

**A COMPARATIVE EXAMINATION OF NARRATIVE VOICE IN
DIEKOYE OYEYINKA'S *STILLBORN* AND AHMADOU
KOUROUMA'S *ALLAH IS NOT OBLIGED***

By

MEMORY HANKWA

**A dissertation submitted to the University of Zambia in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Arts in Literature**

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DECLARATION

I, **Memory Hankwa**, do declare that this work is my own and has not previously been researched and submitted for any qualification at the University of Zambia or any other University.

Signed.

Date.....

APPROVAL

This dissertation of Memory Hankwa has been approved as fulfilling the partial requirements of the award of the degree of Master of Arts in Literature by University of Zambia.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my family, especially my nieces and nephews. You motivate me to work hard. I am forever grateful for your love and support.

ABSTRACT

Narratologists concede that every narrative has an agency who conveys the story. This is the speaker that recounts events as one listens to the story. Voice is an integral aspect in narrative analysis. The study aimed at analysing the similarities and differences in the use of narrative voice in the novels *Stillborn* and *Allah Is Not Obligated*. These were evaluated in order to establish their significance to the narrative system of the two texts. The qualitative approach was utilised and the study was a desk research. The primary texts were purposefully sampled as they are both historical fictional works told by narrators who portray how political turmoil such as war in their respective societies wounds their psyche. A close comparative reading of the two text was conducted. Secondary data from articles, journals, books and electronic sources were examined mainly using the theory of narratology buttressed by the psychoanalytical literary theory. Findings were that in both texts, the narration is done retrospectively by several homodiegetic voices but Seun, a peripheral character is more audible in *Stillborn* whereas *Allah Is Not Obligated* is dominantly told by an autodiegetic narrator Birahima. Retrospective narrations are important as they enable the narrators to reflect on past events and examine their inner thoughts before narrating. Homodiegetic narrators are believable since they recount what they witness to a certain degree. The peripheral homodiegetic narrator exhibits sympathy towards the protagonists while the autodiegetic narrator recounts with depth as a victim of war, revealing his damaged psyche more than the observing narrator. Narrative embedding though more extensive in *Stillborn* is a vital artistic strategy used to develop themes, characterisation, create diversity, suspense and harmony in both texts. The functions of the narrator according to Genette's (1980) model are all carried out by the overarching narrators. It is mainly through Seun's and Birahima's perspective that the tales are narrated. In directing the story, Birahima often pauses the story and time while Seun recounts continually. This demonstrates how varying narrators can manipulate the narrative's flow. Through the communicative function, they confess their repressed emotional wounds and desires to the narratee. Their childhood experiences play a pivotal role in shaping the narratives. They also attest to what they recount but Birahima authenticates his account further by swearing. Testifying renders the narrators believable to the narratee. Political mayhems, ethnic and religious conflict are condemned through ideas the narrators communicate. This is essential to the development of themes. That both narrators are also narratees contributes to the construction of the matrix narratives since they graft the received tales to them.

Key words: *Narratology, narrative voice, significance, homodiegetic.*

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OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS

The words below are some of the terms that the present study makes reference to. They are defined according to how they have been applied in the study. The terms defined are some of the principal ones that the study sought to investigate.

Narratology:	A group of theories of narratives, narrative texts, images, spectacles, events; cultural artifacts that tell a story. It is concerned with how the aspects of narratives can be understood, analysed and evaluated (Bal, 1999).
Narrative Voice:	Who speaks in a narrative? (Jahn, 2017).
Overarching narrator:	The main speaker in instances where multiple narrators are engaged.
Homodiegetic narrator:	A narrator who participates as a minor or major character in the narrative they tell.
Autodiegetic narrator:	A narrator who is the protagonist in the story they tell.
Narrative:	A story that is told by a narrator (Fludernik, 2009).
Narrative Technique:	The author's choice of how their narrator will tell the story and what strategies they will use to relay the information to the audience.
Narrative text:	A text in which a narrator tells a story using a particular medium of expression.
Narratee:	The audience to whom a story is recounted such as the readers or a character/s within it but they do not participate in the plot of the tale presented before them.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

This chapter is an introduction; it gives background information on the study. It briefly discusses the nature of narratology and explains its foundation and expansion. It also presents the particular problem under investigation and states the aim of the study. The objectives to be probed, research questions to be answered and the significance of the study are presented as well. The chapter further explicates the theoretical framework and the methodology. It also briefly spells out the scope of the study and outlines the structure of the dissertation.

1.2 Background of the Study

Narratives have always existed among humans and certainly will ever remain part of human life. Fludernik (2009) says that narrative is everywhere around us, not just in the novel or historical writing. It is connected above all with the act of narration and is to be found wherever someone tells us about something. Narratives in literature include works such as novels, epics, tragedies, short stories among others. Several scholars in their description of narratives present the idea that there is always a narrator who is engaged by the author to communicate ideas to the audience who read the narrative or to whom it is told (Abbot, 2008; Bal, 1999; Chatman, 1978).

Since the 1920s there has been an increase in narrative analysis. A number of people have read narratives and enjoyed their various aspects such as the presentation of events, how the creator of the work gives roles to characters, symbolism and the main ideas the narrator communicates. However, many readers of narratives are unaware of the art of narration. Stories are told or written using various important methods and strategies which readers need to be aware of. It is against this background that one regards narrative strategies engaged in literary texts as one of the important areas that necessitate attention.

When readers pay particular attention to the art of narration and recognise the significance of the various strategies used in story-telling, their comprehension of literary texts improves. The narrator that an author chooses to engage to tell the story for

instance is one of the significant strategies that the readership can utilise to investigate and understand the implicit aspects of a narrative. The present study seeks to investigate the similarities and differences in the way the two authors of the selected works engage narrative voices in their respective novels as well as the significance of this technique, in order to uncover the unrevealed aspects of the narratives.

Although narratives are innumerable, narrative theory provides a comprehensive explanation of how they are organised. Prince (1982) observes that narratology has been used to designate the field of studies that attempts to interpret the secret code of narrative. It is clear that the field of study deals with the general principles of narratives and how they are arranged.

Barry (2002:222) postulates that narratology “is the study of how narratives make meaning and what basic mechanisms and procedures are common to all acts of story-telling”. Fludernik (2009:8) agrees with Barry when she defines narratology as

The study of narrative as a genre. Its objective is to describe the constants, variables and combinations typical of a narrative and to clarify how these characteristics of narrative connect within the framework of theoretical models (typologies).

The two scholars’ definitions suggest that narratology is a wide area of study and is central to the study of narratives; it investigates how these narratives are organised into structures and how the structures are connected into a whole narrative. It not only studies the shared aspects in narratives but also concerns itself with the unchanging and inconstant aspects.

Since its inception, narratology has been used to refer to the analysis of narratives. It draws focus to various structures that weave them together. The theory in a broad sense incorporates a varied range of methodologies that are employed in the analysis of forms of narratives. It is instrumental to the study of the organisation of plots. Chatman (1978: 18) points out that “literary theory is the study of the nature of literature . . . the nature of literary objects and their parts”. Chatman refers to ‘parts’ as the elements and literary ‘objects’ as the narratives. He puts a narrative text into two categories namely, the story

and the discourse. While the story is concerned with the aspects portrayed in a narrative, the discourse is concerned with how the narrative is communicated.

In the recent past, the field of narratology has undergone major expansion as it has also been a major field of study for literary and non-literary scholars. In literature, it has been used in various ways to study and analyse the components of narratives such as the text, story and plot. In non-literary fields, it has been approached from various points of view.

1.2.1 The origin and development of narratology

Narratology is traced from ancient Greece. Scholars in literary studies have attempted to propagate ideas that intend to explain the fictional narrative. Plato (428-348 BC) was the first to document information about narrative theory. He presented the concepts mimesis and diegesis (Onega and Landa, 1996). By mimesis, he was of the idea that literature is a representation of aspects in the real world. A narrative imitates or reproduces aspects in the real world such as human actions. In mimesis, the real world is represented in a narrative without the narrator intervening whereas in diegesis there is an intermediary between the narrative and narratee. From Plato's time, narrative voice a term used to refer to the speaker in a narrative has been central in narratological studies. Plato discussed the concept of the narrator, the functions he or she performs, how they manifests and the scope of their authority (Finkelberg, 2018).

Aristotle (384-322 BC) went deeper in documenting about narratives beyond the ideas of Plato. He approved of Plato's idea that art recreates reality but contended that mimicking of things that exist in the real world does not just involve reproducing them; it rather has to do with adapting them. He is recognised as the leading advocate of the mimetic theory and for categorising narratives into tragedy, epics and comedy. Aristotle is credited for prescribing the general principles of poetry and other literary forms. He is notable in narratology in that he laid down the structure of a plot (Aristotle, 1974). Aristotle also provided ideas concerning the act of narrating, he clarified the difference between two kinds of narration that is a narration by a narrator and a narration by characters (Meghdadi, 2010:280). Aristotle's ideas were not intensively used until structuralists and formalists disseminated their ideas at the turn of the twentieth century.

Structuralists and Russian formalists are noted to have contributed to laying the foundation of narrative theory around the 1920s. Several of the founding studies in narratology are traced from Russian formalism and structuralism. The Russian formalist Vladimir Propp is also renowned for his contribution to the scientific and structural analysis of folktales around the 1920s. He used the principles of structuralism and formalism. His work *Morphology of the Folktale* (1928) in which he scrutinises Russian fairy tales and establishes their functions is very significant in narratological studies. It furnished the latter scholars with the design to use in the structural analysis of various forms of folklore. Levi-Strauss for example later employed the analytical model provided by Propp to the analysis of the structure of myths while other scholars investigated narrative grammar. Propp's model also to a great extent had an effect on Julien Greimas and Claude Bremond's oeuvre on the model of actants as well as the works of the structuralist Noam Chomsky in generative grammar (Fludernik, 2009).

Narratology thus began as a branch of linguistics and expanded with the influence of post structuralism. The principles of structuralism propagated by the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure in his work *Course in General Linguistics* (1916) have to a significant degree been forceful in the development of modern literary theory. His ideas along with those of Claude Levi-Strauss and Roland Barthes have been useful in the analysis of literary works. The ideas of these twentieth century thinkers among others became more prominent around the 1960s. They facilitated the development of a number of methods that are used in the structural analysis of narratives even today.

Eagleton (1996) gives a background of narratology and observes that literary structuralism as propagated by Saussure (1857-1913) examines literary texts using the principles of language. Saussure presents the idea that language is a self-supporting system of signs. He describes a sign as being made up of the 'signifier' and the 'signified'. The 'signifier' in language may be a sound, symbol or image such as words while the 'signified' is the underlying concept or meaning represented. Literary structuralists use Saussure's ideas to view the literary text as a self-sufficient system of signs because of the language in it. They refer to the written word in a literary text as the 'signifier' and its meaning as the 'signified'. They maintain that literary works must

have their language closely examined in order to understand how the various elements of a narrative connect with one another and how they create meaning just as the 'signifier' relates to the 'signified'.

The structuralist analysis of narratives as it is applied in modern times was started by Levi-Strauss. He was a structural anthropologist and was concerned with the study of signs and culture. His work was significantly influenced by structuralism and semiotics which is the study of signs in all its manifestations. Strauss specifically studied how the signs in myths interconnect. He observed that myths are some kind of language. They can be fragmented into separate units called 'mythemes' just as language is broken down into phonemes. These fragments convey meaning when joined together in specific ways.

Barthes upholds Levi-Strauss' ideas, he advocates that literary texts should be studied as an interconnected system of signs. He like Levi-Strauss had his narratological oeuvre reinforced by structuralism. He presents the idea that literary texts are considered to be autonomous because of the phonemes, words and sentences in them. These unite together and contrast with one another and as they do so, meaning is established from them. He also stresses that narratives must be evaluated based on the signs. No reference to any external aspects such as the meaning emplaced by the author or reader, historical or social factors should be made in the quest to arrive at the meaning of a literary text.

Barthes also used Propp's model in the analysis of the structure of narratives and presents the idea that comprehending a narrative does not solely rely on following the story but also recognising its construction in storeys (Barthes, 1966). Barthes is responsible for the beginning of the analysis of narratives based how they are arranged and connected by looking at the arrangement of sentences in a literary discourse.

One other major proponent who contributed to the field of narratology according to Phelan and Robinwitz (2006) is the Bulgarian Tsevan Todorov. The scholar is credited for having invented the term narratology. Inspired by the ideas of Saussure and Barthes, he referred to narratology as the science of narratives. He applied the rules of grammar to the study of narratives. Todorov supports the idea of Propp and Greimas that literary theory must be concerned with the key rules that guide narratives. These are rules of

sentence construction found in a narrative. He describes narratology as the study of narrative structures. This was the beginning of narratology proper.

Gerard Genette (1980) is very significant in narrative theory. His model explains five classifications in which a narrative can be studied. It comprehensively tackles the concept of time. It spells out the difference between ‘*recit*’ which he refers to as the actual arrangement of events in a narrative text and ‘*histoire*’ referred to as the sequence in which the events in fact happened, as the narratee can deduce from the text. ‘Order’ has to do with the time and arrangement of the narrative. ‘Duration’ explains how in a narrative certain events are left out, delayed, shortened, and lengthened among other aspects. ‘Frequency’ deals with the number of times certain events occur in a narrative whereas ‘mood’ deals with whether the narrative is related by the narrator or it is a representation. ‘Mood’ also has to do with the point of view from which the narrator tells the story. ‘Voice’ analyses in detail the act of narrating. Within this category are sub categories which all in essence explain how stories are narrated.

The aforementioned scholars are only some of the notable figures in literary studies whose works have contributed to the beginning and expansion of the study of narratives. A number of these have provided ideas that elucidate the concept of narrative voice.

1.2.1.1 Phases of Narratology

Narratology is divided in two stages namely the classical and the post classical phases. The two phases present diverse points of view and are also give a detailed account of the development of narratology from its inception to the present.

1.2.1.1.1 Classical Narratology

The classical phase is a period of time that is very important in literary history as it is the age of the rise of narratology. Narrative theory became established during this period. The classical stage of narratology ranges from the mid-1960s to the early 1980s. During this period, narratologists largely identified and outlined narrative universals. Classical narratology put emphasis on reading literary texts according to categories and their fixed structure. The first phase of narratology was predominantly interested in the study of narrative genres, plot structures and storytelling. Its focus was mostly on the

consistencies in literary texts and included conventional approaches to the study of narratives such as the principles propagated by formalists and structuralists.

Notable scholars of the classical phase of narratology include Roland Barthes, Tzvetan Todorov, Wayne Booth, Gerard Genette, Gerald Prince, Mieke Bal, Seymour Chatman among others. The narratological works of these scholars are inspired by the principles of formalism and structuralism and have altogether contributed to the theory of narrative by suggesting new and divergent views on the constitution and analysis of narratives and have ultimately contributed to the study of literature. However, the work of Genette is remarkable above the works of all the other prominent scholars. Genette's narratological oeuvre is noteworthy not only for its careful attention to the temporality of narrative but his model is also responsible for distinguishing between who speaks (the narrator) and who sees (the focaliser) (Phelan, 2006).

1.2.1.1.2 Postclassical Narratology

The postclassical is the second phase of narratology. This began around the 1980s to the present. It is an extension of the former but it is different from classical narratology in that it is more concerned with the idea that narrative theory should not be restricted to one field. Post classical narratologists argue that narratology is extensive enough, it can be applied to other disciplines. Rimmon-Kenan (2002:47) notes that the transformation to post classical narratology is a "shift from a fairly unified discipline to one characterised by a diversity of approaches". Post classical narratology has stretched its range and embraces the development of a number approaches that can be used within the field of literature such as feminist narratology, post-modern, post-colonial and cognitive narratology. It also deals with the utility of narratives in several different non-literary fields like anthropology, psychology, philosophy among others.

In the post-classical phase, narratology has been more popular in various disciplines than ever before. Since the 1980s, there has been a departure from the structuralist oriented narrative theory and the field has gone through a significant revival. Since then it has not been limited to literary studies alone. Heinen and Sommer (2009:35) observe that narrative theory has shifted from "a more or less homogenous domain of theorising and

has become a many-voiced field of debate”. It is an extensive study that has produced other schools of thought and is approached from multiple perspectives. Prominent literary narratologists of the post-classical phase include Rimmon-Kenan Shlomith, Cognitive narratologists like David Herman, Monika Fludernik and Manfred Jahn. Feminist narratologists include Susan Lanser and Ruth Page inter alia.

The study of narrative techniques is one of the several methods that can be used to analyse a literary text. This approach falls under the category of discourse. The method deals with the analysis of various ways a creator of a narrative can use to convey information to an audience. It investigates how the many parts of a narrative are intricately combined into a complete whole that is interesting.

In order to understand a narrative, the essential structural elements that weave it together must also be understood. These components include order, duration, frequency, mood and voice. These are altogether vital in different ways in that they explain ideas such as the relationship between the story time and the time of telling, the perspective and the teller of the narrative (Genette, 1980). All these elements clarify how the different parts of a narrative are connected together in a complex manner. The reader can use the principles of narratology to study the elements of a narrative and better their understanding of literary texts.

It must be stated that the present study does not analyse all the aforementioned elements of a narrative. The focus is on one part that has been singled out, narrative voice. Voice is significant to the structural analysis of narratives as it reveals the means by which the narrator communicates the content in a narrative. The significance of the voice in the communication process in a narrative is the focus of the study.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

In western literature, there is a lot of scholarly thought on narratology and a number of studies have been conducted on the various aspects of narratives including the concept of voice. The importance of the narrator in a literary text cannot be overemphasised. Understanding the way a creator of a work engages the narrative voice and other

elements of a narrative contributes to better understanding of literary texts. Regrettably, research on narratology in African texts remains scanty especially on voice.

A number of studies have studied Kourouma's *Allah Is Not Obligated* (2007) from different perspectives but the same cannot be said about Oyeyinka's *Stillborn* (2014). Available studies conducted by earlier researchers devoted much attention to other aspects of the novel such as the form, features of style for instance the use of proverbs and idioms and discourse. Some paid attention to themes, history and politics while others have looked at economic and socio-cultural aspects (Kyoore, 2004; Kodah, 2013 and Bainito, 2014). Available narratological studies have not comprehensively analysed the concept of voice in the selected texts especially by comparing them.

The present study was thus undertaken with the view that narrative voice has not been widely researched on in African texts. It addresses the knowledge gap by investigating the significance of the similarities and differences in the use of narrative voice in Diekoye Oyeyinka's *Stillborn* and Ahmadou Kourouma's *Allah Is Not Obligated*.

Therefore, when stated in question form, the problem that this study is concerned with is: what is the significance of the similarities and differences in the use of narrative voice in *Stillborn* and *Allah Is Not Obligated*?

1.4 Purpose of the Study

The study aimed at examining the significance of the similarities and differences in the use of narrative voice in Diekoye Oyeyinka's *Stillborn* and Ahmadou Kourouma's *Allah Is Not Obligated*.

1.5 Objectives of the Study

The aim of the study was to be attained by the following objectives:

- i. To examine the use of narrative voice in *Stillborn* and *Allah Is Not Obligated* respectively.
- ii. To investigate the similarities and differences in the use of narrative voice in *Stillborn* and *Allah Is Not Obligated*.

- iii. To evaluate the significance of the similarities and differences in the use of narrative voice in *Stillborn* and *Allah Is Not Obligated*

1.6 Research Questions

The study sought to answer the following questions :

- i. How do Diekoye Oyeyinka and Ahmadou Kourouma use the narrative voice in *Stillborn* and *Allah Is Not Obligated*?
- ii. What are the similarities and differences in the use of narrative voice in *Stillborn* and *Allah Is Not Obligated*?
- iii. What is the significance of the similarities and differences in the use of narrative voice in *Stillborn* and *Allah Is Not Obligated*?

1.7 Significance of the Study

When compared to Western literary texts, there has not been intensive research on the narrative voice in African texts. For this reason, it is anticipated that the study of narrative voice in Diekoye Oyeyinka's *Stillborn* and Ahmadou Kourouma's *Allah Is Not Obligated* apart from adding to a body of knowledge on narratology resources, will lead to a better understanding of the selected texts, as narratology is closely associated with the thematic preoccupation of the text. It is through a comprehensive examination of narratives in terms of narrative techniques that the thematic concerns of a literary work are sufficiently addressed and the importance of the implicit aspects of narratives are uncovered.

Since the study is comparative in nature, it is expected that the findings generated in the research will be beneficial to researchers, students and readers of the novels under study and other literary works in general in that it will demonstrate how texts share certain aspects and the divergent ways authors may choose to engage speakers in their works.

An analysis of the ideas conveyed in the texts under study will be of significance to all individuals who will read this work and the selected novels as they redress post-colonial vices such as dictatorship war, religious and ethnic conflicts experienced in African countries. This will stimulate individuals who will read this study and the selected texts to beware of the repercussions of similar mayhems occurring in their societies.

1.8 Theoretical Framework

Guerin et al (2005) postulate that there is no single theory that is sufficient to a comprehensive understanding of a text. The scholars further suggest the use of several theories together; a triangulation of theories gives a study a multidimensional perspective. Two theories inform this study, the theory of narratology and the psychoanalytical literary theory.

1.8.1 The Theory of Narratology

The theory of Narratology is the overarching theory of analysis. There are many scholars who propagated the theory but of note among others include Tsevan Todorov, Roland Barthes, Wayne Booth, Mieke Bal, and Gerard Genette. Bal (1999) describes the theory of narratology as a systematic set of generalised statements used to evaluate, analyse and understand narratives, narrative texts, images, spectacles, events; cultural artifacts that tell a story. Narrative theory hence concerns itself with the analysis of the structure of narratives. It is used to study any kind of narrative. It gives explanation on how the various parts of a narrative intertwine to convey meaning.

Narrative voice is one of the major parts that constitute the narrative system. The present study analyses the concept of voice as portrayed in the two selected fictional works using the general principles of the theory. The study largely uses Genette's model as it provides a more detailed explanation of the theory of narratology.

However, Guerin et al (2005) and Bal (1999) note that although narratology as a theory makes available to readers an instrument with which they can study the text, it may not give an adequate description of the text. Therefore, there may be need for a theory beyond narratology.

1.8.2 Psychoanalytical Literary Theory

The psychoanalytical literary theory by Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) and his followers also supports this study. The theory explains how the human mind operates. It is based on the argument that the actions that humans exhibit are influenced by their unconscious mind. Freud compares the human mind to the iceberg. He proves that the human mind like an iceberg is structured so that its great weight and density lie beneath the surface

that is below the level of consciousness (Guerin et al, 2005). The theory is used in the analysis of literary texts to uncover how the actions of narrators reveal the repressed desires in their unconscious mind. Balogun (2011) observes that the significance of subjecting a literary text to psychoanalytical criticism is to define literature as an expression of the personality, feelings and state of mind of the author or characters in the literary work.

The psychoanalytical literary theory has been used to analyse and understand the ways in which the character-narrators express their unconscious wishes, worries, emotional wounds or unsettled conflicts to the narratee. Understanding the psychology of the narrative voice is helpful in determining their purpose in the selected narratives.

1.9 Delimitation of the Study

Creswell (1994) says delimitation is used to address how the study is narrowed in scope. The study's focus is only on the significance of the similarities and differences in the way the two authors engage narrative voices in the selected works, not on other aspects of the novel such as characterisation or theme. The novels *Allah Is Not Obligated* by Ahmadou Kourouma and *Stillborn* by Diekoye Oyeyinka were the choice of the study. The texts were selected purposively as they have a number of similar characteristics. In order for the research to be focused, only the use overarching voices are analysed. There are other novels that could have been studied but the study was limited to the works of the two African male writers. The researcher was of the view that the novels would be appropriate and would make the research more profuse and focused.

1.10 Methodology

The study analysed two primary texts: *Allah Is Not Obligated* by Ahmadou Kourouma and *Stillborn* by Diekoye Oyeyinka. The study utilised the qualitative approach and the research was desk based. The novels are historical fictional works. They were selected purposively as both authors engage overarching narrative voices who portray how they are distressed by experiences of war and political upheavals in their respective societies. To achieve the set objectives, the methodology included a close comparative reading of the selected texts. The primary texts were closely examined using the principles of the theory of narratology and literary psychoanalysis. Data from secondary sources of

information in form of books, articles, journals and electronic sources on the internet were collected and analysed in line with the objectives in order to arrive at the findings.

1.11 Structure of the dissertation

This dissertation is made up of six chapters. The first chapter provides the background of the study, states the problem under investigation, the purpose of the study, research objectives and questions, significance of the study, theoretical framework, and scope of the study. The second chapter includes a review of literature related to the current study while the third chapter comprises of the synopses of the texts under study namely Diekoye Oyeyinka's *Stillborn* (2014) and Ahmadou Kourouma's *Allah Is Not Obligated* (2007). The fourth chapter examines the use of narrative voice in the texts under study while the fifth chapter investigates the similarities and differences in the use of narrative voice in the two texts. It also includes an evaluation of the significance of the identified similarities and differences in the use of narrative voice to the narrative system of the selected texts. The sixth chapter contains the summary of findings and conclusion.

1.12 Summary of chapter

This chapter includes the background of the study. The nature and development of narratology have been discussed. Other aspects include the statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research objectives, research questions and the significance of the study. The theoretical framework, methodology and delimitation of the study are also clarified. The chapter also explains the structure of the dissertation and ends with a summary. The next chapter is a review of related literature.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Overview

The previous chapter included the background of the study and other aspects such the statement of the problem, purpose, objectives, research question, significance of the study. This chapter follows up on the preceding chapter. It reviews some of the related literature on narrative voice. It examines how various scholars describe the concept. It also discusses the different kinds of narrative voice and how authors engage them to recount stories. Focus is drawn to the model by Genette (1980) and finally a review of studies conducted previously that are relevant to the present study is done.

2.2 The Concept of Narrative Voice

Voice is an integral part of a narrative. Rimmon-Kenan (1983) refers to a narrative as a representation of one or more events by a narrator. This definition recognises the importance of a narrator in a narrative. It is widely accepted by a number of narratologists such as Genette (1980), Bal (1999), Chatman (1978) and Abbot (2008) that in every narrative, there is always a medium of expression that the author employs to tell the story referred to as the narrator. The presence of the narrator is what defines the narrative. Even though the existence of a narrative voice may not be felt by the reader, the fact that the act of narration has been done suggests that there exists a narrator who did it because without them, there would be no narrative to tell.

