Functions and Contexts of Reference Deviation in *Anthills of the Savannah.*

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Abstract –This paper scrutinises some strange uses of pronominal reference in Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* (1978) to come to the conclusion that such uses are influenced by traditional grammar, on the one hand, and by the context of culture and the idiosyncratic belonging of the chief character-narrators in the novel, on the other. The researchers have also established intertextual links between their findings and other writings to show that such pronominalisation is not peculiar to Achebe.

Key words: pronominalisation, personification, metaphor, interpersonal relationship, context of culture, andocentrism.

Résumé – Cet article analyse des cas étranges de pronominalisation dans le roman *Anthills of the Savannah (1978)* de l'écrivain nigérian Chinua Achebe. Il parvient à la conclusion que ces cas sont influencés par la *'loi andocentrique'* de la grammaire traditionnelle, d'une part, et le contexte culturel et idéologique des principaux personnages-narrateurs du roman, d'autre part. Les critiques ont aussi établi des liens intertextuels avec d'autres écrits pour montrer que la pronominalisation interpersonnelle n'est pas forcément propre à Achebe.

Mots clés: pronominalisation, personnification, métaphore, relation interpersonnelle, contexte culturel, andocentrisme.

1. Introduction.

We all have been taught in secondary school that the pronoun set "he-him-his-his-himself" should be used to refer to human-male gender, "she-her-her-hers-herself" for the female one and "it-it-its-its-itself" for neuter, i.e., a thing or an animal, heedless of gender. In addition, reference to the indefinite personal pronouns and noun phrases such as *"somebody, someone, everybody, everyone, anybody, anyone, nobody, no one, any student, every candidate, any person,* etc" should be made with the "they-them-their-theirs-themselves" pronoun set to avoid sexist language. What is more, the English grammar we have learnt and taught so far recommends the use of the "it-it-its-its-itself" pronoun set for the item "baby".

However, such prescriptions at times happen to be breached, consciously or not, in narratives. This paper identifies and analyses 'strange' cases of pronominal reference to animals, concepts, and some humans in Achebe's *Anthills of Savannah* (1978) to point out their apparent deviation. But after their contextualisation, most such uses are found to be influenced by their cultural, ideological and interpersonal contexts. The paper overviews the concept of personal reference and related issues before tackling the analysis proper.

2. Metalinguistic Overview and Research Orientation

The term 'reference' is traditionally used in semantics as a synonym for 'sense' or 'denotative meaning' of a word (Saussure, 1959; Lyons, 1977). In discourse analysis and functional linguistics, however, more stress is laid on 'discourse reference'. Thus, though Halliday (2004) acknowledges the meaning of 'reference' as the ideational

denotation of a word, he, drawing on Halliday and Hasan (1976), opines that it is a textual cohesive strategy of identifiability, that is, how a given element can be identified or recovered by the listener or reader at a given point in the discourse (p.550). For Brown and Yule (1988), 'reference' is the "*function whereby speakers (writers) indicate, via the use of a linguistic expression, the entities they are talking (writing) about*" (p.205). As for Yule (1988:130), it is "*an act by which a speaker or writer uses language to enable a listener or reader to identify something*". Though Halliday and Hasan (1976), Brown and Yule (1988), Bloor and Bloor (2004), and Halliday (2004) distinguish three broad types of reference – personal, demonstrative, and comparative – only the first type is considered in this paper.

Indeed, personal reference is dependent on the use of personal pronouns, which is why it is also known as pronominal reference or personal deixis (Bloor & Bloor, 2004: 94; Yule, 1988: 132). This is of three types: anaphoric, cataphoric and exophoric. Exophoric reference is made to an entity that lies outside the text, as when we say "look at that", by pointing our finger in the direction of the entity. It is thus not textual, while the other two are. While anaphoric reference or anaphora is seen as "*subsequent reference to an already introduced entity in the discourse*" (Yule, 1988:131), cataphora is one to an entity that is to be mentioned later in the discourse (Halliday and Hasan, 1976:72). Here are two examples to illustrate the two concepts.

(a) "John came on stage and the audience gave *him* a standing ovation"
(b) "When *he* came on stage, the audience gave John a standing ovation"

While the pronoun in **(a)** has an anaphoric function, the one in **(b)** has a cataphoric one. Verma and Krishnaswamy (2009), however, use the phrases "*forward pronominalisation*" and "*backward pronominalisation*" to respectively refer to those two types of reference. While the former is seen as "*the replacement of the second of two identical noun phrases by a pronoun*", *the latter consist*s "*in replacing the first of two identical NPs by a pronoun*" (pp.234-5).

