

Name and Naming in Ayobami Adebayo's Stay With Me: An Onomastic Exploration

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ABSTRACT: *The study examines the onomastic landscape of Ayobami Adebayo's "Stay With Me" (SWM), exploring the significance of names and naming patterns in the novel set in a Yoruba locale of South West, Nigeria. By analyzing selected characters and recurring naming motifs, the study explores how these linguistic elements contribute to the overall themes and character development in the novel. The research further investigates symbolic and allegorical meanings associated with names, their relationship to the cultural and historical context of Yoruba, so much so that an individual's name is considered his primary identity. Through a close examination of the onomastics of SWM, this study reveals how names are employed in the novel to lend meaning to specific phenomena and explain certain situations that unfold during the interaction among the selected characters. Research indicates that names have an impact on the portrayal of character and behavioral patterns of the individuals being identified.*

KEYWORDS: *Onomastics, Ayobami Adebayo's Stay With Me, Yoruba Naming Pattern, Names, Anthroponomy.*

INTRODUCTION

The book *Stay With Me* (SWM), the enriching debut work of Ayobami Adebayo, is predominantly set in a Yoruba locale in South West Nigeria. It reveals the story of two passionate lovers, Akinjide and Yejide Ajayi, who met as undergraduates at Ife University in Nigeria and got married amid political upheaval in the country. Although they had vowed nothing was going to come between them, they were weighed down by the issues of barrenness and childlessness after having waited for four years after marriage. These challenges were further compounded by family and societal pressure, which led to diverse and intriguing issues of deceit, despair, denial, death, disappointment, separation, and sorrow. It celebrates human frailty, leaving the readers to catch their breath at unfolding events. The book *SWM*, is a highly celebrated one that has won several awards.

The novel has been researched severally by Azizah (2019), Adam(2020), Gbadeges in (2023), Abianji-Menang (2024) and Yeboah *et al*(2024), where emphasis were laid on issues of feminism, masculinity, infertility, childlessness etc. with little or no attention paid to names/naming in the novel, except cursory references to characters, in a bid to discuss the thematic concerns of the work. However, Alexander(2018), in her book review of the text, mentioned the onomastic dimension of the work, but this was not an exhaustive treatment. This dearth of literature on the onomastic study of the work needs to be arrested, as a reading of the material reveals that issues of names and naming are cleverly and exhaustively treated/woven around the work. Indeed, Osawale (2018) has stated that names reflect people's language and culture; hence, novelists often capture their socio-cultural background, the society in which their texts are set, or the background of their fictional stories. Moreover, Odebunmi (2008) also asserts that examining names in literary works can provide insight into the text, as literary names are often closely associated with the author's thematic concerns and visions. Also, Nicolaisen(1982) declared that the study of names in literature (usually referred to as literary onomastics) has become increasingly popular as scholars have found that character naming in literary work implicitly contributes to character depiction and that some literary writers purposefully name their characters to serve a particular function. It is against this backdrop that we want to explore naming techniques in the literary work, *SWM*, by Ayobami Adebayo.

This article examines the functions, form, and significance of the selected names in the text and Yoruba society in which the book is located. It also analyses how the selected names contribute to the themes of the work and how they reflect the cultural and historical context of the work.

LITERARY ONOMASTICS

Literary onomastics is an interdisciplinary approach that analyzes names in literature using methods of linguistic and literary criticism (Nicolaisen, 2015). The field examines the usage, functions, and formation of names in literature and how an examination of names can add to an understanding and appreciation of the literary work. Moreover, Ngubane (2013) states that Literary Onomastics examines the structure of names, what the name means, and how naming is used to construct identities that reflect the social and cultural realities of their society. It thus studies names as linguistic signs, etymology, and lexical associations.

Indeed, Bailey (2017, 2 & 3), while answering the question on the importance of names in a fictional character, says amongst others, that a character's name is the symbol of their identity and that the meaning behind and reason for their names are central to developing the character. Moreover, names evoke a specific image in people's minds and play a significant role in identification and memory. It deals with answering such questions as: What is the reason behind the names in the book? Why were the names chosen for the character? What are the stories behind the names?

