

Full Length Research Paper

# Protest: A Biblical perspective of Bate Besong's *Beasts of No Nation*

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This work '*Protest: A Biblical Perspective of Bate Besong's Beasts of No Nation*' seeks to show how the writer presents his case of protest in a derailed society using biblical passages. The study knits together context, use and subject matter to bring out those elements that appeal for protest against oppression. The work also shows that the author turns history to fiction, so as to create change in the society. This led to the hypothesis that the use of bible passages in *Beasts of No Nation* makes the play a metaphor of the Cameroonian situation. The theories used are the New historicism literary theory which stipulates that a literary text is formed and structured by the particular conditions of a time and place, and should be discussed in its own context, and functional theory of linguistics which states that situational factors determine what linguistic features are used by the text producer. The method used for analysis is the pattern of analysis postulated by Sinclair. The text was read with full critical understanding and scanned for patterns of linguistic signals. The study concludes that in his quest for national integration, Besong is in search of an avenue that can resolve the conflict between the Anglophones and Francophones in his country. This study reveals how Bate Besong uses the Holy Bible as a moral measuring rod, from which he extracts verses that can make the masses see the source of their problems, raise their awareness and instigate them to protest, and even castigate them if they do not want to adhere to his pleas. The analysis of the work shows that the author uses the religious register and writes with the socio-political situation of his country as a backdrop.

**Key words:** Cameroon, Anglophone, Francophone, protest, Holy Bible.

## INTRODUCTION

Socio-linguistic research has facilitated one's understanding of his social surroundings. When language, the user and the context are brought in to analyse any subject, the results are truly revealing. The point here is that a work of art is never created out of void: it has as bedrock the author's contextual experience, a purpose for communicating and the social constraints that determine the form of the artistic product. With this in mind, one comes to the conclusion that the historical, economic and social context in which the author finds himself / herself is therefore determining element for a successful work of

art. Furthermore, an author may use his/her own experiences within an actual or imagination of a contrive context or setting to create a work of art (Fomukong, 2011). *Beasts of No Nation* is a text published in 1990. That was during the period when the wind of change was blowing over Africa and Cameroon in particular. During this period, there was political tension that led to the use of protest language by most Cameroonian writers, especially Anglophone writers. In the play under study, Besong joins the others to fight for the restoration of the Anglophone culture and tradition, in a bid to build his

nation, Cameroon (Takem, 2008). It is in this respect that Bate Besong's *Beasts of No Nation*, in *Three Plays: The Archwimge Trilogy* (2003) is viewed in this study in relation to The Holy Bible (1991; 1994): these are the Revised Standard Version of 1991 and the Good News Translation of 1994.

### The historical and socio-cultural context of *BEASTS OF NO NATION*

The history of Cameroon has an important part to play in this study, because it is the source of the use of a religious undertone in *Beasts of No Nation*. In fact, it is related to the problem of the study, which is the relationship between the English-speaking and French-speaking communities of Cameroon. The English-speaking and French-speaking communities of Cameroon began with the division of Cameroon into spheres of influence between the British and the French after the First World War. While the British occupied a smaller section representing two regions of present-day Cameroon, the French occupied a bigger portion representing eight regions of present-day Cameroon. After this division, the British administered her portion of the country using the indirect rule, while the French on their part used the policy of assimilation (Ngoh, 1996). The fact that Britain and France administered their rule differently already created a foundation for the two political entities to grow up with different political and cultural mannerisms. Prior to independence, the two states developed specific cultural, economic and political trajectories. But the political decision at the international level brought an abrupt stop to these developments, bringing French and English Cameroon into a union. As a result of their allegiance to the respective colonial masters, Cameroon is a country made up of both the English-speaking and French-speaking communities.