It must be pointed out that this analysis is interested neither in classifying reference into the "exophoric-anaphoric-cataphoric" types, nor is it so in judging this or that as correct or true reference. The discourse analyst, according to Brown and Yule (1988), is mainly interested in successful reference, that is, the hearer or reader's ability to identify, for the purpose of understanding the current linguistic message, the speaker or writer's intended referent (p.205). That is why the present analysis lays emphasis on how third-person pronouns are unusually used to refer to some animals and humans and tries to explain the contextual, interpersonal and ideological foundations of their unusuality. Yet, it must be noted that the notion of 'speaker's intended referent' points to the personal meaning and should be dissociated from the denotative one. This focus on the speaker's intended meaning is expressed, too freely indeed, by a comic character in Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass*, cited in Yule (1988), who says: "*when I use a word,…it means what I choose it to mean –neither more nor less*" (p.92). So discourse reference here should be understood both in terms of speaker's referent and pronominal reference to that.

3. Analysis of Deviant pronominal references in Anthills of the Savannah.

3.1. Indefinite Pronoun References: Andocentrism and Political Correctness

One of the outstanding features of this novel is andocentric pronominalisation of indefinite antecedents. Indeed, the use of politically incorrect pronominal reference, consciously or not, suggests some sexual discrimination as this entails complete elimination of women from the residents of the Government Reserved Area where Beatrice, however, lives, as in *(1)* "*You wouldn't see any of their black successors walking **his** dog today*" (p.107), the possessive adjective "*his*" is used to refer to "*any of the black successors*" while political correctness would require "*their*". In addition, in this section about obituaries or dead-alive celebrities, the same adjective "***his***" is used in reference to "*someone*" where "***their***" would be politically acceptable: *(2)* "*And once in a while among these dead-alive celebrities a disclaimer of **someone** newly disreputable, inserted by **his** former employer or partner using naturally a photograph of the unflattering quality of a police WANTED poster*" (pp.110-11). Does this mean that there is no woman among those obituaries? The answer is definitely 'NO'. Such a use derives from the traditional view of the male-superior-to-the female, one according to which the presence of one man among any indefinite number of women is enough for the use of the male related pronoun "he" and its derivatives, a case more remarkable with the French plural form "ils". A third instance of discriminatory personal deixis can be found in the use of "*he*" to refer to the indefinite noun phrase "a deity": *(3)* "*A deity who does as **he** says never lacks in worshippers*" (p.103). This denies even the faintest grain of femininity to the concept of "*deity*", especially in this context where the deity is Idemili, a female deity, the Daughter of God. Thus, there is no other justification whatsoever for the use of a male-endowed pronouns, unless unconsciously or discriminatorily. Even Ikem, a protagonist who has taken many feminist stands in the story, can be heard to say: *(4)* "*Every genuine artist feels it in **his** bone*" (p.99). Maybe, he should be reminded that political correctness is part and parcel of the feminist struggle for parity.

Indeed, this preferential use of "*he*" and its derivatives may not be conscious as its roots can be traced back to traditional prescriptive grammar and its corollary, the andocentric pronominalisation. John Kirkby (1746:117), cited in Coates (1986:23), puts it this way: "*The Masculine Person answers to the general Name, which comprehends both Male and Female; as **Any Person**, who knows what **he** says*". The 'male-superior-to-female' idea has been the precursor of the sex-indefinite use of "he" rule which has for long proscribed the use of "they" or "he/she" where the sex of the antecedent is unknown. This trend is opposed by feminists who insist on political correctness. Let us consider these sentences:

> *(a)Someone* rang up last night but **he** had hung up when I picked the receiver.
> *(b)Someone* rang up last night but **he or she** had hung up when I picked the receiver.
> *(a) Someone* rang up last night but **they** had hung up when I picked the receiver.

Prescriptive grammarians would consider *(a)* as 'correct', *(b)* as clumsy and *(c)* as 'incorrect' while by today's standards the rating is the reverse. The andocentric pronominalisation is at work in these other sentences from the novel under study:

> *(5)* "Isn't the great thing about **a VIP** that **his** share of good things is always there waiting for **him** in abundance even while he relaxes in the coolness of home...?" (p.42).
> *(6)* "They didn't see why **anybody** should let a drunken idiot walk all over **him** in this outrageous way unless there was something indeed wrong with **him**" (p.47).
> *(7)* "**Everyone** and **his** own. The bush-fowl, her work; and the farmer, his" (p.123).
> *(8)* "Beatrice….told Agatha that she was expecting **someone** and did not wish to be disturbed when **he** came up" (p.111).

It must, however, be remarked that the use of 'he' for 'someone' in *(8)* is contextually appropriate as the speaker knows in advance who she is expecting.

3.2. Pronominalisation of Animals, Concepts and Humans: Personification andDehumanisation.

As announced in the outset, the pronominalisation of animals, concepts and some humans in the novel departs from the 'male-female-neuter' classification and prescription of traditional grammar. Indeed, reference to the crowned bird that has come to sing in Beatrice's courtyard suggests that the use of "*he*" and "*she*" and their derivatives does not relate to human-animal distinction, but to gender distinction for both:

> *(9)* "The bird…was the chief servant of the king and every morning *he* asks the guards of the treasury: *Is the king's property correct?…. Is the king's property correct?…. the king's property…. the king's property…. Is the king's property correct*?" (p.108)
> *(10)* "And *he* spoke again, the diligent chamberlain: *Is the king's property correct*? And now she saw *him* against the light –a little dark-brownish fellow with a creamy belly and the faintest suggestion of a ceremonial plume on the crown of *his* head. *He* was perched on the taller of the two pine trees standing guard at the driveway into the block of flats" (p.108).
> *(11)* "Again *he* demanded: *the king's property… the king's property… Is the king's property correct?*" (p.108)
> *(12)* "*He* continued intermittently to make *his* strong-voiced inquiry until the sun came up…" (p.109).
> *(13)* "Even her poor mother terrorized as she was by her woman's lot could fabricate from immemorial birdsong this tale of an African bird waking up *his* new world in words of English (p.109).