Furthermore, Windt-Val (2012) states that the writer highlights the close connection between a person's given name and their sense of identity and self. Authors use personal and place names in a literary universe to give the impression of being authentic. Names, as stated by different authors, are significant both as a source of information for the reader and in making the characters real to the authors while writing. It has been stated that the parents' choice of name for a child influences the development of the child's personality. Thus, the author, as the 'parent' of the characters in a literary piece, will have a purpose for naming the characters. The names in the novel generally convey essential information about various aspects of the characters' family history, social background, beliefs, attitudes, social status, and relationships between the characters.

Nouh (2022) states that in literature, the proper name is symbolic of different things: character, status, and identity. To him, names do carry out the function of characterizing at times. The story will have more depth if the reader has an explanation within the course of events for why characters were named in that way. However, even if the subject never comes up within the story, it still adds to the atmosphere of the story and to the impact it may have on the readers.

Osawale (2018) says that proper names are not empty markers for reference, as they may also carry specific added meanings, though imprecise, and are nonetheless an essential and fundamental aspect of the proper name. In literature, character names have the same importance as names in life. They help the readers visualize the characters. Names are identities to characters through an intertwining of language and culture. The identity may mirror the expected character, roles, and circumstances surrounding conception and birth, or reflect the worldview of the society.

Furthermore, Al-Zumor (2009) agrees that there is a strong bond between a language and cultural practices, and how language functions as a cultural resource that is seen as a tool to view and understand the worldview of society. Personal names are an aspect of the language, and literary artists set their work in specific societies and use available names in the society to achieve purposes.

NAMING AMONG YORUBA PEOPLE

Among the Yoruba people, where the novel is set, names are not just ordinary referents. Name-giving is considered a spiritual and highly celebrated practice, as parents/elders in the family consider various factors, such as the circumstances before, during, or after the child's conception, gestation, and birth, as well as the family's occupation or preoccupations, religious background, and beliefs. Indeed, conception of a child immediately after marriage is always a thing of joy, and naming ceremonies are a period marked with jubilation. In the traditional Yoruba society, the more children one has, the merrier for the individual, and childlessness is seen as a taboo.

Akinola (2014) makes the following observations on name and naming amongst the Yoruba people: It possesses the ability to predict the child's path

in life as names are profound; It is meaningful and can influence a child's lifestyle; A Yoruba child usually has more than one name because extended family members and well-wishers are given the honor to give names. In their analysis of Yoruba onomastics and translation, Akanmu and Adeniyi (2022:179), like Adeleke (2020), Adeniyi (2017), Babalola and Alaba (2003) categorize Yoruba names into i) family name (Orukoidile) ii) Child's given name (Orukoabiso) iii) Abiku's name (A child predestined to die) iv) Praise name (Orukoinagije), and v) predestined name (Oruko Amutorunwa). Other scholars, such as Ikotun (2014) and Ogunwale (2015), have also explored the social and pragmatic use of Yoruba names, further underscoring the great importance that Yoruba attach to names and naming as a social practice.

RESEARCH REVIEWS ON ADEBAYO'S *SWM*

As stated earlier, the research articles on *SWM* have emphasized issues of infertility, barrenness, and feminism. Abianji-Menang (2024) examines the challenges of infertility as a major reproductive health problem that brings shame and leads to social exclusion of women in Sub-Saharan Africa in the novel. Also, Yeboah *et al* (2024), leaning on the theories of feminism and masculinity, sought to expose the neglected aspect of infertility in the novel *SWM*. Azizah (2019) examines the discourse of women dominating women in the book. It analyses a childless woman's condition being oppressed, objectified and subordinated by other women in her surroundings using Star Hall's Representation Theory linked to Michel Foucault's Discourse Analysis.

