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CONTENTS

THE CULTURAL COMMUNAL IMPLICATIONS OF GREEK LYRIC

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Abstract

The lexical definition of lyric in the *Heritage Dictionary* (of course with some specific reservations about its applicability for the ancient Greek) as a preliminary starting point, "a poem that is distinguishable from the narrative and dramatic poems, is the most representational of music in its sound patterns, and is generally characterized by subjectivity and sensuablility of expression". Bearing this general heuristic definition in mind when referring to the ancient Greek it can be said that lyric is a historical, contextual and in-between (epic and dramatic) poetic event. According to Snell, "when we come to the lyric, however, we are in a position to judge in historical terms, and to ask ourselves how it differs from the older art, the epic, and what new spirit is manifested in it"[1].

Despite acceptance of this historical fact the aim is finding its relevancy with Classical Greek communal speculations. Generally and essentially if we take philosophy as the main symbol of the Classical Greek culture it seems that there are interconnections between this special event (as a subdivision of poetics) and this culture. But here we speak more about the rather unexplored function and status of lyric in philosophy as the symbol of Greek culture. More specifically, from the Classical Greek philosophical perspective this phenomenon is formed in the pre-philosophical phase but philosophy can treat it favorably although with reservations about some of its aspects and notions. Therefore lyric is one of the constituents of the Classical Greek culture and at the same time its basic notions are philosophically friendly and philosophy can take them into account.

Conceptual Reading and the Focal Concern of Lyric: Thick Internality Versus Thin Externality

In the Homeric epic the narration is exclusively about a specific category

and being, that is, the hero. Therefore the main subject matter of epic is very particular and exclusive and the poet through his special medium versifies about this specific being that is outside of poet and majority that are the common ordinary people. Therefore externality is thick and double. In other words, the epic poet versifies about a special kind of human being that is both external to him (for he is a narrator and not the hero himself) and in distantiation of the other human beings (if they have any status or manifestation.) Moreover, the poet describes his subject or hero mostly through a concrete and physical language and it is the basic medium that the other qualities of the subject should take their qualities from it - they have to be concrete and objectively infused. Thereby and according to the Greek history in epic (or pre-lyric phase) the poetic pictorial- infused language versifies about its exclusive subject that is hero.

But afterwards in the so-called phase of lyric with all of its divisions and branches we can detect some changes, split and transformations that on the whole make it attractable to the other fields and especially philosophy. With regard to this fact we choose the heuristic proper concept "internality" for summarizing, demarcating, and also shaping a general panorama and outlook in order to understand the core of the lyric. Here lexically and without going into philosophy and psychology "internality" means the discovery of a nonmaterial potentiality that is distinct from the body as a material entity, is situated in and emanated from within (although we do not ignore the eternal events and happenings) and will be expressed in a particular way. On this basis "internality" is subjective and inherent and comes from something within the body of human beings - somehow it is call of the internal. Then gradually and for different reasons at a specific period of Greek history those who are called the lyric poets focus and versify this aspect. Therefore the interplays of different historical and internal factors lead to and give prominent status to lyric in contrast to epic. And it is basically through the singing and versification of the lyric poets that this new phenomenon called "internality" takes a formal and outstanding expression - thick internality. In the context of the poetic speculation and wisdom, the lyric poet sings and speaks about his or her words, conduct, behaviors, deeds and works and thereby manifests their own internal identities that in comparison with epic has more affinity with the qualities of the other common and ordinary human beings. Therefore this happening is not something artificial, rhetorical, dramatic and narcissistic but is oriented basically toward expressing something neglected in the past narrations about human beings: singing their internalities in order to discover and represent their own personalities. Although Snell's focus of research and

aim is about "personal lyric" but it seems that according to our reading it can be applied to the lyric as a whole: "to find out what the poets themselves thought to be their distinctive personality, why talked about themselves, and by what process they became conscious of their individuality" [2]. This notion can be verified with reference to Archilochus (who stands at first and primary phase of Lyric long process): "Each man has his heart cheered in his own way"; and according to Sappho," Some say ..., others ....- but I say the fairest thing is one I love".

All human beings have some sharing in joy, love, sorrow, and the like but at the face of it this discovery manifests itself both in positive and negative ways and forms but actually the negative one has the upper hand and when it is positive in a hidden and covert way it is the negation of something especially Homerian and is not an intrinsic positivity. Therefore we can suppose that at the initial phase of lyric negation of something-assumed-epical has priority but it is not all and little by little the focused qualities take and form their own identities and personalities independent from Homeric epic. But on the whole it is possible to say that a new sphere and wording is manifested that is essentially subjective and internal and belongs to the person that expresses it sensually and thereby makes him or her distinct from the other persons. And this is the common and connecting spirit that we can specify in the broad spectrum of the lyric poets despite the particular differences and contrasts among them. Thereby as a necessary but not sufficient endeavor, the lyric poets narrate and tell their own anecdotes and at the same time somehow judging and valuing their own feelings, words, and deeds in distinction from the other persons (individually or collectively) and thereby express and emphasize on the respectability and plausibility of their own internalities. But there is something more that is although they are not neutral poets and are engaged actively in shaping and expressing their internalities but in contrast to epic narration their subject has more commonality and shareness with the other ordinary human beings.

Cultural Implications of Thick Internality

Focusing and magnifying of thick internality on its own right becomes valuable and points to the necessity of cultivating and propagating internality in distinct ways against thick externality of the past epic phase in all of its different and diverse embodiments. According to this reading, the lyric poets give prominence to and make internality thick with different wordings and expressions in order to emphasize the internal identity [nature] and in other words existence of human being that for them is essentially individual, independent and within-rooted (outside-

rooted factors are secondary and thin). But it should be notified that the discovered Greek "internality" is basically different from its equivalents in some religions and also the modern mentality. For the Greek lyric poets the internal human identity is not completely separated from the outside present living world but is interconnected with it. Therefore when they speak of their internal ideas and feelings these are not saying something merely subjective, whimsical and fanciful but somehow they represent the outer living world and its core quality or qualities too. According to Jaeger who writes in relation to lyric, for the Greeks, human beings can not achieve liberty and consciousness through arbitrariness and leaving themselves to subjective thoughts and feelings, but it can be only achieved if man makes him- her-self objectified and become aware that he or she is a world (cosmos) in the face of the outside world and its laws and thereby discover the laws of internality[3]. Thus it is very crucial to comprehend what is or are the law(s) of the present living for the lyricists, for this fact forms the standard and norm by which the internality can be justified and then cultivated within human beings. In the first step, "internality" may point to the fact that there is a hard core behind the variegated external happenings and events of human life that connects them together. Thus pluralities return to some main points and there is distance and gap between those things that appear and materialize and the things that do not become materialized and are immaterial but exist and have effects on us and things. Interestingly each lyric poet according to his or her life experiences or "erlebung" expresses and versifies some aspects of the immaterial hard core. According to the rationale of their poems, it seems that the basis of the present human life is eternal, recurring, and unended 'change" and we must be aware of and engage with this human and also nature law and there is no place for options such as escaping, seclusion and the like, for non-engagement is a defect and flaw for human beings that are trying to define themselves by expressing some internalities. As individuals we must be conscious of the alterations and ebb and flow of life on the earth, for all human beings should deal with them and thereby educate and acculturate their internality [soul] for coping with this fact / fate (of course it has also a religious tenor). Brief and to the point Archilochus says: "But when life brings joy, rejoice, and when it brings suffering, do not grieve overmuch. Understand the rhythm of life which controls man"[4]. We can assume that the spirit of these verses is commonly acceptable from the other lyric poets and on this basis the world of human living/ lebenswelt is infused with a basic permanent law. Therefore with identification of this law we can understand life and thereby it is not something obscure and unknown. In other words, we reach a general

conception or lore of life for its discovered law is general and eternal not individual and temporal. Moreover, if life is fashioned and structured with law and human beings give importance to living we can not ignore or fight with this rule but somehow in an appropriate ways our internality must be trained and habitualized according to it. Thus individuals and personalities should familiar and accustom their individual internality [soul] to the law of human life. Thereby on the one hand within human world "internality" and on the other hand in the out side world the law of "change" and transformation are emphasized. And acculturation and internalization of this fact is a didactic and ethical imperative, for we ought to do something essential in the face of what is there otherwise we will encounter with many grave difficulties and problems in our life. Therefore our particular thick internality has not absolute and infinite power and effects but is limited by the law of the living world as the accepted standard that individuals have no influence or manipulation on it because of its immunity from external human interventions. Here the word rhythm (that we have seen in the Archilochus verse too) is a key word and plays a crucial role that summaries what we have said in detail. The exact and appropriate meaning of rhythm in lyric is a circumscribed/ charted or limited/stable movement and with regard to the religious background of lyric we can find its equivalent there too, tuche and moira as destiny and predestination that actively-we have to come to terms and compromise with - each person in the general and universal defined context of rhythm/destiny should play and realize his or her particular and individual internality and identity respectively. But it would be better to say that unlike the theme of classical Greek philosophy about praxis this realization is not through direct rational will but is reactive and mediated by the senses and emotions. It means that the [subjectiveness of] individual internality will be expressed through sensation (and not praxis) that is somehow provoked and stimulated by external favorable or unfavorable phenomena and happenings. Therefore the initial or starting reason should be something (its quality or quantity is not important) there outside (the importance of externality) that attracts our attention and mind and this in its own turn stimulate the emotions - therefore externality has become thin in contrast to the Homeric epic. Accordingly, we are inactive until senses (in contrast to positive action and activity) are stimulated and affected and then they guide and direct the internality of each person.

Communal Implications of Thick Internality

On the ground of the picturesque concreteness of the Homeric epic the word psuche ð(with thick externality and thin internality) basically means the breath of life that escapes like a material substance at the moment of death from the mouth. Thus this word has not in Homer its later common signification of the soul as the nobler, immortal part of man[5]. But later on in the lyric speculation gradually and primitively through thick internality the nonphysical and immaterial aspect of psuche is magnified. Although their perception of the qualities of this new entity has not complete separation and independence of the overall intellectual context and in other words is not completely favorable for the later communal and philosophical thinking but in comparison with the epic speculation it is more advantageous.

With regard to the composition of human community the first step for the classical Greek anthropology would be identification of the spiritual dimension of man and in this direction the discovery of internality by lyricists is relatively valuable and fruitful. For it means that the spiritual identity of man is based on an immaterial inner existent called psuche and is the foundation of nonphysical entities named sensations. Perhaps the philosopher can read and infer that according to lyricists man has an identity and basis of its own that may be named fôusis and then search for knowing it. In other words, if we put in parenthesis some defects of this lyric perception, we can say that this is a worthy development for the later communal (not necessarily societal and political) thinking, for now it is possible to give an internal and general definition of man as a communal animal. Thus for understanding this communal animal by nature magnification of thick internality is useful that in a relatively satisfactory form it is expressed by the lyricists. Therefore for understanding humanness and also communality (or of more precisely community spirit) a non-spatial and immaterial perception is needed and for this reason the contributions of lyricists become important and favorable. And with putting improper sensations in parenthesis they show that every man has an internality and immaterial core of his- or her-self that when these identities come together and shape a holistic tendency they can lead to (an invisible) commonality among related and interested individuals.

We have said that in contradistinction from Homeric epic, lyricists discovered a new entity called internality [soul] in its thick version and at the same time spoke differently in non-physical and non-objective language about it. Thereby mostly this new human discovery will not be tailored or understood according to the physical and bodily language and terms although the latter becomes thin and pale but it has life and

existence yet. But more importantly, the focus of lyric mentality on the "individuality" of thick internality has a duality in itself on the one hand, criticism and admonition than praise and advice of any things that is public and common (opinions, tastes, traditions, customs, and the like); and on the other hand, this internality is a common and shared quality among those who are concerned and thereby a sense of spiritual connectedness between different individuals takes shape. Besides, this communal aspect is enhanced by the fact that the sense of individuality is not infinitive and unbounded but is limited by the basic law of human life that is change and alteration. Accordingly, it is natural that this perception makes a kind of closeness among those who have such a conception of human being and life - invisible but real nonphysical belongness that can materialize and embodied in communal institutional forms such as sðuðmposium as the famous historical one. Therefore notwithstanding the different kinds of distances and gaps that divide and separate individuals' bodies their commonality in thick internality [soul] as a nonmaterial characteristic and also its extensions connects and binds them together. According to Sappho:" ...from Sardes often ... she sends her thoughts hither, ... [6]. According to this archetype poem that is fruitful for our intended point, bodies or the material dimension of persons have distance from each other but it is not the same about their immaterial dimension. For there is an unusual movement or transportation of thoughts that are not material but spiritual (that in her verses concretely its cause returns to the occurrence of an unfavorable event.) Thus physical and material distances can not be obstacles for internal immaterial connections. Although there is not a common and shared place and space but the commonality of the thick internality can bind and connect the individuals that are spatially far from each other (therefore it is also possible that those who are in a common physical place spiritually be too far away). Moreover, for in the context of lyric the shareness is essentially immaterial the material extensions should be translated and stimulate immaterial reactions. Thereby with speculating and versifying about this shareness there can be an "immaterial togetherness". When we refer to and read the texts and search for the core of the classical Greek philosophizing about the main constituting element of humanness and solidarity of human society, it seems that commonality in excellences such as virtue, justices, goodness, and the like that are basically spiritual and immaterial but have outward manifestations is the key argument. More precisely, in the context of Greek philosophy we can translate the "shareness" (of feelings and emotions as immaterial notions) of the lyric into fðhilia/ "friendship" and see the speculations of Plato in Lysis dialogue (for example, there

Socrates identifies himself as a person who has a passion for friends[7] and also defines friends as those who have all things in common[8]); and Aristotle in *Nicomachean Ethics* (there in the context of the interactions between ethics and politics, say that friendship beside goodwill, also exhibits mutual recognition, shared activities and actual fondness for the other people[9]. Of course by this point we do not want to ignore this ancient historical fact that at the time of lyric the Greek polis/gesellschaft as a place-based entity and construction in place of the feudal and aristocratic community becomes established, and it seems very important to explore the implications that lyric might have had on the formation of this new societal construct and artifact.

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IMPLICATION OF THE PRINCIPLE OF JUST AGREEMENTS IN THE *CRITO*: THE CASE OF GHANAIAN PUBLIC HEALTH WORKERS' STRIKE IN 2006

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Abstract

One area of the *Crito* which has received much analysis and interpretation is the argument from just agreements. Under the principle of just agreements, the individual and the state have obligations towards each other to abide by their just agreements. Failure on the part of either or both parties would amount to committing injustice.

The principle of just agreements has some implications on contractual agreements formed between parties. This paper would affirm that the principle of just agreements could create the processes for enduring agreements and harmony in industrial relations.

Introduction

The *Crito*[1] is among the dialogues written by Plato. It forms part of the conversations between Socrates and his friends during his last days. Included in these dialogues are the *Euthyphro*, the *Apology* and the *Phaedo*. As Calvert observed, there has been a lot of studies on the *Apology* and the *Crito*.[2] One area of the *Crito* which has received much analysis and interpretation is the argument from just agreements. Under the principle of just agreements, the individual and the state have obligations towards each other to abide by their just agreements. Using the analogy of a child as the individual and the parent as the Laws, Socrates admits that the state had fulfilled its obligations towards his

upbringing and it was his duty to do same as long as his actions did not constitute injustice and as long as the agreement between him and the state was just. To do otherwise would amount to committing an unjust act. It is from this principle of just agreements that I see the need to examine the implications that such a principle could have on strike actions using the case of Ghanaian public health workers'[3] strike in 2006.

Even though strike actions serve as last resorts for workers to get their concerns attended to, the year 2006 saw an increasing spate of workers in Ghana, predominantly in the public sector, and a limited number from the private sector, using strike actions as instruments of first resort to try to get their demands met.[4] It is not surprising that the period February to June, 2006 has been described as "a season of strikes in Ghana".[5] Is it unjust for health workers to embark on strike actions in order to get their concerns attended to? Do health workers have the right to retaliate through strikes if their concerns have not been attended to or if agreements entered into between them and their employer and/or the state have been breached by their employer and/or the state? In this paper, therefore, I would examine the strike action by the health workers in the light of Socrates' principle of just agreements and draw implications this principle could have on strike actions in general.

The Principle of Just Agreements

The principle of just agreements states that:

P: one must honour one's just agreements (49e5-7).[6]

Before introducing the Laws, Socrates asks Crito:

Ought one to fulfil all one's agreements, provided that they are just, or break them? (49e6-7)

Declaratively, Socrates' question would read:

One ought to fulfil all one's agreements, provided that they are just.

In other words:

(A) If the things one agrees upon with another person are just, one must abide by them.

The negation of (A) would read:

(B) If the things one agrees upon with another are unjust, one must not abide by them.

From (A) and (B) the following questions arise:

(a) When is an agreement just?

(b) When is an agreement unjust?

The Laws argue as follows:

> (C) ... you are breaking covenants and undertakings made with us, although you made them under no compulsion or misunderstandings and were not compelled to decide in a limited time; you had seventy years[7] in which you could have left the country, if you were not satisfied with us or felt that the agreements were unjust. (52d8-e5)

In his comment on the passage, Kraut states that for the agreement to be just, it must be freely and honestly made, without time-pressure and coercion:

> This passage tells us that agreements can be broken under three conditions:[8] when the individual is compelled, tricked, or rushed into giving his assent. And it implies that if any of these three conditions holds, then the agreement is unjust ... If the Laws want to build a case against escape on the principle of just agreements, then they cannot merely argue that Socrates made agreements to obey the city; they also have to show that those agreements were just.[9]

Thus the Laws establish that "the agreement Socrates made to obey the city was just"[10] and that "Socrates was not forced, rushed or tricked into agreement".[11] Kraut, however, observes that the Laws do not provide a full interpretation of the principle of just agreements. He identifies that the principle of just agreements goes beyond the circumstances of the agreement, extending to the act one agrees upon. He thus sees a problem with (A) and (B):

> The trouble with these formulations is that they ignore the fact that "the things one agrees upon" can be unjust in two very different ways. First, the act agreed upon can be unjust; second, the agreement can be unjustly made. In the former case, the act must not be done; in the latter, it need not be done.[12]

Kraut sets out a better interpretation of the principle of just agreements as follows:

> (D) If the act one agrees upon is *unjust*, then, regardless of the circumstances in which the agreement was made, one *must not* honor the agreement.

(E) If the act one agrees upon is *not unjust*, but the circumstances of the agreement

are unjust (coercive, dishonest, or rushed), then one *need not* honor the agreement.

(F) If the act one agrees upon is *just*, and if the circumstances of the agreement are

just (noncoercive, honest, and unrushed), then one *must* honor the agreement.[13]

Thus, the fact that "it is just that a child obey his parents if he cannot persuade them"[14] does not imply that "it is just that Socrates obey Athens, if he cannot persuade it"[15] as Santas has suggested. This is because even though the agreements might have been made fairly, the act itself may be unjust.

On his interpretation of the principle of just agreements, Kraut states that the three statements (D), (E), and (F) embody the arguments shared by both Socrates (P) and the Laws ((C)).[16] Thus (D) u(E) u(F) = P u(C).

Overview of the Strike Action

In 1992, the Government of Ghana through the Ministry of Health/Ghana Health Service (MOH/GHS) introduced an Additional Duty Hour Allowance (ADHA) Scheme to supplement the efforts of workers within the public sector. After its implementation for over ten years, the Ministry of Health/ Ghana Health Service (MOH/GHS) realized that the Additional Duty Hours Allowances (ADHA) for doctors and other health workers were being abused.[17] For instance, some members of the public health sector who went on leave still signed in to receive the ADHA. There were also issues of mismanagement of the ADHA and non-uniformity in its payment within the ten regions of the country. Therefore, in the year 2005, the GHS contracted the services of a UK Consulting Firm to conduct a job evaluation exercise of all the 400 jobs within the public health sector with the primary objective of "designing a new pay structure to ensure that the MOH/GHS was able to attract, motivate and retain a highly qualified workforce in a cost effective manner".[18] The cardinal principle of the job evaluation was equal pay for work of equal value. The various jobs were evaluated using sixteen job evaluation weighting factors and appropriate scores were assigned to all the jobs after which the health workers were then placed in various pay bands.[19]

A report on the job evaluation exercise was submitted by the consultant to the Government of the day for implementation. The Government

upon acceptance of the report made a budgetary allocation of ¢2.3 trillion (old Ghana cedis) as the cost of remuneration of health service workers for the year 2006.[20] According to Sodzi-Tetteh, "a cabinet sub-committee was set up which then mandated government's negotiating team to enter into direct negotiations with the various professional groups".[21] The outcome of the negotiations was that different amounts were allocated to the various pay scales and bands derived from the job evaluation. For instance, a Senior Nursing Officer and a House Officer who were placed on band 6 received a minimum of ¢9,607,290.00 (old Ghana cedis) a month.[22] However, when the Negotiation Committee came out with the negotiation results, it did not reflect what had been agreed upon. Instead of the health professionals receiving full amounts allocated to them, the committee decided to allocate only certain percentages of the agreed amounts. For instance, House Officers were allotted 90% of the allocated amount of ¢9, 607, 290.00 (old Ghana cedis) whiles Senior Nursing Officers were allotted 65% of the allocated amount of ¢9, 607, 290.00 (old Ghana cedis). Non Clinical Staff received 55% of their allocated amount whiles Health Support Staff and Ancillary Staff received 50% and 45% of their allocated amounts respectively.[23]

With these results, the health workers protested against the way salaries had been apportioned. They realized that the cardinal principle of the job evaluation - equal pay for work of equal value - had been compromised and that "the underlying understanding that no employee would be worse off in the new salary scale had not been followed through".[24] They (the health workers), made up of 95.5% of all the professionals and workers within the public health sector came together as the Health Workers' Group (HWG) and declared a deadlock in accordance with the Labour Law, and notified NLC for arbitration of the matter.

In notifying the NLC for arbitration of the dispute between the HWG and the Ghana Health Service and Teaching Hospitals, the HWG sent a complaint to the NLC on March 14, 2006 that in spite of the failure of the Negotiation Committee of the Ghana Health Service and the Teaching Hospitals to reach an agreement with the HWG on negotiations involving the new salary levels, "the Negotiation Committee intended to implement the new salary level in contravention of the agreement to negotiate in good faith under Section 97 of the Labour Act, 2003 (Act 651)".[25] Aside this, the HWG had also listed individual concerns in respect of their salary placement in relation to the banding and scores arising from the Job Evaluation exercise carried out by the consulting firm.[26] At the ruling of the industrial dispute between the HWG and the Ghana Health Service

and Teaching Hospitals, the HWG also complained as follows:

> ... having weighted the various jobs and scores assigned to all jobs, the expectation was that jobs of equal value would have equal pay to satisfy the equal pay for equal work policy obligated by the 1992 Constitution under Article 24, Clause 1 and by the statute in Section 68 of Act 651 and; that if jobs like House Officer, Senior Midwifery Officer, Senior Nursing Officer, Senior Medical Assistant ... were evaluated, weighted, scored and placed in band 6, why should jobs in the same band attract different salary contrary to the principle of equal pay for equal work obligated by law?[27]

The arbitration panel however, identified that:

> Even though all the jobs within the health service were evaluated using 16 job evaluation weighting factors, to the Consultant, some additional soft factors not captured on the job evaluation weighting scheme were weighted in favour of the Director-General, Chief Executives, Medical Officers and Directors.

With the workers' groups expressed concern about the gap between the Doctors' salaries and those of the other health professionals in mind, the arbitration panel charged the workers' groups and the consultant to present scenarios regarding salary structure which would attempt to bridge the perceived gap without undermining the objective of the restructuring exercise, as well as staying within the ¢2.3 trillion (old Ghana cedis) budgetary allocation made available by the government for the implementation of the new pay structure and other terms of employment and conditions of service.[28] However, all the scenarios suggested exceeded the budgeted figure.[29]

On its decision on the matter, the arbitration panel ruled that though the job evaluation report which relied on the principle of equal pay for work of equal value was accepted by the panel, the principle could "best be referred to as persuasive and, therefore, not legally binding for enforcement by any adjudicating body like the National Labour Commission"[30] since it had not been made part of the laws of Ghana[31], in accordance with Article 75 of the 1992 Constitution which states that:

> (1) The President may execute or cause to be executed treaties, agreements or conventions in the name of Ghana. (2) A treaty, agreement or convention executed by or under the authority of the President shall be subject to ratification by- (a) Act of Parliament; or (b) a resolution of Parliament supported by the votes of more than one-half of all the members of Parliament.

The ruling also stated that the principle of equal pay for work of equal value was only "applied in the case of casuals under Section 74 (2)(a) of Act 651".[32] On the principle of equal pay for equal work without any distinction of any kind in the 1992 Constitution Artilce 24 (1), and Section 68 of the Labour Act, 2003, Act 651, the panel commented as follows:

> Basically, the principle of equal pay for equal work without any distinction of any kind ... can be applied to persons doing the same work for a common employer. The fact is that professionals like Doctors, Nurses, Pharmacists, Accountants, etc. cannot by any imagination be said to be doing equal work, though they are all employees of the Health Service, in order to receive equal pay.[33]

The panel also decided that the workers' groups were right in pointing out that medical officers who were put in the same band with other professionals should have received almost equal pay, bearing in mind the job evaluation scores of the consultant.[34] It said it was wrong to identify the medical officers' bands in the summary of the banded jobs as 6, 7, 8a, 8b/8c, 8d and 9 when the bands in pay scale1, which was proposed for director-generals, chief executives, medical officers and directors at the board level and their equivalents in the Ministry, was identified as A1, A, B and C; while pay scale 2, proposed for nursing, allied health professionals and directly employed public health sector staff, was identified as 1-9.[35] The panel directed the consultant to list for future use and to be embodied in the report the 'additional soft factors' that were not part of the job evaluation weighting scheme but had been weighted in favour of medical officers, placing them outside the 1-9 band identification and thereby undermining the report in the eyes of the Health Workers' Group.[36]

The panel, recognizing the perceived gap between the doctors and the other health workers, directed that "future salary negotiations between the GHS and its employees should work to bridge the gap".[37] In addition, it directed that a mapping exercise which the consultant said would be used to address most of the concerns of the individual staff members, "be properly done ... to ensure that no employee is worse off ..."[38] The panel also agreed with the consultant that an independent body outside the Negotiation Committee with no beneficial interest be engaged to complete the mapping exercise.

When the ruling of the arbitration panel reached the other health workers, especially, those at Korle-bu Teaching Hospital, they were very much displeased and this resulted in a strike action. The strike spanned 14 days (19th April, 2006 to 2nd May, 2006).[39] Various attempts by the government to resolve the disparity in the salary of the doctors and the

other health workers did not go down well with the HWG and another strike spanning 19 days (8th to 26th June, 2006) was embarked on.[40]

Implication of the Principle of Just Agreements on the Strike

After the government had accepted the job evaluation report, she voted an amount of ¢2.3 trillion (old Ghana cedis) for the implementation exercise. This means that the computations in the report led government to arrive at that amount since it was believed that the report included "the offer of real figures representing new salary levels for the different health professionals".[41] This was accepted by all parties. Thus, for the Negotiation Committee to present something different from what had been agreed upon by adding certain soft factors in favour of the doctors showed a breach of the just agreements between the employer and the worker (Labour Act, Section 9 (b)). And this was what the NLC arbitration panel should have solved - to ensure that the employer and the worker abided by their just agreements.

The health workers' groups did well to go by the due process of getting their concerns voiced. After both parties (Health Workers' Group and the Ghana Health Service/Teaching Hospitals) failed to reach an agreement on salary negotiations, the HWG notified NLC for compulsory arbitration as required by the Labour Act, Section 162. The NLC also did well to adhere to this same section which required her to settle the dispute within three days by compulsory arbitration. According to Section 164 (4) of the Labour Act, "in a compulsory arbitration, the decision of the majority of the arbitrators shall constitute the award and shall be binding on all parties". Section 167 (2) also states that an award of the Commission in a compulsory arbitration "shall be final and binding on the parties unless challenged in the Court of Appeal on questions of law within seven days after the publication of the award". Thus, if the HWG was not satisfied with the ruling of the arbitration panel, what it should have done was to seek redress in the Court of Appeal than to resort to strike in contravention of Section 163 of the Labour Act, which prohibits employees in essential services from embarking on strike. Relating this to Socrates' principle of just agreements, the HWG had an obligation to adhere to the ruling of the arbitration panel which was acting as an adjudicating body on behalf of the NLC with the powers of a High Court.[42] Thus, if the HWG was not satisfied, it should have sought redress at the Court of Appeal just as Socrates was advised by the Laws to either persuade them (the Laws) or obey.