As can be seen from the examples above, the singing bird is referred to with the pronouns "*he, he, him, his, He, he, He, his, his*" where "it" and its derivatives are expected, especially in this context where the use of 'it' would not blur the male-female distinction; only the male bird being pronominalised. This leads to some personification of animals as is in the case of traditional African folktales, but looked at closely, it may be the narrator's way of implying that, when it comes to matters of sex, all males, whether human or animal, behave similarly, and so do females. Indeed, the eighth chapter of the novel depicts four scenes of sex struggles: two by humans and two by animals. The domineering presence of the male bird, described as the "*caretaker of the crown jewels*" over the females, content as they are with "*making*

sharp calls of satisfaction" (p.109), is one. The "*ferocious sexuality*" of the red-blue male lizard over the drab-grey female is another (p.110). The case of the polygamous man, who is so unsatisfied with his many wives as to go and climb a widow at night despite the deity's prescriptions, stands out here as he is indirectly referred to as a he-goat:

> **(14)** The story goes that in the distant past a certain man handsome beyond compare but in *randiness as unbridled as the odorous **he-goat*** from the shrine of Udo planting ***his*** plenitude of seeds from a huge pod swinging between hind legs into ***she-goats*** tethered for ***him*** in front of numerous homesteads; this man, they said, finally desired also the *ozo* title and took the word to Idemili" (p.104)

As can be seen, the deictics "***his***" and "***him***" refer to the goat, but by inference they indirectly relate to the man, as no difference is made between his sexual avidity and that of the goat. For reminders, the term '*goat*' is pejoratively used to refer to '*a man with such offensive or excessive sexual desire that he can go as far as have sex with close blood relations*'. The same ambiguous pronominalisation can be found out in the quote below:

> **(15)** On his way to resume his hard-lying pretence at cockcrow one morning **who** should he behold stretched right across his path **its** head lost in the shrubbery to the left and **its** tail likewise to the right? None other than Eke-Idemili **itself**, royal python, messenger of the Daughter of God –the very one **who** carries not a drop of venom in **its** mouth and yet is held in greater awe than the deadliest of serpents! (p.105)

Here, the royal python, messenger of the daughter of God, is referred to with the pronouns "***who, who, its, its, its***". This gives the impression of both a human-related python and an animal. Indeed, the word "*serpent*" or "*python*" is used in the book to metaphorically refer to the male sexual organ, just as the word "*shrubbery*" is to contextually or connotatively allude to the female pubic hair. That is what Beatrice, a female protagonist, clearly suggests in describing her dance with His Excellency: **(16)**"*The **big snake**, the **royal python** of a gigantic erection began to stir in the **shrubbery** of **my shrine** as we danced closer and closer ….*" (p.81). The phrases "*bearded meat*" used in the saying **(17)** "*Unless the penis dies young it will surely eat bearded meat*" (*Arrow of God*, p.142), and "*bush/hair*", in the curse of "*fire to scorch their mothers' bushes*" (209) or "*Make your mother hair catch fire*" (p.206) used by drivers against the policemen who demand bribe from them, clearly confirm the use of figurative language by the Igbo people to refer to sexual organs.

Coming back to the issue of pronominalisation, the singing bird discussed earlier is also compared to Beatrice's father, whom she remembers as **(18)** "*a total stranger, like the bird **who** lived and sang in her tree unknown to her till now*" (p.110). While this bird is male-personified, the deictic "***its***" is used to refer to "*a bird*" in **(19)**: "*She left her office like a bird released from **its** cage, on the dot of three-thirty*" (p.180). Pronominal reference to the male and female lizards in **(20)** and **(21)** below also lends to personification; but it clearly points out gender dichotomy through the use of "*he, his, his*" for the male and "*she, she, she*" for the female.

(20) "A lizard, red in head and tail, blue in trunk, chased a drab-grey female furiously….*She* darted through the edges as though *her* life depended on it. Unraffled *he* took a position of high visibility at the centre of the compound and began to do *his* endless press-ups no doubt to impress upon the coy female, wherever *she* might be hiding in the shrubbery, the fact of *his* physical stamina" (p.110)

(21) As she looked at herself in her bedroom mirror and liked what she saw, she thought: we can safely leave grey drabness in female attire to the family of lizards and visiting American journalists. The case of the lizard is probably quite understandable. With the ferocious sexuality of *her man she* must need all the drabness *she* can muster for a shield" (p.110).

