COLONIALITY OF KNOWLEDGE IN AFRICA:

Essays in Honour of Professor Damian Opata

Edited by

Chukwu Romanus Nwoma

Dina Yerima-Avazi

Onyeka Odoh

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Preface

Prof. Ugwuntikiri Damian Opata did not receive the idea of a festschrift that would mark his retirement from the employ of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka with enthusiasm. If anything, he was noncommittal. This of course was expected, given the fact that Prof. Opata is not easily moved by things that typically excite other men. Rather, he is enthusiastic about creative, superior reasoning and thought-provoking arguments which incite his intellectual curiosity. Although he acknowledged that a festschrift in his honour was a good course, he was particular about the quality of a festschrift that would be produced in his honour. The burden of ensuring quality was what we, the editors, had to bear and trudge on with along the many paths we traversed in the course of producing this Festschrift. How well we have discharged that burden is left to the judgement of the readers.

Much of Prof. Opata's scholarship depict him as a humanist who is largely guided by the fundamental principles of humanism, among which is his leaning on the dignity of the human person and the freedom of the individual to attain enlightenment and produce knowledge. He has variously challenged conventional thoughts and Western epistemic ideals that grossly circumscribed knowledge against African epistemic systems. He often questions dogmatic and doctrinal premises that hold African knowledge productions inferior to Western values. The foregoing provoked and shaped the focus of this book, to interrogate the coloniality of the structures of knowledge in Africa. As one of the thinkers of coloniality, Professor Opata's decolonial and critical oeuvre spans through the study of African literature, postcolonial discourse, and decolonization of African knowledge production systems. As Professor Opata retires from the employ of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, this book is meant to honour and celebrate his iconic contributions in these areas of scholarship by addressing and evaluating the state of the fields he has contributed to and shaped to some extent.

We sincerely thank everyone who contributed to the success of this Festschrift and in particular all the authors and reviewers without whose contributions the Festschrift would not have been produced. Special thanks go to Prof. Chinyere Ngonebu, Dr. Chinenye Amonyeze, Dr, Kingsley Ugwuanyi, Dr. Crescentia Ugwuona, Dr. Jane Obasi, Miss Henrietta Okafor, Mr. Chukwu Matthias, Mr. Hillary Chidiebere Ekere, Mr. Onyemuche Anele

Ejesu and Mr. Onyedikachi Okodo, all of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, for their selfless and vigorous service. We also appreciate Dr. Tony Obaje, the Head of Department, Kogi State University for his gracious nature and input. We hope this Festschrift will encourage and inspire all scholars interested in projects of decolonization. We congratulate Prof. Damian Ugwutikiri Opata on the occasion of his retirement from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka and seventieth birthday. Through this Festschrift, we express our appreciation for his commitment and support to postcolonial and decolonial scholarship, also to the development of research, teaching and mentoring.
Happy birthday and happy retirement!

Chukwu Romanus Nwoma
Dina Yerima-Avazi
Onyeka Odoh

Foreword

What We Do When We Do Theory

Imagine you are in a theatre, a room, or a church, together with others. You are watching a play, a dance, or a ritual, being performed on the stage. Imagine you are sitting right in front of the proscenium (the part of the stage in front of the curtain), or perhaps right at the back, or by the right or the left hand side. Truth is that wherever you are sitting invariably determines your view of what is happening. If you are sitting right in front, you are more likely to see what is happening on the stage from the frontal view; if you are sitting in an obscure corner by the left or right, you are most likely only going to see the actors on the stage partially. In ancient Greece, that place you are sitting was called *theoria*, translated as theory, or simply, the perspective from which you observe actions on stage. After reading literary works by authors such as Homer to Aeschylus and others, Aristotle, considered to be the first literary theorist, came up with the first theory of literature as tragedy, captured in *ThePoetics*.

To the degree that "the world is a stage" or that reality could be seen as the very thing that happens on stage, we are all theorists, or we carry theories along wherever we go. If, for example, you were born into a Christian family, you would most likely grow up believing that Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and life. If you were born into a Muslim family, you grow up professing the truth you received. In all, you begin to see the world based on how you are positioned to read reality. If, by accident, you change your original position, for example, move from one obscure corner to the front, you might be shocked to realize that what you had hitherto considered absolute, indeed, issued from a limited perspective.

What we do when we do theory is to put into coherent narrative the perspective from which we engage with the world. Every theorizing worth the name necessarily issues from the questions that are autochthonous to the people, that is, questions that arise from their lived experience as humans. Though one's position may not be the best, it, however, does seem that no position ever captures the entirety of truth, hence the Igbo proverb popularized by Achebe: "The world is like a Mask dancing. If you want to see it well, you do not stand in one place." The dancing masquerade also

changes positions not only to be seen by people, but also to see people and perspectives.

Professor Damian Opata is one of Africa's homegrown theorists who remind us of the structures of European theories about Africa. He alerted us in his own unique way that what the European colonizers foisted on Africans is only the European view of the world. To achieve their goal, they had to convince Africans that the perspective from which Africans viewed the world was wrong. And they went about their goal without even taking pain to occupy the position from which Africans have seen the world. But the Hegelian master is what he is precisely because he never takes the position of the slave. The colonial master's goal was simply to colonize and to dominate; that practice can therefore, be understood with the help of the term, coloniality—an umbrella concept that captures the structure and practice of Western colonialism, especially its forms of knowledge as a technology of power. This term is particularly associated with the Latin American decolonial studies with important names including Anibal Quijano, Walter Mignolo, Ramón Grosfoguel and others. We can now add Professor Opata to the list of theorists of coloniality.

In his very popular book, *Ekwensu in the Igbo Imagination, A Christian Devil or an Igbo Heroic Deity?* Opata makes a strong case for reexamining the Igbo understanding of Ekwensu. He rigorously analyzes how the missionaries literally demonized an Igbo deity in order to make space for their operative binary of good and evil, black and white, superior deity and inferior ones, and finally, establish their own version. His theoretical intervention has expectedly attracted objections, especially from those who are already knee-deep into the new perspective, and have to protect their vested interests. Their objections might be rooted in their suspicion that he is promoting paganism. Regardless of whatever his belief might be, his concern as an intellectual is to unmask the genealogy of Western epistemic framing of the African reality. This unmasking, or if you will, the systematic peeling off of the layers of European reality, is precisely what deconstruction means.

What then do we do with a deconstructed reality? What do you to do with the fallen Humpty Dumpty? It is up to every individual. The true intellectual digs a little deeper, perhaps in order to reassemble the narrative in ways that make sense. This, I think, is the relevance of this festschrift in honor of Opata's retirement, his switch to emeritus status.

Opata is taking a bow as a teacher, but not as an intellectual. The goal of this festschrift, as with most others, is not only to acknowledge the importance of the professor's intellectual contributions, and in this particular case, to acknowledge Opata's importance in the intellectual lives of the writers; it is also, and perhaps primarily, to keep the conversation he initiated going. An important aspect of any conversation is a critical examination of the original idea; it is, to stick with the image of *theoria* we sketched above, to remind the original theorist that there are perspectives he or she has not yet examined. This is precisely what Aristotle did regarding Plato's teaching; it is what Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Jacques Lacan and other French poststructuralists did about Hegel. It is what every serious thinker does. Every generation of intellectuals worth its name must engage with the ideas of the ones that came before it, reject shaky ones, and build upon whatever remains.

I have known Opata for quite some time and I am proud to call him a friend. I have been enriched by his ideas, and I regard him as one of the most important Igbo intellectuals today. I use the word "important" in its constructive and socially instructive ways. It is true that African scholars in the diaspora have a profound role to play in the production of knowledge about Africa. But African scholars on the continent fulfil that role in a much more far-reaching way. They teach and mentor future African scholars who are, in turn, best situated to theorize about the world they experience firsthand. In this festschrift, those whom Opata touched and molded intellectually are raising their voices, and in their own ways drawing attention to the perspectives they are occupying. They keep the light of discourse burning. At least after Opata we can no longer sit back and let other people produce theories about our lives as if we did not possess a mind. So, let the theorizing begin.

Chielozona Eze
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Introduction

The African people have been in contact with the West from as early as the 15th century for trade, war, and various purposes. However, there is rarely an African-human contact that could be as momentous as the 19th century European colonization of the continent. This is because of its combined economic, political, and social interest that would change, for a long time, the African peoples' quest for recognition. Suffice it to say that our use of ''Africa'' here refers to Sub-Saharan Africa, (in other terms, ''black Africa'' as adopted by Wole Soyinka in his *Poems of Black Africa*) whose social and political history remarkably differs from the kingdoms of North Africa. In *The West and the Rest of us,* Chinweizu provides a good trajectory to begin this investigation. He divides the aggression of Western Europe on the rest of the world into two waves. The first wave which began from the Renaissance and Europe's ''learning of the ancient Mediterranean,'' was dominated by the Portuguese who occupied the trans-Sahara trade route for West African gold, guided by their military might and the Pope's authority (Chinweizu 3). Having lost all effort to break the Portuguese monopoly of this trade route in West Africa, their Spanish rival went West sailing around the world in search of the spice island of the East (India) to circumvent the area of the Pope's jurisdiction (Chinweizu 4). This misadventure led to the Spanish exploration of the Americas and the subsequent Columbian exchange that Africa would not be in a hurry to forget. This is not just because it initiated the infamous trans-Atlantic trade of Africans as slaves to farm the vast impounded lands from the Americas but because it also instituted racism as a systematic justification of this slavery- a scourge that the descendants of the slaves and indeed the entire world are suffering till date.

The economic prosperity and imperial dominance of Spain in the Americas sparked off the greed of other European countries, particularly England, France, and the Dutch whose fight to have a stake in imperial and colonial affairs constituted the second wave of the West's assault on the rest of the world, particularly Africa (Chinweizu 6). Though the conquistadors' suppression of the native people and their expropriation of the native land underlie the common features in both waves of the assault, the greatest destructive effect of the encounter between the West and the rest of the world, especially Africa is experienced in the psyche of the colonized people -what Hussein Bulhan elsewhere considers an ''assault on the world of meaning,'' which is the ''changing of the indigenous peoples' religion, knowledge system and identity'' (Bulhan 245). The coloniality of the African being is one tragic historic development that would haunt post-

independent African subjects for a long while, given that epistemological configurations cannot easily be altered like an algorithm or a computer program. If any headway would be made, it must begin from a position of understanding of the extent and direction of the change that the colonized African is going through. Though they have different jump-off points, this fragmented personality and the way forward seem the pivot of coloniality, postcolonial, and decolonial scholarship.

The stature and relevance of coloniality in the Global South are evident throughout many disciplines. The humanities and social sciences together with art and society from which they draw their subject are at the front lines of this scholarship. Art and knowledge production from the philosophical standpoint of coloniality evoke questions which countries of developing nations on the African continent and indeed other continents in the Global South - Asia and South America, ask. Simply put, coloniality involves the foregrounding of art, the intellectual and cultural reasoning which recognize that there is a ''continuity of colonial forms of domination after the end of the colonial administration produced by colonial cultures and structures in the modern/colonialist capitalist world system'' (Grosfoguel 13, 14).Hence, coloniality's distinction is its insistence on the continuity of colonial structures in the framing of power relations between the formerly colonized and former colonizers in all areas. Thus issues from artistic creation and urbanization to economic policies, international relations to development, and provincialization of ideas among others are covered in coloniality.

The coloniality of the structures of knowledge in Africa constitutes the focus of this festschrift. Its objective is to cover some thoughts on the coloniality of African literature and polemics about it. Professor Damian Ugwutikiri Opata has been one of the thinkers of coloniality in the study of African literature in Nigeria. His decolonial and critical oeuvre spans the study of African literature, postcolonial discourse, and decolonization of African knowledge production systems. His work as a scholar, thinker, and critic has brought the works of pioneer and contemporary African writers and critics to speak for constant interrogation and relevance. As Professor Opata retires from his post as a professor from the Department of English and Literary Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, this book is meant to honor and celebrate his iconic contribution in this area of scholarship by addressing and evaluating the state of the field he has contributed to and shaped to some reasonable extent.

Our role, as editors, in this book has been to sift through the entries submitted to select only the papers that align with the central

and sub-themes of the book, an intricate task that explains the minimal volume of the book. That objective is set in motion by the first article in this volume entitled ‘‘Rethinking Coloniality: Opata and the African Epistemic System’’ by Chukwu Romanus Nwoma, Dina Yerima-Avazi, and Onyeka Odoh. This paper lays out the tapestry of Opata’s scholarship in the last four decades, highlighting his major contributions in the field of decolonial scholarship within the African and Igbo epistemic systems, respectively. Nwoma, Yerima-Avazi, and Odoh’s paper introduced the role that translation and naming play in entrenching Western thought patterns, in a way that stifle the indigenous pattern, in Igbo and African societies during and after the contact with Europe. It would appear pessimistic to dwell on the injustice of history. However, the papers that reflect on the past in this collection do so in keeping faith with trying to understand, as Chinua Achebe would say, ‘‘where the rain began to beat us.’’ Thus, Uchenna Oyali provides a reflective, but fundamental, question on the extent to which the Christian missionaries mistranslated the Igbo conception of *God* as *Chineke* and the *Devil* as *Ekwensu.* In exploring translation issues as embedded in decolonial scholarship, Oyali’s paper provides a segue to Augustine Akwu Atabor and Augustine Ainoko Shaibu’s article which advances the argument from translation to epistemological issues by investigating the perceptions of indigenous knowledge and knowledge systems. It also argues that indigenous knowledge can to a large extent hold up under the scientific testing methods. In a further extension of Opata’s ‘‘Ekwensu’’ thesis, under what Madhu Krishnan, elsewhere, would consider a ‘‘constantly shifting field of relation,’’ Laz Ogenyi and Walter Ugwuagbo problematize Ekwensu, questioning both the method and motive of the author.

In furtherance of the referential space that Opata’s critique of the center-margin relations has created, Catherine Oluchi Okoli’s essay on *prebendalism* echoes how Marx Weber's idea of prebend that reflects the ‘‘patron-client neopatrimonialism’’ haunts post-independent Igbo society. This society still suffers the legacy of the Warrant Chieftaincy system created by colonial authority to collect taxes from the people but which turned into a cesspool of corruption and nepotism.

As important as this ambiguous part of our history is, some progress has to be made as the future does not exist in the past. In response to the need to make progress, B.M. Mbah’s paper provides yet a broader critical lens to re-negotiate our identity as colonized people by interrogating the conflicted nature of the postcolonial Igbo

subject. Mbah also hypothesizes on the new identity this subject can create and project as uniquely his, to the world.

As Africans, the coloniality of our beings is a fact that we must deal with. We do not know how we would have turned out had colonization not taken place -perhaps better or worse, but we have seen what has become of us from the event of colonization. The matter is made even more complex because of other corollaries like migration, and globalization that constantly deplete the vestige of the ontological identity of the African - if anything like that exists. This has brought about a crisis of identity which Yerima-Avazi has addressed using Brydon's notion of multiple epistemologies. The paper advocates for hybridization of identity at the individual subjective level since a return to the pristine autochthonous identity is no longer possible. By and large, Ijeoma Okorji and Sopruchi Aboh's paper seeks to expand our understanding of hybridity through a return migration and successful reintegration at a personal and communal level, considering the tangible and intangible factors at play in both. Their findings reveal that reintegration is a personal and communal phenomenon. In any case, A.N. Akwanya's paper reminds the literary scholars who seem to be adrift with the emotions of history and politics, that though those areas can provoke art, art must remain faithful to its identity. Hence his paper explores the form and structure of prose narrative using two experimental texts, positing that it is the very experimentation with form and structure that is the impetus of the novel form and has determined its trajectory over time.

This book would be most itself if it does not more than foreground the ideas, reflections, beliefs, opinions, reactions, and/or even refutations of issues at the heart of Opata's area of scholarship. If this Festschrift succeeds in foregrounding Opata's views on how the African world and the Igbo society in particular were affected and still being affected by the colonial legacies, we will consider it very successful. Above all, the book should find a place in the appropriate shelf if it engages the effect of the said colonial legacies superlatively expressed in the forms of knowledge that the colonized African subjects use in making sense of their daily reality and existence.

Chukwu Romanus Nwoma
Dina Yerima-Avazi
Onyeka Odoh

Part 1

DECOLONIZATION AS AFFIRMATION OF COLONIALITY

1

RETHINKING COLONIALITY: OPATA AND AFRICAN EPISTEMOLOGY

Chukwu Romanus Nwoma, Dina Yerima-Avazi and Onyeka Odoh

Abstract

This essay explores the concept of coloniality in line with the major preoccupations of Opata's key critical works. It interrogates few selected works of Opata, focusing on his theorizations about Igbo cosmology and his musings on the application of decolonial thinking in the creation and critique of literary texts. The overriding theme in these works is a focus on indigenous material: be it cultural texts or episteme; the exposure of the colonizing/imperialist and hegemonic outlook of Western scholars on the one hand, and the sometimes-uncritical viewpoints 'requiring unmasking' by African scholars, on the other. Opata's handling of the decolonial project in the above categories are done within the framework of postcolonialism. The essay concludes with Opata's postulation of a projection of epistemology from a place of body and geopolitics of knowledge, and not an alternative outlook to the western prescribed way of viewing the world.

Introduction

In recent decades, the discourse of decolonization which has become ubiquitous in workshops, seminars, and lectures across and beyond the Global South has gone through a widening diversification process. While previous analyses were underpinned by different strands of postcolonialism, from the beginning of the twenty-first century onwards the discourse opened itself to a new form of theorization- coloniality. Coloniality is all encompassing, as it embraces historical roots, theorization and social action in its attempt to identify the living legacy of colonialism in all ramifications and existing social orders. This differentiates it from postcolonialism which had captured the colonialism discourse before its emergence.

Although coloniality as a concept has its roots in Latin American scholarship, its application and manifestation apply to nations of the entire Global South. It encompasses within its rhetoric, ideas of colonialism, postcolonialism, decolonization, and decoloniality. Coloniality is simply put, a recognition of the consciousness of the ‘‘colonial matrix of power’’ as the logic of coloniality is the implementation of capitalist appropriation of land; the exploitation of labour and accumulation of wealth and authority; the control of gender, sexuality, and subjectivity; and the concentration of knowledge in fewer and fewer hands. (Quijano 546; Mignolo 165 2007a, Mignolo 477-478 2007b). Coloniality was introduced by Aníbal Quijano in the 1990s, in the hinging moment of the end of the Cold War and the introduction of neoliberal global designs also known as globalization. He projected coloniality to undrape the underlying logic of all Western (including the US) modern/colonial imperialisms. For Quijano, there is no modernity without coloniality. Hence, he advanced the idea that modernity/coloniality are two sides of the same coin. Before that time, modernity was viewed as a totality, and colonialism was an unfortunate situation that would end with the advancement of modernity’s vision and ideals. ‘‘Quijano’s proposal was that coloniality is a necessary component of modernity and therefore it cannot be ended if global imperial designs in the name of modernity continue. Coloniality, in other words, is the darker side of Western modernity’’ (Quinjano 541,544; Mignolo 155 2007a). Pervasive names with the movement apart from Quijano include Walter Mignolo, Ramon Grosfuguel, Sylvia Wynter, Catherine Walsh, and Roberto Hernandez amongst others. Coloniality presently finds expression in several different ways by scholars of decolonial leanings across various disciplines, a few of which are gender studies, philosophy, sociology, and literature. The difference which coloniality introduces into the decolonial movement are: its disassociation with Western epistemology (unlike postcolonialism which has roots in Western theorization), the urgency and pervasiveness of action required by decolonial thinkers (scholars as well) in itsblurring of the boundaries between theory and practice, as well as scholarship and activism. All in all, it is important to note the intersection of postcolonialism, decoloniality, and decolonization. The latter two are the driving forces of theorizing both postcolonialism and coloniality. The aim of these theories is to expose and denounce Western hegemony in the implementation of

capitalist appropriation of land, exploitation of labor and accumulation of wealth, authority, control of gender, sexuality, subjectivity, and knowledge. This includes the ‘‘re-writing of global history from the perspective and critical consciousness of coloniality and from within geo and body-political knowledge (within the distinct experiences and viewpoints of other world players), working toward a ‘‘vision of human life that is not dependent upon or structured by the forced imposition of one ideal of society over those that differ, which is what modernity/coloniality does’’ (Mignolo 459, 484). Consequently, it is this engagement that we find in the works and writings of Professor Damian Opata.

This article is divided into four sections. While the introduction explores the concept of coloniality, the second section takes a short panoramic survey of the main preoccupations of Opata's major critical works. The third part interrogates few selected works of Opata, focusing on his theorizations about Igbo cosmology with a consideration of coloniality and his musings on the application of decolonial thinking in creation and critique. The last section of the essay concludes the discussion.

Opata and Epistemology

Damian Opata's scholarship began over four decades ago in an amalgam of efforts to project African and Igbo worldview as well as interrogate all systems of knowledge he engaged with. As was the fashion in the last two decades of the twentieth century, he aligned with postcolonial ideology and applied its tenets in decolonizing African literature, philosophy, and epistemology as his writings and teachings cut across disciplinary boundaries in a brilliant show of inspiring scholarship. Prominent amongst his numerous publications are the following books: *Essays on Igbo World View* (1998), *Major Themes in African Literature* (2000), *Towards a Genealogy of African Time* (2002), *Ekwensu in the Igbo Imagination: A Christian Devil or an Igbo Heroic Deity?* (2005), *Delay and Justice in the Law and Literature of Igbo Extraction* (2008), *Ajija: An Igbo Agent of Death and Destruction (*2009),*Faith, Culture and Individual Freedom: Notes and Extrapolations from Lejja Catholic Parish* (2011).

The overriding theme in these works is a focus on indigenous material: be it cultural texts or episteme; the exposure of the colonizing/imperialist and hegemonic outlook of Western scholars

on the one hand and, the sometimes-uncritical viewpoints 'requiring unmasking' by African scholars on the other. This process is a methodological application of decolonization, most of the time through postcolonial ideology. Coming at a time when coloniality's significance had to be exposed to the emerging generation of African scholars, Opata's efforts are glaring in the Nsukka literary scene where scholars influenced by him incorporate the decolonial ideology having seen the urgency and effects this manner of thinking produces in scholarship. Hence, the relation which decolonial thinking in its postcolonial facet has with the epistemology of knowledge; its nature, production, dispersion, suppression, and overall being are foregrounded in Opata's critique and oeuvre.

The subsequent part of this short exposition will explore Opata's handling of the decolonial project within the framework of postcolonialism. The study will further interrogate how he reveals the idea of coloniality and handles the tasks of de-linking and disassociation of African and Igbo episteme from the Western episteme. The work will also examine Opata's exposure of coloniality in scholarship and African epistemology, and explore his postulation of a projection of epistemology from a place of body and geopolitics of knowledge. We will briefly present a summation of the highlights of Opata's contribution to decolonial thinking to streamline the thought process and maturation of his ideas as a scholar. It, in no wise, ignores the timelines around each publication. The approaches here are postcolonial and phenomenological as the writing considers not only our own decolonial thought but also our geo and body-politics of knowledge production.

Thinking Decolonial Epistemology: *Ekwensu* and *African Time*

This section explores *Ekwensu in the Igbo Imagination: A Christian Devil or an Igbo Heroic Deity?* (2005) and *Towards the Genealogy of African Time* (2002). These books are a display of Opata's brilliance and wide-ranging interest and his desire to decolonize the Igbo world view in the manner of a public intellectual, as a sort of giving back effort to the community which raised him.

Ekwensu in the Igbo Imagination (henceforth *Ekwensu*)is unarguably the most popular of Prof. Opata's works. It holds a fascinating infamous appeal for most of the public which is yet to engage it as its unauthenticated reputation precedes it as 'the Devil's book.' It captures postcolonial thought in its renunciation of the

epistemic binary opposition created by the West in its *othering* of Africans from itself. It also debunks the standard and celebrated ideas and conceptions embedded in this episteme in the ontology and cosmological outlooks as racist and Eurocentric. *Ekwensu* recognizes fully, the influence of the colonizer on the colonized's culture and overall psyche. This influence creates for the colonized African Igbo, who is the focus of this text, a new cultural form different from its antecedents but displaying traits of both. Opata's conclusion claims that the creation and use of the substantial black/Igbo idiom and modes are sufficient to represent and capture the meaning and present the cosmos and ontology as we see it. Put differently, it is the enunciated theorization of the Igbo axiom: *nku di na mba na eyere mba nri* the wood in a locality is often enough to cook whichever food in that locality.

In the opening chapter: 'Angels are White; Devils are Black; and the Geography of Evil,' we come face to face with the binary opposition of Western epistemology where concepts and things have been polemicized to have opposing variants. Here, Edwards Said's contribution to postcolonial thought is evident in Opata's questioning of the fixed way the meanings of the two colors which are chosen to carry the weight of Western epistemology are used. While black is shown to symbolize in different contexts, several varying things such as fertility, possibility, death, and liminal space, it is cornered to represent only the negative possibilities which it suggests. White, on the other hand, is bleached of its deadness, ghostliness, and plainness to epitomize only the pure, the new, the nourishing (1, 2). This manner of viewing the world is what Opata refers to as self-serving subjective conceptualization. Consequently, angels are given as white since they embody the preferred attributes while the devil is undeniably black.

The second chapter deals with the crux of Opata's subject in this text. Entitled 'Ekwensu in the Igbo Imagination,' it covers the conceptualization, evidence of worship, argument from Igbo traditional cosmology, the mistranslation of *Ekwensu* as the devil and, expounds on the etymology of the word as well as seeks a healing restoration of *Ekwensu*. Taking his cue from several sources, Opata in his provision of the conceptualization of *Ekwensu* takes a somewhat convoluted route. He first tells us of the Igbo conception of the absolute God, Chukwu; how he was a part of a two-faced being-*Mmuo*, joined with *Agwu* who in his characteristic trickster's fashion tickled *Mmuo* into a state of erotic ecstasy. In response

Mmuo cut him off, leaving him earthbound in different forms and as separate entities while he became *Chukwu* and ascended back to the sky where he reigns supreme, overseeing the affairs of the world. Subsequently, Opata informs again of how *Agwu*, the incapacitated god cannot be the devil because aside from his incapacitation, he was never capable of being adversarial to *Chukwu*, having only a playful disposition and thus being a mere distraction. *Agwu* is therefore not fully evil as he and *Mmuo* share good and bad traits and cannot be the equivalent of the Christian devil as are *Akaogeli*- evil spirits which are numerous and have known causes (humans who had lived or died in an unsatisfactory manner).

Opata then moves on to discuss attempts by scholars at making *Ekwensu* the conceptual equivalent of the devil and the scholarship indicating a lack of relationship between both. In the first, *Ekwensu* is famed as firstly, the most wicked spirit, the eternal enemy of *Chukwu* who commits havoc without provocation; it is so evil that it has no shrine. It is also famed as being numerous, evil spirits. These two claims are debunked by Opata who proves that *Ekwensu* is appeased in shrines in different communities around Igboland and that evil spirits with known causes are distinct and have a place in Igbo cosmology not known as *Ekwensu*. Rather, Ekwensu is shown to be a war deity and even a patron god of several communities, embodying both good and evil traits which when aggravated or invoked could be effectively used for good or destruction (31). Opata goes on to posit that it was Christianity that proliferated the illusion of *Ekwensu* as the equivalent of the Christian devil to find the direct ontological equivalent in Igbo culture as well as a probable tendency of wanting to relate the Igbo devil to the Yoruba *Esu*- the trickster god. He also alludes to the possibility of the Ekwulobia people of Anambra being the progenitors of Ekwensu's conception as the devil because they are the only community that distinctly fear Ekwensu as an evil spirit dwelling in a particular terrain termed evil hill/forest and do not have a shrine where they make sacrifices to it.

In interrogating the etymology of *Ekwensu*, Opata ventures into the various root words and morphemes which suggest how meaning creation began for the word. He examines these and concludes that it could either mean 'if one agrees, one will be provoked/attacked/challenged' or 'do not agree to be provoked/attacked/challenged', both of which bear no suggestion to the sinister meaning that *Ekwensu* has been burdened with. Thus, he

postulates that the attempt to force Western ontology onto Igbo traditional worldview results in distortions and pervasions of meaning and the world. He, therefore, suggests the creation of a new category which will involve borrowing or improvisation where the Christian devil becomes '*devulu*' in an *igbonisation* of the English word or, *Ezendiajommuo*- king of all evil spirits. Opata then concludes the text by cautioning African scholars/postcolonial scholars to take translation seriously as failure to do so will result in distortion and misrepresentation of the world as it is for the postcolonial individual.

All in all, the book makes for a very interesting and enlightening read as it not only exposes the problem of African and, indeed, post-colonial epistemology in terms of knowledge creation, translation, and uncritical acceptance of knowledge. Opata makes a strong case for African/Igbo taking charge of knowledge production for progress. However, the seeming shortcoming of the book is Opata's reaffirmation of his argument in the conclusion: 'Devil Phobia' and 'Towards a Conclusion: The Discourse of Salvation and Damnation' in a seemingly proselyting manner. The segment points at the proliferation of church teachings on the mechanizations of the devil and contemporary Igbo Christians' attempts to do all in their power to prevent this interference and keep themselves safe. It also explores the burgeoning nature of the business involved with selling this idea especially for the clergy who venture into the profession for wealth. It asserts that before this time and in opposition to this idea of an unprovoked attack by malevolent spirits, evil was viewed in a cause-and-effect manner where one only had misfortune if one had in one way or another disregarded cosmic law. Although the sections do these, they also restate the difference in the ontology and world view of the Igbo from the West, a case which has been thoroughly explored earlier in the text. Perhaps the passion for decolonization and indeed making his point visible to others is responsible for this as one tends to get carried away when engaging with a favored subject.

Three years before the publication of *Ekwensu* above, Opata had begun interrogating the distortion of the Igbo world view and indeed the African image in the epithetical concept of 'African Time' used pejoratively to imply that Africans have no sense of punctuality. Opata who rarely takes things at the face value observes from experience how the idea of 'African Time' had become a common calumniation used to show disapproval not just by non-

Africans but by Africans themselves. So he decided to burrow into its genealogy to see how much of African identity or reality is implicated in the concept of African Time. The fact that this concept has survived for decades ignobly goes to show that late attendance to meetings is a quintessential characterizing feature of Africa as a place and Africans as a people. Unlike the unquestioned assumption about the concept above, Opata's thesis in this monograph claims that time is linked with power and waiting in the West, a phenomenon not found in Igbo thought practices. This is a hegemonic attitude to social relations the colonialist attempted to replicate in the colonial Africa, and when it did not fit, it was interpreted as lack of sense of time, leading to the denigrating concept of African time.

Opata and African Systemic Depersonalization: *Ajija* and 'Theatre Ideology'

For more than four decades, Opata offered epistemological insights into many African, nay Igbo phenomena and existential realities. His critical and interpretive perspectives center on culture, identity, ideology, and so on, and address Charles Bressler's ontological questions. Bressler argues that "the person living and writing in a colonized culture must ask three questions: Who am I? How did I develop into the person I am? […] To what country or countries or to what cultures am I forever linked?" (204). Bressler believes that in asking the first question, the colonized author is going back to their historical origin; by asking the second question, the author is accepting a tension between this historical origin and the new culture which is an imposition on the writer by the imperial powers; by asking the third question, the writer faces the fact that s/he is both an individual and a social construct shaped by these dominant cultures. The shaping of an individual by these dominant cultures provokes the question of identity and affects the process of individuation and integration of the psyche.

Subaltern populations are largely victims of "*Oduche complex*", a concept Opata evolved to account for the condition of "postcolonial subjects who through their immersion in Western ideological frames and structures betray their own culture, even without intending to do so" (Opata 24). This concept, Opata derived from Oduche's complicity (Achebe's *Arrow of God*) in entrenching the Christian church in Umuaro without the intention of betraying the religion, tradition, and culture of his people. It is a condition that

constantly echoes colonial distortions and questions the identity of the colonized as "more than three-quarters of the people living in the world today have had their lives shaped by the experience of colonialism" (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 1), leading to a new consciousness.

Opata's *Ajija: An Igbo Agent of Death and Destruction* (2009) traces the trajectory of the Igbo loss of cultural consciousness and the tenacity with which they uphold imperial ideologies. The linkages between how some Igbo people denigrate their culture, tradition, language, and so on, and the agency of *Ajija* is a new interpretive model. He concludes that "there are many instances in Igbo life and thought which suggest that the Igbo people are largely inflicted by *Ajija*" (38). He had earlier established that:

> As it is, Ajija works by bewitching a person, by beclouding one's reasoning, by temporarily "carrying away" a person's mind or causing a momentary disorientation in the way a person thinks and behaves. It is a force that occupies a person's mind and makes such a person to think and behave in very untoward ways. (9)

Are the Igbo people bewitched by *Ajija* to act as apostles of imperialism as implied in Opata's position? To address this question may mean to dress or undress subjectively. This is because the position echoes immaterial reality which is within the realm of spiritualism. It is both an epistemological and metaphysical question. *Ajija* may be interpreted as a symbolic reference and a metaphor for the domestication of imperial ideologies by the Igbo. This stems from the systemic disorientation and reorientation of the Igbo which has been systematically entrenched in their consciousness by imperial forces.

Opata's analogy of the phenomenon of *Ajija* is an interpretive intervention to comprehend and explain the seemingly incomprehensible and inexplicable position of the Igbo people to neocolonial forces. Since his postulation is open to interrogation, it should however be noted that "every writer is individually placed in society, responding to a general history from his particular standpoint, making sense of it in his concrete terms" (Eagleton 8). Opata's position on the role of *Ajija* in disorienting the Igbo about their culture and tradition is largely extrapolations from Eurocentric proclivities of a people and their leaning on western epistemologies. This throws up the question of whether decolonization has been

achieved. It is neither completely nor substantially achieved. It is a staggering and choking process that has been ravaged by forces of coloniality. Freedom from direct colonial rule created a false sense of decolonization in subaltern populations as they took control of the administrative hierarchies in former colonies, yet the elements of power and control that consolidate colonial ideological underpinnings subsist in all former colonies. Dislodgement of colonial rule, to the extent of erasing the administrative presence of the imperial powers, has been substantially translated as decolonization but colonialism found a replacement in the "dangerous" frame of coloniality upon which the realities of former colonies are largely situated. The Igbo, just as other subaltern nationalities, are victims of the imperial incursion. There are consequences for victims, and the Igbo are not immune to these consequences. It is however worrisome that the greater population of the Igbo people have not shown commitment in the process of decolonization beyond "independence", but unapologetically hold on to Western episteme in rationalizing the world and in knowledge productions.

Opata interrogates the agency of Christian churches in disorienting the Igbo and the tendency to regard some Igbo epistemic phenomena as evil, leading to what in Igbo is referred to as "a systematic depersonalization of the African and paganization of its values" (101). The Igbos' unquestioned acceptance of the culture and tradition of the Western imperial powers commingled with Christianity constitute part of their self-annihilating disposition which predisposes them to deride, and act irreverently to their own culture and tradition. Most phenomena that are not generated or conditioned by the doctrines of Christian churches are often looked down upon asepistemology of the heathen. This reveals the hegemonic tendencies of Western epistemologies which have emasculated not only African systems of rationality but its traditions, religions, and cultures. This is part of the central focus of *Faith, Culture and Individual Freedom: Notes and Extrapolations from Lejja Catholic Parish, Nsukka Diocese*, where Opata holds that:

> Christianity for close to two centuries has been advancing its cause, openly condemning and preaching against traditional religions. Traditional religions have therefore become very weakened, with no one to defend them, no one to teach them even to younger generations [...] Many Catholics can recite

> the litany of saints, but how many can count up to three or four generations of their ancestors? Yet this knowledge is preserved in kola invocation where people go back very far in history to trace their genealogy. (62)

Although the ritual of kola invocation has been made very unpopular and completely abandoned by most of the Igbo population, some still hold on to the tradition while professing Christianity. This is rooted in the understanding that some aspects of the Igbo traditional religion are still worthy to be retained. In Uburu – Ohaozara, an Igbo subgroup that is in the present-day Ebonyi State, it is common to encounter a system of hybridity among converts to Christianity. Kola invocation is one of the elements of the Igbo traditional religion some of them have found difficult to abandon. Through kola invocation, they still recite a litany of some ancestors, those that may be regarded as traditional saints. There is the understanding that these ancestors lived well and created a moral sphere, a plane every good member of society aspires to attain. It has become difficult for some of these converts to abandon such a path. This may be viewed as a portrait of religious confusion; an echo of a similar confusion where it is alleged that a church attempted to dictate the tunes and texture of non-Christian funerals in Lejja, Nsukka, leading to the question, "my father and mother were not Christians. So, why should we, their children organize the funeral ceremony for them in a Catholic way?" (Opata 21) Although this is a rhetorical question, it has offered an insight into issues of a transcultural and cross-cultural interface that have produced systems of hybridity in postcolonial cultures, leading to conflicts at different levels of their interactions.

In line with Opata's intellection, he moves from the broader epistemic social theatre to specifically the visual arts and the media. In an essay, '*Ere M Onu M:* Theatre, Ideology, and Society in Nigeria,' Opata questions the contemporary Nigerian home video, theatre, and the entire modern dramaturgy's tendency to sacrifice 'aesthetic idealism' for 'practical convenience' (85). By this, he interrogates the ideology upon which contemporary theatre practice and home video run and the implication of such in our society. To foreground his point, he contrasts the 'ideology of the visual' upon which the traditional communal theatre is based and the indeterminate nature of the Western model which the contemporary Nigerian theatre and home video adopt. For him, while the former

is based on a 'collective and archetypal motif' that makes the audience aware of what to expect before the performance, the latter requires the decoding of the text based on Western critical theories. Opata sees the traditional theatre, particularly the masquerade tradition, to be aimed at recapturing the essence, identity of the ancestors of the town at their (ancestors') old age. For him, unlike our traditional theatre rooted in the life/soul of the community, and the 'irreducible essence of the soul of the people,' the modern theatre is lacking in the preservation of our 'collective psyche' (88). The reason for this, he locates in the imposition of an alien 'epistemological perspective' that shattered the foundation of the African knowledge system. He sees this change in the traditional African epistemic orientation as a violence of a sort, and imperialism in a sense (89).

He does not deny that an inevitable self-constitution is an on-going variable in the experience of any evolving society. This makes for the fluidity and constant re-definition of our self and collective identity. However, he finds a problem with a re-definition process that completely obliterates our prior self-constitution, as typical of our current home videos. For him, the image of Africa and Nigeria being sold out to the public in our home videos is so blighted that no rational audience can relate with it in the sense of the kind of relationship that existed between the traditional art performance and the audience. For instance, while the traditional drama exemplified in the Omaba Masquerade, for example, celebrates the soul of the community and the irreducible core value of the people, a similar claim cannot be made of the contemporary Nigerian home videos. These home videos construct an image of Africa where people overtly rely on the supernatural, especially the use of jujuor magic for many reasons, as though that is the only 'usable past' in our transition from traditionalism to modernism (92). Similarly, he finds worrisome another common theme in contemporary home videos which is the presentation of an idealized lavish and luxurious lifestyle which Jonathan Haynes considers a 'wish-fulfillment fantasy' of the audience (Haynes in Opata 91). These home videos celebrate the kind of materialism that is not a product of the real means of production. It presents the spirit of money-making without working hard for it.

Seeing these, the big question Opata poses is: where do these ideological resources come from? Though he identifies the Western influence, he also identifies the long years of the military junta in

Nigeria which tore down the faith people had in state security, leading to the search for self-protection by any means possible. That notwithstanding, Opata opines that the Renaissance that Africa and particularly Nigeria need cannot come from a perverse escape from reality by the visual art practitioners in the name of pursuing artistic/theatrical excellence. He cautions against sacrificing 'aesthetic idealism' for commercial benefit while strongly making a call on gatekeepers of these cultural texts to see to it that the obvious and inevitable annihilation of our communal theatre should not translate to the annihilation of the communal values that define who we are (93).

Conclusion

As we make to conclude this short discussion, it is pertinent to reiterate that the aim of this paper on Opata's scholarship is not a deliberate attempt to bemoan the undone fate of Africa in the hands of Western imperialistic tendency as most Nativist-oriented criticism do. It is not even aimed at foregrounding the victimhood position of Africa to the West which the nascent Afropolitan movement decries. The paper first acknowledged the long-lasting effect of colonialism on the life and psyche of Africans because of colonialism's continued domination of different aspects of the colonized existence in different forms decades after the end of colonial administration. This is made possible by the colonial structures, cultures, and epistemological systems in contemporary African existence which are still embedded within the 'modern/colonialist capitalist world system' (Grosfoguel 13 14).

The paper took a panoramic survey of a cross-section of Opata's critical writing, revealing that postcolonialism has been his most employed theoretical position as is evident in his works over the years. However, the paper admits that what seems pervasive in Opata's decolonial ideology is the resistant trend of his scholarship which bears a trait of activism and is foregrounded in decoloniality as opposed to postcolonialism, and, which is also required now more than ever on the African, Nigerian, and Igbo scholarly scene.

The paper moved from a broader theoretical perspective to focus on Opata's intellectual focus on the dialectical juxtaposition of the Western and African epistemic systems of rationality, particularly the distortion of the African people's epistemological system, achieved through translation, ideological naming, cultural imperialism, religious indoctrination/hegemonic conversion, and

mind control through the media. In each of these, we showed Opata's clear position on how the African world constituted a putative space sufficient to have stood and survived on its own had the Western incursion not occurred. Despite Opata's acceptance of the above fact, his works do not pontificate on what the African world would have looked like had there been no early contact, and in the manner of unequal relations in which the contact happened, with the West. His works seem to ask in a reconstructive spirit, what do we do, having seen what we have become as a result of the contact? Do we go on defining ourselves in externalized terms that make us different from who we are and who we are supposed to be? The works further ask how we can begin to undo the reparable damage and the redeemable harm by reconstructing our identity in line with its ontological status. The conclusion one gets after reading a handful of Opata's study is that scholars should seek a re-evaluation of long-held but adopted conventions of thought, that we should not forget the past so soon, or in the words of Achebe, pretend that 'slogan is the same thing as the truth.'

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2

THE DISLOCATION OF CULTURE: TRANSLOCATIONAL/MOBILE IDENTITIES IN ADICHIE'S *AMERICANAH*

Dina Yerima-Avazi

Abstract

Identity, perceived as culture grounded to a particular location, is a construct which has had free reign for a while, especially in the human sciences. In furtherance of this view point, this paper attempts to account for the creation of hybrid identity from localities which mutate in a continuous dynamic movement. It introduces, in a postcolonial context, the issue of translocality, accounting for the varied hybrid identities which abound in Adichie's Americanah. It highlights situations in which translocality works to create hybrid identities for postcolonial individuals. One of such situations is the interpretation of translocality as shape-shifting and pulsating based on the exposure to and dominance of a specific culture over others at a particular point in time. The second position views translocality as different for different categories (age group and gender) of individuals in society. The final point of interaction where translocality works is based on the social status of individuals, which impacts social mobility, consequently affecting hybridity and identity.

Introduction

Human beings have developed the idea of culture to explain life as they understand it and to account for who they are and what they do. Accordingly, identity is tied to culture, which, in turn, is grounded in location. Location as a basis for culture is an idea that has gained ground in and pervaded social theories for centuries (Quazimi 307; Keth and Pile 27). In addition to race, it is the basis of the epistemic binary discourse created by the West, which portrays the East and other non-Western cultures as mysterious and dark, passionate and irrational as opposed to the former's supposedly rational, positive, balanced and superior culture (Habib 747). This tie which culture has with location or space is embedded in its association with

identity, which explains why individuals ask themselves such identity questions as ‘‘where do I belong?’’ In answering this question, the notion of location emerges as people define themselves in ‘‘terms of ancestry, religion, language, history, values, customs, and institutions. They identify with cultural groups: tribes, ethnic groups, religious communities, nations, and, at the broadest level, civilizations [which are all tied to geographic locations and spaces]’’ (Huntington 21).

Location is also implied in given theories of culture. Samuel Huntington conceptualises culture as the ‘‘values, norms, institutions, and modes of thinking to which successive generations in a given society have attached [principal] importance’’ (41) and society as we know it is tied to a specific geographic location. Thus, location has its uncontested place in humanistic scholarship as a foundation for culture, its formation and expression. Hence, location is given as a building block of identity. It is also the stem of the view of hybridity, a postcolonial signification of cultural diffusion and integration which implicates movement from one location to another.

When postcolonial ideology with its deconstructionist tendency is applied to the interrogation of location as a concept related to culture, it initiates a new meaning. Location becomes not just static but mobile. Static, immovable, autochthonous location is no longer the sole determinant of culture but a factor at play in the creation of culture and identity: ‘‘It ain’t where you’re from, it’s where you’re at’’ (Gilroy 25). This does not only consist in where one is physically but also where they are mentally. This line of reasoning introduces the Diaspora question occasioned by migration and, more expansively, globalization. It projects the same argument which Walter Mignolo raises with this assertion: ‘‘I am where I think’’ (20). At this juncture, both static location and the assertion of intellect in the act of thinking have roles to play in identity formation and expression. This suggests that individuals might be in a particular location but perceive or imagine themselves to be in another and thus project cultural traits of their perceived location.

The significance of this research lies in its problematization of identity as mobile for the postcolonial individual, using Adichie’s *Americanah*. Previous scholarship on the nature of postcolonial and other identities tend to tie a large portion of identity formation and expression of the individual to static locations (Clopton 2019; Quazimi 2014). Additionally, with regard to *Americanah*, scholars

have broadly focused on the dualistic, hybrid and adoptive nature of postcolonial identity (e.g., Oddershade and Larson 2018; Arabian and Rahiminezhad 2015; Ucham 2015; Harris 2009). Emerging postcolonial scholarship has begun to place less emphasis on static location as a determinant of a postcolonial subject's highly complex identity, foregrounding instead the non-static nature of location (e.g., Sbiri, Nyman and Yassine 2020; Eze 2014; Gilroy 2006; Wynter 2003). Floya Anthias theorises about the nuances of hybridity in accounting for the identity status of postcolonial individuals, especially those in the Diaspora, which links in with the idea of translocational positionality (620). However, her theory fails to account for those postcolonial individuals resident within the postcolonies. Building on these precedents, this study bridges this gap by accounting for the identity expression of both Diaspora postcolonials and those resident in the postcolonies. It also foregrounds the non-static nature of postcolonial identity and its loose ties with static locations using *Americanah*.

