless life. The inconsistent structure of the lines and odd number of total stanzas as form, together with the

rawness of language has greatly helped in conveying the nature of an individual in existential crisis.

In “Old things” Michelle Agwenyi intentionally employs an irregularity in form and intensive language use to put forward her mastery of elegy:

pulling at both sides of a miscalculation: your penchant for old things,
old fabrics faded at their centres, heavy brass jewelry and leather string that...

that had been granted the ability to double both space and time-
they all fall away. Now,
endlessly exposed, now and again, and especially then we...

you fold everything in the grainy velour of your birth: strings, coins, matchsticks,
green soda bottles-
returning to the intangibility of time.

Angwenyi uses hyperbole in narrating the existential crisis through the persona’s outpouring of feelings, emotions and memories of the deceased one or a loss of something in an elegy. Elegy means a lament for the dead. The word ‘old’ in the title puts in mind something or someone belonging to the past, thus a signifier of time.

From line one to fourteen, the persona recalls the deceased’s attributes, character through their memories together on how they will push through the hustle and bustle of city life every single morning.

...not anyone’s idea; not even idea, to begin with.
whatever it is, from the harshness of the morning’s first gritty coffee,
through which we swallowed the previous night’s fists, and indigestible,
days-old kiswahili sayings, we pretend to be okay, even having forgotten how or
more importantly, when to read, or what it means to look at each other without the
words between us.
some sort of primer for forgiveness.

There is a steady buildup of nostalgia that relay a nostalgic yet melancholic tone.

The line 'returning to the intangibility of time' connotes how the deceased seem to value things and memories in this case incorporeal which are of no meaning now. The last stanza is a call to gain the meaning of life amidst memories of the deceased. This can be achieved by foregoing or erasing the past despite the complexity in understanding the meaning of life. It states:

left behind, as you walk away, the last I see of you is your photograph. An
obliteration yet your substantial form, this fading away into its own
resolution both reminder, and that which it reminds us of. another old thing.
and another, one we've both known, carried around like sin-[and like sin in its
duality of weight and lightness]:

On the other hand, the persona shows her honesty about the human tendency to languish in sorrow; she does not avoid it; she confronts it, not in anguish, but in acceptance. This is clearly relayed in the last phrase of the poem that seems added almost as an afterthought.

The paradox in the simile "[and like sin in its duality of weight and lightness]" shows that, just like how it is complex to understand the intensity of sin, so does finding the meaning of life is amidst the meaningless of it. The simile compares life to sin "you are not dead, but you have never been much alive; and not alive, either." This is yet again a state of existential crisis posited in the line, for the reader to fill in depending on the choice one makes in view of life.

Conclusively, the words 'old' 'time' and the use of past tense all express the hyperbolic symbol of time, being, in this case, loneliness as an aspect of existential crisis. The persona feels and is lonely for the loss of a loved one or passion that is no longer in existence, and that change is bound to happen due to various situations of life. Contextually, the poet calls upon the contemporary youth to brace themselves up and not fall into the trap of existential crisis due to life's situations that bring about change, for change is inevitable!

In "Tender Crow's Feet", J.K Anowe deploys hyperbole to bring to attention the complication of a desire that is culturally ingrained as African but is characterized by fear and shame; (FGM) Female Genital Mutilation. The poem hyperbolically communicates a conversation of how

African women don't have possession or accessibility to their bodies. And how part of that is what we have problematically normalized as inherent African culture:

because it holds the rest of the world like a secret in the sense that when you pass through one every eye is looking but untelling we name it after a lineage-to come from a pedigree of women who never enjoyed sex but moaned anyway...

Anowe narrates that it is in such cultural inhibitions of society upon a female contemporary youth, that an individual confines herself to self-destruct due to the fear and shame imposed on her by such inhibitions and reception by the society.

i know a girl in the scene of the dream- a collector a nudist
a late loomer of sorts running a forefinger over the index
of a facade to the outer corners of my eyes as though it is hers to unsculpt
as if to say-i'll always see you as an answer... barefeet we circumvent
the collarbone of the night like slow dance without holding hands
stopping every now & then to adjust our shadows like loincloths
i-with a bottle of valium she-the corkscrew until we arrive inside ourselves & trigger the
tripwire-a new artform showing how quick
we willingly default to self-destruct...

The word 'night' here symbolizes the idea of absurd "...we circumvent the collarbone of the night like slow dance without holding hands...". This is to connote that the culture is widely unreasonable to today's world where both genders have become enlightened to health and safety precautions.

The irregular structure of the poem and the language convey a sense of aggression by the disposition at which the female has been presented into from one line to another,

...no one knows how burdening it is waiting on the
universe to take your mother by her maiden name so you could grow
the nerve to complete the taking of your own life because like touching your
self in pagan places suicide is but one void telling another-now i
must leave this body & return from you....

The last line above foreshadows the existential crisis that the female will be subjected into due to the absurdity involved. “Denying residues of god, family & love full custody hence we are quiet enough to be sudden to be nothing until we misshapen...but what category is a country being” The persona here questions her society on the kind of beings it is raising to be, the tone becomes a reflective one:

...what is it they say about dancing into your own story without soles
Or nakedness as fireproof lord knows he let us come this far just so we
could feel us come apart

The lines above seemingly provoke a reader to focus on the individual’s dilemma between her culture and her sense of self freedom that one has yearned to have especially, the freedom of accessing their body without the societal cultural inhibitions that puts a definition upon the self. This forms the beginning of an existential crisis to an individual.

The poem ends by alluding to the existentialist myth of Sisyphus “Sisyphus was condemned by the gods to ceaselessly roll a rock up to the top of the mountain, whence the rock will continuously fallback on its weight...” Similarly, the poem uses simile “like rollercoaster passengers on a downward spiral...” to bring the idea of absurdity upon an individual.

...steadfast in slow [loco] motion like rollercoaster
passengers on a downward spiral while the country where bullets pass
through every city like ghosts mistaking bodies for air this city in retrospect
of our wildly truant bones chased our gust of ghosts
from prairie to pavement the girl saying- you’re falling again
as the sand beneath my feet starts to quicken

The lines above speak of the jaws of fear and shame engulfing the persona into absurdity of life. Anowe presents to his readers a contrast between the country/society and a female individual; both are trapped in the jaws of fear for a way out but to no avail. It appears here, the imagined voice in existential crisis here is a female individual-persona, who acts as a representation of the contemporary youth who are culturally traumatized, more so the females, hence living in a purposeless life.

Anowe makes use of several enjambments and line breaks to fill his poem with robust detail of the persona's trauma. He primarily does this to force the reader to take a slight break for purposes of reflection which in turn help in reinforcing the disclosure of the following lines, leading to surprising ideas. In relation to the study, this guides in understanding the turmoil and distress that goes through an individual in existential crisis. Therefore, the title 'Tender Crow's Feet' refers to the fragility that is within a person in an existential crisis. Additionally, the hyperbolism in symbol of time 'night' in the poem represents absurdity as an aspect of existential crisis.

In "Prodigal Son", Mphanza talks of ennui and despair as emotional states that push an individual to an existential crisis. She highlights the lives of two characters from the films 'La Petite Vendéuse de Soleil (or The Little Girl Who Sold the Sun)' and 'La Noire De...' respectively to express her imagined voice in the poem.

Mphanza deploys hyperbole to create a compelling and interesting dialogue by juxtaposing the story of a native and an immigrant; Sili in La petite Vendéuse de Soleil and Diouana in La Noire De... respectively. It is in the regular eight quatrains form that showcases the regular reality of life of the characters in the poem who due to one way or another become victims of fate.

In the first stanza, the poem brings in an ominous tone:

It's the foolish innocence of Sili in the film that gets to me.
A bare-footed girl on crutches walking in the streets
Of Dakar selling newspapers. Dubbed. La Petite Vendéuse
De Soleil. After earning 10,000 francs, she buys

Mphanza presents the native character, Sili, in her poem by drawing in a picture of a young poor 'bare-footed' girl who walks the streets with the help of her crutches selling newspapers. Borrowing from postcolonial ideology, "Colonialism is a powerful, usually destructive historical force that shapes not only the political futures of the countries involved but also the identities of colonized and colonizing people." This view brings to mind the postcolonial trauma that still lives within any individual living in Africa. The first line in the poem "It's the foolish innocence

of Sili in the film that gets to me.” heightens the reader’s curiosity to read on whilst grasping one’s attention to personalize himself/herself as the story unfolds.

The persona remarks in stanza two:

her grandmother a parasol. When I am asked “have you
been back home yet? I think of Sili laughing at me
before asking “What do you have to give Lusaka?”
and “Haven’t you lost the language?” Which means

The three rhetorical questions posed in the poem are thought provoking as they make a reader assumedly an immigrant, to critically think about how decision-making affects an individual’s identity of place/home, family and language hence falling into an existential crisis. The questions comment on the loss of family hood (*have you been back home yet?*), loss of patriot ship (*what do you have to give Lusaka?*) and loss of language (*Haven’t you lost the language?*). The word “language” alludes to accessibility. The persona addresses that the immigrant has no accessibility to his or her native home both physically, intellectually and emotionally since language hinges upon many possibilities of life.

The third stanza addresses the reflective self on one hand and the disheartening incident of Sili with the street beggars on the other hand:

to lose everything. My eyes moving between the subtitles
On the screen and Sili’s mouth twisting between French and Woolf. When the
jealous street beggars take one of Sili’s crutches, she yells *Nous continuous!*

The reflective self, connotes the idea of how an individual feels displaced between which identity to go by (*...twisting between French and Woolf*) thus feeling worthless for oneself. On the other hand, the poem introduces the earlier ominous feeling through the disheartening incident of Sili being attacked by the street beggars who take away her crutches making her to roll over.

This seems pitiful to the reader, but Sili takes no pity on herself instead she yells *Nous continuous* meaning ‘we continue’ this is to say that ‘she will continue to sell newspapers’. The pronoun ‘we’ in the phrase puts forth a message to people that, despite the challenges of life we face; we should

strongly make a decision to not tire but continue doing our life's purpose and not fall into a purposeless life, so to say, existential crisis. This is clearly reiterated in the fourth stanza (last stanza about the story of Sili):

And adorns yellow sunglasses, performing a crazed dance
while singing a French song. The beggars confused,
not sure what to make of Sili's act. The intimacy of language
I'm severed from...

The last line "The intimacy of language I'm severed from" is an emphasis on self-reflection, to suggest 'the accessibility I'm cut from' or it is a result of the fear of losing a language which is basically, losing everything. Is that not what losing language does to us, renders things useless because we cannot call them what they are in the setting we are in? Or possibly, it is the fear of going back to our native place.

The fifth stanza begins with the fate of the immigrant character, Diouana's:

La Noire De...who leaves Dakar for France, but returning
becomes a sort of shame. I share Diouana's ambivalence
to the idea of home. So what then to make of her suicide
in the bathtub? The window open to a view of the

As mentioned earlier, the story in the poem is borrowed from the film, 'La Noire De...' This exposes the postcolonial scars left by France upon the Senegalese. It narrates the harrowing story of Diouana, a young woman from Dakar, Senegal, who accepts a nanny position with a French bourgeois family in Antibes, France. But after a series of distressing episodes and confinement from her bosses, Diouana's melancholy consumes her and eventually commits suicide by way of slitting her throat in the bathtub.

