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TYPOLOGY AND SIGNIFICANCE OF PROVERBS AND PROVERBIAL DEVICES IN BAYO ADEBOWALE'S *LOVELY DAYS*¹

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ABSTRACT

Proverbs belong to oral literature. Every African familiar with his culture knows a certain number of them and uses them whenever they are necessary. But making their typology raises another problem. For, they abound in African cultures, and touch all the fields of human activities. Their significance is both universal and contextual. Bayo Adebowale has used some in many forms in his novel *Lovely Days* which depicts the solitary life of a widow. Yaremi thought that she could peacefully manage her widowhood without taking into account neither the village culture which demands a remarriage for widows nor the reaction of the community. The present article, through discourse analysis, shows how her experiences and feelings of widow are woven in proverbs and proverbial devices.

Key-words: proverbs; culture; discourse analysis; typology; significance.

Résumé

Les proverbes appartiennent à la littérature orale. Tout Africain familiarisé avec sa culture en connaît un certain nombre et les utilise au besoin. Mais, faire leur typologie pose un autre problème. Car, ils foisonnent dans les cultures africaines et touchent tous les domaines d'activités humaines. Leur signification est à la fois universelle et contextuelle. Bayo Adebowale en a utilisés un certain nombre sous plusieurs formes dans son roman *Lovely Days* qui présente la vie solitaire d'une veuve. Yaremi croyait qu'elle pouvait gérer paisiblement son veuvage sans compter avec la culture du village qui exige un remariage aux veuves, ni avec la réaction de la communauté. Le présent article montre, à travers l'analyse du discours, comment ses expériences vécues et ses sentiments de veuve sont tissés dans des proverbes et procédés proverbiaux.

Mots-clé : proverbes, culture, analyse du discours, typologie, signification.

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INTRODUCTION

Lovely Days, a novel dealing with the widowhood of Yaremi who refuses to remarry according to tradition in Kufi village, is punctuated with more than 40 proverbs of all types. Proverbs are

defined by Wikipedia free encyclopedia as "*Concrete sayings, popularly known and repeated, that express a truth based on common sense or experience*". Are proverbs and proverbial devices necessary to the understanding of the novel? What connection do they

have with the predicament of the widow or any other message in the novel? Proverbs constitute an aspect of oral literature which is currently found in written literature, particularly in West Africa and even more in Anglophone West Africa countries. An Igbo popular proverb says in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*ⁱⁱⁱ that "Proverbs are the palm-oil with which words are eaten". It implies that proverbs give a good flavor to the message conveyed, like the palm-oil does for the meat in a sauce. This article intends to categorize and give the hidden meaning of the proverbs cited in *Lonely Days*. My study of the proverbs in the novel will be based on discourse analysis at three levels: the level of utterance, that of enunciation and the message itself. In general, the proverbs and proverbial devices used in the novel fall into two main categories: the ones related to the physical absence of the husband and those of the psychological presence of the husband in the life of the widow.

I. Theoretical Frame

Every culture has its proverbs embedded in its language. They are used to give advice or to express a belief that is generally true, but always revealing the culture which produces them. They are mostly used by the elders. If an elder speaks in public, or is called as referee to settle a discord between two parties, he mixed his speech with proverbs to give importance and emphasis to his message. Elders refer to proverbs to convey moral lessons, warning or advice to adolescents and adults. As rhetorical devices, proverbs appear to be more effective in persuading or dissuading people than are ordinary words. There are simple and complicated proverbs. Easily understandable proverbs are used to give clarity to utterances whereas complicated ones need a metalanguage on the part of the speaker for them to be understood by the listener. This is because understanding them requires a certain level of knowledge of the native culture.

A proverb can serve as a key sentence to a tale, which often refers to the moral lesson drawn from the tale. In consequence, if the whole tale is forgotten, the proverb is remembered. Proverbs revive not only tales but also plays and novels. Almost

all Wole Soyinka's plays like *The Lion and The Jewel*^{iv} and *Kong's Harvest*^v and Chinua Achebe's novels are enriched with proverbs that unveil respectively the Yoruba and Igbo visions of the world. In jurisdiction the lawyers apply the rules of the written law but the elders in Africa use oral discourse supported by proverbs they have kept in their memories.