The cultural tenets of these colonial masters left a permanent mark on the people. This feeling of being different, of being superior, of being richer, of being neglected or being sidelined after the union in 1961 was a potential source of conflict. This conflict has been shown at the social level and it has linguistic and literary manifestations of the English-speaking members of the union (Fomukong, 2011). One of these manifestations was the coming together of the Anglophones in the All Anglophone Conference (AAC 1) held in Buea (Cameroon), called the *Buea Declaration (1993)*. In this conference held in Buea on the 2nd and 3rd of April 1993, they laid out their grievances against the ruling government. In the *Buea Declaration (1993)* they, the Anglophones, agreed that, *Within these thirty-two years, our Union accord has been violated. We have been disenfranchised, marginalized, and treated with suspicion. Our interests have been disregarded. Our participation in nation life has been limited to non-essential functions. Our natural resources have been ruthlessly exploited*

*without any benefit accruing to our territory or to its people. The development of our territory has been negligible and confined to areas that directly or indirectly benefit Francophones. Through manoeuvres and manipulation, we have been reduced from partners of equal status in the Union to the status of a subjugated people.*

This feeling of the Anglophones made them protest against what they termed marginalisation. The colonial past therefore has a negative influence on the situation of English-speaking people.

It is from this background of political tension that Bate Besong, a contemporary English-speaking Cameroonian writer in his play, uses excerpts from the Holy Bible, as a tool to raise the awareness of a marginalised people, in a society full of social ills.

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study uses as frame the New Historicism literary theory and the functional theory. The New Historicism theory asserts that a literary text is formed and structured by the particular conditions of a time and place, and should be discussed in its own context, that is, the social and cultural patterns of that era, and cannot be understood fully unless one considers these influences, too. In this regard therefore social and political orientation can influence the work of art produced in that situation; meanwhile, the works of art produced in a society can give a clue to an accurate understanding of the history of that society (Wisegeeek, 2012). In search of a clue to interpret the history, it finds literature as a way to reach the culture and society of the time, in which a particular phenomenon has happened. In this situation, the critic tries to understand the cultural and social setting of the time, the psychological background of the writer, in which a book was introduced, to understand the text better. It may discuss the other literary works of the time, or analyze the political, social related issues in order to find more information regarding the time, place and situation that produced the work.

The functional theory of language proposes that since language is fundamentally a tool, it is reasonable to assume that its structures are best analyzed and understood with reference to the functions they carry out. Within this paradigm, one attempts to reveal the instrumentality of language with respect to what people do and achieve with it in social interaction. The study uses the Functional theory by M. A. K. Halliday, who focuses on the context of situation. From the linguistic point of view, Halliday and Hasan (1976) interpret 'register' which is the context of situation, as 'the linguistic features which are typically associated with a configuration of situational features – with particular values of, the set of relevant social relations, permanent and temporary, among the participants involved.' These three values – field, mode and tenor are what define register. Field, according to them includes the subject-matter as one of the elements. Mode is the function of the text in the event, including both the channel taken by language and tenor refers to the type of role interacting factors for the linguistic features of the text.

Halliday explains that the context of situation is very important in the analyzing or interpreting of a text. The context of situation gets into the text by influencing the worlds and structures that the text-producer uses. This means that if the situation in Cameroon was different, the writers might not write in the very way in which they are writing. Meaning, if they are placed in a different social context, they will probably write using different linguistic choices to realize different semantic patterns.

From the study, the authors show as tenor the relationship between the oppressed and the oppressors and the language between them to be the language of protest and intimidation. In the Cameroonian context, the tenor is the relationship between the government and the Anglophones. The subject matter is that of the political situation where the ruled are not satisfied with the rulers.

The method used for analysis is that postulated by Sinclair. The text was read with full critical understanding and scanned for patterns of linguistic signals (Malmkjaer, 1995). One of the signals of protest in the play *Beasts of No Nation* is the use of the religious register. Verses from the Bible are used in the play to suit the intentions of the author, that is, the author changes nouns, verbs, adjectives in these bible verses to march the context in which he is writing. In this study the Bible verses are analyzed together with the excerpts from *Beasts of No Nation* to show how Besong uses this aspect of language in context.