The term 'La Noire De...' means "the black girl from/of." The "de..." of the title is a preposition followed by an ellipsis, suggesting an unknown place of origin, reflecting Diouana's displacement and fragmented self in her postcolonial world. The line "I share Diouana's ambivalence to the idea of home." This refers to the uncertainty of what is really better, between

being a native or an immigrant. The rhetorical question “So what then to make of her suicide in the bathtub? provokes the thought.

Stanza six details the suicide:

Champ Elysees. A Senegalese mask she places over her face.
The knife at the side with blood stains. The burden
of France serving as a post-colonial trauma, but I’m still not
sure what my relationship to America or Zambia means.

Here, the reader gets to understand that despite the harrowing experience of being a Senegalese in France, Diouana made a decision to proclaim her identity as a Senegalese since she placed a Senegalese mask over her face before committing suicide, “A Senegalese mask she places over her face.” The image of the knife with blood stains amplifies how an individual in an existential crisis can go to an extreme end of brutalizing the self due to the meaningless he/she feels of life. The last line echoes this kind of brutalization as a postcolonial scar ‘trauma’ Mphanza’s brings in her personal concern on what really is the importance of being an immigrant or a native and if they two are related in some way. “...but I’m still not sure what my relationship to America or Zambia means.”

The aforesaid concern is posed in the seventh stanza:

A white Frenchman, Monsieur, finds Diouana and returns the mask
to Dakar, but a boy chase Monsieur with the mask.
Haunting him to the point where he can’t shed Diouana, or Diouana
Can’t shed him. In this sense, I see Zambia and America.

The introduction of two characters in Diouana’s story contributes to the underlying importance of self-identity or rather valuing the self. For it is so doing, that one appreciates life in general either as an immigrant or native. But all in all, no matter what or where we are, our self-identity cannot be erased, thus should not put ourselves in a state of existential crisis.

The poem concludes in the thought:

not as places of distance, but a reminder of the self-transformation
or the condition for the immigrant and native:
Sili's broken legs in a barefooted dance on a dirt road in Dakar,
Diouana's death in a porcelain bathtub in Paris.

The stanza highlights the "self-transformation" that comes inevitably with being an immigrant or a native. Mphanza notes that this kind of change might be overwhelming to an individual hence resulting to various tragedies "Sili's broken legs in a barefooted dance on a dirt road in Dakar, Diouana's death in a porcelain bathtub in Paris". It is key to note that the symbol of time is expressed in a perception of decision making, the time between having made a decision and experiencing the consequences of that decision as seen in both Sili, a native and Diouana, an immigrant. This perception symbolizes fate as an aspect of existential crisis.

Therefore, the title "Prodigal Son" is left for readers to fathom. Who really is the improvident one? Is it the native or the immigrant? And how is their decision improvident (not showing foresight) bearing in mind that they are both victims of fate -existential crisis? Nonetheless, in relation to my study, the 'Prodigal Son' is the immigrant, Diouana, who makes an improvident decision to commit suicide as a way of escaping the purposelessness of life.

In summary, the selected poems undeniably use hyperbole to present the myriad of thoughts, feelings and personal experiences to articulate how the contemporary youth have internalized various traumas and how those traumas have affected how they articulate the qualms they have. The four poems, "After Suicide, Old things, Tender Crow's Feet" and "Prodigal Son", have exhibited the poets' stylistic choice of hyperbole to convey the imagined voice (self) in existential crisis which speaks to the contemporary youth through the symbol of time to represent the various aspects of existentialism: fate, death, nothingness and absurdity. It is noteworthy to state, though the poems are pessimistically relayed, they have offered an optimistic challenge to the contemporary youth to live existentially and in accordance with the fluctuations of life by understanding the basis for freedom and for consequent acceptance of choice, which is ultimately the only way of creating their lives and giving them meaning.

2.2 Hyperbolic ‘I’ Persona and Identity as an aspect of Existential Crisis

‘Identity is an assemblage of constellations’

(Anna Deavere Smith)

Identity is a collective term that comprises of language, place, self, culture, ethnic, nationality and gender. My study focuses on these identities in different capacities as presented by the selected poets in the following poems: “Clothing”, “Reincarnation”, “& I Mourned What I Could Not Name” and “When They Ask What My Name Means.” The titles of the poems suggest that they are intended to address issues of identity; I aim to try and analyze the selected poets’ works with a view of narrating the identity crisis as their imagined voice.

The developmental psychologist, Erik Erikson, believes that the “formation of identity is one of the most important parts of a person's life”. He believed that identity is something that shifts and grows throughout life as people confront new challenges and tackle different experiences. Erikson later coined the term ‘identity crisis’ in the belief that it was one of the most important conflicts people face in development. According to him, “an identity crisis is a time of intensive analysis and exploration of different ways of looking at oneself”.

He described identity as: “a subjective sense as well as an observable quality of personal sameness and continuity, paired with some belief in the sameness and continuity of some shared world image. As a quality of unself-conscious living, this can be gloriously obvious in a young person who has found himself as he has found his communality”. This forms the background of my study which seeks to use the hyperbolic ‘I’ persona and identity to examine the imagined voice in existential crisis as presented by the selected poets to represent the contemporary youth in Africa.

The ‘I’ persona emanates from the understanding of persona poems. In reference to Robert Lee Brewer’s *The Many Faces of Persona Poems*, A persona poem is a poem in the first person in which the speaker is not the author. The word “Persona” means “Mask” in Latin, so in a persona poem the author puts on the identity of someone other than him or herself. The essence of using persona is in its realm of imagination. It allows the author to step out of the confessional “I” in the familiar into a space that someone else has designed. It is in so doing, that the author is free to tackle sensitive subjects and to express opinions and emotions that are uncomfortable or unpopular. Simply put, the author has the liberty to ‘misbehave’ and to embrace their shadow self.

As a result, the author successfully develops a convincing and authentic voice; the details chosen breathe life into the poem and provide the reader with an unanticipated insight or unexpected outlook.

Therefore, the ‘I’ persona, as evident by the personal pronoun ‘I’ eventually does not only help just the persona, but also a poet who addresses his/her personal issues and experiences thus offering the reader a glimpse at his/her soul. It is in this knowledge that I see how the selected poets in my study hyperbolically view themselves and what their fears and hopes are, as they project their imagined voice. In my analysis of the selected poems, I seek to answer questions such as: Does the “I” persona feel alienated from society? Does he or she feel they are part of the society they belong? How do they view themselves? Do they feel celebrated, ignored, criminalized, vulgarized or accepted?

In the poem “Clothing”, Aremu Adams Adebisi puts forth the geographical spaces we find ourselves in either due to employment, education or inevitable circumstance that takes us away from home hence affecting our identity of self or culture we belong to.

The poem states:

Because my body is a country, a water confluence,
and a country is me and I am me with flesh and bones.
Because when we trace the marks on our faces and palms,
we find dust and ash in a rule of tussle between humans and jinns.
Because when I wear the Sari-either the Ghagra or the Pavada,
I let the Pallu drape over my shoulder freely, carelessly,
or tuck into my waist, stretching towns from Nepal to Tamil.
Because, 2, the Hanu explores curves, tied with a Sash around the waist,
and the Kimono finds straight lines appealing, influenced by the Hanfu
Sharing an origin of drawings and designs-two hands that applaud...

The title ‘Clothing’ whose root word ‘clothe’ has the suffix ‘-ing’ to show a present continuous action, means, endowing a particular quality. It is in the various listings of the cultural attire “*Sari, Ghagra, Pavada, Hanfu, Sherwani*” and others as stated in the poem, that an individual tends to be identified or judged by way of putting on a certain thing, which is determinant on the place/space one is in.

In a free verse form, the poem conveys the message on the need to living freely and appreciating the various cultural identities we might face without categorizing ourselves in who, what or how we are. The first four lines in the poem begin with an assertive tone of pride for one's cultural /National identity and the self. "...and a country is me and I am me ...". The repetition of the first personal pronouns I, am, me, amplifies the sense of pride for self.

The phrase 'a water confluence' is used hyperbolically as a 'living connection' this is to imply, the 'body', which means that the human self is bound to be relatable with other humans of different origins or nationalities. For humans are not '...Mountains that can't meet...'

From line four up to the last line, the poet deploys hyperbole to strongly express the diversity that lies in our identities as a people, and how such identities contribute to varied qualities and interpretations from one culture to the other.

For instance:

Because when I put on the Sherwani, with the Sarong patterned,
around my waist and the Tembel Hat almost covering my face,
I find a wedding in Rajasthan, moving my feet to the Khmer dance,
with delicious Hummus and Falafel dancing down my throat.
Because the Keffiyeh hold two races in one, a black and white,
and the Jalabiya, a long tunic garment, says in purity is peace.
Because when I attempt to wear the Boubou, the pagne or the Danshiki,
I find myself ravaged in tribes whose hearts are as pure as honey,
skins like iron, and eyes as valiant and aging as the eagle's span.

Notably, as the poem flows, the 'I' persona reveals the importance of identity. The persona addresses that it is in an individual's identity; one could actually tell of the heritage, culture, values, attributes, artistry, livelihood, legends and history of the culture/nation he or she belongs to.

The lines below exemplify the aforesaid:

Because the Buckskins and the Poncho have a long history
that cuts across the Andes people and the Native Americans,
and the Huipils of the Tlapanec people is a hundred panels in one.
Because when I wear the Sarafan with a Beret and a Klomp on my feet,
I see myself a Matador at the Eiffel Tower, overlooking the Red Square.
Because the Kilt, Lederhosen and the Smock-frock have me
Reminiscing on great warriors of the past, knowledgeable men

Who once donned the wears for the unification of humankind.

The poet has shown transparency by using exaggerated language to explain the dialectic terms in a unique way for the readers to get a sense of familiarity when reading the terms and their significance. The 'I' persona as evident in the pronoun 'I' throughout the poem, presents a personal connection in the relationship of the poet-persona and the reader as the persona journeys from one culture to another.

The deployment of hyperbole helps in addressing a form of conversation between the poet, persona and the reader; this is in the assumption that there is an imagined question asked about a certain dialectic term or culture, and the persona answers by starting with 'Because...'

The last four lines in the poem bring in a shift of thought:

Because clothes do not betray the thread, the yarn and the spindle
and do not negate the body when they cover its nakedness.
Because either good or worn-out, white or black, loose or fitting,
an apparel or homespun, they are all made from animal skin.

Here, the persona concludes by stating that if an individual does not take pride in his or her identity, then there is a high chance of facing existential crisis due to the feeling of indifference. The persona stresses that when we learn to appreciate a sense of identity within us wherever we are, then we will find ourselves embracing our humanity as a whole.

Adebisi, through her imagined voice, cautions the contemporary youth on the awareness that life is and will always be full of diversity, but at the same time, despite the diversity they should not lose their identity in the process, so as not to find themselves in existential crisis.

In "Reincarnation" Afua Ansong communicates the permanence of identity even after death through her 'I' persona. Through hyperbole, she conveys her message about the 'rebirth' in the sense that we will die and come back, carrying with us the same identity we had in the former life. The emphasis is on "I died..."

The poem begins:

And
yes,
I died: a black swan and

woke,
sharp, in the skin of
Mitochondrial Eve.

The words “Mitochondrial Eve” in the last line of stanza one, is a human genetic that according to wikipedia.com means, “the matrilineal most recent common ancestor of all currently living humans, the most recent woman from whom all living humans descend in an unbroken line purely through their mothers, and through the mothers of those mothers, back until all lines converge on one woman.”