One application of the principles of Socratic public justice to the case

study is whether the health workers, in embarking on the strike action caused harm to their souls and to the souls of others. Since the strikes were illegal, the health workers broke the principle of "one must never willingly or intentionally commit injustice no matter the circumstance" (49a4-5, b2-5). The health workers caused harm to their souls and the souls of others since there were loss of lives and since their action posed danger to public health and safety.[43]

Can we justify the migration of health workers to other countries because of the poor working conditions in Ghana, in the light of the *Crito*? Yes we can but not under present circumstances where already the nation lacks the required health personnel. Even though a state might have educated and trained the health worker, the Laws (in the *Crito*) provide that a citizen who is not pleased with the way the state runs its affairs or delivers justice may emigrate with all his property. However, in the case of a developing country like Ghana where there are only two doctors and nine nursing and midwifery personnel per 10,000 population[44], emigration to seek greener pastures would mean causing further harm to the state since there would be more shortages of health workers in the country, posing danger to public health and safety. This is one reason the state must also abide by her just agreements by showing a commitment to the Laws of Ghana to provide satisfactory, safe and healthy conditions, and train and retain health workers for the development of their skills.

From the above, it has been established in this paper that all the parties involved faulted in one way or the other. While the strike actions of the health workers were illegal, the employer did not abide by her just agreement to implement the accepted report of the job evaluation exercise whose cardinal principle was equal pay for work of equal value. The NLC arbitration panel also did not succeed in mandating the employer to abide by the agreement that had been reached between her (the employer) and the workers.

Conclusion

The health workers have an obligation towards the state/employer to work conscientiously in their lawfully chosen occupation, obey lawful instructions regarding the organization and execution of their work, protect the interests of the employer, ensure public health and safety, etc. The health workers, however, violated the provision of the law which prevents workers engaged in essential services from embarking on strike. They went ahead to embark on a strike action and this posed danger to public health and safety.

The Negotiation Committee failed to implement the results of the job evaluation by introducing additional soft factors in favour of the doctors. This action undermined the job evaluation report and breached the agreement that had already been reached by the parties. In addition, the action violated the provision of the law which provides that every worker receive equal pay for equal work without distinction of any kind.

The NLC on its part failed to rectify the breach in the agreement which had resulted in the strike action. The Commission rather recommended that future salary negotiations between the Ghana Health Service and its employees should work to bridge the gap in the salaries of professions within the public health service. The ruling showed a lack of good judgement, honesty and professionalism.

Since all the parties did not abide by their just agreements, they have committed injustice according to the Socratic principle of just agreements. This implies that for every state or organization to run well, parties to which agreements have been made must show respect for and abide by those agreements.

It is in this light that every state/employer must honour signed agreements and not make promises to citizens/workers which they (the state/employer) cannot fulfil; that both the state/employer and health workers show a commitment to their duties and responsibilities as enshrined in the laws governing the state; that bodies set up to exercise judicial role (such as the NLC) show good judgement, honesty and professionalism in arbitration and court rulings, and also see to the rectification of breaches in agreements between parties in future negotiations. With these, harmony would be created in industrial relations resulting in increased productivity for national development.

APPENDIX

STATISTICS OF STRIKES IN 2006				
NO.	NAME OF ORGANISATION	PERIOD OF STRIKE	DURATION FOR STRIKE	REASON
1.	Crocodile Matchets	Jan. 19-Jan. 19	4 hours 2005	Wage opener negotiations for
2.	Internal Revenue Service	Jan. 30-Jan. 31	2 days	Publication of report on new conditions of service
3.	House Officers, Korle Bu	Feb. 23-Mar. 3	10 days	Feeding Allowance
4.	Allied Health Workers Group	Apr. 19-May, 2	14 days	Salary
5.	B. L. Harbert Ghana	May, 5-May, 6	2 days	Redundancy/Salary Increase
6.	Poly Teachers (POTAG)	May, 17-May, 24	7 days	Refusal of management to negotiate
7.	Poly Teachers (POTAG)	Jun. 12-July, 24	31 days	Refusal of management to negotiate
8.	Junior Doctors	May, 26-June, 12	31 days	Salary ADHA
9.	TEWU (GES)	May, 29-June, 19	22 days to negotiate conditions of	Refusal of management new service
10.	TEWU (POLYTECHNICS)	May, 29-July, 24	41 days conditions of	Refusal of management to negotiate new service
11.	Allied Health Workers Group	June, 8-June, 26	19 days	Salary Disparity
12.	Workers of Kumasi Abattoir	Aug. 3-Aug. 10	6 days	Demand for removal of Managing Director
13.	Workers of Cape Coast Quarry			Non-payment of severance pay
14.	NAGRAT	Sept. 1-Oct. 30	42 days	Conditions of service

Source: National Labour Commission (NLC)

Notes

1. In this work, I have used the translation by Hugh Tredennick and Harold Tarrant.
2. Calvert, Plato's *Crito* p. 17
3. In this paper, a Ghanaian public health worker refers to a public health worker within the Ghana Health Service who is neither a medical doctor nor a dentist.
4. See Appendix.
5. Coleman, *Daily Graphic* p. 7
6. All references will be to Plato's *Crito*, unless otherwise indicated.
7. The agreement would have taken effect at a matured age, say, 20. So Socrates had about fifty years within which he could have left the country. See Plato, (tr. Hugh Tredennick & Harold Tarrant), n. 51 and p. 211. See also A. W. Gomme, 'The Structure of Plato's 'Crito', *Greece and Rome*, Second Series, Vol. 5, No. 1, p. 47, http://www.jstor.org/stable/642076.
8. See Plato, (tr. Hugh Tredennick & Harold Tarrant), n. 50 and p. 74. See also Kraut, p. 32.
9. Kraut, p. 40
10. Cited in Kraut p. 31
11. Ibid.
12. Kraut, p. 32
13. Ibid.
14. Kraut, p. 30
15. Ibid.
16. Kraut, p. 32
17. Asare, *Daily Graphic* p. 24
18. Sodzi-Tetteh, pp. 7, 9
19. National Labour Commission, p. 3
20. NLC *Op. cit.* p. 2
21. Sodzi-Tetteh *Op. cit.* pp. 7, 9
22. NLC, p. 7
23. NLC, p. 4
24. NLC, p. 3
25. NLC, p. 1
26. Ibid.
27. NLC, p. 2
28. NLC, p. 4

29. Ibid.
30. NLC, p. 5
31. I refer the laws of Ghana to the 1992 Constitution of Ghana, the Labour Act, 2003, Act 651, the Labour Regulations 2006 (Legislative Instrument 1822) and the Labour Regulations 2007 (Legislative Instrument 1833).
32. NLC, p. 5
33. Ibid.
34. NLC, p. 6
35. NLC, pp. 5, 6
36. NLC, p. 6
37. Ibid.
38. Ibid.
39. See Appendix
40. Ibid.
41. Sodzi-Tetteh, pp. 7, 9
42. See Labour Act, Section 165.
43. Ampratwum, *Daily Graphic*, p. 7
44. WHO, *World Health Statistics 2009*, p. 98

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ECHOES OF JUVENAL'S DISGUST FOR POWER AND MISRULE IN WOLE SOYINKA'S *MANDELA'S EARTH*

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Abstract

The Roman satiric tradition evolved from the need to make the Roman society a better one. In the hands of a satirist such as Juvenal, it was a socio-critical instrument for assailing the inordinate lust for power and its attendant social maladies. In contemporary times, this mien of satire has remained alive, especially in the critical works of Wole Soyinka. In *Mandela's Earth*, Soyinka has replicated Juvenal's critical voice; especially in the vitriolic lampooning of foibles of leadership in Africa, a situation which was also witnessed in Juvenal's Rome in the 2nd century AD. The objective of this paper is to highlight echoes of Soyinka's use of the Juvenalian critical voice in his work.

Wole Soyinka's withering satire in *Mandela's Earth* is reminiscent of Juvenal's bitter skit against Roman emperors and society of the 2nd century AD Rome, as replicated in the symbol of heroic achievements and suffering in Soyinka's *oeuvre* titled "Your logic frightens me, Mandela" *(ME)* This collision of the hero with power takes place against the backcloth of the poet's personal history and experience at the time of composing the poem. Little wonder then, that he invokes the ironic panegyric mode of the Yoruba "Oriki" of heroic poetry, a style he explored earlier in 'Idanre'. [1]

The poet continues with this ironic panegyric in his satire celebrating Nelson Mandela's courage in the face of the tyrannical Apartheid regime in South Africa. The poet-satirist commemorates the heroism of Mandela, with the Yoruba traditional *Oriki*-chant like praises:

Your logic frightens me
Those years of dream, of time accelerated in
Visionary lopes, of savoring the task area,
The call, the tempo primed
To burst in supernovae round a ''brave new world''[2]

The satire is couched in the ironical expressions he uses to highlight Mandela's super natural/heroic will, which overshadows the white regime/ attempts to break his determination: "Are you not the crossword expert?/ Chess? Ah, no; subversion lurks among chess pieces." These games represent the regimes attempts to subvert his doggedness. But ironically, it is the behaviour of his fellow 'victims' that tends to makes him uneasy:

Your pulse, I know has slowed with
Earth's phlegmatic turns
Yet scorns to race with winds (or hurricane)
That threatens change on tortoise pads.[3]

In the last line of that stanza, the poet sympathizes with Mandela, while ridiculing the 'phlegmatic turns' of the people, and the tyrannical regime which is rather slow at making the requisite change. Next the poet's anger is directed at the 'world' and the Apartheid regime, who still gloat of a 'supremacy of race: "Is the world light-years away, Mandela/ Lost in vision of that dare supremacy of race?"[4]

The rhetorical opener, is meant to energize the satirical thrust, while anticipating the next poem, entitled 'Like Rudolf Hess, The Man Said,!' it was the German under Hitler that claimed a supremacy of race, which is here being flaunted by Botha's inglorious regime.

The poet's indignation continues in the last stanza as he rails at the lethargic response of Mandela's people:

Your bounty threatens me, Mandela,
That taut Drumskin of your heart on
Which our millions Dance
Our daily impressions Dull keen edges of our will [5].

he performs the role he is well suited for, the voice of the oppressed having suffered a similar experience of arbitrary incarceration in the hands of an unjust, corrupt and exploitative, regime, (SC) the masses whose empty stomachs compel to sacrifice the struggle on the altar of

compromises, thus the poet wonders what will happen to Mandela. In this poem we see, Soyinka's poetic sensibility at play. The very next poem ridicules the despotic regimes lying hypocrisy, as they try to hide behind a finger to cover up their bestiality towards black South Africans. Soyinka is blunt in his wit and coldly sarcastic as he condemns Botha's claim that Mandela's crimes had equal culpability as those of Rudolf Hess. He retails the criminality of the Apartheid regime:

A ninety day laboratory per man
Blackened cells -not padded, no
You made them taste sublimity in
Blacked out
Solitary.

The gruesome murder of helpless men and women is portrayed in the lines following :

Gassed them cold and questioned their anatomy/
too bad some woke mid-surgery/
...and thousands died from greedy inhalation/
they loved the stuff, they died laughing no?[6]

where the poet ridicules their pretence as the regime used laughing gas to slaughter thousands of helpless souls the poet's sardonic irony is effective in conveying the criticism of the treatment meted out to the blacks, who the poet humourously compares to the German-Jews, who were held in great contempt by the Third Reich. The cold and contemptuous tone of the description recalls that of the poet's reminiscences in *Massacre 66* in Northern Nigeria. The tyranny and brutality of the regime is further x-rayed in the poems titled, "Funeral Sermon Soweto", and "So Now They Burn the Roof above Her Head", which condemns the harassment and intimidation of the hero's spouse-Winnie. The ironic humour of the arrest of her bed-spread is used to ridicule the futility of the regime's effort at intimidating Winnie Mandela. The first stanza highlights the imbecility of her intimidators:

Son
So now they burn the roof over her head?
Well, what's new? Retarded minds, like infants
play with fire. Bright things attracts them
colour obsessed, did not these mewling agents once
arrest your bedspread?[7]

"The league of hypocrites", they are who do not see inanity of their tyrannical actions.

how could they know, these living dead
The flames their fumbling hands have
Fanned
Inscribe the very colours they proscribe
But alas! It is the colour of hope.[8]

With various images, repetitions of the poem's title, and the allusion to fire and the colour of the ANC, the poet not only whips up pathos for Winnie, but impresses upon the reader the insensitivity of a regime that has no regard for the tradition of wedlock and all that makes it sacrosanct. The poet's contempt for the sadistic regime and its operators is further indicated in his play on words/phrases like, 'Retarded minds' infants' play with fire/bright things attract them" highlighting the irony and paradox of a purportedly rational minded regime.

The condemnable story of sergeant Doe's tyranny and misrule in Liberia -is opened with sardonic humour in the "Apotheosis of Master Sergeant Doe," perhaps reminiscent of the *Apotheosis of Claudius* by the Roman write Seneca. Written in rhyming couplets a style that aptly highlights the satire of Doe's Apotheosis, he is bid welcome perhaps to the under world of tyrannical rulers. "Welcome dear Master Sergeant to the fold/ lean your entry in studied saviors form/ Combat fatigued, self-styled a cleansing storm."

He is by no means the 'cleansing storm' he claims, neither is he really a savour'- but the poet with ironic humour, presents him as he really is, a Master slayer.' His hypocrisy is highlighted in the lines following:

Stayed simple master sergeant.
The nation knew who was master
The Sergeants rendered due [9]

Under this guise he depleted his other comrades and "alone the master planner stayed the course." This satire indicts African leaders for their misrule, a situation that irks Soyinka, and in this instance he did not disdain to reminisce on the master sergeant's predecessors

The whine of violin at the State House Ball
Bears down the whining discords of misrule
You've proved a grade A pupil
From survivor's school
Your worthy predecessors raise a toast
Swinging Bokasa, Macias Nguema,
Idi Amin Dada
You sucked their teats, you supped from
Their cannibal larder [10]

These lines speak for themselves, with no intractable images and mystical language. Even the averagely educated would have no difficulty getting the message in this poem.

In 'After The deluge' *(ME),* Soyinka makes use of his critical voice of satire against exploitation and despotism. The identity of this exploiter and dictator is not easily disclosed. But from the graphic description of the corruption and avarice of one man, it could be any of Nigerian/ African military/civilian ex-tyrant. It really makes no difference to the poet, but his purpose is the condemnation of the hypocrisy of a man who:

filled his heart-shaped swimming pool
with Bank notes,
he made a billion yen
leaps from Tokyo to Buenos Aires
...he knew his native land through
iron gates
his sight was radar bowls, his hearing
electronic beams. For flesh and blood
kept company with a brace of Dobermans.[11]

He was so far away from the people he exploited and deprived. The poet is more concerned here about the betrayal of the people, oppression and deprivation, all of which equals bad governance that was the hallmark of dictatorships in post-colonial African states. This probably explains the absence of any hint for easy identification: they all looted the treasury, IBrahim Babangida, Sani Abacha; Idi Amin, Bedel Bokasa, Master Sergeant Samuel Doe, among many others. Usually the end of such looters is miserable as this exile finds out. In the last stanza the poet sends a warning message to all would-be tyrants and exploiters.

They let him live,but not from pity
Or human sufferance, he scratches life
From earth, no worse a mortal man than the rest
Far,far away in dreamland splendour
Creepers twine his gates of bronze relief.
The jade-lined pool is home
To snakes and lizards; they hunt and mate
On crusted algae [12]

The theme of exploitation and hypocrisy is further exposed in "Apollodorus on the Niger." As he condemns official hypocrisy in collaborating with alien exploiters under the guise of promoting art, especially during the 1977 Festival of arts and crafts (Festac'77),

"Apollodorus" the merchant pimp' is the alien who came "disguised to aid the statecraft" and is aided by "Black Levantines" whose greed is portrayed with their purse-ringed, and mortgaged-beaded. 'Apollodorus' is but "Part headed/by new black Levantines, purse-ringed/and mortgaged-beaded."

The scene by scene lampoon of the caricaturist scenario of Nigeria's social realism in "My tongue does not Marry Slogans", is vivid reminiscence of Juvenal's distorted but realistic portrayal of the city of Rome, in fourth century AD. Kernan[13] elaborates further

> *The scene of satire is always disorderly*
> *And crowded, packed to the very point of*
> *Bursting.*
> *The deformed faces of depravity, stupidity,*
> *Venality, greed, ignorance....*

The poet may have had the above in mind when he deliberately deployed his vintage dramatic medium, which incidentally, is also a feature of satire, in a picaresque portrayal of the symptoms of misrule in Nigeria. The piece, 'My Tongue Does not Marry Slogans' originally addressed to Odia Ofeimum a front liner among the "update poets," whose thematic penchant is also the criticism of the symptoms of despotic, tyrannical exploitative misgovernance in post colonial Nigeria. The first scene catalogues the woes of the country's health care system; in spite of multi-million Naira spent in this sector, the result is a parody:

> *Multi-Naira clinic raised to lead*
> *The shelves stare empty, surgery pans are rusted .*
> *The doctor's reassuring smile replaces*
> *Drugs, his hand prescribes placebos.*[14]

Hospitals in Nigeria are nothing more than consulting clinics; while the wealthy who can afford it fly abroad to ''sequestered clinics' the masses are left at the mercy of fake adulterated drugs and their adverse effects The poor die not only from the hazards from malnutrition and starvation."Kwashiokor bellies stretch to rounded/ Water pots and mimic nourishment."

It is almost like a conspiracy against the hopeless poor masses, who are exposed to the hazards of an unplanned and corrupt transportation system to worsen the scenario, the government encourages the situation through its insensitivity.

> *The bloated victim of a hit and run*
> *The -day festering .After dinner-motorcades*
> *Cruise softly by, stench-proofed*
> *By air -conditioners*[15]

The scenic-stills are thrust before the reader with a Juvenal-like declamation,

Cordus could hardly be called a property-owner,
and yet what little the poor man had, he lost.
Today the final straw on his load of woe
(clothes worn to tatters, reduced to begging for crusts)
is that no one will offer him lodging or shelter,
not even stand him a decent meal"[16]

in which the poet's emotional catharsis is palpable. Next we are on one of the myriads of rubbish heaps flung randomly in the city. "A child's scavenger face pressed against/A dung heap/Probe molting peat, rusted cans and faeces."

Ironically, on lookers really believe the child is insane, whereas in reality, he is starving! Such is the fate of the masses that prompts Soyinka's outrage.

Even those that are supposed to keep the law, are most guilty of flaunting it The lawlessness of the law man who screams , "I could shoot you now' and pulls the trigger recalls an incident in which an athlete based in America-Dele Udoh, on a visit was blatantly shot by a police officer, and his...brains disperse the pleas,

Of good Samaritans
Peace makers dodge
Gray flakes on motor chassis,
Paste on arid tar.[17]

Amidst all these some in the name of religion go slaughtering, "Atavist of Allah" who "shot the throat of fellow Moslems." The poet's indignation is against those who call themselves radicals, pandering empty cant, and impotent slogans, ensconced in the safety of "the staff club/swimming pools." He scoffs at their feeling 'secured by campus walls manned day and night by "wage-slave proletarians." They are no different from devotees of Buddhist nescience. "Oh lotus men, secure in your omniscient Buddha fold" their quest for 'one-cure/cure-for-all Eternity" prompts them to see all societal-ameliorative efforts as diversions unworthy of notice or support.[18]

For these evils, the poet swore,
"My tongue does really marry slogans"
I find no poetry in slaughter fields
No lyric grace, redemptive passion, no
...my tongue eschews the doctored mint
Of slogans.[19]

This attitude of the ruling class has "usurped the hearts we knew,.../ and turned millions fugitive from truth," this theme and others like it dominates his immediate post- Nobel era works, that is , this preoccupation with the dilemma of the African, especially towards the end of the 20th century and beyond.

The issue of hypocrisy of the ruling class, who usually and deceptively lay claim to divine authority in order to authenticate their hold on power, is here ridiculed in "Pens for Hire". The poet begins with a celebration of the powers of the pen:

The pen may beat a path to ploughshares
Pen beat ploughshares into swords
...and pen enshrine, and pen unmask
The lies of vain mythologies, enthrone
The mouldy claims of power[20]

But ironically this positive use has been usurped by these ambitious individuals to "glory tongue their gory deed." And there are those of them, the poet demurs, who :"in fame, plunder in time-honored robes"; hypocrisy and greed are vices that straddle both political and religious spheres. For situations like this, the poet lashes out:

Pen prove mighty ear of swords
The pen may dip
In ink-well and, emerging,
Drip with blood.[21]

Thus besides their plundering of the state and citizenry, these miscreants in power also shed the blood of innocent masses; the pen is also used to create situations of anarchy/ restiveness among the citizenry, thus occasioning riots, and the attendant losses, all in a bid to perpetuate the inordinate ambition for power, wealth, and opulence. All these are immersed in the blood of the innocent. It's all stained with blood, he scoffs:

Show me the water beds they lie upon
Pull the plug and puzzle why
The flow is darkened red
And thick and clotted, eternally[22]

Their hypocrisy is manifest in the meaningless double-speak, which are filled with 'sterile incantation.' The poet describes grimly the fate of these, in the last two stanzas:
"some of whom lived a life of ease amidst the sufferings of the masses,/ and eventually cashed their souls in make-belief." The various shades/

meanings of *Samarkand* is here presented as a utopia dream with its promises, was however a hoarse,-'a straw masquerade, characterized by lies, hypocrisy that triggered off unrest on the streets of Moscow' There is a universal ring to the theme the poet is exploiting here. Hypocrisy 'wound through regulations and officialdom.' The deprivation of peasants, whose expectations were dashed:

The shine we sought upon their skin was locked
In racked tomatoes...
A wild assault of rare, exotic fruits
Flared our questing nostrils mocked
The mien of stiff official guides[23]

Even nature is in agreement with the poets lampoon of these exploiters as it' "mocks the mien" of their hypocrisy. Describing the travails of the downtrodden on the streets of Moscow, the poet condemns the vices of hypocrisy and tyranny:

Joy had fled the faces of the eternal
Women
They lined the market outskirts, silently,
Winter twigs, shadows framed in rags
Limp greens outstretched, limp socks
And shawls[24]

These lines herald the poet's dread of a "mafia kingdom" where *Samarkand* is but, 'a tame protectorate/Yet on parade.'

Artificiality and Hypocrisy

'New York, USA', a travelogue, is vintage Soyinka's satire on America's city of New York, recalls an ancient diatribe cataloguing the tyranny, hypocrisy and brutality of Roman society between the first and fourth century A .D by Juvenal.

Closer home, it is reminiscent of the poet's negative impression of the American society of the 'Telephone conversation' fame. A poet - critique Tanure Ojaide gives his impression of Soyinka's style:

> *His impression of the American society is generally native as he discovers the shallowness and artificiality of the social finesse, the omnipresence of violence, the farcial nature of technological development and the irony of squalor in the midst of splendor*[25]

The similarity of both cities-Juvenal's Rome and America's New-York, is perhaps borne out by Soyinka's

Grim passages predict an amphitheatre
Of deadly games, of rites of menace.
A lion prowls beyond to feed their
Romans' lust. or a Minotaur?[26]

Soyinka's withering satire is again portrayed in the bold relief; FOLLOW the SIGNS, WATCH FOR COULOR CODES, heralding the frenzied materialism and fake bargains at their duty free shops. This poem is divided into five sections, with sub-titles; 'Initiation', 'Lost tribe', 'Sub–way New York', 'The most expensive anchorman in 'USA', and 'Columbus Circle N Y'.

The poet's impression at the point of entry which he describes in the first section is that of the artificiality and hypocrisy of the language welcoming visitors; even checking through customs conveys something apprehensive to the poets sensibilities.

Disgorge in tunnels tight as blind folds
Entrapped with lampreys rushing to
Their doom
You come to a sudden stop, the world
Four deep
In multi-lingual queues[27]

The use of the Piscean imagery further compounds the apprehension of something like a 'trap' as though the poet was being ensnared. This theme is followed up in 'Lost tribe' as he criticizes the pretensions about everything. The multi-lingual tribe, "scurries round in search of lost community/love by rote/care by inscriptions" just as Ojaide stated earlier, the 'social finesse' is a huge pretence. Even the language is "barren and empty" (Biakolo.2004:128)

Incessant tongues pretend to
A way of though-
Where language mints are private
The coins prove counterfeit on
Open markets[28]

The emptiness of this language can be seen in purported expressions of concern; 'the wish is wishy-washy, lacks contact positive' the waiter barks; 'Enjoy your meal', or Enjoy! These are also emblazoned conspicuously displayed on bill-boards, T-shirts these ones are not just empty, but violent; 'take down fences not mend them.'

Then the issue of violence is also explored in the SUBWAY this time not only limited to the language communication, but in public places,

such places as, Manhattan, the Bronx, Brooklyn Harlem and Queens. Throughout these settlements, 'Graffiti violence', augment 'tuneless thought'. The maxim goes: 'self-expression/safety value for pent-up violence.''The most expensive Anchorman in U S A" is a direct lampoon of an obnoxious character (Dan Rather of the *CBS*) one of the public radio stations, who has become the prototype of American banality and insensitive media. "The banality /obey the law of Parkinson, swells/its reign to fill prime space and time".

Written in a dialogic style, the poet criticizes America's use of technology to promote force and violence. The poet takes time out to poke some fun at the nomenclature of this important Anchorman.

The final moment -
would you like to comment?
Rather not? Rather not comment?
Now that's unhead of, Rather.[29]

The segment titled 'Transition' is based on the poets reflections of sundry issues that bother on the university of Ife campus (Now OAU, ile ife) his deep thought about life 'The cremation of a wormy caryatid' with no satirical pre-occupations, along with 'love potion CAMPUS, ILE-IFE, DOCTORED VISION.'

Mandela's Earth and Other Poems as the foregoing analysis indicate, may not quiet be within the moral 'range of *The shuttle in a crypt*, but it is nevertheless satirically vintage, Wole Soyinka, quite in line with *The Outsiders and Samarkard and Other Markets I have Known.* It is more reflective, with a post-Nobel maturity, yet still betrays the Juvenalian bitter skit of the days of *Idanre, Massacre 66* and *The Shuttle in a Crypt*, but, the vision /mission remains those of Wole Soyinka.

A bit of the moral outrage, typical of the poet's criticisms in a *Shuttle in the crypt*, is rehashed in this piece, titled "Some deaths are worlds apart" *(SM)*, and dedicated to the memory of the slain June 12 crusader, Kudirat Abiola. The six stanzas piece is loaded with contemptuous vituperations; Soyinka indicts not only the Abacha led junta that executed the dastardly act, but also the international community that looked on with an air of indifference

...not one carnation marked the spot
Of death
Though undecreed, a ban on mourning
Spoke...louder tha cold eyed guns that spat
Their message of contempt against the world[30]

Although, the diplomatic world made 'noises,' /all too soon it was business as usual.' As they were more interested in satisfying their avarice for the oil which lubricated their dark consciences:

Dark sludge
And lubricant of conscience, oil
Must flow, though hearts atrophy,
And tears
Are staunched at source.[31]

Through the instrumentality of irony, which he used in the first and second stanzas, a repetition of some of the lines occur in the fourth stanza, in a parodic spiting of those sycophants and onlookers; whose avarice feeds on their hypocrisy; both of which are conspicuous to all but themselves:

She was not royal, white or glamorous
No catch of playboy millionaires.
Her grace was not for media drool
Her beauty
We shall leave to nature's troubadours[32]

But then her crown, the poet brightens, making use of one of his characteristic Judeo-Christian allusions, 'was her crown, though of thorns?' but it turned her into a shining martyr as a result, she has secured a place among the Moremis, and Queen Aminas, among others of similar pedigree.

In celebrating the courage of late Kudirat, the poet is indicting those who have sold their conscience for 'sludge of dark oil,' along with their collaborators outside our shores. In this part satire, part panegyric for Kudirat the poet pays glowing tribute to the heroine of June 12, in the last stanza:

She seeks no coronet of hearts
Who reigns
Queen of a people's Will.
Self surrendered, dons a mantle that becomes
The rare-born Master of Fate.[33]

It is not difficult to imagine what Wole Soyinka of the *Shuttle in the crypt*, would have done with this subject matter, a couple of years back,- pre-Nobel era. But with a more mature, an almost Horatian mien; the piece, "Death of a Tyrant" still betrays the diatribe and the Juvenalian disgust.

