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need for "revenge" against him:

*I follow him to serve my turn upon him.
We cannot all be masters, nor all masters
Cannot be truly followed... Others there
are who trimmed in forms and visages of duty, ...
And, throwing but shows off service on their lords...
Do themselves homage (I. 1, 11s. 42-56).*

Therefore, it is seen that Iago representing the white race, hates Othello because he is a blackman, and only for that reason. All other charges laid against Othello by Iago are only trumped-up reasons.

Black and White Intimacy as Abnormal and a Misalliance

Racism presupposes that "white" should be "white" and "black" should be "black". Since "white" is equated with purity, the angelic and superiority and "black" with "darkness" evil and inferiority, it is believed by the racist that no relationship should exist between people of both races. Where any such relationship exists, it is viewed as a "misalliance". Therefore, Othello's marriage to Desdemona is considered a misalliance by Iago. It is this consideration that shocks him into hatred and action against the Moor. The first act of his is to awaken the lady's father in the dead of night to tell him of Othello's secret marriage to his daughter, to incense the old man to abrogate the marriage if necessary. Already, Iago has prophesied doom on the relationship:

*It cannot be that Desdemona should
long continue her love to the Moor...
She must change for youth: When she is
Sated with his body she will find the error
of her choice... a frail vow betwixt an
erring barbarian and a super-subtle Venetian...
(I. 3, iis. 338-339, 345-347; 351).*

Even Senator Brabantio, Desdemona's father who pretended to love Othello, and was fond of inviting the latter to his home, feels disgraced and scandalized on hearing of his daughter's secret marriage to **Othello**. He exclaims:

*Strike on the tinder, ho!
Give me a taper; Call up all my people!
This accident is not unlike my dream:
Belief of it oppresses me already.
Light, I say, light! (I. 1, Us. 142-146).*

Commenting on this racist conception of misalliance, Muir has this to say:

*Iago makes use of ... the difference of
race which could be represented as being
an unnatural basis for marriage
between "an erring barbarian and
a super-subtle Venetian", which
could collapse as soon as she was
sated with his body (Muir 36).*

Emphasis on Black Racial Characteristics

Iago lays emphasis on at least, two physical characteristics of the blackman, namely his black or dark skin and his thick lips. Much stress is laid on Othello's skin pigmentation to show his "otherness" from the Caucasian stock. This explains why he is called by all, "the Moor," behind his back. In act one of the play, he is so called (18) eighteen times, and in act two about (14) fourteen times. Similarly Iago emphasizes Othello's skin colour when he speaks of him as "black Othello" (II. 3, line 29). Equally, Iago takes a derogatory swipe at Othello's negroid feature – "thick lips" (I. 1, 1.66). This remark is meant to lay stress on the lascivious nature of blacks.

Stereotypes about Blacks

White society regards the blacks as Cannibals. The fear of whites intending to travel to Africa hinges on this fact. This fear was no less in Shakespearean and times far beyond. Every blackman was seen to be a potential cannibal, no matter the level of civilization. References to cannibalism is done by Othello himself:

*It was my hint to speak-such was the process:
And of the cannibals that each other eat,
(I.3 lines 141-142).*

This remark made in his speech to the Venetian senate is ironic because he proves himself that cannibal, much later in the play. In act three he is goaded by Iago to bring out his violent cannibalistic nature to the fore when on jealous suspicion of Desdemona, he tells Iago:

*I'll tear her all to pieces!
(III.3 1. 428).*

Further on, as Iago's deception on him gets worse, he exclaims in a fit of jealous rage to Iago, about his intention to kill Desdemona for her "unfaithfulness".

*I will chop her into messes!
(IV. 1, line 199).*

These lines give vent to the racial theory that blacks are ignorant, irrational and violent, with an unquenchable lust to kill. Shakespeare makes Othello say this much in a fit of self-denigration before the Venetian senate in order to gain sympathy:

*Rude am I in my speech
And little blessed with the soft phrase of
peace; for since these arms of mine had
seven years' pith till now some nine
moons wasted, they have used their
dearest action in the tented field;
And little of this great world can I speak
More than pertains to feats of broil and
battle; (I.3, lines 81-87).*

The above speech among other things gives credence to the Venetians' view that Othello is a "barbarian" (I. 3 1. 351). In other words, he is a robot.

Blacks as Useful Servants to be Manipulated

As a robot, Othello conforms to the image of an "ass". He is only meant to be used and dumped whenever he outlives his usefulness to the racist state. He is seen by Iago as having an unsuspecting nature as to be led by the nose just like an ass:

*The Moor is of a free and open nature
That thinks men honest that but seem to be so,
And will as tenderly be led by th' nose
As asses are (I. 3, lines 393-396).*

An ass is a hardworking animal but without brains. It is indispensable to farm labour, but when old, it can be sold off to the knackers. It is even so with Othello. As a blackman he is indispensable to the Venetian state; a soldier whose valour has saved the state from destruction at the hands of the Turks. It is only because of this indispensability that he is tolerated by the Venetian state. Iago states this fact, and advances it as the reason why he cannot attack the Moor openly yet:

For I do know the state...

*Cannot with safety cast him
for he's embarked with such loud
reason to the Cyprus wars,
Which even now stand in act, that for
their souls. Another of his fathom they
have none to lead their business*

(I. 1 11s. 148-154).

Blacks as Sex-Obsessed

The main object of Iago's jealousy is his imagined belief in Othello's sexual prowess, which he believes is what has attracted Desdemona to marry Othello. This notion of the blackman's sexual prowess has metamorphosed into a myth, borne out of racial hatred, that only emphasizes the baseness and beastliness of the blackman. The highpoint of this myth is that the average blackman nurses the obsession of his secret dream of ravishing his white master's wife or daughter. Fanon characterises this myth from the colonizer's point of view as follows:

*The look that the native turns on
the settler's town... is a look of
lust... it expresses his dreams of
possession... to sleep in the settler's
bed with his wife if possible... (Fanon 30)*

In view of this, Iago uses sexual language and imagery to give Brabantio a disgusting picture of his daughter's

alliance with the Moor:

*Even now... an old black ram
Is tupping your white ewe. Arise,...
Or else the devil will make a grandsire
of you. Arise I say! (I.1, 11s. 89-93).*

When this seems not to be making the right impact he follows it up with yet another image of sexual bestiality:

*Zounds, Sir... you'll have your
daughter covered with a Barbary horse;
You'll have your nephews neigh to you,
You'll have coursers for cousins, and jennets
for germans (I. 1, iis. 109, III-113).*

The horse is known for its sexual prowess, particularly the male breed called "Studs". This is the height of denigration for the blackman. This explains the epithet ascribed to Othello as "Lascivious Moor" by Roderigo (I. 1, 11. 127).

