

Cultural appropriation in Ndibe's Foreign Gods, Inc. (2014): A corpus stylistic analysis

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Abstract

This study employs a corpus stylistics approach to examine the themes of cultural appropriation and migration in Okey Ndibe's *Foreign Gods, Inc.* Using Wmatrix software, the study explored semantic domains to reveal the novel's thematic and stylistic features. The study identified two dominant themes: religious and cultural commodification in a globalised world, and economic disparities and post-colonial power dynamics. These themes point to the tension between traditional religious values and the commercialisation of cultural heritage. The analysis also highlighted the economic motivations behind migration and the power imbalances in the global art market. The study contributes to the growing field of corpus stylistics in African literature. It concludes that Ndibe's novel offers a critique of how globalisation and capitalism transform sacred cultural heritage into commodities, raising questions about cultural identity preservation in a post-colonial context.

Keywords

commercialisation, corpus stylistics, cultural identity, migration, Wmatrix

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Introduction

The ongoing debate about migration and literature points to the shared global phenomenon. The global migration report shows 82.4% of Africans immigrating to other continents, mainly the Americas (Windzio, 2018). The factual reality of migration transcends into emerging compositions of immigrant African literature in the 21st century. The concept and construction of space in African literary texts provides trajectories for thematic exploration of migration. Contemporary African writers are focusing on issues of migration (Bone, 2010; Fasselt, 2022). This has led to “migration writing”, a concept and practice sharing instances of life writings, having “a hybrid form, structure and style ... common with post-colonial literature” (Kosmalska, 2022, p. 332). As proposed by Kosmalska (2022), there are three approaches to exploring migration writing: theme-based, ethnic-based, and text-based. In this study, I adopt the theme-based approach to migration writing.

This paper is hinged on the theme-based approach to migration writing because it delineates the origin and background of the author from the analysis (Kosmalska, 2022). Interestingly, this practice is strongly celebrated in the modernist tradition of separating the author from the text to provide a comprehensive and near-objective literary interpretation. The argument of the theme-based approach is that anyone can be affected by migration, not only the migrant. As such, the theme-based approach situates the paper in a perspective which focuses on the significant material that inspired, relates to, or treats the experiences of migration. In this way, this study prioritises the content and topic of the migration text. Following this line of argument, this study sets out to conduct a corpus stylistic analysis of the content of Okey Ndibe’s *Foreign Gods, Inc.* (2014), using Wmatrix software.

The relevance of exploring this text is that it can be classified as migration writing which thrives on cultural appropriation. First, as a 21st-century African literary work, *Foreign Gods, Inc.* represents the current trend that focuses on migration issues. This makes it a timely and relevant source for studying modern perspectives on migration in literature. Second, ongoing analysis of migration writing and literary texts have predominantly been through close readings and textual analyses (Bone, 2010; Motahane, 2022; Motahane & Makombe, 2020; Nkansah, forthcoming; Reid, 2012; Saayman, 2016). This study addresses this gap by using a corpus approach, offering quantitative perspectives, to explore a migration literary text. Additionally, despite drawing on this single text, the study offers a lens to understand a complex global phenomenon that affects millions of people.

Foreign Gods, Inc.: A Synopsis

Okey Ndibe’s *Foreign Gods, Inc.* follows the story of Ikechukwu (Ike) Uzundu, a Nigerian immigrant living in New York City. Despite having a paying job in Nigeria, Ike decides to travel to America in search of the *American Dream* and greener pasture. Upon arrival, he strives to get a job as a taxi driver due to his pronounced African accent, which has hindered his job prospects in the corporate world. Struggling with mounting debts, a failed marriage to an American woman, and the pressures of sending money back home to his family in Nigeria, Ike becomes desperate for a solution to his financial woes. He learns about a New York art gallery called Foreign Gods, Inc., which specialises in selling artefacts and deities from around the world to wealthy collectors. Inspired by this discovery, Ike hatches a plan to steal Ngene, the war deity from his home village in Nigeria, and sell it to the gallery. He believes this will solve his financial problems and finally allow him to achieve the American Dream. Ike returns to his village in Nigeria under the pretence of visiting family. While there, he reconnects with his uncle, who is the chief priest of Ngene, and his old community. He grapples with feelings of guilt and cultural dislocation as he prepares to steal the deity.

Despite his misgivings, Ike goes through with the theft and returns to New York with Ngene. However, when he attempts to sell the deity to Foreign Gods, Inc., he finds that the value of African artefacts has depreciated in the market. The gallery owner, Mark Gruels, offers him a fraction of what Ike had hoped for. Devastated by this turn of events and overwhelmed by guilt, Ike begins to experience a psychological and spiritual crisis. He becomes haunted by the presence of Ngene in his apartment and starts to believe that the deity is exacting revenge on him. The novel concludes with Ike in a state of mental distress, trapped between cultures, haunted by his actions, and still far from achieving the financial stability he sought. The story leaves readers to ponder the costs of cultural displacement, the commodification of heritage, and the challenges faced by immigrants in a globalised world.

Theoretical Framing: Post-colonial Migration and Cultural Appropriation

Post-colonial migration, as a concept, emerged from the historical context of decolonisation and the subsequent movement of people from former colonies to metropolitan centres. Bhabha (1994) posits that this migration creates a 'third space' where cultural identities are negotiated and hybridised. Expanding on this, Hall (1990) argues that cultural identity is not a fixed essence, but a positioning in narratives of the past, which is constantly undergoing transformation in the diasporic experience.

Cultural appropriation, on the other hand, refers to the adoption of elements of one culture by members of a different culture, often in a context of unequal power relations. Young (2010) argues that cultural appropriation becomes problematic when it involves the exploitation of marginalised cultures by dominant ones. In the context of post-colonial migration, this dynamic is particularly fraught, as migrants may find themselves both subjects and agents of cultural appropriation. Ziff and Rao (1997) further elaborate on this, suggesting that cultural appropriation can be seen as a form of colonialism, where the dominant culture asserts power by claiming ownership over the cultural products of marginalised groups.

The intersection of migration and migration writing is particularly salient in this discourse. Migration literature often serves as a site for exploring the tensions between cultural preservation and assimilation (Boehmer, 2005). Writers from post-colonial backgrounds frequently grapple with themes of displacement, identity crisis, and the commodification of cultural heritage. This is evident in works such as Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*, Ayi Kwei Armah's *Fragments*, Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing*, and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah*, where characters navigate the complex terrain of cultural identity in diasporic settings. Frank (2008) further argues that migration literature often serves as a form of 'writing back' to the centre, challenging dominant narratives and reclaiming cultural agency.