Hence, with the postcolonial theory in mind, this paper argues that location is no longer static. Rather, it is something carried by the individual wherever he or she goes (Brydon 16-19) or something that exists in the individual's consciousness. It can be evoked, conjured even, to any location an individual finds himself. In this case, the individual is the postcolonial African, and the identity displayed is created using mobile locations.

Mobile Locations and Identity Formation

By mobile locations, I suggest the concept of translocality. Translocality involves the co-existence of alternate understandings of space and time, which is sometimes concurrent and at others, interwoven to form nascent understandings (Brydon 20). It interprets culture in terms of ''translocative (moving, constantly changing) dissonance - the splits, fractures, and othernesses *within* the nation, produced by diaspora'' (Gabriel 20). Simon A. Peth views translocality as constituting a wide range of enduring, open and non-linear processes like migration flows and networks whose product is close relations between different places and people (1).

Tanslocational identity is a changing identity spurred by movement. It should be noted that movement does not occur only through migration with the physical change of spaces but also virtually in a simulated or cybernetic world; that is, through the use of the media. This is especially true in the 21st century, which is

termed the information age (Buyukbaykal 637), when the world has become more closely-knit by technological innovations. Wander Jager and Hans Joachim Mosler affirm this correlation between human behaviour and simulated environments when they posit that:

> Computer simulation allows for the experimental study of dynamic interactions between human behavior and complex environmental systems. Behavioral determinants and processes as identified in social-scientific theory may be in simulated agents to obtain a better understanding of man–environment interactions and of policy measures aimed at managing these interactions.(97)

In the same vein, culture is dispersed to all corners of the earth by means of print media as well as the internet. This dispersal is conveyed in the celebration of popular culture (Daramola and Oyinade, 33). Hence, citizens of postcolonial countries and other parts of the world are exposed to and intentionally or unconsciously begin to assimilate aspects of Western culture as portrayed by the media. Furthermore, aspects of minority cultures are also commoditized and popularized to the world. Examples of these are the adoption of the ''hula'' contest from Fiji Islands by nationals of other countries, the idea of vacation to and relaxation on the sandy beaches of Hawaii and other Caribbean islands, as well as the adoption of certain fashion styles which originate from Africa and Asia by people around the globe (Franklin and Lyons 72, 73).Translocality can also pertain to ''the role of mass media and other modes of cultural globalization in shaping transnational migrant identities'' (Brickell and Ayona 182). However, both the mass media working by way of globalization and actual ''socio-economic and political practices'' (Brickell and Ayona 182) shape transnational migrant and non-migrant identities.

Translocational identity is basically the creation of a cultural hybrid identity, outside the position of viewing culture as grounded to a particular location. It could result in a mix of rural and urban lifestyles, and ''allows us to see through possibilities of cosmopolitanism; of being here and there at the same time'' (Vanyoro 1). It also implicates the dominant demonstration of cultural forms of the perceived location of an individual. It involves constant adjustments and changes as it is a pulsating, evolving an intricate mix of factors. Stuart Hall notes this while discussing identity: ''instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished

fact… we should, instead, think of identity as a 'production,' which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation'' (Hall 222). Hence, it is an expression of hybridity which negates the view of cultures as unitary, whole or fixed. It is, therefore, the ''creation of new transculturalforms' that occurs not just within the 'contact zones created by colonialism'' (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 108), but outside of this zone. Thus the hybridity here does not necessarily implicate the notion of domination of colonial culture as argued by Homi Bhabha in the unequal imposition of power (Bhabha 173) in the relationship between the colonizer and colonized. Rather, it implies the dominance of the physically present culture, the culture of whichever location the individual is immersed in at a certain time. Consequently, the creation of the hybrid identity is a simultaneously ''plural, complex, subversive, intricate and sometimes contradictory cultural interaction'' (Raj 125). This plurality is seen in the three different situations which enable the creation of hybrid identities in this paper.

Adichie's African and Translocational Identities

Americanah by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie can be described as a novel of migration which demonstrates diaspora experiences and their relationship with identity formation and expression. It is a story with events revolving around Ifemelu, the central character who migrates from Nigeria to America for better life experiences and returns to Nigeria after a period of thirteen years. In the course of her migration, Ifemelu encounters racism and discrimination, developes a hybrid identity and gains a higher social standing in society than she had prior to migrating. Other characters in the novel share some of these experiences. In this text, there are two major categories of characters: those who migrate (such as Ifemelu, Emenike, Uju, Ohiugo) and those who do not (such as Obinze's mum, Ifemelu's parents and Kosi). It is this migration or lack of it therein that punctuates the major events in the text, allowing for the plot to unravel.

In the novel, Ifemelu migrates to America while other characters like Emenike and Nicholas migrate to England. Migration is a major defining point in these characters' identity expressions, although characters in the text that do not migrate also have influences that are beyond the local, shaping their identity formation and expression. This paper, therefore, explores their

identities in relation to external or foreign influence, occasioned by their static and mobile locations, depending on whether they are migrants or not. Migrant characters contend almost equally with two locations (the new location and home through a diasporic lens) in their identity expression. On the other hand, non-migrants have only the external mobile location to contend with, having already been grounded in the culture of their physical, autochthonous location. The study thus interrogates the process of creating the mixed or hybrid identities of the postcolonial migrant or non-migrant characters in Adichie's text, who are influenced by one or more of these two locations that have been outlined above.

There are three major points in the translocality discourse in this text. The first is the interpretation of translocality as shape-shifting. It involves hybridity, which pulsates based on the exposure and dominance of a specific culture over others at a particular point in time. The second argument views translocality as different for the different age groups and genders in the text due to its mobile, private nature (as it is carried out in one's private thoughts and later manifested outwardly). The final point on translocality is based on the understanding of social status or capacity for the mobility of individuals in society as affecting the aspect of a culture which will be adopted, consequently affecting hybridity and identity.

The foremost perception of translocality as shape-shifting involves hybridity which mutates based on exposure to and, dominance of a specific culture over others at a particular point in time. It is the most popular argument in the hybridity discourse as it foregrounds power-play. Throughout history, the cultures which have been the most adopted were those which had a number of specific traits: power, mobility and adaptation. In this way, the civilization of ancient Rome influenced and spread Christianity and Arabic literacy as well as Greek philosophy to Europe and North Africa (Breasted 714-719). European civilization, in turn, led by the English, French, Germans and the Dutch popularised itself in the Global South (Falola 110). This point of translocality marks an important site of colonial interaction. It is the stage where Western culture was most adopted by indigenous peoples because the acculturating influence was directly before them at that point in time. It should be noted that this is a position marked on the one hand by distrust and, on the other, by curiosity. In his exploration of Achebe's *Arrow of God*, Damian Opata explicates this idea thusly:

> …when a hen enters unknown territory, it stands on one leg. This presupposes a stage of alertness and great caution, a willingness to understand the new environment before habituating itself to the environment. The individual who lives within a colonial condition approaches the colonial situation with caution, even with a certain sense of timidity, the type Oduche illustrates in his putting the royal python in a box with the intent of suffocating it and letting it die. Of course, he had earlier in the novel alluded to the fact that God commanded Adam 'to crush' the head of the serpent after it had deceived Eve (Achebe 49). The literal interpretation he gives to this biblical passage is due to his not haven been properly educated in Christian religious knowledge. This early phase (of colonial assimilation) is an experimental stage in which the individual tries to insert himself or herself gradually into the counter-veining colonial infrastructure. (Opata 177, 178)

In *Americanah*, the majority of the characters experience shape-shifting hybridity as a residual effect of colonialism. This is obvious from their educational pursuit, which is Western in orientation, the language of communication used, English, and their adoption of Christianity. This situation reflects Ifemelu's father's identity. He is cautious about his daughter's adoption of Western culture, in awe of Obinze's mother, who obtained her Bachelor's degree from a university in London and acquiesces when Ifemelu informs him that she is living with a man in the United States. In an image that further grounds his character, Ifemelu imagines him ''in a classroom in the fifties, an overzealous colonial subject wearing an ill-fitting school uniform of cheap cotton, jostling to impress his missionary teachers'' (Adichie 47).

Although Ifemelu and her secondary school classmates already display an identity that carries traits of indigenous and Western culture; her display of Western culture heightens when they migrate to the West. This reinforces the notion of translocality as shape-shifting hybridity, which mutates based on exposure to and dominance of a specific culture over another at a particular point in time. Emenike, Ifemelu, Nicholas, Ojuigo, Uju and Bartholomew all demonstrate this. This is especially true for Emenike, who migrates to England. When Obinze encounters him after he has spent a number of years living in London, Emenike has taken on a lot of

Western cultural traits. He projects a taste in aesthetics which is typically Western, a liberal ideology and a laid-back temperament. Thus, Emenike becomes a man who asks a friend he has just assisted with money to count it. He not only condones but becomes friends with a gay man, the same person who had once beaten up a boy for being gay while in Nigeria. Emenike admires sunsets, old furniture and joins his white guests to admire plates for no other reason than that they are uncommon and made by poor people. Thus he gushes over china plates made by rural Indian women, which he and his wife bought at a bazaar. Obinze, on the other hand, thinks of the plates as having an amateur finishing. ''The slight lumpiness of the edges would never be shown in the presence of guests in Nigeria. He was still not sure whether Emenike had become a person who believed that something was beautiful because it was handmade by poor people in a foreign country, or whether he had simply learned to pretend so'' (Adichie 271). As a result, although Emenike projects the appearance of satisfaction, his identity is still very much unsettled as he is not satisfied with the traits he has adopted from his new locality. The dissatisfying and somewhat complex situation in which Oduche finds himself in *Arrow of God* in trying to please his father by learning the white man's ways while retaining a strong sense of his filial and societal duties, as obtainable in the Igbo custom, is similar to what Emenike faces. Emenike is caught between being himself and satisfying what he perceives to be Western society's standards. He allows Obinze to have a glimpse of this when he expresses his anger at the racism he experiences at the hand of a white taxi driver who refuses to give him a ride because it is dark and he is black. ''Emenike had told Obinze this story… the rage he had felt standing on that street and looking at the cab'' (Adichie 275). Furthermore, Emenike's need to exhibit his successes and achievements to guests and acquaintances, as demonstrated by the site of the displayed photographs in his home, indicates his lack of fulfilment or self-realization in his new hybrid identity, engendered in large part by his new locality. Thus Obinze imagines him thus: ''dutiful and determined, visiting the places he was supposed to visit, thinking, as he did so, not of the things he was seeing but of the photos he would take of them and of the people who would see the photos. [Only so that] the people would know that he had participated in these triumphs'' (Adichie 268).

For Ifemelu, America is a place where she can excel unfettered by social and political issues. When she arrives in

America, however, her perception changes and things begin to take a new turn. After a few months, she begins to understand her aunty Uju's pessimism, anxiety and mannerisms. She herself adopts the American accent which she hitherto considers inchoate. She also engages in sexual freedom or adventure attributed to women of African descent in America by experimenting with her neighbour while still in a relationship with Curt because she was curious and as she admits to Ginika, ''there was a feeling I wanted to feel that I did not feel'' (Adichie 287). The intense body consciousness, which is a trait of Americans, is also imbibed by Ifemelu as she increasingly feels extremely self-conscious of her weight gain. At the beginning of the story, this body consciousness is tied to her feeling of dissatisfaction and possible depression:

> She *was* fat…. And she had ignored, too, the cement in her soul. Her blog was doing well, …and yet there was cement in her soul. It had been there for a while, an early morning disease of fatigue, a bleakness and borderlessness. It brought with it amorphous longings, shapeless desires, brief imaginary glints of other lives she could be living, that over the months melded into a piercing homesickness. (Adichie 6)

Obinze reassures her: ''you're not fat. You're being very American about that. What Americans consider fat can be just normal'' (430). These concerns become pronounced owing to Ifemelu's negotiation of a new physical location since prior to her journey, she does not contemplate such views, and indeed, upon her return, she soon loses them.

Nicholas and his wife Ojiugo also demonstrate this tilt towards a particular culture due to their presence in its physical space. Hence, although, like Emenike and Ifemelu, they have been hybrids displaying several cultures—both indigenous and Western while in Nigeria—their demonstration of Western culture increases when they migrate to England. Nicholas, like his wife, speaks only English to their children and allows them free rein to do what they please, unlike he would have done if they were growing up in Nigeria. Obinze discusses this with Ojiugo when Nna disobeys her on one occasion. He asks her: ''Speaking of foreign accents…. Would Nna get away with that if he didn't have a foreign accent?'' (Adichie 242) Hence, Ojiugo and Nicholas's display of hybridity increases in correlation to their relocation to England like other

characters who, upon migration, demonstrate more Western cultural traits when their locality becomes Western.

Uju, introduced in the opening chapters of the story, is another character in the novel whose identity is further adjusted by a change of location. She demonstrates a desire for Western things as she participates in beauty practices which can be described in a way as imperial. These practices involve bleaching her skin to acquire a lighter complexion, perming her hair and using straight or curly weaves to mimic Western textured hair. However, when she relocates to the United States, she adds a speech pattern to her adopted Western traits. She changes her speech pattern to mirror the ''American twang.'' ''The nasal, sliding accent she put on when she spoke to white Americans, in the presence of white Americans, in the hearing of white Americans…. And with the accent emerged a new persona'' (Adichie 108). Uju also prevents Ifemelu from teaching Dike the Igbo language. ''Please don't speak Igbo to him… two languages will confuse him'' (Adichie 109). Uju's cultural acquiescence, comparable to Emenike's, stems from a desire for self-preservation due to the challenges they face in their new localities. Hence, in order to make things easier for themselves, Uju and Emenike decide to, as much as they can, adopt the dominant cultural forms of the place. In this vein, Uju advises Ifemelu:

> 'You are in a country that is not your own. You do what you have to do if you want to succeed.' There is was again, the strange naïveté with which Aunty Uju had covered herself like a blanket. Sometimes while having a conversation, it would occur to Ifemelu that Aunty Uju had deliberately left behind something of herself, something essential, in a distant and forgotten place. Obinze said it was the exaggerated gratitude that came with immigrant insecurity. (Adichie 119)

Hybridity as a form of identity for Uju is therefore translocal as it fluctuates and changes when she changes location. Accordingly, in the different American cities Uju resides temporarily, she is compelled to adjust her personality to fit in when she can until it becomes too much of an effort, forcing her to leave Baltimore for Willow.

The shape-shifting nature of translocal identity (hybridity) based on the dominance of a specific culture over another at a particular time and as a result of locality is also seen in the return and re-discovery of indigenous culture by some characters in the

text. This is not restricted to Western culture. While Obinze's mother, a university professor, demonstrates to a large extent the mix of Western and indigenous cultural traits as embedded in her hybrid identity, she also demonstrates a passion for indigenous culture. Administrative colonialism is over in the Nigeria of the text, and de-colonial thoughts and ideas are rife in the minds of intellectuals like herself. She is interested in translating the meanings of indigenous names. She is also committed to taking Obinze to their hometown to enable him to learn and appreciate the ways of his people. Obinze admits as much to Ifemelu when he tells her during their first meeting: ''I go very often (to my hometown) with my mother, at least five times a year'' (Adichie 61). Hence, like his mother, Obinze grows up with regard for Igbo as well as Western culture. This reveals that the shape-shifting nature of translocal identity based on location or the dominance of a specific culture over another at a particular time is applicable to indigenous and Western cultures.

The paper's second argument is that translocality is different for the different age groups and genders in the text due to its mobile, private nature. It transcends Walter Mignolo's deconstruction of Rene Descartes logic of ''I think therefore I am'' as ''I am where I think.'' Mignolo further argues: ''I am when, where and what I think.'' Gayatri Spivak, in her theorizing about the postcolonial subject, posits that this subject is not homogenous but is rather heterogenous, with several varying conditions which might be based on race, gender and even class (Spivak 79). While class is a major issue in the third and final argument of the translocal in this paper, of important concern at this point, are the elements of gender and age, as factors which separate and allow for the making of different hybrid experiences for postcolonial individuals and the characters in *Americanah*. Diana Brydon has theorised translocality as ''the co-existence of alternate understandings of space and time which is sometimes concurrent and other times, mingles to form emergent understandings'' (Brydon 20). Thus, the same locality to which two or more postcolonial individuals are exposed will not produce the same hybrid identity or the same intensity of hybridity as age, gender and other peculiarities also play a role in the process.

In *Americanah*, Ifemelu and her peers, as well as Ifemelu's parents and their peers, all reside in postcolonial Nigeria. They are exposed to the media, which introduces them to Western cultural forms, some of which were not apparent during the period of

colonization. However, because translocality involves the element of privacy and has a mobile nature, it produces alternate understandings of space and time and consequently varied identities. Hence, although Uju and Ifemelu's parents share the same indigenous background and are both exposed to Western education and culture, they do not see things the same way. While Uju tends to be more realistic in her outlook of the economic and social situation of the country, Ifemelu's parents are idealistic. This is seen in her father's refusal to call his boss mummy and her mother's acceptance of the General as Uju's mentor rather than her lover. This idealism might be tied to Ifemelu's father's perception of Uju's lover as a leader swayed by the Igbo culture as well as the submissive role of the woman to the man, making it difficult for him to participate in office politics for self-preservation. Therefore, he still lives to an extent in traditional Igbo society, which showcases to us the ''when'' or period of his hybrid identity. While Ifemelu and her mother do not see eye to eye on issues of romance and relationships, Obinze's mother demonstrates an understanding of the relationship between Ifemelu and her son. She calls Ifemelu and advises her on how to conduct herself with Obinze. Hence, even though Obinze's mother is much older and belongs to Ifemelu's parents' peer group, she exhibits certain elements of hybridity, which allows her to appreciate the views of her son and his girlfriend. Hence, she has the ''sex talk'' with her:

> …if anything happens between you and Obinze, you are both responsible. But Nature is unfair to women. An act is done by two people, but if there are any consequences one person carries it alone. Do you understand me?... I was once young. I know what it is like to love while young. I want to advise you. I am aware that, in the end, you will do what you want. My advice to you is that you wait. You can love without making love. It is a beautiful way of showing your feelings but it brings responsibility, great responsibility, and there is no rush. I will advise you to wait until you are at least in the university, wait until you own yourself a little more. (Adichie 72)

In spite of this sex talk, Ifemelu and Obinze engage in premarital sex. They do not consent to Obinze's mother's logic. Even though she attempts to appeal to Ifemelu's gender and highlight the implication of premarital sex for the female, Ifemelu gives in and

sleeps with Obinze. This demonstrates the varied experience and understanding of these characters due to age difference, despite their hybridity.

The issue of individual characters' varied perception of time and place manifests mostly in the area of gender for Bartholomew and Uju. Bartholomew, an accountant, residing in Warrington, America, is another character in the text who displays a translocal identity with respect to the dominance of a culture at a particular point in time due to his gender and a romanticised view of his homeland. Although resident in the United States, Bartholomew strives to cling to indigenous Igbo cultural values. However, his is a delusional attachment because he holds on to his idealised recollection of the past. He complains of the indecent dressing and loose morals of girls on the television when he visits with Uju. He also demands that she hand over her earnings to him because they are planning to get married. He declines from helping with chores when they share a home and dismisses Ifemelu and her opinions as a rural Igbo man might have done decades ago. Thus although Ifemelu is sure Bartholomew is ‘‘one of those people who, in his village back home, would be called ‘lost.’ He went to America and got lost’’ (Adichie 116), he views himself rather as someone like the "Igbo Massachusetts lawyer" who is in tune with the politics, culture and life of his home country. Bartholomew does not realize that the homeland has moved from where he last saw it and is no longer as he imagined it. He is therefore living in the past, an imaginary world of his creation, in order to ease his mind and allow for some form of self-fulfilment.

While Bartholomew's view of hybridity has evolved to the point of viewing the African woman as one with the ability to work, earn and respect her man, it does not occur to him that she would also require the same regard and consideration her western peers get. Therefore, Uju reports him as doing the following: ‘‘sits in the living room and turns on the TV and asks me (Uju) what we are eating for dinner…. that I should not send money home to Brother without his permission’’ (Adichie 217). Consequently, even though Bartholomew migrates to and has lived for a long while in the United States, he has not been able to adopt some of the cultural practices of his new locality, which are also existent in his homeland. His gender privilege allows him to deny and reject the equal stance demanded by women in social issues, which he sees as a threat to him, especially in his relationship with Uju. Unlike Uju,

who adopts not only beauty practices, a new speech pattern and social equality of the sexes, Bartholomew's perception of his locality is different from that of Uju. Thus, they both create varying patterns of hybrid identities even though they live in the same place and are exposed to the same cultural realities.

This circumstance is the same for Obinze and Kosi, his wife. While both of them are exposed to Western and indigenous cultures. Even though they both reside in Nigeria, they do not seem to exhibit similar hybrid identities. Kosi, like other Lagos wives, is paranoid about Obinze's fidelity as a husband and doubts his true feelings for her. She turns out to be right in the long run as Obinze confesses to Ifemelu that all he has really felt for his wife is a sense of duty and a great regard. As a result, he is able to make a decision to divorce Kosi because the woman he loves has returned to Nigeria and accepts his advances. Kosi, on the other hand, even though exposed to Western culture, is not comfortable with divorce and resists it as much as she can. Even Obinze's friends share the sentiment as one of them says:

> many of us didn't marry the woman we truly loved. We married the woman who was around when we were ready to marry. So forget this thing. You can keep seeing her, but no need for this kind of white-people behaviour. If your wife has a child for somebody else or if you beat her, that is reason for divorce. But to get up and say you have no problem with your wife but you are leaving for another woman? *Haba*. We don't behave like that, please. (Adichie 472)

In spite of this admonition, Obinze goes ahead to divorce Kosi so that he can pursue a relationship with Ifemelu. He does this not only because this will give him self-realization but because his translocality though consisting of the same place and time as those of his friends who advise him, is also different from theirs due to its mobile, private nature.

For Uju and Ifemelu, who share the same gender but differ due to age group, there is the creation of similar translocality. While Uju, just after graduation, in her twenties, is faced with an economic-stricken Nigeria and a challenging United States, Ifemelu is faced with a similar situation at a similar age when she leaves Nigeria to go and study in the United States. Even the social situation of living with men who are more financially stable than they are is shared by Ifemelu and Uju. Uju does so with the General

while Ifemelu does the same with Curt, her white boyfriend, who gets her a green card and a job. Even after her return to Nigeria, Ifemelu has an affair with a married man, Obinze, almost like Uju's affair with the General. Thus, it can be said that the creation of similar translocalities by individuals of the same gender and age group result in similar experiences.

The third point on translocality is based on the view of social status or class in society as determining the aspect of a culture which will be adopted, consequently affecting hybridity and identity. Benita Parry subscribes to this view, since for her, it is the elite, the metropolitan with a capacity for mobility who migrate that hybridity applies to as the elite are placed in a situation where they come in direct contact with the Western or majority culture (Parry 12). Hence, it is the elite who have identity issues often resulting in conflict and duality. For Parry, this means that hybridity does not matter much to the postcolonial subjects left behind in the homeland as life goes on as before. They are not exposed to anything new and so do not have to make concessions in order to accommodate new things (Parry 12). Contrary to Parry's implication that hybridity is not everywhere (i.e., that hybridity is only for the elite in the Diaspora), this paper posits that hybridity is everywhere, spurred by mobile and changing localities. '''Hybridity' of the [African like the] Anglo-Indian is not adequately explained as the intersection of two oppositional cultures, but rather is a multiple constituted and unstable product of its changing political and cultural contexts'' (Mijares 128). This means that an individual's social status, ergo capacity for mobility, is a major determining factor in that individual's hybridity experience and hybrid identity creation. This argument is what the third point of translocality puts forward.

In *Americanah*, the postcolonial characters all have different social status as they belong to different social classes. They are not all socially or financially privileged. When the story begins, Ifemelu, Obinze, Emenike and other classmates of theirs are not financially empowered. Although they all have hybrid identities due to their mobile localities (of experiencing the West and its culture through the media and Western education), they do not demonstrate Western or non-indigenous cultural traits as they do later on in the text. This is, in part, due to the shift in their societal status. When Ifemelu migrates to the United States, a move which is intended to make her ascend the social ladder, she begins to demonstrate more Western traits, as Benita Parry argues. Ifemelu eats organic food,

cultivates an American accent and becomes conscious of race and its various implications, amongst other ideological changes. Even when Ifemelu returns to Nigeria after thirteen years abroad, she is dismayed to admit to herself that she had become that type of person, a '''they have the kind of things we can eat' kind of person'' (409). Her elite status also puts her hybridity experiences above the likes of Mariama and Aisha, the salon women who migrate to make their fortunes in America. When Ifemelu tells Aisha, one of the hair braiders at the salon, that she has been in America for fifteen years, ''a new respect slipped into Aisha's eyes…. 'I have just finished a fellowship,' she said, knowing that Aisha would not understand what a fellowship was, and in that rare moment that Aisha looked intimidated, Ifemelu felt a perverse pleasure'' (Adichie 16). Prior to her social and financial ascent, however, Ifemelu, like Jane, the Caribbean woman with whom she spends time during her first summer in America, has an invisible line, drawn to demarcate aspects of American culture which she would not adopt as she finds them disagreeable. Jane says to her: ''this is my tenth year here, and I feel as if I'm still settling in…. the hardest thing is raising my kids. Look at Elizabeth. I have to be very careful with her. If you are not careful in this country, your children become what you don't know. It's different back home because you can control them. Here, no'' (Adichie 112).Ifemelu is able to share this sentiment with Jane not just because of their collective migrant experience but also because of their poor financial situation. It is for this reason that Uju approves of Jane's husband because he has a good job and ambition therefore, he is like herself and other people she knows back home.

The same situation of social status as a determinant of the aspects of foreign culture to be adopted is obtainable with Emenike. Growing up in Nigeria, he has a strong passion for Western culture but can do nothing about it until he migrates and becomes financially buoyant to carry out his dreams, as Adichie notes.

> He always spoke quickly, pugnaciously, as though every conversation was an argument, the speed and force of his words suggesting authority and discouraging dissent…. His was the coiled, urgent restlessness of a person who believed that fate had mistakenly allotted him a place below his true destiny. When he left for England during a strike in their second year, Obinze never knew how he got a visa. Still he was pleased for him. Obinze thought of his visa as a mercy: the ambition would finally find a release. (Adichie 246, 247)

Therefore, when Emenike eventually makes it abroad, he takes photos of Western places he has visited, triumphs he has made on the foreign soil and achievements he has, so ‘‘people who would see the photos… would know that he had participated in these triumphs’’ (Adichie 268). For Obinze, financial success makes it easy for him to increase his hybridity experience by indulging in a greater number of Western practices. When he becomes a young millionaire, he eventually has access to an American visa and travels to the United States. He begins to indulge in eclectic tastes like the purchase and remodelling of old houses, a peculiarity which seems Western in origin but which Ifemelu suggests stems from being wealthy. ‘‘People really do become eccentric when they become rich’’ (Adichie 437). Uju demonstrates this same tendency.

Prior to Uju’s migratory experience, when she is the General’s mistress, she bleaches her skin and wears wigs and is greatly admired by salon women where she goes to make her hair and fix her nails. She is able to do this because her position as the General’s mistress allows her to live a life of luxury. When she migrates to the United States, however, and faces financial challenges, her adoption of Western traits, subsequently her hybridity, reduces in the aspect of beauty practices. Ifemelu thinks: ‘‘the old Aunty Uju would never have worn her hair in such scruffy braids. She would never have tolerated the ingrown hair that grew like raisins on her chin, or worn trousers that gathered bulkily between her legs. America had subdued her’’ (Adichie 110). It is the same Aunty Uju who in her days of being the General’s mistress had on weekends lounged in her night-dress, ‘‘reading or cooking or watching television…she avoided the sun and used creams in elegant bottles….’’ (Adichie 74). Her house was equally well designed:

> The bathroom fascinated her (Ifemelu), with its water tap, its gushing shower, its pink tiles. The bedroom curtains were made of raw silk, and she told Aunty Uju, ‘Ahn-ahn, it’s a waste to use this material as a curtain! Let’s sew a dress with it.’ The living room had glass doors that slid noiselessly open and noiselessly shut. Even the kitchen was air-conditioned (74).

All these instances allude to the fact that one’s social status or financial position in society contributes to one’s personal location, which in turn influences one’s hybrid identity.

The three points where translocality works at creating hybrid identities are therefore valid, as seen in their application to *Americanah,* suggesting the varied factors at play in the expression of African postcolonial identities.

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to uncover the intricacies involved in the creation of hybrid identities for African postcolonial characters. It argued that there is no single hybrid identity that runs through all individuals. It also demonstrated that culture is not tied to a particular location with respect to place or point in time. In doing this, it foregrounded translocality as the creation of locality by postcolonial individuals as a result of personal and public influences, and social and political factors. This is in variance with the positions of Floya Anthias, Stuart Hall, Diana Brydon and Benita Parry on hybridity. They explored hybridity in relation to the experience of only diaspora postcolonials, the dominance of a particular location and culture in the life of an individual at a particular point in time, emphasizing social status or economic stability as the determinants of the creation of an individual's hybrid identity. Resting on Brydon's notion of multiple epistemologies, this study has put forward a new string of argument by foregrounding the idea that hybrid identities are created based on varied individual perceptions of social realities and cultures. Thus in *Americanah,* translocality produces hybrid cultural identities on the basis of individual idiosyncrasies, social status, age and gender differences, moderated by other socio-political factors like dominant exposure to one culture at a particular point in time.

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Part 2

TRANSLATION, HEGEMONY, AND THE POLITICS OF LANGUAGE

1

THEOLINGUISTICS, TRANSLATION AND EPISTEMIC HEGEMONY IN AFRICA: THE IGBO CASE

Chidi Ugwu

Abstract

This paper drew from literature and ethnographic methods to highlight the cosmological hegemony that motivated Western-driven translation efforts, with its attendant social change, among the Igbo of eastern Nigeria.Through translation efforts and discourses that sought to universalize Hellenist ideologies, with decades of indoctrination to implant them, most Africans have imbibed Hellenist cosmology, taking tenacious possession of it and even projecting it as their own autochthonous system. Because the Hellenist cosmology was presented as something belonging to a 'superior race', claiming resemblance with that cosmology becomes something with which many African theologians, elite and scholars sought to claim similarity with the global North. However, the extent to which this coloniality has routed the core of the Igbo and other African groups' central organizing logic is what this paper invites investigators to consider. Although much obvious damage has been done, popular postcolonial and decolonial writings have tended not to recognize the things that external contact has not destroyed. How human groups react in the face of external inducement or intimidation to change is usually determined by the place of the domain of that change in the structure of their social life. If the external force is so much that a frontal resistance would be too burdensome, local communities have tended to allow a semblance of change, but in a way that leaves the epistemic core carefully shielded. Local peoples all over the world have learnt that total abandonment of their traditional institutions has often brought nothing but trouble. When matters come to a head, a return to tradition remains the lifeline for the many. Many societies have learnt, the hard way, that a community with no tradition to draw strength and inspiration from, would be like a tree with no deep roots, tossed about by the tide of the times.

Introduction

Languages are different largely because they arise from diverse cultural ecosystems. When two or more cultures or societies meet and need to interact, translation becomes necessary. But translation, notes Virginia Dominguez (205), is a political act; it has not always shown itself to be a neutral exercise done only just for ease of communication. In the heydays of missionary efforts in parts of Africa, Boniface Mbah (14) recalls, cosmological vocabulary was found to be so elaborate and so entangled with other domains of social life that translating and reconstructing relevant terms became the very change agent of the missionary endeavor. This angle to the hegemony of Western imperialism is the perspective this paper raises, focusing particularly on how imperial power was subtly exercised through deliberate (mis)translation. In Africa, argues Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni (485), the domains of culture, the psyche, mind, language, aesthetics, religion, and many others have remained colonized. What this paper does is explore (mis)translation as one of the deliberate strategies through which this has unfolded.

I rely on Discourse Analysis in highlighting the power relationships underpinning Western-driven theolinguistics among the Igbo-speaking people of southeastern Nigeria. Discourse Analysis is a conceptual lens through which the workings of power and disempowerment are examined, usually through forms of communicative events, such as visual, written or oral performances (Ritzer and Jeffery 209). Guided by this tradition, Bowles and Grintis cited in Haralambos, Holborn, and Heald, enunciated the Social Dominance Theory, which essentially highlights the dominant group's use of ideological tools to normalize and entrench the unbalanced interests of the more powerful parties in a social relationship (809). Although physical force and intimidation were key parts of the colonial project, Social Dominance Theory holds that maintenance of group-based control is not simply achieved through physical force and intimidation, but also through the use of relatively stable ideological tools. This subtler alternative later came in handy in the case of the Igbo among whom the British had to fight many frontal battles in order to conquer each of the several villages. This is given the decentralized, acephalous structure of the Igbo society, as well as their deep-seated aversion to being dominated and controlled (Ugwu, "The Place of" 3). The Social Dominance Theory within the framework of Discourse Analysis will help to make sense of the issues examined in this paper. This theoretical choice will

make sense if we consider what George Basden, the Irish churchman, revealed about the colonial agenda behind the European scholars' studies of colonial 'subjects.' He wrote that they were studying the cosmologies of colonized societies to gain the vantage knowledge about how to colonize them more successfully (ix).

The Igbo-speaking southeastern Nigeria has been undergoing Christianization since the Irish and English missionaries first brought the Catholic and Anglican faiths here in the 1850s (Basden ix; Catholic Diocese of Nsukka 9). Local people who have replaced the missionaries have continued to energetically spread the teaching far deeper and wider. This area is today characterized by a mix of Christian teachings, increasing Muslim population, as well as a resurging fallback to tradition. In addition to the written materials on which I will heavily rely, I will, as a person indigenous to this area, also draw from my ethnographic position as an observing participant. In other words, experiential learning I ordinarily picked up long before this paper was conceptualized forms a significant part of the narrative. To complement information from these sources, I also draw from informal interviews I held with adult members of different Igbo communities. Much of my narrative will focus on linguistics. However, given how language is itself entangled with and is reflective of the general social life, I go on to reflect on aspects of the relevant social changes attending imperial theolinguistic maneuvering.

The Igbo, Western theology and cosmological incongruities

In traditional Igbo theodicy, the individual is generally held responsible for their acts of evil. They are to be sooner or later punished for these either by their kinsfolk, community deities, or spirits of the dead members of the community acting as the retributive force of *Àla/Àni*, the earth force. Blame was not shifted from the individual to some other agency. Sometimes, sorcery or *agwụ* (the possessive force of a deity) could be used to explain individual misfortune. Individuals who used sorcery to harm others would sooner get their comeuppance from either the earth force, community deity(ies) or ancestors. If the community deity(ies) or ancestors were seen to be long on arrival to dispense sanction in any case, people might take recourse to a renowned deity in another community. This is polytheism, typically. Measures were taken on both individual and group levels to forestall misfortunes through upright living, observance of taboo, appropriate sacrifices, etc. (cf.

Echeruo 19). Furthermore, it is easy to notice that the Igbo original eschatology had no concepts of hell fire, paradise or purgatory as places of punishment or reward (cf. Talbot 41-42). They instead had the notions of the cult of ancestors, or other less favoured wandering spirits of the dead, inhabiting diverse supernatural realms. Certain cases of harm or misfortune might be attributed to *Àla/Àni*. It is held to do this in its role as the source and sustenance of all things. The notion of it is aniconic (i.e., no human features are attributed to it). Reference to it as "earth goddess" only tends to, through feminization, anthropomorphize it. An argument that *Àla/Àni* is feminized in the sense a country, a continent, a ship, an association, etc. are feminized may not be out of place. But it is important to warn that the danger of distortion lurks, especially when the translation, earth goddess, entered through "lexical baptism" (Mbah 14) by Western-style scholars who were working with Hellenistic concepts and assumptions that they were familiar with. These assumptions drove much of the inaccurate, if not insensitive, translations that (have) happened as a core strategy in the Christianization of the Igbo. In one popular example, John Mbiti suggested "guardian angel" (60) as translation for the Igbo concept of *chi*. Peter-Jazzi Ezeh (*"Religion, Africa"*, however, refers to his translation as "ludicrous". "*Chi is just chi*", he insists, explaining that since the idea of angels is alien to the Igbo, the notion of guardian angel is all the more incongruous (62). *Chi* among the Igbo, which is not easily translatable in another language, may roughly translate as one's life force, a transcendental second that largely determines one's fate in this world. Ibe Chukwukere explored *chi* more elaborately, highlighting how it is inextricably linked with *eke*, a complementary spiritual force which is understood as the action-complement of the more abstract *chi*. Dismissing the latter-day missionary-inspired idea that *Chineke* denotes the Christian Supreme God, he notes that *Chineke* arose out of a deliberate merger of *chi* and *eke* by those leading the early missionary efforts (1). What happened as a key strategy in the proselytization process is what has been called "semantic extension" (Mbah 14), a strategy whereby a local term is left as it is but a foreign meaning is imposed on it. When the object or concept in question has thus assumed the foreign meaning, a foreign term may then be safely brought in as the new referent for the concept or object (14). This is ideological imperialism at its most subtle manifestation. This is part of a bigger picture of Anglophone texts being translated into

a multitude of languages but not the other way around, a phenomenon that has been argued to be “colonial and imperial” (Dominguez 205).

Such terms as *Chineke/Chukwu/Ezechitoke* (now ordinarily taken to refer to the high god), *Ekwensu* (now taken to refer to the devil), *njọ* (sin), *eluigwe* (sky/heaven), *ọkụmmụọ* (spirit fire/hell fire), etc. have thus become part of the everyday lexicon in cosmological discourses among contemporary Igbo people. But Igbo people who have long held that a supreme god has always been part of their deistic pantheon are often lost when called upon to find its place in their original cosmology. Amaury Talbot 1926; Joseph Anene 1956; Michael Echeruo 1979; Ibe Chukwukere1983; Donatus Nwoga 1984 and Peter-Jazzy Ezeh’s ‘‘The Ekwensu’’ among others, have pointed to the historical trails of how *Chukwu*, *Chineke*, *Ezechitoke*, *Osebuluwa*, etc. came to refer to the Christian God among the Igbo. In the case of *Chukwu*, Talbot, who worked among several Igbo communities in early 20th century, found that it was held among many parts of the Igbo area as the Aro deity; and that “only after Christianity had taken roots that *Chukwu* was said to live in the sky” (40-41). The name that has come to be taken up by the Igbo as “a new name for God”, he noted, “was the name of the cult and colonizing god of the Aro, a very ingenious Igbo group.” The Aro “Long Ju Ju”, according to Joseph Anene, was recognized as the supreme god by practically all the numerous communities from the Cross River to the Niger before the European missionaries converted it to their Hellenist sky god (54). This view is corroborated by other early reporters such as William Baikie who visited these parts in the 1850s (Shelton 26). Donatus Nwoga’s book on the subject is titled *The Supreme God as Stranger in Igbo Religious Thought*. Nuanced knowledge of the Nsukka dialect of the Igbo language is what one requires to reckon that *Ezechitoke*, the current Nsukka term for the high god, is a product of word reconstruction drawn from the etymons, *chi* and *okuke* (*okuke* is the Nsukka dialectal variant of *eke*). *Eze*, which may translate to chief, principal, major, etc., was added to the merger to lexically extend the term to assume the same supreme god referent as *Chukwu*, the Aro deity. ‘*Te*’ is a conjunctive in the Nsukka dialect playing the same role as the syncopated ‘*na*’ in *chi-na-eke*. “*Okuke*” was simply syncopated to “*oke*” for convenience, a common speech practice across Igbo communities. A side-by-side look at *chi-na-eke* and *chi-te-oke* will give one the proper insight here. The *abiama* suffix to

eze-chi-te-okuke of Nsukka has always been attached to the Aro deity, *Chukwu*, and not in any way peculiar to the Nsukka. It is common to hear members of various Igbo communities calling on *Chukwu Okike Abiama*, *Chukwu Abiama*, *Chineke Nwa Abiama*, etc. *Abiama* became attached to Aro along the lines of their history of legendary vagrancy. For a more detailed story of this, see Joseph Anene (54-58), Humphrey Eni (17) and Donatus Nwoga (59).

Not finding the place of a supreme god among the Igbo, the Christian missionaries and theologians resorted to an assumption that He was present but in an idle mode (*deus otiosus*) and withdrawn from the people (*deus absconditus*). If they saw that the Igbo had neither shrines for Him nor supplicated to Him in any way, they said He was so imposingly fearful that people dared not approach him directly (cf. Ezeh "The Ekwensu" 476). "When the Christian proselytizers were confronted with a culture that lacked one spiritual personage or entity to credit with the authorship of the universe, they had to introduce one'' (Ezeh "The Ekwensu" 476). Looking back, this seemed all part of a strategy designed to present monotheism as universal, and so fertilize the ground for the soft landing of the Christian faith on Igboland. As among other African and non-Western societies, this tactic was also used against the Yoruba. Rosalind Shaw notes:

> Missionary agendas depended upon the construction of homologies between Christianity and Yoruba 'heathenism'. Through such homologies, certain features could be "baptized" into Christianity, such as God, prayer and the concept of a mediator between mankind and deity. Other features could be replaced by parallel Christian forms, such as the substitution of communion for blood sacrifice. Others again, such as practices defined by the missionaries as "magic", as well as the trickster deity Esu (Ekwensu among the Igbo), were assimilated to ideas of Satan and Satanism and thereby rejected. (342-343)

Ogbu Kalu summarizes the effect of this approach to trans-adaptation of realities on the African intellectuals. "Christian or Hellenistic assumptions had eaten their intellectual inwards. In the end, they merely applied Hellenistic presuppositions on African materials and thereby further enslaved the latter" (351). The African religions of the Western books are, as the Ugandan poet and scholar, Okot p'Bitek, cited by Peter-Jazzi Ezeh ("Religion, Africa"), put it,

"all beyond recognition to the ordinary Africans in the countryside" (54). Ibe Chukwukere moves that henotheism would be a more appropriate depiction of traditional Igbo cosmology. He holds that there is more than one "supreme god," each god supreme in its own sphere of authority, e.g., *Amadioha* (god of thunder in some southern Igbo communities), *Àla/Àni* (earth goddess across all Igboland), etc. (13). And, "If ever there was a supreme god among the Igbo, it was *Ala,*" Michael Echeruo declares (19). One nagging question in the reader's mind by now should be: "How then did a group like the Igbo account for how things came into existence?" It is simple. The Igbo original position on the matter is that it is not possible for human beings to determine how the world came into being, that the universe itself knew how it came into being. Worrying about such things was even considered an unnecessary wild goose chase (see Ezeh "The Ekwensu" 476; Talbot 41; Anene 17; Onyewuenyi 93).

Perhaps nothing demonstrates more the calumny that missionary activities wrought through (mis)translation than what has happened to *Ekwensu*, on which Professor Damian Ugwutikiri Opata wrote his magnum opus, published in 2005. In an earlier ethnography that, at least nominally, focused on the entire Igbo area, Victor Uchendu wrote that "to balance the concept of a god who is all good, there is the existence of a devil to whom all evil must be attributed" (94). He called this devil *ágbàrà*, arguing that this logical binary is not peculiar to the Igbo. "It is a characteristic of all known religions that accept a high god who does no evil", he explained (94). Interestingly, one finds that the Ishielu-Igbo in the present Ebonyi State, southeast Nigeria, regard *ágbàrà* as a god. However, we see reactions to not only the idea of an all-purpose agent of evil among the Igbo but also the nomenclature that chooses the term *Ekwensu* (or *Ekwesu*, *Esu*, *Ekpesu*, *Egbesu*, etc. in different Igbo dialects and non-Igbo languages) as the name of the agent. Anthony Ekwunife (*Spiritual Explosions* 117) identifies *Ekwensu* as the deity which, like fire, could be invoked for positive purposes as well as for destruction. However, in a later publication, after a wider-ranging fieldwork, he takes a firmer stand, declaring that *Ekwensu*'s principal work was to protect people from unjustified aggression (Ekwunife *Meaning and Function* 91). Peter-Jazzi Ezeh ("Religion, Africa") in this latter vein, reveals that not finding the parallel of an all-purpose agent of evil among the Igbo, Christian missionaries adopted the name of this anti-devil deity but reversed its semantics

(62). Opata chronicles this semantic reversal process, placing the blame on Samuel Ajayi Crowther, Simon Jonas or J. C. Tailor, churchmen who all worked in the Igbo area in the second half of the 19th century with a number of local servitors. It has to be mentioned that *Ekwensu*, in its actual form, was regarded so approvingly that babies and villages were named after it (77). Observing that it was a common practice among the Igbo to name a baby after the deity believed to have aided its birth, Ezeh ("Religion, Africa") reports, "I know of someone named after the deity in its authentic form" (65). In living memory, there are so many communities bearing names that begin with, or end in, names of deities including *Ekwensu*. Nru-N'ato Ezike-Ekwensu is one of the three federating units of Nsukka town. They and Imilke Ogo Ekwensu, a town in Udenu Local Government Area, both in Enugu State, are the two places in the Nsukka area remarkable for having retained the *Ekwensu* eponym in their names. Opata's *Ekwensu in Igbo Cosmology* highlighted this. The oldest man in the Nru village where the Ezhike-Ekwensu deity was domiciled told me, in 2006 when I was conducting interviews for my undergraduate project, that its duty was to guard the community against harm and punish grave offenders. *Ekwensu* was here found to be neither neutral as Anthony Ekwunife (*Spiritual Explosions* 117) notes, nor evil as some more popular sources hold.

Furthermore, it may be important to mention that when two different religious systems come in contact, one of them having 'god(s)' and the other, 'God', complexes of superiority/inferiority sooner arise. In this situation 'god' and 'God' become relative terms, the former referencing small deities with a lower letter case 'g', and the latter standing for the supreme deity with an upper letter case 'G', to whom all those with small 'g' are subordinate. That this has long happened between European Christianity and other non-Western groups is an instance of ideological dominance; a way of decentering the *other* 'god' in order to inferiorize and marginalize its adherents. Thus, it is deliberate that I have declined from using 'god' for the element that this term usually references in Western-style discourses. 'Deities' and 'oracles' are used instead.