It is in this respect that the Moor is made to see himself as a goat (another symbol of sensuality) through Iago's influence. Before now it was Iago who used the image to describe the imagined adultery between Desdemona and Cassio,

*Were they as prime as goats,
As hot as monkeys. (III.3.400).*

Soon it is Othello who uses the term in exasperation when his wife seems to be happy at the prospect that Cassio has been made governor of the island of Cyprus. In exasperation and jealousy he shouts:

Goats and Monkeys!

But he soon applies the image to himself when he tells Iago:

Exchange me for a goat.

It is also in relation to this baseness for which the goat is an image that Iago tells Roderigo:

*I would change my humanity
with a baboon. (I. 3, IIs. 312).*

Implied in the image of the baboon is the idea of the clown, which is one way the white establishment regards a blackman. This was no less so in Elizabethan England as it is now in the West.

Othello having been attributed with unnatural sexual powers, more in the image of a stud, is consistently regarded by Iago as a *cuckold*. He suspects the Moor as having cuckolded him, and presents this imagined offense as a cause of his hatred of the blackman:

*I hate the Moor,
And it is thought a broad that
'twixt my sheets*

*He's done my office. I know not
if't be true
But I, for mere suspicion in that
kind, Will do as if for surety
(I. 3, lls. 380-385).*

Iago's attitude here is re-emphasized in subsequent scenes:

*But partly led to diet my revenge
For that I do suspect the lusty Moor
Hath leaped into my seat, the thought
whereof doth, like a poisonous mineral,
gnaw my inwards
(II. 1, lls. 285-288).*

It is this underlying attitude of Iago's that informs white attitude towards blacks who are suspected of raping white women, whether true or false.

Merely on such flimsy grounds, a blackman loses his life, because the offense of a liaison with a white woman gives the black offender the opportunity of reaping where he did not sow, therefore he is regarded as a thief in all respects. For example, for winning the love of Desdemona, first, Iago, and later her father Brabantio, regard Othello as a "thief":

Iago: *Awake! What, ho, Brabantio!
Thieves, thieves!*

*Look to your house, your daughter,
and your bags! Thieves, thieves.*

Brabantio: *What is the reason for this
terrible summons..*

Iago: *Zounds, Sir, you're robbed; for
shame, Put on your gown...
(I. 1, lls. 80-82; 83, 88; emphasis added).*

Again, as a result of the instigations above, when Brabantio in search of his daughter meets Othello, he also calls him "thief"; as in this dialogue:

Roderigo: *Signor, it is the Moor*

Brabantio: *Down with him, thief! ...
O thou foul thief! Where
has thou stowed my daughter?
(I. 2, lls. 56, 57, 62,
emphasis added).*

This leads us to the next logical stereotype about blacks held by the whites – witchcraft and superstition.

*Of a despised life closed in my breasts
By some vile forfeit of untimely death:
But he that hath the steerage of my course
Direct my sail (I, iv, 107-114).*

and Friar Lawrence's deep sigh of impotence when his plan to reunite Romeo and Juliet fails:

*A greater power than we can contradict
Hath thwarted our intents (V, vii, 153-154).*

are only two of the passages which dwell on men's awareness of a supernatural influence that has a decisive effect on their actions.

And not only do fateful accidents occur too: the sudden quarantine which keeps Friar John from delivering Friar Lawrence's all-important letter to Romeo but allows Balthazar unhindered immediate contact with Romeo to deliver his incorrect news is surely the most spectacular and sets the course of the play inevitably on a tragic path. Shakespeare also artfully works the dominant imagery of the play into the entire scheme of the evocation of the fate of the protagonists as doomed. He expresses his consciousness of the tragic import of the headless speed with which Romeo and Juliet fly into each other's arms by shortening the duration of the action of the story from nine months in his source: Arthur Brooke's poem, "The Tragical History of Romeus and Juliet" (1562) to a mere five days. But even more significantly, as some commentators have noted, he weaves a rich texture of imagery of darkness,

forming the fateful and brutal background in which Romeo and Juliet are embroidered in their essential role as redeeming light. And in these three strands, not in a correspondence to the fulfillment of an ancient prophecy in *Oedipus the King* does the concept of fate in *Romeo and Juliet* inhere. Character is sovereign in *Romeo and Juliet* because youth in its enthusiasm, its defiance of old taboos, in its zeal for puns, sonnets, fighting, loving defies all restrictions and is caught in the trap of fateful circumstances. It however in the end redeems the corrupt old world of the Montagues and Capulets. Hence J. Stampfer has noted on the catharsis of the play:

*In Romeo and Juliet, redemption comes
when the tragic hero affirms the
traditional frame of values of society,
love, an appropriate marriage, peace,
and the like, though society has, in
practice, ceased to follow them. The result is
to enhance the sancta of society
by the sacrifice of life itself (156).*

But *King Lear* not *Romeo and Juliet*, is Shakespeare's supreme statement on man and is in many ways an epitome of the tragic vision. All the abundance and chaos of reverberative speculations about the guiding force of the universe and lack of the revelation of any coherent pattern of divine purpose are of the very substance of which tragic terror is created. Neither the gods referred to, nor the friends nor nature is sufficiently vitalized to achieve an illumination of the indeterminacy of the human situation.

Blacks as Practitioners of Witchcraft and Superstition

For this stunning success with Desdemona, the white society suspect Othello of having used the aid of witchcraft and mind-changing drugs. Brabantio asks Roderigo at first:

*Is there not charms
By which the property of youth and maidhood
May be abused? Have you not read, Roderigo,
Of some such things? (I. 1, II. 172-175).*

On meeting Othello, while in search of his daughter. Brabantio accuses him of witchcraft:

*O thou foul thief! Where hast thou
stowed my daughter?
Dammed as thou art, thou hast enchanted
her: For I'll refer me to all things of sense,
If she in chains of magic were not bound...
Judge me the world, if 'this not gross in
Sense. That thou hast practised on her
with foul charms
Abused her delicate youth with drugs or minerals,
that weakens motion...
I therefore apprehend... thee
For an abuser of the world, a practiser
Of acts inhibited, and out of warrant.
(I. 2, iis. 62-65, 72-75, 77-79).*

In the Venetian senate, Brabantio stands again to re-emphasize his accusations of his daughter being

*Abused... and corrupted
By spells and medicines bought of
mountebanks.*

(I. 3 II. 60-61).