Several studies have adopted this theoretical framing to analyse contemporary literature such as textual landscapes (Tolia-Kelly, 2009), migration and disillusionment (Bonsu & Nkansah, 2024), post-colonial exotic (Huggan, 2001), production and reception of post-colonial texts (Brouillette, 2007), exile and redemption (Asempasah, 2020), trauma and postmemory (van Rens, 2023), and indication of naming practices (Nkansah & Bonsu, 2024). In synthesising these theoretical perspectives, it becomes clear that post-colonial migration and cultural appropriation are inextricably linked in contemporary literature. This tension is reflected in narratives that explore themes of displacement, cultural hybridity, and the search for authenticity in a globalised world.

The theoretical framing is suitable for this study, in analysing *Foreign Gods, Inc.* because the power dynamics between Ike, a struggling immigrant, and the gallery owner, Mark Gruels, reflect the broader post-colonial relationships between the Global South and North. This indicates how cultural appropriation often occurs within contexts of economic disparity. Additionally,

Bhabha's (1994) concept of the 'third space' and cultural hybridity is essential in understanding Ike's character. As a Nigerian immigrant in America, Ike inhabits a liminal space between cultures, struggling to reconcile his Nigerian heritage with his American aspirations. This internal conflict drives much of the novel's narrative and can be effectively analysed using post-colonial migration theory.

Previous Studies on Corpus Stylistics

Expanding upon his 2002 keyword analysis of *Romeo and Juliet*, Culpeper's (2009) study focused on keyword analyses, their potential limitations, and the extension of the concept of keyness to part-of-speech tags and semantic domain tags. He examined the statistical settings and reference corpora used in deriving keywords, investigated the various types of keywords that emerged, and explored the significance of keyword dispersion within the data. His research centred on the character dialogue in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. Making a nascent contribution to the field of corpus stylistics, Culpeper demonstrated that Juliet's keywords, such as *if*, *yet*, *or*, and *would*, create a grammatical style that can be interpreted as evidence of the anxieties she experiences in the play. Furthermore, he showed how lexical and grammatical patterns can reflect relevant features and dimensions of a text without relying on qualitative intuition.

Similarly, Archer et al. (2005) explored the semantic domains in Shakespeare's play. They extended the keyness analysis through the semantic domains. Following the interest in Shakespeare's literary craft, Murphy (2015) identified 57 positive keywords, which he categorised into ideational, interpersonal, and textual groups. The ideational keywords, for instance, included words related to mental states and processes, such as *dream*, *sleep*, *conscience*, *thoughts*, *thought*, *mind*, and *wit*. Murphy analysed these keywords using dispersion plots to illustrate the degree to which words are uniformly distributed across the text. His research demonstrated that Shakespeare often employed particular linguistic devices in soliloquies to convey doubt, determination, self-reflection, and intense feelings. The Bard utilised certain speech patterns and rhetorical techniques to represent the inner thoughts and powerful emotions of characters engaged in dramatic monologues.

In another study, Leech (2013) analysed Virginia Woolf's *The Mark on the Wall* as a focal text, comparing it with three alternative reference corpora of varying generalities. Using Wmatrix to identify the keyness and distinctiveness of the focal text, Leech discovered that it possessed a literary style and phenomena that were both statistically salient and of literary significance. He noted that these features "might have gone unnoticed without the Wmatrix software" (p. 25). Interestingly, Leech found prominence in certain parts-of-speech (POS) tags such as VVZ, VBZ, PPIS1 and VV0. The main limitation of the study was the relative brevity of the focal text, which gave undue prominence to some features occurring only a few times. Nevertheless, the number of shared POS tags remained consistent across the focal and reference corpora.

Quite recently, Balossi (2020) employed Wmatrix to examine the style and language patterns in Conrad's *The Shadow-Line*. He advocated for the potential of quantitative approaches, such as key POS-tag analysis, concordances and frequencies, to enhance understanding of a character's mind style and textual interaction with the world. Balossi highlighted the importance of frequently repeated grammatical sequences in illustrating the narrator's interaction with the world and psychological development in the novel. For instance, he found that APPGE (possessive pronoun, pre-nominal) had a higher number of occurrences with an LL value of 28.89, followed by PPIO1 (LL = 24.81). *My* and *me* were the common pronouns identified in the corpus study. Notably, he discovered an over-represented distribution of *I-he* patterns of narration, indicating shifts between perspectives in the target corpus. Similarly, in an earlier study, Stubbs (2005) used Dickens' *Heart of Darkness* to demonstrate that frequencies, distribution of words

and recurrent phraseologies provide a more detailed basis for literary interpretations and identify significant linguistic features that elude literary critics.

From a register perspective, Egbert and Mahlberg's (2020) recent study compiled Charles Dickens' novels and compared them to 19th-century fiction. A key finding was that nearly 70% of the variance in *Egbert_D1* scores in the corpus could be accounted for by discourse level alone. They also found that fictional speech uses more language associated with "Thought Presentation", while narration is more descriptive in nature. Additionally, Tabata (1995) revealed the first- and third-person narrative perspectives of Charles Dickens, pointing to a more oral, subjective, descriptive and nominal style of narration.

McIntyre and Archer (2010) concentrated their analysis on a single literary text, Alan Bennett's *The Lady in the Van*. Their key findings demonstrated that a computational semantic approach could be employed to measure the consistency of mind style within a text. They concluded by offering a method to examine the relationships and differences between characters in a text, potentially leading to the uncovering of deviant linguistic behaviour and the subsequent appraisal of such behaviour as constituting a mind style. This study serves as a notable example of the application of computational approaches in exploring literary texts.

Funnelling the focus to African literature, there are relative few studies that have conducted a corpus stylistic analysis of literary texts. For instance, Nkansah (2021) re-examined Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*. From the results, he argued that the theme of corruption, the dominant issue, is partly perpetuated by unnamed character the Man. Mosutafa (2022) analysed J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* and Gordimer's *My Son's Story* using keyword analysis tool from AntConc. His comparative foci revealed that both novels prominently feature gender-related themes interwoven with South Africa's socio-political reality. *My Son's Story* is set during the height of racial and social discrimination, while *Disgrace* explores the aftermath of apartheid. The intersection of race and gender is evident in both works, though to varying degrees. Additionally, Nkansah and Bonsu (2022) explored Adichie's *Zikora* to deconstruct the meanings of feminism and suffering in the short story. Followingly, Bonsu and Nkansah's (2024) study re-visioned Armah's *Fragments*. They revealed that Armah discusses "the geographic mobility of characters as a metaphor for a quest for a place of being and identity" (p. 1).