Stanza two begins with a simile to portray an indication of suspense:

A
shadow falls
on me like

a cold look and
suddenly my hairs rise, pupils
dilate and this almond-shaped amygdala
shivers. A continuous reverberation of light wings
flap at my face. This is absurd for on my wall, right down that American hall,
stands a painting; a mythical conga bird
perched on a tree branch. Next to this, a picture of mother
(I am her photocopy) & I in Accra. I wake
to beads of sweat lined on my back and
copper collar bone.

The suspense is revealed when one learns that the shadow is a symbol of disbelief in the realization of one’s identity being existent, despite being in different geographical places “...right down that American hall, stands a painting; mythical conga bird...Next to this, a picture of mother, (I am her photocopy & I in Accra)” The two places “America “and “Accra” connote the idea of a native’s identity against the native’s identity as an immigrant. This captures a sense of identity crisis (existential) that a native faces on one hand, and the native’s resilience to stick by his/her identity to not lose it on the other hand.

It is also key to note that the use of the varied punctuation marks is to help in enhancing the message of identity and the crisis of it. For instance, the use of parentheses in the poem, (I am her photocopy) contributes in relaying an afterthought to the imaginary voice in existential crisis. Additionally, the hyperbolism employed has helped in the vivid understanding of the message.

Stanza three concludes by the assertion that:

On my wrist I latch, each day,
A crystal hummingbird. It plucks nectar from fuchsia petals
as it ticks and talks the time of
my world where my niece' curled
upper-lip and my cousin's small nose arte mirrors
of my grandmother's golden
face.

The 'I' persona has made a deliberate decision to live each day joyfully "a crystal hummingbird" in the acknowledgement of her self-identity, the identity which is bound to outlive the passage of time. "...my niece's curled upper-lip and my cousin's small nose are mirrors of my grandmother golden face." The poem is a call to the contemporary youth to clutch by their identity before they fall into existential crisis.

In "& I Mourned What I Could Not Name", Yasmin Belkhyr talks of alienation as a cause of identity crisis (existential). The title of the poem exaggerates the 'I' persona who has lost "mourned" his or her identity "name".

The ten couplet form perfectly describes the effect of losing one's identity, especially the loss of language that will utterly alienate one from his or her society or peers.

The first-half of the poem posits:

They beat our tongues smooth.
The kasbah shuddered and wailed.
I teeth the language, pocked and bloody.
The boys crashed into the sand: it welcomed them.
In the rain, her hair was a river of petals.
My grandfather spoke with a red tongue.
A blade is a mirror is a blade is a wound.
The men hauled their bodies from sea.
The mountains vanish and took her too.
When I return, the land spits at my feet.

The short lines in the poem grasp the reader's attention to understand loss of identity or identity crisis in brevity form but with clarity. The poem begins in a spiteful tone about the African immigrant ('I' persona) who has lost his/her identity of language and he/she is hereby criminalized as a result. "...I teeth the language, pocked and bloody".

The line “My grandfather spoke with a red tongue” alludes to the caution about the dreaded future if the persona dares to lose his/her identity. ‘Grandfather’ is used to symbolize ancestry while ‘Red’ symbolizes apprehension. This is to say, the persona is aware of the fear and anxiety he/she is facing in losing his or her sense of ancestry or identity. The metaphorical language in the line “A blade is a mirror is a blade is a wound” implies that when one loses his or her identity, he or she is ‘cut off’- alienated from him/her and the implication of the alienation is a scar that will permanently be remembered. For this reason, when this person (persona) comes back home, he or she will be unwelcomed, as the line states ‘When I return, the land spits at my feet’.

Nevertheless, the second-half of the poem connotes in a sense of hope:

There is no shame in this, I’m told.
The men crumbled into sand: I watched them.
I spun in dust and gravel, nameless and red.
Contrary to ache, I still know nothing of guilt.
In our mouths, we bled then and bleed still.
Her child had my hair and my eyes.
There was only heat and forests of smoke.
I know there is only light at the end.
I know when it begins, it is dark.
Contrary to wound, I still know nothing of defeat.

In an optimistic tone, the persona encourages himself/herself that he or she will not agonize on the experiences he/she is undergoing be it the dangers of being alienated or terrified about the future; for he/she is fully aware that the pain is not equivalent to the feeling of guilt. “Contrary to ache, I still know nothing of guilt”

The persona goes on to assert that, he/she has felt pain and is still feeling the pain of losing his or her sense of identity. “In our mouths, we bled then and bleed still”. In the last lines of the poem, the persona implies that he/she has not lost the identity but rather has just moved to a foreign land as an immigrant, yet an African native in an identity crisis but he/she reassures him/herself that he/she is not lost for he/she hopes for a rekindled future. “I know there is only light at the end. I know when it begins, it is dark.”

Here, Belkhyr's imagined voice in identity crisis (existential) to reassure the contemporary youth of Africa, especially the ones in Diaspora, that they have not lost their African identity by living in Diaspora, but they are simply in search of a better life, hence should view themselves as individuals who have just travelled to a foreign land.

Similarly, on the idea of alienation, Gloria Kiconco in "When They Ask What My Name Means" introduces her persona as "a placeholder until I return" to signify the extremity of identity crisis, imaginatively, among the contemporary youth immigrants from Africa. The two-sided poetic form also suggests the uncertainty of ideas.

The persona in the poem contends:

a placeholder until I return	<i>I don't remember</i>
a theory I'm testing for practicality	<i>who named me it's</i>
a way to keep existence from coming into existence	<i>a name so common</i>
a chemical component	<i>you could pull it out</i>

The above first four lines in the poem use hyperbole to unveil a persona who is unaware of what his or her name is and has resulted to be named "a placeholder..." This is to say, that the persona is not in the present place of origin, an immigrant, who cannot tell people the meaning of his/her name, as the title states. This opening lines exposes the loss of identity not only of self but also of belonging, hence demeaning oneself to meaningless "a chemical component you could pull it out"

The persona uses a disdainful tone amidst the identity crisis he or she is in:

undercoating so I dont crack on the surface	<i>of a crowd. At home</i>
dilapidated buildings in Kikuubo	<i>it is not at all special</i>
a hammer pulled back for precision	<i>except when it is</i>
solitary confinement in Kyebando	<i>mine and only my</i>
a middle finger pulled on Colfax Ave	<i>mother keeps it</i>
an oath	<i>on her tongue.</i>

The lines above suggest a jeering remark about the persona's view of his or her home to show there is no better place to run to; what's better? An immigrant who has lost identity or a native stricken with poverty or in solitude? In addition, the mention of "mother" by the persona is to bring to the reader the image of home which implies that home (the people at home/fellow natives) can attest to the reality there is in both sides "mother keeps it an oath on her tongue."

The persona expresses his/her thoughts and experiences on the reality in Diaspora:

Pre-big-bang conditions	<i>means gift or talent</i>
an impressionist oasis	<i>I'm not sure. The</i>
stroke mark in a dystopian painting of a picnic	<i>translation is so</i>

Here, the persona uses an oxymoron to amplify a reality which is 'pre-big-bang conditions' harrowing in nature, yet it is the very fertile place that good thing "gift or talent" is perfectly nurtured "oasis". Moreover, the persona uses a paradoxical statement "The stroke mark in a dystopian painting of a picnic" to mean undesirable and frightening "dystopian" place yet ideally scenic in nature "picnic. Generally, the constant use of contradictions in the poem hyperbolically reflects the extremity of identity crisis (existential) as narrated by the persona.

The last line in the poem summarizes the idea of identity crisis as an aspect of existential crisis upon an individual. This is clearly put forth by the paradox used:

a life vest, a swallowing wave.	<i>this side of patriarchy</i>
---------------------------------	--------------------------------

Unlike Belkhyr, Kiconco's imagined voice conveys a sense of despondency in addressing the issues of identity crisis that most contemporary youth immigrants from Africa face.

I thus conclude that my discussion on the deployment of hyperbole in the imagined voice in existential crisis through the issues of identity has indeed explored the underlying personal experiences, sorrows and articulation of identity as presented by the selected poets who have creatively used hyperbole to convey their imagination.

2.3 Conclusion

The findings in this chapter assent to the effectiveness of hyperbole in examining the imagined voice 'self' in existential crisis as presented by the selected poets in the eight poems. This contributed to the understanding of the message of existentialism by grasping the reader's attention to familiarize with the issues addressed. The eight selected poems in the anthology demonstrate that hyperbole is a powerful tool in which literary concerns can be exploited to communicate to their readers. The selected poems exploit hyperbolism in literary devices like metaphors, symbols, point of view, paradox, oxymoron, description to create images that are pregnant with meaning. In doing this, the poets have undeniably proved that there is immense unexploited artistic wealth and potential which can be harnessed to address pertinent issues in the

society.

Like all the gifted literary artists, the selected poets understand the essence of using literary enhancement in expressing their imagination. These poets have presented their hyperbolic imagined voice ‘self’ to vividly and memorably relay the existential crisis. This foregrounds my second finding that approves the claim that the selected poets’ imagined voice is a representation of the contemporary youth in Africa; this is so due to the fact that the personas in the poems have painted a picture of the realities that are in our today’s society. For example, this is seen in Arinze’s “After Suicide”, which uses the contemporary televised reality shows and on-going series such as “Keeping up with Kardashians” and “Blackish” respectively, which are highly watched by the youth- who want to be ingrained in a fiction world other than a real one to escape from their loss. Additionally, the alienation that comes with Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is still persistent upon the female youth in most culturized ethnicities in Africa as portrayed in the poem, “Tender Crow’s Feet”. It is thus prudent to assert that certainly the contemporary youth are criminalized, vulgarized, alienated and ignored in their societies hence fall into existential crisis.

Notwithstanding, I find it imperative to mention that although the selected poets’ imagined voice (self) reflect the contemporary youth; the experiences, thoughts and concerns portrayed are highly exaggerated. The deployment of hyperbole is clearly presented in the use of images, tone, feelings, gruesomeness and melancholy which are deemed to be attributable to the fact that these poets are exasperated by their societies. Furthermore, the hyperbolism of their deep-seated feelings of despair, fear and resilience against the candidness and vastness of their private voice is an indication that the contemporary youth’s concerns should be handled as a matter of urgency in securing a future Africa. Mukoma Wa Ngugi concurs with this view in his review of the anthology, “The poets here are in love with words and the fractured worlds they live in. The poems are at once sublime yet political, global but rooted and contradiction is the border they call home...” (v).

The next chapter is an evaluation of how hyperbole mirrors the disillusionment of the youth in contemporary Africa.

CHAPTER THREE

HYPERBOLE AS A MIRROR OF THE DISILLUSIONMENT IN THE YOUTH IN CONTEMPORARY AFRICA

3.0 Introduction

This chapter evaluates the interrelatedness of hyperbole in the selected poems and the theme of disillusionment among the youth in contemporary Africa. The imagined voice (self) is used to imply to the contemporary youth in Africa who are often faced with global issues that wane their self-progress within their nation or family. The contemporary youth who are aspiring for a better lifestyle that fulfills their goals, dreams or desires but fruitlessly they are left disillusioned. In this chapter, I seek to adduce this imagination of self that argues to be a disillusioned contemporary youth through hyperbole.

In my analysis of selected poems, I try to unbury the meaning underlying literary elements like paradox, irony, ambiguity, metaphor, and tone among others. I have selected and analyzed eight poems; four in revealing disillusionment and the other four in portraying the negative impact of globalization among the youth in contemporary Africa. Before venturing into the poems themselves, it is important to note that the two categories of the poems, four in each, is due to the common literary feature that is reflected across the poems. In disillusioned youth, I discuss hyperbole in the metaphor of pain while in the globalized youth I explore the hyperbolic tone of nostalgia. Admittedly, I would like to point out that the explication of the poems' styles and content might be in no way extensive enough hence a challenge to further study.