The narrator is also described as the imagined ‘voice’ we hear as we ‘listen’ to the narrative being told (Wall, 1991; Baldick 2001). Jahn (2017) observes that the narrative voice answers the question: who speaks? Voice therefore is essentially the speaker who recounts events in a narrative. It has to do with the narrator making known their thoughts and feelings to the narratee in form of a narration. The narrative voice may either be passively or actively involved in the narrating act.

It must however be noted that here is a difference between the author of a narrative, the narrator who is engaged to recount it and the narratee to whom it is relayed (Booth, 1961; Baldick, 2001). Readers must distinguish the three from each other. The creator

of the work does not directly speak to the narratee. It is the narrative voice who is assigned the role of an intermediary between the author and the narratee. Ideas are filtered from the mind of the author and expressed through the narrator to whom the authority to assess, hold back or modify certain events and to delegate the role of narrating to other narrators is given.

Miller (1971) observes that, “The narrator may sometimes seem to be the author himself, speaking in his own voice . . . At other times the narrator may exist entirely on the side of the mirror . . . a persona or invented voice of the author ...” Even though the author may portray the picture that they are the ones relating the narrative to the audience, it is imperative to know that the creator of the narrative is never the teller of their work. The author’s part is to generate the narrative and the narrator in it. Therefore, the narrator’s thoughts and feelings should be considered as their own and not those of the author because the authorial moulding of the story is different from the act of telling.

In order to clarify the concept of voice, Booth (1961) brings to light other terminologies that distinguish the narrative voice from the author and the narratee. He introduces the notions of real author and implied author. The implied author is considered to be an extension of the real author. The dissimilarity between the two is that the real author is a human being, the actual creator of the work whereas the implied author is an abstract entity based on the idea that there exists another author besides the real author who is a highly refined, selective, wiser, more sensitive and perceptive than any real man can be.

In a similar manner, there is also what is termed as the real reader and the implied reader. The role of these is to respond to the narrative relayed. These readers are required to fill in the gap. They actively contribute in that they add meaning to what the narrator presents in the narrative before them. Cuddon (2013:358) distinguishes the two types of readers in the following observation;

The implied reader is a ‘model’ or ‘role’. Such a reader is active as well as passive; the text structures his or her response, but he or she produces meaning and has the task of ‘consistency building’. The actual reader by contrast, receives mental images while reading; but these images, are

inevitably perhaps, modified by the experience and knowledge which the reader brings to the text.

The real and implied readers co-exist although they respond to the text given before them in dissimilar ways. The dissimilarity between the two should as well be understood as it has an effect on how the narrative voice can be construed. The construct of implied reader according to Cuddon refers to the imaginary audience to whom the narrator speaks whereas the real reader refers to the actual audience or human beings who read the work and add meaning to it based on the experience and knowledge they obtain from the real world.

The idea of the implied author is important as it assists in determining how the reader receives the information relayed to them by the narrator. For example, in situations where the narrative voice is fallible among other aspects (Rimmon-Kenan, 1983). The implied author stands in the periphery in a narrative situation as their existence is suppressed by the narrator. Although the implied author is inaudible and remains unnoticeable, their influence still manifests through the ideas and beliefs communicated by the speaker.

2.3 Types of Narrative Voice

Jahn (2017) postulates that although the narrator cannot in fact be seen or heard, there are a number of features in all texts that reveal their voice. The reader can detect the textual voice in their mind's ear. Some of the voice indicators include content matter, subjective expressions and pragmatic signals among other elements. Content matter concerns itself with the information that the narrator communicates to the narratee and how it is presented. From the precise kind of intonation, meaning is conveyed and the attitudes and emotions of the speaker are made known. Subjective expression brings to light the narrator's views, convictions, interests, principles and ideological orientation whereas pragmatic expression discloses that the narrator is conscious of the addressees and his or her orientation towards them can be predicted.

Narrators may be categorised in a number of ways depending on how involved they are in the story they narrate. Various scholars categorise them as first person, third person,

single, multiple, reliable, unreliable, dramatised and undramatised depending on the attributes or personalities the author of the work they recount chooses to assign them. The personalities dispensed to each narrator determine how they are employed in the story they tell. It is generally accepted that narratives ought to be named in conformity with the voice of the narrator. The mode that the speaker utilises to recount events governs how they are defined and distinguished from other narrative voices. Plato and Aristotle made a distinction between three basic kinds of narrators that is a speaker, poet or any kind of a writer who uses their own voice. The second type has to do with a speaker who assumes the voice of another person or persons and speaks in a voice of his own. The third category is that of a speaker who uses both their own voice and that of others (Cuddon, 2013).

Some scholars like Genette and Chatman distinguish narrative voices in two broad categories. Although they categorise narrators differently, they concede that narrators may either be manifest or veiled as they recount stories. Genette (1980) uses the terms ‘implicit’ to refer a narrator that is involved in their narrative although they may not be fully revealed to the narratee and ‘explicit’, to refer to a narrator involved in the narrative they tell and is fully revealed to the audience. Chatman (1981) uses the terms ‘covert’ and ‘overt’. These describe the narrator’s degree of audibility in the narrative they recount. In a covert narration, a voice speaking of events, characters and setting is heard but its owner is hidden in the discursive shadows. The covert narrative voice is not easily identifiable as they expresses themselves indirectly whereas the overt voice is clearly revealed. Therefore, they can easily be heard or detected in the narration as they manifest directly to the narratee in various communication situations such as the style or through the attitude they adopt in the narrative. A homodiegetic narrator is overt.

Within the broad categories mentioned above, further classifications of narrators are made. There exists various groups of narrators because in one main type, there is another and in the second, a third classification may be found.

2.3.1 First Person Narrative Voice (Homodiegetic)

The first person narrator is referred to as the homodiegetic narrator by modern narratologists (Jahn, 2017). This kind of a voice is frequently engaged by authors and

there are various means of identifying their participation in a narrative. Baldick (2001:79) asserts that the first person narrator “appears as the ‘I’ recollecting his or her own part in the events related, either as a witness of the action or as an important participant in it.” For this reason, the first person narrator is sometimes also referred to as the autobiographical narrator since they tell events they have done, seen, heard or have happened to them at least to a certain degree.

The fact that a narrator tells a story in first person does not suggest that he or she is constrained to be consistent with this technique all the way through the narrative. Baldick (2001) postulates that the term does not mean that the narrator speaks only in first person as there are instances when they suspend the use of first pronouns and verbs and recount in the third person in situations where they discuss other characters.

2.3.1.1 Major and Minor Character Narrators

Authors predominantly engage major characters to narrate stories about themselves. For instance a protagonist narrator or any other important character. Minor characters or an ordinary observer may also be employed to narrate. Prince (1982) upholds that in certain instances the narrator may be a secondary or minor character. This type of narrative voice may merely observe the life experiences of the protagonist and remark on what they have observed. The minor character who ordinarily observes is equally of great significance since they mark the change to the authorial narrative situation. There are also narrating instances where the ‘I’ narrative voice may not participate in the tale they recount but may be a character in an account given by another narrator. Prace (2015) gives reasons an author may use the voice of a character in the peripheral. He states that this usually happens when the writer of a work wants to keep at a distance to see what is happening in reality, when the author requires to have a more sympathetic character as compared to the main protagonist or when there is need to conceal some details or facts that are known to the protagonist but not to other characters.

2.3.1.2 Reliable and Unreliable Narrative Voices

The reliable and unreliable narrators are sub categories of the first person narrator. Booth (1961:158) invented the expressions ‘reliable’ and ‘unreliable narrator’. He upholds that

he “called the narrator reliable when he speaks for or acts in accordance with the norms of the work (which is to say the [author’s] norms), unreliable narrator when he does not”. The reader must certainly be convinced by the narrator’s account of events but when they fail to be convincing enough, the narrator becomes untrustworthy. Booth analyses the notion of the unreliable narrator in detail and separates it into two parts specifically those who are morally distant from the author and those who are intellectually distant. He makes his breakdown of the unreliable narrator clearer by giving an example of the morally distant narrator when he alludes to William Faulkner’s *The Sound and the Fury*. The author of this work engages Jason Compson, one of the characters in the novel who is a morally distant unreliable narrator. Booth refers to the character-narrator’s perverted moral world as the cause of his fallibility. The intellectually distant unreliable narrator is illustrated through Mark Twain’s novel *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Huck Finn proves to be an intellectually distant unreliable narrator in the way he wavers before responding when he is questioned by men looking for slaves who have escaped.

Based on the model put forward by Booth, a number of scholars have attempted to understand the notion of the unreliable narrator. They generally concede that the unreliable narrator is one that is imperfect. A narrator that has limited knowledge for instance a child who is excessively innocent, one whose perceptions, explanations, and judgement of the issues they present to the reader are defective in that they differ with the views the author is untrustworthy. Other narratologists present the idea that a narrator that exhibits traits such as over sophistication or moral obtuseness may also be deemed to be unreliable by the narratee (Rimmon-Kenan, 1983; Abrams, 2009).

2.3.1.3 First Person Limited Narrative Voice

Some kinds of first person narrators are limited in nature in that they may not know all the necessary details of a story as their narration may be restricted only to what they know or have perceived. A first person narrator is limited by the fact that they are not capable of penetrating through the minds of characters. For this reason, their knowledge and experience is partial (Verdonk, 2002; Abrams, 2009; Baldick 2001). One may also argue that a first person narrator may be limited in that they tend to give accounts that

may be factual to a certain degree hence may lack breadth and constructive imagination as compared to an all-knowing narrator. The first person narrator may also be limited in that they may incline the narration to their feelings and opinions rather than facts. There is a greater likelihood that may be attached to events they recount at the time of the narrating.

2.3.2 Third Person Narrator (Heterodiegetic)

The third person narrative narrator is an observer who is outside the story. They use third person pronouns and verbs. Fludernik (2009:31) says, “In literature the world of the third person narrator is completely separate from that of the characters.” This means that they are not a character in the narrative but are rather viewed as a godly or ghostly being above the characters. The third person narrative voice is all seeing, they give the impression that it is author speaking. Various authors engage the third person narrative voice in their works. Simpson (2004) posits that authors engage third person narrators to a large extent due their great flexibility and they are mostly perceived to be reliable.

2.3.2.1 Omniscient Narrator

This kind of third person narrator is possessed with unlimited knowledge in that they are capable of knowing all that is required to be known about the events because they can penetrate through the thoughts and intentions of characters. Therefore, they are able of relate or hide some of the details in a narrative or tell of events that occur at the same time in different places. (Abrams, 2009; Baldick 2001)

2.3.2.2 Intrusive and Unobtrusive Narrator

Abrams (2009) further observes that within the category of third person narrator are sub categories referred to as the intrusive and unobtrusive narrator. Apart from recounting events in a narrative, the intrusive narrator is also privileged to interrupt the narration and pass general remarks on the activities and motives of characters. The unobtrusive narrator may be objective in that they may choose not to interrupt the narration by passing remarks and judgements about the characters and occurrences in the narrative.

2.3.2.3 Third Person Limited Narrator

In this category, the narrator expresses themselves using third person pronouns and verbs yet they limit their narration only to what they observe or hear. The third person limited narrator may tell the story from a limited point of view if they confine the narrative to a few characters. They may also restrict the narrative to recounting what they observe about a single character.

2.3.3 Multiple Narrative Voices

Contemporary writers engage multiple voices to narrate. These may be heterodiegetic or characters who participate on the level of action in the plot. The technique of using several narrators in one narrative has proven to be useful as the story is told from multiple perspectives and all the voices used in the narrating act at whatever level ultimately bring out ideas that assist the reader to understand the matrix narrative. In cases where multiple voices are employed, other voices only assist in telling whereas one of them is actively involved. Prince (1982:16) records that, “When there are two or more narrators in a narrative, it is possible to establish a hierarchy among them.” Prince studies the idea of multiple narrators and categorises them. It is important to note that Prince’s classification of multiple narrators does not mean that the narrators introduced by others are the least interesting. In certain instances, the narrator in the third category as outlined below may be more remarkable than the narrator in the second category.

2.3.3.1 Main Narrator

The overarching narrator is the most actively involved, they are the ones who essentially present the narrative. Prince (1982:16) says “The one who ultimately introduces the entire narrative (including all the mini narratives comprising parts of it) is the main narrator.” Jahn (2017) validates Prince’s assertion, he describes the main narrator as a first degree narrator. According to the descriptions of the two scholars, as one reads the narrative, they eventually recognise which voice among many is at the most basic level. The main narrator is autonomous as compared to other narrators. They are marked as being the foundation of the narration in that other narrators are introduced by them.

2.3.3.2 Secondary Narrator

Prince (1982) describes the secondary narrator as one who is introduced in the narrative by the main narrator. In other words, this is used to refer to the narrative voice that is heard recounting events in the narrative that is presented at the second level (Genette, 1980). Bal (1999) likens the relationship that exists between the first and second degree narrative to that of the subordinate and main clause in a sentence. Therefore, it would be safe to conclude that the existence of secondary narrator is dependent on the primary narrator who institutes them. Without the first degree narrator, there would be no second or third degree narrators *inter alia*.

2.2.3.3 Tertiary Narrator

A tertiary narrator is one that is inaugurated by second degree narrator. The narrator in the third rank is referred to as the third degree narrator (Prince, 1982; Jahn 2017). Genette (1980) uses the term *hypodiegetic* to refer to the tertiary narrator. It must be stated that since narrative voices in one text may be innumerable, the ranking of narrators can go on in direct relation with the level of the narrative they tell.

2.4 The Use of Narrative Voice

The narrative agencies in different narratives are generated and engaged by the author to carry out various roles. The narrative voice plays a vitally important role in a narrative discourse because the telling of the story particularly depends on them. A number of discussions of narrative discourse are based on the voice. Therefore, understanding the role they play in the story helps one to understand a given literary work better. Barthes (1966) clarifies the concept of voice. He uses the idea of a communication process. He observes that there is exchange of information that takes place when a narrative is told. There is a donor of the narrative and the receiver. In a linguistic communication, 'I' and 'you' are absolutely presupposed by one another. Similarly there can be no narrative without a narrator and a listener (or a reader). The narrative text is fundamental in the communication process between the narrative voice and the narratee. This assertion suggests that one of the purposes for which the narrator exists is to transmit the story to the audience. Barthes also suggests the idea that the audience to whom the story is narrated is a companion of the story teller in the communication act. Their role is to

receive the information relayed by the narrator. Since there is some interdependency between the narrative voice and the narratee, the participation of the narratee in the communication process should also not be undermined.

Fludernik (2009) condenses the roles of the narrator into four categories. The first role is that to present the fictional world to the narratee regardless of whether the narrator does so explicitly or implicitly. Secondly the narrator also remarks and explains why events happen as they do. He or she qualifies the events to political or social circumstances and specifies what stimulates the characters. This task is most appropriately carried out by a narrative voice that is noticeable in the narration for instance a first person narrator. The significance of engaging such a narrator is to stimulate the reader to respond to the narrative presented to them and to compel them to share the same interests and opinions with certain characters.

The other utility of the narrator is that they often serve as a channel through which wisdom, enlightenment and moral principles are expressed. As they carry out this function, the comments of the explicit narrator are relevant not only to the real world but also to the fictional world of the characters. The gnomic statements that the narrator uses may seem difficult to understand but the wisdom they convey is intended to make it easier for the reader to interpret the text (Fludernik 2006). Fludernik further explains that the narrator also carries out discursive function. As they recount events, speakers communicate a number of ideas some which may be related or may digress from the main ideologies they are presenting. This function has to do with the communicative situation of narration. The narrator openly speaks to the narratee, they from time to time interrupt the process of story-telling to pass their own comments.

2.4.1 Gerard Genette's Account on Narrative Voice

According to Genette (1980) in his model of narratology, voice is the last of the five elements he discusses. Under the category of voice, he presents the idea of the narrating instance. Narrating instance is different from the time of the narrating and the narrator is not the same as the author even though their role is directly carried out by the author. The narrating instance is made up of categories namely time of the narrating, narrative levels and person. The time of the narrating refers to the time of telling of the story and

this may be done in the past, present or future tense. The time of narrating is in form of subsequent, prior, simultaneous and interpolated narrating. Subsequent narrating is in past tense; it tells what happened in the past. Jahn (2017) concedes with Genette's observation on the past tense narrative but refers to it as retrospective narration.

Genette (1980) also discusses prior narrating. This has to do with how the narrator is able to recount events using the future tense. Prior narrating is predictive in nature as it tells what is going to happen beforehand. The act of narrating takes place before the occurrence of events presented in the story. Margolin (1999:143) attributes prior narrating to the "mental attitude of an overall narrator". A narrator is able to form mental images and ideas about the future and present them in form of a narrative. The significance of engaging this mode is that it tasks the narrator to be innovative in order to keep the audience captivated by the narration.

Genette (1980) further introduces simultaneous narration where the telling of events in a narrative occurs at the time they happen. The narrating may closely follow the actions or the actions and the narrating may practically occur at the same time. Jahn (2017) refers to this as concurrent narration. He cites diaries and on-the-scene reporting as examples of concurrent narrations. One may argue that when a narrator recounts a narrative in which they describe events at the very time they occur, their creativity and hence the entire narrative is limited. The technique of simultaneous narrating prevents the narrator from presenting events beforehand or recounting with the expansiveness that comes with retrospection because the time of narrating is restricted to the present.

Genette also explains interpolated narrating. This involves an amalgamation of prior and simultaneous narrating. In interpolated narrations, the telling of events take place before they begin to unfold and at the time the actions and events take place.

The second category in the narrating situation deals with narrative levels. Diegetic levels explain the relationship between the narrator and the act of narration while narrative levels reveal the participation of the narrator in the narrative they tell. The position of the narrator as they recount for example their presence or absence in the narrative can make known their purpose in the story. Narrators are categorised variously depending

on the positions they occupy in the narrative. Genette (1980) and Rimmon-Kenan (1983) agree in terms of how they classify narrators as intradiegetic, extradiegetic, heterodiegetic or homodiegetic and hypodiegetic. A heterodiegetic narrator is outside, they tell the story they are absent from while the homodiegetic narrator is present as a character in the story they tell. An extradiegetic narrative voice is exterior to the story they tell, their absenteeism in the narration also entails that they are present. Rimmon-Kenan (2002) observes that an extradiegetic narrator is directly above or greater than the story they narrate since he or she does not belong to the story world they narrate.

The intradiegetic narrator is present as a character inside the fiction they recount. They recount a narrative embedded in another. Further division is made, Genette describes a narrator who is present in the story they tell as homodiegetic. Homodiegetic narrators are in two categories, the stronger and the weaker degree of participation in the narrative a narrator recounts. The stronger degree of homodiegetic has to do with a narrator who is the hero or heroine in their narrative. This kind is referred to as autodiegetic voice (Genette, 1980). The weaker degree of a homodiegetic narrator is one where an observer such a peripheral character is a narrator. Genette further classifies narrators according to the level they occupy in the narrational layer but refers to the third degree narrator as hypodiegetic. This idea is illustrated in an instance where the intradiegetic narrator institutes another narrator to recount a narrative within the second narrative.

The category of 'person' is the third in the narrating situation provided by Genette (1980). Narratives are defined as first or third person. These words identify narrators in a peculiar way in order to distinguish them from other narrators. Genette uses 'person' to explain the presence of the narrative agency in the narrating situation to indicate whether they are noticeable or not. Personages identify a narrator with humans but this does not entail that non-human cannot recount stories in first or third person. Personages are only used due to lack of a neutral term. Instead of using the traditional concepts of first and third person narrator, Genette uses homodiegetic and heterodiegetic.

Between the binary types of the narrative voices, 'homodiegetic' denotes first person narrator who is a character in the story and is engaged to give an account of what they have lived through or perceived at least to a certain degree. The homodiegetic narrator

does not have extra knowledge about other characters beyond what is made known to them through what they observe them do or hear them say. A first person narrative may be recounted by one or more of its characters for example its hero or one or more characters who are witnesses.

Genette use the concept 'heterodiegetic' to refer to the third person narrator. This narrator gives an account of what the characters in the narrative have undergone in an impersonal or objective manner as opposed to the 'homodiegetic' voice. The third person narrative is recounted by a narrator that does not take part in the plot. However, Genette also observes that there are exceptional circumstances when in a third person narrative, the protagonist-narrator suddenly appears.

Genette (1980) under the category of voice also explains that a narrator performs functions such as narrating, they are the story teller. The narrative voices serve other special purposes in the narrative beyond giving information. Secondly, they also have the authority to determine the flow of events in the story. This is referred to as the directing function. The directing function manifests in the comments and interruption of the organisation of the narrative by the narrator. The narrative agent also undertakes the communicative function. They address the audience to whom the story is told. In the testimonial function, the narrator confirms the truth of the story whereas in the ideological function they give instructions or general wisdom about the text.

Genette further explains the significance of the narratee in the narrating situation. He postulates that they do not simply play an inactive role and that they are not restricted to receiving the message communicated by the narrator which they must take and consume. He explains the role of the narratee in the narrating situation, he corroborates Barthes who as earlier discussed stresses that the narratee do not passively receive the narrative. They contribute by emplacing meaning to what is relayed to them.

2.4.2 Studies on Narrative voice in Non-African and African Texts

Fowler (2010) analysed the works of Eliza Haywood using narratological principles by Genette. The study focused on narrative discourse particularly the concepts of voice, point of view, speech and temporality in narratives. The author manipulates these

narrative features in her works in order to create an innovative text. Findings on narrative voice were that the author's narrators employ meta- narrative commentary. Through interruptions, the narrators express their opinions and explanations besides the act of telling. Fowler's study is of great importance to the current study as it examines how different narrators are employed in the various novels of Haywood. It is enlightening as it applies Genette's model to the study of narrative techniques, an aspect that has not been given much attention in African novels.

A study by Valint (2012) on *Collaboration and Contestation in Victorian Multiple Novels* revealed that engaging multiple narrators in a novel ensures that narrators tell the story with unity and harmony. The research refuted the idea that multiple narrators contest in the act of narrating. The study analyses a number of Victorian novels such as *Bleak House* by Charles Dickens whose narrators take turns in recounting. One narrator narrates in past tense while the other uses the present tense but they collaborate in that they share the same plot, characters, moral values and use sarcasm. The two voices also collaborate with the unnamed disembodied narrator of the first two chapters although the heterodiegetic narrator is distant. The research concluded that Victorian authors engage multiple narrators but this does not evade the presence of the authorial narrator. Victorian novels significantly use omniscient narrators and embedded narratives with homodiegetic narrators. Even though narrators may have diverse backgrounds, knowledge, interests and beliefs, the way they recount events from multiple vantages demonstrates that they collaborate. Contestations that arise such as gender and race are overcome by the overarching aim of collaboration. The research reviewed above compared the voices of multiple narrators in single texts in western literature while the current study is an inter-textual analysis. It focuses on the use of overarching narrators only in the selected African fictional works.

Mabrouk (2012) studied focalisation as a narratological technique in the novels *Under the Volcano* (1947) by Lowry Malcom and *The Yacoubian Building* (2002) by Al-Aswany Alaa. The researcher used Genette's ideas about the point of view of narrators to determine the narratological similarities and differences between the works of the two authors. The researcher analysed the types of narrators employed and their involvement

in the narratives. The study concluded that the two novelists express their ideas through narrative voices; they use internal and double focalisation. Both stories have a multidimensional point of view. The narrators also use the stream of consciousness and overlapping of double voices. Narrators in both stories are absent and impersonal. Mabrouk's study is relevant as it uses Genette's model and is comparative in nature though it sketchily tackles the concept of voice as its main concentration is focalisation.

A research conducted by Louw (2015) analysed the epistolary mode of writing in non-African and African literary texts. It focused on the narrative strategy as used by Alice Walker in *The Color Purple*, Mariama Bâ in *So Long a Letter* and Lionel Shriver in *We Need to Talk about Kevin*. The researcher explored the mode of writing in order to understand the portrayal of female voices in narratives. The protagonist-narrators in the three novels use letters to voice out their pain. The research concluded that in *So Long a Letter* and *The Color Purple*, the character narrators relate the stories with different voices but both use letters as a therapeutic tool to heal from traumatic experiences. They share their reminiscences with their confidantes. Both narratives use first person narrators who protest against the silencing restrictions of their patriarchal societies. Narrators also voice out on how religion is used as a tool to oppress women. The epistolary mode of narrating gives the narrators the liberty to recount what is concealed.

In *We Need to Talk about Kevin*, the researcher examined the ambivalent maternal voice of Eva. She expresses grief on the death of her daughter and husband whom her son Kevin murders. The mourning mother is not certain whether she loves or hates her son. She blames herself as she attributes the shortcomings of her son to her inadequate parenting yet she is also of the view that her son was born a psychopath. The narrative voice is complex and unreliable. Eva's thoughts and perception of her son's brutality show that her vision is blurred by the emotional pain she undergoes. The reader scans for clues in the text about the story world as opposed to how Eva presents it. The narrator is not convincing enough, she most likely exaggerates her account in that she focuses more on recalling and recounting events that hint her son's homicidal potential hence her credibility is questionable. Louw's research analysed lead characters who are also narrators from a psychological point of view. It laid bare the consciousness of the

narrators as does the current study. While it is appreciated, Louw's study does not subject the novels to a narratological analysis.

Ndebele (2007) conducted a narratological study of two Zulu novels namely *Kungasa ngifile* (2007) by Sibiyi M.D. and *Kuxolelwa abanjani?* (2002), by Sibiyi N.G. The study compared how the two Zulu texts deal with narratological aspects mainly using Genette's model. The study concluded that both novels significantly use frequency, multi-dimensional characters and anachronies but in the use of duration, the events are disproportionate. The researcher also concluded that in both texts, there is use of implicit omniscient narrators who recount with authority what they see. This type of a narrator has been engaged for freedom of expression and in order to access the minds of characters. Both narrators are reliable. However, the novels are divergent in terms of order. In *Kuxolelwa abanjani?* the concept of the narrator has been more successfully handled. The narrator uses the dialogue technique to present the actions of characters and his role in the act of narrating is not much evidenced. It is as though they s/he were not there because the omniscient narrator stands aside and gives a voice to characters to speak for themselves. Ndebele tackles various narratological aspects, thereby making the research broad in scope such that the narrative voice has not been extensively dealt with as does the current study whose focus is solely on the concept of voice.