Proverbs give opportunity to learn many things with a few words but they demand deep reflection and maturity as they are not always expressed in simple language. Its form is unchangeable. One cannot change the form and the message of a proverb as he likes.

In the Yoruba language, proverbs appear in many forms. For Leopold Sedar Senghor, African proverbs are comparable to poems. In general, they take the form of couplets. The couplet is one of the basic forms of poetry. It consists of two lines of verse with similar end-rhymes in classical verse, but in free verse, the two lines do not rhyme. In his book *Understanding Poetry*, I Bo Akporbaro defines the couplet in the following terms:

Formally the couplet is a two-line stanza with both grammatical structure and idea complete within itself (...) it is customary but not essential that the length of each line be the same. Couplets are usually written in octosyllabic and decasyllabic lines^{vi}

Senghor quotes three Wolof proverbs to illustrate his theory of the similarity between the form of African proverbs and poetic form.

*"Quand on commence par le dialogue,
L'on aboutit à une solution"
"A qui saute et tombe dans le feu
Il reste à faire un autre saut "
" Avant de crier mon Dieu, mon Dieu !
Cultive ton champs"*^{vii}

Translated into English, the three couplets remain but the number of feet varies

*"When we start with dialogue,
We reach a solution"
"To the one who jumps and falls into the fire,
It remains another jumping"
"Before shouting, my God, my God*

Cultivate your field"

Besides, Senghor puts that a proverb like a poem is made up of symbols because the signified or the meaning of the word is not clearly designated by the significant or the form of the word. That is why a comment often follows the proverb for its understanding. Laleh Bakhtiar defines symbols in "Sufi symbolism and the mystic Quest" as "relatives contained within the nature of things. They refer both

to the universal aspect of creation and the particular aspect of tradition."^{viii} To understand a proverb is to discover a truth, to resolve an enigma. For Senghor, this understanding calls for the mind and the heart. In its substance proverb is poetry. Taken as image, the proverb expresses a civilization referring to history, myths, customs and institutions. In the Yoruba language, proverbs appear in forms as shown in the following table:

Yoruba	English
Afarawe	similitude
Ifi ohun kan juwe ekeji	metaphor
Owe	riddle
Ofo or afore	incantation
Owe	adage
Ana tu afi nlo oro	the way we use word
Or isoro	or idiom

The Yoruba words and their meaning are taken from *A dictionary of the Yoruba*^{ix}. Apart from *afose* which refers to a series of riddles, and *isoro* meaning idiom— both belonging to the semantic field of proverb—, all the other terms revolve around the particle *we* deriving from *owe* (proverb). These common points imply that there are many variations of proverbs in the Yoruba language. A speaker uses them to suit his discourse; all these types of proverbs will be given special attention in my analysis of proverbs and proverbial devices in *Lonely Days*, taking into account their context of utterances, their enunciation, their cultural reference and their relevance to the life of the widow.

II. Proverbs and Proverbial Devices Related to the Physical Absence of the Husband

This category includes proverbs and proverbial devices associated with the husband's death, the widow fight against loneliness, her beauty, her resistance to suitors and the community's perception of her widowhood.

The wife's widowhood starts on the day her husband died. Ajumobi did not feel well the day he passed away. He decided to rest as he could not go hunting. He died of a serious case of cold in the presence of the village herbalist. To announce his

death, the oracle sends his messenger to Yaremi with this proverb:

*The water jar has broken and
 Its content spilled^x*

This proverb is an analogy made up of double symbols: the broken jar and the spilled water which connotes a total loss: the loss of the container and its content. Water is the source of life. Yaremi has therefore lost an important part of her life. The African elders do not announce directly a person's death to their relatives. They always convey the message through proverbs intentionally to attenuate the shock. The broken jar and the spilled water signify Ajumobi's death. Yaremi has lost her husband forever. Nobody can collect the spilled water with his fingers and pour it into a broken jar.

In a couple a partners' death marks the beginning of the other's suffering. The wife particularly is counted among the suspected persons of the death in spite of the pain of the loss she feels. Although she is openly accused, the reality is that the family-in-law still wants a proof that she is not the killer.