### Synopsis of *BEASTS OF NO NATION*

*Beasts of No Nation* is a play that was written in the time of political turbulence in Cameroon, when the effects of reunification (the coming together of the French Cameroon and British Cameroon) were already manifesting in the lives of the people, especially the English-speaking Cameroonians. Looking at the play, one sees the relationship between the play and the socio-cultural and political setting at the time in Cameroon. There are three classes of people in the play. The class of the oppressed constitutes one of the major characters that can be identified in the play. Night-soil-men and the mendicants represent this class of people made up of all common people in the society. These people are identified in the play as those who are compelled to do all the odd jobs in the city, particularly the carting away of faeces. They are looked upon as 'Anglos' who are traitors and slaves, (Besong, 2003). The problem may not only be that the worst jobs are reserved for this class of people but also that they work under very poor sanitary conditions. They are refused the right to own professional identity cards and are compelled to pay huge amounts of money in exchange for minor services rendered them.

The next class of people is the facilitators or go-between and is made up of Narrator and Otshama. Narrator identifies more with the oppressed while Otshama shows more inclination and fidelity to the ruling class. Narrator stands as the light of the oppressed. He takes up the responsibility of educating the oppressed. This entails the reawakening of their dormant consciences for positive thinking (Tanifum, 1993). The things he says to them go to make them develop the revolutionary attitude.

The last class is that of the oppressors. This is essentially made up of the political administrators of Ednuoay, represented by Aadingingin. The Night-soil-men describe him as the 'torturer of the suspicious and extractor of confessions.' His dictatorial powers are displayed through acts of brutish intimidation and torture. The playwright vividly portrays the city administrators not only as money spenders but also as 'money eaters,' making money to be seen as something edible, as food that is later passed out as waste matter-shit. There is a great amount of shit in the city. That is why much of the Ednuoay city budget (a colossal sum of 450 million out of 500 million) is reserved for the clearing up of waste. This amount is set aside for toilet tissues and disinfectants.

In placing the play in context, *Beasts of No Nation* is about Yaounde in Cameroon. If one spells Ednuoay from right to left, one has the political capital of Cameroon, Yaoundé (Ikei, 2008), which becomes a synecdoche, representing the whole of Cameroon. Also, in contemporary Anglophone terms the word 'frog' is a derogatory term used for Francophone and 'Anglos' or 'Anglofou' a derogatory term used to refer to Anglophone (Ambanasom, 2002). These analyses of 'frog' and 'Anglos' point to the fact that Night-soil-men and the mendicants are Anglophones who are subjected to the

harsh rule of the Francophones, in whose hands lie the political power and money. The play makes it clear that 'frogs' are the great 'eater of money' while the Anglos are confined to the mean, undignified role of carriers of the waste matter passed out by their masters (Ambanasom, 2002).

The complaints of the Confederation of Anglophone Parent-Teachers Associations of Cameroon (CAPTAC), the Teachers Association of Cameroon (TAC) and Cameroon Anglophone Movement (CAM) and the All Anglophone Conferences (Nkwain 2008) in Cameroon are all manifested in the demand for identity cards by the Night-soil-men in *Beasts of No Nation*. In search of this identity, Bate Besong through Narrator in *Beasts of No Nation* joins these pressure groups in Cameroon to raise awareness in the Anglophones to fight for their identity, or else, as Bernard N. Fonlon (Anglophone Cameroonian) notified in his article, *We will Make or Mar* (ABBIA, 1964), if the activities of the francophone dominating government is not checked, 'we will all be French in two generations or three.' It is from this socio-political background that Bate Besong in *Beasts of No Nation* uses bible passages to educate the masses on their plight thereby, instigating revolt against the authorities that be.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In *Beasts of No Nation*, Besong makes use of structures from the *Holy Bible*. In some cases he replaces certain familiar images in structures from the *Holy Bible* but the structures remain the same. What he replaces are nouns, adjectives, verbs and pronouns in order to suit the context in which he is writing. In other cases he uses the syntactic structure as it is used in the *Holy Bible*. The *Holy Bible* as a guide to moral living is used by Narrator, hoping to open up the underprivileged to their situation and bring back the wayward and corrupt authorities in Ednuoay to the right path. Narrator uses these Bible verses to expose the wickedness of those in authority, thereby making the downtrodden to see the source of their plight and also to castigate them for not listening to his pleas for a revolt.