The reviewed studies foreground the prowess of corpus approaches in exploring literary texts to provide quantitative evidence that supports thematic and part-of-speech analysis. It must however be noted that this approach necessitates qualitative decisions to provide an interpretive context to support the quantitative report (Moustafa, 2022), which makes this study crucial. Most of the reviewed studies used AntConc to explore the texts, dwelling on keywords and wordlists which have several limitations (Balossi, 2020; Hu, 2015). In this study, I use Wmatrix, a web-based corpus software that is currently being applied in several studies (Balossi, 2020; Bonsu & Nkansah, 2024; Hu, 2015; Rayson, 2008). From the foregoing, the main purpose of this paper is to examine the theme of cultural appropriation and migration in Ndibe's *Foreign Gods, Inc*. The aim is to uncover how the semantic domains of the texts lend themselves for thematisation that grounds the style of the text. In this light, the current study contributes to the existing and emerging studies on corpus stylistics.

Method

Corpus Approach

This study adopts a corpus stylistics approach, a step towards using computer software to analyse literary texts (Leech & Short, 1981). Corpus stylistics provides a quantitative

confirmation on the style of literary texts, providing concrete support for their interpretation that a close reading may miss (Mahlberg, 2007).

Corpus stylistics bridges the gap between corpus linguistics and literary stylistics, combining computational analysis with close reading techniques to examine literary style (Bonsu & Nkansah, 2024; McIntyre & Walker, 2019). This emerging empirical field and methodological approach to literary studies employs both quantitative and qualitative analyses to identify objective, measurable characteristics and themes within a corpus of literary texts. It reveals significant textual features that often escape the notice of literary scholars or remain elusive to traditional methods of analysis (Culpeper, 2009; Leech, 2013; Stubbs, 1995). A primary challenge in this field is obtaining digital versions of literary texts suitable for corpus analysis. Nevertheless, computational methods offer greater consistency and reliability compared to qualitative manual reading, thus lending more rigour and objectivity to the study of literary style (Jockers, 2013).

Despite the aforementioned limitation, corpus stylistics effectively combines the strengths of quantitative digital humanities with the qualitative traditions of literary studies (Bonsu & Nkansah, 2024). The use of concordance lines supports qualitative interpretation, addressing the “decontextualisation” concern raised by literary critics (Bashir et al., 2018). This corpus-based approach to literature lends itself well to reproducible research methodologies. Leech (2008) posits that corpus stylistics, still in its nascent stages, would greatly benefit from the increased application of corpus software and tools to uncover new dimensions of literary texts. The field remains emergent, with a relatively limited body of scholarship (Archer et al., 2008; Bonsu & Nkansah, 2024; Culpeper, 2002, 2009; McIntyre & Archer, 2010; Moustafa, 2022; Nkansah, 2021; Nkansah & Bonsu, 2022). These reasons justify the choice of corpus stylistic approach to analyse the selected texts.

A Two-text Corpus

Two migration literary texts were selected for this study. While this raises representative concerns, in corpus stylistics, the texts are specialised and typically smaller to allow for a comprehensive analysis. As Mahlberg (2010) notes, corpus stylistic analysis of a text may feature a single text (either a play or a novel), selected for analysis based on its worth of addressing a key issue that has cultural or literary worth. Also, several corpus stylistic studies have used single texts (Culpeper, 2009; McIntyre & Archer, 2010; Nkansah, 2021; Nkansah & Bonsu, 2022) and two or three texts (Balossi, 2020; Bonsu & Nkansah, 2024; Moustafa, 2021). Additionally, the texts selected for this study are homogenous in terms of the fact they address migration issues in Ghana and Nigeria, taking into consideration the dilemma and harsh experiences of migrants.

I selected Okey Ndibe’s *Foreign Gods, Inc.* (2014) and Esi Edugyan’s *The Second Life of Samuel Tyne* (2004). In accordance with several corpus linguistic practices relevant to this study (Culpeper, 2009; Leech, 2013), I cleaned the datasets. This involved removing any extraneous information from the files, including page numbers, headings, prefaces, author information, and tables of contents. For sections that proved challenging to remove entirely, I enclosed them in angle brackets, instructing the software to disregard these portions during analysis. I then transformed the PDF versions of the texts to plain text format, a corpus-readable format. Corpus stylistics is basically a comparative procedure (Leech, 2013). It is through such statistical comparison that the foregrounding effects are revealed. I used *Foreign Gods, Inc.* as the target corpus or focal text and *The Second Life of Samuel Tyne* as the reference corpus. Table 1 presents the token and type count of the corpora.

Table 1. Description of corpora

Corpora	Type	Token
Foreign Gods, Inc.	9940	95550
The Second Life of Samuel Tyne	11311	97558
Total	21,251	193,108

As can be seen in Table 1, the token size for the study was nearly two hundred thousand which is suitable for this specialised corpus analysis. This is because most previous studies have used less than a hundred thousand corpus (Culpeper, 2002; Inaki & Okita, 2006; Mahlberg & McIntyre, 2010; Nkansah & Bonsu, 2022; Walker, 2010). Also, the reference corpus is a little higher than the target corpus which makes the analysis viable.

Corpus Analysis

I analysed the data using Wmatrix version 5 (<https://ucrel-wmatrix5.lancaster.ac.uk/wmatrix5.html>), a web-based software programme that automatically tags and presents the distribution of semantic and part-of-speech (POS) tags in texts. After uploading our corpus into Wmatrix, the processing occurred in two stages.

At the first stage, POS tags were assigned to words and multi-word phrases using CLAWS (Constituent Likelihood Automatic Word-tagging System). This system employs a probabilistic Markov Model to identify the most likely POS sequences, achieving 97% accuracy. Despite this high accuracy, I conducted manual checks of concordances to ensure reliability (Rayson, 2008). The second stage, semantic tagging (SEMTAG), assigns semantic tags by matching patterns in the text against the software's built-in dictionaries. This stage achieved 92% accuracy. Although both stages are automatic, I focused on the SEMTAG stage due to the study's purpose. The semantic architecture of the texts could reveal underlying textual meanings.