A research by Ojiambo (2014) on *The Nature of Embedded Narratives in Adichie's Selected Works* concentrated on the functions of embedded narratives and evaluated their efficacy in communicating thematic concerns. The study examined forms of narratives in three novels by Adichie namely *Half of a Yellow Sun*, *Americanah* and *Jumping Monkey Hill*. The findings were that the three works have multiple narrational levels but *Half of a Yellow Sun* to a large extent executes this narrative technique as compared to the other two works. In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, there is overlapping between the narration of the embedded narrative and the embedding narrative, an aspect that flouts the rules of embedding. Findings also revealed that embedding is effective in developing central themes such as race, identity, subtle sexual exploitation of women and war. Other functions include the explicative, actional and creation of diversity in texts. While appreciating that Ojiambo's study provides an example on how narrative

levels can be examined in *Stillborn* and *Allah Is Not Obligated*, it is limited to extensive narrative embedding and did not analyse other aspects of narrative voice.

Siluonde (2015) analysed narrative technique and plot structure in Zambian novels namely *The Chosen Bud* (1991) by John Luangala and *Bitterness* (2005) by Malama Katulwende. The research compared the two texts using the theory of narratology, structuralism and formalist theory. The researcher analysed the narrative time, mood, instance and level in the two novels according to the principles put forward by Genette (1980) and plot structure using the model propagated by Denise Paulme as well as Freytag's pyramid. Findings were that there is use of heterodiegetic voices in both texts. The omniscient narrators are outside the fiction and tell the narratives at the extradiegetic level. There is internal focalisation and use of multiple voices in both tales but in *Bitterness*, the telling that is done from the protagonist's perspective is more noticeable than voices of other narrators. Narrators perform three functions, the ideological function whereby the narrator interrupts the narration in order to add their general wisdom. They also perform the narrative and communicative functions. The study reviewed above is relevant as it is comparative in nature and also employs narratological ideas especially those propagated by Genette. It is helpful as it examines how authors use narrators. However, it generally analysed at all aspects of narrative technique and did not extensively study the concept of voice. It also analysed plot structure thereby creating two broad areas of focus while the current one exclusively examines the use of narrative voice in the selected texts and not any other aspects of the novel.

2.4.3 Studies Conducted on the Selected Texts

Kodah (2013) analysed the novel *Allah Is Not Obligated*. The study focused on the language of the child soldier-narrator as a voice of truth. Findings were that the novel is recounted from the first person point of view. The narrator is also a central character and in the narrative. Birahima is assigned the role of an actor and narrative voice; this brings to the fore the testimonial function. Birahima is the voice of truth as he confirms the truth of the story and reveals socio-political ideas. Although the study draws more attention to language such as the use of proverbs, idioms and repetition, it is relevant as it helps by providing scholarly thought on the novel and highlights how the author uses

the narrative agency. While Kodah's study is informed by the theory of narratology as propagated by Genette, it does not investigate some crucial aspects of narrative voice such as the time of telling and the narrational layers which could have been used to uncover the use of the narrative voice better.

A study by Bainito (2014) entitled *A Child's Narration of War as Depicted in Allah Is Not Obligated* revealed the tribulations that children in post-colonial West Africa live through that coerce them to become involved in war and how they survive amidst such difficulties. The research analysed the narrator's testimony as a child soldier and some historical aspects in the texts. The study revealed that there are cultural, political and economic reasons that compel children to be engaged in soldiering. These include violence, war, and sexual abuse among others. The study briefly expounds on the testimonial function of the narrator but its major focus is a child's portrayal of war and difficulties that lead children to join warring factions as soldiers.

Another study conducted on Kourouma's *Allah Is Not Obligated* centred on political discourse and narrative techniques in the novel. Kyoore (2004) examined the novel from a historical point of view. The researcher observed that the author imaginatively recreates well known historical figures and politically mocks them in his writing. He mocks the tendency of some political leaders in governments of named countries to hold on to power and cause political unrest. The author efficiently uses narrative techniques, such as proverbs, comedy, analepses and a diegetic picaresque-like narrative that speaks against the injustice of treating other people as inferior. The study reviewed above concentrated on political discourse. It did not examine how the construct of voice adds meaning to the narrative system of the text.

In a review of Diekoye Oyeyinka's *Stillborn* by East African Education Publishers issued in 2014, it was indicated that the debut work covers diverse stages in the fifty years that have shaped the history of Nigeria and other countries in the African Continent. The Pontas Literary and Film Agency (2015) also revealed that *Stillborn* explores the tragedy of independence and the contentious assertion that perhaps Nigeria attained it too soon. Seun, an orphan is the focaliser. It shows how the lives of characters in the tale interconnect. The narrative is about turmoil, tragedy, optimism, opportunity

but it also upholds through its characters the power of education, love and friendship in creating new solutions for the future. <http://literature.uonbi.ac.ke>

2.5 Summary of chapter

Based on the literature reviewed, it has been proven that a number of studies have been conducted on narrative voice especially in western literature. This demonstrates that the construct of narrative voice is significant in narrative analysis. Regrettably, narratological studies in African texts are scanty, let alone on narrative voice. The literature reviewed above reflects the void that available studies conducted by earlier researchers have not extensively examined the narrative voice in the *Stillborn* and *Allah Is Not Obligated*. The focus of the current study is to uncover how the construct of voice adds meaning to the narrative system of the selected texts. The present study draws focus to narratological elements and the psychology of narrators. It is thus justifiable that this study was undertaken.

CHAPTER THREE

SYNOPSIS OF *STILLBORN* AND *ALLAH IS NOT OBLIGED*

3.1 Overview

Chapter three provides summaries of the novels *Stillborn* by Diekoye Oyeyinka and *Allah Is Not Obligated* by Ahmadou Kourouma. Both texts have narrators who present post-colonial experiences of political turmoil in their respective societies, thus making them comparable and suitable for this study.

3.2 *Stillborn*

Published in Nairobi by East African Educational Publishers in 2014, Oyeyinka's *Stillborn* is a debut historical fiction set around 1960 to 2010 in various regions of Nigeria. It is also set in the United States of America, Washington DC and Europe. Most of the events recounted are set in the post-colonial period. Reference to factual events in the history of Nigeria is made and names of factual political figures are sometimes mentioned. Dates are also mentioned which indicate a passage of events with time.

Seun an orphan and a minor character in the tale recounts the story after all the narrated events have elapsed. He focuses on the political history of Nigeria from independence and covers a period of fifty years. He leaves Niger Delta where he lives with his parents and goes to live with his uncle Dolapo in Lagos so that he can go to school without disturbances as the political climate in Niger Delta is hostile. He tells of his childhood with other characters like the two protagonists Dolapo and Chukwuemeka inter alia.

Emeka is one of the text's heroes. His life is punctuated with periods of negative and positive events. He alternates between fortunes and misfortune. Likewise, Nigeria attains independence but experiences political and economic upheavals due to several dictatorial governments that rule. Peace and calm is restored when she for the first time in fifty years experiences democracy. Dolapo the other protagonist, unlike Emeka lives a life in which he develops and utilises his abilities for the betterment of his nation.

The novel opens with some preliminary remarks by the narrator. The prologue summarises the story and prefigures the idea that the narration will be about the 'stillborn child' who is likened to the nation of Nigeria. Born on the 1st of October, 1960, she is cursed at birth by her people. She experiences hardships. She is entered into by force, looted and ruined by single-mindedly contemptible assailants. She does not grow regardless of the passage of time as she is diseased with tribalism, religious conflicts, greed and debts of her people.

The main account of the story begins with the tragic death of two young lovers Nneka and Nonso, the parents of Emeka. Nneka dies during child birth and Nonso commits suicide as he is too distraught to endure his lover's death. Emeka is born in this debacle. He is raised by his maternal uncle Ogbonna and his wife, a childless couple whom he has known as his parents and to whom he is a blend of blessings and anguish. The couple later has a child but the reader learns through Emeka's reminiscence that the boy later falls and dies while playing with Emeka leaving Mrs Ogbonna in agony, incapable of being consoled for years. Mr Ogbonna blames Emeka for the death of his only son.

Working in his field years later, Mr Ogbonna is bitten by an insect. The bite causes a spreading infection on his eye. Father Grey, a white priest offers to take Emeka in exchange for his father's medical bills. Emeka goes away with the Priest before Ogbonna objects. Secretly, Emeka is of the view that his departure will help him build his future as it is a bad legacy for a man to die poor for one can transmit poverty to their descendants. Grey enrolls Emeka at the Federal Government College in Ibadan where he is the only Ibo among Yoruba students. Emeka meets his life-long friend Dolapo, the other hero of the story. The two part company after school when Emeka attempts to live his dream as a rich businessman. Emeka leaves Grey and goes to Lagos to work for Chukwura, an Ibo entrepreneur who goes to give a speech at his school, inspires him to become a businessman after school and offers him a job. Dolapo goes to university to study law. After graduating, he works for a law firm before joining the Nigerian army.

Back in time, the reader learns about Dolapo's childhood. One of the illustrious events portrayed on Dolapo's life is an unusual day October 1, 1960 when Nigeria attains independence. He is aged fifteen. The narration's focus is on how the people in Dolapo's

home town are excited and have great expectations of a better Nigeria. Oyeyinka portrays the idea that at independence, Nigeria is rich in diversity and has an abundance of resources. But when independent, it deteriorates and people are disillusioned because inept politicians accumulate large amounts of wealth whereas developments that were anticipated do not happen. There is poverty due to inequality in the distribution of the country's resources. National development plans also remain unimplemented.

A few years after independence as Emeka works with Chukwura, Nigeria experiences a coup d'état. Emeka is assigned to sell all the merchandise in Chukwura's store due to war that may arise in the near future. Emeka does as directed, sends the money to the store owner and pays his co-workers. He takes his money to Dolapo for safe keeping until the end of the tribal war as advised by his employer who is of the view that the money can only be kept safe in a bank account of a person from the Yoruba tribe since the forthcoming war is more likely to be unfavourable towards people of the Ibo tribe.

Emeka later goes back to his parents but is unwelcome as his father is embittered that he had made the decision to go with Father Grey before consulting him. Ogbonna also feels abandoned by Emeka who has not been home for a long time and that he is ungrateful despite the financial assistance Emeka renders while away. Ogbonna is angered that Emeka is hesitant to join the Biafran army so that he can fight on the side of the Ibo in war. This suggests that he is not enthusiastic about his nation. Above all, he is filled with hatred and confronts Emeka for he believes that he caused the death of his only son. This confirms Emeka's long-time suspicion that he is not an Ogbonna.

The narrator portrays the causes of civil war. Emeka joins the Biafran army led by Ojukwu and fights against the Nigerian army which is led by Gowon the Nigerian military head of state. The Biafrans fight over resources with the government and threaten to break away from Nigeria. In the constant gun fire, soldiers die from both sides. Emeka is wounded, he wakes up and fumbles for his gun but his opponent has the gun pointed to his head. Emeka and Dolapo recognise each other. Dolapo belongs to the Nigerian army. He lowers the gun, pries out the bullet in Emeka leg and gives him food.

Dolapo deserts being a soldier and goes to begin his law firm as a civil rights lawyer using the money that Emeka gave him for safe keeping and to use if he does not return. We learn of how Dolapo later marries his university love Temitope through Ranti's flashback. The two are childless and the idea of a stillbirth conveyed in the title of the novel recurs. It is developed further when it is said that Dolapo and Temitope's children die in infancy because they are choked by the stench of their future society. Dolapo's wife is later killed by a stray bullet on her way to help her sister who is about to deliver at a time when there is a political riot as people protest against Babangida's rule.

Emeka also deserts the battlefield. He realises that he is fighting a war that is not his. He walks through the forest until he finds an isolated home of a twenty three year old widowed Muslim woman who nurses him until he heals and later becomes his wife. Some events are elided, the narrative is fast-forwarded to fifteen years later when Emeka and his wife have a daughter whom he by coincidence names after his biological mother Nneka. Their home is no longer isolated due to development. While his wife works at the University, Emeka works as an editor for a newspaper company.

Emeka's writing is blunt, he exposes the bad vices of the dictatorial government and ends up arrested like other people who battle for the plight of their people by refusing to remain silent. The government considers Emeka, journalists and other opinionated people like the musician Fela Kuti as revolutionaries. To silence them, they are arrested as political prisoners and their families unaware of where they are. After several years of imprisonment, no one remembers why Emeka was arrested and due to the need to decongest the prison, he is released along with his cellmate O.C Abari. Emeka is unable to find his family. The protagonist suffers the consequences of imprisonment. He realises how much his life has changed. In order to survive, he takes a lucrative job. Oyeyinka depicts how the country's resources are looted by a minority of citizens while many live in poverty. O.C's uncle is a retired general who believes that the nation owes him. He gives Emeka a job and puts him in charge of transporting laundered money from banks, politicians and white executives to the general's house. Emeka amasses a fortune.

In his lucrative dealings, Emeka comes across Nneka his daughter working in the Alhaji's office in Jos. Nneka like many young graduates had been sent to several parts

of the country by the government to help foster national development. Emeka watches over his daughter from a distance. The author shows how post-colonial conflicts such as religious differences and tribalism facilitate division and war among the citizens. He portrays how Emeka utilises the life-long sibling rivalry between Muktar and Ahmed to convince Muktar to tell Ahmed to protect Nneka during the impending ethnic and religious war when Ibos and Christians will be massacred. Muktar convinces Ahmed to protect Nneka on the pretext that he will not be connected with the massacres as he will use the fact that he protected Nneka, the Ibo Christian girl. Emeka suggests that Muktar records Ahmed in order for him to later use the tapes to blackmail and overthrow his brother as vengeance to Ahmed for having betrayed Muktar during their childhood.

Earlier on the way to Jos, Nneka meets Daniel, a fellow Christian. Both have been sent to work as members of the Nigerian Youth Service Corp. Daniel devotedly attends the same church with Mama Aisha and her twin daughters. Mama Aisha is the wife of Muktar, the half-brother of Ahmed the Alhaji. She earlier runs away from Muktar when he marries another woman. Due to pride, Muktar cannot bear being rejected by a woman so he stalks her until he finds her in Jos. When the Alhaji orders that Christians should be massacred, Muktar is among the assailants. He encounters his wife and children at a church and confronts them. Daniel attempts to rescue them but Mama Aisha, Muktar and their daughter Halima die unexpectedly in the confrontation while Daniel is wounded but manages to take Aisha to Nneka and instructs her to take Aisha to his family before he dies. Nneka does so with Emeka's help as he has been watches over his daughter from a distance. Thus, he is available to drive her to the train station. Nneka does not know that the man who safely drives her to the station is her long gone father.

Aisha begins to live with Daniel's family but is constantly having nightmares after witnessing the death of her entire family and several people being massacred. She adjusts to life and meets her friend Seun in the neighbourhood. Seun is the nephew of Dolapo Odukoya. Seun's father is a lawyer and political activist against the government. He is murdered along with his daughter and wife Ranti, the cousin of Dolapo. This leaves Seun drifting in a state of unconsciousness for several months. Having gone through a similar experience of loss of parents in war, Aisha stays by Seun's side until he recovers.

But Seun is so traumatised that when the harsh political climate affects learning in Nigerian Universities, he opts to go to study abroad in order to escape from his sorrow.

After the genocide in Jos, Emeka is found in a state of unconsciousness by a truck driver as he picks corpses for a mass burial. He realises that his job with O.C causes destruction to the people and the future of Nigeria. He deserts the job despite O.C's attempt to convince him to wait until the next elections. He gives his house to the truck driver and goes in search for his family but their reunion fails when they fail to recognise him. He takes a job as watchman near their residence, he lives in solitary confinement and reads newspapers until one day he discovers that Nneka, now a journalist angers O.C the Governor in an interview, she queries how he made his first million (amassed fortune).

Knowing what his former cellmate is capable of, Emeka quits his job and goes to Lagos to kill O.C before he can have his daughter killed. He is arrested after he murders the Governor but Dolapo comes to bail him and takes him to his home where he awaits his sentencing. Emeka's presence makes Dolapo less anti-social. Other friends join them, they discuss the political turbulence in the country. Seun interacts with the two protagonists and asks them about their childhood and what his mother Ranti was like.

The falling action occurs when Dolapo is diagnosed with tuberculosis and he asks Seun to return home permanently. He refuses to go to the hospital and dies a few days before Emeka's sentencing, leaving his legacy for Seun and Aisha. His death is all over the news. Hence, Emeka's family learn of his whereabouts and trace him. He reunites with his family and so does Nneka and Aisha. Emeka asks them to stay until a day before his sentencing. His wife weeps on the day of departure because only she understands the implications of the sentence. On the day of the sentencing before Dolapo is buried, Emeka is found dead. Seun, Nneka, Aisha lead the crowd that marches the streets with the heroes coffins and drop them at the courthouse as a ridicule of the court hearing in which Emeka was supposed to be sentenced while Dolapo was supposed to defend him. The court is strangely empty. Seun gives a speech that makes the nation weep.

The epilogue summarises the events after the death of the heroes. The author portrays how Nigeria experiences democracy after a long period of dictatorship. A few months

before Nigeria's fiftieth independence, the citizens realise the need to remove the ruling government from power. Seun and his team work together, they make available the tapes that had gone missing which contain information that incriminates Ahmed the Alhaji by linking him to Jos genocides. Ahmed loses the presidential elections in 2010. A government with a leader on a mission is democratically elected. Nneka wins the elections, she stands against Soukonmi for Governor of Bayelsa. Aisha and Seun marry.

3.3 Allah Is Not Obligated

Ahmadou Kourouma's novel *Allah Is Not Obligated* was published in 2000 by Editions de Seuil in France. It was firstly written in French but Frank Wayne translated it into English and was published in 2007 by Vintage Books in London. It is a historical fiction set in various countries of Africa such as Ivory Coast, Liberia and Sierra Leone during civil war in the post-colonial period. The story is in past tense and is told from the perspective of Birahima the protagonist, a former child soldier who recounts how economic and political clashes cause war. The hero portrays the devastation that a number of people including innocent children live through in war-torn countries.

The text opens with Birahima, he utters a statement which is the full title of the novel: "Allah Is Not Obligated to be fair about the things he does here on earth." This indicates that the novel is also about religion. The narrator is an orphan, a ten-year-old Muslim boy whose French language is elementary as he has only learnt up to third grade because in his country, education is not given much value. Birahima uses dictionaries to help him recount his experiences in proper French. He warns the reader that his language is vulgar and tells about the beginning of his suffering when his mother suffers from an ulcer that cripples her and causes her death.

Birahima tells the story in first person and is of the view that he is cursed for angering his mother who goes bitter to her grave. Therefore, nothing goes right with him. He also thinks that he is haunted by the shadows of the countless innocent people he kills in war as a child soldier. He worries that the shadows of the dead victims have converted into immanent malevolent forces that stalk him wherever he goes.

Back in time, Birahima recounts about how he is a fearless and blameless child living with his sick mother and grandmother. But he runs away from home to the street when he is made to believe that his mother is a witch who consumes her own ulcer and the souls of other people like Moussoukoroni and her son. He becomes mischievous, dirty and ruggedly clothed but his grandmother and Balla a sorcerer who marries Birahima's mother Bafitini and tries to heal her from her ulcer constantly search for him. Birahima is disgusted by the accusations against his mother. He only realises how much she loved him and that the accusations against her were false after she dies. Birahima comes home the night his mother dies and she forces him to sleep in the same blanket with him. Bafitini holds her son's hand so tightly that after she dies, it is difficult to separate Birahima's hand from his dead mother's. This leaves him with a feeling of guilt all his life but makes him realise the mutual love between him and his mother.

Further back in time, the readership learns about the night Bafitini is born, hyenas howl and owls cry. The bad portents show that she will have a tragic life of anguish and damnation. The narrative is fast-forwarded to Bafitini's teenage when she is to undergo circumcision in the forest along with other girls as is the annual custom. The god of the forest always takes the life of the most beautiful initiate as a sacrifice, so it chooses Bafitini and she cannot stop bleeding. Moussoukoroni, the woman performing the circumcision offers sacrifices and saves her life on the condition that she marries her son. But Bafitini's family refuses on the pretext that a devote Muslim cannot marry a pagan animist. Angry, Moussoukoroni and her son cast a spell on Bafitini's leg which causes an ulcer and they refuse to rescind their punishment until they die. Bafitini is accused of having caused their death and she devoured them to avenge the suffering they subject her to. Believing the rumour, Birahima detests his mother and leaves home.

After the death of his mother, Birahima is given a new mother according to the Malinkè custom. He is left under the custody of his maternal aunt who lives in Liberia with her second husband, hiding from her first husband who threatens to kill them. It is decided after he is circumcised that he should go to Liberia along with Yacouba, a money multiplier and sorcerer from his village in search of his aunt. Birahima's Muslim family

is also of the view that going to Liberia will separate Birahima from Balla his stepfather, a sorcerer who contrary to the Islamic religion is teaching the young boy magic.

The reader learns that Liberia has several war lords such as Houphouet Boigny, Samuel Doe, Charles Taylor, Prince Johnson and Muamar Al Quathafi among others who are dividing its people and resources using desperate measures. They recruit child soldiers who kill people, rob them and sell what they steal cheaply. It is for this reason that people from various countries flock to Liberia in convoys to trade their merchandise.

Yacouba and Birahima travel in a convoy and are trapped in tribal wars in Liberia. When stopped by a child soldier at road block, their convoy does not stop. The drivers ignore the road block for fear of being robbed but run over a child soldier. The travellers are captured and taken to Papa le Bon's camp where Birahima is made to replace Kid the dead child soldier who is earlier run over while Yacouba becomes one of Papa le Bon's medicine men. He divines and prescribes sacrifices to protect him from his enemies. One night, out of the influence of alcohol, the warlord goes alone to the prison and threatens to shoot the prisoners. They take advantage of his drunken state and kill him.

The prisoners and child soldiers escape while Birahima and Yacouba head to another camp called the United Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia (ULIMO), a rich faction led by Onika Baclay. ULIMO is near Niangbo, the town where Birahima's aunt Mahan lives. The narrator recounts how some children become soldiers. It is brought to the attention of the readership that apart from the harsh political climate, some children become soldiers due to economic and social problems such as death of parents, ill-treatment and child labour among other reasons. At ULIMO, Birahima and Yacouba are thrown in prison and made to swear that they are not thieves, after which Yacouba joins the group of medicine men who protect the camp from attack while Birahima is favoured as Yacouba's boy and becomes a child soldier. Rita Baclay is in charge of child soldiers, she is the daughter-in-law of Onika Baclay. Rita sexually abuses Birahima behind closed doors.

One day when the child soldiers are drugged up, the faction is robbed and the men in charge of diamond and gold mining are kidnapped. This angers Onika because without

the men to mine gold, the flow of dollars in her faction freezes. Onika organises child soldiers and medicine men to attack Niangbo town where the kidnappers are hiding but the townspeople are prepared and fight back on two occasions. The ULIMO faction eventually emerges victorious but many people die from both groups. As they celebrate victory, they receive the news that the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) has seized the gold mining town in the absence of its leaders and soldiers. We learn that the NPFL had attempted several times to take control of ULIMO but had been failing. Onika and her team return to ULIMO sorrowfully.

Birahima and Yacouba learn that Mahan has escaped from Niangbo to the south on to Sierra Leone and her husband has died in the war, so they go looking for her and desert the ULIMO group. They end up in Prince Johnson's faction where they are tried and do not have any misgivings. They remain loyal to the war lord. Through a flashback, the narrator gives an account of the political conflicts between the Prince Johnson who rebels against Charles Taylor's faction. He also recounts about Johnson's dictatorship and religious hypocrisy when he murders Samuel Doe the then president of Liberia whom he believed that wages war in order to remain president of Liberia. Johnson is of the view that he kills Doe at God's command. The reader is exposed to the political corruption, revolutions and assassinations that Sierra Leone experiences from 1961.

The narrator and Yacouba are robbed of their gold and diamond and captured by Foday Sankoh's faction. The narrator portrays various atrocities of the war lord such as how he secretly trains soldiers in preparation for a revolution. Sankoh attempts to seize power, he has the hands of Sierra Leoneans amputated in order to prevent them voting in future. By chance, Birahima and Yacouba are able to escape and continue searching for Mahan until they come across Saydou, Birahima's cousin who is also a soldier in El Hadji Koroma's army. They learn that Saydou has been sent by his brother Mamadou to find their mother Mahan on condition that he will him give a million CFA francs. So they search together until they find Mamadou in Koroma camp where he is looking for Mahan as well. Mamadou carries out investigations which reveal that Mahan had arrived earlier at the camp while suffering from malaria before she died. Birahima's search for Mahan proves futile when he learns from Sidiki, one of the refugees at the camp who confirms

the death of Mahan to Doctor Mamadou by producing her clothes and stating that she had been worried about the wellbeing of Birahima in her dying moments. This breaks Birahima's heart while Saydou is rather saddened that he will lose the money his brother offered him if he were to find her.

Mamadou promises to help Sekou and Yacouba. He will see to it that they change their identities and obtain certificates for them to openly practice their trade as money multipliers in Abidjan. He then asks Birahima to recount his experiences in his journey with Yacouba from Ivory Coast to Sierra Leone.

3.4 Summary of chapter

This chapter presented summaries of the texts under study namely Diekoye Oyeyinka's *Stillborn* and Ahmadou Kourouma's *Allah Is Not Obligated*. The next chapter will be an analysis of how the two authors use the narrative voice in the aforementioned works respectively. The two texts are comparable as they are both African fictional works recounted by narrators who present experiences of political turmoil in their respective societies. However, how the two narrators present what they live through varies.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE USE OF NARRATIVE VOICE IN *STILLBORN* AND *ALLAH IS NOT OBLIGED*

4.1 Overview

The previous chapter dealt with the synopses of the texts *Stillborn* and *Allah Is Not Obligated*. This chapter aims at addressing the first objective which is concerned with the use of narrative voice in the two texts under study. The chapter analyses the works using the theory of narratology buttressed by the psychoanalytical literary theory. Genette's (1980) model has been used to analyse the constituent parts of voice in order to understand how they combine, and how the concept of voice as a whole adds meaning to the narrative system of the two novels. The psychoanalytical literary theory investigates the psychology behind what the narrators express in order to establish the purpose they serve in the selected narratives. It must be stated from the outset that the study only focuses on the use of overarching narrators in both texts.

4.2. *Stillborn*

4. 2.1 Time of the narrating

The novel opens with Seun, the narrator introducing the story to the narratee through the prologue. He uses a combination of the present and past tense. He says, "I sit at uncle's desk ... my thoughts are clouded, surfeited with unanswered questions." The narrator confesses that his mind is overburdened with thoughts. Still in the prologue, the narrator temporarily suspends the present tense and switches to the narrative past. He goes back in time to explain how at her beginning, Nigeria is looted and ruined (Oyeyinka, 2014: xii) records "I watched her as she was entered forcibly, her inside plundered, her seeds corrupted". The narrator switches between these two major tenses.