*Darkness never ends for the rodent
 Entrapped inside a calabash container^{xi}*

said the narrator about Radeke who also lost her husband and is suspected to be the killer." *They cursed*

the women they thought was the killer of Radeke's husband all through eyeing Radeke's herself suspiciously.^{xii} Widowhood is a shift into darkness. Apart from losing her husband, she must endure humiliation and hatred of the family-in-law. The rodent trapped in the container is a bird imprisoned and condemned to live in the darkness. Symbolically, in most African cultures, the widow wears black clothes or stay indoors during their traditional period of widowhood; that is 41 days of seclusion and one or two years of remembrance. A widow who refuses to remarry after this period will have chosen to live in this darkness for the rest of her life. Darkness is close to loneliness because living in solitude is living in confinement from the outside world. After the funeral of her husband Yaremi is left alone.

She felt thoroughly abandoned

Like a stone at the bottom of a lake^{xiii}

Darkness and loneliness become one if one's 'eyes are closed at the bottom of a lake. To fight against loneliness, Yaremi works hard, works on time, gets closer to her little grandchild left to her by her daughter and helps women in her neighborhood. At home, her work load is double. She does her own work as a woman and the one her husband used to do, since her two daughters, Segi and Wura who kept her company, had long been given in marriage. Only her grandchild, Woye helped her as he can in the making of taffeta cloths. Yaremi's hard labor weighs on the little child. She puts pressure on him but also encourages him with proverbs.

Never leave till tomorrow

What could be done today^{xiv}

Nobody knows

What tomorrow will bring^{xv}

But Yaremi is more concerned about these proverbs than the boy. She works hard to fight against boredom, loneliness and sorrow. She needs to keep herself busy to reduce the pressure of her husband's death on her. Woye takes this work as a play time. He learns how to count while beating the taffeta cloths. Yaremi's occupation gives the little child an opportunity to learn figures and how to work hard. He receives an informal education by example and

stimuli. On the contrary, Yaremi works to avoid loneliness and sorrow but also to survive.

For her, to get the fruit of one's work, one must work at the right time:

Whatever must be done

Should be done so well and so quickly^{xvi}

The taffeta cloths she made are to be sold at Sagoe market which is far from her house and does not open every day. Therefore, to meet the first customers, she must leave sooner. She struggles to sell more so that she may satisfy her daily needs and those of the little boy. She does not waste time. Everything must be done at the right time like:

Stitching one stitch in old quickly

enough to save nine future stitches^{xvii}

Because if something is not done at the appropriate time, one has to work more in the future to catch up. If Yaremi does not go to Sagoe market on time or does not go one day at all, she would have worked for nothing. She and Woye would have to bear the consequences. Time does not wait for anybody. Yaremi is never seen complaining about hard labor. She works at home, in the farm and in the market. She works so much that her hands become:

Hard, arid and dry

like the tanned Kano leather in the sun^{xviii}

Kano is a city in northern Nigeria, renowned for its breeding of giant cattle whose leather is used for making drums, bags, and shoes. Yaremi's hands are no more a woman's hands. She is a female with a man's hands. For her, hard and quick labor has many advantages. It is a therapy against loneliness, frustration and boredom; a way of reducing the pressures of daily life as well as a means of survival.

What she cannot do is taking care of her husband's farmland which requires a man's hands. The only person fit for such a work is Alani, her only son who owns a furniture shop at Ibadan and rarely comes home. Uncle Deyo eventually calls Alani back to his duty through the following proverbs:

When fire burns out

It succeeds itself with wood ash^{xix}

When the banana dies

It replaces itself with young suckers to ensure life's continuity^{xx}

For uncle Deyo, Ajumobi family must also be perpetuated through his farmland. His death should not be the loss of his properties, all the more because among his children, he has a son. But one thing is to be entitled to a property; another thing is to accept it. Alani's furniture business is prospering in town, his girlfriend is pregnant and he plans to take his mother with him out of a hostile community. Alani's idea of life's continuity is in contrast with that of uncle Deyo. Deyo sees it as evolution whereas for Alani, it means revolution which recalls Thomas Paine's understanding of heritage. In Thomas Paine's opinion, "when a man leaves property to his heirs, he does not connect it with an obligation that they shall accept it."^{xxi} Alani is much more concerned about his own choice of living than about taking over a heritage compromised by his mother's rejection of a remarriage.