3.1 Disillusioned Youth and the Hyperbolic Metaphor of Pain

“There are too many other inexplicable things around us--horrors, threats, mysteries that draw you in and then inevitably disenchant you.”

(Anne Rice)

Indeed. The disenchantment is the synonym of disillusionment; which is the feeling of disappointment that comes as a result of expecting something to be good or better as one had believed so. Disillusionment is therefore an encroaching despair that consumes a person right

from within to the outward, hence making a person to either vent or lash out his or her pain.

A good number of young people today are uncertain, unable to find secure jobs or fulfill their dreams and aspirations, unaware of the atrocities of their societies or loved ones who might take advantage of their youthfulness by subjecting them to sexual oppression, ironically, the adults who ought to take care of them. These disillusioned young people are angry and tired of the predicaments facing them consciously or unconsciously. They are desperately waiting for employment or freedom of self, but unfortunately, they are excluded from the socio-economic structures of their societies. This affects their prospects to become independent that carves a decent future for them. They are thus compelled to invent and fashion new ways of enduring the margins of society, in this study, their poetry.

In regards to stylistic choice employed by the poets, my study focuses on exploring the concerns of a disillusioned youth through the metaphor of pain such as blood, decay, despair and death in the selected poem: “And I’ve Mastered The Art of Receiving Handouts Because I Come From this Place”, “Asphyxia”, “Thirteenth” and “Ten lessons in Bleeding.” The selected poets have used hyperbole in their language to bring forth the emotional, intellectual and physical pain through their imagined voice on concerns that press down the contemporary youth in Africa.

In the poem, “And I’ve Mastered the Art of Receiving Handouts Because I Come From this Place”, Ama Asantewa Diaka, expresses the persona’s disillusionment that is as a result of the hopelessness there is in her nation. The persona expressively describes her/his emotional, psychological and physical pain that she/he is endlessly facing in his/her nation.

The persona begins:

I am hungry for a love my country cannot afford.
I want a love
that will buffer my mistakes even before I commit them
A love that has mapped out the possibilities of my existence
and made room for each one of them
A love that doesn't need me to calamour to identify as black too
just so I can swim in the opportunity pool.
A love that doesn't need me to be well versed in articulating
how high I am on the needy Olympics scale to be deserving of support

The word 'hungry' is used metaphorically as an expression of feeling uneasy or a 'painful sensation of lack of...' It is employed in the first line of the poem as an introduction of the list of things (presented later as the poem continues) that the persona is lacking. In the lines above respectively, the persona strongly wants his/her nation to: safeguard, provide opportunities, offer equality and build trust on her/his citizenship as a person and not because of dependency. The tone here is full of disquietedness. The unrest of a nation upon its citizen is quite alarming.

The persona speaks of:

A love that doesn't even need me to have an archive of pain
to be worthy of inclusion
I want a love
that doesn't need me to work like there's two of me
in this body just to be visible
A love that doesn't require me to be
both pregnant and doula
trying to pull a nirvana out of my ass just for being different

The first line above shows an overwhelming desire for a love that is not guaranteed by a build of pain for the persona to feel part and parcel of the nation "...an archive of pain". The persona also puts forth the physical pain that comes with being overworked for one to feel included.

This suggests the disillusionment that encompasses a citizen who strives to work hard so as to better his/her lifestyle and livelihood but unfortunately left distressed in seeing no change or betterment. The persona in the last line above asserts that he/she yearns for a love that doesn't require him/her to be helpless or needy "pregnant and doula" so to gain a sense of self-"nirvana". This alludes to the unbearable situations that a nation imposes on its citizens who are left disillusioned and burdened with desperation for emotional and physical support. It is a call for the leaders of a nation to focus on the socio-economic structures that derail a person's development and sense of belonging.

The person concludes that:

I want a love
that doesn't require me to be ridiculously multifaceted
in order to have a fraction of an equation at being equipped for survival
A love that doesn't wait for another suitor to sing praises of my genius
Before recognising my worth
Or worse, only after I'm dead
I am hungry for a love my country cannot afford,
the way white lusts for a backdrop to outshine

Here, the poem presents a disillusioned persona who desires equitability and appreciation by his/her nation. The line “Or worse, only after I’m dead” preempted the persona’s untiring yet futile quest for betterment from or by his/her nation. The term ‘dead’ has been employed primarily as a metaphor of pain to connote an outright summative of all pains: emotional, psychological, intellectual and physical in a disillusioned individual. The persona reiterates the first line “I am hungry for a love my country cannot afford” in a resilient yet realistically, a defeated tone. The constant repetition of “I want a love” shows the intensity of the persona’s desperation for a hopeful life free of conditions. The metaphorical language in the poem suggests the intangibility of pain ingrained in a person.

With this understanding, the title “And I’ve Mastered The Art of Receiving Handouts Because I Come From this Place”, is a hyperbolism of the persona who has gotten used to the set conditions and societal structures that press one down to a state of disillusionment but he/she will keep on speaking out “I want...” even though nothing is changing. On the other hand, Asantewa Diaka repeatedly uses the same phrase to signify the urgency required for a society to refocus on the outcry of the disillusioned youth.

Tariro Ndoro’s “Asphyxia” affirms the indispensable imagined voice to address the state of disillusionment upon the contemporary youth in Africa. The poem begins with an epigraph quoting Sam Cooke’s “A Change is Gonna Come”, to suggest a desire and hope for a safe society through speaking the truth. The fifteen lines in rhombus poetic form signify the gravity and severity of pain that is equated to suffocation. “suffocation is a metaphor for breathing under water for holding the world on your shoulder ...”

suffocation is
a metaphor for breathing under water
for holding the world on your shoulder, woman
there is no rest for the living, the dying, the dead in
black skin and blacker dresses//life is tough but you're still breathing
bleeding , pain, love, suffering on black skin, black ache-labored fifty years to
retire on nothing//headline on Friday's paper says there was a riot//downtown
officer fires two warning shots, two are dead, thirteen injured, I wonder
did he count the number?//uh-uh, cicero, tongue in cheek weaved
false truth asphyxia is//believing the lies so we can sleep at night
truth is triggering is nowadays// so is saying something
different form men are trash when
sister shows her bruises//
no one is safe here
Anymore

Literally, “Asphyxia” means a condition of deficient supply of oxygen to the body that arises from abnormal breathing. An example is choking. But as for my study, “Asphyxia” implies a metaphor of pain. A kind of pain that suffocates a person into a disillusioned state: “there is no rest for the living, the dying, the dead in black skin...” The use of second person narration ‘you/your’ suggest that the persona is either an observer or a narrator who intentionally cautions the reader about the atrocities of the society upon an individual. “...life is tough but you're breathing bleeding pain, love, suffering on black skin, black ache-labored fifty years to retire on nothing...” The persona outlines instance of violence “...downtown officers fires two warning shots, two are dead...”

The rhetorical question “I wonder did he count the number?” suggest a level of brutality, ironically, from the ones who are supposed to protect. The persona posits that “truth is triggering” an alliteration that attracts the reader’s attention on the poem’s implied meaning of asphyxia; “false truth asphyxia is//believing the lies so we can sleep at night.” The persona concludes by asserting that “no one is safe here Anymore” a finality tone of despondency.

In “Thirteenth”, Nica Cornell notes on the emotional pain as a result of a trauma that originated from sexual violence. In ten short lines and two stanza poetic form, Cornell elaborates a castigation of the older generation or adults who take advantage of the fragile youth in society.

Go slow-ly next time
you are inside of me
I am fragile, a deer
of woven glass. Touch me
as you would plait
a child's hair.
Your fingers are large.
My strings are thin.
And when I am wet,
like paper, I tear.

In a calm ironical tone, the persona clearly expresses on how she should be treated with great care for she is fragile "Touch me as you would plait a child's hair" She uses similes to vividly address her brittleness "...as a child's hair" "...like paper, I tear". This implies the vulnerability of the young ones upon the adults. The title "Thirteenth" alludes to the beginning of teenage hood for the persona hence the risk, such as sexual exploitation, that comes with it. "Your fingers are large...My strings are thin."

Moreover, in "Ten Lessons in Bleeding", Sarah Godsell deals with the menstruation experience of a female youth and the disillusionment that comes with it. The persona outlines the lessons she learnt in knowing her body by discovering herself. She says:

under my panties
I can bleed in secret, no one interfering in the hot
wet
blood stains enamel
but no one knows what the speckles on my cheerful yellow door
are from
Intimacy with myself
The way I must touch myself,
gentle but firm, to slip the tampon in

The persona speaks of the disillusionment that comes with not knowing one's self and that by expressing one's deepest feelings, the person is able to reclaim their control of self. The terms 'blood' and 'bleed' are used repeatedly to show the hyperbolism in a metaphor of pain; the physical menstrual pain (cramps) and the psychological pain that chains a person to a state of disillusionment.

I have layers of skin that hug me before I bleed. They cling to me even as I betray myself.
blood is better than noose. Scars better than red bath. I have never held a gun anyway.

The persona recalls her first experience when she did not have her menstrual, "I didn't bleed the first time. I didn't know then it was because it wasn't the first time." This created a sense of confusion for she could not exactly fathom what was happening.

At this thought, the poem introduces the second person point of view:

Head wounds bleed. A lot. My foot held steady on the accelerator driving you to hospital. me, in between you and bouncers.
me, wondering if you knew you were raping her or not.

The 'you' suggests an oppressive adult who exploits the persona's sexuality; on the other hand, the 'you' suggest an observer or a responsible adult who questions the oppression done upon the female persona. The indication of "My mom..." brings in the idea of oppressive patriarchal system that silences the 'caregiver'; the persona craftily states that it is in rejecting such typical tendencies of being 'silenced' that the society will free its youth from being disillusioned:

My mom dropped a stone chess board on her toe.
It was the first time I heard her bleed. The first time I saw her swear.
I wanted to see her bones, too, not believing that something had pierced her silence.

The phrase "...that something had pierced her silence" shows resilience in resisting an oppressive system.

The persona draws to a close with a metaphorical afterthought that leaves the reader in suspense:

Blood in black and white photographs tastes metallic. Like death.
Those photographs in that History lesson, waking up the skulls in the back of my head.
I am not in control.
Ever

Here, a reader might question: Is this how intensive pain can get that one cannot free herself from past experiences? Or is it true that the thin line difference between black and white is in the knowledge of their extreme ends? Or is disillusionment a state of permanency that cannot be

broken? “I am not in control ever” The questions are a reaction to the hyperbolism of the disillusioned youth who are left helpless and hopeless in the societies where they belong.

In conclusion to my argument on the use of hyperbole in the imagined voice of a disillusioned youth; I seek to note that the employment of metaphor (s) of pain has indeed helped in shaping the imagination of a youth in disillusionment through the constant use of ‘gruesomeness’ in diction that communicate the harsh realities of contemporary Africa upon the youth. From a literary perspective, the use of hyperbole has helped in strengthening the message of disillusionment in the youth since the readers can be able to pay attention to and understand the various concerns presented. It is also crucial to note from my analysis that the most vulnerable gender to be easily disillusioned is the female as clearly seen in the poems “Thirteenth” and “Ten Lessons in Bleeding”.

