

Language: The Locus of Parallel Disciplines

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Abstract:

Creativeness and description constitute a natural sequence which finds expression in language. While the former is unconscious, the latter is deliberate. This paper examines the relationship between the unconscious resort, by the literary writer, to his latent knowledge of phonology and the wilful art of phonological descriptions.

Preambles:

Euclidean geometry evolved around the concept of axioms. Thus known as the axiomatic construction, it –furnishes the proof of a statement in terms of logical derivations from the axioms alone|| (Reichenbach (1958)). It was a closed and complete system,

characterized by its ability to reduce knowledge to a precise thesis. The search for knowledge could have ended with the Euclidean formulations because they contain a statement about infinity. But the development later of non-Euclidean geometry which uses the axiomatic construction as an instrument of discovery reversed the situation by demystifying or denying the article of infinity, with which the Euclidean geometry is identified, thus paving the way for modern philosophical thinking. Philosophy touches the mind in reasoning, changes the mind in its logic and directs the mind in thinking.

The provision by the non-Euclidean geometry will be used as basis for the discussion here. In this paper, there is therefore a deliberate resort to the use of –parallels ||, a qualitative term which can be associated with any entity – idea, object, opinion, notion, lines, disciplines, etc., rather than in its strict geometric sense. In other words, this resort to the use of geometrical forms for this study is rather only for illustrative purposes.

Both the Euclidean and non-Euclidean geometries seem to agree on the non-convergence of parallels but have divergent opinions about their infinite nature. The quarrel about the infinite nature of parallels may have emanated from the fact that nothing on its own is totally independent. So-called independent countries still depend, in one way or the other, on other countries for one thing or the other. It may also have come from the fact that something must happen so that other things either happen or are prevented from happening – call it the cause and effect theory. Otherwise, the world would be a drab; nothing happens; the air is still; rivers are stagnant; life itself is at a stand-still; there will be no development... Newton's apple will not fall, etc.

There is no need to think that we are about to propound another theory of parallels; neither are we trying to say that parallels do not exist. Rather by this, we seem to agree with the non-Euclidean that, whether they be lines imaginary or visual, whether they be disciplines or notions, parallels necessarily depend on something else in order to be what they are or what they appear to be. They are thus the parallel lines which I may choose to draw on paper or on the ground, etc. (or parallel non-agreeing lines of thought held by two or more people...), depending on me, my pen and on my paper. If my hand is shaky, thereby preventing my pen from making straight lines, or my paper is not smooth enough, or if I do not want to draw parallels at all, we cannot have parallels. In this way, and like the non-Euclidean, we see parallels as such only as long as we take them to be so. At the same time, we only see them as not being so depending on visualisation. In

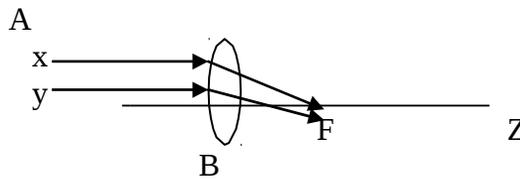
other words, the big question mark on their infinite nature remains conspicuous. This lends itself to a suspicion that the monopoly of the infinity of parallels can be revisited. Therefore for the world to move, for there to be development..., there must be, somewhere along the line, an intervention, an intrusion, an interposition of something to bring about a destabilisation to enable something else to happen. That we cannot yet appropriately identify what that intervention is and locate the point of intervention does not mean that what we visualise as parallels are infinitely so.

The Convergence of Parallels:

Physics provides a good number of instances where parallel rays of light converge, the most intriguing being those demonstrated with a convex lens, a parabolic shaped mirror, the human eye and the pin-hole camera. What these examples do not seem to be specific about is what happens after F, the focus of these rays.

Fig (a):

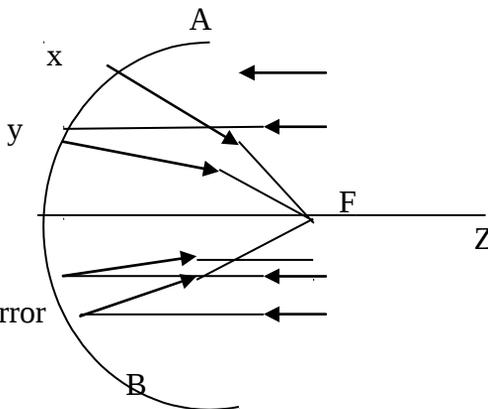
Convex Lens



F = Focus of all rays.

Fig. (b):

Parabolic Shaped mirror



Adapted from Emeka E. Ike (2003).

In figures (a) and (b) above, AB causes parallel rays to converge at F and all culminate in Z. Z is therefore a factor of x, y... convergence.

One may question the necessity for this reiteration of already existing facts. How else is knowledge, indeed the world organised if not by the simple procedure from known to the unknown?

The Disciplines-Phonology and Literature:

Knowledge is unquantifiable. Likewise, the individual disciplines of knowledge are not quantifiable. Assuming the former assertion to be an axiom upon which the later is built, it will make no difference if we say that the individual disciplines of knowledge are of equal magnitude. This thesis and anti-thesis syndrome which sounds like saying: X is... and X is not... seems to be in line with the central thesis of the axiom of parallels and non-Euclidean geometry (Hans Reichenbach (1958)). With it as basis, we shall attempt, in what follows, to examine the relationship between phonology and literature or creative writing.