At her leisure time, she plays with her grandchild and visits her neighbors, always with the intention of avoiding loneliness. With her grandchild, she shares reminiscences of her childhood at Adeyipo through hilarious anecdotes. With the women in the neighborhood she engages in pleasantries and donates them what she can to help them in their working: "At various times, Yaremi had donated bowls of cassava-flour and perches locust beans to her colleagues in the village, and had giving out measures of dry corn..."^{xxii}

She agrees with the narrator's proverb:

*The joy of having
Is really in sharing^{xxiii}*

She uses her financial autonomy not only to satisfy her own needs but also to help some neighbors. This contact with the neighbors is necessary to her, for it allows her to walk away from her loneliness. At home, she has nobody else to talk with except little Woye. She then realizes the importance of the first child when Segi, Woye's mother went into marriage

*A first child is a fresh leaf
plucked from a fruiting tree in the family
garden^{xxiv}*

After the death of her husband the person Yaremi interacts with most and feels closer to is Segi, her first born. The place and the importance of the first child is pointed out by the narrator: "The tree was usually strong and unbroken. Parents always seemed to have entered into secret covenant with their first born, right from childhood"^{xxv}. One's first child, in kufi village is taken as one's junior brother, by the father, and junior sister by the mother. Segi became Yaremi's partner and confident. Now that she had left, Yaremi is alone with the little boy. She keeps herself usefully busy because:

*Frustration easily sets in
for a lonely woman^{xxvi}*

Frustration would have meant for Yaremi boredom, solitary confinement, depression, poverty and sickness. This proverb comes in when the members of her husband's family thought that

*The time is ripe for the widow
to choose a new cap to wear^{xxvii}*

This proverb involves two realities: first, a widow cannot remarry whenever she wants. She must wait until the time is ripe; that is one to two years later and then life goes on. Second, before remarrying, a widow has to go through the cap picking test. During the cap picking ceremony, the widows in the village are invited to choose among some male hats of different styles. The cap chosen by a widow corresponds to the new husband with whom she must remarry. But time has never ripened for Yaremi to choose a new cap. Her love for Ajumobi seems to have never faded since he died. «She remembered him now with gratitude and love as one of the most important presence of her life"^{xxviii}.she confesses this gratitude and this deep love to her first child in the following proverbial simile:

*Your father to me was like the mighty baobab
towering above ten thousand lesser trees
around^{xxix}*

The baobab is a tall, big and strong tree. The lesser trees stand for Yaremi and his children. When the baobab is no more, the younger trees are exposed to the hazards of life. Yaremi refuses to remarry in spite of her beauty.

During her confidential moments with Segi, mother and child "Voted solidly against a second marriage. There was no reason on earth for it! And they swore to resist levirate in whatever form, with all energy at their command"^{xxx}The men who desire her find her as

*A neat woman, vibrant as lily
floating on the clear water of the village
lake.*^{xxxi}

A lily is a beautiful flower found at the surface of the water, which makes it not easily touchable. It can be admired from a distance but not pickable by the admirer. Yaremi is also shown as:

*A pretty woman carrying the blackness of her
skin
like a shining royal gown over her smooth
skin.*^{xxxii}

A hunter's widow and a queen are two contradictory qualities referring to the same person. This special form of antithesis or oxymoron has been possible because of the value Yaremi gives herself in Kufi village with her beauty, her financial autonomy and her generosity toward other women in the neighborhood; she deserves to be called the queen of the widows or the queen widow. She is admired and desired by some married men although she seems to be an untouchable flower, an unapproachable beautiful woman. Ayanle, the drummer fails to win her heart with his beautiful words and promises. Olonade, the wood carver abdicates after extolling his masterpieces and making attractive promises to her. Lanwa, the farmer gives up after talking boastfully of this wealth and promising her the moon and stars.