3.2 Nostalgia and the Negative Impact of Globalization on the Youth

According to Esther De Baecke’s study on *Contemporary American Poetry and Globalization*:

Globalization is a complex process that involves an increased contact on a global scale. It is a process that rapidly accelerated due to multiple twentieth century inventions, which were designed to make transportation and communication highly efficient and fast. Airplanes, container ships, telephones, television, cell phones and the internet, all of these developments appear to make the other side of the world accessible in the blink of an eye. It is a process that increasingly is changing society and affecting the way how people communicate and connect with one another (11)

Many people argue that globalization is primarily an economic process, but it is one that clearly has profound social, cultural and identity implications. The contemporary youth are growing up in a world of globalization; ironically, taking part in a development process that is simultaneously bringing people closer but yet further apart by widening the divisions between them and the ‘true’ identity of themselves.

This is to say, the imminent consequence of globalization is an increasing feeling of instability and uncertainty in the contemporary youth that ultimately leads to vulnerability and anxiety upon the society’s future. This anxiety has provoked the contemporary poets to do a nostalgic search for the identity of a community and individual, portrayed as ‘home’ and ‘self ‘ or ‘I’ respectively. The

question is whether this ‘home’ and ‘self’ are real or just a reflection of the poets’ memories of imagined insecurities.

In view of my study, I seek to explore the use of hyperbole in the selected poems to reveal the imagined voice of the youth in disillusionment by focusing on the negative impact of globalization upon them and how they have responded to the changing socio-economic, cultural and identity realities of contemporary Africa. Through the examination of selected poems: “A Dream in English”, “Revision”, “Silver Spoons and When My Mother Speaks of New Edition”, I demonstrate how the selected poets’ nostalgic imagination has risen against the challenge of: loss of language, culture, breakdown of family systems, income inequality and unemployment as negative consequences of globalization upon the contemporary youth in Africa.

In “A Dream in English”, Lillian Akampurira Aujo nostalgically struggles with the idea of ancestry and memory in addressing the impact of globalization which brings forth the severance of language. The poem’s form is jumbled up in its structure of lines and stanzas to show the persona’s mental confusion in conveying his or her ancestry and the memories therein. The persona commences:

I am stumbling over the tongue of my father and his father
before him I am falling
into the calcified palms
that bound them all
in a razor wire. every time
I try courting syllables my tongue is cut
I cannot speak.

Here, the persona truthfully expresses how much he/she tries to trace the language ‘tongue’ of the ancestry but every single effort becomes futile. As a result, the persona experiences the loss of ancestral language hence the loss of his or her community as well. “my tongue is cut”

From the lines above, the reader understands how this ‘dream in English’ has hyperbolically distorted the African cultural identity of the persona who is entrapped in globalization. The choice of words ‘calcified palms’ signify the ‘Africanness’ of the context.

My memory
reels back
to when we were bats
drifting in a white haze
tongues long unfurled
from the girth of the mutumba tree.

The persona talks of his/her memory of tracing his\her language is compared to 'bats' in a light place. The metaphor here suggests how confused and perturbed the persona is after realizing that he/she cannot at all remember the language of his/her ancestry. "tongues long unfurled...". It is important to note that the narration changes from the singular first person "I" to the plural first person "we"; Aujo does this to simply show how one's loss of identity or language is not affecting the individual but other people as well. Similarly, the assertion is also that the idea of 'loss of language or identity' affects majority of people (youth) who have been negatively influenced by globalization.

Never mind
that we wrapped our dead & covered our loins, still with her bark
yet somehow, our shame we left unclothed.
earth sopping in bone-lava us burning us failing to decide
whether it was dirty whether it was a sacred purge.
whether our soil should wash itself, and if so, with what. If the rain that fell
was bullets with a mouth
to eat out our souls?

The persona here questions how we are keen to cover the dead and hide our privacy 'loins' yet we fail to hide our shamelessness of losing our ancestry- a place that gives us a sense of belonging. The persona asserts how blind we are in recognizing that we are heading towards disastrous implications which will ultimately make us vulnerable "...if the rain that fell was bullets with a mouth to eat out our souls?" This rhetorical question which has personified the "bullets" is hyperbolically used to provoke our individual thoughts about our future, not only as a self or community but also our African cultural identity.

The persona goes on to say:

We never decided. &
poison mushrooms sprouted questions
to jeer at us:

Perhaps if you whisper to history like a man does to a woman
She will lead you to where the spool of wrong started
& when your children tongues un-maimed find you,
they will pulse & dance to the right lines

Here, the persona reiterates the earlier asked rhetorical question about rain being “bullets with mouths” by responding that we have not yet decided and as a result, the personification of the “mushrooms” to imply that it is only the striking of ‘disaster’ that will challenge us to look back and trace our African cultural roots. This is illustrated in the second person narration ‘you’ to act as a caution or advise. The persona concludes by positing that once we are able to get back to our ‘Africanness in language or identity’ then together with our future generation, we will enjoy and value our African origin.

My view here is that Ajuo’s imagined voice of the disillusioned youth rightly elaborates a realistic observation of how the contemporary youth in Africa have lost the value of being African and have failed to appreciate their African ancestry, hence this is a clarion call for these youth to refocus their thinking in the agency of globalization.

Victoria Adukwei Bulley’s “Revision”, makes use of four varied poetic forms to illustrate the agency to compare, consider, consolidate and conclude about the impact of globalization that has led migration of people to live in Diaspora vis-a-vis the very people ‘immigrants’ to maintain their African cultural identity. The poem is basically a castigation of globalization's influence upon the many young people living in Diaspora.

In the poem, Bulley expresses her ‘imagined voice’ persona who makes a comparison between Portugal and England and sees no problem in preferring the other one due to better weather. “Oh chale’ii stayed in portugal for a year and loved it. Loved it.more than england, fam. Patriot, who? ...two colonisers: one with better weather-what’s the problem.” The introduction of this part in the

poem shows how the persona is comfortable with living Diaspora “i’d go to the market and buy vegetables and come back to the apartment and make rice and stew”, but unfortunately, he/she doesn’t know his/her language “i can’t speak ga,”

In a nostalgic tone, the persona recalls how the mother would play her/his grandmother video which did make her/him happy in the joy of seeing the grandmother alive. “...mum played me a video of grandma singing a folk tune, and she told me that the word for ‘song’ in ga is lala.lala. As in, deck the halls with boughs of holly, fa-la-la-la -la...” Through English and dialectic words, the persona hyperbolically expresses a mockery of the western influence upon the African heritage. The rhetorical question “can you believe that?” is to invoke our instincts of the western perception about the African culture.

The persona candidly states that the fact he/she has seen the grandmother alive and happy despite not understanding a single word from the “folk tune”, has made him/her nostalgic by the mere fact of celebrating the many years of old age the grandmother has lived. “...see her clapping, all nearly-one-hundred-and fully-bat-blind years of her...”

The poem concludes by indicating how the person recalls that the ‘folk tune’ had been translated to him/her by the mother but he/she cannot at all remember but just shocked by the idea of how the ‘song’ feels sad. “...even mum didn’t know the story, she just translated the outline to me, which I don’t remember now, but the whole time i could only stand there, i was just watching and thinking damn, this lala feels sad, this one lala sounds like a sorry song” This last line conclusively draws in the reality of the feeling of sadness “like a sorry song” to connote to the erosion of the African culture in our contemporary youth. In general, the title ‘Revision’ has enabled the reader to sensitize on the need to remember our memories and rekindle our appreciation of the African identity despite the influences of globalization.

Contrary to Aujo’s and Bulley’s poems that focused the nostalgic ‘imagined voice’ on the loss of language, culture and identity as effects of globalization upon the youth in contemporary Africa, Lydia Kasese’s *Silver Spoons*, lays its emphasis on income inequality and unemployment. First and foremost, the title ‘Silver Spoons’ which means a privileged background has been used

ironically to deepen the intended message being communicated. The alliterative sound 's' to bring in a particular attention to the words that capture a moment of self-reflection.

The persona commences:

The loss of our jobs has made us soft with caring.
It has humbled our tongues
And taught us to ask
How are you today?
In the places where frustrations /silence/deadlines used to lie.

The above lines talk of unemployment being a negative impact of globalization due to the struggling that young people seek to establish themselves in a new social context within the intimidating adult world which perceives them as being particularly vulnerable to the threat of exclusion. The persona hyperbolically yet ironically draws the reader to the experience of losing a job that presses one into being courteous, "It has humbled our tongues, How are you today?" despite the underlying frustration or silence.

The persona continues:

The new woman at work asks me what my plan is,
If i have a plan, i laugh and say I have no plan.
My parents are my plan.
I will go back to them and leech onto their success.

The lines, here, ironically suggest the hopelessness that lies when one loses a job yet he/she is expected to be a source of joy and provision to the parents (adults) who raised him/her. The first line "The new woman at work..." shows the level of job competitiveness that globalization brings. Although in a despondent tone, the persona utterly states that he/she will return to his/her parents to see secure a better life somewhat; this is clearly illustrated in the oxymoron used "i have a plan...i have no plan"

The persona gets a reply from the new woman:

What will you do?
She looks down and murmurs
I cannot go back to my parents empty handed.
I am their success.

The rhetorical question above shows the dilemma of the economic crisis that sadly pushes people to a state of dependency yet they as well have dependants. The short line “I am their success” indicates vehement tone of establishing one’s success no matter what. The third person narration ‘she’ between the first and second stanza conveys the reality of unemployment from an observer’s point of view since the first and last stanzas are ironically portrayed for effect.

The persona deduces that:

I think i wear my privilege a bit too loudly on some days.
I forget we do not all come from milk and honey,
Silver spoons and golden eggs.

This last stanza uses the metaphors of “milk and honey” and “silver spoons and golden eggs” to assert that we all come from different family backgrounds the ‘haves’ and the ‘haves not’ respectively, thus it is in the understanding of this reality, that any individual will tend to react differently in amidst economic crisis of the globalized world.

The last selected poem, Olatunde Osinaike’s, “When My Mother Speaks of New Edition”, explores the impact of globalization in socio-economic realities such as: communication, media, economy, Diaspora migration and family separateness. The five quintet poem has nostalgically detailed the persona’s family and challenges therein.

The persona begins:

Partly because my stepfather-to-be three counties away
texted her good morning and partly because the radio
announced the reunion tour happening this upcoming spring,
she is giggling with that laugh in her voice that is
recognisable even through the other end of a phone call.

This first stanza highlights the concerns that the persona will be expressing. The persona makes us aware of the “step-father-to-be” to show the issue of family separateness system that is predominant in today’s globalized world, the “radio and text” indicate the technology in media and communication. The poem uses third person narration “she” to act as the observer rather omniscient narrator who perceives ideas and situations holistically. From the first phrase to the last one, the persona uses a sneering tone to mock his/her mother’s joy at a gesture of “good morning

text” and “radio announcement”.

The persona continues to narrate:

Yes. that one. The one where you can tell there are
dimples making golden creeks of light on their face
and that excites you. To be hitched to a forever
that can appear unconsciously, without a halo on
the third finger of your hand, without worry of this

Here, the point of view narration changes to second person “you” to change the focus from the persona’s perception of issues to a self-reflecting perception by the reader. The persona describes the joyous mood we feel “dimples making golden creeks of light ...”when we hear from our loved ones or announcement of going to some place. Intentionally, the persona draws us into realizing the unspeakable happiness or care free we get when we are not anxious or worried. This creates suspense as the poem progresses:

*...Lately upon waking up,
I drink almost the daily allotted amount of water that is
needed by the body to flush itself of toxins. Mostly
because I am thankful to be without the penumbras
of stress. Mostly because I remember my whiskey*

The persona reveals to us a sense of self, he/she focuses on in ignoring the distress that comes with today’s life of anxiety. The poem is filled with a pretentious tone “Mostly because I remember my whiskey hangovers, the stamina it takes to rise anew and unflinching from the evening’s pretenses.” The choice of words “whiskey” and “hangovers” brings in the element of drunkenness that many individuals fall trap of when faced with difficult situations“...evening’s pretenses’ Still in suspense, the persona admittedly owns up that tense is a common result when we fail to fulfill what we set ourselves to. “Mostly because tense is what we tend to be when we do not tend to our needs.”

