



# Cultural and Linguistic Hybridity: A Bhabhasque's Interpretation of Niyi Osundare's *Waiting Laughters*

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**Abstract.** The concept of hybridity unarguably stems from postcolonial theory, and it is championed by a postcolonial critic, Homi K. Bhabha, who considers the pieces of literature produced in third world countries as “in-between spaces” laced with a variety of linguistic and cultural codes of both the colonizer and the colonized. In Bhabha’s view, postcolonial literature is a reconfiguration of a large and heterogeneous collection of cultures, languages, identity, and beliefs; and it also creates a platform to discuss the effects of colonialism and how the colonized people experience cultural and identity crisis in their territory. In this scope, this paper is premised on the ideology that most literary works published in third world countries feature a variety of multicultural and bilingual approaches that align with Bhabha’s position of culture and identity in postcolonial discourse. Using Osundare’s *Waiting Laughters* as a case study, this paper seeks to evaluate the concept of hybridity with its exigencies – and how the literary text thrives within the context of heterogeneity, multiplicity and difference. The concluding remark of this paper is that *Waiting Laughters* is a poetic text of multiculturalism, pluralism, and bilingualism; and it emphasizes the perpetuation of lingua-cultural binaries and an intertextual dialogic of European and African aesthetics to create a new identity.

**Keywords:** *Hybridity, Postcolonial Theory, Culture, Language.*

## 1. Introduction

There is no gainsaying that hybridity and literary texts have shared a semiotic relationship in the works of writers down the ages. Literary critics have examined how the hybrid forms and conditions are textualized in the literary works. Das emphasizes that hybridity in postcolonial literary texts uses themes and language not only to dwell on identity formation but also to shape the new society that is politically and culturally affected as a result of the colonial intervention (2007, p. 72). In this clime, Bhabha postulates that writers are to call for “a radical revision of the social temporality in which emergent histories may be written, the articulation of the ‘sign’ in which cultural identities may be inscribed” (1994, p. 246).

Hybridity is the layer of the self-other dialectic precept of identity formation. The blacks, according to Fanon, are regarded as less-human by the “other:” as they have “phobogenic” – having inherited fears and low self-esteem in the past (Fanon, 1986, 154). It is on this premise that the Orientalist critic, Said, dwells on a false interpretation of the Orient – having been fabricated by westerners. It reflects on the colonial discourse that there is a “strong oppression on the indigenous” in terms of language, religion and politics (Amina, 2019, p. 701). It is the transcultural interaction that co-exists between the original (colonized) and the imperial (colonizer) practices to form a renewed culture, religion and ideology thereby giving credence to the notion of “Otherness” (Hammond, 2007, p. 222).

In the postcolonial sense, hybridity does not refer to the conception of new species but expresses the formation of new transcultural forms within the caged scope of colonization (Ashcroft Bill, Griffith Gareth, & Tiffin Helen, 2002 p. 108). It is more of a situation that happens when there is a cross between the culture of the colonizer and the colonized. In light of the trans-cultural formation, this study seeks to

foreground Osundare's *Waiting Laughters* as a volume of cultural and linguistic hybridity and how it emphasizes what Bhabha refers to as "the third space" in postcolonial discourse.

## 2. *Waiting Laughters: Modern Satirical Composition and Postcolonialism*

Osundare's *Waiting Laughters* (1990), a collection of long poems, is metaphorically linked with the symbols of "waiting" and "laughter." The collection is divided into five sections with a parallel of lyrical tones connecting each section to another. Using the two incomparable symbols—that is, "waiting" and "laughter," the collection explicates Nigeria's diverse problems of oppression, economic exploitation, disillusionment and subjugation bedeviling the nation. Considering the image of "waiting," the collection foregrounds the picture of death and the suffering of the masses as a confirmation of life and yet, the remedy is still hanging as they put their hope into an amusing "waiting." The idealist and philosophical facet of the collection are conceived in the image of "laughters" as it constitutes the liberation of the diverse humorous act in human conscience.