Adam's (2020) work critically examines selected works by three twenty-first-century African writers, one of whom is Adebayo. It provides a sociological grounding to analyze these works, which are based on issues and events in the lives and experiences of African women, exploring the persistence of cultural expectations in marriage, sexuality, and motherhood, and the devastating consequences for African women. The work concludes that African women are disadvantaged in marital relationships because of unfair cultural demands. It recommends an improvement in the social status of African women through greater access to superior education.

Gbadegesin (2023) focuses on the struggles of the non-virile man in a culture where his existence is deeply rooted in virility. Using Corpus Linguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis, the pronoun 'I' and its N-Gram realizations were employed to express the male character's struggles with infertility in *SWM*. These reviews reveal the dearth of literature on the onomastics of *SWM*, hence, the rationale for this study.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study uses the theoretical framework of Anthroponomastics to examine names in the selected Nigerian novel. Anthroponomastics is a field under Onomastics that explores the study of proper names, especially the study of their forms and uses. It uses literary onomastics, an interdisciplinary area that investigates proper names in literary work using methods of linguistics and literary criticism. It deals with the significance of names in drama, poetry,

prose fiction, and folklore (Alvarez-Altman et. al, 1981,iii). Ours is the linguistic dimension as it examines the etymology, lexical, and semantic associations. We are interested in the names as a fact of language and as a part of the text.

METHODOLOGY

Data for this paper were obtained from *SWM* by Ayobami Adebayo. The text was read repeatedly to understand its contents. Character names reveal characters' roles, and those that have significant onomastic implications in the novels were identified. Exhibits from the work that reveal character depictions were taken from the primary source. We selected key characters whose names are more central to the narrative and have greater significance to the themes and plot, thus creating relevance to our research objectives and ensuring in-depth analysis. Data were further treated using a content analysis method. Here, the researchers read the work, examined character depiction, and then explained it by reviewing the character naming method used. Thus, we identified the meanings of the characters' names by examining their semantic and lexical meanings and evaluated whether they are related to the characters' roles and theme(s). Analysis was influenced by the researchers' experience as users of Yoruba as a first language. Indeed, in an interview with *The Guardian*, Adebayo admits that the novel was influenced by the Yoruba language (Omoyele, 2017).

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This aspect deals with an onomastic analysis of selected characters in the novel. The etymological, lexical, and semantic explanations of the characters' names are identified and linked to their roles and character portraits.

A-YEJIDE

Yejide is the first name of the main character, from whom we hear most of the events in the story, with the use of the first-person point of view. The name in Yoruba culture refers to a female child born after the death of the maternal grandmother or mother. In the book, it relates to the main character, Yejide, whose mother died after her delivery (extract 1). This affirms Windt-Val's (2012) belief that the name given to a character enables the readers to know that character's personality and actions. The text shows that the author explicitly gave the name because of this circumstance. Yejide is a Yoruba name meaning 'Mother has resurrected'. Morphologically, it is rendered IYA-JI-DE, Iya/Iye (mother) ji (awaken, arise) de (arrive, return).

Ye-ji-de

Morphological process: Sentential derivation

	Iya/Iye	ji	de
Linear glossing:	mother	awaken	return
Logical glossing:	Mother has resurrected.		

Extract 1

... Only motherless children, children like me, could misbehave like that. And it was not just that I did not have a mother, but the one I once had, the one who died seconds after she had pushed me out into the world, was a woman without lineage! ...(p.42).

B-Yejide Terror

This is a nickname given to Yejide due to her stubborn nature. The mention of this name helped further in her character depiction, as she had it in mind to deal with her co-wife, Funmi who was married off to her husband, Akinyele because she was said to be barren. Moreover, it was a style used by the author to develop further the story, telling us about the challenge of being a motherless child amid a polygamous setting, as we have below:

Extract 2

...years before, nothing would have stopped me from punching her teeth down her throat. When I was a student of Ife Girls' High School, I was known as Yejide Terror. I got into fights every other day... And I always won- not once, not one single time did I lose. I lost a few buttons, broke a tooth, got a bloody nose many times, but I never lost. I never got one grain of sand in my mouth(pp. 41-42).