In replacing the nouns from the *Holy Bible* passages, the readers, especially those who understand the Bible already know the meaning of the structure and put it in context. Narrator says, 'what the rich thief has put together let no poor jaguda man put asunder'. In the Bible it is written, 'what God has put together let no man put asunder' (Matthew 19:6). The adjective 'poor jaguda' is added to 'man' to modify the type of man Narrator is talking about and these are the downtrodden in Ednuoay. The text in the *Holy Bible* is used most during a wedding ceremony, meaning people should not destroy God's covenant. Besong replaces 'God' with the 'the rich thief' and to 'man' he adds 'jaguda'. In the Cameroonian context, 'the rich thief' suggests the authorities that swindle the nation's funds. The 'poor jaguda man' therefore has no right to complain against what the thieves in Ednuoay are doing. This marriage satire comes in because of the signing of the Fouban Accord, which brought together the English and the French Cameroons, in which case the English-speaking Cameroonians think that this togetherness was a game played on them since the union is

not on equal status as in the Fouban constitution of 1961. In this union the 'poor jaguda man' comes from the English section and the rich thieves come from the French section. This can be seen when the Night-soil men sing that 'so my dear frog-brother, wack and burn this damnbrubah Ednuoay' (101), meaning the frogs should steal the money until nothing is left. The fact that the 'frog' is the Francophone means the rich thieves come from the French section of the country. The poor jaguda man is from the English section of the country because, the First Night-soil man says 'we the Anglo Union and congress...' (125), giving the impression that the downtrodden are 'Anglos,' making them poor.

Narrator is educative in the way he talks to the Night-soil-men. He cautions them when he says, 'Beware of false crisis managers, who come to you in lamb clothing but inwardly they are ravening wolves'. In *Mathew 7:15* it is written, 'Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly they are ravening wolves.' Besong does not only replace 'false prophets' with 'false managers but adds the adjective 'crisis.' The noun phrase 'false crisis managers' refers to those who pretend to take care of the crisis but instead tell lies about the economic situation. They even steal the money from the economy. That is why Narrator says that 'if you desire counsel about your economic ulcers, we shall be glad to assist you'. He is making the Night-soil-men know that he is aware of the economic situation and is ready to tell them if they want to listen. He makes them understand that he is not on the side of the false crisis managers but has chosen his own path to tread. The false crisis managers refer to those who claim that they want to handle the crisis but instead steal the money and in the heart of the crisis they buy 'Italian Ferraris and plenty plenty Pajero motor-car' and build storey buildings. This is what happened in the 80s and 90s in Cameroon. The civil service was not accountable and was not transparent in the management of public funds. There was corruption and embezzlement of public funds with impunity. Also custom fraud and the evasion of taxes and other state dues were common (Ngoh, 1996). This gave the opportunity for those who were in charge of projects to buy expensive cars.

Narrator tells the Night-soil-men he has chosen his own path to follow, using the words of Joshua in the *Holy Bible* saying, 'Today, every Ednuoayan should decide whom he will serve. As for my family and me, we will serve Freedom and Liberty'. Meanwhile in the Bible, it is written, 'Today, every Israelite should decide who he will serve. As for my family and I, we will serve the Lord' (Joshua 24: 15). The noun 'Israelite' in the *Holy Bible* is replaced with 'Ednuoayan' in *Beasts of No Nation*. The noun phrase 'the Lord' is replaced by 'Freedom and Liberty'. Joshua was speaking in a religious context, advising the Israelites who wanted to worship other gods, and telling them that he is choosing the Lord God Almighty. Also he was trying to convince them to join him

choose the Lord. Narrator is speaking in a revolutionary context telling the oppressed in Ednuoay that he is choosing freedom and liberty. He is making them to understand that freedom and liberty are to be fought for and not received on a platter of gold. In the Cameroonian context, Narrator's voice is that of freedom fighters like Bate Besong himself calling on the mass to go for freedom by crying out foul to the ills of the Cameroonian society.