He flays a now demised tyrant, jeering at some of his mannerisms,

making good use of the grapevine perhaps. But the satire is by no means veiled; as he ridicules the tyrant's libido and penchant for downing a popular local drink (*Ogogoro*). Neither Juvenal nor Petronius would have passed up, this rather paradigmatic instance of the degeneracy of morals, particularly in very high places. A classical instance of the overlap of morality and politics in satiric discourses[34] this category of moral view of behaviour has implications which are not just political, but also culturally arbitrary, Bourdieu[35]

His favourite gargoyle from Iganmu
Labelled home-made brandy as in
Home-made democracy, the gunner
Was a gunner[36]

The despot really had his day of reckoning at hand; having murdered the finest and best/of a hundred million." Even when he is given a wrong medicine his twisted palate and taste for the esoteric, would not warn him of possible danger:

His last thought was a strange taste
To a familiar pill, concluding
A stronger dosage as befits a despot
Pleased he was[37]

The satirist's use of rhetorical questions in the next stanza, somewhat exposes the hypocrisy and underlying greed , involved in the handling of the resolution of the matter-the whole incidence of the tyrants death, and the question of an appropriate substitute; surmised in one apt question; "in whose cause was this next killing made?/to end a nations agony? This is an open-ended question, that is as ironic as it is rhetorical; with its lightly veiled satire, the poet then concludes with a contemptuous imagery parodying the tyrant now turned 'victim'; "putting the once faithful dog to sleep/ that has turned rabid."
The dilemma created by the method adopted by those who "leap fogged boundaries," somehow has left more questions than answers:

...a moth of victory chants turned
Curses on a million tongues.
...the killers took the one on whom
A nation's hopes were vested
The field they gloated, was now levelled.[38]

In their attempt to create a level playing field and ,of course, to protect their investments and other interests, "the killers", have dashed a nation's hopes for a better tomorrow. The poet shows derision for the

tyrant's manner of persecuting his perceived enemies. He could not face them frontally; but more like a pseudo-tyrant, in want of heart:

> *...took them from the rear*
> *His targets-women (Kudirat et al.)*
> *Octogenarians-Alfred Rewane-and*
> *Once faithful servitors now mired*
> *In the gunners fears*[39]

These and other faithful and responsible citizens were objects of the tyrant's nightmares, and so he 'entrapped them as "flies in his spotty webs" what kind of justice system, the poet scoffs in wonderment, would sanction such injustice all in the name of justice and fair-play? "The game of substitution works only when justly made". He ridicules the purported justice of the solution adopted by these people indicting the country's justice system; since according to the poet the 'capsule' they administered to both tyrant and 'victim' obviously "consumed more than the heart that's stopped.

"Calling Josef Brodsky for Ken Sarowiwa" is a piece which reads like an ode to the memory of the late writer/ environmentalist ken Sarowiwa; whose death resulting from his fight against the degradation of the Niger Delta drew the *ira* of human right organizations across the world, against the Abacha junta and its collaborators. Here the poet juxtaposes the evils of injustice across continents; attacking as it were, tyrants in both continents, (Africa and Europe) to show its kindred grain," his language is again contemptuous of those he refers to as "marionettes/ in itchy uniforms," who, salute and settle "civil strife/on orders from above" He scoff at the marriage of convenience against the Niger Delta, of 'oil and guns' as that supposedly made in heaven. Hence in their bid to perpetuate injustice and enhance their avarice, there is only one tongue which they have learned:

> *For oil must flow through Land and sea Though both be silted from Contempt and greedHe places side by side the ironical situations in both Moscow and Ogoniland even in the land of all-wise Houyhnynms horses shit in social realism, dialectical to the last neighing nay...Moscow is cold. Ogoni is heated space where fires burn all day and night, and gases Blacken fish and leaves from endless flues*[40]

In the face of such apparent differences in circumstances; matters are either determined "by party or by gun." For the tyrants in both settings' social realism is ascribed in 'raelpolitik and profit.' Deploying Jonathan Swift's allusion to a race of horses, that possess human

intelligence and vices; the Yahoos, are brutish and corrupted, but exhibiting the forms of man and his vices; the poet lampoons this similarity in the depravity of these oppressors to such allegorical figures.

In a "Comedy of Law," he criticizes the eco-insensitivity and materialistic greed of exploiters of the resources in the Niger Delta. In both Chechnya and Ogoniland he laments, ' we must learn the comedy/ Of law/And even bear its fatal flaws'.

The 'Comedy of Law,' a synonym for the travesty of law and justice is perpetuated through tyranny, whether in the icy-cold Chechnya or in the mangrove swamp of Ogoniland.

But all believe there lives that
Hidden seed
Within the rancid compost of their world,
A diamond
Pressed to flame from dross of
Timelessness.[41]

The greed of these tyrants is usually triggered off by what the poet refers to as 'hidden seed/a diamond,' which usually is 'dross of timelessness.' For Josef Brodsky in Chechnya, it is 'the pulse within the glacier' and for Kenule, "the rivulet of slick' sludge in the mangrove swamp. Both men were martyr for the injustice of despots in their countries, suffering similar fate. The poet also takes a swipe at the vindictiveness of the justice system; both men suffered for their 'love' of the 'hidden seed,' for Kenule, it was the seed:

Burgeoning in rivulets of slick,
Breaking ground
In carbon pall, defying the laws
Of photosynthesis.[42]

The 'oil' breaking ground is metaphorically juxtaposed with the victim's defiance of the powers of the oppressor, represented by, 'his judges' who became incensed at the tenacity of Kenule's commitment to his course. The idea of defiance is further explored in the 'Blackness" of the oil which is compared to the sunless atmosphere of the dungeon in which the victim is put. The satire is ensconced in the ironic expression, "between the man thought captive," which scoffs at the justice system. The poet's habitual use of the Judeo-Christian allusion of Joseph the dreamer, who later becomes an important official of state in ancient Egypt, is perhaps a warning for both tyrant and their "victims":

The erstwhile tyrant
Ate the humble pie, recall

The dreamer's talent to state use
He quit the dungeon mapped a people
Cause-but
Let all beware the prophet
Beware the prophet[43]

The lines above are alluding to some who maybe tyrannically inclined, while masquerading in the garb of a prophet and in the same breath sounding a caveat to the citizenry:

For tyrants are as variegated as
The prophet's quilt
And some may learn while others
Cage in dread
Of learning.
As consumer's paradise, where one
Will yearn
For those bedraggled hands of
Dead Utopia[44]

He is using strong images and allusions to convey meaning here. It is not difficult to decipher the poet's "consumer's paradise", where the inhabitants, 'yearn for dead utopia', that is always receding from their reach, an appropriate illustration of the poet's home setting.

Conclusion

Mandela's Earth and Other poems, though, a work of an older Soyinka, still betrays the vigor of his withering wit and satiric spirit. He is still irked at the ineptitude of the society at injustice; hypocrisy among other societal ills. Though, Post- Nobelian Soyinka , in this collection betrays a more matured disposition, all the same there is still the Juvenalian disgust with evil. As usual the collection shows Soyinka in his different moods, personal, and meditative, sharing his thoughts with a presumed communicative audience.

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PHILOCTETES - HEINER MUELLER'S CLASSICAL DISGUISE

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Abstract

The East German dramatist Heiner Mueller (1929-1995) was widely regarded as Bertolt Brecht's successor. His plays were always political and his career was dogged, especially in the 1960s, by an antagonistic socialist German Democratic Republic (GDR) government that reacted with censures and bans to his criticism of how socialism was practiced in the GDR. He then resorted to reworking texts from classical Greek literature. This article examines his first reworked play vis-a-vis the original version by Sophocles and points out that, just as this dramatist regularly contradicts himself in interviews, the play is steeped in ambivalence.

Introduction

The East German dramatist Heiner Mueller (1929-1995) was a very popular writer in the German-speaking part of Europe. He was arguably the most important of the generation of German playwrights that came after the great Bertolt Brecht and in fact was widely regarded as his legitimate heir, and he was speculated to have been third on the list for the Nobel Prize in 1992, when it was won by Derek Walcott. Having said that, it must be pointed out that, outside of theatre enthusiasts and academics, Mueller was not very popular in the English-speaking world, so that most readers in our part of the world may not have heard about him. The first monographs in English on the writer were published after his death, despite a successful career spanning about four decades. Why was this the case?

The answer is probably twofold. First, he was living and working mostly in socialist East Germany, which meant that even in the neighbouring

West Germany he was unheard of in the early years of his career. Secondly, and most importantly, he did not have four decades of success. His initial lack of success cannot however be attributed to his earlier plays being failures. In fact, many critics consider these early plays, especially *The Scab* (1958), *The Resettled Woman* (1961) and *The Construction Site* (1963), as some of the finest he ever wrote.

The problem was that these plays, and particular mention must be made here of *The Resettled Woman*, were always critical of government and not so much its policies as the *manner* of their execution. In other words, his criticism was not of socialism, but of "really existing socialism", that is, socialism as currently practiced in the country. This consistently put him in trouble with the censure-happy, repressive socialist government of the then German Democratic Republic (GDR), as East Germany was known. Theatregoing was a very cheap form of entertainment in the GDR, and the government, probably like no other government worldwide, very quickly gave the theatre very serious attention, recognising it as an instrument of political education helping to bring about social change. What this meant was that there was a close eye maintained on theatre works and plays had to be officially sanctioned, mostly both before *and* after the premiere. The government reacted with censures and restrictions or outright bans on performance and publication of works that were deemed to have gone against state principles as they were once articulated by the Brecht pupil and successor as head of the state-controlled Berliner Ensemble, Manfred Wekwerth:

> *The working class and their allies are building a new society. It is one of the purposes of our performances ... to enable the people of this German state to master the new, complicated reality with the aid of artistic means.*[1]

The starkest example of state reprisals against Mueller was in 1961, after the first stage performance of *The Resettled Woman*, which took place at the end of September, only a few weeks after the Berlin Wall had been constructed. It resulted, undoubtedly partly because of the heightened political tension of the period, in a massive scandal that led to the director and many actors losing their jobs - everyone worked for the state, of course - and some of them were made to work in factories and construction sites. Heiner Mueller himself was forced out of the Writers' Union of the GDR and therefore effectively banned from earning money as a dramatist for two years.

This was a very hard situation for Mueller, a married man at the time.

[1] Quoted in Hayman, R.: *German Theatre* 1975 p.192

He had to depend on sympathetic colleagues who gave him money, or helped him secure small jobs, writing poems or captions. He succeeded in writing a play that was relayed on radio, but under the pseudonym of Max Messer. When he was at last allowed to start writing again, in 1963, he showed little remorse, committing the even higher sin of directly criticising socialism by pointing out its negative sides in *The Construction Site*. Socialism, the play shows, could lead to a loss of humanity in the individual, a stark contrast to official socialist propaganda. He was able to publish, but was not allowed to stage this work. He then decided to change his tactics. While refusing to stop the critical tone of his works, he crucially decided to disguise his criticism.

What followed were very decisive years in Mueller's career that effectively defined his later life in many ways - it led to his introduction to West Germany, and from then on to the western (Capitalist!) world and to something that had up till then been very hard to come by for him - money. More importantly, the demand for his works rose not only in West Germany, but in other countries like France and the USA, as well as in Eastern Europe. This international success then changed the negative image he had in the GDR. How did Mueller disguise his criticism, leading to this almost sudden turnaround in his fortunes?

His disguise was simply a turn to classicism, revising and reworking narratives appropriated mostly from classic Greek theatre and mythology. Against the backdrop of a national psyche damaged by the recent Nazi past, the conviction that the Greek classics belonged to the great human inheritances of mankind, inheritances that could not be compromised by the Nazis, was a basic one for the majority of German writers and intellectuals, as well as for the German public, both East and West.

This meant that the plays *Philoctetes, Herakles 5, Oedipus Tyrant,* and *Prometheus*, all coming one after the other, that is, not interspersed with other kinds of plays, were met with great enthusiasm, more so in the West, where the national feeling of guilt about Nazi crimes was a more openly discussed issue. On the surface, then, Mueller had stopped writing about contemporary issues and the GDR's ruling Socialist Unity Party felt he had sufficiently been discouraged from societal criticism and so could be left alone to wallow in the glories of classical Greek Theatre.

When, at the beginning of the 1970s, he stopped reworking classical literature, it coincided with a change in the leadership of the Socialist Unity Party - like all socialist/communist states, the GDR was a one party state - and therefore a new head of the GDR government, Erich Honecker, who Mueller had personally met a couple of times, and who was a little more accommodating of the writer's "excesses". This,

combined with his new found popularity, meant that government functionaries did not target him with repressive measures as often as before. He in fact increasingly became a poster boy for the East German government as a literary giant and one of the few theatre workers of international repute who was a product of the socialist state.

Heiner Heiner Mueller's *Philoktet*

This article discusses the first "disguised" play, *Philoktet* (Philoctetes), completed in 1964 and published a year later. There have, of course been many different ideas on what Heiner Mueller was trying to say in *Philoktet*, and the author himself never said anything conclusive on his motives, either contradicting himself on the interpretation or continually insisting on the reader or audience being left to interpret plays. It is the intention here to discuss the original play and examine the crucial changes to the play by Mueller. Then suggestions are made as to what possible message(s) the author was trying to pass across to his East German public.

In Greek mythology, Philoctetes was the son of King Poeas of Thessaly. He was a famous archer and participated in the legendary Trojan War on the side of the Greeks, and, in another legend, he was one of Jason's Argonauts on the search for the Golden Fleece. There were several plays written on him by the classical Greek dramatists Aeschylus, Euripides and Sophocles, who even wrote two plays on him. However, only one play, written by Sophocles, has survived and it was this play that Heiner Mueller revised and adapted for his purposes.

The background to Sophocles' play goes back as far as the death of Heracles. The dying Heracles wished to be burnt, while still alive, on the pyre he had erected for himself on the mountain Oeta. Nobody but his long time friend Philoctetes was ready to light the fire. In appreciation of this, Heracles gave his old friend his bow as well as his arrows, which still had on them the poison from the blood of the Hydra. When the Trojan War was to start, Philoctetes, now a renowned archer, went - along with his own team of soldiers - as one of the leaders on one of the seven ships to Troy. While on a stopover on an island, the archer was bitten by a snake, and his resulting injury made him scream incessantly in great pain and it also emitted a horrible odour. As the voyage to Troy continued, his screams in particular became more and more harmful to the cause of the Greeks, as they did not allow the necessary silence during their sacrifices to the gods for a successful war. This made Odysseus, the war general of the Greeks, decide to leave Philoctetes alone on the desert island of Lemnos and continue the journey to Troy

without him.

Ten years later, with the Trojan War still raging, a prophecy that the Greeks would only win the war with the help of the bow and poisoned arrows of Heracles - then of course in Philoctetes' possession - meant that bringing back the archer, or at the very least his weapons, was of utmost priority. It was a near-impossible task, of course, because Philoctetes had gone through ten bitter years hating the Greeks, and especially Odysseus, for abandoning him on the island, and would certainly be loath to do anything that would help them. Odysseus decided to go on the journey himself, along with the son of Achilles, Neoptolemus.

The *Philoctetes* of Sophocles begins with the arrival of the two men on the desert island of Lemnos. Odysseus teaches Neoptolemus what false story to tell in order to win the trust of Philoctetes and tells him to go ahead while he hides somewhere, waiting for the right time to show his presence. Philoctetes is convinced by Neoptolemus that they both hate Odysseus and are therefore in the same boat. After gaining the archer's confidence, Neoptolemus is trusted to help him hold his bow while he goes through an attack of violent pain in his foot, after which he falls into a deep slumber.

The young man's conscience does not allow him to simply run away with the weapons. When the archer wakes up, Neoptolemus gives him back his weapons and tells him the truth about his mission to the island, trying to persuade the archer to go to Troy with him, but Philoctetes refuses and, seeing the hated Odysseus, who now appears, has to be prevented by Neoptolemus from killing him. He becomes mad with anger and refuses all entreaties to go to Troy. He only wants to return to Greece. However, his old friend, the dead Heracles, now a god, appears to Philoctetes and persuades him to go with the two men to Troy, promising him that his wound would be healed there. Philoctetes agrees to go on the journey to Troy and the play ends.

Heiner Mueller's version of the play remains true to the original only in certain stretches, but he introduces changes in many decisive points that give the play an almost totally new complexion. One of the most obvious changes is the removal of superstition and the gods as decisive factors in the play, which is most evident, as will soon be shown, in the ending. Furthermore, he reduces the number of actors to the three main figures, eliminating the minor characters and the chorus, which are present in the version by Sophocles. What this helps to achieve is a greater adherence to the Aristotelian ideals on time, space and plot than in the original version. A further change is found in the background to the story. In Mueller's version, Philoctetes is bitten by a snake which was preventing the Greeks from offering a sacrifice at a certain required

spot for the success of their endeavour. The bite came after he had successfully diverted the attention of the snake long enough for the others to make the sacrifice where it was supposed to be made. The Muelleran Philoctetes was therefore not only injured in the line of duty, but was injured while he alone heroically risked his life to ensure the success of the Greek collective.

In the plot itself, there are some important changes. In line with the removal of superstition as a decisive factor, the reason for the two men coming to the island has little to do with the archer's weapons. Philoctetes himself is needed at the warfront, because morale is low especially in the ranks of his own soldiers after the death of Achilles, and all of his men now long for their leader and have refused to continue fighting until they see him. Neoptolemus also does indeed hate Odysseus, because the General has appropriated his dead father's armour for personal use instead of handing them over to him as the rightful heir. He however goes with him to Lemnos because he realises the importance of the mission for Greece.

The most obvious changes to the original, however, are found at the ending, which is a totally different one. With Philoctetes about to kill his hated enemy Odysseus with his bow and poisoned arrow, Neoptolemus himself puts the archer to the sword *from behind*, while Philoctetes, concentrated on Odysseus, is not looking.

Odysseus, quickly conjures up a lie to be told to the Greeks at the Trojan front to explain the death of Philoctetes: Arriving on Lemnos, they are just in time to witness Philoctetes being killed in a fight with an army of Trojans after he refused to go to battle for them, to fight on their side against his own countrymen. They however are luckily able to find the hidden bow and arrows after the Trojans left. Carrying the corpse to the Trojan front, the sight of the corpse would provide the needed motivation for the Greek soldiers to fight and defeat the Trojans. The play ends with a symbolic but significant exchange of burdens: Odysseus, who represents the state, takes the bow, the symbol of power, and Neoptolemus carries the burden, in this case the corpse of Philoctetes.

Müller chose to rework Sophocles' *Philoctetes*, in the words of Hall *et al*, "in order to subvert its humanity, rather than to endorse it."[2] The predominating motifs in the play are twofold: the first is the authority using lies to achieve its aims, and Müller recognised this as mirroring the situation in his own society. Secondly, there is the issue of individual will as opposed to collective will, a recurring issue especially in socialist

[2] Hall, E. *et al*: *Dionysus since 69: Greek tragedy at the dawn of the third millennium*. Oxford, 2004, p.151.

societies. In Heiner Mueller's adaptation, the lies and tricks, already present in the original, are extended and intensified. At the centre of them all is Odysseus, who, while not being the title character, is certainly the central one and the clear winner in the battle of wits with Philoctetes. His network of lies and tricks precede the play, as he had already tricked Philoctetes and left him on the desert island ten years earlier. When the play starts, it is with Odysseus teaching Neoptolemus what lies to tell Philoctetes in order to win his trust. The play ends with another masterful lie by Odysseus to explain away the fact that Philoctetes was dead. However, it must be noted that, especially in Greek mythology, lying and trickery were not necessarily looked upon negatively. In fact the masterful lie or trick very often ended with a rewarding experience.

Closely linked to this issue of lying is the instrumentalisation of people by constituted authority, and when such people are no longer needed, they are unceremoniously dropped. Philoctetes being abandoned on the island is a good example of this. He was useful to the cause when he saved the Greeks from the snake and became injured in the process, but became useless - even harmful - to the cause after his injury, and therefore had to be abandoned. Neoptolemus is also used by Odysseus as the lying messenger to convince Philoctetes to travel along to Troy. Even the corpse of Philoctetes will be put to use. The general motto in such situations is that the end justifies the means.

The most striking message certainly is illustrated by Mueller's most striking change to the play. By killing Philoctetes as he was about to fire an arrow at Odysseus, Neoptolemus shows once again that he understands the necessity to put the collective above the individual. Using people, lying, trickery and betrayal are basically wrong and in the case of Neoptolemus, actually anathema to his spirit, yet he realises that they can, and in fact, if necessary, then they *must* be put into use when the national cause is at stake. Moral issues should not take precedence over practical issues. The young man knows from the start that he is being used as a foil to convince Philoctetes, and expresses his reservations about it, but sees it as a necessary evil that he must go through for the sake of Greece.

Neoptolemus then, despite his youth (he can be no more than 16 years old) realises what Philoctetes cannot or will not realise: the individual will should always come second to the collective will. This means that nationalism *should* take precedence over personal issues and sentiments. Although he hates Odysseus and certainly has sympathy for Philoctetes, he recognises that there is a greater need in Troy for the War General than for the archer, who has blatantly refused to go to Troy anyway, and who has been so overcome by his personal feelings of hatred that he

either cannot or refuses to recognise the fact that the general (Greek) good would be served not only by his own appearance on the warfront, but, more importantly, by Odysseus being alive to continue capably leading the war. This inability to overcome his overwhelming hatred proves to be the **harmatia** on the part of Mueller's title hero and leads to his downfall.

Is Heiner Mueller then showing through this play his support for the likes of Odysseus and their rather Stalinistic methods, or is he showing his disgust at their practices? It is a difficult, probably impossible, question to answer. There can be no doubt that the people of the GDR experienced on a daily basis what Philoctetes experienced - lies and tricks, followed eventually by a stab in the back by their supposed leaders or by people like Neoptolemus who must sacrifice their conscience for the public good, and are instrumentalised by leaders like Odysseus for their own ruthless purposes. What the reader or the spectator in the theatre must ask himself after the play is fundamental: are all these necessary evils? True to the tradition of the epic theatre, Mueller does not provide us with an answer. There is no clear lesson taught and no optimism felt by the spectator, just as the audience is warned in the prologue:

> *Our show is grim, let me be plain*
> *There is no message here to take home and frame*
> *Nor is there a useful lesson for a cloudy day*
> *If you're afraid - you can go away*
> *[*The hall doors fly open*]*
> *You've had your chance*
> *[*Hall doors close ...*]*
> *Our business hereafter*
> *Is for something else than laughter*[3]

The two plays by Heiner Mueller immediately preceding *Philoctetes* - *The Resettled Woman* and *The Construction Site* are more direct in exposing unjust practices, which was why the GDR government reacted with censures and bans. As we have seen, this made Heiner Mueller then decide to go another route in his critique of society. The first critical appraisals actually fell for his disguise, with Werner Mittenzwei, acclaimed critic and member of the state-run East German Academy of Arts, calling Mueller's play "an anti-war play"[4], an interpretation certainly based on

[3] Mueller, H.: *Werke 3* (Complete Works vol 3), p. 291. All translations in this paper are mine.

[4] Mittenzwei, W: *Eine alte Fabel, neu erzaehlt*, in: *Sinn und Form* vol. 6, pp. 948–956, 1965

Philoctetes' refusal to go with the two men to Troy.

The author himself hints at an interpretation that would confirm his play as a criticism of Stalinism and confirms his decision to disguise his criticism:

> *In my version of the play, the battle for Troy is only a sign or image of the socialist revolution in stagnation ... in the early 60s, one could not write a play on Stalinism. You needed this sort of model if you wanted to ask the real questions. The people here [in the GDR] understand that very quickly. However, in the West [of Germany] it simply looks like a funny story, like a simple rewriting of the ancient drama.*[5]

However, Mueller would not be Mueller if he did not show his usual contradictory self. In his autobiography *War without Battle*, he stated, concerning *Philoctetes*, that in no way was his use of the classic tales an attempt to escape scrutiny by using them as allegories. "I do not have such ability anyway - to disguise a present problem in antiquity"[6] Furthermore, as early as 1966, Mueller had advised in a seldom cited magazine interview that "*Philoctetes* should not be given one definite interpretation, but several different ones."[7]

It is such contradiction that inspired the unique description of Mueller as a "virtuosic wriggler"[8], and it is such contradiction that leads to the ambivalence that the spectator may feel when watching this play. We are supposed to feel pity for Philoctetes, who was a perpetual victim of lies, tricks and betrayal, yet we must recognise that his death was for the general good. Philoctetes staying alive would have meant the death of Odysseus. Keeping both men alive, in the manner of the harmonious ending we see in the original by Sophocles, would not be a typical Mueller ending.

More importantly for Mueller probably, his version conforms more to what, especially with the influence of Shakespeare, has now come to be understood as tragedy. While the harmonious ending in the Sophoclean original does not preclude its classification as a classic Greek tragedy,[9]

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[5] Mueller, H.: *Walls*. Interview with Sylvere Lotringer [1981] . Translated into German by Weber, G. as *Mauern*, Gespraech mit Sylvere Lotringer. Rotwelsch, Berlin 1982, pp. 75/77

[6] Quoted in Lehmann/Primavesi (eds.): *Heiner Mueller Lexikon*. p. 172

[7] Mueller, H.: *Sinn und Form*, vol. 12, p. 46, 1966.

[8] Kalb, Jonathan: *The Theater of Heiner Mueller*. Cambridge, p. 4, 2001

[9] My thanks to Dr. Folake Onayemi for her informed comments in a recent private conversation on classical Greek tragedy.

there have been many arguments about whether Aristotle was justified in directly referring, in his *Poetics*, to Sophocles' *Philoctetes* in particular as a successful tragedy[10], since it clearly does not adhere to the ideals of **harmatia**,[11] or the "tragic flaw", as described by Aristotle himself in the 13th chapter of the *Poetics*.

The modern day tragedy, it can successfully be argued, is now defined more widely along the ideas of Shakespeare, and Heiner Mueller, who idolised the English Bard, must have taken a look at the Sophoclean *Philoctetes* and seen very little about it that could be considered tragic in the Shakespearean mould: there is no death, no fatal error by the hero, and a harmonious ending. Apart from the need for a disguise, therefore, it could be argued that one of Heiner Mueller's intentions with his own version was to "right the wrongs" as he saw them (this was clearly the reason why he re-wrote Shakespeare's *Macbeth*) and make a "real" tragedy out of a "false" one.

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[10] Aristotle: *Poetik* (Poetics). Translated from Greek into the German and edited by Manfred Fuhrmann. Stuttgart 2003, p. 1449b.

[11] For a full discussion on "Harmatia" in Philoctetes, see Bremer, J. M.: *Hamartia. Tragic error in the poetics of Aristotle and in Greek tragedy*. Amsterdam 1969, p. 165ff.

AFRICAN COMMUNITY AND SEXUALITY IN GRAECO/ROMAN LITERATURE

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Abstract

The theme of sexuality in regards to Africans in Latin literature is worth critical study. The study shows how far the statements about Africans as far as sex is concerned represent the truth, and also how far they represent mere myths and popular notions and prejudices about Africans that were current among the Roman and, as far as possible, how these notions and prejudices arose. Moreover, it is noteworthy that polygamy, which was common in ancient African, is still in practice at the present day. Some of the sexual notions that the modern Western world have of Africans may even have their origin in Latin (and Greek) literature which, until a century ago, dominated the Western school curriculum. Even if the sexual undertones in modern literature and popular beliefs are not directly influenced by Classical literature, there are certainly some close similarities between the sexual concepts of Africans found in Latin literature and those found in modern writings. In novels like Sex is a Nigger's Game, Sex is a Nigger, and John Bull's Niggger we have Africans being referred to in ways which are comparable with Latin references like Virgil's reference to Numidians as Numidae infreni Though these novels represent what some Europeans think of Africans in regards to sex, this paper would examine how far this notion of sexuality is a matter of historical fact or mythology.