However, this personification helps the narrator to liken animals to humans in sex matters. Just like the case of the he-goat and the polygamous man discussed earlier, the sex struggle between the male and female lizards turns out to be compared to that of humans, with more favourable vote for the animal side. In **(21),** the term "*man*" refers not to human male in particular but to the male gender in general, whether human or animal. The lexical item 'drab,' or its derivative 'drabness,' refers to a slovenly, untidy and dirty woman. Thus the comparison of the drab-grey female lizard to a visiting American journalist is interpersonally outstanding. This is a certain Cranford Lou, who has come to see if the bad news being heard in America about the fictional country Kangan is true, and Beatrice's view on her, after refusing to be one of his Excellency's 'bed-wife' at the private reception, clearly shows the mutual unfriendly tenor between the two ladies. Such tenor is reflected in this statement by Beatrice: *(22)* "*pretentious journalists hoping to catch the attention of the new military rulers created an image of me as 'the latter-day Madame Pompadour' who manipulated generals and patronised journalists*" (p.84). Even the bus named *Luxurious* is ambiguously pronominalised for both genre-related and interpersonal reasons:

(23) "Before embarking on *Luxurious,* Chris walked around *it* sizing *it* up like a prospective buyer. He felt a curious pride in *its* transformation which had not entirely abandoned *its* origins" (p.201)

(24) "Luxurious had inscribed on *its* blue body in reds, yellows and whites three different legends." (p.201).

(25) "*But Chris welcomed this disappointment of comfort for the blessing it had in tow, for it curtailed the recklessness of Luxurious which had been conducting **herself** like a termagant of the highway treating **her** passengers' safety cavalierly and bullying every smaller vehicle **she** encountered clean out of the way as though traffic rights were a matter of size*" (p.205).

While this bus is initially referred to, neutrally, with the pronouns "*it, it, its, its, its*" in **(23)** and **(24)**, it gets personified in **(25)** with the use of "*herself, her, she*" used for it. The pronominal shift here comes from the fact that Chris, the focaliser, has initially taken Luxurious as an ordinary bus, any bus. Yet, as he boards it and starts interpreting the inscriptions on it, he finds out the bus represents, 'three legends' p.202), thus the change from neutral to genre-dictated and affective pronominalisation.

Moreover, the reference to the horse is built upon the proverb "*a man whose horse is missing will look everywhere even in the roof*" (p.177) used by the Captain come to Beatrice's to search for papers and books while Chris, her fiancé, is hiding out. From

the use of *'him-him-him-him-him'* to refer to 'the horse,' one can deduce that it is a human horse, Chris:

> **(26)** "I know where the horse is. But I don't want to find *him*. Get *him* moved. Before tonight" (p.179).
> **(27)** "Move *him*? Was it a trap? To lure *him* into soldier-infested streets?" (p.179).
> **(28)** "In the morning it was to give her full marks for moving the horse; but, if the horse was still in Bassa, to impress upon her that the city was not a safe environment for *him*" (p.185).

The mosquito is referred to with the male-endowed pronominal deictic "*his*", as in **(29)** *"the mosquito…was taunting the ear in revenge for the insult with which **his** suit had once been rejected"* (p.199), while the bedbug is pointed to with the female-endowed pronoun "she" and its derivatives:

> **(30)** "*Her* story is that man once tried to destroy *her* and *her* new-hatched brood by pouring a kettle of hot water on them. *Her* little ones were about to give up the struggle but *she* said to them: Don't give up, whatever is hot will become cold" (p.199).
> **(31)** "I wonder what *she* will tell them after a good spray of aerosol insecticide" (p.199).
> **(32)** "Then he quoted the words of encouragement which the bedbug was said to have spoken to *her* children when hot water was poured on them all. *She* told them not to lose heart because whatever was hot must in the end turn cold" (NLAE, p.114).

It must be noticed that **(32)** above is another version of the bedbug story in *No Longer At Ease* which has the same pronominal reference as **(30)** and **(31)**. Different pronominal references are used for the co-hyponyms of the super-ordinate 'bird': 'the cock' (*his*), 'the bush-fowl (*her-her*), 'the chicken' (*its-it-it*), and 'the hen' (*her*), as in these passages:

> **(33)** "The cock that crows in the morning belongs to one compound but *his* voice is the property of the neighbourhood" (p.122)
> **(34)** "Long before sunrise in the planting or harvesting season,… the *bush-fowl* will suddenly startle the farmer with *her* scream…. If he is a farmer who means to prosper he will not challenge the bush-fowl; he will not dispute *her* battle-cry; he will get up and obey" (p.123).
> **(35)** "What is the use of bending your neck at me like a chicken to the pot when **its** real enemy is not the pot in which *it* cooks nor even the fire which cooks *it* but the knife?" (p.226)
> **(36)** "Most of the men emboldened by tradition and regular travel did not wander around like a hen looking for a place to drop *her* egg but simply picked a big parked truck, moved up close enough and relieved themselves against one of the tyres" (p.207).