The collection uses laughter to support the downtrodden to resist and survive what oppresses them. Osundare, in dealing with social-political issues, uses laughter to "provide a small example of risk and freedom in speaking truth to power in dangerous times and in dismantling a bit of the fear that often acts as an instrument of control" (Philip 2015, p. 187). In the collection, Osundare attempts to satirize the inferiority complexes that survive in the style of the interview between the white embassy officials and the African visa seekers. To Osundare, the entire procedure of the interview is described as "queries" and unnecessary "fear" of condemnation by the embassy personnel. In the collection, the use of "trembling papers" implies that the fear of condemnation is evident among the visa seekers as they shiver, with their documents, continuously throughout the period of the interview. Further on the interview procedures, the poet puts across the mistreatment of courteousness from the part of the embassy personnel whose "pompous" demeanour is figuratively demonstrated "like a mad phallus." For Osundare, the use of indirect comparison, in the collection, experiments with the bastardization of moral principles in the characteristic conduct of mad phallus. He reads:

Waiting

The anxious fumes of the visa awe-office

thick with queries, thick with fear

and stamps which bite trembling papers

with purple fangs, and seals pompous

like a mad phallus (p. 11)

In correlation with the above, Osundare also ridicules the unprofessionalism in the paramilitary officials. The repetition of the word "waiting" signifies the illegitimate act of the custom officials as they are just waiting for the entrails of the traveler's bag. The custom officials, in the collection, are corrupts towards the international travelers as they keep turning "like diet" and "like a mule" for the sake of bribe. The indirect comparison, as a literary technique, is used in the poem to delineate the immoral demeanor of the custom officials. Further on this, the poet describes the anxiety of the custom officials for a huge amount of money coming directly from "the empire of my bag" in order to avoid their rusty rules:

Waiting

just waiting, the Custom's fingers

in the entrails of my puking box;

turning, turning, churning it like a bad diet,

probing for pellets, probing for dusts

prospecting for quiet little banks in the empire  
of my bag;  
and my bag, waiting, forbearing like a mule  
turning every cheek;  
still waiting while rugged fingers stretched me  
full length against a rusty rule,  
rattled the sacred shrub below my navel (p. 13)

In the development of African literature, Osundare, using historical allusion, contributively discusses the apartheid regime in South Africa. For him, "the bleeding anthem on the lips of wounded kraals" suggests the apartheid regime and the Soweto massacre of the blacks in South Africa. For the poet, "the trapped boers" connotes the disinclination of the western world to allow African countries to become independent. As such, the "time ambles..." suggests that the vision of waiting, by the South Africans, is gloomy. He says:

ask Soweto  
Ask  
the bleeding anthem on the lips of wounded kraals  
Waiting  
for the kaffir buried four hundred days a year  
in orphaning pits  
for Boer trapped by the diamond dazzle  
of unanswerable plunderings  
Time ambles in diverse paces... (p. 38-39)

At the beginning of Canto III, Osundare suspiciously portrays his nation's state of apathy. For the poet, the Africans are suffering in an "unhappy land" as an outcome of the "vultures" feasting on the nation's resources. The parasitic image of "vultures" used in the collection is to show the extent to which the national heritage of the country is caged in the hands of a few. He says:

A king there is  
In this purple epoch of my unhappy land,  
his first name is Hunger,  
his proud father is Death  
Which guards the bones at every door  
And the vultures are fat  
crows call a feast at every dusk;

markets wear their stalls like creaking ribs  
 the squares are sour with the absence  
 of friendly feet (p. 45)

*Waiting Laughters*, like other political-oriented collections of poems, also centralizes the military regime in Nigeria. The verses, using symbols as a figurative gadget, reveal the suspension of the Nigerian constitution and the introduction of decrees: "And Fat Cows swallow Lean Cows." The capitalization of the words "Fat Cows" and "Lean Cows" linguistically represents the decree and the suspended constitution as the "decrees strut the streets like swaggering emperors." Here, Osundare ironically opines that death is a source of blessings for the masses that encounter hardships at the hand of the military officials. Thus,