I sorted the data with the USAS tag, where I considered ten (10) Semtags with loglikelihood significance (see Table 2). Each of the semantic fields had a loglikelihood statistical test (LL) of +7 ($LL \geq +7$) which meant that the tags were statistically significant for the analysis. I used log-likelihood, which is more preferred than chi-square in Wmatrix, explained in Rayson (2008). The normal level for statistical significance is a 95% confidence level ($p < 0.05$) Chi-square value, which equates to an LL value of 3.8 or above. The recommended LL value for a word/tag to be statistically significant is above 6.63, as this is the cut-off point representing 99% confidence in its significance. Table 2 shows the summary of the keyness of Semtags with their observed frequencies in target text and reference corpus (O1 and O2 respectively), overuse and underuse (%1 and %2) relative to O1 and O2 respectively, sorted on log-likelihood. Underuse refers to the use of a word or phrase that occurs less frequently in the target than in the comparison corpus, while overuse refers to the use of words or phrases that occur more frequently in the target than in the comparison corpus.

Table 2. Top ten USAS keyness analysis

Tag keys	O1	%1	O2	%2	LL
S9	1198	1.32	208	0.23 +	745.83
I1	237	0.26	62	0.07 +	104.90
C1	227	0.25	64	0.07 +	92.74
S2.2	577	0.63	313	0.35 +	72.98
M5	75	0.08	11	0.01 +	51.85
Z2	435	0.48	279	0.31 +	30.54

Tag keys	01	%1	02	%2	LL
I1.1+	44	0.05	8	0.01 +	26.54
A10-	199	0.22	115	0.13 +	20.68
I1.3	63	0.07	22	0.02 +	19.60
I2.2	203	0.22	129	0.15 +	14.82

Source: Author (2024)

USAS tag keys: **S9** (Religion and the supernatural; e.g. god, heaven, goddess, deity), **I1** (Money generally; e.g. dollars, cash, money, banks), **C1** (Arts and crafts; e.g., statue, gallery, design, culture), **S2.2** (People: Male; e.g. male, man, gentleman, fella), **M5** (Flying and aircraft; e.g. arched, spiral, wavy, curved), **Z2** (Geographical names; e.g. New York, Lagos, London, Amsterdam, Philadelphia, Zulu, Ghana), **I1.1+** (Money: Affluence; e.g. rich, wealthy, prosperity, big money), **A10** (Closed; Hiding/Hidden; e.g. anonymity, shutting, covered, secrecy), **I1.3** (Money: Cost and price; e.g. charged, bills, price, fees, expenses), and **I2.2** (Business: Selling; e.g. buy, sell, store, purchase).

Following the analysis, I grouped the tags into two dominant themes: (a) religious and cultural commodification in a globalised world, and (b) economic disparities and post-colonial dynamics. These themes are further explored in the next section.

Results

Religious and Cultural Commodification in a Globalised World

This theme combines the tags S9 (Religion and the supernatural), C1 (Arts and crafts), M5 (Flying and aircraft), A10 (Closed; hiding/hidden), and I2.2 (Business: Selling). It reflects the central conflict in the story: the transformation of sacred religious artefacts into commodities in the global art market. This theme explores the tension between traditional religious values and the commercialisation of cultural heritage.

The story begins with Ike's visit to Foreign Gods, Inc., a gallery that specialises in buying and selling deities from around the world. The very name of the establishment encapsulates the commodification of religious artefacts. The gallery's owner, Mark Gruels, embodies this commercialisation of the sacred. In one instance, he describes his business matter-of-factly: "I buy and sell gods, period" (Chapter 26). This statement starkly illustrates the reduction of religious objects to mere commodities. Figure 1 illustrates the concordance of this tag, showing the religious names.

1198 occurrences.			Extend context	
a bluish background : FOREIGN	GODS	, INC . It was written in tiny	1	More Full
erves . How odd to vend a war	god	while jittery . Yet , to go in	2	More Full
of diamond . She strapped the	deity	in place with the seat belt an	3	More Full
gnated dealers . There was an	otherworldly	chill in the air . There was a	4	More Full
e weeks , his peoples ancient	deity	, Ngene , would be here , too	5	More Full
tairs , in the section called	Heaven	. Ngene was a majestic god wit	6	More Full
Heaven . Ngene was a majestic	god	with a rich legend and history	7	More Full
as a majestic god with a rich	legend	and history . How many other g	8	More Full
and history . How many other	gods	could boast of dooming Walter	9	More Full
Stanton , that famed English	missionary	whose name , in the syllable-s	10	More Full
layer in the rare sport where	gods	and sacred curios were bought	11	More Full
the rare sport where gods and	sacred	curios were bought and sold .	12	More Full
the glass cage identified the	deity	as C1760 . Ike picked up a glo	13	More Full
udied the image of one of the	deities	in that section . Carved from	14	More Full
rt italicized description : A	god	of the crossroads , originally	15	More Full
er him . Surely , a legendary	god	of war would command a higher	16	More Full
gravelly . Youre looking at a	goddess	. Shes definitely not a good f	17	More Full
ou do better with strong male	gods	. Youd find hershall I saya bi	18	More Full
ser to him . You do nt want a	goddess	that clashes with your persona	19	More Full
n this . He glanced up at the	deity	. This , here , is a Mayan mar	20	More Full
nde with one hand , the Mayan	deity	with the other . Mark , this g	21	More Full
, like , now ! So ? I have a	god	I can bring , he said . You ha	22	More Full
bring , he said . You have a	god	? Yes . Great . Lets see it .	23	More Full
f , he added , Its a powerful	deity	, too . Gruels regarded him wi	24	More Full
ng to show ? Ike said , Its a	god	of war . It could be a god of	25	More Full

Figure 1. S9 (Religion and the supernatural) Concordance

The S9 tag, representing religion and the supernatural, is prominently featured throughout the text, underscoring the sacred nature of the deities being traded. This is exemplified in the description of Ngene: “Ngene was a majestic god with a rich legend and history” (Chapter 1). The reverence for Ngene is further illustrated in Osuakwu’s invocation: “Ngene, you’re the hand of splendor, the hand of riches! You’re the breast that suckles the baby!” (Chapter 14). These descriptions emphasise the deity’s spiritual significance within its original cultural context. However, this reverence is contrasted with the I2.2 tag (Business: Selling) (see Figure 2), which represents the commercialisation of these sacred objects. The gallery’s approach to these deities is purely transactional, as evidenced by Gruels’ statement: “I buy and sell gods, period”. This commodification is further emphasised in the gallery’s pricing strategy: “The lowest price in the section was \$171,455; the highest \$1.13 million” (Chapter 1).

