

**ORATURE IN THE POETRY OF SELECTED  
FRANCOPHONE WEST AFRICAN NEGRITUDE  
POETS**

**BY**

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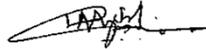
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## **CERTIFICATION**

I certify that this work was carried out by Victoria Adeola ADEFARASIN in the Department of European Studies, Faculty of Arts, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, under my supervision.



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## **DEDICATION**

I give God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit the glory for this thesis.

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## ABSTRACT

Orature, a literature that is oral, is evident in African poetry, including that of Francophone West African Negritude poets. Previous studies on West African Francophone poetry focused on form, content and style with little attention paid to elements of orature in the poems. This study was therefore, designed to examine features of orature in the selected poems of Negritude poets, with a view to determining the literary features of orature and their implications for Francophone African society.

Homi Bhabha's postcolonial postulations on cultural hybridity served as the framework, while the interpretive design was used. Four Negritude poets were examined: Leopold Sedar Senghor, from the collections *Oeuvre poétique* (OP), Birago Diop *Leurres et lueurs* (LL), David Diop *Coup de pilon* (CP); and Bernard Dadié *Hommes de tous les continents* (HC) were purposively selected based on their thematic relevance. The data were subjected to literary analysis.

Four features were deployed across the selected poems and categorised as: Figurative expressions, Sound devices, Code-mixing and Code-switching. Figurative expressions common to the poems that are related to orality include, apostrophe and metaphor, among others. The apostrophic expression is used to recall African religious chants, eulogise individuals and invoke the forces of nature. Apt metaphor is found in "Les Vautours" (CP), "Vanité" (LL) "sèche tes pleurs, Afrique" (HC) and "Femme Noire" (OP). The metaphorical expression in "Les Vautours" (OP) describes the European Missionaries as vultures who came to exploit Africans. Allegorical metaphor is displayed in "Vanité" (LL); it demonstrates the wickedness of the Whites to the Blacks. Sound devices that manifest in the poems include chant, song, incantation and initiation rites. Chant runs across all the poems; it appears in "Chant des rameurs" (LL). Song also manifests in "Le Tam-tam" (CP), Incantation and initiation rites are displayed in "incantation" (LL) and "Chant de l'initié" (OP). Code-mixing involves intra-sentential and extra-sentential expressions. Intra-sentential code-mixing is deployed in *Oeuvre Poétique* (OP) in "Lettre a un prisonnier" where French and Wolof language are being code-mixed "Ngom! Champion de Tyané" while extra-sentential code-mixing is employed in CP in the poem "Rama-Kam" where French and Wolof are combined many times: "Le Tam-tam Rama-Kam, le Tam-tam tendu comme un sexe de victoire". Code-switching involves English and French inter-sentential expressions in CP particularly in "Le temps du Martyre", "Hé boy, un Berger, une serviette, de l'eau!". Linguistic varieties in the poems are used to frame African identity.

The selected Francophone African Negritude poets deploy features of Orature to promote African unity and an identity that provide convergence for both oral tradition and written orality.

**Keywords:** Orature, Cultural hybridity, Francophone Negritude poetry, Figurative expressions

**Word count:** 421

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

OP	–	Œuvre poétique
CP	–	Coup de pilon
LL	–	Leurres et lueurs
AP	–	Anthologie de la Poésie d’Afrique Noire
HC	–	Hommes de tous les continents
LS	–	Les Vautours
CM	–	Code-Mixing
CS	–	Code-Switching
UNESCO	–	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
ICPC	–	Independent Corrupt Practices Commission
EFCC	–	Economic and Financial Crimes Commission

# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background to the study**

This chapter introduces the entire work. Particular attention is paid to the background to the study, statement of the problem, aim and objectives, justification of the study and clarification of terms deployed in the study.

Orature, Jegede (2021), observes that folklore and literature are related but, they are different terms, therefore, it is important to clarify the following terms in order to have better understanding of terms and to avoid unnecessary misrepresentations of ideas and thoughts. This work, on this note, attempts to familiarise us with culture, folklore and orature. To foreground the term, culture is the total way of life of group of people. It is germane to human existence and a point of convergence to all and human endeavours as well as the capacity of mankind to live peacefully in a given society. Culture moderates human interactions and defines people's level of political, social, cultural, economic and religious functionality. Therefore, in a situation whereby human being does not exist, culture cannot thrive in that environment. On the other hand, culture is the umbrella that embraces in totality the languages, religions, customs, traditions, food, dress, music, arts, marriage, trades, occupation, housing and community systems that are taught and passed on from generation to generation while folklore is an integral part of culture tied by a tissue of connections with every other element in the culture (Ajibade 2019). In the word of Olutoyin Jegede (2021), "folklore is what people traditionally say on one hand and what they traditionally do on the other hand." It means the type of literature they engage in, the food they eat, the dress they wear, the type of their hairdo, weaving of baskets and broom just to mention few. Based on this, we would like to say that oral literature is an aspect of folklore, which should not be used interchangeably. Therefore, oral literature is an essential aspect

of folklore. It is a verbal expression that is passed on from one generation to another. It includes epics, myths, proverbs, lyrics, riddles, puns, tongue-twisters, songs and chants.

Okpewho (2004) also observes that in the past, oral literature was characterised by series of prejudices, they called it derogatory names like “popular literature”, “traditional literature.” Jegede (2012) corroborates Okpewho’s view that oral literature in the past is seen as literature of low class level people or vernacular, art and folklore , therefore, she does not subscribe to such thought but sees it as a literature that appeals to fancy and popular taste.

Akporobaro (2006), also raises an argument on the misconceptions about oral literature that, it was once oral and written traditions, it appears contradictory because “literature “itself is formed from Latin word, which is “literature” that is written “literatura”. Literature emphasises written word not oral, therefore, the term “oral literature” is contradictory in nature because it suggests that something exists in spoken form as well as written form. Akporobaro avers that the above discussion is merely superficial, he states that literature needs not be what is written only but all verbal creations both spoken and written, collection, oral compositions that are projected artistically, recitations and performances of high artistic merit that are products of creative use of the imagination by artists of the spoken work in a given society.

Jegede (2021) open our eyes to the coinage of oral literature to orature for the purpose of clarity. She analyses the fact that Pio Zirimu (1930), Professor of Linguistics from Uganda coined the term orature as a synonym for oral literature, it means that oral and culture become orature. Therefore, this research, adopts orature because some scholars in Europe and other parts of the world have extensively carried out research on it, they affirmed and accepted it as a body of literature. Hence, this assertion, the thesis decided to employ orature as coined by Pio Zirimu in 1930 in all our discussions. Based on this, orature is a verbal expression that is handed down from one generation to another. It comprises of myths, epics, riddles, proverbs, tongue-twisters, pun, songs, folktales and recitations such as poetry, chant and incantation. In the same vein, this work considers the definition of other

scholars to buttress the essence of orature in the poetry of selected francophone West African Negritude poets for example Akporobara and others.

Okoh (2008) defines orature as a phenomenon that is transmitted from a generation to another, unwritten literature has become written to the extent that orature is receiving a lot of attention nowadays.

Ibrahim (2008) corroborates Okoh's assertion as he expatiates that orature is at present the existing domain for any creative writing of today which include epic, festivals, myths, proverbs, religion, dance and poetry.

Akporobaro (2006) also explains that orature is the imaginative compositions distinguished by their beauty of forms of expressions and local ideas developed over the years by a people and handed down from one generation to another by word of mouth. Many literary critics of orature such as Ademola Dasylva, Wole Soyinka, Olutoyin Jegede, Babatunde Ayeleru have worked extensively on orature, create literary artistic expressions that worth global recognition. This research work therefore explores culture in totality and describes it as a traditional heritage of mankind and any advancement without a cultural dimension cannot administer the populace. Besides, orature is the oldest and most lasting form of literature in African continent; however, it is being abandoned as a result of badly conceived education which Africans are currently struggling to cope with in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It is indubitable that the African history has a lot to enhance the modern circumstances and it is also valid that the continent has within its reach technology that is progressively making the world to exchange concepts but colonialism has been politically exploitative, socially and politically enslaving because Europeans substantiated colonialism on the basis that Africans had no culture. Meanwhile, upon getting independence, Africans demonstrated to the entire globe that they had an energetic culture which was not lesser to the colonial master's western one and this assisted the representation of African culture in the imaginative writings of the francophone West African authors.

Similarly, francophone West African writers are thoughtful of political and socio-cultural problems to the point that their poems can be used not only to expose but also to seriously resolve them in African societies so that justice can prevail and their poetry can equally align with socio-cultural and political liberation in Africa. Therefore, various

aspects of African culture have endured some encumbrances and decline has really set in. For instance, several Africans, notably the enlightened ones, consider African culture as substandard and ancient and deliberately accept foreign ways. They dumped their ancestor's lifestyle and take delight in the foreign ones. Some prefer imported suits, blouses, and skirts and other types of overseas dresses to African cloth even in a scorching climate which makes them appear unreasonable. Contemporary parents who should teach their children about Black culture fail to accomplish their responsibilities as a result of ineptitude. Fathers do not show interest in narrating folktales while ancient lullabies do not make any meaning to mothers to pacify their infants to sleep. Only few African cultural values exist because of the lengthy abandonment of African culture by the enlightened ones.

Some Africans communicate in foreign language and bring up their children adopting same and even despise those who use African mother tongues. Africans have abandoned their original language to the point that Africa is presently a continent deprived of a shared language. Failure to speak our language influences the African child. In the administration of marriage and christening of children, similar thing occurs; some even choose to convert African names into European languages before naming them. We currently have names such as John, David, Elisha, Elijah, Silas and Paul, Joy, Treasure as names for African children.

African women also contribute to the desecration and demonisation of the African culture. For example, they put on terrible fake heavy wigs in multicolour touching their buttocks. Contemporary women are not embarrassed to wear wigs and weavens which is a simulation of white women's hair as Niyi Osundare (2000: 10) calls it "borrowed beauty store bought hair". Effect of western cultural imperialism is also felt on religion. Although Islam and Christianity are good, they are used as weapons of cultural and political domination. As a result of this, Americans, Europeans and Asians are manipulating Africans economically presently. The colonialists adopted foreign religions as means of oppression, political cum socio-cultural exploitation. This truth is exposed in francophone African literary creations of the colonial era. The conventional means of doing things and ancient African knowledge and proverbs are now disparaged and viewed as obsolete, even African diet and drinks are considered inferior to foreign ones. The consequence of the foregoing is ridicule, pain and misery because Africans have intentionally discarded the voice and paths

drawn out for them by their forefathers; they have become psychologically and physically exposed to distasteful experiences such as diseases, kidnapping, rape, terrorism, corrupt political leadership, underdevelopment and poverty which are now rampant in the continent. In addition instead of being acknowledged as identical, the African renegades are considered as those they are copying as a little better than monkeys. They are objects of hilarity at home and overseas, sustaining the value of oral traditions is the pathway to resolving identity crisis among Africans.

Based on this, orature being a verbal literature is transferred from one generation to another. It occurred solidly in Africa before the colonial era and from the available evidences, it is apparent that Africa had a successful literature though absolutely oral but still in existence till today. Orature is a dependable and real literature of Africa, well known and largely distributed by the majority of Africans and they are still in frequent touch with it. Orature symbolises the form of expression in which African emotions are most willingly accommodated. Irele (2007:79) describes orature in African region as the prevailing mode of communication regardless of the relevance of literacy in Africa.

Orature is the foundation of written literature, the communication of our traditional beliefs and ideas, the dramatisation of our values and the dynamic literature that increases and transforms into numerous forms. It is also an opportunity for recounting the accomplishments of our forefathers and their priceless contributions to the enhancement of world concepts and thoughts. Our history demonstrates that the great African empires were traditionally developed. The African socio-cultural societies flourished by meeting their regular needs and most particularly by ensuring stability through an efficient means of socialisation which guaranteed that the values, norms, ideas and symbols of society were adopted by the younger generations. The insubstantial cultural legacy in its numerous aspects stimulated the whole system. Language and literature became a reference points, playing a standard setting and implementation agent for the entire cultural society (Isola, 2003:3).

The most significant questions that normally come up are why do African people and cultures appear to lack the courage to confront and outlive disasters and why are Africans still staggering in political, economic and socio-cultural crises that have impeded genuine growth in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? Indeed, there is absolute contempt for all facets of

African tradition. English and French continue to be the prevailing languages of the internet but African languages are presently in disadvantaged position to contend. Furthermore, globalisation has modified the world. Television channels and foreign radio stations have overpowered African youths with bad images. We cannot also depend on African political leaders to guide us back to our culture because they would like to preserve their privileged position and be prepared to work together with foreign authorities on economic issues. African parents too do not help matters, they dropped behind in the initiation of their children to African traditions. How then do we protect our culture? Consequently, it is important to note that African traditions which are abandoned should be resuscitated and never permitted to go into extinction. The type of persistent efforts required to sustain the African culture include that all hands must be on deck to revive it and we must all come together to protect our cultural inheritance. It is thus exigent and anticipated to treasure orature so that it can lead us to the part of advancement and growth.

## 1.2 **Statement of the problem**

Studies such as Finnegan (2012), Okpewho (1992), Irele (2007), Jegede (2021), Ayeleru (2011) have investigated orature with particular emphasis on form, content and style with little attention paid to elements of orature in the poems. This work establishes the fact that Africa is the second enormous and most crowded continent in the world. It is noted to be the cradle of mankind for various countries and it is believed to be in the pole position of all world development. Even before the British came into contact with Africa, Africans were advanced people, having their own organisations and concept of government (Hayford, 1992). Similarly, Africa should be a titan and a basis of honour to the world's black people, rather it is still staggering after many years of independence and most prominent reasons are bad governance, terrorism, poverty, corruption, moral decadence to mention but few. However, Africa's greatest challenge is the continuous looting of her treasury and unrestrained corruption by the African politicians.

In recent times and of all the diverse challenges confronting Africa as a region, nothing is as destructive, malicious and as distressing as those of political and socio-cultural challenges which African writers allude to in their works in form of underdevelopment,

corruption, bad leadership and lack of sufficient resources to tackle disasters endured by African tradition during colonialism and currently is the abandonment of African tradition to the uplift of European culture. Despite the fact that Africa is rich both in human and natural resources, gifted and endowed, yet, she remains poor and still wallowing in moral decadence.

As a result of this, African region remains debauched and poorer in its persistent difficulty, excessive stealing and mindboggling fraud which have inhibited Africa from accomplishing its potentials. This political and socio-cultural challenges in Africa are responsible for child abuse, kidnapping, rape, underdevelopment, diseases, hunger, insecurity and unemployment. It is against this background that the work explores orature in selected West African francophone poetry with particular focus on the works of Leopold Sedar Senghor, Birago Diop, David Diop and Bernard Padie. These writers deploy orature in their poetry so as to preserve African tradition in order to accord cultural uniqueness to African people and to ensure African progress because without tangible development, there can be no acceptable change and to sum it up, to bring together African people in the effort for permanent growth.

Different scholars have worked extensively on orature but they did not use orature as a revolutionary tool to combat socio-cultural challenges caused by colonialism and neocolonialism in Africa. It critically examines orature in the poetry of selected francophone West African poets and by using critical analysis, this approach will make a more substantial difference from the approach formerly used by others.

### 1.3 **Aim and objectives of the study**

- a. This study aims to investigate attributes of orature in the poetry of selected Francophone West African Negritude poets; while the specific objectives are to: discuss the essential attributes of orature in the selected poetry.
- b. Explore the inter-thematic commitment noticeable in the selected poetry.
- c. Examine how the selected francophone poets deploy poetry to destabilise the colonial engagement in Africa.
- d. The study foregrounds the uniqueness of francophone African poetic narrative methods and explain their consequences for Francophone African society.

#### 1.4 **Research questions**

1. What are the attributes of orature apparent in the selected poetry?
2. What are the inter-thematic commitments engaged in the selected poems?
3. In harmony with the authentic picture of African indigenous oral customs, how do the selected poets destabilise colonial engagement in Africa?
4. What is the uniqueness of francophone African poetic narrative methods and their consequences for francophone African society?

#### 1.5 **Justification of the study**

The choice of these four francophone negritude poet arises because they are founding fathers of Negritude movement. They started the movement in France around 1930 and they were also Founders of “Etudiant Noir” (1934), a negritude publication written in France that demanded African identity and African independence from European colonialists.

#### 1.6 **Scope and delimitation of the study**

This investigation is restricted to orature as symbolised in the negritude poetry. The selection of West African francophone poets (Bernard Dadié, David Diop, Birago Diop, and Léopold Sédar Senghor) is compelled by the similarity of symbols, images and themes in their poetry and their common interest in eliminating political and socio-cultural vices in African continent. These poets are committed to kicking against colonial and neocolonial issues in Africa through their poems such as *Afrique Debout*, *Femme Noire*, *Souffles*, *Défi a la Force*, *Afrique*, with similar themes of ambivalence, protest, colonialism and exploitation, cultural identity among others. The investigation is focused on twenty-four chosen poems which are interrogated through the lens of postcolonial theory.

#### 1.7 **Conceptual clarification of terms**

Some of the recurring concepts used in this study are explained below:

##### **Africa**

The word ‘Africa’ has its origin in the Greek or Egyptian word Libya; referring to the land of the Lebu in the book of Genesis. During the Roman times, Africa referred to the

North Africa coast up to the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century AD. The word 'Africa' is thought to have come from the name Afrik of Berber origin referring to the people in the land south of Carthage. The Phoenician origin of the word 'Africa' is pharika, meaning land of fruits. The Latin word for Africa is Aprica meaning sunny or free from cold. Africa is the second largest and most populous continent in the world. Africa is claimed to be the cradle of mankind. Human history began in Africa and spread round the earth. Africa is believed to be the birth place of man. The conclusion has also been drawn from discoveries in Africa that the Old Stone Age (Palaeolithic) Africa led the rest of the world in man's early development. Africa thus became the birth place of man because it was there that our near man ancestor emerged into human status about two and half million years ago. And for several centuries after the emergence Africa was believed to be in the forefront of all world progress.

Before even the British came into relations with our people, we were a developed people having our own institutions having our own ideas of government. (J.E. Casely Hayford, 1922. Africa Gold Coast Nationalist). As quoted by Walter Rodney, 1972: 40).

Therefore, Africa is a continent endowed with natural and human resources. It is the continent of drums and percussion: in the light of this, Africa people reached the pinnacle of achievement in that sphere. Africa has contributed to man's heritage of beautiful creations. An example is the Art of Egypt, among others.

## **Culture**

Culture is what defines a particular group. It is the sum total of the ways of life of peoples, their languages, ideas, customs, beliefs artefact, clothes e.t.c. Culture can be said to be a pattern of human behaviour man and knowledge that orders the workings of a particular group. Similarly, Geert Hofstede in Lewis (21006) observes that culture is the "collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the member of one category from another." In the same light, Appiah (2006) opines that "culture is whatever people make and invest with significances through the exercise of their human creativity." This means that culture is a social construct and not innately given, it is learnt and passed on from one generation to another. It is what gives identity and bond to a group; it structures and orders

the working of an assemblage, but ultimately, culture is not static or rigid. Appiah concludes that “cultures are made up of continuities and changes, and the identity of a society can survive despite these changes.” (Ibid) because according to him, “cultural purity is an oxymoron” (Ibid). In a nutshell, culture is dynamic, it evolves, it appropriates and sheds off. It moves with the times and appraises the needs of the people and this is what makes culture relevant, its dynamism.

## **Literature**

Literature is an essential instrument for interpreting and articulating the aspirations and realities of a society. It occupies an important place in the development of many nations. Literary scholars like Abiola Irele (1971), Aduke Adebayo (2010), Dasylva (1999), Jegede (2021), Ayeleru (2011) have discussed extensively on the significance of literature from various angles. They all observed that literature serves as a mirror that sees all the happenings in the society. Literature is also an expression of human culture and experiences. It is a reflection of life as well as human endeavours. Wellek and Warren (1988: 228) posit that:

Literature is a social institution, using as its medium language, a social creation. Literature represents life and life is in large measure, a social reality, even though the natural world and the inner of subjective world of the individual have also been objects of literary imitation.

Literature consists of plays, drama, prose, poetry, short stories, proverbs, riddles and tongue-twisting. It also includes autobiographies, biographies, philosophical treatises, travel and adventures and essays on political, socio-cultural, religious and literary topics. It is the window through which the writers use to peep and project into the totality of human experience such as human emotion and experiences of life, human limitations and potentials. It serves as an essential element in national stability and development. Moreso, literature is a veritable communication network through which human ideologies, opinions and aspirations for the survival of the society are vividly expressed. Literature is also used as a weapon of minimising socio-political cum leadership problems in Africa. Nwoga (1978: 26) observes that:

Our literature must be seen as part of the struggle for the liberation of Africa, politically and morally. It must reflect a full aspect for the value of human life, our aspiration for human life and that of humanity in general.

Nwoga charges us to use literature as a means of expressing political, historical and socio-cultural thoughts to inform, educate and change African people's attitude and orientations.

### **Proverbs**

Proverbs are short and popular sayings among African people. They are communicative devices used to clarify ideas in African society. They are also indispensable forms of expression in African daily communication. For example, the late Chinua Achebe described proverb as "the palm oil with which words are eaten" (1958) and its equivalence in Yorùbá diction is "Òwe leṣin òrò, òrò leṣin òwe, b'òrò bá sọ̀nù, òwe ni a fi ń wá a." Proverbs pass on the ancestor's belief in God, human destiny and death from generation to generation. Proverbs are short, direct and well-known sayings that express an obvious truth and offer advices to people.

Jegede (2008) describes proverbs as "poetic expression" because of its structural patterns and wording that are usually fixed by the society. According to her, its terseness and fixity that gives it a kind of poetic quality in style set it apart from straightforward maxims. In African proverbs, it is generally believed that a good speech has the potentiality of bringing out desirable responses from the listener as a bad speech could create fiction between the interactors. For example, a Yorùbá proverb says:

*Òrò títù ní yọ obì lápò  
Òrò gbóná a yọ 'dà láko.*

Pleasant words draw kolanut from the pocket  
Unpleasant words draw a sword from the sheath.

Orature relies heavily on the use of proverbs, therefore, proverbs are reflected in the creative works of the selected francophone West African Negritude poets. For example, Birago Diop started his story with a proverb which says:

Quand la mémoire va ramasser du bois mort, elle rapporte le fagot qu'il lui plaît.

When the memory goes to gather dead wood, it brings back the bundle of fire of his choice. (1946: 31)

These proverbs are expressed to concretise an idea and to introduce an important discussion.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **2.1 Chapter overview**

This chapter endeavours to distinguish culture from orature because some people are of the opinion that culture and orature are the same in content and nature. Culture and orature appear to be essentially interconnected; however, there is need for clarification in order to reveal their differences. Culture normally has a wider perception than orature. The word culture signifies an absolute way of life of a group of people or community which contains but is not restricted to literature, arts, beliefs and practices, mode of dressing and music. An English anthropologist named Taylor (1871:50) defined culture as the intricate system that consists of the law, morals, arts, beliefs, knowledge, customs, and any other skills and behaviors required for man to function in society. From Taylor's definition, it is inferred that culture is the totality that people have acquired and sustained from previous communal experience.

Furthermore, Okpewho (1992) avers that orature developed from culture when he notes that "accordingly they manifested no interest in oral artists because they believed that the ancient stage of culture at which oral literature evolved, it would be hasty to discuss individual artists". While orature is a modern but rarely used term that attaches importance to the oral feature of literature, traditional literature emphasizes the fact that this type of literature emanates from the ancient and is transmitted from one generation to another (p.4). Orature is a part of insubstantial cultural inheritance. It is a means of effective transmission of cultural values and imaginative expressions. It is an authentic asset for social restoration and societal amalgamation. Based on this, orature or folktale means spoken communicative forms as lyrics, panegyric, legend, folktale, myth, African rhythm and oral poetry.

## 2.2 **Review of related literature**

Many scholars have worked extensively on orature, particularly on its forms and contents but this study attempts to the features of orature and their implications for francophone African society. Ruth Finnegan (2012) in her text *Oral Literature in Africa* defines orature as written and unwritten traditions. She specifies that written traditions are well-known in colonial languages while unwritten ones are not appreciated nor known. She says further that they are not easy to record and they are not appropriate in the familiar categories of literary cultures. However, this work opposes Finnegan's assertion as being faulty in the sense that oral precedes written literature, man must learn to speak before he learns how to write. Therefore, orature is the first literature ever known by a large percentage of people in the world. Based on this, many non-literate people from ages past have imagined, composed, transmitted and performed oral arts without the written aspect. It is principally oral such that orature has been the base from which all other literatures have grown (Adebayo, 2010). Finnegan explicates further that orature is an unfamiliar concept especially to the Europeans who capitalise on the idea of written and literacy tradition. To the Europeans, orature is crude artistically undeveloped with formulations; but thought occurs first in the mental realm just before or during the act of oral expression which, in itself, is an act of matching language with thought. Writing comes third in the series of documenting and transmitting created words in the form of visible signs. Besides, the existence of writing benefits from and depends on the existence of orature.

Moreover, Akporobaro (2006) defines orature as the "inherited imaginative verbal creations, custom and tradition of African societies which have evolved and transmitted on through verbal arts from a generation to other". This definition is a general statement because he associates oral literature with the pre-literate societies thereby concluding that the supposed folks might not be susceptible to creativity since the advent of literacy. Akporobaro misses the mark by associating the literature of the people with a period which suggests that these folks might no longer be creative since the dawn of literacy. However, far from this flawed claim, folks create and re-create songs and stories and evolve scripts or oral items that are still artistically relevant in indigenous societies. What Akporobaro terms as pre-literate societies should have been aptly referred to as indigenous societies because no matter the potency of globalisation, indigenous societies will remain indissoluble till the end of time.

Ayeleru (2011) also expatiates more on the oral performance in his article titled “African cultural rebirth: a literary approach”. He observes vividly in David Diop’s poem “Celui qui a tout perdu” that Africa was peaceful before the invasion of the whites but their invasion destroyed many spheres of life, both cultural and spiritual peaceful co-existence were destroyed.

Ayeleru’s submission attests to the peaceful co-existence of African people before the arrival of the whites who subjugated African continent to perpetual darkness. Pre-colonial era in Africa was not totally free and peaceful as recorded by David Diop and Ayeleru. Then, empires were waging war against one another in Africa, they were not totally angels but European incursion to Africa underdeveloped the continent unnecessarily. Akpagu (2000), like other critics, sees oral performance as the speech act that is taken as communication method in which social issues are discussed centrally between an audience and a narrator-performer. The implication of Akpagu’s discussion is limited in the sense that communication system does not only involve social discourse in oral performance, it includes cultural, political, economic and technological discourses which can contribute positively to the advancement of African community.

Hodza and Fortune (2018) view poetry as a special form of language that encompasses all the elements of language such that grammar, sound and meaning are necessary ingredients in the combination of poems. On this basis, poetry differs from prose because the ingredients used in poetry are combined in distinctive patterns which are artistic and concrete in nature. According to Abdurrahman Umar (2018), Hodza and Fortune’s description is largely acceptable, except Léopold Sédar Senghor’s assertion in the preface of *Les nouveaux contes d’Amadou Koumba* (1961:8) which indicates that:

En Afrique Noire, il n’y a ni douaniers ni poteaux de signalisation aux frontières. Il n’y a pas de limites entre le mythe, le proverbe, la légende, le conte et la fable.

There are no boundaries in Black Africa; from myth to proverb to legend, folktale to fable, there are neither customs barriers nor signposts at the borders. (p. 342)

Senghor’s remark shows that the three genres of African oral literature, poetry, prose and drama cannot be separated and this is what is called African cosmological naturalism, however, this work identifies Senghor’s deficiency and agrees with the classification

proposed by Dasyuva, based on this, Dasyuva's treatise (1999a: 1) is apposite to Senghor in the classification of three genres of orature. According to some literary scholars, for example, Leopold Senghor using western taxonomical cannons said that there was no boundary among prose, drama and poetry, that they are the same but Dasyuva (1999a: 5) observes that:

Incantation, for example is a form of poetry, but its occurrence in drama or prose narrative neither makes it drama or prose. Therefore, regardless of the generic form in which an incantation on text may occur, it remains a poetic type. Similarly, riddles and proverbs, regardless of the generic context in which they appear, whether drama or larger poetic forms remain poetic types by virtue of their linguistic composition, metaphoric constitution and structural balancing.

This is a total deviation from Senghor's proposition, idea and thought that says:

En Afrique Noire, l n'ya ni douaniers ni poteaux de signalisation aux frontières. Il n'ya pas de limites entre le mythe, le proverbe, la légende, le conte et la fable.

There are no boundaries in Black Africa: from myth to proverb to legend, folktale to fable, there are neither customs barriers nor signposts at the borders.

This assertion is not properly situated by Senghor because the western critical standards which are uncritically adapted to orature are unsuitable and inappropriate to orature. In the same vein, copious critical works have been carried out on African oral literature which enunciate the point that orature is a social product which originates from cultural context and it is also relatively related to social, political and cultural aspirations of the people. It is observed that oral literature encompasses national development and unity that is attainable by peaceful co-existence.

Some non-African scholars have contributed greatly to recent trends in the study of orature. During the 1970s, it became clear that the emphasis in the study of the oral tradition had shifted considerably toward an examination of their artistic or literary merits and one of the scholars who helped this move was Ruth Finnegan. She published a book titled *Limba Stories and Storytelling* in 1967. She stands firmly against the prevailing trend in folklore studies. Although earlier scholars had been inclined to ignore the element of individual artistic skill in the oral traditions, she says quite firmly:

Each of the Limba of Sierra Leone who performs at particular times is known as a storyteller. No collective common “folk” authorship or predetermined performance style governed by blind tradition exists. The stories are naturally written and performed within the confines of Limba society and literary standards, but each performer has his or her own quirks and particular set of experiences, interests, and skills. (1967:17).

Finnegan (2012) appreciates the literary and artistic qualities of orature when she declares that African storytellers are individuals who perform on specific occasions. She asserts that in a society where two traditional story tellers operate, their versions of the stories are bound to be different according to narrator’s personal experience and skill and the context and the audience within which the tale is told. Finnegan (2012) explicates that Africa does not possess certain types of orature such as epic and myth. On this note, we realise that Finnegan makes a fallacious and untrue statement about epic and myth, for they are very vital aspects of orature in Africa.

There is another erroneous idea about the word folklore or orature by Eurocentric scholars which is engendered by the fact that the folk from whom the traditional materials had been gathered were people who were in the rural rather than the urban environments and their lifestyle was thus unsophisticated. They were not literate or educated. Therefore, it cannot be said that these people were capable of producing what, in the understanding of these administrators, could be called literature but “The word folklore implies much more than just literature,” says Okpewho (1992:5), “and in some quarters underplays the literary aspect of what the folk do.” At a time when the study of traditional culture was gaining a lot of attention in Britain and Europe, the Englishman William John Thomas used orature for the first time in a letter he sent to Athenaeum.

Similarly, European scholars, the evolutionists precisely such as George Frazer, John Roscoe, Edwin Smith and others had the same notion about African people from whom they gathered some materials on tales, songs, riddles and proverbs. The people were primitive and they were only getting in touch with the primitive, if not primordial material with which they would compare and contrast with the modern society. However, it is noteworthy that ultimately, their conclusion is that “African people were essentially people like anywhere in the world” (Okpewho, 1992). For Chatelain H, who studied folktales from

Angola, he was convinced, for instance, that African folklore generally is a branch of one universal tree.” (p.6).

The shortcoming of this theory is the fact that individualism and the stylistic idiosyncrasy of the individual texts collected were not recognised since whatever was collected was survival of the earlier texts and must have been weakened as it had to pass from one generation to the other and this is the totality of the perception of the evolutionists who were only interested in the nature of man and the history of human culture. This had blocked their appreciation of the merits of individual texts bearing the stylistic signature of each narrator of the folklore. Other scholars of orature are the diffusionists who would eventually say that whatever is found in Africa in terms of oral tradition which is similar to that found in the West must have been left behind or borrowed by the Africans from the Western culture, a notion which best describes the nauseating concept of Eurocentrism. Both the evolutionists and diffusionists are interested in human origin and the origin of culture as well as in the history of culture respectively.

Therefore, by showing the fundamental point of the evolutionists, there is another disagreement with the diffusionists when Okpewho (1992) unravels the aim of the diffusionists in their research. He asserts that the evolutionists believe that if two stories from two different countries demonstrate the same pattern and the same elements, it shows that all human beings from the planet earth reason alike and the tales reflect the same and equal pattern of cultural development in the same societies. The diffusionists, on the other hand, assume that in a situation where similarities occur between two societies in a way of telling stories, it could be that the two societies had contact with each other that caused borrowings of particular cultural ideas from the other group in the past. Because of the belief of the diffusionists, they would group people on the basis of the similarities they find in language, belief systems, customs, climate and so forth. Their objective, as noted earlier, is to ultimately trace the path of the European culture in order to posit the fact that the borrowing was done by the African through their contact with Indo-European culture, since some scholars are convinced that some of the European cultures were also found in India. Thereafter, the origin of some cultural systems and traditions could be traced to the Indo-European contact with the rest of the peoples of the world. However, it is veritable that most of the beliefs, cultural systems, philosophical systems and traditional artifacts were taken to

Western and possibly to the European people via the West from their base in Africa. (Okpewho, 2004)

To confirm further the intentions of the Eurocentric scholars in the above said theory, we ought to know that Frazer and other evolutionist scholars in diffusionist theory learnt above also engage in comparative studies of folklore of the entire world. This theory was done under the supervision of Wilhelm and Jacob Grimm, the German brothers who collected and published many folktales from their country and India. The Grimm brothers also had a few things to say about tales from other parts of the world. In the introduction of their classic work *The Household Tales* (1812), for instance, they express their views that if there are similarities between tales told in Europe and tales told in Africa, then tales told in Africa are gotten from European tradition. These statements made by the two brothers are nothing but prejudice and biased statements that culture can only be spread from superior to inferior people therefore, Africa is racially inferior to Europe (p.7).

Reference to Okpewho's work is not only helpful but also necessary because Isidore Okpewho is a typical Afrocentric scholar and his voice is representative of the voices and the general consistent and objective voices of most, if not all, Afrocentric scholars. It is observed that the above quotations help to authenticate our submission that Eurocentric scholars are out to put up a racial fight, to prove that their culture is basically superior, the prejudice that any Afrocentric scholar will normally resist with all his or her intellectual stamina. We believe that Okpewho's work is representative of that intellectual stamina (Ajadi Gabriel, 2001). Based on this, Chinweizu *et al* (2016) are not left out in the discussion of orature by making it their tasks to decolonise the criticism of African oral literature. Chinweizu *et al* are correct as they insist that: Written literature has been established in every part of Africa; African people were not uneducated when the Europeans arrived to Africa; and many parts of Africa had written literatures before the arrival of the Europeans, before the Great Julius Caesar led his Roman legions to bring civilisation to the Druidic German tribes of verangetorix in the 1st century B. C., Barbarian Gaul, and to Celtic Britain. Besides, the African Nile valley civilisation of Pharaohic Egypt, Ethiopia, Nubia, Moroe and Kush also had literate cultures in territories where Egypt, Sudan and Ethiopia are today located. The criticism clearly depicts the prejudices, perjury and intellectual dishonesty of the content and characteristics of Eurocentrism, a phenomenon which had beclouded non-African criticism of African oral literature for a long time. In this respect, we need to appreciate the efforts of African scholars such as Sembene Ousmane, David Diop, Birago

Diop, Oyin Ogunba, Okpewho, Leopold Sedar Senghor, Wole Soyinka and Babalola S.A to mention but few (Na'allah, 1994). The views of the above-named scholars on oral literature must be taken into consideration because they are literary African giants who fought with remaining intellectual stamina in their beings to make sure that African orature gains its stand among the countries of the world. Based on this, Gunner (2007) avers that:

In African context, orality is seen as the means by which African societies organize and regulate themselves in their pasts and present conditions. They create space for philosophical reflections, political and power and paid homage to the world language as a means which humanity was constantly refashioned and made.

Undoubtedly, function of orality is vibrant and alive among the African elite, it is not passive but functioning. Therefore, these African giants have been able to contribute to the development and objective assessment of African oral tradition. On this note, any definition given by African scholars, elite and non-African scholars, should be able to internalise the fact that African oral literature embraces the entire aspects of African culture, philosophy, psychology, feelings, thoughts and ideas, especially, the Africans' relationship with their kinsmen and their ways of expressing the relationship in terms of socio-cultural values. Jan Vansina (1965) classifies oral tradition into five major categories. They are: poetry, formulae, commentaries, lists and tales. They are also sub-divided in the following manner:

**Formulae:** Ritual and didactic formulae, slogans, titles

**Poetry:** Panegyric, historical, personal and religious

**Lists:** Personal and place names

**Tales:** Artistic tales, personal memories, aetiological myths, memories, local and family tales

**Commentaries:** Occasional comments, auxiliary explanations and legal precedents.

On the other hand, oral tradition listed above could also be reclassified into two main categories which are literary and historical categories; historical category centres on historical anecdotes, tribal and family stories, myths, legends and ancestral stories while the literary category is divided into formulae which encompasses parables, slogans, oaths, titles, incantations, proverbs and poetry.

Joel Adedeji (1971:134) corroborates Jan Vansina's assertions as he observes that oral tradition:

is a complex corpus of spoken or verbal art established as a medium of revisiting the past based on beliefs, ideas, sentiments of people's symbols, assumptions and attitude. This is acquired by the process of initiation or learning and it is meant to foster social interaction and condition social action.

### 2.3 African culture and features

Culture as a notion, has several definitions by many scholars and authors. It has different meaning to different people. Culture also means dance and music, it is also a craft and work of art, some people take it as folktales and mores, myth, folk stories, legend and the dressing style of some people. Culture is defined as total way of life of people, including their beliefs, religions, local languages, facial marks on bodies and faces, tattoos and many more ornaments used to decorate themselves during the burial of their dead ones and naming ceremonies of their babies, how they, as a people, govern themselves and how wealth is distributed. Ruth Benedict (1960: 28) defines culture as a thought which permeates through the activities of a people and differentiates them from other. The most comprehensive definition of culture is offered in the Nigerian Culture of policy (1998) defines culture as:

The entirety of a person's means of subsistence, which includes both material and immaterial elements. Non-material components include economics, legal, social and political institutions while material culture are food, technology, clothing, airport, buildings and machines which sustains spiritual and material well-being. Culture encompasses the philosophical aspect of life that embraces creativity, comportment in the society, belief and idea.

According to the aforementioned, culture is seen as a people's entire way of life in a given society. Additionally, it is the collection of behaviors that give meaning to society. This collection of behaviors takes numerous forms since it encompasses a diverse range of topics, including laws, knowledge, skills, traditions, and any conceivable man-made behaviors. Another vital aspect of culture which needs to be emphasised is its dynamism. In other words, it is a product of ever-changing historical circumstances which are consistently affected by many factors like wars and general developments on the national, continental and global scene as well as new ideas, contact between societies and population movements (Anaemene, 2015).

Ayeleru (2011) views culture as an attribute that is numerous and diverse to people; therefore, no culture is superior to the other. Piddington (1950:3) describes culture as the total sum of intellectual equipment and material whereby people satisfy their biological and social needs and ability to settle down to their indigenous environments.

Culture is not biologically inherited, it is a process of learning and training. On this note, literary practitioners in Africa are totally in the defence of African cultures. Creative writers like Cyprian Ekwensi, Wole Soyinka, Birago Diop, Leopold Sedar Senghor and Sembene Ousmane have written extensively on African culture.

Camara Laye (as cited by Ayeleru, 2017) defends African culture by looking at African past and comparing it with present modern Africa. According to him, Africa in the past was nearer to beings and things because African life was less distracted and was protected by having fewer facilities and few artificial elements yet contented (Laye, 1987). Birago Diop also supports the notion in his poem “Souffles” (1977) that traditional Africa was natural as it took care of things and beings. Ayeleru (2011) maintains that African writers should rededicate themselves to the reawakening of African culture whether anglophone, francophone or lusophone which will consequently boost the modern globalized civilisation. He stresses further that African writers should rise in defence of African culture because culture and people are inseparable. He explains that culture is the aggregate of values and concepts which characterise a community because people without culture are nowhere to be found and what is important in Black African history is a full rediscovery of cultural and full spiritualities that can bind all Black descendants all over the world.

Achebe (1978) asseverates that the “fundamental theme” of the African literary creators ought to be that: African culture had been in existence before the arrival of the white people, they did not hear it from them for the first time and that their societies are mindful of their culture with in-depth philosophy of beauty and value embedded with dignity and poetry. Africans lost this dignity during colonial era which they must regain now. The loss of self-respect and dignity is the terrible thing that can happen to any group of people. Therefore, the duty of the writers is to regain it and show it to them in human terms what they have lost.

Clyde Kluckhohn (1963) says “to be human is to be cultured”. He describes likewise that culture is the total way of life of people and the creation of man; it also means the social legacy an individual acquires from his environment and his people. Ruth Benedict (1960:18) accepts all these characteristics of culture and observes that:

A nation prefers to focus on culture, which unites its people, by highlighting its significant and valuable benefits and recognising different values that may develop a different culture, rather than looking for a replacement for symbolism, i.e., common blood heredity, which is misleading and hazardous to a nation’s culture. Culture is what binds all men together along with standards and ideas they share in common.

The problem Ruth Benedict poses for society and culture in her book titled *Patterns of Culture* has little or no relevance for Africa because European and African cultures are not completely the same. Her advocacy for the search for symbol of unity may likely be misleading or may be dangerous at last. All we need is to develop continental unity as well as draw from complementary values enveloped in our overburdened cultural institutions. Therefore, culture must be seen as our mode of intervention in our economic, political, cultural, social lives and be considered as our instrumental agent of change. Many scholars have put great emphasis on the universality of culture as they argue that culture is flexible and provisional for it transforms constantly, accumulates new elements while all innovations in culture are ever entirely original.

Claude Levi-Strauss (1995) avers that “civilisation implies and indeed consists in the co-existence of culture exhibiting the maximum possible diversities”. To buttress our point, we have to call the attention of African people back to the challenges of life we are facing in Africa through elements of culture that gather under its wings literary studies and language. Ability to revive our culture includes celebration of African culture, reiterating to one another facts about our culture, and bringing out ideas from old and by dint of hardwork. through the foregoing, there will be solutions to African problems. Groups of people all over the world know that culture is the absolute and total way of life and the important issue about culture is found in Article 1 of UNESCO: Universal Department of Cultural Diversity (2001:12) which states that:

Cultural diversity is the mutual tradition of man which takes many forms across time and space. It identified with the popularity of identities of group of people that made up of humanity. Being a channel of creativity, innovation and exchange of ideas, cultural diversity is important for biodiversity and human race. It is also a common heritage which should be recognised and affirmed for the future use of both old and present generations.

The essence of the above explanation is that the world is diverse in nature which consists of cultural diversity and bio-diversity, “the earth sphere is one but the whole world is not one”. Everybody depends on a biosphere for sustaining us but each society has to create its own culturally rooted ways of living together and elaborate e plan of sustenance (De Cuéllar, 1995). De Cuéllar (1995) posits that God’s demonstration of His love for humanity in the ecology and his diversity in culture cannot be overemphasised. God also created a special language for each culture to be effective and independent. Therefore, language is the heart of culture, the two are intertwined, if culture dies, language also dies. Language is a gift of God to man just as the engine is the hub of the wheel of culture. In that wise, the magical properties related to language and orature strengthen this belief. Language makes people in society to record knowledge in a wonderful way, to possess the tool of creativity and to lay the foundation for the acceptable standards in all spheres of life to ensure genuine continuity and justifiable development. We stress further that every culture has laid down rules and regulations which must be followed to the letter.

Essentially, every culture has its history, origin of man and language, myth and tradition. No myth is superior to another, though, some cultures promote their myths of origin through soul winning and transforming ordinary myth to superior godly myth of history on the minds of their followers who turn their minds against other cultures, even their own culture but a good man should be liberal-minded and protect his culture from external invasion. Mahatma Gandhi reiterates that:

I don’t want my house to be completely shut off, even the windows. I favour letting other cultures breathe freely. But I won’t abandon my culture to fit in with theirs. (A quoted by de Cuellar, 1995: 20).

On this note, cultural diversity is a common heritage of man and there is the need for the development and dimensions of culture. “Development in UNESCO’s opinion is a

means of developing the relationship between spiritual and material welfare of men which only culture can bridge the gap between them and negotiate it as expected” (Culture Diversity Series, No. 1:2). There are tangible and intangible cultural heritages. Tangible culture can be seen and touched; such as sites, and landscapes, paintings, carvings and statues, monuments while intangible culture cannot be seen and touched, examples are orature, custom, dance, festivals, languages, mores and beliefs which give cultural identity to a group of people (UNESCO, 2002:19).

Moreover, the intangible aspect of cultural heritage develops and sustains the tangible aspects, the intangible which includes poetry, proverbs, folktales, taboos, idioms and valuable ideas such as justice, integrity, hardwork, dignity, honesty, faithfulness and accountability are taught to maintain the tangible aspect of culture. Culture is a God-given way of organising His people in a united groups and each with its own knowledge and skills. In the same vein, culture and religion are inseparable, both work hand-in-hand for sustainable development. Religion is an aspect of culture, it ensures that the foundation of culture remains stable and culture makes a man. There is no foundation which any religion can be built upon if one’s culture does not socialise him one to acceptable standard of right and humane qualities of dignity, integrity, love, honesty and transparency. We need to emphasise this point that culture has crucial implications for sustainability. Without intangible development, there can be no justifiable means like buying aircrafts and ships, building bridges and roads, constructing houses and factories for material acquisition cannot be maintained by material means alone but by intangible cultural heritage like integrity, honesty and transparency to mention few.

Another incontrovertible truth that we must take into consideration is that the tangible cultures imported from foreign countries are not accompanied by the intangible culture wrapped with humane qualities and that is the reason some African leaders believe that they can import globalised ideas of legal monitoring of behaviour like Nigerian ICPC (Independent Corrupt Practices Commission), EFCC (Economic and Financial Crimes Commission) and forget about transparency, honesty, integrity that they do not appear in universal and generic terms. Many people articulate them by using idiomatic terms laden with meaning and value as contained in their own culture. African contemporary youths

must imbibe and learn from childhood the intangible aspects of African culture for sustainable development.