In a shift of voice, the persona turns into narrating about the mother:

And a good night's rest isn't something she has
referenced since I was ten and we made family errands
out of her telling me to grab allocated ziploc bags full
of pennies near her purse to walk in and pay the cashier
for the gas we would need to get home. When I ask her how
she sleep last night, she responds oh you know, the usual
so I serenade her with her favorites while pinching myself.

The lines here break the suspense by expressing the socio-economic turmoil a family faces in a globalized space where people feign 'all is well' without pouring out their honest truth about the reality of life we live in "*oh you know, the usual*".

The poem exposes the broken family systems that majority of the youth come from, which are characterized by migration of family members, communication barriers, media influence, drunkenness, economic uncertainty and self-awareness amidst the globalization influence.

From my analysis of the selected poets' imagined voice of a disillusioned youth, I must say the hyperbole used, although not exhaustively, has effectively helped in bringing forth the impact of globalization in a more vivid and thought provoking manner for the readers to contemplate upon with a view of how the concerns have mirrored the society we live in.

3.3 Conclusion

Throughout the eight poems I have examined, the selected poems have indeed demonstrated their craftiness in their imagined voice 'self' of a disillusioned contemporary youth through hyperbole. This has ultimately led to an aesthetic appeal as depicted in the clear elaboration of the poets' intended message.

It is quite clear that the selected poems use linguistic milieu not just for embellishing their poetic imagination but more as a tool to tackle the challenges of the day as part of their poetic content. Through the hyperbolic use of metaphor and nostalgic tone; these selected poets have sympathized with, castigated, advised, cautioned, dialogued with and cried with society, about the present and future state of the contemporary youth in Africa who are enveloped in a

disillusioned world. Throughout, one can see literary elements such as rhetorical question, oxymoron, similes and personification being used as a scalpel to dissect the individual's experiences, memories, thoughts and fear, in addressing the pertinent issues of disillusionment as revealed in the poems.

The selected poets' imagined voice of a disillusioned youth rightly represents the contemporary youth in Africa. I do say, the personas in each of the poems have clearly resonated with any contemporary African youth living in or out of Africa. From my understanding of the poems in respect to the discourse of disillusioned youth and metaphor of pain; indeed, no one has never been taken for granted because of being a young person, assumedly, deemed to be energetic. In regards to security of the nation, no one can claim to have not experienced or heard of violence or attack in their country or a young person who has never heard of rape stories and the trauma that comes all with such incidences. In the discourse of nostalgic tone and negative impact of globalization as a form of disillusionment in the youth; no young person has never been beguiled or thrilled at the thought of migrating abroad and be excluded from the typical Africa's way of life or taken pride at the idea of being 'globalized' and not being categorized as a cultural-oriented person, for instance, laughing or acting confused when spoken to by your grandparents. Realistically, there are many young people who have been replaced in their workplaces because someone else's skills and competence were much better than theirs. All these instances might majorly agree that almost every single youth in one way or another has felt the pain of living in disillusionment and the effect of globalization either at a personal, family or national level.

Hope Wabuke shares the same thought in his review of this anthology that:

With poems ranging from interrogations of the nature of borders and the legacies of colonialism to questions of nationhood and ethnicity; reflections on gender and identity to legacies of personal trauma and national violence, the editors of 20.35 Africa: An Anthology of Contemporary Poetry have taken care to select wide themes and voices that reflect the myriad experiences of young African writers coming of age... (v)

Ultimately, the finding is that the use of hyperbole has indeed formed a package of not only beautifully crafted poetry, but also one which is pregnant with meaning, acting as a mirror of today's society.

The next chapter, makes conclusions of this study.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSION

This study set out to analyze the manifestations hyperbole in the African youth's imagined voice in selected contemporary African poems. The study comprises an analysis of sixteen poems selected from the anthology *20.35 Africa: An Anthology of Contemporary Poetry*. The selection of the sixteen poems was based on the assumption that they represent a cross-section of youth concerns and the poets' stylistic choice of hyperbole in executing the concerns. Thus, it is my hope that they provide a glimpse into today's realities as reflected by the selected poets' imaginations. The selected poems involve a subtle use of literary devices. A major strength exhibited is that the poets in the anthology use of hyperbole to the everyday ordinary conversation hence put new life into them. Ebenezer Agu, the editor-in-chief in his review of this anthology says: "The poems in this anthology add to the living, electric archive in this conversation." (viii) My analysis entailed trying to dig out the meaning of words that have been used distinctively.

My study focused on hyperbole as a literary style used in presenting the African youth's imagined voice. This choice was guided by my belief that the widespread use of literary enhancement in the selected poems indicates that it was a vehicle of communication by the poets in their imaginative writing. The two theories that I employed were very useful in enabling me to analyse the poems. The New Criticism Theory was especially helpful in enabling me to critically dissect words and locate them in their breadth of meaning, distinctiveness and interpretation. As a result, it helped me to generate and decipher meanings that lay below the surface. The Postcolonial Theory on its part enabled me to arrive at the personal, communal or national vision of the selected poets against the backdrop of postcolonial trauma. Through these two theories, I was able to come up with intriguing shades of meaning that a casual reading of the poems would not have availed to me.

The first chapter involved mapping out what the study would entail. In the second chapter I made a critical analysis of the deployment of hyperbole in the depiction of the imagined voice in existential crisis. Under this, I focused on the hyperbole in two stylistic aspects, symbolism and the I' Persona. Here, I found that the selected poets use these features to shed light on the pertinent concerns upon the contemporary youth in Africa in a way that is hauntingly visceral and evocatively imaginative. In the third chapter, I evaluated hyperbole as a mirror of the imagined

voice of disillusionment of the youth in contemporary Africa. The hyperbole literary elements employed were metaphor and nostalgic tone respectively. By exploiting these features, the selected poets have been able to convey their ideas and imagination in bringing out the disillusioned youth. Similar to the bard in the traditional society who had his/her lesson coated with sugary language, so do the selected poets adorn their words with beautiful features like rhyme, alliteration, repetition, rhetorical questions and many others. Additionally, the patterns of deviation employed in the poetic forms greatly enhance the aesthetic value of their poetry. In a classroom context, the selected poems can be very effective in enlivening a language lesson as well as instilling life lessons.

In my analysis of hyperbole in the depiction of the imagined voice in existential crisis, I was able to make observations concerning the hyperbolic use of symbolism and ‘I’ persona respectively. For instance, in examining the symbol of time and existential crisis, I realized that the representations of time such as night, added meaning to the meaninglessness of the nothingness of life as discussed by the varied personas hence greatly added aesthetic value to the selected poets' imaginations. The use of ‘I’ persona in identity crisis which is an aspect of existentialism helped in highlighting issues of importance in society upon an individual. The fusion of the hyperbole to literary elements employed was useful building blocks in creating this imagined voice ‘self’. Additionally, the use of sound features like alliteration or repetition in a poem helped the selected poets to draw attention to certain words that are loaded with meaning. This is seen in the images and symbols they call to mind. Through these, the selected poets have successfully articulated issues that pertain to the contemporary African youth either living in or out of the continent.

Another observation I made was that the hyperbole in literary aspects of metaphor and nostalgic tone in examining a disillusioned youth have been used purposively to create a familiarization and vivid picture on the extremities of disillusionment upon an individual, especially the youth. In many instances, the selected poets use words in a way that is both unique and odd. In a poem like “*Silver Spoons*” we find that the title itself is odd because one would not think literally but on the alluded meaning yet the poem’s content is ironic. By using such ordinary words in a unique way, the poet draws attention to them as he/she paints the picture of the imagined voice engulfed

in disillusionment.

Additionally, hyperbole as portrayed in the selected poems communicate a sense of nostalgia which has aided in provoking the reader's thoughts about certain issues in society that may seem unimportant yet weighty upon an individual when critically assessed singly. An example of this is: *Ten lessons in bleeding*, one would tend to assume the weightiness of the content simply because it expresses menstrual pain, but in depth it highlights youth subjugation by adults.

Furthermore, it is forethoughtful to state that the selected poems in the anthology peg on issues that are significantly vital to the youth. The observation is that as much as the youth are expected to be well versed about the past experiences and concerns of their nations; they also want a platform to critique and evaluate issues of their time as well as be listened to by the societies they belong to.

This is clearly referenced by Ebenezer Agu who states:

...all I knew of African poetry at the time were colonial-era and postcolonial works. The concerns of the poets of that era were so quaint they hardly resonated much in me. I wanted voices that investigated issues of my time, voices that may be about the personal or universal but relevant to my understanding of questions of my age... (6)

Following Ebenezer Agu's view, I state that the imagined voice in existential crisis and disillusioned youth, is indeed a representation of Africa explicitly and maybe an allusion to the African situation. It is through these selected poems, I deduce that the poets have a special concern and vision for the contemporary youth in the continent. These selected poets seem to forecast an Africa free of despondency, an Africa that is ready to act upon the issues affecting its youth; for it is in the centrality of these youth that Africa will achieve its vision for the future. The use of hyperbole employed by the selected poets helped in the development of the overall message on existentialism and disillusionment in the youth.

The study has highlighted how the use of hyperbole has been manifested in the poems, how it has aided in developing the intended message of the African youth's imagined voice and what effects it achieved in the end. My analysis of how the selected poets have used hyperbole in their imagined voice clearly demonstrates that literary devices are powerful tools that a creative writer can exploit to shed light on issues of socio-economic importance, more so among the youth. It is key to posit that these selected poets use distinct images and symbols which have resonated with the Africans by setting them out from their contemporaries in Africa. Indeed, the exaggerated language employed has greatly helped in the characterization of the imagined voice 'self' as illustrated by the 'gruesomeness' relayed and the vivid elaboration of scenes and moments that have expressively described in depth the concerns of the contemporary African youth. The thematic discourse on existentialism, identity, disillusionment and negative impact of globalization illuminated the imagined voice based on the poets' attitudes, experiences and thoughts from a divergence of cultures in Africa. In conclusion, it is my hope that my analysis of the selected contemporary poems has contributed towards unearthing the immense literary treasures hidden in the anthology.

WORKS CITED

- Agu, Ebenezer. 20. 35: *Africa: An Anthology of Contemporary Poetry*. Brittle Paper, 2018.
- Adetuyi, Chris Ajibade and Adeniran, AdeolaAdetomi. "African Poetry as an Expression of Agony" *World Journal of English Language*, vol. 8.No. 1, 2018, pp. 21-27.
- Alembi, Ezekiel. *Understanding Poetry*. Stantex, 1999.
- Akingbe, Niyi. "Speaking denunciation: satire as confrontation language in contemporary Nigerian poetry". *Africa Focus*, vol. 27, no. 1, 2014, pp.47-67
- Ashcroft, Bill, et al. *The Empire Writes Back*. Routledge, 1989.
- Bamgbose, Gabriel S. "Modern African Verse and the Politics of Authentication." *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 16.1 (2014):<https://doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.2283>
- Becker, Jenny. "Girls in Fragile Contexts" *Women in Action*. (2012) Report, pp 7-9.
- Brendtro, Larry, K., Martin Brokenleg and Steve Van Bockern. "The Circle of Courage: Developing Resilience and Capacity in Youth".*International Journal for Talent Development and Creativity*, vol.1, no. 1, June, 2013.pp. 67-74, 1990.
- Brewer, Lee R. "The Many Faces of Persona Poems".*Writer's Digest*, 2016.
- Burgers et al.. *Figurative Framing: Shaping Public Discourse Through Metaphor, Hyperbole, and Irony*. Amsterdam. Carston & Wearing.2016
- Chinweizu, Jemei and Ehechukwu Madubuike. *Towards the Decolonisation of African Literature*. KPI, 1980.