. Every god I ever bought or sold	had the greatest mojo in all o	16	More	Full
in a sweeping gesture . This store	has great inventory . Look aro	17	More	Full
usly expect me to discuss the buying	ofnothing ! It does nt even ma	18	More	Full
away . So , is he offering to sell	thiswhats its name again ? Nge	19	More	Full
e . Is the priest offering to sell	this god ? Ike shook his head	20	More	Full
er . You said youve got great merchandise	. You get me a great item , yo	21	More	Full
ew York City , where he would sell	it to Foreign Gods , Inc . Gru	22	More	Full
nced that his famous cane had flogged	a corpse . It was after this e	23	More	Full
led Foreign Gods , Inc . They buy	and sell gods . Thats what I p	24	More	Full
ign Gods , Inc . They buy and sell	gods . Thats what I plan to wr	25	More	Full
Ike contacted a Puerto Rican broker	named Ricardo Otis who in turn	26	More	Full
e Ikes green card bride . The broker	demandd a fee of five thousan	27	More	Full
he accent isnt right . I cant hire	you . Ike did not submit any j	28	More	Full
d more and more money for her shopping	sprees . To meet those demands	29	More	Full
ot right in front of Cadillas store	. He exhaled through gritted t	30	More	Full
ed driving out to the package store	on Avenue U , but he was in no	31	More	Full
s the usual rowdy scene . The store	was directly underneath Ikes s	32	More	Full
oom space . Still , he rarely shopped	there . In fact , once he sold	33	More	Full
ped there . In fact , once he sold	Ngene , one of his first prior	34	More	Full
t pain . He also detested the store	owners brand of gregariousness	35	More	Full
girls , rollicked around the stores	swinging door . Excuse me , he	36	More	Full
he took his place behind six customers	. Cadilla was as high-spirited	37	More	Full
yarn-spinning wreck . Red Ray bought	eighty-eight Mega Millions lot	38	More	Full
et himself a Hollywood lady , buy	a Cadillac with leather uphols	39	More	Full

Figure 2. I2.2 (Business selling) Concordance

Moreover, the tension between these two tags is particularly evident in Ike's internal struggle. While he recognises Ngene's spiritual importance, he also sees it as a potential source of financial gain: "With a green card in his possession, he would be in line for a good corporate job" (Chapter 2). This internal conflict illustrates the clash between traditional religious values (S9) and the allure of financial prosperity through selling (I2.2). The text explores how the value of these deities shifts based on market demands rather than their religious importance. Gruels explains: "You want a great payday, then go get me an Asian god. They're big, Asian gods are. There's also a huge demand for Latin American gods" (Chapter 26). This statement highlights how the business of selling (I2.2) has come to dictate the perceived value of religious artefacts (S9). The culmination of this tension between S9 and I2.2 is seen in the final transaction. Despite Ngene's profound religious and cultural significance (S9), it is ultimately sold for a mere \$1,500 (I2.2). This transaction encapsulates how the business of selling has overshadowed the religious and cultural value of these artefacts, as shown in the C1 tag for commodification (see Figure 3).

brushed off the hurt . Theres a	gallery	called Foreign Gods , Inc . They	27	More	Full
ke gave no response . Wheres the	gallery	? the man elaborated . Oh , here	28	More	Full
ver that she had two small roses	tattooed	on the skin underneath each breas	29	More	Full
s from the V of pubic hair , was	tattooed	the name DONNELLE , a mystery lov	30	More	Full
de of white brocade and lavishly	embroidered	. She turned the fabric this way	31	More	Full
ast back , the sides of her lips	drawn	down , she regarded him with an i	32	More	Full
mbered the mailbox . He had , by	design	, not checked it for more than a	33	More	Full
He pictured Gruels gazing at the	statue	, sniffing it , fawning over it .	34	More	Full
Eds eyes . Then he said , In my	culture	, people always exchange greeting	35	More	Full
Big Ed cut him off again . Your	culture	got nothing to do with it . This	36	More	Full
to do with it . This ai nt your	culture	. Its NYC . Let me tell you somei	37	More	Full
d meandered their way to Ghana ,	drawn	by Nkrumahs Pan-African vision .	38	More	Full
nk I was testing out some comedy	sketch	here ? Ive lived in this country	39	More	Full
but she has Internet access . A	gallery	somewhere in this city buys and s	40	More	Full
d Ngene , and sell it to Gruelss	gallery	. He had come to that decision af	41	More	Full
Each new reading of the magazine	drew	him ever closer , fearfully , to	42	More	Full
d he have the guts to snatch the	statue	of Ngene and sell it ? At first ,	43	More	Full
troyed in the month of May . The	statue	will be thrown into a huge fire .	44	More	Full
to sell it . The thought of the	statue	smoldering in a fire was too jarr	45	More	Full
above the framed black-and-white	photograph	of his family and saw that the ti	46	More	Full
wered his eyes and stared at the	picture	. He looked lingeringly on his pa	47	More	Full
raight , as if suspicious of the	camera	. His father was noticeably more	48	More	Full
police sergeant . Looking at the	photo	, he wondered if he had not betra	49	More	Full
of him . He turned away from the	photo	, but thoughts of his father , mo	50	More	Full
ls hours before , he studied the	photo	that dominated the first page of	51	More	Full
was a joss , in the other hand a	statue	of the Ewe god of rain . In bold	52	More	Full
the magazine dived into the new	art	of god collection , gaining groun	53	More	Full
merged as a visible and powerful	cultural	current and force . It named some	54	More	Full
Over the last ten years , major	galleries	had opened in such locations as S	55	More	Full

Figure 3. C1 (Arts and craft) Concordance

This commodification is further emphasised in the description of “god collection, gaining ground as a new art” (lines 53-54). Here, sacred objects are being transformed into collectible art pieces, stripping them of their original cultural and spiritual significance. The M5 tag can be inferred from the global movement of these cultural artefacts. The mention of “Nkrumah’s Pan-African vision” (line 38) suggests a contrast between the ideals of African unity and the reality of African cultural objects being dispersed worldwide. This dispersal involves the physical movement (or “flying”) of these artefacts from their places of origin to foreign galleries and collections.

The A10 tag is subtly present in the act of cultural appropriation and the hiding of cultural significance. When Big Ed says, “Your culture got nothing to do with it. This ain’t your culture” (lines 35-36), it suggests a closing off or hiding of the original cultural context. This sentiment is reinforced by the statement “It’s NYC” (line 37), implying that the new context supersedes the original cultural significance. These tags interlink to portray a process where cultural artefacts (C1) are removed from their original contexts (M5), and their true cultural significance is hidden or ignored (A10) in favour of their value as collectible art pieces. This process is exemplified in Ike’s internal struggle: “did he have the guts to snatch the statue of Ngene and sell it?” (line 43). Here, we see the conflict between cultural preservation and the temptation of commodification. The commodification process is further illustrated in the description of the magazine diving “into the new art of god collection” (lines 53-54). This phrase encapsulates how sacred cultural objects (C1) are transformed into a new form of art, divorced from their original context (A10) through their movement to foreign galleries (implied M5).