### **Features of African culture**

Majekodunmi (2008), quoting Joshua and Akong (1998), describes the following as the characteristics of African culture:

- It is universal from the point of view that all human beings generate and share culture; however, it varies from one society and environment to another.
- It is a shared or collective phenomenon, as no one person can possess his or her own culture. In this way, we cannot conclude that a habit attributed to an individual constitutes culture. On the other hand, no individual is capable of knowing all aspects of the culture of the group he or she belongs to. There may partly be some aspects of beliefs, philosophy or elements of culture that are manifest, while others are latent. An individual is, therefore, taught or strives to learn those aspects of culture immediately relevant to his/her current future status in a social category such as professor, priest or student, while a role is what is expected of a holder of a status. The implication is that culture is generally shared equally. It depends on one's position in the social structure or organisation and how successful socialisation may have been.
- It is learnt directly or indirectly and communicated through language and other symbols. Learning can take place through instruction, imitation or identification and through personal or group experience. Learning culture is both a social experience and process that involves conditioning.
- When new elements of culture are acquired or learnt, the old ones may become inoperative partly because they are considered cumbersome or outdated; but they may not be completely forgotten. They can be reverted to later on when necessary. Culture is thus cumulative. This can cause conflicts and contradictions between certain elements of culture that have not found adequate time for integration. This is quite common in Africa today because of cultural diffusion.
- Some early anthropologists review culture as super-organic or beyond the organism; in that, although there are certain aspects that have some relationship with evolutionary biology such as speech, it is generated and shared in interaction among

individuals, between individuals or group and nature and between individuals and the supernatural (Kroeber, 1979).

- The culture of a specified group is relatively organised as to minimize conflict and contradiction among the various aspects. It is, therefore, relatively integrative.
- Culture is specific to a particular group or society; implying that although it is universal, it is also variable. It is possible to draw cultural boundaries such as around an ethnic group, religious group, a sport and so on. The possibility of having variants of the same culture within a specific group also exists.

From the foregoing, it is obvious that culture is the way of life of a particular group of people and the totality of living in a particular environment of a group of people.

### 2.3.1 African oral literature and its characteristics

Orature has several interpretations. An Eurocentric scholar defines it in his own way by taking care of his prejudices and is eventually biased in his definition while a genuine African scholar defines orature having it at the back of his mind that his culture has been misconceptualised and erroneously misrepresented by the use of pejorative concepts like “folk narratives” “folktales and folklores”. Isidore Okpewho (1992), for example, identifies the definition of various scholars who term orature as folklore, folk literature and traditional literature. Jegede (2012) differentiates between folklore and oral literature, stating that folklore is the umbrella that houses oral literature. To her, folklore remains a visible part of modern culture while oral literature appeals to fancy and taste, it is adopted by professional advertisers on television and radio (2021). The main idea that we cannot underrate in the study of African orature is that unwritten literature is ancient and it has always been transmitted from a generation to another verbally and this is the reason it is taken as oral literature. Moreover, two points need to be stressed in this research. In the first instance, the oralness of orature does not make it less literary than the written text because those who clamour for the concept of written tradition and literacy such as Ruth Finnegan and others later realise that as a matter of necessity, orature has to pass through verbal before arriving to written stage. For instance, Homer’s epic emanated from the oral stage to the written stage. Therefore, written tradition can be traced back to Africa from where hieroglyphic writing emanated from the ancient Egyptians.

Orality is the foundation for the written literature. The second point is that we must understand the fact that African oral literature does not mean negation or a signal of African primitivity. Oral literature is found among all people of the world; hence, whatever definition given to oral literature by African scholars and non-African scholars, we should know that African oral literature encompasses all facets of life, including philosophy of life, sentiments, feelings, behaviour, psychology and African's relationship with foreigners, fellow Africans, and ways of expressing this relationship in terms of socio-cultural and political values.

Okpewho (2004) also opines that customs, observances, superstitions, proverbs, ballads, manners and tradition constitute all the spectrum of African oral literature. He reiterates further that the verbal aspect of oral literature "comprises of songs and stories, chants, recitations, proverbs, tongue-twisters, pun and riddles.... (Okpewho, 1992:4). Besides, no one will like to miss the definition proffered by Bukonya and Nandwa, as pointed out by Okpewho (2004: 4) which goes thus:

The definition of oral literature is any utterance, whether said, recited, or sung, whose authorship and performances exhibit a notable level of precise observation, creative qualities, inventive expression, and vivid imagination.

For the purpose of brevity and clarity, oral literature can be called folk literature, oral tradition, folklore, orature, popular or traditional literature because they are terms used interchangeably to qualify oral literature delivered verbally. Orality plays a key role in the spoken word, but literature works in the written aspect that is a crucial part of culture. As a result, orature is now seen as a lore medium through which African civilisation engages in oral communication with its people about important cultural matters. Then, orature is regarded as a repertoire of authentic belief and practices of African people. However, lack of writing art in the past made it necessary to deploy orature as a means of transmitting and preserving African cherished traditional practices and beliefs. These forms of orature are proverbs, myths, legends, riddles, blessings and curses, prayers, invocation, names and poetry.

## **Characteristics of African culture**

Society is built on culture. It serves as the thread that knits society together. The most complete definition of a people's way of life, it includes how our interpersonal interactions are conducted in the social, private, and public arenas. Based on this, African culture as a social concept is the African way of life. It encompasses the entire essential feature of a group of people which includes people's thoughts, their worldview, survival and their communal lives, institutions, religions and educational systems. Based on this, African culture advances through socialisation and it is transmitted from a generation to the other. It is learned not inherited, it is also dynamic as it changes in content as the day goes by and season to season and as individuals interact so also are cultures. The following are the main characteristics of African culture:

### **Culture is expressed in symbols**

Complex thoughts and communication develop through symbols such that number and alphabet are symbolic creativity for purpose of communication within cultural environment. For example, the Egyptians designed hieroglyphics sign of writing as a true means of communication within their group. This is also seen among other cultural groups in Africa; for instance, the brass industry in Benin had many cultural symbols used to communicate their important messages and expressions to their people. Simultaneously, the Nsibidi symbols were among the earliest writing forms related with the secret societies of Igbo, Efik and Ibibio societies of Nigeria. On this note, most African art works like clothing, carving, and cooking utensils have many several cultural symbols like painting, printing, and knitting as motif on their art work for communication purpose.

### **Culture is learned**

The fact that culture is learned is another important aspect of it. People are not born with the ability to comprehend and be consistent with cultural qualities. They are rather raised in a certain environment, in this case the cultural milieu. Since culture is gained through socialisation, it is typically learnt rather than inherited. It is handed down from generation to generation. It's necessary to pick up a language, develop good habits, and pick up manners. Anthropologists refer to this process as enculturation or cultural transmission, and it occurs when parents pass on their culture to their children. For the learning process

to be possible, this process must take place inside the cultural environment. It is necessary to be close to Yorùbá or Hausa people in order to learn and adapt their languages and cultures. This is crucial for achieving successful cultural adaptation. While it is possible to acquire a foreign culture's cultural qualities outside of its cultural context, this adaptation is less successful than that which occurs within the cultural milieu.

### **Culture can be transferred and shared**

Some cultural characteristics can be easily shared with and transmitted to individuals from various ethnic backgrounds. For instance, the English language shares cultural traits with many other countries in Africa, including Nigeria. More international languages that share cultural traits in Africa are Portuguese and French languages which are spoken in West African countries like Burkina Faso, Mauritania, Mali, Senegal, Togo and Benin Republic. The Arabic language is also commonly used in North Africa as a cultural trait that is particularly widespread among the Egyptians and the Maghreb countries. The Swahili language is a classic example of a cultural trait that cuts across numerous cultural groups in East Africa.

Another shared and common cultural trait noticeable in Francophone countries like Benin Republic are food, and clothing articles. For example, in Benin, we have 'Ndole', 'Kenkey', 'La Baguette', as food. 'Le pagne', 'Le foulard', 'La blouse', are part of francophone clothing, this cultural trait cannot be overlooked and this said cultural trait is observed by many Nigerians because of cultural exchange and interaction that have become inevitable owing to urbanisation, intermarriages, and migrations. For example, "Baba riga" or agbádá are clothing articles in Nigeria which are common among Yoruba men and it also represents a shared cultural trait among several groups of diverse cultures in Nigeria. This is also similar to Western men and female suits worn for formal occasion in the global context. These and many examples compel the sharing of cultural traits among people which creates a supra-culture trait that binds the collection of many cultural groups together

### **Culture evolves and adapts**

Culture is not a concept that stays constant; rather, it changes and develops in response to the environment in which it exists. This is due to the fact that culture interacts with individuals just like people do, and that interaction may result in some mutational processes that necessitate the need for new forms. It is known as a cultural transformation.

Cultural differences in social interaction often result in the disappearance, adaptation, or integration of specific cultural elements into the dominant culture. For example, the killing of twins in Southern Nigeria is a cultural practice that was unable to withstand Christian culture's invasion in the 19th and 20th centuries. When one culture influences and supplants elements of another culture, this is a regular occurrence in cultural evolution. Most indigenous societies have altered their marriage rituals to match those of Islam or Christianity. The majority of African societies have developed a smooth fusion of the two cultural ceremonies into one procedure, which is an excellent example of cultural adaptability.

In addition to acclimating to the oppressive presence of other cultures, environmental adaptation is essential. Climate and environmental changes have a significant impact on the development of culture. For example, increased desertification causes variances in the cultural practices of locals in the Sahara desert's growing borderlands. Their housing and clothing must adapt to the demanding demands of the weather and environment. The same example applies to a person who migrates from the tropics to the temperate zone and changes his or her dress in order to survive in his or her new home (Nwoko and Osita, 2015).

### **2.3.2 Importance and classification of orature**

African oral traditions are fascinating, interesting, potent for analogy with vivid illustration in the culture of readers thereby facilitating the divergences in African modes of expression and the perception of affinities in African culture is visible; for example, totems as used by African writers and scholars as symbols of integrity and permanence. Totemism is also the belief in animal or plant species and mystical communion between man and spiritual being which manifests in physical life among social groups in which the consumption of the totemic objects could become taboo. Totemic objects in some Nigerian rivers cannot be consumed by the people, if they cook such fish, it would remain uncooked and inconsumable.

On this note, francophone West African writers are proud in exploring oral traditions in their domains as the process of mental decolonisation and disalienation and this exercise brings them closer to their roots and fills a vacuum created by inadequate education upbringing transmitted to them by Eurocentric scholars who initially introduced them to

formal education. African oral literature is primarily intended for aesthetic purposes. Oral literature materials are also incorporated in written African literature which performs other vital functions and it also enhances the authenticity of African literary texts, particularly those in foreign languages.

The deployment of elements of orature provides varieties and extends the scope of readership to both the young and old and it should give room for audience participation especially when the features used are group activities such as the rice harvesting and circumcision which are celebrated in “dark child” (L’Enfant Noir) with poetry, songs and dance. By using elements of oral tradition in their writings, francophone African writers like their anglophone counterparts are consciously or unconsciously providing useful data for anthropologists, historians, ethnographers and promoting cultural awareness.

In the same vein, Chief D.O Fagunwa from Western region of Nigeria is another African author who writes to entertain and instruct through African orature. His novels contain values and messages of universal import. Fagunwa joins other African writers to project the African image and correct the fallacies and half-truths written about Africa by Eurocentric scholars and her people in a humorous manner. Fagunwa as a story teller like Birago Diop has an obsession to unfold the action in his novels to arouse and sustain the interest of his reader. He is always aware of an audience to which his stories are directed and this is reflected in some of his novels such as *Ògbójú Ọdẹ Nínú Igbó Irúnmalẹ* (1938) and *Ìrèké-Onibùdó* (1949). Any reader conversant with oral literature of the Yorùbá people will not fail to trace most of the stories used by Fagunwa to the traditions of Yorùbá folktales. Since writing has become an armour against oblivion, Fagunwa has succeeded in preserving for posterity and indeed all humanity what might have been “washed away” by the time (Abioye, 1990:227).

In an attempt to draw from the tradition of his people, Fagunwa makes use of tales usually told as Moonlight stories. He also presents his narratives in a vivid manner, a description of life as it is led by his people (the Yorùbá) on the farm. In his second novel, *Ìrèké-Onibùdó* Fagunwa is quite at home, in his description of how farmers enjoy fresh corn meal, how rats and other animals are hunted. He also describes the source of drinking water at the farm: streams running through cocoa plantations, etc. The description is so vivid and so detailed that it ends up whetting the appetite of readers whose experience falls within the

realm of the culture or tradition. Fagunwa incorporates in his novels well known stories in villages. One of such stories is that of Àjàntálá, the problem child, which also appears in Diop's folktales titled *Samba de la nuit*. Àjàntálá's behaviour baffles everybody, including his parents. Fagunwa makes use of this well-known story in his first novel *Ògbójú-ode nínú Igbó Irúnmolè* translated as (*Les Odyssées du chasseur à coeur vaillant dans la foret habitée de myriads de demons*). Fagunwa uses this story as recourse to the use of oral tradition and to explain why the goat is a domestic animal, why elephants abound in Africa and in India and why monkeys live on trees.

Abioye (1990) advises that Africans must be encouraged not to shy away from shouting their cultures and traditions on the roof-tops so that other nations and peoples of the world may come to the same conclusion with us that although some cultures are more popular than others, there is no culture that is superior to the other.

Orature serves as a tool for African writers like Chinua Achebe, Sembene Ousmane, Wole Soyinka, Leopold Sedar Senghor, Camara Laye, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, David Diop, Mongo Beti, Dennis Brutus, Bernard Dadie, Birago Diop, Ferdinand Oyono, Okot p'Bitek, Jacques Rabemanajara just to mention few and to share some of the themes widely explored by these African writers namely, racial discrimination, pride in African past and hope for Africa's independent future, clash between indigenous and colonial cultures, condemnation of European subjugation, etc. Orature is also used as a medium of communication to express independent and nationalist feelings and hope. It does not only denounce colonialism but also proudly explores and shows to the whole world the validity of African culture which the European masters had destroyed. Therefore, orature is important and its good value is creative in nature and is able to serve the humanistic needs of all both the non-lettered and lettered Africans. It is also vital for examining and analyzing the cultural relationship between literacy and orality; in fact, it is highly critical of African society.

Nkem Okoh (2010:19) foregrounds the importance of oral literature in Nigerian national life:

Orature is vast and didactic in nature which can benefit Nigerian society without any recourse to regret. Apart from being work of art, it is a medium of learning that constitute a pleasurable mode of learning, in short, there are other possibilities and enjoyment one can explore through the learning of orature.

Okoh (2010), observes that orature deals with particular issues of life such as death, birth, natural happenings, man and his relationship to man and his environment. Therefore, orature has a vital role to play in national development. Based on this, Abiola Irele (2007) opines that:

Vast aspect of orature had developed methods within complex framework from their semiotic system in African content, it is therefore necessary to mention the constant recourse to non-linguistic symbolic schemes and drum language that give spatial resonance to human language and extend the potential of language expressively. (p. 76)

Irele's submission emphasises that oral and written literatures complement each other and there is a need to develop the two in a typical human environment. He submits further that the capacity of oral art to cultivate and preserve the values in collective memory for future use should not be jeopardised. Wole Soyinka (1976) also complements Irele's submission in his book *Myth and Literature and the African World* that:

African world is unique being a comprehensive world of myth, tradition and history, it has in common the virtues of complementarity. It is also a way of negotiation which common race pursue. More so, it is another method that process black continent external subjugation. (p. 12)

Soyinka outlines the shared origin of mankind on a worldwide scale, where the genesis myth in the folktales of all ethnic groups shares a common vision and aim. Based on this, in francophone Africa, we find a continuity of oral literature in the writings of Birago Diop, Bernard Dadié, Camara Laye, Tchicaya U'Tamsi, Cheik Hamidou Kane, Sembène Ousmane and Ousmane Socé; for example, in *Ville Cruelle* (Wicked City) of Eza Boto, *Les Contes d'Amadou Koumba* (Tales of Amadou Koumba) of Birago Diop and *Le Pagne Noir* (The Black Wrapper) of Bernard Dadié, in this novel, the village is depicted as the natural home of custodians of custom such as the traditional healer and the griot. Camara Laye, in his depiction of the village, draws attention to symbolic objects such as amulets against diseases, potion, charms that ward off evil spirits and scared snake, the mystery behind the promotion of the artisan employed in *L'Enfant noir* (*The African Child*). On the other hand, another similar guiding spirit is evoked in Senghor's "Chants d'Ombre" (Songs of Darkness) in *Œuvre Pôétique* collection of poems where a garden snake is portrayed as

an intercessor amidst the living and the dead. Here, Senghor shares the belief that the dead are alive, he sees them as those who refuse to die and those who know how to resist death.

### **Characteristics of African oral literature**

One of the features of orature is oral performance and speech act which are delivered by social conventions and different gesticulations and they are performed during unique occasion. Orature is performance-based while speech act and its effects are derived from poems, tales, songs, stories and the process of articulation. Their examples are dramatic acts, production and performances (Akporobaro, 2006).

Ruth Finnegan (1970) observes that orature is different for the fact that there exists a connection between the existence and transmission which is very close and another importance of orature is the rendition and oral realisation by the singer. Although this unwritten literature cannot easily have independent existence, it has to be supported. The importance of performance in orature is beyond the definition because the nature of performance makes it relevant to the impact of the expression as the oral expression exists as a performance for it is a performed expression and the artistic qualities of the given form are neatly bound up with the given social occasion in which it is performed and the performing skill of the artist himself is imperative. Hence, there is no number of words that can succeed to recapture and convey adequately the emotional situation and atmosphere of the given recitation. For example, the emotional tones, pitch changes, dramatic gestures, facial expressions, vocal expressiveness, rhythm of delivery, melody and pause-effects which the reciter can bring into play in the course of his performance are often lost completely in the written version which has no life or morphological-aesthetic possibilities.

Moreover, orality is another feature of oral literary creation. In other words, the oral creation is expressed through the audience-performance situation and narration. There are many aesthetic effects which are derived from this:

- i. The completely non-censored, unrehearsed and non-premeditated nature of creation
- ii. The mass-audience which means that the artist addresses himself to many people, the artist has a specific immediate audience before and which reacts to him.
- iii. The performance-audience creation

The qualities mentioned above determine important feature of oral performance which include retention of the audience's attention, the stimulation of audience's emotion

as well as the sustenance of audience's interest, the satisfaction, psychological and moral expectations of the audience. Sekoni (1990) corroborates Finnegan's (1992) submission on oral performance that aesthetic experience in oral narrative performance consists of three inseparable components which are the transfer of cognitive experience of the audience, retention of audience as well as captivation of audience.

- i. The fact that the production was entirely spontaneous, uncensored, and unplanned.
- ii. The mass-audience. It means the artist addresses himself usually not only to one person but to many. The artist has a specific immediate audience before him and which reacts to him.
- iii. The aesthetics of the performance-audience.

The arousal, stimulation, sustenance, and retention of audience emotion as well as the fundamental and distinctive element of oral performance are determined by these traits. Additionally, it requires the audience's interest and satisfaction of their psychological and moral expectations. According to Sekoni (1990), an oral narrative performance's aesthetic experience consists of three interrelated elements: audience capture, audience retention, and audience transmission of cognitive experience.

In addition, the personality of the raconteur/artist is another characteristic feature of orature. The personality of the performer not only recreates, but also mediates between the inherited core forms and his living performance and audience, colouring the received version with his personality traits. The artist is a recreator, he is never indifferent or objective recreator. He manipulates the imaginative forms he has received by imposing either his own family, clan or group or subjective reality and values on the materials he is recreating. In the case of legends or myths, he may for personal reasons suppress or add materials, image-sets to heighten the sense of the heroic nature of the clan hero or twist or give different slant to existing materials. In case of purely entertainment performance, he can also transform and remould his received materials.

It is not only in terms of the historicity of his materials that the personality of the oral artist comes into play and focus. The degree of his liveliness, inventiveness, responsiveness to his audience and environment has a significant hold on his materials qualitatively and quantitatively. The nature of his personality, his social economic experience and condition will determine the level of his commitment to creativity and imaginative representation.

Another important feature of orature is audience. The audience is usually involved in the recreation and actualisation of any piece of orature because an artist is receptive to audience's cultural assumptions, expectations and reactions. Besides, the beliefs and reactions of the audience are woven into recitation, poem and story. In addition to the role which the audience exercises on the narrator, his unavoidable presence is also very important. Orature as a performed mode of creation demands audience participation because oral performer cannot avoid direct confrontation with his listeners. The significance of the narrator and the recited piece has been described by Finnegan when she observes that the important factor in oral performance is the audience because he is directly involved in the creation and actualisation of the oral text. Oral artist chooses sometimes his listeners to involve directly in storytelling where the narrator starts with the opening formula which clearly arouses the attention of the audience. For instance, "Il etait une fois" (once upon a time), therefore, he expects the audience to join him in the songs, choruses and the narration section. On the other hand, audience can be allowed to participate in the performance of oral poetry same way it happens in lyrical songs, whereby it is necessary for the poet to act as a leader who improvises and sings the verses which the audience sings and dances to the chorus with the accompaniment of musical instruments while the connection between the artist and the audience turns to the same role as the choir participates directly in some parts of the performance.

In the inventive and creative process of interaction between the performer and his audience, oral narrative performances use recitation and narration as tactics. Through the use of theatrical techniques and the suspense code, the performer motivates his audience throughout the performance. On the other hand, the audience stimulates him through his affective presence. The mental pictures and pools of symbolism, characters and deities, historical places and allusions become for him sources of narrative trends which he exploits to surprise, stimulate and enrich the imagination of his audience.

Improvisation is also a characteristic of orature that is unavoidably absent in written form. The poet or storyteller displays their creativeness by names of objects, images and symbols, motifs and new words. Therefore, contemporary issues and personalities are introduced to reflect daily realities. The mastery of delivery techniques combined with

skilful improvisations work to heighten the artistic effectiveness of the recitation and the artist.

Improvisation births the element of the variability of oral literary forms. What may be identified as the same poem or story or myth tends to vary so much that it is difficult sometimes to call it as the same poem or story. The oral artist to some extent relies on the manner in which he expresses his ideas and beliefs so that he can give beauty and interest to his literary recreations. The practice of improvisation is an important consideration in the study of traditional African oral literature. It not only gives the raconteur the opportunity for original creativity but also a chance to demonstrate his versatility because it highlights the love and capacity for invention and innovation inherent in traditional people.

Oral performance is one of the most prominent features of orature that incorporates music and musical instruments like balafong (xylophone), khalarm (small guitar), kora (harp), most especially the instruments used in Senghor's poetry to enhance poetic elegance and dictate the pace of performance. The public appearance of the king in *Le regard du roi* (the radiance of the king), *Circumcision* in *L'Enfant noir* (the dark child) and Birago Diop's creative writings such as *Les contes et les nouveaux contes d'Amadou Koumba* are laced with dance, song and music. It continues in *Une piège sans fin* by Bhely Quenum who employs some fon songs some of which are translated into French language for maximum result. Aiwa's song of appeal in *Le pagne noir* by Bernard Dadié like song of appeal like the dog which hid its mother in heaven during famine in order to receive food from her in times of want. Chants also constitute a prominent feature in *Les nouveaux contes d'Amadou Koumba* by Birago Diop; they are rendered in Wolof and some are juxtaposed with their French translations. Example in Khary Gaye, the Wolof song goes thus:

Khary Gaye  
Tjakh fi, tjakhfâ!  
Lambour débé Batam fèss  
Kou ma ghissal Khary Gaye?  
Môye sama yôle!

Khary Gaye  
Colliers ici, colliers la!  
De l'ambre plein le cou  
Qui a vu pour moi Khary Gaye?  
C'est elle mon salaire! (Diop 1961: 75)

These chants are not just for reinforcing poetic elegance but are meant for breaking the boredom of narration and to ensure that the dramatic nature is retained and for encouraging audience participation particularly when performance is involved, the refrain part of the original songs is deployed.

Praise singer or griot is an oral poet who reproduces aspect of oral history, fables and legendary events. He is regularly mentioned, respected by their people, and sought for by traditional elders. Bernard Dadié describes praise singers in his book “Climbié” as individuals who are “happy to please people, happy above all to prove that, despite the cinema and the gramophone, the people remained loyal to them,” adding that their purpose is to “gladden a company, to maintain tradition, to stimulate against the vitalizing fluids of the past.” (Dadie/Chapman, 1971).

Furthermore, in “Le maître de la parole” (the guardian of the word) which is a transcription of part of Camara Laye’s one month interview with Babu Condé, the author describes the griot as the custodian of historical traditions and soul of ancient Africa. The griots are the artists whose legends, chants and epics are veritable works of art. During these performances, the objective is not only to tell a story but also to sustain the interest of the audience through inventiveness and narrative skills. In the same vein, praise singers preserve African epics because their performances are about the past that needs to be preserved. Moreover, their performances deal with their achievements, history, warfare and war heroes. The most popular epic in francophone Africa is Soundjata edited by DjibrilTamsirNiane. This Mandingue epic is built around Soundjata Keita, who founded The Empire of Mali Kingdom. Babu Condé also was an Arabic scholar, a story-teller and the most prominent griot in Laye’s era who knew the events of the time of Soundjata when the kings of Sumaoro received their kingdoms from Soundjata himself.

### **2.3.3 Social relevance of francophone oral literature**

Academic scholars and researchers continue to unearth new folkloric elements in oral art forms for the purpose of posterity and preservation. African oral literature reminds humanity that the benefits of science and technology can make us forget our culture to the extent that man will begin to operate like robot. On the other hand, the importance of African folktale in the upbringing of African children cannot be overemphasised for there are many moral lessons deducible from African folktales and absence of this in the educational system

in Africa would boil down to a great loss. Therefore, a clarion call to go back to African culture cannot be ignored because of its importance and contribution in solving some contemporary problems. This call must not be seen as an act of retrogression and backwardness but an appreciation of the past and present records of African people.

On this note, orature reforms African youth, corrects some erroneous mistakes committed by old African writers and imbibes fully African culture. They can only do all these, if they expand their readership prowess and encourage low cadres of readers to engage more in the reading of novels, reciting poems and show interest in the scripting of drama. On the same note, language is essential in communicating our beliefs, ideas and traditions. It can never be relegated to the background and no society can develop without the use of language as it serves as a means of communicating facts, opinions, and culture for adequate understanding in society. Literature and language are inseparable and one of the roles of literature is to correct ills of society. Africa as a whole has really suffered in the hands of colonisers and wallowed in quagmire of slavery, colonisation and penury. It is described as a corrupt and poverty-stricken continent which was as a result of European colonialism and African leaders being what they are have refused to assist the youths in developing their reading habits consequently, we now have higher institution students who cannot read to know their civic rights and criticise corrupt African rulers.

Therefore, this study seeks to encourage students and individuals to stand up to their rights by writing and reading cultural texts to denounce and checkmate corrupt practices in Francophone countries and in Africa as a whole for proper development. Francophone oral literature examines creativity, collective ingenuity and political and cultural experience of African descendants, institutions and people. Additionally, francophone literature focuses on developing the African personality so that his equality with other races goes beyond platitudes and meagre favouritism. This literature is also used to highlight African accomplishments and show the rest of the world that Africa is significantly advancing the continent's growth and development.

Francophone orature is designed to showcase the richness of African culture, ethos, the vitality and the values and on this ground, stories are narrated to African children to teach them morals and caution them about disobedience, encourage them on bravery, educate and inculcate in them good values. For example, stories are meant to entertain and

teach children morals and the concern of the narrator is to put children on the right path, influence them to conform to societal norms and remind the adults of their responsibilities in society.

Francophone orature contrasts evil with good values, evil is bound to be rewarded with punishment while good value deserves remuneration. Francophone stories also talk about bravery so that children can have sense of belonging and pride. These stories teach them that they should not shy away from performing their responsibilities and show them reward for bravery. Stories about selflessness, challenges, endurance are commonly told for entertainment and didactic purposes. In addition, it needs extra courage and strength to serve the whole community where the input of low cadre people could lead to criticism; hence, people's submission, ideas and views should not be suppressed but carefully looked into. Francophone orature is aesthetically rooted because its proverbs, stories, myth and legends teach children the lessons of endurance, faith, obedience, diligence, honesty, helpfulness and hope.

Elders often use proverbs to teach children certain behavioural norms and to reaffirm timeless truths and lessons. Francophone African writers explore orature with pride being a process of mental decolonisation and desalienation, having it in mind to bring their people closer to their roots and fill a vacuum created by European misrepresentation of ideas. Elements of francophone oral literature provides room for audience participation, extend the scope of readership and give data to anthropologists, ethnographers and historians.

Francophone oral literature has given birth to the mainstream of cosmopolitan creative writings which turn to francophone novels; that is, elements of orature are infused into their writings through which the image of African tradition is projected to the world and the myopic representations of Africa by Eurocentric writers could be corrected. Events of the past are recorded through orature in form of myth, legends, stories. It also aids artistic modes of communication in which there is fact and fiction, myth and reality. Orature also entails the use of imagination and a high degree of creativity.

Francophone orature presents rich images as well as diversified perspectives of episodes, characters and past events. Lyrics, poems, riddles and stories form the core of orature and the source and the beauty of orature present diverse points which give absolute picture close to the original state of affairs of long forgotten issue. African people through

the aforementioned elements of orature contribute to African development and construct social historical experiences and sense of being of people.

#### **2.3.4 History and benefits of African oral literature**

African writers have given much and greater recognition to the literary qualities of African oral literature to a considerable extent from the prejudices of the earlier European scholars who termed oral literature as primitive and savage which occurred frequently and unapologetically in the works of the evolutionists and even of the sociologists. In more recent times, these witticisms such as proverbs, riddles, and tongue twisters have been found by numerous scholars (African and non-African) to reveal not only a depth of wisdom but especially a high level of artistry or creativity in the way their tellers manipulate sound and meaning. The literary interest taken in these aspects of African oral literature has helped to show that the culture from which they come is far more complex and sophisticated than words such as primitive and savage would seem to suggest.

Another interesting offshoot of the literary interest in African oral literature has to do with the growth of modern African literature as well as its study. This literature was studied as an aspect of anthropology by scholars who were primarily interested in understanding the fundamental level, in small rural communities. For instance, it was in such an environment that the use of words such as primitive inevitably grew. However, in a situation whereby literary scholars are aware of high level of cultural sophistication of orature.

It is now necessary for orature to leave its old shell and move to new realm of innovations. The majority of colleges and other educational institutions in Africa that offer the course have it housed in a department that specializes in the study of language and literature. Oral literature is studied in these departments not only for its own sake but also in relation to contemporary African writers who have been at the forefront of ongoing efforts to gather and translate texts from their people's oral traditions in order to promote the greatness of their indigenous cultures.

From francophone Africa, the Malian novelist Hampate Bâ has translated with Lilyan Kesteloot some of the heroic tales or epics from the Bambara; the Senegalese storyteller Birago Diop, has done the same for Wolof folktales and the Guinean Djbril T. Niane, who was the first to provide a classic French translation of the famous Mandinka

(Mandingo) Epic of Sundiata. In Ghana, we have had poets Kofi Awoonor and G. Adali - Mortty translating pieces of the traditional poetry of their people into sensitive English.

In Nigeria, the poet - dramatist Clark has given us the epoch - making edition of the *Ozidi Saga* and even the novelist Chinua Achebe has become involved in translating Igbo folktales especially for young readers. In East Africa, Okot p'Bitek of Uganda led the way in the collection and translation of texts of African oral literature, an example is his translation of folktales *Hare and Hornbill* (1978). The presentation of the pioneering work of Thomas Mofolo in South Africa inspired other poets like Mazisi Kunene to publish some epic narratives about war leader in "Emperor, Chaka the Great" in a notable edition, *Emperor Shaka the Great* (1979).

In other words, African orature is studied side-by-side with modern African literature because these writers unconsciously and consciously borrow ideas and techniques from African oral tradition in order to construct aesthetically literary work dealing with modern life. Therefore, these African writers, having the knowledge that their societies have changed drastically from what they were some years ago, communicate in foreign languages that are not their own. However, they do not forget their own. In *Weep Not Child*, for instance, Ngugi wa Thiong'o evokes the image of the ancestor of the Kikuyu race in his portrait of the struggle of the Kenyan people against foreign oppression. Wole Soyinka, in many of his writings, deploys the image of the Yorùbá god Ògún as a symbol for the revolutionary spirit needed to combat social evils that plague both his country, Nigeria and the black race as a whole. In poetry, both Okot p'Bitek and Kofi Awoonor borrow heavily from the techniques of folk expression in writing about present-day situations. Negritude literature also demonstrates the use of oral elements for written literature.

#### 2.4 **Negritude movement: origin and objectives**

The term negritude has several meanings. Many African writers interpret the concept differently. Negritude, being a concept or movement, found its origin and received a sociological or historical content whose implications for those whom it affected are wide-ranging and full of many responses, though contradictory but significant.

Irele (2007) observes that negritude is an ideological and literary movement of francophone Black scholars. This movement is distinctive and significant because it reacted

to the blackman colonised situation well known and perceived by the Blacks in the whole universe being a global subjection to political cum socio-cultural domination of the West. Negritude is defined in a broader way to denote Black race in its historical being and opposition to the Europeans.

He says further that negritude can be described as the creative writings of francophone-speaking Black scholars in their affirmation of their Blackness and ability to designate the complex ideas linked with their efforts to define a new set of information for the awareness of black people and collective experiences. Negritude is also a Black nationalist consciousness and an extensive exploration of the Black situation in its direction towards ultimate aim and the historical setting.

Negritude movement was founded in the 1930s through the efforts of Aimé Césaire, Léopold Sédar Senghor, and Leon Gontran Damas. Negritude was first read in the work of Aimé Césaire in his poem, *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* (1939). Negritude movement identifies itself with Africa as its root and initially, it was a literary movement which gradually metamorphosed into a political and ideological movement through which black writers from all over the world expressed their disgust for the injustice, abuses and oppression meted out to the black race by the white. Negritude was developed by francophone Black intellectuals, writers and politicians in France in the 1930s. The word itself is a neologism introduced in French language around 1935. It is used to refer to the politico-literary movement founded by three foremost writers namely, the Martinican Aimé Césaire, the Senegalese Léopold Sédar Senghor and the Guyana-born Leon Gontran Damas. Initially, the term was used to mean “the one who has no culture”. According to Césaire cited by Redouane (2009), the word owes its creation to the political and socio-cultural oppression of the Blacks by whites. He contends that:

La négritude a été créée par les Blancs... Nous avons ramassé ce mot “négre” qu’on nous jetait. Comme mentionné précédemment, c’est un mot défi qui s’est transformé en mot fondateur. Il est important de considérer la Négritude comme un humanisme de manière appropriée. Après avoir franchi le stade du particularisme, on parvient à l’universel. Si l’homme noir est le point de départ, l’homme tout court est le point de départ.

It is the Whites who invented Negritude ... We adopted this word “negro” which is aimed at us. As has been said, it is a challenge-evoking word transformed into a foundation word. But it is useful to view Negritude as a kind of humanism. From the particular one arrives at the universal. If the departure point is the Black, the arrival point is man in short. (As quoted by Mokwenye, 2005:30)

According to Césaire, this pejorative word appropriately captures the situation of the black. In his book titled, where he uses this word for the first time, Césaire (1939), claims that negritude is the sine qua non condition for the authenticity of creativity in all domains of the black man’s life. He explains that « *la Négritude à mes yeux une chose très simple et qui me parait aller de soi. C’est l’affirmation d’une identité*” (Saakana 1997) [*To me, Negritude is something very simple which seems relative. It is the affirmation of an identity*]. Senghor, on his part, defines the movement as the cultural patrimony, the values and especially the spirit of black-African civilisation (Redouane, 2009).

The negritude movement sprang up in the 1930s in response to the problem and complicity of the black bourgeoisie who assimilated French culture and thought. This movement played a great role on the African literary scene and far beyond. The writers of this movement accord major importance to the values of the black world. They wish to reconstruct the distorted image of the Blacks, an image ridiculed by France and its political assimilation. Works such as *Pigments of Léon Gontran Damas* and *Cahier d’un retour au pays natal* by Aimé Césaire demonstrate the richness and the power of the movement. Negritude movement started around 1930 and ended after 1960. The movement started with many classic and literary creations of francophone African literature which is illustrated in all genres. The greatest classics then are *La Rue Cases Nègres* (1974) Joseph Zobel, *Le Cahier d’un retour au pays natal* (1939) Aimé Césaire. All these creative works depict the Caribbean and African societies, they expose the penury of the blackman, political and social assimilation caused by French exploiters and capitalists.

### **Origin and objective of negritude movement**

The year 1930 was an eventful year in the history of francophone literature. During this year, many black intellectuals from America, Africa and West Indies met in France. Paris, being the capital of France, was a place of exchange for these men of various horizons to discuss the plight their race was confronted with the world over. They had the same origin

and the same problem. They were faced with racism, cultural and identity denial from the white race supposedly considered to be superior. The illustrious leaders of this struggle were Leon Gontran Damas (French Guyana), Aimé Césaire (Martinican Republic), Leopold Sédar Senghor (Senegal), and thus they became the forefathers of modern black Francophone literature.

The founding father of Negritude was influenced by the Black American civil rights movement of the 1800 which focused on fighting for equal rights between the Whites and the Blacks. These movements were led by activists such as Martin Delany, Williams Blyden, and WEB Du Bois. One of the remote influences of Negritude was the Negro-renaissance movement of Harlem led by Langston Hughes, Jean Toomer, Countee Cullen, James Weldon Johnson and Claude Mackay. These Afro-American writers were forced to relocate from America to Paris in 1930 due to the hostile policies of the American government of the day.

The Haitian school of thought took over from the Harlem Negro-renaissance. The publication of newspapers and journals between 1920 and 1930 anticipated the birth of the Negritude movement. One of such journals was *L'Indigène* which was edited by Jacques Roumain, Jacques Stephen Alexis and Emile Boumer. The main thrust of this publication was the depiction of racial discrimination of the Haitian society along skin colours. While Blacks were at the bottom of the socio-economic hierarchy, the Whites as the superior race were on top solely directing the affairs. The same discourse was echoed in *Ainsi Parla l'oncle Sam* of Jean Price-Mars. Aimé Césaire found enough justification for the Haitian revolt that he baptised it as their own negritude. Motivated by the negritude spirit in them, the army of Toussaint Louverture beat the French army of Napoleon to gain her independence in 1804. René Maran, the author of *Batoula* (1921), is also considered to be another ancestor of the literary movement. He was one of those writers who first condemned the excesses of the colonial system. It is believed that the novel is considered by some black writers as a negritude work. However, the Guyanese French colonial administrator dissociated himself from the movement which he saw as a racist tool. *Batoula* deals extensively with the human rights abuses to which the colonised people of Oubangi-Chari, present-day Central African Republic, are subjected. As a matter of fact, the book was censored and even the author was made to resign his position as the colonial governor.

The Antillean University Students' Journals of the 1930s also contributed to the birth of Negritude. These Caribbean students were meeting in the house of the Nardal Sisters to voice out their displeasure against the colonial system. This gathering led to the founding of another journal *La revue du monde noir* in 1931. The following year, Caribbean radical students group made up of Etienne Léro, Jules Monnerot and Rene Menit published *Legitime defense* (1932). This journal, which only appeared once because it was banned immediately after its publication, denounced the conformism and copycat attitude of their fellow French West Indians. Negritude is generally defined as a literary movement whose objective was the defence of the dignity and culture of the black races against the stereotypes propagated by the western world. It was a kind of catalyst to awakening the consciousness of the dominated and oppressed Black people. The ultimate goal was to encourage the beaten and battered black race to stand up and fight for her rights.

Aimé Césaire who coined the word negritude defines it as “la simple reconnaissance du fait d’être noir et l’acceptation de ce fait, de notre destin de noir, de notre histoire et de notre culture” (Chévrier, 1974), (the simple recognition of the fact that one is black, the acceptance of this fact and of our destiny as black people, of our history and culture.) For the poet, Negritude is a weapon to proclaim the existence of Black identity and culture and to fight all forces of oppression unleashed against the Blacks either Africans or Caribbean and other coloured people.

Aimé Césaire and Léon Damas and their supporters considered Negritude as the Caribbean’s way of renouncing France as their father land and strengthening their ancestral link with Africa, their continent of origin. Of course, it implies awakening the consciousness of their fellow countrymen and consolidating the spirit of oneness and solidarity of all the Blacks across the globe. Little wonder then why all their poetic works and plays evolve around colonisation and independence of Black nations. In addition, Césaire was grateful to Senghor who served as a bridge between West Indians and Africa. He describes his rapport with Senghor in the following lines:

Senghor et moi, nous sommes restés très, très liés. Il se trouve que tous les jours nous parlions de quelque chose nos sujets de conversation étaient inépuisables. Nous n’étions pas toujours d’accord évidemment, mais l’esprit fonctionnait à plein régime... (Césaire 2005: 221)

Senghor and I maintained a very good relationship. Everyday we had a topic to discuss, our discussion topics were inexhaustible. We were not always agreeing obviously but the mind was fully functioning. I discovered Africa in him. I explained the Caribbean vaguely to him. It was important for me to tell him where I came from. (Mokwenye, 2013: 31)

Leon Gontran Damas' *Pigments* is among the literary works that first exemplified Negritude. It served as its foremost manifesto which was consistently referred to during the struggle for francophone African countries' independence. Césaire declared the important role played by negritude in the African independence struggle during a conference in Miami, USA, on February 26, 1987 (Zongo, 2004:86) when he says:

Et de fait, quand je pense aux indépendances africaines des années 1960, quand je pense à cet élan de foi et d'espérance qui a soulevé tout le continent à l'époque, c'est vrai que je pense à la négritude parce que je crois qu'elle a joué son rôle, et un rôle peut-être capital, car elle a été un rôle de défense ou de catalyseur.

When I think of African independence of the 1960s, when I think about the confidence in the future and the hope it aroused in the continent, my memory goes back to the Negritude movement. I think that Negritude played its role, a very prominent one. Its role was that of an agitator and a catalyst. (Mokwenye, 2013: 34)

For example, in 'Et Cetera', one of the poems in *Pigments* (1937) as was memorised and recited in the French colonial possessions in Africa in order to prevent them from being enlisted or mobilised for Second World War II (1939-1945) was translated to a native language in Cote d'Ivoire and was being recited by the illiterate population to signify their refusal to go to the war front.

Ayeleru (2011) points out that the aim and objectives of Negritude movement cannot be overlooked as they are essential and relevant to uplift humanistic studies and its activities that are usually situated within the Faculty of Arts and social sciences of a particular university. He expatiates further that Negritude movement is necessary to African development as African writers on this cause should not be left out in literary activities and in the reawakening of African people and culture. Irele (1977) also defines Negritude movement as being members of black race with themes such as revaluation and defence of African culture, revolt of colonial domination from political, moral and cultural aspects. He

stresses further that the aim of African literature is for the alienated and westernised elite to affirm their racial belonging and claim African identity completely.

Themes of revolt of colonial domination range from moral to political aspects which encapsulates defence and revaluation of African culture and its people and the secret admiration of being member of the black race. The main aim of African literature is the quest for alienated and westernised elites to calm African identity and affirm their racial belonging (p.10).

Negritude is an artistic and literary movement which is connected to the political awakening of African writers and politicians in the thirties. It was a development of a new literature especially in English and French which produced little significance in the way of published materials. The politically committed writers like Kwame Nkrumah, Sekou Toure and Leopold Sedar Senghor by their economic and political writings influenced their creative writings and initiated their endless discussions about the nature of African personality being the chief redherring of the period (Wake, 1982).

Another important factor to note is the oneness of modern African intellectuals and writers; they agree in literary preoccupations; common social and political unity must not be overlooked. It is oneness among them that shows social and political revolution which eventually inspires African creative works. The oneness among African writers has undergone an important change of direction since the march towards independence began. It is indeed, a perfectly natural change.

## **2.5 Negritude movement and Senghor's resistance against its criticism**

Like any other literary movement that has ever existed, Negritude had its peak period and was subjected to many criticisms. In the first instance, the movement was criticised by Caribbean writers with the emergence of new literary movements like Antillanité and Creolité which counter-attacked all the ideals Negritude stood for. Fundamentally, these new ideologies came up because of the homogeneous nature of Negritude whose objective was to bring under the same umbrella blacks in the diaspora and in Africa.

The detractors of Negritude believed that the restriction of Negritude to Black man alone connotes racism and rejection. What they are faulting in Negritude is what Jean-Paul Sartre called "anti-racist racism" in "Orphée noir". This actually later on made some schools of thoughts to refer to Negritude as Africanity. In addition, Aimé Césaire's compatriots

believed that he was only being the mouthpiece of the intellectuals, and not the masses. According to his detractors, his literary works were inaccessible to the lower classes due to the complexity of his language. Others attacked Negritude because, according to them, it advocated racism. Based on this, Negritude became a less and less alive issue and seems to be fading away from the scene because Senghor himself, in one or two places, for example in the Preface to *Ethiopiennes*, suggested that Negritude was a temporary myth, necessary at a given moment in Africa's history. He foresaw the day when the idea of Negritude would no longer be relevant. The reason for Negritude's loss of ground then was due to the passing of the need for such a myth with the general attainment of independence. The decline of Negritude is also due to a growing opposition to it in French-speaking Africa, especially among the more radical young intellectuals opposed to Senghor as a politician and head of state. This kind of reaction tends to show the close connection between the literature of contemporary Africa and politics. Another criticism against Negritude is in connection with its adoption of the French language which is a means by which it indirectly fuels French cultural domination which it theoretically claimed to resist. Redouane (2010:197) corroborates this view noting that:

Ainsi, une illusion était entretenue par le courant littéraire de la Négritude. En réalité, il alimenterait une bataille sur le fond contre une domination qu'il alimenterait par complicité avec la langue du dominant. En d'autres termes, la résistance ne peut s'empêcher de contester l'appareil linguistique par lequel la violence symbolique du dominant est exercée.

The Negritude discourse was therefore entertaining an illusion; that of waging a war against domination which in reality was fed through its complicity with the dominator's language. In other words, resistance cannot spare language, which is an apparatus through which is manifested the symbolic violence of the dominator] – (Ibid: 50).

The word "Negritude" thus seems fraught with connotations which sometimes are negative and which call for more thorough analysis from different perspectives in order to share varying views and understanding. Most Negritude critics, especially in anglophone African acknowledge its historical importance but agree with Stanislas Adotevis (1972:50) who asserts that:

The era of Negritude movement is considered as ancient time which is important to African reawakening, however, some aspects seem outdated but full of reactionary objectives... During the period when the whole world was into racism, when the humanity raised its voice against colonialism, then there was a heavy stone thrown against the negritude which shook consciences.

Based on this fact, around 1940's Negritude movement suffered a decline from some of the African antagonists of this movement, the prominent critics of Negritude are Ezekiel Mphahlele and Abiola Irele. On the other hand, these critics believe that the aim and objectives of Negritude had already been defeated. Therefore, Boukman (2007) observes that to cling like an oyster to ideas overtaken by history is not good for African culture.