Like Nasula, the widow in *A Cowrie of Hope*^{xxxiii}, who resists the harassment and blackmail of her brother-in law, Yaremi puts up a fierce resistance to suitors. She recognizes the caps of her three suitors at the cap picking ceremony: the 'bage' cap belonging to Ayanle, the drummer, the 'labankada' cap to Olonade, the wood carver and the 'gobi' cap to Lanwa, the farmer. But she did not pick any of them in spite of the encouragements of the other widows. Before going to the ceremony, she knew that nothing would come out of it. She has her idea about a second

husband. In her mind, no other man can love her like Ajumobi did. She knows that wives are too submissive to their husbands in Kufi village. As put in the proverb below:

*The tenant's shaky voice
must never get into the big ears of the
landlord.*^{xxxiv}

The relationship between wife and husband in Kufi is comparable to that of the tenant and their landlord. The landlord accepts the tenant in his house for the rent's money. The husband accepts the woman in his house for the pleasure and child he may get from the union. The wife hesitates to ask questions to the husband because of his excessive authority, just as the tenant feels reluctant to make request which may not be fulfilled, to the landlord. Yaremi perceives this relationship as a union without love. For that reason in the following metaphorical proverb, she refuses:

*To be neither a napkin nor a rag
to clean up mess with.*^{xxxv}

Or

*To be a music calabash
for be clumsy fingers of drummers.*^{xxxvi}

In her resistance, she is straightforward with her suitors. She hits the nail on the head, telling them that women are not worth more than napkins and rags in the hands of men. They take their wives as domestic objects that can be easily thrown away when they become useless. They are music calabashes for their husbands who do not give them the value and respect they deserve like a drummer's clumsy fingers. In kufi, Yaremi stands out as a rebel widow.

The community's perception of her attitude and deeds is different from the one they have on other widows and women. For the men including her suitors, she is an intruder in the world of men. Not only does she refuse to remarry, she also spreads her influence on other women and asserts her personality. She has become the men's rival: "what imprudence! To the men, this is one woman who should be kept at arm's length and dealt with decisively"^{xxxvii}. Yaremi is not the kind of woman they would like to have in kufi. They prefer submissive, passive and dependent

women. Dealing decisively with Yaremi is putting her at the same place as an ordinary woman of the village.

In the eye of the women, particularly the three widows who were at the cap picking ceremony, Yaremi is too rigid, "self-concerted, self-opinionated and very unyielding"^{xxxviii}. At the beginning of the ceremony, they encourage her through prayers, injunctions and advice:

Make no mistake about your choice

The consequence of mistake can be great^{xxxix}

But as she is determined not to have a second husband, she disappoints the three suitors. The beautiful display of the three caps has not changed. At the moment of the choice, there is a contrast between her stream of consciousness and what the community expects her to do. Her abstention in choosing is a choice, and each choice has its consequence. When she walked away from the "odan", the place where the cap picking ceremony takes place, she could hear behind a reaction to her act.

The angry murmur of the crowd

vibrating like the discordant note of a distant music^{xl}

One of the consequences of her act that she must bear is the anger of people in Kufi. Her choice goes against the demand of the tradition of the village. The second consequence is her feeling of sorrow after remark made by the three widows about her self-conceit and rigidity. She shed tears, realizing that:

Truth is bitter

like the cooked bile of a slaughtered ram^{xli}

The third consequence of her act is the ostracism of which she is the object. For the first time she feels totally isolated from men and women in Kufi. The more her popularity becomes tarnished, the more she feels sorrowful for that. She is so desperate that she conceives the idea of self banishment from Kufi for another village and even the option of relocating to live in turns with her three children Segi at Olode, Wura at Apon and Alani in Ibadan. But she does not yield to the temptation of moving to a space of refuge. Convinced now that people have turned their back to her, she prays and recites the following proverbial

incantations to show her resolution to triumph over her enemies and evil forces:

Ojuoro floats tente

on the surface of the river^{xlii}

Ojuoro is an aquatic leaf commonly seen on rivers sometimes in great quantity.

Osibata floats tente

on top of the forest lake^{xliii}

Osibata are larger aquatic leaves that cover the surface of ponds in the forest. The common point between these two types of leaves that naturally screen the surface of water is their inability to sink, whether fresh or dry. For Yaremi, no evil force, no one can make her drown. She always stays at the surface like ojuro and osibata.