As a motherless college girl, Yejide must have seen life challenges in school as an extension of the deadly blow death dealt to his mother, so she becomes sensitive to any act of oppression from any quarter. In fact, delivering punches to her stressors in high school was to her a psychological therapy rather than a transfer of aggression. Again, since there was no mother to report her misdemeanor to, she became a terror. At the home front, Yejide becomes a terror because she sees herself losing out to the younger wife because of her barrenness and the shift of attention by her husband, Akinyele to Funmi, the younger wife. So, toughened by her lived experiences as a child without motherly affection, she becomes hard on her husband and the younger wife by activating a defense mechanism, thereby becoming confrontational in order not to be the weeping girl both in school and the polygamous setting. The author deliberately chooses the name Yejide and the nickname Yejide Terror to give meaning to the role she played in the story's plot development.

C-Akinyele/Akin

Akinyele is Yejide's husband and the second main character, who also, through the use of the first-person narrative technique, brings to the readers part of the events in the novel.

Akin-ye-le

Morphological process: Sentential derivation

	Akin	ye	le
Linear glossing:	valor	befits	house

Logical glossing: Valor is worthy of the house or valor befits the house. Akinyele is a first name. It means 'valor is worthy of the house'. Morphologically, it is Akin-Ye-Le, where Akin depicts valor, bravery, Ye - be respectable, Yelebe befitting of Ile-home, house.

This name serves as a vehicle of communication (Akinola, 2019) to express one's ideas, feelings, or states of mind and thought expression. It is a name given to only male children in the Yoruba society. As the firstborn, he is expected to be the brave one who will bear all challenges and excel. Interestingly, the Yoruba people do not name girls with the prefix 'Akin' before their names, probably because women or ladies were not expected to be warriors or valiant in nature. However, beyond this, Akin was a warrior in the book! Indeed, Alexander(2017), a book reviewer, said Akin struggled to prove his masculinity. Thus, his name celebrates the theme of masculinity and the issues of having a flaccid penis(Gbadegesin,2023). The name/character is also used to reveal the functions, expectations, or importance of the firstborn in the Yoruba society, which further added to his desperation to have a child. Mkaudize (2020) states that writers make use of characters' names to communicate thematic aspects and reinforce the role that those characters play in literary work.

Extract 3

'I'm Akinyele and everyone calls me Akin,' he said. (p.184)

Extract 4

"I was her first-born son, the beginning of her strength." (p.132). Quite revealing in the onomastic patterning of Yoruba names, although he is Akinyele, he's popularly referred to as the clipped form, Akin(extract 3), probably because of the polysyllabic nature of the name. However, the name is mentioned in full when there are issues, or he has done something wrong or is being reprimanded, as we have in the extracts below.

Extract5

She sighs. 'Akinyele.' It's never a good sign when she calls my name in full. I walk across the room, sit in a cushioned chair, and wait for her to continue. (p.94)

Indeed, the name was used in full when he walked out of her mother's house in annoyance when she suggested he take yet another wife after the death of Funmi in a horrible circumstance, mainly because he, Akin, knew the issues were from him and not Yejide because he had erectile dysfunction issues.

Extract 6

'Moomi, as if you have not destroyed my life enough.' Her mouth dropped open. 'Akinyele, what nonsense are you saying?' 'Are you sick? What have I said that -?' I stood up. 'Don't call me for this kind of discussion again. Never again. Lai lai.' 'Me? Abi, you don't know who you are talking to ni? Akin?

Akinyele? Abi, you are walking away, Akin? Come back here. Akin, I'm still talking to you. Are you not the one I am calling? See this boy. Akinyele!' I didn't look back. (p. 266).

D-Olamide

The name Olamide is a first name which means "my wealth has come." Morphologically, it is OLA-MI-DE. In the text, Olamide is the much awaited first born of Yejide and Akinjide Ajayi.