In the long quote below, even concepts like 'Agwu', the god of healers, which actually stands for "*Sense*" or "*Right Hand*", and its opposite "Madness", or "*Left Hand*", are personified and deified as the former is four times referred to with human-male endowed pronouns "*his, his, he, his*" and the latter, just once, with "*his*".

> **(37)** "Then, one day Agwu comes along… and hands the story over to a man of *his* choice….Agwu does not call a meeting to choose *his* seers and diviners and artists. Agwu, the god of healers, Agwu, brother to Madness! But though born from the same womb *he* and Madness were not created by the same *chi*. Agwu is the right hand a man extends to his fellows; Madness, the forbidden hand. Madness unleashes and rides *his* man roughly into the wild savannah. Agwu picks *his* disciple, rings his eye with white chalk and dips his tongue, willing or not, in the brew of prophecy; and right away the man will speak and put head and tail to the severed trunk of our tale" (p.125)

The preferential treatment of the "*Right Hand*" by the story-teller over the "*Left Hand*" may be a reflection of the stigma generally associated with the "Left Hand" in some African societies as parents are hardly keen on seeing their children become left-handers; they do whatever is possible to prevent it from happening, even if this requires deforming the young ones. What is more, in the story about the leopard and the tortoise that is about to die (p.128), the former is referred to with the pronouns "*who-he*" and the latter, likewise, with "*him, his*". Initially, the old storyteller in the novel has invariably used the neutral pronouns 'it-its-itself' to refer to the items 'war-cry', 'war' and 'war-story' to show the relative importance of each. But as soon as he considers 'story' to '*take the eagle-feather*', i.e., he upgrades 'it' over the others; it becomes personified in *(38)* "*So why do I say that the story is chief among **his** fellows?*" (p.124), as it is referred to with the human-endowed deictic "*his*". This somewhat draws attention to the importance of story in the context of the novel, where the speaker establishes a special affective or interpersonal relationship with it over others like "war-cry" and "war" to which it is compared and uprated (pp.123-4).

Finally, reference to Elewa's baby-girl apparently shows the narrator's inconsistency in the use of pronouns. In the quote below, the dummy pronouns "it" and "its" are profusely used, thirteen times in all, to refer to the baby.

> **(39)** But a baby had to have a name, and there seemed nothing particularly wrong in giving *it* one in the company of a few friends, or doing *it* on the seventh market as tradition prescribed. Every other detail, however, would fall into abeyance, for this was a baby born into deprivation –like most, of course; but unlike most *it* was not even blessed with an incurably optimistic sponsor ready to hold *it* up on *its* naming day and call *it* *The-one-who-walks-into-abundance* or *The-one-who-comes-to-eat* or suchlike and then blithely hand *it* back to *its* mother to begin a wretched trudge through life, a parody of *its* own name. No, this baby would not lie in cushioned safety from daily stings of the little ants of the floor. Indeed *it* was already having to manage without one necessity even the poorest may take for granted –a father…to hold *it* in his hand and pronounce *its* name on this twenty-eighth day of *its* life (p.217).

The same pronouns are used in other isolated sentences picked up here and there, as in **(40)** and **(41)**:

> **(40)** "She picked up the tiny bundle from *its* cot and, turning to Elewa, said: 'Name this child'" (p.222);
> **(41)** "What does a man know about a child anyway that he should presume to give *it* a name?" (p.222).
> **(42)** "Beatrice got up, put the baby down in *her* cot, went to the sideboard and soon retuned with a bottle of White Horse whisky" (p.225).
> **(43)** "'This baby has already received *its* name. *She* is called Amaechina" (p.225)
> **(44)** "'Who gave *her* the name? All of you here are *her* father?" (p.225)
> **(45)** "'Our daughter has a child an both d I want you to come and give *her* a name'" (pp.226-7)
> **(46)** "'Wherever the child sleeps let *it* wake up in the morning, is my prayer'" (p.227).
> **(47)** "'What brings us here is the child you sent us. May *her* path be straight…May *she* have life and may *her* mother have life…What happened to *her* father, may it not happen again…When I asked who named *her* they told me All of Us. May this child be the daughter of all of us ….May these people here when they make plans of their world not forget *her*….(p.228)
> **(48)** " Ama *whom* Beatrice nicknamed Greedymouth having drunk both from the bottle and from Elewa's breast, pendant like a gorgeous ripe papaya on the tree, was sleeping quietly in *her* cot" (p.232).

However, it must be noticed that the child gets to be referred to with the female-endowed pronoun after receiving a name. This may imply that it is the name that determines, not only humanness but also maleness or femaleness. This shift from the use of "it" to that of "she" to refer to "baby" may also have its roots in the interpersonal relationship, namely, the affective involvement established with the name and the named entity. Interestingly, Beatrice the name-giver qualifies it as **(49)** "*a beautiful name*" (p.222), and Elewa uses phrases like "*wonderful name*", "*fine name*" to do the same. The paradox here, yet, is that the name given to this baby-girl, and which leads to the use of 'she' for reference, is a boy's name. This simply means that it is not the name or the signifier that determines gender but the named entity or signified; as the name-giver justifies in Pidgin "*Girl fit answer am also*", which means a girl can also be called by a boy's name. Another use of "*it*" to refer to "baby" in general appears in **(50)** "Even a one-day-old baby does not make ***itself*** available for your root-and-branch psychological engineering, for ***it*** comes trailing clouds of immortality" (p.100).