Summarily, from the corpus analysis of the first theme, the interplay between religious significance (S9), cultural artefacts (C1), and commercial transactions (I2.2) in *Foreign Gods, Inc.* illustrates the complex process of religious and cultural commodification in our globalised world. This commodification involves not just the physical movement of sacred objects (M5) from their places of origin to foreign galleries, but also a metaphorical journey that strips these artefacts of

their original context and meaning (A10). The tension between spiritual value and market worth, epitomised by Ike's moral struggle and Gruels' cold business calculations, reflects broader post-colonial issues of cultural appropriation and exploitation. Thus, the novel presents a critique of how globalisation and capitalism transform sacred cultural heritage into mere commodities, raising profound questions about the preservation of cultural identity and the ethical implications of the international art market in a post-colonial context.

Economic Disparities and Post-Colonial Power Dynamics

This theme integrates the tags I1 (Money generally), I1.1+ (Money: Affluence), I1.3 (Money: Cost and price), Z2 (Geographical names), and S2.2 (People: Male). It encompasses the economic motivations behind Ike's actions, the contrast between wealth in the West and poverty in Nigeria, and the power dynamics at play in the global art market. This theme also touches on issues of migration, identity, and the lingering effects of colonialism on cultural and economic relationships between Africa and the West.

The concordance, as illustrated in Figure 4, reveals Ike's dire financial situation, exemplified by phrases like "financial state was dismal" and "less than thirteen hundred dollars saved" (lines 61-62). This economic hardship is a common driver of migration, as individuals seek better opportunities abroad. In Ike's case, his migration to the United States has not resulted in the financial security he likely hoped for. Instead, he faces overdue rent and high-interest debt, as evidenced by "March rent of fifteen hundred dollars was long overdue" and "usurious interest rate of 28.9 percent" (lines 63, 65). This financial strain underscores the often harsh realities faced by immigrants, challenging the notion of the American Dream.

o jarring to imagine . Ikes	financial	state was dismal . He had le	61	More	Full
less than thirteen hundred	dollars	saved . His March rent of fi	62	More	Full
rch rent of fifteen hundred	dollars	was long overdue , the April	63	More	Full
. And he would have lots of	cash	to start any life he wished	64	More	Full
that it carried a usurious	interest rate	of 28.9 percent and had mean	65	More	Full
et , Ike had to think about	cash	for expenses . There would b	66	More	Full
stay in the city . Hed need	money	for eating , for moving abou	67	More	Full
nd sister would expect some	cash	. Ike had two or three good	68	More	Full
kes credit card came with a	cash	limit of twenty-five hundred	69	More	Full
imit of twenty-five hundred	dollars	. He withdrew it all , unper	70	More	Full
l , unperturbed by the high	interest rate	. He had a beloved deity to	71	More	Full
as that twenty-five hundred	dollars	was not enough for the expen	72	More	Full
bout where to get some more	cash	. If he had had time , he mi	73	More	Full
trip , he would have enough	money	to do a better job of taking	74	More	Full
pending forty-five thousand	dollars	on a bottle of Dom Perignon	75	More	Full
wn several hundred thousand	dollars	for a godhead from the Tiv p	76	More	Full
rs to push it . Oga , bring	money	to settle customs , the port	77	More	Full
Youre asking me to hand you	money	to bribe customs , or they w	78	More	Full
porter dropped some folded	dollar	notes into the officers palm	79	More	Full
Please , sir , spare me one	dollar	. Taxi ? You want clean taxi	80	More	Full
the driver . Na to collect	money	be their business . Another	81	More	Full
lice officer would palm the	money	then say , All correct ! or	82	More	Full
police ? Ejoo bring correct	money	. Otherwise come down ! bark	83	More	Full
well as visitors , from one	bank	to the other . The bridge !	84	More	Full
made excuses . They pleaded	financial	constraints or made promises	85	More	Full
happened years ago , on the	banks	of River Utonki , when he ha	86	More	Full
etimes , in the midst of an	account	, Ike would drift off , only	87	More	Full

Figure 4. I1 (Money generally) Concordance

The text's frequent mentions of Ike's need for immediate cash, such as "cash for expenses" (line 66), point to the precarious financial situation many migrants find themselves in. This constant need for liquidity may be exacerbated by expectations to send remittances home, a common

practice among migrants. The pressure to maintain financial stability while potentially supporting family back home adds another layer of complexity to the migrant experience. References to bribery and corruption, particularly in interactions with customs officials (“money to settle customs”, “money to bribe customs” - lines 77-78), highlight the challenges migrants face when navigating between their home country and their adopted country.

Similar to I1, I1.1+ (Money: Affluence) supports the theme of economic disparities in the novel. The concordance reveals a preoccupation with wealth and prosperity, evident in repeated terms like “rich”, “wealthy”, and “prosperity” (lines 8, 10, 16, 19, 20), as shown in Figure 5. This focus reflects the aspirational nature of migration, where individuals like Ike move in pursuit of economic betterment. The frequent mention of prosperity, especially in a religious context (lines 18-22), suggests that wealth is not just an economic goal but a spiritual promise, potentially motivating migration through the belief in divinely sanctioned abundance in a new land. The phrase “old deity and sell it to some rich fool” (line 6) encapsulates the intersection of cultural heritage and economic desperation in the context of migration. It points to the fact that economic disparities can lead migrants to commodify their cultural artifacts, selling them to wealthy collectors in the host country.