Cubitt, P.Christine. "Employment in Sierra Leone: what happened to post-conflict job creation?"
African Security Review 20(1), 2-14.

De Baecke, Esther. *Contemporary American Poetry and Globalization*. (Unpublished Masters Thesis) Ghent University, 2015.

Douglas, Harper. *Poems for Young People*. Author House, 2004.

Egudu, Romanus. *Modern African Poetry and the African Predicament*. Macmillan Press, 1978.

Elbow, Peter. *Writing Without Teachers*. New York. Oxford University Press. 1973

Elen, Oliete-Aldea. "Fear and Nostalgia in Times of Crisis: The Paradoxes of Globalization in Oliver Stone's *Money Never Sleeps*," *Journal of Current Cultural Research*, vol. 4. 2012, pp. 347–366.

Elizabeth, Emily P. *The Existential Concepts of Time, Death and Choice in the poetry of Philip Larkin*. (Unpublished Masters Thesis) North Texas State University, 1982.

Gilliland, Burl. E., and James Richard, K. *Crisis Intervention Strategies* (2nd ed.). USA, CA: Thomson Brooks/Cole. 3–26. 1993

Heaney, Seamus. *The Redress of Poetry*. Faber and Faber. 1995

Hena, Omaar. "Globalization and Postcolonial Poetry," *The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Poetry*, vol. 30, 2016, pp. 249-262.

<https://examples.yourdictionary.com/examples-of-amplification-in-literature.html>

Indangasi, Henry. *Stylistics*. Nairobi UP, 1988.

James, Richard, K. *Crisis Intervention Strategies* (6th ed.). USA, Brooks, 2007.

Keatinge, Benjamin. "The Language of Globalization in Contemporary Irish Poetry" *Journal of Irish Studies*, vol. 10, no. 4, 2014, pp. 69-84.

Kemper, Yvonne. "Youth in war-to-peace transitions: Approaches by International Organisations" Berhof, Research, Centre, Report (10) PP.2-56.

Mackenzie, Megan. "Empowerment boom or bust? Assessing women's post-conflict empowerment initiatives" *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 22 (2) pp.199-215.

Norgate, Stephanie. *Poetry and Voice: A Book of Essays*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012.

Pruitt, Lesley, J. "They Drop Beats, not Bombs: Music and Dance in Youth Peace-building" *Australian Journal of Peace Studies*, 3 pp. 14-32.

Ogunbesan, Kolawole and David Woolger. *Images and Impressions: An Oxford Senior Poetry Course*. Oxford UP, 1978.

Oguibe, Olu. *A Gathering Fear (Poems)*. Boomerang Press, 1992.

Ojaide, Tanure. *New Trends in Modern African Poetry*. Indiana UP, 1995.

Olembo, Waveney. *The Music of Poetry: Poems from Africa, the Caribbean and Elsewhere*. Arnold, 1986.

Olusola, Owagbemi. "Globalization: The Challenges of the Nigeria Youths" *Journal of Law, Policy and Globalization*, vol. 22, 2014, pp. 2224-3259

Okunoye, Oyeniya. *The Critical Reception of Modern African Poetry*, Awolowo University, 2004.

- Omutiti, Godfrey. *A Gendered Socialist Vision of Micere Mugo's Poetry*. (Unpublished Masters Thesis) University of Nairobi, 2005.
- Orhero, Mathias. *Trends in Modern African Poetic Composition: Identifying the Canons*. *UNIUYO Journal of Humanities*, vol. 21, no. 1, 2017, pp. 145-164.
- Ruhela, Sonakshi. *Existential Crisis amongst Youth: A Comparative Perspective*. *International Journal of Education and Psychological Research*, vol. 2, no. 3, 2013, 36-41.
- Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. Pantheon Books, 1978.
- Sartre, Jean-Paul. "Existentialism Is Humanism." (Lectures found in a Web site).
 Trans Philip Mairet. 1946. Wikipedia.org. N.p, n.d. web. 26 Nov. 2005.
 < [http:// en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Existentialism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Existentialism) >
- Soyinka, Wole. *Poems of Black Africa*. Heinemann, 1975.
- Spivak, Gayatri. *Can the Subaltern Speak?* Macmillan, 1988.
- Stern Paul, C. *Towards a Coherent Theory of Environmentally significant Behaviour*.
<https://sites.goggle.com>. 2000
- Tambari, Dick. *Patterns of Deviations in Niyi Osundare's Poetry*. *Mgbakoigba: Journal of African Studies*, vol. 4, (2015), 1-12.
- Titus, Harold H. *Living issues in Philosophy*. New York. Van Nonstrand Reihold. 1970
- Venn, Couze. 2006. "A Note on Assemblage." *Theory Culture & Society*, vol. 23 nos. 2-3, 2006, pp. 107-108.
- Wimsatt, William, K. Jnr. and Monroe C. Beardsley. *The Intentional Fallacy: The Sewanee Review*. Hopkins UP, 1946.

APPENDIX

1. After Suicide -AkpaArinze

When you died mum moved your bed,
I took your place.
It was not difficult changing the television channel
from Keeping Up with the Kardashians to Black-ish.
At night your dog kept barking,
we thought it was learning to accept the heat.
We wanted happiness, you wanted flowers.
& when the chrysanthemum germinated
you asked if I had ever thought of losing something,
I said no, because denial eases the pain.
I once lost my ping pong ball, it was found in your chest.
We are always wanting what we can't have.
At the prom, I pretended I was you just to dance
with Judith, the one that never looked at me.
This night I write your name first
& I can't... all over the paper
Hoping you won't be found in me.
The leaves scatter, decomposing.

2. Old things- Michelle Angwenyi

pulling at both sides of a miscalculation: your penchant for old things,
old fabrics faded at their centres, heavy brass jewelry and leather strings that
schoolboys, you included, would collect for no reason; Nairobi city pamphlets and giant, giant
mirrors —
that had been granted the ability to double both space, and time —
they all fall away. now,
endlessly exposed, now and again, and especially then when we

stood, at ocean's edge, morphing in and out as the waves, asking for the day's compensation:
knowing full well this is what it means to love.

not anyone's idea; not even an idea, to begin with.

whatever it is, from the harshness of the morning's first gritty coffee,
through which we swallowed the previous night's fists, and indigestible,
days-old Kiswahili sayings, we pretend to be okay, even having forgotten how,
or more importantly, when, to read, or what it means to look at each other
without the words between us.

some sort of primer for forgiveness.

you fold everything in the grainy velour of your birth: strings, coins, matchsticks,
green soda bottles —

returning to the intangibility of time.

left behind, as you walk away, the last I see of you is your photograph. an obliteration yet
your substantial form, this fading away into its own

resolution, both reminder, and that which it reminds us of. another old thing.

and another, one we've both known, carried around like sin — [and like sin in its duality of
weight and lightness]:

you are not dead, but you have never been much alive; and
not alive, either.

3. Tender Crow's Feet - J.K. Anowe

because it holds the rest of the world like a secret

in the sense that when you pass through one

every eye is looking but untelling we name

it after a lineage—to come from a pedigree of women

who never enjoyed the sex but moaned anyway

i know a girl in the scene of the dream—a collector a nudist

alatebloomer of sorts running a forefinger over the index

of a facade to the outer corners of my eyes as though it is hers to unsculpt

as if to say—i'll always see you as an answer... barefeet we circumvent

the collarbone of the night like slowdance without holding hands

stopping every now & then to adjust our shadows like loincloths
i—with a bottle of valium she—the corkscrew until we arrive inside
ourselves& trigger the tripwire—a new artform showing how quick
we willingly default to self-destruct how but for one she exhumes all of my birth
marks& mental disorders till her feet begins to hurt the masochism evident
with every footfall every fingering of the stigma where the flower begins its bloom...
could we have known language to be a thing for the lost [insert question
mark] ask the men at babel no one knows how burdening it is waiting on the
universe to take your mother by her maiden name so you could grow
the nerve to complete the taking of your own life because like touching your
self in pagan places suicide is but one void telling another—now i
must leave this body & return from you denying residues of god
family& love full custody hence we are quiet enough to be sudden to be
nothing until we mishappen... but what category of disaster is a body is a
country being what is it they say about dancing into your own story without soles
or nakedness as fireproof lord knows he let us come this far just so we

could feel us come apart steadfast in slow [loco]motion like rollercoaster
passengers on a downward spiral while the country where bullets pass
through every city like ghosts mistaking bodies for air this city in retrospect
of our wildly truant bones chased our gust of ghosts
from prairie to pavement the girl saying— you’re falling again
as the sand beneath my feet starts to quicken

4. Prodigal Son - CheswayoMphanza

It’s the foolish innocence of Sili in the film that gets to me.

A bare-footed girl on crutches walking the streets of Dakar selling newspapers. Dubbed: La Petite Vendeuse de Soleil. After earning 10,000 francs, she buys her grandmother a parasol. When I am asked “have you been back home yet?” I think of Sili laughing at me before asking “What do you have to give Lusaka?” and “Haven’t you lost the language?” Which means

to lose everything. My eyes moving between the subtitles on the screen and Sili's mouth twisting between French and Wolof. When the jealous street beggars take one of Sili's crutches, she yells *Nous continuons!*

And adorns yellow sunglasses, performing a crazed dance while singing a French song. The beggars confused, not sure what to make of Sili's act. The intimacy of language I'm severed from. Or you could think about Diouana,

La Noire De..., who leaves Dakar for France, but returning becomes a sort of shame. I share Diouana's ambivalence to the idea of home. So what then to make of her suicide in the bathtub? The window open to a view of the

Champs-Élysées. A Senegalese mask she places over her face. The knife at the side with blood stains. The burden of France serving as a post-colonial trauma, but I'm still not sure what my relationship to America or Zambia means.

A white Frenchman, Monsieur, finds Diouana and returns the mask to Dakar, but a boy chases Monsieur with the mask. Haunting him to the point where he can't shed Diouana, or Diouana can't shed him. In this sense, I see Zambia and America not as places of distance, but a reminder of the self-transformation or the condition for the immigrant and native: Sili's broken legs in a barefooted dance on a dirt road in Dakar, Diouana's death in a porcelain bathtub in Paris.

5. Clothing - Aremu Adams Adebisi

Because my body is a country, a water confluence,
and a country is me and I am me with flesh and bones.

Because when we trace the marks on our faces and palms,
we find dust and ash in a rule of tussle between humans and jinns.

Because when I wear the Sari— either the Ghagra or the Pavada,

I let the Pallu drape over my shoulder freely, carelessly,
or tuck into my waist, stretching towns from Nepal to Tamil.

Because, 2, the Hanfu explores curves, tied with a Sash around the waist,
and the Kimono finds straight lines appealing, influenced by the Hanfu,
sharing an origin of drawings and designs— two hands that applaud.