Ordinances tumble down like iron showers  
 decrees strut the streets like swaggering emperors  
 hangmen hug the noose like a delicate baby  
 and those who die thank Death  
 for his infinite mercies (p. 46)

The poet further enriches the above expression of grief with the utilization of the indigenous word, *ibosi o*. To him, the exploit of the word *ibosi o* illustrates a loud cry to a larger audience to safeguard the calamitous acts bedevilling the African society. Thus,

Ibosi o  
 Hands which go mouthwards  
 in seasons of ripening corn  
 have lost their homeward trip  
 to the waiting bowl  
 And yet corpulent towncriers  
 clog the ears of listless lanes;  
 praise singers borrow the larynx  
 of eunuch thunders. (p. 46)

Despite the poet's lamentation, the poet wraps up his collection with optimistic voices. Therefore, Osundare, like other many African writers, is highly anticipating for a societal reformation; he is optimistic that "laughters will surely come back/to the paradise of our lips." To Osundare, the joy-killers (that is, the political plunderers) will find a grave "in the labyrinth of their venom" when the society is reformed properly. Thus,

But the sun strides through the clouds  
 to the threshold of noon,  
 strong, untrappably wiser;  
 a quiet smile informs the sky's diurnal face

and cloud's sullen brow  
 is promise of a gentle shower  
 Joy-killers will find ready grave  
 in the labyrinth of their venom  
 Laughter will surely come back  
 to the paradise of our lips (p. 86-87)

From the foregoing, one can deduce that Osundare births his collection, *Waiting Laughters* to dwell on the socio-political calamities bedeviling the African society. Thus, this study shall critically examine the collection between the terrain of cultural and linguistic hybridity.

### 3. Cultural Hybridity in Osundare's *Waiting Laughters*

"All forms of culture are continually in the process of hybridity" – Rutherford (1990, p. 211).

Literary texts cannot be separated from the contexts in which they are produced. These contexts are often the historical, social experiences, which have shaped the worldviews and identities of the countries and regions they come from. Within this argument, cultural identity is hybridized in Osundare's poetry, attempting to balance two competing cultures. As Fanon asserts: "the struggle for freedom does not give back to the national culture [...] After the conflict, there is not only the disappearance of colonialism but the disappearance of colonized man" (1961, p. 55-105). Castle touches light on this, buttressing that the principal interest of Fanon is to understand the psychology of colonialism and somewhat call for anti-colonial revolutions (2007, p. 135).

The disappearance of a colonized man, as Frantz Fanon echoes, is what constitutes Niyi Osundare's poetry; striking a balance between the colonial and the colonized voices with the sole aim of revealing the concept of identity and alienation especially in the way most African elites prefer to think and convey meanings in the colonial tongue. In *Waiting Laughters*, Osundare rekindles this absurdity of using foreign tongue and consequently foreign mindset by the African elites to express the African experience. Osundare's symbols of "tongue" and "mouth" are said to have metaphorically delineated the crisis of cultural identity and the unit of his hybridized poetic voices to strike the analogy between the African language and foreign thinking. Thus,

Waiting  
 like the crusty verb of a borrowed tongue  
 salty with the insult of the sea  
 its nouns dotted with little maps  
 its proverbs crimson with memories of conquering  
 waves  
 Here, my tongue  
 But where, the mouth?  
 The tongue of parrot  
 Of another forest

Couched and caged  
 In a strident silence  
 Fed the seeds  
 Of an alien tree  
 Routed by its root  
 Logged by its stem  
 A white white tongue  
 In a black black mouth (p. 40).

One of the characteristic elements of cultural hybridity is the strong aura of invocatory chants posited in *Waiting Laughters*. Osundare subtly draws from the musicality of incantations in the Yoruba oral tradition in an attempt to construe the in-betweenness of the colonial and the colonized culture. For him, the assortment of two languages in the musicality of incantations is used to thematize the despairs of the oppressed, the injustice of the inequitable distribution of natural resources which he portrays with diverse natural images; “wind,” “shrub,” and “whistling fern.” He posits:

I pluck these words from the lips of the wind  
 Ripe like a pendulous pledge;  
 Laughter’s parable explodes in the groin  
 Of waking storms  
 Clamorous with a covenant  
 Of wizened seeds  
 Like a talent of golden vows  
 I listen solemnly to the banter  
 Of whistling fern  
 And I reap rustling rows  
 So fanatic in their pagan promise (p. 2).