The Earth is capitalised and personified in **(51)** "*In the last desperate acts the Earth would now ignite **herself** and send up a shield of billowing of black smoke over **her** head*" (p.32) to affectively illustrate the concept of "Mother Earth" and similar ones like "Mother Nation", "Mother Africa", etc. In **(52)** "*Our proverb says that the earthworm is not dancing, it is only **its** manner of walking*" (p.157), the antecedent "*earthworm*" is referred to with "*it, its*" though it appears in a proverb, while the item 'crowd' is referred to with "***it***" and "*its*" in such a phrases as (53) "*its* desire to catch the command…" (pp.41-42) where the use of "*they, them*" for such collective nouns as "crowd, people, police, etc" is required. The same item is referred to with 'their' in **(54):** "*The little crowd that had gathered around **their** story-teller…joined in the laughter*" (p.212)

A good case of interpersonal pronominalisation appears in **(55)** "*I knew then that if **its** own mother was at that moment held up by her legs and torn down the middle like a piece of old rag that crowd would have yelled with eye-watering laughter*" (p.42), where "*its*" refers to the robber to be publicly executed: Maybe, his bragging that he "*shall be born again*" and a woman's reply in Pidgin "*No goat go born you nex time, noto woman*" (p.42) are drawn on by the narrator to see him as a goat, as only a goat can give birth to a goat.

The next section looks into the figurative use of language to refer to sex and sex-related topics, which leads to metaphorical comparison and pronominalisation.

3.3.   Figurative Comparison and Pronominalisation.

As discussed in section 3. 2, the Igbo people metaphorically use terms like "*snake, serpent, python, royal python*" to refer to the male sex and "*shrubbery, greenery, temple, shrine, bearded meat*" for the female one. For example, when a sex maniac girlfriend of his demands more after an all-night series, Sam uses the word '*pipeline*' to refer to the male organ in saying that **(56)** "*there was nothing left in the **pipeline***" (p.69). Likewise,

the word "*Power*" **(57)** below, with human-endowed features like "*naked*", "*rude waist*", stands for "*Woman*". In **(57)** and **(58),** the item 'God/Almighty' is differently pronominalised:

> **(57)** In the beginning Power rampaged through our world, naked. So the Almighty, looking at *his* creation through the round undying eye of the Sun, saw and pondered and finally decided to send *his* daughter, Idemili, to bear witness to the moral nature of authority by wrapping around Power's rude waist a loincloth of peace and modesty" (p.102)
>
> **(58)** "I tell you it is the way the *Almighty* has divided the work of the world….To some of us the *Owner of the World* has apportioned the gift to tell their fellows that the time to get up has finally come. To others *He* gives the eagerness to rise when they have heard the call…" (p.123).

While the narrator in **(57)** uses small-letter deictics "*his, his*" to refer to the "Almighty", the old story-teller, jailed for the threat his stories represent for the military Government, uses capitalised pronoun "*He*" for the same entity in **(58)**. This suggests that the former may be referring to a personalised God, while the latter is doing so to the real one. Indeed, there clearly appears a synonymy between Idemili, God's daughter, and the mysterious "*Pillar of Water*" which she embodies. This "*Pillar of Water*" is described in terms to hint to the clitoris: **(59)** "*It* rises majestically from the bowl of the *dark lake* pushing *itself* upward and *erect* like the *bole* of the father of iroko trees *its* head commanding not the forest below but the very firmament of heaven" (p.102). Lexical items like "*dark lake*", "*upward*", "*erect*", "*bole*", "*the majesty of the Pillar of Water standing in the dark lake*" (p.103), and "*the indescribable Pillar of Water fusing earth and heaven at the navel of the dark lake*" (p.103) are figurative ways to refer to the female pubic hair or organ and position of the clitoris in this hair, which is clearly likened to a "dark/holy lake" or the "shrine" to Idemili, 'a forest', 'a bush,' etc. Intertextually, one gets some insight into the Idemili concept from *Arrow of God (1964)*: "*Idemili means Pillar of Water. As the pillar of this house holds the roof so does Idemili hold up the Raincloud in the sky so that it does not fall down*" (p.41). If 'Idemili' equals 'Pillar of Water', why should the narrator use '*it-its*' for the latter in *(59)* above but "*her-her*" for the former here*?: (60)* "*Idemili, travelling through the country disguised as a hunter, saw this and on **her** return sent a stream from **her** lake to snake …Niger*" (p.103). This pronominal clash helps the narrator to metaphorically use the concept of *Power* to refer to female sex, which he sees as the stronger. The figurative use of lexis reaches its tour de force in this depiction of a sex ritual:

> **(61)** And they fairly scrambled out of the sofa into the bedroom and peeled off their garment and cast them away like things on fire, and fell in together into the wide, open space of her bed and began to roll over and over until she could roll no more and said: 'Come in.' And as he did she uttered a strangled cry that was not just a cry but also a command or password into *her temple*. From there she took charge of him leading him by the hand silently through the ***heaving groves*** mottled in subdued yellow sunlight, treading dry leaves underfoot till they came to *streams of clear blue water*. More than once he had slipped on the ***steep banks*** and she had pulled him up with such power and authority as he had never seen her exercise before. Clearly this was *her grove* and these her own peculiar ***rites*** over which she held ***absolute power***. *Priestess or goddess herself*? No matter. But *would he be found worthy? Would he survive*? This unending, excruciating joyfulness in the crossroads of laughter and tears. Yes, I must, oh yes, I must, yes, oh yes, yes, oh yes. I must, must, must. *Oh holy priestess*, hold me now. I am slipping, slipping,

slipping. And now he was not just slipping but falling, crumbling into himself. Just as he was going to **plead for mercy** she **screamed an order**: 'OK!' and he *exploded into stars* and *floated through the fluffy white clouds* and began a long and slow and weightless falling and sinking into deep, blue sleep. When he woke up like a child cradled in her arms and breasts her eyes watching anxiously over him, he asked languorously if she slept. 'Priestesses don't sleep' (pp.113-14; our italics and boldings).

As can be seen the narrator has intensely resorted to the use of geographic imagery to liken the female sex or woman to landscape. Such phrases as *"her temple, heaving groves, yellow sunlight, dry leaves, streams of clear blue water, steep banks, her grove, exploded into stars, floated through the fluffy white clouds"* clearly relate to the landscape, shrubbery, river, and sky and connote the enjoyment of exuberant sexual intercourse. *In addition, terms like "temple, shrine, grove, rites"* hint to sex as a ritual, and the concept of *'power/authority'* here reveals the woman as the power-holder in this ritual. The woman's commands *"come in"* and *"OK"* uttered respectively before Chris enters her shrine and before he explodes clearly confirm her as the embodiment of "Power" and of the Pillar of Water. The same hyperbolic and metaphorical language is earlier used by Chris, the focaliser in the long quote above, to note down his first time with Beatrice: *"Her passion begins like the mild ripples of some* **tropical river** *approaching the* **turbulence of a waterfall** *in slow, peaceful,* **immense orbits**"* (p.68).

Pronominal reference to Beatrice and other comparisons clearly portray her as both a female and a male. She, for her father, has been a *"Female soldier/soldier-girl"* who must learn to *"sit like a female"* (p.87) For Chris, she is a *"demure damsel whose still waters nonetheless could conceal deep overpowering eddies of passion that always almost sucked him into fatal depths"* (p.105). Later, she is seen as a "soldier" and is ambiguously referred to now with female-endowed pronouns *"her, she, her, she, she, her, her, her, her"*, then with male-endowed *"his, his"* (p.106). This bisexual pronominalisation may well be a grammatical reflection of her nickname "the female soldier" or "soldier girl" in which she is seen as a boy-girl and intriguingly, her style of fiction-writing is described as *"muscular or masculine"* (p.91). It may also be a way of pointing both to her duality and undefinability or mysteriousness as she is referred to in ways similar to the ones in which God is: "a Spirit" (John 4: 19-24); " a person, an individual" (Psalm 83; 18); "Father" (Matthew 6: 9); "the Rock," "a sun", 'a shield" (Deuteronomy 32: 4; Psalm 84:11). Thus, though the use of "He" and the attribute "Father" may lead to think of God as 'male' in gender, the Bible refutes this conception, reminding us through Apostle Paul that the use of male pronoun for God and other spirit creatures should not be taken literally: *"'there is neither male nor female within their ranks when they become glorified spirit sons of God, as they are also described as 'the bride of the Lamb'"* (Galatians 3:26, 28; Revelation 21:9; 1John 3:1, 2).

Likewise, the "she-he" pronominalisation of Beatrice suggests her portrayal as both female and male, as if she were bisexual. Moreover, she is likened by Chris to *'the Maiden Spirit Mask'* (p.199), to a *'Cherubim and Seraphim prophetess'* (p.113); *'a holy priestess',* "a goddess" (p.114), and to Idemili, the Daughter of God, as can be seen in the clause *"would he be found worthy*?" (p.114) used by Chris in reference to her, which

can be paralleled with "*if she finds him worthy*" (p.104) used in reference to Idemili. Ikem clearly sees her as **(62)** "*the village priestess who will prophesy when her divinity rides her abandoning if need be her soup-pot on the fire, but returning again when the god departs to the domesticity of kitchen*" (p.105). She herself seems to be aware of her duality as she observes: **(63)** "*In a way I felt like two people living inside one skin, not two hostile tenants but two rather friendly people, two people different enough to be interesting to each other without being incompatible*" (p.89). In addition, in response to her fiancé's calling her a '*Cherubim and Seraphim prophetess*', she has this to emphatically say: **(64)** "*As a matter of fact I **do** sometimes feel like **Chielo** in the novel, the priestess and prophetess of the Hills and the Caves*" (p.114). This is an intertextual reference to Chielo, the priestess of the Oracle of the Hills and Caves, who is thus described: **(65)** "*Anyone seeing Chielo in ordinary life would hardly believe she was the same person who prophesied when the spirit of Agbala was upon her*" (*Things Fall Apart*, 1958: 35). The next section sums up the different antecedents pronominalised, their referring pronouns and contexts of use, and gives an interpretation to them.