Introduction

The Punic Wars brought some parts of Africa under the control of the Romans. Formerly, the Carthaginians were the "Lords" of North Africa from Morocco to Tripolitania controlling most of the trade and mines of this extensive region. Since the end of the second Punic War (201 B.C.),

Rome's indirect "control" was established over all North Africa from kingdom of Mauretania (now Morocco). The Roman conquest of Carthage in 146 B.C. brought about the direct administration by Rome of a part of North Africa. The Roman over-came the problem of administering this province by sending pro-praetors (as governors) along with some other Roman officials to rule this part of Africa. The system of government which the Roman set up in her provinces aimed at the propagation of the *Pax Romana* and this system of government was extended to Africa. *The Pax Romana* (the Peace of Rome) facilitated development in Africa. The importance of this control lies in the fact that though there was some contact between the Romans and North-Africa long before the establishment of direct Roman rule in any part of Africa the contact began in earnest after 201 B.C. and it gathered momentum in 146 B.C. The contact also increased when Numidia was annexed by Rome in 46B.C. and Cyrenaica and Egypt in 74 B.C. and 30 B.C. respectively. This contact enabled some Romans including writers to visit Africa. Such visits would naturally get them better insight into the life of the Africans in and near these regions. Sallust, a Roman historian whose works include the *Bellum Iugurithinum* was a governor of Numidia during the time of Julius Caesar and this might have given him a privilege of knowing more of the Africans' culture.

> *When Juvenal, the Roman satirist, was in exile, he went to the Great Oasis in Upper Egypt, thereby finding himself in a position to know more of the inhabitants of that country. The Second Punic War itself threw light on Africa. Because of the great importance of this war and the "atrocities" of Hannibal, many Roman writers not only wanted to write the history of this Punic War but also took an interest in the culture of the* barbari *who took part in the war. Livy in this work* Ab Urbe Condita *and Silius Italicus in his epic poem entitled* Punica *focused their attention on Africans both in public and private life.*[1]

With the passage of time, the fame of the Alexandrian school in Egypt also brought an influx of Romans wishing to study in Egypt. One of such Romans was Lucius Annaeus Seneca who studied intensively the stoic philosophy and resided for a time in Egypt.

These writers, varying from poets, historian's geographers and even encylopaedists, have something to say in regards to African social or private life. It is possible that some of the writers on Africa had never

1 M.L.W. Laister. *The Greater Roman Historians* Berkely and Los Angeles 1963 chap.3.

been to Africa and so they could demonstrate any real familiarity with the traditional African social system, but based their knowledge and judgment on what they saw of the Africans living in Rome at that time and what they read or heard about Africans in Africa[2]. Some of them may have inferred that because Africans in Rome behaved in such and such a way, it followed therefore that all Africans or at least all Africans of a particular national or ethnic group behaved thus[3].

Among the important African societal institutions on which the Latin authors focused attentions are polygamy and certain religious or social rituals which had some connection with sex. It seems as if one of the points which most struck the Roman writers was sexuality in Africa.[4] Many Latin authors whether directly or indirectly, looked at Africans with an eye on sexuality. But this theme of African sexuality seems to be a continuation of a tradition started by Greeks like Herodotus[5]. When the Roman conquered the Greeks, the Romans became influenced by Greek civilization. Since the literature of the Greeks formed an important part of their civilization, it followed that the Romans started to adapt Greek tragedy, comedy and epic into Latin literature. It turned out that although the Roman conquered the Greeks physically, the Greeks in turn conquered the Romans culturally. Horace, in his famous saying attested to this in Graecia capta feru victorem cepit et artes intulit agresti Latio."[6] . Greek writers such as Herodotus, [7] Diodorus Siculus [8] and Polybius [9] even connected the theme of African sexuality with the idea that those people were hardy and healthy races[10]. In adopting the notion of sexuality from Greek literature, it seems as if the Roman writers related polygamy and inordinate sexual activity with the life of African *barbari* and that this attracted a particularly strong interest on the part of the Romans who were supposed to be models of *gravitas, pietas, disciplina* [11] *fides, Concordia, ratio, elementia, pudicitia, virtus, dignitas and frugalitas* [12] The kinds of sexual topics that interested some Latin writers as far as Africans are concerned range from polygamy, concubinage, prostitution

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[2] J.W. Duff, *A literary History of Home in the Silver Age* (3rd) edition 1964 p. 478

[3] Livy xxi – xxx

[4] J.W. Duff, *A literary History of Rome in the Silver Age_* (3rd edition) 1964 pp. 160 ff

[5] Herodotus II 77, IV 168f

[6] Horace *Epistle*_II 156 -7

[7] Herodotus *Histories* II 89, 131, 126, 172, 46, IV.168f.

[8] Diodorus Siculus III. 32

[9] Polybius xxxi . 16

[10] cf Sallust, *Bellum lugurthinum*_17

[11] D.L. Earl, *The Political Thoughts of Sallust* (Cambridge University Press) 1961 Chapt. 11 pp. 18ff.

[12] P.G. Walsh Livy: *Historical Aims and Methods* (Cambridge 1963) pp. 78 – 80

to lack of control of the sexual urge. The focus is not only on inhabitants of Africa but also on Africans living in Rome and elsewhere outside Africa either as slaves or ex-slaves or free men, especially people in various kinds of show business, including gladiators. Instances of Roman ladies who were fond of gladiators and slaves were mentioned by Juvenal[13]. Martial also recorded the case of a Roman lady who had children by her slaves[14]. Pliny also recorded the story of the boxer, Nicaeus, whose mother was born of an adulterous relationship between a Byzantine woman and a black African, and who himself resembled his African grandfather, although his mother did not[15]. The sexual dealings of such Africans with some Roman ladies were reflected in Latin literature, especially in satires.

The aspects of the religious life of African that seemed to have sexual undertones were also of interest to Latin writers. Some authors thought of certain African as having a culture which made their women "prostitute" [16] themselves and interpreted this as an indication of the sexual excess characteristics of Africans.

[13] Juvenal *Satires* 6. 597 - 600
[14] Martial, *Epigrames*_x 95; VI. 39
[15] Pliny, *Historia Naturalis*. vii. 51
[16] Valerius Maxims II. 6 14 – 15

The Infrenus Afer

The idea of the *infrenus Afer (unreined Africans)* and the *Afer praeceps in venerem (sexy Africans)* arises from the general Graeco-Roman idea that North Africans are a very hardy and healthy people. As earlier mentioned, the Greek writers laid a precedent concerning the health of North Africans. The Roman writers focused on the Numidians mainly. In Numidia itself, the most important and most frequently mentioned person in Latin literature was king Masinissa, and his family also came in for considerable mention. This is due to friendship existing between the Roman and the Numidians. It was from the life of King Masinissa, as Latin writers saw him, that we could get some facts of what the Roman writers thought of the North Africans.

Many Latin writers portray Masinissa as a very strong, vigorous and energetic man. Cicero claimed that at the age of ninety, he used to go to journeys on foot, not riding a horse; but when riding, he would not come down; neither rain nor cold would make him cover his head and he was in a healthy condition until his death. Cicero said about Masinissa:-

> *Cum ingresus iter pedious sit, in equum omnino non ascendere, cum autem equo, ex equon non descendere; nullo imbri; nullo frigore adduci ut capite operto sit; summam esse in ec coporis siccitatem, itaque omnia exsequi Regis official et munera* [17]

Valerius Maximus agreed with Cicero in his own account of Masinissa but he also added that Masinissa could stand in a position without moving for several hours, outdoing young men in this exercise; he could sit still for whole day and he rode at the head of his army for twenty-four hours non-stop.

> *eumdem ferunt aliquot horis in eodem vestigic perstare solitum, non ante moto pede quam consimili labore invenes fatigasset, ac si quid agi ab sedente epoerteret, toto die saepenumero nullam in partem converse corpore in solio durasse. Ille vero etiam exercitus equo insidns noctem diel plerumque iunde duxit....* [18]

Polybius [19] record was similar to that of Valerius Maximus and Diodorous Siculus on Masinissa "had from the days of his childhood accustomed himself to endurance and strenuous activities....." [20] the implication of

[17] *Cicero De Senectute 10.34*
[18] Valerius Maximus VIII. 13
[19] Polybius xxxVI. 16 11-5 (Leob translation)
[20] Diodrous Siculus xxxII.16 (Leob translation)

what these Graeco-Roman authors have said, is that the Numidians have been trained from childhood to be hardy and this is why they are still strong even in old age.

The Classical idea that North Africans are very hardy and healthy people probably led to Livy's declaration that the Numidians surpass all other barbarians in sexual urge. Livy said,sunt ante omnes barharos Numidae effuse in venerem.... [21]

This represents the general view of Latin writers on the North Africans. In the story of King Syphax which Livy told to justify his claim, he believed that it was the love of sex that made King Syphax to form an alliance with the daughter of Hasdrubal; thus allowing sexual indulgence to turn him against Rome. It was Syphax's lust that enable the young wife to urge him to attack the Romans. Livy made Syphax himself confess to Scipio after his defeat that sexual indulgence was responsible for his fall and that he has acted like a madman and a criminal because of a woman who was "furiam pestemque" and who "omnibus delenimentis animum suumavertisse atque aliensse....."[22] Similar views on King Syphax are expressed by other Latin authors such as Silius Italicus [23] in whose epic Syphax is induced by his perverse sexual urge *(pravo amore)* to lose his kingdom and the friendship of Rome, forgetting an oath of hospitality that he had sworn to the Romans. The object of Syphax's lust is a very beautiful virgin of distinguished parentage and although he already had many wives, when he took this girl in his lofty bed, he was fired with lust like a man who had never had a wife before. *(ceuface suceensus prima taedaque iugali)*. Thereafter his lust kept him tied the girl and her country Carthage *(blando nimium facilique marito)*. This same lust *(thalami flagrantis aamores)* blinded him to reason *(surdens obstruxerrat aures)* and cost him his life .

As pointed out in the earlier part of this essay, the Roman writers are often biased when looking at attractions of other races. When Livy and Silius Italicus claim that it was sexual lust that was responsible for Syphax's actions, they have forgotten that there is also the possibility that Syphax was thinking of the safety of his kingdom. It is possible that Syphax joined the Carthaginians because of the danger that his kingdom might be in if he joined the Roman, and the Carthaginians happened to win the war. In that case, the Carthaginians would naturally have turned against him. Another important point is that when Latin writer accuse Syphax of faithlessness *(perfidia)* they have forgotten that Masinissa whom they

[21] Livy XXIX. 23
[22] Livy XXX. 13
[23] Silius Italicus, Punica 59-84

praise is also guilty of *perfidia* for deserting the Carthaginian and going over to the Romans. Furthermore, by the African extended family system, there was a sort of brotherhood between those like Syphax and the Carthaginian Hasdrubal who were related by marriage. When Livy says that all *barbari* [24] are guilty of sexual excess, he has forgotten that before the Roman conquest of Greece, the Greeks were calling the Romans *barbaroi*. Livy and Silius Italicus are clearly showing that they believed that the Romans are chaste and responsible, while barbarians like Syphax lack sexual continence and a sense of proportion.

This Roman's belief is well illustrated by Livy's story of the youthful King Masinissa's encounter with Sophoniba. In this episode, Masinissa, who after the defeat of king Syphax has come to acquire Syphax's kingdom, also shows the in-built "quality" of the Numidians when Sophoniba comes to him to ask for protection against the Romans. Livy says:

> *itsque cum genua modo dextram amplectens in id ne cui Romano traderetur fidem exposceret propiusque blanditas I am oratic esset quam preces, non in misericordiam mode pro laspsus est animus victoris sed, ut est genus Numidarum in venerem praeceps amore captivae victor captus* [25]

In other words Masinissa has allowed his passion to get better of him. Giving in to the beauty, enticement and supplication of the beautiful Sophorisba is unworthy of his honour as an ally of the Romans. Livy implies that Masinissa could hardly wait to take her to bed and had to marry her that very day that she came to him as a supplicant. Judging from the words, he puts into the mouth of Scipio,[26] whom Livy admires so much, it seems as if Livy bases his judgment on the Roman qualities such as *disciplina ratio, virtus* and *dignitas*. Livy even makes Scipio claim for himself these qualities which he also expects Masinissa to admire and copy. A contrary opinion can be that the marriage was not hasty because of Masinissa's sexual appetite but because humane nature in Sophoniba's death or being taken to Rome to grace the triumphal procession of Scipio, as she was the wife of Syphax who turned him against the Romans and also the daughter of a Carthaginian general, Hasdrubal. It is also possible that Masinissa thought that by marrying her, he would be able to gain the support of the conquered people as well

[24] Livy XXX. 23
[25] Livy XXX. 12
[26] Livy XXX. 14

as making a claim of Syphax's throne since military conquest might not be enough. The real problem lies in the fact that Livy does not take pains to find out whether there was a relationship or connection between Masinissa and Sophonisba which made Masinnissa to yield easily. [27] There is a tradition which claims that Sophonisba was betrothed to Masinissa before she was married off to Syphax by her father.[28] If this authority is acceptable, there is no reason why Masinissa should not save her since they had once been engaged to be married.

Like other Latin writers, Virgil also points out that the Africans have special interest in sex. In the *Aeneid* [29] he shows that anger and sorrows of Iarbas over the loss of his "right" to marry Queen Dido of Carthage. Iarbas, an African chief, probably of Numidian descent, is angry because Queen Dido chose to marry Aeneas instead of him.

According to Virgil's picture of Iarbas, he is angry because, as a king, he feels insulted that a woman could turn down his request and he considered his honours tarnished by losing a woman of such beauty to a foreigner. But judging from the speech made by Iarbas to the god Jupiter Ammon in which he asked for vengeance upon the followers of Aeneas whom he called *"semiviro comitatu"*[30], it seems as if Iarbas believes that the followers of Aeneas are impotent or at least sexually inadequate.

> *In other words, Iarbas believes in his own virility in contrast with that of men of other nations. From that speech, it can be deduced that Virgil wanted to show see that the anger of Iarbas is not only due to his feelings of his honour lost but lost to his thoughts into his characters' mouths.*

A more glaring instance in which Virgil accuses the Numidians of sexual excess is put into the mouth of Anna, the sister of Queen Dido. When Anna is advising her sister to take Aeneas in order to know the blessing of children, she mentioned all the tribesmen that have tried to woo Queen Dido. One of the tribes to which these suitors belong happened to be the *Numidae*, of which Anna says *"Numidae infreni"*[31] (unreined Numidians). This adjective (*infreni*) is capable of two meanings. On the one hand, it means that the Numidians do not make use of bridles for their horses even when on the battle field. On the other hand, as Virgil uses the adjective *infreni* to go with *Numidae*, is probabale that Virgin

[27] CF.Livy XXX. 12
[28] CF. Appian, *Iberica 37. Libyca* 10, Zonaras IX. 11
[29] Virgil *Aeneid* IV 193 – 218
[30] Virgil *Aemied* IV. 215
[31] Virgil *Aeneid* IV. 41

wanted to portray the Numidians as a set of people who cannot control their sexual urge - men of "unbridled lust"

As earlier mentioned, the Latin writers respect the African for his healthy and physical condition. The Latin writers believe that this is the reason why North Africans are vigorous sexually in youth as well as in old age. The African could go on fathering children up to the age of eighty and beyond. Valerius Maximums claims that Masinissa, as a typical Numidians, was very active in his old age;

> *nihilque omnino ex eis operibus quae adulescens sustinere assueverat, quo mollius senectutem ageret, omisit. Veneris etiam usu ita semper viguit, ut post sextum at octogesimum annum filium generaret cui Methymo nomem fuit.*[32]

Pliny also reports the birth of a son by Masinissa at the age of 86.[33] Livy records that Masinissa, "etiam veneris usu in senecta viguit" to the extent that he fathered a son at the age of eighty - six. [34] Valerius Maximum believes that one evidence of his greatness as a king is that he had fifty sons.[35] It is not only the Latin authors that report the sexual activities of Masinissa in his old age. Greek writers such as Polybius [36] and [37] also attest to the fact of his virility. But there is no need for this to be attributed to a special valour of the Africans. Afterall Pliny reports that Masinissa's feat was equaled by the Roman Cato.[38]

The fact that Cato, a Roman, was able to have a son at the age of 81, shows that it is possible for a man of any nation to father children at old age. But the Roman thought the case of Cato was unusual and spectacular. With the stories of Masinissa and Micipsa [39] (who has two sons in his old age) in mind, the Roman writers think that this kind of thing is common among the *Afri*. The idea of African sexual vigour also comes in Pliny's reference to a famous boxer, Nicaeus, born at Byzantium (Istambul) whose mother was the off-spring of adultery with an Ethiopian, and who although his mother looked white resembled his black grandfather who had committed adultery with a resembled his black grandfather who had committed adultery with a Byzantine woman.[40]

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[32] Valerius Maximus VIII.13
[33] Pliny. *Naturalis Historia* V. 45
[34] Livy. *Periocha* 50
[35] Valerius Maximus V.2
[36] Polybius XXXVI. 16 1-5
[37] Diodorus XXXII. 16
[38] Pliny *Naturalis Historia* VII.62
[39] Sallust *Bellum Iugurithnum* 6
[40] Pliny *Naturalis Historia* VII.51

In their reference to adultery of Roman high society ladies with Africans, Martial [41] and Juvenal [42] also show this idea of Africans as sexual pleasure that they share. The men are humble people-servants (slaves), gladiators, stage performs and soon.

The African women are also subject of attraction to Latin writers. Like their male counterpart, the African women are believed guilty of sexual excesses.[43] They engage in all sort of vices to satisfy their sexual urge. Valerius Maximum[44] compares a noble loving Indian wife who is prepared to die with her husband and the "Punic" women of Sicca - that is the Numidians of that town. While an Indian widow counts herself lucky to be cremated along with her dead husband, the women of Sicca are averagely "prostitutes". Here Valerius Maximums is referring to the custom whereby Siccan women go to a temple of Venus (Astarte) in the town and have sex with any man that comes to them in exchange for a little amount of money. Valerius Maximum accuses them of "selling their body" simply for gain under the pretence of looking for dowries which they should pay their husbands for an "honourable wedding". Valerius Maximum sees this act as a disgraceful commerce. It seems as if Valerius Maximum does not know what the custom was about. The Sciccan women did not count this act as prostitution but a necessary condition which must be fulfilled before a wedding. The fact that this act took place in a temple shows that it is connected with a rite.

It is important to note that this custom also existed in Corinth [45] as well as Babylonia.[46] Herodotus notes that the custom takes place to satisfy the godless Aphrodite, though the women received a coin after the sexual intercourse, no amount of money will make the women take another man after she had performed her "duty" to the goodness. It is clear, however, that the custom that Valerius Maximum is referring to is connected with a fertility rite. If the sole purpose of this prostitution was to raise enough money for a dowry, not all the Siccan women would have needed to participate, since the wealthy ones could raise their dowry without prostituting. It is unimaginable trade the daughters of the wealthy aristocracy of this town would involve themselves in prostitution simply to raise a dowry. Moreover, the fact that these Siccan women settled down to a happy married life thereafter shows that the custom was meant to serve specific purpose- fertility. Valerius Maximum

[41] Martial *Epigrams* 10.95. 6.39
[42] Juvenal *Satires* 10.95. 6.39
[43] Pliny *Naturalis Historia* VII.14
[44] Valerius Maximum II 6. 14 – 15
[45] Diodorus Siculus VIII 6.20
[46] Herodotus *Histories* 1.199

has assured this attitude because of the difference in cultural background of the Siccan and the Romans, and the established Roman idea of Africans as sexy. Thus Valerius Maximum can suggest that, while the Roman believe in virginity, the Siccans have little use of it. The story of a tribe in Africa known as the Psylli who go to the extent of exposing their children to snakes as soon as they are born was also of great interest to the Roman. The exposure is done in order to discover if the mother has committed adultery; for the snakes harm only the children of adulterous mother. It is obvious that this tale helped to reinforce Classical belief in Africa sexual excesses, including proneness to adultery. Rather, this should be seen as a proof of African concern with chastity. This practice served as a check or to guard the behaviour of the women rather than a proof of their infidelity. After all, scarcely, is there any nation in which adultery is entirely unknown.

Some Latin writers seemed to believe that Africans are guilty of every vice connected with sex. Pliny reports a tribe, located beyond the Nasamones and adjacent to them called Machylae Androgyni, who perform the function of either sex alternately:

> *utriusqueaturae inter se vicibus coeuntes*
> *Pliny, claiming Aritotle as his authority also says,*
> *dextram mammam is virillem, laevam muliebrem esse.*[47]

There is the indication that these people are hermaphrodites. But it is difficult to image that a whole community can be hermaphrodites. And there is no reason why hermaphrodites should have any physical contact between each other since all of them possess male and female organs. Moreover, it would be difficult for them to bear children. I think this story is more of a myth than a historical fact.

On the whole, it appears that the Roman writers are so severely influenced by their own values that they fail to see anything good in other nations' culture. The declaration of Pliny that:

> *gentium in toto orbe praestantissma una*
> *omnium virtute haud dubie Romana extitit*[48]

shows clearly how biased the Romans are. In other words, the Romans are the standard by which all other nations should be measured. Any other custom that do not align with Roman values should be rejected. At the beginning of Livy's book he clearly shows how much he holds Roman values as the standard. He says of Rome:

[47] Pliny *Naturalis Historia* VII.15
[48] Pliny *Naturalis Historia* VII.130

utcumque erit, iuvabit tamen rerum
gestarum memoriae principis terrarum
populi pro virili parte et ipsuim
consuluisse[49]

An historian who has such a view cannot but be blamed. Obviously the reason for Romans holding the view that Africans are guilty of sexual excesses is due to lack of proper understating of African custom. Africans, obviously enjoyed sex; but so did other races, including the Romans. It is more myth than historical fact to believe that Africans are specially gifted sexually or are specially endowed.

[49] Livy Praefatio 3

FALOLAISM: RE(-)PHASING AFRICAN LITERARY HISTORY & THE RUPTURES OF THEORY

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Abstract

The search for an African theory of meaning has been a perplexing subject of scholarly inquiry for many decades. The problem has often been underscored by the futility of misconstruing Africa's colonial and postcolonial experience and that of her diaspora for objectionable starting point. The other extreme radical position is the denial of some natural correspondence of thought and knowledge of the universe by Africa and the West due to the commonly shared breath of life as humans and the refusal to acknowledge that any theory of African system of thought should consider the undeniable interlunation of both Western and African cultural values that has become inextricable aspects of organic truth in world history and sociology. This is a seeming philosophical gap in Africana knowledge that this paper posits to fill through an in-depth reading of Falola and Adesanya's encyclopedic volume of poetry, *Etches on Fresh Waters*. The paper distils from the work a critical principle of knowledge called *Falolaism, and* discovers the correspondence between African methods of inquiry and those of the classical Greek philosophers like Aristotle, Plato and Longinus, which is a process of arriving at the knowledge of an object or a phenomenon through observatory sense and hypothetical questions. If the Greek philosophers derived the classical theory of Art from the nature and principles observed in their works, Etches proves that African indigenous thinkers indeed used similar

methods in understanding their universe. The paper posits that Falola re-invents the African verbal discourse and recasts them out of the limitations imposed upon them by Western intellectualism, which does not see them as philosophical beyond subaltern status as myths, legends and oral histories! To Falola, they constitute aspects of African ethno-philosophy. Falola's work thematizes the problem of philosophical inquiry by both African and Western scholars. The work proves that the much sought African theory of knowledge is not to be located in the mega cosmopolitan bank of Western scholarship, but is resident in the despised *sophia* of Africa in the forgotten villages, the pre-colonial and pre-capitalist regions of Africa - indeed in Ifa literary corpus as one valid system of African knowledge and theory of being.

Introduction

Etches on Fresh Waters, a very recent volume of African poetry authored by a foremost African historian and a notable African art historiographer, Toyin Falola and Aderonke Adesanya respectively, is a queer work in the bibliography of postcolonial African literature for many reasons. These reasons are anchored on the seeming technologizing of poetry with stupendous embellishments of intra-textual, self-referential and integrated critical theory and the offering of a meta(-) phoric relation of densely coded cultural meanings underlying its otherwise pretentious simplicity. This uncommon character of the work is at once an affront to the tradition of Western hegemonic discourse which may find this attempt an ambitious 'tall order' for a genre of African work which Eurocentrics often diminish their types as having no canonized epistemology of meaning! Yet a notable Western anthropologist, Robert Plant Armstrong in his book, *The Powers of Presence: Consciousness, Myth and the Affecting Presence* (1981)[1] valorizes African arts: "African sculptures depict two significant powers, namely, 'powers of invocation and powers of virtuosity'" powers of virtuosity which are 'demonstrated in their aesthetic appeals to the consciousness of the whites, the psychological appeals of such works are irresistible'. *Etches on Fresh Waters* (henceforth *Etches*) amalgamates the philosophical and aesthetic 'powers' of the invocative and virtuoso to reconstruct a radical polysemy of ideologies, ranging from visual to virtual, from sense and feelings to hypnotism, from myth and mythography to meta-narration and from meta-morphic media to meta-poetic devices of cultural communication. The use of hyphen between 'meta' and 'phoric' is deliberately meant to capture the ironic twists of semantic versatility and of clever appropriation of both English and African Yoruba words and concepts to Falola's ironies

of meditative reasoning and imaginative flights - all of which I classify as elements in the corpus of indigenous African theorizing that I call *Falolaisms!*[2] And this concept is potentially initializing a future canon of reading theory in African studies the same way we have 'newton' as a principle in atomic science.[3] There is a valid historical precedent in Greek theory of arts and poetry whereby the principles of Aristotle *Poetics*[4], the philosophies of Plato's *Republic*[5] and the paradigms of Discourse amplification or theory of the *Sublime* by Longinus[vi] provide a legacy of systematic methods of generating the theory of art from the nature of art itself. Thus, Aristotle and Plato's theory of art and the various intellectual disagreements were the results of private meditative readings, observations and perceptual apprehensions of man, environment, nature and universal laws. The pristine and pre-colonial indigenous African knowledge as ensconced in our folklore, myth and divination systems are deeply philosophical, they are at once secular and cosmically esoteric. The logic of our arts and verbal discourse that were written out of intellectual relevance by the pens, the print and the publishing machines of the colonial West have today proved to be a comparable episteme to the Western alternative[7]. African scholar researchers who have studied the origins of Western knowledge and possess more than armchair research knowledge about African nuggets of wisdom would agree that Africa had and has one of the best understandings of the universe which the regime of Western education has misdirected and misconstrued as "animist metaphysics" and "voodoo". Were the Greek, Roman, Babylonian, Egyptian[8] and Jewish cosmos not developed on the transcendental, esoteric and metaphysical assumptions, propositions and proto-scientific speculations, perceptions and invariably, knowledge of the universe? Were arts and magic not part of Western esoteric and metaphysical philosophies? No one would probably deny the genius of Yoruba creative arts[9] and epistemic body of cosmic, sacred and secular knowledge which compares in greatness to ancient cultures of the world. And if the denial of African capability in rational knowledge was based on the premise that Africa has produced no comparable technology as a proof, one would ask anyone to rethink history and the evidences of pre-colonial African 'technology', architecture[10] and craft works - a great parade of talents that Western slavery and colonialism truncated by carting away the best of African human resources as slaves - people who served as creative artisans and skilful men and women who built the modern civilization of the West. Although, those who argue against this paradigm often ask the question why Africa has not picked up their so-called historical talent and geniuses to rebuild and develop their own technologies in these post-slavery and

post-colonial times, the answer is that Africa is not yet truly free from slavery and colonialism. And these two evils are yet to be atoned for. Until then, the souls of African self-initiative will continue to wander restlessly like a vagrant in the forest of world political, economic, cultural, intellectual and technological freedom. And predictably, the body of world politics of power which is head of gold[11] shall regress into brass, and from brass to silver from silver to iron and the iron and clay shall not mix then shall Africa regain her stolen treasures and shall emancipate as one of world's super powers predictably by the year 2050 AD. Toyin Falola (2004) sounds to have pitched his intellectual tent with Anta Diop who had a "prodigious publishing career" having studied and gotten "Equipped with a knowledge of history, archaeology, Egyptology, and linguistics" (45). This depth of profound understanding about the directions and migrations of knowledge in world history led Anta Diop to the revealed truth that "... Africans had contributed to the civilization of Egypt, to the link between Egypt and Greece, and to religions such as Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.(45). Falola further reports Diop as claiming that "If African and European civilizations were different, the explanation owes to race and gender, since these categories had been used to create political ideologies" (op.cit).