Apart from the narrator shifting between the two tenses, the prologue is predictive in nature since it explains what is in the main narration beforehand. These three narrative instances are observable in the prologue but the narrator's language does not clarify whether the entire narrative will be in past, present or future tense. While there is use of

a prologue in *Stillborn*, the narrator's language in the main narration shows that the novel is dominantly recounted using the past tense. Thus as Seun narrates, he already knows what happened. That the narrator calls to his mind bygone events shows that the novel is retrospective in nature. Siluonde (2015) observes that *Bitterness* is told in past tense and has a prior narration in it due to use of a prologue. However, the whole novel still qualifies to be subsequent since the narrator already knows what will happen. This is in agreement with theory of narratology which ties this study, it stipulates that the use of past tense is enough to render a narrative subsequent (Genette, 1980).

In the main narration, the narrator abandons the act of shifting between tenses and settles on consistently using the narrative past. However, there are also instances when he incorporates some events that are prefigured before they occur. Seun relates how Emeka, one of the protagonists of the text learns beforehand from his employer about the impending coup and tribal war in Nigeria. Chukwura forewarns Emeka that the war will mostly affect the Ibo people and their businesses, than it will the Yoruba. From his experience with the neighbouring warring countries, Chukwura is able to read the portentous signs that Nigeria will experience turmoil in future. Due to this foresight, Chukwura and Emeka prepare for the war and Emeka takes his savings to his Yoruba friend Dolapo for safekeeping so that it can survive the war (Oyeyinka, 2014:46). While this event is prefigured and comes to pass as predicted, it does not overshadow the fact that *Stillborn* is a retrospective narration since all events and actions are recounted to the narratee after they have already elapsed.

Another textual marker that makes known to the reader that Oyeyinka's *Stillborn* is a subsequent narration is the period the text covers as well as the length of the same period. The narrative has a long timeline, it covers events in the post-colonial history of Nigeria that occur over a period of fifty years. It depicts events and actions that take place shortly before independence, during independence in 1960 and long after Nigeria attains her independence. The events that are mostly recounted happen between 1960 and 2010 (Oyeyinka, 2014). The narrator tells the readership when the narrated events occur but does not indicate exactly when the narration takes place.

Genette (1980) and Prince (1982) posit that there exists a time interval that separates the story time from the time of the narrating although the length of the interval may not be explicitly revealed. It may be argued that the text does not accurately specify the temporal distance between the two intervals. However, the narrator mentions specific dates and notable events (Oyeyinka, 2014:258). Suffice to say that the narrating occurs sometime after Nigeria's 2010 elections since this is one of the last events presented as the novel reaches the resolution.

The main narration opens with events that occur before Nigeria's independence such as the tragic deaths of Emeka's parents and his birth in such a calamitous situation. Through the story of the birth of Emeka the protagonist, the reader is introduced to the idea of independence. Seun pauses the tale and goes back in time. He introduces Chief who wants to marry the protagonist's young mother, despite that she is already in love with Nonso. Chief is constantly travelling to Lagos for meetings as he is one of the people that prepare Nigeria for her independence by helping to form a new government that rules when the British handover power (Oyeyinka, 2014:4). The narrator discusses events that occur before independence in order to give background information about events and actions that occur during the pre-colonial period.

At the time of the narrating, Seun is of the view that Nigeria was not ready for independence by 1960. He uses the metaphor of a child born prematurely whose legs refuse to walk and hands refuse to work the simplest of enterprise even after a passage of many years to explain the devastation of Nigeria in the post-colonial period. He states that some cautioned that the child must be aborted because her conception was an abomination (Oyeyinka, 2014: xii). In psychoanalytical terms, it may be argued that the narrator's view that Nigeria attained her independence prematurely no wonder she deteriorates shows regret and disappointment in what Nigeria becomes in the post-colonial as compared to what she had been like in the pre-colonial period.

The narrator also uses the childhood experiences of Dolapo, the other protagonist of the text to make known to the narratee events that occur before 1960 in Nigeria's history. Seun, the primary narrator does not witness events that occur in the pre-colonial period but Dolapo's childhood experiences when recounted to him influence how he interprets

past events and links them to post-colonial events which he witnesses with his own eyes. Dolapo's account hints at events surrounding the independence of Nigeria. For example, he reminisces about how on one occasion he is sent by his parents to the Blacksmith and there he discusses with him the coming of independence. Dolapo asks the Blacksmith what it means to be independent and he responds that, "independence means you can make your own decisions" (Oyeyinka, 2014:20). The excitement with which the people of Nigeria await independence although some do not understand what it means for a nation to be independent is portrayed through the Blacksmith. He anticipates that life will be bettered by independence and that his business will also improve. The Blacksmith prepares for independence by making ploughs for Nigeria's independent farmers to buy. Seun uses the account on Dolapo's childhood to illuminate how the people's excitement about Nigeria's independence later turns into disillusionment.

The narrator goes back in time to events that occur in 1960. He draws the narratee's focus to October 1st in particular and describes how people celebrate their independence from colonialism on this day. He describes it as 'atypical' (Oyeyinka, 2014). He further covers important events in successive years after 1960 to 2010. The narrator's account of events in 1960 and prior to independence shows the condition of living in Nigeria then in comparison to the post-colonial period and at the time of the narrating.

The age of the narrator and other characters like Dolapo and Emeka are indicative of the duration of the events narrated. At the time the narrating of the story occurs, Seun is an adult but some of the events he tells of, he experiences them as a child. This signals that the narrative covers events that occur earlier, most of which take place in his childhood and long before his birth. It is worth noting that Seun is an adult minor character narrator who describes his younger self and other characters earlier in life for instance the lives of the protagonists from their birth, youth, adulthood on to their death (Oyeyinka, 2014). The growth of the narrator and other characters shows a passage time and reflects the subsequence of the novel.

Passage of time is also observable as the narrator elides and summarises scenes that do not advance the plot without indicating the period of time elided. Sometimes the narrator clearly indicates in the discourse how long the period elided is. He describes his six-year

stay abroad by indicating that he had not returned home such a period. Genette (1980) refers to these binary narrative techniques as indefinite and definite ellipsis respectively. Although the reader learns nothing about what occurs in the six years of his life abroad, the narrator's language of elision is indicative of bygone events.

4.2.2 Narrative Levels

Oyeyinka engages a number of speakers to recount. A heterogeneous people such as old and young men and women narrate in *Stillborn*. All the speakers that the author engages have dissimilar backgrounds and experiences. Hence, they each recount events based on what they each live through and their varying beliefs and values. All the narrators in the novel are named. The reader can distinguish each narrator's account from other speakers' accounts in terms of the content they relate and how uniquely each of them presents it to the narratee. In psychoanalytical terms, one may argue that each narrator's tale reflects the nature of their experiences such as the distresses they live through and the main ideas they each communicate uncover the meaning of the work at large.

In *Stillborn*, the multiple narrators Oyeyinka engages are threefold; some are easily noticeable through the expressions they make and the subjects they present whereas others are not easily noticeable as they are hidden behind the discursive shadows of the text. Jahn (2017) describes a covert narrator as one who fades in the background, who camouflages themselves, goes into hiding such as drawing no attention to themselves. Some narrators in *Stillborn* are neither noticeable nor fully hidden but exist somewhere in between covertness and overtness. Seun, Emeka and Dolapo are overt narrators. Emeka's wife, Dolapo's mother and Ranti's mother are covert narrators for their voices are lethargic. Nneka and Aisha manifest somewhere between covertness and overtness.

Although each narrator is different from other narrators, the author uses Seun in a more characteristic way. Seun plays a more superordinate role of narrating in that his voice is heard more audibly and dominantly above other voices over long stretches of the text. Seun exhibits influence, he gives the opening remarks as the narration begins and as it closes, the voice that is heard giving the closing remarks in the epilogue is again Seun's (Oyeyinka, 2014). Therefore he has the first and last word to the narrative.

In the main narration as the story unfolds, *Stillborn* is recounted at a number of dissimilar levels. Seun opens the main narration, he brings to light what he foregrounds in the prologue about the stillborn child of 1960 who is deadened at birth by her people (Oyeyinka, 2014). He unveils what he announces as he introduces the birth and life of Emeka, the protagonist through whom the history of Nigeria is represented. The narrator goes back in time to the pre-colonial period when Emeka is born. He delegates the narrating role to Emeka so that he can fill in the narratee with what transpires before Nigeria is deadened by her people as it is at the time of the narrating.

Seun then alternates the role of narrating between multiple sub narrators such as the two protagonists and other characters like Nneka and Aisha to help him recount events that occur in the history of Nigeria from their own points of view. These narrators introduced by Seun hand over the narrating role to other characters to recount their stories. Seun delegates the narrating role to other characters. They recount narratives within narratives thereby forming multiple narrational layers. Prince (1982) and Jahn (2017) posit that in texts where several speakers narrate, it is necessary to create a system in which they are placed in a series of levels to indicate their different statuses. They further provide a possible hierarchy of narrators such as first, second and third degree levels and so on.

The figure below shows the narrational layers in *Stillborn*.

Summary of levels of narrators in *Stillborn*

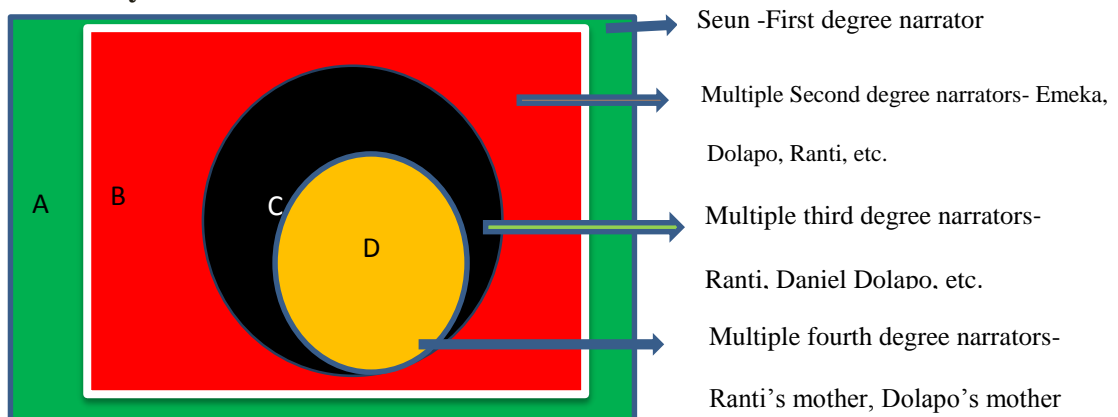


Figure 1: summary of narrative levels in *Stillborn*

Being the narrator of the first narrative, Seun recounts a tale which is not embedded in another. He exhibits more influence than other narrators in several ways. His authority

manifests when he is one who on the overall institutes all the sub narrators, since they all come into existence through him. Seun explicitly gives concise information about the protagonists. He is at a level superior to all the narrators. Thus, he is the primary narrator and occupies the first degree in the narrational layer.

The multiple sub narrators the overarching narrator introduces such as Emeka, Dolapo, Nneka and Aisha occupy the second level. By common similarity, they are referred to as second degree narrators. The sub narrators that are instituted by narrators at the second level such as Emeka's wife, Ranti and Muktar, take up the third degree in the narrational layer. A few third degree narrators such as Ranti and Dolapo introduce other narrators such as Ranti's mother and Dolapo's mother who occupy the fourth level (Oyeyinka, 2014). Thus, it may be argued that the novel *Stillborn* has four narrational levels.

A close analysis of narrative levels reveals that some sub narrators occupy more than one level. One character can narrate a story at a secondary level and move to occupy another level as a tertiary narrator. The overarching narrator Seun recounts a story about the character Temitope which is passed on to him by his mother, Ranti. Thus Ranti here occupies the second level since she is introduced by the primary narrator. On the other hand, Dolapo tells a story to Seun about his childhood with Ranti. In it, he makes reference to the story that Ranti narrates to him and that Ranti's mother had recounted the story to her. The story is thus passed from Ranti's mother to Ranti, then to Dolapo who in turn recounts it to the text's primary narrator Seun. So Ranti occupies the third level when introduced by Dolapo who is a second degree narrator (Oyeyinka, 2014).

4.2.3 Person

In the category of person, Oyeyinka engages an overarching homodiegetic narrator. This means that Seun exists as an explicit first person narrator and his presence is marked in the discourse by first person pronouns and verbs which he uses as a designation of himself. Genette (1980:245) defines a homodiegetic narrator as one who is "present as a character in the story he tells"

The overarching narrator narrates about events that are reported to him by other characters he interacts with whom he believes reliable. Seun acknowledges to the

narratee that he re-narrates certain events that are recounted to him. This is evidenced when he states that, “I was curious to hear his story and then I realised how little I knew of the past. Over the week, I asked about their childhoods and I asked how they met. I asked my uncle what my mother was like as a child” (Oyeyinka, 2014: 225). The main narrator learns about the lives of other characters from the stories they tell. These characters come in contact with narrator and have they an effect on each other’s lives.

Unlike a number of novels narrated by homodiegetic narrators, Oyeyinka’s *Stillborn* is recounted by an ‘I’ narrator who is not a protagonist in the tale but rather features as a minor character at the level of action. Seun plays a secondary role as a character in that he is an observer. He interacts with the two protagonists Emeka and Dolapo and watches their lives and destinies. The narrator also has an opportunity to witness the turmoil that Nigeria faces. He therefore utilises the knowledge and understanding he obtains about events that occur in the country’s history to shape and present the story after the events have taken place. He recounts historical events after a lapse of time although it is not clearly stated how long the interval lasts but as he narrates, Seun is an adult who has more knowledge than he does at the time of experience as a child. The narrator therefore has more knowledge about the history of Nigeria. Jahn (2017) describes a situation where the narrating I is older and wiser than the experiencing I as narrative distance.

Narrative distance maintained by the narrator in *Stillborn* is not only in terms of time but is also psychological. A psychoanalytical analysis of the narrative distance of the narrator shows that Seun exhibits more mature behaviour at the time of the narrating. His actions show some degree of separation between his childhood and adulthood. He has evolved. His utterances project that he is more capable of thinking in a logical way.

Based on these textual markers, Seun proves to be a reliable narrator in several ways. He is an adult at the time he tells the story, this renders him reliable in that he presents past events that he has taken time to reflect upon as a mature and sensible adult. A psychoanalytical analysis of the state of mind of the narrator at the time of the narrating suggests that Seun looks at the past more objectively than he would have had he recounted the story as a child. As a child narrator, it is more likely that his account would have been influenced by his feelings and opinions since he suffers from emotional

trauma. But as an adult he has become more knowledgeable and experienced with the world. His behaviour as the novel reaches the resolution shows that he has recovered from his childhood distresses and there is an emotional distance between he as the experiencing I and he as a narrator.

The narrator also demonstrates ability to deal with difficult and unpleasant experiences such as death in adulthood unlike earlier in his childhood when trauma causes him to go into a coma. When Dolapo and Emeka die, Seun is less emotional; he is instead more assertive. He exhibits more confident behaviour in times of adversity unlike in the past where he withdraws from interacting with others. This is evidenced in the speech he delivers during the funeral of the two protagonists. The narrator's behaviour shows that he has healed. According to the psychoanalytic literary theory, when an individual becomes aware of and acknowledges the true causes of their emotional wounds, healing occurs (Guerin, 2005). Seun stabilises his emotional wounds, he realises that he has a task to make his country a better place to live in. So, he quickly recovers from his uncle Dolapo's and Emeka's deaths and diverts his psychic energy into politics. He takes part in campaigns and opposes corrupt candidates while supporting those that he believes will bring change such as Nneka and the president who eventually win the 2010 elections (Oyeyinka, 2014).

Seun's account corresponds with factual historical events that occur in Nigeria in the post-colonial era. It is convincing to the narratee in that in the story world he presents, he also shows that Nigeria attains her independence in 1960. The narrator further portrays the idea that from time to time, Nigeria experiences political, religious and ethnic conflicts. For example, the tribal wars between the Nigerian and Biafran armies are due to divisions among her people. Other vital textual markers that suggest the narrator's credibility in the eyes of the narratee include the fact that he mentions specific dates, factual political figures like Obasanjo and places that exist in Nigeria such as Lagos, Jos and Niger Delta (Oyeyinka, 2014). It may be argued that the narratee is also engaged in a mental activity as they search for clues within the discourse that reveal the way of thinking of the narrator in order for them to believe his account.

The fact that the main narrator introduces other narrators to assist him give accounts which correspond with his renders Seun trustworthy. His interaction with the text's protagonists is convincing to the narratee in that he observes their lives. He is thus worthy to recount the lives of Emeka and Dolapo after the two heroes die. He informs the narratee of the protagonists' involvement in affairs of Nigeria as he is directly connected to them. He is related to Dolapo by common ancestry whereas with Emeka, Seun connects with him towards the end of his life. The protagonists have a bond with the narrator such that they recount to him their past struggles and successes in their quest to make their country a better place (Oyeyinka, 2014). The primary narrator is therefore viewed by the narratee with less suspicion as he convinces them to trust his judgment.

Although Seun uses first person pronouns and verbs, he sometimes temporarily abandons them and utilises third person pronouns and verbs. Thus, he switches to narrating with omniscience. He adopts the technique especially when narrating about other characters. He introduces Emeka and the tragic circumstances surrounding his birth. The narrator exhibits unlimited knowledge. As he describes Nonso and Nneka love affair when he says, "They had shared their first kiss. It was magical; Nonso clumsily held a fishing rod in his hand, one end poking her ribs. Their wet feet causing excited ripples. But it was eternal, a day never to be forgotten" (Oyeyinka, 2014:3). This description creates the impression that the narrator witnesses the secret romance between Nneka and Nonso with his own eyes. It is presented as though the narrator is beyond human limitations and is able to see the inner feelings and thoughts of the two lovers yet he is homodiegetic. He cannot describe beyond what he witnesses or is told yet the characters described existed long before the narrator's birth. Baldick (2001:97) states that the term first person "does not mean that the narrator speaks only in first person, of course in the discussion of other characters, the third person will be used." While the narrator uses the third person perspective to recount about other characters, some of his descriptions suggest that he temporarily assumes the role of a heterodiegetic narrator since he narrates what happens in secrecy.

The narrator only abandons the use of third person pronouns and verbs when he begins to talk about himself. Even so, there are instances in the narrative when he refers back

to himself as though he were another person. He says, “Seun Odukoya stood like an Iroko tree on a cloudy night, tall, dark and pensive. It was an unusual stature for my Yoruba name” (Oyeyinka, 2014:167). This evidences how strange the narrator feels to carry his uncle’s name Odukoya and not Akpokio Ehurere. The narrator also uses third person to describe how strange he feels in the first days he begins to live with his uncle in Lagos. He says, “Next to this was a pair of wooden doors leading to a patio on the outside with two rocking chairs and a [silent] murmuring fountain [until Seun joined the household]” (Oyeyinka, 2014:151). It may be argued that the narrator adopts this narrative technique when he wants to psychologically distance himself from what he recounts.

4.2.4 Functions of the narrator

In terms of functions of the narrator outlined by Genette (1980) in his model of narratology, Oyeyinka engages an overarching narrator who undertakes all the five functions. Firstly, Seun performs the most obvious function of narrating which no narrator can avoid or else they would not be called a narrator. He is the voice whose view point is mainly used to recount the narrative. As the novel opens, he begins recounting covertly, he assumes the role of an omniscient narrator. As the story progresses, he begins to feature overtly as a homodiegetic narrator. In section II of part 1, the narrator reveals his relationship with the protagonists when he refers to Dolapo as his uncle (Oyeyinka, 2014). He later uses the lives of Emeka and Dolapo to represent the idea that Nigeria is corrupted by her people immediately she attains her independence.

The second in the functions of the narrator has to do with directing the story. The overarching narrator exhibits control of the flow of the entire narrative from the beginning to the end. Seun introduces the story to the narratee before any other speaker is given an opportunity to make an utterance. His influence in the narrative’s flow is also observable in the fact that he gives closing remarks after everyone else has spoken.

The main narrator Seun delegates the narrating role to other speakers and determines how long each speaks. He allows some second degree narrators to pass on the narrating

role to hypodiegetic narrators and this continues up to the fourth degree. He gives directions to all narrators and he is the one that influences the flow of their narratives. For example, Dolapo and Emeka are not aware that they are characters in Seun's tale but he gives them a voice to recount their lives and how they attempt to shape Nigeria into a better nation (Oyeyinka, 2014). When the speakers are limited by death, they cannot recount what happens after they die. Seun takes it upon himself to complete the protagonists' life stories since he watches their lives and destinies. He also relates how the two heroes' deeds after their death still influence the progression of the story. Jahn (2017) observes that since sub narrators are unaware that they are fictional figures in the overarching narrator's tale, they cannot complain when their motives are misrepresented by the higher-level narrator.

The directing function is also observed in the way Seun introduces sub narrators to assist him in recounting. This reduces on tedious sameness so that the narratees are able to follow each narrator's account closely and link with what the primary narrator recounts. In essence, he utilises the accounts of the sub narrators in that he grafts them onto his tale in to in order to shape the entire narrative.

Seun undertakes the communicative function which is evidenced through the speaker's coordination with the narratee. He utilises the narrative to transmit and make accessible information about important political events that happen in the history of Nigeria and some influential political figures of this period to the narratee. This is in accordance with Barthes (1966) who from a narratological viewpoint posits that there exists a form of communication in every narrative in that there is a donor and a receiver of the narrative who depend on each other. It is through the narrator that information about post-colonial mayhems in Nigeria are exposed to the reader and without the narratee, the communication cycle is incomplete.

The communicative function is also evidenced as the narrator confesses his wishes, worries and emotional wounds to the narratee. Seun openly communicates his thoughts and feelings for instance how the death of his parents changes his life completely. He is so traumatised that he drifts "in and out of coma" (Oyeyinka, 2014: 194) and the anguish

that other characters live through. The narrator's tone expresses grief. This is somewhat similar with Louw (2015) who analysed the ambivalent maternal voice of Eva, a narrator who lays bare her unconscious mind as she expresses grief on the loss of her loved ones in Lionel Shriver's *We Need to Talk about Kevin*. From a psychoanalytical perspective, it may be argued that Seun lays bare his mental distresses to the narratee when he admits that he attempts to escape from dealing with the experience of losing his parents. He confines his life to school work, his new family and he becomes less sociable. Seun withdraws, he becomes socially and emotionally detached from the society around him in order to avoid stirring his emotional pain.

Seun further confesses that when learning in Nigerian universities is disrupted by riots due to political confusion, he requests his uncle to send him to study abroad but mainly as a way of getting away from unpleasant experiences and sorrowful environment. For a long time, he avoids returning to Nigeria. "I had not been home for six years and I did not know why. Perhaps I shied from the reality that life was not halted for the sorrows of one soul" (Oyeyinka, 2014: 212). From a psychoanalytical viewpoint, the narrator confining his life to school work and avoiding to return home for a long time suggests that he attempts to escape from situations that are likely to make him distraught. This also reveals that he has unsettled conflicts with his past. Further, the narrator's realisation that the life of the people around him were not halted for the sorrows of one soul is a way he deals with reality. This is a manifestation of the ego at work. The ego is the rational governing agent of the psyche. Its role is to regulate the instinctual drives of the id so that they may be released in nondestructive behavioural patterns (Guerin, 2005:157). Seun reasons and understands the reality that the people around him like his uncle Dolapo, Aisha and Mrs Folayo have their own needs and distresses resulting from the deaths of their loved ones. It may be argued that Seun becomes aware that other characters around him are affected by his grief. Thus, he goes away so that his sorrow does not keep other characters' frozen in time or continually stir their heartaches.

The narrator also openly communicates to the narratee how sad he is and struggles to deal with the fact that he carries his uncle's name and not his biological father's although he subdues it by acting as though he does not mind (Oyeyinka, 2014:167). Although

Seun does not fully express how he struggles adapting to his new name, his pretense that he is comfortable about it hints at his unspoken emotional struggle and displeasure. This is evidenced in the expression that he usually forces a smile each time he is reminded that he has an unusual stature for a Yoruba name. According to the psychoanalytical literary theory, the narrator's wish that he would have loved to carry his birth name Akpokio Ehurere and not Seun Odukoya as he does is hinted but he represses this desire in order to live peacefully with his uncle. This form of repression suggests that the super ego is at work. The super ego is a moral censoring agency, the repository of conscience. It inhibits the drives of the id, to block off and thrust back into the unconscious those impulses toward pleasure that society regards as unacceptable (Guerin, 2005:158). Seun considers that failure to accept to carry his uncle's name would be offensive to Dolapo.

Seun's confession that adopting his uncle's name displeases him is central as it uncovers what is hidden deep in his mind. It exposes the idea that he is more attachment to his deceased biological father than he is to Dolapo who adopts him. This is in line with (Guerin, 2005:154) who posits that "... like an iceberg the human mind is structured so that its great weight and density lies beneath the surface." Similarly, the narrator's confession is like the tip of an iceberg, it only gives the reader a clue of how much wounds and desires the narrator has repressed while many unspoken wishes and wounds remain hidden beneath his level of consciousness.

It may also be argued from psychoanalytical viewpoint that the narrator conveys the idea that he struggles to sustain a feeling of identity. It is for this reason that he is apprehensive about his new name. He would have loved to maintain his actual name but out of respect for his uncle, he does not express displeasure when his identity changes. He has two identities and this makes him uncomfortable. Because he suppresses his displeasure, when other people comment about his Yoruba name not corresponding with his stature, Seun often gets emotionally hurt.

Seun also attests to what he recounts in a number of ways. Firstly he attempts to make his narrative authentic by mentioning specific dates, places, names of actual political figures and makes reference to certain factual events in history to persuade the reader

that he is being truthful (Oyeyinka, 2014). He further summons a number of sub narrators to confirm the truth of what he speaks. Although other multiple voices recount their stories from different viewpoints, they all agree in a way with the ideas introduced by the primary narrator. For example, the primary narrator likens the Nigerian society to a stillborn child. Through the expression ‘stillborn’ Seun communicates the idea that the people of Nigeria deaden their nation immediately the British hand over power because the elected people plunder her resources. Dolapo, one of the text’s protagonists confirms the truth of this idea when invoked by the overarching narrator to speak. He describes how in his childhood the people of Nigeria anxiously await independence with expectation but the leaders who come in power deteriorate her economy. They leave her wealth in the hands of inept people who loot it. Dolapo’s acknowledgment to the testimony to the primary narrator is evidenced in the statement,

...many projects launched with much fanfare for independence celebrations remained unchanged... improvements that were to have heralded the birth of a new Nigeria remained frozen as they had been in 1960. It seemed progress had died with the birth of the nation. It seems her dreams and ambitions were stillborn (Oyeyinka, 2014:38).