Le concept de Negritude, qui était révolutionnaire dans les années 1940 et 1950, est aujourd'hui réservé exclusivement au musée de littérature. (Irele, 2007:84)

Because of the non-assimilationist style of British colonial rule, they thought it softened the reaction that produced Negritude in French-controlled areas, some of the strongest attacks have come from anglophone Africa.

Il était supposé que les citoyens étaient devenus entièrement français sans regarder en arrière vers la culture qui était en train de disparaître. Cela a conduit à Wole Soyinka's célèbre questionnement de la nécessité de la noirceur, lorsqu'il affirme que même un tigre ne doit pas courir pour démontrer sa noirceur. Soyinka pense que la négritude était une réaction qui persiste dans un système préétabli d'analyse intellectuelle de l'homme et de la société européenne qui essaie de redéfinir l'Afrique dans des termes externalisés. (Soyinka, 1976:136).

The Marxists have also denounced Negritude in a clearly political setting. Marxism's anti-spiritual prejudice runs counter to some of Senghor's comments' apparent mysticism. Negritude, according to contemporary Marxist Chidi Amuta (1989), promotes culture while separating the issue of decolonisation from the actual battles, which are economic, political, and social. This modern perspective first emerged in the late 1940s, when some of the book's earliest detractors labelled Negritude as an illogical detour from the class struggle.

Another political objection to Senghor's essays' universalism has been raised. His concept of métissage, in particular, has offended certain people since it is perceived as a

Western imperialist adaptation. It is perceived as a concession in the context of neocolonialism, and similar to quite different concessions made by Negritude in its early years, this concept is considered as providing too much to appease Europeans and Americans. Additionally, due to European independence and pride in a distinctively acclaimed Western culture, Western interest in Negritude frequently helps to decrease its reputation in Africa.

Leopold Sedar Senghor also made Negritude in Africa a personal experience project towards the period of attaining independence because he insisted on African socialism as a programme of social and political action. Most African elite expected Senghor to be revolutionary in his poems and writings because of his concern for reconciliation, profound Christian piety, gesture of resentment and bitterness made his poetry close on harmonious and reconciliation note between European and African civilisation. Since independence, French-speaking predominance and the myth-making of negritude have lost ground. Senghor, significantly, has fallen silent. He has said nothing poetically since independence. The decline of Negritude might be the reason for a growing opposition to it in French-speaking Africa, especially among the more radical young intellectuals opposed to Senghor as a politician and Head of State. In English Africa, the Negritude was not popular in literary activities; English writers never wasted any time lamented his demise.

As Ezekiel Mphahlele points out, one of the chief mistakes of negritude was the belief that culture can be programmed in a free society. It is difficult to achieve in a totalitarian society. African must inevitably produce a literature, which will be an essential part of a total culture that will be distinctly African. (Wakes, 1965) Ezekiel Mphahlele also opposed Negritude because Africa had already been completely assimilated by the European culture.

## **2.6 Forms and functions of African oral literature Social patterns, imagery and diction**

Forms of orature are artistically significant and imaginative such that they exhibit the artistic exploitation of the communicative resources of language like sound patterns, imagery and diction. The author of Orature takes a close look at human nature as well as universal issues like death, love, corruption, greed, life, and the conflict between good and evil. Oral literary forms depict the achievement of indigenous people of Africa, their literary traditions. As auditory and verbal expressions of man's creative impulse to express his

innate creative ability, they serve as demonstrations of perception of social reality, traditional creative imagination and beliefs, modes that construct and deconstruct the sociocultural and political milieu of African people. The techniques and forms of orature are not borrowed from foreign culture nor contaminated by western beliefs but are exhibited in their original forms. Thus, they constitute the most authentic creative expression of African worldview. Akporobaro (2006) corroborates Malinowski's (1954) assertion that verbal literary forms are means for the validation and preservation of culture and traditions. Examples of these are ritual performance, festival dramas, chants, orations, recitations, riddles, proverbs, epic, narratives, songs, ballads, myth and legends. Malinowski (1954) also observes that myth is an essential ingredient in human civilisation, it is not an idle tale, nor hard-worked active force, nor intellectual explanation nor artistic imagery but a moral wisdom and a pragmatic character of primitive faith. Folktales, songs, legends, and the full corpus of oral literary forms all share the same characteristics as myth, according to Malinowski (1954).

## **Epic**

Epic is a narrative, long and heroic poem which relates the story of a hero whose great exploits have national impacts on a particular society or for human race. Benet (1987) explains that epic is a narrative poem which presents adventures on a large heroic scale being organically united through an important figure or personality of heroic propositions. Brewer (1996) adds another historical dimension of epic as he observes that epic is a poem of dramatic character that deals with historical narration of notable actions which could be real or fictitious; it could even be several actions deployed under supernatural guidance or an heroic figure like "Sundjata" of Malian and Malinké people. Epic is an oral genre. It is also a performing art executed on special occasions and before a particular audience by griots. The performance of epic tale is usually accompanied by musical instrument and the griot is the principal actor. He mimics his characters and identifies with them. His aim is to give to his audience a rewarding performance. His renditions are never identical as he is invariably affected by his sponsors and audience. In the contemporary times, epic tales now in written form have lost to a large extent the oral ones such as the background song and the dramatic performance.

In Africa, epic is written in verse and in prose which depends on the transcriber and editor. As an editor, he reconstructs the tale choosing from a number of traditions. For example, Soundjata epic is written in both forms. Diabété's *Kala Jata* (1970) in prose highlights the performance aspect by introducing an interlocutor in the tale. African scholars such as Okpewho (2000) and Hampaté Bâ (2008) consider the epic as a song. Okpewho cautions against the strict categorisation of verse as opposed to prose saying that the line of demarcation is very thin (p.155). Even where the epic is in the verse form, the structure is loose. In *Soundjata ou l'épopée mandingue*, the griot narrator, Mamadou Kouyaté, in a prelude of his text introduces himself and the subject matters of the tale as *L'Histoire du fils du Bouffle, du fils du Lion* (Story of the son of Buffalo, son of the Lion). Based on this, epic is nothing but a long poem which celebrates some legendary heroes in grand style, the hero who is believed to have come down from heaven as a god who performs supernatural exploits in journey and war fronts. Epic is also a form of narrative that tells stories which originate from legends. It is a story of famous individuals in various communities who distinguished themselves by their exceptional qualities and great exploits especially in war. For historical details, epic is embellished, manipulated and magnified by oral artists such as griots like Mvet players in Cameroun, Sunny Ade and Sir Shina Peters from Nigeria. These artists are commended for offering insight into illustrious genealogies, ancient migrations, wars, victories, conquests, defeats, grand alliance, intrigues and revolutions in numerous African societies (Okeh, 2000).

Epic constantly reminds the coming generations that anyone can achieve greatness in life and be counted among those who will ever be remembered. The epic hero is not only a strong and brave person who is capable of surpassing human opponents, but also an occultic figure who is able to command powers as he bulldozes his way against evil powers. Epic of Soundjata occurs within a network of praises. It is strongly tied to historical events and relies heavily on heroic poetry. The story has African themes such as migration, adventure, religious and political plot. In the poem, women play a central role as an extension of the hero. For example, Soundjata passes through stages of life through his manhood, miraculous birth and how he accomplishes great tasks assigned to him for nobility in a supernatural way. Soundjata struggles with his great enemy Somanguru, discovers his secrets and destroys him which later helps him to become important leader.

Epic runs through all the selected poems examined in this work because all the poets are epic writers. They are historians, griots, and story tellers of their time. Nothing is hidden from them in the origin and history of African continent. They knew much about civil war, migration, European conquest, slavery, heroic achievements. For example, *Le Kaya-Magan* is written by Léopold Sédar Senghor as a heroic evocation of a historical figure, the emperor of ancient Ghana. Senghor celebrates an ancient African, being a symbol of the ideal poet-politician.

Je suis Kaya-Magan! Le premier roi des nuits noires, des  
nuits d'argent et des nuits de verre.  
Paissez mes antilopes à l'abri des lions, qui sont charmés  
par les voix de mes antilopes (p. 107).

The poet elaborates important spiritual values of African people. Kaya-Magan, being the first ruler and founder of the ancient empire of Ghana, takes precedence over his subjects as direct heir of the original founder of the race and present absolute incarnation.

David Diop is also an epic writer. He devoted his poem *Negre Clochard* to Aimé Césaire, one of the founding fathers of Negritude movement who resisted the racial discrimination of the black man in European land assisted by Léopold Sédar Senghor.

Toi qui marchais comme si tu avais brisé un vieux rêve.  
Je constate que Soundjata est oublié et que Chaka est  
indomptable.  
Oh mon ancien moissonneur noir de terres inconnues.  
Nous reviendrons à Ghâna et Tombouctou pour toi (p. 28).

Historically, David Diop tells the story of pre-colonial Africa, how it was trampled upon by the whites and the suffering the continent passed through but Africa has regained its strength when Diop says:

Patience le carnaval a disparu.  
J'aiguise l'ouragan pour les futurs sillons.  
Nous reviendrons à Ghâna et Tombouctou pour toi.  
Les guitares sont remplies de galops frénétiques. (p. 29).

Keep calm; the funfair has ended, and I'm sharpening the  
hurricane for the furious future.  
For you, we'll rebuild Timbuktu and Ghana.  
And the guitars trembling from a thousand chord changes (p. 3)

Diop's tone here is assertive, optimistic, violent and that of renewing of hope of African people. "The imagery has the stamp of the prophet calling up visions of the New

Jerusalem”. Okeh (2000) also supports Senghor’s view that “there is no clear-cut distinction between the domains of poetry and those of prose in African Oral Literature in any language”. Based on this assertion, it is inferred that Birago Diop being a tale writer was also a poet and epic writer as he includes in his tales *Les Contes d’Amadou Koumba* titled *Maman-Caiman*; the story is about the tragic end of a child who refuses to listen to the wisdom of his parents. This historical account that depicts the little caymans, the disobedient children, is an example of the tales that were used to record and pass on the history of the race.

### **Folktale**

Folktale is a popular story, a common narrative which forms part of the oral creation of African people. It is transmitted from one place to another likewise generation to generation. Examples of folktales abound in the poem of Birago Diop and Bernard Dadié. For example, in *Les Contes and Les nouveaux Contes d’Amadou Koumba*, series of poems are deployed in narrating stories to their people. This is exemplified in “Abandon” and “Souffles” by Birago Diop. Montelle (2004) has this to say regarding folktale:

Le conte est un récit fictif c’est-à-dire l’agencement et la mise en intrigue d’événements réels ou inventés. Il est anonyme et caractérisé par des versions multiples, actualisées et enrichies par le conteur à partir d+es trames fixes... (50).

The tale is a fictional narrative, that is, the arrangement and developing into plots of real or imagined events. It is anonymous and characterised by multiple versions, actualised and enriched by the teller (p. 341).

As for Coffin (2006), the term folktale is broadened to include all other forms of narrative: the myth, the legend, etc. He refers to it as “a generic term for all the various kinds of narrative prose literature found in the oral traditions of the world”. This broad view is in consonance with the African view of the folktale, according to Senghor (1961). This goes to say that the African makes no distinction among myth, legend, epic and folktale. They are all folktales and the characters cut across all creations while the events are not restricted to time and place. In other words, in African folktales, both the gods and all created beings, animals, plants and spirits come into play and the theatre of action is the entire universe.

According to Senghor,

Le conte est une histoire où les protagonistes sont des personnages humains et des génies. Il nous introduit dans le monde du merveilleux surnaturel. (p. 19)

The folktale is a narrative in which the heroes are the spirits and men... it takes us through the world of the supernatural (p. 342).

Besides this, many African folktales contain a cultural hero, usually a kind of trickster who exists in paradoxical terms. Tortoise is small but powerful; he is greedy, resourceful, pretentious, deceitful, yet stupid. He tricks other creatures or is tricked by them or still, he ends up tricking himself. His escapades and his ultimate lot in the story are instructive to the listener and are a source for drawing lessons of morality as well as clues for survival in a complex world. Examples of such trickster heroes are Anansi the spider in Ghana and Ìjàpá, the tortoise in Yorùbá folktales respectively.

Folktale has various functions, depending on the orientation of its contents. Montelle (2004) attempts a classification of folktales according to the functional orientation of their contents. Some of them are as follows:

- **Etiological stories:** They are stories explaining the fictional myth origins of beings. They try to describe the ordering of the universe and they also enable the listener to learn about his environment, e.g. *Animal Farm* of George Orwell.
- **Animal stories:** These are stories in which animals are mainly the heroes such as dog, elephant and lizard. They contrast strong and weak animals, domestic and wild animals. Their function is to teach social comportment.
- **Fables:** They are short stories of animals, man and plant characters, usually illustrating a moral precept or ethical observation.
- **Mischief stories:** They are stories that satirise social conducts such as *Les soleils des independances (Sun of Independence)* by Kourouma Ahmadou.
- **Supernatural stories:** These are stories about successful initiation in which supernatural beings with coded functions appear. They teach various transitory stages of life: birth, childhood, adolescence, marriage, death, naming ceremony, etc.
- **Philosophical stories:** They are stories that trigger off discussions and they usually end in a question or proverb drawn from a social or national wisdom. They help to stimulate and develop a sense of discovery.

- **Religious stories:** They are stories with metaphysical contents. They help the listener or learner to integrate moral teachings and to reflect on issues of life and death.

By and large, whatever the form of purpose, folktale presents different frameworks or structures upon which an individual constructs his worldview and draws different messages according to his age and experience. It is, therefore, an authentic means of initiating the learner into different phases of life. In African setting, storytelling is a veritable performance wherein both the storyteller and the audience are actively involved. It is done mainly at night, usually by moonlight. It is the time for drinking deep from the fountain of wisdom issuing from the mouth of elders. It is the moment when, in an artistic manner, the cultural values of the people are dispensed to nurture a child.

## **Myth**

Myth is an unforgettable event that took place in the past and also at the commencement of a season. It is all about the narration of a story held to be real in the past. The actors and actresses of myth are gods and goddesses, not human beings but supernatural heroes. Myth represents supernatural happenings performed by gods or divine beings at the beginning. As an illustration, according to a tale from the Bible, “In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth” (p. 60). Myth explains how something came into existence or was completed. As a result, myth is frequently associated with ontology, a way of thinking about existence and reality. It becomes the ultimate or absolute truth once it is said.

In primitive communities, myths are only spoken in relation to significant ritualistic locations, times, or seasons, or in relation to significant religious rituals. As a result, myth explains how reality came to be, including how the universe, various plant species, and human institutions came to be. Malinowski further notes that:

Myth fulfils in traditional culture an important function which codifies belief, enhances morality, it contains practical rules for the guidance of men and vouches for the efficacy of ritual and prayers. Myth is an essential force in the development of human civilisation. It is a pragmatic wisdom not an idle tale, therefore, the function of myth is to promote tradition and embedded in it a prestige and greater force to achieve greatness for his people (1954:67).

Myth is found in all areas of the world and the major types of myth found all over the world abound like myths of culture, myth of origin, eschatology myth, myths of destiny and providence, myths of celestial gods, religious myth and myth of transformations (Encyclopedia Britannica, 1981).

### **African proverbs**

Every human community has its own language that has proverbs in it. It is a product of cultural heritage and experience of people in human society. Proverbs are the palm oil with which words are eaten (Achebe, 1958). Every spoken language has proverbs, which are connected to other types of folk literature like riddles and fables that have their roots in oral tradition. The most apparent sources of proverbs are culture, customs, and traditions of the people. In Benin Republic, for example, many proverbs are derived from the traditional festivals, ceremonies, occupations, politics, commerce, and socio-religious activities of the people. Some African proverbs are not easy to trace; therefore they are anonymous. African proverbs are adapted from orature and recreate more because of their love for them and the flair to preserve them for unborn generations.

Proverbs are words of wisdom and repository of knowledge used especially by the elders in the community. In other words, the elderly ones are the rightful owners of proverbs because they know their importance and when to use them. Modesty on the part of the youth demands that they acknowledge the presence of the elders with respect and honour by any of these expressions in Yoruba context: *Àwon àgbà a máa pa òwe kan* (the elders do say a proverb) or *Tótó ẹ se bí òwe* (it sounds like a proverb). The elders will reply: *Wà á pa òmíràn* (May you live long to say another) (Lindfors and Owomoyela, 1973).

Proverb is usually didactic; it does not make a point but fixes it in our minds. Achebe (1958) stresses that proverb is highly regarded among the Igbo tribe. Stories and African proverbs are strengthened the more with the collective wisdom of Igbo oral tradition that expresses feeling, thought, structure of meaning and expression as well as serves ethical and social features. In the study of African literatures without studying images and metaphors, rhythms and styles, plots and structures in African orature (Achebe, 1958). Based on this, it is obvious that African proverbs serve as the moral ideas and attitude that belong to a particular society.

It is vital to know as well that morals and lessons have been integrated into proverbs. Proverbs can be used to perform different functions in society. They can be used to teach morals, turned into excellent channels for learning, or used to advise, rebuke, encourage, warn or praise people. Proverbs in African life are used to regulate the character of family members, they educate children and straighten the crooked lives that are difficult to shape, they make people to attain goals that no one ever attained in their family.

### **Riddles**

They pose questions and expect intelligent answers in return. Riddles embody the wisdom of a race; they are the people's basic concerns and interests. Riddles are metaphorical in nature; they are embedded elaborately in rich imagery and in picturesque terms. Riddles are important components of every language and culture. They are core area in traditional education which cannot be ignored. Riddles are generally associated with children and they involve finding a solution to a problem. The major concept of riddles as explicated by Okoh (2008:134) goes thus;

As a form of oral literature, riddles are designed to sharpen the wits of children, rouse and sensitise them to various phenomena in their society, or teach them something of their society's conception of the world around, even the universe.

Furthermore, Michael (1995:34) observes that:

In many African societies, riddle is meant for youths and children for it serves as an oral instructive tool within age group and it enables young ones to acquire cultural knowledge that concerns social and natural world around them.

From the foregoing, it is deduced that riddles serve useful purpose. Apart from activating a child's intellectual leverage, riddles also sensitise, enlighten, entertain and are targeted at achieving didactic or teaching objectives inasmuch as they are concerned with virtually every phenomenon pertaining to human life. When African elders engage their little ones in riddles, the aim is to enable youths to understand their immediate environment and to teach them something of their society's conception of the world around them. For example, Yorùbá elders proactively integrate the younger ones into society and one of such numerous riddles is:

My father's ancient cock  
My father's ancient cock  
It has four legs in the morning  
It has two legs in the afternoon  
It has three legs in the evening  
(Faturoti, 2012: 287)

The solution to the above puzzle is *èniyàn* (human being). The *èniyàn* as it were is symbolised by *àkùkọ* =(cock) The *òwúró*=means (morning) when *èniyàn* is at infancy, crawling on two legs and two hands: =òsán (afternoon) connotes when the *èniyàn* attains adulthood, walking on his normal two legs while (*alé*) night is the latter part of the *èniyàn*'s days on earth when he is due to an old age, too weak to walk and therefore makes use of a walking stick to complement his movement (p.288). Thus, riddles in African society underscore the essence of deep reasoning, rational thoughts and impeccable wisdom. It is well known in Africa that many children that are brought up with this kind of background are always sharp, brilliant and culturally sound.

### **The importance of African riddles**

- Riddles entertain and provide leisure during celebration time.
- They sustain the interest of people through oral performances and songs. They also teach endurance and perseverance during awkward period.
- They promote co-operation and intimate relationship among people.
- They help youths and children to appreciate traditional occupation during games and playtime.
- Riddles also help the youths to become future performers of drama and playlet. Idleness is avoided through riddles because they task their brains and measure their intelligent quotient.
- They promote respect for elders and age group.

### **Functions of African oral literature**

Oral literature has the following functions:

- i. It equips the individual with knowledge of his/her origin and makes him/her one with the cultural spirit of his/her people.

- ii. It instils a full insight into one's culture and social problems and provides the platform for solving these collective problems which require a critical and appreciative response to life.
- iii. It instils skills, knowledge and qualities of personal character to deal with the issues within the context of globalisation.
- iv. It centres on reforming individuals and society and persuading the individuals to order their collective life based on truth.

Opara (2009) says that francophone oral literature is an intercultural toll. By virtue of its universality, it serves as a bridge between different cultures and facilitates dialogue within a multi-cultural setting. Life is impoverished or enriched to the extent to which we can draw upon the efforts and experiences of others to overcome the challenges of our society. We must be able to draw upon the experience of others to develop a critical awareness of our challenges and limitations. We must be aware and conscious of cultural integration and linkage. Moody (1981) maintains that orature is helpful for humanistic values of respect for human rights, it fosters broadmindedness, accommodates respect and freedom and demonstrates tolerance and integrity.

Bamikunle (1999) adds that every work of literature is inspired by socio-historical of realities where the author finds himself. The above statement makes it clear that the literary artist does not function in a vacuum, he gets much inspiration from his or her culture. Therefore, literature all over the world has important values for people throughout all ages and one of the values of literature is the deployment of language in expressing literary views. To be factual, all literatures use various languages to express their experiences of life; by so doing, the world today is flooded with writing of one kind or another.

The most essential value of literature is the ability to preserve new ideas and the accuracy of the language. In other words, literature relaxes minds, entertains and distracts people's attention from their problem. Its distraction from the stress of the day may prolong somebody's life. Literature stands to relax brain, contradict dormant life and evade mental laziness. Literature makes life meaningful and it is totally against weary lifestyle to the extent that it changes depressed body system to agile and active body. Literature equips man to live a fuller life of understanding, fulfilment and peace with his fellow human beings without chaos.

## 2.7 **Theoretical framework**

This research employs postcolonial theory as a critical tool to be freely applied to negritude poetry because this theory is a dominant sign of contemporary time and it has moved beyond its traditional engagement with literary texts to address wider range of socio-cultural cum political issues worldwide. These issues now range from subject, global refugee crises, migration, minorities, civil war, margin, identities, empire, colony, gender, race, hybridity, globalisation, etc. In a descriptive sense, postcolonial theory is preoccupied with literature emanating from cultures of lands which have emerged from colonial rule.

There are series of controversies and debates that have accompanied the rise of postcolonialism. First, it is an intellectual and literary movement from the late 1960s and 1980 respectively. It is also a Commonwealth and Negritude literature and in the course of the years, Negritude literature falls under postcolonial studies. In the 1960s, Third World theories, underdevelopment and neo-colonialism were dominant but postcolonial discourse was not a theory produced in the postcolonial world by postcolonial writers, postcolonial theory was produced by “Les Emigrés” who based in Western countries. Some of the postcolonial theorists and thinkers are Homi Bhabha, Edward Said and Gayatri Spivak. These theorists examine categories, roles and the extent they perpetuate the superiority of the West and the subservience of its colonised. They also focus their analysis on the role of language, dissemination of and resistance to colonial ideologies. For example, Homi Bhabha’s *Location of Culture* (1994) interrogates the contradictions and inconsistencies inherent in colonial discourses and he calls it The Separation from Origins and Essences. He queries as well the positions of both coloniser and the colonised which are inwardly conflicted. His work tends towards hybridity and mimicry which he asserts as the mark and legacy of the colonial encounter.

### **Postcolonialism**

Postcolonialism is a theory marked by its sense of dislocation from what it considers as being one of its geographical references, i.e., the postcolony. Since 1990, postcolonial theory has revolved round the theory of Third World practices, category of thought and experience being the object of analysis. Hall (1996) defines postcolonial discourse as an attempt to grip with the nature and meaning of colonial modernity from the dual vantage

points of migration and decolonisation. Sanusi (2015) corroborates Hall's view on postcolonialism that postcolonial theory is no longer an Anglo-saxon affair but a global one. Postcolonial theory interrogates erroneous colonial writings to attack European claiming of superiority with a view to denying the arrogant views and opinions of claiming superiority of European culture which exposes as well the coloniser's wickedness to the African continent. Black writers like Chinweizu, Walter Rodney and Aimé Césaire believe totally that European colonialism had weakened African development. These writers affirm that the European mission had already destroyed many African oral traditions and disrupted the once peaceful continent. Postcolonialism studies the effects of colonialism on societies and cultures. The theory also concerns itself with how European countries controlled and conquered "Third World" cultures and how the colonised groups resisted and responded to the encroachments. Therefore, postcolonialism, being a body of theory and a study of socio-cultural cum political change, has gone and continue to undergo three broad stages, according to Slemon (1994):

- i. creation of awareness of psychological social and cultural inferiority enforced on the colonised people;
- ii. the struggle for political, ethnic and cultural independence; and
- iii. growing awareness of cultural hybridity and overlap.

Moreover, postcolonialism is an attempt to establish non-western modes of discourse as a viable means of contesting with the West. This idea came out forcefully in *The Empire Writes Back* written by Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (1989). Bart Moore Gilbert also provides historical genealogy of postcolonialism having some important concepts in contemporary postcolonial theorising as being worked out in the critique and writing of authors like Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe, Wilson Harris and Kamau Braithwaite and others from 1960 upwards (Moore-Gilbert, 1997).

Postcolonial studies are inspired by theories and processes of decolonisation of 1950s and 1960s. The effects of decolonisation on postcolonial theory are traceable to the writings of Mahatma Gandhi, Albert Memmi, Frantz Fanon, Kwame Nkrumah, David Diop, Birago Diop and others. The centrality of these political activities and thinkers ensures that the link between the era of decolonisation and contemporary postcolonial concerns is kept alive. Meanwhile, the definitions of postcolonialism are many which involve a studied

engagement with colonialism experience with both present and past effects at the global and local levels of ex-colonial societies relating to the after-effects of colonial empire. It also involves various discussions of experiences on migration, gender, class, race, resistance, encroachment, suppression, slavery and responses to colonial discourses of imperial Europe like philosophy, linguistics, history and anthropology. Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (1995) observe that postcolonialism is a theory which is about conditions under imperialism, colonialism and situation after the historical end of colonialism. Many postcolonial critics in the West have shown growing interests in racial minorities in the West, Aborigines in Australia, African-Americans in the United States, Asians, British and African Caribbean in the United Kingdom.

Postcolonialism bears a resemblance to an ensemble of discourses emerging from the late 1960s that all aimed at challenging central Western philosophical ideas. Then it is important to bear in view the overlapping nature of problems that postcolonialism and these other discourses attend to. This recognition brings with it the need to forge wide-ranging links between postcolonialism and these other discourses in a larger project of addressing injustice and inequality anywhere they may show themselves in the world. Slemon (2000) remarks that postcolonial project must be alert to injustices and imbalances created by colonialism; it must be dealt with in South, North, West and East, especially in the area of child abuse, pornography, women's labour, degradation of environment, racism and micro-minority rights. Postcolonialism must be seen as project to correct imbalances in the world.

Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (1998) in *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies* observe that binary opposition is the most extreme form of difference which is possible and germane to imperialism and colonialism in Africa. In the same vein, many intractable binaries were created in colonial period that had serious adverse effects on Africa; consequently, the colonised people adjusted their culture to the coloniser's to the extent that the colonised depend on them and abandon their own ways of life in order to be accepted as civilised people which is still in operation till today as the game of subordination and domination manifested in all religions, socio-cultural, political and economic spheres of African people.

Sanusi (2015) cites Ranu Samantrai in her book *Claiming the Burden: Naipul's Africa* that the Western thought about Africa and the rest is strongly about the opposition

binaries such as superior/inferior, First World/Third World, advanced/backward, developed/developing, adult/child paradigm which state that if the colonised obey the West completely, they will grow and become like them. Samantrai also avers that it is common and noteworthy in the contemporary Africa to see the colonised imitating the West by copying their ways of life so that they can be addressed as civilised and the worst part of it is that Africans lost most of their cultural heritage and cannot fully imitate the European ways of life (ibid 2015).

This is a clear way of instilling in the colonised an inferiority complex and the inferiority complex affected many Africans in various ways even till date and these principles are also systematic process of cultural domination through the imposition of imperial structures of power. This assessment by European critics is unfair and unjust. It betrays the critics' biases and prejudices, but postcolonialism now covers all the cultures affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonisation to the present day.

The term 'Postcolonial' means the period after the independence in Africa as used by the historians after the Second World War. The literary critics used the term around 1970 being the effects of colonialism on societies. It implies the cultural, political, social, economic, linguistic and technological experiences of people which were formerly colonised by European colonies. Africa was no longer stable when the Europeans left their shores, African collision with the whites knocked Africa off balance. The legacy of colonialism was cultural confusion and it became difficult to find moral values in African societies. In opposition to Western colonial mythology that the Europeans came to civilize Africans and brought light to the dark continent, we would like to say that their thoughts were not true; instead of peace, they brought chaos and trauma to African people, well organised societies were disorganised and in view of this, the first generation of African writers were preoccupied with postcolonial themes such as corruption, civil war, military coups, nepotism and genocide.

Few years after independence of African countries, little was achieved, happy mood changed to sadness because their expectations were dashed; new political parties sprang up and replaced the parliamentary system of government which was bequeathed to Africa as Europe took its leave. Africa started as one party state and later, the military men took over. Therefore, African people who started well with their leaders became disenchanted because

of the misdeeds of African leaders and in the course of this, their followers decided to pull them down by exposing their evil acts.

Consequent upon this, the increasing centralisation of power within the new nation states made impeachment impossible to accomplish through constituted means. Therefore, the army played a major role in effecting political change and in lieu of this, bullets replaced ballots as instruments of governance to the extent that post-coup conflicts deteriorated into full scale civil war at least in one African country, for example, there was a civil war in Congo and Rwanda in (1997 – 1999). It took place in Rwanda in (1990 – 1994). The pre-independence dreams of early 1960s turned into traumatic postcolonial nightmare.

At a particular period, West African writers were troubled and could not totally ignore the misdeeds of African leaders such that poetry was used as political and social satire against the irresponsible leadership. These writers stopped at celebrating and reconstructing the dignity of the African past and beamed their searchlight on African people. They also pointed accusing fingers at themselves and African leaders. This fact made Wole Soyinka switched from drama to fiction and exclaimed that African writers need urgent release from the past and fulfil his fiction as the recorder of norms, mores and experiences of life (Soyinka, 1967). Chinua Achebe confirms and points out that most African countries today are politically free and that there are also thirty-six independent African states managing their own affairs sometimes quiet badly (1966).

### **Culture and hybridity**

Culture is the total way of life developed by a group of people in order to meet the challenges of living in an environment that gives order and meaning to their legal, socio-cultural cum economic structure built on spiritual and material objectives while creative structure encapsules oral and written literatures, visual and performing arts and people's beliefs and values which assist to mould other aspects of culture. Lyre (1998) describes hybridity as the mixing of cultural signs and practices that stemmed out from the colonising and colonised cultures of the world. Homi Bhabha (1994) observes that contemporary culture is also hybrid culture; he notes as well that culture are retrospective constructs; meaning a historical process that appears in all cultures. Therefore, the contemporary postcolonial situation is a condition that is no longer new in our daily upbringing. On this note, cultural hybridity in postcolonial theory has the potentials to supersede modern

binaries in order to find a way of escape. Jan Nederveen Pieterse (2001) states that hybridity is to culture what deconstruction is to discourse which surpasses binary categories. Robert Young (1995) sees it as a discourse of ideologies and racism. He traces its origin back to seventeenth century which was used in race mixture. Bhabha (1994) observes further the interrelationship and interdependence between the coloniser and the colonised, for instance, the white exerted much pressure on the black through colonial experience and the idea of superior and inferior culture imprints unforgettable experience to both parties and this contact eventually creates new hybrid of culture that in turn challenges the experience of the coloniser, beliefs and values. Homi Bhabha (1995) reveals that postcolonial statements are constructed in a “limina space” and “the third space of enunciation”. The reason for his argument is that the deconstruction of the coloniser’s claim of inherent purity of culture should not be allowed because no culture is completely superior to other culture.

Homi Bhabha’s (2001) concept of hybridity is the ideology of scholars and cultural new elite, that is, “postmodern cosmopolitanism” which differentiates two different varieties of hybridity, that is, old and new hybridities. He avers further that “New hybridity” is a procedure that can be observed, it is also a counter-discourse which is dominant, that has hegemonic structures and institutions of colonisation such as law court and religious institutions while old hybridity is a theory and dimension that creates hybridity consciousness and proper awareness. This implies that there must be cross-fertilisation of values and beliefs system. Therefore, the significance of the counter-discourse has to do with the negotiation of space, in-betweenness, where hegemonic discourse can be mixed or homogenised culture and society. This negotiation also seeks an opportunity to authenticate cultural hybridities that emerge in the hour of historical transformation and evolvement.

### **The life and time of Homi K. Bhabha**

#### **Homi Bhabha’s arguments on postcolonial theory**

Bhabha (1994) argues against an attempt to treat postcolonial countries as having the same identities among the ex-colonial states. He identifies a sound relationship between the colonisers and the colonised, and nationalism and ambivalence. He attacks Western production and implementation of some binary opposition created by the Whites such as centre/margin, civilised/savage, enlightened/ignorant.

He destabilises the opposition binaries to the extent that the inferior binaries could be allowed to dominate the superior one. He also stresses that cultures are bound to transform and interact with each other in a complex manner compared to the old binary opposition and contrasts. The process of colonisation through the interpretation of political discourse, linguistic vocality and hybridity has the potential to dislocate and intervene in such procedure. Bhabha's belief in nation, otherness, hybridity, liminality and mimicry is bound to aid the cultural practical change. Homi Bhabha observes further that the problem of mimicry, being a call to colonial subjection, is as a result of colonial encounter between black semblance and white presence. He avers that the obligation of the black to mirror an image of the white back to coloniser does not produce difference nor identity, the picture is blurred. Therefore, the black man that occupies the complex space between cultures which is the effect of a colonial mimesis flawed argument that came through European civilisation and colonial imitation in a twisted manner. Mimicry is an important concept and aspect of visualizing and engaging in postcolonial situation as a binary term of opposition between de-authorisation, authorisation, oppression and power. He situates that all forms of imposition such as the demand on the colonised to behave like coloniser (assimilation) will later result in mimicry. To Bhabha, mimicry is a way of exercising authority over the colonised and a way of escape cleverly to reject colonial masters' authority and hegemony, a prompt action to oppose colonial situation in Black world. His interest is captured in his in-betweenness of colonial discourse where his transformation and invocation of Bhabha's notion of hybridity destabilises all forms of European superiority which expresses as well the production of hybridisation and colonial condition which marks the possibility of counter colonial resistance.

## **2.8 Postcolonialism and francophone literature**

This research work also tends to examine how postcolonial theory serves as a principle in which this study is based. A few preliminary remarks should be made on the selected authors to fully comprehend the importance of their works as reflections of the realities of their world and the representations of correctives to the ills of African society. For example, Leopold Sedar Senghor and others lay emphasis on the affirmation of identity of the Blackman and return to authentic African source. The selected African poets opine that African traditional societies should not have waited for European contact before

evolving their communal political order. Besides, they argue that capitalism can never thrive in Africa.

Nyerere (1968) observes that African people never aspired to acquire wealth in order to oppress their fellow Africans in the olden days; rather, he claims that communalism is rooted in African culture instead of capitalism in the past so much that modern African socialism recognised an extension of the family unit being a source of traditional heritage family groups draw from.

Leopold Senghor (1964) expatiates on African communal way of living. In other words, Negro African society lived a communal or collectivist life for it is rather a communion of souls than an aggregate of individuals. He foregrounds that Africans should renew socialism, a system they practiced before the arrival of the whites in order to regain spiritual dimension.

The communal past which these writers have been clamouring for is humanistic, cooperative, collectivist and egalitarian. Humanism is a system of thought which can solve human problems by reason rather than religious beliefs target the overall development of man and the respect which is due to man's dignity as a rational being. This system is totally against any form of racialism and any method that uses man as a means rather than an end. But Senghor, because of his profound Christian piety, was concerned with reconciliation and a note of unity but David Diop tone is more militant. His poem incites his black people against the European colonisers. David Diop does not embrace reconciliation, instead his militancy against the colonisers is awful. The tone throughout is that of refusal, dismay, rejection of white men's beliefs and values which are not in any way truthful. This is a rejection of a set of beliefs, values and ideas of European people in favour of the Black race. Diop exhorts the black man to reject his position of a subdued humiliated man. He exhorts the blackman to stand up, face up to the challenge with defiance and say "No" to all that has the tendency to subjugate him and thus, change the status quo. The poet's position is made manifest in the poem "Defi à la force":

Toi qui plies toi qui pleures  
Toi qui meurs un jour comme ça sans savoir pourquoi  
Toi qui luttas qui veilles pour le repos de l'Autre  
Toi qui ne regardes plus avec le rire dans les yeux  
Toi mon frère au visage de peur et d'angoisse  
*Relève-toi et crie: Non.* (p. 38)

This poem is perhaps the poem in which Diop does not pretend to have any semblance of finesse. He is just as brutal as the occasion demands. This is a direct call to the black man to reject in its totality the position of subalternity in which he has been held for too long a time.

Spivak Gayatri, one of the proponents of postcolonial theory, corroborates David Diop's point of view to stand up and fight against injustice and other forms of oppression from the white. Her work is committed to the cause of the subaltern, the low class level of people, voiceless set of human races and this cause is given an active application through her engagement in world politics, particularly the politics of Third World labour and First World relations. Spivak's inflection of deconstruction is the tool or instrument through which she challenges the audacity of those empowered discourses that suppress other voices such as the subaltern people. Spivak's deconstruction interrogates the privilege of identity such that such truth is being questioned and how it is persistently and constantly looking into how truths are being produced (Landry, 1996). Edward Said and Homi Bhabha are of the same separate views and thoughts. For example, Spivak aims at overturning the epistemological authority of colonial discourse and most importantly, the deconstructive project that resists the replacement of one discourse with another having the potential to oppress but rather demands, as she suggests constant and persistent interrogation of truth claims. Her essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" has proved to be one of the most influential contributions to this project. Spivak describes the subaltern as the group of people within a community who are subjected to the power of people in authority. Spivak reiterates further that the development of the subaltern is further complicated by the European project, that is, colonialism. She explains more on this issue that when addressing the question of the consciousness of the low class people, the belief of what the work cannot achieve becomes important; it means that the subaltern project cannot achieve all its aims and goals. Postcolonial theorists are critics of postcolonial African literature, their tasks then are formulating, standardising and propagating the appropriate critical attitudes in a developing society which testify to the viability of literary studies in Western and non-Western worlds.

It all comes down to the various postcolonial experiences and reactions to them. Because postcolonial works show how the colonial involvement had a corrupting effect on Africans, this study uses postcolonial theory to analyse contemporary African poetry. By

inverting imperialist misrepresentations of Africa and Africans, contemporary African poetry also demonstrates deliberate opposition to colonial rule. In order to establish their African cultural identity, these poems also examine pre-contact indigenous literary traditions. According to the research, the idea of writing back is perhaps the most appropriate and applicable to the creative vision that inspired the creation of African poetry in the twentieth century.

David Diop's poetry addresses germane issues which affect post-independence Africa. He debunks the neo-colonial mentality of the African petty bourgeoisie. He criticises African leaders for financial mismanagement, corruption, political ineptitude. Lawino, an African poet, also corroborates David Diop's criticism when he says that African politicians join the race for material wealth and not for the love of the masses. Most modern African poets see themselves as producing artistic works which will help to edify their very societies. There was the time when African poets saw themselves as defenders of African culture against Western denigration of the African culture. In much of modern African poetry, there has been shift from the white/black conflict to a black /black conflict. In modern African poetry as in traditional African songs, they are the poet's people. The criticism of political leadership is one of the major preoccupations in contemporary African poetry.

On this note, postcolonial theory is based on the experience gained by the African people and the literary production of people whose history is characterised by extreme socio-cultural, economic, political, cultural and psychological oppression of the white people while African literature addresses many problems which arise due to the subjection of political powers in Africa to the domination of the super-power group of people. Therefore, postcolonial disenchantment and disillusionment are the topical issues that preoccupy the minds of many African writers and negritude poets.

This thesis employs postcolonial theory as a tool which critically examines negritude poetry with the aim of denoting socio-cultural and political problems which bedevil African people like bad leadership, corruption, terrorism, coup d'état and denigration of African culture which areas a result of colonialism and neocolonialism in Africa. Tyson Lois (1999) in *Critical Theory: A User-Friendly Guide* argues that the colonisers left the African people in a psychological limbo to the extent that they were alienated from their culture, African

culture was devalued and Africans were made to inherit negative self-image which deepens them into the well of inferiority complex. Tyson (1999: 366) observes that “the colonisers believed that only their own Anglo-European culture was sophisticated, civilised and continental by nature”. However, Africans were popularized as being savage, underdeveloped, unsophisticated and backward while the colonisers considered themselves as being superior to their counterparts; they saw themselves as the centre of the world and the colonised at the margin. The colonised were trained to believe in European superiority and the Blacks in their own inferiority. Most of these people, according to Tyson (1999), tried to copy the colonisers as much as they could go in lifestyle, speech, food, dress and behaviour, a concept which Homi Bhabha (1994) refers to as “mimicry”. Bhabha’s theory of unhomeliness is a situation of being caught between two cultures where one belongs to none. It is also a state of uncertainty. The problem that produces an unstable sense of self results sometimes in psychological disorder and also the trauma of the cultural displacement on them cannot be underestimated (Tyson, 1999).

The socio-cultural and political problems examined in negritude poetry are the consequences of internalisation of inferiority complex instilled in the Black people by European culture which was wrongly imbibed and inappropriately applied by the Blacks. Nweke (2009) argues that many people that pass through the European socialisation suffer from the complex problems of double consciousness and unhomeliness and because of this, the Western cultural ideas imbibed by the African scholars are without success; they are neither here nor there. Consequently, most of them end up in cultivating anticultural ideas rather than working towards the process of perfection which culture represents (Nweke, 2009). Therefore, there should be need to enhance theories by African scholars to showcase diverse aspects of African realities. The dominance of counter-discursive African theories is a special aspect of trends in postcolonial literary studies. This aspect deploys the dialectic of double voices, hybrid identity, the double consciousness of African writers and the high and calibre of African literature. Nweke (2009) maintains that scholars also need to uphold the inevitability of hybridisation as a fall-out of the colonial experience. Postcolonial discourse may be seen as a re-reading and reinterpretation of discourses. The good thing about the theory is that it has attempted to unite the exploited world and speak up as one

articulate voice, a voice going beyond the divides of colour, geographical boundaries and the centre/ margin dichotomy (Umar, 2018).

Simon Gikandi (2002:50) posits that tradition and modernity have functioned parripassu over many centuries in Africa. He maintains that one is not superior to the other and advocates the theory of co-existence. Sushela Nasta (1999) recognizes the thrust of political critique that includes correction of European injustices and the opposition binaries for self-reclamation. Therefore, the new direction put forward in this research is to present a more dynamic and pragmatic perspective on Homi Bhabha's (1994) hybridity which he considers inevitable to transcend correcting the imbalances done to African culture.

## 2.9 Cultural hybridity

The work employs postcolonial theory as a critical tool to investigate negritude poetry which depicts socio-cultural and political problems which undermine black people's efforts to reach their stipulated goals. In this wise, it attempts to streamline postcolonialism to cultural hybridity of Homi Bhabha because of its vastness and various dimensions.

The history and origin of the term hybridity made some people to see the concept as being problematic (Mitchel, 1997; Webner, 1997). The concept of hybridity occupies an important place in postcolonial discourse. Hybridity is a privileged and celebrated type of culture seen as superior and intelligent owing to the advantage of in-betweenness; that is, the existence of two cultures, the negative effects and the ability to negotiate the difference (Hoogevelt, 1997). This statement speaks the mind of Homi Bhabha on cultural hybridity for he developed this concept from cultural and literary theories in order to expatiate on the construction of culture and identity within the colonial opposition and conditions of injustice (Bhabha, 1994, 1996). He observes further that hybridity, being the process taken by colonial masters, undertakes to change the identity of the colonised people within a singular universal framework which finally fails but produces the familiar one (Papastergiadis, 1997). Bhabha avers that a new hybrid identity emerges from the inextricably interwoven intricacies of the colonisers and the colonised which contend the validity and authenticity of cultural identity.

Ashcroft et al (1995) observe that any culture that claims to be pure is questionable and Bhabha (1990) realises the dangers and disapproval of identities within binary colonial thoughts when he argues that all forms of cultures are in the continuous process of hybridity,

none is pure. Bhabha (1996) explains the term “Third space” to mean hybridity; that is, a form of in-between space where the “cutting edge of negotiation and translation occur” (Rutherford, 1990). He does not relent in his effort to assist Homi Bhabha when he says that the essence of hybridity is not the ability to trace two original moments where the third emerges but hybridity to him is the “Third space” which enables other positions to emerge. Based on this, the third space is an ability to express one’s thoughts and feeling clearly in words. It is also a way of describing a productive space that brings about new possibilities and advantages. The expatiative space of new forms of cultural meaning and production which blurs the limitations of the existing boundaries and questions the established category of culture and identity are questionable. Therefore, Bhabha confirms that the third hybrid space is an ambivalent site where representation and cultural meaning have no basic unity.

### **This history of cultural hybridity**

The history of hybridity has been in use since 17<sup>th</sup> century. Hybridity is associated with the work of Homi Bhabha. It is also a colonial discourse which is essential and important in postcolonial theory. It emerged in Middle Ages when “a boundless world of humorous forms and manifestations opposed the official and serious tone of medieval ecclesiastical and feudal culture.” (Holquist 1984). Homi Bhabha’s work examines coloniser and the colonised interdependence relationship and the construction of their subjectivities. Bhabha contends and establishes the “Third space of enunciation” where there is inter-play of systems and cultural statements. The origin of hybridity made some people to consider its usage as being problematic. (Mitchel, 1997; Webner, 1997). Barber (1995) avers that Homi Bhabha notion of hybridity does not mean the mixing of two different cultures rather “a problematic of colonial representation”. His analysis produces a type of aftershadow of an alterity which is beyond the reach of the colonial master.

The concept of hybridity is topical in Canada, South Africa, Australia. Bhabha uses this concept to support his argument that hybridity goes beyond the purity of culture and the sedimentation of tradition. Lyre (1998) also describes hybridity as “the integration of cultural signs and practises from the colonising and the colonised cultures.”

Hoogeveit (1997: 159) describes hybridity as a type of superior cultural intelligence, privilege and celebrated which own to the advantage of in-betweenness straddling or managing two cultures and capability to negotiate the difference between two cultures Homi Bhabha also develops the concept of cultural hybridity from cultural and literary theories to describe the construction of identity and culture within the conditions of colonial opposition and cultural inequalities (1994, 1996). Therefore, he postulates that hybridity is a procedure whereby colonial government attempts to change the identity of the colonised (the other) within a singular universal framework which fails and produces blurred hybrid.

Bhabha (1996), Ashcroft (1995) and Rutherford (1990) also agree that any idea which says that a culture is superior to another is essentially disputable fixity which Bhabha himself is aware of. Rutherford (1990).