This stock attitude of the white racist world is as base today as it was in ages past. Mention can be made of what happened during the 1990 world cup in Italy. Cameroon, a black nation fared so well against all expectations that all the whites ganged up with the western press to accuse Cameroon of using "black magic" and "witch doctors" in order to win her matches. Therefore, wherever a black man succeeds he is likely to have used magical spells.

In relation to the above, blacks are seen as superstitious people. Blacks themselves give colour and strength to this biased notion by their actions. Othello is a case in point. When his wife loses the handkerchief he gave her as a token of love, he attaches a superstitious story as to why the handkerchief should have been kept safe (III.4, iis. 55-75). This superstitious tendency of Othello's is commented upon. Muir in his introduction, says of Othello:

*He is a christian, but we are conscious
that he has not entirely outgrown some
pagan superstitions (33).*

Much later, Muir comments on the theme of superstition and witchcraft as follows:

The theme of witchcraft, first introduced by Brabantio to account for the unnaturalness of his daughter's marriage is taken up by Iago in the temptation scene, and finds its most memorable expression in Othello's account of the handkerchief. The fact that the handkerchief was not merely a love-token and the Moor's first gift to Desdemona, but that it was thought also to have magical properties, goes far to explain why he should be perplexed in the extreme by its loss. It also shows, perhaps, that pagan superstitions have not been entirely eradicated by the Moor's baptism (43; emphasis added).

Blacks as Irrational People

The blackman as represented here by Othello, is depicted as being irrational. In this regard, he is shown to be jealous to the extreme, without seeking for plausible evidence; he is easily influenced; he is ignorant of most things, and lastly, has the irrational desire or lust to spill blood including those of his loved ones, for misconceived ideals.

Othello is extremely jealous when roused to it by Iago, his shadow. Iago poisons Othello with the evil brewing in himself, and it is a matter of time before Othello starts suspecting his wife of **adultery** with Cassio. Even though he hankers after "proof" from Iago, he nevertheless

believes what he has heard and soon begins to act on it. As a result, Othello soon loses interest in his duties and on his vocation as a soldier (III. 3, iis. 342-354). In his jealousy and rage, the dark bloody side of Othello comes to the fore, while his noble aspect is submerged. What dominates Othello's mind now is the irrational desire to kill even the object of his love, as he says:

*Even so my bloody thoughts with violent
Pace, shall ne'er look back, ne'er ebb
To humble love, till that a capable
and wide revenge swallow them up
(III. 3, IIs. 454-457).*

To him now, Desdemona is no longer the "fair warrior" (II. 1, l. 175), but the "fair devil" (III. 3, l. 476). The lust to kill is echoed in Othello's insane babble:

O, blood, blood, blood! (III.3 l.448).

At this point he has been reduced to a beast.

In reality, Othello's basic ignorance of women and the ways of the world has been taken advantage of by Iago. Of this ignorance, Othello himself admits:

*Rude am I in my speech
And little blessed with the soft phrase
of peace;...
And little of this great world can I speak
More than pertains to feats of broil and
Battle (I. 3.IIs. 81-82, 85-86).*

Therefore, this gives Iago the basis to exploit Othello's basic ignorance of the Venetian (white) women, especially the fact of their moral looseness, to his advantage. This is brought out when he advises Othello:

Iago: *I speak not yet of proof. Look to your wife;
observe her well with Cassio. Wear your eye
thus: not jealous, nor secure... I know our
country disposition well: In Venice they do
let God see the pranks. They dare not show
their husbands; their best conscience.
Is not to leave 't undone,, but keep 't unknown.*

Othello: *Dost thou say so?*

Iago: *She did deceive her father,
marrying you,...
(11.3. 194-196, 197-204 emphasis added).*

Having swallowed the bait of Iago, Othello's situation becomes tragic as he vacillates between rage and pity for Desdemona's supposed fall, and his proposed bloody intent upon her:

*A fine woman, a fair woman!
O Sweet woman!... Ay let her rot and
perish and be dammed... for she shall not
live.. No, my heart is turned to stone...
O, the world hath not a **sweater** creature!
She might lie by an **emperor's** side and command him*

*tasks... but yet the pity
of it, Iago, the pity of it, Iago!...
I will chop her into messes! (IV.1. 177-199).*

Language

The view that blacks are base, irrational and easily influenced is underscored by the frequency of animal imagery that suffuse the play. Most of these animal images are spoken by Iago (I – III) and later found in the speeches of Othello himself. Typical of these images are those of baboons (I. 3. 311-312) monkey (IV. 1) asses (I.3. 393-398) and goats (III.3).

Also, stress is laid on the word "moor" or "black" in the speech of the characters. This is to emphasize the fact that whatever is black is ugly, no matter how useful. For example, the term "moor" is used about eighteen times in Act I to refer to Othello, and about fourteen times in Act II. Also, the term "black" though used sparingly, has a strong impact. For example, it is used to draw a distinction with "fair", as in when a senator tells Brabantio, Othello's father-in-law:

*Your son-in-law is far more
fair than black (I.3. 287).*

But this comment is ironic because at the end black Othello (II. 3.29) does not only find himself the slave of his white/master Iago, but also dies as the blacker devil (V.2.

133). This racist posture is emphasised by a critic, Rymer who says that "the morals to be drawn from the play include:

*to warn all maidens of quality
without their parents 'consent',
not run away with blackamoors (Muir 12).*

I have attempted in this essay to show that Othello has been a victim of white racial prejudice, no thanks to Shakespeare. Reading the text one finds that racism is a psychological phenomenon that is buried in the deep inner recesses of the collective unconscious of the racial memory. This memory assumes the form of negative myths and animal symbols. Therefore, Shakespeare was a racist; his racist imagination found expression in the creation of Iago, as the "shadow", the literary expression of that "heart of darkness" which is white racism, which has been responsible for the continued denigration and destruction of the blackman as represented by the noble Othello in the play of that title.

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7 Shakespeare's *Richard II*: Divine Right of Kings Revisited

Julius Ogu.

Shakespeare's *Richard II* was written in 1595 and was very popular because it dealt with the current political events of the time. One of the cardinal beliefs of the Elizabethan age was the divine right of kings. Rulers ruled by divine ordinance and cannot be deposed by subjects. But by the time *Richard II* was composed there was a growing change in English thought from divine right of kings to emphasis on human obligation for reasonable action. Kings and rulers were also expected to exhibit social responsibility in the use of authority. A certain amount of reasonableness was expected of a ruler.