The downtrodden have to fight because the oppressors are not willing to give them freedom. The oppressors are those who will not heed the advice. Narrator advises the under privileged not to put their trust in directors because the latter are corrupt and greedy, satisfying their greed while leaving the masses in poverty. Narrator in a bid to show that almost all Directors in Ednuoay are corrupt repeats what God said to Abraham in the *Holy Bible*. Narrator says, 'If I find in Ednuoay two righteous Directors then I will spare all the place for their sake'. In the Bible is written, 'If I find at Sodom fifty righteous in the city, I will spare the whole place for their sake' (Genesis 18: 26). Besong replaces the noun 'Sodom' in the *Holy Bible* with 'Ednuoay' to suit his context. The author assumes that Ednuoay's Directors are as sinful as the people of Sodom. In the *Holy Bible* God told Abraham that He is going to destroy the city of Sodom because of the evil deeds of the people. In the *Holy Bible* Abraham ended at ten righteous people but Narrator goes down to two giving the impression that the people of Ednuoay are more sinful than those of Sodom. Narrator wants to make the audience and the masses see the devilish nature of the Directors of Ednuoay. This is to justify the need for a revolution. The people in Ednuoay do not have the power to punish the Directors but can put their forces together and fight for their rights.

In advising the masses to be careful about the dealings of the authorities, Narrator tells the Night-soil-men, 'Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil-frog, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking who to devour'. In the *Holy Bible* it is found in *1 Peter 5: 8* 'Be sober, be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.' In *Beasts of No Nation* Besong adds the noun 'frog' to 'devil' and makes 'devil' now become an adjective describing the 'frog'. 'Frog' is a derogatory term used by Anglophones in Cameroon to refer to Francophones. These frogs are false crisis managers who go about seeking someone to devour. The expression 'your adversary the devil-frog' gives the impression that Narrator is talking to the 'Anglos.'

Narrator goes on to prescribe a cure for these false crisis managers who have flourishing accounts overseas. He says, 'Purge them with hyssop and they shall no more loot; flog them in the streets and they shall be whiter than snow. In *Psalms 51: 7*, it is written, 'Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.' Besong replaces the object pronoun

'me' with 'them'; the phrasal verb 'shall be clean' with 'no more loot' and 'wash me' with 'flog them in the streets'. Besong changes all these to make the statement fit in Ednuoay where it is not an individual asking God to forgive his sins, as king David, the psalmist was saying in *Psalm 51*, but Narrator prescribing punishment for those who loot from the national coffers. Narrator prescribes this punishment because they, the masses, are dying in abject poverty while the looters are living in affluence. This prescription is what the government of Cameroon is using today, exposing the thieves and by jailing them.

In trying to make the masses and authorities understand that there is no need to loot or 'banquet on borrowing' Narrator says, 'we brought nothing into Ednuoay and it is certain we can carry nothing out'. In *Job 2: 21a* in the *Holy Bible* Job says, 'I was born with nothing, and I will die with nothing.' Besong replaces 'I' with 'we'. 'We' here refers to all the inhabitants of Ednuoay and specifically the authorities who steal and use for themselves, what belongs to the whole city of Ednuoay. He is trying to make them understand when they all die they will go along with nothing, so it is needless stealing.

These directors are so corrupt that Narrator compares them to the stubborn King Belshaz'zar in *the Bible*. Narrator describes them as wanting, that is, hollow, inadequate and not up to the status. 'They have been weighed in the balances. They have been found wanting'. In the Bible, it is written, 'You have been weighed in the balances and found wanting' (Daniel 5: 27). King Belshaz'zar in *the Bible* was disobedient to God and in a dream saw a hand writing on the wall. Part of what was written was 'tekel' which was interpreted by Daniel as, 'you have been weighed on balances and found wanting.' Narrator is urging the masses to see how lacking the directors are. The directors are keeping in possession what belongs to the whole nation just as King Belshaz'zar was keeping in his possession what belonged to God. These Directors have been found wanting and will surely receive a punishment for that. The foresight Besong has can be seen in the actions of Operation Sparrow Hawk II and other sanctions meted out numerous Cameroonian who swindle the wealth of the nation in today's Cameroon.