## 2.10 Theories of hybridity

The concept of “hybridity” is an important so that it can break the yoke of colonising cultures that are slow to change and not interested in individuals. Homi Bhabha makes us to understand that cross-fertilisation of cultures and ideas, assimilation and adaptation of cultural practices can be dynamic, progressive, positive and enriching.

This concept is necessary so that it can break the yoke of colonising cultures that are slow to change and not interested in individuals. The term hybridity is essential and in vogue in literary parlance with postcolonial critics because it means that the cultural and political negotiation between the coloniser and the colonised must not be jeopardised.

Robert Young (1995:110) in *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Races*, opines that:

In a technical parlance, hybrid means a product of mixing two types of species while hybridization is a botanical belief of inter-species grafting and connected as well as the vocabulary of the Victorian extra right that regarded different races as different species.

On this note, Robert Young stresses that hybrid, being a cross between two different species, will eventually become one body with a common goal.

Loomba Aina (1998) describes Bhabha’s hybridity as the most influential and controversial discourse in current postcolonial studies. Frantz Fanon’s “Liminality”, that is,

the theory of in-betweenness or ambivalence theory, neither one thing, or the other, also challenges a neat demarcation between animal and human species, culture and nature, etc. On this note, we realise that hybridity and liminality are the essential attributes of colonial condition.

Fanon also expatiates further that psychic trauma may result if any colonised subject realises that he cannot reach the whiteness he has been targeting to acquire nor shed the blackness he has devalued, then his colonial identities will become a matter of agony and pain. This is his neurosis of otherness. Bhabha makes references to Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin/White Masks* as the image which articulates ambivalence and the trauma the colonial subject passes through which designs the workings of colonial authority as well as subjects and the way they react to each other. From this, Bhabha observes that the colonial authority is unable to replicate own self perfectly. To him, the Holy Bible is also hybridised in order to reach out to natives. Therefore, the colonial presence is about having two different opinions about something at the same time, a split between its appearances as original and authoritative while its articulation is about repetition and difference, so far, this gap is a failure and colonial discourse is a site for opposition.

Cultural hybridity refers to impurity and mixedness of culture, having it in one's mind that no culture is perfect. Bhabha, in his *Location of Culture* (1994) lays emphasis on cultural differences as opposed to cultural diversity. Based on this, every culture has something to offer the world as well as something to learn from other cultures. No culture is so pure that it cannot be enriched by other cultures. This is identical to the position of many African scholars such as Da-Silva, Toyin Jegede, Ramonu Sanusi, Babatunde Ayeleru, Toyin Williams and Ali Mazuri in "Cultural Forces in World Politics" (1991). Bhabha acknowledges that every culture is the state of original mixedness, it is bound to be mixed because it contacts other culture always. He states it as well that cultures are not discrete phenomena; though unseen it contacts one another through language. Bhabha, therefore, insists on hybridisation; that is, ongoing process of being hybridised. *The Location of Culture* (1994), Homi Bhabha's text, explains what happens between the borderline and in-betweenness culture by using the term liminal, a theory which stresses the idea of identities settled and complete the creation of new cultural meaning. On this note, hybridity and liminality refer to space and time which denote that every living creature in

different spaces are living at different stages of life to make progress and progress is contagious in a space.

Hybridity is an essential aspect of postcolonial studies as Ella Shohat (1992) describes that it should try to differentiate between the diverse modalities of hybridity which include cultural mimicry, political co-operation, social conformism, forced assimilation and internalised self-rejection. Homi Bhabha answers Spivak's question, "Can the subaltern speak?" in colonial text in an affirmative way as it is in negritude poetry by the selected West African francophone poets. Bhabha, in *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha gives example of repetition as a mode of resistance to modern-day neocolonialism, especially the recolonisation of migrants within the contemporary Western States. Bracken Christopher (1999) says that once a mode of Western discourse is altered through repetition, it loses its westness and exposes itself to difference.

Bhabha brings to fore the postcolonial perspective on modernity that it is better to challenge and transform ideas on what it means to be modern because modernity and postcolonialism are inseparable. Modernity has repressed its colonial origins and to form new analysis of modernity, we need to expose this repression and we should see modernity as something that needs to be hybridised. It is also necessary to explore and acknowledge all contributions for complete understanding of modern world.

This research work examines postcolonial theory as a principle upon which the research is based and it points out some postcolonial theorists whose literary analyses are relevant to African oral literature. Having said that, we discover that the research should narrow down its theory to Homi Bhabha's cultural hybridity because of its relevance to orature in negritude poetry.

### **Theory of mimicry**

Mimicry is another method deployed in copying the voice, gesture, and movement of other people. The term mimicry can be said to mean the gap between the norm of civility, ability to be polite in one's remarks which was presented by European enlightenment and its colonial imitation in twisted form. Mimicry, in Homi Bhabha's term, is vast and the concept of visualising the postcolonial situation as a binary opposition between authority and oppression, authorisation and de-authorisation. He opines that all modes of imposition such as the demand on the colonised to behave like the coloniser (assimilation) result in

mimicry. It is a system of asserting authority over the colonised that later gave rise to mimicry. Bhabha's mimicry is another way of escaping in a clever way, which leads to postcolonial analysis by attacking the colonial masters' hegemony and authority.

Ghandi Leela (1999) in her book *Postcolonial Theory: An Introduction* observes that mimicry is a weapon of anti-colonial civility, an indirect way of rejecting colonialism and an ambivalent mixture of disobedience and difference. On the other hand, mimicry introduces a new method of anti-colonial, self-differentiation through the logic of inappropriate appropriation (Bracken Christopher, 1995). Bhabha's "Mimicry and Man" (1995) uncovers the self-defeating and ironic structure of colonial discourse because it foreshadows a colonised mimic who is almost the same as the colonist, but not quite, neither here nor there. Mimicry is also a state of ambivalence which weakens the claims of imperial discourse and makes it impossible to isolate the radicalised importance of either the colonised or the coloniser.

Homi Bhabha (1994) wishes that the anxiety and the worry of the coloniser would pave the way for a space to be opened for the colonised to resist colonial discourse but the anxiety is matched with the mimicry when the colonised adopt and adapt to the coloniser's culture. He observes further that mimicry is not the total limitation of the colonised being assimilated into superior culture but it is an exaggerated copying of culture, ideas, manners and language. This implies that mimicry is a repetition with a difference but not the evidence of the colonised's servitude, although mimicry mocks as Homi Bhabha's postcolonial theory is a common approach to colonial pretensions of empire and colonialism.

The comic quality of mimicry is essential as colonial discourse is serious with intelligence to educate and improve the colonised. Therefore, Bhabha accentuates an ironic compromise between two ideas that there should be a continual change and things are eternally the same (1994: 86). This postcolonial theorist sees mimicry as an issue that is important to colonial discourse such that:

Since mimicry theory is based on ambivalence, it must constantly create its excesses and differences in order to be effective. It is a want and hope for a reformed, recognisable other, a subject of difference that is nearly identical but not quite the same. (1994: 86).

The coloniser's theory expects the colonised subject to behave like the coloniser but the total value between the coloniser and the colonised fails to underline colonial rule and ideologies because these ideologies pretend to have a particular quality and there could be a structural non-equivalence, a split between the superior and inferior that makes us to understand that a group can dominate the other. Bhabha argues further that ambivalence and mimicry are not good enough for they have weakened the colonialism grand discourses of humanism and enlightenment. He also reckons with the fact that there is obvious difference between the discourse of intellectual moral superiority and the material effects of colonialism. He observes that mimicry transforms, it does not rupture the discourse in an uncertain manner that fixes the colonial subject as a partial presence and the partiality of the presence in colonial theory may become a drive to be authentic and genuine. Therefore, the desire to emerge as authentic person through mimicry is a system of writing and the repetition is the irony of partial representation and portrayal of certain ideas. Mimicry, a method of visualising idea, is very important but the vision and mission of mimicry are produced at the site of interdiction. Both the colonised and the coloniser have no authentic and absolute identities which can betray them through mimicry, but fixed identities which are not completely pure. Bhabha raises other problem of mimicry which is an attack on the coloniser's stable original identity that is repeatedly slipping away because of the effects of "Writing Back" through orature, metaphor, irony, Negritude poetry which eventually undermined coloniser's identity.

### **The uncanny**

The uncanny tendency is an unusual manner of behaviour that is weird in nature. Homi Bhabha deploys the concept of uncanny to qualify his postcolonial experience which means that our childhood experiences have been repressed to destroy our daily experience such as dreams, fantasy and imagination. Bhabha maintains that at the beginning of Western history, something was suppressed, which eventually broke out by the arrival of civilization as he proposes the uncanny concept as the non-encouraging, unhomely and unfamiliar concept. He states the uncanniness of migrant experience captured through the thematic thrusts of exile, migration, colonialism and oppression through the partial presence of colonial identity that repeats the life lived in their country home. However, such repetition

is not similar but introduces transformation and difference in repetition which is another way of reviving past life in the modern world.

The uncanny theory is popular in cultural theory because the idea is ambivalent and preoccupies Homi Bhabha's work in many contexts. Uncanniness is imbued with ambivalences, hesitations and uncertainties of colonial authority. Sigmund Freud and Julia Kristeva, the psychoanalytic literary critics, are not left out in the idea of uncanny as they employ this concept which later on inspired Bhabha's sense of cultural hybridity in postcolonial experience.

Homi Bhabha's concept of uncanny could mean mischievousness, untrustworthiness, carelessness, strange and familiar feelings which are unsafe and dangerous. We can access the feeling of uncanniness by an involuntary recurrence of old and familiar life. Uncanniness can also be analysed through self-objectification and self-observation. It is the feeling of guilt-laden past which one should confront even if one has another means of avoiding it. Bhabha uses this cultural theory as a situation that opens a space for us to reconsider our ways and cultural identities. To Bhabha, colonial discourse and culture have dual identity which is homely and assertive and it is also meaningful to those to whom it belongs; it is dynamic and made meaningful by others.

The uncanny idea of Homi Bhabha helps him to weigh the possibility that the last group of slaves forced into slavery have a relationship with their homes which is actually similar to migrants' situation. He argues that the relationship that exists between self and others is always an uncanny relationship. To Bhabha, uncanniness is about a question of place and time for our national identity is open and static and our nation does not totally belong to us because its identity is always coming from the future (1994). The idea of the uncanny describes the dual quality of all identity which is eventually useful in the study of colonialism. Bhabha uses the concept of uncanniness to question the superficial self-sufficiency of western modern narratives as the simple division of self and other. Therefore, the great impacts of Kristeva and Sigmund Freud are felt on Homi Bhabha's concept of uncanny.

### **Stereotype**

Stereotype is a firm idea about a particular type of a person which is wrong and not true. The idea the white has about the black that black is tabula rasa is not true. There could

be racial, cultural and social stereotypes. The discourse of stereotype in colonialism is essential and necessary for it is a form of colonial knowledge about the Black. This knowledge deals with traditional studies of colonialism. The coloniser spread the stereotypes about the laziness of colonised people through exotic novels. For example, France led the way in novels about the exotic life in African world. Louis Marie and Julien Viaud wrote *Egypt* (1909), *Jerusalem* (1915) and *Romance of a Spahi* (1910) simultaneously. These novels spread racist ideas about the biological incompleteness of Africans. African writers reacted against the misrepresentations which was necessary for them to start a new tradition as a result of their spontaneous reaction. Therefore, they fell in with the existing tradition and engaged in polemical writing.

Homi Bhabha in the (1994) in the third chapter entitled “The Other Question” discusses Edward Said’s Orientalism which explores the stereotypes and discrimination work in terms of a theory of colonial discourse which he bases on the ambivalence.

Bhabha opines that the stereotypical knowledge is seen as a practical means of control on the colonised which should not be taken as the civilizing justification of colonial mission. Bhabha avers that a stereotype has the problem of mixing individuals, it denies people their own sense of identity but attempts to understand them based on the foreknowledge. Bhabha maintains that stereotype is not something that is easier to do because it is a false representation of an actual reality; hence, stereotype obstructs the articulation and circulation of the signifier of race as anything than its fixity as racism (1994:75). Bhabha avers that stereotypes do function in order to enable colonial authority to provide the justification that the coloniser rules the colonised because of their innate superiority. He adds that ambivalence is essential for the production of new stereotype as well as strategies and counter-knowledge for contestation and resistance. He admonishes that postcolonial critics and the colonised must resist stereotypes continually.

### **Theory of otherness**

Falola (2016) defines otherness as a situation in which blackness is constructed continually in racial and social ways by which black people are treated differently from others by the people of the western world. On this note, postcolonialism is built around the concept of otherness. Otherness could also mean difference, doubleness, and identity. Bhabha got this theory of the ‘other’ as traditional antagonism between White and Black.

The meaning of this theory in Bhabha's view is that the colonial authority is hybridised and ambivalent during the postcolonial era. He opines spaces for the colonised subject to contend with his master's discourse. Bhabha lays emphasis on how the colonised is considered as being the 'other' which leads to the construction of stereotype in his colonial discourse titled "The other Question: The stereotype and Colonial Discourse".

The term 'other' has been used by many theorists such as Homi Bhabha, Dan Izevbaye, Toyin Falola, Jean Paul Sartre and Jacques Derrida to refer to colonised subject as well as an avenue to create awareness of self and identity. Rasheed Araeen (2000) comments on Bhabha's concept of hybridity and in-between space, that a separate space has already been created which is specified by the cultural differences of non-White people to the extent that there is a dividing line between Whites and non-Whites and the result is that white artists can appropriate any culture they like without demonstrating any sign of cultural identity and non-white artists can imbibe the dominant culture by showing their cultural identity cards. Araeen admits that Bhabha is a native collaborator and his work is the continuity of postcolonialist and postmodernist discourse. Though a large number of scholars agree that Bhabha's work is foundational in postcolonial discourse, there are some flaws and uncertainties in his contribution. Bhabha, being one of the leading postcolonial theorists of the contemporary time, has greatly contributed to socio-cultural cum practical change in the world through most of his concepts like hybridity, liminality, mimicry and otherness. On the other hand, Bhabha points out that the most important feature of colonial discourse is its dependence on the concept of "fixity"; meaning firmness, not changing in the ideological construction of otherness. He continues in his argument that "it is this process of ambivalence, central to the stereotype that my essay explores as it constructs as theory of colonial discourse" (Newton, 1997).

Bhabha raises more question on colonisation, how the coloniser came to build and expand their colony and how the colonised native people who are now called the "other" welcomed them to their territory. He analyses the situation and realises that the stereotypic image of the colonised is negative. The colonisers termed them inferior to the European culture in race, knowledge, language and practice. In order to justify invasion up to and including the establishment of administrative and educational systems, colonial rhetoric makes an effort to characterise the colonised as a population of defective people based on

ethnic origin. Despite the 'play' that colonialism requires to exercise its power, colonial discourse creates the colonised as a social reality that is simultaneously a "other" and completely knowable and visible (1994). Bhabha explains that colonial discourse makes much attempt to highlight the inferior status of the colonised such that the coloniser mentions the power politics which later subjugates the colonised. Toni Morrison testifies that Homi Bhabha is one of the gurus that occupy the front rank of cultural and literary theoretical thought and any discussion about postcolonial theory is unimaginable without the contribution of Homi Bhabha, Edward Said, Spivak Gayatri whose contributions gave birth to the stereotype.

### **The third space**

According to Law (1997), the third space can be used to analyze transgression, provide an explanation, and undermine dualistic categories of transit through the domain of colonial binary ideas and oppositional stance. Because the third space is open to ambiguities and contradictions, it promotes a spatial politics of inclusion rather than exclusion because it creates new venues for collaboration and contestation as well as new markers of identity (Bhabha, 1999). As a lubricant in relation to cultures, the hybrid identity is positioned within the third space (Papastergiads, 1997). According to Taylor (1991), the potential of the hybrid lies in its natural understanding of transculturation, or the capacity to communicate with both cultures in order to navigate change and to consider similarities and differences within a dynamic flow of ideas. The colonizers have also encoded a counter-hegemonic institution within themselves, where the coloniser exhibits a typical hegemonic practice while the hybrid space creates a third space for rearticulating negotiation and meaning (Bhabha, 1996).

However, some literary critics rise up against Bhabha that his concept of cultural hybridity is problematic and questionable. They argue that he neglects the material and conceptualised historical conditions which would emerge within a colonial theory analysis and framework (Parry, 1996; Mitchel, 1997). Therefore, he declares that hybrid is a cross-breed idea of two different species which eventually become one body with a common goal.

## 2.11 Challenges of postcolonial theory

There is always a task of establishing whether a postcolonial writer could ever reestablish his allegiance with a tradition since his continent and world has been destroyed by the intrusion of an imposing 'other'. For example, his language is mediated and his land is violently appropriated by a force without. In spite of the use of the English and French languages, Africa shares little cultural affinity with Europe. The colonial factor in language and cultural events has been critical in the intellectual and artistic outputs of artists from Africa. Besides, there is both the need to rediscover a tongue as well as to reinvent a voice in the effort to be heard (Layiwola, 2001).

On this note, Africa is ready to welcome new and more cultures with all their weaknesses and strengths but Africa's dependency on intellectual imitation might not help the continent to attain its aim and objective. In the same vein, there is lack of cultural revolution, that is, radical cultural awareness that will indict political leadership and destroy all cultural imbalances. The foregoing inspires Pius Adesanmi (2000) who has this to say on the devaluation and silencing of culture in the discourse of African development: "Whenever two or three development experts are gathered in the name of Africa's future, culture is always invited as a sideshow, as entertainment". African cultural and political issues are not discussed openly for solution to be proffered.

Furthermore, an attempt at 'mimicry' is one of the challenges of postcolonial criticism to the extent that African culture is denigrated and positive cultural values and desires to recolonise African people are the order of the day. The process of "othering", being manipulation of colonised people, is referred to in postcolonial discourse where the leader is the "proper self" and citizens are the "other". The leader is considered civilised while others are savages. The stereotypic representation of African man or woman as being less intellectually endowed personality who suffers inferiority complex should be withdrawn. African culture is dynamic and developmental in nature. Therefore, we must practice the culture of interrelatedness of the humanities. The practices of Africa's indigenous knowledge systems should be harnessed, especially by emphasizing the funding of research into neo-traditional herbal medicine particularly in drug discovery, retrieval, development and production as well as in the standardization of usage and for export (Aderemi, 2014).

Julius Nyerere of Tanzania (1997) has this to say during a speech given at Edinburgh University:

Africa will have to rely upon Africa. African governments will have to formulate and carry out policies of maximum national and collective self-reliance. If they do, they will develop; if they don't, Africa will be doomed. Africa is a babel of identities because there are multiple African identities and it could be possible only through many languages, cultures, religions, indigenous knowledge as well as histories of migration, conquest, and hybridities.

A pluralistic approach to African culture is the most valid approach. The multiplicity of languages indigenous to the continent is itself proof of Africa's original multiplicity of identity (Aderemi, 2014).

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Interpretive design**

The methodology employed for this study is the interpretive design method of literary analysis known as “explication de texte” in French. “Explication de texte” is a library-based method coupled with the use of communication and information technology. The method involves a detailed objective of form, structure, style, image and symbol. The practice of explication is found in the verb “to explicate” which means to explain in detail an idea in literature and ability to make clear the meaning of things. “Explication de texte” can also be regarded as an interpretation process used in the work of arts, social sciences and humanities. The method is used in interpreting the statements made by poets, authors, critics, and commentators. It is noted that the new explicit knowledge is opened to interpretation of different and additional meanings derived in future discourse. Therefore, new explicit knowledge is contingent and context-specific. It can also be considered as improvement. The interpretative process is a situation where new knowledge, new insights or new meanings are opened to subsequent debate. Based on this, the critical assumption of the new critics denotes form and content which are combined in productive ways to produce a unified whole that involves the endorsement of certain methods, particularly interpretation based on analysis and close reading.

This interpretive design method also study social life, which takes into cognisance human action. Scholars who engage in the use of interpretive approach method express its meaning for a better understanding of problem involved. Thus, the selected poems are subjected to observations and critical thinking. Coded techniques like qualitative data, content analysis and poetic devices based on literary practices detailed on the analysis of the selected works to express the meaning and structure in Leopold Sedar Senghor’s *Œuvre poétique* (OP), David Diop’s *Coup de pilon* (CP) Birago Diop’s *Leurres et lueurs* (LL) and

Bernard Dadié's *Anthologie de la Poésie d'Afrique Noire* (AP) are purposively selected because issues of socio-political cum cultural problems are discussed therein.

### 3.2 **New critical approach**

The new critical approach is a literary work needed to be a united whole, with formal technical elements contributing to the overall effect of performance of content analysis. New criticism is also an analytical close reading which leads to the interpretation of single works. New critical approach is extremely useful in exploring the difference between two poems on a shared theme.

### 3.3 **Close reading of the selected texts and postcolonial theory**

The study adopts close reading as a method of interrogating the selected texts. It tends to critically examine orature in the poetry of the selected francophone poets. The methodology is analytical in nature because it brings to the limelight the interpretations and meaning inherent in the creative works of the selected poets. This critical study of the selected francophone poetry uses postcolonial theory as the framework that helps in achieving an in-depth study and interpretation of the poets' works. It helps to facilitate the comprehension of francophone African society. This theory discloses ample insights into copious similarities in interests, thoughts, worldviews and values across the various francophone groups in Africa. It constitutes as well the effective tools for national integration, unity and development by reawakening forms and themes that could orient the attitudes of the political leaders and majority elite towards the cause of national unity. Postcolonial discourse is a radical rethinking of how colonial encounters are expressed, articulated and analysed. This research particularly employs Homi Bhabha's cultural hybridity because of its diversities and vastness. Bhabha completely rejects the pure dominance of European culture because no culture is superior to another in the word of Ayeleru (2010). Bhabha encourages a "third space" wherein different cultures will interact and be celebrated. In other words, his "in-between space" was created for interaction of creative hybrid relations.

In addition, this research attempts to bring out from the texts some references and excerpts to highlight personal interpretations, situations in the texts and analyse the experiences of the poets by illustrating the meaning of the work as well. Similarly, the

interpretive method is used to analyse and express the content and functions of the messages embedded in the twenty-four selected poems to bring out important values, attitudes, custom and tradition of francophone people and society.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **FORMS, CONTENTS OF ORATURE AND POETIC NARRATIVE TECHNIQUES IN THE POETRY OF SELECTED NEGRITUDE POETS**

#### **4.1 Chapter overview**

African critics, academics, and poets generally agree that poetry was neither invented in Africa nor brought there by Europeans. This implies that the poetic genre had been in existence before the introduction of written art form. Based on this, there are many verbal expressions that can be classified as poetry in African literature which are incantation, chants, early ritual hunting songs, panegyric, repetitive refrain just to mention a few. The scope of the poetic practice in Africa is too vast to ignore. With the advent of writing in African society, the nature of oral poetry changed course to modern African poetry and the inconceivable idea the Europeans introduced poetry to Africa disappeared gradually. Poetry is highly artistic and aesthetic in value, a cultural heritage meant to be cherished by all races in the world. It exists up till this moment in different areas of the world as a living testimony and a true constant reminder of their origin.

African societies are vibrant in the usage of poetry; it is their best form of artistic expression. Thus, African oral poetry is rich and related to religion as many Africans are religious in nature. The first phase of modern African poetry started with older and pioneer poets like Birago Diop, Léopold Sédar Senghor, David Diop and Bernard Dadié. These negritude writers affirm their faith in African culture, defend their culture against European encroachments and assert their Africanity to fight against colonial prejudices. The poetry of this phase is a protest poetry against exploitation, racial discrimination, and agitation for political independence and evocation of African past and visions of her future. These poets are mainly concerned with socio-cultural, political and economic issues which affect their societies for their cultures demand community responsibility.

#### 4.2 **Orature and Negritude poetry**

Orature is a spoken literature from African past. It is handed down from one generation to another. It existed firmly in Africa before the arrival of the white men and evidences abound that Africa had a flourishing literature though purely oral. Osundare (2000: 294) affirms the originality of African oral literature when he posits that:

The beauty of the poem is in chanting it. Oral tradition remains a powerful source of my inspiration, because it is one area that prevents you from being a mere imitator of other voices.

Orature should not be underestimated because the unwritten poetry of Africa is transmitted from one generation to another orally through the use of various mnemonic devices like hand and facial gestures, poem, chant, and song, assist the performer in the production of oral performance. Africans who had been enslaved and colonised were bound to use their art as a form of struggle against oppression and exploitation because a people's culture and history help to determine their aesthetic responses. In addition, modern African poetry originates from colonial times and it was initially indebted to the European world, yet it is governed by traditional African aesthetics which has oral flavour and the aesthetic modes which define the expressive schemes of modern African poetry. African poetry has the substance of orature which is well embedded in it. Besides, it is Africa's source of inspiration. This work examines orature in the poetry of selected francophone West African negritude poets in persons of Birago Diop, Léopold Sédar Senghor, Bernard Dadié and David Diop. Almost all the poetic devices explored by the negritude poets are adaptations from African oral poetry. For example, all the selected authors celebrate Africa through praise poetry.

#### 4.3 **Oral poetry and its roles**

Oral poetry is the popular genre of African literature. It is oral in nature, the composition, distribution and performance of oral poetry is verbal in nature. There are many forms of oral poetry such as panegyric, praise, lullaby, bridal chant, incantatory, divinatory and invective poetry. These oral literary forms vary from one society to another. In an oral society, poetry performs many functions, which are literary and extra-literary. Oral poetry consists of dramatisation, which is the use of body, face, movement to reinforce the words

and voice, public rendition in which most oral poetry is performed to an audience making it a public affair. It also has repetition, the recurrence of sound or line in a poem.

Clive Wake (1965: 20) also observes that:

African poetry is a poetry that owes its particular atmosphere to a definite situation in history. This factor suggests the themes of colonialism, independence, race, culture and also the idea that poetry should by its commitment contribute to the struggle of freedom.

Oral poetry has broader vision which goes beyond political preoccupations, it concerns itself with personal issue, people and mankind. The oral poet gives his poetry universal validity. Olajubu (1981) proves beyond reasonable doubt that oral poetry sufficiently possesses all the beauty of language, style and content associated with written poetry. Thus, the recognition of oral poetry as true poetry is clearly manifested in oral poetry. There are three major ways of determining oral poetry which are performance, composition and transmission. Finnegan (1992) reveals that oral poetry possesses an oral text like written poetry and for a piece of African orature to be fully actualised, it has to be performed because the verbal text cannot absolutely constitute oral poetry to that effect, oral poetry cannot concentrate on oral text alone but consider the details of performance, nature of the audience, the context of the performance and the personality of the poet-performer.

Elements of orature are found in the poetry of the francophone negritude poets. For example, there is in Birago Diop's *Les Contes d'Amadou Koumba*, precisely "Sarzan"

Écoute plus souvent  
Les choses que les etres  
La voix du feu s'entend.  
Entends la voix de l'eau.  
Écoute dans le vent.  
Le buisson en sanglot :  
C'est le souffle des ancêtres. (p. 173).

Listen more often to things rather than beings  
Hear the fire's voice  
Hear the voice of water  
In the wind,  
Hear the voice of our ancestors.

Birago Diop also uses oral poetry to celebrate African ancestors in *Les vérités* (Contes et lavanes, 1963).

La ou tu n'as pas a y...  
Tu n'as pas a y  
Si tu y  
Tu l'auras. (p.19)

There, where you cannot be  
You cannot be there  
If you go there  
You will have it.

David Diop in *Coups de pilon* (1973) is explosive and confrontational. He openly addresses his fellow Blacks as “Comrades” and bemoans the suffering of the black world:

Ecoutez des camarades  
Ecoutez les camarades des siècles en lutte  
À la vive clameur du nègre de  
L’Afrique aux Amériques  
Ils ont tué Mamba  
Comme ils ont tué les sept Martinsville. (p.21)

Bernard Dadié is also a francophone negritude poet who makes strong impression on people, though his poetic vision is much softer than that of David Diop, Birago Diop and Léopold Sédar Senghor. In his second volume, *La ronde des jours*, the poem titled *Aucun pays n'est loin* (No country is too far) states that:

Aucun pays n'est loin  
Où passé un nuage dans le soir  
Aucun pays n'est loin  
Que regarde le soleil au zénith (p. 159)

No country is far  
Where cloud passes in evening time  
No country is far  
Looking at the sun in zenith. (Our translation)

In the above, Dadié talks about the need to acknowledge the equal value of all human beings. Oral poetry is sung and performed by trained poets and specialists who are connected with chiefs, spiritual figures and kings. Certain groups like warriors, cattle herders, farmers and hunters are designated poets. They recite poetry in the course of their daily works such that the poem is mostly sung in their local languages. Examples are in Gikuyu, Ewe, Baoule, Wolof, Bambara, Malinké, Hausa, Igbo, Zulu. Finnegan (1992:16) states that:

Oral poetry circulates essentially through verbal than written aspect as against written poetry. Its composition, distribution or performance is through word of mouth and not by reliance on printed out or written text.

Oral poetry is performance artistry based. It involves memorisation, improvisation and gesture. It is an audience oral presentation which has cultural and social significance. In addition, the oral poet who recites a popular poem can as well introduce his self-inspired poem to the audience. Okpewho Isidore (1985) maintains that oral poetry is chanted in performance for the audience to appreciate with the eyes and their ears. Sotunsa (2009) agrees with them that the scholars of orature advocate always for the principle of spontaneity and actual performance. The major role of oral poetry in national development and nation building cannot be overemphasised.

David Diop's *Ecoutez camarades* depicts the killings of the black people who were moved by force and violence to America. Bernard Dadié in his poem *Aucun pays n'est loin* decries injustice and inequality meted out to the blacks by the white people, therefore oral poetry abhors unrighteousness, corruption, marginalisation and encourages uprightness which is one of the features of national development. Oral poetry fights and hammers the attainment of personal merit by hard work. The service to humanity and society should be attained through the principles and practice of heroism, humility, diligence and integrity which oral poetry teaches/preaches. Oral poetry entertains and contributes to societal development and stability. It also checks vices and promotes communal development. It consists basically of mores and traditions, musical instruments and people's music, aims and goals of various groups that use it.

Oral poetry rendered and composed orally is flexible in nature. The performer creates and performs excellently by including some side attractions by praising some members of the audience. There is also an instance of call and response technique. This is where a soloist calls a tune and the rest of performers chorus the response. It is also a public affair; most oral poetry is performed to an audience. It involves dramatisation as well as the use of body, face and movement to reinforce the words and voice. Repetition is a literary device which could be a repetition of words and phrases, mood and idea in a poem while mnemonic devices such as alliteration, rhyme, rhythm, assonance, personification are otherwise called sound devices which are necessary in oral poetry.

#### 4.4 Elements of traditional African poetry

##### Free verse

Free verse is an imaginative idea carved out clearly from the metaphorical use of language. It is also a poetic style that consciously and unconsciously demonstrates the idea of rhyme and metre in a poem. It is the combination of different verse forms which gives varying combinations of syllabic group determined in each line by accentuation or pauses. For example, “Et mon père étendu sur des nattes paisibles mais grand, mais fort, mais beau” (p.60). This is employed in Léopold Sédar Senghor’s “Hosties Noires” in *A l’Appel de la race de Saba*. Therefore, Senghor, being a stylistician, believes in style rather than theme when he says:

La chaleur émotionnelle qui donne la vie aux mots qui  
transmuent la parole en verbe est moins le thème que le  
style qui fait la négritude d’un poème. (p. 23)

Senghor and his fellow negritude poets fight political, economic, religious, literary and /cultural battle in order to gain total independence for African people; yet they do not forget to take the form of art into consideration. They all make use of free verse in their poems. They adapt French classical poetic art into the elements of traditional African poetry, especially Alexandrine versification. Free verse is observed in Senghor’s poem, “Prière de Paix”:

À la fin de ce livre Que je T’offre comme un a boire de  
souffrances, seigneur Jésus  
Au début de la Grande Année,  
Sur les toits neigeux de Paris, sous le soleil de Ta paix. (p.96)

Birago Diop employs free verse in “Kassak”:

La terre saigne  
Comme saigne un sein  
D’où coule du lait  
Couleur du couchant  
Le lait est rouge  
Du sable sourd du sang  
Le Ceil pleure  
Comme pleure un Enfant. (p.148)

David Diop and Bernard Dadié use free verse in “Souffre pauvre negre” and “noir sur blanc” respectively:

Le fouet siffle  
Siffle sur ton des de sueur et de sang  
Souffre pauvre Negre  
Le jour est long. (p. 36)

Car pour coucher Noir sur blanc  
Il ne faut pas toujours etre grand clerc  
Ecouter son cœur suffit  
Le reste est garniture. (P. 50)

The selected negritude poets use free verse to be more in tune with their aesthetic tradition. Almost all the poetic devices used by the negritude poets are adaptations from African oral poetry. For example, Bernard Dadié employs free verse in his poem:

Hommes de tous les continents  
Je sours des nuits éclaboussées de sang  
Regardez mes flancs  
Labourés par la faim et le feu  
Je fus une terre arable  
Voyez ma main calleuse,  
Noire  
À force de pétrir le monde.  
Mes yeux brûles à l'ardeur de l'Amour. (p. 99)

Men from all continents  
I go on nights splashed with blood  
Look at my flanks  
Plowed by hunger and fire  
I was an arable land  
See my callous hand,  
Black  
By dint of kneading the world.  
My eyes burn with the ardor of Love. (Our translation)

Due to the listener being informed of the meanings of the words, free verse offers greater word choice freedom. It also depends on structured components like words, phrases, sentences, and music that are devoid of the artificiality of a conventional poetic thinking. Modern poets have adopted the practise of free verse, also known as “Vers Libre,” as a means of communication free from rhyme and rhythm since it has an unexpected effect on people’s mindsets.

## Repetition

Repetition is one of the fundamental features of orature. It is utilitarian and aesthetic in nature. Repetition adds beauty to orature. Therefore, it is necessary in the overall organisation of the oral performance. In the light of this, the use of repetition contributes to musicality of the performance, which makes the audience not only eager to watch but desirous to participate. We find in all the poems cited the repetition of words and phrases which sometimes functions as refrains. For example in Senghor's poem titled "Joal", "Je Me Rappelle" (I Remember) opens all the six stanzas. In Birago Diop's poem, another repetition occurs in "Souffles" (Breaths) where the expression "Ecoute plus souvent" is repeated in almost all the refrains. In *Les Vérités* (Truths) by Birago, "Tu n'as pas, a y" appears several times. In addition, there is repetition in David Diop's poem *Ecoutez Camarades*, a poem which thematises the killing of the Africans by the White. Bernard Dadié's poem repeats the title *Hommes de tous les continents* (Men of Many Continents) three times in order to stress some points on injustice and inequality meted out to the Blacks by the whites. By using this device, the selected West African francophone poets are able to achieve the effect of emphasis as they enable them to stress the point they are making in their poems.

There is repetition of 'regarde-moi' for emphasis of his point to illustrate an idea of liberty from Europe domination. The proverbs he employs illustrate a truism, an idea that is most important. For example,

L'on ne connaît l'utilité des fesses que quand vient l'heure de s'asseoir.

(The usefulness of buttocks is not known until the time one wants it).

Quand la mémoire va amasser du bois (mort), elle rapporte le fagot qui lui plait).

(When the memory goes to gather (dead) wood, it brings back the bundle of fire of his choice). (p. 331)

It is obvious that each of these proverbs can adequately, effectively and forcefully replace a lengthy discourse because their intervention and folk music in Diop's tales represent the comprehensive nature of the tales as a repository of elements of orature.

#### 4.5 **Categorisation of forms, features and significance of francophone oral poetry**

The classification of orature is problematic in nature because of the genres which are fluid, flexible, overlap in nature. All in all, oral poetry and life are inseparable in Africa as they work hand in hand. Finnegan (1992) identifies seven types of oral poetry; which are religious, elegiac, panegyric, special purpose poetry, topical, political songs, rhymes and lyrics as well as children songs. However, she states that it is necessary to accept the fact that the three major genres of orature are ambiguous yet related and can easily be compared, having depended solely on culturally accepted norms of differentiation rather than a universal criterion. Sotunsa (2009) posits that classification of genres of poetry does not align with universal one. However, Abdul Rasheed Na'Allah and Bayo Ogunjimi (1994), Oludare Olajubu (1981) and Kolawole, A. (1990) classify African oral poetry according to the themes or contents. These scholars identify occupation poetry, lullaby, religious poetry and incantatory poetry.

Léopold Senghor is seriously concerned about the contribution of Africa to world civilisation. His pre-independence poems laid foundation for modern African poetry and this makes him to be more interested with the form of African poetry which matters to him than the thematic aspect. He says categorically that:

Ce qui fait la Négritude d'un poème c'est moins le thème  
que le style, la chaleur émotionnelle qui donne la vie aux  
mots qui transmue la parole en verbe. (p. 23)

With this caption, Senghor does not lose sight of his primary concern with form of art but sees himself as a practitioner of the literary art of poetry.

#### **Panegyric poetry**

Panegyric poems are the most developed and elaborate of African oral poetic forms. This poetry is the most widely discussed and common form of oral poetry. It is designated by names as *oríkì* and *Ìjálá* in Yorubaland by professional Yoruba hunters. This poetic form is meant for public hearing and performance. It is deliberately created and performed to extol the virtue of kings, chiefs, hunters, animals or plants. It is performed by griots, court poets or a bard. It is also historical in nature; it deals with historical character, his deeds and behaviour. It is well developed and documented in Sub-Sahara Africa. The work in which

Senghor's appropriation of the African tradition is most evident in his poem *Taga de Mbaye Dyôb* it is a direct adaptation of the Senegalese praise chant (taga) which is associated with the griots (praise singers) and chanted to the accompaniment of a drum (tama). Senghor's conception of his poetic expression remains oral. Besides, an important element in the internal organisation of his poetry is the essential role of sound and values in creating its total effect:

Mbaye Dyôb! Je veux dire ton nom et ton honneur  
Dyôb! Je veux hisser ton nom au haut mot  
Du retour, sonner ton nom comme la cloche qui chante la  
victoire  
Je veux chanter ton nom Dyobène!  
Toi qui m'appelais ton maître. (p. 83)

Hello, Dyob! I'll mention you by name and in good faith,  
Dyob! I shall raise your name to the tall mast of the ship that  
is coming back and ring it like a victory ball. You used to  
call me your master, Dyobène, and I shall sing your name.  
(Our translation)

Senghor's poem is known for musical conception and almost every page of his work abounds in expressive sonorities which give it its characteristic flavour. The interplay of these sound effects with the other aspects of his technique underlines further the oral character of Senghor's poetry. Senghor makes use of sound effect because of his intention to give his written poetry the oral quality which literature still retains in Africa to create a poetry which comes dramatically alive as the spoken word. Senghor's use of sound device can be seen in onomatopoeia. It is the fact of words containing sounds similar to the noises they describe:

L'Europe m'a broyé comme le plat guerrier sous les pattes  
pachydermes des tanks. (p. 100)

Rhythm and sound combine in yet another evocation to intensify the expression of an important idea:

Nous sommes les hommes de la danse, dont les pieds  
reprennent vigueur en frappant le sol dur. (p. 70)

The purposeful use of alliteration as a connecting link is found in "Taga de Mbaye Dyob" where two series of related words are paired off and highlighted by the repetition of

similar sounds and also by the regular distribution of syllabic quantities in a line made up of two alexandrines:

Et que les accompagnent les cordes des kôras!  
Et que les accompagnent les vagues et les vents! (p. 84)

Senghor uses alliteration here to distinguish between the homage of men, indicated by the use of musical instruments and the participation of the elements in this homage to Mbaye Dyôb. Again, a particularly rich effect is obtained by the use of alliteration in the concluding line of another poem of homage:

Paroles de pourpre à te parer, princesse noire d'Elissar. (p.90)

Senghor takes the advantage of French at his disposal to add to his poetry a whole lot of effects coupled with some elements taken from his traditional oral poetry in order to give sufficiently his personal feeling for Africa. In the same vein, M'Bana Diop, a Senegalese singer and a composer of songs, in her song *Sam Samaane* tells of the deeds of a modern hero, the poet, scholar and former President of Senegal, Léopold Sédar Senghor:

Senghor est notre leader  
Tous nations nous respecte  
Tout le monde respecte Léopold  
Il faut se rappeler la période de manqué du riz  
Yee sam Samaanee... Yaay!  
Les Heros du Sénégal – Loo! (2003: 33)

Senghor is our leader  
All nations respect us  
Everybody respects Léopold  
Remember the time of rice shortage  
Yee sam Samaanee... Yay!  
The heroes of Senegal. Loo! (Our translation)

M'Bana refers to this song as *Un chant du développement*, that is, a song whose major function is to enhance the development of her country and her government. The song is also a political song and M'Bana insists on the fact that she sang it first at a yearly convention of the "I'Union Progressive Senegalese" an international organisation where Leopold Sedar Senghor belonged to (p.34).

Bernard Dadié also praises Houphouet Boigny, the formal Prime Minister of Ivory Coast, using panegyric poetry. He says:

You are king of the factories  
You are king of the fields  
You are the people  
You are the master (1960: 30)

The lines show Dadie's political commitment with hope. His optimism is fully revealed in a poem he wrote for the Dakar Festival of Negro Arts in 1960. His aim is "to replace man on his pedestal/ to give him back again intrinsic values". Dadié's voice reflects that hope is possible in the world.

David Diop also dedicates few poems to his mother, grandmother and lovers. He represents Africa as mother Africa. Such poems are *A ma mère*, *Rama Kam*, *Hommage: Rama-Kam: Beauté noire*, *A une danseuse noire, detresse*. To Diop, Africa has a definite and distinct identity that rubs on each African and it has a socio-cultural reality which is different from the one painted by the West. Africa is, therefore, accorded an identity in *Coups de Pilon* and this identity comes alive through its name Africa, topography, vegetation and climate. Diop presents Africa in this way:

Afrique mon Afrique  
O mon Afrique, ma mure espérance  
Ma terre d'enigme et mon fruit de raison. (p. 60)

Africa my Africa  
Oh my Africa, my mature hope  
My land of enigma and the reward of my mental  
commitment. (Our translation)

Africa is presented as a continent that cannot but be cherished with love, care, tenderness and concern. This is so, because for the African poet, Africa remains the only geophysical reality that accords him his identity, that gives him the feeling of a home that allows him to have an indisputable origin. Diop's imposed exile in France and the resulting dichotomy and dislocation on his personality did not make our poet forget that Africa was his home (Ade-Ojo, 2000:44).

Africa is personified as a mother in *A ma mere*:

O mère mienne et qui est alle é de tous  
Du nègre qu'on aveugla et qui revoit les fleurs  
Écoute écoute ta voix.  
Elle est ce cri traversé de violence  
Elle est ce chant guidé seul par l'amour. (p. 9)

Diop is attracted to the mother's attributes of maternal tenderness, love, care, mother as care-giver. Africa is also presented by the poet as another protective element, a tree. This great symbol of a tree means that Africa would remain unbent and unshaken despite all odds.

### **Features and significance of panegyric**

Panegyric is a type of praise poetry which describes origin of people, clans, animals and inanimate things. They are usually laudatory in nature. Formal praises are addressed to supernatural beings in West Africa. This is found in *Poème liminaire* of Sédar Senghor and *Souffles* of Birago Diop. Figurative expressions are common in panegyric and references are made to historical events that may require interpretation to native listeners (Finnegan, 2012). There is frequent comparison of an eminent person to a wild animal who may be referred to as lion, elephant, jackal, vultures as referred to in the poem of David Diop. Similarly, the qualities and actions of the hero and heroine may be eventually deployed in metaphorical terms in a situation where animals which the hero is compared with is absolutely displayed in action. The missionaries are metaphorically described as vultures who come to exploit helpless natives. It is an apt metaphor as vultures are noted for feeding on human misfortune, dead bodies of war or any other calamity:

Les vautours construisaient à l'ombre de leurs serres  
Le sanglant monument de l'ère tutélaire  
En ce temps-là  
Les rires agonisaient dans l'enfer métallique des routes  
Et le rythme monotone des Pater-Noster. (p. 10)

The vulture built in the shadow of their talons  
The blood stained monument of tutelage  
In those days  
There was painful laughter on the metallic hell of the roads  
And the monotonous rhythm of the paternoster (Senanu: 2001: 75)

Praise poetry does not properly take allusion as a literary device but panegyric highly exploit imagery and allusion compared to other forms of poetry in Africa. Therefore, panegyric is not implicit in nature, it cannot be directly expressed in straight forward language.

In public performance, panegyric is used to announce the arrival of eminent personalities in town by piping their names, drumming and singing. Moreover, an important person is known through the use of his formalised praise name. Panegyric plays vital roles in the rites of passage of a person who changes his status in African society; transition from one status to another is marked, praised and celebrated. Bride and groom are not left behind in panegyric. They are celebrated by their friends and relations. Panegyric is relevant as well in announcing people's achievements, especially the warriors or hunters in hunting sphere. Praise poetry has many social significance. For example, it validates recent level or status by the praise content; it displays the prowess of performers through public recitation and rendition and this new status is usually acknowledged by kind and cash gifts.

### **Praise poetry**

It is a poetry that accounts for the achievements and deeds of a person and it is done by tracing the virtues and vices of the ancestors, parents and the subject of praise. Karim Barber (1991) describes praise poetry as the total and complete nature of the person or lineage to whom it is attributed. Jegede (1996) argues that it could be as long as one word, one phrase or strings of figurative expressions that are compact and suggestive. Praise chant is the most popular and the widely practiced of African oral poetic genre for oral artists strive to know the praise chants of the important personalities in their localities for the knowledge is the most deciding factor in assessing their competence as artists. In short, praise poem records the outstanding events, expresses praises and recalls the history of the people. In this wise, Senghor celebrates Africa through his poem *Nuit de Sine*, which is a poem that celebrates Africanness and blackness. On the other hand, it demonstrates Leopold Sédar Senghor's love for his mother land:

Femme, pose sur mon front tes mains balsamiques, tes mains  
douces plus que fourrure  
Là-haut les palmes balancées qui bruissent dans la haute brise  
nocturne  
A peine. Pas même la chanson de nourrice.

Woman, lay on my forehead your perfumed hands, hands  
softer than fur  
Above, the swaying palm trees rustle in the high night breeze  
hardly at all. No lullaby even  
The rhythmic silence cradles us. (Ibid : 56)

Mezu (1973:101) expatiates more on Senghor's poem that:

*Nuit de Sine* celebrates the beauty of the tropical night, not just the stars and country but the human warmth, the togetherness, the light touch of life, in a quiet village, lost to modern civilisation but happier because of this Eden-like purity.