From the above quotation, it can be observed that the musicality of the verses is akin to the strong aural of incantation that is usually chanted by the herbalists during Ifa consultation. The poet borrows lengthily from the Yoruba oral incantation to dwell on the cultural aesthetics of hybridity.

Going by the ideology of McLeod saying that most colonized societies find themselves “in transit” to interact with “difference and identity” (2000, p. 217), the climax of Osundare’s hybridized poetry can effectively be attributed to the deployment of Ikere mythology in his collection. Niyi Osundare unarguably finds a discursive space in illuminating the view of Frantz Fanon that the colonized (that is, Africans) are to trace back their roots in order to proclaim their cultural aesthetics. The cultural values delineated in Osundare’s poetry reveal that there exists a literary nexus between his root, Ikere and his poetry. Thus, this hybridized voice is evident in *Eye of the Earth* as he carefully pays a strong homage to Ikere and its cultural artefacts. Niyi Osundare in *Waiting Laughters* metaphorically exercises the local Ikere mythology as a symbolic cum hybridized gradient to strike warning sounds to the tyrant and dishonourable kings of his home town. Culturally speaking, the dishonourable kings are banished to a remote village called

"orogododo orogodo" as a result of their illicit demeanours. For him, the political plunderers should be sent to a banished land if they fail to understand that "the crown is only a cap".

Osundare also attempts to give equal weight to the African heritage in his hybrid voices with the use of Yoruba proverbs. In the articulation of Ojaide, proverbs "give a distinctive cultural identity to modern African literature" (2009, p. 13). The satirical poetics of the collection is unique because it deploys the creative forge of the Yoruba proverbial expression. The proverbial evangelism is to critically reveal his hybridized version of Yoruba proverbs written in English. Osundare, taking from the Yoruba lore, asserts that: "the feet I see are waiting for shoes/the sores are waiting for an urgent balm." The proverbial verses above criticize the injustices of social deprivation of stomachs "waiting for coming harvests/water-pots waiting in famished homesteads/eyes waiting for rallying visions." To end the criticism against injustice, Osundare, in his cultural ambivalent tones, communicates:

For time it may take

Time it may take

The stammerer will one day call his

Fa-fa-fa-ther's na-na-na-me!" (p. 74).

The above verses are undoubtedly invocative of the popular Yoruba proverbs, woven around the stammerer:

B'o pe titi (it may take a time)

Ak'ololo yi o pe baba (the stammerer will eventually pronounce his father's name).

Also, Osundare is indisputably influenced by the Yoruba traditional song praise, a song that is popularly known among the Yorubas as a communal activity to herald the planting season, harvest season, dry and rainy season. In the collection, the song is used to celebrate nature in its ramifications. Thus,

My song is the even rib

in the feather of the soaring bird

the pungent salt and smell of

earth

where seeds rot for roots to rise

My song is the root

touching other roots

in a covenant below the crust

beyond the roving camera of the eye

My song is the embryo of day

in the globule of the rising dew;

a vow which earths the Word

in regions of answerable rains

My song is ogbigbotirigbo  
 waiting on the stairs of the moon  
 garnering lights, garnering shadows,  
 waiting (p. 26)

In the above quote, Osundare deeply dwells on the concept of hybridity by describing his songs in the mold of “ogbigbotirigbo,” a large bird in the Yoruba country. For him, the understanding of one’s society critically plays a prominent role in any artistic production in Africa and poets are viewed as a channel through which the societal consciousness is stimulated.