Narrator tells the Night-soil-men that 'I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course; I have kept my Anglo-faith.' In the *Holy Bible* St Paul ends his second letter to Timothy on this note of success, 'I have fought a good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith' (2 Timothy 4: 7). St. Paul said this after he had preached the gospel of Christ and had been arrested, imprisoned and was awaiting execution. The noun 'faith' in the Bible is modified with 'anglo' to give 'anglo-faith' in *Beasts of No Nation*. 'Anglo-faith' is the struggle by the 'anglos.' This adjective 'anglo' specifies what the speaker is fighting for and is a derogatory term used to refer to

Anglophones in Cameroon. He is objective and hopes that keeping the 'anglo-faith' will grant him freedom and liberty one day, just like Paul hoped that keeping his Christian faith will win for him a crown of righteousness. Besong has shown the example and warns the other 'anglos' by telling them that 'He that hath ears to hear let him hear'. This is the way Jesus ended some of his parables. Speaking like Jesus makes Narrator to look like a prophet or like a saviour come to deliver the oppressed in Ednuoay. The repetition of Bible verses in the play is raising awareness to educate the oppressed. The *Holy Bible* gives a sense of 'grandeur.' This is to make the masses take the warning, education or exhortation seriously. This warning goes to Cameroonians especially the 'Anglos' who are complaining of being marginalised.

Ednuoay is a city of pain, frustration and bondage; a city in which people perish because there is no vision. In this frustration the third Night-soil-man asks 'Is there no balm in Ednuoay? Is there no physician here?' This is the question prophet Jeremiah asks, 'Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no Physician there?' (Jeremiah 8: 22). Replacing the noun 'Gilead' with the noun 'Ednuoay' is a way of making the depressed aware of the fact that the sickness, joblessness and poverty in Ednuoay are just like that of Gilead as used in the Bible. If the work is placed in context one, it is discovered that Cameroon is country with social ills, which makes it sick. The question Jeremiah asked in the *Bible* in Gilead is the question Narrator asks in Ednuoay, implying Cameroon.

Narrator also repeats the statement, 'Verily, verily I say unto you!' He uses this expression to convince his listeners to believe in what he is saying. This is an expression used by Jesus in the Gospels, especially the Gospel of St. John in the *Holy Bible*. It can be found especially in *John 3: 5*, *John 5: 24*, *John 8:34*. Jesus used this after using parables to teach his followers and to prepare them for the battles they were going to fight after he was gone. Narrator imitates Jesus with the intention of educating and convincing the masses to fight against injustice; the injustice of doing mean jobs like carting faeces, while others drive around in 'pajero cars.'

As the play opens Narrator is given the image of a saviour or a godly person. It reads 'Narrator Priest-like, stands...' (85) and as a saviour, says 'Moses lifted up a brass serpent' (85). This is found in the *Holy Bible* in *Numbers 21:9* and reiterated in *John 3: 14* and *Acts 17: 11*. In all these circumstances the serpent is like a saviour to the distressed and a healer to the sick. In *Beasts of no Nation*, Aadingingin 'will raise up a golden serpent for the safety of Ednuoay'. This is actually what he is supposed to do as a leader, just as Moses did to the Israelites. But, Aadingingin does not do it. This is why Narrator accuses the wicked directors of Ednuoay to 'have left undone those things which they ought to do and they have done those things which they ought not to have done'. Jesus used this in *Mathew 23: 23* to castigate the Pharisees and the scribes for claiming they were virtuous; meanwhile

they were hypocrites. This verse is also used in churches especially in the Act of contrition, when Christians are confessing their sins and asking God for pardon. Besong's advice to Cameroonians, especially those in authority, is to do what is right, what they are supposed to do to make the country a better place for all.