David Diop also celebrates Africa as a continent in his poem *Africa*:

Afrique mon Afrique  
Afrique des fiers guerriers dans les savanes ancestrales  
Afrique que chante ma grand-mère  
Au bord de son fleuve lointain. (1973: 23)

Africa my Africa  
Africa of proud warriors in the ancestral savannahs  
Africa of whom my grandmother sings  
On the banks of the distant river  
On the banks of the distant river. (Ibid: 73)

In this poem, David Diop eulogises Africa and divides the poem into three stages through his power of imagination, that is, the pre-colonial era, colonial period and postcolonial times. Besides, in *Seche Tes Larmes, Afrique* (Dry Your Tears, Africa), Bernard Dadié celebrates Africa in this manner:

Nos sens se sont ouverts  
À la splendeur de ta beauté  
À la senteur de tes forêts,  
À l'enchantement de tes eaux  
À la limpidité de ton ciel  
À la caresse de ton soleil  
Et au charme de ta verdure emperlée de rosée. (p. 85)

And now that our senses have expanded  
The radiance of your beauty  
To your forest's aroma and your waters' allure  
To your skies' clarity, your sun's tenderness, and the  
allure of your greenery's pearlised foliage

There is introduction of local words, colour expressions as well as the infusion of African names such as 'Terin-Ndyare', 'dyoung-dyounge', 'taga' in Senghor's poems. Similarly, in the poem of David Diop, the use of words and expressions such as 'Mamba', 'Ramakam', 'Le tam-tam' is employed in order to domesticate African poetry and make it more relevant to the cultural realities of their people. Such cultural references equally enable the selected negritude poets to illustrate the elements which symbolise Africa's past glories

and civilisation. For example, we find in a poem like ‘Rama Kam’ the frequent use of words such as:

Rama Kam  
Quand tu dances  
Le tam-tam Rama Kam  
Le tam-tam tendu comme un sexe de victoire. (p. 27)

It is an attempt to make reference to African culture.

### **Features and significance of praise chant**

The subject of praise poem ranges from supernatural beings to non-human and human beings. Praise poem contains expressions which characterise its subject. In a non-human subject, the emphasis is on physical description, achievement and its quality. In human subject, the praise is traced to the subject’s relatives who are known for certain things. This is significant in that it shows a sense of team spirit with one’s blood relations and pride in one’s ancestry. It gives the praised subject confidence and satisfaction for the present and courage for the future (Jegede, 2021).

In *Femme noire* (Black Woman), Senghor comes out boldly to sing the beauty of the black woman. This can be regarded as a major breakthrough in the struggle for the cultural rehabilitation of the black person:

Femme noire, femme nue.  
Vêtu de couleurs vives,  
De ta belle forme  
J’ai grandi à ton ombre et la douceur de tes mains a bandé  
mes yeux. (p. 18)

Naked woman, black woman  
Clothed with your colour which is life  
With your form which is beauty in your shadow I  
have grown up  
The gentleness of your hands was  
Laid over my eyes.

Praise poem is a popular medium in Africa for it reminds one that history repeats itself. According to George Santayana (1905), “those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it”. Reading about the past gives us context for our problems in modern times. It promotes self-discovery. Someone can learn new ideas through other stories. It allows us as well to see the world in new ways. Somebody can easily change his perspective

on the reality of the world in which we live in because innovation comes from taking one situation and adapting it to another situation that is relevant to one.

Jegede (1996) summarises the significance of praise poetry thus:

It induces a man to action in his youthful age, during maturity, it defines man's ambition and deeds, it contains the records of his adventures and achievements in his old age and it becomes a kind of inspiration to his friends and followers after death. (p. 39)

### **Religious poetry**

This refers to the body of poetry associated with various religious activities in Africa. Such poetry can be identified through its content, performer or context, any of which could be religious. It includes praises, possession songs, incantatory poetry and oracular poetry like Ifá divination poetry. All these have different conventions, contents and functions in different cultures (Jegede, 2013).

African culture is basically founded on spirituality. A man is defined by his gods that he adores as it establishes a didactic foundation on which he builds his cultural, social, economic and political life. On that note, an individual identity is bound to scatter, if someone's spiritual and essence of life are being changed. This means that the person is no longer stable in the spiritual realms. Bernard Dadié records in his poem *Sèche tes larmes, Afrique* (Dry your tears, Africa) that "And our senses are now opened... and to the charm of your foliage pearled by the dew" (p. 150). In this poem, Dadié explains that Africans are unable to yield to their own spirituality because of colonial subjugation by the Europeans and Dadié's rejection of European technology is the rejection of European gods for the Whites have already replaced God with Europe as the most valuable part of man's life but African people welcomed the god of his colonial master because he wanted by all means the secrets of white man's technology. Therefore, opposition to European gods means the rejection of European technology. For that reason, African must go back to her source, African culture. Dadié reveals that African religion before the European contact was not just a part of a whole but African life. Spirituality is a tool to be utilised to subdue oppression and a means to recover African creativity and freedom.

*Prière aux masques* (Prayer to the masks) is an invocation of the power of the spirits as well as a prayer to African spirits to revitalise the spiritual and moral energy of the African world that is rapidly losing its cultural and spiritual heritage and human dignity:

Masques! Ô Masques!  
Masque noir masque rouge,  
Vous masque blanc et noir  
Masques aux quatre points d'où  
Souffle l'Esprit  
Je vous salue dans le silence! (p. 25)

This is an affirmation of the continuing power and existence of African spiritual forces and ancestors. The masks are wooden carvings but they symbolise spiritual beings who protect, and regulate social and individual life. The masks are physical representations of the gods, the ancestors and powers who are dead and invisible yet they are always watching over us. For example in “*Prieres aux masques*”:

Vous distillez cet air d'éternité  
Ou je respire l'air de mes pères  
Masques aux visages sans masque  
Dépoiles de toute fossettee comme de toute ride. (p. 25)

You exude this air of eternity which for me is the breath of  
my father's  
Masks of unmasked faces, stripped of all dimples, all  
wrinkles. (Ibid: 271)

This dramatic opening is like a scene which seems to be African people being unable to fulfil the vital and unique role which only they can fulfil in the development of human history and civilisation. To Senghor, Africa has to fulfil the spiritual and humanitarian role which must act as “a quickening” (Akporobaro, 2015) force to the dead rationalism and materialism of the European world. Senghor utilises an image expressing the creative and vitalising role of yeast over flour. Africans have a major role to play in the vitalisation of the entire world that has lost its humanity. From the evocation of the memory of injustice and prejudice, the poem triumphantly returns to an assured affirmation of the black men's humanity, vitality, joyfulness and personality. However, the prayer to the mask is postcolonial counter-discourse as it problematises the Eurocentric tabular rasa stereotype of Africa. It demonstrates that Africa had religion before the coming of the Whites.

Furthermore, Birago Diop is well known for his love for the ancestors. In *Viatique* (Viaticum), he narrates the significance of ritual or initiation in the life of the African people:

Dans un des trois canaris  
Des trois canaris ou reviennent  
Certains soirs  
Les âmes satisfaites et sereines  
Les souffles des ancêtres qui furent  
Des hommes, des aïeux qui furent des sages  
Mère a trempé trois doigts  
Trois doigts de sa main gauche  
Le pouce, l'index et le majeur. (p. 146)

In a shrine, in the presence of religious images of several colours. The idea of a holy presence of something sacred is suggested in the above lines. Another role played by the African ancestors is the creative role:

Qui avez composé ce portrait,  
Ce visage mien penché sur l'autel  
De papier blanc  
À votre image, écoutez-moi! (p. 25)

The poet's concern and source of spiritual and emotional sorrow is the decadence of modern Africa. This is simply a metaphorical statement of the alienation of Africans from their African roots, from the negative impact of European and other foreign powers, past glory and cultural heritages as a result of colonialism. To the poet, colonialism has destroyed the heroic Africa, the African of the Empires of Songhay, Mali and Ghana. To the poet, the threat is from Europe that gives orders and imposes its political tutelage upon African people. The poet prays for protection:

Fixez vos yeux immuables sur vos  
Enfants que l'on commande  
Qui donnent leur vie comme le pauvre  
Son dernier vêtement  
Que nous répondions présents à la  
Renaissance du monde. (p. 150)

If the poet prays for the protection from the encroachment of European domination, it is not only because such domination could lead to the adulteration of African cultural heritage, but also because an alien influence could result in:

Mère a trempé trois doigts,  
Trois doigts de sa main gauche  
Le pouce, l'index et le majeur ;  
Moi j'ai trempé trois doigts  
Le pouce, l'index et le majeur. (p. 146)

Mother has dipped three fingers  
Three fingers of her left hand:  
Thumb, forefinger and middle fingers  
I have dipped three fingers  
Three fingers of my right hand (Ibid: 36)

In the first 6 lines, Birago describes the 'three jugs' which are initiation containers. In the three containers, there is blood of different animals dog, bull and goat. It is believed that the souls and the breaths of the ancestor will mix up with the blood. The blood in the three jugs contains the spirits, the strength and the wisdom of the ancestors. The initiation is mainly for the poet to launch out into the world; he holds out his three fingers red with blood:

J'ai tendu mes trois doigts aux vents aux vents du nord,  
Aux vent du levant aux vents du sud,  
Aux vents du crochant; Et j'ai levé mes trois doigts vers la  
lune vers la lune pleine et nue quand elle fut au fond du plus  
grand canari. (p. 146)

I have held my three fingers to the winds  
The north wind, the east wind  
The south wind, the west wind;  
And I have raised my three fingers towards the moon  
Towards the full moon, the full moon when she was at the  
bottom of the biggest jug. (p. 36)

The spirit, the power and wisdom of the ancestors are believed to be transmitted into the winds of all direction as the poet holds his fingers towards them. These are to be his guide, his source of power and wisdom when he moves out of his home and the completion of the initiation. Mother confidently tells the son-poet:

Mother said: "Go through the world, go in life.  
They will follow they traces" since then I go  
I go by the tracks and on the roads. (p. 36)

Repetitive utterances are common features at ritual ceremonies and this is why Birago Diop competently handles repetitions as part of ritual language. For example, 'trois canaris',

'des ancetres', 'sang de chien', 'sang de taureau' are repeated several times to emphasise their importance in the initiation.

Diop also makes use of ritual numbers which are three, seven or twenty-one. The poet uses three for the initiation ceremony, three jugs are used, three fingers are dipped into the jugs, the dog, the bull and the goat. The mother has to touch the poet three times, touching his forehead, his left breast and his navel. For deeper illustration of the initiation, the poet refers to parts of the body and the direction of the world which are symbolic. For example, the mother touches the poet's forehead which stands for brain, the left breast for soul or heart and the navel for bowel. The initiated poet also holds his fingers to:

Aux vents du nord et du levant.  
Les vents du sud, les vents du soir  
Et j'ai levé mes mains avec mes trois doigts vers la lune.  
Vers la lune nue et pleine. (p. 146)

The north wind, the east wind  
The south wind, the west wind;  
And I have raised my three fingers towards the moon  
Towards the full moon, the full naked moon (p. 36)

These symbolise all parts of the world that he may travel to. The poet also raises the fingers to the moon and thrusts the fingers into the cold sands. This could mean that all these elements of the nature are being invited to witness the initiation and to protect the initiated child. The local imagery used by the poet also makes the description more understandable, especially to the native reader. This appeals to the reader's imagination. Travelling beyond the place. Beyond is hyperbole which means exaggerated expression which indicates the limitlessness to which the initiation power can follow the poet. With this skill in the choice of words and phrases, Birago Diop has to some extent convinced the reader on the significance of initiation in African life.

### **Features and significance of religious poetry**

The content of religious poetry is religious just as it is verse about mythical actions of gods. On the other hand, religious specialists may recite poetry and religious activities may be performed on occasions that are unanimously agreed upon as religious days (Finnegan, 2012).

Religious poetry is done on ritual occasion with ceremonies that have to do with death, initiation or marriage. Poems related with other rituals and initiations are religious in

nature and are more concerned with praise or morals. Examples include “Viatique” (Viaticum) of Birago Diop and “Prière aux masques” (Prayer to the Masks) by Senghor.

Religious poetry cannot be completely divorced from orature because there are many examples of these poems that are transmitted in oral form and writing. This example can be found in *Incantation* (Incantation) by Birago Diop. One of the common features of religious poetry content comprises invocation and sometimes connected with panegyric, incantation in a verse is believed to be efficacious in manipulating people and things.

References are made to personal supernatural beings as gods and there is a remarkable achievement in verbal forms like in prayers, testimonies, ode, lyrics, each with its own techniques and principles in religious poetry to be precise. Professional religious leaders and highly trained poets memorise and recite religious poetry. For example, Ifá diviners in Yorùbá land or marabouts in Francophone societies spend many years learning the nitty-gritty of the profession. African religious poetry varies from one society to another and there could be similarities as well because of interconnection in African religious activities.

### **Lyric poetry**

Lyric poetry is an expression of personal emotions in a rhythmical melodic language. It is the basic form of orature. It is also a poetic song accompanied with the musical instruments such as koras, drums, guitar, knocking of bottles or knocking of sticks. Lyric poetry entails work, war, hunting song and a rite of passage in nature. Sédar Senghor, David Diop, Birago Diop and Bernard Dadié are lyric poets. For example, lyricism is deployed in the following poems of Senghor: *Chants pour Naet* (1949) and *Chants pour Signare*. David Diop begins this poem *Ecoutez Camarades* with a recollection of African names of people that lived in his community and who have suffered for decades the injustice and brutalities from the Black’s unfortunate encounter with the Europeans:

Écoutez camarades des siècles d’incendie  
L’ardente clameur nègre d’Afrique aux Ameriques  
Ils ont tué Mamba  
Comme la-bas les sept de Martinsville.

Listen comrades of the struggling centuries  
To the keen clamour of the Negro from  
Africa to the Americas  
They have killed Mamba  
As they killed the seven of Martinsville. (p. 60)

Lyric poem is another way of asking for cooperation and support from one's local kinsmen in a terrible situation where a man tries to share his bitter experience which disorganises the whole life of villagers. David Diop adopts this method in order to carry his people along and turn the back of his people against foreign incursion.

### **Features and significance of lyric poetry**

Lyric is a short poem, which expresses one's feelings and thoughts. It is usually accompanied with musical instruments and the most common in francophone West African states and most essentials aspect of orature. The oral content of lyric is short and exact performance may be lengthy with more of improvisation. Lyric gives room for wide scope of individual expression as well as opportunity for repetition and chorus responses. Most songs in Africa are antiphonal which means that there is a response between the soloist and the chorus, they both work hand-in-hand such that the song relies on the agreement between the two, that is, the role of soloist is important that he composes the song from the beginning to the ending (Finnegan, 2012).

Antiphonal method is the main feature of lyric. It provides opportunity for flexibility, varied interpretation and rich-elaboration. In this vein, the balanced antiphony adds to musical attractiveness and also allows a clear structure of the song. In addition, one of the recurring lyric musical features is the identical use of more meters at the same time being a method of heightening the rhythmic tension.

Based on this, lyric African song needs cooperation, especially where there is an accompaniment of musical instruments and chorus. Emphasis should be laid on the performance and participation by the audience, agreement among the stakeholders are very important. The selected francophone negritude poets are lyricists; they all engage in individual creation and improvisation.

### **Funeral poetry**

This is a poetry or song directed at dead person. It is performed at funeral ceremonies by professional and non-professional poets. The sub-categories of funeral poems are dirge, elegy, and lament (Jegade 2008). Dirge is the poem recited around the corpse or the house where the corpse is being prepared for burial. Elegy is composed at the death of a loved one in order to praise the deceased, lament the loss or a memorial to remember the dead after

his death. This poem expresses regret and nostalgic feelings about the past and expresses a negative fear for the future. Elegy may be chanted or be rendered as song. Senghor uses *Élégie de circoncis* (Elegy of Circumcised) to mourn and lament the death of soldiers killed at the European war front. He represents the predicament of his people and collective historical plight which plague African people. He uses repetition to establish the final resolution, the mood of confidence at the end of a spiritual agony in the poem:

Nuit d'enfance, Nuit blue Nuit blonde. Ô Lune!  
Combien de fois t'ai-je invoquée Ô Nuit!  
Pleurant au bord des routes  
Au bord des douleurs de mon âge d'homme?  
Solitude! et c'est les dunes alentour. (p. 205)

Night of childhood, blue night blonde night. O Moon!  
At the edge of sorrows of my man's age?  
Solitude! And these are the dunes all around. (Ibid: 276)

An elegy is usually written after the first wave of violent and grief has subsided, giving way to meditative form of mind. It is also used to suggest the circumstances and social events surrounding the death of the individual and the poet usually uses these to comfort himself and express his philosophy of life. Repetition is employed in poetry, especially by practitioners of free verse to impose organisation on their verse-form. It is the principle which underlies another important characteristics of his poetry.

### **Tribute**

Tribute is a statement that is intended to show one's respect or admiration especially for the dead person. It is poetic in nature and used to draw attention to a particular attribute in a person, thing or place. Senghor pays tribute to the contribution of African soldier who engaged in a war which was not their own in Europe. He considers the Senegalese soldiers who died fighting in foreign lands as the victims sacrificed unjustly and so the poet decides to honour them in *Poèmes Liminaires*:

You *tirailleurs* of Senegal, black brothers warm handed  
under ice and death, who but I should sing of you, your  
brother in arms, in blood?  
I will not leave the speeches to ministers nor to generals  
I will not leave you to be buried stealthily with a little  
contemptuous praise.  
You are not poor with nothing in your pockets without  
honour.  
I will tear down the banana smiles from every wall in France.  
(Mokwenye, 2013: 50)

The use of repetition has important functions in his poetry and it is one of his most effective borrowings from oral tradition for it makes idea to progress and be organised. Sometimes, it is used as refrain, for example, “Mes frères, votre frère d’arme”. Repetition is used as leitmotif maintaining at intervals the emotional colour of his poems (Irele, 1977). The repeated element that stands at the head of the line prompts a new flow of ideas and images.

### **Features and significance of funeral poetry**

Funeral poetry is one of the features of orature. The poetry involves weeping, sobbing and wailing which distinguishes and makes it suitable for African women in particular. Most of these songs are ephemeral and topical in nature. They are composed for the deceased alone not for all dead ancestors. Funeral dirges are embedded with meanings and they are messages for the living as most dirges. Besides being a lamentation, dirge poetry engages as well in social criticism, philosophical reflection of life and moral education. In African setting, people believe in after-life gathering which means that life continues after death in another abode and realm. Therefore, participation in life after death depends on the deceased, the life well spent on his sojourn on earth and the vice-versa, on this note. The life lived by the dead person will determine if he would be celebrated or not, the good legacy he maintained while he was alive will speak for him.

The use of repetition in the dirge, elegy and tribute helps to produce higher musical effect that makes the audience happy and also serves as an important creative tool which helps to intensify and clarify ideas as well as increase the length of performance. In funeral poetry, imagery, allusion, symbolism, overtones and parallelism are displayed in the use of words, sentences and phrases as well as the singers’ melodious voice, his or her occasional subs, facial expressions, vocalism, gestures and physical movements go a long way to communicate the people’s understanding of the occasion and their reactions to it.

With the use of literary devices such as metaphor, personification, repetition and rhythm, the funeral poetry projects the rich cultural heritage of African people. It is known that funeral poetry such as dirge, elegy and tribute are part of orature which is a major way of gaining insight into the world of a group of people and also an exercise which can create effective crosscultural communication and healthy intercultural relations.

In postcolonial term, the Negritude poets evoke funeral poems to demonstrate the African cultural pattern and respect for the dead, therefore, the colonial discourse of Eurocentrism of avilising mission is problematised as funeral ceremonies illustrate an existence of African civilisation defined through oral traditions or cultural practices of the people.

#### 4.6 **Figurative use of language in selected francophone poetry**

Literary tropes are figurative use of language. They are used to create a particular mental image in the mind of people. Its meaning goes beyond the selected words used to form them. It deviates totally from conventional word order. It is also used to lay emphasis and provide for clarity of ideas and thoughts beyond literary use of words. Tropes are employed cleverly to use language creatively in order to stress the effect of what is being said. Examples of tropes are metaphor, sarcasm, satire, irony, apostrophe, hyperbole, paradox and oxymoron. Oratory tropes identified across the selected poems include metaphor, sarcasm, satire, apostrophe, hyperbole, rhetorical question and repetitive utterances. For example, the four negritude poets are masters of metaphor. David Diop employs vulture. In *les vautours* to symbolise the exploitative missionary who pretended to guide when he actually came to exploit. He describes the period as “the bitter memories” what the foreigners did to the natives:

O le souvenir acide des baisers arrachés  
Les promesses mutilées au choc des mitrailleuses  
Hommes étranges qui n’étiez pas des hommes  
Vous saviez tous les livres vous ne saviez pas l’amour. (p. 10)

O the bitter memories of extorted kisses  
O promises broken at the point of a gun of foreigners who  
did not seem human  
Who knew all the books but did not know love. (Ibid: 284)

This is a strong attack on the European exploiters who claimed to be educators of the natives but turned out to be their exploiters.

Léopold Sédar Senghor uses metaphor in *Femme Noire* (Black Woman) to promote self-assertion and revolt against the white men who eulogised always the beauty of the white ladies:

Naked woman, dark woman  
Oil that no breath ruffles  
Calm oil on the athlete's flanks,  
On the flanks of the Princes of Mali  
Gazelle limbed in paradise, pearls are stars on the night  
of your skin. (p. 96)

This poem was written around 1920s to 1930s when Black woman was not appreciated at all by the white, but Senghor rehabilitates her through positive values. The metaphors like 'oil that no breath ruffles' and 'the athlete's flanks' denote a pleasing structure. The beautiful black woman is 'gazelle limbed in paradise' which is comparison to 'pearls' and 'stars' on 'the night of your skin'; it is a beauty that creates 'delight of the mind' 'the glinting of red gold' found on the woman's 'watered' rather than on a dry 'skin'.

Bernard Dadié is also a master of metaphor. The pictorial quality of his imagery communicates across language and cultural barriers. It is seen in *Hommes de tous les continents* where he addresses a general audience through the ties linking all people. All must resist war and inhuman treatment for "Les balles etentent encore les roses dans les matins de reve" (Bullets still behead the roses in the mornings of dreams).

### **Types of metaphor**

There are five primary types of metaphors, namely, allegorical, absolute, mixed, extended and dead metaphor. Allegorical metaphor is a metaphor that represents an idea or quality. This type of metaphor is found in Birago Diop's *Vanité*:

Si nous disons, doucement, doucement  
Tout ce qu'un jour il nous faudra bien dire,  
Qui donc écouter a nos voix sans rire,  
Mornes voix geignardes de mendiants  
Qui vraiment les écouteront sans rire. (p. 105)

If we tell, gently  
All that we shall one day have to tell,  
Who then will hear our voices without laughter,  
Sad complaining voices of beggars  
Who indeed will hear them without laughter (p. 278)

The poet directly compares the cries of African to the sad complaining voice of beggars who are desperate to receive from their helpers:

Quel cœur entendrait nos vastes clameurs  
Quelle oreille nos colères chétives  
Qui restent en nous comme des tumeurs  
Dans le fond noir de nos gorges plaintives. (p. 65)

What ear will listen to our clamouring?  
What ear to our pitiful anger  
Which grows in us like a tumour  
In the black depth of our plaintive throats? (p. 279)

This poem describes the wickedness of the imperialists against the black race and there is no regret of their action.

An apt metaphor is a figure of speech or a literary device in which a word or phrase is applied to an object that does not indicate an action directly in order to suggest a resemblance. David Diop describes the European as “Vultures built in the shadow of their talons, the blood-stained monument of tutelage” (p. 110). The grabbing missionaries are metaphorically described as vultures who come to exploit the black race. This is an apt metaphor because vultures are noted for feeding on human misfortune, especially on dead bodies of war. Extended metaphor is a metaphor that extends through several lines of an entire poem. For example, *Black Woman* by Léopold Sédar Senghor:

Femme nue, femme noire  
Vêtue de ta couleur qui est vie, de ta forme qui est beauté  
J’ai grandi à ton ombre; la douceur de tes mains bandait  
mes yeux. (p. 18)

In the poem cited above, the poet uses a Black woman’s body as a case study for extended metaphor which eventually represents Africa by personifying African land and her cultural heritage. In addition, rhetorical questions are used several times by the four selected poets for the sake of emphasis. These rhetorical questions are employed to mock the Europeans and the Africans themselves because of the worst situation African people will face as they reject African culture. For example, David Diop uses a rhetorical question in “Afrique”:

Africa, tell me Africa,  
Are you the back that bends  
Lies down under the weight of humbleness?  
The trembling back striped red (p. 111)

Furthermore, it is deployed in *Les vanité* by Birago Diop:

Si nous disons, doucement, doucement  
Tout ce qu'un jour il nous faudra bien dire  
Qui donc écouterà nos voix sans rire  
Mornes voix geignardes de mendiants  
Qui vraiment les écouterà sans rire? (p. 65)

If we tell, gently, gently  
All that we shall one day have to tell  
Who then will hear our voices without laughter  
Sad complaining voices of beggar  
Who indeed will hear them without laughter? (Ibid: 67)

It runs through the poem of Léopold Sédar Senghor titled *Prière aux Masques*:

Car qui apprendrait le rythme au monde défunt des  
machines et des canons?  
Qui pousserait le cri de joie pour reveiller morts et  
orphelins à l'aurore? (p. 26)

For who would teach rhythms to a world blasted by  
machines and guns?  
Who would carry the joy-cry to waken the dead and the  
orphaned at dawn? (Ibid: 272)

Rhetorical questions express poets' worry and anxiety. It is used to convey emotion of anger and the feeling of being cheated by the superior one. Bernard Dadié in his political engagement asks a rhetorical question about Africa when he says thus:

Il n'y a personne en Afrique  
Car le nègre ployant sous le joug des maîtres du cuivre et  
des épices  
Est-il encore une personne? (p. 164)

The poet is embittered and criticises the colonial masters who subjugated Africa under heavy weight of slavery. Thus, he asks: Is there no one in Africa?

### **Repetition**

In addition, the use of repetition is extensive in the poetry of the selected francophone poets. Repetition is one of the most effective borrowings from African oral literature. It allows free flow of thoughts and lay emphasis on concrete ideas. It is used in *Joal* by Léopold Sédar Senghor:

Joal!  
Je me rappelle.  
Je me rappelle les signares à l'ombre verte des vérandas  
Les signares aux yeux surréels comme un clair de lune sur la  
grève. (p. 17)

Joal!  
I remember  
I remember the *signares* in the green shadow of the verandah  
*signares* with eyes surreal as moonlight on the beach. (Ibid: 306)

“I remember” expresses images which define his cultural identity and African personality.

It appears as well in *Viaticum* by Birago Diop :

Trois doigts de sa main gauche sont présents dans l'un des  
trois canaris qui reviennent chaque soir. J'ai trempé mes  
trois doigts. (p. 146)

In one of the three pots  
The three pots to which on certain evenings  
Three fingers of her left hand  
I too wetted three fingers.

Bernard Dadié employs repetition in his poem “Je vous remercie mon Dieu”:

Je vous remercie, mon Dieu,  
d'avoir fait de moi le sommaire  
de toutes les souffrances.  
Ma dame sur ma tête. (p. 86)

I give you thanks my God for having created me black  
For having made of me  
The total of all sorrows,  
And set upon my head (p. 114)

In this poem, Dadié reflects on the disparity with imperialism and yearns for Africa to become independent. Bernard Dadié repeats “Je vous remercie mon Dieu” more than three times in order to stress some points on injustice and inequality meted out to the Blacks by the Europeans. By using this device, the selected West African francophone poets are able to achieve the effects of emphasis as they enable them to stress the points they are making in their poems.

## Sarcasm

This is a mocking humour. It is a way of using words that are opposite to what one means in order to be unpleasant to somebody. For example, David Diop ridicules the colonial Renegade in *Le Renegat*:

Mon frère aux dents qui brillent sous le compliment hypocrite  
Mon frère aux lunettes d'or sur tes yeux rendus bleus par la  
parole du Maître. (p. 19)

My brother you flash your teeth in response to every hypocrisy  
My brother with gold-rimmed glasses  
You give your master a blue-eyed faithful look. (p. 282)

This poem satirises Europeans' injustices and oppression against the Black. Besides, the black people who abandon their culture are also scolded by David Diop. Birogo Diop equally lampoons the Europeans in *Vanité* (Vanity). In the same vein, Sédar Senghor mocks the Europeans for their high-handedness in *Prière de Paix*:

Qu'elle aussi a porté la mort et le canon dans mes villages  
bleus, qu'elle a dressé les miens les uns contre les autres comme  
des chiens se disputant un os  
Qu'elle a traité les résistants de bandits, et crache sur les tetes-  
aux-vastes-dessiens. (p. 98)

She too has brought death and guns into my blue village, has  
set my people one against the other, like dogs fighting over a  
bone.  
Has treated those who resisted as bandits and spat upon the  
heads that held great schemes. (p. 14)

Senghor enumerates the grievances of the black man and levels accusation of injustice against the European people.

## Irony

Irony is a figurative device which expresses a contradictory meaning to the stated one. It has underlying meaning. David Diop's *Les Vautours* (Vulture) is laden with ironic expressions. For example, in 'The Vultures' he exposes the colonialist's atrocities under the guise of civilisation and religion. He uses special words and phrases which are ironic and sarcastic. The expression used to create images of the exploiters is ironic because it vividly portrays the foreigners' evil deeds among the colonised people. For example:

En ce temps-là  
A coup de gueule de civilisation  
A coup d'eau bénite sur les fronts domestiqués  
Les vautours construisaient à l'ombre de leurs serres  
Le sanglant monument de l'ère tutélaire (p. 10)

In those days  
When civilisation kicked us in the face  
When holy water slapped our cringing brows  
The vultures built in the shadow of their talons  
The bloodstained monument of tutelage (p. 110)

The poem is ironic in nature for Diop recalls the civilisation brought by the Europeans which was supposed to be a mark of progress and joy but he describes it as the type of civilisation that kicks the colonised in the face which is contrary to expectation. The holy water which is supposed to cleanse the natives from their ills slaps their humble 'cringing brows'.

Moreover, Bernard Daidie also employs irony in "Il n'y a personne?"

Afrique! Afrique de la reconquête des libertés  
Il n'y a personne en Afrique (p. 209)  
Dockers, peintres, chauffeurs, masons  
Tous ouvriers de la peine  
D'ombre habillés et de toisons de jais coiffés triment  
Et quand l'homme blanc vient, embarrassant la foule d'un  
regard de dieu (p. 209).

In this poem, Bernard Dadié expresses his bitterness ironically towards the colonial masters. He criticises colonisation when he describes Africa as a place full of drivers, painters and bricklayers employed by the whiteman, yet they see nobody in Africa, Africa is empty "Tous ouvriers de la peine" au service du maître qui lui, ne voit personne en Afrique car à ses yeux, le nègre n'est pas un homme: deul le blanc est doté d'humanité" (Almeida :157).

African people are being used by the European masters as slaves, maids, drivers, gatemen and host of other menial jobs; however, they do not see anything good in them but the Whites are the best creatures on earth imbued with humanity:

Il n'y a personne en Afrique!  
Car le nègre ployant sous le joug des maîtres du cuivre et des  
épices  
Est-il encore une personne? (p. 210)

Bernard Dadié uses irony to expose colonial masters' hypocrisy in their colonial enterprise. He castigates the natives as well as they join the colonisers to oppress their kinsmen. Léopold Sédar Senghor deploys irony to contradict the European masters who exploit the natives in the name of religion in *Prière aux masques*:

In your image, hear me!  
See how the Africa of empires is dying like agony of a  
pitiabile princess  
And Europe with whom we are bound by the umbilical cord  
stare with immutable eyes at your children who are bound to  
give up their lives as the poor man must give his last clothes.  
(p. 271)

The religious imagery shifts here is an ironical assessment of Western knowledge expressing the poet's sense of his ambiguous situation. Book knowledge, worshipped by the white man, is superficial, that is, their love for Africa is not genuine.

### **Personification**

Personification is one of the tropes which addresses non-living thing as human being. This is used, for example, in *Afrique* :

Une voix grave me répondit :  
Cet arbre jeune et robuste un fils impétueux.  
Ce superbe arbre seul au milieu de fleurs blanches et fanées est  
l'Afrique, votre Afrique qui s'éveille. (p. 23)

Solemnly a voice answered me  
Impetuous child, that young and sturdy tree  
That tree that grows  
There splendidly among white and faded flowers.

### **Local words and expressions**

The frequent introduction of local words and expressions into negritude poetry by the selected francophone poets is an attempt to domesticate African poetry and making it to be relevant to the African cultural heritage. Local expressions and words are referred to as idiophones. It conveys emotion and enhances poetic quality of a poem. It also adds clear conciseness to a poem. Idiophone is like tonal or vocal devices that rely on sound. It means 'idea in sound' (Okpewho, 2000:92). They are sounds used to convey a vivid impression. For example, in his poem *Kor Siga, Taga de Mbaye Dyôb, Téring-Ndyare* and *Saras*. In

*L'Agonie des chaînes de David Diop*, he commences the first verse with “Dimboro Poulo Condor”. Local words and expressions are devices that occur frequently in songs and chants to achieve lyrical effects.

#### 4.7 **Oral performance in selected francophone poetry**

Another element of orature used by the selected negritude poets is performance which is a distinctive feature of orature in the African context. It is exhibited in most of their poetry and some of the strong feeling of love and happiness people get from oral poetry is as a result of its musicality. Thus, poetry is a combination of music and movement (dance) in a performance. It is poetic and emotional by nature, people are sentimentalised while listening and observing it. The essence of true poetry lies in the fact that it appeals to our sense of reasoning, it lifts people up emotionally. Therefore, poetry appeals to us in two major ways: it stirs up people’s minds and makes them to reflect on important aspect of life; and it also touches people emotionally so that they can feel the pleasure or pain of life. In oral tradition and performance, songs cannot be easily understood unless the audience direct their minds towards the actual performance. Moreover, these songs are written to be chanted openly not to be read at all and for audience to appreciate it with their minds, ears and eyes.

On many occasions, oral poetry performance could be compared to stage performance where a performer supports his voice and words with the right movement of his body and control of his voice in order to make a lasting impression on people. Oral performance achieves its assertiveness from the participation of the audience at the scene of the performance as they delight in the creative art taking place by the performer. There exists two types of music in oral poetry performance and one of them is instrumental music of drums, wooden gongs, strings, rattles, even hand-clapping or foot-stamping that accompanies the songs like we have in “Taga de Mbaye Dyôb”, a Senegalese praise chant known as the “taga” (sung by griots) and accompanied by the drum. For example, Senghor sings his own praises to Dyôb :

Mbaye Dyôb: Je veux dire ton nom et ton honneur  
Dyôb! Je veux hisser ton nom au haut mat  
Du retour, sonner ton nom comme  
La cloche qui chante la victoire  
Je veux chanter ton nom Dyôbene!  
Toi qui m’appelais ton maître. (p. 83)

David Diop also renders the praises of his mother in *A ma mère*:

Je pense à toi, mère, à tes belles paupières qui ont été  
brûlées par les années. À ton sourire qui exprimait la  
victoire sur les anciennes souffrances, ma mère, qui  
est celle de tous. (p. 9)

So mother I think of you  
To your beautiful eyelids burned by the years  
To your smile that said the old miseries vanquished  
O mother mine and that is everyone's.

The value of this accompaniment is not only that it helps to regulate the words of the song into measured movement, but it also inspires in both singer and audience a general enjoyment which results in several lines of passages being sung over and over again. There is another type of music we have in verbal performance which is tonal or vocal. For example, Yoruba hunters' poetry, *Ìjálá*, usually adopts a high trembling tone, the effect of which is to provide the right pace and level of excitement for the words, which are chanted at some speed. More effective use of vocal music can be seen in the technique whereby the poet makes tonal changes on a word.

The performer has given a good account of himself as a poet, this effective poetic use of vocal music is possible because many African languages is a highly tonal language and this quality works to the advantage of the oral poet in performance. Having examined performance in oral poetry, it is realised that African oral poetry satisfies one of the basic requirements of poetry which is to touch people emotionally so that they feel either delight or pain.

The second major effect of poetry is that of stirring people's minds deeply so that they think intelligently on some concepts of life such as death which is inevitable to all humankind. This type of poem can be found in Birago Diop's "Souffles" (Breaths of Ancestors):

Ecoute plus souvent  
Les choses que les êtres  
La voix du feu s'entend  
Entends la voix de l'eau  
Ecoute dans le vent  
Le Buisson en sanglot  
C'est le souffle des ancêtres. (p. 173)

We should bear in mind that poetry like this helps the traditional society to teach its youth to acquire a sharpness of wit by reciting a variety of ideas that will remain in the minds of the audience long after the performance is over.

### **Songs**

Songs pass across message of the song writer. Songs constitute the cultural heritage of a particular people. They are not written to be read but sung openly for the audience to dance and appreciate it with their ears. There are two kinds of music in oral poetry performance, they are instrumental and vocal or tonal music. This type of song can be found in one of Senghor's poems "Que m'accompagnent koras et balafong" (Let koras and balafongs accompany me):

Tokô Waly mon oncle, tes ouviens-tu des nuits de jadis  
Quand s'appensantissait ma tête sur ton dos de patience?  
Ou que me tenant par la main, ta main me guidait par ténèbres  
et signes?  
Les champs sont fleurs de vers laissant;  
Les étoiles se posent sur les herbes sur les arbres. (p. 31)

Tôko Waly my uncle, do you remember those long ago nights  
when my head grew heavy on your patient back?  
Or how you took my hand in yours and guided me through signs  
and shadows?  
The fields blossom with glow worms, stars alight in grass and  
trees. (Ibid: 11).

These songs show that francophone poets are proud to be associated with African tradition for a continual harmonious co-existence among themselves. Songs in oral performance serve as a form of entertainment and the songs could be didactic, pedagogic and therapeutic in nature.

### **Chant**

Chant is a recitation and widespread performance in African communities. It stands halfway between song and normal speech. It is a religious song repeated many times as prayers and invocations. Chant manifests in all the selected negritude poems. For example, *Chant de l'initié* by Léopold Senghor:

Où consomment mes appétences, dans la vibration pure  
et l'espace fervent  
Ah! Que sonnent vive les cloches jumelles  
Que gronde le tambour des Initiés. (p. 17)

Chant de printemps also appears in Léopold Sédar Senghor thus:

Des chants d'oiseaux montent lavés dans le ciel primitif  
L'odeur verte de l'herbe monte, Avril!  
J'entends le souffle de l'aurore émouvant les nuages blancs  
de mes rideaux (p. 66).

This poem is a note of enthusiasm and hope on Africa. The poet addresses Africa as loved one and restates his new-found hope for her and calls her attention to the benefit of spiritual rebirth brought in by the spring. To the poet, Africa has vital values to show to the whole world. Chants are intended for breaking the monotony of the narration because it reinforces poetic elegance.

David Diop employs chant in his poetry. The poem *Rama Kam* is dedicated to Africa:

Rama kam  
Quand tu dances  
Le tam-tam rama kam  
Le tam-tam tendu comme un sexe de victoire  
Halète sous les doigts bondissants du griot (p. 27).

This poem tends to reconstruct Africa which was destroyed by Europe. This reconstruction aims at showing how Africa was before colonial invasion and the hope and trust David Diop has in Africa that it will spring up in the nearest future. The reciter is eager to impress the audience with his tonal voice. The music in chanting is almost absent, it is only emphasised at the end of entire vocal performance (Okpewho, 1992). Another feature of chanting is the control of the audience participation because the audience normally supports the performer with the last line of recitation; though it is a form of encouragement, it may mar or derail the performer if care is not taken.

### **Initiation rites**

Initiation rites are religious practices daily observed by the African. They are part of their cultural heritage, though they are not peculiar to Africans. Initiations occur in rural and urban centres. These rites come to limelight in Senghor's poetry *Chant de l'initié* and Birago Diop's *Viatique*. Initiation rites are evoked in Senghor's poetry :

Ah, que sonnent vives les cloches jumelles.  
Que gronde le tambour des initiés!  
Car cicroncis je franchirai l'épreuve:  
Les flames de mile adéras. (p. 17)

Same initiation rites are also evoked in David Diop's "A une danseuse noire":

Ô mon Afrique ma mure Espérance  
Brisant la stupeur vénérable de mon corps  
Je chante pour ton sourire  
Je chante pour la parole. (p. 44)

Oh my Africa, my mature hope  
Breaking the pernicious stupor of my body  
I sing for your smile  
I sing in your defence (p. 44)

The rite of passage confronts the young adolescent boys with the realities of life as they are forcefully taken away from their mother's caring hands to access fraternal world. They pass through hard experiences at a location far from home in order to prepare them for future life. Singing, clapping and dancing are parts of activities during the initiation rites. A night of pain and anguish is spent under a baobab tree around burning fire. This symbolises departure from their past life of inexperience. "As the drums sound rhythmically, the adolescents dance frenetically as they wait for the mystic to appear in form of an awesome lion" in "Le chant de l'initie" (Adejumo, 2000: 94).

Au pèlerin dont les yeux sont larmés par le jeune et les  
cendres et les veilles  
Apparaît au soleil-levant, sur le suprême pic, la tête de  
Lion rouge  
En sa majesté surréelle (p.195).

These rites of passage are from ignorance to realities, discovery of sex and adolescence to adulthood is through initiation.

The "Viatique" (Viaticum) by Birago Diop is a poem of ritual which prepares one for a journey. The magical splitting of blood and symbolic use of number three, the invocation of the earth and moon signify the initiation rites that prepare the poet on the journey of life and assure him of the protection of the spirits of his ancestors against all evils:

Et lors que j'approche les méchants les hommes au cœur noir  
lorsque j'approche les envieux les hommes au coeur noir  
Devant moi s'avancent les souffles des Aieux. (p. 147)

And when I come to the wicked men  
the black-hearted men,  
When I come to the envious, the black-hearted men (p.108)

In this poem, the sacrifice is done and accepted, then the poet has been guaranteed the guidance of his ancestors' spirits.

Incantation is religious in nature. It is one of the basic characteristics of oral performance. Jegede (2021:60) defines it as being personal. It is a kind of poetry that is believed to be magically effective in manipulating people or things. It is a restricted poetic form that is cultic and also serves as a source of mystical power to whomever possesses its knowledge". Incantation runs through all the poems of the selected negritude poets. It is employed in Birago Diop's "Incantation":

Ouvre à l'Ombre de l'Homme  
Ouvre à l'Ombre à mon double  
Ouvre à l'Ombre de l'Homme  
Qui va vers l'Inconnu  
Laissant seul dans le Somme  
Le corps inerte et nu. (p. 147)

This is an invocation to the dead ancestors to intervene in the affairs of African people. Birago Diop believes that the dead are not departed from the living, which necessitates rites and activities that affirm the bond between the dead and the living. Léopold Sédar Senghor in his "Prière aux masques" (Prayer to the masks) also addresses the ancestral gods because "there is no formal distinction between the sacred and the secular, between the religious and the material areas of life" Mbiti (1969). Senghor continues:

Voici la fin de l'Afrique des empires.  
Ce n'est pas seulement l'agonie d'une princesse triste, mais  
c'est aussi l'Europe à laquelle nous sommes liés par le  
nombril. Fixez vos yeux immuables sur vos enfants  
commandés. (p. 24)

Here, Senghor decries the effect of Europeans' activities on the African continent and appeases to the ancestral spirits to watch over Africa. *Prière aux Masques* is a symbol of morality, cohesion and solidarity among African people.

## **Musical performance and musical instruments**

Oral performance in orature involves the use of musical accompaniments and musical performance. They are vital and key aspects of orature. The role of the audience in performance cannot be overlooked. They participate through the clapping of hands with the drum beats, stamping of feet and these musical accompaniments provide diverse array of tempo, sound and pitch. The major musical instruments used in francophone oral performance especially in Senghor's poetry are koras, balafong, flute, tam-tam, wooden stick, khalarm (small guitar) in Senghor's poem "Que m'accompagnent koras et balafong" (Let koras and balafong accompany me). Musical performance is also evident in *Taga de Mbaye Dyôba* Senegalese praise chant (taga) associated with the griots and chanted to the accompaniment of a drum (tama) (Birago Diop, 1948).

### **Talking drum**

Talking drum is a musical instrument employed by the poets. Negritude poets use "tam-tam" to add musical effect to their poetry. In "Que m'accompagnent koras et balafong" (Let Kora and Balafong accompany me) there are indications that Senghor uses musical instruments during his poetical rendition. David Diop also employs the usage of drum in his poem *Tam-Tam* when he says:

Un enfant rêvait et chantait sur le tam-tam qu'il serrait contre  
lui il frappait dur sur ce tam-tam qui faisait vibrer son corps  
nu et son chante comme une prière remplissait la forêt. (p. 62)

Talking drum is very important in oral performance because it has coded language which may not be clear to the novice but it is used to alert, inform and guide artists. Drum poetry performance is a special form of poetry in African orature as stories are told and poetry recited with drums.

#### **4.8 Important features of oral performance**

Jegede (2002:50) identifies four important features of oral performance. They are performers, improvisation, authorship, audience, context and performance style. Based on this, the performers in this context are Birago Diop, Bernard Dadié, Léopold Sédar Senghor and David Diop. These are professional performers. They have gone through informal and formal training especially in their milieu, Senegal and in Cote d'Ivoire. They learnt the art

of performance from their fore fathers, great grandmothers, uncles and aunts. In Francophone African literature, these performers are referred to as “The Griots.” Griots are important members of African community. They compose music for national festivals and celebrations. They are praise singers, recounters of communal history and treasurer of communal memory who evoke things of the past. They direct young actors, musicians and dancers who keep the African musical traditions alive. They train as well the young apprentices on how to make use of traditional African instruments such as kora, balafong, khalam and tam-tam. In Senegal and Guinea, most often, people dress in white flowing robes with their instruments as dignified figures. They command respect often from foreigners because they comport themselves as cultural institutions.

In West Africa to be particular, people rely on the griots to conserve and transmit the musical and artistic heritage of their people because they have always been the singers and storytellers, the troubadours and chroniclers, the transmitters of myth and legend, the repository of oral tradition in history and literature.

Griots of the olden days are not dead but they are much alive because of the good legacies they left behind. Nowadays, the griots train troupes of singers and dancers, they perform on radio and television, they entertain to while away the time with the tales such as Leuk the Hare, Golo the Monkey, Thile the Jackal.

David Diop, Bernard Dadié, Birago Diop and Léopold Sédar Senghor are African griots. Birago Diop has this to say concerning Amadou Koumba:

Amadou Koumba m’a raconté certains soirs et parfois de jour, je le confesse les mêmes histoires qui bercèrent mon enfance... (p. 11)

Amadou Koumba narrated unto me certain evenings and sometimes in the daytime, I confess this, the same stories that soften my childhood.