People were therefore interested in the fall of the king, the ruler, from the right of his power to misery and possible disgrace. The play, *Richard II* traces the rise and fall of king Richard's fortune, how he was deposed by one of his subjects. Primarily, we are dealing with a historical play treating political issues in the England of Queen Elizabeth I. The reign of this monarch was characterized by plots, civil strife, coups and counter-coups. One is here reminded of the history of our country Nigeria during years of military dictatorship. One of the questions posed by the play is whether it is ever right to depose a king-God's anointed- no matter how badly he rules.

Shakespeare is more interested in the consequences that are likely to befall him who **deposes his king**. The ambiguity we see in Shakespeare's answer to the doctrine of divine right of kings is understandable only in terms of the unprecedented shift from this strongly helped doctrine. To emphasise on the responsibility of the ruler who as the highest in the chain of being among men was there as a role model. The Elizabethan high conception of man and by implication, of the king, is illustrated in Hamlet's soliloquy, an ecomia of what man was in his prelapsarian state:

*What a piece of work is a man: how noble in reason;
How infinite in faculty; in form and
moving how express and admirable;
In action how like an angel;
In apprehension how like a god;
The beauty of the world, the paragon of animals.*

This expression of Renaissance humanism is an assertion of the dignity of man against what was seen as the asceticism of medieval misanthropy. These ideas of man were quite taken for granted by the ordinary educated Elizabethan of Shakespeare's time and were extensively embodied in the writings of the age.

The king as the primate of his class is expected to excel in his own role for the dignity of all creation. This opinion was consequent on the period's theory of the chain of being; Jillyard, writes:

God is first among the angels

King is first among men

Sun is first among the stars

Lion is first among animals

Dolphin is first among the fishes

Eagle is first among the birds

Rose is first among the flowers (43).

One cannot transcend the terms of one's class or one's humanity. A king that does this lends himself to disturbing the idea of a related universe. If given this environment, to challenge a king's disposition becomes an act against God. What is the subject to do to such an incompetent and irresponsible ruler? This question gained much prominence during the reign of King Edward VI and culminated in the execution of his son, King Charles I.

Shakespeare's *Richard II* taken from English political history, deals with the deposition of king Richard II. Shakespeare got the story from Helinshed's Chronicles but made certain changes to suit his artistic as well as dramatic purposes. The structure of the play is centered on Richard II and marks how the king descends from his great height as the king of a rich and powerful kingdom to the depths of a prisoner of his own people. He is shown as a man incapable of meeting the demands of his high office as king. One of his loyal subjects Salisbury seeing this rapid decline exclaims:

*Ah Richard, with the eyes of heavy mind,
I see thy glory like a shooting star
Fall to the base earth from the firmament
(11. iv. 18 – 20).*

Right from the first act of the play we begin to see the kind of king Richard is. Richard's uncle, the dying John of Gaunt enumerates for the reader the weak points that will later lead to the downfall of the king. In a speech which has come to stand as an apostrophe to England (11.ii 33.70), Gaunt outlines Richard's faults. He is unkingly, an egotist, a dreamer. He not only does not know how to exercise his power as king, but also in most cases fails to exercise it when he should. We notice this in the treatment of the case between Bolingbroke and Mowbray. Richard lacks justice, he is arbitrary and self-willed, does not follow proper procedure in handling the case. Richard is accused of being an extortionist who takes his subjects property with impunity. For instance, it is very unjust to deprive Bolingbroke of his inheritance at the death of his father. The Duke of York sees king Richard's act of dispossessing Bolingbroke as undermining his own authority. After all, he inherited the throne from his father:

*Seek you to seize, gripe into your hands
The royalties and rights of
Banished Hereford? ...
Is not his heir a well deserving son?
....for how art thou a king
But by fair sequence and succession?
(11.i.189 – 199).*

If we must see **Richard II** as Shakespeare's attempt to examine thoroughly and probe man's responsibility in the use of authority vis-à-vis the prevailing acceptance of the divine right of kings, we must examine in detail old Gaunt's dying prophesy. The series of images used to identify the major faults of Richard appear in all the subsequent acts and scenes of the play to account for the deposition of the king. We will divide the speech into three parts: **1st part** (11.i.33-41) deals with Richard's character as king and the images employed show the young king's prodigality, his fiery and destructive life style. He is compared to a storm and a horseman who spurs his horse too much. He is so greedy that he chokes himself in the process with food. He is a cormorant who devours himself:

*His rash fierce blaze of riot cannot last,
For violent fires soon burn out themselves;
....but sudden storms are short;
He tires betimes that spurs too fast betimes.
With eager feeding food doth choke the feeder;
Light vanity, insatiate cormorant,
Consuming means, soon preys upon itself
(11.i.33-39).*

The 2nd Part (11.i.46-61) shows Richard as unworthy of England where he is described as father, lord, protector and redeemer of English people. Since Richard, who as head of state, should embody these qualities but does not have them, he is unworthy of the head of state by implication. He is therefore a failure as king:

*This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England
This house, this teeming womb of royal kings,
Is now leased out, I die pronouncing it
Like to a tenement or pelting farm.*

The 3rd Part (11.1.62-70) uses images of financial irresponsibility to show how the misrule of Richard is seriously hurting the well-being of England and that of her subjects. England is sick because of the king's financial mismanagement, consequently the king is now expendable so as to cure the nation of this malady:

*England ... is now bound with shame,
With inky blots and rotten parchment bonds*

This speech is used by Shakespeare to prepare us for the events to follow, the coup against Richard by Bolingbroke. This speech must be viewed against Richard's enunciation of the Tudor doctrine of divine right of kings and its two aspects.

The first is that no king can be deposed by his subjects; and the second is that God will defend his divinely ordained king by miraculous means: "No anointed king can be deposed by man" and "God will defend his divinely ordained king by miraculous means, for "Heaven still guards the right" (11.iii.62).