It is agbe that brings blessing

to olokun^{xliv}

Agbe is a bird that flies majestically over the sea, olokun. It is supposed to be a bird of good omen.

It is aluko that brings prosperity

to olosa^{xlv}

Aluko is another type of bird usually seen above the river, symbol of wealth. Through the two kinds of bird, Yaremi is praying for her own blessing and prosperity among her enemies in Kufi.

When a person catches a toad and sees that

it does not resemble a fish

he quickly drops it^{xlvi}

This proverb is longer because of the presence of a compound subordinate clause. It means when someone notices that Yaremi is unattackable, he will give up. She will be too hot for her enemies to handle.

Whoever encountered Aye

must flee from Aye!^{xlvii}

Aye stands for the wicked ones of the society from whom one must stay far away. They are people of bad will who expect you to do what they want but not what you think is good for yourself. In her list of incantation Yaremi mentions some of the bad things done by Aye in the world.

Aye soaked Ijimore's cloths in palm-oil

Ijimore was born black^{xlviii}

Ijimire is a black skinned animal but Aye turns its skin with palm-oil. Yaremi prays so that nobody changes her own nature.

Aye slew ogidan, the surgeon of the wilderness

With ogidan's own incision knife^{xlix}

Ogidan is the tortoise, supposed to be the surgeon of animals in the forest, but Aye kills it with a knife made out of its own carapace. Aye did this harm to prevent the tortoise from taking care of other animals.

Aye altered the life-span of Okra and terminated okra's existence^l

Okra is a tall plant whose slender, sticky green pods are used as vegetable in the soup. The plant dies when all the fruits are picked from it. Yaremi's prayer is to live long, but not to have Okra's life-span as would wish her enemies.

Aye changed the destiny of the garden egg consequently the garden egg turned crimson^{li}

The color of the garden egg is usually purple. Aye changes the color to bloody red for an unknown reason (red is generally believed to hide a danger). Yaremi prays for herself not to have the destiny of the garden egg in front of her enemies

Aye harboured hatred for salt and drenched salt in the water^{lii}

Although salt and water are incompatible, Aye drenched it intentionally in the water. The wicked ones do not love. They always hate and destroy. Yaremi's prayer is to be shielded against their hatred and destruction.

Aye disliked hot pap and mixed hot pap with gravels and sand^{liii}

Here hot pap means any soft or semi-liquid food for babies or invalids. To prevent the baby from enjoying its hot pap, Aye mixes it with gravels and sand. Yaremi's peaceful widowhood is poisoned with the cap picking ceremony and the villagers' hatred in Kufi.

In general, Aye symbolizes all the evil forces that are opposed to a person's happiness. They are people who set traps to others to prevent them from reaching their goals and who laugh at the persons that fail.

All the proverbs and proverbial devices examined so far are the ones related to the widow's survival and interaction with people in Kufi. The other category of proverbs is related to the psychological presence of the husband. After being let down by the elders and the entire village for having rejected a second marriage, she finally finds comfort with the psychological presence of her deceased husband.

III. Proverbs Related to the Psychological Presence of the Husband or the Widow's Life

The psychological presence of the husband occurs when the widow is overwhelmed with reminiscences of the happy days spent with her husband. Apart from her habit to tender the grave of Ajumobi twice a week and sit down on it waiting for the response to her prayers, she feels his presence anywhere in the house, in the yard, in the kitchen, in the bed. As a proverb has it:

A woman's first husband always remains her best^{liv}

In fact, the man shows to the woman all his kindness until he reaches his goal. This attention is the way of protecting her against the desire of other suitors. It is a silent competition but in the case of Yaremi, she had been loved by Ajumobi with devotion up until his death.

She feels the presence of Ajumobi with the reminiscence of the hunter's incantations he used to chant to her, as a test to her intelligence, giving thereby an intellectual dimension to their love. These incantations can be classified in six lexical references: incompatibility, self-destruction, resemblance, irony of destiny, obligation and adaptation.

Incompatibility: this kind of hunter's incantation is made up of proverbs in the form of oxymoron that denote incompatible things or facts.