Léopold Sédar Senghor is a griot as well. He adapts the Senegalese praise chant known as the ‘taga’ (sung by griots) and accompanied by the drum, sings his own praises to Dyôb:

*Mbaye Dyôb! Je veux dire ton nom et ton honneur.*

Mbaye Dyôb! I will speak your name and your honour. p. 83)

The function of the griot is to entertain and teach morals especially in the folktales in which their characters are human beings. For example, in *Les Contes d’Amadou Koumba*,

“Maman Caïman” Mother Crocodile warns her children to ‘always listen to the wisdom of your elders’. In the same text, in *L’héritage*, the inheritance, there exist multiple fables with many layers of meaning. In this story, we are made to understand that man’s existence is full of challenges, which are symbolically illustrated by the fantastic adventures of the three sons in their pilgrimage whose father’s mysterious property contains a message about communal living which is all about sharing what one has and a wise assessment of the value of worldly goods.

### **The performers’ texts and improvisation**

According to Jegede (2021), the performer’s text depends on two types: received and created texts. The performer’s received text refers to the stock images, characters contents of a particular oral material such as story or poetry shared by a community. For example, Léopold Sédar Senghor’s received text are many but this work will cite few as a matter of brevity. For instance, *Que m’accompagnent koras et balafong* :

Eleyâi, bisimilâi! Mângi dêti woy Yâram bi  
Biram Dégén-Ô! Ndendâ’k tamâ’k sabar-ê!  
Eléyâye bisimilâye! De nouveau je chante le Noble  
O Biram Déguen! Que m’accompagnent ndeundeus,  
tamas et sabars! (p. 30)

This is a traditional and community poem dedicated to celebrate Maran, Senghor’s Martinican friend. Another poem recreated by Senghor is *Congo* (guimm pour trois kôras et un balafong):

Oho! Congo oho! Pour rythmer ton nom grand sur les eaux  
sur les fleuves sur toute mémoire  
Que j’émueve la voix des kôras koyaté!  
L’encre du scribe est scans mémoire  
Mère de toutes choses qui ont narines, des crocodiles des  
hippopotames  
Lamantins iguanes poisons oiseaux, mère des crues nourrice  
des moissons. (p. 105)

Oho! Congo oho! I move the voices of the kôras of koyaté to make your great name their rhythm over the waters and rivers, over all I remember...

Mother of everything that has nostrils, of crocodiles, of hippopotamus, sea-cows, iguanas fishes, birds, mother of floods and fields (Ibid: 27)

This poem is lyrical. It is used to celebrate African virility, strength and abundance of natural and human resources.

Birago Diop's prolific prowess is displayed in his community poem titled *Souffles* (The breath of the ancestors):

Écoute plus souvent  
Les choses que les êtres  
La voix du feu s'étend  
Entends la voix de l'eau  
Écoute dans le vent  
Le Buisson en sanglot:  
C'est le souffle des ancêtres (Ibid : 50)

Listen more often to things than to beings  
Hear the fire's voice,  
Hear the voice of water  
Hear, in the wind, the sobbing of the trees  
It is the breath of the ancestors.

The poem is dedicated to the dead African ancestors. Though dead, Africans see them as spiritual link between the living and the dead. They see them as their protectors and guardians who are much alive to shield them from any unforeseen circumstances. In the same light, Birago is known as recreator of tales, songs and poems but he refuses vehemently that he is recreating for Amadou Koumba, his nephew. Senghor also testifies to this in the preface of *Les nouveaux contes d'Amadou Koumba*:

Birago Diop ne prétend pas faire  
Œuvre originale, il se veut disciple du griot Amadou, fils de  
Koumba, dont il se contenterait de traduire les dits (p. 7).

Diop never claims to be author of the contes and poems but Amadou Koumba, yet he recreates many tales and poems, for example, *Le chants des rameurs*:

J'ai demandé souvent  
Écoutant la clameur  
D'où venait l'âpre chant  
Le doux chant des Rameurs (p. 150).

It is a lyrical poem about the colonisers and the colonised. The European's wicked act of colonialism threw Africa into the pool of backwardness. "Tam-tam" is another traditional poem and song dedicated to Africa by David Diop. His love for her is immeasurable and unquantifiable when he says:

Un enfant rêvait et chantait sur le tam-tam qu'il serrait contre  
lui une larme tomba avec une triste tendresse il frappait dur sur  
ce tam-tam qui faisait vibrer son corps nu Le soleil dansait sur  
sa peau d'ébène ses yeux fixaient fierement l'horizon et son  
chant comme une priere remplissait la foret. (p. 62)

David Diop recreates another poem titled Je Sais:

Qui fait vital mon sang  
Tambour tambour mon sang  
Ô mon Afrique ma mère espérane  
Brisant la stupeur vénérable de mon corps  
Je chante pour ton sourire  
Je chante pour ta parole (p. 61).

Africa as a jewel of inestimable value needs to be jealously guarded as a possession. In an interview in Paris, on November 24, 1968, Dadié says "La poésie est plus facile à écrire, car, je la porte en moi" (poetry is easier to write, for I carry it within me). David Diop, as quoted by M. Battestini, S. Battestini, and Mercier, in "Bernard Dadié: Ecrivain Ivoirien" (1964) affirms:

Our continent is indebted to Bernard Dadié for its most beautiful expressions of love and fidelity because *La Ronde des jours* is a hymn to the grandeur of Africa, an act of faith, the creed that every African will recite:

Aucun pays n'est loin  
Où passe un nuage dans le soir  
Aucun pays n'est loin  
Que regarde le soleil au zénith (p. 159).

"Feuille au vent" is another lyrical poem composed by Bernard Dadié where mastery of technique is apparent and effectively demonstrated in it:

Je suis l'homme à la couleur de nuit  
Feuille au vent, je vais au gré de mes rêves  
Je suis l'arbre bourgeonnant au printemps  
La rosée qui chantonne dans le creux du baobab  
Feuille au vent je vais au gré de mes rêves. (p. 160)

This lyric is addressed to Africa as a continent, that whatever may be the circumstances surrounding her development, she will surely get to the promised land.

### **The audience**

Oral performance is an important aspect of African socio-cultural life as it manifests itself in varying degrees such as epic, myth, poetry, song, music, riddles and jokes. Essentially, oral performance is public and in this wise, the role of audience cannot be underestimated. African audience are not passive in the discharge of oral performance but active, critical and commentarial. One of the roles of audience is to spur the performer to action through rendition and dramatisation of oral art.

In oral performance, audience are the spectators who gather to enjoy and watch the oral artists' performance. They are participants as well as listeners in the oral delivery of a performer. Akangbe (2020) observes that oral performance is performed especially for the enjoyment of the audience because the said audience is the consumer of the oral artists' performance and action. Akangbe alludes to Sekoni's view that the ability to possess charming and good voice, power of his language and capability to use his arms, legs, face and eyes in oral performance will determine the oral artist's aesthetic harmony with his audience as well as the increase in the size of narrators' spectators. On the other hand, a performer should be able to impress his audience with the good mastery of language expressed in charming and sweet voice and extra-verbal devices such as use of pauses and rhythms, facial and hand gestures and dramatic actions.

### **Types of audience in oral performance**

In oral performance, the audience plays quintessential role. Meanwhile, audience can be passive or active. Active audience plays major role in oral performance and his involvement in an action varies from time to time and place to place. Some audience are active especially in drama and poetry while others are passive in particular poems that address the dead ancestors, tree, lake, rivers, and forest.

Olajubu (2020) cited by Akangbe describes "variability" in Yoruba oral poetry as being distinct for the fact that variability influences and affects all the elements that control the performance of the poem, that is, the text, audience and the situation. The variability of the situation and the audience affects the poet himself and imposes itself on the poetic texts.

In African oral performance, size is an important feature of audience. For instance, in francophone Africa, the audience during the incantation and initiation rites are mostly men. Women are not allowed into the cult because of the suffering the young adolescents will pass through to become adult men. For example, Adebo (2010:95) cites the initiation rites in *Élégie des circoncis* and *chant de l'Initié* of Léopold Senghor :

J'ai consulté les initiés de mamangètye que gronde le tambour  
des initiés je dois régler le ballet des circoncis je franchirai  
l'épreuve. (p. 9)

Here, several references are made to secret Mossi societies like the high priests of Poéré and Bénin.

Soyez bénis mes pères, qui bénissez l'Enfant prodigue  
Je veux revoir le gynécée de droite  
J'y jouais avec les colombes, et avec mes frères les fils du  
Lion (p. 96)

This rupture is done between young adolescent boy and his mother who have just been separated and withdrawn from his mother's protective. This shows an example of restricted audience where only men are allowed entrance into the gate. Still on the matter, number of the audience ranges from few to zero audience, example of incantation where the poet chants to himself. It appears in Birago Diop's "Incantation" and Léopold Sédar Senghor's "Priere aux masques." In addition, other performances may tolerate different audience which comprises children, youths, men and women as it is deployed in Sarzan in *Les Nouveaux Contes d'Amadou Koumba* by Birago Diop, children, parents both old and young are present in the poem which goes thus:

Les enfants étaient revenus, entourant le vieux chef de village  
et ses notables  
Après les salutations, je demandai ce qui était arrivé au  
sergent Keita. (p. 176).

Therefore, Sergeant Keita, the rancoteur starts the story with:

Les choses que les êtres  
La voix du feu s'étend  
Entends la voix de l'eau  
Écoute dans le vent  
Le Buisson en sanglot:  
C'est le souffle des ancêtres. (p. 173)

*Chaka* by Léopold Sédar Senghor, "Poème dramatique à plusieurs voix" is dedicated also to Bantou's saints in South Africa "Aux Mytyrs Bantou de l'Afrique du sud".

Une voix Blanche Chaka, te voilà comme la panthère ou l'hyène  
à la mauvaise-gueule à la terre clouée par trois sagaies, promis au  
néant vagissant te voilà donc à la passion. Ce fleuve de sang qui  
te baigne, qu'il te soit pénitence. (p.122)

Chaka

Oui me voilà entre deux frères, deux traitres deux larrons deux  
imbéciles hâ! Non certes comme l'hyène, mais comme le Lion  
d'Ethiopie tête debout me voila rendu à la terre. Qu'il est radieux  
le Royaume d'enfance! Et c'est la fin de ma passion. (p. 122)

The foregoing exemplifies types of audience that exist in oral poetry performance. Old poetry performance could be dramatic in nature; an example is Leopold Sedar Senghor's "Chaka."

Another feature of audience is setting which is another version of variability. Oral performance can be carried out in palace arena, large space in a community, market square and open space. The setting must permit going and coming out of the audience and the only factor that can arrest the attention of the audience is the beautiful performance of the performer. For example, Senghor's "Joal" is set up in his village:

Je me rappelle  
Je me rappelle les signares  
A l'ombre verte des vérandas  
Les signares aux yeux surréels  
Comme un clair de lune sur la grève. (p.17)

The temporal setting of the above is a pre-colonial time, while the local setting is in the house and community river. The poet remembers his childhood souvenirs in «Celui qui a tout perdu » :

Le soleil riait dans ma case  
Et mes femmes étaient belles et souples  
Comme des palmiers sous la brise des soirs  
Mes enfants glissaient sur le grand fleuve  
Aux profondeurs de mort  
Et mes pirogues luttèrent avec les crocodiles  
La lune, maternelle, accompagnait nos danses. (p. 34)

The poem titled "Abandon in Sarzan", one of the stories told in *Les Contes d'Amadou Koumba*, has its setting under the tree:

Thiémokhokeita eut sa tête changée. Appuyé contre l'arbre-  
aux-palabres, il parlait... Les souffles avaient pris son esprit  
et ils criaient maintenant leur crainte: disait-il à la tombée de  
la nuit, et les enfants et les femmes tremblaient dans les cases:  
Dans le bois obscurci  
Les trompes hurlent, hurlent sans merci  
Sur les tam-tams maudits  
Nuit noire! Nuit noire! (p. 145)

Participatory audience is another type of popular audience identified by Ruth Finnegan (1992). They are integral part of the performance. She stresses that audience is a co-performer in choral singing when the audience forms the chorus to the artist who is the vocalist. Akangbe (2022) also confirms this assertion that this type of audience is found in religious contexts, political rallies, initiation ceremony and dramatic poetry as deployed in Léopold Sédar Senghor's "Elegie pour Aynina Fall":

Le Coryphée  
Quel calme redoutable dessous l'azur!  
Et pas un souffle quand passe l'ombre des Esprits  
Si blanche. Un ouragan soudain a déferlé sur la saison,  
Pleuvant sa poussière de sang. (p. 213)

Chœur Des Jeunes Hommes  
Il était droit comme un rônier  
Il était noir comme un bloc de basalte  
Terrible comme un lion pour les ennemis de son peuple  
Bon comme un père au large dos  
Beau comme une épée nue. (p.124)

Senghor reaffirms it in his preface to *Les Nouveaux Contes d'Amadou Koumba* as he utters a warning against this "simplification grossière":

### **Role of the audience**

In a truly traditional setting of an oral performance, it is highly unusual for members of the audience to watch passively and not make any sort of comment whatsoever as the performer sings or narrates (Finnegan, 1992). The audience helps the performer to supply phrases or sentences he might have lost during his recitation. The performer gets the full support of the audience. In a situation where the artist is going too far by extending his narration, the audience cuts him short. The audience is a force to be reckoned with in traditional African setting, no physical separation between the audience and performer

because the performer can easily be reminded of any expression forgotten by the performer. No audience, no performance. Therefore, oral performance is dependent on the performance and audience. The audience is the consumer, spectator and the buyer of performance products like poetry, music, song, incantation, chant, initiation rites, etc. The audience does not only play a supportive role to the artist, but also constitutes a medium where verbal art is assessed and judged.

#### 4.9 Selected negritude performers

##### **Léopold Sédar Senghor: African griot and poet**

He was born in 1906 in Joal, very close to Sine Saloum basin of central Senegal. His father was a wealthy businessman of Serène tribe and his mother, a Peul, an ethnic group related to the Fulani northern Nigeria. His maternal uncle took charge of his early education in the traditional culture which reflected in his *Chants d'ombre* (1945). He got another influence from a poetess Marôgne, whose chants introduced him to the traditional literature of Senegalese people, he was closely knitted with his culture that he became an African griot.

Senghor started his formal education in Joal, at age seven which made him encounter formal education where he learnt French language and culture. In 1915, his father sent him to a boarding school run by Catholic missionaries in the village of Ngasobil. He finished it in 1922 and entered the college Libermann, a junior seminary in Dakar in order to become a catholic priest which he abandoned after six years and continued his studies in Lycée Louis le Grand in Paris. His arrival in France brought him in contact with its people and culture where he saw it with his naked eyes “la situation coloniale” in France. It was a period of socio-cultural cum political upheavals all over Europe, which reflected on his mind the relationship between Africans and Europeans. Then, Paris was a meeting point for many people of different races like Asia, Europe, America and Australia. Such contact gave him a wider view of the whole world and international view and situation which helped him focus his attention on colonial question.

He continued his studies in L'Université de Sorbonne where he obtained License-ès-lettres in 1931 and he got the Diplôme d'études supérieures (The Master's degree) in 1932 with a dissertation on Baudelaire. In 1935, he sat and passed the agrégation, the most highly competitive examination in France and he was the first black man to be awarded this

degree and was obliged to take French nationality which opened up for him an academic career as a teacher in the Lycée. Senghor's political views rested on cultural foundation. His cultural and literary preoccupation cannot be overemphasised because he continued to write poetry and he was instrumental in promoting in Senegal an artistic life and intellectual feats which made Dakar the cultural capital of Dakar where the World Festival of Negro Arts was held in 1966. Senghor's poetic expression moved from European environment to the sense of his identity, his quest for his origin made valid effort at self-affirmation, especially in *Joal* "Je me rappelle les signares à l'ombre verte des vérandas. Les signares aux yeux surréels comme un clair de lune sur la greve".

This poem establishes the sense of firm belonging and a participation in a way of life essential to his own being. Senghor's performance is displayed in the following poems: *Que m'accompagnent kôras et balafong*, *Taga de Mbaye Dyôb*, *Chant de Printemps*. These poems foreground historical and communal existence as well as spiritual destiny of Africa. They also manifest Senghor as lyric poet and African performer. For example, in *Lettre à un poète*:

Les tamtams, dans les plaines noyées, rythment ton chant,  
et ton vers est la respiration de la nuit et de la mer lointaine  
tu chantaies les Ancêtres et les princes légitimes (p. 32).

Senghor eulogised Aimé Césaire, his intimate friend, during the foundation of the negritude movement, he praised him with musical instruments. His poems are known for musical conception that are flavoured with sensuous aromatic flavour.

### **Birago Diop: a writer of tales and poet**

Birago Diop was born in 1906 and raised in Dakar, one of the four communes in Senegal in which the populace was accorded French citizenship. His family were members of the Wolof tribe and the young Birago was brought up in the Islamic faith. A.C. Brench has recorded that 'Islam and French culture are fused in his words but he is first and foremost an African.

Diop was educated in Dakar and later attended the Lycée Faidherbe in the former capital of Senegal, St. Louis. Moving to France, he pursued a course in veterinary medicine at the University of Toulouse until 1933. It was there that Diop met and collaborated with the fellow countryman. Léopold Senghor, in the publication of the single yet highly

influential issue of the journal *L'étudiant noir*. In addition to being a veterinary, he had studied philosophy for his second *baccalaureate*, and after Toulouse, began writing much of the poetry that was later appeared in *Leurres et lueurs*. Several of his poems were included in Senghor's *Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie nègre et malgache de langue française* (1948), that introducing him to a wide audience.

Upon his return to Africa, Diop devoted himself to his career as a veterinary surgeon. The years 1937-39 saw him working in the Sudan, and after a brief return to Paris in the early forties, he continued his work in the Ivory Coast, Upper Volta, and in the early fifties, in Mauritania. Birago Diop has written numerous poems and folktales such as *Les contes d'Amadou Koumba* (1940); *Les nouveaux contes d'Amadou Koumba* (1951) both extensively anthologised. A complete volume of his poetry published by Présence Africaine in 1960, *Leures et lueurs*.

Birago Diop is a folktale writer as well as francophone poet and a disciple of negritude, he celebrated his cultural inheritance with strong feeling of pride and admiration. The theme of death and the ancestors are prominent in Diop's works. For the African, then, the worlds of the living and the dead interpenetrate one with the other, as though, indeed, they were the same world. This is a cornerstone of traditional Africa's world view and it is strongly present in poems by Diop. Birago Diop *Souffles* is one remarkable example:

Listen more often to things rather than beings. Hear  
fire's voice. Hear the voice of water. In the wind, hear  
the sobbing of the trees, it is our fore fathers breathing.  
The dead are not gone forever. They are in the paling  
shadows and in the darkening shadows. (Diop, 1948).

It is clear the Diop is not only working with one of the fundamental beliefs of his people, but is doing so in a style whose repeated invocations and parallel phrasing strongly, echo indigenous poetic practice.

Francophone writers like Sedar Senghor, Bernard Dadié, David Diop and Birago Diop gazed on African culture with pride and draws strength from it but Anglophone poets hover precariously between two worlds, while his francophone counterparts, only too familiar with the attractions of Europe, unequivocally pledge their loyalty to Africa.

Birago Diop is an unbeatable collector and story teller. His three fantastic collections are *Les contes d'Amadou Kounbu*, *Les nouveaux contes d'Amadou Kounba* and *Contes et lavanes*. He is unquestionably one of the best if not the best story tellers in francophone Africa. His stories are of the hare tradition and they are full of humour, wit and language manipulations. One is advised to enter the world of Francophone Oral literature through the tales of Birago Diop, African collectors and translators of oral literature.

Birago Diop featured early in the activities and in the circle of black students that created in Paris the movement known as Negritude but he distinguishes himself in the uniqueness and excellence that define his writings. Diop is renowned for his folktales which are handed down already formulated from generation to generation, by the community which remains its source and custodian.

The peculiarity and grandeur of Diop's *Contes* were first brought to the fore by Jean-Paul Sartre in his famous preface in Senghor's *Anthologie de la nouvelle poesie negre at malgache de langue française*

C'est la poésie de Birago Diop, dans sa majesté naïve elle seule est en repos parce qu'elle sort directement des récits de griots et de la tradition orale. (1972)

It is Birago Diop's poem in her naïve majesty, she is at ease because she comes directly from the elderly ones and oral tradition. (Our tradition).

We need to take into consideration two things that Diop's tales are poetry and secondly, they emanated directly from the oral tradition. In view of this, the poetic dimension emphasises Diop's creativity while the oral tradition suggests the creativity in the texture of the stories.

### **David Diop: a griot artist and revolutionary poet**

David Diop was born in Bordeaux, France on 7th July, 1927. He was born of a Camerounian mother, Madame Maria Engômé Mandessi Belland a Senegalese father, Mamadou Yandé Diop. David Diop therefore, had to two nationalities. He lost his father at the tender age of 8 in 1935 and his mother carried on the moral and financial responsibilities of bringing up Diop as a young man. David Diop lived in France for many years where his mother reminded him about Africa, its past, present, her lost glory and potentials. Despite

all odds, Diop kept moving from France to Africa and Africa to France, he never allowed cultural and psychological dislocation to blur his vision of Africa as he enjoyed the warmth and beauty of Africa. His poetry gives true picture of Africa from pre-colonial, colonial and postcolonial periods. His few poems then centre on the contemporary events of the period especially the struggle for cultural and political independence, which he had read about from his fellow African literary writers whose works were suppressed by the European masters. His poetry is a cry from the foreign lands for African culture to survive. David Diop's selected poems in this research work vividly reflect his yearning for promotion of African culture.

David Diop lived his life as a semi-invalid person which made him to abandon his poetry in 1951 as a result of long hospitalisation. This sickness grew worse to the extent that he lost one of his legs and a bout of pneumonia cost him one of his lungs. With all these unfavourable ill-health, he died tragically at the prime age of 33 years precisely in 1960 in an air-crash over the Atlantic off Dakar.

### **Bernard Dadié: across generic poet and African griot**

Bernard Dadié was born in 1916 at Assinie in Ivory Coast. He was educated in Ivory Coast and graduated from William Ponty College at Gorée in Senegal with Diplôme de Commis d'Administration. He belongs to the older generation of African French writers like Léopold Sédar Senghor, Birago Diop and David Diop. These older writers were born and bred in Vieilles communes of Senegal such as Gorée, Dakar, Rufisque and Saint-Louis. He worked in Dakar for twelve years at a museum and it was there that he became particularly interested in African folklore and traditions. From 1936 to 1947, he was associated with the "Institut Français d'Afrique Noire" in Dakar. From 1947 to 1960, he served with the Ivory Coast Information Service. In 1960, he became the director of fine arts research in his native country Ivory Coast. Since his return to his country, he took a vigorous part in literary and dramatic activities; hence, he became an Ivorian novelist, playwright, griot, poet and administrator.

Bernard Dadié's publications are many, including various collections of African legends and folktales. His literary works include *La Ronde des Jours* (1956), Battestini S., and Mercier quote David Diop that: "Our continent is indebted to Bernard Dadié for his most beautiful expressions of love and fidelity. *La Ronde des Jours* is a hymn to the

grandeur of Africa, an act of faith, the creed that every African will recite.” Bernard Dadié was once a minister of culture in Ivory Coast. He was an African griot because of his love for African culture. He has been a major voice in African-French literature, a leading writer of folktales and responsible in great measure for the worldwide dissemination of the African folktale.

Lilyan Kesteloot (1963:306) in *Les écrivains noirs de langue française: Naissance d'une littérature* attests to Bernard Dadié's dexterity in African literary works that, “One must award decorations of excellence to authors like Birago Diop and Bernard Dadié who, in a manner often too little appreciated became so discreet, bear witness to the legacy from their ancestors and from it cultivate the most authentic art”. Brench, A. C. (1967) submits that Bernard Dadié's literary works are set in Africa and the tales, poems and drama are inspired by traditional themes for this period. Dadié consciously uses themes and materials from Africa's past as a protest against colonial domination and as evidence of the richness of his cultural heritage.

Dadié's “Légendes Africaines” (1954), *Le Pagne Noir* (1955), and *Legendes et Poemes* (1956) are collections of the rich and varied oral literature of Africa. The stories, proverbs and legends that make up these distinct genres are patience and wisdom that are indispensable to the stability of society and guidance to mankind, generosity and a lesson in prudence. According to Bernard Dadié, these legends and stories are our monuments, museums and street-names – our only books, in fact, this is why they have such an important place in our daily lives... (p. 10). While *Climbié* is an autobiographical account of Dadié's schooldays, *Un nègre à Paris* is the harbinger of a new type of African novel, written in letter-form.

Upon his return to the Ivory Coast in 1947, he began teaching and writing, and later founded a National Drama Studio. For sometimes, he served as Directeur des Arts de la Recherche. Bernard Dadié died at the age of 103 in Abidjan in March 2019.

#### 4.10 **Linguistic hybridity, code-mixing and code-switching**

##### **Linguistic hybridity**

Linguistic hybridity is a linguistic medium used to express an authentic African literature. Hybridity plays a major role in the domestication of European languages in African literature (Ayeleru, 2010). It is also a strategy employed by African writers to

decolonise the language of literary expression in African literature because literature is culture-bound and language is the vehicle for expressing one's literary creativity. The essence of the cultural decolonisation is the search for authentic identity of the blackman and literature that is genuinely Africa. Africanisation of the French language is the integration of an African language in a work written in French to suit the feelings of Africans. It also involves destructing and defrenchifying the French language; it is a process of deconstruction and reconstruction of the foreign tongue. Ayeleru (1998:90) observes that: « L'auteur africanise ses expressions en réfléchissant d'abord en sa langue maternelle avant de s'exprimer en français. »

Moreover, the emergence of the postcolonial theory championed by writers and critics like Homi Bhabha, Edward Said and Frantz Fanon further legitimises the principle of linguistic hybridity in African literature. Bill Ashcroft (1989) employs the notion of metonymy in his literary discourse. He opines the deployment of indigenous and cultural elements of the mother tongue by postcolonial writers is not an involuntary exercise but a way of promoting the cultural identity within the foreign medium they use to produce their texts (Ayeleru, 2010).

This work cannot totally achieve its aim without making reference to the literary works of selected francophone African writers like Birago Diop and Bernard Dadié whose works could not have reached greater heights without sprinkling local spices to their African dishes. The incorporation of Wolof, Malinké, Bambara and Swahili local languages enable African writers to project their cultural identities. The linguistic strategies employed by the selected authors are code-switching, code-mixing, transliteration and hosts of others.

### **Code-switching**

Code-switching is African writers' way of showing African aesthetics, expressing and evolving their own peculiar style. Another name for code-switching is linguistic transformation. Nwachukwu-Agbada (2002) describes it as a violation of the rules of combination. It is a product of translation which compels the writer to choose words which best convey the meaning (Jegede, 2008). Ayeleru (2016) cites Pius Adesanmi (2000) who states that:

La nouvelle génération des écrivains africains ne va pas continuer seulement à utiliser les langues européennes, mais elle se donne la tâche de les approprier, de les décoloniser et de les africaniser afin d'exprimer leur expérience et leur opinion.

It is observed that the old generation of African writers have been decolonising the French language since the emergence of negritude movement which started around 1930. For example, code-switching and code-mixing run through the poetry of the selected negritude poets. For example, in Léopold Sédar Senghor's *Que m'accompagnent kôras et balafong*, we have:

Eléyâye bisimilâye! De nouveau je chante le Noble  
O Biram Déguen! Que m'accompagnent ndeundeus, tamas et  
sabars!

Senghor code-switches from Wolof to French while David Diop in *Les vautours* code-switches from French to Latin thus:

Les rires agonisaient dans l'enfer  
Métallique des routes  
Et le rythme monotone des Pater–Noster. (p. 10).

In *Désert* by Birago Diop, he code-switches from French to Islamic language:

Dieu seul est Dieu, Mohammed rassoul Allah!

The linguistic and stylistic analysis of these poems by the negritude poets shows that the poets try to evolve their own peculiar style.

### **Code-mixing**

This is the use of lexical items and expressions of one or more languages while communicating principally in another language. It is used by the deconstructionist to decolonise imported languages used as medium of literary expression in African literature. It also entails the African writer's deliberate infusion into his literary discourse in borrowed code of linguistic items ranging from one word to several words or expressions drawn from African autochthonous languages as well as non-indigenous ones like French and English. For example, Bernard Dadié code-mixes French with Wolof in *Afrique Debout*:

En griot du siècle sur le cora de la vieille Afrique  
Aujourd'hui en mouvance, par les villes et les prisons sous  
les baobabs des carrefours. (p. 166).

Code-mixing also appears in Congo by Senghor:

Oho! Congo oho! Pour rythmer ton nom grand sur les eaux  
Sur les fleuves sur toute mémoire  
Que je'meuve le voix des koras, koyaté! (p. 105)

David Diop code-mixes as well in "Non"

Les manguiers de Bouaflé  
Les roniers de Dimbokro  
Ceux de Yamoussokro  
Les cocotiers de Grand-Bassam. (p. 53)

Code-mixing is an attempt to introduce cultural realities of African people to their poems. The importance of code-mixing French with indigenous languages is to spice the borrowed code and give it African flavour. For example, where indigenous words could be translated into foreign language, they choose to retain them untranslated because the use of this linguistic medium helps African writers to embark on a massive campaign for international literacy in African indigenous languages.

Code-switching and code-mixing are often deployed in world literature. European writers like Molière, Beaumarchais and Shakespeare inject into French and English Greco-Latin words and expressions, perhaps to identify with the language of literacy and civilisation (Onyemelukwe, 2001).

Gumperz (1964), Lawal (1991), Olaoye (1991) and Onyemelukwe (1997) observe that code-mixing is the use of "language interlarding" and lexical items and expressions of one or more languages while communicating principally in another language. It occurs when two or more languages come in contact and naturally influence each other. The most common way of influencing each other through these languages is through borrowing which later results into code-mixing. Ogunsiyi (2001), Ahukanna (1990), and Ogunsiyi (2002) are of the opinion that code-mixing uses one or more languages in consistent transfer of linguistic units from one language to another. To them, code-mixing takes place frequently, rapidly and unconsciously within a single social event, within a single sentence. Arohumolase (2004:28) adds that code-mixing is disorganised because it follows certain syntactic or grammatical rules.

Code-mixing is divided into single word code-mixing, intra-sentential code-mixing and extra-sentential code-mixing. Single word code-mixing, according to Ogunsiyi (2001),

is the commonest type. He observes that nouns and verbs are code-mixed in English with Yoruba and that such nouns are either at the subject or the complement position. This observation also appears in French and Wolof being code-mixed. For example, in David Diop's "Non": "Ils reviennent du Danubé de Dunker que" (p.53). This single code-mixing comprises noun, verb and complement in a single sentence. It is observed that a Wolof speaker code-mixes Wolof with French when he speaks in Wolof language. There are many examples of code-mixing in the selected poems and each of the items belongs to the nominal group and functions as either the subject or complement of the sentence.

### **Intra-sentential code-mixing**

Cheshire and Gardner-Chloros (1998) observe that intra-sentential code-mixing occurs in instances of dense grammatical mixing, mixing a noun and its verb or a verb with its complementiser. It appears in *Œuvres Poétique* by Léopold Sédar Senghor, particularly in *Lettre à un prisonnier* as revealed in the following:

Ngom! Champion de Tyâné!  
C'est moi qui te salue, moi ton voisin de village de cœur (p. 86).

This poem consists of nominal group, verb and its complementiser. Another example of code-mixing in the subject, object and complement position is found in Birago Diop's "Diop Dieu seulest Dieu, Mohammed rassoul Allah" (p. 144). In this example, Birago Diop code-mixes French with Arabic in a nominal group and complement within a sentence.

### **Extra-sentential code-mixing**

This involves elements of at least two different languages. They are deployed by all the selected poets. It appears in Léopold Senghor's *Poème Wolof*:

Eléyaye bismilâye! De nouveau je chante le Noble  
ÔBiram Déguen! Que m'accompagnent ndeundeus, tamas et  
sabars. (p. 30)

Senghor code-mixes Arabic plus French and Wolof. David Diop in his poem "Non" code-mixes French with Wolof:

Dans cent ans  
Dans millions  
Les manguiers de Bouaflé  
Les rôniers de Dimbakro  
Ceux de Yamoussokro  
Les cocotiers de Grand-Bassam  
Témoigneront au barreau de l'humanité  
Des crimes commis au nom de la liberté. (p. 53)

Bernard Dadié also code-mixes in *Le tam-tam des arènes*:

Saute, Saute Belle  
Djiguène, c'est le tam-tam  
Des arenès, qui t'appelle ce soir. (p. 174)

### **Types and functions of code-switching**

Code-switching involves English and French inter-sentential expressions; for example, code-switching appears in *Coup de pilon* by David Diop particularly in “Le temps du Matyre” where it goes thus:

Hé boy, un Berger, une serviette de l'eau. (p.33)

It is the use of two or more linguistic varieties in the same discourse. Ogunsiyi (2002:208), Bello (2007), Myers Scotton (1995) maintain that it is natural for bilinguals to code-mix and code-switch in discourse. Myers-Scotton (1995:1) avers that code-switching means any form of “alternation of linguistic varieties with the same conversation”. Ikenna Kamalu (2010:76) adds that code-switching involves elements of at least two different languages. There is alternation of the linguistic elements of English and French within the same sentence. These two languages are appropriately mixed that they create meaningful discourse. Code-switching is also deployed in “Harlem Renaissance” by Bernard Dadié:

Vous qui croyez Tombouctou rebâtie  
là-basussi des revessaignent au pied des buildings. (p. 170)

Code-switching also appears in “Priere de paix” by Senghor:

Seigneur, pardonne à ceux qui ont fait des Askia des  
maquisards, de mes princes des adjudants des mes  
domestiques des boys, et de mes paysans des salariés. (p. 97)

The function of code-mixing and code-switching is to motivate non-speakers of the indigenous languages especially the Europeans to learn the traditional languages of African people. For the fact that French utilizes her resources to mobilise the global village to learn

French language, the deconstructionists, in the word of Onyemelukwe (2010), deploy these linguistic varieties to embark on massive campaign for international literacy in African indigenous languages.

#### **4.11 Relevance of oral performance to contemporary African socio-cultural and political realities**

The essence of orature is by performance which combines action with sound and meaning to the extent that performance solidifies the interaction among the performer and the storyteller, including the audience such that an utterance can be evaluated and interrupted within the context of the total and complete performance. On this note, we observe that the specialised language is used to relate and communicate event and experiences of life in orature and this language deploys literary aesthetics in content and draws its strength from literary devices such as metaphor, simile, repetition, hyperbole, alliteration and assonance. These devices make expression to be easily remembered and appealing where there is a combination of content and form. In addition, this literary strategy also ensures the artistic mastering of language. Performance is a vital aspect of orature as well as an indicator of how cultural knowledge is utilised and produced. It is also a primary site for the production of knowledge and a place where multiple discourses are employed. Performance also means a reaction through which a society reacts on the members' relationship with one another and society and its current condition, which enables people to reinvent themselves and their society.

Oral performance is a collective enterprise rather than an individual, which entertains people in society; it plays a religious role and serves as a medium of communication between the living and the dead. During family event or ceremony, oral performance becomes an intermediary between the ancestors and members of the family. Health wise, oral performance also plays a vital role where it is performed before the audience that prayers are offered to their forefathers and the audience participate evenly in the celebration is a typical example of oral performance with emphasis on its relevance to their current situation and experience as it is indicated by the accompanying lyrics. Therefore, the healer or the priest is a prayer warrior and the interpreter of the text because the cultural and social context of the performance must be understood for the actor is

performing within the confines of time and space and the social context which determines the form of the performance and its meaning.

African oral performance expresses public opinion and provides an effective means of social control. Oral performance recreates society with the corroboration of the political content. It is used for social identity and maintenance. Similarly, it is an important instrument in the educational system; it serves as an incentive to reward socially approved actions. Its recitation is a reminder to reward good characters, attitude and qualities that are valuable. In oral performance, the performer is not alone on stage. It is a collective action in which the performer is encouraged, surrounded, promoted and accompanied. There exists a close interaction between the performer and the audience pertaining to organisation of voices and call and response relationship appears in stamping of feet and other body movements, snapping of fingers and clapping of hands.

Performance in orature is incomplete and meaningless without practical participation by the narrator and the audience. The narrator has many roles to perform, he develops the potential and talent in him; his physical displays to recreate actions in story is very important. His dramatic actions provoke the audience to action consciously and unconsciously. Thus, the participation between the performer and the audience is an essential aspect of orature.

#### **4.12 Poetic narrative techniques in the poetry of selected negritude poets**

##### **4.12.1 Physical form of poetry**

Poetry is a genre of literature that expresses a strong feeling, thought or experience in a compressed form through the rhythm of figurative language. Poetry is an indication of advanced culture handled by trained and skilled poets who imagine, compose, observe and recite poems with all diligence and with the intention of showcasing the beauty embedded in it (Okpewho, 1985:5). It is written in verse and divided into stanzas and it is said to be the oldest genre of literature. Akporobaro (2015:2) maintains that:

Poetry is simply one particular way of saying things. It is a unique and specialised form of self-expression having some artistic features. Poetry comes in various shapes, sizes and qualities of sentiment.

Poetry contributes to the store of human knowledge or experience. It is concerned with meaning and it is also emotive, dynamic and sensuous but cumbersome to unravel due

to the poet's choice of diction. Ideas are clearly presented to drive home selected thematic ideas. Poets also use different choices which are capable of revealing their wealth of ideas with fascinating structure in moulding and affecting their generation.

Poetic techniques refer to the expressions that are chosen because of their inherent qualities, they are special language for poetry which differed from the language of common speech; this type of language evolves a special vocabulary for poetry and for ironic effect. In the *Poetics*, Aristotle says that a writer's diction should be clear but that it should also be raised above the common people. To achieve this elevation, he maintains that the writer must introduce unusual words, metaphors and various stylistic elements, "for by deviating in exceptional cases from the normal idiom, the language will gain distinction" (as quoted by Akporobaro, 2015: 32).

Poetry distinguishes itself from other forms of writing by its formal organisation and structure. Structure and form of poetry vary from poet to poet but poetry has a distinctive format and style, which makes it different from prose. Poetry is expressed in lines and the lines are organised in units called stanzas. Stanzas are line paragraphs expressing units of thought. One or two or more lines combine to form a stanza. Lines and stanzas provide a limited context, space within which the poet must convey his thought in a very concise form. Lines and stanzas help the poet to be concise, vivid, rhythmic and poetical. Lines in poetry may be long or short, rhythmical or non-rhythmical and the manner of their organisation may be in various forms giving rise to various kinds of poetry and poetic types and styles. The basic unit of poetic form is the verse, which is the line. Example of a stanza in David Diop's poem is *Défi à la force*.

Toi qui plies toi pleurs  
Toi qui meurs un jour comme, ça sans savoir pourquoi  
Toi qui luttas qui veilles pour le repos de l'Autre  
Toi qui ne regardes plus avec le rire dans les yeux  
Toi mon frère au visage de peur et d'angoisse  
Relève-toi et crie: Non! (p. 38)

You who stoop, you who weep  
You who one day die just-like that without knowing why  
You who struggle, who watch while the other sleeps  
You with no more laughter in your look  
You, my brother, with this face of fear and anguish  
Rise and shout "Non". (p. 55)

The poet expresses his feelings within the narrow space of his verse and stanza. The number of lines (verses) in each stanza and the way he organizes the rhyme pattern generates different types of stanzaic forms such as the couplet, tercet, quatrain, sonnet and so on.

Sonnet is a poem of fourteen lines with a special pattern and rhyme scheme. For example, David Diop's *Les Heures* :

Il y a des heures dans la journée pour rêver.  
Il y a des heures pour douter dans l'apaisement des puits au creux du silence, et le voile lourd des mots se déchire en sanglots.  
Il y a des heures pour endurer la douleur.  
Le regard des mères sur les chemins de guerre  
Il y a des heures d'amour.  
Dans les cases de lumière où la chair unique chante  
Il y a quelque chose qui changera les jours à venir.  
Comme la chair des plantes est colorée par le soleil et dans le délire des heures  
Dans la hâte des heures  
Le germe est toujours plus prolifique.  
Il y aura des moments où l'harmonie sera établie. (p. 12)

Heroic couplet is written specifically in decasyllabic lines. For example, *Rose Rouge* by David Diop:

Fines biguines rhums blancs rumbas  
La chair bouge  
Rose Rouge  
Filles qu'on file invertis avertis  
Rose Rouge  
Rose Rouge! (p. 56)

#### 4.13 Modern African poetry and its poetic techniques

Modern African poetry explores basic techniques such as oral performance, free verse, repetition, figurative language and literary devices to give flavor of genuineness to their works and demonstrate that modern African poets are aware of rich sources of literary inspiration. Modern African poets deploy different poetic devices to educate African people and give them confidence and hope in cultural heritage in order to enlighten the foreigners and help them get rid of false impression acquired about African cultures.

Free verse is a poem that has no definite metrical arrangement or rhyme scheme. Most modern African poets such as Senghor, Birago Diop, David Diop and Bernard Dadié write in free verse form because rhyming imposes severe restrictions and rhyme schemes

impose great difficulties and impediments on the artistic mind. Free verse can derive its source of poetic beauty from line arrangement mood, imagery and sentimentality (Akporobaro, 2015). Senghor has incorporated into his versification African elements, either similar to or different from the resources of his borrowed medium and the union forms a personal idiom (Irele, 1977). Senghor employs free verse which consists of combinations of the different verse forms in almost all his poems likewise other negritude poets; for example, in *Nuit de Sine, Joal, Femme Noire* by Senghor; *Abandon, Souffles, Viatique* by Birago Diop; *Les Vautours, Le Renegat, Afrique* by David Diop, *Afrique Debout, Hommes de tous les continents* by Bernard Dadié.

Repetition is also employed by the negritude poets. It is a recurrence of the same or similar words in a poetry. Repetition is employed in poetry especially by practitioners of free verse to impose organisation on their verse-form. The use of repetition has important functions in poetry and it is one of their effective borrowings from African oral tradition. The use of repetition is a device that is common among the selected West African negritude poets. We find it virtually in all their poems such as *Joal, Afrique, Souffles, Afrique debout*.

Another important role which the use of repetition plays in the studied poetry is to lay emphasis on their feelings and thoughts and it also affords them the opportunity of enumerating, drawing parallels as well as juxtaposing related figures which they have taken directly from the African oral tradition. Repetition is basically the product of the emotional excitement which inspires music. Modern African poets use it frequently to lend their poetry a certain musical quality which reflects the rhythmic basis of the traditional poetry. For example, in Bernard Dadié's *Souviens-toi*, he deploys repetition of adverb "lentement":

On n'écrira point sur sa tombe  
 Qu'il est mort lentement, lentement de faim...  
 Mais toi, souviens-toi  
 Qu'il était mort de faim  
 Lentement, lentement, lentement de faim. (p. 67)

By using this device, Bernard Dadié is able to achieve the effect of emphasis as they enable him to stress the point he is making in the poem.

#### 4.14 **Forms of sound in poetry**

Poetry is not only a pattern of words, it is also, and can be, an imaginative exploitation of sound, rhythm and musical effects for aesthetic communication

(Akporobaro: 126). Poetic techniques can be achieved by various sound effects, which are most important features of poetry. Sound effects can enhance the meaning of a given poem by evoking wide range of feelings and ideas and different forms of sound are alliteration, rhyme, rhythm, onomatopoeia, assonance, etc. Senghor's conception of poetic expression remains oral. In the same vein, the works of the negritude poets are notable for musical conception and they make systematic use of sound with the intention to give the written poetry oral flavour. Therefore, all the selected francophone poets put into consideration the essential role of sound in poetic expression, which remains oral in their poems. For example, Léopold Sédar Senghor attests to the importance of sound in a poetry when he avers in *Ethiopiennes*:

Je persiste à croire que le  
Poème n'est accompli que s'il se fait  
Chant, parole et musique en même temps (p. 34).

Their poetry is known for musical conception and expressive sonorities, which give, is sensuous flavour. The interplay of these sound effects and other poetic techniques underlies the oral character of the selected francophone negritude poets.

In addition, all the poets rely on sound values in order to carry out their poetic creation. The repetition of sound values in their poems gives these poems oral quality which is paramount in African oral poetry. This work employs syntactical parallelism as sound effect that produces onomatopoeia, alliteration, assonance, anadiplosis and others to realise vividly and graphically a visual image.

### **Syntactic parallelism**

Parallelism is the arrangement of the parts of a piece of writing so that elements of equal importance are balanced off in similar grammatical construction. It also acts as an organising force which directs the reader's attention to the elements which the writer wishes to emphasise. It gives a polished effect to a piece of writing. It is one of the most persistent rhetorical devices which are foregrounded in francophone African literature. A parallelism is the placing side by side of two phrases, which are similar in construction or meaning. For example, in Psalm 23:3, the bible verse read thus:

He maketh me to lie down in green pasture:  
He leadeth me beside the still waters,  
He restores my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of  
righteousness for his names's sake.

On the other hand, syntactical parallelism is a rhetorical feature which occurs when a sentential structure is made up of more than one sentence having lexico-grammatical features which are structurally similar (Wehinde, 2004). In poetry, it is the repetition of a line of poetry in different forms but with similar meaning or same structure with different meaning. Syntactical parallelism is common in francophone poetry. The recurrence of syntactic elements such as stress, tone, meter, rhyme, alliteration, assonance and consonance is preponderant in the selected francophone poetry. For example, Birago Diop employs it in *Diptych*:

Effrayée à l'approche des Filles du feu  
L'Ombre se terre au pied des pieux  
La savane est Claire et crue  
Tout est net, forms et couleurs. (p.148)

Fearful of the approach of the Daughters of fire  
The shadow squats at the feet of the faithful  
The savannah is bright and hash  
All is sharp, forms and colours. (p. 278)

It appears as well in *Afrique* by David Diop. This example is anadiplosis which is the repetition in which the last expression of one statement becomes the first expression in the following statement. The poem goes thus:

Le sang de ta sueur  
La sueur de ton travail  
Le travail de l'esclavage  
L'esclavage de tes enfants. (p. 23)

The blood of your sweat  
The sweat of your work  
The work of your slavery  
The slavery of your children (Ibid: 111)

### **Onomatopoeia**

Onomatopoeia is a device in which a sound is echoed or imitated in order to suggest a meaning. It is found in *Hosties Noires*, and *Taga de Mbaye Dyôb* of Senghor. One main purpose of the use of onomatopoeia, assonance and alliteration is to intensify the expression

of an important idea and it is also employed to realise concretely and graphically a visual image. In *Taga de Mbaye Dyôb*:

Dyob! – du Ngabou au Wato,  
Du Ngalam a la Mer s'eleveront  
Les chants des vierges d'ambre  
Et que les accompagnent les cordes des Koras:  
Et que les accompagnent les vagues et les vents!  
Dyob! – je dis ton nom et ton honneur. (p. 84)

Dyob! – from Ngâbou to Wâlo, from Ngalam,  
At the sea, the song of the virgins of amber will rise  
And may the strings of kôras accompany them!  
And may the waves and the winds accompany them! (Ibid:  
70)

Senghor uses alliteration in the above to distinguish between the homage of men indicated by the musical instruments and the participation of the elements in this homage to Dyôb. Again, a particularly rich effect is obtained by the use of alliteration in the concluding line of another poem of homage:

Masques! O Masques!  
Masques noir masque rouge, vous masques blanc et noir  
Masques aux quatre points d'où soufflé l'Esprit  
Je vous salue dans le silennce! (p. 25)

Masks, masks  
Black mask, red mask, you white and  
Black mask,  
Mask of the four points from which the spirit blows  
In silence I salute you! (p. 30)

### **Alliteration**

Alliteration is the repetition of a consonant sound. Senghor worked into his poetry a whole range of effects which gives it the character of a balanced system of cadences and of harmonies because he has resources of French language at hand. David Diop also makes use of alliteration in *Afrique*:

Ton beau sang noir à travers  
Les champs repandu  
Le sang de ta sueur  
La sueur de ton travail. (p. 23)

Diop employs alliteration to add beauty and sound to his poem that “Mother Africa’s beautiful black blood...irrigates the fields”. He makes it known that it is through the hard

work of black people and their struggle that France as a nation and other colonial nations were able to build their empires and domains. Mother Africa is portrayed as slave that was exploited physically and spiritually.