Narrator gets frustrated when the Night-soil-men do not react to his pleas for them to protest. He asks, 'tell me, have I been wasting my breath all years?' This is St Paul's cry for the Galatians in *Galatians 4: 11*. This is after he has discovered that the Galatians are not responding to his preaching. Narrator goes on to conclude that after all he might be considering himself too wise, creative and too righteous 'when I am really nothing more than dust and ashes'. In the Bible in *Job 42:6b*, it is written '...and repent in dust and ashes.' Job was repenting from questioning God's wisdom and Narrator is repenting from considering himself like Jesus and accepts just like Job he is nothing. But he, Narrator goes on with his duty of educating the masses.

Narrator laments that the masses are not listening to him. He uses *Proverbs 29: 18* when he says, 'where there is no vision the people perish', because he sees no vision in Ednouay. Since the masses cannot fight against the wrongs of the authorities and instead admire the authorities, this shows that 'the blind lead the blind and both shall fall in a ditch. Jesus says this in *Luke 6: 39* and *Matthew 15: 14* after telling the people not to be evil and greedy. In *Beasts of no Nation*, Narrator considers the authorities, the blind leaders who are greedy, and the masses, as blind subjects who cannot fight for their rights. These people are blind because 'eyes have they but they will not see. Jesus in *Mark 8: 18* and *Mark 4: 12* told his disciples they cannot understand because the eyes are given only to those who believe in God. That is why many have the physical eyes but do not see.

Like Jesus in *John 3: 5*, Narrator convinces the oppressed telling them 'marvel not that I say this to you; meaning he is telling them the truth. In echoing Jesus in *John 3: 8*, Narrator tells them 'the wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst tell where it cometh, and whither it goeth'.

In the *Holy Bible* God tells Moses he is going to punish the Israelites because they are a stiff-necked people (*Exodus 32: 9*). God also tells them they will not see the promise land because they are stiff-necked (*Deuteronomy 9: 6*). This is reiterated in *Acts 7: 51* when they are about to stone Stephen for preaching the word of God. In *Beasts of no Nation* the Night-soil-men are stubborn in adhering to Narrator's pleas. Narrator stands on the side of a saviour, accusing them for their stubbornness. He tells them, 'You are a stiff-necked people'. He is trying to make them understand the wickedness of the authorities and how to handle the problem but they will not listen or adhere to his pleas. Just as Dr Bernard Nsokika Fonlon warned in August 1964, in an article titled '*Will we make or Mar*' that 'in three years of reunification,...the tide is

running hard against Anglo-Saxon influences in the Federal Republic of Cameroon...we will all be French in two generations or three' (ABBIA, 1964, and the Anglophones did not react. Besong is warning again and considering the oppressed as a stiff-necked people.

Narrator goes on to bring out the foolishness of the masses. They cry for freedom but they do not want to fight for it. When the Night-soil-men say their foreign friends will help them, Narrator tells them, 'Be not made a beggar by banqueting on borrowing. This is found in the book of *Ecclesiastics (Sirach) 18: 33*. He is insinuating that the one who borrows money to make a banquet never gets rich. He also tells them 'open rebuke is better than secret love', which is the same as *Proverbs 27: 5*. Telling the Night-soil-men these is telling them that they are not working for themselves but relying on unreliable friends. Narrator makes them understand they are an unintelligent people because they talk a lot. He uses *Proverbs 17: 28* which reads, 'even a fool when he holdeth his peace is counted wise'; *Proverbs 26: 11*, 'like a dog that returns to his vomit is a fool that repeats his folly'; *2 Peter 2: 22<sub>b</sub>*, which says 'the dog turns back to his own vomit, and the sow is washed only to wallow in the mire,' and ends up telling them, 'eat and drink for tomorrow you shall die'. This is from *Isaiah 22: 13* and *1 Corinthians 15: 32*. These Night-soil-men want freedom but do not want to fight for it. To banquet on borrowing, flatter and feast without thinking of the future is what the authorities of Ednouay want and are doing. Narrator is using these proverbs to raise the awareness of the oppressed masses so they can fight against it and be liberated, but these masses are adamant. God was telling the Israelites to weep for their sins rather than to be eating and drinking. Narrator is also telling the masses to fight for the future rather than being satisfied with what they have in the present or believe that their friends are going to help them. Cameroon at the time had loan from the International Monetary Fund but instead of liquidating the debts, the authority wasted money on senseless and uncompleted projects (Ngho, 1996). In this waste, so many Cameroonians in posts of authority em-bezzled much of the money.