The main narrator also presents the idea that the contest for power in post-colonial Nigeria facilitates political, ethnic and religious conflicts that divide the people of Nigeria. He then introduces the characters Emeka, Aisha and Nneka who give different accounts based on the distresses they live through. Their accounts harmonise with Seun’s. Emeka attests to the existence of ethnic differences between the Ibo and the Yoruba, a major cause of a coup and eventually war between the Biafran army and the Nigerian army led by the military head of state. Nneka and Aisha corroborate Seun’s idea about political and religious conflict dividing the people. They recount about the religious and tribal war in Jos and Ahmed the Alhaji uses his political power to settle scores with his opponents (Oyeyinka, 2014). The sub narrators’ accounts elaborate more on the ideas that are introduced yet are not fully explained in Seun’s narrative. Jahn (2017) notes that narratives recounted by sub narrators reveal information that explains

events and actions that are outside the primary narrator's tale specifically, events that occurred in the past.

The ideological function of the narrator is made known through the ideas that are dealt with in the text and through the way the narrator expresses his feelings and opinions. Jahn (2017) observes that expressivity markers, the content matter and pragmatic signals are some of the things that can point to the narrator's education, his or her beliefs and convictions, values, political and ideological orientation, attitudes towards other people, events and things.

Seun enlightens the narratee on a number of phenomena that take place in Nigeria in the post-colonial period. The idea of religion permeates the text. The narrator exposes religious hypocrisy. Christians and Muslims exhibit enmity for each other, an attitude which is evidenced when during elections people from these religious groupings support their own. It is further illustrated when the Muslim leaders Ahmed the Alhaji and his brother Muktar mastermind the massacre of Christians in Jos. The narrator further portrays the idea that in times of adversity, religion serves as a place of refuge. When the Christians are about to be massacred in Jos, they are found hiding and praying in their churches (Oyeyinka, 2014). Religion is thus used as a tool of oppression but psychoanalytically, it may be argued that the narrator portrays the idea that it has mollifying influence on the suffering in times of adversity.

A close examination of the political ideas contained in *Stillborn* suggests that the narrator describes his experiences of political conflict and builds his narrative based on the experiences of war of other characters around him. Seun portrays how political turmoil negatively affects the people of Nigeria physically, emotionally and how it can lead to a country's economic deterioration (Oyeyinka, 2014). From the perspective of the psychoanalytic literary theory, one may argue that the way the narrator describes the aforementioned events to the reader is a valuable tool that provides a concrete understanding of the anguish the characters in novel live through.

Another political idea presented in *Stillborn* is embezzlement of public resources. The narrator reveals inequality in terms of how public resources are shared in the country

from the time Nigerians begin to rule themselves. The wealth of the country is amassed by a few people mostly by incompetent politicians while most of the people live in poverty (Oyeyinka, 2014). He also exposes the corruption exhibited by the rich and government officials. He heightens the idea of misappropriation of public resources through the character O.C Abari, the Retired General and Emeka. When O. C and Emeka are released from prison, they find employment to sustain themselves by engaging in a lucrative business as employees of O.C's uncle, the Retired General who believes that the government owes him. The Retired General is engaged in an illegal business and Emeka is put in charge of transporting the laundered money from the bank, white executives and politicians to the General's house (Oyeyinka, 2014). The narrator expresses disappointment in the role Nigerian politicians of the post-colonial period play in ruining their country. The way he expresses himself gives the readership a sense of the quality and clarity of Seun's voice.

The narrator also exposes the deceit that surrounds post-colonial elections in African countries. He ridicules the electoral process of the post-colonial period through the portrayal of the electoral commissioner who persuades the electoral officers to appreciate the Governor's generosity. The commissioner tells the electoral officers that the Governor was instructing his chairman to give money to his loyal men (Oyeyinka, 2014). This incident exposes the electoral officers' vice of taking bribes and manipulating the votes in favour of particular candidates.

The idea that the people in power continually deceive the electorate by manipulating the vote results is portrayed in a comical way. It is developed further through the characters Tarfa and his cousin who are heard discussing how they previously helped the NAPP retain the seat. Tarfa receives a bribe so that he organises people to vote several times for the NAPP. He arranges with his cousin to serve as an electoral officer at whose poll booth five thousand people are expected to cast their votes. When only one thousand people turn up, Tarfa's cousin votes about two hundred times while Machine dips his thumb in ink and votes about one thousand times (Oyeyinka, 2014). The narrator ridicules the tendency by post-colonial leaders to cling to power dishonestly.

An analysis of the narrator's mind through his utterances shows that he is dissatisfied with the political leaders that rule Nigeria from 1960 to 2010. He uses vocabulary that hints at his outlook on issues and occurrences. He says, "The elections in 2010 were strange because they were democratic. Nigerians had never known what it was like to have a president elected by the will of the people" (Oyeyinka, 2014:262). In addition, this suggests that all the presidents that rule Nigeria over a period of fifty years were never elected democratically. It also depicts the dictatorship that Nigeria undergoes. The narrator makes known to the narratee how elected leaders seize power for a long time or pass it on to weaker people whom they control so that they keep ruling indirectly. Seun illustrates this when he recounts how the old leaders after the 2010 elections attempt to seize power or pass it on to their stooges but fail to manipulate the results as people had turned up to vote in great numbers against the old leaders.

Also marked in the narrator's language is his satisfaction with the election results of the year 2010. He says that the elections were democratic as many citizens realised their civic duty and turned up to vote unlike what they did in the past. His use of the word 'democratic' projects his voice in that he is of the view that the elections were marked by impartiality and credibility. Seun makes known that several Nigerian citizens had gradually become indifferent towards the political affairs of their nation due to the political mayhems they experience but change their attitude after fifty years of political turmoil (Oyeyinka, 2014). His language shows approval of the citizens' change of attitude and their desire to vote in order to help themselves and the rest of the Nigerians.

The narrator's political alignment is also marked in his praises for the president elected in 2010. He uses the expression "... a new government was in power, a man on a mission. His mission was simple - to save a city decaying from the rot its centre. Despite his efforts, despite the support of the people, despite the tangible improvements in the lives of the citizens – the cabal was still displeased..." (Oyeyinka, 2014:258). The narrator commends the new president for his hard work and for bringing noticeable development in the lives of the people. Seun's voice is projected through the subjective sentiments he utters that associate him with the new government and never with any government that rules Nigeria before the year 2010.

Another idea that the narrator exposes is the economic deterioration of Nigeria. This is reflected through neglected projects and embezzlement of public resources, thereby causing inequality between the rich and poor, as wealth is amassed by a small percentage of citizens. Illegal dealings, a number of various forms of corruption portrayed in the text and the sanctions by the global community on Nigeria also signal economic corrosion (Oyeyinka, 2014:169).

The narrator's descriptions reveal that buildings are in a state of ruin due to negligence. As Seun arrives in Nigeria from abroad, he notices that the buildings in Lagos are dilapidated and live wires swing hazardously over them. He also describes houses as being in poor condition with rusty roofs. Tired people are seen with burdens in their hands. For example, the girl that is selling puff puffs by the roadside (Oyeyinka, 2014:213). These descriptions by the narrator make known the afflictions of the people of Nigeria such as poverty and general suffering in the post-colonial era.

The idea that Nigeria experiences economic struggle is also enhanced through the way taxi drivers compete for customers. As Seun arrives at the airport, a number of taxi drivers attempt to persuade him to board their taxi, arguing among themselves and giving reasons that make one driver's vehicle better than the other's (Oyeyinka, 2014:213). This incident suggests that there is a struggle to survive as the people attempt to adjust to changes in their economy.

The narrator also communicates social issues. He disapproves of early marriages, marriages of convenience and materialism. These ideas are presented through Chief who wants to marry young Nneka, despite the fact that she is already in love with Nonso. Nneka's mother would rather have her daughter marry Chief than Nonso for social and economic advantages since Chief is rich and has political influence (Oyeyinka, 2014:3). Nneka's mother exhibits behaviour that suggests she attaches greater importance to material possessions rather than the well-being of her young daughter. She and Chief attach no significance to Nneka's age as well as her affection for Nonso. From a psychoanalytic perspective, Chief and Nneka's mother are driven by the demands of id which seeks pleasure and satisfaction of instinctual desires notwithstanding the destructive consequences (Eagleton, 1996 and Guerin, 2005). Chief and Nneka's mother

are not concerned about the negative consequences of a forced marriage and the general well-being of young Nneka.

4.2.5 Narratee

The narratee is the receiver of the narrator's discourse who exists explicitly or implicitly within the fiction. She or he may be a fictional character. The narrator may for example tell the story to a friend, to someone who belongs, just as the narrator does, to the fictional world even though this person is not active on the plot level and only exists offstage (Fludernik, 2009:23). In *Stillborn*, the narrator at some point assumes the role of a narratee. Seun listens to the remarks of other characters addressed to him including the accounts of hypodiegetic narrators. As a narratee, he does not feature as a character in the tales presented before him. This is in agreement with Prince (1982:21) who observes that a narratee may be a character who plays no other role other than of an audience in the narrative but may also play several other roles and even functions such as a narrator.

According to the theory of narratology, Oyeyinka's overarching narrator thus temporarily becomes an intradiegetic narratee who receives the narratives of intradiegetic sub narrators. Although Seun as a narratee manifests in a manner that is not easily noticeable to the reader, he does not just passively receive the stories related to him by other fictional characters within the text. He is rather an active participant in the communication process. His active participation is evidenced when he transfers the narratives he receives by re-narrating them to his own narratee (the readership).

Since the novel has four narrational layers, it is thus made up of four hierarchies of narratee. Each character who listens to another character's account is a narratee. The main narratee is the readership since all the events in the narrative are in due course addressed to them (Prince, 1982:24). Seun is the secondary narratee because all the sub narratees of the embedded narratives ultimately donate their narratives to him. Those who receive narratives and directly recount to Seun occupy the third level and at the bottom fourth degree narratees. All these narratees contribute meaning to the stories they receive. For example, as they are listen, they are involved in a mental activity where

they look for hints of trustworthiness in the voice they hear recounting. The narratee in their mind filter, modify ideas and read between lines as they listen to a narrative.

The findings of the study also reveal that as Seun transfers what is recounted to him by other speakers who exist intratextually to his own narratee, he assumes the role of an extradiegetic narrator. This is evidenced when he adopts the use of third person pronouns and verbs to demonstrate that he does not reside in the story world he presents in some parts of the text. By association, the narratee he re-narrates to, are also extradiegetic since they do not exist within the text as part of the story.

4.3 *Allah Is Not Obligated*

4.3.1 Time of the narrating

There are textual markers that are used to determine the temporal aspects of the narrative in *Allah Is Not Obligated*. That Birahima recounts the story at the end of his journey indicates that the narrative is subsequent. Birahima undertakes a journey in search of his aunt Mahan who will be his guardian. His journey only ends when he comes across his cousin Mamadou who extricates him from the adventurous journey. Seeing that Birahima has been exposed to a dangerous experience, Mamadou asks him to recount everything that he sees, does and all that transpires in his journey (Kourouma, 2000:214). It may be argued that while fulfilling Mamadou's request, Birahima unconsciously takes the first step of dealing with the distresses he has repressed for a long. The narrator purges out his emotions by relating the suffering he lives through to Mamadou.

After he narrates to his cousin, it is then that the thought to put his story in writing crosses his mind. Thus the entire narrative is recounted as Birahima evokes bygone happenings. The narrator uses narrating as a therapeutic tool that helps him deal with his emotional wounds. This observation is agreement with Louw (2015) who studied how narrators in Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*, Mariama Bâ's *So Long a Letter* and Lionel Shriver's *We Need to Talk about Kevin* use narrating through letter writing as a therapeutic tool to heal from emotional distresses. In psychoanalytical terms, as Birahima puts his narration in writing, he shares his distresses and the process of psychological healing begins as he pours out his heart to the narratee.

In *Allah Is Not Obligated*, there is significant use of the past tense from the beginning of the novel and this is maintained over long stretches of the narrative all the way to the conclusion. As Birahima introduces himself, he gives a background of his life in the statement, “I did not get very far at school; I gave up in my third year in primary school” (Kourouma, 2000:1). From a narratological perspective, the use of past tense is meant to point to the idea that what Birahima recounts has already elapsed at the time of the narrating. Hence, the novel is retrospective in nature.

There is a thin line that separates the story time and the time of the narrating. This indicates that the interval between the two points is short because immediately Birahima meets Mamadou, he instantly asks the narrator what he has lived through and the story closes with Birahima relating (Kourouma, 2007). That the interval between experience and narrating is short entails that the narrator has less time for emotional healing from past wounds before recounting. It may be argued that the psychological state of the narrator is questionable since he has not had enough time to reflect on his inner thoughts and feelings after the harsh experiences.

Kourouma’s *Allah Is Not Obligated* has a long timeline. It mainly covers a period of over three years; the time Birahima spends searching for his aunt. The story stretches as Birahima recounts the horrors of what he experiences when trapped in war. Each time he escapes by chance, he continues the search, only to wander and get trapped in another warring faction. The story twists as the narrator gives an account of events he witnesses and learns about in the warring factions he wanders through. He presents events that occur in the post-colonial period and describes unpleasant states of affairs that take place in post-colonial Africa as a witnessing and participating child soldier after he escapes from the warring factions (Kourouma, 2000:214).

In some instances Birahima recounts events that are foretold before their occurrence. For example, he tells how the life of his mother Bafitini is prefigured that it will be full of suffering. His journey to Liberia with Yacouba the sorcerer is also foretold that it will be full of challenges and successes (Kourouma, 2000:38). These events come to pass as prefigured. Even though there is use of the foreshadowing technique, it does not entail

that the novel is anticipatory in nature because all events in it are presented to the narratee after they have already occurred.

4.3.2 Narrative Levels

Kourouma's *Allah Is Not Obligated* has a multiple narrator structure. A heterogeneous selection of child narrators, both boys and girls tell the story. A psychoanalytical analysis of all the speakers utilised to present the story to the narratee shows that they have different backgrounds and all live through dissimilar experiences. Thus they react inversely to the trauma of war. However, they have some common experiences of loss and grief such as deaths of their parents and loved ones in war and general suffering that is facilitated by war. Hence, their accounts concur to a great extent.

Kourouma engages narrators whose narrations corroborate. Each narrator is distinguished from the others in terms of how uniquely they relate their experiences and what they witness. Each narrator lays bare their psychological state and each account makes available some essential clues to the narratee which are used to establish the themes they convey. Each speaker's account develops a theme or stresses themes already developed by other narrators as who recount earlier than they do.

When authors use multiple narrators, they can be placed in two categories which are covert and overt narrators. Although the multiple narrators differ, they concur significantly. It may be argued that among the narrators engaged, Birahima is utilised in a more distinct manner. He is the only narrator that features overtly whereas the rest of the intermediaries recount their tales covertly. Birahima begins recounting the story of his experiences of war as a child soldier. As the narrator wanders through warring camps, he meets a number of distraught child soldiers like him due to war experiences they live through. He incorporates their life stories in his tale. All the narrative voices whose accounts Birahima grafts on to his narrative are emotionally bludgeoned by the effects of political turmoil such as war and their only place of safety from physical harm is to join warring factions. However, the genocides they commit as child soldiers leave them psychologically wounded (Kourouma, 2000:90).

In Birahima's narrative, there are a number of narratives recounted by other child soldiers. This forms a hierarchy of narrators. However, as Birahima introduces other narrators in his story, he delegates the narrating role in a subtle way. It is not easy for the narratee to recognise that behind Birahima's voice there are other voices that are heard recounting their stories because Birahima presents what is recounted to him with the use of third person pronouns and verbs. There are no textual markers that directly indicate that other characters tell Birahima their life stories and experiences. He instead presents the accounts of other speakers recounted to him as though he is an all knowing narrator who watches the lives and destinies of the characters he recounts about. The only evidence that indicates that there are other narrators in the text covert though they may be is the fact that there are a number of narratives that are subordinated to Birahima's. From a narratological viewpoint, there are other speakers who articulate the sub narratives.

The figure below shows the narrational layers in *Allah Is Not Obligated*.

Summary of levels of narrators in *Allah Is Not Obligated*

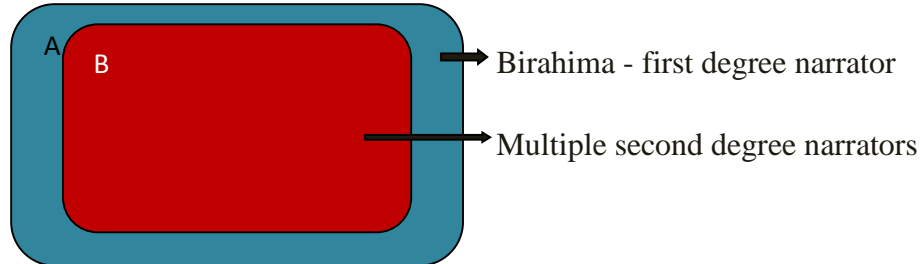


Figure 2: Summary of narrative levels in *Allah Is Not Obligated*.

The figure above shows the hierarchy of narrators in *Allah Is Not Obligated*. Findings show that Birahima occupies a superior rank in the narrational layer. The observation that he is the overarching narrator in the novel is based on the evidence that he is heard more audibly. He is also more dominant in that he tells about his life. He only makes reference to other characters' life stories to enhance the story of his adventures to the narratee.

Allah Is Not Obligated is recounted at two levels. Birahima occupies the first level, hence is a first degree narrator. The overarching narrator does not acknowledge how he comes

to know about all the other characters' life stories whose accounts he includes as he recounts his tale. He does not indicate whether each sub narrator recounts directly to him about what they have lived through before they become child soldiers or he learns about their past through other intermediaries. One may argue that all the sub narrators in the novel occupy the same narrational level. Based on the textual evidence that all the subordinate speakers in the novel are introduced by Birahima the first degree narrator, they all occupy the second level. According to the hierarchy of narrators put forward Prince (1982) and Genette (1980), all sub narrators in *Allah Is Not Obligated* are by correspondence second degree narrators.

4.3.3 Person

In terms of the category of person, Kourouma utilisess an overarching homodiegetic narrator. Birahima is present as major character in the novel. He manifests in a way that is easily noticeable. In narratological studies, the presence of the homodiegetic narrator in the discourse is marked by their significant use of first person pronouns and verbs to designate themselves (Genette, 1980:244). This technique is used as a designation of the narrator indicating that Birahima is at least a witness to the action. As the novel opens, Birahima confirms that he is the narrative agent when he refers to the story he recounts as his. The statement "my bullshit story" (Kourouma, 2000:1) indicates the narrator's relationship with the story. In psychoanalytical terms, the word 'bullshit' hints at the narrator's frustration and disgust about how his war experience has altered his life completely.

From the outset, first person pronouns and verbs are used to refer back to the narrator Birahima. Kourouma engages an autodiegetic narrator. Genette (1980:245) describes an autodiegetic narrator as one who exists as the hero of the narrative he recounts. The language he uses show that the story revolves around Birahima. He says, "The full, final and completely complete title of my bullshit story is: *Allah is not obliged to be fair about the things he does here on earth*" (Kourouma, 2000: 1).

The overarching narrator in *Allah Is Not Obligated* speaks about events and actions that he witnesses with his own eyes. Therefore he presents firsthand information to the narratee. This aspect renders him trustworthy in the eyes of the narratee. His account is

about himself and the events he witnesses, it is not communicated or transformed by an intervening agency as it is presented directly by the experiencing person.

On the other hand, Birahima incorporates events that are reported to him as a testimony by other witnessing characters he interacts with. He thus constructs his account of post-colonial politics based on what he observes directly combined with what is recounted to him by other intratextual characters whom he believes reliable. For this reason, he transfers firsthand information about war and portrays to the narratee about the suffering several children live through in the post-colonial era especially child soldiers.

Birahima's account is believable in that it matches with factual historical events that occur in the history of many African countries, specifically Liberia and Sierra Leone. There are a number of aspects in the novel that correspond with factual events in the history of West African countries. The narrator for example mentions real historical figures such as the former presidents of Liberia Samuel Doe and Charles Taylor and his colleague the Sierra Leonean revolutionary leader Foday Sankoh (Kourouma, 2000:89-194). Some of the events and actions the narrator pronounces about these political figures are factual. Birahima links the aforementioned political figures to several mayhems that occur in post-colonial West Africa. The narrator's incorporation of raw historical facts renders his account authentic to the narratee.

While the narrator exhibits a number of attributes that render him trustworthy, he on the other hand proves to be defective. Kourouma uses a child narrator in *Allah Is Not Obligated*. The witnessing I is a child and so is the narrating I. This observation is based on the textual evidence that the time interval that separates the story time and the time of the narrating is short in that the narrator begins to recount his story immediately he meets Mamadou. According to Jahn (2017), distance between the experiencing I and the narrating I is very crucial to the dramatic effect of the narrative. Birahima's narrative has less distance between the experiencing I and the narrating I. Psychoanalytically, this suggests that Birahima has less time to engage in retrospection over what he experiences in war as a child soldier before he can recount to the narratee. This creates suspicion in the narratee's mind. The emotional trauma that he lives through in war renders him

fallible. It may be argued that at the time of the narrating, Birahima's vision is somewhat still blurry due the emotional distresses.

Another aspect that suggests that Birahima is an unreliable narrator is that he persistently calls the attention of the narratee to the idea that he is not obliged to tell the story. Using psychoanalytical lenses, it may be argued that since the narrator is of the idea that he is not obliged to go on recounting, he may as well not be obliged to be truthful as he recounts. Therefore, it is questionable whether he should be trusted. Birahima also says, "That's all I have got to say today. I'm fed up talking, so I'm going to stop." (Kourouma, 2000:42). The narrator's use of the expression "fed up" lays bare his state of mind. His language reveals that as he is narrating, Birahima is tired and frustrated that the narration has continued for a long time and has to come to an end. This renders the narrator subjective since he is evasive as he narrates.

The narrator also withholds certain information to the narratee, "I could tell you what happened, I remember. But I don't like to tell everyone about it. Because it is a secret, because when I tell the story, I tremble with pain..." (Kourouma, 2000:6). From a psychoanalytical perspective, the narrator's expression above shows that his mind is a depository of painful experiences and emotions. While he admits the exact cause of some of his distresses in some instances, Birahima at times conceals certain experiences. He is of the view that if he stirred them, they would depress him more. By so doing, the narrator keeps suppressed wounds continually bottled-up. Based on this, Birahima is not trustworthy because he chooses not to disclose certain details thereby creating lapses in his tale. Withholding information suggests that at the time of the narrating, the narrator has not fully healed emotionally. It may be argued that although maintaining privacy enables the narrator to reduce nervousness while recounting past painful experiences, it somewhat creates suspense to the narratee who is forced to look for clues as to why Birahima really chooses to withhold certain information.

One may as well argue that although Birahima presents an unmediated account to the narratee, an aspect which renders him reliable, he is somewhat unreliable in that he is a child narrator. Psychologically, a child is prone to innocence. Abrams (2009:235) argues that a narrator may be deemed unreliable if he or she is a child who is innocent, whose

perceptions, explanations and judgment of the issues they present to the reader are defective in the sense that they do not concur with the author's. Using the psychoanalytical perspective, it may be argued that Birahima is limited by lack of maturity and a good sense of judgment typical of a child.

Psychoanalytically, Birahima's unreliability due to innocence is evidenced when he describes subjects concerning sexuality and nudity with obtuseness. The openness with which the narrator talks about his sexual interaction with Rita Baclay lays bare his innocence as a child. His failure to replace morally offensive words with more agreeable expressions is suggestive of lack of restraint and that he is free from embarrassment. This is similar to Bainito (2014:77) who views the narrator in the same text as ambivalent in nature. He observes that Birahima exhibits lack of experience and knowledge as a narrator yet, he is not to be considered as completely naive in that he is also capable of passing judgment on what he observes.

Although Birahima's narrative is recounted in first person, the narrator adopts the use of third person when re-narrating what he does not witness with his own eyes. When Birahima presents an account of the lives of other child soldiers, the language he uses differs from the way he relates what he directly witnesses. The third person perspective is thus incorporated in a first person narrative in order for the narratee to distinguish when Birahima presents a story world he inhabits in or one in which he does not belong to (Baldick, 2001:97).

4.3.4 Functions of the narrator

Kourouma employs a narrative agency that serves all the five functions of the narrator outlined in Genette's (1980) model of narratology. These functions are either implicitly or explicitly undertaken. Birahima undertakes the function of telling the story. He is identified as a narrator because of this function. The narrative is recounted from Birahima's perspective and he manifests explicitly throughout the text. He takes an active part in the story as he describes his experiences of war and political turmoil, as well as the experiences of other child soldiers (Kourouma, 2007).

In directing the story, the narrator exercises control of the flow of the entire narrative from the beginning to the end. While Birahima manifests as an explicit narrator, he assigns peripheral roles to the sub narrators he introduces to assist him in recounting. All the subordinate narrators manifest implicitly, he presents their narratives in third person as he recounts their funeral orations (Kourouma, 2007). Since all sub narrators are limited by death, Birahima takes up the narration of their lives and destinies and presents it to the narratee. He has the authority to judge, transform or hold back certain events and actions he is told about. The overarching narrator's influence on the development of the story is thus evidenced in the way he apportions time for each character's account and manipulates all sub narratives by weaving them with his into a single narrative. Birahima also often pauses the entire narration when tired and resumes when he feels like. He thus frames all subordinate- level narrative agents.

In terms of the communicative function, there exists some communion between the narrator and the narratee. This is mainly evidenced through the idea that Birahima transfers a number of ideas to the narratee. He makes accessible firsthand information about his suffering in war and what other children experience that eventually coerces them to join various warring factions as child soldiers. Secondly, Birahima's narrative makes accessible information about important events that happen in the history of Africa in the post-colonial era especially in the two West African countries Sierra Leone and Liberia. Suffice to say that the novel is a collection of historical events in the two African countries. This is partially in agreement with Kyoore (2004) and Bainito (2014) who investigate historical aspects in the text under study.

One of the first things the narrator confesses to the narratee is his educational background. He confesses that he stopped school in the third grade (Kourouma, 2000:1). This information according to the psychoanalytical literary theory, lays bare Birahima's mental weakness in that he expresses inadequacy in himself as a narrator since he has not had enough education. It may be argued from a psychoanalytical perspective that the narrator is conscious of his educational inadequacy and his lack of fluency in the French language. Thus, he has low self-esteem and notifies the readership beforehand that his language is elementary no wonder he uses dictionaries from time to time to help him put

his story in writing. The narrator attempts to convince the reader to understand his way of narrating. The readership do not question his excessive use of dictionary definitions in his tale.