es old deity and sell it to some	rich	fool ? Youve got a goddamn war go	6	More	Full
from the trip . Then , with the	windfall	reaped from the sale of the deity	7	More	Full
d then twisted off its cap . Its	rich	scent hit his nostrils and made h	8	More	Full
round as a new diversion for the	wealthiest	of the wealthy whose after-dinner	9	More	Full
ersion for the wealthiest of the	wealthy	whose after-dinner drone is peppe	10	More	Full
, a haunt of Hollywood stars and	well-heeled	titans of the corporate world who	11	More	Full
odies , a riot of voices , and a	rich	harvest of smells . A man in a fl	12	More	Full
s mind exhumed the word Zulu , a	rich	and respectable noun that his ex-	13	More	Full
, filled-out physique advertised	prosperity	. Ike had heard that De Don had m	14	More	Full
magic of the earths redness and	rich	scents . Ah , Utonki of the red e	15	More	Full
hen their hands were strong with	wealth	, they brought cows to its shrine	16	More	Full
. He prayed and fasted for your	prosperity	. When I dreamed about you and we	17	More	Full
s descendants great increase and	prosperity	. The congregation ramped up its	18	More	Full
e yours . We claim it ! Abrahams	prosperity	is your prosperity . Thank God !	19	More	Full
it ! Abrahams prosperity is your	prosperity	. Thank God ! Alleluia ! Uka bega	20	More	Full
onse . Have you been praying for	prosperity	? asked the pastor . Yeah ! answe	21	More	Full
congregation . God said youll be	prospered	. Are you trapped by water spirit	22	More	Full
he while riffing on the theme of	prosperity	. His voice would rise to the lev	23	More	Full
the gold and diamonds , wants to	prosper	you . He wants all your enemies t	24	More	Full
told me to tell you this : your	wealth	would have been released a long t	25	More	Full
e , the source of all health and	wealth	, deserves a befitting place of w	26	More	Full
m the dead . And he s used me to	prosper	a lot of people . Fine , then , I	27	More	Full
certain advantage of an assured	windfall	. True , the deitys disappearance	28	More	Full
e was a story that hed fleeced a	well-heeled	Hausa businessman in the northern	29	More	Full
as even a story that hed been an	affluent	widows gigolo . The woman had pam	30	More	Full
on and the majesty of the man of	wealth	are of a kind . Youre the lion th	31	More	Full
Afo , Nkwo . Four , the sign of	prosperity	. It means that hunger will never	32	More	Full
ed Reginas relationship with the	wealthy	drug pusher . He had tracked thei	33	More	Full
of the men . A man with so much	wealth	in his hand cant be without one .	34	More	Full
y the basketball players storied	wealth	. Of course , its always about mo	35	More	Full
man to continue . If I become a	rich	man , nkwo and ngwo will never to	36	More	Full
tell Chief what to do ? If Im as	wealthy	as Jordan , nobody will stop me f	37	More	Full
you talk about , Ike teased . A	wealthy	man must have other plans . My fe	38	More	Full
ters of the Bronx or in the more	affluent	sectors of Westchester Countyanyw	39	More	Full

Figure 5. I1.1+ (Money: Affluence) Concordance

The text reveals shifting attitudes towards wealth across generations and cultures. The reference to “when their hands were strong with wealth, they brought cows to its shrine” (lines 16-17) contrasts with the modern, capitalist notions of wealth represented by “well-heeled” businessmen. This shift may reflect the changing economic realities faced by migrants, who must adapt their traditional concepts of wealth and success to a new economic environment.

Finally, the results shows that geographical names (Z2) are important in the text. This reveals the metaphor of space related to migration. The geographical names in this text points to the

complex landscape of migration. They are integral to the narrative of cultural displacement and identity formation. The frequent mentions of American cities like New York, Boston, and Baltimore, juxtaposed with references to countries like Nigeria and Jamaica, underscore the transnational nature of the immigrant experience. These geographical markers trace not only physical journeys but also the psychological and cultural transitions that migrants navigate. Figure 6 presents the concordance for Z2.

Big Ed Thelwell , his	Jamaican	neighbor and fellow cab	23	More	Full
the classroom , taking	French	. Later , a classmate t	24	More	Full
old him that the irate	French	teacher , Robertson Iwu	25	More	Full
ublic incidents in the	United States	. After each episode ,	26	More	Full
er screeched about the	Yankees	tie-breaking home run i	27	More	Full
ubleheader against the	Boston	Red Sox at Fenway Park	28	More	Full
the Boston Red Sox at	Fenway Park	. IKES HEART BEAT VIOLE	29	More	Full
borated . Oh , here in	New York	. On Vance Street , num	30	More	Full
here in New York . On	Vance Street	, number nineteen . You	31	More	Full
for black folks in the	States	. How it could sneak in	32	More	Full
nto the White House or	Wall Street	. Cause mayhem and shit	33	More	Full
d sent him the copy of	New York	magazine that profiled	34	More	Full
and classmates back in	Nigeria	. About his mother who	35	More	Full
rd his passenger say .	Jamaican	, right ? Nigerian , Ik	36	More	Full
y . Jamaican , right ?	Nigerian	, Ike replied , surpris	37	More	Full
almness in his voice .	Nigerian	! the passenger exclaim	38	More	Full
trenghth . Ikes a proud	American	name , too . It was Eis	39	More	Full
name . He was a great	American	general and president .	40	More	Full
0 billsand a venerable	American	name . Ik	41	More	Full
met five years ago in	Baltimore	. The venue was a hall	42	More	Full
nue was a hall where a	Mexican	cabdriver , a mestizo ,	43	More	Full
, a mestizo , and his	African	American wife celebrate	44	More	Full
tizo , and his African	American	wife celebrated their w	45	More	Full
r fell in love with in	America	. But the differences w	46	More	Full
eeting . He moved from	Baltimore	, Maryland , where he e	47	More	Full
moved from Baltimore ,	Maryland	, where he eked out a l	48	More	Full
join her in Brooklyn ,	New York	. Two distinct , differ	49	More	Full
ld had run off with an	African	to some remote African	50	More	Full
African to some remote	African	village . And then , in	51	More	Full

Figure 6. Z2 (Geographical names) Concordance

As can be seen in Figure 6, the concordance illustrates a diverse range of geographical origins for migrants, including Jamaica (lines 23, 36), Nigeria (lines 35, 37, 38), and Mexico (line 43). This diversity highlights the global nature of migration to the United States and suggests a complex cultural interaction within immigrant communities. The text shows various migration paths, such as from Baltimore to New York (lines 47-49). This internal migration within the US suggests that immigrants often move multiple times, seeking better opportunities or community connections. The mention of Africa (lines 44, 50, 51) in contrast to specific African countries like Nigeria indicates a tension between broad continental identity and specific national origins. The text frequently mentions major American cities like New York (lines 30, 34, 49), Boston (lines 28, 29), and Baltimore (lines 42, 47, 48). These urban centres are typical destinations for immigrants, offering economic opportunities and established immigrant communities. The specific mention of Brooklyn (line 49) suggests the importance of particular neighbourhoods within these cities for immigrant settlement.