In Richard II, Shakespeare does not seem to be taking sides in the face of two antithetical strains of the divine right of kings and personal and moral responsibility. Rather

than attempt to reconcile them, he seems to have brought them into a final harmony. This is not a small feat. Paul A. Jorgensen (1975:229) comments that:

*Richard II probably required more
wary thought than Shakespeare ever
before or ever after had to give a play;
and much of the wariness was demanded
by the means through which Richard
loses and Bolingbroke wins.*

Richard's two proclamations are hotly debated although not called in doubt by the events in the play. God does not intervene through any miracles to help Richard. The impression created is in the words of Jorgensen, it is not that:

*A Sacrosanct theory is being ridiculed.
Instead, a nostalgic, almost discredited
theory is voiced by a mistaken character,
one who is repeatedly wrong in his point
of view (229).*

One is inclined to see the stance of Shakespeare more as a demonstration of the tragedy of a character than a repudiation of direct divine intervention in warfare on behalf of the king. Human responsibility plays a vital role in determining failure or success in war. The irony of it all is that it is a religious spokesman, the Bishop of Carlisle, who openly repudiates pure divine right of God as proclaimed by Richard:

*The means that heaven yields must
be embraced.
And not neglected, else if heaven would
And we will not, heaven's offer we refuse,
The proffer'd means of succour and redress
(111.ii, 29-32).*

Accordingly, nationalistic emotionalism and dependence on fortune had to be thoroughly examined by a dramatist serious about his audience's experience and the principles behind the issues of war and victory. The king's divine right to rule is not questioned but his moral responsibility and human resourcefulness in battle is now being emphasized, a dramatic change in the Elizabethan point of view towards divine fortune and man's natural military preparedness and resourcefulness in war. There is a growing persistence of character responsibility over divine intervention. **Richard II** is Shakespeare's attempt at rendering in play the slow but unavoidable alteration in thought, embodying the nature of divine ordinance and the extent of human contribution, and the relationship between the first cause and secondary causes. T. S. Eliot a renowned twentieth century literary writer is conscious of Shakespeare's nascent awareness of the new human role and resourcefulness:

*What influence the work of... Machiavelli... seems
to me to exist in common on that time and
most conspicuously through Shakespeare,
is an influence towards a kind of self
consciousness and self dramatization*

*of the Shakespearean hero, of whom Hamlet
is only one. It seems to make, even if not
a very agreeable one, in human history, or
progress (119).*

From Act III **Richard II** progresses with a contest between what Richard should be and what he actually is, between what he should do as king and what he does. Side by side with this is the portrayal of Bolingbroke as a man of action who consolidates his growing power day by day. Scene iv of this act is a turning point in the tragedy of Richard. The ordinary people represented by gardeners moralize on his action as king and ruler and find him wanting:

*Why should we, in the compass of a pole,
Keep law and form and due proportion,
showing, as in a model, our firm estate,
when our sea-walled garden, the whole land,
is full of weeds; her fairest flowers choked
up, ... and her wholesome herbs
swarming with caterpillars' (111.iv, 40-47).*

The gardeners see Richard's mismanagement as morally unjustifiable, his inefficiency and negligence very reprehensible. Shakespeare's ambivalence could not allow him to come out openly to justify Richard's deposition. As a later play of Shakespeare it shows his intellectual development; his alertness to the changing theory of God and war; to the change in religious and political attitude. Instead of giving easy answers to religious or philosophical

questions, Shakespeare found himself striving after artistic and intellectual resolution. The result according to Jorgensen, is that "he was never comfortably bound by a tradition, any more than he was by a source"(222). David Bevington observes in this regard that "the burning issues of the 1590's were relevant to Shakespeare's career as a dramatist, not in terms of individual identities but of principles" (3 - 5).

In act iv, the deposition of Richard gives Shakespeare the opportunity to express one of his themes in the play; the consequences of deposing a king. Bishop Carlisle's address to Bolingbroke and Northumberland the leader of the rebels is worth studying in detail:

*What subject can give sentence on his king?
And shall the figure of God's majesty,
His captain, steward, deputy-elect,
Anointed, crowned, planted many years
Be judged by subject and inferior breath
(IV.1, 121-128).*

He then goes on to enumerate the grave consequences of deposition:

*My Lord Hereford here, whom you call king,
Is a foul traitor to proud Hereford's king,
And if you crown him, let me prophesy:
The blood of English shall manure the ground,
And future ages groan for this foul act;
Peace shall go sleep with Turks and Infidels,*

*And in this seat of peace tumultuous wars
Shall kin with kin and kind with kind confound:
Disorder, horror, fear and mutiny,
Shall here inhabit... (IV.1.134-143).*

Deposition, or what we today call coups, is not the solution to the problem of misrule. Coups breed discontent and open a pandora's box for future coups and depositions and perpetual strife in the kingdom. This aspect of the play has been brought home to us in Nigeria by years of military intervention as well as misrule.

One other aspect of the fourth act which is pertinent to Shakespeare's artistic achievement is the contrast drawn between Richard and Bolingbroke, and the humiliation of a king. An image used effectively here is that of two buckets on each side of a rope: while one goes down, the other goes up. Richard falls and Bolingbroke rises. Richard with his personal belief and trust in the Tudor doctrine of the divine right of kings does not succeed while Bolingbroke who seems to believe in none of these but in **showd steel**, "**hard bright steel**" prevails. Is the author advocating Machiavellianism in Bolingbroke's success or is he merely exposing Richard's acceptance of Tudor governmental and theological doctrine to ridicule. Irving Ribner, sees Bolingbroke as "**a true Machiavellian**" (177). It seems that Shakespeare is content with an ambivalent stance while allowing even a clergyman Bishop of Carlisle, as we saw earlier, to repudiate the fast-dying theory of God's immediate action on behalf of kings and recognize second causes.

In fact, the gods, as Wilson Knight has noted, lack poetic conviction (184). There is simply no mortal pattern in the operation of fate. There is no possible resolution to Lear's supreme riddle asked in a picked moment of utter petrification:

*Why should a dog, a horse, a rat, have life,
And thou no breath at all?
(V, iii, 305-306).*

The search in the dark universe of *King Lear* for God in our habitual conception of him in Good, in Love, and in Light, is simply doomed to frustration. The possible and rewarding search is the search for the pattern of Lear's attitudes.