### **Assonance**

Assonance is the recurrence of vowel sounds.. For example, assonance is used in *Afrique* by David Diop. The musical quality of the poem is additionally increased through assonance which is essential in a free verse poem:

Afrique mon Afrique  
Afrique des fiers guerriers dans les savanes ancestrales  
Afrique que chante ma grand-mère  
Au bord de son fleuve lointain. (p. 23)

Africa my Africa  
Africa of proud warriors in the ancestral savannahs  
Africa of whom my grandmother sings  
On the banks of the distant river  
On the banks of the distant river (Ibid: 73)

The repetition of vowel sounds in his poem *Afrique* enables him to make the beginning lines to increase in tempo and spiritual. This poem represents Africa that rears the “proud warriors” which attests her pre-colonial glory in the “ancestral savannahs”. Africa is a landscape of tradition of oralness where Diop’s grandmother, a praise singer, tells the story of the land’s greatness to her grandson.

### **Rhythm**

Rhythm is another African oral device which has been adopted by negritude poets. Rhythm is an upward and downward movement of the voice which gives a poem the pattern of song. It is also a feature of both oral and written literatures. Léopold Senghor and David Diop’s poems exemplify the patterns of song. Rhythm differs from language to language and from poem to poem. Also, language determines the kind of rhythm which exists in a people’s poetry. For example, David Diop’s “Africa” ends with interlaced rhythms and a rising cadence which gives a pleasing effect, indicating that the poem has finally arrived at a thoughtful and substantial conclusion:

Fils impeétueux cet arbre robuste et jeune cet arbre là-bas  
splendidement seul au milieu de fleurs blanches et fanées  
c’est l’Afrique qui repousse. (p. 23)

Another rhyme which is extremely effective is the ringing of the bells as they summon Bouki to the various feasts on the day of Tobaski in *Les nouveaux contes d'Amadou Koumba* so anxious is he to get to all of them that he rushes hither and thither until exhausted, he collapses, unable to choose one and miss the rest.

### **African rhythm**

Orature includes folktale, proverbs, myth, legend, lyric, epic, song and rhythm. These infuse modern African poetry with motifs, themes, characters and techniques. The selected poets draw a lot from African orature. The modern African poets are culturally rooted and carry the sensibility of their people. For example, Léopold Sédar Senghor says monotonous rhythm is a distinguishing feature of African poetry: “Cette force ordinatrice qui fait le style nègre est le rythme” (1987: 35).

He considers it like inhaling and exhaling air, a rhythm he describes as *vivant* and *libre*. Many examples of monotonous rhythm abound in almost every African poetry, especially in the poetry of Léopold Sédar Senghor, Birago Diop, David Diop and Bernard Dadié. It indicates emphasis. Repetition and its accompanying monotonous rhythm could be most important in a ritual poem of Birago Diop “Viaticum” which is created in a solemn atmosphere. The following lines from Senghor’s “Congo” are illustrated of this ancient African rhythm:

Oho! Congo oho! Pour rythmer ton nom grand sur les eaux  
Sur les fleuves sur toute mémoire  
Que j’émue le voix des koras, koyaté! L’encre du scribe est  
sans mémoire.  
Oho! Congo couches dans ton lit de forêt, reine sur l’Afrique  
domptée.  
Que les phallus des monts portent haut ton pavillion. (Senghor,  
1987: 105)

Oho! Congo oho! To rhythm your big name on the waters  
On the rivers on any memory  
That I bring the voice of koras, koyate! The ink of the scribe  
is without memory.  
Oho! Congo diapers in your forest bed, queen over tamed Africa.  
May the phalluses of the mountains carry your pavillion. (p. 21)

The rhythm is full of the energy and liveliness that Senghor says it characterises African poem. The tonal nature of Black African language combined with European rhythms give a distinctive mark to African poetry. African rhythm appears as well in

Bernard Dadié's "Redis-Moi la Complainte des Pillons". The poem is full of nostalgia and describes village experiences in the morning:

Dans le silence du petit matin, les pilons qui ont valeur de symbole volent en cadence, la répétition du mot là bas exprime la nostalgie, le sens de l'éloignement et donne au poème son rythme (Almeida, 1992: 176)

Là-bas! Là-bas! Là-bas  
A un tournant de la route  
Là-bas! Là-bas! Là-bas  
A un coude de la rivière  
Là-bas, dans les champs embaumés,  
Il y a un village  
Là-bas! Là-bas! (p. 176)

### **Repetitive utterances**

These are verbal repetitive sounds repeated several times in a poem. They are preponderantly employed in all the selected negritude poets' works. They are common features at ritual ceremonies. They are used in *Viatique* by Birago Diop:

Dans un des trois canaris des trois canaris où reviennent certain soirs mère a trempé trois doigts trois doigts de sa main gauche. (p. 146)

'The three jugs', 'the three fingers', 'the ancestor who...', 'beyond the seas' are repeated several times to lay emphasis on the importance of ritual. Repetition brings situation into reality in the poem. Diop makes use of ritual numbers, which are usually three, seven, nine, and twenty-one. For ritual ceremony, three jugs are used, three fingers are dipped into the jugs because the jugs contain the blood of three different animals like the dog, the bull and the goat. Poet's mother touches the poet three times by touching his forehead, his left breast and his navel. This ritual means that wherever the poet may go on the planet earth, the unseen power will follow him.

#### **4.15 Images and symbols in negritude poetry**

Images are mental pictures that are used directly or indirectly that appeal to our understanding and feelings. They are also powerful choice of words in which we are deeply touched with admiration and sentiment.

An image means concrete and literal representation of sensory and visual experience. It is one of the major and distinctive elements of the language art. It is also the means in which our experience of life with its richness and emotional complexity is being communicated to people. Negritude poets use various images and symbols to represent Africa. Senghor uses 'Night' and 'Blackness' as his most common symbols of Africa while David Diop, in "Vautours"(The Vultures) employs the image of a predatory bird effectively to characterise British brutality and her nefarious acts in Western colonialism and the coloniser's disdain for the colonised Black people. Diop portrays the white as a bird of prey, the vulture that maltreats its victims mercilessly. The poet, David Diop, in his "Vulture" uses the metaphor "We whose hands fertilize the womb of the earth, in spite of your songs of pride" to enumerate the glorious past of Africa, when Africa was living in abundance and prosperity, that Africa was capable of being a relief to others and ready to offer support to whosoever was in need of her support (p. 10).

Bernard Dadié deploys metaphor in his work powerfully. The pictorial quality of his imagery communicates across language and cultural barriers. As he addresses Africa, "Sèche tes pleurs, Afrique, vos enfants te reviennent", he evokes the Black Diaspora, recalling the nostalgic dream of the old "Back to Africa" movement (Bruner, 1992:55). His poem *Harlem* is a rehearsal of metaphor, Harlem is a zoo for tourists, a bone stuck in New York's throat, a veritable slave ship, a museum of miseries, a cemetery for dreams, a ghost town. Dadié's "Hommes de tous les continents" addresses a general audience through the emotional ties linking all people: for example, those who like to hear a woman laugh, those who like to watch a child play, those who offer a hand to form a chain. All must resist war and inhuman treatment for "Les balles étêtent encore les roses dans les matins de rêve" (Bullets still behead the roses in the mornings of dreams). Bernard Dadié uses his poetic techniques in most productive way. For example, he employs the image of rusty bicycle in *Hommes de tous les continents* to evoke the experience of life especially the experience of the black man:

La vie est un cerceau rouille  
Que l'on ramasse le soir à l'angle des cimétieres.

He uses the image of the hand and another is the image of the leaf in the poem *Feuille Au Vent* which he combines with the image of night to invoke colour motif:

Je suis l'homme à la couleur de nuit  
feuille au vent, je vais au gré de mes rêves.  
Je suis l'homme dont on se plaint parce que contre  
l'étiquette  
L'homme dont on se rit  
Parce que contre les barrières. (160)

The imagery and the lyric qualities of Dadie's poems such as *Hommes de tous les continents*, *La ronde des jours*, *Feuille au vent* are meant to assert himself as a black man and human awareness of the need to rise above the forces that seek to undermine one's dignity and the refusal to be kept down are conveyed in Dadie's imagery.

### **Use of imagery and symbols**

Imagery is the use of language to describe or represent objects, feelings and actions so that they can be clearly pictured and understood. Negritude poets such as Senghor, Birago and David Diop as well as Bernard Dadié use many images and symbols to represent Africa. Night and Blackness occur frequently in Senghor's poetry from the titles he gave them such as *Nuit de Sine* (Night of Sine), *Femme Noire* (Black Woman), *Élégie de minuit* (Elegy of Midnight). In *Que m'accompagnent Koras et Balafong* (Let Koras and Balafong Accompany Me), 'Night' is pictured thus:

Nuit d'Afrique ma nuit noire, mystique et claire notre  
Nuit qui fonds toutes mes contradictions toutes contradictions  
dans l'unité première de ta négritude  
Reçois l'enfant toujours enfant, que douze ans d'errance  
n'ont pas veilli. (p. 30)

Night of Africa my dark night, mystical and lightning  
Night that dissolves all my contradictions, all contradictions  
receive your child still a child whom twelve years of  
wondering has not made old. (Ibid)

The imagery used by Birago Diop in his "Vanity" are "our plaintive throat," "our ears were deaf", "our large mouth" and "voices of beggars". They are employed as satire, a form of rebuke and ridicule. He repeats some images and phrases for emphasis; including, "what heart," "what eyes," "what ears," "just as our ears were deaf."

Birago Diop uses synecdoche as figure of speech substituting a part for a whole, in *Vanity*, different parts of the human body are used to represent persons, they are "heart," "ear," and "eyes." These are sensory organs that belong to the Europeans who are not ready

to sympathise with “us,” the oppressed. Non-usage of these organs is deliberate attempt to turn their deaf ears to our pleas and nonchalant attitude to African plight.

David Diop’s “Vultures” encompasses some of the most powerful images of Africa’s colonial experience and European control of Africa under the pretext of a civilising mission. European colonising mission is seen as closely allied to the work of the Christian missionaries in converting Africa to a religion, which demands humility. Diop begins his poem with:

En ce temps-là  
A coups de gueule de civilisation  
A coups d’eau bénite sur les fronts domestiqués  
Les vautours construisaient à l’ombre de leurs serres  
Le sanglant monument de l’ère tutélaire  
En ce temps-là. (p. 10)

He narrates the arrival of the white with civilising mission and gradually to total denunciation to proclaiming hope for the oppressed. Generally, metaphors of violence are followed by specific images of oppression. The images of condemnation are strong, so that the more positive images of hope held up at the end of the poem inevitably appear weak beside them. “Vultures” describes European imperialists in Africa. This word alone powerfully conveys the poet’s condemnation and loathing for colonial rule. The images of violence express vividly what is involved when a race imposes its will on others. “Je Vous Remercie Mon Dieu” is a defiant poem in which Bernard Dadié cleverly and imaginatively turns those things traditionally despised in Africans such as black colour, wide nose and large mouth into objects of pride and satisfaction. He also symbolises in himself the suffering of Africa through colonialism:

Je vous remercie mon Dieu de m’avoir  
Créé noir d’avoir fait de moi  
La somme de toutes les douleurs  
Mis sur ma tête  
Le Monde  
J’ai la livrée de centaure  
Et je porte le Monde depuis le premier matin  
Le blanc est un couleur de circumstance  
Le noir, la couleur de tous les jours  
Et je porte le monde depuis le premier soir. (P. 115)

I give you thanks my God for having created me black  
For having made of me  
The total of all sorrows,  
And set upon my head the world  
I wear the livery of the centaur  
And I carry the World since the first morning (Ibid: 114)

Rhetorical question is one of the tropes, which run through his poem. This poem expresses the poet's anxiety and worry. For instance, "What eyes will watch our large mouth?", "What ear to our clamouring?", "Who will hear our voices without laughter?" He equally employs sarcasm, which is a mocking humour. For example, "sad complaining voices of beggars; plaintive throats, large mouth." In "Vanity," he gives life to dead ancestors through the use of personification: "When our dead comes with the dead, when they have spoken to us in their clumsy voices" (p. 105). Repetition runs through the poem respectively. For example, "what eyes will watch our large mouth?" Simile appears in his poem such as "like" or "as." "What ear to hear our pitiful anger which grows in us like a tumour?"

**Nature Imagery:** The selected negritude poets are very much in love with floral and fauna images. They all love nature and celebrate it. Fruit trees are mostly recurrent in their works; they are vegetal symbols and their allusion to the fertility of black families, once sterile and dead under colonial oppression are established. They have faith that the tree Africa will bear fruits in future.

Diop says:

Cet arbre là-bas  
Splendidement seul au milieu de fleurs blanches et fanées  
C'est l'Afrique ton Afrique qui repousse  
Qui repousse patiemment obstinément  
Et dont les fruits ont peu à peu  
L'amère saveur de la liberté. (p. 23)

That tree over there, which stands magnificently by itself among faded, white blooms, represents the rebirth of your continent, Africa, whose fruits gradually take on the bitter taste of freedom (p. 74).

Sédar Senghor's *Joal* and *Nuit de Sine* evoke and present a poetic picture of the actualities of life in an African village at night. They present visible and invisible social and communal activities that are typical of life in an African rural set up:

Femme, pose sur mon front tes mains balsamiques,  
tes mains douces plus que fourrure.  
Là-haut les palmes balancées qui bruissent dans la haute brise  
nocturne.  
A peine pas meme la chanson de nourrice. (p. 16)

Woman, lay on my forehead your perfumed hands, hands  
softer than for above, the swaying palm trees rustle in the high  
night breeze.  
Hardly at all, No lullaby even. (p. 302)

Joal!  
Je me rappelle.  
Je me rappelle les signares à l'ombre verte des vérandas  
Les signares aux yeux surréels comme un clair de lune sur la  
grève. (p. 17)

Joal!  
I remember  
I remember the signares in the green shadow of the verandas  
Signares with eyes surreal as moonlight on the beach. (p. 307)

It is all about recollection of events and images of African life in the typical village of Joal where Senghor grew up. The poem also expresses love of Africa in a mood of cultural nationalism:

The African environment has also shaped modern African literature in a unique fashion. The writers make use of the indigenous flora and fauna in their writings. Trees such as the baobab, tamarind and the iroko of the African environment also assume symbolic significance. Rivers, hills, mountains and some African landscape are used in their writings. (Okpewho, 1992: 320)

In line with the foregoing, negritude poets make use of the fauna and flora of their environments which emanate directly from African oral literature to add colour to their creativity. For example, Jean-Paul Sartre in Senghor's *Anthologie de la nouvelle poesie Nègre et Malgache de langue française* says:

Le centre calme de ce maelstrom de rythmés, de chants, de cris, c'est la poésie de Birago Diop, dans sa majesté naïve; elle seule est en repos parce qu'elle sort directement des récits de griots et de la tradition orale. (Senghor, 1948: 100)

Some of the environmental elements in orature used by the selected poets include land, water, tree, birds and other animals. Some of these nature-related images are discussed below.

### **Land**

Land features often in the poetry and tales of the selected creative writers. Land is a geographical area that is used for a particular purpose. Their works are coloured with features of the geography and history of the land which is transmitted from one generation to another. “The Grand Fleuve”, wide stretches of sand, and the vast savannah all end to anchor the stories in the real world. The villages are small, the professions include cattle rearing, farming and blacksmithing. Hunting and fishing are also practised. In *Les Contes d’Amadou Koumba*, the mamelles are the two modest mountains “Le point culminant du Sénégal.” In the story, the origin of the two natural phenomena has nothing to do with geophysics. They are the humps formerly on the backs of Khary and Koumba, the two hunch-backed wives of Momar. On account of her bad character, Khary, in addition to her own, earned the co-wife’s hump, she drowned herself in the sea, but the waters, unwilling to bury her completely, exposed the two humps. The tales integrate historical and geographical phenomena into their universe and use them to explain the why and the how of things (Imeyen, 2000).

### **River**

The River Congo is celebrated in Senghor’s pre-independence poetry as a symbol of Africa’s vitality, a source of abundance and fecundity, as a mother:

Oho! Congo oho! Pour rythmer ton nom grand sur les eaux  
sur les fleuves sur toute mémoire que j’émueve la voix des  
kôras koyaté.  
L’encre du scribe est sans mémoire. (p. 105)

Oho! Congo oho! I move the voices of the koras of koyate to  
make your great name their rhythm over the waters and rivers,  
over all I remember. (p. 27)

Negritude poets deploy the use of indigenous fauna and flora in their creative writings, which include land, tree, water, sky etc. They use various images and symbols to represent Africa.

Being poets committed to the cultural reconstruction of African people and race, their poems also honour Africa's cause through the way they celebrate African village and societies. Similarly, they glorify African ancient heroes and exalt Africans, especially the African soldiers who died in the white man's wars in Europe. For example, in "Celui qui a tout perdu," David Diop recalls his childhood days in his native village in Senegal:

Le soleil riait dans ma case  
Et mes pirogues luttèrent avec les crocodiles  
La lune, maternelle, accompagnait nos danses  
Le rythme frenétique et lourd du tam-tam. (p. 34)

The sun used to laugh in my hut  
My canoes would wrestle with the crocodiles  
The motherly moon would accompany our dances  
Frenzied and heavy was the rhythm of tom-tom (Ibid: 48)

Moreover, Senghor's "Nuit de Sine" celebrates the beauty of the tropical night, the stars, moon, the eclipse and the countryside and the human warmth, the togetherness, the light touch of life and a quiet village lost to modern civilisation; however, the poet is happier because of this Eden-like purity. For example:

Battre le pouls profond de l'Afrique dans la brume des  
villages perdus voice que décline la lune lasse vers son lit de  
mer étale voice que s'assoupissent les éclats de rire, que  
conteurs eux-mêmes. (P. 16)

To the deep pulse of Africa beating in the midst of forgotten  
villages see the tired moon comes down to her bed on the  
slack sea, the laughter grows weary, the story-tellers even.  
(As translated by Ade-Ojo, 2000: 8)

## **Tree**

David Diop personifies Africa as a mother. He is attracted to the mother's attributes. He believes that Africa has such motherly qualities as maternal love, care, tenderness, care-giver and protector of her tender child. Africa is presented by Diop as another protective element, "A une danseuse noire":

Ô mon Afrique ma mure Espérance  
Brisant la stupeur vénérable de mon corps  
Je chante pour ton sourire  
Je chante pour la parole (p. 44)

Oh my Africa, my mature hope  
Breaking the pernicious stupor of my body  
I sing for your smile  
I sing in your defence (p. 44)

The full meaning of a tree connotes the attributes of root, foliage, fruits which are used to represent gods and goddesses on whom Africa depends on for survival and protection before the arrival of the white missionaries. The shape of Africa with its root in South Africa, shows that Africa is robust and flourishing:

Cet arbre là-bas splendidement seul au milieu de  
Fleurs blanches et fanées  
C'est l'Afrique ton Afrique qui repose patiemment obstinément  
Et dont les fruits ont peu à peu  
L'amère saveur de la liberté (Ibid : 23)

That tree over yonder, splendidly alone amidst white and  
faded flowers,  
Tha is Africa, your Africa which is growing again which is  
patiently and obstinately growing again  
And whose fruits acquire little by little  
The bitter taste of liberty (p. 47)

Europeans represent Africa as a land without reputation, with lots of deficiencies but Diop's poetry does full justice and presents Africa's militancy and radicality towards the Europeans; not as a land of condemnation but a land full of vigour and justice.

In *Celui qui a tout perdu*, David Diop paints the blissful communion between nature and Africans and it reminds one of the symbiotic communion between nature and man of the biblical Eden. Nature was in touch with man, the two were joined together in harmony and love, they blended together as friends.

Et Mes pirogues luttèrent avec les crocodiles  
La lune maternelle, accompagnait nos danses  
Le rythme frénétique et lourd du tam-tam  
Tam-tam de la joie  
Tam-tam de l'insouciance  
Au milieu des feux de liberté. (p. 34)

And my canoes would wrestle with the crocodiles  
The motherly moon would accompany our dances  
Frenzied and heavy was the rhythm of tom-tom  
Tom-tom of joy, tom-tom of care-free life  
Amid the bonfires of freedom (p. 48)

The unity between man and nature generated peace and joy, it inspired confidence and freedom, it brought satisfaction to the pre-colonial Africa “the motherly moon would accompany our dances”. The black race is represented by the tree - the popular “arbre généalogique”. The tree as dialectical symbol is the struggle against the oppressor. Slavery and colonisation have incapacitated the black race to the extent that they are no longer able to free themselves from the shackles of bondage up till now.

David Diop, a revolutionary freedom fighter in his poem *l’Afrique* sees in the tree the image of a new Africa that would emerge from slavery and colonisation into independence:

Cet arbre là-bas  
Splendidement seul au milieu de fleurs blanches et fanées  
C’est l’Afrique ton Afrique qui repousse  
Qui repousse patiemment obstinément  
Et dont les fruits ont peu à peu  
L’amère saveur de la liberté. (p. 23)

## **Water**

This symbol, which easily encompasses rivers, seas and oceans, is one of the sources of joy and happiness for the negritude poets because their people, “les Sénégalais, Camerounais et Congolais” are very close to the sea. Thus, one finds commendable references to water and its related images. For example, Senghor’s “In Memoriam” depicts the African way of living which he considers lively:

Je contemple mes rêves distraits le long des rues couchés au  
pieds des collines comme les conducteurs de ma race sur les  
rives de la Gambie et du saloum de la Seine maintenant, au  
pied des collines... (p. 11)

I watch my dreams listless along the streets, sleeping at the  
foot of the hills like the forerunner’s of my race on the bank  
of the Gambian and Seloum, now of the Seine, at the foot of  
the hills.

Meanwhile it was the water such as rivers, seas, oceans that served as route for carting away millions of innocent Blacks to America as slaves and also brought the colonial master at a later date. In Africa, water is commonly seen as the giver, sustainer, restorer of life and disseminator of the world. In all the poems discussed above, it is clear that water ushers in a rebirth and proves to be a restorative agent.

Senghor says:

Pour le négro-Africain, les vivants, les existants sont au centre du monde... ils ne sont pas les seuls êtres. Tout l'univers visible et invisible depuis Dieu jusqu'au grain de sable, en passant par les génies, les ancêtres, les animaux, les plantes, les minéraux est composé de vases communicants de forces vitales solidaires, qui émanent toutes de Dieu (p. 20).

He explains further that “everything has life; the sun and especially the moon, la vieille courieuse,” the spirits and the dwarfs, the fire, the egg, the arrow, the bow, the stone as well as the men and the animals. Everything tends to increase knowledge of the world and society.

**Animal imagery:** The selected negritude poets make use of animal imagery in their poetry. Diop's *Coups de Pilon* portrays white men who behave as real human beings operating in various roles as enslavers, soldiers, administrators, traders and missionaries. In his poem “The Vultures”, they are depicted as carnivores; vultures, hyenas, beasts, panthers and jackals that manifest animalistic instincts by way of operating with the ruthless and sadistic jungle law of the survival of the fittest and are motivated continuously by the primitive animal concern for self (Ade-Ojo, 2005). Sédar Senghor, in his preface to *Epitome*, describes the white as “images touffues” changeantes tournantes...” some of the animal imageries used to describe them are jackal, thief, bloodsucker and vampires.

**The image of blood:** The image of blood in Léopold Sédar Senghor's poetry has a three special significance. It denotes the poet's sense of his communalities. It also registers his preoccupation with a life force e.g. “Sang Sombre”, “Lait Noir”, “Vin Noir” are related images denoting an essence of life, associated with an intensity of being whose ultimate direction is a passionate exaltation of the elemental:

Surgisse le soleil de la mer des ténèbres  
Sang! Les flots son couleurs de l'aurore.  
(Irele, 1977: 25)

The image of woman is comprehensive hymn of praise to the poet's loved one. It is a preoccupation with the idea of regeneration, as an obsession with a personal sense of vigour that draws directly upon the force of nature for its maintenance. Blood also has a connection with the image of woman.

**The image of Africa:** The concrete portrayal of Africa as a landscape of natural growth is centred upon the symbolic connotation of water as natural element and as a source of being operating an intimate identification of the continent with the poet's entire universe of feeling and of vision. Senghor's evocations refer to a particular physical landscape and environment to which his earliest and most enduring memories are attached. The constant recourse to organic and vegetal imagery is an indication of a consciousness formed by an agricultural society, which shows the same kind of preoccupation with growth, an immediate sense of the surge of life in the natural world, characteristic of animist outlook. Image of Africa is seen in Senghor's symbolism of "Night", which derives its special importance from the association with Africa and blackness.

**The image of sound:** One of the imageries used in the title of the collection of Diop's poems *Coups de Pilon* – an African imagery - which means breaking the eardrums of those who do not want to listen to it and slam like sounds of shark on the egoism and the conformism of the conservatives (Adejo, 2000). The aim of Diop is, therefore, to drum his violent message forcefully into the eardrums of the perpetrators of unacceptable norms. It also aims at breaking their eardrums. Only blows that are strong can do that. Anyone familiar with the driving force that goes into pounding with pestles, as witnessed in African rural settings of yesteryears, would be able to understand the full implications of Diop's imagery. Another aspect of the imagery of mortar/pestle sounds is the notion of united action that this common African culinary activity connotes. Not only does pounding involve energy and determination, it also calls for combined and multiple action so that whatever is being reduced to a paste can be effectively and quickly done. The actions that the poetry of Diop calls for would bear very positive fruits if only there is unity of purpose and action, merging of forces and intentions and if there is an iron determination on the part of the oppressed and the wretched of the earth to reverse their unbearable conditions and situations.

Diop's poems do not present pre-colonial Africa as peaceful and harmless as it is seen in Senghor's poetry but he presents pre-colonial Africa as a continent with distinct reality and socio-cultural realities different from that which the West presented to its own people.

## Symbols in negritude poetry

Symbol is another device that is prevalent in African oral literature. Symbolisms are words or images, which often suggest a mental picture that can be perceived in the mind's eye (Dasyilva and Jegede, 2003). Symbolism and metaphor are used to avoid direct mentioning (Lamidi, 2002). It helps the audience to use this information to work out, interpret and give meaning to negritude poetry. In African society, various objects are used for communicative purposes involving two or more people. It is basically a means of sending a message across to an individual or a group of people. In Yoruba parlance, it is known as *àrokò*. It is a silent way of contact, expression and communication in a non-verbal manner. For example, negritude poets use various images and symbols to represent Africa. Senghor, for example, uses 'night' and 'Blackness' as his most common symbols of Africa. As Irele points out, Night can be considered the governing symbol of Senghor's poetry. It is not, therefore, surprising to find 'Night' and 'Blackness' occurring frequently in his poems and in the titles he gives to them: *Nuit de Sine* (Night of Sine), *Femme Noire* (Black Woman), *Élégie de Minuit* (Elegy of Midnight), *Masque Negre* (Negro Mask), *Chants d'Ombre* (A Song of Shadow), (Mokwenye, 2009). In a poem like *Élégie de Minuit*:

Été splendide été, qui nourris  
Le poète du lait de ta lumière  
Moi qui poussais comme blé de printemps,  
Qui m'enivrais de la verdure de l'eau,  
Du ruissellement vert dans l'or du temps. (p. 202)

Night usually means peace and repose for Senghor, but the midnight setting in this poem is associated with a mood of dejection and restless solitude. The tone is tragic, it is a moment of crisis in his life because of political discouragement as the poem indicates and his solitary combat against his anguish. The first stanza suggests the paradox involved in his dissatisfaction with worldly honour and his inability to derive comfort from those values he has cultivated and celebrated as a poet. 'Été splendide été', this invocation stresses the paradox of the poet's situation at the beginning and his strongest aspiration.

In *Joal*, Senghor's poem and in the second stanza, he invokes images of the signares, the mulato woman married to or living with a white, this is to present an image of an already mixed cultural milieu. The sign symbolises the presence of white, Portuguese missionaries

that the youthful Senghor must have revered and respected with a genuine sense of the early love, innocence and mystery.

The third stanza presents the evocation of African life i.e. the pomp and beauty of sunset, 'the image of pomp at dusk' is specific and concrete, it brings into the readers' consciousness the fact of rituals, the funeral:

Je me rappelle les festins funèbres fumant du sang des troupeaux  
égorgés  
Je me rappelle les voix païennes rythmant le Tantum Ergo  
Et les processions et les palmes  
Et les arcs de triomphe. (p. 17)

I remember the funeral feasts  
Smoking with the blood of slaughtered cattle  
With the noise of quarrels and the griots rhapsodies  
I remember pagan rhythmic singing of the tantum Ergo  
And processions and palms and triumphant arches (p. 306)

These vague images of sacrificial ritual, song and dancing, which are part of the religious and communal identity of African life are essential. This motif of socio-cultural life activities is seen here:

Je me rappelle la danse des filles nubiles les chœurs de lutte  
Oh! la danse finale de jeunes homes, buste. (p. 18)

I remember the dance of the girls who are for marriage  
The choruses at the wedding.

The motif of physical contests between the boys with bodies bent forward is qualified and modulated by the reality of love, of kinship ties all around coming from relations and spectators. In *Prière aux masques* (Prayer to the mask), it is central to the overall vision of negritude poetry. It is also an affirmation of the continuing power and existence of the spiritual forces and ancestors. The masks are not simply wooden carvings but also symbolise the spiritual beings who protect and regulate social and individual life. The masks are physical representations of the gods, the ancestors and powers, that, though invisible or dead are always about us watching:

Masques! Ô Masques!  
Masques noir masque rouge,  
Vous masques blanc et noir  
Masques aux quatre points d'où  
Souffle l'Esprit  
Je vous salue dans le silence. (p. 25)

Masks! Masks!  
Black mask, red mask, you white and black mask  
Mask of the four points from which the spirit blows in silence  
I salute you (p. 308)

The poet's concern and source of spiritual and emotional sorrow is the decadence of modern Africa. It is simply the metaphorical statement of the alienation of Africans from their African roots, from the negative impact of European and other foreign powers, past glory and cultural heritage as a result of colonialism. Africans have a role to play in the revitalisation of the world that has lost its humanity:

Que nous répondions présents à la renaissance du monde  
Ainsi le levain qui est nécessaire à la farine blanche  
Car qui apprendrait le rythme au monde  
Défunt des machines et des canons? (p. 102)

Senghor utilises an image expressing the creative and vitalising role of yeast over the flour. From the evocation of the memory of injustice and prejudice, the poem triumphantly returns to an assured affirmation of the black men's humanity, vitality and personality:

Nous sommes les hommes de la danse, dont les pieds  
reprent vigueur en frappant le sol dur.

### **Symbol of blood, scars and whip**

This symbol is used in David Diop's "Le temps du martyre":

Le Blanc a courbé mon frère sous le soleil des routes  
Car mon frère était fort  
Puis le Blanc a tourné vers moi  
Ses mains rouges de sang  
Noir. (p. 33)

The white bent my brother under the sun of the roads  
Mybrother was strong  
The white turned towards me  
His hands red with black blood. (p.15)

These symbols foreground the torture that Africans went through in colonial time. 'Sang noir' (Black blood) metaphorises African identity. Symbols of blood and animal are used in Birago Diop's "Viatique" (viaticum):

Dans un des trois canaris des trois canaris où reviennent  
certain soirs les âmes satisfaites et sereines.

The number three is symbolic. It is often used for invocations in magical and sacrificial performances. The jugs, the animals whose blood is split, the fingers and the elements are three in number. Such description forms vivid pictures of initiation materials in the reader's mind. The three jugs are the ancestors who beyond the sea are repeated several times to emphasise their importance in the initiation.

David Diop explores the European colonisation in Africa and explains the inhuman treatment meted out to the African people which resulted in exploitations of their lands and human resources. He reveals his thought through the use of symbolism. Symbols are used to represent ideas, for example, "Les vautours construisaient à l'ombre de leurs serres" (p.10). (The vultures built in the shadow of their claws). Vultures are used as symbol of inhuman maltreatment the native people are subjected to by the Europeans. The deep sorrow of postcolonial theory is expressed in *Les Vautours* "Les rires agonisaient dans l'enfer métallique des routes" (p.10). "Laughter gasped its last in the metallic hell of roads" portrays a country where guns and ammunitions are displayed in the country in order to suppress any joy. The repetition of "En e temps là" (in that time) means the memory of the past which lays emphasis on Diop's wish to come back home before the existence of colonialism in Africa. Through his *Les Vautours*, Diop senses a gap and disparity in European imperialism towards Africa and yearns for total independence.

Senghor also employs the symbol of animal in "le totem" as "serpent de la mer" and "serpent de l'eau." The identification of the serpent with virility means the symbolic representation of strength and power to foresee the future and it is also the fundamental insight into the processes of life that make for total experience.

### **The trope of Africa as a woman**

The selected poets employ the symbol of Africa as woman in "Femme noire", "A ma mère", "Souffles", "Afrique Debout." This poetic technique is upheld through allegorical means where Africa is conceptualised as a mother to the Black populace born from her landscaped body. Through the mother Africa trope, these poets are able to communicate the plight of the colonised and postcolonial Africa. Her metaphorical body of work offers a depth of meaning and concludes with a message of hope reminding Africans that they can rise above the colonial system.

#### 4.16 **Thematic engagement of selected negritude poetry**

Every African writer is a negritudist in one way or another (Ojaide, 1995:5).

Negritude poets are preoccupied some socially relevant thematic thrusts. They have serious concern for African culture and they are ready to go to any length to promote Blackness. For example, Léopold Sédar Senghor the matises traditional singing, rites and ceremonies, African religion and other matters of cultural interest. Francophone African poets use their themes as echoes to salvage various issues found in the decaying political, economic and social landscape of Africa.

#### **Theme of African cultural identities**

Identities are the characteristics and beliefs that distinguish people from others. It is the process of reclamation of an authentic selfhood. It is also a defence and revaluation of Africa, its people and culture. Ayo Kehinde (2007) argues that the black person in the New World is forever a quester whose major challenge is a quest for identity, an attempt to come to terms with a past that was overwhelming in itself'. The selected West African francophone poets are committed to cultural retrieval and they make a remarkable contribution in negritude poetry. For example, in *Joal* of Senghor:

Joal!  
Je me rappelle  
Je me rappelle la danse des filles nubiles  
Les chœurs de lutte-oh! La danse finale  
Des jeunes hommes, buste  
Penché élané et le pur cri d'amour des femmes  
kor Siga! (p.17)

This poem establishes the sense of a firm belonging to Africa. It is the affirmation of the reality of the poet's African antecedents, of historical and spiritual continuity which is the informing principle of his individual identity. The question of identity which is directly related to the question of sovereignty and survival is one of the predominant themes in the history and literature of Africa. It is also an individual as well as collective issue. For example, in Bernard Dadié's "Sèche tes larmes, Afrique" (Dry Your Tears, Africa):

Sèche tes pleurs Afrique  
Tes enfants te reviennent  
Dan l'orage et la tempête des  
Voyages infructueux. (p. 116)

Dry your tears, Africa!  
Your children come back to you  
Out of the storm and squalls of  
Fruitless journeys (p. 116)

The statement expresses the dominance and the destructive impact of the Europe on Africa and acknowledges his pride in African culture. Identity theme is pointed out in Bernard Dadié's poem where he sends the message to the oppressed Africans to rise collectively from psychological trauma and wounds inflicted by the white supremacy and never be discouraged about it despite the hardships and toils endured but to affirm, assert and preserve African natural beauty and values.

David Diop's "Afrique" (Africa) evokes his cultural identity when he says:

Afrique mon Afrique  
Afrique des fiers guerriers  
Dans les savanes ancestrales  
Afrique que chante ma grand-mère  
Au bord de son fleuve lointain. (p. 23)

Here, we can see that Africa has a definite and distinct identity and socio-cultural identity which is different from that which the West presents to its own people and it also has a veritable geo-political distinction from which every African receives as reason to exist. Through his collection of poetry *Coups de Pilon*, this identity comes alive through its name, topography, vegetation, climate, town, and its people.

### **Theme of death and ancestors**

No understanding of African life is possible without an appreciation of the part which the dead play in it. Africa's belief in the rebirth of ancestors into the same family is indicated by such names as 'father has come back' (Babatunde) or 'mother has come back' (Yetunde) among the Yorùbá ethnic group of Nigeria. For the African, the worlds of the living and the dead interpenetrate each other as though indeed they are the same world. This is a cornerstone of traditional Africa's world view which is strongly present in the poetic works of Birago Diop, David Diop and Léopold Sédar Senghor. For example, Birago Diop's « Souffles »:

Ceux qui sont morts ne sont jamais partis  
Ils sont dans l'ombre qui s'éclaire  
Et dans l'ombre qui s'épaissit  
Les morts ne sont pas sous la terre

Ils sont dans l'arbre qui frémit  
Ils sont dans le bois qui gémit  
Ils sont dans l'eau qui coule  
Ils sont dans l'eau qui dort  
Ils sont dans la case, ils sont dans la foule  
Les morts ne sont pas morts (p. 100)

It is clear that Diop is not only working with one of the fundamental beliefs of his people, but he is also doing so in a style whose repeated invocations and parallel phrasing strongly echo indigenous poetic practice. This is exemplified in Senghor's "Prière aux masques" (Prayer to the Mask):

Masques! Ô Masques!  
Masques noir masque rouge,  
Vous masques blanc et noir  
Masques aux quatre point d'ou  
Souffle l'Esprit  
Je vous salue dans le silence  
Et pas toi le dernier, Ancêtre  
À tête de lion. (p. 25)

In Senghor's "Nuit de Sine", ancestors are abiding and serve as source of help and solace to whom the poets can run in times of doubt and anguish. They are symbolised as masks and Black Women:

Femme, allume la lampe au beurre clair,  
Que causent autour les Ancêtres comme  
Les parents, les enfants au lit  
Écoutons la voix des Anciens d'Élissa  
Comme nous exilés. (p. 16)

Woman, light the clear oil lamp,  
Where the ancestors gathered around may talk as parents talk  
when the children are put to bed  
Listen to the voice of the ancients of Elissa,  
Exiled like us (p. 303)

These negritude poets are proud of African culture and draw strength from it and pledge their loyalty to Africa. Negritude movement has really helped the poets to preserve their cultural identity in the face of some degree of western assimilation.

In Senghor's collection of poem *Chant d'Ombre* (Songs of Darkness), he evokes the guiding spirit of the ancestors in an "animal garden" portrayed as an intermediary between the living and the dead. Senghor shares the belief that the dead are in many ways alive. He

sees the dead as those who refuse to die and those who know how to resist death in *Memoriam*:

O morts défendez les toits de Paris dans  
La brume Dominicale  
Les trois qui protègent mes morts  
Que de ma tour dangereusement sûre,  
Je descende dans la rue  
Avec mes freres aux yeux bleus  
Aux mains dire (p. 12)

In many of the poems written by the selected francophone poets, it is observed that rites of passage are celebrated. Ancestors are highly valued in traditional Africa and everybody lives to be one. Senghor alludes to this when he states that:

J'étais moi-même le grand-père  
De mon grand-père  
J'étais son âme et son ascendance. (p. 50)

Many of the African elders depicted in African literature believe that the dead must be consulted, if actions are expected to bear fruit. The traditional Africa was natural as it took care of being and things (Ayeleru, 2011:171). The importance of the ancestors is in their immortality for the fact that they did die but continue to live.

### **Colonialism and exploitation**

Africans are victims of colonialism, domination, oppression, exploitation and linguistic rape. For example, David Diop's poems centre on the contemporary events of the age which means the struggle for cultural and political independence. He read about African culture being suppressed by the colonial masters and his poems lament from the foreign land for the survival of African culture. David Diop's language to attack foreign exploiters and destroyers of African culture is sarcastic and ironic. For example, in "Les Vautours" (The Vultures), it goes thus:

En ce temps-là  
A coups de gueule de civilisation  
A coups d'eau bénite sur les fronts domestiqués  
Les vautours construisaient à l'ombre de leurs serres  
Le sanglant monument de l'ère tutélaire  
En ce temps-là. (p. 10)

In those days  
When civilisation kicked us in the face  
When holy water slapped our cringing brows  
The vultures built in the shadow of their talons  
The blood-stained monument of tutelage. (p. 75)

The poet recalls the civilisation brought by the colonialists. Civilisation is usually welcomed as a mark of progress and joy but reverse is the case. Diop describes this type of civilisation as kicking the natives in the face which is contrary to expectation. Their 'holy water' which is supposed to cleanse them from ills of life is slapping their humble 'cringing brows'. The foreigners are seen as exploiters. They are described as blood thirsty "vultures". The words and phrases used to create images of the exploiters are not only sarcastic, but also ironic. They vividly portray the foreigners' evil deeds among the natives:

En ce temps-là  
Les rires agonisaient dans l'enfer  
Métallique des routes  
Et le rythme monotone des Pater-Noster  
Couvrait les hurlements des plantations à profit. (p. 10)

The poet's expression is ironic as he describes the natives' laughter as painful 'on the metallic hell of the road'. The repeated "Lord's Prayer" is supposed to bring one nearer to God. "The Lord's Prayer" is 'monotonous'. "Et le rythme monotone des Pater-Noster" that it overwhelms the natural atmosphere of the area. This is a sarcastic remark on the foreigners as propagators of religion. The poet also recalls their kisses which are natural, spontaneous and are being forced from natives. Such kisses serve as a trap for them to exploit Africans. He describes the colonialists as knowing all the books but do not know love 'Vous saviez tous les livres vous ne saviez pas l'amour'. Love, which is supposed to be end-product of learning, is absent in the foreigners and this is another example of sarcasm employed by the poet to achieve his aim.

The poet also uses the language to create the images of the toiling natives on their 'desolation village of torn Africa'. The natives, rather than being dejected and disheartened under this condition, are filled with hopes and aspirations that would spread across Africa, even to Europe. He concludes that:

L'espoir vivait en nous comme une citadelle  
Et des mines du Souazi land à la sueur lourde des usines  
d'Europe  
Le printemps prendra chair sous nos pas de clarté. (p. 10)

Hope was preserved in us as in a fortress  
And from the mines of Swaziland (South Africa)  
To the factories of Europe (Across Africa to Europe)  
Spring will be reborn under our bright steps (p. 75)

Spring symbolises new life after the deadly winter season. In other words, the poet prophesies the wind of great hope, the wind of change that must blow across Africa.

David Diop effectively uses figures of speech such as personification, metaphor and simile to convey his feelings in the poem. With personification, civilisation is given human power to kick the natives on the face; holy water also has the power to slap their brows. This device is meant to emphasise the cruelty of the people whom the words symbolise. The grabbing missionaries are metaphorically described as vultures who come to exploit helpless natives because vultures are known for feeding on human misfortunes, dead bodies, of war or any other calamity. In the hours of the natives' misfortunes, the human vultures arrive to build their 'blood stained monuments of tutelage, that is, 'le sanglant monument de l'èretuté laire. More examples of metaphor are 'the womb of the earth', 'le ventre de la terre' and 'the mines of Swaziland' 'des mines du Souaziland'. These images show the atmosphere of confusion that the foreigners have created with their new religion. The poet describes the monotonous rhythm of their prayers as the image of the ocean, which drowns former natural orderly atmosphere of the natives.

Ajayi (2004) and Ayeleru (2011) attest to the colonisation and oppression of African people through their creative writing. For example, in *Le systeme colonial et ses mutations à travers les premiers Œuvres de Mongo Beti*, Ajayi avers that:

Les populations colonisées sont aussi constamment soumises à des représailles parfois inattendues et dénuées de tout scupule. C'est en effet cet appareil militaire que les colonisateurs employant pour intimider et conteurs employant pour intimider et contenir les populations indigènès afin d'attendre leurs objectifs: travaux forcés, imports et recrutent de la main d'œuvre gratuite...(p. 80)

In the same vein, Ayeleru in *African Cultural Rebirth: A Literary Approach* supports David Diop who vehemently opposes European colonisation of Africa. In another poem, "Le temps du martyre" (The Time of the Martyre), David Diop openly exposes hypocritical, sadistic, and exploitative nature of the colonial masters. The poem goes thus:

Le Blanc a tué mon père  
Mon père était fier  
Le Blanc a violé ma mère  
Ma mère était belle  
Le Blanc a courbé mon frère  
Sous le soleil des routes  
Mon frère était fort  
Le Blanc a tourné vers moi  
Ses mains rouges de sang  
Noir  
Et de sa voix de Maître  
“He boy, un berger, une serviette de l’eau! (p. 33)

The Whiteman killed my father  
My father was proud  
The Whiteman raped my mother  
My mother was beautiful  
The Whiteman bent my brother  
Under the sun of forced labour  
My brother was strong  
The Whiteman turned to me  
His hands covered with Blackman’s blood  
And said in his authoritative voice  
“Hey boy, a shepherd, a serviette and water!” (p.50)

Ayeleru further states that David Diop is exceptionally bold and remarkably blunt in this poem. He exposes how Europe bastardised and destroyed African cultures. He concisely summarises the death, murder, forced labour and sadism that characterised colonisation.

### **Negritude movement**

Negritude is a literary and artistic movement that metamorphosed into a political and socio-cultural movement. It is a consequence of foreign influences, particularly by Europeans on Africans. Aimé Césaire, a Caribbean writer invented the doctrine of Negritude in his text *Cahier d’un retour au pays natal* (Return To My Native Land, 1939). This text examines the responsibilities of men of culture to the Black world and the renewal of African identity. This ideology was later elaborated by Senghor as the awareness, defence and development of African cultural values. Senghor defines Negritude as “L’ensemble des valeurs culturelles du monde noir, le refus de l’Autre. C’est l’affirmation de soi” (The totality of the cultural values of the Black world, the refusal of the other, is the affirmation of self).