Ola-mi-de

Morphological process: Sentential derivation

Ola mi de

Linear glossing: wealthmy come

Logical glossing: My wealth has come.

Yejide gave the name, although people felt it was given by her husband, Akinyele. Her naming ceremony as the first child after several years of waiting was grand, thus revealing a traditional naming pattern of the Yoruba. Additionally, she was given the name Olamide and twenty other names (extracts 7 & 8). The author also uses the name to reiterate the theme of the importance of having children. By saying her wealth had come as the name communicated, it shows children are a source of wealth. The name thus reveals the circumstances of her birth and contributes to plot development and themes. Hence, the characters live out their names. Allagbe (2016) says that writers give specific names to the characters in the literary content, which usually serve a particular function. This means characters are given names purposefully. This naming method is relevant to the culture within which the literary work is written, where names are influenced by the events surrounding the baby's birth. Additionally, Butler (2010) asserts that literary names are far more than mere labels and classificatory markers; writers can choose characters' names that are connected to the context.

Extract7

We called the baby Olamide and twenty other names (p. 123).

Extract 8

Each name was a contribution from a key family member. Even Yejide's stepmother contributed names. Olamide was Yejide's choice, but everyone thought it was my choice since it was the first name I called out. (p. 133).

E-Sesan

This is the name given to the child born after the death of Olamide, the first much-desired and awaited child of Akinyele and Yejide Ajayi. Sesan is a circumstantial name that reveals the parents' experience before conception. It is a consolation that the Lord uses the child to console, to replace the dead one. The name means (God) has avenged me. The name is usually preceded

by Olu or Ade or Oye. Morphologically, it is SE-ESAN. Se-Make, Esan-payment, revenge, recompense.

Se-san

Morphological process: Sentential derivation

(Olu) Se esan

Linear glossing: (God) Make reward

Logical glossing: God has rewarded (me) or has repaid (me)

The name, Sesan, further follows the Yoruba naming pattern, which shows the author did not just select the name randomly. It follows a naming system that involves clipping that suggests *Oluwa san mi niesen* which is "God has rewarded me." Furthermore, the naming ceremony and pattern when compared with that of Olamide were sober (extract 9). She is seen as a replacement or consolation. According to Yoruba, Esan is a form of consolation, and in the book, the child is also to console the parents. This means the author did not just name the characters arbitrarily but did so to reveal the cultural background of the work to make it authentic. In Yoruba socio-cultural setting, a woman who loses an only child after many years of barrenness or childlessness, especially in a polygamous home is seen as a reproach. She is an object of ridicule for not having a child. So, the arrival of a child in such circumstances is like a consolation or a reward for years of reproach, especially from the second wife. So is Sesan. No wonder, when Sesan died, Moomi requested her corpse for mutilation to find out when she comes in a cyclical rebirth as another child, that is, as an abiku.

Extract 9

Sesan was born on a Wednesday. There were few people at Sesan's naming ceremony. It was a small gathering that took place in our sitting room. Guests sat on dining chairs we had borrowed from our neighbors, ate jollof rice, and went home an hour after the ceremony. Moomi did not even come. ... No one travelled down from Lagos or Ife. There was no live band, tarpaulin tent outside, microphone, or DJ. There was no dancing (p. 157).

F-Ige

This is the middle name of Sesan. According to the Yoruba worldview, the name signifies that the individual bearing the name was born in the breech position. Thus, it is a circumstantial name or *Orukoamutorunwa*, the name a child brings naturally from heaven. In Yoruba worldview, being born in such a way is considered unique and linked sometimes with the child possessing special qualities or destined for a remarkable path in life. Adebayo, in the body of the text, indeed referred to this Yoruba worldview (extract 10), which makes us realize the names were not selected nor given randomly, but to ensure authenticity and relevance to the setting of the work. The message derived from the name 'Ige' is the Yoruba belief that some children are said

to bring good luck through their birth, and if evil does not befall some, no good can come to others (extract 10).