Lear's pilgrimage through life strikingly approximates Oedipus'. He too goes beyond the delusion of contemplating life in the pomp and the power and the tinsel of kingship to the bewildering recognition that the sober reality of man's fate is humiliation and death. The play opens in an enchanted but strictly illusory moment or ritual pomp and ceremony. But that is not of the essence of man or his communities. Hence Lear's symbolic renunciation of the lendings of kinship leads to his discovery of a second possible image and fate of man as animals in a state of nature preying on one another. He rages and laments. But going beyond his desire for the annihilation of man, all his work and the entire universe, Lear learns lowliness and love, and indeed to come to terms with man's fate. This dilation of his consciousness enhances his power to grasp the possibilities in human experience and thus induces his

compassionate reflection on the life of the poor:

*Poor naked wretches, whereso'er you are
That bide the pelting of this pitiless storm,
How shall your houseless heads and
unfed sides, your loop'd and
window'd raggedness, defend you
From seasons such as these? O! I have
ta'en too little care of this. Take physic
pomp; expose thy self to feel what
wretches feel.
That thou mayest shake the superflux
to them and show the Heavens more
just (III, iv, 28-38).*

But this third possible image of man in which there is a community of suffering and humility which blending with mercy, pity, and love has the human face divine is also shipwrecked. For Cordelia whose life is its animation dies. Her death causes Lear's final estrangement. And significantly he achieves reconciliation with the world only in the delusion of Cordelia's resurrection in his imagination. Lear dies happy. From egotism and virtual ignorance of the realities of the mortal condition, Lear awakens on the wheel of fire to a new consciousness of love and general spiritual regeneration. He discovers redeeming grace in the reconciliation to truth. Indeed the imagined resurrection of Cordelia is not to be until his own acceptance of life, so absolute that the very descent of death strikes him as no more than the tightening of his clothes. Lear's ecstatic cry on his discovery of the re-inspiration of Cordelia's corpse,

Richard, deposed, seems to have come to the same confusion as the scales fell off his eyes. He regards himself as a traitor with the rest of his deponents:

*I find myself a traitor with the rest...
When I do see the very look indeed
Where all my sins are writ, and that's myself
(IV.i. 248, 274-5).*

In prison, Richard is presented as having voluntarily deposed himself. Already there is talk of insurrection against Bolingbroke. Aumerle's rebellion may be suppressed, but the point made by Shakespeare is clear. Deposition brings rancour and rebellion, coups bring counter-coups. In one of his best speeches Richard outlines his deficiencies as king. He compares his position with the world at large as a kind of diversion, but sees how he failed and where he failed as king:

*And here have I the daintiess of ear
To check time broke in a disordered string
But, for the concord of my state and time,
Had not an ear to hear my true time broke.
I wasted time, and now doth time waste me
(V. v. 45-49).*

This speech is Richard's impressive self-awareness and also founded on the dual knowledge that all men are as corrupt and evil as himself but are perhaps less aware of their hypocritical stance. The playwright makes the divine

right of kings come face to face with the realization of private identity as something to be cultivated and appreciated. One can even suggest that Shakespeare is asserting the superiority of private identities to public roles.

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**Poverty in Nigeria: Responses to a Human
Predicament in a Literature.**

J. O. J. Nwachukwu – Agbada.

That land never knows peace
Where few have too much
And many none at all
- Niyi Osundare, "The Land of
Unease"

Poverty and its concomitants have pre-occupied the social scientist for as much as society and its configurative character have constituted his domain of discourse. However, approaches to the issue of destitution in society have varied in treatment, influenced by culture, race, creed, and especially ideology. A capitalist-cum-bourgeois examination of poverty would, for instance, point to low productivity, famine and natural disasters¹ as culpable phenomena to be tackled before nations can be rescued from permanent beggary and relegation. True to some extent as this analysis might prove, the socialist outlook sounds a different note.² In spite of the somewhat

rhetorical pre-occupation of scholars and thinkers as to which approach is preferable or which manner of reparation is best, the fact remains that there exists in post-colonial states such as Nigeria a gulf of wretchedness and want between such nations and their imperialist overlords just as there is a sordid and economic hiatus between individuals across nations.³ Frantz Fanon strikes our conscience with his, "what counts today, the question which is looming on the horizon, is the need for a redistribution of wealth. Humanity must reply to this question, or remain shaken to pieces by it" (98). He goes on to assert that "the wealth of the imperial countries is our wealth too.... For in a very concrete way Europe has stuffed herself inordinately with the gold and raw materials of the colonial countries: Latin America, China and Africa" (Fanon 102). Unfortunately, the collapse of the Soviet Union in the 1990s, a country that pursued socialist principles with vigour close to eighty years, seems to have attenuated the arguments of socialist methodologists. However, committed ideologues of the socialist order would blame the strategy of socialist implementation rather than its objective of ultimate vision of society. Our purpose in this paper is to underscore the concern of Nigerian literary writers to the

vexed issue of destitution rather than to pass value judgements on ideological prescriptions.

Let us ask, like Chinua Achebe, the monadnock of African literary creativity, once asked: "What has literature got to do with it?" What has literature got to do with poverty, social inequality, want, misery, social justice, and therefore of development of our physical and spiritual growth as a society? Achebe also offers the answer:

... I am saying that development or modernization is not merely or even primarily, a question of having lots of money to spend or blueprints drawn up by the best expert available; it is in a critical sense a question of the mind and the will. And I am saying that the mind and the will belongs first and foremost to the domain of stories. (Achebe, "Literature" 9).

Alcon and Bracher, for instance, observe in the formation of the oft-mentioned Greek character the influence of the ideals borne by the ancient stories of Achilles, Hector and Ulysses. In the same manner, "when the Anglo Saxons huddled around their hearth fires, stories of heroes like

Beowulf helped define them as a people, though articulating their values and defining their goals in relation to the cold, alien world around them" (350).

How have Nigerian writers reacted to the incidence of destitution, neglect, dehumanization, the slum culture and pauperization inherent in the Nigerian social system? The approach has varied among local creative writers, occasioned by their experience, education, outlook, social class origin, creed, ideology and culture. However, the most single influence on their appreciation of social issues in general seems to relate to the social situation in their time. Chinua Achebe, for example, devoted his early novels to teaching his African readers that "their past with all its imperfections – was not one long night of savagery from which the first Europeans acting on God's behalf delivered them" ("The Novelist" 45). Wole Soyinka, the Nobel Laureate, has often returned to the theme of power, to the notion that "human beings are simply cannibals all over the world so that their main preoccupation seems to be eating up one another" ("Interview" 173). Certainly in thematic concern Soyinka should have proved very useful towards our understanding of the problems of poverty and

want in the Nigerian society but for his language which the most affected – the poor and the poorly educated – would hardly follow.