The African past which was known to the white race was one of slavery, denigration and colonialism and the aim of negritude at its inception was a process of self-authentication and the revaluation of African civilisation and the essence of this civilisation became the subject of negritude poets such as Aimé Césaire, Léon Gontran Damas, Léopold Sédar Senghor, David Diop, Birago Diop and Bernard Dadie. Apart from self-definition and authentication of African culture, it became the role of negritude poets to denounce the evils of colonialism and assimilation.

Negritude is the totality of African cultural value in the world. It is a rallying point of cry and revolt against the European exploitations of the Africans as well as the attitude of revolt and the consciousness of being Black and the acceptance of one's blackness. Senghor in his words in *Liberté 1* defines it as:

La Negritude, c'est ce que les Anglophones désignent sous l'expression de personnalité africaine, c'est donc la personnalité collective négro-africaine c'est l'ensemble des valeurs culturelles du monde noir, telles qu'elles s'expriment dans la vie, les institutions et les œuvres des noirs. (p. 150)

Poems that depict Africa and show considerable emotional attachment to her as ancestral home include "Afrique" (Africa) by David Diop and *Et cetera* (Poem dedicated to Senegalese soldiers in the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War) by Aimé Césaire.

For Senghor and the first generation of critics of the African creative works, negritude was not only a cultural and ideological phenomenon; but it was also poetic. The crux of the poetics is the projection of the African presence to the outside world and this presence is interpreted to mean the beauty of African culture, which consists of its functional and aesthetic aspects. Negritude poetry shows its love for nature, rhythm, folklore, imagery and symbolism. In the words of Senghor:

Ce qui fait la Négritude d'un poème c'est moins le thème que le style, la chaleur émotionnelle qui donne la vie aux mots qui transmutent la parole en verbe. (p. 23)

What constitutes the Negritude of a poem is less the theme than the style, the emotional warmth which gives life to words, which changes speech into words.

This is what makes poetry national because it is essential for him to speak from the root, from which he has sprung. Whatever comes after this is just additional to his authentic self.

Kesteloot (1992) cites Senghor's definition of negritude that it is the cultural patrimony, the values and above all the spirit of Negro-African civilisation. From Senghor's point of view, his definition is completely against European prejudices and bias that Africans invented nothing, that Africa itself is a tabular rasa, no contribution to world thought. Based on this, Léopold Sédar Senghor, through his poem "Totem" disapproves European erroneous belief about Africa by saying:

Il me faut le cacher au plus intime de mes veines  
L'Ancêtre à la peau d'orage sillonnée d'éclairs et de foudre  
Mon animal gardien, il me faut le cacher  
Que je ne rompe le barrage des scandales  
Il est mon sang fidèle qui requiert fidélité  
Protégeant mon orgueil nu contre  
Moi-même et la superbe des races heureuses...(p. 26)

I must hide in the intimate depths of my veins  
The Ancestor storm-dark skinned, shot with lightning and  
thunder  
And my guardian animal, I must hide him  
Lest I smash through the boom of scandal  
He is my faithful blood and demands fidelity  
Protecting my naked pride against  
Myself and all the insolence of lucky races. (p. 50)

The poem cited above signifies the poet's wish to demonstrate to the Europeans that the black people have origin, they are not rootless. Totem depicts the profound unity among the Africans which are cemented across the continent unlike the whites that are linked by nationality. This truth is supposed to make the colonisers perplexed and realise that the unity among the Africans subverts colonial regimes in Africa and they are much more related through their symbols.

Muvindi (2014) opines that in African culture, a man is not allowed to reveal his totem to stranger, it is an abomination which may lead to betwitchment. He says "Il me faut le cacher au plus intime de mes veines" (it is necessary to hide it in the intimate depths of his veins). Therefore, Senghor appeals to the ancestral tie/knot which serves as a personal secret a stranger of another blood should not know anything about. Totem, a guardian animal, is something one should be proud of, it is a secret that is known only to his kinsmen that are knitted to his heart such that the foreigner will be full of envy as he wallows in his own totem.

Léopold Sédar Senghor reveals how he discovered and was introduced to his totem, “L’Ancêtre à la peau d’orange sillonnées” (Ancestor storm-dark skinned). Totem bestows much respect to his ancestral father to whom he is very much proud of. He describes the Ancestor as “storm-dark skinned” whom his culture serves as a sign of prowess, valour and energy. The poet’s ancestor is known as a warrior and life-giver that is able to defend his younger ones from the atrocity of foreigners.

Only African people understand the cultural significance of the image of lightning and thunder because of strength and energy they derive from them. For example, white people are ignorant of how lightning can be used to frighten and destroy their enemies when the need arises to cause havoc which remain a mystery to the European settlers up till this very moment. In the poem cited above, the poet names the totem his guardian animal, “Mon animal gardien, “il me faut le cacher” (My guardian animal, he protects me) which is against Christianity that believes that everybody moves about with his guardian angel who protects him by his sword of fire. The European is surprised that the same concept appears also in African culture which is an animal, African totem. Senghor proves that African religion is similar but outshines European religion because African ancestor sends the guardian animal to protect his son or daughter against the white man’s imaginary angel whom he claims he sees in his dreams. To this end, African belief is a reality that surpasses the white man’s imagination called faith.

On the other hand, the poet believes in the sacredness of his totem, which must be hidden in order to avoid scandal (Que je ne rompe le barrage des scandales). Here, Senghor does not convince the coloniser shows him that he has his own culture which is sacred like any other. He declares that his guardian animal is important that he protects him from the coloniser who thinks that his victim has no culture and decides to impose on him his own culture.

Totem is a direct attack and indictment on the coloniser and simultaneously warning him to steer clear of his African religion because it is a dangerous attempt. Against the foregoing, negritude movement is a protest against the European’s view of an African man as being poor, non-civilised, non-cultured and rootless and as it has been shown in the analysis of Senghor’s poetry, negritude tells African story that black is beautiful and Africa itself is a pride.

Among major African negritude poets, Léopold Sédar Senghor, Birago Diop, David Diop and Bernard Dadié demonstrate more than other poets the concept of Africanness which is negritude. For example, in “Ecoutez camarades” (Listen Comrades), Diop demonstrates his love for the African continent and acknowledges its lores and traditions:

Ecoutez des camarades  
Ecoutez les camarades des siècles en lutte  
À la vive clameur du nègre de  
L'Afrique aux Amériques  
Ils ont tué Mamba  
Comme ils ont tué les sept Martinsville. (p. 20)

The poet starts with the recollection of the names of many people in their locality who have passed through pains and agonies for many decades of colonialism from Europeans' humiliation and subjugation since the Black encountered white people's culture, they kill Mamba He admits that “C'est vrai qu'ils l'ont tué Mamba aux cheveux blancs, qui dix fois nous versa le lait et la lumière” (Mamba with his white hairs, who ten times poured forth for us milk and light). The title of the poem is interesting “Ecoutez camarades”; typically, it is an African poem and a way of soliciting help, support and cooperation from kinsmen to explain the bitter experience that touches the entire community and to find lasting solutions to the problem. To adopt the narrative technique, David Diop determines to carry his people along with him and at the same time stir up their emotions.

In the same vein, Diop recounts many events that he and his community experienced such as slavery, colonialism and neo-colonialism. He vividly remembers the slavery experience where African people were captured unawares and were transported from Africa to America. He explains further on the torture, exile and humiliations, starvation and injustice suffered in the hands of the European colonial masters:

Le cri decent peuples écrasant les tanières et mon sang  
d'années d'exil.

(The cry of a hundred people smashing their cells and my  
blood long held in exile)

And the African philosophic way of viewing human suffering and the optimism of life:

C'est le signe de l'aurore, le signe fraternel qui viendra  
norms le rêve des hommes.

(It is the sign of dawn, the sign of brotherhood which comes to nourish the dreams of men).

He uses several images and techniques whereby the poet recounts the common experience of African culture to ask for cooperation, goodwill and help to overcome the evil of colonialism and to remind them of their historical background. In “Après de Toi” (Your Presence), Diop demonstrates his love for Africa:

Après de toi j’ai retrouvé mon nom  
Mon nom longtemps caché sous le sel des distances  
J’ai retrouvé les yeux que ne violent plus les fièvres  
Après de toi j’ai retrouvé la mémoire de mon sang. (p. 22)

In your presence I have rediscovered my name  
My name that was long hidden under the salt of distances  
I have rediscovered the eyes which are no more to be clouded  
by fears  
In your presence I have rediscovered the memory of my blood (p. 44)

Here, he expresses his deep connection to the African ancestral root for he has been away from Africa more than a decade ago (*Dix ans mon amour*). His home-coming and reunion he establishes with his relatives will give peace, rest, joy and unlimited satisfaction. One of the important elements of this poem is the employment of contrast as rhetorical device because Africa and Europe are compared and contrasted. Diop symbolises Africa as a bed of roses : “Et ton rire comme la flamme trouant l’ombre” (laughter like a flame of piercing the shadows) “Et les colliers de rires autour des jours, les jours qui étincellent de joies renouvelées” (Days sparkling with ever new joys).

David Diop lived in exile for ten years and those years in isolation were traumatic; he was in pain and disillusioned. Indeed, all his ideas were abandoned: He says, “J’ai retrouvé les yeux que ne violent plus les fièvres (the snows of yesterday and eyes veiled with fever). He describes the environment where he lives, the white socio-cultural milieu as hell “cette souffrance qui charge le présent du goût des lendemains (suffering that burdens today with the taste of tomorrow).

### **Theme of protest, militancy and revolution**

This theme can be found in the works of all the selected negritude poets. To Diop, whatever the poet writes must be of relevance to society. Theme of militancy appears in *Le Temps du martyr*. Diop enumerates all the crimes committed by the white men against

Africans such as torture, rape and murder. Similar themes recur in *Celui Qui a Tout Perdu* and in *Souffre pauvre negre*. He does not only draw attention to the atrocities committed by the white colonialists, but also calls on Africans to fight for their freedom. In *Défi à la force*, Diop appeals to the suffering and oppressed Africans to revolt:

Toi mon frère au visage de peur et d'angoisse  
Relève-toi et crie: Non! (Dabie Diop, 1973: 11)

In the same vein, Frantz Fanon conscientises African men to take action against the white. He says: "Europe has laid her hands on our continents, we must slash at her fingers till she lets go. (Ibid, 1983:11). David Diop, Aimé Césaire, Walter Rodney and Frantz Fanon are militant and aggressive towards white people for their imperialistic mission in Africa.

It has also been established that negritude poetry is that of protest and revolt and the revolutionary movement is made manifest in the works of nearly all the negritude poets. It cannot be said that the poetry of Senghor does not contain some elements of activism (Angrey, 2000). In his *Poème liminaire*, Senghor talks about Senegalese *Tirailleurs* where he takes it upon himself to solve the problems of the *Tirailleurs* who seem to have no one to speak for them. He makes himself their spokesman as these lines attest:

Je ne laisserai pas la parole aux ministres, et pas aux  
généraux.  
Je ne laisserai pas-non-les louanges de mépris vous enterrer  
furtivement vous n'etes pas des pauvres aux poches vides  
sans honneurs.  
Mais je déchirerai les rires BANANIA sur tous les murs de  
France. (p. 99)

This poem is a call to arms and a promise that the poet makes to his black brothers who have found themselves fighting in the interest of France. This poem intends to give his aim which is that of giving honour to Senegalese *Tirailleurs*.

The selected negritude poets studied in this work celebrate Africa, being their fatherland. They also point out the atrocities committed by the Whites on the black people during slave trade; they express disgusts and conflicting attitudes about the actions of the past and convey a sense of hope to the Africans about what is in store for them. They really play major role in shaping the attitudes that Africans have today about their freedom and their role in the world. Negritude poets base their writings on their temperament, their understanding and their world view. But the fact remains that their themes point to the same

goal though they are varied. The theme of protest shows that the poets must first of all accept that they are what they are. They urge the black man not to be ashamed of his blackness; rather, he should embrace same and feel proud of it (Angrey, 2000:104). For example, David Diop uses his poetry to call for action. He exhorts the black man to stand up, face up to the challenge with defiance and say “No” to all that has the tendency to subjugate him. The poet’s position is made manifest in the poem “Defi à la force”:

Toi qui plies toi qui pleurs  
Toi qui meurs un jour comme ça  
Sans savior pourquoi  
Toi qui luttas qui veilles pour le repos de l’Autre  
Toi qui ne regardes plus avec le rire dans les yeux  
Toi mon frère au visage de peur et d’angoisse  
Relève toi et crie: Non!

You who bend you who weep  
You who die one day just like that not knowing why  
You who struggle and stay awake for the other’s rest  
You with no more laughter in your look  
You my brother with face of fear and anguish  
Rise and shout: No!

(As quoted by Oladitan, 2011:11)

David Diop’s major preoccupation is protest and struggle for the political emancipation of his oppressed brothers through the adoption of a more positive and radical poetic approach. But Senghor’s personal experiences and feelings betray him because he could not totally reject or condemn European colonial vices towards Africa; he asks for forgiveness and pardon in his poems *Priere de paix* or *Neige sur Paris*. While claiming his Africanity, he does not want to lose his Frenchness and so prefers to preach reconciliation and peace in his poetry (Mokwenye, 2009:17). David Diop’s poems are politically and culturally committed while Senghor’s intimacy with France clearly affects his reaction to European colonial policies against Africa and so places the poem at a disadvantage.

Léopold Senghor affirms that Diop’s poetry is “a violent expression of a strident racial sensibility.” Senghor’s poetry is peaceful, collaborative, and conciliatory while Diop’s is acidic, aggressive, tempestuous, provocative and revolutionary. David Diop’s revolutionary poems are similar to those of Frantz Fanon, Aimé Césaire, Jacques Roumain.

### **Theme of ambivalence**

Ambivalence in Senghor's poetry corresponds to his dilemma as a man of two worlds, though his loyalty to France does not diminish likewise his love for Africa remains steadfast. Therefore, he is a man of two worlds. His love for France does not diminish his sense of loyalty to Africa but determines a direction of his feelings towards a resolution of his personal conflict. Senghor feels the necessity to reaffirm his Africanness in *A l'appel de la race de Saba*:

Mère, sois bénie!  
Reconnais ton fils parmi ses camarades comme autrefois ton  
champion  
Kor-Sonou! Parmi les athlètes antagonistes  
A son nez fort et à la délicatesse de ses attaches...  
Reconnais ton fils à l'authenticité de son regard,  
Qui est celle de son cœur et de son lignage. (p. 60)

He makes his poetry to carry his consciousness beyond the problem created by the colonial situation and to elaborate a new idea of unity that would embrace both terms of reference of his cultural and human awareness. Through his poems, he seeks a reconciliation of Africa and Europe and defines the universal brotherhood that he envisions at the end of it:

Et donne à leurs mains chaudes  
Qu'elles enlacent la terre d'une ceinture de mains  
fraternelles  
Dessous L'ARC-EN-CIEL DE TA PAIX.

Senghor's ambivalence can be explained by the fact that he is too deeply assimilated into the French culture which he greatly admires. David Diop, Lilian Kesteloot and others refuse to forgive Senghor for his ambivalence and lack of genuine commitment towards the total condemnation of France and Europe over their colonial iniquities.

Bernard Dadié is a humanist and traditionalist to the core because he seeks the essence of civilisation through knowledge of people and their cultures, exhibiting an openness to all aspects of human existence that celebrate man's supremacy and superiority affirming an aspiration to emphasise good even in a universe of hell. Bernard Dadié is a black man from an ex-colony of France, which makes his humanistic posture problematic. They enjoyed France citizenship as well as their education but the colonial experience makes the colonised to doubt humanism. Ojo-Ade (1992:211) confirms that:

Such is the dilemma of our African elite that they cannot fully or fairly question colonialism: they are its children, its revered, select offspring, representing its triumph over the savage continent.

Theme of ambivalence is seen in Bernard Dadié's *Hommes de tous les continents* :

J'étais là lorsque l'ange chassait l'ancêtre,  
J'étais là lorsque les eaux  
Mangeaient les montagnes  
Encore là, lorsque Jésus réconciliait  
Le ciel et la terre,  
Toujours là, lorsque son sourire  
Par-dessus les ravins  
Nous liait au même destin. (p. 99)

Critics have pointed out Bernard Dadié's love for France. Further proof is easily found in Dadié's poetry *L'Homme et l'Œuvre* which makes his devotion and gratitude to France comparable to the deepest feelings of any negritude poet:

France has given me neither the gun, nor the powder, nor the  
bullet that forever brought down Black or White but on the  
contrary, she has aroused in my heart, the love of humanity.  
(1967: 77)

Here, Dadié exhibits a psychological disposition as well as anxiety to attain goals fixed on contemporary Africa.

#### 4.17 'Writing back' through orature in negritude poetry

The ability to relate one's experience of life to the whole world has really played a vital role in the lives of African men and women, including Black American people who need the space to tell their own stories. The tragic consequences of slavery continue to hunt its victims even in the twenty-first century. As a result, the urge to reflect the agony of trying to belong in a society which hardly recognises their presence becomes a duty for black authors in African world. Black writers often write themselves into their texts by providing reliable sources for historical research in their fiction. For example, Benaouda Lebdaï (2015) argues in his text *Introduction to Autobiography as a Writing Strategy in Postcolonial Literatures* that black authors through self-telling reveal and affirm their personality and individuality and the reconstruction of their lives with genuine impact on politics and literacy. In the same vein, they says further that autobiographical writings are

more than the representation of one's life but it is a powerful quest for identity, self-recognition and self-knowledge in colonial and postcolonial eras.

The pioneer West African writers who used the medium of writing to explain to the world about their existence and to engage in polemics with writers and critics for other countries who portrayed them subjectively are Naipaul, V. S., Salman Rushdie, Rene Maran, Bakary Diallo, Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen, etc. In 1927, Maurice Delafosse published his *Les Negres* an ethnological account of Africa, Andre Gide's *Voyage au Congo* and *Retour au Tchad* (1932) and Marcel Sauvage's *Les Secrets de l'Afrique* all try to tear the veil of hypocrisy of French colonialism (Adebayo, 1995). Colonial masters and their system of ruling introduced written literature to Africa in their own official language to the extent that this language became official language in all quarters of the colonised people and having conquered their subjects with French language, the African men in their bid to retaliate the white colonial masters came to the African literary world to expose the colonial masters and their evil deeds and as well attack their erroneous colonial writings in order to combat the arrogant views of the superiority of European culture and also a way of exposing the colonisers' misdeeds on the continent. African writers like Chinweizu, Frantz Fanon, Aimé Césaire and Rodney Walter, David Diop in their poem "Celui qui a tout perdu," maintain that colonisation hindered African growth. They also assert that the European mission to Africa ruined African cultural legacy and upended the formerly tranquil continent (Sanusi, 2015).

"Writing Back" started as a commonwealth literature in 1920. Commonwealth literature is a literary and artistic works from some continents that have been colonised by the British people. This includes literary texts that are written by resident writers who originated from former and old colonies. The most surprising thing and irony is that the best literature that came from Britain in some years back are produced by writers from former colonies. These writers are: Ben Okri (Nigeria), Salman Rushdie (India), Jean Rhys (Dominica), Timothy, M. O. (Hong Kong), Naipaul, V. S. (Trinidad). Their beautiful literary pieces and texts have been published as books and journal articles and titled as "The Empire Write Back".

Commonwealth literature is now used interchangeably as postcolonial literature which includes literatures from other languages like Portuguese, Spanish, German and

British. Postcolonial literature now covers the literature of Pakistan, Malaysia, Australia, Canada and African countries. Another vital aspect of commonwealth literature is that it is written in one place by people from another place, for example, Ben Okri is a Nigerian who resides in Europe and writes his postcolonial literature from there. On the other hand, features of their writing concerns displacement, marginalisation, cultural identity, mimicry and hybridity. Commonwealth literature promotes the writings of those who might not get attention, for example, Nigerian literature.

Négritude movement can be seen as the beginning of postcolonial literature. Senghor's reputation as an apostle of negritude is well renowned and he defines negritude thus:

Négritude is the development of African cultural values, a defence and awareness. I agree, Négritude is a myth. And I agree that myths breed division and hatred, there are false myths. Négritude, being a true myth is the opposite of hatred and division. Négritude being a sort of awareness by a social and political group of people who are faced by some challenges in their world and which the expression of it is being represented by the concrete image. However, the negritude struggle must be an affirmation not a negation. Everybody must contribute to the struggle, to the building of their civilisation of the universal, to the growth of Africanity and from Africa to the people of Sub-Sahara Africa. Négritude is part of human civilisation and part of Africanity. The people's most authentic expression of itself is works of art that include sense of symbol and beauty as well as sense of image and rhythm. (p. 35)

Without mincing words, negritude is the totality of the values of world African civilisation, it is culture not racialism. It means the spirit of Negro-African civilisation based on Negro hearts and earth which is offered to the world of both things and beings to show it, understand it and unify it (p. 185)

In spite of Senghor's serious concern with the cultural aspect of Africa's contribution to world civilisation, his pre-independence poems laid the foundations for the emergence of modern African poetry. Senghor was concerned with the form of the African poem and so paid considerable attention to poetry as a form of art which to him mattered even more than the thematic aspect. This is why he categorically asserts that:

Ce qui fait la Négritude d'un poème, c'est moins le thème que le style, la chaleur émotionnelle qui donne la vie aux mots, qui transmute la parole en verbe. (p. 227)

In this light, negritude poets view themselves as fighting a committed battle on the cultural, psychological, ideological and political levels. They do not lose sight of their primary concern with art. The policy of negritude gives voices to the African people. Their work influenced other African writers who lived in France before the Second World War. African literature in French was born in the 1930s. Negritude poetic style is derived from African oral tradition. All the poetic devices explored by the negritude poets are adaptations from African oral poetry.

#### 4.18 Postcolonial theory in Negritude poetry

Postcolonial literature is part of general process of cultural and political affirmation that entails the celebration of authenticity and a return to cultural sources. It means a contest against colonial hegemony and the implication of writing back to the centre appears vividly in postcolonial theory. “Writing Back” is the dimension of social and internal political critique which critics and writers are obliged themselves to undertake to defend their people. Colonial discourse encourages the colonised to mimic the coloniser’s cultural values, habits, assumptions and institutions and the result of that combination is blurred copy of the coloniser which could be threatening to both the colonised and the coloniser (Ashcroft et al, 1990). For example, David Diop in “Le Rénégat” castigates African people against the mimicry of Homi Bhabha when he states:

Mon frère aux dents qui brillent sous le compliment hypocrite  
Mon frère aux lunettes d’or sur tes yeux rendus bleus par la  
parole du Maître  
Mon pauvre frère au smoking à revers de soie. (p. 19)

My brother with teeth that shine under the hypocritical  
compliment  
My brother with gold glasses on your eyes made blue by  
Master’s word  
My poor brother in a silk lapel tuxedo (p. 283)

To mimic the traits of the coloniser is not completely beneficial to the colonised and the coloniser because the result is a split image and caricature of the coloniser. This blurred copy is a threat to the coloniser’s civilisation and images. The act that produces this copy is what Bhabha refers to as mimicry in terms of ambivalence as similar and dissimilar (Bhabha, 1994, 1996).

Birago Diop's "Souffles" (breath ancestors) establishes the fact that African educated elite as well as Westernised Africans may abandon African cultural heritage for European culture because they believe that African culture is primordial and barbaric. They thus encourage foreign values and the African values. Birago Diop warns them against this practice in "Souffles."

The poem is a warning to renegades as David Diop warns them in his "Le Rénégat." The poem warns disobedient children who vow and choose to disobey the ancestors and the elderly. Diop cautions that refusal to obey elders will lead to shame, ridicule and regret. In this poem, Diop concludes that the dead will mock the disobedient people of Africa on their self-inflicted wounds.

Mimicry appears when members of a colonial society imitate and take on the culture of the coloniser. Therefore, colonial mimicry comes from the colonists' desire for a reformed person, a recognisable other as a subject of a difference which is almost the same but not quite the real one (Ibid: 1994). He sees mimicry as a sign of double articulation, a strategy which appropriates the other as it visualises power, Mimicry produces a partial vision of the colonised presence.

Bhabha (1994), in the theory of ambivalence, sees culture as being in opposing perceptions and dimension resulting in a duality that presents a split in the identity of the colonised other. This duality or ambivalence produces a sort of cultural hybridity which can be found in Léopold Sédar Senghor's "Prière de Paix" (Prayer for Peace), Bernard Dadie's "Hommes de tous les continents" and David Diop's "Les Vautours" (The Vultures). Broadly speaking, modern Africa knows two societies and two cultures, which it must encounter. Ambivalence is a motif in the poetry of the selected West African francophone poets because they are men of two worlds; certainly, African people cannot escape the encounter with the two ways of life, his own traditional way and that of his formal master.

The farthest area in the interior of Africa has experienced some contact with the European masters because planes are seen overhead and roads are built and being improved upon. Under these situations, Africans could not accept one society and leave the other one, they must experience both societies as quoted by Roscoe (1970).

In addition, a new cultural mood is developing and its literary manifestations are quickly detected in the negritude poetry as well as Homi Bhabha's cultural hybridity in the

sense that David Diop's "Negre Clochard" (A Nigger Tramp) addresses Africa. The message here is that of the selected West African francophone poets and the cultural mood underlying the message is assertive, aggressive, violent and optimistic and the imagery has the stamp of the prophet, calling up visions of the New Jerusalem:

L'espoir vivait en nous  
Comme une citadelle  
Le printemps prendra chair  
Sous nos pas de clarté.

The poem of David Diop represents the voice of negritude. Homi Bhabha debates the question of cultural colonialism and hybridisation extensively and he maintains that cultural purity is not visible. In his book, *Location of Culture* (1994), he places emphasis on cultural differences as opposed to cultural diversity. Ayeleru (2011) argues that culture is an attribute of man and culture is numerous and diverse. This explains why it is often said that no culture is superior to the other. Kolawole (2014) alludes to Bhabha and Ayeleru's views on culture that:

Every culture has something to offer the world as well as something to learn from other cultures. No culture is so pure that it cannot be enriched by other cultures.

Furthermore, Toyin Falola (2003:5) affirms that in the discourse and development, culture shapes people's perception of themselves and their environments, their values, norms and their general way of behaviour. He explains that the past is still relevant even in the twenty-first century. Falola's position on the concept of a relevant past and his idea of cultural nationalism is like the old negritude idea promoted by Aimé Césaire, Léopold Sédar Senghor, Birago Diop and others. Similarly, like the alienation school spearheaded by Abiola Irele, Falola (2003) advocates a creative adaptation of other cultures and civilisations. He observes that there is need to keep expanding knowledge through interaction with other cultures (Jegede, 2008:181). However, he opines that development models, whether imported or local, should be able to respect people, appreciate values and their histories. It should be able to strengthen human rights, uphold capacity building and invest cultures with the power to be functional and creative. Falola observes further that the essential ingredients in the packages for the solution of African crisis of development are the interrogation of past history, ideology and the culture of African people.

Postcolonial theorists and writers like Denis Williams (1996), Bill Ashcroft et al (1989), Edward Said (1989) and Homi Bhabha (1989) recognize that the strength of postcolonial theory is in its embracing the hybridised and syncretic view of the modern world. Cross-culturalism is seen as the "potential termination of an apparently endless human history of conquest and annihilation" (Ashcroft et al., 1989).

Orature is a precursor, a pool of linguistic and thematic resources which African writer can draw from in order to enrich and transform African culture into a potent symbol of Africanity. Orature is a modern, mainstream, heterogeneous, hybrid and changing mode of discourse which should be recognised by its own identity. It evokes alterity and has the capacity for resistance (Grodnet al, 2015 as cited by Jegede).

*The Empire Writes Back* (1989) and *Africa Writes Back* (2008) are postcolonial texts that are used as a critique of the manifold injustices perpetrated upon the once and colonised Third World countries by Western colonial powers. "Writing Back" started as commonwealth literature which dates back to the early 1960s and allowed for the first time the study of writers like Chinua Achebe, Ngugi waThiong'o and Sembene Ousmane. In their works, there are limitations and inherent biases because of their oppositional approach but then commonwealth literature serves the purpose of constructing an identity for the literary culture within the British imperial terrain. After sometimes, another categorization sprang up which is postcolonial literature, a theory-driven literature and a scholarship that abandons commonwealth literature for more combative and oppositional stand. This theory is culturally specific and focuses on indigenous elements over the influence of European aesthetics. literature makes the construction of a literary environment primarily embrace the literature of societies with a common history of colonial experience possible.

*Africa Writes Back* (2008) only imitates *The Empire Writes Back* (1989) of Ashcroft et al which is a seminal work on postcolonial studies and theory. It is a parody of the earlier work. Currey (2008:2) confirms that the book titled *Africa Writes Back* shows that Africans have really achieved a great confidence to write back to the Europeans in poetry, plays and novels about what was happening to them in the past. Chinua Achebe (1958) maintains that: The launching of Heinemann's African Writers series was like umpire's signal for which African writers had been waiting on the starting point. In the light of this, a huge and gigantic library of writing started from all over the continent and for the first time in history, African

future generations like writers and readers began to read works by their own writers about their own people such as “Coup de Pilon” 1973 by David Diop, Œuvre Poétique (2001) by Sédar Senghor, Leurres et Lueurs (1963) by Birago Diop, Afrique Debout (1950) by Bernard Dadié. Chinua Achebe also emphasizes the importance of education in Africa and he is also concerned with how African writers should spread their tentacles across the world through their creative writings.

Having considered “Africa Writes Back”, African writers were able to demonstrate to the world that the future of African writing did not lie in simple imitation of European forms but in the fusion of such forms with the oral traditions. Gayatri Spivak (1988), a postcolonial theorist and an advocate of subaltern studies group and some collective of intellectual advocates the silent women and men, including the lowest strata of the urban proletariat, the peasantry and the illiterate. Gayatri (1988) avers that “the first part of my proposition that the phased development of the subaltern is complicated by the imperialist project”. She stresses further in her text “Can the Subaltern Speak?” that she is interested in articulating voice-consciousness of the Subaltern whether male or female. Writing about the condition of subalterns, Gayatri (1988) argues that the subalterns constitute in themselves “subversive cultural politics because it provides liberating alternatives (Ludden, 2014). Paulo Freire (1970) supports Ludden that for the weak and the oppressed to be liberated from oppression, they must realise that oppression of the poor is not an end of everything but a limiting strategy where they still have opportunity to progress.

How does negritude poetry infused with orature break the yoke of subalternity? Negritude poets, the likes of Bernard Dadié, Birago Diop, Léopold Sédar Senghor and David Diop, honour women in Subaltern, maternal and domestic tasks in their poetry. They also portray women as way makers in nurturing their children and husband (Sanusi, 2015: 28). They represent women as mothers in terms of their nurturing capabilities. For example, Senghor’s « Femme Noire » portrays the idealised African woman :

Femme nue, femme noire  
Vêtue de ta couleur qui est vie, de ta forme qui est beauté  
J’ai grandi à ton ombre; la douceur de tes mains bandait mes  
yeux. (p.16)

Naked woman, black woman  
Clothed with your colour which is life, with your form which  
is beauty  
In your shadow I have grown up;  
The gentleness of your hands was laid over my eyes (p. 96)

Senghor honors the African woman's beauty and her maternal function in this poem by presenting her as a mother whose job it is to raise and care for children. In his poem, David Diop dedicates it to his mother:

Après de toi j'ai retrouvé mon nom  
Mon nom long temps caché sous le sel des distances  
J'ai retrouvé les yeux que ne violent plus les fièvres  
Après de toi j'ai retrouvé la mémoire de mon sang. (p. 22)

In your presence I have rediscovered my name  
My name that was long hidden under the salt of distances  
I have rediscovered the eyes which are no more to be clouded  
by fears  
In your presence I have rediscovered the memory of my blood  
(p. 44)

Africa is regarded as his mother destroyed by colonialism and the image of woman here is that of Africa humiliated and subjected to colonial domination. The poet who considers his mother as Africa; hence, he chants her suffering and victimisation.

A typical example of orature can be found in the folktale of Birago Diop, to be precise, *Les Contes d'Amadou Koumba*. Diop depicts the importance of African women. His grandmother told him series of tales that remained a regular event between the two at bedtime and each night and the morals behind the tale would be revealed to him as well. Diop's grandmother speaks:

Baké, tu dors? Oui, grand-mère?  
Tant que je répondais ainsi, grand-mère  
Savait que je ne dormais pas et que  
Je tremblant de frayeur. (Diop, 1946: 9).

Baké, are you sleeping?  
Yes, grand-mother  
As much as I responded the more grandmother knew that  
I didn't sleep that I was shivering with fear. (p. 10)

At this point in the life of Birago Diop, he had already developed interest in and gained familiarity with his people's folktales. Therefore, he was a repertory of tales and his grandmother also seized the opportunity to voice out her reactions. Senghor, in the preface of "*Les Nouveaux Contes d'Amadou Koumba*", eulogises African women:

Les femmes sont tout autres  
Plus sensible, plus nerveuses  
Elles ont aussi plus de relief  
On l'oublie trop souvent, dans la  
Société négro-africaine, la femme,  
Gardienne du foyer et du sang  
On est de la race de sa mère  
Joue un rôle prépondérant. (p. 12)

Through his creative writing, Senghor gives voice to the African women. Bernard Dadié, in « Le Conte dans la Société Africaine » states the essential roles of African women:

Son premier rôle est celui de la maîtresse de maison, la femme est encore et surtout éducatrice la femme reste au centre de cet univers des contes parce qu'elle est la gardienne de toutes les valeurs traditionnelles. (p. 33)

Her first role is being the mistress of the house, mother of the house. Woman is also an educator, she is at the centre of all folktales which are African traditional values.

To this end, negritude poetry also draws insights from the subaltern studies because it is sure of transforming African societies and establishing same right for both women and men. Besides, voices of the oppressed and weak people must be listened to in order to identify the problems of the poor people in Africa.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 Summary**

The study's summary and conclusion are presented in this chapter. The study's key conclusions are emphasised below. In a similar vein, the chapter reviews the study's contribution to knowledge and offers some suggestions for additional research.

The study reveals that African orature is a repertoire of socio-cultural and political problems. Therefore, it is posited that orature can be deployed to solve the problems since it fosters pluralism of values and ideas. Orature features in the poems of selected francophone West African poets counter colonial exploitations and project African identity as we have them in “Les Vautours” (The Vultures) by David Diop where he recalls the sad days of European exploitations and the ray of hope, which awaits the colonised subject. Leopold Sedar Senghor also projects African identity in “Femme Noire” (Black Woman) where he extols the sterling qualities and beauty of African woman, that is, Africa as a continent.

Furthermore, it is established that the selected poets raise their voices against colonial vices such as injustices, rape and oppression that characterised pre-colonial period in Africa. Orature remains an artistic medium of expression that projects African consciousness as pronounced in David Diop’s “Défi à la force” and Senghor’s “Neige sur Paris.” Orature in the poetry of francophone West African negritude poets has boldly inscribed itself into the discourse of modern literatures as it promotes African cultural heritage among the comity of nations by providing useful data for critics, literary scholars, students, politicians and leaders.

The selected texts also afford us greater opportunity of distinguishing types of linguistic varieties in the poems such as intra and extra-sentential code-mixing and extra-sentential code-mixing as well as inter-sentential code-switching which eventually frame African identity and provide points of convergence for both oral and written orality.

The deployment of the varieties of performative tropes such as chant, song, music, alliteration, assonance, incantation in the poetry of selected Francophone poets results in a successful mediation of oral tradition into an authentic written orality.

The search for African identity is also emphasised across the poems of the selected francophone West African poets such as “Afrique” (Africa) by David Diop, “Femme Noire” (Black Woman) by Senghor, “Souffles” (Breath of Ancestors) by Birago Diop and “Il n’y a personne?” (There is Nobody) by Bernard Dadié.

## 5.2 Conclusion

From the findings, the study establishes the fact that there is erosion of moral decadence in Africa and we have been able to find out that orature is essential to the development of African nations and it cannot be relegated to the background any longer as it was in the past. On this note, Léopold Sédar Senghor, Birago Diop, David Diop and Bernard Dadié offer an exemplary work by promoting orature through their poetry, through which they depict socio-cultural and political problems that plunged Africa into the stream of backwardness. Therefore, their thoughts and concepts are significant because they are didactic in nature and provide guidelines and solutions to the contemporary challenges in Africa.

Moreover, it is observed that the negritude poets describe in their poetry how Africa’s continuous exploitation by the European imperialists leads her to underdevelopment and unfortunately, these cultural, social, political and economic problems which the poets seek to abolish with their radical activities are still thriving and existing in many parts of Africa today. This implies that the quest for liberation of African societies through revolutionary struggle is still meaningful until all forms of exploitation, oppression, injustice, corruption are eschewed from the African society.

The study employs postcolonial theory to analyse the selected negritude poetry and it is found out that the global problems that we face today in Africa which range from cultural to youth disorientation such as internet fraud, terrorism, corruption, rape, kidnapping, mimicry, abuse of human rights and crises of cultural identities are direct consequences of the inadequate recognition of African culture in national policies and

orature, being an instrument of revolution against socio-cultural and political injustices, could resolve these problems through hybridised culture in the world.

Orature is a reliable document for a true understanding of African contemporary world. It is also an opportunity for narrating our ancestors' achievements and their priceless contributions in enriching global thoughts and ideas. Through orature, Africans have presented to the whole world their culture, history, philosophy and their artistic aspirations. Therefore, a return to African culture is imperative and must not be seen as a path to retrogression, but a new dimension of appreciating their contributions to the past and present world resources despite all odds. Orature is, therefore, recommended as a panacea for the challenges in Africa.

In order to contextualise the analysis conducted in the following chapters, the study's first three chapters examine conceptual and theoretical concerns. The chapters provide us a solid understanding of literature, and the final two chapters analyse literature as it is mirrored in the study's poetry. Thematic thrusts, linguistic varieties such as code-mixing and code-switching, imagery and symbols deployed in the selected poems are discussed. The identified themes range from cultural identities to colonialism and exploitation, protest and revolution, ambivalence and cultural hybridity. In the same vein, the study exploits images such as animal and nature images, image of Africa, love and sound. Symbols found in the study are symbols of vegetation, death, tree, hand, and ear.

It is vital and crucial to emphasise that moral growth is a crucial factor in a country's development since a morally deficient country is a sick nation. For instance, most poems and songs in traditional African communities warn listeners of the repercussions of committing terrible behaviours as well as provide entertainment. The didactic consideration in African poetic aesthetics gives a pattern of story telling in modern African poetry e.g. epic, myth, ode and legend give the sense to instruct ethically, morally and to entertain, which makes most African poets relate their experiences through stories. The more indebted the poets are to orature, the more common the narrative feature of modern African poetry, because they tell stories in their poems, for example, Birago Diop in *Sarzan*.

Most modern African poets see themselves as producing artistic works, which will help them to edify their societies. For instance, Senghor, Birago Diop, David Diop and Bernard Dadié are defenders of African culture against Western subjugation.

The use of francophone oral tropes such as metaphor, irony, hyperbole, images, symbols and personification could be said to be a strong determining factor of modern African poetry. This is because:

If the catfish comes from beneath the river to report that the crocodile has a cold, you must not doubt the authenticity of the news. (Obeng 2019: 70)

In other words, negritude poets employ African tropes to give an authentic touch to the experiences they articulate. These poets are cultural vanguards and apostles, their literary interventions constitute significant touchstones of the collective efforts at decolonisation as well as the confrontation of African continent's post-independence struggles.

To this end, Africa's political predicament and collective situation are well discernible in their poetic creation. Their utilisation of metaphoric figures in their literary creation and production makes the effort at a literary engagement of socio-cultural crisis very important. Jegede (2021) states that postcolonialism is an appropriate discourse for research. The approach discusses the black writing model that explores the effects of production of postcolonial texts on social and historical texts which manifest in the oral poetry of Senghor and David Diop. Francophone oral tropes and modes such as apt metaphor are deployed in the selected poems.

Furthermore, Williams and Adefarasin (2021) refer to Homi Bhabha's cultural hybridity as the integration of cultural signs and practices from the colonised cultures which eventually result into cross-fertilisation of cultures that might be seen as positively enriching and dynamic yet oppressive. However, the selected francophone African poets embrace genuinely Homi Bhabha's cultural hybridity but the oppressive aspect of it is what they continually oppose because it retrogresses and undermines African development in the contemporary period.

Senghor, Birago Diop, David Diop and Bernard Dadié at the level of linguistic hybridity have created identity for their people through their domesticated and hybridised form of the French language. They employ oral elements which include poetic techniques like code-switching and code-mixing of Wolof expression into French language. This technique provides African cultural vehicle that is adequate for the presentation of socio-cultural and political realities of the African people. Therefore, the foreign culture of

exploitation and oppression is symbolically thrown overboard through effective linguistic deviation of standard French. This strategy is widespread in African literature. The emergence of the postcolonial theory championed by writers and critics like Homi Bhabha, Edward Said and Frantz Fanon further legitimises the principle of linguistic hybridity in African literature. Hybridity plays a major role in the domestication of European languages in African literature (Ayeleru, 2010). The call for upholding African cultural heritage is a clarion call for all Africans to wake up from their dogmatic slumber and be alive to their responsibilities.

This study has also shown that orature is capable of challenging socio-cultural and political problems in Africa, because it attends to psychological well-being of African people. It also ensures continuity, promotes and integrates social change and development in Africa. It is therefore, recommended that orature should be encouraged, sustained and strengthened to achieve its functional and aesthetic roles in African society.

We must stop placing the blame for all of Africa's issues on the West if we want to put an end to the rot. Everyone can see how self-inflicted the issues Africa is facing are. As a result, the younger generation of Africans needs to advance to meet the challenges that the continent's leaders have set forth. Our current leaders should be confronted and challenged because they have become god-like figures. The younger generation of Africans ought to accept the fact that only Africans can address their own problems.

The world being a global village with multiculturalism has its core tenet, learning and teaching African culture has become important. African literature is no longer in the margin, it has really centred itself on the experiences of the African people because it has inscribed itself boldly into the discourse of modern literature. Therefore, orature is utilitarian and not art for art's sake. It impacts knowledge and entertains people; it is used daily in lives of the people. Though the traditional African society was non-literate, it had system within to teach record and express the totality of the people's experience.

Modern African Literature has matured considerably. No one can read modern African literature through a canon of its own, just as Western literature has its own canon. Since literature is a cultural production, its canon is also culturally determined (Umar, 2018). Based on this, orature is expanding expressly because of the African's experience which diversifies through the new realities of Africans. Valuable creativity is one which is

able to change concepts and perceptions of people not simply to mirror life. “It is perception that gives us the words and the choice with which we think about anything”. Creativity is the main hope that can restore thinking and making Africa a competitor to the rest of the world in the 21st century. Emphasis should be laid on creativity, for creativity is at the centre of all creative processes. Creation of concepts and new ideas is the basic tool that we need to accomplish this task. To achieve this, we have to invest in our language and literatures for the past is not dead in the research of African indigenous thought, the past should be revisited in a dynamic and proactive way.

Ayeleru (2011:174) opines that African writers should rededicate themselves to the reawakening of African cultures which will eventually boost African development and reintegrate Africa into the comity of nations and into the globalized and contemporary civilised world.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

Arising from the findings of this study, it is expedient to make the following recommendations. African cultural heritage must be promoted, revisited and revived. It should not be allowed to die off the surface of the earth. Africans must all unite in the task of safeguarding their culture. To help us reach the next stage of advancement and development, it is both desirable and important to cherish and promote African culture. In the same vein, African people should rededicate themselves to the renaissance of African culture which will eventually boost the integration of Africa into the contemporary globalised civilisation.

Moreover, there should be a re-discovery of the cultural and spiritual ties which bind all black and African people together all over the world. Orature serves as a vehicle that conveys nationalist feelings; it denounces colonialism and neo-colonialism and proudly asserts the validity of African culture which colonialists had destroyed. African oral literature should be preserved because it relaxes mind, entertains and takes people’s mind away from their problems. Taking off mind from the stress of the day prolongs one’s life and guards against mental illness. Depressed body system is changed to active body on the account of orature. Orature is meant to reform African youths. Therefore, it must be imbibed to correct some errors committed by our forefathers. Orature is bound to correct the ills of society by exposing and correcting the ignorance of the populace. The study recommends

the new trend to African youths by reading and writing literary texts to checkmate and denounce corrupt practices in society in order to ensure proper sustainable.

In the same manner, this research work encourages African people to contribute meaningfully to the personality development, world thoughts and continually explore common grounds for collective and individual development. Parents and guardians must deeply be involved in the promotion of African cultural heritage. This study corroborates the view of Abioye (1990) which admonishes African people that they must not shy away from shouting their cultures and traditions on the roof-tops so that other nations and people of the world may come to the same conclusion with us that although some cultures are more popular than others, there is no culture that is superior to the other. African oral literature must be taught in primary, secondary and tertiary institutions in Africa. By so doing, African culture will not die a natural death.

#### **5.4 Contributions to knowledge**

Given to the fact that works on francophone African poetry in French studies in Nigeria are becoming relatively limited as prose and drama appear to be the generic preferences of postgraduate students of literature of French expression, this study constitutes a renewal and revival of scholarly interest in Negritude poetry and orature. With the comparative perspective of four major African Negritude Poets such as Senghor, Birago Diop, David Diop and Dadié, a new vista of critical poetic engagements has been opened and negotiated demonstrating the values and volumes of oral intertextuality in African orature discourse. With the use of postcolonial theoretical lenses, the study has illustrated the endless interpretative potentialities and possibilities of African orature in Modern African literature that can shape the understanding of African oral traditions and their relevance to the African modern life and its development. On the other hand, this research work has greatly contributed to knowledge for the fact that nowadays, the upcoming literary scholars dwell more on prose and drama texts at the detriment of poetry because many people believe that poetry is complex and difficult to access, therefore, it is signalling the extinction of poetry and this work is an attempt to arrest the ugly trend. Moreso, the work realises that the scholarly works of the earliest Negritude writers are being relegated to the background, some claim that they are already overflogged but this thesis has decided to take

a new look at the supposedly literary work as catalyst to African cultural rebirth. The thesis has modestly demonstrated that what is now called today as postcolonial theory actually started by the Negritude writers such as Frantz Fanon in *Les damnés de la terre* (1961), Leopold Sedar Senghor's *Chants d'Œmbre* (1945) and *Hosties Noires* (1948), Jacques Chevrier's "Littérature nègre" (1945) and Aimé Césaire "Cahier d'un retour au pays natal" (1939).

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