From Ideological to Actual Social Change – How Much Change and in What Direction?

The point at issue is not whether non-western groups' cosmologies and ideologies are changing as a result of contact; it is to put the

records straight so that we are clear as to the original position of things. In other words, to faithfully account for how things have changed, we should first be able to account for what they are changing from. Even more important to contemplate is: how much is changing due to the external ideological maneuvering being highlighted here, and in what direction.

In my boyhood days, one man, a catholic catechism enthusiast, used to come to my father's compound to school us on the catechism of the Catholic church. My father (who was a traditionalist) always listened from our sitting room while we recited outside, seated on the pavement. Each time the man mentioned that the Christian God was infinite in mercy and ready to forgive all repentant wrongdoers including those who had taken human life, my father never helped stepping outside to challenge him. I remember him always rhetorically putting it to the catechism teacher: "So what becomes of those whose lives were cut short by that so-called convert? What becomes of the family and dependents who might have become stranded for life because of his death?" They would argue for some time before my father would sigh and retreat to his sitting room, seething with anger and obviously not satisfied with our catechism teacher's bible-based responses. One day, as I got back into the house after one of those catechism sessions, my father called me close to him and gestured that I sit down. In his usually calm, ponderous manner, he said to me:

> It is time to determine how you are processing these teachings. What do you think this sort of teaching will achieve? -- the teaching that wills you to suspend all quest for justice to a God that has promised upfront to pardon all your offenders, including those who kill your relatives? Imagine someone killing me and appealing to you for forgiveness because the God you are being told about will also forgive him; and will even punish you for refusing to forgive that wicked dealer! What society where people think that way will not be torn apart? What have you to say?

But I was too young to process the import of the matter and articulate a fitting response.

Here are two men representing two different belief systems: a traditional, longstanding one structured to exert temporal punishment on wicked dealers and an introduced system in which retribution is deferred to the hereafter. Although there have been

sustained onslaughts by thelatter to overrun the former, the fact is that belief, especially one rooted in tradition, is usually so ingrained that external influences hardly root it out. The usual result is a hybrid of beliefs and practices, termed syncretism. Actually, Igbo people who openly profess Christianity reckon with the local deities more than they do the Christian one; they would always resort to the local deities whenever solutions to life's real challenges are required. Indeed, it has become common in these parts that a stolen item is most likely to be returned if it becomes clear that the owner would invoke an oracle to deal with the culprit; and this is a strategy that many now resort to. The belief in the traditional deities to enforce sanctions in such occasions is so deep rooted that many (including politicians and the ordinary people that profess Christianity) now readily recourse to it. A certain widow in my neighbourhood whose late husband's properties were being trespassed by some of his relatives had invoked a legendary oracle to 'cover' those belongings after having made several futile attempts to do that through the formal justice system and other mechanisms such as the lineage group. Thenceforth, such trespasses ceased completely. A politician who uses the Bible or Quran to take the oath of a political office but relies on traditional deities to secure the loyalty of his proteges (which is common today among Nigerian politicians) is only obviously demonstrating this. Stephen Ellis (447) narrates how senior Igbo political 'godfathers' had taken their proteges to the Okija shrine in Anambra state, southeastern Nigeria to extract oaths of allegiance before the shrine of the oracle. These events highlight the key role of traditional institutions as a final resort when nothing else could be mobilized to muster loyalty even in modern state relations of power, which should ordinarily be organized around formal rules. Ellis links the British policy of indirect rule to the colonialists' realization of the fact that they could only try to sidestep traditional structures to their own peril. What is more, that communities are hardly ever ready to accept a total sweeping aside of their central organizing logic is something that even church leaders in these parts are beginning to concede to. In 2018, the priest of one catholic parish in Nsukka had sent one of the seminarians serving in his parish to bear witness to a traditional oath-taking between two parties in a long-drawn dispute, one of whom was his parishioner. When the matter came to the juncture that oath-taking appeared to be the final option, the village council gave a condition: both would swear by the bible and by an oracle to be unanimously

chosen. When the priest, whose parishioner had enlisted to help him mediate, had no more options to recourse to, he also gave in. And this is not an isolated case. No matter how much smear has been done to elements of African Traditional Religions, recourse to local deities across groups is clearly in resurgence (Ugwu, Tagbo 12). One of my interlocutors tried to explain:

> I think people have been left with no choice. What do you really want people to do when everything else has failed them? Is it the police? Can you really call the police today if you truly want to get justice? Do they not support the person who has more money...? What about *ndi ụka* (the Christians) ...? for how long will they keep praying for justice even when it is clear to everyone that their God is always a long way coming? When pushed too much, they will look for quicker justice. Life is short. (Ugbo, personal communication, Nsukka, March 15, 2019)

> Another interlocutor said,
> We are all humans with a limited number of years to live…. People cannot wait for justice forever. Gone are the days when people left justice to a God they were not sure was really interested in delivering that justice…. People now seem to want to sort things out here and now, and then wait to explain when the judgement day arrives. That is what I think is going on. (Ike, personal communication, Nsukka, November 10, 2020)

Although superimposed by the received Western systems, tradition still undergirds behavior among the Igbo and across many non-western groups. Any interested observer who spends time going around local Yoruba, Benin and Igbo communities, not the urban areas, will make no mistake about this fact. Decades ago, similar observations were already made among the Akan of Ghana by Pobee and Mends 1977, the Ibibio of Nigeria by Offiong 1999, and more recently among the native Americans by Ottenberg ("Igbo Life and Tradition") 2009. Recalling how Pentecostalism has thrived in Nigeria by drawing from indigenous beliefs in spirit possession, *mami wata*, witches and wizards, Simon Ottenberg ("A Modern Religious") affirms, "It is extremely difficult to completely wipe out a cultural past" (75). The observations of Kelechi Ugwuanyi (2019) and George Agbo (personal communication, January 8, 2020) across

Igbo communities over the past four years is that many local groups have successfully shielded the core of their indigenous systems from being completely torpedoed by external influence. The changes we see are usually more superficial than many realize, argues Ugwuanyi. In a forthcoming work, I extend this perspective to argue that we have been accustomed to paying attention to the things that have fizzled in the wake of westernization, ignoring those that have not. I explore how indigenous healers' appropriate dominant colonial discourses and practices (especially as represented by Christianity and the biomedical tradition), analyzing how they deliberately re-inscribe their practices in the allures of those dominant external discourses, using those allures as shield to preserve the core of their system. For example, many healers in southeastern Nigeria present themselves as Christian priests and prophets, quoting the bible, organizing prayer vigils, singing Christian songs, adorning their healing spaces with objects of Christian worship; but when you get truly close, it would become clear to you that their traditional knowledge is at the core of their 'faith healing' in actuality. The purely herbal healers on their own now package their medicines in the shapes of pharmaceutical drugs, with dosages, expiry dates and even government registration numbers, thus removing the debate as to whether they are measured and regulated or not, and so retaining the core element of their medicament, although now covered by a new outer shell of biomedical tradition (Ugwu, forthcoming). Again, although concerned persons lament about how white weddings have gained more prominence in these parts than the traditional process of contracting marriage, the traditional rites have not given way, but have indeed remained so central that white wedding is not allowed to happen if the traditional protocol has not been consummated satisfactorily. Perhaps because it is at the very center of life's major questions, it is funeral protocol that has come under the fiercest onslaughts of the Christian churches around here. It is a fateful unfolding that deserves a full narrative made, in terms of how the local communities are shapeshifting to deflect, accommodate or absorb the onslaughts.

Concluding Thoughts

No doubt, Eurocentric modernity has marginalized other knowledge systems (Asher and Wainwright 29). Fostering discourses that universalize Hellenist ideologies was how colonial missionary

efforts overwrote the ideologies of the non-Western *other*. This became a necessity at a time when mental conquest was gravely needed to advance the colonization process. Africa was dragged into a Eurocentric moral order dominated by Christian thought, notes Ali Mazrui, who goes on to argue that what Africans know about themselves and about each other have been profoundly influenced by the West (26). Through translation, word reconstruction and decades of indoctrination, most Africans have been raised to imbibe Hellenist cosmology to the extent of taking possession of it and projecting it as their own autochthonous system. Many of them work with the sense that having a belief system comparable to the Europeans' will tend to bestow something the outsider has, thus offering some 'fulfilment' that they, after all, have something in common with that 'superior race'. Because the Hellenist monotheistic view, for example, was presented as something belonging to a superior race in a higher level of 'evolution' and 'development', claiming monotheism then becomes something with which some African theologians, elite and scholars sought to draw level with the West. How political and economic power is wielded through such epistemic control is what the seminal scholarship of Frantz Fanon, Michael Foucault and Edward Said, among others, have been invested in exposing. Deliberate (mis)translation of religious concepts as a key part of this process is the interesting perspective that this paper has contemplated. Whether social change has happened across the non-Western worlds as a result of this ideological course-plotting is no longer a moot point. The extent to which the external onslaught has routed the core of the Igbo and other African groups' central organizing logic is what I invite investigators to pay more attention to. My carefully cultivated observation is that although much obvious damage has been done, popular lamentations have tended not to recognize the things that external contact has not managed to destroy. Externally-driven change does happen but not always as much as we think it does. How human groups react in the face of external inducement or intimidation to change is usually determined by the place of the target of that change in the central organizing principle of the group in question. If the external force is so much that a frontal resistance will be unsustainable, local communities have ways of allowing a semblance of that change to happen, but in a way that leaves the core carefully shielded. Local peoples all over the world have learnt that any attempts to totally sidestep any traditional institutions have

often brought nothing but trouble to the particular social sphere in question (cf. Ottenberg 5). It remains the case that when matters really come to a head, a return to tradition remains the lifeline for the many. A group with no indigenous tradition to draw strength and inspiration from is, like a tree with no deep roots, tossed by the wind of the times.

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2

DID THE CHRISTIAN MISSIONARIES MISTRANSLATE THE IGBO? ANOTHER PERSPECTIVE ON THE MISSIONARIES' TRANSLATION OF *GOD* AS *CHINEKE* AND THE *DEVIL* AS *EKWENSU*

Uchenna Oyali

Abstract

This study is a critique of Opata (2005) and Onukawa (2014) who respectively investigated the appropriation of the Igbo concepts of Ekwensu and Chi na Eke (Chi and Eke) by Christian missionaries who used the terms to represent the Christian concepts of the Devil and God respectively. While accepting the validity of the historical claims of both studies – that the meanings of these terms within the Christian religious domain is a re-semanticization of these Igbo terms with far-reaching consequences, the present study critiques the evaluative and essentialist inclination of the studies, which presents the appropriations as errors and the outcomes of the appropriations as not reflecting a true picture of the Igbo system of thought. Using the concept of language elaboration, this study argues that the appropriation of these terms was necessitated by the functional elaboration of the Igbo language in its use to express ideas in the new Christian domain and the fact that the Igbo language did not have terms for the Christian concepts of the Devil and God. Consequently, the Christian missionaries resemanticized the pre-existing Igbo terms in order to fill a lexical gap in the language. With the spread and integration of the new meanings of these terms into the Igbo language over time, the Igbo language has been lexically and conceptually enriched. What is more? As majority of the Igbo people are Christians, these elaborations form a part of their linguistic repertoire. Thus, this study concludes that these translation choices of the Christian missionaries were deliberate acts and not done in ignorance as suggested by Opata (2005) and Onukawa (2014), and the outcomes of these choices, having been integrated into the system of thought of present-day

Igbo people, should be considered as instance of the dynamism of the Igbo language aimed at accommodating its new reality.

Introduction

In present-day Igbo language, the supreme good deity of the Christian religion is called *Chukwu* or *Chineke* and the supreme evil deity is called *Ekwensu*. These Igbo terms for these Christian concepts have been fully integrated into the language so much that they have entries in dictionaries of the Igbo language (e.g., Echeruo 2001 and Eke 2001). Interestingly, several studies have demonstrated that the terms *Chukwu* or *Chineke* and *Ekwensu* did not have these meanings prior to the Igbo encounter with Christian missionaries in the early 19th century. Studies on *Chukwu* and *Chineke* include Achebe (1975), Chukwukere (1983), Nwoga (1984), Ezekwugo (1987), Onukawa (2014), and Oyali (2016, 2018 and 2020), while those that focused on *Ekwensu* include Umeh (1999), Opata (2005) and Oyali (2018). The present study is a critique of two of these studies, namely Opata (2005) and Onukawa (2014). It does not refute the validity of their historical claims – that the meanings of these terms within the Christian religious domain is a re-semanticization of existing Igbo terms with far-reaching consequences. Rather, it critiques the evaluative and, in a way, essentialist inclination of the studies. Using the concept of language elaboration, this study descriptively investigates the concepts under study in order to appreciate the impact of the translators' choices within context. Thus, this paper calls for a more descriptive approach to translation criticism in Nigeria as such an approach would engender a better appreciation of the import and impact of translation in the society. The next two sections present the thrust of Onukawa (2014) and Opata (2005) respectively. These are followed by a highlight of the concept of language elaboration and how Bible translation, especially the first translations into a language that had not encountered any of the Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam) is a fitting illustration of the concept. The section also analyses the various forms of elaboration engendered in the translation choices under study, followed by the concluding section.

Onukawa (2014) on the Appropriation of *Chineke* as the Christian God

Onukawa (2014) is a beautiful linguistic reconstruction of the etymology of the lexical item *Chineke*, generally interpreted today as the Igbo word for the Christian God. Within the Christian parlance, *Chineke* is interpreted as "God does create" or "God that creates", depending on the tone used in the articulation of the last two syllables. Here, *Chineke* is seen as a compound word made up of *chi*, *na* and *eke*. In this sense, *chi* is interpreted as "God", *na* as an auxiliary verb marking progression and *eke* as the main verb meaning "to create". Onukawa (2014), thus, contends that *chi* does not mean God. He cites other scholars such as Achebe (1975), Isichei (1976), Ebeogu (1993), Nwoga (1984) and Nwala (1985) as variously interpreting *chi* as "Igbo personal life force", "guardian angel", "companion", "individualized providence", "portioned-out-life principle", "personal deity-identity in the spirit land which complements his human identity" (p. 361). He adds that *na* in *Chineke* is a coordinating conjunction and not a verb as interpreted among the Christians. He also insists that *eke* in *Chineke* is a noun and not a verb as interpreted in the Christian domain, and that the verb root *–ke* does not mean "to create" but "to share or allot". From his etymological reconstruction, the "correct" interpretation of *Chineke* is *chi na eke* (chi and eke). Onukawa (2014), thus, submits that this interpretation fits the Igbo pattern of complementary dualism.

To be clear, the present study accepts Onukawa's (2014) reconstruction of the etymology of *Chineke* from the dual concepts of *chi* and *eke* to the single concept of the Christian God who is believed to create. However, this study views Onukawa's (2014) attitude towards this new meaning as somewhat purist, an unwillingness to accept certain forms of dynamism in the language occasioned by the history of its speakers. For instance, in his introduction, Onukawa (2014:360) submits that the interpretation of *Chineke* as "God that creates" is "a distortion of the actual meaning of the word in Igbo traditional thought". Furthermore, in the concluding section, Onukawa (2014:369) reiterates that "Igbo Christians and Christian-oriented scholars etc. (sic) who misinterpret the word *Chineke* seem to forget that the word has its etymology in the Igbo system and not in the Christian system". Here, Onukawa (2014) rejects the meaning of a lexical item that has

existed in Igbo for over a century, specifically since the publication of the New Testament of the Igbo Union Bible in 1908. His insistence that an Igbo word must reflect the Igbo system of thought suggests that the Igbo language should not accommodate Christian thoughts, and if it must, the Christian thought must not disturb the pre-existing Igbo thought, a position that is hardly viable in situations of language and culture contact. A disturbing assumption in this position is that there is some sacrosanct Igbo system of thought which the Christian enthusiasts dared to interfere with. The irony in this assumption is that the collective Igbo consciousness so hyped was a relatively recent creation by the same Christian missionaries being accused of interfering with the Igbo traditional system of thought. The communities that make up present-day Igboland were a heterogeneous lot with different traditions of origin and histories of migration, albeit with similar cultural practices after years of living as neighbours. With no central religious or political authority, these people were first brought together under one umbrella by the Christian missionaries in the course of mapping the area where the different dialects of what is collectively called Igbo today were spoken (see Oyali 2021, forthcoming and Bersselaar 1997). In other words, making an allusion to some Igbo past with a well-defined and sacrosanct collective system of thought is an allusion to a non-existent past, as the collective Igbo system of thought has been under constant negotiation over the years.

Furthermore, Onukawa's (2014) dismissal of the Christian appropriation of a pre-existing Igbo term as a misinterpretation of the term suggests that the translators were not well versed in the Igbo language and systems of thought and probably made the choice in error. Again, available evidence suggests otherwise, for the translators of the Igbo Union Bible where this lexical innovation was first used were native Igbo speakers, born and raised in Igboland and well versed in Igbo language and philosophy before their conversion to Christianity (Oyali 2018). Their decision to use the term stemmed from the lexical gap existing in Igbo at the time, and the fact that their decision has not only subsisted in the language but has also been fully integrated into the language indicates that their innovation successfully served the purpose for which it was done. This point is further expatiated below.

Opata (2005) on the Appropriation of *Ekwensu* as the Christian Devil

Opata (2005) is a comprehensive depiction of the central and positive position of the deity, *Ekwensu,* in many Igbo communities before its demonization by the Christian missionaries. Using several anthropological examples, Opata (2005) demonstrates that *Ekwensu* was "the putative ancestor/founding father of many Igbo communities" (p. 35). Not least, these communities bore names that have *Ekwensu* in them. Notable examples of such communities in Enugu State include the family in Lejja, Nsukka Local Government Area (LGA) called *ỤmụEzike Ekwensu* (children of *Ezike Ekwensu*), the village in Udenu LGA called *Oba Ekwensu*, and the kindred group in Obukpa, Nsukka LGA called *ỤmụEkwensu*. Sadly, these communities have changed their names to expunge the *Ekwensu* element because of the prevailing negative associations of the term as the Christian Devil. Opata (2005:38) thus argues that "[i]f Ekwensu is an ancestral name, then it cannot in any sense be an evil spirit since those who become ancestors are those who had lived well, died well, and therefore were accorded full funeral rites […]. It cannot then be imagined that many communities will, knowing that Ekwensu is evil, decide to answer to that name".

Opata (2005) also shows that Ekwensu was similarly used for place names, such as *Ala Ekwensu* (Ekwensu's land), a large parcel of land in Achi, Oji River LGA of Enugu State and *UgwuEkwensu* (Ekwensu's hill), located in Ekwulobia and Ukpor, two communities in Anambra State. *Ekwensu* is also a deity in several Igbo communities including Edem in Nsukka LGA, Amube, Amalla Oba in Udenu LGA, and Nkpologu in Uzo-Uwani LGA, all in Enugu State. Indeed, Opata (2005) argues persuasively that Ekwensu would not be invoked in these contexts if it were perceived to be negative.

Despite the convincing anthropological account, some of Opata's (2005) statements, especially on the concept of translation and its impact on the Igbo language and worldview, are on the one hand essentialist and on the other hand contradictory. One of the reasons he presents for embarking on the study was to:

> re-direct the way the post-colonial subject engages a distorted past. The colonizer may have done more epistemological harm to the colonized through "translation" than through other forms of colonial subjugation. There are no more empires to "talk back", but individuals can talk back a little to the colonial

> languages in which they have been "formatted" and "flopped". It does appear to me that there is no translation without a virus. This is why any human group must take the issue of how they are "translated" and how they "translate" themselves seriously. The translation of the Christian Devil as the conceptual equivalent of Ekwensu, a heroic deity of the Igbo, is one of the instance in which translation can become virulent (Opata 2005:v-iv).

Essentially, Opata (2005) posits that his goal is to reclaim the distorted history of Ekwensu which resulted from its use in the Christian Bible as the Igbo equivalent of the Christian Devil. Owing to the negative lot of Ekwensu in the hands of the Christians, Opata (2005) asserts that "there is no translation without a virus" which suggests that every translation is harmful. This raises two sets of questions: 1) To whom are these translation products harmful? The Igbo Christians and non-Christians alike? Or just the adherents of *omenala*, the Igbo system of religious and cultural practices? 2) Were all instances of lexical re-semanticization done by the missionaries during Bible translation negative? Would the example of *Chineke* presented above, for instance, be seen as negative as well?

Elsewhere in the text, Opata (2005) declares that "[t]he mistranslation of Ekwensu as the conceptual equivalent of the Christian devil has become so pervasive, so widely and unquestioning (sic) unchallenged that to do so now would appear like a veritable heresy" (p. 81). Undeniably, the understanding of Ekwensu as the Igbo term for the Christian Devil has been well integrated into the Igbo language and worldview; however, calling it a mistranslation is problematic and difficult to justify. Like Onukawa (2014), Opata (2005) suggests that it was a result of some error in judgement by the translator. Is there no possibility that this was a conscious decision and not some mistake?

Interestingly, and surprisingly too, the last paragraph of Opata (2005) reads:

> What the Christian churches may do is set up a Translation Commission to take a new look and a new view of the Bible, to make it more meaningful to the Igbo, to customize it to Igbo needs. Government and universities need to also take translation more seriously. Some seminal scientific and philosophical texts need to be translated into Igbo. One way

> of being able to manage foreign concepts is to have them translated into the indigenous language because translation not only enriches a language, but also helps it to grow, to mix with the cross currents of other cultures and systems of thought (p. 130).

The first sentence above suggests that the existing translations of the Bible into Igbo are in dire need of a revision because they are not meaningful to the Igbo and, as such, not customized to Igbo needs. It should be noted that in building up his argument in the last chapter of the study, Opata (2005) did mention other instances of perceived mistakes in Bible translation such as the interpretation of *igommuo* (veneration of ancestors) as heathen worship, the translation of heaven as *eluigwe* (up or above the sky) and servant as *oru* (slave). These assertions also raise the question: what makes these translations mistranslations? For one, they may be seen as instances of semantic extension, with the meanings under attack being restricted to the Christian domain thereby heralding the emergence of an Igbo Christian register. Besides, Opata's (2005) statements suggest that there is a uniform interpretation of Christian concepts like slave and servant among Christian denominations, which is far from the reality. What is more, when Opata (2005) talks about making the Bible meaningful to the Igbo or customizing the Bible to Igbo needs, one wonders which Igbo he has in mind. Is he talking about the non-Christians, especially the adherents of *omenala*? Or does he also include the Igbo Christians? On what grounds does he assume that the use of these terms in these contexts does not satisfy the needs of the Igbo Christians?

The last two sentences in the excerpt above further make Opata's (2005) position more problematic. Indeed, they contradict the premise of his argument regarding the harmful nature of translation. Here, he asks the government and the academia to take translation seriously because of its potential for lexical and conceptual enrichment while all the while deriding the same lexical and conceptual enrichment that resulted from Bible translation; for the Bible is indeed part of the "seminal scientific and philosophical texts [that] need to be translated into Igbo" and the re-semanticization of *Ekwensu* is part of the lexical and conceptual enrichment he is calling for. Via Bible translation, Igbo has been enabled to indigenize Christianity and its systems of thought to the

extent that there is hardly any topic within the Christian religious domain that cannot be comfortably discussed in Igbo.

The major challenge with the views of Opata (2005) and Onukawa (2014) is that they are essentialist, which beclouds some of the nuanced contextual matters arising from the missionaries' translation choices. The next section foregrounds these contextual matters using the concept of language elaboration, of which Bible translation is a form.

Bible Translation as Language Elaboration

When a language is elaborated by being used to express ideas in a new domain, especially in situations of language and culture contact, one of the outcomes is the realisation that the language may not have terms for concepts in the new domain. In some situations, the said concepts may not exist in the worldview of speakers of the language, which presents a clear instance of lexical gap. In other situations, there may be partial equivalent terms and concepts in the language; that is, the term may have some nuanced meanings that are not seen in the term for the concept in the donor language or the term for the concept in the donor language may have nuanced meanings that are absent in the equivalent term in the receiving language. There are also instances where the receiving language has a fitting equivalent term, which the speakers ignore for political reasons such as when the term has some associations that the speakers of the language do not want to associate with the new domain. Whatever the case may be, the language users would have to figure out how to deal with such total, partial or political lexical and conceptual gaps in the language. This is usually the situation when the Bible is first translated into a language, as was the case with Igbo in the late 19th century and early 20th century. Prior to their encounter with Christian missionaries, Igbo people had a distinct system of religious and cultural practices; Christianity, with its several distinct concepts, was foreign to them at the time. As such, the early missionaries struggled with finding apt equivalent terms for many of these Christian concepts. The situation was so tough and frustrating for the missionaries that it was one of the reasons J. F. Schön, about the first missionary to embark on the task of translating the Bible into Igbo, abandoned the project and shifted focus to Hausa, for Hausa had overcome this problem at the time owing to its over two centuries of encounter with Islam (Oyali 2018).

This situation is beautifully illustrated in Oyali's (2018) model for Bible translation and language elaboration, an adapted form of which is presented in Figure 1.

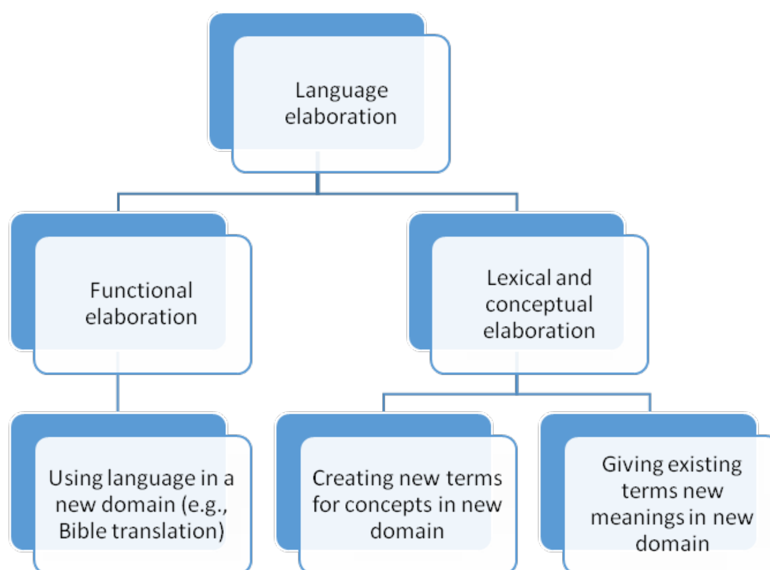

Figure 1: *A Model for Bible Translation and Language Elaboration (after Oyali 2018)*

Figure 1 presents two forms of language elaboration. The first entails expanding the functions of a language by using it to express ideas in a new domain, such as using Igbo to express ideas within the Christian domain via Bible translation. Resulting from the functional elaboration of Igbo, the second form of elaboration involves introducing new lexical items and concepts into the language. As presented in Oyali (2020), the pre-Christian Igbo society did not have a central deity that all the Igbo communities worshipped as their collective supreme deity (also see Ifeka-Moller 1973); neither did they have this supreme deity's negative counterpart. Translating the Bible into Igbo then created the need to not only introduce these concepts into Igbo but also have terms for them in the language. For the supreme good deity, as presented in Oyali (2020), the Bible translations into Igbo published in 1860 and 1900 adopted the name of a local deity of the Arochukwu people called *Chukwu*. However, following protests by some Igbo Christians that this term would make the Christian supreme deity to be associated with this local deity, this term was dropped in

subsequent translations and a new term *Chineke* created by appropriating an existing Igbo expression that refers to two complementary concepts, *chi na eke* (*chi* and *eke*). All the translations done from 1908 till date use the new term. For the supreme evil deity, from Opata's (2005) presentation, the Christian missionaries picked an existing term for a trickster deity and god of war and gave it a new signification in the Christian context as the Christian Devil. Over the years, especially as more Igbo people embraced Christianity, these new meanings of *Chineke* and *Ekwensu* gained acceptance and spread among the Igbo of different age groups and religious inclinations.

The point being made here is that the missionaries innovated these two terms because the concepts they are used to represent in the Christian domain did not exist in the Igbo language and worldview. There were no pan-Igbo supreme good and evil deities. So, these innovations were done to solve a translation problem for the Igbo Christians, which have resulted in different forms of elaboration. First is the expansion of Igbo concepts with the addition of these two Christian concepts into the worldview of the Igbo people. Second is the enrichment of the Igbo lexicon by: 1) creating a single lexical item *Chineke* with a singular referent from a noun phrase *chi na eke* which refers to two related concepts *chi* and *eke*; and 2) extending the meaning or referent of *Ekwensu* from a local deity to a pan-Igbo deity and the negative counterpart of the Christian supreme deity. Thirdly, Christianity being a religion distinct from the religio-cultural practices of the Igbo, innovating these two terms alongside many others within the Christian domain (see Oyali 2018) implies creating a corpus of terms distinct to Igbo Christianity; in other words, the innovations marked the emergence of an Igbo Christian register.

One key issue that apparently influenced the positions of Opata (2005) and Onukawa (2014) is the conflict between the religio-cultural practices of the Igbo at the time and the teachings of Christianity. For instance, Christianity teaches that deities are either good or evil and that each category has a hierarchy with a particular deity at its head – God at the head of the good deities and the Devil at the head of the evil deities. Besides, Bible translators are encouraged to indigenize Christian concepts in the receiving languages by appropriating existing cultural concepts and giving them new significations in the Christian domain (Nida 1964). This practice has been heightened with Eugene Nida's (1964) distinction

between formal and dynamic equivalence, where dynamic equivalence, the favoured translation strategy, specifically encourages this form of cultural appropriation. Granted that in due course, such acts change the fortunes of the cultural icons so appropriated as is the case with *Ekwensu*, they ultimately serve the desired purposes for the Christian religion. For by such acts, Christian concepts not only get introduced into new societies, but also get ingrained into the people's cultural practices. Over time, a new generation of speakers is born who are unaware of the meanings of these cultural icons prior to their appropriation by the missionaries. This way, doing away with the Christian religion becomes impossible. Such conscious practices cannot be mistranslations. They are political acts consciously carried out to promote and indigenize the Christian religion.

Another outcome of such translation strategies is that as more people in the receiving culture embrace the Christian religion, Christianity and its worldviews become an integral part of the culture of the people. Consequently, it becomes untenable to argue in the case of the Igbo for instance, that what constitutes the Igbo worldview should not include the Christian ideas that have been well blended into the Igbo culture. Doing that would mean refusing to accept the present reality of the people, as Onukawa (2014) has done when he insists that the interpretation of *Chineke* as "God who creates" or "God does create" does not uphold the Igbo system of thought, for the interpretation does uphold the system of thought of the Igbo Christian. The same could be said of Opata (2005) when he suggests that the Bible does not serve the needs of the Igbo, for the Bible does serve the needs of the Igbo Christian.

Conclusion

The Igbo people's encounter with Christian missionaries in the 19th century, which foreshadowed the British colonization of the Igbo, introduced a new reality to the Igbo. Anchimbe (2018:40) submits that such colonially introduced realities are in the form of "languages, religions, political administrative systems, formal education, and so on." In relation to the Igbo experience, Christianity and colonialism introduced a new language (English), a new religion (Christianity), a new political and administrative structure (the collective Igbo nation and indirect rule), and a new education system (Western education). Put simply, the present-day Igbo society is a hybrid one, a blend of the pre-existing system with

the realities introduced by Christianity and colonialism. Any study of present-day Igbo people, language, culture, cannot afford to overlook these new realities. It is against this background that this study has re-examined the positions of Onukawa (2014) and Opata (2005) regarding the appropriation of the Igbo concepts of *chi na eke* and *Ekwensu* respectively in Christian circles. This study disagrees with these critics' claims that these appropriations were done in ignorance; rather, it submits that they were conscious steps taken to solve a translation problem for the Igbo Christians.

The study also revaluates the essentialist stance of these critics regarding the identity of the Igbo. Present-day Igbo culture is a hybrid one and any claim that divests it of its Christian components does not reflect the reality of the people. Nationalistic as their position may be, Onukawa (2014) and Opata (2005) appear to be speaking for the non-Christians among the Igbo, who incidentally constitute the minority in today's Igbo society.

Lastly, this study has demonstrated the inherent danger in an evaluative and prescriptive approach to translation research. Such an approach may distract from the intentions of the translation agents and the impact of their translation products. Alternatively, a descriptive approach, such as applied in this study, would accentuate the nuanced and contextual impact of translation in the receiving language and culture.

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3

LANGUAGE AND DISCIPLINARY CLASSIFICATION IN POST-COLONIAL CONTACT

Boniface M. Mbah

Introduction

This chapter centres around our unrecognised fleeting fortunes, the crises in the classification of our genres, and how we can retype ourselves by discussing ways that the architecture of our motifemic labeling as a finished people has been emblematised and, from that label, sort our identity from the noxious mixture, which encapsulates us and, consequently isolates us from the mix, do a block characterisation that recreates or rather refreshes that mesmerised silhouette called our identity.

It will be unduly repetitive here to recount our sullied history. Echeruo (1979:1) succinctly summarises the travail of the Igbo nation from the long time of persecution to her current state of divine providence. He writes as follows:

> We are a people who should have disappeared from the face of the earth a long time ago from a multiplicity of vicissitudes but have miraculously avoided doing so: from famine when the soils suddenly failed us; when the slave raiders carried us away in our thousands, and we laboured and wasted in the oil Delta and in the Americas; or when only a few years ago, we were massacred and bombed and shelled almost out of existence. It cannot be an easy task, therefore, to attempt any serious reflection on the Igbo people; certainly not before an audience as well informed and as committed as the one I have before me today.

Like Echeruo, before a battery of scholars and an informed audience reading this chapter, perhaps, biased in favour of established western traditions, one is moved to wonder how unorthodox and obtuse one will sound. However, I am encouraged by the mammoth reception of my 129th inaugural lecture of University of Nigeria, Nsukka, which was in Igbo, the first of its kind in the University. I have come to believe that every able-bodied

right-thinking Igbo man knows the true state of the Igbo nation, its psychology and attitude, and yearns for one who will wash the dirty linen in public so that the public knows that it is eventually washed and indeed that the linen is clean after all. I have come to reflect on how our ethics have not been supported with action, how our courage has failed us in declaring who we are indeed and how nobody wants to be the first to take the step of faith and bell the cat in our articulated journey to independence.

This chapter is organised in four principal parts. The first part is the introduction, which introduces and lays the proper foundation for the lecture, the second limb looks at the theory, which analyses how an otherwise one people under God has been polarised on the basis of prejudice and geographical dispersion. The third section analyses the subject matter proper, namely, language and disciplinary classification in post-colonial contact. The fourth part is the summary and conclusion.

1.0 Pride and Prejudice

The origin and nature of man at the point of creation have remained controversial and subject of speculations. There have arisen speculations about how life started and how the first man looked. Theists speculate that there is an omnipotent being that is responsible for the creation of man (Bible, the Holy, Genesis, 1:1). Different religions have different versions of this belief. On the other hand, anthropologists and members of the other schools of thought, who do not subscribe to the thesis of the theists, tend to assume that man evolved from centuries of auto-regulation of matter (Butler, 1985). Of these postulations, one thing is certain, that is: there is a being generically called man. One other thing that is incontrovertible is the fact that man is born mortal. Within the constraints imposed by this unfortunate fate, from his lone birth, he tries as much as possible to relate with himself as much as with those around him (cf. Staszak, 2008). Much of this relationship is a consequence of the need to soothe his feelings and prolong his being as his station in life permits (Mbah, 2018). Man realises his predicament and through enculturation as much as acculturation aggregate to protect himself from his raw environment and other predatory creatures. Consequent upon the aggregation, he with those with whom he shares common solidarity factors progressively irons out some ideologies. These ideologies are mental representations of basic social characteristics, which are made self evident through self

serving selection of values, identity, tasks and goals (see Staszak, 2008). The effect is that the aggregation continuously recreates social attitudes and perspectives of the group. Accordingly, as Van Dijk (1995) asserts, different groups attach special importance to different social values such as dominance, equality, autonomy and independence. These values constitute the first basic laws of self preservation. Mbah (2018), therefore, contends that every culture, while it cherishes its traditions, regulates the psychological and social forces that unite it with the other converging societies to positively type its members but is averse to negative typing of its ethos (Keen, 1988). Further to this attitude, it fights against the intrusion of cultures of 'the other' especially those opposed to its own worldviews. In other words, each culture, no matter how perceived as barbaric, civilised or in their alternative, yearns to be understood on its own terms. This cultural posture has come to be called cultural relativity. The philosophy of cultural relativity was pioneered by Herodotus (Histories), to wit:

> If anyone, no matter who were given the opportunity of choosing from amongst all the nations of the world the set of beliefs, which he thought best, he would inevitably after careful considerations of their relative merits-choose that of his own country. Everyone without exception believes his own native customs, and the religion he was brought up in, to be the best and that being so, it is unlikely that anyone but a mad man would mock at such things. There is abundant evidence that this is the universal feeling about the ancient customs of one's country (Aubrey de Selincourthttps://en.m. Wikipedia.org)

The contention of Herodotus was reformulated by Williams (1973) as follows:

> What is right or good for one individual or society is not right or good for another, even if the situations are similar; meaning not merely that what is thought right or good by one is not thought right or good by another ... but that what is really right or good in one case is not so in another (Frankena William, 1973, *Ethics*)

The love of culture may sometimes lead to attitudinal hardening and or fixation. A culturally fixated person or group of persons becomes ethnocentric, who accordingly uses his or its

culture as a measure for other cultures. Churchill (1911), Gilmartin (2000) and Stuyter (2003) believe that ethnocentrism inspired colonialism. First, the colonialist thought that his culture was superior to those of others. Second, he felt that it was his duty to civilise other cultures, which he felt were savaging on his own. Indeed, it mattered less to him that some of his cultural practices were tainted with features of abomination, which were tabooed in some other cultures.

> The ethnocentric uses his culture as a standard for measuring the other cultures. This was popular during the age of exploration and expansion that led to colonialism. The colonialists thought that they were domesticating the savages and civilising them. The means were religion, politics and the other was economy. The missionaries thought that they were teaching the native religion for their own good. The overall effect is that it destroys the cultures of the natives. Having lost their culture, the natives lost the will to organise and resist the colonialist demand for their lands and even human resources. Economically, the colonialists have no qualms with the appropriation of the land and slave trade because they would bring themselves to believe that they would make better use of their resources than their relatives. (study.com/academy/lesson/ ethnocentrism vs. Cultural relativism)

One of the most painful aspects of colonialism is that it lacked diplomacy, that is, the application of intelligence and tact in the conduct of official relations between governments of independent states (cf. Ken-Maduako, 2014). The colonialist of all persuasions does not recognise the sovereignty of his target; he visits his target with brute force, and is prepared to crush any opposing force against his expansionist, exploitative and demeaning agenda. Either not culturally directed at grooming the society for warfare, or poorly prepared for such an encounter, every colonised society feebly resists the attacker. Consequently, with time, the colonialist is accommodated to the extent of his fury; after years of destruction and plunder of all that makes the nation, he orchestrates a make-belief negotiation. He pretends to step aside, giving his victim the trail of his reign. The victim has the trail of his reign but he is so overwhelmed that he is incapable of either identifying himself or what distinguishes him from his master; all he sees is the master. He

sits back, making monkey of the master, devises petty administrative systems that sieve the remains of what makes him and his subjects, and bundle same into the common wealth of him, who assigned him the insignia of office.

Man with the other fellow men first unites to conquer his environment. After taming the environment, some men, in view of limited resources and to suit their ego come together to rule over their fellow men. The undercurrent of this artifice is a balkanisation of an otherwise calm environment into an environment that is at war with itself (Staszak, 2008, Lenin, 1961). The consequence is that while some pin others down to their own design, the objects of this machination get brainwashed to the extent that they fail to realise their virtues, and sometimes see themselves with those features that distinguish them as chattels for the same system that holds them hostage.

Whether by principle of direct assimilation or indirect rule, the colonialist has one goal; first to determine the direction of thinking of the colonised, to deny them the access to reason in regard to self actualisation and to perpetuate same. The principle of assimilation works on the make-belief that all is one. However, two or more things which are unalloyed can never be compounded; all mixtures can always be sorted. No matter the degree of similarity among peoples and cultures in contact, or the degree to which they are made to appear so, they are denied common identity; otherwise, *ab initio*, they would have remained the same.

Each culture has unique values that make it relatively different. The theory of cultural relativity propounded by Whorf (1940:8) argues that each culture has a system of organising its world so that each group remains essentially distinct:

> We cut nature up, organise it into concepts, and ascribe significances as we do, largely because we are parties to an agreement to organise it in this way – an agreement that holds throughout our speech community and is codified in the patterns of our language. The agreement is of course an implicit and unstated one, but its terms are absolutely obligatory; we cannot talk at all except by subscribing to the organisation and classification of data, which the agreement decrees.

Each culture first and foremost forms a solidarity driven pact, the essence of which makes its beliefs and values distinct from those of the other cultures. The pact is terse, unstated and unwritten

but validates its ethos to such an extent that the members of the society see the practice of its pact as compelling against those of others, which they see as either discretionary, unacceptable, abominable or tabooed in parts (cf. Mbah, 2018). It is these differences in cultural beliefs that lay the foundation for discord across societies.

The differences in the values of different societies first of all delineate them into sects. These sects concretise them into in-groups and out-groups. Intrinsic in the segregations is an embedded feeling that each of them is different from the other and therefore objectified, that is, one in relation to the other. Objectivisation of peoples is a relation of necessary conflict, while conflict itself is a necessary relation of competition. The more cultures are established, the more conflicts prone groups are created and the more resources, which are limited, are struggled for. Avruch (2002) identifies the causes of conflict among societies as individuated groups, perceptions, incompatible goals, scarce resources or the sources of power needed to acquire them. Comparative geography of knowledge then tries to isolate isoglosses of the knowledge typology, and their localisation. Knowledge based pundits and propagandists then use the knowledge typology to type societies and classify them according to their whims. When the classifications are not countered or efforts to do so are countermanded, these groupings and their typing become marks of identity of peoples or civilisations. The emergence of first, second and third worlds is a direct consequence of this typing.

2.0 Theory of Self/Identity

Scholars have attempted to outline principled procedure of engaging with issues in dialogic relations. Many of the theories on the conversational analysis focus on self and otherness. The theories of sortable mixture, identity and critical discourse centre on the self and the other (cf. Van Dijk, 1984). This theory studies the relations, which exist among divided groups generally referred to as ‘the in- and out- groups’, ‘the enemy and I’, and ‘us and them’ (Chimombo & Roseberry, 1998). “Other”, according to Staszak (2008), is a member of a dominated out-group, whose identity is considered lacking and who may be subject to discrimination by the in-group. He contends that ‘Othering’ results from transforming a difference into otherness so as to create an in-group and an out-group. This theory according to Staszak (2008) is summarised as follows:

> Otherness is due less to the difference of the Other than to the point of view and the discourse of the person who perceives the Other as such. Opposing Us, the Self, Them, and the Other, is to choose a criterion that allows humanity to be divided into two groups: one that embodies the norm and whose identity is valued and another that is defined by its faults, devalued and susceptible to discrimination. Only dominant groups (such as Westerners in the time of colonization) are in a position to impose their categories in the matter. By stigmatizing them as Others, Barbarians, Savages or People of Color, they relegate the peoples that they could dominate or exterminate to the margin of humanity. The otherness of these peoples has notably been based on their supposed spatial marginality. In addition, certain types of spatial organization, like segregation or territorial constructions, allow the opposition between the Self and the Other to be maintained or accentuated.

Although it seems that the "Other" is sometimes valued, as with exoticism, it is done in a stereotypical, reassuring fashion that serves to comfort the Self in its feeling of superiority.

The otherness theory does not therefore focus on the basis of the characteristics of the person or group being typed but on how the self categorises the other. The segregation of society into groups that are not based on the difference between the self and other but on prejudice has a long history. Among the Greeks, otherness was based mainly on spatial factors, those living in the neighbourhood as opposed to those far away. Those who were far away were called the Barbarians – those whom the Greek thought lacked the Greek linguistic repertoire, were unfamiliar with their perceived advanced system of government, lacked Greek culture and therefore belonged to other civilisations. For the Greek, geographical location, political system and language were major determinants of otherness (Staszak, 2008). However, when Christianity and Islam were formed and firmed into societies, they introduced a different strand of otherness, the believers against the non-believers. The advent of the industrial revolution, which heralded the expansionist agenda of the West created a different criterion for judging otherness, namely material progress as opposed to primitiveness. For the West, there are hierarchies of societies, based on their level of primitiveness. During the period of the exploration, especially that of Africa, it was

believed that the Africans engaged in cannibalism, had no organised system of government, and went about naked. Up till now, some westerners still live under the sedation that Africans live on trees. They were thought to be even more qualified to be exterminated than the Barbarians of the Greek period. As Said (1978) puts it, the West therefore felt that it was their right to tame the savages from the clutches of despotism, superstition, misery, vice, slavery and decadence.

Geographers strongly believe that there is something geographical about all forms of otherness; the 'progressive' and 'primitive' societies clustered around certain geographical locations; their locations coincide with certain continents, countries, zones. They wonder, if otherwise, why 'white' men are found in certain continents whereas men 'of colour' are localised in certain parts of the globe. Otherness is believed to be the main reason for the exploration and the expansionist agenda of the West. There appears to be no sense of solidarity between the 'colonialists' and the 'savages'.

Colonial Strategies of Typing

The basis of 'self' is culture sensitive. The self concept according to Aronson (2002) is the belief that an individual has upon himself an emotional, spiritual and social being. However, cultural systems construct the self concept according to the way the society organises itself. Kroeber and Kluckholn (1963) argue that culture systems may be a product of action or conditioning elements for further action. In a similar vein, Kanagawa (2001) argues that individuals construct themselves according to their cultural practices. Heine and Lehman (1992) found out that Western and Eastern cultures were different and this difference was defined by the way individuals constructed their self concepts. Western cultures were more self centred, individualistic and demanded more positive feedback toward individual advancement. This is the converse of what happens among the Afro-Asian cultures where negative feedbacks on individual advancement were expected in order to pursue collective societal goals for the advancement of society.