But before we digress, it must be borne in mind that social worthiness is a revered value in the immediate settings of the works of both Achebe and Soyinka. Writing on the worldview of the Igbo – Achebe's setting – on poverty, Donatus Nwoga says,

Poverty is soul-killing because it makes the Igbo man depend on another, requires him to subject his identity to that of another... Not to be self-supporting makes poverty a terrible situation. But still, the essence of tragedy is in the personality it prescribes for the person before others, and becomes reality when that person becomes the object of ariri (insult) (56).

Even if N. A. Fadipe does not invest poverty among the Yoruba with the same spectral touch as Nwoga has done in his reference to the Igbo, private wealth is a cherished expectation in a Yoruba life. For instance, "individual property, however, means more to the Yoruba than

communal property... Indeed the Yoruba child is given at an early age every opportunity to acquire a sense of individual property "(194). In other words, personal welfare, meaningful living and all the associated forms of dignified existence are primarily a desire of members of these separate but united cultures even if we have not endorsed the acquisitive instinct which this drive might engender.

In Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, the hero is from his early childhood guided by a philosophy to achieve, to better his existence, and to surpass the meagre life of his father, Unoka. The welfare Okonkwo seeks after is personal and physical. The satisfaction he derives from the power of his arm naturally makes him a little proud and overbearing. The author informs us that Okonkwo "... had risen so suddenly from great poverty and misfortune to be one of the lords of the clan." Achebe further states that people were struck by "Okonkwo's brusqueness in dealing with less successful men." This is a capitalist community combining materialism with a tinge of morality. The old man who says, "Looking at a king's mouth, one would think he never sucked at his mother's breast" uses the proverb in good taste or so we are told. But of course when Okonkwo

shouts on Osugo, the less successful, reminding him that "this meeting is for men," the oldest man at the gathering "said sternly that those whose palm-kernel were cracked for them by a benevolent spirit should not forget to be humble," to which those present acquiesced. From the foregoing, we are meant to understand that the community believes that fortune and welfare are god-sent. However, throughout the novel, Achebe proves them wrong as he systematically shows that "anyone who knew his (Okonkwo's) grim struggle against poverty and misfortune could not say that he had been lucky" (*Things* 19). Okonkwo has achieved greatness but this greatness is personal, and as the events in the tale bear out, his wealth does not endure because the material salvation he worked for is essentially private.

His life had been ruled by a great passion – to become one of the lords of the clan. That had been his life-spring. And he had all but achieved it. He had been cast out of his clan like a fish on to a dry, sand beach, panting. (Things 92)

The same earnestness in terms of the search for personal welfare is quite noticeable in two

other Achebe characters – Obi Okonkwo of *No Longer at Ease* and Chief Nanga of *A Man of the People*. Obi comes from a poor household. Originally sent abroad to study Law by communal effort he later decided to read English. We are not convinced as to why he should have done this, but we do know that the community had wanted him to read Law so as to stand in for it in land cases which it had hoped to commence with its neighbours. Poverty must have made him accept the community's condition that he read legal studies even though he had always had a great passion for the literary discipline. Dogged by poverty, he comes back from England, decides he will live cleanly but the pressures of life, the need to satisfy such material demands as paying the school fees of his younger brothers and sisters, paying his rents, paying his house-help, maintaining his car, paying his electric and water bills, made him succumb to the easy way-out – bribery:

Obi was finding it more and more impossible to live on what was left of his forty-seven pounds ten after he had paid twenty to the Umuofia Progressive Union and sent ten to his parents. Even now he had no idea

where John's school fees for next term would come from. No, one could not say he had no need of money. (No Longer 81).

If a forty-seven pounds salary could not do for Obi Okonkwo on his return from England, we ought as well to pity the community members who in spite of their own wretchedness had stretched themselves in order to express their solidarity and support for his enterprise as they pressed:

Their presents into his palm, to buy a pencil with, or an exercise book or a loaf of bread for the journey, a shilling there and a penny there – substantial presents in a village where money was so rare, where men and women toiled from year to year to wrest a meagre living from an unwilling and exhausted soil. (No Longer 10).

This is Achebe's clear recognition of the fate of the rural dweller in Nigeria; it is a fate which still dogs the rural man several years after the publication of the novel.

Achebe has not told us that it is the apparent poverty of the Anata villagers in *Man of the People* that makes them at one stroke condemn Josiah's ambition to 'make' money with blind Azoge's stick, and at another say, "Let them (local politicians) eat... after all when white men used to do all the eating did we commit suicide?" (161). In other words, the villagers see nothing wrong in the embezzlement of public funds whereas Josiah's suspected ambition at once pricks their conscience. According to Odili Samalu, the chief character of the novel,

My father's words struck me because they were the very same words the villagers of Anata had spoken of Josiah, the abominated trader. Only in their case the words had meaning. The owner was the village, and the village had a mind; it could say no to sacrilege. But in the affairs of the nation there was no owner, the laws of the village became powerless. (A Man 107).

The fact is that poverty, neglect on the part of the country's leadership, lack of a systematic plan to integrate the people, to give them a sense of

belonging, constitute the roots of intense cynicism which the Anata villagers glaringly exhibit. If Chief Nanga, Odili Samalu, Max, Chief Oko, Josiah and a host of other characters in *A Man of the People* have played what E. N. Obiechina calls "teaching politics" (57) rather than infuse their actions with the right dose of morality it is because the capitalist trends in this society make it impossible for them to do so. Morality is fostered by social justice, equity, a sense of social and economic security as well as a patriotic zeal arising from a feeling of belonging generated by the society in which men live out their lives. Here Ngugi Wa Thiongo's question become appropriate:

Which do you change first in a society – its politico-economic base or the morality of individual men and women. (Homecoming 54) .

In Soyinka's early work, Biodun Jeyifo has picked bones with the failure of the writer to identify himself with the direct contents of class struggle as the motive force of history. Rather than do this, argues Jeyifo, Soyinka has "so far ... been concerned with the 'symbolic forms; also so far, in literature at least, he has not clearly and

unambiguously represented dialectical possibilities and revolutionary options" (62). Jeyifo would not accept an art or literature which "exists only for passive contemplation, for individual morale uplift" (60). One can, with a similar stroke, describe all works before the Civil War even though Soyinka has again and again, shown that he possesses a powerful imagination; and that he has a profound insight into the fundamental issues dictating the conflicts and contradictions in this African society. However, without a desire to say that these other writers have not done us a favour in their respective visionary roles as creative writers, one would like to point out that when they have ventured into presenting us with the menace of poverty, destitution and neglect in Nigerian communities, they have not sufficiently struck our ire of giving this social anathema the central focus that it deserves. Yet poverty stares us in the face as we drive through the city, return the greetings by neighbours or members of the extended family or desire manual help in our gardens or kitchens.