Western Theories and African Literature

Western knowledge originated from independent constructions and mappings of principles of nature and textual laws as derived from the texts themselves, never as superimposed by superior literary and cultural hegemonies. On the contrary, African studies have depended on the reading theories generated by Western scholars from the textual transaction of western linguistic and cultural texts. The reading and interpretation of African texts, from oral to written, are not allowed to pass as a naturally occurring system to be done without paying homage to the knowledge system of Western critical and textual strategies. If the Greco-Roman scholars had yielded their intellectual consciousness to the reading system of 'colonial' or external textual standards, they would have been eclipsed from the reality of their unique and powerful meaning, being-dom and philosophy. There lies the crust of reasons why African literature has not been able to generate its own theories despite the intimidating bibliography of her intellectual geniuses in the humanities. Textual theories are like medications which in one instance may be suitable as a cure for Mr X but may be contraindicated as a cure for the same disease in Mr. Z because of unaccustomed medical history and different body chemistry. It is the bio-chemistry and history of each body that dictates the type of medication that is suitable for it. Similarly,

African and Western texts are diametrically different bodies that require different textual (medications) approaches. Although, it may appear whimsical to lay claim to impossibility of accidental and occasional nexus of inter-textual convergence of forms and thoughts between the West and Africa, such instances are evidences of generic human universals and psycho-orphism which are significantly minimal. Mechanical contrivance of universals is contrary to the idea of globalization, as derived from consolidated elements of cultural divergence within a universal matrix of ethics, philosophies and ideologies.

Before exploring the epistemic structures and values of *falolaism*, it is essential to periodize[12] the stages of transformation in the literary transaction of African literature. The study of African literature, arts and culture has undergone significant stages of intellectual and philosophical problem, ranging from the search for honest answers to the question whether there is an African literature, and if it exists, what is its phenomenological proof of material existence beyond abstract emotional claims of its realization in oral folkore! How may we characterize its features and forms in literary brands that are acceptable to existing universal canons of literature? In other words, what is the material evidence of Africaness[13] in terms of aesthetics, language, structure, form, literary, political and cultural ideologies beyond the adaptation and appropriation of its Western alter-ego! These challenges were the sincere questions that problematized African literature a couple decades after the independence of African states from colonial administration. The perplexing question of criteria for Africaness was a big huddle on the way of its authenticity. At the period, scholars were wont to worry if there was such a thing as African literature. Following objective criteria for mapping and identifying literature in the West, even some Africana scholars succumbed to the insulting proposition that what existed was a form of literature in Africa, and not necessarily an African literature. Thus, based on Western criteria, while it was acceptable that there is such a field or genre as English Literature, American Literature, French Literature, Greek and Roman Literatures, such recognition was not extended to the so called literary practice of Africa until Wole Soyinka's 1986 Nobel Prize. There was however a tacit concession of the existence of a relative variety of literature in Africa, which was considered too obtuse to name as 'African literature', since literature is 'what gets taught' and has an integral system of critical interpretation, which derives from the study of society's values as well as the paradigms of immanent structures, style and intratextual, intertextual and post-textual logic of relations and codifications of meaning.

As far as this generative critical strategies are concerned and are

symbiotic to the recognition of literature by Western establishments, African folklore and writings were not qualify to answer for literature in the technically efficient fact of the term[14]. Although, this perceived absence of valid epistemology from African literature was somewhat a mistaken politics of textual and intellectual repression and inferiorization of African values, no particular groundwork till date exists on the categories of thought in African worldview, and where there are few attempts[15] none can be really taken serious to have broken the ice of silence over the frontal challenge of the African 'David' by the philistine 'Goliaths' of Western literary theory! Obviously, there have been abrasively radical theories generated from the textual machines of Western epistemology. These range from the Greco-Roman classical paradigms of humanism to Marxist ideologies[16], sociological theories, Freudian[17] and Jungian psycho-analysis and archetypal theory, Russian formalism, semiotics, structuralism, deconstruction, postmodernism[18] and even to the much parroted postcolonialism, which is a re-invention of feminist ideologies! While these critical theories are inconsistent and unstable, yet the world receives them as valid products of textual efficiency and evidence of empirical body of knowledge and philosophy of advanced world cultures and civilizations. Even the best of African intellectuals irresistibly appropriated them to the reading of African myths and folklore, arts, literature and society. Structuralists like Anthony Appiah[19] and Sunday Anozie[20] created intellectual excitements by applying the models to our indigenous poetics of literature and arts. Ropo Sekoni[21] was the formalist-semiotician perhaps more erudite in Russian Formalism and Prague Circle Semiotics than Ferdinand de Saussure, Charles Sanders Peirce and the Italian writer and medievalist semiotician, Umberto Eco. Biodun Jeyifo[22] was very Hegelian and eloquent in the theories and applications of Engels and Karl Marx to the teaching and politics of African literature. Abiola Irele[xxiii] was versatile in ancient and modern western philosophy than Socrates and Rene Descartes while Wole Soyinka, Africa's first Nobel Laureate whom Dapo Adelugba (1988) calls as "WS our WS"[24] was more sublime than Longinius, more Greek than Sophocles and spoke shrill nosed English than the Queen of England. Other scholars like Niyi Osundare (2003)[25] wondered why African scholarship should succumb to these empty Western technologizing of African discourse. Yet, comparative values and systems of knowledge lay buried in existing corpus of African literature which cannot be deciphered unless the reader first purges himself of the 'albatross' of reading and distilling African nature of knowledge and systematic theory via the blindfolding reading glasses and furnace of Western critical terms and theories. Unless the reader is certified to suspend the compulsory homage of scholarly

references and 'footnotes' paid to existing Western literary history and critical theory, there may be no possibility of an African theory of literature in the African sense and knowledge. I concur that only then may we get the critical sensibility of our best and most knowledgeable Africana scholars to derive a corpus of African-specific reading theories. The plethora of reading theories and strategies from the West constitutes a deluding mélange of colonial reading glasses and lenses through which no scholar critic can get to the roots of the logic and epistemic knowledge that is ensconced in African creative discourses. Thus when the transfer of critical technology from the West failed to yield African specific logic and philosophies of meaning, the effect was to doubt the existence of an African paradigm of knowledge and literature.

Historicist Polemics of African Literary Relativism

In the seventies, there was broad argument between two schools of thought on this subject - the Relativists led by MJC Echeruo's "The Dramatic Limits of Igbo Ritual"(1971) and Ola Rotimi's "The Drama in African Ritual Display" (1981), Ossie Enekwe's "Myth, Ritual and Drama in Igboland"(1981) and J.P. Clark's "Aspects of Nigerian Drama" (1981)[26]. The arguments of Echeruo and Ola Rotimi were anchored on the claim that if we assess African folklore and oral performances on the objective criteria of Western standards and aesthetics, the values of literature attached to them would whittle down considerably. The second school was the Traditionalists like J.P. Clark, Nkem Nwankwo, Oyin Ogunba[27] and Femi Osofisan who saw emergent forms and aesthetics of literature in the folklore and other traditional and ritual performances in Africa. While Ogunba was a formidable voice in the propagation of the idea of immanent literariness in African folklore, he struck an ironic water level of conceptual invention by labeling African form of discourse art as "Orature", rather than literature. By orature, Ogunba meant that the literature of Africa was a product of dialectical dialogue and fusion of oral and written manifestations of African creative values (Fashina, 2005)[28]. Ogunba's conceptualization of orature as the art form of African verbalization captures the ideas of William Bascom[xxix] Ruth Finnegan, and Richard Bauman in their view that African culture and tradition was essentially orate. This claim again led scholars like Niyi Osundare[30] and others to engage the discourse of Africa in the analysis of its stages and stylistic 'repercussions' of modal transition from oral into written. As this argument prevailed, there arose a kind of new consciousness and re-awakening to field collection and research into African oral folklore

of which Isidore Okpewho[31], Oyin Ogunba, G.G. Darah, and Karin Barber[32] were prominent research figures. These intellectual inquiries began in the sixties and reached its zenith in the eighties when paradoxically, Africana scholars, researchers and students in Africa and abroad began a spurious spree of reading appropriation of Western critical theories to the interpretation of African literature in a way that appeared a re-colonization of the intellectual values of Africa.

Scholarly reactions against this seeming ambiguous miscegenation of textual cultures led to the clamor for a suitable language and ideological form for African literature. Others like Ngugi wa Thiongo[33], Chinua Achebe and Chinweizu et al[34] advocated the writing of African literature in African indigenous languages while Ulli Bier and Bernth Lindfors[35] advocated the indigenization of critical practice and theory in African literature as a way to initiate the linguistic, cultural and textual decolonization of African literature. But the bane of the experiment of linguistic nationalism of African literature was the restriction of its reading audience. African language literatures exclude both Africans and non Africans who do not speak that language thus minimizing the population and global spread of its consumers. Paradoxically, the lack of linguistic nationalism has also frustrated the effort at indigenization of critical theory. Thus, some schools of opinion believe that African writers needed not only to reach out to the rest of the world, they also needed to make their works accessible in a language that is understood by other Africans since there is yet no African continental *lingua franca*. Other schools of opinion argue that the flirtation of African literature with the reading theories of the West was a cultural contamination which has led to unwelcome hybridization of literature and the submergence of Africa's literary culture. It was argued that language defines a space and location in the world. Therefore, African literature could not afford to give up its literary identity to the cultural and ethical redefinition by alien praxis. It was the period of search for the meaning and critical theory of African literature. Ultimately, the quest for African local content in African literature produced a literary culture of linguistic hybridism whereby writers domesticated the colonial language by forcing it to convey the idioms of speech, logic and African discursive poetics. This practice was also fraught with huddles of stylistic disorder whereby the sounds of meaning and the meaning of aesthetic rhythms were lost to linguistic transliteration and conceptual translation of African creative values into European languages. The result was tantamount to the absurdity of hearing the 'voice of Jacob' but feeling the 'hand of Esau'! The failure of this experiment led to the formulation of various theories of translation which was a problem left for linguists and semioticians to tackle through a combination of eclectic

approaches such as linguistic and extra-linguistic methods. It generated a field of study on what happens when a target language from a different culture is made to convey thoughts and ideas in a different source language. Results of the recommended systems of near equivalent translations led some African writers to adopt either of three methods of representing their ideas in European languages. While some like Soyinka, Okigbo, early J.P. Clark[36] and others experimented with conceptual translation, it resulted in what Chinweizu et al. (1980, 1983) criticized as "linguistic obscurantism" and "euro-centric" ideology. Also, others like Okot P'Bitek[37] who used a method of wholesale transfer of the African cultural thought and folklore aesthetic formula was derided as writing folklore and not literature! This method of hybridization again led to what Lewis Nkosi (1981:34) criticized as "undigested use" of European language in the name of commitment to Africaness! In order to tackle this problem, many African writers resorted to writing in African languages, thus leading to upsurge of African language literatures which could not reach scholars, readers and potential readers who are beyond the frontiers of the language community in which the texts are written.

Etches on Fresh Waters: Phoricity/Rituals of Self-integrative Theory/Episteme

Etches on Fresh Waters has come to life at this crucial period of African literary history when Africana scholars are challenged to a dwell of relevance of the field and also embarrassed to justify and locate its place and space in the rapidly globalizing literary-humanist map of the world of letters! Falola and Adesanya's literary forge in *Etches*[38] is constructed upon a most promiscuous philosophical miscegenation of ironic fusions and infusions of fecund imaginative play on words that mesmerize the 'unprofessional' and impatient reader into misleading ironies of meaning. Here lies a brand of an African integrative textual theory of meanings and of humanism. And the future of this paper promises to expound this poetically reconstructed order of an African epistemology of man, nature, society and language as erected in *Etches*. The first 'formal' poem in the volume, although preceded by the dedication and invocation poems, 'Mothers Wisdom' addresses the foundation of inquiry into African knowledge and philosophy by using the African pristine method of rhetoric - asking questions by interrogating a testable proposition. Even though the poetic method here appears to have some similarity to modern research style of hypothetizing, it is essentially indigenous in Africa as a style of telling and folkloric discourse. From the outset, the poets make no pretence of promise to narrate their poetic

experience via the secularization of thought. Rather, there is an overt manifestation of ritual poetics and radical philosophical ideology anchored on the pristine knowledge of Ifa oracular wisdom as a source of their Yoruba epistemology. If the term 'philosophy' is etymologically derived from a conflation of two Greek words - *philos*, meaning 'love' and *sophia*, meaning 'wisdom', then what the ancients meant by philosophy was the love of wisdom. Both Socrates and Descartes, the founder of ancient and modern Western philosophy, respectively, were devoted to and "intoxicated by . . . the love of wisdom" wherein Kwame Nkrumah argued that "philosophy . . . is what happens when we respond" to the Socratic ideas of human social behavior (Kwame Nkrumah, 1970:13). Nkrumah's proposition is complemented by Ali Mazrui (1980: 71) who defines philosophy as the ". . . the contemplation or study of the most important questions in existence with the end of promoting illumination and understanding, a vision of the whole." Given the validity of these claims about the nature of philosophy, it becomes obvious that 'Mothers' Wisdom' is a poetic inquiry into the problem of, and the nature of the search for 'truth' and wisdom, an analytical argumentation and logical deductive reasoning, in this case, a poetic metanarrative and a metamorphization of epistemology. In this poem there is the thematization of the problem of philosophical inquiry by both African and Western scholars, thus engaging a subsidiary discourse of radical globalization, rather than the usual polemics of resistance to Hegel, Hume, Levy-Bruhl[39] and other ironic Western hegemonic ideals which posit that "Africans belong to the category of primitive mentality ... incapable of logical reasoning" (Hountondji, 1976: 13). It compels immediate interest to delve into the poetic process by which Falola and Adesanya prove that African theory of knowledge is not to be located in the mega cosmopolitan bank of western praxis, rather it resides back in the despised 'Wisdom' of Africa in the forgotten villages, in the precolonial and precapitalist regions of the flowing rivers, natural vegetation, ancestral groves, divinatory rituals, festivals and virtuoso works of arts, crafts, bronze casting and iron smelting, pot making and cloth weaving, where days are counted by the movement of the sun and months by the phases of the moon, and year by the seasons of harvest, where for every ailment a leaf avails in the forest!

'Mothers' Wisdom' refracts from the epistemology of *Eji Ogbe*, the very first of the sixteen major *Odus* of Ifa oracular divination corpus. It is otherwise called as *Ogbe Eyonu* or *Ogbe Isoriire*[40]. This reveals that the project in *Etches* is beyond the frontiers of secular attempt to communicate a political or social ideology through the use of *Oriki* (panegyrics) and *Itan adayeba* (mythic folk stories) and *Alo* (folk tales).

Rather the work itself is an externalization of the poet's introjected cues of *Asa ati Orisa ibile* (culture and indigenous tradition of the race) as revealed in 'Mothers' Wisdom', the dedication and the invocation poems, 'Native Wisdom', and so on. The work explores the mystic science of the Yoruba cosmic space as an inquiry into metaphysics, a branch of philosophical studies. It is in Eji Ogbe that Ifa mystical narrative of origins presents an episteme on the dialectic of ritual hegemony of the jungle - "village" in supremacy of fortune over the "city" as the ironic ultimate loser in the relations of gains and losses! In this oracular paradigm, the jungle or village is ahistorically configured as superior to the city as a westernized cosmopolis. According to the Ifa mythico-historical narrative and etiology of the origination of relations between *Oko* (rural settlement or village) and *Igboro* (cosmopolis or city), *Oko* and *Igboro* were in prehistoric times human personages before their mystical and mythical transcendence to the realm of immortality and ancestral plane. Both were asked by Orunmila (Ifa, eleri ipin: the Godsent deity of divination wisdom and witness to human destiny) to make a sacrifice so that sudden gain and loss would not be the bane of their endeavor and well being in the journey through life. Naturally, Igboro (City) chose a good Ori (inner head/destiny) for prosperity and fame! The Yoruba philosophy of *Ori* is very complex. It manifests as a trimorphous relation of cosmogonic knowledge of, and nature of 'being'. Ori manifests as Akunle-yan (that which is received while kneeling), *Ayanmo* (that which is affixed to one) and Adayeba (contingents of life encounters that affect one's *Akunleyan* and *Ayanmo*). But unknown to Igboro, there is a predisposition to an evitable economic struggle in his Ayanmo (affixed destiny - the second part of the tri-morphic destiny and life pattern) that may negate or foil the fulfillment of his natural Akunleyan and Ayanmo - two of the three epistemic narratives of the mega discourse of destiny in African (Yoruba) philosophy. Igboro (City) was ignorant of the possibility of future 'foil' to his excellent chosen destiny. Therefore, he despised the divinatory counsel given by Orunmila that he should offer sacrifice to prevent his good *Ori* from being tampered with by life forces (*Adayeba*).Thus, even though *Igboro* has been so popular and overtly more civilized and prosperous than Oko, Igboro's survival has nevertheless been dependent perennially on the produce supplied from Oko, including farm produce, natural and human resources as well as indigenous wisdom. The moral didactic philosophy and ideological 'school' of wisdom in this poem is inclusive in the Oyeku Meji verse which chants as follows:

Riru ebo nii gbe'ni
Ai ri ebo kii gbe'niyan
Bi a gbo riru ebo kaa ru

Bi a gbo atukanse kaa tuu
A difa fun Igbo igboleti
A ki fun Oke Okeniyi
Oke ko je
Oke ko mu
Oke ko simi
Oke ko baye
Won waa ni ko kara n'le o jare
Ebo ni kowaa se
Ogbo, O ni kilebo! Kilebo!
Won ni ko ru Ase
Otun ni kilebo! Kilebo!
Won tun I ko ru Agbon
O gbo riru ebo o ru
O gbo atukanse o tu
Ko pe ko jina
O n'segun iku l'otun
O n'gbon werepe arun danu losi
O yato si ti Adeja
Ko gbo'fa
Ko ko'yere
O dosu n'badi
O n'se kondu kondu si Babalawo
Ee wa wo ina eresu ti n'jo won!
E mama waa wo'na eresu ti n'jo won oo!
Orunmila ooo! *(Awo Apata, op.cit)*

This Odu Ifa narrative is an episteme of reward through obedience to forewarned instruction, and of punishment for disobedience to theogonic directive in the life of the prototypical characters in this ritual and mythographic discourse. This oracular pedestal appears to form the template and framework for the poetic narrative of one strand of meta-communication of myth and history of knowledge in 'Mothers' Wisdom'. The *Eji Ogbe* verse from which aspects of the poem, 'Mothers' Wisdom' may have taken its source tends to mythologically configure the "village" in its mundane semantic plasticity as superior to the "city" - which is metonymic of the procapitalist space of Western industrial *'Gesselschaft'* (opposite of *Gemenscheft)'*[41] society where there's high population, anonymity, individuality, economic rationality, postmodern myth and high consumer culture. This discourse of allusion to Ifa material reconstruction of the origination of the Village and City narrative is not overt on the surface of 'Mothers' Wisdom' as an obvious narrative, but exists as the repressed unconscious and the deep structure of the cultural narrative and philosophical argumentation in *Etches*. But, the same overt structure is immanent in this poem, as the construction of at once

historical, ahistorical and mytho-poiec material reality. This is a bunch of paradoxes whereby the despised crude natural environment of the "jungle" is ironically erected as superior to the cosmetic civility, postmodernity and automated technologies of the cosmopolis. In this poem, the persona is in search of valid 'Truth' and epistemic philosophy of 'being' and invariably of 'wisdom'. Therefore while he goes to the "City" he is ironically surprised to discover that even the elders of the city are bereft of the type of knowledge he came to seek from them; they do not know better! No wonder, *Eji Ogbe* verse asserts:

Ka r'oko r'oko to e de kaba kamba! Though they urbanize a universe of farmlands

Eru k'omo ni kururuu	And child learns knowledge from experience of panic seizure!
Ifa, Oko ni yoo k'ere won	Ifa says the village/rural farmlands will gain their prosperity
Ka lana lana to e de'ebo pelu	Though roads be constructed over the sea to the white land
Eru k'omo ni kururuu	And child learns knowledge from experience of panic seizure!
Ifa Oko ni yoo k'ere won	Ifa says the village/rural farmlands gains their prosperity
Bi won kole t'esin gbe n j'eko	Though they build a stable to house their horses
Bi won si lana lana taara w'oja	And they construct a road enroute their capital markets
Eru k'omo ni kururuu	And child learns knowledge from experience panic seizure!
Ifa Oko ni yoo kere Igboro iwon![42]	Ifa says the village/rural farmlands will gain the prosperity of the cities! (translation mine)

This mytho-morphic divinatory chant asserts a proposition that though the agencies of wealthy living and miracles of modern development may be found in the city, the village stands to gain the losses of the city at all

times. This is a philosophical proposition on the dynamics of social and economic forces that define the relations of the Village as an advantageous space that produces what the city buys like food and cash crops, timber, games reserve and other natural resources needed to maintain the city or feed its industries. This narrative is a radical sociology of comparative development that posits to subvert the hegemony of the cosmopolis over the 'vassalage', of modernity over tradition, of the precolonial over the colonial and postcolonial, of the colony over the colonized, of the West over Africa. It falls within the structure of myth narration and historical demystification of the superiority of Western education and research knowledge to that of African paradigms in 'Mothers' Wisdom'. It is certainly the case that African scholars of the colonial and immediate post independent era were constrained to idolize the philosophical depth, wisdom, knowledge and understanding they got from Western Universities and colleges overseas. And, most obviously to date, many researchers and students of African anthropology, ethnography, music, folklore literature, history and philosophy hardly have alternative than to study for their degrees in American and European Universities where ironically, the epistemic foundation for the kind of 'truth' they are researching resides with the active bearers of African indigenous traditions and philosophy in the remote villages of Africa. This is the exact dilemma of the poet-philosopher who is in quest for "wisdom" in this poem, as his adventure leads him from ignorance to knowledge!

Both Falola's poem and its *Eji Ogbe* alternative source tradition construct a complex social ideology that underlines the indigenous theory of society by pristine and prehistoric Yoruba indigenous thinkers and philosophers ('lovers of wisdom'). Ifa ahistorical narrative reconstructs this episteme via the social inscriptions of an indexical figure - Oko and Igboro, which is the "village" and "city" in this poem. Ifa affirms that the personage, Oko(otherwise known in *Eji Ogbe* ritual verse as 'Adeja') was compliant to the prescribed rituals of pre-existence sacrifice, and therefore he got distillated through transcendence from human to deity to become the *'Orisa Oko' (* the deity of farmland or agriculture). This is an episteme which represents a linear process of spiritual distillation of the personage by the circumstantial encounters of material existentialism. The human personage on this plane of existence is born to run, to straddle the 'self' against the odds of existence, and to triumph through discipline, restraint and obedience to the prime energy of transcendence through ontological rituals and procedures whose epistemological significance is an elaborate metonym of self-denial - 'sacrifice' that leads to elevation of status. The same structure of narrative paradigm is found in the

ethics of Christian mythography and philosophy whereby the denial of the self-satiative ego of the material flesh is rewarded in elevation of the spirit and emancipation of the soul in the post-existential world beyond this material plane. Thus, Oko, the personage of the farmland or village attained the realm of dissolution of the material self and transformed his being from ordinary human to deity via conformity to the prescribed ritual procedures of spiritual transcendence from denial to gain, humility to elevation, ignorance to knowledge, innocence and naivety to maturity. This is a paradigm of linear process whose material graph presents an overlap of dialectical movements back and forth in the ontological span of Yoruba cosmogony.

Both this verse of *Eji Ogbe* oracular orature and Falola/Adesanya's 'Mothers' Wisdom' are paradigms of binary inscriptions of historical and philosophical truth, a material evidence of the surprises and magical discoveries of the ironic powers of the weak over the strong, as a paradox of existence. The cosmopolis is associated with ignorance where the village or vassal is erected as the wisdom bank of contemporary world. Thus, the poem is not just a window unto the indigenous systems of inquiry about the nature of knowledge; it is also an inscription of comparative theory of two natural narratives of material history and of the philosophy of knowledge, being and sociology. Each is a natural text, and the poem is a comparative theory of these disparate texts.

A third fragment of the epistemic foregrounding of this ploysemic text and literature of African 'Motherhood', as it embraces a totality of African knowledge, is its diametric opposition to the Western rational episteme of 'motherhood', 'fatherhood' and gendered 'womanhood' - a culture of renegade 'fatherhood' and destitute mothers, of lesbianism, homosexuality, and the over-privileging of female sexuality, rape, addiction, and culture of drug dependency. The philosophy of African 'motherhood' is different from the western paradigms of 'single mothers', working mothers and hockey moms. Rather, 'motherhood' in Africa radiates a polysemy of social-cultural, mythic and transcendental semiotic meanings beyond the confines of its lexico-semantic meanings in western social order. Whereas, in Western episteme the woman is the idol of the man and may not be read from the angle of a woman proud to be a wife, but a legal presence whose consciousness about legal rights invariably makes her to be over-privileged by "rights" rather than the innocence and pride of wifehood. And this angle of relation makes inter-moral communication to break down at the slightest challenge such that the social cultural meaning of husband in the West is different from the complex holistic episteme of that paradigm in African social-cultural semiotics. In precapitalist Africa, the woman's sense of superiority and

ego-complex satiation derives from the perceived cultural honor of being called a 'wife' and being 'owned' by her 'husband' wherein she is in return configured and semiotically read a treasured object, jewel of value! This is the prequalifying stage for attaining the transcending realm of 'motherhood', where motherhood is not lexico-semantically defined by child-bearing or procreation. The kind of 'Motherhood' in *Etches* is an ideal realm of perceived or material evidence of transcendence and maturity - a possession of some cosmic and material indices of philosophical and spiritual knowledge or wisdom. This angle of meta-poetic communication of the female energy embraces the metamorphoses from girlhood and ladyhood to womanhood and wifehood and from this level to 'motherhood' - the highest level of transcendence by a female figure wherein she attains the personality of 'Iya' or Yeye with all the mystical trappings of ritual, spiritual energy of 'witchcraft' sacredness and ironic psychological loss of her sexhood and genitalhood. And at that stage the borders of gender dissolves, as she becomes a code, an object of bi-sexual and bi-gender archetype. The discourse of 'Motherhood' is one mega strand of cultural communication strategy that reveals the authors' agenda of cultural theory in *Etches*. This narrative episteme flickers out of the integrative theory of African system of knowledge, which differs considerably from its Western alter ego!

If this derived system of cultural reading of the Woman is constructed from Falola's work, then the work provides an alternative meta-critical answer to the questions and denial of precolonial Africans' ability for rational thinking. Elsewhere, I have posited arguments to debunk the claims by the French Sociologist Jean Copans (1999) that there's no discipline as African Studies that defines an African knowledge because both the field and the methods of inquiry were an invention of western social sciences devoted to the study of preliterate cultures and societies. *Etches* presents a paradigm of theory that would interrogate and subvert this common eurocentric obsession that denies that research knowledge and procedures are alien to Africa. Thus the question asked by the self-effacing poet-narrator who is codified in the first person nominative singular pronoun, "I" (which I have theorized as the 'I' sociology of individuality) in the poem 'Mothers' Wisdom' is very revealing:

A dazzling puzzle to resolve -
Who traveled to the jungle to become a monkey?
Why ask a question
If answers are forbidden?
.....
.....
.....

Who killed the monkey and hid it in the forest?
Who hid the monkey's tail in its mouth? (59).

In these lines, the poets are quite rightly re-inventing the oral aesthetic formula of African folktales through the use of rhetorical questions and interrogatives which in this poem are marked by the WH-relative pronouns ("Who", "Why") and conditional clauses headed by the adverbial (If). The sustained repetition of the interrogatives is ordinarily an aesthetic technique of discourse reification and intensification of mood, an oral narrative technique that is usually invented to catapult the audience of the oral narrative performance to achieve what Ropo Sekoni (1994:12) calls as "paraverbal devices" and "verbal skills" as socio-semiotic instruments for achieving " ... emotive and epistemic satisfaction". While Ropo Sekoni's extensive theorizing of the folk tale poetic devices of communication in Yoruba explores the semiotic repercussions of communication aesthetics via a meta-language, his conceptual models have provided a strong foundation for understanding the structures of aesthetic archetypes in the various genres of Yoruba folkloric tradition. However, his pattern stems from the Levi- Straussan[43] type of meta-myth poetics and the structuralist poetics of Jonathan Culler[44], Robert Scholes, and those of Russian formalism and their African variants in Anthony Appiah and Sunday Anozie.