In view of the above cultural directions, the letter of Lord John Russell, the Colonial Secretary, to the British Lords of the Treasury in London dated December 26, 1839, suggesting other ways of stopping the Trans-Atlantic slave trade may be better appreciated. He stated, *inter alia*,

> [a]lthough it may be impossible to check the cupidity of those who purchase slaves for exportation from Africa, it may yet be possible to force on those by whom they are sold, the persuasion that they are engaged in a traffic opposed to their own interests, when correctly understood (quoted in Seddall 1874:167).

Oyali (2018) takes a quote from Seddal (1874), which summarises the mindset of the missionaries while coming on the religious, economic and cultural conquest of Igboland

> Good news! all ye that wander wide,
> Poor scattered sheep long torn and tried,
> In death and sin's domain:
> The gracious Lord His spirit sheds
> O'er broken hearts and weary heads,
> To give them rest again
>
> Good news, idolaters! no more
> Your altars black with fire and gore,
> Shall leave yourselves unclean;
> Th' atonement you never find,
> The blood that hallows all mankind
> Christ's Holy Cross hath seen
>
> *(Church Missionary Gleaner[1], quoted in Seddall 1874: 166)*

Oyali (forthcoming: 2) runs a commentary, which, to our mind, aptly analyses the poem in relation to the missionary enterprise:

> The ... missionaries' perception of the natives who live by the Niger River as a lost people ("scattered sheep"), wallowing in sin ("in death and sin's domain"), whom they intend to rescue ("give them rest again") using the gospel of "the gracious Lord". The second verse clarifies... the religious practices of the natives, since they are perceived here as "idolaters", whose black altars make them unclean. They therefore required the blood of Christ for atonement. Basically, the mission of the CMS was to "civilize" the people by converting them to Christianity. Suffice it to mention... that the missionaries engaged in translating

> (portions of) the Bible into Igbo. This action introduced a new religious reality – Christianity – to the Igbo, which, in turn, brought about some changes in the Igbo language and their conceptualization of the world.

To achieve the above goal, the mission agents searched for concepts in the Igbo culture that were similar to concepts in Christianity. They laid those concepts as the foundation which supported other Christian concepts, which subsequently infiltrated the language and culture. (cf. Oyali, 2016). Having isolated the core vocabularies, which incorporated Judeo-Christian concepts into the Igbo lexicon, they took the next vital step, namely, using language elaboration as a major tool for mind bending and later for psychosomatic superimposition of their world view and realities on the host culture; they used Igbo lexical items to adapt to Judeo-Christian concepts. This had a lot of implications for language use. The foreign terms wore the garb of Igbo terms, and as Echeruo would have it, ''through cat's tiger fur" hid the smouldering realities of the West under the Igbo reality. In no time, with vicious military, economic and religious manoeuvres, the fabric of the Igbo worldview was penetrated and subsequently rendered ashen. This indirect lexical superimposition introduced the Judeo Christian perspectives, and with time, through selective lexical reinterpretation, some core Igbo lexical terms, which held the Igbo belief system together were targeted and baptised. The lexical baptism had two aims; to express some Christian concepts and or heathenise some so that people became averse to their use even in secular contexts. Such terms as Ekwensu (Opata, 2012) 'atama' or 'ezemmụọ', 'dibịa' (Oyali, 2018) were demonised and became restricted in use. Furthermore, apart from adapting the Igbo lexicon to the foreign religion, the language as a whole became less a vehicle for expressing age long traditional views than expressing the new foreign cultures. This cupid tactic was also used against the Yoruba as can be seen in the following excerpt by Shaw (1990: 342-343), citing Peel (1987):

> [m]issionary agenda depended upon the construction of homologies between Christianity and Yoruba 'heathenism'. Through such homologies, certain features could be "baptized" into Christianity, such as God, prayer and the concept of a mediator between mankind and deity. Other features could be replaced by parallel Christian forms, such

> as the substitution of communion for blood sacrifice. Others again, such as practices defined by the missionaries as "magic", as well as the trickster deity Esu, were assimilated to ideas of Satan and Satanism and thereby rejected.

Kalu (2002: 351) summarises the effect of this approach to trans-adaptation of realities on the African intellectuals, "Christian or Hellenistic assumptions had eaten their intellectual inwards. In the end, they merely applied Hellenistic presuppositions on African materials and thereby further enslaved the latter".

Language and disciplinary classification in post colonial contact

The field of language study is one of the trickiest fields of study. It is cut in-between itself as a subject of study as well as medium of instruction. Language as a subject of study is distinct from language as a medium of instruction. With the above background of the violation of the indigenous Nigerian languages by the colonialists or missionaries and their agents, and the cross fertilisation of indigenous and foreign concepts, and the subsequent superimposition of the foreign concepts on the indigenous ones, it became the vogue to first think in the indigenous language but transmit same in the foreign language or rather cogitate over how the foreign language will present the conceptualised term before either speaking or reducing it to writing. The effect is that content is mixed with the media of delivery; the mixture is further confused by the fact that the content may be the medium of delivery. Furthermore, the media of delivery are further mixed up in the cultural permutations relative to the worldviews embodied in the culture content. This mixture though intricate is 'sortable'.

Let us take an example from some of the disciplines across Nigerian universities. What makes a medical doctor is the content of his profession, which he learnt to master, namely diseases and their medications. The content may relate to dermatology, nephrology, anaesthesiology, internal medicine, cardiology, endocrinology, gastroenterology, gynaecology, haematology, oncology, psychiatry. In the field of medicine, the content is clear from the medium of instruction. What makes a medical practitioner is therefore the knowledge of the practice of identifying and treatment of diseases. It does not matter whether this knowledge is delivered in Igbo, Yoruba, English, Japanese, German or Greek. The same difference may be made of specialists in veterinary medicine,

pharmacy, law, political science, architecture or engineering. The effect of colonialism is not visible in the above examples.

The above scenario does not appear to behold some disciplines in the language discourse. What is the difference between a student of the English language and English oral literature? What is the difference between Igbo oral literature and English oral literature? What constitutes African literature has been a subject of debate. Chinweizu, Jemie and Madubuike (1980) have taken time to present a treatise on what constitutes African literature and how it can be decolonised. Opata and Ohaegbu (Eds) (2000) compile what they consider the major themes of African literature. It does appear that Chinweizu et al. (1980) contend that language should be the major determinant of African literature; African literature or more appropriately African literatures should be that which is written in African languages.

What constitutes an African language is a subject of academic debate. Legally, an African language includes all languages that have been domesticated and accepted as official languages in different parts of Africa. In view of African history and the legal regimes that it has been encumbered with, some languages that would not have otherwise been African languages are not only African languages but are used to conduct and superintend over African affairs. One is uncertain if there is any aboriginal African language that is used as a medium of conducting government or other official businesses among interethnic groups in Africa. Within the context of language or academic discourse, it may be reasonably argued that any language that is not aboriginal to Africa is not an African language. But the position is mixed with the argument that most of what is now regarded as English is not truly English in the real sense of the word. The phonetics, phonology, and syntax of most English constructions in Africa morph into African sensibilities rather than those of English. If the owners of a language do not understand texts in the same language, is it proper to claim that such texts are still those of the language in question? As a consequence, what are Hausa English, Ibibio English, Igbo English, Yoruba English, or Nigerian English as opposed to English unqualified? English is mixed but the mixture can be sorted. The criterion for so doing is one: isolating the English with a feature that is not English qua English.

The study of English in Igbo land and indeed Nigeria is aetiological, even a child can see through the veil of its difference

from English; Nigerian English is English for Nigeria. The Nigerian world view is different from the English world view; Nigerian world view is conveyed in Nigerian English and it takes language elaboration, semantic extension, and analogical mapping for the English to appreciate Nigerian English. The big brother syndrome in Africa has constrained Africans from clearly differentiating 'Englishes' and or its associated disciplines or both. Why should there be African medicine, African literature, African science, African lifestyle, or African language? Are they indeed identical? The effect is that we misrepresent our true reality and the contribution that each set of Africans is making in the world; consequently, an uninformed British thinks that Africa is a country, an uninformed American thinks that Africa is a state, an uninformed German thinks that Africa is a local government and an uninformed Asian thinks that Africa is a forest of wild animals. Why is it that there cannot be Hausa cattle, Ibibio poetry, Igbo science, or Yoruba drama? Why must everything in different parts of Africa be African even in areas where what is ascribed African does not thrive?

In most Departments of English in Nigerian tertiary institutions, there are studies in language and literature. The state of the language studies has been highlighted above. With regard to literature, hardly are the aspects of literature properly identified. From the dossiers of project, dissertation and thesis collected across Nigerian universities in the South-East, it does appear that there is no difference between Igbo oral literature and African oral literature on the one hand and Igbo oral literature and English oral literature on the other. And in furtherance of their careers, they are awarded the same degree, namely, B.A, M.A. and PhD English.

On the same side of the coin, students of German will go to the same field, collect the same data, translate and analyse the same text; then, such students earn certificates in German oral literature. The same text is subjected to the same hackneyed procedure by French, Russian and Chinese students, who earn certificates in French, Russian and Chinese oral literature respectively. The question that arises is: is it the content or the medium of instruction that makes the specialist in these Departments? Just as content makes the specialist in medical science, in engineering, in architecture, and in veterinary medicine, so also should content be the deciding factor in English, French, German, Russian or Chinese oral literature. The text in issue is an Igbo or some other African language text, the medium of instruction notwithstanding. These

certificates are fake; they belong to Hausa, Ibibio, Igbo, Swahili or Zulu (oral) literature as the case may be.

Another question may be asked; is there no difference between Igbo oral literature and African oral literature? Why not award certificates in the appropriate language in these cases? Of the cases observed, there is no certificate awarded for Igbo or African Oral Literature in the Departments of English where these aberrations are rife. Because the studies are done under Department of English, the certificate awarded is a certificate in English. But reading the projects, dissertations or seminars presented in pursuance thereof, one observes that the data used for analyses are Igbo oral literary texts. One feels strongly that the same scenario is in the South-West, South-South and Northern Nigerian universities. There are texts collected from different parts of Igbo land on natal songs, burial and funeral dirges, marriage rites, royalty or chieftaincy songs and other shades of oral literary performance. Using different methods of data analysis, the texts so collected are translated into English and analysed. One is then moved to ask; does translating an Igbo oral or any other African language text into English and analysing same in the English language with any paradigm make the text an English literary text to be awarded a specialist English certificate?

The problems in the instant case are multidimensional. The first has to do with identification and or classification. Is the text an Igbo, African, or English text? Or is the study that of translation? The text cannot be a translation text because the nature of the text does not fall within the subject matter of translation. Furthermore, having identified it as an Igbo text, then it is neither an African in the narrow sense of the word or any other text. Though the text is within the African geographical area of study, African is too wide a classification in the instant context. Given the affinities among language families and phyla, there could be similarities among closely related languages and or cultures. However, other similarities may point to aggregate universal tendencies rather than to affiliate close knit relations. There are motifs across cultures such as the femme fatale, the love triangle, vaulting ambition, and trickster hero. However, these literary archetypes are represented differently across even African cultures. While the Igbo, Tiv, and Yoruba may have the Tortoise as the trickster hero in their folktales, in Ewe (Ghana), though African, the archetypal character is the Spider. To what extent then is an Igbo folktale revolving around the

Tortoise African rather than Igbo? The physiognomy and mannerisms of Tortoise are different from those of the Spider and these features count in the fixed and non fixed form of the tales.

The other aspect of the question is the propriety of classifying such literature as English oral literature or awarding a certificate in English. As already established above, hardly is there any basis for classifying the data as African let alone English oral literature. One is certain that the English have their oral literature, which is quite unique to them and different from African or Igbo oral literature. If one were to send his child to study English oral literature and such a child comes back with tape recorded materials from Igbo, Ibibio or Yoruba land or their oral literature rendered in English, one would conclude that such a child is prodigal. It is also likely that even if such a father were not to know what English oral literature was all about, he would likely refer such a child to English country songs such as those of Dolly Parton, Don Williams, Kenny Rogers, Jim Reeves or Skater Davies.

English and Igbo are distantly related; the paradigms of analysis cannot fix them into a unity of cultural analysis. Igbo is a tone language while English is an intonation language. It is therefore difficult to so translate an Igbo oral text, no matter how comprehensively annotated, to generate the icons of rhythm in English and still be semantically faithful to the Igbo text. The world view of the text will also be distorted. It appears that classifying the content of English studies in Nigeria is urgent; otherwise, what are currently regarded as Departments of English in Nigerian universities are hardly so. It is expedient to differentiate graduates of English from graduates of other areas of study. It is heartwarming that some East African Universities like Makerere University have taken some positive steps by making what used to be Department of English that of Literature and that of African literatures. The African self colonisation of bundling the self and presenting same to the colonial world must stop. There is hardly any university in Nigeria today studying English oral literature. And awarding English certificates against studies in any African oral literature does not make any difference.

Another critical question in classifying the content of English study in Nigeria is: why is it that those who study particular African traditions avoid labelling the articles of their trade appropriately? One possible reason is unfounded bluff coupled with inferiority complex. Those who, for instance, study African

literatures and label them English live under torn shadows of themselves; they appear to claim that the study of English launders their image more than stating otherwise. With the history of English and its official status in Nigeria, such persons believe that better opportunities come with such falsehood. Furthermore, they feel that it presents them as dull if their course of study is local or insular. Hardly do they worry about the quality of what they learn, the possible contributions they can make within the area and indeed the opportunities available after graduation; inwardly, they hope to learn on the job subsequently. If otherwise, what contribution can those who studied African oral literature under the guise of English oral literature make in the analysis or teaching of English oral literature? What contribution can those, who studied Igbo oral literature, make in the analysis or teaching of Yoruba oral literature or vice versa? Expertise is expertise; it cannot be achieved through academic politics. One does not know the number of Nigerian English experts in Igbo, Yoruba or Zulu oral literatures that have been appointed as reviewers of theses in English oral literature in the United Kingdom or the United States of America. If there is none, then, it calls for sober reflection; compounds cannot but mixtures can always be sorted.

The cliff hanger in the dilemma of students of Igbo or African oral literature under the guise of English oral literature is that there are departments of Nigerian or African languages, which teach and research into these same courses either in foreign or indigenous languages. To what extent can one who studied Hausa, Igbo or Yoruba oral literatures in English compete with those who studied them in the indigenous languages? To what degree does the analysis of translated African literary texts in other languages represent or substitute African realities in the target languages or change them to such target language literatures? To what extent will the claim that African literatures are European language literatures be sustained? When will foreign language literatures accept these literatures as part of their own literatures? Till when will the pretence be over? When the pretence is over and the reality dawns on all of us, then, where will it fade into and how? Translating one’s text and appending it to the text of another is self defeatist. Why it is self defeatist is that the European would not accept it or even mix it with that which he already has. Furthermore, the African does not appreciate the fact that once given away, he is left with nothing; ultimately, he is bereft of identity and is finished.

Summary and Conclusion

One should appreciate the long distance we, as a people, have travelled, and the energy needed to be expended to return to the point of digression. However, now, what is urgent is the will to appreciate our current condition and the drive to construct an African short circuit to the desired paradigm shift. What has brought the Igbo nation to her current station is not altogether peculiar to her. Societies construct different identities for themselves while other societies may construct some identities for others. Currently, the picture is clear; the colonialist constructed a subservient identity for the African. And the African, having realised his station in life, appears to be constructing his own identity, dishing it in a platter and begging the same colonialist to accept and add same to his own. Mixtures, as they are, are separable and, as expected, are being and will always be sorted by the European.

Civilisations are a group of firmed identities. Civilisations are like empires; they rise and fall. In recorded history, there are civilisations and empires that have risen and fallen. However, some civilisations have had more lasting impact than others before eclipsing into oblivion. Such is the case with the British Empire on the Igbo nation. The influence is immense; the culture of the Igbo society has been radically modified. The first target was the language; the basic vocabularies of the language were so elaborated that they transformed to be the change agent of the missionary endeavour. Some of the lexical items were redefined to accommodate the worldviews and precepts of the missionaries. Further to this, they ensured that the meaning of the fundamental terms, which founded Igbo culture and religion were delimited, first to avoid any coincidence with missionary beliefs and also demonised to be avoided by the language users, who having been converted or brainwashed see them as heretical.

The next step was to reincarnate in their agents, who after the missionaries have gone became more threatening to the Igbo culture than the regime of their overlords. It has therefore been a long line of successive accommodation, absorption and assimilation of western values. The overall effect is that our perceptions are twisted; our intellectual values diffused and our heritage reassigned. This is worst evident in language and related disciplines.

In every cloud, there is a silver lining. In the full bloom of colonisation, there are still discerning minds, who ask basic questions bordering on identity. It is these still hardly heard voices

that, as a drop in river, are rippling in the minds of many. This lecture is borne out of this ripple and it is believed that before the ripple wears away, it would have covered the circumference of its borders. It is therefore hoped that with the new wave of rethinking and revivalist publications, those things that have been lost will be recovered and properly classified.

By way of conclusion, I believe that I have analysed why language and disciplinary classification is the way it is currently. I think that I have also shown why the current attitude towards the study of African traditions cannot be sustained. I have also shown why it is urgent that those, who insist on slaughtering African icons of identity on the altar of misconceived bluff and giving these civilisations to other traditions, should have a rethink and pursue courses of action that elevate rather than impugn on the Africa persona.

Note

1. This paper was first presented in the public lecture organised by the Africanity Scholars Network in the Faculty of Arts Lecture Auditorium on August 30, 2018. I am indebted to the contributions by the members of the informed audience who made constructive criticisms to parts of the earlier contents of the paper.

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4

REDEEMING THE NEW SELF BY LINGUISTIC FUMIGATION

Laz C. Ogenyi and Walter O. Ugwuagbo

Abstract

This paper is hinged on the thrust of the argument in a well-publicised book by Professor Damian U. Opata entitled Ekwensu in the Igbo Imagination: A Heroic Deity or Christian Devil? In this text, he battles against the deliberate act of demonization of a benevolent deity by the early translators of the Bible. The Bible literature is seen as a colonial, post-colonial and neo-colonial tool of subjugation, devaluation and debasement of the Igbo cultural worldview. He advocates a healing restoration of the view of Ekwensu as a heroic deity, and not a deity that has traumatized many Igbo communities. The question is, how? This paper therefore concerns itself with the how? This is predicated on the fact that the text is coming from a hitherto avowed Catholic adherent, who recently turned a traditional worshiper whose new consciousness brandishes linguistic tools, when the 'culprits' have dug deep into the minds and hearts of the religious, as well as the laity that the English 'Devil' is the insidious Ekwensu they have to avoid. Just how far will the author's linguistic fumigation go?

Introduction

There is something mentalistic or imagistic about the way Igbos use the word –*Ekwensu*. Imagistic language has the capacity to conjure abstractions and turn them into concrete possibilities; thus, it highlights the elegant dynamism of language that emanate from metalinguistic thought. Metalinguistic thought has many facets and occurs mainly in complexes that suit situations rather than sentences. It may involve colour, movement, smell, time, touch or sound. So, someone may say, 'I see', about a problem instead of 'I understand'. One, thus, conceptualizes and creates mental pictures that constantly stare at one, at the thought or mention of a word.

The manner in which the Catholic faith teaches about the Devil (Ekwensu) using the Igbo language as a medium is not only

fear-inspiring but entombing. It is not just like a carving on the wood, but an engraving on solid granite. It starts from infancy; the Block Rosary sessions and the catechism teaching are chanted by rote, as it were, on the tabula rasa of very young, fertile and assimilating minds. The situation is as Emile Benvesite argues thus:

> Language re-produces reality.... Reality is produced anew by means of language. The speaker re-creates the event and his experiences of the event by his discourse; the situation inherent in the practice of language, namely that of exchange and dialogue, confers a double function on the act of discourse; for the speaker it represents reality, for the hearer it recreates that reality. (22)

However, can one talk of reality when in fact no one has seen the Ekwensu? Indeed, Opata raises a few pertinent questions regarding the linguistic or mental reality of an Ekwensu when he asserts, "Spirits are non-corporeal; that is, they are disembodied beings. They do not have a body. How can non-corporeal beings now be said to have colours, white or black. Has the pursuit of self-serving ideologies led to physicalism?" (p. 9) Therein lies the point. Barring arguments on the nature and notion of 'being', which is a different philosophical pursuit, one can veer into the non-corporeal nature of a spirits or Ekwensu. If a spirit is disembodied, by implication, it first had a body, albeit a spiritual body, before shedding it to either assume another form or disguise. If he [we ascribe it with masculinity] were to wear another form, only spirits can see him.

If we take the Biblical instances of appearances of the Holy Spirit to human sight at River Jordan during the baptism of Jesus into consideration, we see a dove. During the Pentecost of 33CE, we see flames of light resting on human heads simultaneously, ferried by a stiff wind. Similarly, the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures* puts it, the Holy Spirit is said to minister to the mind of individuals, thereby giving himself a voice (p. 1, 616).

There are religious stickers, handbills and banners depicting Ekwensu's 'colour' by means of negativizing his activities, such that adherents easily give him existence, a habitat, voice and even a future. In short, the believers in religious creed have no doubt regarding the existence of Ekwensu. This consciousness is breathing. Human consciousness is constituted by an ideology – the beliefs, values and ways of thinking via which we perceive and

explain what we take to be real. The *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures* corroborates that religious belief is anchored on faith – the "assured expectation of realities that are not seen or beheld" (p. 1, 612).

By analogy, we wish to observe – with no intention to malign anyone – that the immediate above facts were the firm beliefs of the author before 'Saul' became 'Paul'. We are spared of the circumstances of the turnaround. However, at this juncture, we have the text – a product of the new self – to grapple with.

The Text

The better way to show that a stick is crooked is not to argue about it or to spend time denouncing it, but to lay a straight stick beside it. In this wise, Opata's brief treatise not only takes a swipe at what he termed the "subjective conceptualization" of the colours 'white' and 'black' and apportioning the latter to the Devil or Ekwensu, but highlights the dishonesty of Western Europe in using pre-existing notions of their authority as a tool for enslaving and dispossessing the minds of Africans and by extension, the Igbos.

By academically traversing the Igbo landscape, the author – Opata – distinguishes between a variety of supernatural forces and deities that are seen as evil: *Agwu,Ogbunike, Akologeli, Ndi Npulu Chi, Agwu Nsi, Ajo Mmuo*(12) on the one hand and Ekwensu on the other hand.

Worthy of note is that the author notes, at different places in the text, that there are various dialectal variations of the name, which include, *Ekwensu, Ekweetu, Ekpesu, Ekwe-Nsu, and Ekwetu*. Regarding the question of the binary existence of God and the Devil as taught by the Christian faith and its relevance in the Igbo cosmology, the author was quick to refer to Ikenga Metuh, who asserts,

> … many writers ... represent Ekwensu in Igbo traditional religions as the archenemy of Chukwu and the supreme author of evil. It is necessary to point out at once that this dualism does not exist in Igbo religion. Ekwensu, which is the name Christians have adopted to translate the devil, is an evil spirit, which is feared because [it] is the spirit of somebody who died poor without a family. (It) is also a missionary accretion which has completely confused Christian and traditional Igbo beliefs. (p. 195)

He argues that if Ekwensu was the spiritual equivalence of the Christian Devil, the question would be why would individuals and communities supplicate, revere and worship him? There are shrines for Ekwensu worshipers in Obimo, Edem, Umundu, Nkpologu and Iheaka (all in Enugu State); Obodoukwu (Imo State) and in Ezi (Delta State). Conversely, there are no artifacts, physical shrines, statues or effigies dedicated to Chukwu or God, despite the belief that Igbos worship Him as well. Christians may, according to the Bible, argue that God is worshiped, "in spirit and in truth" (p. 1, 430). That leads to the conclusion drawn by Opata that "… the connection between benevolence and evidence of sacrifice via instituted shrines is human and constructivist. It is not error-proof' (55).

The crux of the matter is obviously a perceived translational error. Aside the cosmological and, or ontological problems which may have undergone some rational reconstruction over time, there seems to be a linguistic logjam that made the early translators of religious literature assign the roles and perceptions of the Christian Devil to an Igbo deity – Ekwensu. The book highlights other translational thorny words and phrases that have remained opaque or even confusing to both Christian and traditional worshippers in Igboland till date. These include such misleading words like *akwamozu/ikwa ozu nkwa na abo* (second funeral ceremony); *uka/aja nso* (mass/holy Eucharist) *uka/okwu na uka* (trouble); *misa* (mass); *elu igwe* (sky or Heaven?); *ogbara Igbo ghaari* (science?); *nka na uzu* (science or art and smithing); *ohu/oru/osu* (servants of God) (75 – 76). The text specifically and without blinking holds three men – Samuel Crowther, Simon Jones and J. C. Taylor, early missionaries in Igboland – responsible for the misleading translational error. These men were involved in the translation of the Bible literature with the help of local catechists (Circa, 1857).

The author does not only frown at these instances of miseducation but goes further to suggest words or names that could best suit the opposers of the Christian God in Western theological fora. These include – *Devulu* (an Igbonized word in the pattern of Jesus – *Jeso*); *Eze Ndi Ajo Mmuo* (king of Evil Spirits) and *Onye isi Ndi Ajo Mmuo* (leader/Head of Evil Spirits) (86).

The intentions of the early translators may have simply been didactic, but the use to which today's evangelists and zealots put it is, to say the least, pecuniary or how else does one explain the fact that the fear of the Devil and his superintendent role in hell drives

many to be churchy, to pay tithes and gullibly follow the leading of the clergy who feed fat on fleecing the flock? The "god-heads" of various deities across the land have either been stolen or carted away as cultural artifacts and sold to enrich museums in the country or elsewhere. The sellers smile to the banks while the traditional worshippers mourn their losses.

The author also posits that the existence of the Devil is a Western philosophical imposition created to actuate the existence of God and that this "binary logic of opposition between God and Satan is not necessary for a belief in the existence of God .... People must be morally responsible for their acts of transgression" (109 - 110). Much of the conflict in relationships between Christianity and traditional Igbo culture is linguistic in nature, specifically caused by translation. In the Bible books of Leviticus and Deuteronomy are priestly procedure, rituals that are akin to what is done in traditional settings. The text concludes with a recommendation that Christian Churches should set up a Translation Committee to relook at their work on the Igbo Bible and make it suitable for use in our modern society without hurting the sensibilities of speakers of the Igbo language.

Translation

No matter how anyone conceives or explains the nuances of translation, the notions of transfer, conveying or moving from one phenomenon to another is implied. Translation involves the transfer of a message from one language to another. The idea of message transfer is central to translation. A few questions are pertinent here: Is not the message a product of the transfer termed translation rather than an entity that precedes the action of transfer, a thing that remains invariant in the process of translation? Is the message transferred determinable in, and of itself before it has been operated on? What is the status of the language from which or into which the message is transferred? For the sake of facilitating and representing, is it not necessary to posit the organic unity of language rather than see it as a random assemblage of words, phrases and utterances?

Here, we are concerned with literature of religion worked upon in the 1850's; a time when the West African sub-region boasted of a little less than two hundred persons who had a diploma. The early missionaries faced the Herculean task of communicating with the people in their local languages, and relied on the local catechists who barely understood the English language. Therefore,

if a foreign language is incomprehensible, then translation simply cannot be rightly done. But if the foreign language is comprehensible, knowable or familiar, then a translation is not necessary. The status of a foreign language is a variable. Translation in itself suggests contact with the unfamiliar, and there is no awareness of language until the foreign is encountered. It becomes difficult to evade the problems of the terms – *meaning* and *language*. Translation is not derivative or secondary to meaning and language; it is foundational or fundamental to the elucidation of the terms *meaning/language*.

The work of the translator is like that of an umpire, standing between two kinds of audiences, as it were. On his presumed left is the audience that possesses the comprehensive language and on his right, the audience who finds the language incomprehensible. The translator deals with the differences between the two by encroaching on both sides and standing in the midst of the differences. The terms *language* and *audience* may also be used by extension, figuratively, to mean *vocabulary* and *document*.

In this wise, translation is a discursive construct, a part of an assemblage of protocol, rules of conduct, cannons of accuracy and ways of viewing. It foregrounds what speech act theorists call the *perlocutionary* effect. And just as a precautionary act of persuasion may occur in a speech act of arguing, yet persuasion does not always result from an argument. Translation proper need not be postulated whenever one acts to translate.

It is somewhat easy to see the ambiguity inherent in the position of the translator as an occupier of duality between a native language and a foreign tongue. The task of the translator is to discern the differences between the two languages, and these differences are always determined as that between two linguistic communities. In spite of the numerous potential differences within one linguistic community, translation obliges one to speak from a binary opposition, either to the same or to other. Thus, the translator becomes invisible. The attitude in which one is constantly solicited to identify oneself may be termed a monolingual address, whereby the addressers adopt the position representative of a homogeneous language community and enunciates to addressees who are also representatives of a homogeneous language community. So, what the author calls, "conceptual recuperation, … semantic healing, a restoration of health and fresh air to suffocated concepts ... necessary not only for historical accuracy but also for political

reasons …" (74 – 5) should be situated within the imagistic space of the literature of religious denominations over time.

Conclusion

To critique a work in the mould of Opata's *Ekwensu in the Igbo Imagination: A Heroic Deity or Christian Devil?* is daunting and somewhat heretic. A man cannot gradually enlarge his mind as he does his house. The author does not simply advocate a gradual incursion to the psyche of the numerous Christian believers of Igbo extraction, but a re-assessment of the traditional error or "sin" of the translators. He advocates a fresh Translation Committee for the sole purpose of re-working the Igbo Bible and Bible literature. He writes in an Achebean tone, "I hope that the communities which have mistakenly inflicted on themselves this trauma will, from this study, learn that they had a noble and heroic past, not a devilish one. What they do with this knowledge is, of course, left for them" (84).

Once the work is placed against the number of years of religious education and dissemination of who the Devil is by the mainstream Christian denominations – the Catholic and the Anglican Churches in Igboland – one realizes that it (the work) has a long distance to travel, many rivers to cross, and many mountains to climb. It is but a flint; a flickering one even among the academia where it properly belongs. To the general (reading) public, it may appear to be one of those products of the curious minds of the restless intellectuals. Today's Igbo person is so religiously dogmatic, churchy and even skeptical about any new light that touches on his faith. These may not really translate into fear of God proper, but religious issues, to the average Igbo person, are sensitive and a re-direction of thought touches on his very red nerve.

Again, how can one use the benevolence and adoration of a deity – Ekwensu – in a few communities in Igboland to generalize the fact that Ekwensu does not connote evil in the minds of over 20 million speakers of the Igbo language? Some concepts and things are so deeply rooted and entrenched in a people's culture that it will take long, or even an eternity to erase or obliterate, the authenticity of such concepts and things notwithstanding.

The lexical substitutes for Ekwensu as suggested by the author which include *Eze Ndi Ajo Mmuo*, *Onye Isi Ndi Mmuo Ojo*etc. are already being used side by side with Ekwensu, both in speech and in writing. They all carry the semantic baggage suitable for them.

Therefore, in as much as the work is novel, makes an exciting reading and tickles the minds of scholars, it nonetheless draws the ire of Christian fanatics and deists, pacifies the sensibilities of agnostics and atheists. And we may ask, like Shakespeare, what is in a name? That which we call a rose, by any other name will smell as sweet. Conversely, that which we call Ekwensu may still be heroic or devilish, depending on which divide one finds oneself. After all, the Igbo language appellations such as *Akpu Nwa* and *Ajo Nwa* (naughty child/bad child) are positive and congratulatory!

The point is that the linguistic fumigation serves the purpose of massaging the new image of a well-known deity, and whether this laundering and re-branding will gain widespread acceptance is left to time.

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Part 3

THE AUTHOR, TEXT AND THE WORLD

1

ALEKSANDR SOLZHENITSYN'S *THE CANCER WARD,* CHINUA ACHEBE'S *ANTHILLS OF THE SAVANNAH* AND THE TEACHING OF NARRATIVE

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Abstract

Popularity and demand were the main drivers that accounted for the growth of the novel up to the beginning of modernism. Experimentation was going on as well, but at a slower pace. Such are variations in point of view, whether first-person or third-person. But it may be said that the main driver of growth since modernism has been experimentation; and it appears that in this literary genre, experimenting with the forms and structures is taking place more than in any other. Although all novels tell stories which readers often find enjoyable, it is through careful and close reading that the experimentation becomes manifest. But some can try the patience of readers, like Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's The Cancer Ward, which appears to be having trouble deciding whether it is going to be a collection of short stories, instead of a novel, and Chinua Achebe's Anthills of the Savannah, which some have adjudged as fragmentary. But these are experimental novels, pushing the very tools of narration to new frontiers. This paper will examine some of the breaches of the conventions of narrative in these two novels, conventions which became more or less normative since being set forth in Aristotle's Poetics. In doing this, it will be shown that their attaining the 'work-character' of art is owing in part to these very innovative ways of handling the tools of story-telling.

Introduction

The moral environment of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's *The Cancer Ward* and Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* are entirely different. The world of *The Cancer Ward* is one of total control of production, distribution, and social services by the state, while in *Anthills of the Savannah* we have an individual as a 'desiring machine'. As Deleuze and Guattari would put it, the content of this desire the demolition of the state institutions and substitution of the

self, as no ‘desiring-machine is capable of being assembled without demolishing entire social sectors’ (xxiii). Thomas Lynn has taken the view, however, that the problem hinges ‘on how far [the] protagonists will bend under pressure from … His Excellency, Sams government (5), which seems to overlook the fact that there would have been no pressure if the characters had toed the line dictated by General Sam, who is single-mindedly pushing a programme of restructuring the state with himself at the centre. His model is precisely that of old Louis XIV of France who is said to have declared, *l’état,* ***c’est moi*** (I am the state, or the state, thats me). General Sam of *Anthills of the Savannah* does not even have an equivalent of the nobility which could justify itself as existing ‘to counter the excesses of absolute authority’ (John Merriman 256). It is either to let him have his way, as most of the members of his Cabinet are willing to do, in their own self-interests, or to try to make him correct his course, which the protagonists Ikem, Chris, and Beatrice attempt to do, coming under heavy pressure as a result. These opponents, to begin with, think that he means well. Ikem believes that he only needs good quality information to do the right thing, and is counting on ‘the many bull’s-eyes of [his] crusading editorials’ (chapter 4), while Chris judges him to be a playboy, who does not really understand the seriousness of being the leader of a country: he is ‘basically an actor and half of the things we are inclined to hold against him are no more than scenes from his repertory to which he may have no sense of moral commitment whatsoever’ (*Anthills of the Savannah* 51). Chris is right that his sense of responsibility is very limited, and his vision of the world does not extend beyond his own lifetime. He cannot think of the system; for that would be an institution that might outlive him. This is why his great ambition is to be a life president. Beatrice is the first to realize that ‘The thing is no longer a joke’ (115), but does not succeed in conveying the seriousness of the situation to cause her friends to rethink their methods.

The ‘strategy of containment, which allows what can be thought to seem internally coherent in its own terms’ (Jameson 38) is different in each of the two novels. *The Cancer Ward* circumscribes a self-contained place of centrally controlled administration of medical care, while in *Anthills of the Savannah* the presidential Cabinet office, subsequently to be substituted by the space of public opinion is where thought is being regulated to become ‘internally coherent in its own terms’, where debate is in fact being emasculated

and reduced to a 'circus' by sycophants whose role is to applaud the president's every whim. It is at the level of formal relationships, how each of the two texts creates 'the unity of its structure', that this paper aims to engage Solzhenitsyn and Achebe, 'rather than through ideas or mimetic representation' (Anders 56). The factors of 'unity of its structure' and 'ideas or mimetic representation' are of course the most productive principles in practical criticism of literature (Akwanya 230-279). The other principles of criticism, which are quantitatively less productive, are the efficient cause (the author) and the final cause, which tends to be reduced to a didactic purpose.

Interconnectivity among Texts

At one level, literary criticism disentangles, or as Paul Ricoeur would say, 'interrupts' the movement of a literary work 'in order to understand the crystallization' of certain phenomena within it (*Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences* 190). Art phenomena that can be understood in this way pertain to the realm of form, the instruments, media and devices, techniques and methods, strategies, the framework and ordering processes, etc. of *rethinking* meaning (Derrida, *Writing and Difference* 4), rather than meaning itself. Viktor Shklovsky puts it this way:

> I would like to add the following as a general rule: a work of art is perceived against a background of and by association with other works of art. The form of a work of art is determined by its relationship with other preexisting forms. *The content of a work of art is invariably manipulated, it is isolated, 'silenced.'* All works of art, and not only parodies, are created either as a parallel or an antithesis to some model. *The new form makes its appearance not in order to express a new content, but rather, to replace an old form that has already outlived its artistic usefulness.* (20, emphasis original)

By 'artistic usefulness' Shklovsky means the capacity to agitate and shock the reader. And art, during its history, must 'stage periodic uprisings' (194), such as by presenting itself as 'an antithesis to some model' that readers are used to. But although originality in art is not necessarily about having something *new* to say - a new *conten* - a work of art does not merely transmit anything, not even values, without rethinking them. Such a 'content' would indeed be 'isolated, silenced'; it would remain 'a dead tradition if [handling] it is not the

continual interpretation of this deposit: our "heritage" is not a sealed package we pass from hand to hand, without ever opening, but rather a treasure from which we draw by the handful and which by this very act is replenished. Every tradition lives by grace of interpretation, and it is at this price that it continues, that is, remains living' (Ricoeur, *The Conflict of Interpretations* 27).

Nor does art simply hand down form by means of which it unseals the package and rethinks tradition's treasures. Art at its most self-conscious does not take the media, techniques, the framework and ordering processes for granted, and 'ready to hand' (Martin Heidegger, *Existence and Being* 307)*;* rather their possibility and functioning are once again, or even freshly *worked* over, sometimes rearranged. Then the work *crystallizes*; with it the overworking of the form. Experimentation in literary art involving discovery of the need for such rearranging and reworking of structural and formal elements which at the same time satisfies 'the requirements of the art' (Aristotle, *Poetics*, chapter 25) is itself avant-garde art, although this concept may also suggest the beginning of something new, something like a movement. The discovery of these needs and creation of art thereby are manifest in narration in Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's *The Cancer Ward* andChinua Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah.* Both crystallize re-formations of conventions of narrative.

In Solzhenitsyn's *The Cancer Ward*, third person narration surges as if uncontrolled and uncontrollable, while in Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* narration is an anguished process. But few of the basic conventions of narrative such as are found in Aristotle's *Poetics* are honoured in *The Cancer Ward*. The one which is definitely honoured is identified as part of epic literature, namely: it being 'rich in suffering' (Chapter 24). It is also 'character-based' (Chapter 24), but hardly a unified 'construction of events' (Chapter 6), to make up an 'action that is complete, whole, and of magnitude…. A whole … that … has a beginning, middle, and end' (Chapter 7). In this study, the contrasting narrative practices in Solzhenitsyn's and Achebe's works are explored, with an eye to the violations of the norms of narratology which account for their individuality as literary masterpieces.

Well-Made Narrative

The study of narrative has grown very complex in recent times. In this aspect of literary studies, that is, poetics in general and in the

specific case of narrative, narratology, the literary work always comes first. Form obviously pre-exists every instance of its realization, but since form is not directly perceived unless concretized as one or another object, it is in this concretized entity that it may be analyzed and the elements identified whereby it may be described. An artist like Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz of Polish modernism sought to create what he called a 'theatre of pure form'; that is, one in which 'gestures, words, movements, and objects are not only a system of signs, but have their own pure theatrical value just like hieroglyph or Chinese ideogram which not only has a meaning but is an image as well' (Kott xiv). The stage may work in this way, provided that it is strictly a spectacle, whereas for Aristotle, the sequence 'should be so structured that, even without seeing it performed, the person who hears the events that occur experiences horror and pity at what comes about' (Chapter 14). Witkiewicz presumably discovered a need which drama could not meet without adjustments in form, a similar need the contemporary Russian formalists addressed in terms of bringing about a 'shock effect'. The Formalists thought that literary art always was faced with this need, and addressed it by tweaking the medium of mimesis to render it strange and difficult, and thus giving effect to the 'unfolding of the word as such' (Steiner 11).

Pure form in the literal sense would be ideal and imperceptible. It becomes perceptible when it fuses with some material element, which thereby associates it with the limitations of individuality. In itself form is invariable, but no sooner is it concretized than the need arises to vary it. On the one hand, no concretion is the form in its perfection, on the other hand, its very concretion prompts the need to re-concretize it, where it is still recognizable, but in an unprecedented shape. Hence Roland Barthes writes:

> one could say that the origin of a sequence is not the observation of reality, but the need to vary and transcend the first *form* given man, namely repetition.
> (*Image – Music – Text* 124)

The practice of narrative has thus been complicating from the earliest days of the novel, from the anonymous third person omniscient narration with the illusion of total objectivity, to the first person limited perspective and the epistolary form. Change continued, for example, in the unreliable third person narrator, as in

the late works of Henry James, and in Joseph Conrad, the first person seeker for truth and missing links to complete a *history* and lay its anxieties to rest.

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's *The Cancer Wad* is a third person narrative, insofar as all the characters are referred to in the third person, and the first person appears only in discourse of speaking characters. But whereas 'the third person of the novel' (Ann Banfield 4) is understood to be one specific individual, the protagonist, who may be opposed to an antagonist, and related to helpers, a clear protagonist does not emerge in Solzhenitsyn's work until the last three or four out of its large number of episodes. The reader's first encounter with him is not even directly where he is in the narrative focus, but rather where he is in the focus of the character the narrator is focusing on:

> Pavel Nikolayevich heard a smacking sound behind his back. He turned round carefully - even the slightest movement of his neck was painful - and saw it was his neighbour, the cut-throat, who had snapped shut the book he had now finished and was turning it over and over in his large rough hands. Diagonally across the dark-blue binding and also down the spine, stamped in gold and already dulled, was the signature of the author. Pavel Nikolayevich could not make out whose signature it was, but he didn't care to address a question to a type like that. He had thought up a nickname for his neighbour - 'bone-chewer'. It suited him very well. (14)

It is normal narrative practice, therefore, that 'the third person of the novel' is the character who is in the narrator's focus. There may indeed be several major characters in a novel, but to be the protagonist one dominantly holds the narrative focus. It was also normal for that individual to take his/her position in the narrative focus from the opening of the sequence – until Charles Dickens, who varied the form, according to Shklovsky, beginning instead with minor characters in *Nicholas Nickleby, Oliver Twist, Our Mutual Friend,* and *Martin Chuzzlewit* (137). Because of this norm, *The Cancer Ward,* with its large number of characters whose individual stories the narrator presents in different episodes, moving back and forth in no discernible order, has the look of a collection of short stories especially in Part One. It has in fact been argued that the book 'is based on persons and events which Solzhenitsyn experienced and

observed in his own life [and] has a large number of characters, giving us something like a cross section of Soviet society' (Ericson). Nowadays some western critics take the view that the achievement of Solzhenitsyn, who was much praised during the Cold War, lies precisely in 'giving us something like a cross section of Soviet society'. However, given chapter titles like 'No Cancer whatsoever' ,'Education doesn't Make you Smarter', 'Teddy Bear', 'The Patients' Worries', 'The Doctors' Worries', 'The Story of an Analysis', 'The Right to Treat', the suggestion of a panoramic overview with no definite destination is strong. But observing what goes on around Pavel Nikolayevich Rusanov, from his referral and arrival at the hospital with his family, and the amount of early narrative attention paid to him, including his home and work routines, presentations of events in the ward during his early days in the hospital and of his fellow cancer patients through his viewpoint, the forays into his consciousness and detailed narrations of his drug induced delirium and nightmares, there is a certain amount of expectation that it would ultimately crystallize into Rusanov's story.

These characters followed at one point or another in the narration; all have to do with the cancer ward either as patients or as doctors and staff, and even though Pavel Nikolayevich has a superior air and tends to condescend towards the other patients, he rather hates 'bone-chewer', Oleg Kostoglotov. The above passage is clearly from his point of view: Kostoglotov is a 'cut-throat' and a 'bone-chewer' who has information he would have liked to satisfy a curiosity with, but he does not 'care to address a question to a type like that'. This antipathy arises from unconscious competition on the part of Pavel Nikolayevich for the soul of the narrative, as it turns out. The competition moves up to the level of incident at their discharge from the cancer ward and they go their separate ways. Pavel Nikolayevich is the first to leave in the company of his happy family:

> They drove off, splashing through the occasional puddle, and turned the corner of the orthopaedic wing. There, in a grey dressing-gown and boots, a long, lanky patient was walking down the middle of the asphalt road, enjoying an unhurried stroll.
>
> 'Blow your horn at him! Give him a good blast!' said Pavel Nikolayevich as soon as he noticed him.

> Lavrik gave a short, loud burst. The lanky fellow moved briskly to one side and looked round. Lavrik stepped on the gas and drove past, missing him by about ten centimetres.
>
> 'I call him "Bone-chewer". A really unpleasant, envious type, if only you knew him! You saw him. Kapa, didn't you?'
>
> 'Why does it surprise you, Pasik?' sighed Kapa. 'You'll find envy wherever there's good fortune. There are always people who will envy you if you're happy.'
>
> 'He's a class enemy,' Rusanov grumbled. 'If circumstances were different..."
>
> 'I ought to have run him over, then. Why did you tell me to blow the horn?' Lavrik laughed, turning round for a moment. (Part Two, chapter 12)

A provincial official who thinks that he is naturally first in rank in a hospital environment comprising medical officers, support staff, and patients ranging from social outcasts like Oleg Kostoglotov to farmers, teachers, and low-level professionals, Pavel Nikolayevich takes Kostoglotov's sour attitude as a sign of refusal to accord him the deference owing to class and assumes that this is down to envy. In the type of literature he is familiar with, where 'even the titles make you feel good' (Part One, chapter 21), and 'to analyse' a literary work 'objectively meant to see things as they are in life' (Part One, chapter 10), a story ought to have given pride of place to the first in social consequence. Elizaveta Anatolyevna bitterly sums up the merits of that kind of literature, and the reason why she never reads them:

> I know of no books closer to our life that wouldn't irritate me. Some of them take the readers for fools. Others tell no lies; our writers take great pride in that achievement. They conduct deep researches into what country lane a great poet travelled along in the year eighteen hundred-and-something, or what lady he was referring to on page so-and-so. It may not have been an easy task working all that out, but it was safe, oh yes, it was safe. They chose the easy path. (Part Two, chapter 13)

The novels that Pavel Nikolayevich's daughter brings him in the hospital are the *normal* ones which either 'take the readers for fools' or 'tell no lies'. She herself is embarking on a writing career,

and may already be trusted to know what people should be reading. She makes the following recommendation to her father:

> You read The Earth in Bloom, this is Mountains in Bloom. Here's another one, Youth Is with Us. That's a must, you'd better start with it. (Part One, chapter 21).