On the other hand, one may argue from a narratological point of view that Birahima's use of dictionary definitions as he recounts is an incompetent technique that covers up for his lack of knowledge of the French language and education . Words drawn from dictionaries help Birahima make his descriptions vivid to the readership of his tale. It enriches his vocabulary.

The communicative function is also performed when the narrator expresses himself fully to his narratee. He makes known the physical and emotional vulnerability he is subjected to as a child soldier. Birahima openly talks about how he is frequently sexually abused by Rita Baclay, the wife of Colonel of ULIMO faction. The narrator says, "And after I finished eating, she always asked me to take off my clothes. And I would. She would stroke by *bangala* gently, gently, and I'd get a hard-on like a donkey" (Kourouma, 2000:103). Narrating his adventures is a form of catharsis that enables Birahima to let go of the repressed wounds in his mind. This is in line with Eagleton (1996:158) expounds on Freud's ideas. He presents the idea that as the ego adapts to social life through therapeutic techniques, any distressing personality traits that might deviate from the norm are treated.

The communicative function is also evidenced as Birahima openly communicates to the narratee how emotionally traumatised he is by his mother's death. The narrator expresses the idea that he constantly experiences misfortune because his mother died a sad woman due to his attitude. He says at the time of his mother's death, he had run away from home after he heard and believed the accusations that his mother was a witch. "Even now, it hurts, it burns my heart every time I think about Maman's death because I think maybe Maman really wasn't a witch who devoured souls, and that makes me remember the night she died" (Kourouma, 2000:24). From the psychoanalytical perspective, Birahima's belief that nothing ever goes right with him because he is cursed reveals his emotional fears and regrets. At the time of the narrating, Birahima is still troubled by his

attitude towards his mother. His language and attitude reveal his emotional connection to his mother and that he is attached to his past in that these bygone experiences still haunt him as they manifest in form of regret, low self-image and guilt. Guerin (2005:158) notes that, “An overactive superego creates an unconscious sense of guilt.” The superego at work is evidenced when Birahima metes out punishment on himself in form of guilt for having angered his mother before her death, an act he and the rest of the society consider to be a curse.

Birahima exhibits low self-esteem, he constantly says he was once a blameless child as opposed to the kind of child he is at the time he is narrating (Kourouma 2000: 4). This expression suggests that he is of the view that he has himself to blame for all the bad things that happen in his life. It also lays bare the idea that he is less worthy than other people and does not deserve anything good that life offers. While the narrator acknowledges the causes of his emotional wounds and distresses, he still feels overwhelmed. This is because he still has some unsettled conflicts with his past.

The narrator also openly pours his heart out to the narratee when he says how he is bothered by the vindictive shadows of the people he killed during war. “The *gnamas* of the innocent people are stalking me so my whole life and everything round is fucked” (Kourouma, 2000:4). These confessions embody the narrator’s troubled psyche. Birahima has repressed in his mind unpleasant events of his mother’s suffering and the deaths of the war victims he kills as a child soldier. These unsettled conflicts repressed by the narrator keep coming back to his mind, thereby causing him emotional pain which is revealed in form of regret and sadness. This observation is based on the psychoanalytical literary theory which stipulates that the behaviour that humans portray is as a result of what is repressed in their unconscious mind (Balogun, 2011 and Guerin, 2005).

The narrator in *Allah Is Not Obligated* also undertakes the attestation function. He attests that what he recounts is true when he tells the narratee that he witnesses the war in Liberia and Sierra Leone with his own eyes. He performs certain actions such as killing people, as a child soldier. Birahima makes his narrative authentic by mentioning specific

dates in history, places, and names of actual political figures and makes reference to certain factual events in history (Kourouma, 2007). These render him believable to the narratee.

Secondly, the technique of assigning roles of narrating to other characters, covert though they may be contributes to the authenticity of the narration. The most obvious advantage of summoning sub narrators is that they increase the overarching narrator's effectiveness. They corroborate what is said by the overarching narrator. The secondary narrators in *Allah Is Not Obligated* through their different accounts enhance Birahima's reliability; they confirm the truth of what he speaks.

Corroboration in attesting the truth is also observed when Birahima introduces the idea that there are several reasons that lead children to become soldiers. The voice of Birahima is strengthened by the voices of all sub narrators. As Birahima does the funeral orations of the dead child soldiers, he re-narrates the different circumstances many children live through that coerce them to be recruited in various warring factions. For example, Birahima's narrative informs us that he gets trapped in war after his parents die and he goes in search of his aunt whom he has been given as his new mother. The idea that being deprived of parents by death coerces children into soldiering is validated through the life stories of child soldiers like Sarah and Captain Kik (Kourouma, 2000:86-87). This is similar with Valint (2012:1) whose study discovered that the use of multiple narrators in a tale ensures that there is harmony between the characters as they narrate.

Birahima's narrative is somewhat convincing to the narratee in that he attempts to show that he is being sincere by swearing. From time to time, the narrator uses Malinkè expressions, some of which are marked by the invocation of Allah. The narrator uses swearwords to demonstrate the idea that, what the narrator recounts is sanctioned by the all-powerful spirit that is revered. "...I swear like a bastard... I use Malinkè swear words like *faforo!* (my father's cock - or your father's or somebody's father's), *gnamokodè* (bastards) *walahè* (I swear by Allah)" (Kourouma, 2000:2).

The overarching narrator Kourouma engages in *Allah Is Not Obligated* presents a number of ideologies to the narratee. To understand the ideas the narrator communicates, the reader establishes the meaning from what is implicitly and explicitly communicated. The narrator's ideological function is marked through the way Birahima expresses his feelings and opinions. This lays bare his way of reasoning, beliefs he firmly holds and his political views. Throughout the novel, Birahima informs the narratee about a number of phenomena that occur in West African countries like Sierra Leon and Liberia in the post-colonial period. The narrator communicates some cultural beliefs of the Malinkè people. He explains that according to Malinkè tradition, when a child's parents die, the orphaned child is given to a relative who becomes the guardian and takes up all parental responsibilities (Kourouma, 2000:28). Birahima takes the journey in search of his aunt who lives in Liberia as she is his new custodian.

The belief in supernatural power is spread throughout the novel. The narrator recounts how people live in fear of the unknown. For instance, when the narrator's mother Bafitini develops an ulcer that fails to heal, her whole family and society suspect that the ailment is caused by Moussoukoroni the sorcerer and her son. They are of the view that it is a punishment she metes out on Bafitini for refusing to marry her son after the sorcerer offers sacrifices to the forest god in order to prevent Bafitini from dying of severe bleeding as a result of the circumcision she undergoes. Similarly, when the sorcerer and her son die, their deaths are associated with Bafitini who is believed to have caused their death in order to take vengeance for casting a curse on her (Kourouma, 2000:19).

The characters in the text exhibit a strong belief in magic. The narrator recounts how on several occasions sacrifices are offered to appease the gods. This is evident among the war lords in the factions that Birahima and Yacouba wander through who engage sorcerers to offer sacrifices for them to emerge victorious in war and for protection from outside attack (Kourouma, 2000:67).

Birahima also ridicules some cultural practices such as belief in magic, witchcraft and genital mutilation. He portrays the beginning of his mother's suffering. He recounts that his mother Bafitini has her life altered forever when she undergoes circumcision. He

says, “Every year at the ceremony of excision, the djinn of the forest takes one of the girls who has come to be initiated and kills and keeps her for a sacrifice.” (Kourouma, 2000:14). Birahima exposes the negative consequences of female genital mutilation and belief in magic. A number of girls die when undergoing the rite due to such practices. His mother Bafitini could not stop bleeding after the rite was performed on her. When the excisor saves her from dying using her magic, she demands that Bafitini should marry her son. Her refusal to marry the sorcerer’s son results into hatred between Bafitini and the sorcerer’s family and between the two villages. The repugnance that people show towards Bafitini after the sorcerer and her son die is passed on to Birahima.

The narrator presents a number of religious ideologies. Firstly, when characters in the text experience bad luck or any form of undesirable events, they attribute that to the intervention of divine authority. They believe that Allah prearranges the life and fate of people and that though plagued by suffering here on earth, he has reserved some greater joy for them in paradise. When the narrator’s mother suffers from a chronic ulcer, her Muslim family believes that it is an affliction sent by Allah in order to judge her worth. From a psychoanalytical perspective, it may be argued that the narrator portrays the idea that the belief in the supernatural power of Allah has a mollifying effect on the suffering. Similarly when Yacouba the sorcerer worries about what he and Birahima will eat, he eases this burden with the belief that Allah in his infinite never leaves a mouth he has created without food for survival (Kourouma, 2000:42).

On the other hand, it may be argued that the narrator expresses rejection of impractical things. When Yacouba and other grigri men (medicine men) use charms and fetishes to help the ULIMO faction attack their opponents but they do not seem to work (Kourouma, 2007), Birahima openly expresses to the readership his distrust in magical powers and the medicine men who enchant them. He expresses the view that medicine men use magic to deceive, take advantage of and control other people.

Another important idea the narrator exposes is religious hypocrisy. This is shown in two ways. Some characters in the text display a false appearance of virtue. For example, the villagers in Birahima’s village in Ivory Coast portray the picture that they live in

accordance with the teachings of Islam but they exhibit behaviour that does not correspond with their beliefs and claims. This is observed when the characters believe in magic and sorcery which are discouraged by the Islamic religion. The narrator states that, “No one in the village was allowed near Balla’s hut, but actually at night, everyone went to his hut. Some people even went during the day, because Balla practiced sorcery, native medicine, magic and a million other extravagant customs” (Kourouma, 2000:8).

Religious hypocrisy is also portrayed through the characters Prince Johnson and Mother Superior Marie-Beatricè. Johnson commits atrocities in the name of God and as a war lord, he is described as a man of the church. He claims that he is engaged in ethnic war at God’s command in order to get rid of the devil’s men. He assassinates Samuel Doe, his enemy and opponent, whom he believes has committed wrongs against Liberians. Birahima exposes the religious hypocrisy of Marie- Beatricè, a woman who makes love with Prince Johnson despite being a nun (Kourouma, 2000:134).

The narrator describes Papa le Bon as a holding a Quran in one hand and a Bible in another yet he also believes in the power of magic and fetishes, contrary to the teaching of the two religions he upholds. The warlord uses religion to control other characters. For instance, he has his way with women and holds their husbands captive. He sexually exploits the women on the alleged reason that he is casting evil spirits from them.

The narrator also presents political ideologies. He describes how conflict to take over presidency divides the people of Liberia and Sierra Leone into warring factions based on tribe. This breeds hatred among the people as each tribe desires to have one of their tribesmen in power. This facilitates the post-colonial wars as people begin to kill those who belong to tribes other than theirs. When Samuel Doe becomes the Liberian Head of state, he enriches only his tribesmen. “Now Samuel Doe was happy and triumphant, the one leader, surrounded by officers of his own tribe, Krahn officers. The Republic of Liberia became a Krahn state” (Kourouma, 2000:97). A similar observation is made by Bainito (2014) who says that in *Allah Is Not Obligated*, presidency appears as the hope for the community’s prosperity albeit looting of the state coffers. Presidency is not for the state but for the ethnic group.

As he performs the ideological function, the narrator criticises the measures used by war lords in their quest to seize power. Birahima expresses disapproval of the use of children in war, brutality and dictatorship. His condemnation is justified through the portrayal of the dictator Foday Sankoh, who attempts to prevent democratic elections from taking place. He has the hands of numerous Sierra Leonean citizens, including children cut off in order to prevent them from voting for his opponent Almad Tejan Kabbah. “Amputations were rife, and they were carried out with no quarter, no mercy. If a woman showed up with a baby on her back, the woman’s hands were amputated and the baby’s too... because they’ll be voters someday” (Kourouma, 2000:165).

4.3.5 Narratee

Birahima is also a narratee besides being a narrator. The author assigns him two roles as he also listens to the tales about the lives of other child soldiers and later re-narrates. A number of child soldiers give an account of how the misfortunes they experience in their childhood lead them to join the army. The multiple voices heard narrating what they live through are intradiegetic since they are characters within the text whereas Birahima is an extradiegetic narratee of their tales since he does not participate on the plot level in the narratives they present before him (Genette, 1980).

As a narratee, Birahima does not just submissively listen to the different accounts of the sub narrators. He is involved to a great extent not just in the communication process but he also gives life and meaning to the received narratives. Birahima transfers the narratives he receives by re-narrating them to his own narratee. Birahima’s narratees are twofold; he firstly orally recounts his adventure to Mamadou, a narratee within the text, yet he is external to the story Birahima recounts to him. He writes for the reader, an extradiegetic narratee. From the narratological perspective, he is an intradiegetic narrator who addresses an extradiegetic narratee. Mamadou and the readership are the main narratees since they are the ones to whom all the narratives including the mini ones in *Allah Is Not Obligated* are ultimately addressed while Birahima is a secondary narratee. This finding is in line with the hierarchy of narratees provided by Prince (1982).

4.4. Summary of chapter

The chapter has analysed the use of narrative voice in the selected texts using the theory of narratology and the psychoanalytical literary theory. *Stillborn* is told retrospectively by a heterogeneous selection of narrators who recount their experiences of political turmoil such as war and how the images of death leave them with a damaged psyche. The narrators reflect their mental distresses as they narrate. Thus adding to the narrative's emotive effect. The novel is told at four narrational layers but more audibly by Seun an observer who is a minor character. The overarching narrator performs the five functions of a narrator expounded by Genette. The narrator for instance undertakes the communicative function. He pours out his heart to the narratee and confesses his repressed emotional wounds. He also assumes the role of the narratee as he receives the narratives of other characters and re-narrates to the readership. *Allah Is Not Obligated* is told subsequently at two narrational levels by diverse homodiegetic narrators who are distressed by war but more dominantly by Birahima, the hero. The primary narrator undertakes the five functions of the narrator outlined in Genette's model such as the ideological function where he communicates the negative effects of post-colonial wars in West-African countries. Political turbulence traumatises the citizens especially children. For example, the narrator struggles to deal with mental distresses after war. He also undertakes the role of a narratee in that he receives the stories of other characters in his narrative and later recounts to Mamadou, an intradiegetic narratee. He then writes his story for the reader who actively receives the narrative but does not participate in the plot of the story presented before them. Chapter five focuses on the areas of convergence and variance in the use of narrative voice in the two texts. It also discusses the implications of the identified similarities and differences in the two texts.

CHAPTER FIVE

SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES IN THE USE OF NARRATIVE VOICE IN *STILLBORN* AND *ALLAH IS NOT OBLIGED*

5. 1 Overview

The previous chapter examined the use of narrative voice in Oyeyinka's *Stillborn* and Kourouma's *Allah Is Not Obligated*. This chapter builds up on the previous one. It aims to tackle research question two which investigates how the authors of the texts under study use the narrative voice similarly and differently in the two selected works. It further evaluates the significance of the identified similarities and differences to the narrative system of the selected fictional works.

5.2. Similarities and Differences

5.2.1 Time of the Narrating

Regarding the time of the narrating, the two novels are similar in several ways but also differ significantly. The resemblance is that they are both subsequent narratives. Both narrators use the past tense narrative technique over long stretches of the texts. The use of language by both narrators is expressive of bygone events. Thus what both Seun in *Stillborn* and Birahima in *Allah Is Not Obligated* recount has already taken place at the time the narratives are recounted to the narratee. The two narrators make reference to precedents in the history of Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Liberia in the post-colonial period. They portray political turmoil in their respective societies. For instance, they depict how war prior to the time of the narrating claims the lives of citizens, destroys the land and devastates the countries' economies (Oyeyinka, 2014 and Kourouma, 2000).

The two narrators also portray how political confusion leaves the citizens of the Nigeria (Oyeyinka, 2014) and Liberia and Sierra Leone (Kourouma, 2007) especially children with serious, long term, negative consequences such as a damaged psyche. Characters in both texts exhibit disordered behaviour in form of fear, insecurity and grief as a result of the violence they live through during political turbulence. The narrator in *Stillborn* displays a wounded psyche after the assassination of his family. He from time to time loses consciousness due to trauma. The narrator also evidences the unconscious mind

at work through Aisha who is constantly having the same nightmare after she witnesses the deaths of her entire family (Oyeyinka, 2014:103) whereas Birahima in *Allah Is Not Obligated* exhibits guilt for killing innocent people in war (Kourouma, 2000:4). It may be argued that the trauma, nightmares and guilt complex exhibited by characters in both texts point to their unconscious mind and the ego at work. The unpleasant experiences suppressed by the ego as the characters adapt to reality flare up in form of dreams, trauma and guilt. This corroborates Eagleton (1996:136) Guerin (2005:109) who posit that dreams according to Freud reflect the unconscious wishes and anxieties of people.

The two texts however differ in that as the narrators recollect events in the history of Nigeria, Liberia and Sierra Leone, they portray varying periods of time. While Seun goes back in time to events that occur mostly between 1960 and 2010 in Nigeria's political history and notes that for this period, the people of Nigeria had never known what it was like to elect a president democratically (Oyeyinka, 2014:258), Birahima focuses on recollecting events that occur in the 1990s in the political history of Liberia, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire (Kourouma, 2000:98). The period Birahima focuses on is characterised by tribal wars stirred by war lords as they conflict over power and the resources of the named countries.

The novels are also comparable in that they both have long timelines. They are told by narrators who recount events that occur for successive years after Nigeria, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire cease to be colonies of European countries. They capture prominent events that occur and conflicts that arise thereof. Nevertheless, the lengths of the timelines of the two texts differ in that in *Stillborn*, a period of over fifty years is covered (Oyeyinka, 2014) whereas *Allah Is Not Obligated* covers over three years (Kourouma, 2007). From a psychoanalytical point of view, one may argue that since the two novels are retrospective and have long time frames, the memory of narrators may be somewhat inaccurate as the two narrators may be susceptible to forgetting. For this reason, Seun in *Stillborn* is more likely to have memory lapses than Birahima in *Allah Is Not Obligated* whose tale has a shorter timeline as compared to the former.

In both texts, the interval that separates the story time from the time of the narrating is not exactly specified but the language used by both narrators Seun and Birahima reveals

that the period of time between these two points is short in both novels. Even so, there is a variance. It lies in the fact that in *Allah Is Not Obligated* where the narrator recounts instantaneously when the narrator reaches the end of his journey, the narration is much closer to the events narrated (Kourouma, 2000:214). In *Stillborn*, the narrator's description of events shows that although the interval between the two points may be short, the narration is a little distant from the events recounted since Seun does not recount with immediacy like Birahima. This is in agreement with the theory of narratology. Genette (1980:220) posits that in the classical third person narrative, the interval that separates the moment of the narrating from the moment of the story generally appears indeterminate, and the question of how long the temporal interval lasts is irrelevant, the preterite marking a sort of ageless past.

The narrator's expressions in *Stillborn* indicate that, the narrating takes place sometime after the 2010 elections. Seun recounts the story at an unspecified time but sometime after the citizens begin to appreciate the newly elected leadership's positive impact due to changes he stirs in Nigeria's economy (Oyeyinka, 2014:258). The elections occur as the novel reaches the resolution. However, it is interesting to note that the interval between experience and time of the narrating is much shorter in *Allah Is Not Obligated*. This is supported by the fact that Birahima begins recounting his story immediately he reaches the end of his journey, upon meeting his cousin Mamadou who asks him to orally recount his adventures. Although the interval between experience and narrating is indeterminate in both texts, it may be argued from a psychoanalytical point of view that the longer the interval, the more time the narrator has for introspection before they begin narrating and vice versa. Seun in *Stillborn* who recounts after a lapse of time is thus associated with more self-reflection, he has more time to examine his inner thoughts and feelings than Birahima in *Allah Is Not Obligated* who recounts with immediacy.

In *Stillborn*, the time of the narrating is only made known from the narrator's use of the narrative past but in *Allah Is Not Obligated*, there are other textual markers apart from the tense used. The time of the narrating can also be predicted in the narrator's expression that after his oral narration, he puts his story in writing for the readership. The plan to write is provoked when Mamadou takes Birahima, Yacouba and Sekou with him to his

home and promises to better their lives. As Birahima scans through the dictionaries he has just come into possession of, the thought to put his adventures in writing crosses his mind. He says, “I was flicking through the dictionaries I’d just inherited... That’s when the idea popped into my calabash (my head) to write down my adventures from A-Z. To recount them with clever French words...” (Kourouma, 2000:214).

5.2.2 Narrative Levels

In terms of narrative levels, both novels are made up of a multiple narrator structure. A varied range of speakers with dissimilar backgrounds and experiences of emotional trauma are engaged. (Genette, 1980:228) posits that multiple narrator structure situations occur where narratives within narratives are told. In the texts under study, all the narrators of the embedding and the embedded narratives employed are identified by name and gender. These each relate their experiences from different perspectives. However, the variance is that in *Stillborn*, Oyeyinka chooses a number of young and old men and women who witness Nigeria’s political struggles at different stages from independence to the year 2010 as narrators whereas in *Allah Is Not Obligated*, Kourouma engages various children, both boys and girls who have suffered loss such as deaths of parents as a result of war to serve as narrators.

The study established that in the two selected texts, overarching narrators are used in a more distinctive manner. Each selected novel has a single narrator who is utilised in a more characteristic way than other narrators. (Prince, 1982: 16) says, an overarching narrator is the one who ultimately introduces the entire narrative (including all the mini narratives comprising parts of it) in cases where multiple speakers are engaged. The overarching narrators, Seun and Birahima are the ones that introduce the matrix narratives in the two texts, they feature explicitly as they are heard more audibly and exhibit more influence than other speakers. Seun and Birahima have control of the narrative from the beginning to the end of the two novels. Their influence is also evidenced in their ability to delegate the narrating role to other characters in their tales. They introduce ideas which they leave to sub narrators to develop. In *Stillborn*, Seun uses the prologue to introduce the idea that Nigeria is raped by her people immediately she becomes independent (Oyeyinka, 2014: xiii). The idea is developed further in the

various sub narrators' accounts. Similarly, in *Allah Is Not Obligated*, Birahima introduces the idea that a number of children are coerced to become child soldiers due to difficulties they live through. This is expounded further by other child soldiers the primary narrator invokes to narrate their experiences during war (Kourouma, 2000).

However, the dissimilarity in levels of narrators between the two texts lies in the fact that the sub narrators engaged exhibit different degrees of audibility. In *Stillborn*, overt and covert sub narrators are utilised and a few manifest somewhere between overtness and covertness. Some sub narrators such as Dolapo and Emeka are overt, Emeka's wife and Muktar manifest implicitly; their voices are lethargic, while Nneka and Aisha manifest somewhere in between covertness and overtness. On the contrary, in *Allah Is Not Obligated*, apart from Birahima the overarching narrator, all sub narrators he engages to assist him recount the tale manifest covertly.

The overarching narrators in both texts delegate the narrating role to other characters within their tales. Therefore there are multiple narratives that are subordinated to the stories they recount. *Stillborn* has four levels of narrators while *Allah Is Not Obligated* is made up of two. Seun and Birahima recount embedding narratives while the sub narrators they introduce recount embedded narratives. Jahn (2017) refers to the embedding narrative as the matrix narrative as it is a narrative within which other narratives originate and the embedded narrative as a hyponarrative. Level one is thus occupied by Seun and Birahima who are superordinate narrators.

The dissimilarity in narrative levels is that in *Stillborn*, levels two to four are occupied by multiple sub narrators whereas in *Allah Is Not Obligated* all the sub narrators occupy the same level since they are all introduced by Birahima. This findings is in agreement with Prince (1982) and Genette (1980) who in their narratological work prescribe the hierarchy in which narrators can be classified in narrating instances where the creator of the work chooses to engage two or more speakers to narrate.

In *Stillborn* as opposed to *Allah Is Not Obligated*, some sub narrators occupy more than one level. They move from one level to another. For example, Dolapo occupies the second degree in Seun's story but in Emeka's story, he manifests as a third degree

narrator. Similarly, Ranti occupies the second level when introduced by Seun, the overarching narrator yet in Dolapo's narrative, the same character exists as a third degree narrator (Oyeyinka, 2014). This narrative technique has been utilised successfully in *Stillborn* but has not been utilised at all in *Allah Is Not Obligated*.

Through narrative embedding, there is significant use of oral story telling. Seun for instance receives information from Dolapo and Emeka and all the narrators whose accounts he includes in his tale. The only form of non-oral information he receives are the tapes that he obtains from Emeka, containing evidence that links Ahmed the Alhaji to the genocides in Jos which Muktar records in order to later betray his brother and overthrow him. These tapes go missing but Emeka makes them available to Seun before he dies. The tapes validate Emeka's oral account so Seun and his group who later use the information contained in them to influence people not to vote for Ahmed during the 2010 elections (Oyeyinka, 2014:262). Similarly, in *Allah Is Not Obligated* Birahima has all the tales he grafts onto the matrix narrative recounted to him orally. Unlike in *Stillborn*, there is no textual evidence that shows that Birahima is at any point provided with non-oral information by any of the sub narrators. Oral story telling is a therapeutic tool. It is not just utilised by the overarching narrators in the two texts but is also evidenced as all the multiple sub narrators give accounts of their experiences of suffering to the narratee. It telling brings relief and healing of the mind to the narrators. This is somewhat in contrast with Louw (2015) who posits that the act of narration through letter writing is an essential situation in healing of the narrator's troubled psyche.

5.2.3 Person

In terms of the category of person, both authors of the texts under study engage homodiegetic overarching narrators. Homodiegetic overarching narrators are speakers who are present as characters in stories they tell (Genette, 1980 and Jahn, 2017). Seun and Birahima both participate as characters in the narratives they recount. Even so, Oyeyinka in *Stillborn* employs a speaker who participates less centrally as character in his tale. From a narratological perspective, Seun is associated with weaker degree of the homodiegetic, he takes up the peripheral role of an observer as he watches the lives and destinies of the protagonists Emeka and Dolapo (Oyeyinka, 2014). He is not the

hero of the narrative he recounts. On the contrary, Kourouma's narrator in *Allah Is Not Obligated* is involved more centrally in the narrative he recounts, in that he is an autodiegetic narrator. Unlike Seun, Birahima is not in the periphery, he is rather the protagonist of the tale he presents. The role the author assigns Birahima represents the strong degree of the homodiegetic. These findings are in harmony with Genette (1980) who expounds on the two varieties of homodiegetic narrators discussed above.