3.4. Recapitulation, Contextualisation and Interpretation of the Findings.

The table below recapitulates the unusual or deviant pronoun uses in the corpus novel.

Table 1. Recapitulation of pronominalisation in the novel

Antecedents	Pronouns	Contexts of use
singing bird	he, him, his, etc	legend
A bird	it, its, etc	general use
Male-lizard	he, him, his, etc	metaphorical, interpersonal
female lizard	she, her, etc	metaphorical, interpersonal
bedbug	she, her, hers	story/tale
mosquito	He, him, his, etc	story
baby	it, its, she, her, etc	general use, then interpersonal or affective
python	it, its, who, etc	general use, then metaphorical
Beatrice	she, he	general use, then metaphorical
Indefinite pronoun	he, him, his	andocentrism
robber	he, its	general use, interpersonal/metaphorical
goat	he, him, his	metaphorical, and ideological
Luxurious (a bus)	it, its, *she, her*	general use, then legend-oriented
deity	he, his	andocentrism
Bush-fowl	she, her	story
story	It, its, his	general use, then interpersonal
God	he, He	metaphorical, then real

As can be seen in the table, most pronominal deviations come from the fact that the animal antecedents are personified and used metaphorically as characters in stories, legends, and folktales and in comparisons. Sometimes, they are personified for comparison purposes as the aggressive sexual assault of the male lizard on the female one, or the verbal domination of the singing male-bird, is used to show that the male-female tenor in such matters is the same with humans. At other times, a human is somewhat dehumanised and reduced to the state of an animal, as has been the case of the robber. Moreover, the change in the use of pronouns is found to result from affective or interpersonal reasons, as has been the cases of 'the baby' and of 'story'. Part of the reasons is experiential as it relates to the narrator or speaker's personal or symbolic representation of the notions of "God" and "Power. Finally, pronominal clashes have helped to portray Beatrice, the heroine, as the embodiment of both masculinity and femininity. Indeed, the dual pronominalisation seems to have resulted from her being viewed now as a soldier-girl, then as a 'damsel'. The use of figurative language is found to coalesce in the description of a sex episode. Maybe, the fact that the three main character-narrators (Ikem, Chris, Beatrice) are people of letters has contributed to the figurativeness/metaphoricalness of language: Ikem is referred to as a "*poetry editor*" (p.61), "*a literary artist*" (p.11), "*a poet*" (209), and he has written "*a full-length novel and a play*" (p.91) and a prose-poem (p.30, p.208); Beatrice has written "*a short-story and a poem*" (p.91) and Chris is shown as a part-writer of the novel: "*I couldn't be writing this if I didn't hang around and observe it*" (p.2), and the old man from Ablazon is a story-teller.

4. Conclusion.

It has been noticed that reference to indefinite noun phrases in the novel is influenced by the "Andocentric Rule" of traditional grammar. Achebe being a widely-read writer, such uses should be reviewed to conform with the requirements of political correctness if any feminist struggle through language use is ever to succeed. Opinions do differ here; while some consider the feminist opposition to the sex-indefinite "*he*" and any attempt to change it as futile and doomed to failure (Lakoff, 1975:45), it must be reminded that such uses have been imposed on users by male grammarians in the 18th Century (Coates, 1986). In addition, in our schools political correctness has been underway for quite a long time as I have learnt and taught the use of "*they*" for reference to indefinite noun phrases, and it is high time the records were set straight in literature too.

As for the other deviant uses of pronominal reference to animals and concepts, they are greatly influenced by the context of culture or genre. Here, context of culture stands for both the culture of the society where the work is set and to literary culture/genre in the parlance of functional linguists (Eggins, 1994). Indeed, such uses are not peculiar to the novel under investigation and nor are they limited to African narratives with animal characters. Halliday (2004), for instance, gives this example from a European animal narrative. "*There was once a velveteen rabbit. **He** was fat and*

bunchy, **his** *coat was spotted brown and white and* **his** *ears were lined with pink sateen"* (p.551).

These uses are also influenced by the interpersonal or affective relationship between the speaker/narrator and the entity being referred to pronominally, as the cases of 'story', 'robber' and 'baby' show. Metaphorical use of language has also contributed to the strangeness of pronominalisation such as the case of *'python'*, *'shrine'*, *'shrubbery'*, *'God'*, *'Power'*, *'Beatrice'*, etc. Above all, the use of pronouns is andocentric; influenced by traditional grammar; interpersonal, influenced by the tenor between the speaker and the entity referred to; cultural, influenced by the literary genre (folktales, myths, sayings, and proverbs); social, guided by the linguistic etiquette of the community; and educational, influenced by the occupational backgrounds of the major character-narrators.

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