But in the man’s present debility, it is rather something ‘with a bit of sentiment in it’ that he craves (Part One, chapter 21).

The narrator had striven to show no partiality, rather to let the two fight it out, whereas it had never appeared to be contested who decided who was the protagonist of a story, and who to command the undivided attention of the narrator. Both men, however, have their own personal and life-threatening struggles against cancer, and are incapacitated by the treatment they are receiving to the extent that they are hardly aware any longer of each other. However, Pavel Nikolayevich, from whose viewpoint the following is mediated appears to be living with that contest through his suffering from the disease:

> Pavel Nikolayevich passed his days listlessly, mostly lying down. Incidentally, even 'Bone-chewer' had become quite tame. He had stopped roaring and snarling and it was obvious now he wasn't pretending; the disease had laid him low too. More and more often he would let his head hang dangling over the edge of the bed and lie there like that for hours, screwing up his eyes. Pavel Nikolayevich would be taking powders for his headaches, slapping a wet rag over his forehead and covering up his eyes against the light. And so they would lie side by side for hours on end, quite peaceably, without joining battle. (Part Two, chapter 2)

Thus in being borne triumphantly homeward following his discharge from the cancer ward, with full conviction that the prescribed monthly ‘compulsory check-ups were only for the record’ (Part Two, chapter 11), and having failed to run down Kostoglotov in the process, Pavel Nikolayevich is in effect withdrawing from the *agon* (contest), leaving this adversary the undisputed soul of the story.

For his own part, Kostoglotov flings against Nikolayevich and his family ‘a long stream of obscenities’ as they speed away, the story abruptly abandoning Rusanov then and there. From now on the story gives undivided attention to Kostoglotov. In reality he has won

the unannounced *agon* of a narrative which while this contest is undecided is unable to be character based, instead it adopts the name of a place, 'the cancer ward'. Now there is a clear third person of the novel, Kostoglotov. He even displaces the site of containment of the story, the cancer ward; for in leaving the hospital after his discharge, he is followed by the story, forsaking the ward. That is to say, the story has continued for his sake, and comes to an end at his decease. In every sense of the word, *The Cancer Ward* is Kostoglotov's story. It is as if the novel does recognise that narrating a place, the cancer ward is a breach of the norm, and corrects this at the first opportunity, which is in the second half of the narrative. Narrative of a place has a major consequence for a novel, for such a novel would in principle go on without end, or else its closure must be arbitrary.

Agon, a mock debate or contest is of course a feature of comedy going back to the Greeks, which contrasts *man's confrontation with more than man* in tragedy. But it quickly became a feature of the novel from the early days of the genre, as in the marriage sequence of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, where there is often more than one young man with some interest in the heroine's hand in marriage. The *agon* in *The Cancer Ward* is one level of action, perhaps playful, but coexisting with confrontation with the more than man, signified in the randomness of the blight of cancer in Solzhenitsyn's work, and whose malignancy (literally) is portrayed in the diagnosis of Ludmila Afanasyevna Dontsova with the disease, an x-ray specialist whose human goodness and devotedness and professional expertise are here portrayed:

> Although Kostoglotov argued with her, he did it only as a defence against the excesses of medicine, as laid out in a mass of instructions. As for Ludmila Afanasyevna herself, she inspired only confidence, not just by her masculine decisiveness, by the precise orders she gave as she watched the screen in the darkness, by her age and her indisputable dedication to work and work alone, but also, above all, by the confident way in which, right from the very first day, she had felt for the outline of his tumour and traced its circumference so precisely. The tumour itself proclaimed the accuracy of her touch, for it had felt something too. Only a patient can judge whether the doctor understands a tumour correctly with his fingers. Dontsova had felt out his tumour

so well that she didn't really need an X-ray photograph. (Part One, chapter 6)

In *Anthills of the Savannah* tragedy works at two levels: there is the level of heroic struggle where Chris and Ikem come to grips with what had to be done, ‘though it might mean ruin’ (Lukács and Baxandall 155). There is a deeper level of the ‘more than man’ which Beatrice alone glimpses, but in a visionary moment, which does not lead to action because Chris to whom the revelation is conveyed has a mind working on another wavelength:

> 'You called me a priestess. No, a prophetess, I think… As a matter of fact, I do sometimes feel like Chielo in the novel, the priestess and prophetess of the Hills and the Caves.'
> 'It comes and goes, I imagine.'
> 'Yes. It's on now. And I see trouble building up for us. It will get to Ikem first. No joking, Chris. He will be the precursor to make straight the way. But after him it will be you. We are all in it, Ikem, you, me and even Him. The thing is no longer a joke. As my father used to say, it is no longer a dance you can dance carrying your snuff in one cupped hand. You and Ikem must quickly patch up this ridiculous thing between you that nobody has ever been able to explain to me.'
> 'BB, I can't talk to Ikem anymore. I am tired. And drained of all stamina.' (114-115)

There is a ridiculous *agon* going on between the two friends Chris and Ikem; ridiculous, but it is dissipating their energies and affecting their effectiveness in their ‘Titanic struggle’ against General Sam’s arbitrary rule, which each of them is carrying on in his own personal way.

But the narrative also has an *agon* related to narration, whose story it is going to be. First of all, there are three friends who are caught up in the struggle, General Sam the President of Kangan, Chris Oriko his Commissioner for Information, and Ikem Osodi the Editor of the National Gazette. These are called by Chris, citing ‘a terrible, bitter joke’ (231) he shares with Ikem and Beatrice, ‘one of the troika of proprietors who own Kangan itself’ (202). But being a proprietor of Kangan is not a joke to General Sam. The story of Kangan is his *funeral* and nobody else’s (16), something he had tried

to make official, national policy in a failed plebiscite for a life presidency.

Narration in *Anthills of the Savannah* is anguished because of the involvement of the characters in the action they are narrating. Here ‘the first witness’, Chris Oriko attempts to justify himself:

> And of course, complete honesty demands that I mention one last factor in my continued stay, a fact of which I'm somewhat ashamed, namely that I couldn't be writing this if I didn't hang around to observe it all. And no one else would. (*Anthills of the Savannah* 2)

He is aware, apparently, that his personal involvement necessarily puts the reader on his/her guard, since a first-person participant may always be associated with what Habermas calls ‘interest’, which in a project leads ‘to the direct gratification of a need just as an instinctual movement does’ (*Knowledge and Human Interests* 134). The fiction, therefore, is that Chris is already imaginatively in a post-crisis environment when the ‘gathering tornado’ whose early signs he has espied will have broken upon Kangan and passed ‘overhead carrying away roof-tops and perhaps ... only perhaps ... [left the witnesses] battered but alive’ (124), with nothing ‘left of it now [except] tired twitches of intermittent lightning and the occasional, satiated hiccup of distant thunder’ (101).

But ‘direct gratification’ or no, the unfolding events are considered by Chris to be important that they be tracked by writing, even if by a first person eyewitness. Chris is no less *prophetic* than Beatrice: he has long made out that a *history* is about to happen, and a momentous one, which calls for both an eyewitness as well as objectivity. He is involved in the action, and therefore could serve as the eyewitness, but he documents the events in the authoritative third-person perspective, thus putting in abeyance the subject-object tension. As he becomes aware with the unfolding events that things have shifted from the level of day to day events to a building crisis, he comments, in his notebook, presumably:

> I have thought of all this as a game that began innocently enough and then went suddenly strange and poisonous. But I may prove to be too sanguine even in that. For, if I am right, then looking back on the last two years it should be possible to point to a specific and decisive event and say: it was at such and such a point that everything went wrong and the

> rules were suspended. But I have not found such a moment or such a cause although I have sought hard and long for it. And so it begins to seem to me that this thing probably never was a game, that the present was there from the very beginning only I was too blind or too busy to notice. (1-2)

The survivor of the storm that is pertinent to the narrative is Beatrice, and her concern is not with the point in time 'that everything went wrong and the rules were suspended', but to piece together documents by persons very dear to her and complete a story which included their deaths. For the losses from the storm deliberately whipped up because of the delegation of draught-stricken Abazon people to ask for government help are deeply personal to her. This is the one region in Kangan that had returned a negative vote in General Sam's plebiscite for a life presidency. Her fiancé Chris and one who is 'like a brother to' her, Ikem Osodi (94), both 'Titanically striving' individuals, as Nietzsche identifies the kinds of character (50), who accordingly have the*wrongdoing* of complicity in the failed plebiscite imposed on them (*Anthills of the Savannah* 144), and had remained the targets of General Sam's revenge, had now ended up being destroyed.

In Chris's self-justification above, it is clear that he has awareness that his personal safety is in doubt. Elsewhere, he admits that he has considered leaving the country on exile, but had dismissed it as unworthy of himself. But there is some solace in the fact that the events he is caught up in have an *inside story*, which none but himself could document, and none probably knows, but himself.

Ikem is not only committed to tracking and publishing current events as a journalist, he is also a writer in the strict literary sense, having 'written a full-length novel and a play on the Women's War of 1929 which stopped the British administration cold in its tracks' (95), with unpublished poetry some of which Chris reads while travelling in a north-bound bus in the hope of sanctuary in Abazon, as the purge in progress in Bassa has already claimed Ikem, and he himself a main target. Given his antecedents, Ikem is probably the one first to think about, with regard to the documenting of the unusual turbulence in Kangan socio-political life. But it is rather Chris who has discovered the need to document these events, whose story it had to be because he is an eyewitness and personally involved in the unfolding crisis, being the targeted individual to be

got rid of in order for Sam to have a compliant Cabinet. He is therefore tied up in the actions and reactions that link up to make the *muthos*. It is mainly his documents that have come into Beatrice's possession, but also pieces providentially left to her by Ikem, which are more like bursts of inspiration and creativity he appears not to have intended for anything in particular. Some of these he had read from in the manner of a rhapsodist at their last meeting, and then left with her when he departed (chapter 7), all of which becoming significant for her in piecing together and narrating this particular history:

> For weeks and months after I had definitely taken on the challenge of bringing together as many broken pieces of this tragic history as I could lay my hands on I still could not find a way to begin. Anything I tried to put down sounded wrong – either too abrupt, too indelicate or too obvious – to my middle ear.
>
> So I kept circling round and round. Until last Saturday. (82)

Just as with 'contiguous heroes of the same tale, created to perform identical actions and thus to justify the use of synonymous pairs of predicates' (Jakobson and Halle 79), Beatrice stands in a contiguous relation to Chris as a narrator. She takes the place of Chris – *displaces* him; by virtue of occupying the place that he has vacated, Chris's self-assigned task of narrating the upheaval is continued and brought to completion.

It is not a case of the woman accepting the role of the last resort and having to go into action after the men have tried and been defeated, and thus *eating her words;* for she had strongly rejected implicit chauvinism of this kind which she charges Ikem with despite his play on the Women's War of 1929:

> But the way I see it is that giving women today the same role which traditional society gave them of intervening only when everything else has failed is not enough, you know, like the women in the Sembene film who pick up the spears abandoned by their defeated menfolk. It is not enough that women should be the court of last resort because the last resort is a damn sight too far and too late! (91-92)

She has been involved in the action from the beginning. Trying – and failing – to forge a common front between Chris and

Ikem, and trying directly with General Sam – and again failing – to moderate his behaviour.

Beatrice's narration has first-person moments like in the above where she first announces the undertaking, but it is dominantly in the third person, which causes no problem as long as her own action is not the focal event. But there are such moments, as when she learns of the death of Chris:

> But by the time Kangan was asking … questions Beatrice had heard the news of Chris's murder and lost contact with everything else. (219)

Similarly, Emmanuel here conveys his sense of the dignity with which Chris had faced death:

> 'I was kneeling on the road at his side weeping uselessly. She,' he nodded his head in Adamma's direction, 'was trying to do something. Then I said something idiotic like *Don't go, don't leave us please*. And, I can't describe it, that effort – you could touch it almost – to dismiss pain from his face and summon a smile and then crack a joke. He called it The Last Grin.'
> Beatrice started in her seat. (230)

But the story continues in spite of all the above, just as it does in third-person events which a first person narrator could not know, being physically absent from the scene. The story of a struggle of the scale in *Anthills of the Savannah,* and told by a disciple of Agwu,is not necessarily about a detailed presentation of observed facts. According to the Old Man of Abazon:

> Agwu picks his disciple, rings his eye with white chalk and dips his tongue, willing or not, in the brew of prophecy; and right away the man will speak and put head and tail back to the severed trunk of our tale. This miracle-man will amaze us because he may be a fellow of little account, not the bold warrior we all expect nor even the war-drummer. But in his new-found utterance our struggle will stand reincarnated before us…. His chalked eye will see every blow in a battle he never fought. So fully is he owned by the telling. (125)

The whole Kangan upheaval is presented in detail, with a sense of immediacy and urgency in line with the plan Chris had been laying out before his death; and the narrative is enriched by materials

from Ikem. But in taking over the story, Beatrice has also imposed a new vision than the original one by Chris, as well as her own personal values which, no doubt have been sharpened and clarified by the recent trauma. She has brought in the vision of the anthills of the savannah, 'surviving to tell the new grass of the savannah about last year's brush fires' (31). She has given the conflagration that has brought to an end General Sam's chaotic rule a historical significance: it has carried off both the best that she knows, and the worst, but it has also silted up 'the canals of birth in the season of renewal' (31), ushering in a new awareness that 'this world belongs to the people of the world not to any little caucus, no matter how talented' (232). The vision of renewal is originally Ikem's, but she adopts it, giving it living expression in the naming of Ikem's daughter:

> I will start afresh ... There was an Old Testament prophet who named his son *The-remnant-shall-return.* They must have lived in times like this. We have a different metaphor, though; we have our own version of hope that springs eternal. We shall call this child AMAECHINA: *May-the-path-never-close.* Ama for short.' (222)

Conclusion

Solzhenitsyn's *The Cancer Ward* and Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* are both experimental texts, but pose different kinds of challenges to the teaching of narrative. Narrative structure is presented in its basic outlines in Aristotle's *Poetics* as an arrangement of incidents into 'a single, whole, and complete action, with beginning, middle, and end' (chapter 23). But it had always involved variation, and could be 'simple, complex, character-based, rich in suffering' (chapter 24). Both Solzhenitsyn's and Achebe's stories are highly complex narratives as well as 'rich in suffering'. With respect to suffering, what is envisaged in Aristotle is suffering brought about by human action, for it is 'through their actions that [men] are happy or the reverse' (chapter 6). Such is suffering that Aristotle accounts for as tragic-not one from an anonymous source. In *Anthills of the Savannah,* for example, even though the people 'have been slowly steamed into well-done mutton since February' by the solar 'enemy', the weatherman can tell them they 'are doing just fine' (28). On the same note, hardship from lack of rain in Abazon would not qualify as *tragic* suffering; it is the stoppage of the boreholes and refusal to bring government help to alleviate this

hardship that arouses the tragic emotions. By contrast, *The Cancer Ward* not only recognizes like a poem by Sarah Marslender that 'suffering is ordinary', it makes a narrative of it, a behaviour that Paul Ricoeur gives a rational, literary basis where he writes:

> We tell stories because in the last analysis human lives need and merit being narrated. This remark takes on its full force when we refer to the necessity to save the history of the defeated and the lost. The whole history of suffering cries out for vengeance and calls for narrative. (*Time and Narrative* 75)

Cancer in *The Cancer Ward* creates pure victims, proving itself no respecter of persons or social classes. But the human spirit does not surrender to it; rather it musters its intellectual and technological resources in the fight, winning some, losing some, ameliorating others.

The main tool of narration is of course the voice – *mimesis* of the human voice. The voice in *The Cancer Ward* is unified, but uncertain, apparently for more than a half of the narrative, who among its many characters would bear the burden of the narrative – with the associated risk of loss of privacy, that this individual's 'life is a story, with a beginning, an end, and a wide range of characters, plot changes, and climaxes' that give it volume and completeness (Ballard Web). Much of this narrative consists of a survey of a field of potential protagonists, finally settling on one, Kostoglotov who, as the central character, enables clarity on:

> the details of specific occasions of choice, conflict, dilemma, and decision and [provides, or allows reconstruction of] a great deal concerning situation, motivation, temptation, and all those other things that make a crucial difference to the particulars of a case. In such narratives we may think of Character, not so much as a psychological-explanatory tool, but as a device for making vivid and coherent the interplay of these other, psychologically real factors. (Gregory Currie 212)

The search for a character is probably always taken for granted as part of the story's gestation. In *The Cancer Ward* the search takes up a large portion of the narrative; it is part of the narrative: the search is the story itself. *The Cancer Ward* is a human story, despite the name.

Anthills of the Savannah also moves its searchlight around between four characters, General Sam, Ikem Osodi, Chris Oriko,

and Beatrice Okoh, with the equivalent of a voice over different in each case, with the result that the narrative appears fragmented. But unlike *The Cancer Ward* which is character-based, *Anthills of the Savannah* is event-based, and preserves its 'work-character' (Heidegger 67), by reference primarily to this one flash point that exercises it, which is misrule in Kangan. That one factor of narrative divides the four characters: General Sam the protagonist of misrule, Ikem, Chris, and Beatrice believers in the people's right to good government, and therefore willy-nilly Sam's opponents and antagonists. What is more, the multiple voices ultimately coalesce into one by virtue of Beatrice taking all the voices and narratives under the aegis of an anonymous third person which is her own creation.

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2

TRADITIONAL CHIEFTAINCY AS A PREBEND IN CHUMA NWOKOLO'S *DIARIES OF A DEAD AFRICAN*

Catherine Oluchi Okoli

Abstract

This paper explores the representation of prebendal consciousness in Chuma Nwokolo' Diaries of a Dead African. Taking thechieftaincy stool of the Ikerre-Oti kingdom as a symbol of traditional rulership in 21st century Nigeria, the essay examines the workings of prebendalism in the governance of contemporary Nigerian villages. In the text, one not only sees the village chief (the Igwe) asserting his traditional right to rule but also his perceived legitimate right to use the power of his office for his personal economic benefit—and that of his cronies, cabinet members. Richard Joseph captures this patrimonial leadership mentality using the concept "prebendalism." This is what forms the conceptual framework employed in the textual investigation carried out in this paper. It is argued herein that the Igwe of Ikerre-Oti is a thoroughgoing prebendal chieftain for these reasons: he does not care for the interest of his subjects but only cares specifically for his personal economic interest; and in protecting his interests, he behaves just like the typical autocrat by claiming to have derived his prebendal rights from an authoritative source of legitimacy: the tradition of their land. However, it is further argued, at least within the context of Diaries, that this prebendal consciousness and the very structure of traditional rulership which it serves, is rooted in the intrusion of colonial ideas and its political frameworks into the hinterlands of Nigeria.

Introduction

Call it a novel, a trilogy or a collection of three short stories, Chuma Nwokolo's *Diaries of a Dead African* is written as a creative diary documenting the hard-luck story of the Meme Jumai family. Each of the three parts of the diary tells the story from the narrative point of view of a different member of the hard-pressed family, with the first one focusing on the life of Meme Jumai, who is the father and

man of the house. The other two stories relate the travails of the two sons of Meme, starting with the younger son Calama (alias Calamity) and ending with Abel, the older son. The book has been noted to portray various things. For instance, its author, Chuma Nwokolo, observed in his conversation with Adaobi Nkeokelonye on literature and development that the text captures, among other things, “the indifference that replaces the extended family, which used to be a fundamental part of many African societies” (9). To this end, *Diaries* is said to explore the “modern concept of nucleation in families where the only important relationships were husband, wife and children, and where the extended family was whittled away” (9).

Pursuing a different discursive issue in the text, Taiwo Adetunji Osinubi examines the way Nwokolo’s *Diaries* exemplifies an ongoing critical regionalism which seeks to expand the geographical imaginaries of Nigerian fiction (131). Seeing *Diaries* as a “rearticulation of the village novel,” Osinubi preoccupies himself with the circulation of the village in the text, whereupon he argues that the novel is not a simple reply to Chinua Achebe or the tradition of the village novel, but a serious satire which “magnifies the foibles of villagers in order to situate them as actors in global environments and complexly articulated, morally complicated worlds” (Osinubi 132). Osinubi goes further to argue that Nwokolo situates “the village as a self-sustaining entity that does not construe its identity simply in opposition to other sites,” but as a community whose inhabitants “imagine themselves and live as highly individuated beings with aspirations to belong to and act in complex social worlds” (132). This complex lifeworld is one which the villagers recognize to extend to other sites far beyond their village and other explicitly national contexts (132).

As Osinubi has notably observed, the characters in *Diaries* are highly individuated people who aspire to belong to and act in complex social worlds. Building on this perspective, this current paper sets out to examine the text’s representation of prebendal politics within this complex social system. Nwokolo’s novel, as this paper argues, is a representation of the effect of colonialism on African traditional system of governance, especially in terms of how the former brought about a system of governance in which community leader, in this case the chieftain (the Igwe), sees his office as a prebend that needs to be exploited solely for his own personal benefit, and that of his clients (his council of elders and

other retainers). In *Diaries,* the Igwe and his clients share this major feature: the unalloyed determination to use their political offices and the power emanating therein to basically serve their personal interests, which is totally their economic interests. Richard Joseph captures this phenomenon that exists prevalently among Nigerian leaders using the concept of prebendalism.

The Concept of Prebendalism

The term "prebend" is itself known to have a somewhat Euro-feudal root; for the medieval European catholic churches, it meant "the right of member of [the Catholic] chapter to share in the revenues of a cathedral; also, the share to which he is entitled" (*The Catholic Encyclopedia).* Writing about the origin and definition of the term, Shaheen Mozaffar in his review of Joseph's seminal text, *Democracy and Prebendal Politics in Nigeria: The Rise and Fall of the Second Republic,* clarifies thatthe term "prebend" is not only historically rooted in feudal societies but was also first "introduced in modern social science by Max Weber, within which context the "prebend" is taken to mean "a public office procured by an individual in return for loyal service to a lord and retained for his personal use and for benefiting his own followers" (500).

For Joseph who first brought it into the discussion of the Nigerian polity, prebendalism is the system whereby "state offices are regarded as prebends that can be appropriated by officeholders, who use them to generate material benefits for themselves, their constituents and kin groups . . ." (*Democracy and Prebendal Politics in Nigeria* 8). The prebendal consciousness, as Joseph alleges, is built on the "justifying principle that (state) offices should be competed for and then utilized for the personal benefit of office-holders as well as of their reference or support group" (8). The corollary of this, Mozaffar points out, "is that the official public purpose of these offices [is relegated] to a secondary concern" (501).

This thus involves a form of patron-client or neopatrimonialism, much like the feudal system of medieval Europe. Richard goes further to observe that prebendalism is not necessarily Nigerian, nor is it limited to Nigeria alone, but is rather a political phenomenon of global scale. According to him:

> What I perceived was [prebendalism's] entrenched and pervasive nature in [Nigeria]; and how [the country's] prebendal attitudes were woven into what Ken Post and Michael Vickers had earlier described as "a conglomerate

> society," i.e., a nation composed of cultural sections defined by ethnicity, language, region[al] and cultural practices. Patron-client mechanisms were fundamental features of a dynamic system that linked the appropriation of state offices in Nigeria to the material and other aspirations of cultural sections of the population. ("Prebendalism and Dysfunctionality in Nigeria).

As Joseph has consistently observed, the prebendal mindset had its most supreme reign in Nigeria during the country's second republic, which was the period of oil boom in the country. Segun Ayobolu explains it this way, much like the members of the clergy in feudal Europe who "felt entitled by right to the revenue of a cathedral," occupants of Nigerian public offices during the second republic (and even now) were (and have remained) convinced (at least subconsciously) that "their positions entitled them to unbridled access to public resources with which they not only satisfied their own material needs but also served the needs or wants of subaltern clients" (38). Ayobolu further explains the effects of the prebendal system on society; "this kind of criminal diversion of public resources for selfish private ends," he wrote, "starve[s] the polity of funds for development, [just as it] increase[s] poverty and inequality, and [intensifies] an unhealthy rivalry and competition for public office that trigger[s] pervasive instability" (38). Noting the unrelenting misappropriation and stealing of public funds by office holders, Joseph considers what happens to the state itself under this condition of brazen financial misconduct. According to him, "a patrimonial order, under the authority of a king, feudal lord or chieftain can be a stable one. A prebendalized system, however, is inherently unstable." This, he says, is obviously because under the prebendalized system, every aspiration "to build a capable state, a democratic system, and a coherent nation are ultimately foiled by prebendal practices" ("Prebendalism and Dysfunctionality in Nigeria").

Traditional Autocrats and Prebendal Consciousness in Nwokolo's *Diaries*

In this paper, the concept of "prebendalism" will be employed in the study of Nwokolo's *Diaries of a Dead African.* The aim is to dig

into the mind of the traditional rulers in the text in order to understand their perception of their role in the governance of their domain. *Diaries of a Dead African* has no doubt been explored from various perspectives. For Laura T. Murphy, Nwokolo's *Diaries,* particularly the second part of the book written by Calama, "describes the life of a 419 scammer in the age of the fax machine" (292). Like Tricia Nwaubani's *I Do Not Come to You by Chance*, Calama's story in Nwokolo's three-part narrativeis thus seen to depict "a veritable counter-culture of criminality—not an unsympathetic portrayal at all, but instead a contemplation on the structures of society that lead people to skim off the edge, steal from the unsuspecting, and carry out homegrown forms of justice" (292). These structures of society that serve as the enablers of the 419 or advance fee fraud, as Nwokolo's book seems to show, include the corrupt political system headed by patriarchs such as the Igwe of Ikerre-Oti and his council of chiefs who see their traditional political office as a prebend from which they must enrich themselves rather than work to actualise the interests of the community they claim to serve. The council reveals their prebendal consciousness during the hearing of the case Calama has brought to them regarding his claim to the land in his father's compound. When the council fines him one fowl for speaking abusively to them, he brings five instead of just one fowl. But on his return, he refuses to release the five birds to them, insisting that their fine was for one fowl rather than five. The narrator reveals:

> That was when their eyes cleared and they started talking to me with respect. They said it wasn't good for elders to curse their own son, and that the way I was going, that might just happen. They said I should come back tomorrow to allow everybody's annoyance to cool down. They said that *it wasn't only through fines that elders should eat the fowls of young men*; that there was nothing wrong with me giving them a freewill gift.

This context serves to reveal the intention of the elders who serve in the Igwe's council. The one-fowl fine was merely a means of extorting things from the young man. Worse still, seeing that they have already fined him only "one fowl" and could not easily increase the fine without revealing their true intention, the elders devised a different strategy. They tell him to come back the next day, and as Calama puts it, "When I was coming tomorrow I should look for an

experienced elder to be my mouth" (60). One would think that by using the expression "look for," the elders actually meant to offer the service for free. However, as the council reconvenes the very next day, the elders quickly reveal what they truly mean. "They reminded me [Calama] that they had advised me *to hire* a seasoned elder to speak for me," notes Calama (61).

But being too disgusted at the elders, Calama evades this new ploy,

> I told them that the best mouth to describe a stomach ache was the mouth that owns the stomach ache; that I knew what was inside my mouth, and that to save everybody's time, they should take my four fowls and accept everything else that came out of my mouth the way they heard it.
> They said I was beginning to insult them.
> I told them that that was the whole point. (61-2)

As Calama openly points out, all the complaint of the council "was pretence anyway, because they had already taken the fowls. That was how we started to talk" (61-62). The Igwe's council is the sort that does not convene unless they are first of all certain of extorting something from the casebearer, nor do they rule on a case unless they have by all means obtained assurance of receiving something in return for the ruling—which is to say, unless they have been bribed.

This penchant for bribery is one of the very characteristic features of a prebendal society. In fact, the prebend could hardly continue to exist as such in the absence of bribery, just as a feudal lord could hardly ever do without his retainers. Calama's con-master, FazO, explains this relationship between prebendalism and bribery when he offers Calama the "list of names and addresses of the police officers, magistrates and government people on the 419 network," saying, "the con artists who got into trouble were those who ate alone" (*Diaries* 122). Calama's reply is very revealing: "I told him that I already had the list, that money was for spending, and that any hand in that state that had the authority to sign an arrest warrant with my name on it had already eaten from Billy Barber's money" (122). The point here even goes farther than FazO has sought to explain. In plain words, the corrupt politicians, the magistrates, the Igwe and his council of elders, and the young fraudsters (who prefer to professionalise their trade by calling themselves con artistes) are one and the same in many ways. Their

major difference perhaps lies in the appellation used in reference to each one of them.

Going back to Calama's diary entry of 20th June 2000, for example, the proud 25-year-old con artiste reveals what travails at the Igwe's court when he has sought to get the royal council to prohibit the use of his father's compound as a refuse dump. Firstly, the Igwe tells the complainant that he has no right to "complain about what the villagers were doing on Meme Jumai's land since it wasn't [his, that is, Calama's] land." Calama contends the Igwe's claim, saying that the land is his by right of inheritance; at this the Igwe suggests, and very openly too, that he has to first bury his father Meme Jumai if he is to inherit the land; and since "a burial was a very spiritual thing," to bury the deceased father, Calama is required to provide the following items: "Fifteen cartons of beer for the elders, five bottles of Schnapps, three gourds of kokori and six thousand naira in lieu of the burial feast" (62). Calama who has himself become a seasoned con artiste quickly understands the true intention of the Igwe and his council of elders. So he says to them, using their very own words against them, "that didn't sound very spiritual to my own ears. I asked them if they wanted to do to me what they couldn't do to Journeyman's son and they said I had insulted them; and that was one fowl" (62).

Even as Calama concedes to pay the sum of ten thousand naira to "satisfactorily bury [his] father into their stomach," the elders could not restrain from hungrily accepting the money, nor could they even bring themselves to forget about the fowls which only costs three hundred naira for one. The narrator describes the very dramatic scene this way:

> Some were shouting, Yes! Yes! Others were shouting second fowl! Second fowl! So I opened my boot, brought out ten thousand naira, and threw the bundles on the ground in front of the Igwe.
>
> The insult crazed them, they screamed, Third fowl! Third fowl! But as they were screaming, they were struggling for the money.
>
> Hungry people. (62)

What is evident in the scene above is this, whether some are shouting "Yes! Yes!" in response to the offer of ten thousand naira, or others are screaming "Second fowl!" "Third fowl!" in response to the perceived insult, the elders are all in agreement in terms of their motive and objective, which is to extort as much as they possibly

could from Calama. So not only do they refuse to oblige his request after having taken his money, they equally contrive a proverb to legitimize their con in the shroud of ancient wisdom. Calama notes that just after paying the money, he "asked them whether, now that I had buried my father to their [stomach's] satisfaction, I could inherit his land. That was when I realised why the village vultures prefer the leaking roof of the Igwe's palace for a perch: they have relations inside" (63).

This mention of vultures having relations in the Igwe's court echoes the image of corrupt politicians which the Nigerian playwright, Emeka Nwabueze, portrayed in his famous play *A Parliament of Vultures.* The Igwe and his council, in Nwokolo's *Diaries*,by far constitute a great depiction of this vulturine parliament. Rather than be straightforwardly invested in doing their jobs as impartial adjudicating, legislating and executing of the law for the Ikerre-Oti people, the band of old men, with the Igwe as their captain, specialise in exploiting their very own people to the highest degree. Like the parliament of greedy men and women in Nwabueze's play, the Igwe and his gang have carefully set up their business of governing Ikerre-Oti in a way that benefits only them and their family, regardless of what anyone else in the community or outside it thinks about them and their ploys. And to go against the schemes of the Igwe's court is then projected as going against the ageless traditions of the land. This is in much the same way that Nigerian legislators have resolutely maintained the current political structure built around the 1999 Nigerian constitution, formulated by then ruling greedy military dictators, simply for their own economic benefit rather than for the good of the country.

This parallel between the Nigerian polity and the one in the Ikerre-Oti village plays out in more ways than one. Just like the Nigerian politicians who, in justifying their huge remunerations, would quickly cite the supremacy of the constitution and point out that they were not the ones who stipulated their wages themselves, the Igwe and his council in Nwokolo's novel are quick to defend their actions and demands by invoking the Ikerre tradition. One example is when they refuse to oblige Calama's request to allow him to inherit his father's land. After having suggested that he can inherit the land if he pays for his father's funeral in cash, they then pocket the money and tell him: "this matter of yours is very complex. The firewood you brought us was full of ants…" (*Diaries* 63). The exchange of wit that follows is very revealing:

> Why didn’t you see the ants before my money came out? I [Calama] asked them.
> It’s only when firewood enters fire that ants come out, said the Igwe; it is a very, very complex matter.
> He said the Ikerre-Oti tradition in question was very serious; (which was very funny, because nobody has ever gone to prison for breaking tradition. They think I’m Meme Jumai who starved himself because of a stupid taboo). He said that by tradition, when a man commits abomination as my father did, his property was forfeited to the village. He said that even if I buried my father twenty times, the land now belonged to the villagers, whose most pressing need was for a garbage dump. (63)

In the excerpt above, the Igwe gives the impression that the council indeed takes the traditions of the village very seriously. However, if – as Calama observes – nobody in the village has ever been to prison for breaking tradition, one is left to wonder, how then does the Igwe’s council punish those who contravene any one of the village’s many taboos and traditions? The answer is simply this: by skinning them alive, making them sweat blood to pay up a huge fine—*huge* at leastin relation to the abundant poverty of the villagers. Calama indirectly censures them for this when he asks them “whether they wanted to do to [him] what they couldn’t do to Journeyman’s son” (62).

The story of Journeyman and his son reveals the deep-seated greed embodied by the Igwe and his council. The poor man Journeyman is said to have died the previous year, but because his son is in Rome, the “greedy elders refused to bury him. Bury him, bury him, his age grade kept pressing, but no, the elders wanted to eat Italian *lira*,” their thought being that once the dead man is buried, “it would be impossible *to squeeze anything from his son*; so they took him to the mortuary and left him there, like kidnappers waiting for a ransom. Imagine that! For five months, a man who died of hunger has been sleeping naked in a corpse’s dormitory whose room rate was higher than the biggest hotel in Warri” (28). As the vulturine council of elders eventually fail to *squeeze anything from Journeyman’s son* and even have to bear the cost of burying the man, it is understandable that they will, like the hungry carnivores they are, angrily bare their teeth and in readiness to devour any potential prey that comes within reach of their territory. For this group of

ravenous old men, Calama is that potential prey who is expected to bleed out whatever blood they have been unable to draw from Journeyman's son.

Autocrats and their Claim to an Ancient Source of Legitimate Prebendal Right

Notably, in the prebendal state, the office holders are usually quick to cite some ancient lore or some supreme body/figure/law as the source of their legitimate right to the proceeds of their office. And it is expected that no one can or should dare to challenge this right, seeing as its source is legitimately established. For the feudal lords of medieval times, these rights had been obtained by birth and inheritance; for the medieval European catholic churches, this right of the clergy members of the chapter to share in the revenues of a cathedral had been given by the Pope, who himself had been ordained by God; for the Nigerian political office holders, both past and present, this right is enshrined in the country's unwritten political culture which is as old as its very colonial foundation and which, by virtue of the ancient and yet ageless history of this culture, can and should never be altered—even for the benefit of the citizens. Quoting such ageless custom, the council, through their captain, the Igwe himself, not only tells Calama that "the Ikerre-Oti tradition in question was very serious," but also mentions how very ancient it is, whereas the said tradition is, in point of fact, one that has been contrived by them, and merely for their own benefit too. According to Calama:

> I asked when this tradition began and they pointed at the *iroko* in the middle of Ikerre, and explained that when the seed that became the tree was still in the stomach of the fruit bat that excreted it, the tradition was already a very old one. That was nonsense of course, because everybody knew that *sixty years ago*, Ikerre-Oti was called Trailer-Junction and its culture was picked and mixed from the five or six major tribes that formed the mongrel town. (63)

So if the village has been formed merely some *sixty years ago,* how could the tradition be indeed very ancient? The current Ikerre-Oti kingdom is a postcolonial creation formed through the relocation of various persons from the different parts of Ikerre town, and its rulership (that is, the Igwe and his council), merely the

product of evolution, what Darwinian evolutionary theory explained as "survival of the fittest."

Many oppressive dictators throughout history are recorded to have justified their powers by making reference to this law of natural selection. The German dictator and leader of the Nazi party, Adolf Hitler, for example blatantly argued that: "The stronger must dominate and not mate with the weaker, which would signify the sacrifice of its own higher nature" (237). Hitler here extends the issue of eugenics, that is racial hygiene, to the subject of leadership, wherein he implies that the so-called racially and genetically purer and stronger must rule the impure and weaker, and must never allow the weaker to rule (or to use his own word, "mate") with them as such will "signify the sacrifice," that is, the waste of their own higher/superior nature, thinking, initiative, and strength. Hitler even expects the so-called racially and/or genetically weaker humans to put up no resistance to such domination at all. His presumption continues: "Only the born weakling can look upon this principle as cruel, and if he does so it is merely because he is of a feebler nature and narrower mind; for if such a law did not direct the process of evolution then the higher development of organic life would not be conceivable at all" (237). This is in much the same way that the Igwe of Ikerre-Oti and his council have taken it upon themselves to project their personal interest as that of the village and still expect no one to resist their dominance ("One man couldn't fight a village," the Igwe has once told Calama, 64). The political process of the village rests on this single factor—the survival of the fittest and the domination of the stronger over the weaker. Political power is conferred not based on a person's noble birth, or their character/personality strength, but solely on their ability to influence others through their economic power.

Furthermore, although the Igwe claims to be the traditional overlord of the Ikerre-Oti village, he is in reality a piper who plays the tune of anyone at all with the highest financial strength to command his will. And such person must assuredly be the highest bidder. The payment obtained from such person is the shared between the Igwe and the other members of his gang, that is, his cabinet members. Existing among them is a structured relationship built on years of practised clientelism. According to Mozaffar, "clientelism is the culturally-rooted social process which aggregates shifting combinations of personalities, factions, class and ethnicity into a structured, albeit unequal, relationship, and compels

prebendal political behavior involving the competition for and the appropriation of state offices to satisfy narrow individual and group interests" (501). The patron-client dynamics comes into play in every judicial hearing being led by the Igwe and his council of elders; it is, in fact, the main determinant of their decisions or verdicts.

Consider what transpires when Barika brings false accusations against Calama's late father before the Igwe's court. Although everyone in the village of Ikerre-Oti is said to have been aware that Meme Jumai, till his death, is a pauper, the greedy Barika – who himself is another crook in the village much like the Igwe – contrives a con to scam Calama out of his money. He makes the false claim that before his passing, Meme Jumai has taken from him a fifty-kilogram bag of semolina on credit, and also a loan of fifty thousand Naira on the security of his house and compound, and that the interest on the loan is now eighty thousand Naira (Diaries 117). Later on, when the case appears before the Igwe, this same Barika whose business motto is popularly known to be: "No Credit Today, Come Tomorrow" (116), not only produces a host of witnesses, up to fifteen in number, to support his claim, but he also increases the sum from eighty thousand to a hundred and eighty thousand. Calama in his role as narrator puts it thus:

> So Barika repeated his nonsense of the day before ending with how the villages rescued him from assassination by my thugs. He brought his witnesses: his loan register and fifteen people who swore they saw Meme Jumai take the loan and promise to pay on the week of harvest. Now it wasn't eighty thousand naira that the snake was claiming, it was hundred and eighty thousand! Plus he brought papers that he said that Pa has signed securing the loan with my land (123).

At this, Calama is greatly perplexed by the very confounding lies which Barika has contrived against his father.

However, being a pro in the con art himself, Calama acknowledges that the problem does not lie in paying Barika the said amount of money which after all is "like weekend money" for him. The real trouble lies in the bad precedence which such a seemingly small loss will set for him in the village: "If I lost the case," he says, "Barika would go around claiming that his money was what made Calamity rich and he would have showed the people of Ikerre-Oti the newest way to make money" (124). In order to forestall this,

Calama decides to play just the exact same game which Barika has invited him to. The latter has brought up the false claims with the hope that the Igwe who is famous for bribes (what an Igbo would quickly understand in the concept of "*agbata e kee*") will have no hesitation ruling in his favour, after all, as everyone with interest in the case has heard, he (Barika) has already "offered the Igwe half of any money he got from [Calama]" (123). But knowing that the Igwe is only ready to rule on behalf of anyone of them who offers him the highest bribe, Calama is quick to act by making the Igwe an offer of a new palace, "a real palace," the first ultra-modern palace in the whole of Ikerre town (125). It is thus no surprise that when the time arrives for the Igwe to give his judgement, he has straightaway realigned his allegiance. Calama narrates that

> The Igwe himself couldn't look at me, and I'm not surprised. Yesterday Ugbaja had warned him that he was playing with his new palace: that I had already paid him a deposit to build him a real palace for Ikerre-Oti after my own house was finished.
>
> Barika was there with his whole family and he was accepting congratulations as though he had already won the case. But when our chief started his judgement, I could see that this was one thief who didn't do things half-and-half.
>
> As soon as he opened his mouth, he started to abuse Barika: that anybody who knew Meme Jumai before he died would see that the poor man hadn't seen one thousand naira together in the same place for many years. He asked what kind of greed would push Barika – who was already a rich man, although not by my standards – to lie against a dead man just to defraud a hard-working tycoon young enough to be his own son; adding that he wasn't surprised – wasn't it the same Barika who crept into his palace yesterday, as the whole village might have heard already, to try and bribe him over this very case? (125)

Notice that everything the Igwe has said above (except for Calama being a hard-working, thus honest, tycoon) is true. But is he to receive any accolade for saying the truth? Not at all! His outpouring of truth is merely induced by the benefit (the Americans call it "tip") he is to receive from Calama.

But even before now, the Igwe and his council had shown their propensity to play to the tune of any generous paymaster when

Calama has just started erecting his new house, dubbed the fastest growing house in the village of Ikerre-Oti. While the Igwe has driven to Calama's compound under the guise of warning him to abandon the funeral plans, his actual intentions has been to curry favour with Calama. Just after offering Calama one of his daughters for marriage on a losing bet (that no Ikerre-Oti person will attend Meme Jumai's funeral) and Calama turning down the offer, the Igwe "said in a different voice that we should leave aside the issue of his daughters, because there was a vacancy for a chief on his council and I shouldn't spoil my chances of becoming the youngest chief in Ikerre-Oti. I knew immediately that what was on top of his mind right then was the replacement of his royal vehicle," (78). What is loathsome is that the Igwe who is now seeking to ally himself with Calama is the same man who has never wanted to have anything to do with the Jumai family prior to Calama's wealth.

For instance, Calama tells of his father (Meme) being dodged by the Igwe after the former's three-hours' attempt to see the latter and table a land case before him. Calama "digresses" into this unconsciously remembered story of his childhood memory, the painful memory of his father's humiliation before the Igwe. When he has become an excessively wealthy man, and has started building his house, the Igwe finally pays him a visit, his first ever visit to the Jumai compound. Even as the Igwe counsels Calama out of selfish reasons, Calama falls silent for a long time and begins to reminisce about the past:

> I was also silent for a very long time, remembering the last time Pa tried to take a case to the Igwe's court. Chentus had encroached on his land. Instead of sharpening a machete like an angry Ikerre man, Pa had gone to the Igwe's waiting room to report. He was there four hours and the Igwe sent him three messengers. The first messenger said the Igwe was sleeping. The second messenger said the Igwe was eating. The third messenger said the Igwe was sleeping. After that my father had come home and gone two days without eating. And here was the same Igwe, offering me my choice of daughters and a chieftaincy stool – if only I would give Pa a lizard's burial (79).

The Igwe is a crooked old man ready to say and do just anything if only he could be paid enough for it.

In his quest to exploit every chance of personal economic benefit, the Igwe shows himself to be just another figure of the Rugato Orinsos who Calama's brother, Abel, reveals in his research paper cum book, *The Slaving Kings,* to have caused the decimation, and thus extinction, of the original Ikerre-Oti people through their slave-raiding trades with White colonizers (166). Detailing the lineage of the Orinsos, Abel narrates that it has taken him up to two dozen pages in his old term-paper to trace that family line. The Orinso's village Ikerre-Ntefe, is said to be "sixty kilometres south of Ikerre-Oti. He was the son of Minas Orinso, who was the son of Emerson Orinso, son of Mathias Orinso, grandson of Crema Orinso, son of Monos Orinso, son of Iga Orinso, who was either the son or Granson of Rugato Orinso, who in his time was the most powerful slave dealer between Benin and the Delta" (163-4). Abel goes on to reveal that "the original Ikerre-Oti had been decimated and her survivors exiled by too close a proximity to the slave-raiders of Rugato Orinso" (166). To put this into perspective, following the extinction of the original Ikerre-Oti people, migrants from other towns and nearby villages have gradually reoccupied the places and lands left vacant, thus a new village has been born, and with this evolution also comes the emergence of the fittest as traditional leaders. Thus, as mentioned earlier, the current rulership of Ikerre-Oti is a postcolonial creation, a business venture set up in the spirit of patron-client relationship, a form of clientelism which serves only the interest of a few people: principally, the chieftain, his cabinet, and other corrupt members of the village ready to use their money to steer the Igwe's will.