Adding to the points above, the use of ijala (hunting poetry) can also be considered as the cultural hybridization of Nigerian poetry in Osundare’s *Waiting Laughters*. The hunting poems, called Ijala in Yoruba, are songs in the Yoruba traditions that are chanted at the funerals of hunters. In a wider scope, Ijala can also be sung in any social function predominantly for the purpose of entertainment. In the collection, Osundare delineates Ijala songs to praise the rainy season, the season that signifies bliss and harvest in the Yoruba society. Thus,

The rain. The rain  
 The rain is onibanbantiba  
 The rain is onibanbantiba  
 The rain which taunts the roof’s dusty laughter  
 In the comedy of February’s unsure showers;  
 The wind is its wing, the lake  
 One liquid song in its fluent concert  
 And still fugitive like a fairy,  
 The wind gallops like a thoroughbred  
 Dives like a dolphin  
 Soars into the waiting sky  
 Like awodi with a beak of feathery oracles (p. 4).

To the iconic poet, the coming of the rain, in the above lines, preoccupies the “laughters” of the nation in the first beginning as it is widely celebrated when Nigerians were throwing flags “like awodi” shortly after the attainment of the independence—an avenue that provides us short laughter after the political cum cultural contact with the colonialists. It should, however, be noted that the ornamental use of Ijala is not part of the European culture but it is extensively drawn from the culture of the colonized and the ability to carve it via the language of the “other” formulates the hunting song as cultural hybridity.

Since hybridity in contemporary Nigerian poetry connotes the fusion between the colonizer and the colonized, Osundare dramatically enacts the Yoruba fable of a toad and a snake to rebuke the aftermaths of self-indulgence. The modification of the Yoruba tales into a European style of storytelling is a basic component in this study as Osundare’s hybridized voice uses the allegory of “snake swallowing the rock” to preach the gluttonous act of the political plunderers consuming something bigger and more harmful than the national cake. In the collection, the toad and the snake dramatically reveal the conversation between the oppressor and the oppressed in poetic dialogue. For the poet, the snake has been swallowing

the nation's "meat" for so long in which the oppressed is waiting for the nemesis of their action which is equivalent to swallowing "something too hard for the mill of the stomach." He posits:

Okerebu kerebu  
 Kerebu kerebu  
 And the snake says to the toad;  
 "I have not had a meal  
 For a good weak;  
 And my stomach yearns  
 For your juicy meat"  
 "Suppose I turn into a mountain?"  
 Asks the toad,  
 "I will level you in the valley  
 Of my belly"  
 "Suppose I turn into a river?"  
 "You will flow easily through  
 The channels of my mouth"  
 "Suppose I become one  
 Of your favourable children?"  
 "I will eat you  
 With all the motherly love  
 In this world"  
 The toad then turns into a rock  
 And the snake swallows it  
 With delicious despatch  
 Ah! Aramonda  
 The mouth has swallowed something  
 Too hard for the mill of the stomach (p. 63-64).

Taken all the above highlights together, *Waiting Laughters*, as a bicultural collection of poems, imaginatively borrows extensively from the Yoruba culture and as well, uses the indigenous Yoruba words such as "awodi," "aramonda," "asopa," "oremodo," werepe" to explore the model of hybridity in the contemporary Nigerian poetry. The cultural cum traditional features in Osundare's *Waiting Laughters* adopt the potentialities of domesticating the collection with a view to exploring the African experiences.

Consequently, this cultural tradition, which is not just modern in form but also in cycle with the contemporary Nigerian poetics, delves essentially into the African orality.

#### 4. Linguistic Hybridity in Osundare's *Waiting Laughters*

As a way of interpreting the complexity of the linguistic range of hybridity in the post-colonial literary text, Osundare deploys language which is not restricted to any specific mode and includes standard poetic English words, dialects, unstructured breaking of words and programmatic cum digitalized poetic style. Thus, the analysis of formalist elements, the practicality of a literary work, disruption of coherence in the use of language and the structure of the text will be examined within the terrain of the linguistic hybridity as reflected in Osundare's *Waiting Laughters*.