Extract 10

Sesan's middle name was Ige because he entered the world feet first. Those feet were exceptional; there was no doubt in anyone's mind after a few weeks that my son's feet were as good as they could get. Like all people with good feet, his arrival in our family was followed by all sorts of good things happening to us. For instance, Akin bought four plots of land for half the market value because the owner was swamped in debt and had to sell all his assets. That was not such a good thing for the poor man, but as with many things in life, sometimes one person's good fortune is a direct consequence of another person's ruin. (p. 158)

G-Rotimi

The writer also uses the name Rotimi, meaning 'Stay with Me'. Morphologically, it is RO(stay)-TI(with)-MI(me). The name is a complete sentence in the Yoruba language: Duroti mi, "stay with me."

Ro-ti-mi

Morphological process: Sentential derivation

Ro ti mi

Linear glossing: stay with me

Logical glossing: Stay with me

Rotimi is the eponymous character on whose name the title of the novel is hinged (extract 11). It is usually given to a child whose birth is preceded by the death of siblings, referred to as 'Abiku'. It is in the category of the Abiku name, which refers to children that are born to die, thus making it another circumstantial name. Adebayo used the name to highlight the theme of reincarnation and the importance of having children. Indeed, the name Rotimi relates to her birth situation. It also shows Adebayo uses Yoruba traditional naming practices in her literary characterization. Hence, Windt-Val (2012) states that the name has many different functions in real life, and all of these can be transferred to literature. The name Rotimi defines the African ideology of reincarnation and explication of the cyclic nature of life, which validates the African belief of a mysterious bond between the dead and the living (Lamidi & Aboh, 2011).

The name also highlights the themes of premature death of children and the genetic group of red blood cell disorder - sickle cell disease. It also develops the theme of reincarnation in the work and Yoruba philosophy. Also, the name is suggestive of a cry of despair, a plaintive plea for life's shield against death. From the text it is observed the writer said the name is also used to develop the theme of hopelessness and earnest desire for a child. It is observed that Rotimi is assumed to be the reincarnated Sesan, and since

Sesan's body was mutilated, it is expected that these marks would be seen on Rotimi, but this was not the case, as revealed in (**extract 12**).

Extract 11

I did not know what to do with the screaming girl whom we were already pleading with, every day, every moment we called her name – Rotimi – stay with me (p. 210).

Extract 12

There were no incisions on my daughter's body, no lacerations, no scars, not one single lash mark from a previous life. Still, they named her Rotimi, a name that implied that she was an Abiku child who had come into the world intending to die as soon as she could. Rotimi, stay with me. It was the name my mother-in-law had chosen, a name that until then I had thought was given to boy alone. I wondered if Moomi had picked Rotimi because it was mutable. If the right prefix were added later on, it would sound normal, stripped of the tortured history that Abiku names announced. Rotimi could easily become Olarotimi – Wealth stays with me. There was no getting around other alternatives like Maku.

Don't die, Kukoyi – Death, reject this one. (p. 210). Not only did the name symbolize a desire or a fervent prayer to live, but the naming ceremony and the attendant events were devoid of pageantry or grand celebration as a result of the Yoruba belief, as seen below.

Extract 13

The day Rotimi was named, in a quiet ceremony that included only ten people ... (p. 211)

When Sesan was ill and about to die, the mother, Yejide, declared:

Extract 14

By the third day, I was on my knees praying to him in muted words only I could hear. Saanu mi, malo, omo mi, joo nitori olorun. Saanu mi. Durotimi. Have mercy on me, don't go, please. Stay with me, I ran to the bathroom and back. I did not eat or bathe (p.198).

H.Timi

This is the name adopted by Rotimi when she became older, as she believed she was not a reincarnated individual, and so, her life should not be attached to some dead individuals. This we find in **extract 15**. It is the clipped form of Rotimi. This name change is true to life in the Yoruba society, as this is what obtains when some individuals come of age. They feel uncomfortable about the names given to them because of their connotations they thus, they lessen such an effect by clipping off the part that shows the untoward message.