The main concern in this theoretical reading and reconstruction is to unravel the ideological philosophy of *Etches* as an African category of literature with a self- integrative theory that is the hallmark of African poetics and knowledge of the cosmos and the nature of existence itself as a valid rational philosophy of knowledge. Thus, the aesthetic devices in 'Mothers' Wisdom' as highlighted above is beyond the ordinary function of virtuoso appeal to aesthetic sensibility of the audience. Although, quite rightly, there is a visible potential of the story-teller for genius of artistic fulfillment in self and audience satisfaction, my point is that these logic of discourse is itself an integrative theory of African narrative ideology. Rather than teaching Western paradigms, we should scoop out the forms of African rhetorical methods and systems of oratory, narratology, elocution and textual technology from our own discourses and teach them as our own aesthetic philosophy. For example if epistemology is about the engagement of assumptions and interrogations of proof to ascertain their validity, if philosophy is about the logic of knowledge, then there are resident in 'Mothers Wisdom' a system of logic, and the logic of discourse, which is an evidence of rational thinking by precolonial Yoruba artists and storytellers. For, according to John Shand in *Philosophy and Philosophers* (1993: x)

> *Epistemology is concerned with what knowledge is, what conditions have to be satisfied for knowledge, what counts as good evidence and justification, and what in that case are the kinds of things we can know (p.x).*

Here in Falola's poem is "good evidence and justification" for Africana scholars to build an epistemology of African narrative theory based on logic, reason, questions, arguments and derived truths by valid assumptions that flicker our of a second reading of 'Mothers' Wisdom' and is also manifest in the logic of many poems in the entire *Etches.*

Notes and References

[2] This concept of Falolaism becomes a reading theoretical model which will receive elaborate critical discussion in Nelson Fashina's oncoming book, Creativity and the Poetics of Radical Epistemology in Toyin Falola

[3]Isaac Newton was at the center of modern science. See Joy Hakim, The Story of Science. Newton at the Center. Washington: Smithsonian Books, 2005. See Isaac Newton's formula for the force (F) of gravitation:

$$F = \frac{G\, m1 m2}{R2}$$

m = mass
r = distance between the masses
G = the universal gravitational constant

[4] See Aristotle Poetics trans. George Whalley, ed. John Baxter and Patrick Atherton, London: Buffalo, McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal & Kingston. This author draws some stylo-semantic and philosophical correspondence between Aristotle's theory of "mimesis" and Coleridge's model of poetic "imagination" , implying that both belong to the same "sort of creative initiative" (p.xv).

[5] Daryl H. Rice provides illumination into the main propositions in Plato's controversial philosophy in his ideal Republic. See Daryl H. Rice, A Guide to Plato's Republic. New York: Oxford, Oxford University, 1998.

[7] Various scholarly attempts have been made to disprove or suggest the relativity of the arguments about this Western intellectual assault on Africans' ability for rational and logical thinking. These include Peter Bodunrin, Philosophy in Africa, Ile Ife, University of Ife Press, 1985; Kwasi Wiredu, Philosophy and African Culture Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980; Abiola Irele, "Introduction" in Paulin Hountonji, African Philosophy: Myth and Reality, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976; Abiola Irele, The African Imagination: Literature in African and the Black

Diaspora, New York, Oxford UP, 2001.; Segun Ogungbemi, *Philosophy and Development*, Ibadan, Hope Publications, 2007, Sophie Oluwole, Philosophy and Oral Tradition, Lagos: ARK, 1997, etc.

[8] History, archaeology, oral traditions and myths have pointed in relatively unitary direction of thought that world ancient origins of knowledge from Greek, Roman, Babylonian, Egyptian Jewish and African (see Cheik Anta Diop, op.cit) had sources of intermingling and reciprocal influence. For further references see *New Surveys in the Classics* ed. John Taylor, Cambridge University Press; Christopher Gill, *Greek Thought*. Cambridge UP, 1995; John Marincola, *Greek Historians* Cambridge UP, 2001; T.E. Rihll, *Greek Science*, Cambridge UP, 1999; Jan N. Bremmer, *Greek Religion*, Cambridge UP, 2004. For Roman contributions to knowledge, see Catherine Steel, *Roman Oratory*, Cambridge, 2006; J.A. North, *Roman Religion*, Cambridge, 2004; C. S. Kraus and A.J. Woodman, *Latin Historians*, Cambridge, 1997; Richard Rutherford, Homer Cambridge, 1996. For Egyptology see John L Foster, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, Austin, University of Texas Press, 2001; Michael Rice, *Egypt's Legacy: The Archetypes of Western Civilization 3000 - 30 B.C.* London, Routledge, 1997; David Warburton (trans.) *Life and Death in Ancient Egypt* Sigrid Hodel-Hoenes (author), Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2000. Also for Babylonian influence on world knowledge, see Samuel Kurinsky, *The Babylonian Origin of Greek Science* HHF - Fact Papers, new York, 1991 - 2003.

[9] Yoruba mythology, religion, arts, literature and culture is apparently one of the most theorized and canonized in modern African scholarship. Works on Yoruba contribution to knowledge - art, architecture, language, literature, mythology and religion, history, archaeology and social anthropology occupy an intimidating list of bibliography. A few include Omosade Awolalu, *Yoruba Beliefs and Sacrificial Rites*. White Planes, New York, Longman, 1979; Boloaji E. *Idowu, Olodumare: God in Yoruba Belief*. London, Longman,1962 reprinted , New York,A&B Books, 1994. Wande Abimbola has prolifically pioneered the teaching of Yoruba philosophy through Ifa oracular/literary and divination corpus. His books include *Ifa Will Mend Our Broken World*, Aim Books, Boston, 1997; Ifa Divination Poetry, NOK Publishers, New York, 1977; *Ifa: An Exposition of Ifa Literary Corpus*, Oxford University Press, Ibadan, 1977; *Awon Oju Odu Mereerindinlogun*, University Press Limited, Ibadan, 1977, *Sixteen Great Poems of Ifa*, UNESCO, Niamey, 1975; *Yoruba Oral Tradition* (ed.), University Press Limited, Ibadan, 1975; Yoruba Idioms (ed.), Pilgrim Books, Lagos, 1969; *Ijinle Ohun Enu Ifa Apa Keji*, Collins, Glasgow, 1969, reprinted, University Press Limited, Ibadan,1976; *Ijinle Ohun Enu Ifa Apa Kini*, Collins, Glasgow, 1968.Apart from books, he has published more than a dozen of scholarly articles on various aspects of Yoruba contribution to knowledge through Ifa studies in journals. TOYIN FALOLA's been a frontline prolific voice in the promotion and scholarly theorizing of Yoruba culture and identity through his numerous big books either authored, co-authored or co-edited. These include

[10] See *The International Review of African American Art*- A journal pf the African Heritage Architecture, Owing Mills, MD 21117. See also the traditional roundhouse designs made with earth material of Geriyama tribe, Kenya, East coast of the 20th century Africa; see designs from Ghana, Cote De'Voire and Senegal as well as the Egyptian art, architecture and Archaeology.

[11] This is the author's meditative reflection on figurative codes ensconced in the Biblical Daniel's vision and prediction of the progressive or successive fall and decline of the world's six great Empires till the end of times and the second advent of Christ.

[12] Unlike English literature for example where literary history is periodized by the political and social hegemony at work in the social space when a particular tradition of literature was popular, African literary history has been dominated and overwhelmed by the history of slavery, colonialism, apartheid, politics of independence, civil wars and post-independence disillusionment. Everything about our modern literary history is tied to the history of our contact with and conquest by the West. Until we begin the tradition of writing and mapping out the historiography of our literature and arts by delineating it through the epochs of African hegemonic landmarks and spots in hisotry, there may be no correct and objective meeting grounds between our literary history and our political, economic, cultural as well as intellectual history that will can use as tripod stand for developing a respectable and true poetics and theory of literature and the arts.

[13] Up till the mid-eighties, the concept of Africaness was a critical category in the search for the definition of African literature. Africaness was defined by African authorship, African setting and socio-cultural and political problems as the logic of plot and thematic concerns in African works. But, the West seemed to define Africaness as the gothic and exotic character of literature as if the West never had such types and forms of literature.

[14] See seminal papers by J.P Clark, Ola Rotimi, MJC Echeruo, Michael Horn, and others in Yemi Ogunbiyi ed. Drama and Theatre in Nigeria. The Guardian, Lagos, 1981.

[15] Some works that have initiated this discourse include Abiola Irele, The African Imagination, Oxford, New York, 2001; Toyin Falola, Nationalism and African Intellectuals University of Rochester Press, 2001, Peter Bodunrin, Philosophy in Africa Ile-Ife, University of Ife Press, 1985., among others.

[16] See Kevin Anderson, Lenin, Hegel and Western Marxism: A Critical Study University of Illinois Press, 1995; David Macgregor, Hegel and Marx after the Fall of Communism University of Wales Press, 1998; Joylon Agar, Rethinking Marxism : from Kant and Hegel to Marx and Engels. Routledge,

2006; Raya Dunayevskaya, The Power of Negativity: Selected Writings on the Dialectic in Hegel and Marx. Lanham, Maryland University, Lexington books, 2002.

[17] The psycho-analytical theories of Sigmund Freud and his student who later became his intellectual critic, Carl Gustav Jung influenced the body of modern knowledge across disciplines.

[18] Terry Eagleton's work provides a sound introductory insight into the tenets, weaknesses and politics of these modern theoried in relation to literature, history contemporary and future of literary theory. See Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory : An Introduction*. Oxford, Basil Blackwell.

[19] See Anthony Appiah, "Strictures on structures: Prospects for a Structuralism Poetics of African Fiction". *Black Literature and Literary Theory*. New York, Methuen, 1984; Appiah, "Structuralist Criticism and African Fiction: An Analytic Critique". Black American Literature Forum. 15, 4 (1981): 165 - 174.

[20] Bernth Lindfors' brief biographical review of Sunday O. Anozie (1942 - 2001) is hosted by the Michigan State University on the web. Lindfors confirms among other comments that " Sunday Anozie was "building on the theories of Senghor, Levi-Strauss, Barthes, and roman Jacobson ... sought to examine 'the relevance of of structuralism and semiology to literary criticism ... and to African poetics in particular". Sunday Anozie's espousal of Western theories which is although very intellectual is a distraction of the courage to derive an African theory of knowledge. For further readings, see Sunday Anozie's book, *Structural Models and African Poetics: Towards a Pragmatic Theory of Literature*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981.

[21] See Ropo Sekoni, *Folk Poetics : A Socio-semiotic Study of Yoruba Trickster* Tales Westport, CT, Green Press, 1994. His critical treatises and theories are formidably informing about how semiotic theories of cultural communication may be generated from African folklore.

[22] See Biodun Jeyifo, *The Truthful Lie : Essays in a Radical Sociology of African Drama*, London, New Beacon Books, 1985.

[24] After Wole Soyinka became the first African to win the Nobel prize in Literature in 1986, Dapo Adelugba edited a volume of critical essays in his honor, *Before Our Very Eyes :Essays in Honour of Wole Soyinka*, Ibadan UP, 1988 where Soyinka was described as "WS our WS" - Wole Soyinka our William Shakespeare, what a coincidence of initials!

[25] See Niyi Osundare, *African literature and the Crisis of Post-Structuralist Theorising*. Dialogue in African Philosophy Monograph Series, Ibadan, Options Books, 1993.

[26] These papers by MJC Echeruo, Ola Rotimi, J.P. Clark and Ossie Enekwe are published in Yemi Ogunbiyi (ed.) *Drama and Theatre in Nigeria: A Critical Source Book*, Lagos: Nigeria Magazine, 1981. That was the period of search for the justification and otherwise of the existence and validity of African literature. There was a problem as to the definition of African drama, and the Western denial of the existence and definitive recognition of African literature began to thin after Soyinka won the Nobel prize in Literature in 1986 as the first African ever to hit that global mark of literary genius recognized officially by the West.

[27] See Oyin Ogunba, "The Traditional Content of the Plays of Wole Soyinka." In: *African Literature Today* 5(1971) 107; Oyin Ogunba, *The Movement of Transition: A Study of the Plays of Wole Soyinka* Nigeria, Ibadan University Press, 1975; *Theatre in Africa*, eds. Oyin Ogunba and Abiola Irele, Ibadan University Press, 1978.

[28] See Nelson Fashina,"Lit-Orature , Development, World Peace and the Challenges of Literary Theory/Criticism", *Journal of the Nigeria English Studies Association* (JNESA), 2005.

[30] See Niyi Osundare " Aspects of the Socio-Stylistic Repercussions of Transition from Oral into Written" In *Journal of African Literature* nos. 3, 1981.

[31] See Isidore Okpewho, *African Oral Literature: Backgrounds, Character and Continuity*. Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1992.

[32] The Birmingham Professor of anthropology has done extensive works on West African historiography, especially on Yoruba culture, traditions, and language, history and folklore studies. See Karin Barber, *I Could Speak Until Tomorrow : Oriki, Women and the Past in a Yoruba Town*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University press, 1991; *Readings in African Popular Culture*, London, School of African and Oriental Studies, 1997; *Hidden Histories: Everyday Literacy and Making the Self I*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2006.

[33] Both Achebe and Ngugi had devoted a significant chunk of their critical writings to polemics and intriguing critique of the expression of African literary and creative ideas in colonial languages. See Ngugi's *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*, London, James Currey, 1986. See also Achebe's *Hopes and Impediments: Selected Essays: 1965 - 1987*, London, Heinemann, 1988 and his article, " The African Writer and the English Language" *Morning Yet on Creation Day*, London, Heineman, 1975, pp. 91-103.

[34] Chinweizu, Jemie and Madubuike: *Towards the Decolonization of African Literature*, Howard University Press, 1983. First published by Fourth Dimension publishers, Enugu, 1980. This book was a radical assault on the

"eurocentruc" style of writing and communication in African literature.

[35] See Bernth Lindfors, *Folklore in Nigerian Literature*, Ibadan: Caltop publications, 2002.

[36] Soyinka, Okigbo and J.P. Clark are canonized as among the 'first eleven' of African poetry of English expression.

[37] Okot P'Bitek's Song of Lawin and Song of Ocol, Nairobi,Heinemann, 1984.

[38] Toyin Falola and Aderonke A. Adesanya, *Etches on Fresh Waters*, Durham, North Carolina, Carolina Academic Press, 2008. Toyin Falola's first co-authored volume of poetry marked the beginning of his creative inquest into philosophical expression through the media of poetry. See Toyin Falola and Vivek Bahl, *Scoundrels of Deferral: Poems to Redeem Reflection*. Durham, North Carolina, Carolina Academic Press, 2006. Whereas Falola's single authored and award winning autobiographical narrative (*A Mouth Sweeter than Salt*, 2004) was regarded as African creativity at its peak, Etches on Fresh Waters has proved that Falola's best was yet to come.

[39] These scholars did not acknowledge the existence of African philosophy. They thought that Africans could not have the mental faculty for rational thinking and logical reasoning.

[40] This Ogbe is Ifa scriptures for favor, fortune or luck, whereby Odu means scripture.

[41] According to Ferdinand Tonnies, the German sociologist (1855-1936) who contributed a lot to the theories of sociology, Gemeinschaft was group whose membership is self-fulfilling, where there is communal co-existence, social interaction and cohesion - a type of 2village" setting. Tonnies calls as gesselschaft a sphisticated group in which membrship is kept by intsrumental goals - a society, a city culture. Thus, while Gemeinschaft was exeplified by the family or neigborhod, Gesselschaft was by city or state. See Ferdinand Tonnies *On Gemeinschaft und Gesselschaft* (1887) reprinted in Community and Society: Gemeinschaft und Gesselschaft (translated and edited by Charles P. Loomis, Ann Arbor, Michigan State University Press, 1957, pp.223-231.

[42] The Ifa verses cited in this paper are as chanted by Awo Adeniji Apata, the Erinmi On'pitan Ifa of Iwo town, Osun State, Nigeria.

[43] See Claude Levi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*, Allen Lane, Penguin Press, 1968; Levi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.

[44] See Jonathan Culler ed. *Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics and Literature*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975.

FROM MOUKOURY, BA AND RAWIRI: WHERE ARE THE ESSENTIAL HUSBANDS?

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Abstract

The entrance of Francophone African women writers into African literary field marks a new era. Kuoh Moukoury's *Rencontres essentielles* (1969) considered a ground breaking piece received applause in academic circle when it was published. This paper focuses on the mutation of initially loving and caring husbands of female personae of Kuoh Moukoury, Bâ and Rawiri's novels. The following question is central to this article: "Why did the husbands of the female protagonists of the selected texts turned into unfaithful husbands and why are these women treated as 'non-being' like Medea in *Euripides,*" and "What led to the metamorphosis of especially female characters in Bâ and Rawiri's works?" Antonio Gramsci's theory on subalternity is adopted to analyze the texts and to see the evolution of the female protagonists who engage in struggle to destroy cultural and patriarchal ethos that enslave them.

Introduction

> *African written literature has traditionally been the preserve of male writers and critics. Today, however, accompanying an ever-growing corpus of literature by African women writers, a new generation of critics, most of them women, is impacting on this male-dominated area*[1].

The coming into writing, although somewhat late, of Francophone African women received applause in academic circles. The first known published literary piece was written by Thérèse Kuoh Moukoury, and

[1] Carole Boyce Davies. *Ngambika: Studies of Women in African Literature*. p. 1

entitled *Rencontres essentielles* [Essential Encounters] published in (1969). The year 1975 is, however, considered a landmark in African women's writings. Aside from being the International Year of Women, it was marked by many publications. Aoua Kéita published *La vie d'Aoua Kéita par elle-même* [Life of Aoua Kéïta] (1975), Nafissatou Diallo wrote *De Tilène au plateau: une enfance dakaroise* [From Tilène to Plateau: A Dakaroise Childhood] (1976), Aminata Sow Fall authored *La grève des Battú* [Beggars' Strike] (1976) and Mariama Bâ published *Une si longue lettre* [So Long a Letter] (1979). Bâ is one of the most influential Francophone female writers of that generation. The publication of *Une si longue lettre* brought particular attention to African women's texts.

African literary scene has been flooded with works of fiction by women since the 1970s. Some of these works include Aminata Ka Maiga's *La voie du salut* suivi de *le miroir de la vie* [Way to Salute and The Mirror of Life] (1985), Calixthe Beyala's *Tu t'appeleras Tanga* [Your Name Shall Be Tanga] (1987) and Angèle Rawiri's *Fureurs et cris de femmes* [Furors and Cries of Women] (1989). In the 1990s, female literary production increased. Evelyne Mpoudi Ngolle published *Sous la cendre le feu* [Under the Ash, Fire] (1990), Abibatou Traoré authored *Sidagamie* (1990), Regina Yaou wrote *Le prix de la révolte* [Price of Revolt] (1997) and Fatou Kéïta produced *Rebelle* [The Rebellious One] (1998), to mention a few for the number keeps on growing. Their entrance into the African literary scene marks the beginning of a new era. Their main goal is to denounce through their writings the oppression of women and they have greatly succeeded in making their words heard by finding male and female audiences within their worlds and beyond to sympathize with and champion their cause.

Western education has given African women writers the key to selfhood and to borrow Antonio Gramsci, the Italian Marxist scholar's phrase, the education they received "raised their consciousness, and thus they acquired the necessary weapon for confronting the enemy effectively[2]". Their ability to write allowed them to emerge from the shadow, to grab the pen and to tell their ordeals in their own words.

In this paper, we will focus on Kuoh-Moukoury, Bâ and Rawiri's novels while making references to similar works.

Where Are the Essential Husbands?

As earlier stated the Cameroonian novelist Kuoh Moukoury's *Rencontres essentielles* [Essential Encounters] (1969) was the first Francophone African women's novels. Commenting on this novel, P. Pézres

[2] Antonio Gramsci. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks.* p. 20

notes:

> *La publication en 1969 de* Rencontres essentielles, *fut un acte d'exception dans l'histoire de la littérature romanesque de l'Afrique noire francophone où seuls les hommes avaient su s'illustrer. A la liste de romanciers tels que Ferdinand Oyono, Mongo Beti, Sembène Ousmane, Bernard Dadié, Belly Quénum, Badiane Kouyaté, Francis Bebey, Yambo Ouologuem, etc., venait s'ajouter un nom de femme: Thérèse Kuoh Moukoury. (p. 5)*

> *The publication in 1969 of* Rencontres essentiels *was an exceptional act in the Francophone black Africa's literary history where only men knew how to illustrate themselves. To the list of novelists such as Ferdinand Oyono, Mongo Beti, Sembène Ousmane, Bernard Dadié, Belly Quénum, Badiane Kouyaté, Francis Bebey, Yambo Ouologuem, etc., was added that of a woman: Thérèse Kuoh Moukoury. [My translation]*

This novel, contrary to the expectations of some African male authors and critics, did not deal with problems of colonialism or post-independence Africa, but instead recounted the sorrow of Flo, a young Cameroonian woman. *Rencontres essentielles* tells the story of Flo, the female protagonist, who marries Joel whom she considers the man of her life, her 'essential husband'. Unfortunately Joel later abandons Flo because she fails to have children for him and takes up with Doris, Flo's bosom friend. Even though Flo is omnipresent in the novel as a woman conscious of her subaltern condition / situation, she lacks the courage to take her destiny in her own hands. She fails to reject the husband who humiliates her by marrying her close friend. Here is what Flo says:

> *Mais comment puis-je divorcer, que vont dire mes amis, ma famille, la société toute entière. Chez qui vais-je entrer, démunie? Une vie à reconstituer, des amis, des relations à refaire! Suis-je réellement capable de tout cela. (p. 84)*

> *But how can I divorce, what will my friends, my family and the whole society say? Who should I go to? Restart a new life, friends and relatives! Am I really capable of all that? [My translation]*

From Flo's remark, one begins to understand how many women remain and suffer in their matrimonial homes because they fear the judgment that will be passed on them by their society should they abandon their

husband. Like Flo in *Rencontres essentielles*, protagonists such as Mama Ida in Philomène Bassek's *La tache de sang* [The Spot of Blood] and Rokhaya and Rabiatou in Aminata Ka Maiga's *La voie du salut suivi de Le Miroir de la vie* keep their sorrows to themselves and suffer silently. In *La voie du salut* suivi de *Le Miroir de la vie*, Rokhaya and Rabiatou are both betrayed by their dishonest husbands whom initially they considered as their 'essential husbands'. If Rokhaya, the mother, is a woman who lives by tradition, her daughter Rabiatou is a modern woman who rejects tradition. The irony however is that both mother and daughter share the same fate.

Female protagonists in *Rencontres essentielles*, *La tache de sang* and *La voie du salut suivi de Le miroir de la vie* lack the courage to challenge masculine ethos and to come out of their subaltern condition. Gramsci notes that it is only when the subaltern is conscious of his oppressed condition that he rises up to fight back. In the novels hereunder despite the fact that female protagonists of *Rencontres essentielles*, *La tache de sang* and *La voie du salut* suivi de *Le miroir de la vie* are conscious of their state of being oppressed, they lack courage to fight back. Hence, they are dominated by patriarchal ethos and masculine powers. They all endure oppression in their matrimonial homes and sacrifice their lives for their husbands. Eurepides´ Medea is somewhat right when she avers that:

> Of all things which are living and can form a judgment, we women are the most unfortunate creatures, firstly, with an excess of wealth it is required for us to buy a husband and take for our bodies a master; for not to take one is even worse. And now the question is serious whether we take a good or bad one; for there is no easy escape for a woman, nor can she say no to her marriage. She arrives among new modes of behaviour and manners[3].

Women in the above stated novels view submissiveness to their husbands as something admirable. The "essential husbands" they initially got married to, turn into unfaithful husbands and they (wives) fall prey to the patriarchal system. The women come to realize that the educated husbands are not different from uneducated ones their mothers got married to.

Rencontres essentielles's protagonist failed to achieve Gramscian's "permanent victory" because Kuoh-Moukoury cannot in her writing envision a protagonist who has the courage to break away from her male oppressor / oppressive situation or achieve what Paulo Freire on the

[3] David Greene and Richard Lattimore (Ed) *The Complete Greek Tragedies Volume V Euripides* I. p.79

other hand called "permanent liberation". Kuoh-Moukoury nevertheless in her autobiographical writing launches a first step towards liberation. Her *Rencontres essentielles* is an important foundational novel. Although it narrated the struggles of a helpless female protagonist who made no attempt to fight the traditional masculine institutions that oppressed her, it nevertheless prepared the ground for a later generation of African women writers.

The women novelists who followed Kuoh Moukoury created female protagonists who spoke against injustice and attacked ancestral traditions. In a more radical way than their predecessor Bâ and Rawiri defied "taboos" and challenged masculine powers and traditional rites that impede women's progress. African women of this later generation used writing as a medium to liberate and to champion the cause of women / new society. Bâ and Rawiri's *Une si longue lettre* and *Fureurs et cris de femmes* like Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*, to paraphrase Folake Onayemi[4], give women a new hope, a new vision and a new situation in which they force men to listen to them.

Bâ and Rawiri tear the veil of patriarchy and challenge sub-Saharan African traditions. In their novels these two authors introduce a new dimension by presenting female protagonists who are very conscious of their subaltern condition and who resolve to break their silence. In Bâ's *Une si longue lettre*, Ramatoulaye and Aïssatou are childhood friends and sisters in the African sense. Both of them are Senegalese Muslim women married to Senegalese Muslim men and their marital lives have become nightmares after their treacherous husbands take younger women as second wives. Another important figure in the novel is Jacqueline, an Ivoirian Christian woman also married to a Senegalese Muslim man. Jacqueline had disobeyed her parents and decided on her own to marry Samba Diak in Abidjan and go back with him to Dakar, his homeland. Jacqueline, as a foreigner in Dakar and a Christian in a Muslim world, becomes disoriented and confused. When the truth dawns on her that she is not accepted there, she becomes frustrated by the hostility of the Senegalese Muslim environment. In addition to the hostility with which Jacqueline is confronted, she is also deceived by her unfaithful husband, "qui passait ses loisirs à pourchasser les Sénégalaises 'fines' et ne prenait pas la peine de cacher ses aventures" (p. 64) [who spent his time running after young Senegalese women without even hiding his adventures] (My translation).

[4] Folake Onayemi, "Women, Sex and Power in Classical and Nigerian Drama: Lysistrata and Morountodun," p. 44 For more details see Women *and Culture of Violence in Traditional Africa*. (ed) Akintunde and Labeodan

In Bâ's *Un chant écarlate* [Scarlet Song], Mireille is a white French woman who grows up in Senegal with her parents and eventually marries a Senegalese Muslim man. The opposition to this marriage by both sets of parents on racial grounds does not stop the couple. Bâ presents the problems inherent in inter-racial marriage in this novel. It is also an avenue for Bâ to testify to the fact that even interracial marriage does not stop polygamy in a Senegalese Muslim society. Ousmane, Mireille's husband, marries another woman and thus joins the polygamous company of Modou, Ramatoulaye's husband, Diak, Jaqueline's husband and Mawdo, Aïssatou's husband. Bâ's novels portray polygamous husbands as unfaithful womanizers. She describes these men in very negative terms and presents their attitudes and behaviours in ways that clearly justify the rebellions of female protagonists.

Modou Fall in *Une si longue lettre* is a happily married man for twenty-five years, but his appetite for a younger woman pushes him to Binetou, a teenage girl of the same age as his daughter, Daba. He deceives his wife of many years by secretly taking up with Binetou, and eventually abandons the original matrimonial home after marrying her. His friend, Mawdo Bâ, follows in his footsteps and marries young Nabou after a long and successful marriage with Aïssatou. Samba Diak, on his return to Dakar with his Christian Ivoirian wife, also runs after young Senegalese girls.

The story in Rawiri's *Fureurs et cris de femmes* is not different; Emilienne, the protagonist of the novel, is a Gabonese woman married to a Gabonese man, Joseph, who comes from a different village. Like the husbands of Ramatoulaye, Aïssatou and Mireille, Emilienne's husband secretly married another wife, Dominique. Ironically, Dominique is Emilienne's office secretary, and she succeeds in hiding what is going on with her boss's husband from this woman she considers as a friend. With the complicity of Eyang, Joseph's mother, Dominique quietly snatches Emilienne's husband from her. Dominique even goes to the extent of giving malicious advice to Emilienne when Emilienne tells her naively about the difficulties she is going through with Joseph and his mother in her home. By marrying Joseph, Dominique satisfies the societal expectation of women (which is for them to be married) and by having children for him, she fulfils the other side of the marriage as expected of women in African societies. Dominique, however, later engages Emilienne in a lesbian relationship as a way of sympathizing with her boss who suffers in her marriage.