In the collection, Osundare tries to convey the anxiety the Africans have over their heritage using the language of the *self* and the *other*. His doings concur with the assertion of Dutta (2004) saying: "postcolonial theory has regularly critiqued colonialist constructions of otherness, but, because so much of its articulation is in the mode of revenge historiography, the uncovering of the 'other' as constructed/violated by colonialism has been its busiest area of operation" (432). *Waiting Laughters* can thus be seen as an example of transculturation, which is a process by which a conquered people choose and select what aspects of the dominant culture they will assume. The collection, in this context, draws from the sound and linguistic patterns of Yoruba oral poetic forms and the Western poetry tradition. In this purview, the influence of oral genre pervades Osundare's poetic oeuvre and in most cases, the poet tries to use traditional cultural speech and the language of the poet's speech community (Yoruba) in a stylistic manner that transposes Yoruba semiotics into English expression. In the collection, Osundare's Yoruba semiotics into English expression can be seen in the proverbial lore: the stammerer will one day call his/Fa-fa-fa-ther-ther's na-na-na-me!" The elongation of the words "father" and "name" by the stammering persona delineates the idea of semiotic hybridity as Osundare carefully sculpts his language and allows its sounds to semiotize the movement of meaning. In light of this, the lyrical and tuneful deployment of sound symbols and images in the poem is part and parcel of the overall instrumental orchestration of poetry.

The crucial role of sound and tonality in Osundare's poetry also constitutes the hybridization of language in contemporary Nigerian poetry. According to Finnegan, oral tradition, speech, the verbal arts, orality, voice, audition, words give Africa and hanging experience (2012, p. 56-80). For her, the ethnography of speaking or the textualization of speech sounds emphasizes the contextualized, ideological and socially situated dimensions of language. In each canto of the collection, Osundare conveys a class-conscious and people-oriented message as he blends the oral resources of his Yoruba native tongue and his acquired language, English, in order to approximate the English language to Yoruba. The poetic song in the collection illustrates the assorted hybridity as the poet attempts to bring out a vivid description of the kingdom of the politicians in a graphical mode. Thus,

Orogododo Orogodo

Orogododo Orogodo

Oba ba ti beyi

O mo d' Orogododo o o o o

The king's brave legs are bone and flesh

Bones and flesh, bone and flesh

The king's brave legs are bone and flesh

The castle is a house of mortal and stone

Mortal and stone, mortal and stone

A chair is wood which becomes a throne (p. 22)

One of the concepts of linguistic hybridity is the use of parallelism as the English linguistic features. Parallelism, as a troupe of literary discourse, is a linguistic phenomenon which explains the relationship that may be understood between the units of linguistic structures, which are constructed parallel to each other or related in some other ways. This is mostly a style employs by the Euro-modernist poets to distinctively reveal their poetic renditions from other artist structures. In this purview, parallelism is achieved to interpret its heuristic uses in literature in which meanings are suggested in order to argue a point of view and convey a message. He posits:

History's stammerer,  
 when will this tongue, uprooted, settle back  
 in the pink peat of the mouth  
 History's stammerer,  
 when will this wandering tree seek  
 the loam of its father's forest  
 History's stammerer  
 when will your memory master  
 the vowel of your father's name? (p. 41)

The power of parallelism in the above piece lies in the repetition and sameness of structures. The graphological arrangement of protrusion of "History's stammer" captures the parallelistic formulaic of repetition and structural equivalence provides the rendering of the poem a certain rhythmic power that cascades into a somewhat crescendo mood of sadness with a view to explaining the lost culture of his people and the hybridized identity of his community that cannot remember "the vowel of their father's name."

Also, the style deployed in the text is quite different from the poetic orality of the African oral poetry tradition. Though Osundare defamiliarizes the reader with the use of Yoruba dialect, the style of the one to four cantos can be attributed to the works of European poets such as John Donne and his contemporaries. Within this outlet, Osundare writes his long song in many voices to dwell on the decrepit status of the African society using the hybridized version of linguistic styles.