Conclusion

Nwokolo's *Diaries of a Dead African* offers a textual representation of the after-effects of colonialization on Nigeria, especially in terms of how colonial system, with its exploitative consciousness, upturned traditional systems of leadership and brought in a new normal whereby newly instituted chieftains (even in areas where there previously had been no such single imposing leadership) see their political offices as a prebend that should be exploited for the sole profit of themselves and their cronies. The text uses the Ikerre-Oti village headed by the Igwe as a symbolic representation of rural communities under the leadership of prebendal chieftains who are willing to concoct a false ancestry in order to justify their exploitation of their subjects all in the name of tradition.

However, the text also seems to depict that inasmuch as autocratic chieftains, such as the Igwe of Ikerre-Oti, expect no one to question or resist them, they cannot totally eliminate such resistance from their subjects insofar as they continue to think that their positions entitle them to "unbridled access to public resources with which [to satisfy] their own material needs" and also serve the needs or wants of their subaltern clients (Ayobolu 38). In the text, Meme Jumai turns out to be the symbol of such resistance. Driven to the wall by the hunger and starvation imposed by the Igwe, Meme has suicidally turned against the whole village and its rulership. Nevertheless, Meme's failure and death, just like the latter death of his son Calama, stands as a warning that any such resistance against deeply entrenched oppression will certainly fail in the standalone hand of a single person, and should rather be equally coordinated if it is to have any success.

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3

RETURN MIGRATION AND SUCCESSFUL REINTEGRATION IN NWANA'S *OMENỤKỌ*

Roseline Ijeoma Okorji and Sopuruchi Christian Aboh

Abstract

Omenụkọ, as the first Igbo novel, has been analysed from different perspectives. However, a critical look into the text indicates that the concepts of migration and reintegration in the novel appear to be relatively unexplored. As such, this study explores (return) migration and successful reintegration in Omenụkọ. The study approaches the text from a descriptive perspective by drawing insights on typologies of (return) migration to interrogate the data from the novel. The study observes that Omenụkọ, the text's main character, at the time of his migration to Mgbọrọgwụ had no thought of returning. But due to his failed integration in Mgbọrọgwụ and Ịkpa Oyi as a result of the bias from the kings of other communities, he was forced to return. The study identifies two factors that can induce forced migration: intangible and tangible. Intangible factors refer to issues that take place in the mind of the migrant, which can be in the form of emotional restlessness and the social contract the migrant has with his community, while tangible factors refer to things that are perceptible to the eye. From the study, the finding reveals that reintegration is a personal and communal phenomenon.

1.Introduction

Mobility has been a major feature of human existence since time immemorial and has continued to shape our experience even in today's globalised world. Instances of people migrating from one point to another abound in the Bible. In Africa and beyond, many nations and communities have been formed as a result of permanent migration. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) (2020), international migrants are estimated to be 272 million in the world, whereas refugees globally were estimated at 25.9 million in 2018. The phenomenon of migration and possible

return has been nuanced by scholars from different perspectives. International Organization for Migration (2020: 4) argues that "There was a continued increase in the number of migration-related academic publications, with the largest ever academic output produced during the last two years." This shows the level of critical attention scholars have given to the study of migration. Previous studies have explored the economic implications of return migration (e.g., Dustmann & Weiss, 2007; Wahba & Zenou, 2012; Batista, McIndoe-Calder & Vicente, 2016); migrant's reasons and intentions to return (e.g., de Haas & Fokkema, 2011; de Haas, Fokkema & Fihri, 2015; Kunuroglu et al. 2017); education of ethnic returnees in Germany and Japan (e.g., Ortloff & Frey, 2007); the rural as return migration destination (e.g., Farrell, Mahon & McDonagh, 2012); gender and migration (e.g., Tienda & Booth, 1991; Sinke, 2006; Girma, 2017; Duda-Mikulin, 2018); reintegration of returnees (e.g., Adhikari, 2011; Ugochukwu, n.d., Ukwueze & Okey-Agbo, forthcoming); and the theme of (return) migration in literature (e.g., Hall, 2000; Rahminezhad & Arabian, 2015; Bimbola, 2015).

Researches on the economic implications of return migration have revealed interesting findings on how some returnees use the wealth they acquired from the returning country to improve their community. It has also been observed that one of the reasons for return is because of the economic disadvantage of the returnees in the country they migrated to, and as such, they see their return as a way of making prudent use of the little money they have. In the literature, the economic issue is the major reason for migrant's return (Dustmann & Weiss, 2007). On the aspect of reintegration and gender, in the case of trafficked individuals, it has been observed that the stigma is higher on the females than the males (Girma, 2017). Some researchers have explored the theme of (return) migration in Adichie's *Americanah* (Rahminezhad & Arabian, 2015), African-American folklore (Hall, 2000), and Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (Ukwueze & Okey-Agbo, forthcoming). Studies have also compared the theme of 'exile' in *Things Fall Apart* and *Omenụkọ* (Ugochukwu, n.d.; Idoko, 2009). Apart from these studies, it appears that return migration and successful reintegration are relatively unexplored in Nwana's *Omenụkọ.*

The narrative plot of *Omenụkọ,* as succinctly captured by Nnyigide (2018: 150), follows this sequence: "A prosperous merchant, misfortune strikes, commits [a] crime, self-exile, economic and political prosperity, urge to reconcile with home

people, expiation and reconciliation, rose to the pinnacle of economic and political power, envied and harassed by rival chiefs, forced to go home." Previous studies on *Omenụkọ* have centred on verisimilitude in the novel (Okodo, 2012), Marxist reading of it (Aboh, 2018), beasts and abomination (Hodges, 2013) and migration in the novel and Africa at large (Nnyigide, 2018). From these studies, the one that comes close to the present research is Nnyigide's (2018) study, which examined migrants' contributions to their host communities, their experiences in their place of migration, the impact of migration on Igboland and culture, and lessons derived from the novel. The present study departs from Nnyigide's study in different ways. First, Nnyigide's study does not give primacy to the exploration of return migration and reintegration in the novel. Second, Nnyigide's (2018) research links the migration scenario in *Omenụkọ* and *Ije Odumodu Jere* to migration situations in Africa, which is not the objective of the present study. Based on these, this study critically explores (return) migration and reintegration in Nwana's *Omenụkọ*, which is a fictionalised biography of Igwebe Ọdụm of Arondizuogu who lived between 1860 and 1940 (Njoku, 2008).

2. (Return) Migration

A return migration presupposes that migration had taken place. International Organization for Migration (2020: 29) defines migration as "the process of moving from one place to another. To migrate is to move, whether from a rural area to a city, from one district or province in a given country to another in that same country, or from one country to a new country. It involves action." This implies that migration includes a movement away from one's initial place of domicile within the same country, region or outside the country. However, as Ukwueze and Okey-Agbo (forthcoming) observe, what has not been established is the length of time one needs to be away for it to be called migration as opposed to vacation, visit or pilgrimage. They submit that for one to qualify to be called a migrant, such a person's intentions of migrating should go beyond vacation or visit, exile, studies, job etc. One of the perceived problems with this submission is the inclusion of exile and job as things that disqualify one to be a migrant. In their study of return migration and reintegration in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, Ukwueze and Okey-Agbo (forthcoming) discuss Okonkwo's return from exile as a return migration, implying that they acknowledge

that his exile is a form of migration. Further, other migration scholars recognise individuals who seek jobs in another province or country as migrants (see Lianos, 1975; Gmelch, 1980). However, we concur with their acceptance of Kuschminder (2013: 11) remark that "The UN's specification of 12 months is faulted on the grounds that only three months can provide enough time for exposure to another culture and context to have an impact on individual's values and behaviours, which is important for their ability to potentially impact social change".

In most cases, people migrate because they believe that the benefits of migration will be greater than its costs (Dustmann & Weiss, 2007). This corroborates Bauer and Zimmermann's (1998) position that migrants are confident that they will recover whatever they spent in the country they are migrating to. In *Omenụkọ*, Omenụkọ believes that migrating or forcing himself to exile is more profitable to him than remaining in his hometown. This makes him to abandon his house, where he comfortably lives in to migrate to Mgbọrọgwụ, where he is to live in the king's house. Okodo (2012: 92) justifies Omenụkọ's exile by asserting that "To go into exile is a normal thing. One goes into exile when one has committed an offence that so much desecrates the land more so if it involves the spilling of the blood of a relative." Therefore, Omenụkọ, based on the social contract he shares with his community, understands that if he does not do something, the consequences may be unbearable. This explains why he intends to assemble the king of his community and the family of those he sold into slavery and set the house where they will gather ablaze so that nobody will punish him for selling off his goods bearers (*Omenụkọ,* p. 10). It takes the counselling of his brothers to convince him to run away with his family and siblings. Omenụkọ understands that his life is more secure in Mgbọrọgwụ than in his hometown because it is either he is killed by the community or his house is set on fire. Where none of these takes place, he and his family would be left to live with the stigma, which might be more agonizing. Stigma, according to Adhikari (2011), makes the stigmatised lose confidence in themselves. As the narrator shows:

"…Nke a dịkarịrị anyị mma, n'ihi na ihe nke i mere, a gaghị echefu ya echefu ruo mgbe ebighị ebi. Ihe dị otu a ka nna nna anyị na-akpọ nwa tote o tokwuru. Nke pụtara na ụmụ anyị ga-ahụ ahụhụ banyere ya: ụmụ ụmụ anyị ga-ahụkwa ahụhụ banyere ya otu aka ahụ". (10)	We prefer this one because what you did can never be forgotten. A thing of this nature is what our ancestors refer to as transgenerational knowledge. It means that our children will suffer from it: our children's children will also suffer from it.

Based on the above, Omenụkọ and his siblings decide to take advantage of the exiling relationship or "reciprocity arrangement" (Ugochukwu, nd: 102) that exists between their community and Mgbọrọgwụ (10). In addition, Omenụkọ needs to migrate to another rural area like their hometown, and this aided his quick adaptation in Mgbọrọgwụ. This made his appointment as the interim king of Mgbọrọgwụ plausible because the people of Mgbọrọgwụ believe that he is familiar with their system of rural kingship since there is no much difference between the two cultures.

Studies on migration have identified different types of migration: in terms of duration (temporary and permanent) and conditions of migrating (voluntary and forced) (see Dustmann & Weiss, 2007; de Haas & Fokkema, 2011; Farrell, Mahon & McDonagh, 2012; International Organization for Migration, 2020). Omenụkọ's initial plan is to embark on a permanent migration. This is evident in his desire to kill the kings and parents of those he sold into slavery. It may be argued that a person with such intentions does not plan to return but to exile himself permanently from his people. A change in this initial plan occurred when the people of Mgbọrọgwụ and the kings of other communities declared war on Omenụkọ in Mgbọrọgwụ and Ịkpa Oyi respectively (31, 76). This resulted in Omenụkọ's initial permanent migration plan being cut short. This confirms that failed integration can stimulate sudden return. This concurs with the push-pull hypothesis, which states that when socioeconomic factors become unbearable to migrants, they are forced to prematurely induce their return (Gmelch, 1980). We see an instance of contract migration in the case of Omenụkọ, which is defined by Dustmann and Weiss (2007: 6) as "…a temporary migration where the migrant lives in the host country for a limited number of years, and where the length of the migration is

exogenously determined by for instance a residence permit or a working contract." As earlier observed, Omenụkọ's motive for migrating to Mgbọrọgwụ is to remain there permanently. But as the novel depicts, within such permanent migration motive, there exists some temporariness. This temporariness is not based on the migration itself but the conditions of the migrant in the host country. At the time of leaving his community, Omenụkọ does not know that he will be asked to join the peace troupe of the king not to talk of holding the stead as the king of Mgbọrọgwụ until Obiefula, the king's only son, comes of age. The plan was to stay in the king's palace (14) as a guest. As the narrator remarks, "Omenụkọ ahapụla ala anyị laa ala ọzọ ịnọ dị ka ọbịa" (Omenụkọ has departed our land to another land to live as a foreigner/guest) (15). Contract migration comes in when Omenụkọ's temporary status as the king of Mgbọrọgwụ takes effect. He has the rights and obligations of a king as he represents Ndị Mgbọrọgwụ at the governmental level (22) and settler of disputes (24).

As hinted earlier, other types of migration based on the conditions of migrating are voluntary or forced migration. In *Omenụkọ*, we see a case of forced migration. Omenụkọ's migration to Mgbọrọgwụ is sudden. At the time he was returning from where he went to purchase goods and passed Umuduru Nsọ Ọfọ, Ụmụ Lolo, and Ezi Nnachi (3), he is not planning to leave his town upon his return. It is losing all his goods at the Igwu River (3) and selling some of his load bearers to slavery (6) that force him to consider exile as the only option to abate the wrath of his people. In Omenụkọ's forced migration, there are two factors that stimulated Omenụkọ's migration: tangible and intangible. Tangible factors in this study refer to where the conditions that induced migration are caused by physical occurrences and, as such, perceptible to the eye. Omenụkọ's goods being destroyed in the Igwu river and his subsequent selling off of his servants into slavery are events one can see. On the other hand, intangible force migration implies refers to a situation where the circumstances that stimulate migration are abstract and often seen and experienced by the intending migrant. As the narrator shows:

Ọ bụrụ na Omenụkọ matara na ya ga-adị ndụ ruo ta a, ọ gaghị ererị ụmụ mmadụ ahụ. Ya na oke uche nọ mgbe dum n'ihi ihe ahụ o mere. Mmụọ ya mara ya ikpe nke ukwu, ọ bụ ezie na

Omenụkọ anọkaghị n'ala anyị n'oge ahụ, ma mkpụrụ obi ya enweghị ozuzu ike, ọ nọkwaghị n'otu ebe n'ihi ihe o mere (15-16).	
If Omenụkọ had known that he will be alive till today, he wouldn't have sold those people. He was always in deep thought because of what he did. He had enormous guilt; it is true that Omenụkọ was not often present in our land that period, but his heart had no peace, he was not settled in a place because of what he did.	

The above presents a scenario where one of the things that propelled Omenụkọ to forcefully migrate is emotional restlessness or lack of inner peace. Such emotional unrest is intangible, as it is only felt by the person bearing such thoughts. We argue that the combination of the tangible and intangible factors, in most cases, is needed in the actualisation of forced migration. It appears that if not that Omenụkọ's conscience crucified him, he may not have been forced to migrate. One of the things that may happen is that he may return to his hometown and fabricate a story to the parents of those he sold. In addition, another intangible factor that stimulated Omenụkọ's forced migration is the social contract he shares with other members of the community. This social contract, which comes in the forms of culture, beliefs and tradition, contributes to Omenụkọ's migration. Without being told and without allowing the community to take action, Omenụkọ already knows what is to befall him if he does not migrate. If Omenụkọ had continued with his plan of killing the parents of those he sold into slavery as well as committing suicide, not only would there have been a mob action of the community on him and his family, his generation would have been wiped out (15).

At Ndị Mgbọrọgwụ, Omenụkọ and his family have no problem settling in and being integrated into the community initially because Ndị Mgbọrọgwụ revere him for his wisdom, wealth and fame (16). In a short while, he is appointed into the cabinet of the king of Mgbọrọgwụ as one of the people representing the king on peacekeeping mission (16), and surprisingly became the king of Mgbọrọgwụ upon the death of the previous king (17). Because of his progress, he marries a fourth wife (26). Omenụkọ's sudden rise and possession of political power in a land where he is not an indigene shows that successful integration depends greatly on the status of the migrant in terms of financial independence, exposure, wisdom, proactiveness, leadership skill or experience, and the

previous relationship between the destination and place of departure. The narrator reveals Omenụkọ's wisdom and leadership prowess thus:

Ma mgbe ụfọdụ ha nwere ihe ha na-achọ ịgwa D.C. ukwu, mgbe ha nọ na-eche ụzọ ga-aka mma isi gwa D.C. okwu ahụ, e leghị anya Omenụkọ ga-achọta ụzọ madụ nile ga-asị na nke ahụ kacha mma. Ọ bụrụ na ị nọrọ nso na-anụ okwu ya, madụ agaghị akọrọ gị na ọ bụ onye amamihe, kama ị ga-achọpụta ya n'onwe gị (24-25)	When they have something to tell High D.C. [a British officer who is in charge of all village heads], when they will be thinking of a better way to tell the D.C., maybe Omenụkọ will devise a way that is acceptable by all. If you listen to him closely, you need not be told that he is a man of wisdom; you will discover it yourself.

The respect and honour given to Omenụkọ were not permanent. As Obiefula, the son of the late king of Mgbọrọgwụ, came of age to take over his father's throne, the people of Mgbọrọgwụ assemble and decide to announce to Omenụkọ that it is time for him to hand over to Obiefula (27). The way they present the matter to Omenụkọ suggests that they feel intimidated by his progress. As the narrator succinctly captures it, "Around our town in Africa, this belief is accepted as law: if anyone goes to another town and lives there as a guest, even if things are good, or he is a merciful person, or a gracious one, or a fair judge, he will always be reminded that he is a guest in that land and he will be preparing himself for his inevitable return to the town of his birth. At any time, he may be told, proverbially or directly, that he is a guest and must not fail to return home" (1) (as translated by Ugochukwu, nd: 101). Ndị Mgbọrọgwụ's decline to assist Omenụkọ in building houses in Ịkpa Oyi and their refusal to assist him to relocate there show that they do not want to associate with Omenụkọ any longer. Moreover, the kind of joy they feel when the throne is handed over to Obiefula confirms that a stranger, no matter how successful and impactful they become in a foreign land, will always be reminded that they are strangers and, as such, have limits to their powers and rights.

Since Omenụkọ and his family are not ready to return (home because one needs to be prepared to return and this preparation involves time, resources and willingness on the part of the migrant [Cassarino, 2004]), they continue their migration to Ịkpa Oyi, a

place where dead people were previously disposed of (32). As Omenụkọ migrates to Ịkpa Oyi, he continues to prosper in riches and fame. Because of envy, the council of kings decided to expel him from Ịkpa Oyi (76). As a result, they connive with the king, whose territory covers Ịkpa Oyi, to evict Omenụkọ. As the case reaches the table of the D.C., they have no justifiable grounds for deciding to eject Omenụkọ (78), and this resulted in their forcefully ejecting him, making them to declare war on Omenụkọ and his family (82). Omenụkọ beomes uncomfortable with the actions of these kings and then begins to consider returning to his hometown as a result of his failed integration in Ịkpa Oyi. This confirms de Haas and Fokkema's (2011: 757) assertion that:

> …if migrants integrate successfully, they can be more productive than in their origin countries, and there will be no rationale for returning. On the contrary, if individual migrants fail to find employment and to improve their lives through migrating, they are more likely to return. So, within this perspective, return migration is mainly interpreted as a result of structural (educational and economic) integration failure. Put differently, while "winners" settle, "losers" return.

3. Successful Reintegration

An important issue to include when discussing return migration is reintegration. When a migrant returns, two major things can possibly happen: it is either the returnee achieves a successful reintegration or the reintegration fails. Owing to the circumstances surrounding Omenụkọ's migration, he knows that there are many things to be done before he will be able to return. As a result, he decides to first reclaim those he sold into slavery. In the bid to achieve this, he seeks the help of one of his kinsmen named Igwe, who is a trader and a good man (36), to help him go and find out the whereabouts of those he sold into slavery. Upon Igwe's return, Omenụkọ begs his brother Nwabụeze to go to Arụ Ụlọ and reclaim the three surviving servants he sold into slavery. It costs Omenụkọ two pounds each to reclaim Obiọha from his master Mazị Ọjị, Ebeleke Okoro from Ezuma and Arịsa from Ọkpara (45). Upon the successful return of these servants, Omenụkọ welcomes them in a grand style as the narrator shows:

Mgbe Omenụkọ hụrụ Obiọha na Elebeke na Arịsa, o were ọṅụ gaa zute ha n'ezi. Mgbe o kelesịrị ha ekele nke ọma, ọ sị ha, "Ụmụ m zuwenụ ike". Omenụkọ wee kpọọ ndịnyom ya atọ nye ha otu ewu, otu ewu, sị ha, "Werenụ ha siwere madụ atọ ndị a nri." O nyekwa ha shilling ise ise ka ha were zụrụ azụ, wee na-eme ka ofe na-adị ụtọ nke ukwu (54).	When Omenụkọ saw Obiọha and Ebeleke and Arịsa, he met them outside with joy. After warmly greeting them, he told them, "My children, rest." Omenụkọ called his three wives, gave them one goat each and told them, "Take them and cook for these three persons." He also gave them five shillings each to buy fish so that the soup will be very tasty.

In order to minimise the surprise and shock Arisa and Ebeleke's parents will have when they suddenly see their children, Omenụkọ invites them to Ịkpa Oyi to reunite with their children (55) and promises to help Arịsa and Ebeleke marry two wives each. As a sign of forgiveness, Arịsa's and Ebeleke's parents say a prayer of progress for Omenụkọ (56). Another reason for this reunion is so that the parents will not serve as an obstacle to Omenụkọ's proposed return. Omenụkọ warns Arịsa's and Ebeleke's parents not to be over-joyous in order not to resurrect the grief of those parents he is unable to reclaim their children (57).

After this personal reconciliation with the parents of the reclaimed load bearers, Omenụkọ progresses to communal reconciliation. As such, he requests Igwe to go and enquire what it will take him to be pardoned by the community and be reintegrated as a bonafide member of their community. This enquiry is important because, according to Cassarino (2004), a migrant who wants to return must gather enough information on what it will take him to return and should also have the resources that can sustain him upon his return. After due consultations with the king of the community, Aniche and Iyiụkwa the chief priest, Omenụkọ was asked to bring one big cow, eight chicken eggs, one cock, eight big tubers of yam and eight small tubers of yam (60), which will be used to reconcile him with the community members. He will also bring one female sheep, one hen, one cock, eight chicken eggs, a duck egg, a basket of yams, a basket of cocoyams, one pod of kola, one pod of kola pepper, forty pieces of native chalk, wine in a pot whose bottom has not touched the ground, a pot of raffia palm wine, a pot of oil palm wine and four eagle feathers (61), which will be used to reconcile

him with the spirits. Providing these materials would show that Omenụkọ is truly ready to return. The essence of making peace with humanity and gods is because it is believed that what Omenụkọ did is a taboo both for humanity and divinity. When the above materials are brought to Aniche and Iyiụkwa respectively, they performed some declarative acts which entail that Omenụkọ has been reabsorbed into the community. The narrator recounts:

Onye is ala wee pụta, were akwa ọkụkọ ahụ hie ya n'ọnụ ugbo anọ na-asị, "Ma m kwuru mma, ma m kwuru njọ megide Omenụkọ na ụmụ nne ya, ọ bụ njọ ahụ ka m na-ehichapụ ta a. Anyị na ha abụrụkwala nna na nwa. Nna nna anyị ha nụrụnụ, olu madụ bụ olu mmụọ, anyị na ha abụrụkwala otu (67).

The king came out, took the chicken egg and rubbed on his mouth four times, saying, "Whether I spoke good things or bad things against Omenụkọ and his siblings, it is bad that I am wiping away today. We have again become father and child. Hear our forefathers; the voice of man is the voice of the gods. We are now one with them.

Mgbe ha nọ na-esi ha, Iyiụkwa ewerekwa akwa ọkụkọ anọ ọzọ fọdụrụ, werekwa ogbe ọjị ahụ yiwaa ya, ghụpụta otu mkpụrụ ọjị, gbọwaakwa ogbe ose ọjị anọ…wee malite were akwa ọkụkọ hie n'ọnụ sị, "Ọnụ kwuru njọ site ta a anyị ekwughasịala, ọnụ madụ bụ ọnụ mmụọ." (69)

When they were cooking them, Iyiụkwa also took the remaining four chicken eggs as well as one pod of kola nut, breaks it and plucks out a lobe of kola nut, breaks four alligator peppers…and started rubbing four chicken eggs on his mouth, saying, "The mouth that spoke bad things has unsaid what he said from today, the voice of man is the voice of the gods."

The above statements are symbolic because they signify Omenụkọ and his siblings' successful reintegration into their community. In his *How to Do Things with Words,* Austin (1962) regards such statements as declaratives because they change the order of things in the world. The utterances made by Aniche and Iyi Ụkwa changed the status of Omenụkọ from being an outcast to a bonafide member

of the community. The utterances are effective because all the prescribed conditions have been met. Moreover, the utterances were uttered by those who have the rights and obligations to do so, and they were also uttered in the appropriate setting, scene and context. With this change of events, Omenụkọ builds great edifices in his community (72), which have not been seen since the inception of the community. One other issue implicated in Omenụkọ's successful reintegration is the idea that wealth might help to cancel social stigma. This position supports Link and Phelan's (2011) claim that stigma, to a large extent, is dependent on socioeconomic and cultural power. One may begin to wonder if Omenụkọ would have been successfully reintegrated if he had no wealth. The community understands that reintegrating Omenụkọ into their community portends more benefits for them than losses.

From a structural approach, Omenụkọ's return falls under Cerace's (1974) classifications of return of failure and return of innovation. For Cerace (1974), return of failure describes those returnees that find it difficult to integrate into their home countries or communities because of stereotypes and biases. As has been shown, the polarisation of 'us' versus 'them', which is seen between the council of kings and Omenụkọ, becomes unbearable for him and his family members. The 'us' versus 'them' ideological square is often a manifestation of power and hegemony. The kings want to remind Omenụkọ that he is a stranger in Mgbọrọgwụ and that Ịkpa Oyi is not his.

Moreover, Omenụkọ's return also falls under 'return of innovation'. According to Cerase (1974: 251), migrants who fall under this form of return are "prepared to make use of all the means and new skills they have acquired during their migratory experiences." These returnees wield influence and power in their returning community. As the narrator shows, Omenụkọ constructs great edifices in his hometown, which aids in improving the architectural look of the town (72). Further, he shows his community the importance of education and helps a lot of people who are willing to work (93). The innovation he is able to bring to his community is attributable to his successful reintegration into the community. This concurs with Batista, McIndoe-Calder and Vicente's (2016) submission that return migration can benefit the home community because the returnee brings new productive skills such as education and development as well as wealth amassed abroad. It is worthy of note also that Omenụkọ is able to undergo a

successful reintegration because there have not been any significant changes in the cultural and political structures of his people. His case is different from that of Okonkwọ in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, which Ukwueze and Okey-Agbo (forthcoming) argue that Okonkwọ met new cultural and political practices in his home community upon returning from exile, which resulted in his failure to reintegrate.

4. Conclusion

Omenụkọ, as the first Igbo novel, has received a great deal of critical attention. This study is an addition to the body of works on this classic novel. The study has explored return migration and successful reintegration in *Omenụkọ.* From the study, it was observed that Omenụkọ's migration to Mgbọrọgwụ is not voluntary. A concept that this research possibly introduced to the literature of return migration is the dichotomy between tangible and intangible dimensions of forced migration, which are used to respectively capture abstract and concrete factors that can force someone to migrate. The study also showed that in Omenụkọ's initial permanent migration to Mgbọrọgwụ, that there exists an element of temporariness. The migration is permanent because he never thought of returning at the time of departure. The temporariness lies in his specific period as the king of Mgbọrọgwụ, which should elapse immediately Obiefula comes of age. The study also revealed that Omenụkọ's return can be simultaneously seen as a return of failure and the return of innovation. What he fails to achieve in Ịkpa Oyi was what he achieves in his community. The finding also shows that reintegration is a personal and communal phenomenon because "…return is not solely analysed with reference to the individual experience of the migrant, but also with reference to social and institutional factors in home countries. In fact, return is also a question of context" (Cassarino 2004: 4). It is personal because Omenụkọ was first reintegrated into the heart of those he sold into slavery as well as their parents through forgiveness brought about by his redemptive actions before he moved into the community to make peace with the entire community and the gods. From Omenụkọ's case, it appears that wealth and the values a returnee can bring to a returning community or country facilitate the reintegration process and mitigate against social stigma that may have been incurred.

The present research did not explore the explication of return migration and successful reintegration in *Omenụkọ* to the tragic, comedic or tragic-comedic structuration of the text. It did not also focus primarily on hegemony in the novel. These are some of the areas future researchers can explore.

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4

HYBRIDITY, AMBIVALENCE, AND THE QUEST FOR AGENCY IN YAA GYASI'S *HOMEGOING*

Friday Romanus Okpo

Abstract

The aim of this study is to reveal how the conditions of slavery and racism complicate the identity question of many postcolonial characters in Yaa Gyasi's Homegoing. Postcolonialism comes in handy as the theory for the study. But the text is studied more for its literary and artistic merits than for its place as a postcolonial product. In the first instance it is an epic and a tragedy, a tragedy about existence. In the second instance, the existents are figures caught in the throes of slavery, at the threshold of colonialism; the text follows the struggles of characters who have lost their names to the combined affront of slavery and colonialism to take back their names, and this is reflected in the titular implication of the motif of homecoming that we find also in such other poems as Emile Dickinson's "I Years Had Been Away from Home" and Lenrie Peters' "Homecoming" where the struggle is to return home physically and/or psychologically. The form of return that is found in Homegoing is rooted in the question of identity and that question when attempted turns on the issues of hybridity, ambivalence, and identity/culture conflict that this research attempts to X-ray. It also pursues the characters' attempt to attain agency through acts of "redemptive violence" (Wink). The basic problem that this research addresses is the possibility to X-ray the text of Gyasi within the Bhabhian lenses. Our task is to unmask in the text of Gyasi several characters as figures in the Bhabhian tradition of criticism, figures that are phenomenologically lost, that occupy some sort of liminal space or transplace. As such, we follow Effia and Esi, and some of their descendants and attempt to show how as postcolonial subjects they reflect some Bhabhian conceptualizations and other major concepts in postcolonialism. The paper establishes a place for the text as a postcolonial narrative.

Introduction

The characters that we meet across the seven generations of the family tree in Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing* are all victims of hybridity and ambivalence, as well as involved in a quest for agency. The narrative correlates the African experience of slavery from the Ghanian perspective. Yet, we keep in mind that "correlation is impossible, except by hunches and arbitrary linkages, and by suppressing certain features which may be followed up and issue in quite different readings" (Akwanya, *Verbal Structures* 3), and understand that the question of literature is akin to the insane musings of Hamlet, "to be or not to be, that is the question?" We know, howbeit, from Husserlian "intentionality", that every consciousness is consciousness of or about something; that "to be a conscious state is to be an experience" (Siewert). The consciousness or experience at play in the text under survey is the postcolonial consciousness. This informs the choice of the theory of postcolonialism to account for the claims that we raise in this research. But, one need not lose sight of the fact that the text is first a narrative whose orientation is tragic before a postcolonial narrative. In its former sense (at the mythic level) it implies a universal discursive tradition, with recognizable structures that mark it out as such. In the other sense (at the level of significance) tragedy figures as a question of existence for the postcolonial subject. This seemingly opposing visions of art form the matter that Eliot discusses in his essay, "Tradition and Individual Talent" where tradition is a product of the "science of archeology" (1), and is at issue when one ponders on the nature of literary art, "the art form that depends on language and language alone" (Aristotle 4). In Heidegger, the idea is that literature concerns "the conception of language as that sphere in which man can dwell aright and make clear to himself who he is…. and the way language relates to thinking and its response to the call of thought (Heidegger *Thinking* xix). In the two classical philosophers (Aristotle and Plato) and Heidegger what is true is that language is a sphere of experience and existence; that the language system can compose and or create a world from words, like the Christian God. And this world will be governed by such rules as the constitutive words allow, and no rules outside this world will be of necessity in deciding events in the work.

It is our opinion in this research that art has long moved past the questions found in these two philosophers. In Martin Heidegger, the "conception of truth as the revealing of what is concealed, in

distinction to the theory of truth as correctness or correspondence, is probably his most seminal thought and philosophy's essential task, as he sees it" (Heidegger xxii).

The text of Gyasi under consideration here reveals the truth on the deepest questions about human existence, the question of identity, questions such as "who are you?" or as Leah frames it, "who is it that can tell me who I am?" (qtd in Akwanya *Discourse Analysis* 28). The questions that the text of Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing* raises border on slavery and its attendant consequences, such that "on the one hand, the slave's hopes and aspirations call for some celebrative "smiling," but on the other hand, the harsh realities of adjustment in a new but enchanting setting turns "smiling" into a necessary mask, a disguise or even therapy to cope with the nightmarish "suffering" engendered by displacement. (Falola and Afolabi xix). Slavery on its part necessitates cultural hybridity by the consequence of existence in the liminal space, as the "liminal space is a 'hybrid' site that witnesses the production--rather than just the reflection--of cultural meaning. A liminal space, made by nature of cultures, does not separate but rather mediates their mutual exchange and relative meanings" (Rahaman 12). Raihan Sharif sees the "theory of hybridity, especially its ways of cross-cultural exchanges as bereft of any understanding of the biopoltics of power" (2). Thus, it appears that the concept of hybridity is as unifying as it is separatist, resulting in cultural ambivalence, as Bhabha captures it,

> To that end, we should remember that it is the 'inter — the cutting-edge of translation and negotiation, the in-between space – that carries the burden of meaning of culture […] And by exploring this Third Space, we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as others of ourselves. (39).

The Bhabhian conceptualization of culture follows through Derrida's postulations on the text as having a ur-text (text in the history). For Bhabha, therefore, culture has this textual character, in that cultures borrow from a history of intercultural relations, especially between colonizers and other power figures and those who occupy the subject positions. Part of the result of these relations is captured by the triad of concepts that this research investigates. Thus, postcolonialism implies a necessary commingling of cultures, in that every culture that has witnessed colonialism can no longer remain the same; there is bound to be a reconceptualization of such

concepts as home and identity. What is more, the intrapersonal conflicts reflect the tragic spirit.

Thus, Heinz considers "the relative effortlessness with which common-sense understandings of home often conflate house and home, home and homeland, or home, family, and identity." (123) He shows that the word home is a complex concept, with varying implications. Heinz in the above is also concerned with "the inter — the cutting-edge of translation and negotiation, the in-between space – that carries the burden of meaning of culture" (Bhabha 38) and this is the bane of cultural hybridity. His paper also traces Effia's lostness to her motherlessness and presents the view that for Effia she has not just lost a home but has always been homeless, seeing that her house has never been a home. Thus, it is when Effia learns about her husband's involvement in the business of slavery and would leave that James reminds her that "your home is no better." (*HG*17) For Effia, the experience of motherhood is such that "both her birth mother Maame, who left her at birth, and her foster mother Baaba, who was keen to get rid of her, are unavailable for Effia as points of origin, comfort, and belonging." (Heinz 128).

The Daily Star reviewer, Shah Tazrian Ashrafi titles his review of the novel "A Novel Dripping with Tragic Tales of History". According to this review *Homegoing* [is a text] where dark history unravels itself, reminding the readers of the slave trade that has carved its marks on history's shoulders". The reference to dark history here takes us in one swift swipe back to the title of Conrad's classical *Heart of Darkness* set at the heart of British colonialism and imperialism. From the first comment of this review we figure that the text is a historical novel, with the outright reference to history.

For Ashrafi, "the various narratives [represent] the winding branches of a tree and the forces of slave trading history being its roots." Thus, the claim here is that slavery constitutes the base of this narrative, that which unites all the fractions or episodes into one unique whole. And, slavery ordinarily is grounded on "the history of struggle" with the various failed attempts at escape. We unearth trapped individuals, who, however, must struggle, and win, even if it is by losing. This is also true about the postcolonial subjects who must suffer the effects "of the slave trade that has carved its marks on history's shoulders". Part of the effect of that trade has been the identity crises of the postcolonial subjects that results from the

convergence of various cultures in a single individual, like Quey or James Jr.

Nathaniel Welnhofer argues that *Homegoing* shows the tragedy of slavery. As he puts it, the novel "*Homegoing* [] demonstrates the oppression [] by colonialism, imperialism, and slavery by following a family's lineage dating back to the seventeenth century" (1). Nathaniel also studies the place of language in the tradition of slavery and colonialism, all forms of oppression. According to him, language "is a physical embodiment of a culture." The cultural implications of language are clear from the German poet Hölderlin's "full of merit, yet poetically, man dwells on this earth" (qtd in Akwanya, "Heidegger" 1), implying that language is one condition of existence for humanity, and that it has often been employed by the human community to capture the said conditions of existence. With African literature, the writer is seen as part of the communal struggle as "he is after all – as Ezekiel Mphalele says in his *African Image*- the sensitive point of his community" (Achebe103). Achebe sees art as "man's constant effort to create for himself a different order of reality from that which is given to him…" (107) As such, literature -a function of language -is an active part of the social worlds of African people.

In James Wood, it has been observed that Yaa Gyasi's novel presents a more complex ideal of identity than Du-Bois' two-pronged approach. Accordingly, Gyasi's novel is "brilliantly renewed and expanded the fiction of double lives. While Du Bois treats just two people [or groups], Gyasi follows two branches of a family tree across seven generations. Du Bois confines himself to America, while Gyasi's novel makes a double-chambered form for the hybridity of African-American history, moving between Ghana and the United States, from the late eighteenth century to the present." Our approach in this critique shall be largely historical, just as the theory on which the critique is anchored is postcolonialism.

The Location of Hybridity, Ambivalence and Quest for Agency in *Homegoing*

Brought face to face with the reality of an alien culture and language, and their place in the midst of things, the colonized end up with a merged sense of identity, a sense of "hybridity" which leads to "ambivalence"; these two are the touchstones employed by Homi K. Bhabha in Postcolonial criticism. It is in his *The Location of Culture* that Bhabha introduces "Hybridity." He writes that,

> Hybridity is the sign of the productivity of colonial power, its shifting forces and fixities; it is the name for the strategic reversal of the process of domination through disavowal (that is, the production of discriminatory identities that secure the 'pure' and original identity of authority). Hybridity is the revaluation of the assumption of colonial identity through the repetition of discriminatory identity effects. It displays the necessary deformation and displacement of all sites of discrimination and domination (160).

Hybridity as such is the obfuscation of the dialectics of opposition. The hybrid, so to call him, does not truly or fully belong to any side of the divide, nor is he lost as Said would have us see, but instead he generates a new identity. Yaa Gyasi's characters are caught in a circus of hybridity, such that the identity questions in the text are resolved as a complex conundrum. The two Matriarchs are Esi and Effia, and whereas Effia and her descendants suffer a marred identity, the generations of Esi experience the pain of slavery and its aftermath: that in turn is resolved as a crisis of identity. Both generations, however, are poised towards fulfilling the same goal, that of homegoing: the return to the native skin and land, the call to unmask, even when such a return is practically impossible.

"Hybridity" comes about when an individual is caught between two different options, usually two different cultures, leading the individual to the possession of a "double vision" or "double consciousness" and consequently to a merged or even a lost identity. Members of every human culture have their own unique customs, language, religion, and any other features which introduce them as members of that culture as well as separate them from the other cultures. Therefore, when the individual leaves his/her own country and goes to another, he/she experiences new ideas, opinions, culture, language… which brings him/her a dual life or identity. Indeed, living in the in-between spaces and between two different worlds leads to a merged identity. This is what Bhabha sees as the "third space", which he describes as full of ambivalence and equally contradictory. Thus, for him, "border lives" put the individual in "the moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion, [for] there is a sense of disorientation, a disturbance of direction in the 'beyond'" (1).

Therefore, leaving one's own country automatically makes the person a figure in "diaspora" and brings him/her "hybridity" and "ambivalence". But for us in this essay, "home" plays an important role in the stability of one's identity. Hence, "unhomeliness" can ultimately lead to a merged or even a lost identity, but is much more complex than that and involves the entire sociodynamics of identity. As Bhabha puts it, "to be unhomed is not to be homeless, nor can 'unhomely' be easily accommodated in that familiar division of social life into private and public spheres" (9). Again, the colonized intelligentsia who leave their motherlands are not free from such problems of identity crisis. They travel to the land of the colonizer in the claim that those countries are more developed and they intend to learn the ways of the colonizer in order to save their motherlands by bringing home high education with themselves to their own lands and peoples. Meanwhile, the reality is that coming in contact with the alien cultures and languages, and their border and in-between lives puts them in "hybrid" situations and robs them of their pure identity. Indeed, they move between two or more different worlds and this brings them a sense of lostness and rootlessness; as Fanon captures it, "in the world in which I travel, I am endlessly creating myself" (227).

Ambivalence connects with the question of hybridity as derivatives of postcolonialism, and they both figure as questions of identity. Ambivalence indicates an unsettling feeling, the belongingness to two polar regions, the kind that results in dangling between two positions, such that straddling becomes inevitable. Ambivalence leaves the postcolonial with Quey's (*Homegoing*) kind of identity, as "almost the same, but not quite" (Bhabha 86). Ambivalence as such points to the one who is doubly conscious (Du-Bois), the kind of figure that we encounter in reading Derek Walcott's "A Far Cry from Africa" that understands his ambivalence as such and closes his poetic lament with:

> I who am poisoned with the blood of both,
> Where shall I turn, divided to the vein?
> I who have cursed
> The drunken officer of British rule, how choose
> Between this Africa and the English tongue I love?
> Betray them both or give back what they give?
> How can face such slaughter and be cool?
> How can I turn from Africa and live?

Walcott above presents the postcolonial condition as incurably ambivalent, such that the subject is hemmed in and comes up with a questionable identity, a sense of "merged- or lost-identity" (Zohdi1). Thus, the lines mostly end as rhetorical questions. This is as Franz Fanon sees it. The individuals "can't choose; they must have both. Two worlds that make two bewitchings… each day the split widens" (17). This split leads to double-consciousness, "a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness… two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. (9)

On its part, Culture conflict is understood to be the result of two incompatible cultures coming in contact. It is the result of the conceptual interplay between such frames as hybridity, ambivalence, mimicry, transculturality, interculturality and multiculturalism. With these Bhabhian concepts in focus, it is clear that the modern man suffers a crisis of identity and is involved in a quest to redeem that identity, to reassert his agency. It is this conflict of cultures that Gideon Umezurike has in mind when he raises such questions as "But what happens when Da-sein – be it willingly or by sheer force – is uprooted (either physically) from its world, actually from its space, (or psychologically) from its perception of itself and its world, and then translocated or subjected to a totally (or even if to a nearly) different world?" (5) where in answer he presents the views of "Cohen, Kum-Kum Bhavnani, Barbara Tizzard and Ann Phoenix – [who have] observed that it is quite possible to feel at home in a place and, yet, be inhibited from publicly proclaiming the place as home due to the experience of social exclusions (Umezurike 8). This is the case of Effia as we have stated above. The postcolonial subject as such becomes the site of a contestation of cultures. The result is that there is a conflict of cultures between the culture of colonization and the native cultures. Thus, ambivalence and hybridity figure as aspects of cultural conflict. In the end the agent who feels his agentic position threatened by any of these Bhabhian premonitions and seeks to redeem same is inadvertently involved in a quest for agency.

This current study attempts to investigate Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing* in terms of Homi K. Bhabha's theories of "Hybridity" and "Ambivalence" as the causes of merged- and even lost-identity

in post-colonial discourse. *Homegoing* is the melting pot of generations of rootless and homeless characters. Most of the black characters in the work suffer pangs of ambivalence, hybridity, and identity crisis. We notice that, for the white man, the identity of the black man is muddled up. As such, they see every black man as one and the same person. When Jo leaves Alice he is sure the white man wouldn't miss him; they would think he was Poot and vice versa (Gyasi 89-90). The point, however, is that the identity crisis that ensues is a result of the machinations of the slavers and colonizers in such acts as crude unnaming. Thus, "taking away your name is the first step," he'd said somberly (Gyasi 92). In some cases, it goes beyond merely taking away a name; what is found is the complete destruction and eradication of the historical roots of a family line. We feel the fangs of rootlessness in that "Jo used to worry that his family line had been cut off, lost forever. He would never truly know who his people were, and who their people were before them, and if there were stories to be heard about where he had come from; he would never hear them" (Gyasi 100), as well the commentary on his mother which reads, "his ma had never been like the other mothers. She was a little strange, a little off, still dreaming of the country she'd been ripped from years and years before. She could often be found looking out at the water, looking as if she would jump in, try to find her way home" (Gyasi 88).

What we find in the above is a sense of lostness (Edward Said) of a person who has "been ripped from [a country] years and years before." This is the sense in which we understand also Bhabha's idea of homelessness, the sense of a person lost to a home, often lusting for the lustre of that home, but ending up with a feeling of vain longing. The imagery of water in the above aids our argument, water being one symbol of the primal origins. It could also be seen to represent travels and movement; it features prominently in the Odyssey which follows the journey motif. There is a sense, therefore, in which Oedipus can be interpreted as lost. Again, philosophically, water is a constant factor in all theories of origin, and was usually there before creation began. Kojo's mum's staring into the water can thus be interpreted as a long look into her beginnings. She attempts an understanding of her past with her present and finds no cognates; she finds that she has a past she is forever lost to, and this leaves her completely rootless. As we find to be the natural rhythm of the work, the characters' identity crises are often handed down to their children, as the succeeding

generation usually faces what their parents faced. The ripping of a person from their home country is a marker of tragedy, as ripping is characteristically forceful. Thus, it appears that the postcolonial concepts of hybridity, ambivalence and identity often find expression as tragic sequences. *Homegoing* is thus a tragedy. And tragedy conveys

> the sense of ancient evil, of the 'blight man was born,' of the permanence of the mystery of human suffering, that is basic to the tragic sense of life. It informs all literature of a sombre cast – the dirge, the lament, the melancholy lyric, or song, the folk ballad of betrayal and death" (Sewall 6).

Effia in the narrative under study stands out as the postcolonial character that provides the major narrative nexus between the local world of Fanteland and the world of the Whiteman. As we see early in the narrative:

> The first time the white man came, Adwoa's mother asked Effia's parents to show him around the village while Adwoa prepared herself for him. "Can I come?" Effia asked, running after her parents as they walked. She heard Baaba's "no" in one ear and Cobbe's "yes" in the other. Her father's ear won, and soon Effia was standing before the first white man she had ever seen. "He is happy to meet you," the translator said as the white man held his hand out to Effia. She didn't accept it. Instead, she hid behind her father's leg and watched him. (Gyasi 10)

In the above, the only shield between Effia and the white world is her father's leg, which is probably employed as a synecdoche for her father as her shield and protector. Fiifi would later set out to redeem her image from oblivion by his act of redemptive violence that results in the planned marriage between her son Quey and the daughter of the Asante King. But the result of their marriage (their son James) turns out to be a more complex man: he is Fante, Asante and British; he is the seed of a slave and the child of a slaver. Fiifi's act of redemptive violence sets to redeem that which is revealed on the morning of her marriage; for on the morning that she leaves for her marriage to James Collins, Governor of the Capecoast, Cobbe seemed to know:

The morning she left for the Castle, Cobbe had kissed the top of her head and waved her away, knowing that the premonition

of the dissolution and destruction of the family lineage, the premonition that he had had the night of the fire, would begin here, with his daughter and the white man." (Gyasi 18) Later on, on the day Cobbe dies, a similar episode plays out: "Cobbe died, Effia still holding his hand. The villagers would say that Cobbe had been waiting for Effia to come home before he could die, but Effia knew that it was more complex than that. His unrest had kept him alive, and now that unrest belonged to Effia. It would feed her life and the life of her child[ren]" (Gyasi 23).