These protagonists refuse to lament or to swallow painfully, alone in their rooms, the attitudes and traditional behaviours of their husbands

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who subjugate women by not giving them any say in matters affecting them. In *Rencontres essentielles* Kuoh Moukoury depicts Flo's anguish in her matrimonial home, while Bâ in *Une si longue lettre* presents Ramatoulaye, the novel's main character who reviews the story of her life and that of her friend Aïssatou. Rawiri on the other hand, presents Emilienne's ordeals in her matrimonial house.

These protagonists have many things in common: they are products of Western education; they are victims of cultural practices that impede women's emancipation and above all, they have been deceived by their husbands. These women dream of effecting changes in the societies in which they live through an application of the education they received:

> *[Elles étaient] de véritables soeurs destinées à la mission émancipatrice. [Se] sortir de l'enlisement des traditions, superstitions et moeurs; [se] faire apprécier de multiples civilisations sans reniement de [la] leur; élever [leur] vision du monde, cultiver [leur] personnalité, renforcer [leurs] qualités, mater [leurs] défauts; faire fructifier en [elles] les valeurs de la morale universelle.* (Lettre 27-28)

> *[They were] true sisters, destined for the same mission of emancipation. To lift [themselves] out of the flog of tradition, superstition and custom, to make [themselves] appreciate a multitude of civilizations without renouncing [their] own, to raise [their] vision of the world, cultivate [their] personalities, strengthen [their] qualities, to make up for [their] inadequacies, to develop universal moral values. (15)*

Despite the goals these women set while attending Western schools, not to tolerate any nonsense yet, they still found themselves frustrated by traditional rites deeply rooted in their different milieu. They are sometimes subject to humiliation and confrontation by the patriarchal structures that surround them.

It is pertinent to note though that Bâ and Rawiri and some women writers who followed them, demonstrate their bitterness against the traditions that oppress women. The words of an anonymous male character to his friend in Rawiri's *Fureurs et cris de femmes* touch on some of these traditional attitudes that denigrate African women:

> *Sais-tu que mes soeurs et mes cousines trouvent ma concubine arrogante? Et tu sais pourquoi? Tout simplement parce qu'elle dirige de main de maître notre maison, mes petits frères y compris. Ces messieurs, qui se considèrent comme des gens précieux, ne veulent pas s'abaisser à*

> *accomplir les tâches ménagères. Comme le veut la coutume, ils considèrent ma femme comme la leur et exigent d'être servis comme des maris. (p. 63-64)*
> *Do you know that my sisters and cousins find my concubine arrogant? And do you know why? Simply for running our house and dictating to my younger brothers as if she was the boss. Those men, who consider themselves as precious beings, do not want to help with domestic work. As the custom wants, they consider my wife as theirs and they insist on being served as husbands too.*

It is common in a majority of sub-Saharan African societies that every member of the husband's family wants to be treated with the same deference the wife shows her husband. Family members of the husband consider anything that falls short of this treatment as being rude.

Francophone African women writers of the generation of Bâ and Rawiri criticised such attitudes and behaviours in their texts. Not surprisingly their protagonists wage serious battles against patriarchal hegemony – and in particular against the traditional and religious rites that enslave women.

Moukoury's *Rencontres essentielles*, Bâ's *Une si longue lettre* and *Un chant écarlate*, and Rawiri's *Fureurs et cris de femmes* have generally been considered among the most important feminist texts that expose the conditions of Cameroonian, Senegalese and Gabonese women. These novels also reveal the pattern of patriarchal indoctrination that characterizes a number of African societies, whereby elders pass on the rules that govern ways of life in a society where men take decisions while women and children are simply taught to obey. Mina, the protagonist of Cameroonian Evelyne Ngolle Mpoudi's *Sous la cendre le feu* says it well:

> *Toute l'éducation d'un enfant chez nous est construite sur la base qui fait l'homme le maître, et de la femme l'être créé pour servir celui-ci. Ce fait n'est pas particulier au Cameroun, me dira-t-on. [...] Mes parents ont fait de moi une petite fille obéissante et reservée, qui ne doit élever le ton devant les garçons- fussent-ils plus jeunes que moi. (p. 8)*

> *Child education in our land is tailored in a way that man is the boss and the woman is created to serve him. You cannot tell me that this is particular to Cameroon...My parents turned me into a reserved and obedient little girl, who should not raise her voice before boys even if they are younger than me.*

Mina's remark might as easily apply generally to certain traditions in Senegal, Ivory Coast and Gabon. Indeed, a close examination of *Rencontres essentielles*, *Une si longue lettre* and *Fureurs et cris de femmes* reveals that these novels are not only about the subaltern condition of women in Cameroon, Senegal or Gabon, but more broadly also the critique of traditions. These novels cry out against the general condition of African women even as they launch their particular attacks against conditions in a predominantly Islamic society like Senegal or a traditional male-oriented society like Cameroon and Gabon. Similarly, Madeleine Borgomano argues that even though Mireille in *Un chant* is French, one should see Mireille's condition as that of an African woman because Mireille faces the same problems:

> *Les problèmes de Mireille sont donc ceux soulevés par les mariages mixtes. Mais Mireille est devenue sinon africaine du moins sénégalaise par son mariage et les questions qui se posent à travers elle n'ont rien à voir avec la couleur de la peau ou la nationalité française. [...] Ainsi estimons-nous tout à fait d'englober le cas de Mireille dans celui des femmes africaines. (p. 91-92)*
>
> *Mireille's problems are those found in interracial marriages. But Mireille has become African or better put Senegalese by virtue of her marriage and the problems she encounters have nothing to do with the color of her skin or French nationality...We will thus classify Mireille's case among those of African women.*

The three novels all show how the protagonists confront the traditional rites and patriarchal powers that subdue them. Patriarchal traditions and Islamic religious codes constitute the socio-cultural fabric of these narratives. For the first time in African women's writings, one witnesses a severe criticism of the attitudes of the elders, masculine powers and traditions. Women writers' arrival on the African literary scene brought about a positive transformation of the subaltern female subject in fiction. The African female subject now rejects her mute status. She emerges from the shadows to defy patriarchy by breaking her silence and by taking active control of her own condition. The female protagonists of these novels initially were happily married to loving and understanding husbands. Their marriages were not prearranged like those of Niam's wife in *Mission terminée* [Mission to Kala], Salimata's first marriage in *Les soleils des indépendances* [The Suns of Independences], Mariama in *Toiles d'araignée* [Spider Curbs] or Rokheya in *La voie du salut* suivi de *Le miroir de la vie*. Flo, Ramatoulaye, Mireille and Emilienne had modern

marriages in the sense that they had made their own free choices. These protagonists alas, live in a highly patriarchal society, a society that sees nothing wrong with polygamy. "Essential husbands" succumb easily to their mothers' encouragements or to their personal lusts and end up rejecting the marital vows that they made with their first wives.

These female protagonists and wives are, alas, confronted with ruthless mothers-in-law who cause trouble in their marriages. These dangerous mothers-in-law always see themselves in competition with their sons' chosen wives because they are insecure. Even though the wives fight back against their mothers-in-law who desire other women for their sons, these wives suffer for their actions. It is assumed in rigidly traditional milieu such as Cameroon, Senegal and Gabon that wives cannot change the order of things, but these women despite all odds challenge traditional norms. Their painful experiences symbolize the anguish of women who find themselves caught in a quagmire of domination and oppression. The modern female characters of *Une si longue lettre*, *Un Chant* and *Fureurs et cris de femmes* emerge from the shadows after years of silence to defy authority. If these women keep silent about everything that had previously been done to them, the arrival of another woman in their matrimonial life breaks their passivity. Their patience is exhausted and they decide to reject their subaltern condition. Faced with humiliation, Ramatoulaye, Aïssatou, Mireille, and Emilienne show their unfaithful husbands that they are capable of taking decisions about issues which affect them. Emilienne in *Fureurs et cris de femmes* states:

> *J'ai avalé toutes les couleuvres que tu as voulu brandir devant moi. C'en est assez. Je te demande de choisir à cet instant précis entre ta maîtresse, tes enfants et moi. Retiens qu'il est hors de question que tes rejetons viennent habiter cette maison. (p. 157)*
>
> *I swallowed all the vipers you put before me. It is enough. I am asking you to choose right now between your mistress, children and me. I want you to know that your extra-marital children cannot come and live in this house.*

Emilienne's passivity is over; her transmutation from passive acceptance of her subaltern condition to rejecting it is necessary if her freedom is to be achieved. Ramatoulaye's revolt comes when she is told that she is to marry Tamsir at a time when she is still mourning her late husband. Only a few days after her husband's death, Tamsir made this declaration. In accordance with Islamic rite, the wife is to be inherited

by the brother of the departed. In her letter to Aïssatou, the narrator gives us more details on this event:

> *Après les actes de piété, Tamsir est venu s'asseoir dans ma chambre dans le fauteuil bleu où tu te plaisais. En penchant sa tête au dehors, il a fait signe à Mawdo; il a aussi fait signe à l'Imam de la mosquée de son quartier. [...] Tamsir parle cette fois plein d'assurance [...] "Après ta sortie (Sous-entendu du deuil), je t'épouse. Tu me conviens comme femme et puis, tu continueras à habiter ici comme si Modou n'était pas mort." (p. 84)*

> *After going through the motions of piety, Tamsir came and sat in my bedroom in the blue armchair that used to be your favorite. Sticking his head outside, he signaled to Mawdo; he also signaled to the Imam from the mosque of his area...Tamsir speaks with great insurance 'When you have "come out" (that is to say mourning), I shall marry you. You suit me as a wife, and further, you will continue to live here, just as if Modou were not dead. (p. 57)*

Boiling with anger after digesting Tamsir's words, Ramatoulaye renounces her silence and chides Tamsir in the presence of the elders assembled to support him in his proposition:

> *Je regarde Mawdo. Je regarde l'Imam. Je serre mon châle noir. J'égrenne mon chapelet. Cette fois, je parlerai. Ma voix connaît trente années de silence, trente années de brimades. Elle éclate, violente, tantôt sarcastique, tantôt méprisante. "As-tu jamais eu de l'affection pour ton frère? Tu veux déjà construire un foyer neuf sur un cadavre chaud. Alors que l'on prie pour Modou, tu penses à de futures noces." (p. 85)*

> *I look at Mawdo. I look at the Imam. I draw my black shawl closer. I tell my beads. This time I shall speak out. My voice has known thirty years of silence, thirty years of harassment. It burst out, violent, sometimes sarcastic, sometimes contemptuous. Did you ever have any affection for your brother? Already you want to build a new home for yourself over a body that is still warm. While we are praying for Modu, you are thinking of future wedding festivities. (p. 58)*

Ramatoulaye's breaking of silence here is a complete rejection of her passivity. In Ramatoulaye's long letter to Aïssatou, who now lives in New York after leaving her husband, Ramatoulaye informs her friend of what

she is going through. Ramatoulaye's letter is a river of revelation on the travails of womanhood and the ugliness of manhood. It is through Ramatoulaye, the narrator that we know of all the events taking place in the novel. It is through her that we come to know the other characters. Some of the women are, like her, victims of unfaithful husbands and are going through ordeals in their matrimonial homes. Aïssatou, frustrated by her husband's second marriage, decides to abandon him and breaks her silence in a letter to him. Aïssatou forwards a copy of this letter to Ramatoulaye, and here is what part of the letter to her husband says:

> *Si tu peux procréer sans aimer, rien que pour assouvir l'orgueil d'une mère déclinante, je te trouve vil. Dès lors tu dégringoles de l'échélon supérieur, de la responsibilité où je t'ai toujours hissé... Mawdo, l'homme est un: grandeur et animalité confondues. Aucun geste de sa part n'est de pur idéal. Aucun geste de sa part n'est de pure bestialité. Je me dépouille de ton amour, de ton nom. Vêtue d'un seul habit valable de la dignité, je poursuis ma route. (p. 50)*

> *If you can procreate without loving, merely to satisfy the pride of your declining mother, then I find you despicable. At that moment you tumbled from the highest rung of respect on which I have always placed you. Mawdo, man is one: greatness and animal fused together. None of his acts is pure charity. None is pure bestiality. I am stripping myself of your love, your name. Clothed in my dignity, the only worthy garment, I go my way. (p. 32)*

Aïssatou informs her husband in her letter that she has abandoned him for her own good and rejects her marital name and status in order to pursue her own life. The consciousness of their victimization leads these women courageously to defy their oppressors. By letting out their pains in words these protagonists find some relief. As Borgomano notes:

> *La parole, ici, sert de consolidation et de thérapeutique. Elle aide l'éveil et la naissance d'une personne existant à part entière, selon l'exemple jadis donné par Aissatou. Refusant de se voir réduite au rang de toutes ces femmes "méprisées, reléguées ou échangées, dont on se sépare comme un boubou usé ou déchiré," Ramatoulaye, malgré son âge, ses trentes années de mariage et ses douze enfants, refuse d'être un "non-être." Elle prend la parole. [...] Cette transgression du rôle de muette que lui assigne le système social lui donne de l'assurance et lui permet de revivre. [...] Il est beau de voir émerger ainsi peu à peu la voix des femmes et de se lézarder la règle du silence. (p. 104)*

> *Speech, here, serves as consolation and therapeutic. It helps the birth and rise of a person living on the side, according to the example once given by Aïssatou. Refusing to see herself reduced to the level of those women "hated, relegated or exchanged, thrown away like a worn out garment, Ramatoulaye, despite her age, her thirty years of marriage and her twelve children, refuses to be a "non-being." [My translation]*

This 'prise de position' [taking of position] of the women protagonists described by Borgomano constitutes an important step toward their liberation from terms of oppression. To borrow a phrase from Gramsci: "to know oneself, to be master of oneself, to distinguish oneself, to free oneself from a state of chaos[5]". African women writers, through their texts, disrupt the traditional binary opposition of male-oppressor versus female-oppressed. Rawiri's Emilienne, as a woman who believes in complimentary roles of men and women, dreams of a peaceful coexistence with her husband and his relatives, but she finally rises up and rebels after being frustrated despite all her efforts and sacrifices to keep her marriage going. Her reaction to frustration is to show the world that the time has come for women not to accept nonsense from either their husbands or their relatives. Emilienne summons her courage and asks both her husband and his mother to leave her home, completely and dramatically breaking her silence after tolerating their attitudes for many years:

> *J'ai suivi avec grand intérêt une bonne partie de votre conversation ... j'ignore quelle décision aurait pris ton fils à la suite de tes menaces et de toute façon cela n'a plus d'importance. Je te demande de l'emmener avec toi où tu voudras dès ce soir... Je veux trouver la maison vide quand je reviendrai, c'est à dire dans une heure. (p. 174)*

> *I followed with a great interest a good part of your discussion... I doubt what decision your son will take after your threat and in any case that has no importance anymore. I am asking you to take him with you wherever you want to this evening... I want to see the house empty when I come back, that is in an hour's time. (My translation)*

Emilienne, like Ramatoulaye, Aïssatou and Mireille, finally speaks out about her family situation; she comes out of the shadows and discloses that the house belongs to her. The breaking of silence by the protagonists

[5]Antonio Gramsci, op cit. p. 95

is a means through which Bâ and Rawiri not only criticize polygamy but advocate the pursuit of happiness in marriage. Furthermore, these writers advocate women's right to live their lives the way they want and not the way the society wants them to live.

Conclusion

African women authors reject silence and begin effectively using their writings to tell the stories of African women. Much more than African men writers, they tap into the utilitarian function of their art. Bâ and Rawiri's protagonists are torn between tradition and modernity as their husbands' sexual escapades drive them into episode of frustration and depression reminiscent of those of Flo in Kuoh-Moukoury's *Rencontres essentielles*. None of the novels could boast of parading 'essential husbands' who are loyal and totally devoted to their wives from the beginning to the end. Women protagonists of these novels lost their husbands to either young women or friends because of their husband's greed or the complicity of their mothers-in-law.

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THE TRAGIC PARADIGM IN GBADAMOSI'S *TREES GROW IN THE DESERT*.*

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Abstract

Aristotles's "Poetics" is undeniably a foundational framework in the criticism of Western drama. Written circa 335 BC it constitutes a benchmark in the production of dramatic theory even today. Subsequent theorists and dramaturges have been largely influenced by most of Aristotle's treatise on ancient Greek drama. His memorandum on Greek tragedy remains the most significant critical apparatus in the investigation of the tragic art as a whole. This paper examines Gbadamosi's *Tree Grows in the Desert* against Aristotelian recommendations, among others.

Introduction

> *Tragedy is the imitation of an action; and an action implies personal agents, who necessarily possess certain distinctive qualities both of character and thought; for it is by these that we qualify actions themselves, and these - thought and character - are the two natural causes from which actions spring, and on actions again all success or failure depends*[1].

This clearly underscores the instrumentality of character in the constitution of dramatic action. He construes character not in the simple sense of agents or *dramatis personae* but "that in virtue of which we ascribe certain qualities to the agents"[2]. He goes further to explain that character is

> *(T)hat which reveals moral purpose, showing what kind of things a man chooses or avoids. Speeches, therefore, which do not make this manifest, or in which the speaker does not choose or avoid anything whatever, are not expressive of character*[3].

From the above Aristotle avers that it is through the actions of the agents, the subjects of tragedy, that character is constituted. Although he places character second to plot - which he describes as "the first principle ... the soul of tragedy" and "the arrangement of the incidents" or actions - and observes that character may not be the end of tragedy but its means, yet it is invariably decisive for it is that liable quality in the actions of the agents through which plot is constructed. Thus it is through the actions of the agents that both character and plot are constituted. His submission is that although tragic action is only possible through the actions of agents it does not serve exclusively for the purpose of character portraiture but to also carry the plot. Echoing Aristotle, Lodovico Castelvetro states that "The end of tragedy is action... but it is the nature of the characters which determines the actions"[4].

Aristotle also emphasizes that tragedy imitates "actions which excite pity and fear, this being the distinctive mark of tragic imitation." He goes further to observe that "pity is aroused by unmerited misfortune, fear by the misfortune of a man like ourselves"[5]. This implies that when an agent comes to a deserved misfortune s/he would not excite or move us in the direction of pity. Paradoxically, the misfortune must be both deserving and undeserving. This is where pity, that definitive pathos of tragic action, is domiciled. While we feel that the agent does not really deserve the misfortune, we also hold her/him culpable through his action. And to really feel this empathetic tragic emotion it is necessary that we see ourselves in the person of the agent. That is, if we do not empathize with his action and the consequent pain and suffering he undergoes - that is, if he is not "like ourselves" - his misfortune would fail to excite the emotions of pity and fear in us. What Aristotle obviously means by the agent being like ourselves is that s/he should not be superior or inferior to us. S/he should neither be a thoroughgoing saint nor an outright villain. Explicating this paradox further Ariel Meirav observes that "some of our best literary examples of greatness of character are of persons acting in a way that involves them in a terrible burden of guilt." He asserts that "in spite of, or through, their necessarily guilty action such protagonists reveal and even attain supreme levels of greatness of character"[6]. This greatness is attained not only from the kind of suffering they go through as a result of their action, but more significantly from their acceptance of their guilt and responsibility for that action and the consequent suffering. Citing Sophocles' Oedipus, Euripides' Orestes and Aeschylus' Agamemnon, he observes that "paradigms of greatness of character" are "morally tainted characters"[7].

Over the years, production in dramatic theory has displayed such

dynamism and prolificacy that practically every one of Aristotle's precepts has been questioned, defended, elaborated and/or canonised. One fundamental contention challenging the weight of Aristotle's dramatic theory that deserves mention here is the submission that no singular determination of drama can claim universal currency across the rich diversity of dramatic forms in the various cultures of the world and across all historical moments; that is, across all geographical space and time. As a matter of fact, Charles de Marguetel de Saint-Denis made this point nearly four hundred years ago when he said of Aristotle's theory that "there's nothing so perfect in it as to be the standing rule of all nations and all ages"[8]. The question therefore is why a spatially and temporally alien critical model, such as Aristotle's, should be deployed in the analysis of a local and modern literary expression. In other words, why deploy Aristotle's *Poetics* (or any such critical concept that define the nature of conventional Western drama) in a critique of a Nigerian drama such as Rasheed Gbadamosi's? Among many defences the first is that despite the various criticisms of Aristotle's *Poetics* it remains the most dominant body of critical thought on the nature of the art of tragedy. Secondly, any play written in the in the archetypal form of Western drama deserves to be interrogated with Aristotle's influential treatise in perspective. Jonathan Haynes observes that Rasheed Gbadamosi's plays, the playwright whose work this paper investigates, are very "far from the African theatrical aesthetic (either in its traditional incarnation or in the modern literary form which has evolved since Independence)"[9]. Therefore, it seems reasonable to critique his plays with a critical apparatus determined by his style rather than his nationality.

Another query to the notions of tragedy as posited by Aristotle is whether they apply strictly to the best tragedies or to tragedies as a whole. Laurence Perrine notes that whichever way we look at it,

> *The important thing is that Aristotle had important insights into the nature of some of the greatest tragedies and that, rightly or wrongly interpreted, his conceptions are the basis for a kind of archetypal notion of tragedy that has dominated critical thought*[10].

The critical framework of Western tragic art is used in this paper investigates the integrity of Rasheed Gbadamosi's *Trees Grow in the Desert* and, tangentially, the status of the playwright as a tragedian. It also identies the ingredients that constitute eminence of character in tragedies and the nature of tragic conflict as a measure of this eminence. In this respect it suggests why Gbadamosi's play is wanting in the tradition of tragedies, and how the fate of a corrupt and deservedly perishing

upper class which he awkwardly tries to sublime ends up being grossly pathetic and laughable. I attempt to provide obvious answers to the following decisive questions: Are Gbadamosi's characters admirable, noble, likeable, and consistent? Are they faced with any tragic conflicts? Are there choices that they are confronted with? choices that demand of them decisive actions implicating their commitment to certain human values? actions that not only censure them morally but also venerate them? The other question is whether, by failing the tragic test as scripted by Aristotle and some other theorists, Gbadamosi's play could then be described as a bad tragedy or not a tragedy at all.

Rasheed Gbadamosi's *Trees Grow in the Desert*

This is a drama set in the years immediately following Nigeria's political independence from colonial administration. The protagonist or hero, in so far as there is one, is Chief Iginla, a man who acquired immense wealth by actively partaking in the corrupt practices that characterised the indigenous administration that eclipsed British colonial government. However, unfolding political circumstances destroy both himself and his affluent and privileged family. First, a revolutionary military regime incarcerates him on charges of misappropriation of public funds, and then his most promising son gets involved in an attempt to topple the military government and is consequently executed. His wife and his eldest son, who in every respect are bumbling characters, are the only ones left to mourn the demise of an otherwise effete family.

Although *Trees Grow in the Desert* can be said to possess some degree of global relevance it is thematically located in the very nexus of Nigeria's peculiarly challenging postcolonial socio-political terrain. When read metaphorically, the title could suggest that the play centres on the struggle of human agents ("trees") to make sense of, and possibly subdue ("grow in") a hostile and enervating landscape ("desert"). A further thematic exegesis could suggest that while trees commonly grow in the forest only the resilient species thrive in the desert. Metaphorically, this implies that only rugged and noble individuals can prosper in the hostility, insufficiency and aridity of Nigeria's post-colonial terrain. This tenacity is, as a matter of fact, the locus of tragic characterization. Thus it seems to me that Gbadamosi's initiative is to present to his reader agents of such pedigree that survive impossible odds; such rugged 'trees' that 'grow' even in the extreme aridity of the desert. On the other hand, however, I find a moralist and didactic reading irresistible; that is, that through the fate of the thieving Iginla and members of his ignoble family the reader comes to the realisation that crimes against the people do not pay; that the embezzlement of tax payers' money does not go

unpunished. Unfortunately, tragedy as a dramatic genre, as we have seen from Aristotle, Perrine and Meirav, does not succeed on the acuity of themes alone but on the imitation of plausible actions and conflicts represented through fictive yet convincing agents; not on the articulation of thematically relevant and socially consequential morals but the representation of actions with tragic soundness.

Looking at the profile of two of the major agents in *Trees Grow in the Desert* I proceed to locate the sources of their weaknesses as tragic agents, and inevitably the failure of the play to move us in the habit of tragic drama.

Chief Iginla is obviously Gbadamosi's version of a tragic hero. When confronted with two choices, either the option of exile or incarceration, he exhibits that archetypal tragic stature by choosing to face the punishment for his crime. Taken out of context Iginla's stance in this very decisive moment would not only win him the readers' admiration but would also ennoble his personality. He confronts his detractors and resolves to fight rather than give in to them. This choice, which indeed represents the dramatic climax, almost succeeds at presenting Iginla as a courageous and articulate agent. He challenges the government to a do-or-die battle. He is heard roaring like a lion and spoiling for a fight. Placed in context, however, one feels only disappointment. He sounds pitiably infirm as he vocally challenges a force which he neither comprehends nor is morally positioned to contest. There is no doubt that Chief Iginla enriched himself corruptly. His second son Lakunle informs us that

> *He took part in the graft that befouled the old order. Now he must be punished for it... It's in the book. He shared a kick back with the Defence Minister... He overpriced the Army boots made in his factory and shared the profits with the Minister (p. 37).*

His first son Lalekan says that "... the great Iginla misappropriated public funds to the tune of fifteen thousand pounds. Fifteen thousand pounds of peasants' money!" (*Trees*, 59.) These irrevocably confirm his guilt. But hear his wife try to rationalize and deny this crime:

> *You are not a criminal. At least to me you are not. I remember what we went through... Aside you once gave jobs to over one thousand people. Now they are forgetting all that. Now is the time to drag a sick, old fighter in front of the world and condemn him. Only because of a few thousand pounds (*p. 45*).*

And just like his wife, rather than accept responsibility for his crime, Chief Iginla proclaims:

> *I am going to stay right here and face whatever is coming. I only paid a kickback on a contract awarded to me. And that is nothing but* kola *money... Strictly in accordance with our best tradition (p. 45).*

> *We are still fighting; the battle is not over yet. I will show them. You wait and see! Every pound I made myself was got clean. O. K. I got a dash now and then. So did the cocoa farmers get easy loans and the civil servants money for their cars. Everyone snatched his own bit (p. 50).*

The reader inevitably finds this kind of bravado absurd. Chief Iginla obviously stole the people's money. Thus he is an irredeemable villain whose passion should fail to excite the emotion of pity from the reader. Worst of all is that when the police eventually come to whisk him away he does not offer even the feeblest resistance. Even his woeful statements before the arrest shows indeed that he is aware that he has no chance in hell against his opponents. For instance, he says: "Any minute from now they'll take me away on a long decaying journey" (p. 62). Certainly this does not sound like the same person who vowed to fight them. Because the reader suspects that the intention of the playwright is indeed to present a tragic agent this inconsistency is obviously a statement on the limitations of the dramaturge than the character of the agent.

In the first instance, the playwright's failure to actually show Iginla's crime as well as the moral conflict which made him commit it destroys the agent's tragic potential because the reader finds it impossible to imagine that s/he could do the same thing when faced with a similar circumstance since there is, strictly speaking, no 'circumstance' at all. Consequently, we find it difficult to empathize with his suffering. Friedrich Schiller notes that it is "important that we should be able to follow in all its concatenation the action that is represented to us, that we should see it issue from the mind of the agent by a natural gradation, under the influence and with the concurrence of external circumstances"[11]. But, as already observed, this is not the case with Iginla's crime. If the reader were presented with a plausible motivation for that crime then it would have been possible for her/him to identify with both his action and his suffering. Thus we wonder if it was some kind of Aristotle's *hamartia*; a weakness of character or imperfection. If it was any of these the reader would have been carried along but the reader simply

does not know. What seems probable is that it is simply a 'follow-follow' stupidity and/or greed since he claims that everyone, even the civil servant and cocoa farmer, was doing it.

In addition to the obvious lack of any justification for his crime one major factor which robs Iginla of tragic stature is lodged in his denial of responsibility for his actions. It is imperative that the tragic hero accepts responsibility for his action if s/he is to achieve tragic eminence. Professing innocence and yet vocally challenging his fate makes Iginla insincere and much less than "ourselves". He invariably fails to look morally decorous, courageous and admirable. He looks more like a common thief, a placid insignificant personality with not a single notable or redeeming attribute. So as he rails in his inconsequential passion the reader only sees the weakness of the dramatist in his obvious poeticisation which does not move the audience in the fashion of tragedy. As Meirav observes,

> *(I)t is essential to the demonstration of the greatness of character ... that the person accepts responsibility for the horror committed, and thus that she both perceive herself, and be perceived by others (who empathize with her) as guilty*[12].