1. *The day fire sets eyes on gun powder a blast scatters the air.^{lv}*
2. *The day eye hosts hot pepper it loses its vision^{lvi}*

Fire and gun powder are incompatible. Their contact always creates explosion. The eye and pepper are two elements made to stay apart. A couple of lovers destined to live together must be composed of two

partners of compatible characters like Yaremi and Ajumobi. There cannot be contact between the eye and pepper, nor can fire and gun powder coexist in the

3) *The day the pawpaw fruit ripens,
its illness gets cured.*^{lvii}

This proverb means that a paw-paw fruit falls down when it ripens. A person dies when the time he/she must spend in this world comes to its end. That is the case of Ajumobi who dies in spite of his great love for Yaremi. The incompatibility lies in the maturity of the fruit and its duration on the tree.

Self-destruction:

1) *The day elulu calls for rain
he gets himself thoroughly drenched*^{lviii}

Elulu is a brown-feathered bird. The day he desires rain to fall, it also gets soaked that day. You get what you ask for but you bear the consequence. Some people attract misfortune on themselves by their own act.

2) *Endless opening and closing
jams the entrance door.*^{lix}

Exaggeration leads to futility. Doing something to excess spoils the result. This is a lesson of moderation in life. When something is overused, it becomes spoilt. This proverb is repeated in other terms in the following ones:

3) *All resolutions taken by the squirrel
are wiped off with the squirrel's own swinging tail.*^{lx}

4) *The grass-cutter throws away with his two hands
all the divinations he prepares for his grandfather*^{lxi}

What the squirrel and the grass-cutter do becomes useless because of excess of zeal. The four proverbs show that man is the cause of his own misfortune out of carelessness, exaggeration or excess of zeal.

Resemblance

1) *The seamstress who sews her customer's dress with
the strings woven by a spider deceives herself.*^{lxii}

The string woven by a spider is so fragile that it is useless to sew the dress of a customer with it. A wife with her husband must base their relationship on mutual sincerity. The spider's string and the tailor's string look alike but do not play the same role.

2) *Nobody prepares food
with the palm oil of a crab.*^{lxiii}

The palm oil of a crab is not real oil. It is the water which serves to boil the crab. The color of water makes it look like palm oil. Appearance differs from the content. This proverb suggests that we must not let ourselves be deceived by appearance.

3) *Nobody pounds yam
with the wooden mortar of a weaver bird.*^{lxiv}

The mortar of a weaver bird is not a real mortar. It cannot pound yam. It just looks like a wooden mortar. The form is different from the role. The proverb about palm oil and the one about the wooden mortar imply that the value of a person is not given by his or her appearance. Ajumobi is a husband but a special husband to Yaremi. In the same respect, Yaremi is a widow but not like the other widows in Kufi village.

Obligation:

1) *Whatever command is issued to ogbo, ogbo must
confirm.*^{lxv}

2) *Whatever order is issued to ogba, ogba must
accept.*^{lxvi}

Ogbo and ogba are respectively male and female leaves in Yoruba traditional medicine and mysticism. Whatever they are used for happens. The wishes placed in them are fulfilled. That is why people pay attention to the kind of requests they utter on these two leaves.

Irony of destiny: *When a firetrap is set for gunugun on
the cam wood tree it is another bird that falls in it.*^{lxvii}

Gunugun is the Yoruba name for vulture, a bird which lives long and is difficult to catch. That is why it avoids any trap set for it and another bird comes into the trap. It means that some persons are punished in the place of others because of their carelessness or bad luck. This proverb is in tune with Yaremi's prayers to avoid ambushes set against her widowhood in Kufi.

Adaptation

*The divinity grants all life's requests and all
life's wishes of the gentle chameleon.*^{lxviii}

A chameleon is an animal whose color changes according to its background. God fulfills the chameleon's desires to hide from attackers by confounding its skin color to that of its surrounding of the moment. The proverb implies that a person who

adapts to the situation presented to him is likely to obtain what he wants. Yaremi adapts to her widowhood situation by working hard, fighting boredom and resisting her suitors' advances.

The incantations Ajumobi shares with his wife when he was alive are words of wisdom. They are commonly used in African rites and prayers because of their potency. Ajumobi chants them to Yaremi, maintaining her attention by repeating her name before each proverb, because he wants to pass directly to her some of his powers of hunter.