In sum, the theme of economic disparities and post-colonial power dynamics in the novel illuminates the challenges faced by migrants like Ike. It reveals the harsh financial realities that often drive migration, challenging the notion of the “American Dream”. The text highlights the constant struggle for money, the pressures of remittances, and the temptation to commodify cultural artefacts for financial gain. These economic pressures are set against a backdrop of diverse geographical locations, emphasising the transnational nature of the immigrant

experience. The theme also explores shifting attitudes towards wealth across generations and cultures, reflecting the changing economic landscape that migrants must navigate. Throughout, the lingering effects of colonialism are evident in the power dynamics between the West and African countries, particularly in the global art market.

Discussion

Religious and Cultural Commodification in a Globalised World

The prominence of the S9 tag (Religion and the supernatural) throughout the text underscores the central role of religious and cultural heritage in the narrative. This aligns with Bhabha's (1994) concept of the "third space" where cultural identities are negotiated and hybridised. In the novel, Ngene, the war deity, becomes a symbol of this hybridity, existing simultaneously as a sacred object and a potential commodity. The frequent occurrence of religious terms and references to Ngene's spiritual significance echoes Culpeper's (2009) findings on how lexical patterns can reflect relevant features of a text without relying solely on qualitative intuition. The tension between the S9 tag and the I2.2 tag (Business: Selling) exemplifies the conflict at the heart of the novel. This conflict resonates with Young's (2010) argument about the problematic nature of cultural appropriation when it involves the exploitation of marginalised cultures by dominant ones.

The commodification in the novel could be interpreted by how cultural difference is packaged and sold in the global marketplace (Huggan, 2001). The implicit presence of the M5 tag (Flying and aircraft) in the global movement of cultural artifacts reflects the physical and metaphorical journeys central to post-colonial migration literature. This aligns with Boehmer's (2005) observation that migration literature often serves as a site for exploring tensions between cultural preservation and assimilation. It must be emphasised that cultural identity is not fixed but constantly undergoing transformation in the diasporic experience. The hiding or closing off of original cultural contexts in the novel reflects the challenges migrants face in maintaining their cultural identities in new environments (Hall, 1990).

Finally, the prominence of certain semantic domains in *Foreign Gods, Inc.* echoes Leech's (2013) findings in his analysis of Virginia Woolf's *The Mark on the Wall*, where he discovered statistically salient features of literary significance. Similarly, the interplay between different semantic domains in Ndibe's novel aligns with McIntyre and Archer's (2010) conclusion that computational semantic approaches can be employed to measure the consistency of mind style within a text. Like Nkansah's (2021) re-examination of Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* and Bonsu and Nkansah's (2024) re-visioning of Armah's *Fragments*, this study demonstrates how corpus analysis can reveal thematic concerns in African literature. The focus on cultural appropriation and migration in Ndibe's novel aligns with Mosutafa's (2022) comparative analysis, which revealed the prominence of themes related to socio-political realities and identity.

Economic Disparities and Post-Colonial Power Dynamics

The I1 tag (Money generally) and I1.1+ tag (Money: Affluence) throughout the text highlight the central role of economic motivations in the narrative. These tags indicate the economic factors are excruciatingly influential to migration. In the novel, Ike's financial struggles and his pursuit of wealth become a lens through which we can examine the economic realities faced by many migrants. The tension between Ike's dire financial situation and his aspirations for wealth exemplifies the conflict at the heart of many migration narratives.

Ike's financial state challenges the notion of the American Dream and highlight the often harsh realities faced by immigrants. This aligns with Boehmer's (2005) observation that migration literature often serves as a site for exploring tensions between cultural preservation and assimilation. The frequent mentions of bribery and corruption, particularly in interactions with customs officials, highlight the challenges migrants face when navigating between their home country and their adopted country. This aspect of the novel reflects Young's (2010) argument about the problematic nature of cultural appropriation when it involves the exploitation of marginalized cultures by dominant ones. The irony, however, is that such corruption is perpetrated at the immigration of his home country by his own people which reveals the effect of colonialism from a 'powerful' colonised to a 'civilian' colonised. Few instances are noted when Ike was trying to acquire a green card through marriage. This aligns with Hall's (1990) concept of cultural identity as a positioning in narratives of the past, which is constantly undergoing transformation in the diasporic experience.

Furthermore, the analysis of geographical names in the novel echoes Tolia-Kelly's (2009) work on textual landscapes in migration literature. The diverse range of locations mentioned in *Foreign Gods, Inc.* creates a geographical landscape that reflects the transnational nature of the migrant experience. This aligns with Tolia-Kelly's argument that spatial references in migration literature often serve to map the psychological and cultural journeys of migrants alongside their physical movements. The novel's exploration of the immigrant experience in America, particularly the financial struggles and aspirations for wealth, aligns with recent studies on migration and disillusionment. Bonsu and Nkansah's (2024) study on Armah's *Fragments* similarly explores "the geographic mobility of characters as a metaphor for a quest for a place of being and identity" (p. 1). In *Foreign Gods, Inc.*, Ike's journey from Nigeria to America, and his subsequent struggles, serve as a metaphor for the broader challenges faced by immigrants in their quest for identity and belonging in a new land.

Conclusion

This study employed a corpus stylistic approach to analyse Okey Ndibe's *Foreign Gods, Inc.* using Wmatrix software, with a focus on semantic domains and their relation to themes of cultural appropriation and migration. The analysis revealed two dominant themes: religious and cultural commodification in a globalised world, and economic disparities and post-colonial power dynamics. The prominence of semantic tags related to religion (S9), business (I2.2), money (I1, I1.1+, I1.3), and geographical names (Z2) provided quantitative evidence for these themes. The study found that the novel critically examines the transformation of sacred cultural artefacts into commodities, the economic motivations driving migration, and the complex power dynamics in post-colonial contexts. The discussion interpreted these findings through the lens of post-colonial theory and migration studies, drawing connections to concepts such as Bhabha's "third space" and Hall's notion of cultural identity as a constantly transforming narrative.

This study's findings contribute to the growing field of corpus stylistics, particularly in its application to African literature. It demonstrates the value of combining quantitative linguistic analysis with qualitative literary interpretation, offering a more comprehensive understanding of how language use in literature reflects broader social and cultural themes. For literary analysis, this study showcases how computational methods can reveal patterns and themes that might be overlooked in traditional close reading approaches. In the context of African migration literature, this research provides a new perspective on how linguistic choices reflect and reinforce themes of cultural displacement, economic struggle, and identity formation in diasporic settings.

Despite the important findings and implications, the generalisation of the study is limited by its focus on a single novel, which may not be representative of the broader corpus of African migration literature. Future research could expand this approach to a larger corpus of texts, potentially comparing works from different time periods or geographical regions. Additionally, while this study focused on semantic domains, future work could incorporate other linguistic features such as collocations.

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