Another important element of linguistic hybridity revealed in the collection is the use of code-switching. In *Waiting Laughters*, the kind of code-switching is the blending of English and Yoruba. For Osundare, the complete attempt to shut out foreign readers in some part of the collection is to forcefully educate the non-native speakers that the language of the colonized is still intact; though, it has been fully hybridized. Osundare, therefore, uses this aspect of linguistic hybridity to express his nostalgic efforts of tracing back the African culture in his collection. He says:

Omi I lo o, iyanrin lookun rode  
 Omi I lo o, iyanrin lookun rode  
 Aye mo re de, e emee jemi lo loona o o o  
 Even when the horse has galloped home  
 Galloped finally home on the spur of sweating dusks  
 Roadside shrubs hold on to their legacy of dust  
 The tracks are red with alphabets of passing hoofs

We are a village of hills,  
 A village of rolling hills,  
 Those who sharpen dark knives  
 For our fledgeling voice  
 Will go back home, drowned in the deluge  
 Of its echoes  
 Of its echoes  
 Of its echoes  
 In the deluge of its stubborn e...ch...o...es (p. 67)

In *Waiting Laughters*, Osundare vividly uses an unstructured breaking of words. The unstructured breaking of words is also a linguistic style employed in the collection. Osundare's poetry, as an experimental collection, attempts to make a difference in the literary circle of Nigerian poetry. To exemplify the unstructured breaking of words used in the collection, Osundare posits:

|        |            |
|--------|------------|
| And    | Minutes    |
| Drag   | Their      |
| Feet   | So         |
| in-    | Finitely   |
| In     | Grey       |
| Boots  | Of         |
| Leaden | Hours      |
| Each   | Wink       |
| A      | Wail       |
| Each   | Wail       |
| One    | Eon        |
| In     | The        |
| Sleepy | Chronology |
| Of     | Drastic    |

etherings (p. 36)

Adding to the above, there is a more overt digression from the norms and conventions of writing in *Waiting Laughters* which are illustrated in the deliberate tactics used by the colonized writers to different the language of the "self" and "other." In this purview, Ashcroft et. al opines that the postcolonial writers deploy a new style that does not conform with the conventional style of poetry. He asserts:

The first, the abrogation or denial of the privilege of 'English' involves a rejection of the metropolitan power over the means of communication. The second, the appropriation and reconstitution of the language of the centre, the process of capturing and remoulding the language to new usages, marks a separation from the site of colonial privilege (p. 37).

From the literary endowment of Ashcroft, Osundare linguistically marks out a programmatic cum digitalized style to reveal his hybridized voice. The programmatic cum digitalized style preoccupies the innumerable of time as an unending significance in a man's life. Thus,

*The cross  
 Criss and rails*

in a crisis of sleep

ing  
 steel  
 Only savage rust  
 threatens the knots  
 with a tooth of filed water  
 And when millipede legs un  
 do the distance  
 on spines of serpentine columns  
 No matter how fast  
 the millipede may run  
 will it not always find the earth ahead (p. 32)

From the foregoing, this study winds up that Niyi Osundare has spent much of his time living between different cultures, navigating the boundaries linking Africa with Europe or between multiple languages. Often describes as a hybrid, the themes of identity and culture in his works are communicated through language: language, therefore, formulates words and structures in order to constitute what is known as literary elements. As a bilingual collection of poems, *Waiting Laughters* mediates between the varying constituents of the symphony of identities, cultures and ideologies to delve into the realm of hybridity.

## 5. Conclusion

To conclude, this study has demonstrated that the African writers have adapted the English language to the native experience, thereby establishing a “new” language that can both “carry the weight” of the African experience (and, therefore, still be in “full communion with its ancestral home”) while also speaking to and engaging the Western audience. Osundare’s *Waiting Laughters* implies that the fixed identities that the colonial relations seek to impose are subvert or so unstable that the colonizer and the colonized are caught up in complex reciprocity and negotiation within the slippages of domination in complex ways and forms. Thus, the postcolonial terminologies– hybridity and pluralism – find a space in the poetic renditions of Osundare.

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