Because when I put on the Sherwani, with the Sarong patterned
around my waist and the Tembel Hat almost covering my face,
I find a wedding in Rajasthan, moving my feet to the Khmer dance,
with delicious Hummus and Falafel dancing down my throat.
Because the Keffiyeh holds two races in one, a black and a white,
and the Jallabiyah, a long tunic garment, says in purity is peace.
Because when I attempt to wear the Boubou, the Pagne or the Danshiki,
I find myself ravaged in tribes whose hearts are as pure as honey,
skins like iron, and eyes as valiant and aging as the eagle's span.
Because the Buckskins and the Poncho have a long history
that cuts across the Andes people and the Native Americans,
and the Huipils of the Tlapanec people is a hundred panels in one.
Because when I wear the Sarafan with a Beret and a Klomp on my feet,
I see myself a Matador at the Eiffel Tower, overlooking the Red Square.
Because the Kilt, the Lederhosen and the Smock-frock have me
reminiscing on great warriors of the past, knowledgeable men
who once donned the wears for the unification of humankind.
Because Gakti is of the Sami people who are the people of reindeer
and the Tapa cloth can be used to decorate walls and for poetry,
and also sing the Tonga, sip Fiji's Kava drink and the Samoan Vaifala.
Because clothes do not betray the thread, the yarn and the spindle
and do not negate the body when they cover its nakedness.
Because either good or worn-out, white or black, loose or fitting,
an apparel or a homespun, they are all made from animal skin.

6. Reincarnation - AfuaAnsong

And
yes,
I died: a black swan and
woke,

sharp, in the skin of
Mitochondrial Eve.

A

shadow falls

on me like

a cold look and

suddenly my hairs rise, pupils

dilate and this almond-shaped amygdala

shivers. A continuous reverberation of light wings

flap at my face. This is absurd for on my wall, right down that American hall, stands a painting; a

mythical conga bird

perched on a tree branch. Next to this, a picture of mother

(I am her photocopy) & I in Accra. I wake

to beads of sweat lined on my back and

copper collar bone.

On my wrist I latch, each day,

a crystal hummingbird. It plucks

nectar from fuchsia petals

as it ticks and talks the time of

my world where my niece's curled

upper lip and my cousin's small

nose are mirrors

of my grandmother's golden

face.

7. & I Mourned What I Could Not Name - YasminBelkhyr

They beat our tongues smooth.

The kasbah shuddered and wailed.

I teeth the language, pocked and bloody.

The boys crashed into the sand: it welcomed them. In the rain, her hair was a river of petals.

My grandfather spoke with a red tongue.
A blade is a mirror is a blade is a wound.
The men hauled their bodies from sea.
The mountains vanish and took her too.
When I return, the land spits at my feet.
There is no shame in this, I'm told.
The men crumbled into sand: I watched them.
I spun in dust and gravel, nameless and red.
Contrary to ache, I still know nothing of guilt.
In our mouths, we bled then and bleed still.
Her child had my hair and my eyes.
There was only heat and forests of smoke.
I know there is only light at the end. I know when it begins, it is dark.
Contrary to wound, I still know nothing of defeat.

8. When They Ask What My Name Means- Gloria Kiconco

a placeholder until I return I don't remember
a theory I'm testing for practicality who named me it's
a way to keep existence from coming into existence a name so common
a chemical component you could pull it out
undercoating so I don't crack on the surface of a crowd. at home
dilapidated buildings in Kikuubo it is not at all special
a hammer pulled back for precision except when it is
solitary confinement in Kyebando mine and only my
a middle finger pulled on Colfax Ave mother keeps it
an oath on her tongue. it
pre-big bang conditions means gift or talent
an impressionist oasis I'm not sure. the
stroke mark in a dystopian painting of a picnic translation is so
a hallucination. a queer delusion easily lost, like so
an obsession with the smell of paper many maiden names

a life vest. a swallowing wave. this side of patriarchy

9. And I've mastered the art of receiving handouts because I come from this place-

AmaAsantewaDiaka

I am hungry for a love my country cannot afford.

I want a love

that will buffer my mistakes even before I commit them

A love that has mapped out the possibilities of my existence
and made room for each one of them

A love that doesn't need me to clamour to identify as black too
just so I can swim in the opportunity pool

A love that doesn't need me to be well versed in articulating
how high I am on the needy Olympics scale to be deserving of support

A love that doesn't even need me to have an archive of pain
to be worthy of inclusion

I want a love

that doesn't need me to work like there's two of me
in this body just to be visible

A love that doesn't require me to be
both pregnant and doula

trying to pull a nirvana out of my ass just for being different

I want a love

that doesn't require me to be ridiculously multifaceted
in order to have a fraction of an equation at being equipped for survival

A love that doesn't wait for another suitor to sing praises of my genius
before recognizing my worth

Or worse, only after I'm dead

I am hungry for a love my country cannot afford,

the way white lusts for a backdrop to outshine

10. Thirteenth- Nica Cornell

Go slow-ly next time
you are inside of me
I am fragile,
a deer of woven glass.

Touch me as
you would plait a child's hair.
Your fingers are large.
My strings are thin.
And when I am wet,
like paper, I tear.

11. Ten lessons in bleeding- Sarah Godsell

under my panties
I can bleed in secret,
no one interfering in the hot wet
blood stains enamel but no one knows
what the speckles on my cheerful yellow door
are from intimacy with myself the way I must touch myself, gentle but firm,
to slip the tampon in I have layers of skin that hug me before I bleed.
They cling to me even as I betray myself. blood is better than noose.
Scars better than red bath. I have never held a gun anyway.
Six.
I didn't bleed the first time. I didn't know then it was because it wasn't the first time.
Seven.
Head wounds bleed. A lot.
My foot held steady on the accelerator driving you to hospital. Me,
in between you and bouncers. me,
wondering if you knew you were raping her or not.
My mom dropped a stone chess board on her toe.

It was the first time I heard her bleed.

The first time I saw her swear.

I wanted to see her bones, too, not believing, really, that something had pierced her silence. Nine.

Blood in black and white photographs tastes metallic.

Like death. Those Photographs in That History lesson,
waking the skulls in the back of my head. I am not in control. ever

12. Asphyxia- TariroNdoro

Then I go to my brother And I say brother help me please

But he winds up knockin' me Back down on my knees

_Sam Cooke, "A Change is Gonna Come"

suffocation is

a metaphor for breathing under water

for holding the world on your shoulder, woman

there is no rest for the living, the dying, the dead in

black skin and blacker dresses//life is tough but you're still breathing

bleeding, pain , love, suffering on black skin, black ache – labored fifty years to

retire on nothing// headline on friday's paper says there was a riot// downtown

officer fires two warning shots, two are dead, thirteen injured, I wonder

did he count the number?// uh –uh, cicero, tongue in cheek weaved

false truth asphyxia is// believing the lies so we can sleep at night

truth is triggering is nowadays// so is saying something

different from men are trash when

sister shows her bruises//

no one is safe here

Anymore

13. A dream in English- LillianAkampuriraAujo

I am stumbling over the tongue of my father and his father
before him I am falling
into the calcified palms
that bound them all
in razor wire. every time
I try courting syllables my tongue is cut
I cannot speak.
My memory
reels back
to when we were bats
drifting in a white haze
tongues long unfurled
from the girth of the mutuba tree.
Never mind
that we wrapped our dead & covered our loins, still with her bark
yet somehow, our shame we left unclothed.
earth sopping in bone-lava us burning us failing to decide
whether it was dirty whether it was a sacred purge.
whether our soil should wash itself, and if so, with what. if the rain that fell
was bullets with a mouth
to eat out our souls?
We never decided. &
poison mushrooms sprouted questions
to jeer at us:
Perhaps if you whisper to history like a man does to a woman
she will lead you to where the spool of wrong started
& when your children tongues un-maimed find you,
they will pulse & dance to the right lines

14. Revision- Victoria Adukwei Bulley

i. compare

A	<u>onion</u>	'sabolai'	hint: cebola
B	'chalé'	<u>Charlie</u>	hint: fam
C	hint: water bird	<u>duck</u>	'dokor-dokor'
D	'lala'	hint: 月	song

ii. consider

from the 1400s, the area later known as the gold coast would be
(choose one)
discovered / invaded / visited / landed upon
by
europeans / illegal aliens / migrant workers / tourists / christians
hailing from the ports of
sweden / denmark / england / the netherlands / portugal / prussia

during their
visit / residency / occupation / sabbatical / stay
they would alter, irreversibly, the
ecology / lives / speech / gods / memory
of the
homo sapiens / natives / people / fauna
inhabiting the land. it is not clear what their expectations were.
one could assume they were successful.

even after
completing / losing / leaving / tiring of the project and
going home they did not actually leave
it is arguable that

iii. consolidate

in the year of our lord
1471
they came –

in the year of our lord
2017
i look for my language,
still finding their hairs in it.

iv. conclude

oh chulé! i stayed in portugal for a year and loved it. loved it. more than england, fam. patriot, who? water off a duck's back. two colonisers: one with better weather – what's the problem. the people were happy. it was hot. i stayed in bolhão. i'd go to the market and buy vegetables and come back to the apartment and make rice and stew. i do that when i want to feel at home. and you know i can't speak ga, but our word for onion is sabolai. right? and the portuguese word for onion? cebola. say-ball-ah. i love it. i love it and i hate it, and this year it happened again. this very january. mum played me a video of grandma singing a folk tune, and she told me that the word for 'song' in ga is lala. lala. as in, deck the halls with boughs of holly, fa-la-la-la-la can you believe that? and i was so happy to see grandma so alive, singing all these words – of which i understand nothing – see her clapping, all nearly-one-hundred-and-fully-bat-blind years of her, and even mum didn't know the story, she just translated the outline to me, which i don't remember now, but the whole time i could only stand there, i was just watching and thinking damn, this lala feels sad, this one lala sounds like a sorry song

15. Silver Spoons - Lydia Kasese

The loss of our jobs has made us soft with caring.

It has humbled our tongues

and taught us to ask

how are you today?

in the places where frustrations/silence/deadlines used to lie.

The new woman at work asks me what my plan is,

ifi have a plan, i laugh and say i have no plan.

My parents are my plan.

I will go back to them and leech onto their success.

What will you do?

She looks down and murmurs

i cannot go back to my parents empty handed.

I am their success.

I think i wear my privilege a bit too loudly on some days.

I forget we do not all come from milk and honey,
silver spoons and golden eggs.

16. When My Mother Speaks of New Edition - OlatundeOsinaike

Partly because my stepfather-to-be three counties away
texted her good morning and partly because the radio
announced the reunion tour happening this upcoming spring,
she is giggling with that laugh in her voice that is
recognizable even through the other end of a phone call.

Yes, that one. The one where you can tell there are
dimples making golden creeks of light on their face
and that excites you. To be hitched to a forever
that can appear unconsciously, without a halo on
the third finger of your hand, without worry of this
being a redundant exercise.

Lately upon waking up,

I drink almost the daily allotted amount of water that is
needed by the body to flush itself of toxins. Mostly
because I am thankful to be without the penumbras
of stress.

Mostly because I remember my whiskey
hangovers, the stamina it takes to rise anew and
unflinching from the evening's pretenses. Mostly because
tense is what we tend to be when we do not tend to
our needs. And a good night's rest isn't something she has
referenced since I was ten and we made family errands

out of her telling me to grab allocated ziploc bags full
of pennies near her purse to walk in and pay the cashier
for the gas we would need to get home. When I ask her how
she slept last night, she responds oh you know, the usual
so I serenade her with her favorites while pinching myself