Phonology and creative writing (Literature) are seen here as parallels of equal magnitude. While the former is a deliberate and conscious undertaking, the later is an unconscious utilisation (through the game of manipulation) of the former's findings (Ada Ugah (1990)). Motivated by the pulsion/drive to communicate, to interact and to exchange ideas and concepts, both converge at a locus (F) – language, their common channel of experience. Having found this weapon, the creative writer is, thus, equipped for the conquest of the universe if he is sufficiently motivated. We can therefore see that (F) is not an end result, but the very beginning of the search for knowledge, the end of creation and the beginning of recreation.

From Phonology to Literature:

What transformational processes do sounds undergo to make them literature? This question borders on what happens at the confluence (F) of creation and recreation.

Isolated sounds, which phonology aims at describing, do not constitute language on their own. A language is born through the structuring of elemental components of sounds into a systematic entity, according to a specified pattern. Equipped with these entities and with the rules governing their coinage into meaningful strings, the creative writer is thus fired by an image which he regards as his lamp, his guide, his inspiration, his primary vision.

Writing is one of the most rigorous tasks, the most painstaking, the most involving human endeavour if it is to be carried out effectively. A well constructed line or piece is a mirror through which

the writer visualises an image, his universe, his environment and it is also the picture which the audience has of the writer himself. Composition, therefore, is a rebellious selective manipulation of built-up entities which fit into a specific imagined context. Therefore cognizance of these discrete sound units in a purely phonological sense is not necessarily a prerequisite for writing. The creative writer's job actually begins where the phonologist's stops. What brings them together is in the realm of language, the locus of their parallel disciplines.

In accordance with Umezina (1990), we shall attempt an illustration of the unconscious application of phonological findings to creative writing, with Ada Ugha's symbolism in **The Ballads of the Unknown Soldier**. A cursory look at this 117-page novel in ballads reveals two major themes or concepts.

On the one hand, the theme of Hero is camouflaged in what may be regarded phonologically as its pertinent traits or literally as the sub-themes-fame, fiery, force. In characterising the hero and the unknown soldier, the writer resorts to the use of the following forms whose phonological implications he may not have been aware of:

Calabar, calabashes	battle (battle line, battle dress)
Gallantry	combat
Baobab gift	parade
Twisting	beat (a retreat)
Comrades	gallons (of hot slimy saliva)
Bury	gape
Turn day to darkness	pregnant cows
Guns	groped and grabbed
	bulldozers, etc.

Each of these forms commences with stop consonants or occlusive or yet in certain phonological quarters, plosives, signifying some exertion of force or energy in their articulation. Also in the chapter entitled –Ballad of the Fortune Teller||, the element of fear is identified with the use of words with similar initial articulation – cowries, black, blow bugles, darkness, crucible (of new climes) tormented, grief etc.

On the other hand, the theme of the countryside, characterisable with the traits serenity, souvenir and syndrome, is exemplified in the ballads with soft initial sounding coinage among which are:

Sunshine, shades, landscape lined, singing serenity, splendour, aroma, yearning, longing, harmony, velveteen, azure skyline, verdure, etc. Nature goes with beauty, peace, harmony and smoothness. Natural beauty can be seen in the use of the relatively soft articulating sounds at the initials of the above words.

In Ugah's **In the Beginning**, Albert and Benjamin are names alien to the Igbo traditional culture, which is the setting of this book. While names like the above in the Western culture admit consonant clusters and closed syllables, Igbo names never signal any instances of such occurrences. These names are, therefore, foreign in the sense that, first of all, consonant clusters are nowhere attested in Igbo culture. Secondly, their syllabic patterns are contradictory to the Igbo phonological structure. This is probably the reason why the writer dissociates Achebe, the traditionalist we know, from Albert. This may also be the reason why Benjamin (the driver) was painted with an image of the intruder, the distracter and the alien. Howbeit, Albert and Achebe on the one hand and Benjamin and Agunkwandu on the other constitute parallels of equal magnitude, which only find their locus in Ugah's novel or language.

Conclusion:

This study which embraces a little of a number of areas, may cause concern in the minds of many. As can be seen from its presentation, it is neither a pure linguistic analysis nor a pure mathematical deliberation, neither a pure literary analysis nor a pure philosophical conjecture. This may be as a result of our belief in the destabilisation of the mind prior to its introduction to a new concept. If this procedure meets a consensus, our resort to a mathematical-cum-philosophical treatment serves to loosen the ground for the phonoliterary study, a relationship which it aims at establishing.

The locus (language) of these two parallel disciplines finds utilisation in a wide range of disciplines. Even within the same discipline, we have a network of smaller or sub-disciplines whose existence has been made possible because of the possession of language.

Again, mere possession of language without being aware of its capabilities serves a very narrow purpose. During the last few decades, emphasis was placed on language performance. Whoever spoke and wrote good grammar could pass for everything. That was an epoch comparable to the axiomatic era when –... unless one was a sceptic, one was content with the fact that certain assumption had to be

believed

axiomatically...||, Reichenbach, H. (1958). But in recent times, our awareness of the implications of possessing a language has resulted in diversified preoccupations.

Therefore Z is a factor which results from the convergence of X and Y in F. Z can generate $Z_1, Z_2, Z_3 - Z_n$ depending on motivation.

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