The Myth of Redemptive violence as defined by Wink enshrines the belief that violence saves, and war brings peace, that might make right… Accordingly, "the myth of redemptive violence is the real myth of the modern world… [it is] the dominant religion in our society today" (1). We see it functioning in the Orwellian dictum "war is peace," (Orwell1) as is also implicated in the title of Tolstoy's classic: *War is Peace.*

Thus, restlessness and ambivalence are implied in the above, in the gloomy word "unrest". The characters cannot seem to come to terms with themselves as such. Effia inherits Cobbe's unrest. She is burdened by the revelation Fiifi makes to her on her father's dying day: that she is after all the daughter of a slave woman who had run into the fire the day she was born. She is that mystery of fire; she is unknown, cannot be known, until Fiifi's act of redemptive violence seeks to reclaim her from the flame. Her life as such becomes a metaphysical fire, a burning, haunting, ghostly existence_ more like Dante's "Inferno." The image of fire reinforces the tragedy of the sisters and their descendants. The firewoman returns in the dreams of Ness; Akua suffers similar dreams; Jo's daughter, Beulah, experiences nightmares.

Another manifestation of rootlessness in *Homegoing* is seen in the unnaming and renaming that comes with colonialism. One result of colonialism is the replacement of African names by European ones. And name and essence are essentially related, which means that with unnaming and renaming aspects of the African culture are eroded and the left over forced to merge with the available European ones. In some cases, European names are prefered to African ones. Such characters, as a result of this, are steeped in ambiguity; they are not able to come to terms with their identity given that naming is an essential component in identity study. As such, we see that "Millicent's mother had been given a new name by her white husband." Apart from this, we find that the

white husbands treat their Fante wives as subhumans, as such "the white men could not leave money in their wills to their Fante wives and children. They left it to other soldiers and friends, and those friends paid the wives. Millicent's mother had been given enough money for a new start and a piece of land (Gyasi 13).

Naming is one form of identity that the colonizers and slavers adopt in order to keep the identity of the postcolonial subject under subjection. Thus, "When Ma had explained it was the Asante name for a boy born on Monday, he'd clapped his hands together as though hearing a good song, and insisted on calling Jo by his full name every time he saw him. 'Taking away your name is the first step,' he'd said somberly. So somberly that Jo hadn't felt it wise to ask what he was thinking—the first step to what? (Gyasi 92).

For the imperialist, this is done with the mindset of eroding the cultures of colonized people, such that the ordinary result is the production of hybrid and ambivalent personalities. Thus, with the name of Quey's son whom he gives three Foreign names, we see how by naming one can be lost to his true culture and identity, removed from one culture and be rooted in another. Thus:

> He (James) could still remember the fights they had when he was a small boy. His mother screaming loudly about his name. "James Richard Collins?" his mother would shout. "James Richard Collins! What kind of Akan are you that you give your son three white names?" "And so what?" his father would reply. "Will he not still be a prince to our people and to the whites too? I have given him a powerful name." (Gyasi 72)

We find echoes of hybridity in "prince to our people and to the white man too." There is the coming together of two differing cultures within one individual, and rather than its characteristic diminishing effect. Hybridity here receives the stamp of approval as the son's hybrid identity is interpreted to mean "a powerful name."

In the case of James, he is not only unnamed but completely removed from his roots. The only experience the boy attempts to get of himself and the ways of his people is intercepted by James his father who interprets his association with Cudjo as unholy and sends him to London, further endangering his sense of self, as well as problematising his identity. But his sending him to England is a clear case of what we have referred to above, about adopting as "one explanation and narrative of reality as the only one." The result is

that ambivalence surrounds the identity of James. “Maybe London had done what his father had hoped it would do, but then again, maybe it hadn’t” (Gyasi 51), as Cudjo would later observe, “you speak English like a British man, just like Richard, enh? (Gyasi 54). And we know that for the two men speaking above, Richard represents the oppressor in the way Cudjo currently employs it. It is his uncle Fiifi who attempts to reclaim for him his identity as a Fante son:

> I am the one who told your governor to give you this job, Quey, because you are the person I am supposed to leave all of this to. I loved Effia as a sister once, so even though you are not of my mother, you are the closest thing to a firstborn nephew that I have. I will give you all that I have. I will make up for my mother’s wrongdoings. Tomorrow night, you will marry Nana Yaa, so that even if the Asante king and all of his men come knocking on my door, they cannot deny you. They cannot kill you or anyone in this village, because it is now your village as it was once your mother’s. I will make sure you become a very powerful man, so that even after the white men have all gone from this Gold Coast—and believe me, they will go—you will still matter long after the Castle walls have crumbled” (Gyasi 57).

There is a trade in culture that is implicated in the following:

> They had been trading languages. In the early mornings, before he went off to oversee the work of the Castle. James would teach her English, and at night, when they lay in bed, she taught him Fante. This night, he was tracing his finger along the curve of her collarbone while she sang him a song that Baaba used to sing Fiifi at night as Effia lay in the corner, pretending to be asleep, pretending not to care that she was never included. Slowly, James had started to mean more to her than a husband was supposed to mean to a wife. The first word he had asked to learn was “love,” and he said it every day. (Gyasi 20)

Thus, Effia slowly becomes the European adaptation of a Fante lady. But in the above, the two cultures tend to exist peacefully, side by side. However, there is another level of cultural relation that is cannibalistic. That which is presented in the symbolic narrative of the Fante girl who is cursed; the story that ends with the

birth of a half-caste child who dies four days after, an evil omen, forcing her mother to go live under the palm. The child represents in this instance hybridity as an evil or destructive force. As Effia observes: “How this child, both white and black, was an evil powerful enough to force the woman out into the forest of palms” (Gyasi 21). This evil activates the trajectory of lostness and hopelessness, to the point that “Esi studied the lines on those palms. They led nowhere. She had never felt so hopeless in her life” (Gyasi 38).

However, Effia in the narrative under study stands out as the postcolonial character that provides the major narrative nexus between the local world and the world of the Whiteman. As we see early in the narrative:

> The first time the white man came, Adwoa’s mother asked Effia’s parents to show him around the village while Adwoa prepared herself for him. “Can I come?” Effia asked, running after her parents as they walked. She heard Baaba’s “no” in one ear and Cobbe’s “yes” in the other. Her father’s ear won, and soon Effia was standing before the first white man she had ever seen. “He is happy to meet you,” the translator said as the white man held his hand out to Effia. She didn’t accept it. Instead, she hid behind her father’s leg and watched him. (Gyasi10)

In the above, the only shield between Effia and the white world is her father’s leg, which of course is employed as a synecdoche for her father. It is that leg, the metaphorical standing with, which Effia loses in the beginning of the narrative that Fiifi would later set out to atone for by the planned marriage between her son Quey and the daughter of the Asante King. But their son James is a more complex man: he is Fante, Asante and British; he is the seed of a slave and the child of a slaver. Fiifi’s act of redemptive violence sets right that which is revealed on the morning of her marriage, for on the morning that she leaves for her marriage to James Collins, Governor of the Capecoast, Cobbe seemed to know:

The morning she left for the Castle, Cobbe had kissed the top of her head and waved her away, knowing that the premonition of the dissolution and destruction of the family lineage, the premonition that he had had the night of the fire, would begin here, with his daughter and the white man” (Gyasi 18). Later on, on the day Cobbe dies, a similar episode plays out: “Cobbe died, Effia still

holding his hand. The villagers would say that Cobbe had been waiting for Effia to come home before he could die, but Effia knew that it was more complex than that. His unrest had kept him alive, and now that unrest belonged to Effia, it would feed her life and the life of her child" (Gyasi 23).

Thus, Ambivalence is implied above, in the gloomy word "unrest". We find that the characters cannot seem to come to terms with themselves. Effia inherits Cobbe's unrest. She is burdened by the revelation Fiifi makes to her on her father's dying day, that she is after all the daughters of a slave woman who had run into the fire the day she was born. She is like fire; an essence that cannot be known. It is Fiifi's act of redemptive violence that redeems her from the flames that her mother's fire had set up for her. Her life as such is a metaphysical fire, a burning, haunting, ghostly existence_ the ghost of Dante's "Inferno." The image of fire reinforces the tragedy of the sisters and their descendants.

Cudjo also establishes a split identity for Quey. In the following discourse is revealed his "thrownness" (Heidegger *Being*), in terms of one who is neither here nor there, who is substantively lost, as in Quey in the following:

> "Are you white?" Cudjo had asked him, touching his hair. Quey recoiled at Cudjo's touch, though many others had done the same thing, asked him the same question. "I'm not white," he said softly. "What? Speak up!" Cudjo said, and so Quey had repeated himself, nearly shouting.
> From the distance, the boys' fathers turned to observe the commotion. "Not so loud, Quey," James said. Quey could feel color flood into his cheeks, but Cudjo had just looked on, clearly amused. "So you're not white. What are you?" "I'm like you," Quey said. Cudjo held his hand out and demanded that Quey do the same, until they were standing arm to arm, skin touching skin. "Not like me," Cudjo said. Quey had wanted to cry, but that desire embarrassed him. He knew that he was one of the half-caste children of the Castle, and, like the other half-caste children, he could not fully claim either half of himself, neither his father's whiteness nor his mother's blackness. Neither England nor the Gold Coast [and he is thus lost]. (Gyasi 47, parenthesis mine)

The above is a clear demonstration of hybridity. Quey as we have stated is the melting pot of various cultures; he is Fante, Asante

and British at the sams time; he is a bit of everything, a hybrid, and by this ambivalent. This condition results in a cultural conflict with the individual as the site of contestation, the battle ground for the war between the opposing cultures. Life becomes thus, "phenomenologically bizarre" (Revonsuo, 1995 and 2002) for the postcolonial subject, and his existence is as a result set towards the attainment of agency that for most is defined in terms of Bhabha's "almost the same, but not quite" (Bhabha 86).

Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing* is a touching commentary on the post colonial derivatives of hybridity, ambivalence, identity/culture conflict and the quest for agency. What we have attempted so far is a critique of the work following the critical theory of postcolonialism to ascertain the level of hybridity and ambivalence that result from a seeming loss of cultural identity. The method has been largely character-study, in line with the theoretical frame of postcolonialism. This study by no means claims to be exhaustive. As for Northrop Frye, the interpretation of a literary work is "an inexhaustible source of new critical discoveries, and would be even if new works of literature ceased to be written" (17).

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Part 4

EXISTENCE, DIFFRENCE, AND POWER RELATIONS

1

THE INTERSECTION OF EXISTENTIAL PHENOMENOLOGY AND DECOLONIAL TRANSCULTURALITY

Gideon Uzoma Umezurike

Abstract

Despite the polarity in the origination of existential phenomenology and decolonial transculturality, the one from the Global North and the other from the Global South, their several shared characteristics cannot be ignored. Like decoloniality and transculturality, existential phenomenology is not only enmeshed in the power relations between different entities (the one and the they), it also involves a form of revolt against the stereotyping of the self, a revolt which is itself a hallmark of decoloniality. However, the stereotyped self in existential phenomenology is numerically singular, as existentialism features amongst other things the wails of an objectified self that seeks to emerge from the shadows of the others (the they), in order to attain a subjective voice. Conversely, in decoloniality and transculturality, the stereotyped/objectified self is numerically plural; decolonial and transcultural discourses argue against the subjugation of the many by the one, such that the resistance originates from the numerically plural struggling to be at par with this one. The relationship between phenomenology and decolonial transculturality is further illustrated in this study using the graphic examples of peering at the world through the base of a cone and also through the vertex of the same cone. The different perspectives offered by each of these sightings are symbolic of the different levels of subjectivities that distinguish one set of these philosophies from the other. Although it is observed that both sets of philosophies advocate a world wherein the individual, as well as each national group, has the choice to authentically determine his/its "how-being," the paper concludes on the note that what distinguishes decolonial struggles from the existential revolt is that the former seeks an equilibrium, whereas the latter could lead to yet another polarity.

Introduction

As the call by decolonial scholars to delink from modernity's "universal epistemic code" (the Western hubris of the zero point (Walter Mignolo *xvii*)) continues to grow, there sadly comes tiptoeing after it a feeling, if not a point-blank misconception, that the decolonial attitude involves the total rejection of everything western—all of its epistemological framework and ontology[2]. At the root of this misapprehension is a neglect of the fact that the decolonial, as well as transcultural, attitude is not an isolated way of thinking which suddenly sprang from the Global South without echoing other systems of thought. For instance, at the surface level there are hardly any recognizable rallying points for decoloniality and transculturality on the one hand and existential phenomenology on the other. The one originates from the Global South, specifically two Latin American countries, Cuba and Peru; while the other stems from the Global North, particularly Germany. As such, the opposition between the Northern and Southern coordinates of our economic and political globe is expected to rub off on these systems of thoughts. It really does, but hardly any further than the often thrown around tantrums about postcolonial scholars being overly preoccupied with European concepts rather than brewing up indigenous knowledge. Far more than their divergences, the convergences between the two at the deeper level are so strong as to deserve close investigation. This paper, thus, contends that within the frames of decoloniality and transculturality lies a cohesive alliance with existential phenomenology. The strength of this alliance is seen in their shared features, some of which are highlighted in this theoretical endeavour.

The existential phenomenological framework is drawn from the fusion of two philosophical movements: existentialism and phenomenology. While phenomenology is described as the "science of pure phenomena" or the "science of consciousness" which aims at giving a reasoned interpretation of "whatever is *experienced,*" the *universal* structures of consciousness (Edmund Husserl 1), existentialism is a philosophical tradition that focuses on the lived experiences of a particular *individual*: "We must begin from the subjective," Jean-Paul Sartre argued (289). Although the duo "are two of the most influential movements in twentieth-century

[2] In his paper, "Colonizing and Decolonizing Minds," Marcelo Dascal has examined this notion and pointed out its underlying assumption of a double mental colonization (5).

philosophy," wrote Mark A. Wrathall and Hubert L. Dreyfus (1), the relationship between them has been the cause of a long debate which this research does not intend to mediate in as the controversy (as to whether both movements are compatible or independent of each other) seems to be already resolved, since the two traditions "have now largely merged into a common canon of works and ways of doing philosophy" (5). A more intriguing trajectory being pursued in this essay is the tracing of the dialogue between phenomenology and critical theory, particularly existential phenomenology on the one side and "decolonial transculturality" (an aspect of critical theory) on the other.

By using the term "decolonial transculturality," what is referred to is the two critical theories which not only emphasize mutuality and reject any homogenous synthesized worlds and selves, but also seek to overcome Western modernity and its myths, values, taste norms and thinking pattern, thereby decolonizing being, knowledge and perception (Tlostanova Madina Vladimirovna 11-12). Understandably, decoloniality and transculturality are generally treated as two totally separate issues. The point in bringing them together, however, is to point out their shared features, some of which include a postcolonial origin and an interest in the decentralisation of power. Interestingly, in the discourse of knowledge/knowing/power, transculturality – just like decoloniality – "seeks to avoid an overemphasis on polarities and oppositional structures by paying greater attention to the multiple relationalities that unfold beyond the colonizer-colony divide" (Monica Juneja 471). In a similar fashion, decoloniality, as a long-standing epistemological movement that grew from a postcolonial foundation, revisits the imbalanced relationship between Europe (most especially, Western Europe as well as North America) and the Global South (Walter Mignolo, "Decoloniality and Phenomenology" 364). Considering the postcolonial foundation of both decolonial and transcultural studies, it is not at all surprising that the decolonial quest agrees with the transcultural philosopher Wolfgang Welsch's argument for a "number of ways of life and cultures, which also interpenetrate or emerge from one another" without the one dominating the others, or the others subsuming the one (Welsch, "Transculturality – The Puzzling Form of Cultures Today" 197); a sort of symbiotic relation in which the coequality of all participating parties is maintained. This symbiotic structure is in contrast with the "monotopic imperial global/universal design"

(Ramón Grosfoguel 31) of Husserl's transcendental consciousness and its offshoot, modernity of knowledge. This essay will now explore the existential phenomenological framework vis-à-vis the arguments of decoloniality and transculturality.

Phenomenology: From Husserl's Transcendental Consciousness to Heidegger's Existentialism

To begin with, how has the evolution of phenomenology resulted in the various movements, creeds and tenets that have become associated with it over the years? Even though the term "phenomenology" is traced to Hegel and thus, was already used in the philosophical parlance before Husserl, its foundation as a science and a philosophy is credited to the latter for his enormous efforts to develop a method of enquiry into "the structures of experience as they present themselves to consciousness" (Wrathall and Dreyfus 2). Deviating from his earlier studies in Mathematics, Husserl is known to have turned his attention to the field of Philosophy under the influence of Franz Brentano and Wilhelm Dilthey. It is not surprising then that Brentano's view of consciousness and his descriptive approach to the study of psychic phenomena, as well as Dilthey's argument against naturalistic accounts of the psychic domain, have been recognised to resound throughout Husserl's published oeuvre (2). Breaking from many traditional concerns of philosophy before him, Husserl sought to inaugurate a new way – a systematic way of thinking and doing philosophy (Sreekumar Nellickappilly 1). His objective was to develop phenomenology as a science that deals with the concrete experience of the world, that is, the world as it reveals or presents itself to consciousness.

Consequently, the major concern or subject matter of phenomenology is the idea of phenomena, which is said to refer to "ourselves, other people and the objects, and events around us. It also includes the reflection of our own conscious experiences as we experience them" (2). Phenomenology is, therefore, according to Botond Bognar, a method of inquiry into people and the world or, specifically speaking, inquiry into the relationship between people and the world (185). By perceiving subjects and objects in their unity, phenomenology opposes traditional Western understanding, otherwise called Cartesian dualism, which was based on a sharp distinction between person and the world. In contrast to Cartesian dualism, notes Bognar, the phenomenologists believe that people

and their environment are mutually inclusive, as both define and influence each other (185). As Bognar puts it, “phenomenology understands a world wherein people and their environment mutually include and define each other. It focuses upon nature and reality not as an *absolutum* existing only outside us, but as subject to human scrutiny, interaction, and creative participation” (185). At the centre of this scrutiny done through the phenomenological reduction, David Seamon points out, is the “life-world” (12). So phenomenologists not only thematise those acts or experiences which are simply lived in the natural attitude, said Amadeo Giorgi, but also make them the “topics of reflective analysis” (148). Seamon further explains that an important tool used in the reductionist process is what phenomenologists refer to as *epoche* (from the Greek “epokhi,” meaning suspension). It is described as “the suspension of belief in the experience or experienced thing—the phenomenologist attempts to disengage himself from the life-world and re-examine its nature afresh in *epoche*” (12). This is said to empower the individual to bring precognitive “givens” into consciousness and “to empathize with the worlds of other people” (Anne Buttimer 281), that is, the experiencing subject. Husserl’s belief, according to Wrathall and Dreyfus, is that “on the basis of this method, philosophy could be established as a rigorous science that could clarify all species and forms of cognition, because it could discover the structures common to all mental acts” (2).

While Husserl had earlier sought to make philosophy a rigorous science, “his changed trajectory from that task to the crises of European sciences, the life-world and transcendental consciousness” (Mignolo, “Decoloniality and Phenomenology” 361) is just indicative of the different concerns that troubled later phenomenologists, resulting in the divergent thoughts and expansive scope of phenomenology. Dan Zahavi wrote about this divergence in these words:

> Husserl is the founding father of phenomenology but it has often been claimed that virtually all post-Husserlian phenomenologists ended up distancing themselves from most aspects of his original program. Thus, according to a second competing view, phenomenology is a tradition by name only. It has no common method and research program. (661)

In fact, most of the subjects and views of phenomenological thinkers like Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre, Merleau-Ponty and Paul Ricoeur are likewise claimed by other movements: existentialism and hermeneutics. The existence of these branches, according to Zahavi, makes phenomenology "a heterogeneous movement" (661), and its history, "the history of Husserlian heresies" (Ricoeur 9). As the concern of this essay is with the existentialist movement, attention will now turn to phenomenology from the existentialist perspective.

According to Zahavi, while phenomenology is not a philosophical system with delineated body of doctrines nor set theories, its proponents are united, nevertheless, by overarching concerns and common themes (661). These concerns and common themes, explain Wrathall and Dreyfus, have largely merged phenomenology and the existential tradition into a common canon of works and ways of doing philosophy, with the following in mind:

i. A concern with providing a description of human existence and the human world that reveals it as it is, without the distortion of any scientific presuppositions. This leads to:
ii. A heightened awareness of the non-rational dimensions of human existence, including habits, non-conscious practices, moods, and passions [which are all parts of culture],
iii. A focus on the degree to which the world is cut to the measure of our intellect, and a willingness to consider the possibility that our concepts and categories fail to capture the world as it presents itself to us in experience, and
iv. A belief that what it is to be human cannot be reduced to any set of features about us (whether biological, sociological, anthropological, or logical). To be human is to transcend facticity. (5)

These themes are notable not only in the works of Heidegger, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty, but also in the works of the philosophers influenced by them. Thus, the term "existential phenomenology" signifies a way of designating what is common in the works of these philosophers (Wrathall, "Existential Phenomenology" 31).

The phenomenological concern which is most pertinent to the phenomenological dialogue with decolonial transculturality is that of the "life-world" (from German *lebenswelt*: *leben,* life; and *welt,* world), and the description of human existence within such world. According to Tomislav Zelić, it was Husserl who first used the term

“life-world” in 1917, but he did not present an extensive treatment of its phenomenological meaning until the publication of *The Crises of European Science and Transcendental Phenomenology* in 1936; even so, the term is seen to be shrouded in ambiguities (413). Husserl explains the life-world as the world revealed to us “as universal horizon, as [the] coherent universe of existing objects, [in which] we, each ‘I-the-man’ and all of us together, belong to the world as living with one another in the world” (108). Pointing out the shared nature of the life-world, he said:

> The world is our world, valid for our consciousness as existing precisely through this “living together.” We, as living in wakeful *world-consciousness*, are constantly active on the basis of our passive having of the world; it is from there, by objects pregiven in consciousness, that we are affected; it is to this or that object that we pay attention, according to our interests. (108)

This phenomenon of “living together” (co-existence) is, for Heidegger, an existential, which is to say that it is a fundamental feature of human existence that is – to be more terminologically consistent with his philosophy – Da-sein (*being-there*).

Co-existence defines Da-sein’s being and actions. This is the sense captured in Heidegger’s hyphenated complex word “being-in-the-world,” a term which recurs several times in his seminal work *Being and Time*. Among other things, Heidegger uses the term “being-in-the-word” to point out something unique in the essential nature of Da-sein and also to show spatial location cum social relationship. First of all, the term highlights the kind of existence that characterizes the being of humans in contradistinction to the being of other entities. Contrary to other beings, Dasein has an ontical priority for its existence, being the only one that “ex-sists,” the only one in the world differently from other beings in that it has the ability to question its existence: “it asks the question of its own being” (John Tietz 20-1). Moreover, “being-in-the-world” underscores the fact that human existence is always within the world of, or in association with, fellow existents.

Going further, Heidegger points out four related meanings that could be ascribed to the term “world,” whereupon he calls attention to the first and the third meanings. The first deployment of the term “world” is done with a quotation mark to denote “the totality of beings objectively present within the world” (i.e. within

the lived space), while the second refers to the being of the multiple beings in space, for example, the "world" of the mathematician which refers to the region of all mathematical objects. The third use of "world" denotes that "in which" a factical Da-sein "lives". This, he explains, allows for various possibilities which are nevertheless reducible to two: "the public world of the 'we' [which is actually the world of the they] and one's own and nearest (domestic) surrounding world" (61). The fourth and final sense of the term "world" is said to connote the ontological and existential concept of "worldliness" (61) which bespeaks the structure of a constitutive factor of "being-in-the-world" (60). The world (referring to the third meaning above) "is always already the one that I share with the others. The world of Da-sein is a *with-world.* Being-in is *being-with* others," wrote Heidegger (112). This, however, is not to say that – just like two school-going brothers who had been warned by their mother to always go/stay together – Da-sein is always physically present with others. As Heidegger explains,

> the phenomenological statement that Da-sein is essentially being-with has an existential-ontological meaning. It does not intend to ascertain ontically that I am frantically not objectively present alone, *rather that others of my kind also are*. Being-with existentially determines Da-sein even when an other is not present and perceived. (113; the italics is mine).

In contrast to the Cartesian "I", which, being purely accessible to itself, exists in isolation (independent of the world) Heidegger conceives of Da-sein's existence as a process of being-with others, sharing the world with others, explains Tietz (74-5). In this fact of being-with fellow existents who "are not seen as things but [as] participants in various modes of involvement" (76), there lies a serious existential problem, a problem that affects today's globalising world. As coloniality itself is merely a child of this problem, all the decolonial and transcultural struggles put in to combat coloniality could be said to have only come to be because this problem first existed.

The problem being referred to involves Da-sein's relationship with others of its kind. Heidegger explains this relationship using three cognate words: *Sorge, besorgen,* and *Fürsorge,* translated as "care," "concern" and "solicitude." These cognate terms are respectively explained as: "to care," or to "be worried about;" "to be

concerned, troubled, or worried" about in the sense of "concerning oneself with or about" something; and "actively caring for someone who needs help" (Michael Inwood 35). Through the interplay of these words, Heidegger clarifies that because being-in-the-world essentially means being in association with others – a relationship wherein Da-sein is concerned about (and is affected by) the thinking, orientation and welfare of the others, and takes solicitous care to establish a common ground with *the they* (the who of which is not a definite *others* but a neuter representable by any *other* [*BT* 118-9]) – Da-sein runs the risk of being overwhelmed by publicness (say, inauthenticity), a lostness in the they which occurs through the synthesis of three processes: distantiality, averageness and levelling down (119).

Distantiality describes the sordid fact that in thinking about its affairs in the world, Da-sein is inconspicuously afflicted by a "constant care as to the way [it] differs from others; whether this difference is to be equalized, whether [its] own Da-sein has lagged behind others and wants to catch up in relation to them," and whether (in its priority over others) it is intent on suppressing others (118). The result of this phenomenon (that is, distantiality) is the propagating of averageness. By constantly measuring oneself against others, by constantly trying to "keep up with them, or catch them up or outdo them," by always having "an eye on what others are doing and how they are doing it," explains Inwood, "what we do and how we do it is mostly determined by others—not definite others, but nameless others" (212). One's Da-sein hence ends up becoming just like 'the they', being averaged by one's adoption of what the they advocates.

Moreover, the furthering of distantiality, the inconspicuous constant care about measuring up to other, according to Heidegger, takes place in the world wherein we are surrounded by others of our kind (118). The world perpetuates levelling, the reducing of everything to specific standards and shapes. Despite its near-total inconspicuousness, we see such *levelling* and *averaging* "in utilizing public transportation, in the use of information services such as the newspaper"—if we are to elongate the list, we can add: in the use of social media, in obtaining a haircut at the salon, in watching of movies at the cinema, in obtaining an education (participating in classes and reading of recommended books), in going through an album of cloth-styles at the tailor's shop, in choosing what to wear and what to be in life, in deciding the manner of one's wedding. In

all of these things, notes Heidegger, "every other is like the next" (119). This being-with-one-another is said to dissolve one's own Da-sein completely into the kind of being of "the others" in such a way that the others, as distinguishable and explicit, disappear more and more (119).

The world of our everyday existence is thus the space wherein the theyself inconspicuously unfolds its true dictatorship over one, a dictatorship seen in society's promotion of a sense of propriety which burdens the one with configuring oneself to fit the specified mode of behaviour:

> We enjoy ourselves and have fun the way they enjoy themselves. We read, see, and judge literature and art the way they see and judge. But we also withdraw from the "great mass" the way they withdraw, we find "shocking" what they find shocking. "The they", which is nothing definite and which all are, though not as a sum, prescribes the kind of being of everydayness. (119)

"The they" is thus said to maintain itself on the *averageness* of what is proper. As Heidegger posits, averageness reveals an essential tendency of Da-sein which is the levelling down of all possibilities of being (119). This levelling down (the fact that others' interests often influence Da-sein's own interest, resulting in the *imposition* of their episteme, culture, and interests on Da-sein as "our interests") together with distantiality and averageness, therefore, constitutes publicness: a phenomenon which decoloniality and transculturality, from the angle of critical/cultural studies, both seek to redress.

Decoloniality and Transculturality: Delinking from the Dictatorship of the They

Decoloniality, according to Catherine Walsh, "denotes ways of thinking, knowing, being, and doing" which recognize and seek to undo

> the hierarchical structures of race, gender, heteropatriarchy, and class that continue to control life, knowledge, spirituality, and thought, structures that are clearly intertwined with and constitutive of global capitalism and Western modernity, and whose origin is the colonial enterprise and invasion" (17).

These decolonial ways of "thinking, knowing, being, and doing" are said to stem from the entanglement of modernity with coloniality, the fact that what is obtainable as "modernity" is driven by "coloniality" (Mignolo, "Decoloniality and Phenomenology" 372). For Mignolo, "coloniality" does not refer to colonialism but to "the underlying logic of all Western European colonialism, from the Iberian Peninsula since the sixteenth century to Holland and Britain since the establishment of the East India Company, French colonialism after Napoleon, and the United States since 1945, a particular case of coloniality without colonialism" (372).

This underlying logic, as explained by Mignolo, is identical to the foundational assumption that led Husserl to postulate transcendental phenomenology "as a unified philosophy of the sciences by arguing that transcendental consciousness is the limit of all possible knowledge" (370). It is the same assumption sustaining Husserl's idea of a universal philosophy of knowledge. Mignolo buttresses that Husserl's foundational assumptions lead readers to believe that Western knowledge is the final destination and that all other knowledge on the planet, local histories and non-Western languages, have to catch up or else be left behind (365). But while transcendental phenomenology through its foundational universalist assumption propagates the so-called "modernity of knowledge," its offshoot existential phenomenology – by emphasizing the uniqueness of each individual Da-sein and its possibility of transcending publicness – does exactly the opposite, adopting instead the "decolonial attitude" (Nelson Maldonado-Torres, *Against War: Views from the Underside of Modernity* 8). The modernity of knowledge is taken to mean "the entanglement and power differential amid the formation and growth of knowledge in Europe and the strangling of knowing and knowledges in the colonies as well as in non-European civilizations that were not colonized but did not escape coloniality" (364). This could be represented using the graphic example of peering at the world through a cone that has two openings: one at its base and the other at its vertex. Modernity of knowledge is the product of peering at the world through the base of the cone; what is seen in such peering is merely a tiny fragment of the globe. Seeing nothing else but this tiny fragment (that is, the insignificant white dot on the globe in figure 1 below), transcendental phenomenology takes it to be the size of the whole wide world. Thus, European consciousness is passed off as world-consciousness (Husserl, *The Crises* 108).

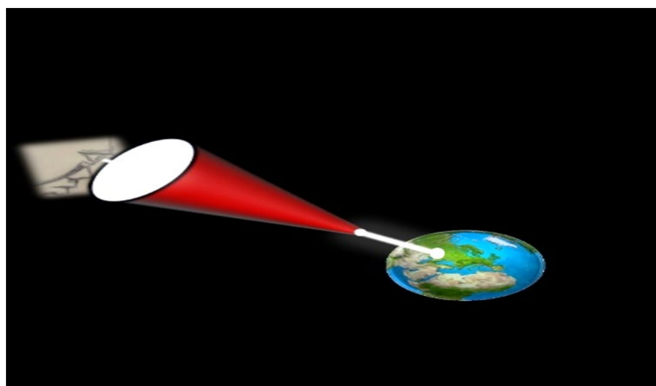

Figure 1: With roots in Husserlian transcendental phenomenology, modernity of knowledge involves peering at the world through the base of the cone and capturing only a fragment (the white dot in the diagram) which is then assumed to represent the whole globe.

In the diagram above, the regions outside the white dot are seen as standing outside of humanity. Thus, modernity breeds a disgust for the civilizations, cultures, persons, objects, and epistemes that fall outside of Western Europe. As the product of transcendental phenomenology, the modernity of knowledge is, from both existentialist and decolonial perspectives, a *flipped* form of publicness. Publicness occurs not only when one's Da-sein is being dominated by "the they" but also when the they (multiple relationalities) is being subjugated by Da-sein—by any monologic, monotopic imperial global/universal design (Grosfoguel 31).

On this note, it is important to highlight some of the similarities between existential phenomenology and decolonial transculturality. While the former is allegedly a Western philosophical movement and the latter a supposedly anti-Western philosophy, both have the shared feature of revolting against the tradition of polarised power structure and the domination it encourages. The existential phenomenological revolt is fundamentally a revolt against traditional Western philosophy (Walter Kaufmann 11) and its attendant societal impediments to the flourishing of individual authenticity (Webber 5-6). Decoloniality, on the other hand, is a revolt against Western epistemology (Mignolo*, The Darker Side of Western Modernity* 82), against modernity/coloniality ("Decoloniality and Phenomenology" 374), against the tradition of elevating Western cultures and episteme above those of other lands including "'our own' ways of being" (*The*

Darker Side 134), and thus a revolt against "the epistemic dependency of Third World countries upon the West" (119). Rejecting the Euro-centred sighting which peers at the globe through the base of the cone and only sees Europe as the core of the whole world, decoloniality prefers to look at the world through the vertex of the cone.

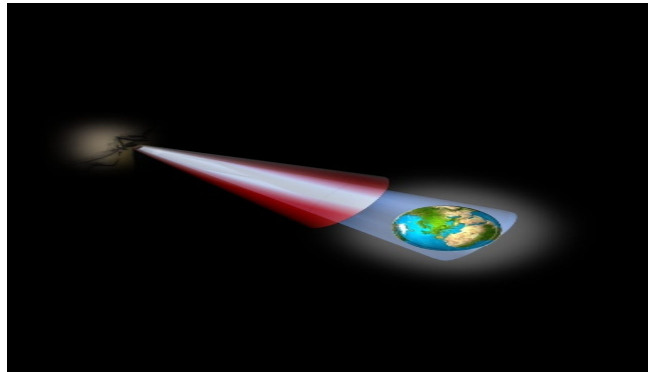

Figure 2: Both decoloniality and transculturality involve peering at the globe through an opening at the vertex of a cone. In such sighting, the full globe is captured and recognised as such, with no part elevated above the other.

What appears hence, as in figure 2 above, is the full expanse of the globe, comprising the whole geographical spectrum of human, cultural, linguistic, and epistemic dispersion, rather than a centred segment. By capturing the full geographical expanse of human dispersion, the decolonial sighting stands in opposition to the colonial matrix of power and its elevation of a part of the world above the others; what the decolonial and transcultural sighting offers is a world in which all cultures, societies, persons, and systems of being and knowing are given equal status. It follows then that both existential phenomenology and decolonial transculturality seek to delink from domination. In the case of the former, it is traditional philosophy and its concomitant societal epistemic and ontological domination over the individual, while for the latter, it is the dominating influence of the colonial matrix of power, the domination of one culture over others (Mignolo, *The Darker Side* 9).

Moreover, just as the existentialists repudiate inauthenticity, decolonialists also share the "definitive rejection" of the dictatorship of Western modernity (121). By seeking to dictate for the *damne* what they are and what their "ranking is in relation to the ideal of

humanitas"(121),modernity perpetuates inauthenticity. If then inauthenticity (which is described by Heidegger as a mode of being marked by the "flight of the Da-sein from itself as from its authentic potentiality of self-Being") only comes about when "Da-sein occupies itself entirely with its world of care and gives itself up to the publicity of the 'one like many'" (*Existence and Being* 60), then there must be something very clandestine about modernity; for in seeking to dictate for the *damne*, modernity's universal epistemic code beckons the *damne* to abandon its authentic potentiality of self-being. Thus, as existentialists reject inauthentic existence, decolonialists reject modernity which projects this inauthentic selfhood over an entire race, generation or group of people.

Even in allowing for the interpenetration and emergence of cultures by and from one another, transculturalists also detest the domination of one culture by another. What transculturality argues for is not the uniformization and loss of cultural difference, but a sort of cultural/identity networks that is "woven from partly the same and from partly different threads" which then gives birth to different colours and patterns (Welsch, "On the Acquisition and Possession of Commonalities" 9). As Welsch further clarifies, what changes in this interpenetration of cultures by one another is "the type of cultural variety. Differences no longer emerge between different kinds of monolithic identities, but between identity configurations that have some elements in common while differing in other elements in their arrangement as a whole, and often in their complexity" (9). This new *diversity* is also in itself built on and respects the principles of *authenticity*. For instance, while the English language has become a major language in Africa, say, Nigeria in particular, what is spoken in Nigeria is predominantly a new form of English: Nigerian English, which falls under the umbrella term of New Englishes, varieties which though obviously retaining their Anglo-Germanic root, are distinctive for the several qualities they have drawn from the local multilinguistic (Nigerian) environment they are found in. Chinua Achebe captures this when he argued that while the English language of postcolonial literature is still in full communion with its ancestral home, it has been "altered to suit its new African (postcolonial) surrounding," to bear the burden of postcolonial experience (349). This ability of the imperial "standard" version of the English language to alter itself by drawing from local languages and then emerging anew as New Englishes capable of carrying and expressing the burden of history

and colonization is a pure example of the "new diversity" (Welsch, "On the Acquisition" 9) and authenticity promoted by transculturality. Hence, the existence of New Englishes is a decolonial phenomenon, an outright disapproval and rejection of the monolithic linguistic modernity brought about by colonization.

By so rejecting modernity, decolonialists thus promote the decolonizing of Western (or any other universalist) epistemology, *the stripping off of its pretence to universalism*, *its "pretence that it is the point of arrival and the guiding light of all kinds of knowledges"* (Mignolo, *The Darker Side* 82, my italics). Perceived by Walsh as a war, a war against coloniality's tendency to regenerate and reconstitute itself, the de-chaining or delinking process is said to reveal "the increasingly violent tendencies of dominant Western ideals" (15). The incalculability of the decolonial task has been noted to demand that it be carried out not on one but on various fronts; hence, Walsh describes it as a war that is "epistemic and existence based, a war that is feminized, racialized, and territorialized" (15). Therefore, while there is a diversity of decolonial paths, these diverse paths are connected by their "engaging in epistemic disobedience" against the West (Mignolo, *The Darker Side* 9), by their felt need to heal from the *colonial wound*: "the fact that regions and people around the world have been classified as underdeveloped economically and mentally," explained Mignolo (121). The "colonial wound," in an existentialist sense, is indicative of "the dictatorship of the they" (Heidegger, *BT* 119), of the dominance of the *pour-soi* over the *en-soi* (Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* 629); it is a wound inflicted upon a Da-sein which has been levelled down and lost in publicness.

Going back again to Heidegger, it is read that "publicness controls every way in which the world and Da-sein are interpreted, and it is always right not because of an eminent and primary relation of being to 'things', nor because it has an explicitly appropriate transparency of Da-sein at its disposal," but because in being insensitive to every difference of level and genuineness, it does not get to "the heart of the matter" (*BT* 119). Thus, just like publicness which "obscures everything [including Da-sein's unique first-person structure of existence] and then claims that what has been thus covered over is what is familiar and accessible to everybody" (119), European modernity, its systems of knowing and of being, disavows all non-European episteme and ontology, and then constitutes itself as a universal praxes of knowing—much in the

same way Husserlian phenomenologists assumed "that transcendental consciousness was a universal entity rather than a Eurocentered obsession, or that local Europeans' obsessions were universal" (Mignolo, "Decoloniality and Phenomenology" 370).

Nelson Maldonado-Torres, therefore, describes modernity/coloniality as "the catastrophic transformation of whatever we can consider as human space, time, structure, culture, subjectivity, objectivity, and methodology, into dehumanizing coordinates or foundations that serve to perpetuate the inferiority of some and the superiority of others" ("Outline of Ten Theses on Coloniality and Decoloniality" 20). What decoloniality proposes then is that the Global South should "delink from the narrow history and praxis of Western (i.e. west of Jerusalem) knowledge, and bring to the foreground the coexistence of stories, arguments, and *doxa* ignored by Eurocentered languages" (Mignolo, "Decoloniality and Phenomenology" 365). Just like existential phenomenologists who recognize that to be human is to transcend facticity, decolonialists are spurred by the belief that the *damné* – that is, the wretched, the subject formation created at the crux of the coloniality of knowledge, power, and being – has "the potential to shift away from the imperatives and norms that are imposed over it and keep it split with itself" (Maldonado-Torres, "Outline" 23).

Thus, decoloniality follows existential phenomenology in advocating a world wherein the individual, as well as each national group, has the choice to authentically determine his/its "how-being." While the existentialist concept of authenticity according to Taylor Carman refers to what is "formally unique and particular to each individual human being . . . the unique first-person structure of existence, what Heidegger calls its 'mineness'" (233), it does not exclude the capacity to see things from the perspectives of others, nor does it eschew group association/involvement, rather it promotes the capacity to make such choice/decision without the undue influence of, which amount to imposition by, others. Inauthenticity, therefore, connotes Da-sein's letting "the possibilities of the choice of its own 'ek-sisting' be given to it by others instead of deciding for itself" (Herbert Spiegelberg and Walter Biemel). So long as the power of choice remains the potentiality of Da-sein, the ownmost decision to rise out of the ashes of the subject position of coloniality is also a possibility. In fact, by virtue of its spatiality, Da-sein can choose to cross cultural borders, authentically mixing up its unique views and ways of life with those

of others, thereby becoming transcultural. Da-sein's transculturality involves a process of mutual cultural exchange with the world it encounters as it continues to widen its borders (Patrick Holland and Graham Huggan 22). Again, even though the transculturation process emphasises give-and-take, it also emphasizes what has been up above pointed out by Welsch as a new form of diversity (9). This new diversity undermines the homogenizing and unilateral process of acculturation (Mark Stein 255). This unilateral process of acculturation has nearly the same outcome as the process captured by Heidegger using the terms distantiality, averageness and levelling down (Heidegger, *BT* 119).

Transculturation and Da-sein's Spatiality

Welsch propagated his views of transculturality against the backdrop of the complexity of human societies, a situation partly brought about by the daily relocation of people who are the embodiments of different ways of life from one part of the globe to another. He states that transculturality, which is in the first place a consequence of the complexity of modern societies, allows for a "number of ways of life and cultures which also interpenetrate or emerge from one another" ("Transculturality – The Puzzling Form of Cultures Today" 4). In developing this view, Welsch points out that it stands in contrasts to Johann Gottfried Herder's traditional concept of single cultures and other theories (such as interculturality and multiculturalism) which were founded on, and which presuppose "the old homogenizing and separatist idea of cultures" (4). To say the least, he finds these notions of culture deficient and unable to offer a more habitable lived space for people of different backgrounds and origins. Transculturality, in contrast, purports to allow such diverse people, in the words attributed to Maurice Merleau-Ponty, to conclude a pact – and this pact involves "a certain possession of the world by my body, a certain gearing of my body to the world" – which then gives each one "the enjoyment of space" (292). That is, the inclusive feeling of "comfort and security" (David C. L. Lim xii), in Gaston Bachelard's words, the "joy of dwelling" (91), the relaxing feeling of being at home.

While the idea of transculturation is known to have been first formulated by Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz in his 1940 book, *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar* (Vladimirovna 10), it is Welsch who (typical of the European "light-bearer and redeemer") shares the reputation of bringing the idea to limelight in

recent times. Transculturality is said to be the product of the "inner differentiation and complexity of modern societies" (Welsch 4). It stems primarily from human spatiality which, according to Heidegger, is a characteristic feature of Da-sein that points to the fact that Da-sein is "*in* the world in the sense of a familiar and heedful association with the beings encountered within the world" (*BT* 97). Da-sein's spatiality, as Heidegger points out though, does not mean being fixed to a position in "world space" nor being at hand in a place, both of which are qualities belonging to inner worldly beings, that is, objects encountered in the world (97). Otto Friedrich Bollnow vouchsafes an easier-to-grasp explanation in this regard:

> that it is spatial does not therefore mean that the human being occupies a certain space with his body, in the same way as any other mass, and . . . is prevented from slipping through openings that are too narrow. It means that the human being is always and necessarily conditioned in his life by his behaviour in relation to a surrounding space. (23)

Eugene Minkowski further conveys the idea of Da-sein's spatiality in his words that "life spreads out into space without having a geometric extension in the proper sense of the word. We have need of expansion, and of perspective, in order to live. Space is as indispensable as time to the development of life" (367). If space is indispensable to the development of life, it means – just as Bollnow suggests – that life cannot be lived separate from space, "but not that man is present [stagnant, immovable] in space as an object is in a box" (23); for one thing, the making of the lived space is the responsibility of man. And man is wont to move from one location to another, from one space to the other, crossing borders as it were.

Thus, the answer to the questions respectively raised in Homi Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* and Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic*:"Where is culture to be located in an age of shifting boundaries and unstable identities?" and "What does it mean to be black and English when the two terms have been written, in the discourse of Englishness, as mutually exclusive?" (Simon Gikandi 140), lies in the phenomenon of the *transplace*, that is, the transcultural (Arianna Dagnino, *Transcultural Writers and Novels in the Age of Global Mobility* 199). Dagnino defines the transplace as "an all-inclusive space [or phenomenon] of subjective

consciousness and cultural possibilities which does not deny the formative importance of native cultures and, to some extent, their accompanying worldviews but at the same time, allows an openness to the reception, integration, and negotiation of other cultures" ("Re-discovering Alessandro Spina's Transculture/ality in *The Young Maronite*" 74). Dagnino goes further to assert that transculturality occurs through the process of "transpatriation" (*Transcultural Writers* 4). By "transpatriation" Dagnino means the "result of physical and symbolic movement through, and embedding in, deep and diverse cultural contexts [which] allow individuals to adopt new ways of self-identification" that not only lead to the formation of multifaceted identities but also facilitate the development of a transcultural lens ("Re-discovering"74): "a perspective in which all cultures look decentered in relation to all other cultures, including one's own" (Ellen E. Berry and Mikhail N. Epstein 312).