Narrator tries to make the masses understand that the authorities in Ednouay are wicked when he says 'all wickedness is but little to the wickedness of crisis managers'. This comes from the book of *Ecclesiastics (Sirach) 25: 19*. In the Bible, Sirach is examining the troubles women cause and concludes that 'compared with the troubles caused by a woman, any other trouble looks small.' Narrator uses this verse from Sirach replacing 'women' with 'crisis managers' and 'trouble' with 'wickedness' so that the expression can fit the context. This expression vividly describes the extent of the wickedness of the authorities in Ednouay. He reiterates this by telling the oppressed that 'they have tails like scorpions and there are stings in their tails'. This is found in *Revelations 9: 10* when John was warning

against evil. He, Narrator is warning the masses not to rely on these false crisis managers because they are wicked and evil. He goes on to use Bible readings in *Psalms 146: 3* and *Isaiah 2: 2* to warn the masses not to put their trust in directors. These directors are false crisis managers who are not to be trusted. This instruction comes because the Night-soil-men envy the positions of SAP manager. Narrator tells them 'out of your own mouth will I judge you'. In the *Holy Bible*, when Jesus was telling his followers the parable about the gold coin, he talked of a servant who took the master's money and did not make any profit. On his return, the master told the servant 'you bad servant! I will use your own words to condemn you!' (*Luke 19: 22*). Narrator says this to the masses to let them understand that if they side with the authorities they will be punished with them, because the authorities are like the master that likes to reap where he did not sow.

Narrator prescribes doom for these evil leaders, 'woe unto them that are at ease in Ednuoay'. In the book of *Isaiah 5: 8-20* and *Isaiah 10: 1*, Isaiah prophesied doom to those who took away the properties of windows and orphans. In the whole of *Mathew 23*, Jesus spoke 'woe', a doom to hypocrisy especially to the Pharisees and scribes. Narrator taps from *Acts 13: 11* and tells these evil and oppressive leaders, they will continue to walk in perpetual darkness and will never again see the great light. These are in the valley of Darkness (91) as *Joel 3: 14* stipulates.

Narrator ends his sermon by calling on his audience to 'pray without ceasing' (96) as St Paul called on the people of Thessalonica in *1 Thessalonians 5: 17* to pray at all times. Narrator's request to those listening to him is the same as God's request to the Israelites when they had sinned in *Isaiah 1: 18a*, 'come now, let us reason together says the Lord: though your sins are like scarlet...' Besong, through Narrator, believes that though harm and hurt already have been done, together they can still redress the conflict between the oppressed and the oppressor.

## Conclusion

This study asserts that the language, as used by Bate Besong in *Beasts of No Nation*, is a means of encouraging the downtrodden who want change for the better. His pleas go both to the oppressed, calling on them to protest and to the oppressors, calling on them to dialogue. The linguistic choice made by the author is affected by the ongoing social activity. The political struggle, the economic depression, the social inequality

and the rest of the ills in the society make the author to believe that with the grandeur of the *Holy Bible*, the use of the word of God to protest can change the society to that of equality. As Halliday views the society, Besong is writing from a context which is reflected in the text. The political and socio-cultural situation of Cameroon has a bearing on his writing, affirming that the use of language is determined by the ongoing social activity at the time Besong was writing. The conclusion drawn is that which supports the case of Cameroon that, where there is oppression, the language of the oppressed faction will obviously be the language of revolt in their writings. This defines the register used by Bate Besong in *Beasts of No Nation*, since the context in which he is writing determines the linguistic choices he makes.

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