Extract 15

She prefers to be called Timi, says she is her own person, not a monument to siblings she never knew. I agree. She plans to change her name officially but wants to discuss it with you first. (p. 297)

I. Arinola

Arinola is Akinyele and Dotun Ajayi's only sister. The name means - Born in the midst of wealth. Morphologically, it is ARIN-OLA. Aarin- middle, ola-wealth. This is different semantically from *Abisola*, born into wealth. Arinola signifies one born amid wealth.

Arin-ola

Morphological process: Sentential derivation

Arin ola

Linear glossing: Middle wealth

Logical glossing: Middle of wealth

It is in the Yoruba world, a girl's/daughter's name. Just as the name signifies, she is also an only daughter. So, the name is chosen to suit her gender and her birth position in her family. As the only girl child, the name is suggestive of a child born in opulence, with a tacit indication of having more than enough wealth. This is expected to show in her carriage, her outlook, and form. That could also be the reason Yejide honors or respects her as she says:

Extract 16

Akin's sister, Arinola, was the only woman whose hair I wove (p. 39).

J. Juwon

This is the name of Akinyele's younger stepbrother, the son of the second wife, who was married after Akinyele's mother, the first wife. As expected in a polygamous family, Akinyele's mum says the boy is not just a threat to her first son, Akinyele, but a measuring guard to weigh how far Akinyele has gone in life. The name means- "more than them or /bigger than them." It's a clipped first name which could be prefixed by Olu, God, or Ade, crown, or arrive, becoming something like Olujuwon—"God more than them." Devoid of the clipping, the name will mean *Oluwajuwon* or *Olujuwon*, with the same semantic implication, "God is more than them."

Ju-won

Morphological process: Sentential derivation

Ju won

Linear glossing: More than them

Logical glossing: More than them

The choice of Juwon by the author is aptly selected to reveal the competitive spirit among co-wives in a Yoruba polygamous home. Just as the name

connotes in the Yoruba culture, the character Juwon was used to depict a younger sibling in a Yoruba polygamous family who tended to be better than his elder brother, and further compounded by the competitive nature of a polygamous family where mothers derive joy in seeing their children excelling above the children of their co-wives, as seen in extract 17 below:

Extract 17

Soon, Moomi began talking about Juwon, my half-brother, the first son of my father's second wife. It'd been years since Moomi had used him as an example. When I was much younger, she was always talking about him. Juwon never comes home with dirty uniforms; why is your shirt dirty? Juwon has never lost his school sandals; this is the third pair you've lost this term...How come Juwon came home with prizes and you didn't? You are the first son in the family. Do you know what that means? Do you know what that means at all? Do you want him to take your place? (p.28).

The name underscores the level of competition and rivalry that characterizes a polygamous family, where the rise of the younger wife's child is a direct threat to the first wife and her children. So, for the second wife to name her son Juwon (more than them), she has already sent a message to the effect that her son is bigger than the other children from the senior wife. Apart from courting the trouble of the first wife, she has inadvertently indicated that the battle line is drawn.

CONCLUSION

The work reveals names in the novel, depicts experiences, positions, behaviors, and roles of their bearers. They are also deployed in developing and reinforcing literary themes woven around the plot structure of the selected text. The paper examines the names of characters to show the socio-cultural factors that influence name choice and their effects on their roles, thematic concerns, and plot of the work. In addition, the work examines names, forms, uses, and varieties of naming practices/ceremonies in the novel. The study also reveals the author's understanding of the socio-cultural milieu of the Yoruba to be able to carve roles for the characters according to the semantic implications of the names he gives to them. Further investigation reveals that there is an interconnection between names cum naming system and the behavioral patterns of the selected characters in the novel, and this helps not only character portrayal but also the understanding of the thematic thrusts in the book.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTOR

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