From a psychoanalytical perspective, the two primary narrators engaged in the texts under study each produce a different dramatic effect to the narratives they recount. It may be argued that Seun in *Stillborn* exhibits compassion for the two protagonists in his tale since he is peripheral narrator who observes the lives of the protagonists. On the contrary, Birahima in *Allah Is Not Obligated* is the hero and he recounts a story about himself. Therefore, he does not exhibit the compassion the narrator in the former demonstrates.

Both authors of texts under study create narrators who witness and narrate what they experience in their childhood. The two novels differ in that, in Oyeyinka's *Stillborn*, there is use of an adult narrative voice who evokes previous happenings after a considerable lapse of time. Seun mostly recounts events he witnesses as a child but some of the events he recounts, he learns about them in his adulthood. For example, he learns more about the two protagonists, Emeka and Dolapo, towards the end of their lives sometime after he graduates from University (Oyeyinka, 2014:224). From a narratological and psychoanalytical perspective, it may be argued that this demonstrates that there is a durational and intellectual gap that makes a distinction between Seun, the experiencing I, and the same character as a narrating I. The narrating I is more mature and much wiser than the experiencing I.

As opposed to the former, in *Allah Is Not Obligated*, Kourouma constructs a narrative voice who at the time of the narrating is a child recounting about his childhood as soldier (Kourouma, 2014). The time of narrating closely follows experience, thus Birahima is associated with being emotional due to what he lives through. He is not evidently distinguishable from the witnessing I, since Birahima begins to narrate immediately he reaches the end of his journey. The immediacy with which he narrates prevents him from

exhibiting intellectual growth which he could have attained with time lapse as Seun in *Stillborn* does. So, Birahima lacks the hindsight and expansiveness with which Seun narrates. From a psychoanalytical view point, it may be argued that Birahima unlike Seun exhibits less self-consciousness and less self- acceptance. For example, at the time of the narrating, he still finds it difficult to forgive himself for hurting his ailing mother and is still haunted by thoughts of people he kills while Seun demonstrates acceptance when he faces distress as well as flexibility. He exhibits growth with the passage of time and this is demonstrated in his ability to overcome emotional wounds and worries. Healing enables Seun to move on immediately after the deaths of Emeka and Dolapo.

Both primary narrators in the two texts under study narrate events that they witness with their own eyes and accounts which are reported to them by other characters they interact with, whom they believe to be reliable. Seun admits to the narratee that he is directly told by the experiencing characters and inquires about the lives of other characters whose accounts he incorporates in his narrative but Birahima does not clearly acknowledge how he learns about other characters' lives and destinies he includes in his tale. The only tale that he explains how he learns about is the one he is told by his grandmother about his mother's childhood and birth. A close examination of the rest of the embedded narratives reveals that Birahima acquires the information as he interacts with other characters, based on the evidence that most the sub narrators he invokes are child soldiers whom he meets as he wanders through warring factions.

5.2.4 Functions of the Narrator

Both overarching narrators in the texts under study undertake the five functions of narrators put forward by Genette (1980) in his model of narratology. Seun and Birahima execute the most recognisable role of narrating. The two novels are predominantly related from their outlooks. However, how the two speakers carry out this function varies to a great extent. Seun in *Stillborn* begins recounting by disguising himself as an omniscient narrator but as the story progresses, he manifests explicitly as a narrator who is also a character. Seun recounts about his childhood with other characters as well as his adulthood with the two protagonists Emeka and Dolapo. He describes in detail their role in the history of Nigeria and the distresses he and other characters live through

during political turbulence (Oyeyinka, 2014). On the contrary, Birahima in *Allah Is Not Obligated* performs the role of narrating from the beginning as an explicit narrator who recounts the story of his own life. Birahima reveals to the narratee his experience of war in Liberia and Sierra Leone along with other children who are trapped as child soldiers in several warring factions (Kourouma, 2007).

Having been traumatised earlier in life, it may be argued from a psychoanalytical viewpoint that when both Seun and Birahima perform the role of narrating in the two texts, they experience healing of the mind. By virtue of sharing their experiences of suffering with the narratee, they get rid of distresses repressed for a long time thereby producing a good effect on their psychological and emotional well-being. This is in agreement with Goldberg (2006:122) who postulates that narratives recounted by traumatised victims often bear significant consequences, or at times even therapeutic relations: a traumatic experience produces an immediate need to tell a story and to formulate one's life story.

The two novels are also comparable in that; the overarching narrators undertake the directing function similarly. Seun and Birahima exhibit control of the flow of the narratives they recount. They decide how to tell the stories. For example, they introduce the matrix narratives and institute several narrators whose narratives they graft onto theirs in order to shape the embedding narratives. Both interlocutors decide which sub narrator's account to present, when it is presented and how long it should be. Birahima and Seun also correspondingly direct the flow of their respective narratives as they recount by deciding when to pause them, in order for them to add their own comments and describe other phenomena or characters' experiences

However, the way the authors of the two texts engage narrators to perform the directing function is somewhat dissimilar. Birahima interrupts the flow of his narration in a peculiar way. He often dismisses the audience to rest and the entire narration comes to a pause. He and all other interlocutors who assist him in recounting become silent for some time. This results into pause in time and story until Birahima has rested enough to resume (Kourouma, 2000:91). In *Stillborn*, apart from descriptive pauses, there are no

atypical pauses that require a halt in time and story. At no time does the narration pause with a situation where the narratees idly wait for the narrator to speak. Whenever Seun temporarily stages out of the view of the audience, there is always one sub narrator at a given time whom he institutes to address the audience. From a psychoanalytical perspective, it may be argued that pausing the entire narration renders Birahima unreliable as the narratee is forced to look for clues in the discourse in order discover the real reason he pauses the entire narration rather than weariness whereas Seun whose narrative is devoid of such pauses as Birahima utilises proves himself a reliable narrator.

The directing function is undertaken similarly in both texts through the use of foreshadowing and flashbacks. Flashbacks are observable as Seun and Birahima often interrupt the chronological sequence of their narratives in order to fill in their narratee with what happened in the past. However, there is a difference in the way the two narrators use anticipation. Seun in *Stillborn* foreshadows events based available facts. He and his group observe the attitude of the multitudes who turn up for Emeka and Dolapo's funeral that they would have enough support if they tried to influence them to vote wisely in the impending elections (Oyeyinka, 2014:261). In *Allah Is Not Obligated*, omens and divination are used to prefigure future occurrences. Birahima throughout his narrative portrays how omens are used to determine destinies. That his mother's life would be full of suffering is foretold by howling hyenas in the mountains and crying owls on top of roofs of huts. His journey with Yacouba is foretold by omens such as owls and singing touracos signifying either bad or good luck (Kourouma, 2000:38).

In *Allah Is Not Obligated*, the directing function is executed distinctively as opposed to the way it is undertaken in *Stillborn*. Birahima directly addresses the extradiegetic narratee as though they were manifest as in a dialogue. "I'm not obliged to tell my dog's-life story, wading through dictionary after dictionary. I'm fed up of talking, so I'm going to stop for today. You can all fuck off" (Kourouma, 2000:91). This statement markedly shows that the narrator is aware of his audience, he directs his speech to them and he informs them about the direction that the narrative is moving along as he is about to pause. The narrator in *Stillborn* on the contrary does not openly announce to the narratee on the flow of the narrative as does Birahima.

The words ‘wading through dictionary to dictionary’ that Birahima uses also point to the communicative function. They also suggest that the narrator directs his narrative towards a particular audience. It may be argued from a psychoanalytical perspective that as Birahima consults dictionaries in order to find the right vocabulary to help him put his ideas in writing as he communicates to the readership, he is conscious of his educational inadequacy and fluency in French. He says “to make sure I tell you the story of my fucked-up life in proper French, I’ve got four different dictionaries so that I don’t get confused with big words” (Kourouma, 2000:3). Birahima is conscious of the narratee’s presence although they may not manifest explicitly. In *Stillborn*, Seun does not use any direct expression that reveal that what he communicates in his narrative is directed towards a specific audience as does Birahima who mentions the specific narratees who he targets. Birahima says, “I need to be able to explain stuff because I want all sorts of different people to read my bullshit: colonial *toubabs*, Black Nigger African natives and all who can understand French.” (Kourouma, 2000:3). This suggests that he has in mind whom he wants to communicate to as he puts his story in writing.

While the childhood memories of both narrators communicate the height of the trauma they undergo, the communicative function is evidenced varying in the narrators’ use of language. Birahima’s rude language in *Allah Is Not Obligated* lays bare his distresses more than does Seun’s use of polite language in *Stillborn*. Birahima’s use of crude words and expressions shock the reader yet this enables him to have communion with the audience. He addresses the narratee using the second person pronoun ‘you’ and bluntly speaks to them about what irritates him. He shows irritation that he has narrated his story for a long time. He sometimes exercises authority as the donor of the narrative by forcefully telling the narratee to go away or wait while he rests. Birahima temporarily dismisses his narratee when he suddenly says, “I’m going to stop here today, you can all fuck off” (Kourouma, 2000:91). Bainito (2014:84) reveals that the narrator’s language in *Allah Is Not Obligated* shows forms of particular violence. Psychoanalytically, Birahima’s experiences in war as a child soldier as opposed to Seun who experiences war at a distance influences what he later becomes. This is evidenced by the fact that at the time of the narrating, the cruelty he is subjected to earlier on is reflected in his language.

In the communicative function, both overarching narrators present to their narratee information about the ruin of their countries due to struggle for power among the natives. Birahima's speech is aggressive, this narrative technique that allows him to be more emphatic as he communicates to the reader as compared to Seun. The two narrators convey knowledge about post-colonial political upheavals in African countries. They present experiences of war, ethnic conflict among other aspects. The two novels are similar in that both overarching narrators orient their stories towards themselves. They adopt a confessional tone. They disclose the anguish of losing their loved ones. They openly communicate their inner struggles to the readership. This is evidenced through their use of affective language and the behaviour they exhibit demonstrates that the two narrators are attached to their past. Seun's language and actions show that he has an emotional attachment with to deceased parents especially his mother. This is suggested when he asks Dolapo to recount her life (Oyeyinka, 2014:225). Birahima also shows the affection he shared with his mother and grandmother. This is evidenced in his memories of their lives together especially the night Bafitini dies. His language is emotive, when he describes the day he bid farewell to his grandmother as he went in search of Mahan in Liberia. He evidences his attachment to her when he says,

One morning at first cockcrow, Yacouba came to our hut. It was still dark; grandmother woke me up and gave me rice and peanut sauce... she put a silver coin in my hand that was probably all the savings she had. Even today, I can still feel how warm the silver coin felt in the palm of my hand. She cried and went back to the hut. I'd never see her again (Kourouma, 2000:37).

Another similarity between the texts under study relates to how the authors engage the overarching narrators to carry out the testimonial function. Both narrators confirm the truth of what they recount. They mention specific dates, events and places and names of factual political figures of notable worth in the history of the countries where the novels are set, namely Nigeria in *Stillborn* and Liberia and Sierra Leone in *Allah Is Not Obligated*. While Birahima mentions political figures in the history of Liberia such as Samuel Doe, Prince Johnson, Charles and the Sierra Leonean rebel leader Foday Sankoh (Kourouma,

2000:167), Seun mentions political figures in the history of Nigeria like Gowon and Obasanjo and all through the course of the novel, there is constant mention of dates and reference to the Biafran war against the Nigerian army (Oyeyinka, 2014:222).

The narrators, Seun and Birahima also attest to the truth of what they recount by introducing other narrators to assist them narrate. The accounts of the sub narrators invoked in both texts validate what the primary narrators relate and all their accounts are harmonised into a single, logical and reliable narrative. However dissimilarity lies in the observation that the testimonial function is undertaken strikingly by Birahima in *Allah Is Not Obligated* than it is by Seun in *Stillborn*. Birahima authenticates his account further by swearing using Malinkè swear words, calling upon Allah or swearing by someone's father (Kourouma, 2000:2). This is partially similar to Bainito (2014) who observes that Birahima's insults and swear words reveal his identity as a Muslim and of the Malinkè ethnic group. These help in the validation of truth in his narrative.

The fifth function of the narrator according to Genette's (1980) model of narratology is the ideological function. The two novels under study have a somewhat similar ideological orientation. The ideological function of the narrator is observed in terms of the major ideas that Seun and Birahima convey to their narratee. The novels are comparable. For example, it may be argued from a psychoanalytical viewpoint that the two narrators portray religion as a weapon of oppression. In *Stillborn*, Ahmed the Alhaji, a devote Muslim who has been to Mecca for pilgrimage is portrayed to be a hypocritical, shrewd politician. Along with his half-brother Muktar, he uses religion to punish his enemies. He settles scores with his enemies by instructing his followers to kill Christians in Jos. "This time you must send out a strong message, burn down the churches, kill everyone inside, let the whole nation, the whole world know of this injustice" (Oyeyinka, 2014:119). In *Allah Is Not Obligated*, individuals are harsh towards other people with religious beliefs opposed to theirs. Muslims for instance are harsh towards those who practice magic as it is contrary to their beliefs. Religion as a tool of oppression is also portrayed through Bafitini whose suffering is believed to be an ordeal that Allah makes her undergo in order to test her faith (Kourouma, 2000:10).

It may also be argued that both narrators portray the idea that religion is a source of comfort in times when characters face adversity. In *Stillborn*, religion serves as a place of refuge in times of difficulty. When the Christians are about to be murdered, they hide and pray in their churches as they are of the view that there they are protected (Oyeyinka, 2014:130). In *Allah Is Not Obligated*, Birahima's mother is reminded to pray during the time she is sick. She finds relief in the idea that her suffering is temporal, painful though it may be and that Allah has ordained that she undergoes this experience in order to purify her for paradise. Similarly, Yacouba exhibits faith in Allah during adversity. His belief that Allah never sleeps, he watches over them and cannot leave them hungry gives him resilience. It enables him to work hard at his magic in order to provide food for himself and Birahima (Kourouma, 2000:189). From a psychoanalytical viewpoint it may be argued that this form of religious conviction exhibited by characters in both novels produces a positive effect such as healing of the mind especially in times of adversity.

Religious hypocrisy is an idea that permeates the two novels yet it is portrayed differently in the two texts. In *Stillborn*, religious hypocrisy is evidenced when characters of different religious groupings exhibit enmity towards each other, an aspect that is contrary to religious teachings (Oyeyinka, 2014:131). In *Allah Is Not Obligated*, Prince Johnson exhibits religious hypocrisy when he murders his enemy and claims that he does so in the name of God (Kourouma, 2000:131). Saint Bèatrice Marie also does not live up to her beliefs as a nun in that she makes love to Prince Johnson (ibid:134) and Colonel Papa le Bon sexually abuses women as he claims that it is some form of exorcism (Kourouma:2000:64).

The two narrators also communicate some political ideas. They both portray the idea that during the post-colonial period, African countries experience a struggle for power. When the Europeans hand over power to the native Africans to rule themselves, a number of political leaders attempt to seize power using desperate measures. This divides the people based on religion and tribal lines and consequently stirs war among the citizens thereby causing a number of effects. However, these ideas are depicted differently by both narrators. Seun in *Stillborn* for instance notes that man's wounded psyche is one of the effects of political confusion in Nigeria. He associates it largely

with imprisonment and loss of loved ones through death and separation. The lives of several characters are altered forever due to incarceration (Oyeyinka, 2014:99). It may be argued that detention is a psychological torture that political prisoners undergo which leaves them with life-long repercussions such as failure to fit in society. Emeka's life changes completely after incarceration in that when his family cannot recognise him, he fails to introduce himself to them but chooses to watch them at a distance. On the contrary, Birahima attributes the damaged psyche of characters in his narrative to sexual violence and murder due to the political conflict and domestic violence they live through (Kourouma, 2007).

The idea of dictatorship is used in the two works to heighten the political ideologies presented by Seun and Birahima although each narrator portrays it in his own way. In *Stillborn*, Seun notes that the presidents that rule Nigeria from its independence in 1960 to 2010 exhibit autocratic control. They use force such as election malpractice and violence to seize power or to pass it on to their stooges (Oyeyinka, 2014:258). Similarly in *Allah Is Not Obligated*, dictatorship is evidenced through the domination exhibited by several military heads of state in Liberia and the oppression that the Sierra Leonean rebel leader Foday Sankoh subjects the citizens to in his quest to seize power and prevent his opponents from winning the elections (Kourouma, 2007).

Another political idea that permeates the two texts although discussed differently since the novels capture different settings is the struggle to maintain power and amass wealth. In both texts, presidents who are in power tend to only better the lives of their tribesmen. In order to stop dishonesty and inequality, each tribe fights for their own tribesmen to seize power so that they can have access to the nation's resources. In *Stillborn* there is a struggle for resources between the citizens of different regions and in the forefront are political leaders such as Gowon and Ojukwu. These war lords each have the support of their tribesmen. The narrator identifies the conflict over power and resources to as cause of the tribal war between the Biafran and Nigerian armies (Oyeyinka, 2014:59). In *Allah Is Not Obligated*, holding the presidential position and controlling a warring faction with the most resources commands more power among other warring factions. There is inequality in that the people want to hold on to power and amass wealth while other

citizens live in poverty. It is for this reason that war lords in Liberia and Sierra Leone surround themselves only with their tribesmen and characters portray hatred for other people who are not of their tribe (Kourouma, 2000:97) or use desperate measures such as kidnapping others in order to seize power (ibid:149).

The two narrators also present social ideologies although inversely. In *Stillborn*, the narrator presents the story young Nneka whose mother wants to marry her off to Chief for material possession. Seun uses this mini narrative to criticise early marriages. The narrator also ridicules marriages that occur for social or economic advantage rather than mutual affection (Oyeyinka, 2014:3). On the contrary, *Allah Is Not Obligated* portrays social ideas such as the difficulties children are subjected to. These include child labour, sexual abuse, deaths of parents, being deprived of education due to poverty and so on (Kourouma, 2007). This is in line with Bainito (2014) who explored childhood forms of violence portrayed in the novel among other aspects.

There are cultural ideologies that the narrator in *Allah Is Not Obligated* communicates which are not observable in *Stillborn*. Birahima's narrative includes some cultural materials that are transmitted from one generation to another. His narrative makes known some African oral traditions but centres mostly on those observed by the Malinkè people such as holding a meeting after the death of a family member and adoption of orphaned children by another family member. The idea of belief in supernatural forces such as the use of magic, witchcraft, sorcery also permeates the novel. The narrator also reveals the positive and negative effects of cultural traditions such as the circumcision of boys and girls at puberty. He portrays the idea that children who are circumcised together create lifelong ties as does Yacouba and Sekou. Kourouma (2000:14) also portrays the negative effects of circumcision such as the death of many young girls as the rite is performed are also revealed to the narratee

5.2.5 Narratee

Both Seun and Birahima also assume the role of the narratee besides being the primary narrative agencies in the two texts. They both listen to the narratives about the lives of other intratextual characters but they are not involved as actors on the plot level of the narratives recounted to them. From a narratological viewpoint, the multiple voices heard

narrating what they live through are intradiegetic thus when Seun and Birahima receive their narratives, they become intradiegetic narratees. Further, both Seun and Birahima do not just passively listen to the different accounts of the sub narrators, they participate in the communication process as active recipients and contribute meaning to the received narratives. They transmit the narratives received by re-narrating them to their own narratees. This is in accordance with Genette (1980) and Fludernik (2009) who expound on the role of the narratee. They posit that the narratees are not inactive receivers of the narratives.

However, Birahima in *Allah Is Not Obligated* has two kinds of narratee as opposed to Seun in *Stillborn*. Firstly, he orally recounts his adventures to Mamadou, an intradiegetic narratee since he is a character in the matrix narrative although he is not present as a character in the story Birahima recounts to him. He then puts his story in writing for the reader. In this case, Birahima takes the role of intradiegetic narrator who addresses a narratee that is outside the story world he presents. The reader does not participate on the plot level of the story being recounted but still contributes meaning to the received narrative.

5.3 Significance of the Similarities and Differences in the Use of Narrative Voice

5.3.1 Time of the Narrating

Stillborn and *Allah Is Not Obligated* utilise narrators who recount subsequent narratives. From the narratological point of view, retrospective narrations produce a past tense narrative whose events and action units have all happened in the past (Jahn, 2017 and Genette, 1980). It may be argued that this narrative technique is significant in the two texts in that both overarching narrators are enabled to reflect on past events and their experiences. Consequently, they exhibit more authority as they interpret facts and are able to analyse past events and actions objectively because they have had time to meditate upon them.

While both narrators recount events that have already elapsed, Seun's narrative in *Stillborn* is distinguished by use of a prologue. The narrator already knows what happened but employs the prologue to foreshadow to the readership what the narrative is all about. Siluonde (2015) observes that the prologue is used by the narrator to

manipulate the story. In *Bitterness*, the prologue tells the reader what will befall the characters. Jahn (2017) in his narratological oeuvre observes that prologues in literary texts are exposition-oriented. Their significance is to introduce characters and setting, often via descriptive statements. While such prologues tell a lot about the quality of the narrative voice, they do not necessarily reveal whether the narrative is going to be homodiegetic or heterodiegetic. In *Stillborn*, the narrator's language in the prologue somewhat suggests that the narrator already knows what happened when he recounts about Nigeria's beginning and that she is later raped by her people (Oyeyinka, 2014:xii).

In the prologue in *Stillborn*, the narrator often switches between the narrative past and the present tense. This technique does not clearly reveal to the narratee whether the main narration will be retrospective, simultaneous or interpolative in nature. It is only when the story begins to unfold that it is identified as a subsequent narration. Prince (1982:19) observes that the tenses used in narrating a series of events do not automatically match with the time of the narrated in relation to the narration. To give but one example, the present tense can be used in the middle of other tenses to relate certain past events more vividly while Jahn (2017) notes that tense switch is normally used to produce an effect of intensification or distancing (moving into / out of focus) or change of perspective and so on.

Concerning the gap that exists between the experience and the time of telling, the interval that separates the two points is short in both texts. However, in *Stillborn*, the narrator recounts after a lapse of time. This narrative strategy is significant as the narrator has more time to retrospect on what he experiences. Psychoanalytically, it may be argued that the interval between experience and narrating is important as it helps the narrator to examine his inner thoughts and feelings before presenting the story to the narratee. In *Allah Is Not Obligated* where Birahima recounts his war adventures with immediacy, the interval between experience and narrating is shorter than in the former. This narrative technique is significant as the narrator's reminiscences are rather recent at the time of the narrating. Since Birahima has not fully dealt with the repressed wounds in his psyche at the time of the narrating, the reader has more access to the narrator's behaviours that reflect his unconscious desires, wounds and unresolved conflicts unlike

Seun in *Stillborn* who exhibits less negative emotions as he has worked through the trauma he earlier lives through.

The contrasting statuses of the two narrators are significant to the dramatic effect of the narratives. A narrator who recounts after a lapse of time gives the narrative a different dramatic effect as compared to a narrator who recounts with immediacy. From a psychoanalytical viewpoint, Seun's status as an adult narrator who recounts after a lapse of time renders himself reliable, more objective and mature in the eyes of the narratee because he spends time to reflect on the past and demonstrates that he has healed from past traumatic experiences as he narrates. Seun thus has more interpretive power as he narrates. On the contrary, Birahima's status as a child narrator who recounts with immediacy gives the narrative a sense of urgency but renders his narrative subjective as he is still traumatised by his war adventures at the time of the narrating. He also proves to be unreliable since he exhibits innocence and immaturity typical of a child. This is evidenced in his speech that lacks civility. Birahima's informative power is limited by immediacy since he has less time for introspection. Hence, he demonstrates less emotional healing and growth. Jahn (2017) confirms that temporal and psychological distance enables the narrating I to grow and become wiser than the experiencing I.

The texts under study both have long timelines. The narrators interweave several accounts that occur at various points during the colonial period into one narrative. The significance of this similarity is that it evidences how inversely narrators can manipulate time frames. Oyeyinka's narrator recounts a story that covers events that occur in a period of over fifty years. He manipulates the long time frame by summarising some events, he compresses several years of his life abroad in a single sentence when he says, he had not returned home for six years (Oyeyinka, 2014:212). From a narratological perspective, the significance of summary to the time frame of the novel *Stillborn* is that it enables the narrator to concentrate on covering important events that advance the plot of his narrative. This is in agreement with Chatman (1978:68) who observes that summaries are used to condense events. Using psychoanalytical lenses, one may argue that summary is significant as narrators use it to avoid focusing on recounting in detail events that would stir their mental distresses.

Dissimilarly, Birahima's narrative stretches to cover a period of over three years. As he explains his adventures, he does not just focus on himself but skirts around by giving elaborate information about each faction he wanders through and includes accounts of several child soldiers' suffering and the trauma they live through individually and severally. The narrative's time frame is also lengthened by repetitions and the technique of defining difficult vocabulary for the narratee (Kourouma, 2000:3). It may be argued that a long time frame allows the narrator to give more details about his adventures and results into creation of a complex plot. Repeating allows the narrator to forcefully present important ideas in the text. Some phrases he repeats advance the text's ideological orientation. Ndebele (2007:43) notes that authors often give characters personalities, they allow them to express themselves in a particular way in order to distinguish them from other voices in the text. From a narratological perspective, repeating and defining words are verbal character tags that distinguish Birahima's voice from other narrators in the novel.

5.3.2 Narrative Levels

The two novels under study are told at multiple narrational levels. This occurs when the primary speakers pass the role of narrating to multiple sub narrators who assist them recount their respective tales. This technique has similar implications in both novels in that the tales stir imagination more deeply since they are told by various narrators with different experiences. In *Stillborn*, Seun's narration about the massacre of his family has a dramatic impact but Aisha's and Nneka's accounts of the massacres in Jos increase the dramatic effect of the novel in that they are more emotive. Similarly, Birahima in *Allah Is Not Obligated* narrates that children experience suffering during post-colonial war in Liberia and Sierra Leone. This idea is told without dramatic force but when he describes the experiences of other characters, the narration has an emotive effect to the narratee. He says, "The following morning, when there was no more noise...Kik went to his family hut and found his father's throat cut, his brother's throat cut, his mother and sister raped and their heads bashed in" (Kourouma, 2000:90).

Narratives within narratives create a multiple layered narrational structure in both texts. The relevance of this technique to the narrative system of the two texts is that it makes

the novels become more complex and detailed as the narratives interweave. *Stillborn* and *Allah Is Not Obligated* show diverse aspects that the readership can use to view the narrative from but the tales still coordinate. This is in accordance with Valint (2012) who posits that a multiple-narrator structure enables unity and harmony among narrators rather than contestation.