Borrowing from Ortiz's original notion of "transculturation," Epstein's "transculture," and Welsch's "transculturality," Dagnino posits that transculturality is "the analytical model through which one can give account of the cultural dynamics and the creative expressions happening in highly mobile individuals 'out of the narrow national and regional boundaries'" ("Re-discovering" 74). Also, following Epstein to see the phenomenon of "transculture" as "the freedom of every person to live on the border of one's 'inborn' culture or beyond it" (334), Dagnino asserts that "transculture/ality rests on the idea that individuals may find [and favour] a mode of identity formation as well as of creative expression which goes beyond the conventions and obsessions of identity politics and the exclusive dimension of national identity" (*Transcultural Writers* 113–14). Thus she cites Edward W. Said's view that what makes cultures interesting, even when they are witnessing unbalanced power relations is not their purity but their reciprocal enmeshing, mutual influences, and constant processes of borrowing and border-crossing (Dagnino, "Re-discovering" 74). Transculturality then is even as Mignolo explains: the decolonial option does not reject or deny "Western epistemic contributions to the world. On the contrary, it implies *appropriating its contributions* in order to then de-chain from their imperial designs" (*The Darker Side* 82, the italics is not in the original). This capacity to appropriate the contributions and views of others points to Da-sein's being as a peculiarly fluidity entity.

Conclusion

However, there remains at least one sharp contrast between existentialism and decoloniality. This contrast is seen in their inverse/flipped attitudes towards number, in other words, their inverse perceptions of the world. Decoloniality, if we follow Mignolo, is about the many, say the others, delinking from the one, thus a discouraging of the passing off of regional consciousness as universal consciousness; that is, the growth of "the one" (a particular region of the globe) at the cost of "the many," at the expense of the rest of the world (*The Darker Side* 122; "Decoloniality and Phenomenology" 364). This has been graphically illustrated above in terms of seeing the globe by peering through the base of the cone. Decoloniality, as such, is a revolt against Husserl's transcendental/universal consciousness and its modernity of knowledge. Being in the first place an offshoot of transcendental phenomenology, existential phenomenology also bears this stamp of a part taking precedence over the whole.

The existentialist worldview sees the world within the context of power relations whereby "the one" must give priority to itself and rise up to overcome and even overshadow the "others of [its] kind" who, in Heidegger's words, "also are," i.e., also exist (113).Existential phenomenology gives "the one" priority over all entities that seek to determine and limit its nature (Sartre, "Existentialism Is a Humanism" 291). The central focus of existentialism is the actualization of Da-sein's ownmost potentiality for being, that is to say, the actualization of human freedom (Nichols M. Craig 3). Ikenna Dieke explains this further, saying that in the Sartrean vision (just as in the Heideggerian), the human potentiality for being lies in the transcending of the *en-soi* position (which is the static, stock persona, the reified, contingent, immanent object-self) and the attainment of the *pour-soi* status, the imperial ego which is eternally self-projective, self-creative, and self-evolving, refusing to be fixed or stereotyped (17). But since the *en-soi* (the reified object-self) seeks to attain an imperial ego by acquiring the *pour-soi* status, in other words, since Nietzsche's herdsman, motivated by the call of Zarathustra, can and will sooner or later seek to rise up and become an Overman, it stands to reason that the existentialist revolt can only eventually lead to yet another polarity, and so fails to maintain the equilibrium which decoloniality and transculturality seek.

Like in existentialism, decoloniality too is about the *en-soi* (the Global South) asserting its significance and evolving into a *pour-soi*, refusing to be fixed or stereotyped. Since the only way the *en-soi* can attain significance is by getting out of the reified status into the process of becoming (17), decoloniality involves "the many" likewise perpetrating *nearly*, but not exactly, the same act of revolt executed by "the one" in existentialism. Decoloniality re-examines the Euro-centred perception of the world and the resultant imbalanced relationship between Europe and the Global South (Mignolo, "Decoloniality and Phenomenology" 364). By demythologizing Husserl's "world-consciousness" as a masked form of regional-consciousness (*The Crises* 108), decoloniality critiques the universalists claims of transcendental phenomenology. This regional-consciousness is, typically, "European-consciousness" geared at disavowing "all coexisting non-European praxes of knowing and knowledge" (Mignolo, "Decoloniality and Phenomenology" 364).

However, whereas in pursuing its priority over "the others," "the one" in existentialism could all too easily over project itself and seek to become – as in Nietzsche's philosophy – an Overman; in decoloniality, even though "the others" refuses to be stereotyped and dominated and seeks instead to evolve into a *pour-soi*, this "others" does not attempt to overshadow "the one." Instead, its desire is to coexist in equal standing with the one, not in terms of a levelling in which everyone is a copy of the other, or every other a copy of the one, but a form of coexistence in which everyone maintains its diversely/complexly distinct self and yet is given equal standing as the other. Thus, what decoloniality argues for is, in the words of Grosfoguel, "a form of universality that is not anymore a monologic, monotopic imperial global/universal design, from the right or the left, imposed by persuasion or force to the rest of the world in the name of progress or civilization" (31). The distinct quality of this "decolonial universal" is that unlike Husserl's, it not only joins the struggles against coloniality, patriarchy, capitalism and Euro-centred modernity, but also respects "the multiple local particularities" that originate from diverse epistemes and histories (31). This underscores the task of decolonial thinking as that of "*advocating and building global futures that aspire to the fullness of life* rather than encouraging individual [that is regional] success at the expense of the many and of the planet" (Mignolo, *The Darker Side* 122).

Suffice it to say that although decolonial transculturality is not one and the same as existential phenomenology, even as distinct systems of thought, they both share enough affinity as to have the aptitude to unitedly constitute a theoretical framework for the study of the being of postcolonial literary characters constricted by the western hubris of the zero point in the cosmopolitan lived space. Furthermore, serving as a theoretical basis for inquiring into the being of cosmopolitan postcolonials and their colonial wound, their identity crises, their wandering and longing for conscience, this bridge between decolonial transculturality and existential phenomenology echoes the earlier cited view of Mignolo that the decolonial option does not reject or deny "Western epistemic contributions to the world" but instead seeks to appropriate its contributions in order to not only de-chain from imperial designs (*The Darker Side* 82), but also create a more tolerant lived space wherein all existents and their diverse cultures are seen as having equal right of co-existence.

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2

SECRECY IN INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS AND THE PROBLEM OF SCIENTISTIC OBJECTIVISM

Augustine Akwu Atabor and Augustine Ainoko Shaibu

Abstract
Secrecy is one age-old feature that has characterized knowledge production, preservation and sharing within the domain of many indigenous systems. However, this singular element has continued to bedevil the results obtained from such processes, as many not only ridicule, but also raise serious doubts concerning the reliability of the fruits from such traditional indigenous knowledge systems, especially in the face of the increasing demand for objectivity in modern science being encountered today, more than in any other time. Such positions have given rise to the designation of indigenous science as "pseudo-science" in some quarters. It has also led to an increasing demand for the claims of indigenous knowledge to conform to the standards of modern science, that can be subjected to observation and demonstration through a verifiable experimental process and falsification. Modern science hardly makes provision for anything beyond what is physical, concrete or material. Indigenous knowledge system entails the use of some intuitionistic paradigm to achieving required results. As such, there have always been doubts about the claims of indigenous knowledge as against apparent objective and value-neutral method of modern science which is sometimes obsessed with objectivity. This poses a great threat to effective knowledge-sharing from across the world and presents a major challenge to the individuals in contemporary time who need answers. It is our claim that indigenous knowledge is not necessarily clothed in secrecy and primitivism as there are classified systems of transference which qualify those trained and certified to access such knowledge.

Introduction
References to indigenous knowledge systems in previous studies have dismissed them as unscientific because of their tendency to be laden with false beliefs and untested assumptions. Therefore, it has

attracted a lot of criticism for being unreliable, secretive, primitive, mythical, if not mystical in nature. Nevertheless, such hurried conclusions have called for a re-examination of indigenous knowledge systems in the light of present evidence available to us through the advancements in science and technology. Many historical narratives continue to reveal the bias inherent in the conclusions that were drawn upon insufficient proof. Evidence of this scenario abounds in the accounts of many Eurocentric scholars who engaged in the studies of alien cultures. Findings from recent studies in the fields of religion, sociology, anthropology, psychology and philosophy have led to a resurgence of interest in indigenous knowledge system – and hence the significance of this study. It is our contention that indigenous knowledge systems are not necessarily clothed in secrecy and primitivism, as previous researchers have claimed. This is because there are classified systems of transference, which allow those trained and certified to qualify to access such knowledge.

In the attempt to relocate the impossible historical condition of the many underprivileged nations of the world based on the type of narrative above, Boaventura de Sousa Santos declares in his book, *Epistemologies of the South: Justice Against Epistemicide,* that there cannot be any global social justice without first a global cognitive justice. (x) Therefore, this writing can be seen as an attempt at theorizing from the Global South, which is an academic engagement that uses the theoretical framework of the struggle for liberation by the dominated regions. It is a decolonial – but even more correctly a postcolonial – approach to writing. This type of theorizing would bring about an ecology of knowledge that is generally referred to as "Epistemologies of the South". In a more general sense, what we are out to do in this paper is to show why indigenous knowledge is what it is and why the method of science is not big enough to accommodate or test the validity of indigenous knowledge.

The term *Global South* is used to refer to the less socio-economically developed areas of Africa, Asia, Latin America, Carribeans and the Middle East. The "hegemonization" of knowledge that took place in the modern era which was championed by Kant and Hegel came with colonial, patriarchal, corporate, exploitative, and logocentric baggage against the less privileged countries. The term "is not an existing entity to be described by different disciplines, but an entity that has been invented in the struggle and conflicts between imperial global domination and

emancipatory and decolonial forces that do not acquiesce with global designs. It is the place of struggles between, on the one hand, the rhetoric of modernity and modernization together with the logic of coloniality and domination, and, on the other, the struggle for independent thought and decolonial freedom." (3-4).

Over the centuries, words have been used to position and define people. Words are powerful carriers of meaning. From the modern time till now, words like "primitive" "periphery", "Third world", "underdeveloped", have been used to describe and refer to people of the African, Asian, Caribbean and Latin American countries. However, with the explosion of the awareness about the multicultural dynamics of a global world, countries from these areas of the world have awakened to the reality of an epistemic, social and economic prejudice that has been perpetrated overtime against them. In the wake of this awareness, there has been attempt from the point of theoretical discourse to be sensitive to the impossible delicate historical conditions of these various regions of the world.

We shall therefore in this paper attempt to consider indigenous knowledge in detail under the following highlights: What is Indigenous Knowledge? Secrecy in Indigenous Knowledge and the Systems of Transferences, the Claims of Scientistic Objectivism, Impact of Scientistic Objectivism on the Social Sciences, a Critique of the Imperialism of Objectivity, and then see how we can forge the basis for intercultural cooperation and create epistemic hybridities.

Indigenous Knowledge: What Is It?

According to Chika Ezeanya-Esiobu, though there are various opinions with regard to the understanding of indigenous knowledge, there seems to be agreement that it is a categorization that is somewhat different from what is considered mainstream or western knowledge which has definite form and structure (6). Ezeanya-Eziobu further elucidates that "indigenous knowledge is based on communal understanding and is embedded and conditioned by the culture of the locality in question" (6). Thus the "unique, traditional, local knowledge existing within and developed around specific conditions of women and men indigenous to a particular geographic area" can be rightly regarded as indigenous knowledge (Greiner 1).

Indigenous knowledge, in a different light, can be seen as "the local knowledge that is unique to a given culture or society; it contrasts with the international knowledge system which is

generated through the global network of universities and research institutes" (Warren et al. xv). Indigenous knowledge refers also to knowledge systems embedded in the cultural traditions of regional, or local communities. It includes types of knowledge about traditional technologies of subsistence, such as tools and techniques for hunting or agriculture, midwifery, ethnobotany and ecological knowledge, traditional medicine, celestial navigation, craft skills, ethnoastronomy, climate, and others. These kinds of knowledge, crucial for subsistence and survival, are generally based on accumulations of empirical observation and on interaction with the environment (Kiggundu, 42).

Tharakan sees indigenous knowledge systems as comprising "knowledge systems that have developed within various societies independent of, and prior to the advent of the modern scientific knowledge system" (52). They evolved into broad and comprehensive knowledge systems, such as those from ancient India, China and Africa. Indigenous knowledge is also a "culturally informed understanding inculcated into individuals from birth onwards, structuring how they interface with their environments. It is also informed continually by outside intelligence. Its distribution is fragmentary. Although widely shared locally on the whole than specialized knowledge, no one person, authority or social group knows it all… It exists nowhere in totality, there is no grand repository" (Sillitoe, 9).

Thus, it is through indigenous knowledge that people learn how to grow food and to survive in difficult environments. They know what varieties of crops to plant, when to sow and weed, which plants are poisonous, which can be used for control of diseases in plants, livestock and human beings. Indigenous knowledge that is passed down orally from generation to generation finds expression in culture, stories, legends, folklore, rituals, taboos, songs, proverbs and laws. Other forms of traditional knowledge are expressed through other means. Indigenous knowledge most often reflects a community's interests and typically serves as a major mark of distinction between various communities.

It is not enough to know what indigenous knowledge is without also noting that there has been a continuous prejudice against it, particularly when it is compared to what is regarded as the standard form of knowledge. Thus, Brush and Stabinsky refer to indigenous knowledge as being culture-specific, while western knowledge is considered to have been deculturated. Kiggundu

repudiates indigenous knowledge for its lack of universality which is considered only possible with western knowledge. He rather offers a catalogue of what one can say is a derogatory description of indigenous knowledge as "primitive," "backward," "savage," "rural," "unscientific." (49)

Howes and Chambers attempting to describe the areas of difference between western knowledge and Indigenous traditional Knowledge (ITK) offer the following hints:

> An important difference between science and ITK lies in the way in which phenomena are observed and ordered. The scientific mode of thought is characterized by a greater ability to break down data presented to the senses and to reassemble it in different ways. The mode of ITK, on the other hand, is 'concrete' and relies almost exclusively on intuition and evidence directly available to the senses. A second distinction derives from the way practitioners of the two modes of thought represent to themselves the nature of the enterprise in which they are engaged. Science is an open system whose adherents are always aware of the possibility of alternative perspectives to those adopted to any particular point of time. ITK, on the other hand, as a closed system, is characterized by a lack of awareness that there may be other ways of regarding the world (330).

If indigenous knowledge is all that we have said it is, then from where comes the accusation of secrecy? This is an important question because all that we have said so far about indigenous knowledge does not necessarily translate into secrecy. Having said this, we shall now point out that the area where indigenous knowledge begins to be secretive is where the knowledge system has to do with very sensitive matters such as health, religious rites of worship, corporate tenets of social cohesion, and of course some cultic practices.

Secrecy in Indigenous Knowledge and tThhe System of Transferences

According to Kanu, secrecy is a universal phenomenon, something that pervades the entirety of human and even animal world. While

lower animals build their den and nest in secret to avoid encroachment by predators, humans are used to keeping secret some information about themselves which they consider not meant for public consumption. Beyond this, families, corporate organizations and nations sometimes have secrets as a matter of defense and security (36). It is therefore not surprising that some forms of knowledge whether religious or cultural are considered as treasures and top secrets to be protected from the public and only revealed or transferred to those alone who have been properly initiated. One area where Kanu identifies as being intricately laden with secrecy is the field of traditional medicine. Kanu, commenting on the role and duties of the medicine men and traditional doctors, opines that

> They principally concern themselves with sickness, disease and misfortune. They symbolize the hope of society: hopes of good health, security and prosperity. Sickness, disease and misfortune are generally believed to be caused by the ill will or ill action of one person against the other. The medicine man is thus consulted to diagnose the type of sickness and trace the cause of it. As a solution to the problem in question, the cause must be found, counteracted, uprooted and punished. It is also the duty of the medical practitioner to provide countermeasures that can counteract future inflictions (40-41).

Kanu however agrees that regardless of their role among the people their practices are usually shrouded in secrets. He even recounts the experience of a son of a traditional healer referring to the knowledge of healing somebody from a scorpion sting as a family secret. And as such one can only be privy to such secret if and only if one is a member of the family. This explains why some peculiar healing powers are associated with some particular families in Africa. (41)

Apart from family secrets, there are also community secrets, and these types are only divulged on the occasion of the initiation into adulthood both for the male and the female. Thus, there are community secrets that constitute the systems of social cohesion, which make the community different from others. Apart from general social knowledge in the community, there can also be men and women with special knowledge and talents, such as singing, rainmaking and necromancy. For such gifted and talented persons, it is sometimes believed that there are some benevolent spirits who

are responsible for such gifts and it is incumbent on such spirits to choose the preferred candidate to whom such knowledge can be transferred.

Modern scientific knowledge is centralized and associated with the machinery of the state, and those who are its bearers believe in its superiority. Indigenous technical knowledge, in contrast, is scattered and associated with low prestige rural life; even those who are its bearers may believe it to be inferior (Warren, 162). Thus, there is the tendency towards disinterest in the practices that are supposed to be the conduits to the apparent secretive knowledge. This is also made so because of the impact of Western civilization on traditional systems and cultures.

The Claims of Scientistic Objectivism

According to Sheldrake "the 'scientific worldview' is immensely influential because the sciences have been so successful. No one can fail to be awed by their achievements, which touch all our lives through technologies and through modern medicine. Our intellectual world has been transformed through an immense expansion of our knowledge, down into the most microscopic particles of matter and out into the vastness of space, with hundreds of billions of galaxies in an ever-expanding universe" (211). the stupendous impact of scientific advancement cannot but appeal to human reason and it is not surprising that there seems to be certain contemporary arrogance of science because of this impact.

Sheldrake further highlights this scientific arrogance when he points out that, "Contemporary science is based on the claim that all reality is material or physical. There is no reality but material reality. Consciousness is a by-product of the physical activity of the brain. Matter is unconscious. Evolution is purposeless. God exists only as an idea in human minds, and hence in human heads" (211).

Here are the ten core beliefs and claims of scientific materialism which form the bases of scientistic objectivism as outlined by (Sheldrake 211). These beliefs also explain why scientism can be said to be different science. (a). Everything is essentially mechanical. Dogs, for example, are complex mechanisms, rather than living organisms with goals of their own. Even people are machines, "lumbering robots," in Richard Dawkins' vivid phrase, with brains that are like genetically programmed computers. (b). All matter is unconscious. It has no inner life or subjectivity or point of view. Even human consciousness is an

illusion produced by the material activities of brains. (c). The total amount of matter and energy is always the same (with the exception of the Big Bang, when all the matter and energy of the universe suddenly appeared). (d). The laws of nature are fixed. They are the same today as they were at the beginning, and they will stay the same forever. (e). Nature is purposeless, and evolution has no goal or direction. (f). All biological inheritance is material, carried in the genetic material, DNA, and in other material structures. (g). Minds are inside heads and are nothing but the activities of brains. When you look at a tree, the image of the tree you are seeing is not "out there," where it seems to be, but inside your brain. (h). Memories are stored as material traces in brains and are wiped out at death. (i). Unexplained phenomena like telepathy are illusory. (j). Mechanistic medicine is the only kind that really works.

Even though Rudolf Carnap appears to moderate the apparent extremes of the above claims he still submits to the absolute finality of science. He says that science . . . has no limits. But this does not mean that there is nothing outside of science and that it is all-inclusive. The total range of life has still many other dimensions outside of science, but, within its dimension, science meets no barrier . . . When we say that scientific knowledge is not limited, we mean: there is no question whose answer is in principle unattainable by science. (290)

The point at which science begins to pick issues with the character of indigenous knowledge is when it begins to operate from the point of scientism or scientistic objectivism. This is an attitude by the sciences to pose as the only means of knowledge and to say that anything that is not amenable to the scientific method cannot be a valid knowledge. However, there are valid claims that there could be other means of arriving at knowledge which may not be similar to the scientific method.

On this point Haught talks about various other fields of meaning through which we could arrive at knowledge. He suggests that "There are at least five fields of meaning through which the desire to know must travel if it is to encounter the rich texture of the world's being. These avenues are: affectivity, intersubjectivity, narrativity, beauty and theory". (12)

Wittgenstein was also opposed to what he described as the "over-estimation of science" (70): the "kind of idol worship" of science he thought was endemic in the time in which he lived and pernicious for various areas of inquiry, including philosophy, and

for culture more generally (27). Wittgenstein felt that a dominance of scientistic attitudes is a source of our disenchantment with the world – that we need "to awaken to wonder", but "Science is a way of sending [us] back to sleep again" (5). He even writes that it "isn't absurd … to believe that the age of science and technology is the beginning of the end for humanity" (56).

We must, however, be sensitive enough to what Blackburn calls Pejorative attitude for the belief that the methods of natural science, or the categories and things recognized in natural science, form the only proper elements in any philosophical inquiry. (344) Science is bigger than what the scientistic objectivistic attitude can handle.

The Impact of Scientistic Objectivism on the Social Sciences

There has been a debate as to whether the social science can be regarded as real science, since it is value oriented. While the dry and curt approach of the physical and natural science is more prone to "objective knowledge" it is most of the time suspected that the same kind of objectivity cannot be reached with the social sciences. This suspicion is founded on the awareness that the society and its institution may not be susceptible to scientific investigation as other objects of investigation in the natural and physical sciences. Thus, the point we want to elucidate here is that the so-called unity of the scientific method does not seem to apply completely with the social sciences when it comes to the question of scientistic objectivism. The reason why this may be so is because societies are shaped by culture and so cannot be considered a stable datum for the type of objective investigation expected from the natural and physical sciences.

It has been argued, especially by sociologists of knowledge, that there is a crucial difference, regarding objectivity, between the physical and social sciences. Whereas in the former all value judgments must be eliminated, in order to achieve valid knowledge, in the latter value judgments are indispensable. Thus, the physical and social sciences have radically different criteria for their claims to truth. The social scientists start with value judgments, by the very selection of their problem, long before they start to examine it, while the physical sciences proceed without appraising the worthiness or the normative standards of human efforts and struggles. However, Hayeck points out that there was a gradual gravitation of the social

sciences towards making their methods as value neutral as the physical and natural sciences.

> During the first half of the nineteenth century a new attitude made its appearance. The term science came more and more to be confined to the physical and biological disciplines which at the same time began to claim for themselves a special rigorousness and certainty which distinguished them from all others. Their success was such that they soon began to exercise an extraordinary fascination on those working in other fields, and who soon began to imitate their teaching and vocabulary. Thus, the tyranny commenced which the methods and technique of the Sciences in the narrow sense of the term have ever since exercised over other subjects. These became increasingly concerned to vindicate their equal status by showing that their methods were the same as those of their brilliantly successful sisters rather than by adapting their methods more and more to their own particular problems (268).

Thus, we see that the claims of scientistic objectivism run into problem even with an area of study as broad as the social sciences just because its data are not and cannot be the same everywhere. We must accept that the type of objectivity available in the social sciences cannot be the same as that available in the other sciences. This same problem of objectivity when it comes to the social sciences is similar to what is at issue when objectivity, particularly the scientistic one is brought in relation with indigenous knowledge claims. It cannot but reject outright any claims to knowledge arising from such quarters. However, we can now see that there is a categorial mistake to want to evaluate indigenous knowledge claims with the tools of scientistic objectivism.

Atabor, however, is of the opinion that:

> in a postmodern era, where relative conception of truth is imperative and a culture-based objectivity clearly inevitable, it remains not just a possibility but a practical expectation that cross-cultural reasoning would pave the way and create interlinking corridors across cultures. These shall be the areas of common grounds pertaining to the universal agreement of human reason. Thus, even in the relativity and culture-based objectivity of postmodernism, there may be

> room even in the social sciences for a form of universal objectivity and truth. (53)

Objective Knowledge: A Critique of Cognitive Imperialism

According to Ibuot, the invitation of Socrates that men should lead a life founded on rational evaluations came at an early stage in the development of western philosophy. Thus, at this stage there came to be an association of logic with self-evaluation. This, however, was based on the perception that logic is the stronghold of objective knowledge. (132) Ibuot defines objective knowledge as that which is at once neutral and universal. This type of knowledge must be precise, free of ambiguity/ambivalence and clear in structure. In other words, the model of this type of knowledge system has been symbolic logic. (134)

According to Shmueli "objectivity can be defined, very generally, as that attitude towards propositions which is a necessary condition for acquiring valid knowledge." (107) Shmueli's definition brings to the fore the notion of the necessary attitude that allows for the validation of knowledge. Though this attitude has come to be solely associated with the codification of the methodological patterns of modern science, Harding makes bold to point out that value-neutrality of objectivity is still used to police university research, public debates, journalistic reports on international relations. It does so in the face of widely recognized incompetence to detect or eliminate racist, sexist, class, colonial and other anti-democratic values and interests in the results (1801). This ordinarily suggests that sometimes the so-called value neutrality that objectivity claims is nothing but a sham or maybe a deliberate scam. Thus, Harding submits that though a good scientific knowledge is characterized by strong objectivity, inclusive rationality, and universal validity, it however remains a local knowledge claim. (56)

Furthermore, Feyerabend in his attack on the claims of scientific objectivity, states that "there is hardly any difference between the members of a 'primitive' tribe who defend their laws because they are the laws of the gods … and a rationalist who appeals to 'objective' standards, except that the former knows what they are doing while the latter does not" (82). Feyerabend also acknowledges how sometimes instead of an impartial assessment, the methods of western science are employed to evaluate knowledges springing from another traditions (80–83). He suggests that it is far better to uphold that there can be as many sciences as

there are peoples and cultures in the world and not be quick to dismiss non-western perspective for the sake of worldviews emanating from the West. Feyerabend's final submission is in favor of an epistemic pluralism that accepts varied methods of acquiring knowledge. According to him, science should acknowledge the multiplicity of values and traditions that drive our inquiries about the world, rather than protecting a myopic and erroneous ideal of objectivity (106–107)

Malinowski arguing in favor of the multiplicity that characterizes rationality says that "No art or craft however primitive could have been invented or maintained, no organized form of hunting, fishing, tilling, or search for food could be carried out without the careful observation of natural process and a firm belief in its regularity, without the power of reasoning and without confidence in the power of reason; that is, without the rudiments of science" (17). Wiredu supports this point by Malinowski when he argues that:

> No society could survive for any length of time without conducting a large part of their daily activities by the principle of belief according to the evidence. You cannot farm without some rationally based knowledge of soils and seeds and of meteorology; and no society can achieve any reasonable degree of harmony in human relations without a basic tendency to assess claims and allegations by the method of objective investigation. The truth, then, is that rational knowledge is not the preserve of the modern West (137).

Wiredu and Malinowski make the point that every human settlement survives based on some principles of sociation and these principles are not devoid of logic, hence human reason plays a major role in the organizational structure of even the primitive settlements of humans.

Intercultural Cooperation: Towards Epistemic Hybridities

There has been recorded in recent time a general rise in the global attention being given to multicultural, intercultural and postcolonial studies. Moreover, as civilizations evolve and are interconnected, it has become very important to ensure that there is greater peace than there is conflict in the world. This has called for a certain

reorientation of the conceptions of otherness, particularly as it involves the sense of identity and differentiation. The quest for this re-education has made the area of intercultural theory very important. What can be gleaned from this conclusion is the need for cultural hybridity, but even more importantly is the need for epistemic hybridity. This would mean a blending together of different emanations of knowledge as all the different types of knowledge have their specific cultural origins.

Harding, commenting on the emergence of what we today consider as western knowledge, points out the historical antecedents that warranted the rising to universal status of western knowledge. According to him "it was only political threats that forced mid-twentieth century philosophy of science to retreat toward the kind of logical empiricist (logical positivist) commitments to the singularity of sciences and their autonomy from society and, especially, from politics that so many of us were taught were the unquestionable commitments within which we could plan our own work" (106). He further explains how in the USA the threatening political climate of McCarthyism and the cold war alongside an escalation in government funding warranted the formalization of the scientific system to protect it from the government. (106)

It is therefore not surprising that Harding submits that all sciences are local knowledge systems. She argues that though good scientific knowledge is characterized by strong objectivity, inclusive rationality, and universal validity, it remains a local knowledge claim. This therefore neutralizes the universal and absolute standard claims of Western science as it has been seen that there are historical antecedents that warranted the emergence of the kind of science that is today acclaimed as western. These historical antecedents which are localized culturally and politically, therefore can properly account for why Western science can also be seen as local knowledge.

The advent of the modern era came with the absolutization of reason as understood by the Western tradition. This being the case, there was an orchestration of the triumph of western knowledge system over every other form or system of knowledge. Thus, western science became the ideal standard and pattern. Any knowledge that did not conform to these standards was written off as ethno or pseudo knowledge. However, according to Chimakonam, the modern hegemonic claims to standard episteme

were called into question by the rise of postmodernism. Chimakonam argues that,

> Postmodernism when studied closely is an intellectual movement that upholds alternative logics. When understood as a movement that seeks to unmask the pretensions of Western absolutistic, and all-embracing cloak of reason, that all valid epistemes are upheld by Western-developed Aristotelian logic; the illusions of metaphysics, that there is a common foundation for all thought; and the idea of the "unity of sciences" in which a common method is prescribed for knowledge, then we grasp the alternative nature of the logic that grounds postmodernism. (4)

This postmodern understanding and approach to knowledge lays the foundation and opens the door for what is today known as cross-cultural or intercultural engagement and cooperation. In this same vein, intercultural philosophy has done much to laying the foundation of how the different knowledges arising from different civilizations of the world can be brought fruitfully into a dialogue and conversation. Mall writes that "intercultural philosophy stands for a process of emancipation from all types of centrism, whether European or non-European," and that it seeks to exhibit "a philosophical attitude, a philosophical conviction that no one philosophy is the philosophy for the whole of humankind." He further says that "It is the task of intercultural philosophy to mediate between…two ends, i.e., the specific philosophies as they are found in different cultures and the universal philosophy which is not culturally bound itself."

Agbakoba in trying to make evident that the possibilities that abound within the framework of intercultural philosophy accentuates the dividing line between what he calls mongrelity and hybridity. "Ordinarily, a hybrid means the same thing as a mongrel, namely, a product, especially biologically, of the breeding or union of two different stocks" (19). However, within a cultural context,

> a mongrel represents the product of a forcible union or fusion of two different cultures in which the elements from one of the cultures is very significant and, brought about at the instance of the more powerful of the two cultures as could be seen, for instance, in colonialism and imperialism, while a hybrid, on the other hand, is a product of a more consensual union of two different cultures in which a very

> significant element of such a product is from one of the cultures – a hybrid is product of conscious, constructive efforts at a fusion of cultures (19).

From the foregoing, cultural hybridity has to do with a deliberate and constructive fusion of aspects of cultures so as to create a stronger and sophisticated culture stock. This therefore can become the foundation of epistemic hybridity since every culture is a carrier of its own knowledge system. A hybrid of cultures will also naturally bring about a hybrid of knowledge.

Conclusion

In this paper we have tried to show that there are diverse ways of viewing reality as various epistemological heritages are always connected to different cultural stocks. Western science with the strength of its explanatory power always tend to enjoy a popularity that orient minds to "monorational thinking"; a type of thinking that holds as knowledge only what is proven replicable based on the scientific method. However, this should not be the case as it is easier to arrive at a more holistic view of knowledge of nature and society through a mind that is oriented towards "polyrational mindset." We have also argued that there are shades of rationalities and that paying keen attention to as many of these shades of rationalities that are available will help to build super world understanding.

The cloak of secrecy that characterizes indigenous knowledge ordinarily should not pose a problem. Every form of knowledge has basic curriculums which when properly applied certifies an individual as a professional in that field. Just as when someone who wants to study Western medicine must prove to have the mental acumen to undergo the rigors of the course, and can only be declared a certified doctor after he successfully passes through, fulfilling all requirement, in a similar manner indigenous knowledge is only bequeathed to special selected few who would have been identified as having the capacity (moral and mental acumen) to handle important knowledges that are even sometimes considered sacred. However, when secrecy is used with the intention of denigrating the quality of the type of knowledge characterized as such then there is the threat of Western supremacy bias.

We, however, uphold that a certain level of objectivity is still very important; a pragmatic system of validation that justifies the mediums of operations. Manipulation of the people which is

sometimes rife with the subjective character of the cloak of secrecy is highly discouraged.

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3

FEMALE POWER AND THE MANIPULATION OF MEN IN ADAOBI TRICIA NWABUANI'S *I DO NOT COME TO YOU BY CHANCE* AND BEN OKRI'S *DANGEROUS LOVE*

Ogugua Omajuwa and Eyituoyo Matilda Ovie-Jack

Abstract

Numerous scholarly researches have confirmed that power is male dominated. This study's intention is not to contradict these researches. It intends, however, to discuss instances where the "norm" is not the case. The study's conceptual framework will be based on concepts developed by Chinweizu Ibekwe in his highly controversial book, Anatomy of Female Power: A Masculinist Dissection of Matriarchy (1990). In the book, Chinweizu asserts that women operate a hidden system of matriarchy and so they are the sex in charge, contrary to general belief. To this end, Chinweizu introduced the three power concepts: motherpower, bridepower and wifepower. This paper explores Adaobi Tricia Nwabuani's I Do not Come to you by Chance (2009) and Ben Okri's Dangerous Love (2012), as literary representations of Chinweizu's female power concepts. The study concludes that although many women have been ruled, manipulated and abused by men, as proven by researches, there also exist few instances where the reverse is the case.

Introduction

When the subject of manipulation is raised, most people naturally assume that women are the victims. It has become common knowledge that the woman is seen to be powerless or weaker than the man. This has led to the feminist's quest to improve women's lives and rights. Contrary to the general perception that only women and girls are manipulated and oppressed by the opposite gender, men and boys can also be manipulated and oppressed by the opposite sex. The implication of this is that empathy is shown mostly to the oppressed female while the oppressed male receives little or none. This study is an attempt to compensate for the neglect

by using literary works to elucidate instances where the man is the victim of the woman's oppression.

Simon and Preger-Simon (1991) assert that men are oppressed not by women or any particular group but by structures in society. According to them, "they are oppressed by society as a whole, through parents, other adults, institutions, peers…Men's oppression acts to keep men in particular roles; those roles society requires them to fill in order for them to function normally" (306). Going further, they clarify that "what men lose through their oppression is not access to resources, as do most other oppressed groups, but access to a whole message of human qualities and choices" (306).

Benatar (2012) avers that men are also victims of domestic violence but government and society in general do not treat such cases with seriousness (37). This nonchalant attitude has been linked to the belief that men are fearless, can bear more pain and can physically defend themselves from women. In this regard, it becomes pertinent to state an obvious fact that while some women are born Athenas not all men are born Hercules.

We would like to use the popular children's cartoon, "Tom and Jerry", as an example here. Tom, the cat, has been bought for the sole purpose of protecting the house from mice. Jerry, the mouse, lives in the house and eats from the house. He even drinks Tom's milk. Now Tom chases Jerry round the house, trying to stop it from destroying the house and also get rid of it. In that end, Tom is beaten and outsmarted by Jerry. Jerry is proclaimed the "good one" and Tom, the "bad one". This is because Tom is bigger than Jerry. Tom's actions are therefore perceived as "bad" while Jerry's little and weak statue gives him the advantage of being termed "good", even when it is a troublemaker.

Conceptual Framework

This study is conducted within the frame of three concepts, mother power, bride power and wife power. These concepts were introduced and developed by Chinweizu in his book, *Anatomy of Female Power: A Masculinist Dissection of Matriarchy*. In this book, he challenges feminism, stating that women have always ruled over men. Chinweizu, in great details, developed and discussed the three females that wield their powers over the male: the mother, bride and wife power.

The mother power is wielded by his mother, an older female or any woman whom he holds in similar regard. The bride power is the tool of a fiancé, girlfriend, girl-next-door, love interest or a crush. Finally, the wife wields wife power, the power that rules him until divorce or death "do them part". In Chinweizu words:

> Female power exists; it hangs over every man like a ubiquitous shadow. Indeed, the life cycle of man, from cradle to grave, may be divided into three phases, each of which is defined by the form of female power which dominates him: mother power, bride power, or wife power (14).

From the above, it means that a man is ruled from birth to puberty by his mother. His life is dictated his one and only "mummy dearest". Then he passes into the territory of a bride's power; the power is exercised over him by his bride-to-be; that cuddlesome and tender wench he feels he cannot live without. This phase lasts from puberty to the wedding day when the last of his potential brides finally makes herself his wife. He then passes into the domain of a wife's power. This power is exercised over him by his own resident matriarch, alias his darling wife (14). The wife rules over him until death or divorce parts them.

Discussion

Explaining how the **motherpower** works, Chinweizu writes that:

> The power of the cradle is also great; for the way the twig is bent, that way the tree will grow. The cradle is the boot camp where every raw recruit is trained for induction into the human community, where basic habits are ingrained. Habits are more powerful than commands; for commands can only work where there already is a habit of obedience (15).

A mother wields her influence over her infant male child by instilling habits which will remain with him for the rest of his life. All through his life, Kinsley Ibe, the protagonist of *I Do not Come to you by Chance,* has enjoyed some privileges as the *opara* (first son) of the family. For one, he is not expected to go to the kitchen to get his food like his younger siblings do. He is to sit at the dining table and be served his meal. His meal is to be garnished with lots of meat as the *opara*. However, there is a saying that: "to whom much is given, much is expected". Kingsley has been groomed to

enjoy these privileges with the knowledge that there are responsibilities tied to it. This is why when Kingsley's father, Paulius became sick, it fell on Kingsley to seek money to pay the hospital bills. Also when his father eventually died, Kingsley took up the responsibility of protecting and providing for his family. Kingsley has been conditioned from childhood to accept these responsibilities.

"The hero is a servant who performs extraordinary duties for family, community or humanity: as warrior or protector, as organizer of wealth, or as bringer of vital knowledge" (Chinweizu 31). These words seem to summarize the destiny of Kingsley Ibe. Kingsley's mother, Augustina, knows that her step-brother, Boniface, aka Cash Daddy, got his wealth through dubious means. However, she allows her young and naive son, Kingsley, to visit and beg Cash Daddy for money while she stays back. She sends her son into to the devil's den instead of protecting him by going herself. Kingsley driven by his conditioning, especially the need to care for his mother and siblings, becomes an internet fraudster.

Ola's mother also plays a gigantic role in pushing Kingsley over the edge. Initially, she liked Kingsley as a suitor for her daughter seeing that he is an intelligent young man studying a good course in the university. However, she later turns against him when he could not secure a job after graduating from the university. In her words, "Look, let me just make it clear to you. There are other men out there who would gladly marry her… I expected that by now, she and her husband would be the ones taking care of us. Me, I'm getting tired" (Nwaubani, 46). All she wants is for Kingsley to make money, be it legally or illegally, "Other men know what and what to do to move ahead" (Nwaubani 47). To her, Kingsley is totally useless, not minding the fact that he made the best result in his class and loves Ola deeply. Kingsley and Ola's relationship is a big disappointment because neither Ola nor her mother has benefited anything from him.

Chinweizu's observation that women use their kitchen power to manipulate men is evident in *Dangerous Love.* According to Chinweizu, the woman:

> By feeding him his choice meals, or by not serving him any meal at all, the woman who is the commandant of his kitchen can manipulate any man. The power of the kitchen is also great, for it is the power over hunger. (Chinweizu 19)

In *Dangerous Love,* Omovo's stepmother, Blackie, uses her kitchen power to oppress and manipulate. She serves her husband the choicest of meal in order to win him over and also to remain in his favour, thereby manipulating his emotions. On the other hand, she uses her kitchen power to oppress Omovo. She keeps his food in a "filthy cupboard", gives him heavy food "*eba*" in the morning, and prepares the food with little or no care. Once Omovo complained to his father that his food "was full of lumps which crumbled into grains of uncooked garri ... The soup was cold and the oil had congealed" (Okri 49). Omovo, being wise to her games, never complained. Unfortunately for him, one day he falls into her trap when he forgot to clear the table and wash the dishes after eating, Blackie capitalizes on this opportunity to play the role of an unappreciated woman. First she tries to provoke Omovo into a fight then later starts crying and acting hurt in front of Omovo's father. This act adds more strain to father and son's relationship.

In a hilarious twist, Blackie uses her kitchen power in an attempt to bribe Omovo. In the night, he was beaten up by thugs sent by Takpo, Omovo picks up some clues that Blackie might be cheating on his father with someone in the compound. Although Omovo is indifferent to whatever might be going on, Blackie feels threatened that Omovo has discovered her illicit affair. So Blackie tries to buy Omovo's silence by offering him a meal fit for a king: "pounded yam and stockfish stew" (Okri 257) or any meal of his choice; all he had to do was "Just mention it" (Okri 257). Omovo rejects the offer. Omovo's refusal to be manipulated by Blackie's kitchen power made her more frighten because this has been one of her weapons against the men in the house.

Bride power is the power of new love or infatuation. Regardless of how intense the man's feelings are, the bride calls the shots and the man is willing to oblige her. According to Chinweizu, "If he should pass her eligibility tests for economic ability, nest defense capability, emotional loyalty, sexual loyalty, etc.; and if she has no better candidate within reach, she accepts his application for the job of her nest –slave" (Chinweizu 46).

In *I Do not Come to you by Chance,* Kingsley and Ola had been so much in love with each other that neither had minded the fact that they both came from poor families. They were contented with the little they had to offer each other. This feeling however did not last for Ola. While still in a relationship with Kingsley, Ola starts

collecting gifts from another male suitor. Ola is enticed with expensive gifts of Dolce & Gabbana wrist watch, Gucci slippers and Fendi handbag. Kingsley has failed to pass her "eligibility tests for economic ability". Ola leaves Kingsley for a rich man, Udenna, the owner of Ude Maximum Ventures. To Kingsley's horror, Ola had left him for an uneducated man. It can be concluded that Ola was never truly in love with Kingsley but is in search for the best "nest-slave".

Chinweizu further avers that:

> He is also taught that being given a beautiful woman to husband is the most precious reward for heroism. If he is a Fulani or Maasai herdsman in Africa, he learns that lesson from the flogging contests whose victors are rewarded with admiration and love by beautiful maidens. (Chinweizu 31)

A similar scenario, like the one narrated by Chinweizu above, played out in Kingsley's live. However, in Kingsley's case, being that he is an Igbo, he will need to purchase items needed for the marriage ceremony; his love will not suffice. This adds extra burden and pressure on him. Kingsley laments that:

> As much as I wanted to fulfill my responsibilities as opara and help my family, I also wanted to get a job because of Ola. Marrying an Igbo girl entails much more than fairy-tale romance and good intentions. The list of items presented to the groom as a prerequisite for the traditional marriage ceremony was enough to make a grown man shudder. And that was even before you considered the gift items for family members, the clothing for the girl and her mother, and the actual feast itself. (Nwaubani 31)

Cash Daddy is of the opinion that there is nothing like love, all one need is money. In his words, "All you need to do is fix a date for the wedding, book the venue, pay for the catering . . . just plan everything. As soon as you've done that, you'll see that the woman will just appear on time and fill in the slot" (Nwaubani 210).

In *Dangerous Love,* Blackie had come into the house as a "warm, understanding and self-sacrificing" (Okri 59) bride. She tried hard to please the family and sometimes humiliates herself in the process. Gradually she reveals that she is a wolf in sheep's clothing. She eavesdrops on important conversations and uses the information gained to dissemble the family.

Chinweizu asserts that “to secure his emotional commitment, a woman will train a man to attach his feelings in severable to herself. His jealousy and her cantankerousness are great instruments for this task” (Chinweizu 53). Blackie “worms her way into his father’s heart” (Okri 59), making him believe that she is the only person who loves, understands him and will be with him forever. “The man came to depend upon her for those little necessary comforts” (Okri 59). After Blackie has gained control of Omovo’s father’s heart and ears, she starts cheating on him because she knows her husband will never believe any bad behaviour accredited to her.

Wifepower, there have been numerous protests against wife-beating to the extent that it is now generally believed that women alone experience this type of domestic violence. In the novel, *I Do not Come to you by Chance,* Kingsley witnessed his boss/uncle, Cash Daddy being abused, beaten and threatened by his wife, Mrs. Boniface Mbamalu. She has refused to live with him in Aba but stays far away in Lagos where she can live affluent life without restraint. She just found out that her husband intends renting an appartment for one of his girlfriends on the same street where she lives. She pays her husband a visit just to beat him up, destroy his properties and threaten him to relocate his girlfriend to another location.

> After she left, I went into Cash Daddy’s office with Protocol Officer. The place looked as if a tornado had dropped by to say hello. The exotic vases were smashed to smithereens on the floor, the wall cabinet was lying face down like an Islamic worshipper, every single item on his executive desk had been transferred to the ground (Nwaubani 209).

It is worth mentioning that she is indifferent to the fact that Cash Daddy was cheating on her; all she cares about was keeping her appearance in public and enjoying the best that her husband can offer.

Tuwo in *Dangerous Love,* is also a victim of husband-beating. Tuwo was once married to a woman who had entrapped him with her sexual prowess. She however turns out to have the strength of man, fearfully possessive, domineering and tried to change Tuwo’s routine. Tuwo found himself living under her control:

> She went with him everywhere. She was loud, lusty and picked arguments indiscriminately…She criticized him mercilessly. They fought for days without end. Her passion for quarrelling was matched only by her passion for sex. In three months every valuable thing he owned was destroyed in fights (Okri85).

Conclusion

This study concludes that although African literary scene has witnessed an outpour of feminist literature which seeks to protect the female gender, the male gender should also be protected. They can sometimes be victims too. As seen in the novels studied, cases exist where men are manipulated and used. In the future, women would have created a safe haven for themselves and some wicked ones will exploit this opportunity to create hell for some men.

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