Most damningly anti-tragic is the lack of any evidence that Chief Iginla has attained any higher level of awareness or self-knowledge from his experience. By denying his crime and therefore proclaiming himself innocent he makes it obvious that he has not advanced in knowledge at all. Whatever values the playwright set to underscore are woefully crippled. Perrine, for instance, states that the tragic loss results in "a change from ignorance to knowledge." According to him the tragic hero exits "not cursing his fate but accepting it and acknowledging that it is to some degree just"[13]. Iginla's lack of wisdom implies that faced with the same circumstances he would probably commit the same crime again and in the same manner.

Greatness of character is attainable irrespective of, and even in respect of, the moral impropriety of the agent. Thus it would still have been possible for Iginla to attain tragic eminence despite his moral blemish. But he fails to rise to the level of greatness because he does not realize that his corrupt enrichment of self is a moral crime in the first place. He feels justified and gives a ridiculous cultural veneer to his very criminal acts.

All through the play Chief Iginla's agency is undermined by an embarrassing naivety in his characterization. His actions are inconsistent and unbecoming of the kind of personality the playwright aspires to

build. First of all, his inability to recognize the significance of people hanging up the phone on him presents him as insensitive, if not downright foolish. One then wonders how such an idiot could have made tremendous wealth even by the age of forty-five (*p.* 13). If the playwright expected the reader to accept Iginla as a shrewd businessman he should have shown him being shrewd in business. But the Iginla that we see is an incompetent and imbecilic character. This is the same man who borrows money from a bank to manufacture army boots without any contract whatsoever save his claim to a verbal request made over the phone (p. 7). He is deluded and lacks the courage to confront any issue persuasively. His actions present him as infirm, childish and foolish. Rather than confront his son Lalekan, he eavesdrops on him in an embarrassing manner. He fails to adequately comprehend his predicament, thus he remains unbelievably hopeful even in the face of inevitable catastrophe. He is excited by the childish plot devised by his wife to engage a whore to test \lalekan's manhood. He regales in drunkenness and ribaldry but whimpers piteously like a woman upon Lalekan's exit from home. Add to these the contemptible lie he tells on the phone in the presence of his children and you have a man totally lacking in self-respect and dignity.

Lakunle's portraiture presents even a more woeful tragic subject than that of his father. The blurb on the back cover of the play obviously posits him as the protagonist. It reads thus:

> *Should family ties take precedence over state matters? Lakunle, a young army officer and a member of the secret Revolutionary Army Corps swears to sanitise the "Augean Stable" of which his father, Chief Iginla, has been a part. He is caught in the web of divided loyalty when he offers his father a safe conduct pass out of the country to escape trial and conviction.*

This analysis is certainly inconsistent with the personality the reader encounters between the covers of the play. There we meet a misguided, confused and detestable slogan-marcher who has no loyalty at all, contrary to what the playwright would want the reader believe. In Lakunle the reader encounters a most shallow and inconsistent portraiture. It is obvious from the blurb and the stage directions which describe him as "debonair... extrovert and likeable" (p. 5) and "dignified" (p.10) that the playwright obviously intended to show in him a tragic hero in the whirl of conflicting loyalties; a man torn between the currents of very powerful emotions and passions. However, this is unsuccessful for Lakunle is unimpressive and flat. In the first instance, Lakunle is not successfully portrayed as a noble man. As the play opens the anxiety in the Iginla

house over his impending visit gives one the picture of an eminent young man. He is practically worshipped by his parents. But as soon as the reader encounters him in the next scene s/he begins to doubt the basis for their adoration. The first evidence of inconsistency and lack of dignity in Lakunle is the break-up with his fiancée. It is not so much the break-up itself as the melodramatic manner of it all that offends the taste of the reader. Matter-of-factly he informs his fiancé that "there won't be any wedding because I've got more important matters to think about. I've got a long career ahead of me and I don't want any woman blocking my way. That's all" (p. 11). Playing the revolutionary he proclaims his reason for the break-up: "Family and personal loyalties are secondary to our revolutionary aims" (p. 15). Having demonstrated his lack of any personal loyalty in his attitude to the revolutionary corps and his fiancé, our next encounter with him displays a lack of any family loyalty. Contrary to what the blurb claims it is not family loyalty that moves him to procure the safe conduct pass out of the country for his father. Without any provocation whatsoever he declares cold-heartedly, almost gleefully, that his father "ought to be hanged" (p. 33). And soon enough he says to his elder brother, whom he gave Fadeke the impression he had affection for (p.13): "You're just a bum! A parasitic bum! You ought to be shot!" (p. 36). And then he gives out the real reason he procured the pass: "... among my colleagues. I can't hold my head high..." (p. 39). Then obviously telling a lie he declares to his father: "you are my father but my oath demands I should handcuff you right here and take you to jail. But I won't do that. I am offering you a safe-conduct pass out of the country... I've done it for you, father" (p. 45). The same father he would rather have shot. Then for betraying the so-called loyalty he swore to the Secret Revolutionary Army Corps he explains: "But I'm human too, aren't I?" (p. 37). Consequently when he is shot dead the reader feels nothing for him.

Tragedy thrives on experiences that are both shocking and attractive to us. Explaining this paradox Schiller notes that

> *It is a phenomenon common to all men that sad, frightful things, even the horrible, exercise over us an irresistible seduction, and that in presence of a scene of desolation and of terror we feel at once repelled and attracted by two equal forces*[14].

It is the absence of any of such a scene of desolation or terror with regards to Lakunle that is liable for his lack of attraction and delight for the reader. When his ignoble motives are revealed his actions and speeches

fail to delight the reader, rather it repels him/her. Despite his verbal profession of pain and loyalty he betrays every emotion the reader would have empathised with. And he does not execute any physical or psychological struggle whatsoever. Is it possible that the indifference of the reader to his predicament is induced by the failure to see him as a virtuous or noble character? Talking about the reader's delight in tragic actions Schiller observes that "the suffering of a weak soul, and the pain of a wicked character, do not procure us this enjoyment"[15]. Lakunle strikes the reader as both weak and wicked. If there were any noble human feelings in him perhaps the reader would have empathised with them.

Even Arthur Miller's view of tragedy as ensuing in the desire for man to investigate and contest circumstances that threaten to lower his dignity[16] does not bear Gbadamosi's characters out. Their inconsequential postures at contesting adversarial circumstances are stymied by the fact that their dignities are either already sullied or non-existent. And as the play progresses they sink even lower and lower into the mud of indignity.

After reading Gbadamosi's play one critically notes the failure of the drama, especially through the actions of the agents, to move us as the experiences of great men and women caught in tragic circumstances demanding of them ennobling options and resultant suffering. The characters are presented with no conflicting choices which demand decisive actions of them; actions which compromise or damn the agents any which way, but nonetheless which ennoble them and increase the reader's empathy and admiration for them.

Secondly, the agents are not really represented, in the fashion of tragic plots, as possessing any single passion or objective in the pursuit of which they necessarily must encounter disabling obstacles. In other words, there are no truly definite antagonising agents or circumstances that posit obstacles which enable dramatic conflict and tension.

Thirdly, *Trees Grow in the Desert* does not offer the reader any new knowledge or positive outlook on life. Although tragedy is commonly characterized by an unhappy ending, the passions of the agents, especially the protagonist, leaves the reader reasonably satiated or delighted. Perrine asserts that

> *With the fall of the hero and his gain in wisdom or self-knowledge, there is, besides the appalling sense of human waste, a fresh recognition of human greatness, a sense that human life has unrealized potentials. Though the hero may be defeated, he at least has dared greatly, and he gains understanding from his defeat*[17].

The difficulties with *Trees Grow in the Desert* could be congregated under two key problematics: It does not posit any tragic circumstance, or what Meirav calls "circumstances of tragic conflict"[18]; that is, those circumstances which demand from the protagonist a decisive (and often damning) action propelled by her/his weakness or total loyalty to one value or the other. Secondly, it fails to create agents who are like "ourselves". Agents who are not only dignified but also "neither paragons of virtue nor monsters of evil nor an impossible combination of contradictory traits"[19]. On these two inadequacies Meirav perhaps offers some advice to the dramaturge:

> *(A) playwright will be well advised to contrive such circumstances with a protagonist at their center. In doing so, and in convincing us that the protagonist has responded in the manner I have described, the playwright will succeed in presenting us with a great and admirable character, someone deserving to be remembered as a tragic hero*[20].

Having failed in this respect the question then is whether *Trees Grow in the Desert* is simply a bad tragedy or not a tragedy at all. Whatever the case, I see Gbadamosi's play as a failed tragedy, and the dramaturge as a naïve tragedian.

Notes and References

* This essay is an entirely revised version of an earlier one entitled "Not these Trees: Gbadamosi's Characters" published in *ASE: Journal of Contemporary Literature* (2, 1 [1993]: 165-178). Rasheed Gbadamosi's *Tree Grow in the Desert* is published at Ibadan: Kraft Books (1991).

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XENOPHANES AND ISLAMIC MONOTHEISM

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Abstract

Our world is far from peaceful. As it is, aside the ethno-political crises and socio-economical crises, religious crises equally abound. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has become perennial, religious fundamentalism cum terrorism is universal. Africa, as expected, is not immune to this. Nigeria for example, has witnessed several religious crises, especially in the Northern part of the country. Efforts are now geared towards application of comparative religions to solve the global problem of religious violence. In *The Mystery Teachings in World Religions*, Florice Tanner attempts a unification of the major world religions by analyzing and revealing fundamental ideals common to all religions. Along this line, this paper compares the monotheistic theology of Xenophanes, a major pre-Socratic Greek philosopher with the monotheism doctrine of Islam, one of the greatest religions in the world, as preached by its Prophet. Most religions enthusiasts would, of course, consider the ancient Greeks as merely anthropomorphic pagans. However, evidence of monotheism in Early Greek Philosophy of Xenophanes, as considered in this work, does not reveal major differences between Xenophanes monotheism and Islamic monotheism. The paper therefore concludes that most differences we identify in religions, with appropriate scientific investigations, are generally differences of form and never those of substance. Thus if mankind can collectively fight ignorance by discovering the unity in the apparent multiplicity of religious thoughts, there is little doubt that a reasonable level of tolerance would be achieved.

Introduction

I am Guilty of War when I Believe
The God I conceive is the One
Others must accept.
-Ralph M.Lewis.

Scholars of the early ancient Greek philosophy were never really agreed as to whether Xenophanes was a theologian.[1] However, a scrutiny of the available fragments of his works shows that he was not only a theologian but also a monotheist. He had lived several centuries before the advent of Islam[2] but the similarities between the fragments and certain verses of the Quran, especially as regards monotheism and some attributes of God, are quite astounding. Had Xenophanes lived about the same time, and in the same region, as the Prophet of Islam, we could have concluded that they had influenced one another. With ancient philosophy, this kind of conclusion is common, and convenient, in spite of little or no proofs.[3]

God is one, greatest among gods and men,
In no way like mortals either in body or in mind
-Xenophanes Fr. 23.

"Gods are not born" - Xenophanes Fr. 14

Compare for example:

And Your God
Is one God:
There is no God

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[1] Guthrie, W.K.C. in **A History of Greek Philosophy**, Vol. I, Cambridge, 1969, argue beyond reasonable doubts that Xenophanes, like many other early Greek philosophers, could lay claim to being a theologian. This is a detailed exposition on Early Greek Philosophy. Interested readers will find the section on Xenophanes Philosophy highly illuminating. Personally I found the section very useful. See also Jaeger Wermer, **The Theology of the Early Greek Philosophers,** London, 1936, Pp. 38-54 for a similar opinion.

[2] The word **Islam** is from the root **salam** meaning **peace**. The general meaning of **Islam** is however: "complete submission to the Will of God". Islamic theologians, especially the mystics, therefore believe that Islam, as a religion, had existed right from the beginning of the world and that it was only perfected with the coming of the Prophet of Islam. Any creature who submits to the Will of the Creator may then be considered a Muslim in the general sense of the word. See Quran 2:62 and 2:131-3.

[3] For example Xenophanes was, at a time, regarded as the founder of the Eleatic School of philosophy. Later, as the tutor of Parmenides, the actual founder of the School. Many of these so called Teachers – Student relationships theories are however based on similarities of doctrines, closeness of periods and nearness of places. You will agree with me that we cannot always rely on these. See Burnet J., **Early Greek Philosophy**, 4th Edition, London, 1930, p. 64ff on Xenophanes and Parmenides.

But He. -Quran 2:163
Say: He is God
The One and Only
God the Eternal, Absolute
He begetteth not
Nor is He begotten
And there is none
Like unto Him. -Qur'an 112.[4]

The aim of the paper is therefore to call our attention to these similarities[5], perhaps we can all learn a few lessons, and probably see ourselves, one day, beyond ethnics and religious differences, as citizens of the world.[6]

'Man is the only being that is a prey to ambition,
To avarice, to an immoderate desire of life, to superstition,
He is the only one that troubles himself about his burial,
and even what is to become of him after death.'[7]

An Historical Account of Religious Consciousness

Anthropologists think that humans appeared on earth with *Homo erectus*, at least, 500, 000 years ago. This was followed by the *Homo sapiens* about400, 000 years after and finally by the *Homo sapiens* sapiens[8] barely 30,000 years ago. One therefore wonders concerning the general state of human consciousness towards God about this period, if at all they had

[4] For Xenophanes' fragments, I rely on Guthrie, op.cit. The Quran passages are from **The Holy Quran: Text, Translation and Commentary** by Abdullah Yusuf Ali.A reliable translation; with an attempt to convey the spirit of the Qur'an, especially to the non-Muslims.

[5] The closeness of Xenophanes theological philosophy to Judeo-Christian monotheism has been recognized by scholars (e.g. Jaeger op. cit. p.51). It is also instructive to observe that certain doctrines of Christianity are similar to those found in the ancient philosophy of the Pythagoreans as well as those of the Orphic religion which probably had influenced Pythagoras himself. Jesus Christ has also been compared with Socrates e.g. in Ferguson, John **Plato Republic Book X**, London, 1957, p. 14.

[6] The socio-religious crisis in Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria, towards the end of the year 2008 is a ready example. All hands must therefore be on deck to forestall future repetitions. At the international level, the Israeli –Palestinian problem is noteworthy. One of the first duties of the new President of the United States of America,Obama, when he assumed duty had to do with the wars in both Iraq and Afghanistan, which purportedly bother on Terrorism, Religious Fundamentalism and Religious Intolerance. Most people however believe that the United States economic interest is the main reason behind the wars. Indeed, all over the world, our religions appear not to give us the desired peace. Something therefore must be wrong with us or with our religions.

[7] **Pliny's Natural History,** Edited by Loyd Haberly, New York, 1957, p. 2.

[8] *'Man who knows that he knows'*

any idea of God or religion. Little wonder then that religions first appeared under the garments of magic and attires of superstitions,[9]though many of these are, surprisingly, still part of modern religions.

The earliest period of human consciousness of God as identified by anthropologists is the animistic period. This is a period of magic and superstitions. Animism is the belief that all objects possess soul and that the entire universe itself is alive on account of the presence of spirit vitality. Animistic people of the primitive world attempted to control the forces of nature through magic; offering sacrifices in order to appease the gods; seeking the gods' blessings and protection. In the *Theogony*, Hesiod explains the birth of the gods. He mentions Chaos(Void) ,Gaea(Earth) and Uranus(Sky).These primal creatures of the Cosmic could more or less be taken as symbolic representations of the animistic level of universal religious consciousness ,for the ancients believed that water, sky and earth had spirits and souls of their own that could be angered or appeased and controlled-thus the first generation of the Greek gods could be the poet's attempt at presenting the animistic period of religious evolution.

This was followed by the anthropomorphic period when gods were presented with human attributes. Homeric period of Greek civilization falls into this category, hence the ancient Greeks inherited this epoch from their ancestors. Xenophanes and some of his contemporaries had to struggle against this in varying degrees. The second generation of ancient Greek gods, the Titans, led by Cronos, was strictly anthropomorphic. At this level of religious consciousness, human beings began to give to the gods a number of human attributes, characteristics and behavior.

The third period is the mechanistic period of religions and priesthoods, also referred to as Determinism, when human beings first had the idea of a unique, Supreme Being whose Will pervades the entire universe. Determinism, as used in this paper, is that stage of religious consciousness when mankind held the belief that past events determine the present situation. Determinism in this context says that all events have a cause and that the moment the cause has taken place, the event must follow automatically. In my opinion the Olympians, the third generation of Greek gods in the Hesiodic account, led by Zeus, mythically represent the mechanistic period of religious consciousness. Though the Olympians are generally viewed as anthropomorphic and polytheistic, the mythical presentation of Zeus is very close to the idea of a Supreme Deity. In

[9] For comprehensive accounts of magic and superstitions, see Frazer, J.G. **The Golden Bough**, London, 1960. Also, the Qur'an 2:102 for a brief reference to the origin of magic.

Homer's *Iliad* for instance, the WILL of Zeus is one of the major themes, next only to the Anger of Achilles. Though the **Moirai** (Fates) are said to be under no control of the gods; yet Zeus decisions are presented as unquestioned.

It must be pointed out that the above divisions are not in any way perfect as evolution of religious consciousness has little to do with time and space. There are at present many religious ideologies in the world. Most religions have elements of more than one ideology. Same goes for magic, animism, anthropomorphism and determinism. None of these has totally given way to others. Polytheism, Dualism, Monism, Monotheism and Pantheism are all present in most religions in varying degrees. The most dominant ideology is then used to describe that religion. Determinism therefore recognizes a Supreme Being who has bestowed a limited free will to mankind. Known as the One, Fire, the Great Architect, God,Nous and many other appellations, this Infinite Intelligence, the Great Mind behind the Universe has set the standard for conduct while each man is expected to reap the reward according to his action.

This seems to be the present position of man in relation to God, at least within our great religions; Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Yet others are already moving towards mysticism-defined as science of religion or scientific religion. Mysticism is in fact a personal direct knowledge of Reality. Perhaps this is the appropriate period in the history of man when religions should give way to mysticism, when sectarian religions should become the platforms and structures for spiritualism to lean on.

At the beginning of ancient Greek philosophy, there were no clear distinctions between philosophy, theology, cosmology, astronomy and biology. This is because the philosophical and scientific accounts of that period were mixed with poetry, divine revelation, myth, sagas, legends, folk tales as well as reason. The philosophers were also the theologians, mythologists, mathematicians and scientists. Philosophers like Thales, Anaximander, Anaximenes, Pythagoras, Alcmaeon, Xenophanes, Heraclitus and a host of others were actually the first set of natural scientists as well as theologians. Xenophanes was one of the outstanding ones.

Examining the Concept 'Monotheism'

Monotheism is the belief in the unity of God; that God is One. Among the ancient Greeks, there was really no question of Monotheism. The religion of the ancient Greeks was anthropomorphic polytheism. However, as pointed out above, the power of Father Zeus was such that he was

very close to the idea of the Omnipotent. He avoided the marriage with Thetis, the mother of Achilles, in order to preserve his throne, having forcefully obtained that secret from the titan, Prometheus.

Though Xenophanes sometimes refers to gods in the plural as in fragments 18 and 34, this needs not be taken in the literal sense because the question of monotheism was not really important to the early Greeks. Thus he only followed the Greeks convention by speaking of the gods in plural. As a theological poet, the important thing was to convey the idea of a Supreme Being. This he did in no uncertain term, and without mincing words, in fragment 23 where he says that God is One, the Only, the Unique.Guthrie10[Guthrie op.cit.p.376], commenting on this has this to say and I quite agree with him:

> *Doubtless Xenophanes did not condemn the worship of Gods outright, provided men's notion of them was stripped Of anthropomorphic crudities and immorality. He is emphatic That god is essentially one...*

Concerning the form of Xenophanes' Divinity, the general interpretation among commentators is that the god of Xenophanes was not incorporeal. It is therefore assumed that Xenophanes was not ahead of his age in thought and that he could not have conceived the idea of an incorporeal being at that point in time. Scholars reached this conclusion on account of the available materials that suggest that the god of Xenophanes was spherical in shape and that his god had identical figure with the universe.11 [Some scholars think that the *sphere* was Parmenidian. See note 3 above. A few even considered Xenophanes a Pantheist on account of the spherical image ascribed to god. However, in Islam, the popular saying; 'to God we belong and Unto Him is our return' could also indicate pantheistic doctrine. In Christianity, God, making man in His Image, if taken in the literal sense, is clearly anthropomorphic. cf. Xenophanes fragment 27(a doubtful fragment): 'from earth come all things, all things end in earth.' The point is that in matters bothering on god ,soul ,religion, birth, death, rebirth and mysticism ,general consensus and definite knowledge are quite difficult, if not impossible.cf.Jaeger,op.cit.p.43 where he says that Xenophanes should not be seen as a pantheist.Guthrie,op.cit.pp.395-6 says; 'we are like people searching for gold in a dark room containing many other kind of treasures beside. Some will lay hands on it, but they will have no means of confirming their discovery. So with philosophers searching for truth, the one who lights on it may well not believe his luck'. This is true of metaphysics.]This line of thought does not appear convincing to me. I dare say that a little reflection on the use of geometrical symbols to convey important mystical

doctrines among the Ancients12 [For example the Pythagoreans, who were mystics as well as mathematicians, made use of several such symbols. Pythagoras himself was actually a contemporary of Xenophanes.] will show that Xenophanes' sphere was allegory and I think that he must have believed his god formless. Further reflection should reveal the perfection, fullness, roundness and completeness of the sphere. More so, Pharaoh Amenhotep IV, known as Akhenaton, is said to have preached monotheism over seven centuries before Xenophanes; and considering the impact of Egyptian Mystery School on Greek philosophy, it should not be surprising if Xenophanes considered his god without body.

Xenophanes believed in one god, complete, eternal and non-anthropomorphic. I cannot therefore see any difference between Xenophanes concept of god and Aristotle's unmoved Mover. It then appears to me that Aristotle, in his account of pre-Socratic philosophers, gave little recognition to Xenophanes as a sage. This is not surprising when we note the comment of Jaeger that Aristotle is the most valuable source of information on the pre-Socratic but that however "the weight of his testimony has been decidedly impaired during the last fifty years as we have become more and more clearly aware of his inability to grasp the ideas of his predecessors except in the fixed categories of his own system."13 [Jaeger, op.cit.p.53.]

Islamic monotheism is pure monotheism. It has been reported that of the twenty-three years spent by the Prophet of Islam to preach the message, ten of these were expended only on the oneness, unity, and supremacy of God. It constitutes part of the first of the five pillars of Islam. Xenophanes monotheism may therefore be a part and parcel of Islamic monotheism: There is no god except God.

The Religious Ideology of Xenophanes

Xenophanes was born at Colophon, an Ionian city, around 570 BC [14 the Prophet of Islam was born around 570 AD] and he is said to have lived for about a hundred years. He fled the city for Sicily when Colophon fell to the Medes in 546.Xenophanes wrote in Hexameters, elegiacs and iambics. Much of his works is lost, however the extant fragments are sufficient for a considerable understanding of his theology, especially as regards the unity of reality.

The beginning of philosophy has been traced to the Ionians. Thales, a native of Miletus, an Ionian city, has the honour of been recognized as the first philosopher. The primary goal of the Ionian philosophers, and indeed the earliest Greek philosophers, from Thales to other pre-Socratic

philosophers, including the sage Xenophanes, was to determine and define reality. Reality, according to these philosophers, is the original substance constituting the universe. Thales identified the **arche**, the reality, as water while Anaximenes believed it to be air. Though a few philosophers considered reality as more than one, others, like Xenophanes, thought it to be one. Most of the Ionian philosophers believed that the universe originated out of a primal unity, which appears in many forms. This was the main direction of philosophy, especially before the study of matter gave way to that of form with the philosophy of Pythagoras.

In fragment 7, Xenophanes satirizes Pythagoras and ridicules his doctrine of the transmigration of souls. This theory has it that the soul, being immortal, survives earthly death and comes back to the world in another body, be it that of a man or an animal. The rebirth continues until the soul is purified and learnt acquired important lessons. This purification, according, to the doctrine, is necessary as a result of sin. Pythagoras is reported to have said that he recognized the voice of a late friend in a dog. What Xenophanes considers ridiculous is not likely to be the doctrine of reincarnation per se but the idea that a sinful soul could incarnate in the body of animal. The important lesson to us here is that Xenophanes must have given serious thought to spiritual matter in relation to the relationship between man and god; birth, death and rebirth; appearance and reality.

Xenophanes also attacks both Homer and Hesiod for describing the gods in anthropomorphic terms. Theological reformation was the main reason behind Xenophanes verses. His philosophy was essentially theological. Homer and Hesiod dominated the religious conception and understanding of the Greeks. Their works were the foundation of education and religion. Philosophers like Plato criticized Homer for the immoral presentation of the gods. Socrates was asked to take hemlock having been accused of impiety and corruption of the youths. However, before Socrates and Plato, Xenophanes had taken it upon himself to present the divine in suitable and befitting garment. In fragment 10, he says that everything known is influenced by Homer and that Homer and Hesiod are guilty of portraying the gods in anthropomorphic manner. In fragment 11 he says that both Homer and Hesiod present the gods as thieves and adulterers. Xenophanes spoke against anthropomorphism in strong terms:

> *Ethiopian imagine their gods as black and Snub-nosed,*
> *Thracians as blue-eyed and red-eyed.*
>
> *-Fragment 16*

He continues in Fragment 15:

But if oxen and horses or lions had hands,
Or could draw as men do, horses
Would draw the gods shaped like horses

And lions like lions.[15 As Jaeger observes,op.cit.p.47,the Egyptians had already created gods in the image of animals.]

Islamic Monotheism

The prophet of Islam was born about 570 AD in Mecca, Arabia. He taught that there is no god except the Almighty God. The teachings revealed to him were recorded in the Quran. From about 8th to the 14th centuries, the Muslims spread learning all over Europe. During the Dark Ages in Europe, the Muslims maintained the highest civilization in Europe and took the knowledge of science, literature, art, and philosophy to France, England andGermany.16 [For a brief and interesting account of Islam and Islamic Monotheism, see Florice Tanner, **The Mystery Teaching in World Religions,** The Theosophical Publishing House, United States of America, 1973.pp.36-40.This fascinating book is a must read for all students of mysticism and comparative religions.]According to the Quran, there is only one God, Allah.

There is no god but He -the Living,
The self-Subsisting, Eternal,
No slumber can seize Him
Nor sleep. His are all things
In the heavens and on earth.- Quran 2:225.

Concerning the omnipresence of God, Quran 2:115 says;

To God belongs the East
And the West; Whithersoever
Ye turn; there is the presence of God.

In the same vein, Xenophanes fragments 25 and 26 have it that:

Always he remains in the same place,
Not moving at all, nor indeed does it
Befit him to go here and there at
Different times;
But without toil he makes all things shiver
By the impulse of his mind.

It is reported in the hadith collection of Bukhari that the Prophet of

Islam said that his position in relation to other prophets of God is like that of a man who has built a beautiful house, completed, except for the place for a brick, 'so I am that brick' says the Prophet. Before Islamic civilization at Arabia the citizens were idolaters. The era before Islam is known as the period of ignorance. Over 360 idols are said to be worshipped at the Kabbah, hence the importance of monotheism in Islam. Several verses of the Quran emphasize this.

The Islamic tradition says that Allah has sent about 124 thousand messengers-all with the message of peace. The completion of the message came with the advent of the Prophet. A Muslim is not expected to make unnecessary distinction between the messengers of God. The most important thing is the message, not the messengers. (Quran 2:285) Since fragment 23 of Xenophanes buttresses Surah 112 of the Quran, then Xenophanes could be one of the 124 thousands messengers of God!

Conclusion

In conclusion Carl Jung, in his *Archetypal Theory of Psychology*, posits that certain ideas are of the archetypal kind; emanating from the collective unconscious of the universe. Attuning with the collective unconscious would make it possible for individuals to receive the same inspiration, regardless of time and space, thus if the message is the same, the source must definitely be the same. In other words, this paper has attempted to draw parallels between the monotheism of Islam and that of Xenophanes' -a period of over eleven thousand years before Islam. However, what is true of Islam and Xenophanes is even truer in Christianity, Judaism and Hinduism. Without playing down the impact of economy, culture and politics on the religious violence, at the risk of oversimplification of our religious predicament, there is no doubt that the right sort of knowledge can rid our world of religious fanatics. This type of illumination the paper has tried to stimulate. *Fiat Lux*.