The multiple narrator-structure in the selected texts is important as it is an artistic strategy that reinforces characterisation in narratives. Each narrative, including the mini ones in other narratives have their own set of characters and each of them has a dramatic effect on the matrix narrative. However, in *Stillborn*, some characters in one narrative may as well play a role in another sub narrator's account. For example Ranti is a second degree character-narrator in Seun's narrative (Oyeyinka, 2014:170) but occupies the third degree when introduced by Dolapo (Oyeyinka, 2014:226). In *Allah Is Not Obligated*, expansion of characterisation is attained through narrative embedding although the technique is not extensively used as it is in the former where some sub narrators occupy multiple levels in the narrational layer. Birahima's grandmother for instance recounts to him a narrative and in it, Bafitini's role as a character in the text is developed further (Kourouma, 2000:13). Ojiambo (2014) observes that narrative embedding is essential in the creation of multiplicity in texts. The dissimilarity in terms of narrative embedding in the selected texts illustrates the diverse ways authors may distribute and swap roles among characters in an artistic representation.

The multiple narrator-structure is instrumental to the development of themes in *Stillborn* and *Allah Is Not Obligated* in that each story introduced is meant to emphasise some theme already introduced by another narrator or introduces its own theme which overlaps with themes in the matrix narrative. In *Stillborn*, Dolapo and Emeka's accounts are used to develop ideas such as the hasty independence of Nigeria, economic deterioration and corruption among other aspects which the overarching narrator introduces (Oyeyinka, 2014:38). In the same way, in *Allah Is Not Obligated*, ideas like childhood suffering, political turmoil, war and dictatorship (Kourouma, 2000:84-91) are introduced by the primary narrator and further developed in the accounts of several child soldiers. The embedding and embedded narratives in the two texts have similar ideas, at no time do

they clash. This is in agreement with Ojiambo (2014:42) who argues that embedded narratives serve as answers to questions that arise in the primary narrative. However, the observation above somewhat contrasts with Jahn (2017) who argues that a hyponarrative corroborates or contradicts a story line of the matrix narrative.

Another significance of using multiple narrators is that when one narrator goes out of the view of the narratee, another takes up the narrating role. This breaks the monotony and generates suspense in the matrix narrative. In *Stillborn*, Seun introduces the story, delegates the narrating role and alternates it between the sub narrators. For example, he describes the experience of Emeka and Dolapo at Federal Government College where Dolapo tells Emeka a story that his mother told him about how the rain had birthed the earth (Oyeyinka, 2014:11). The reader waits for the embedded narrative to end in order to have a clear picture of the two protagonist's life in secondary school. Similarly, in *Allah Is Not Obligated*, as Birahima tells about the experiences and deaths of his fellow child soldiers, the story about his adventures comes to a pause until the embedded narrative is over. Ojiambo (2014:55) notes that embedded narratives are important in the creation of suspense. The narratee has to wait for the narration of the embedded narrative to pass and any questions raised in the reader's mind are held in suspense until the embedded narrative reaches a possible resolution. This corroborates the theory of narratology. Jahn (2017) observes that hyponarratives are used to momentarily obstruct the continuation of the matrix narrative, often creating an effect of heightened suspense.

The overarching narrators listen to the narratives of various sub narrators in their respective narratives, they are given to them orally. This narrative technique demonstrates that oral information about past experiences in the history of the narrators' countries is transmitted orally from one person to another until it is received by the overarching narrators who recount the tales to the narratee. Ojiambo (2014) states that embedded narratives advance oral tradition. Seun in *Stillborn* unlike Birahima in *Allah Is Not Obligated* is also provided with non-oral information in form of tape recordings. It may be argued that the significance of the recorded information is to validate oral accounts. One may also argue that putting narratives in writing serves as a depository of oral narratives.

5.3.3 Person

One major similarity between the two texts under study is that both authors utilise narrators who participate as characters in the plot of the stories they recount. They both use first person pronouns and verbs to refer to themselves. The utility of this narrative strategy is to clearly show that the reported events and actions happen to the narrators Seun and Birahima, or they witness them happening to other characters they interact with, at least to a certain degree. In *Stillborn*, Seun uses first person pronouns and verbs over long stretches of the novel. He says, “After mother’s departure, I took no time to quickly settle into uncle’s house.” (Oyeyinka, 2014: 183). The same is observed in *Allah Is Not Obligated* where the narrator throughout uses the first person to recount. “As soon as we had arrived, we told the ULIMO people a story we had made about Samuel Doe and his patriotism and his generosity” (Kourouma, 2000:98). It may be argued that engaging homodiegetic narrators is of significance as it adds to the narrators’ trustworthiness in the eyes of the narratee. Narrators use first person pronouns and verbs to designate their presence in the narrative (Genette, 1980). This creates the impression that they are present at the time most of the events recounted occur.

Using homodiegetic narrators however varies in that Seun is a peripheral character narrator. The use of a minor character narrator who observes the lives and destinies of the protagonists in *Stillborn* is significant in that Seun is able to portray the difficulties the two heroes live through and their emotional wounds better than would have the central characters themselves. For example, Dolapo has a cough but continues working as though he were not ill; his illness is perceived by the reader as though it were minor but when Seun describes his uncle’s cough, he uses intense adjectives and emotive language that accentuates the seriousness of the illness and his sympathy towards the protagonist is made known. “... Uncles’ cough cascaded from his window. It was harsh and sharp like I had not been aware of the day before and I realised he must have worked hard and suffered in silence so I would not notice” (Oyeyinka, 2014:226). This finding corroborates the argument by Pracè (2015) who states that an author utilises a peripheral narrator when they want to have a more sympathetic character than the protagonist.

As opposed to the former, there is use of an autodiegetic narrative voice in *Allah Is Not Obligated*. The significance of this narrative is that Birahima is less prone to forgetting certain information since he recounts a subsequent narrative about his own life and not about another character's unlike Seun in *Stillborn*. It may be argued that Birahima as an autodiegetic narrator is privileged with narrational attributes such as depth which an observing narrator does not possess. As the hero of the story and a narrator, he is able to describe with intensity certain actions and events he witnesses, including his inner feelings, unlike Seun who reports what he observes and is told about the heroes of his narrative. For example, Birahima as a victim of war unreservedly describes massacres and scenes of sexual molestation he and several children are subjected to (Kourouma, 2000:103). Psychoanalytically, it may be argued that while a peripheral homodiegetic narrator exhibits sympathy towards the protagonist, a story told from the perspective of an autodiegetic narrator who is a victim reveals more emotional wounds as the account is unmediated than does that of a peripheral character who recounts about the distresses of the victims he observes from a distance or is told about.

As homodiegetic narrators, Seun and Birahima both maintain a detachment from what they recount. While Seun, in *Stillborn*, proactively exhibits detachment to his new name 'Seun Odukoya' and is indifferent about coming back home from abroad (Oyeyinka, 2014:212), Birahima in *Allah Is Not Obligated* establishes a distance with certain experiences in his childhood which he does not want to remember, for instance the burn he sustains as a child (Kourouma, 2000:6). Even though the two narrators exhibit emotional detachment in dissimilar ways, this has a similar implication in both texts. Using the psychoanalytical literary theory, the distance Seun and Birahima maintain can be attributed to failure to deal with distressing experiences. It suggests that they have unsettled conflicts hidden deep in their unconscious mind. Freud (1953:328) refers to the unconscious or the id as the dark inaccessible part of personality. Even though humans may not express certain memories, feelings or desires, the inaccessible part of the psyche still shapes their behaviour. Even though Seun and Birahima do not fully reveal the reason they exhibit detachment, their unconscious fears and worries are reflected in their detachment with the past. One may argue that the distance they maintain with their past entails that they are still attached to unpleasant experiences.

Both narrators witness and narrate what they perceive in their childhood and the suffering they live through. From a narratological perspective, this narrative technique has the same implication in both novels in that information is presented to the narratee in its raw form as both narrators are witnesses to most of the events and actions they recount. This suggests that most of the narrators' accounts are devoid of transformation as there are no other intervening agencies between them and the narratee. Psychoanalytically, one may argue that what the two narrators experience in their childhood does not just disappear with time but rather remains hidden in their unconscious mind (Freud, 1953). The way they recount reflects their childhood experiences. Thus engaging witness is significant in that it enhances originality and accuracy in the way the stories are presented as observed in the texts under study.

In *Stillborn*, Oyeyinka engages an adult who exhibits healing from the emotional wounds he harboured from his childhood. This has both narratological and psychological implications, it suggests that at the time of the narrating, Seun exhibits emotional and intellectual distance from the person he is at the time of experience. He is more mature and his judgment is reliable. In *Allah Is Not Obligated* Kourouma, engages a narrator whose reliability is questionable to a certain degree in that at the time of the narrating, Birahima is not much different from the character he is at the time of experience. The psychological implication of this is that at the time of the narrating, the narrator is still traumatised by his earlier experiences. Engaging such a narrator is significant to the dramatic effect of the narrative as the reader has more access to psychology of a narrator as compared to Seun in *Stillborn* who at the time of the narrating exhibits healing. That the narrator is a child renders him immature and prone to innocence. His judgment cannot be fully believable. This observation is in agreement with Booth (1961) who expounds on the reliable and unreliable narrator. He posits that a narrator who exhibits innocence, moral obtuseness and so on is unreliable.

5.3.4 Functions of the narrator

In *Stillborn*, the narrator initiates the narration by wearing the mask of an omniscient narrator but as the story develops, he reveals himself clearly as a narrator who is also a character at plot level (Oyeyinka, 2014:1). He also adopts the use of third person

pronouns and verbs when describing other characters while Birahima from the beginning to the end of the story manifests as an 'I' narrator (Kourouma, 2000:1). This difference has a dramatic effect to the two stories in that the role of the narrator in *Allah Is Not Obligated* is ascertained definitely by the narratee since Birahima presents a story about himself. In *Stillborn*, the narrator disguising himself as heterodiegetic in the beginning enables him to temporarily hide his identity. The reader follows the narrative without the knowledge or feeling that the speaker has been encountered before but is later surprised when the narrator suddenly unmask himself as a character in the tale.

Birahima in *Allah Is Not Obligated* directly addresses the narratee. This technique signals that he is aware of the audience he recounts to. Birahima addresses his narratee using the second pronoun 'you' as though they were bodily present in front of him. The significance of this technique is that Birahima shows that there is communion between him and his audience unlike Seun in *Stillborn* who addresses his audience generally. It may be argued that the technique utilised by Seun shows some distance in terms of the relationship between him and his narratee.

The directing function is carried out correspondingly by Seun and Birahima. They demonstrate the power to decide the flow of events in their respective stories. They use foreshadowing and flashbacks to a great extent. The significance of these similarities is that, going back in time enables the narrator to fill in the reader with past events and how they are linked with events occurring at the time of the narrating. Foreshadowing enables the narrator to refer to the future and in particular to the present situation (Genette, 1980). Thus the audience is kept captivated to the narration as they look forward to the prefigured events.

However, in *Stillborn* flashbacks are not predictable while in *Allah Is Not Obligated*, the narrator employs them as a routine that he faithfully observes each time he introduces a narration about death (Kourouma, 2000:83). The implication of this is that the readers are able to predict that a flashback will follow each time a death is mentioned in Birahima's narrative. This enables the narratee to closely follow the story without losing track of events. Seun's use of flashbacks in *Stillborn* is noteworthy in that it allows the

narratee to be actively involved as they listen to the narrative since they are unpredictable and the narratee has to figure them out on their own.

On the other hand, foreshadowing is also executed differently in the two texts under study. In *Stillborn*, the future of characters and events is prefigured by analysis of past and current events in the history of Nigeria (Oyeyinka, 2014), whereas in *Allah Is Not Obligated*, the future is foretold through omens and consulting diviners such as Yacouba, Balla and other medicine men and magicians (Kourouma, 2000:38). This dissimilarity is indicative of the various ways anticipation can be presented.

Descriptive pauses are observable in both texts. Seun describes the birth of Emeka which occurs in a tragic manner because his parents die, he then pauses to describe how his parents make love the night he is conceived (Oyeyinka, 2014:3). Birahima also introduces his life story but later pauses to describe the birth, suffering and death of his mother (Kourouma, 2000:6). However, Birahima utilises pauses in another innovative way as compared to Seun. He halts the entire narration when tired and his narratee idly waits for him to resume, a narrative technique that is not utilised in *Stillborn*. One may argue that this strategy is important as it creates suspense and renders him unreliable to the narratee. It keeps them involved as they try to study the narrator's mind in order to figure out why the narrator pauses besides they reason he gives. The narratee is uncertain whether or not to trust that the narrator the narrator's reason that he is wearied.

In undertaking the communicating function, both narrators use language in an inventive manner but the execution of language differs. While Seun's language in *Stillborn* is marked by formality, Birahima's language in *Allah Is Not Obligated* is devoid of civility. These dissimilarities have different implications to the narrative system of the two texts. Seun and Birahima's language is significant in that it makes clear to the readership the narrators' attitude towards people as well as his edification and upbringing. This finding is in agreement with Jahn (2017) who maintains that expressions made by the narrator in the narrative discourse reveal their education, attitudes towards characters, age, and background and so on. Birahima's lack of civility makes known to the narratee that he is insolent. It lays bare his state of mind and that at the time of the narrating, he is still attached to some of his past experiences. Birahima for example says, "I'm disrespectful,

I'm rude..." According to Sigmund Freud's argument, the behaviour exhibited by humans is influenced by their unconscious mind (Balogun, 2011). Birahima unconsciously exhibits incivility. This may be due to the harsh realities he lives through during war as a child soldier. Seun's civility on the contrary is attributed to his good-natured upbringing. Both narrators may not be aware of the underlying causes of their behaviour. The significance of this is that the reader is made aware of the psyche of narrators beyond what they express.

Through the communicative function, relevant information in the history of Africa in the post-colonial era especially the named Nigeria, Liberia and Sierra Leone is revealed to the readership. The two texts portray a struggle for power, war and economic ruin of Africa for successive years in the post-colonial era (Oyeyinka, 2014 and Kourouma, 2000). The political mayhems the narrators portray such as war and massacres add to the emotive effect of the narrative. The narrators pour out their hearts to the narratee on how war and political atrocities leave them with a damaged psyche along with other characters. Griffith (2002) observes that literary psychoanalyst has access to the mental activities of characters, their motivations and behaviour.

The testimonial function is undertaken in similarly ways in the texts under study. The overarching narrators, Seun and Birahima, authenticate their accounts as they mention specific dates, notable events in the history of their countries, names of places that exist in reality and names of factual historical figures. Mention of names like Prince Johnson, Foday Sankoh, Charles Taylor, Samuel Doe (Kourouma, 2000:97) Obasanjo and Gawon (Oyeyinka, 2014:222) is noteworthy as it suggests to the reader that the fictional accounts of Seun and Birahima are genuine as they correspond with historical facts. Dates are important as they enable the narratee to note when certain events occur and to follow the chronology of the narratives especially that there is significant use of analepsis and narrative embedding in both texts which can disrupt the reader's track of passage of time.

Both overarching narrators point out that the information they present originates from what they witness and what is recounted to them as they further invoke other sub narrators who confirm the truth of what they narrate. Genette (1980:255) postulates that

in the attestation function, “the narrator indicates the source of his information or the degree of precision of his memories.” Although other sub narrators recount their different experiences in the two texts, they validate that what Seun and Birahima narrate indeed took place. This narrative technique is significant in enhancing the testimonial function of the narrators in both novels because it gives more authority to the primary narrators and renders them more trustworthy.

One dissimilarity observed in the way the testimonial function is carried out in the two novels is that in *Allah Is Not Obligated*, Birahima also swears as opposed to Seun in *Stillborn*. The significance of this testimonial function is that swearing allows the narrator to promise his narratee very strongly and sincerely that his utterances are true. The narrator swears upon Allah to convince the narratee that what he recounts is inviolable. Birahima as a Muslim views Allah as a sacred, all-powerful, and supreme-being (Kourouma, 2007). He calls upon him through the use of swear words to witness to what he narrates. This is an assurance of his dependability as the source of information to the readership.

The ideological function is evidenced in the way the narrators of the two novels portray religious ideas. Though common in both texts, religion is discussed varyingly. In *Stillborn*, religion is portrayed as an instrument used to persecute others (Oyeyinka, 2014:119). Religion is also portrayed as a place of refuge in time of hardship (ibid: 130). In *Allah Is Not Obligated*, religious insincerity is revealed through characters who do not live according standards of the religion they profess to be devoted to like Prince Johnson and Saint Beatrice-Marie. Birahima also discusses the idea that religion is used as comfort to the suffering (Kourouma, 2000:134). The significance discussing religious ideologies such the weaknesses of characters in relation to religion is to expose religious hypocrisy as a means of seeking remedy. Psychoanalytically, it may be argued that he portrayal of religion as a place of refuge in adversity is significant in that it demonstrates its mollifying influence and how it enables characters to exercise resilience.

Both narrators also depict the idea that post-colonial struggle for power results into dictatorship, ethnic and religious divisions, war, economic deterioration and massive deaths in their respective societies (Oyeyinka, 2014 and Kourouma, 2000). This finding

is in accordance with Bainito (2014) who observes that in *Allah Is Not Obligated*, dominant ethnic groups fight for political power and compete for scarce economic resources while smaller groups revolt against this. The significance of having narrators communicate such ideas is to reproduce what transpires in reality through fiction. This observation is in line with Aristotle (1974) who observes that literature is an imitation of things in the real world. The two novels differ in the manner in which they mimic the reality of post-colonial conflicts but they both portray a picture of how political conflicts in Nigeria, Liberia and Sierra Leone damagingly upset the citizens' physical and emotional well-being and affects the countries' economies. Through the ideological function of the narrator, the readership is informed about these post-colonial injustices and told to beware. It is also through the ideological orientation of the texts that post-colonial wrongs are redressed. Kyoore (2004) who says that Kourouma ridicules historical personalities and critiques dictatorship and those responsible for wars.

Both narrators portray different social problems that affect characters in the two texts. While in *Stillborn* early marriages and marriages of convenience are exposed (Oyeyinka, 2014) in *Allah Is Not Obligated* social problems that children face as a result of war such as deprivation of education, sexual abuse, child labour and many others that coerce them to become child soldiers are exposed (Kourouma, 2000:114). The significance of communicating such ideas is to correct the vices. The two narrators disapprove of the aforementioned wrongs by incorporating some scornful jocularity as they expose the injustices of the post-colonial period.

Some ideas communicated in *Allah Is Not Obligated* are not communicated in *Stillborn*. Birahima also ridicules cultural ideas such as the circumcision of women when he portrays how it changes his mother's life completely and claims the lives of many children. Bainito (2014) observes that the narrator castigates cultural practices such as female genital mutilation among other aspects. The narrator in *Allah Is Not Obligated* also communicates traditions of his tribe such as adoption of an orphaned child and belief in supernatural forces (Kourouma, 2007). Oral traditions incorporated in Birahima's narrative are significant as they provide authenticity to the narrative.

5.3.5 Narratee

Both narrators address their narratives to a fictional audience. They also assume the role of the intratextual narratee besides being the primary narrative agencies in their respective texts. They listen to the narratives about the lives of other intratextual characters. From a narratological perspective, this role is important in that Seun and Birahima do not just passively listen to the different oral accounts of the sub narrators, they participate in the communication process as active recipients and contribute meaning to the received narratives. They transmit the narratives received by re-narrating them in form of a written story to their own narratee. Both novels blend oral culture in written fiction. Ojiambo (2014) observes that oral culture when assimilated and reorganised in written fiction enhances artistry in a piece of work, arouses the process of understanding a text.

The disparity in terms of narratee is that Seun in *Stillborn* addresses his narrative to a wider audience; the readership. The narratee is not explicitly named whereas Birahima in *Allah Is Not Obligated* has two categories of narratee who are clearly named. He firstly orally recounts his adventures to an explicitly designated narratee Mamadou, an intradiegetic narratee. Birahima then puts his story in writing for the reader such as colonial toubabs, Black Nigger African Native and anyone that can understand French (Kourouma, 2000:3). As he recounts he addresses them as 'you'. This finding is in accordance with Prince (1982) who observes that the narratee may or may not be explicitly designated by a 'you'. In *Stillborn*, the matrix narrative has no traces of signs designating the narratee. The way Oyeyinka and Kourouma utilise narratees in the two texts evidences how varyingly narrators can engage their audience.

5.4 Summary of chapter

Chapter Five has analysed the similarities and differences in the use of narrative voice in *Stillborn* and *Allah Is Not Obligated*. The chapter has also discussed the significance of the identified similarities and differences to the narrative system of the two texts. The general findings were that both authors engage similarly though there is a difference in terms of the varying degrees the narrative techniques are utilised. The identified areas of convergence and variance contribute to the dramatic effect of the texts. For instance,

a peripheral homodiegetic narrator recounts with more sympathy towards the heroes. This contributes to the emotive effect of the text while the autodiegetic narrator displays more of his repressed emotional wounds in his utterances. The implication of this is that the reader is able to access the state of mind of the narrators and the narrators childhood experiences contribute to how they construct their tales. The next chapter is the conclusion of the study.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

6.1 Overview

This chapter concludes the study. It discusses the conclusions drawn from the analysis of the similarities and differences in the use of narrative voice in *Stillborn* and *Allah Is Not Obligated* and their significance thereof.

6.2 Conclusions of Research Findings

The study sought to address three research objectives which were: (i) to examine the use of narrative voice in *Stillborn* and *Allah Is Not Obligated*, (ii) to investigate the similarities and differences in the use of narrative voice in the selected works and (iii) evaluate the significance of the similarities and differences in the use of narrative voice in the texts under study. The objectives were achieved by analysing the novels mainly according to the fifth category of Genette's (1980) model which provides a detailed explanation of the theory of narratology. Genette divides voice into five parts namely: time of the narrating, narrative levels, person, functions of the narrator and narratee. The study also uses the psychoanalytical literary theory to study how narrators project their unconscious wishes and emotional wounds through the ideas they communicate to narratee in order to determine the purpose of narrators in the tales they recount.

6.2.1 Objective One: To examine the use of narrative voice in *Stillborn* and *Allah Is Not Obligated*.

Research objective one examined the use of narrative voice in the selected texts. Findings were that the time of the narration in *Stillborn* is subsequent. The narrator reflects on his experiences and deals with his repressed wounds before narrating. The novel has four narrational layers; the first is occupied by the main narrator whereas the second, third and fourth are occupied by several sub narrators. All the narrators engaged are homodiegetic and the primary narrator is a peripheral character. The functions of the narrator outlined by Genette (1980) are all undertaken; it is mainly through Seun's perspective that the narrative is told. In the communicative function, he purges his

distresses and reveals the wounded psyche of characters. As a narratee, he receives other characters' tales and re-narrates them to the reader. In *Allah Is Not Obligated*, the time of the narrating is subsequent. The interval between experience and narrating is short, providing less room for the narrator to introspect before narrating. The story has two narrative levels, the first level is occupied by Birahima an autodiegetic narrator while all the sub narrators occupy the second. All the speakers utilised are homodiegetic but Birahima's voice dominates. He carries out all the functions of the narrator; he communicates his regrets and emotional wounds. He openly narrates how political turmoil affects children and damages their psyche. Ideologically, he redresses political turmoil and as a narratee, he receives other narrators' tales and addresses them to Mamadou, an intradiegetic narratee and then writes them for the readership.

6.2.2 Objective Two: To investigate the similarities and differences in the use of narrative Voice in *Stillborn* and *Allah Is Not Obligated*.

Findings in line with research objective two which set out to investigate the similarities and differences in the use of narrative voice in the texts under study were that both novels are retrospective in nature, giving room to the narrators to retrospect. However, Seun in *Stillborn* has more the time for retrospection due to the lapse of time between experience and narrating. Both novels have a multiple narrator structure but this more extensive in *Stillborn*. Concerning the category of person, the two novels are recounted by homodiegetic narrators but in *Stillborn*, the main speaker is a peripheral character who observes the lives and destinies of the protagonists while *Allah Is Not Obligated* is recounted by the hero of the narrative. While the narrator in the former is more sympathetic towards the protagonists, the autodiegetic narrator in the latter reveals more of his damaged psyche as a victim of war than Seun who observes the victims from a distance. The directive function is evidenced as the two the narrators control the flow of the narration through pauses, flashbacks and summary. However Birahima also uses pauses that halt the story and the time. The two narrators also attest to the truth of what they recount, they introduce multiple narrators to validate their accounts. They mention dates, places and factual political figures in the history of their societies but Birahima also uses swear words to make his narrative believable. Regarding the category of narratee, both narrators also assume the role of the narratee when they listen to the

narratives of other characters. While the narrative in *Stillborn* is directed to the general readership, Birahima directs his to Mamadou and readership.

6.2.3 Objective Three: To evaluate the significance of the similarities and differences in the use of narrative voice in *Stillborn* and *Allah Is Not Obligated*

Research objective three sought to evaluate the significance of the identified similarities and differences in the use of narrative voice in the selected fictional works. The study revealed that retrospective narrations enable narrators to reflect on past events and introspect before recounting. Introspection allows them to recount objectively. Narrative embedding is extensively used in *Stillborn* than in *Allah Is Not Obligated*. It is an essential creative strategy that contributes to the development of themes, characterisation, plot, creation of diversity, suspense and harmony in narratives. Since the two homodiegetic narrators somewhat witness events, their accounts are believable. The peripheral homodiegetic narrator engaged in the former is more sympathetic towards the protagonists while the autodiegetic narrator in the latter recounts with depth. Thus, he reveals more of his damaged psyche to the narratee through his behaviour and utterances. When narrating Seun masks himself as heterodiegetic narrator but later manifests overtly as a homodiegetic narrator, thus creating the dramatic effect of surprise. In directing the story, Birahima utilises pauses that halt both the story and the time while Seun recounts continually. This demonstrates the varying ways narrators control the narrative's flow. Through the ideological function, the themes of the texts are sufficiently addressed. That the two overarching narrators assume the role of the narratee is of significance in that they contribute meaning to the received narratives as they re-narrate them to their own narratee. Without the narratee the communication process would be incomplete.

6.3 Summary of chapter

This chapter mainly aimed to conclude the discussion on the similarities and differences in the use of narrative voice in *Stillborn* and *Allah Is Not Obligated* their and their significance to the narrative system of the two texts. The findings have shown that the way Oyeiyinka and Kourouma engage narrative voices in the selected fictional works evidences that authors utilise narrative techniques similarly and varyingly. Similarities demonstrate that narratives share common aspects while the differences show the

varying ways authors engage narrative voices. Each narrative technique utilised in the act of narrating is of significance to the narrative system of the selected texts. The identified similarities and differences in the use of narrative voice all contribute to the dramatic effect of the narratives.

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