CONCLUSION

Yaremi lives a peaceful widowhood until the village community interferes with her life. She is physically, socially and emotionally in harmony with herself. But when she is confronted with the realities of the tradition in Kufi, her widowhood turns bitter to the hostile world around her. But she stays firm and eventually finds comfort in the psychological presence of her husband, which is her real reason for living. There are three stages of proverbs and proverbial devices in the plot of the novel: the stage of peaceful widowhood, the stage of conflict with the community and the stage of comfort in the psychological presence of the husband. The last stage contains fewer proverbs, which explains why it is shorter.

END NOTES

ⁱ Bayo Adebowale. *Lonely Days*. Ibadan: Spectrum Books Limited. (2006) 2013

ⁱⁱ Wikipedia free encyclopedia

ⁱⁱⁱ Chinua Achebe. *Things Fall Apart*. London/ Heineman

^{iv} Wole Soyinka. *The lion and the jewel*

^v Soyinka. *Kongi's Harvest*

^{vi} I.B.O. Akporobaro. *Understanding Poetry: its language, its form, its functions*. Lagos: The Light House Publishing Company Ltd. 1994. p.40

^{vii} L.S. Senghor Préface pour le tam-tam du sage, poèmes et proverbes africains in J Falk et Mkane. *Littérature Africaine. Textes et travaux* tome 1. Paris : Nathan (1974) 1994. p. 151

^{viii} Laleh Barhtiar. *Sufi Symbolism and the Myth Quest in Sufi*. London: issue 82 Winter 2012 BiannualJournal. p.30

^{ix} *A Dictionary of Yoruba*. Ibadan : University Press PLC. 2008

^x *Lonely Days* p.45

^{xi} *Ibid.* p.28

^{xii} *Id.*

^{xiii} *Lonely Days*. p.3

^{xiv} *Ibid.* p.7

^{xv} *Id.*

^{xvi} *Lonely Days*. p.28

^{xvii} *Ibid.* p.31

^{xviii} *Lonely Days*. p.8

^{xix} *Ibid.* p.139

^{xx} *Id.*

^{xxi} Thomas Paine. *The Rights of Man* quoted by R. Taylor. *Background lectures on English literature*. Benin City: Ethiope Publishing Corp. 1977

^{xxii} *Lonely Days*. p.89

^{xxiii} *Id.*

^{xxiv} *Lonely Days*. p.125

^{xxv} *Id.*

^{xxvi} *Lonely Days*. p.107

^{xxvii} *Id.*

^{xxviii} *Lonely Days*. p.122

^{xxix} *Ibid.* p.125

^{xxx} *Ibid.* p.127

^{xxxi} *Lonely Days*. p.90

^{xxxii} *Id.*

^{xxxiii} Binwell Sinyanguwe. *A cowrie of Hope*. London: Heinemann. 2000 p.16

^{xxxiv} *Lonely Days*. p.90

^{xxxv} *Id.*

^{xxxvi} *Id.*

^{xxxvii} *Lonely Days*. p.90

^{xxxviii} *Ibid.* p.117

^{xxxix} *Ibid.* p.115

^{xl} *Lonely Days*. p.116

^{xli} *Ibid.* p.117

^{xlii} *Lonely Days*. p. 118

^{xliiii} *Id.*

^{xliiv} *Id.*

^{xliiv} *Id.*

^{xlivi} *Id.*

^{xlvii} *Lonely Days*. p.119

^{xlviii} *Id.*

^{xlix} *Id.*

^l *Id.*

^{li} *Id.*

^{lii} *Id.*

^{liiii} *Id.*

^{liv} *Lonely Days*. p. 121

^{lv} *Ibid.* p.120

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- lvi Id.
lvii Id.
lviii *Lonely Days*. p. 120
lix Id.
lx Id.
lxi Ibid. pp. 120-121
lxii *Lonely Days*. p. 120
lxiii Id.
lxiv Id.
lxv Id.
lxvi Id.
lxvii Id.
lxviii Id.

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 8. Sinyanguwe, Binwell. *A cowrie of Hope*. London: Heinemann. 2000
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