One or two early Nigerian writers have tried to give the impression that they write for themselves; that they feed their own feelings first before those of their audience. Hear Soyinka:

...in the actual writing, I don't think I need bother my head or anybody need bother their heads at all about the audience, whether Nigerian or the European ("Interview" 177).

One wonders whether Soyinka would still want to associate himself with such an opinion several years after he had uttered it. Okigbo who later made his poetry accessible to the local audience once haughtily said: "I am writing for other poets all over the world to read and see whether they can share in my experience ... I don't care for applause..." (135). Had he lived longer than he did, perhaps he would have reasoned differently, given the sudden and immense twist in the diction, concern and passion evident in his *Path of Thunder* poems.

Having taken some of the older writers to task as to the extent they have demonstrated their concern with the gargantuan social malaise of wretchedness and social disparity, one would like to turn to the newer writers or, put more neatly, post-war writings. For to insist on the tag 'newer writers' is to exclude, for instance, the tremendous artistic perspicacity which Soyinka displays in his post-war novel, *Season of Anomy*, who though

himself is an 'older' writer, has continued to infuse his vision with a diversity which only sensitivity can ensure. Post-war writing has been greatly influenced by the trauma of the war, the poor performance of our political leaders and the need to relate directly to the poor or the poorly educated majority whose fortunes had been toyed with by the elite class. Not only did the language of Nigerian literature change its hitherto high browness to 'common speech', its concern moved from a "preoccupation with personal reflection and alienation" (Maduakor 55) to concrete issues of direct political and social relevance to the people. "The life of the people", insists Mao Tse Tung, "is always a mine of the raw materials for literature and art, materials in their natural form, materials that are crude, but most vital, rich and fundamental" (81). How then will a writer be blind to this possibility and then proceed to visionize over sometimes abstract, imperceptible concepts and earn our respect for it? For Ngugi wa Thiong'o "no writer of imaginative literature from the very best to the moderately significant can really avoid the big issues of the day, for literature to the extent that it is a mirror into man's nature must reflect social reality or certain aspects of social reality" (*Writers in Politics* 74). He then goes on to elucidate on what this entails:

What we are talking about is whether or not a writer's imaginative leap to grasp reality is aimed at helping in the community's struggle for a certain exploitative relations – the relevance of literature in our daily struggle for the right and security to bread, shelter, clothes and song, the right of a people to the products of their own sweat (75).

A literary perspective in Nigeria has emerged demarcated as we have noted – by the 'season of anomy' which the Civil War gave rise to. Social issues predominate this vintage of writing because the writers of this epoch are aware that "it is not true that one writes for oneself." Writing, says Jean-Paul Sartre, is "the joint effort of author and reader which brings upon the scene that concrete and imaginary object which is the work of the mind. There is no art except for and by others" (29-30). This recent trend in Nigerian writing has advanced public advocacy beyond the scope and depth of first generation Nigerian literature to include attention to immediate social and economic problems. A careful analysis reveals a close "association of sensibility" – to employ T. S. Eliot – between much of recent Nigerian

writing and the East African literary tradition. This is perhaps due to the similarity in the developmental configuration of the two areas. To begin with, the flourishing of the literature of social angst in East Africa had its roots in the colonial experience and inheritance in the region. The tone of the education bequeathed to the indigenes and the social disparity arising from the lopsided distribution of social and economic means led to what Ezenwa-Ohaeto has described as "the erection of the structures that generate disadvantages in the society" ("Utopia" 9). One of these structures was the legalistic but immoral appropriation of the people's natural resources which, though was not experienced in such massive scale in Nigeria as much as in the oriental part of Africa, had its parallel in Nigeria's allocation of nearly all her material and financial resources to the few urban settlements, resulting in a sharp migration to her towns and cities. This encouraged early enough the post-colonial elite culture which to date has become so much rooted. Added to this was the impact of the Civil War, the oil wealth era, the capitalistic economic structures, the hussle for political brinkmanship in the four experiences of party politics, the creation of military power brokerage in the country as well as the gradual acceptance of certain newer values

indeed seems to stress, coming in the same breath as his total acquiescence, that the resurrection is a consequence of his own achievement of peace.

That Shakespeare leans Lear's final redemption on a delusion is amazing but absolutely illustrative. It indicates the completeness in terms of which Lear's salvation has to be worked out in this existence, since the province of tragedy is man's immersion in time, not eternity. Indeed, insisting on the essential imbecility and unresolved chaos of the Lear universe, Stampfer has sought the catharsis of the play beyond the transfiguration of joy at Lear's death. He sees it instead in the beholder's participation and release, by the ritual of drama, in a vision of life in which man even after full repentance and penance, and rise to the tender regard of sainthood still fails to achieve salvation "because the partner of his covenant may be neither grace nor the balance of law, but malignity, intransigence, or chaos" (160). The tragic pilgrimage in Lear may assume the figurations of a religious revelation. But it is not one. In fact its great promise to be a purgatorial experience ends in a final illumination that ultimately denies the christian revelation of election to divine bliss after penance on the wheel of fire.

But if Shakespeare's tragedies constitute a vehement declaration of death as the ultimate sober reality of man's fate, Andre Malraux's obsession with the appointment of that experience as the ultimate date in the human calendar culminates in his conception of man's life itself as fatality. Old Gisors, part of whose role in *Man's Estate*, a novel in

which Malraux's refrains from authorial comments, is the articulation of Malraux's philosophic position, says:

...it does not take nine months to make a man, it takes fifty years—fifty years of sacrifice, of determination, of ---so many other things! And when that man has been achieved, when there is no childishness left in him, nor any adolescence when he is truly, utterly, a man—the only thing he is good for is to die (347).

The inevitability of death expressed in this passage repeats Pascal's famous image of the human condition from which, as many commentators have observed, Malraux chose the title of his novel and in terms of which the latter weaves the presiding imagery:

Let us imagine a number of men in chains, and all condemned to death, and some of these men having their throats cut every day in sight of their fellows, and those who remain recognizing their own fate in that of their companions and, as they wait their turn, staring at each other full of anguish and without hope. Such is the picture of man's fate. (426).

founded mainly on materialistic precepts. (Nwachukwu-Agbada, "The Eighties" 89)

This is perhaps why new Nigerian poets – more than the writers in the other literary genres – have directed their artistic muzzle at the unbalanced distribution of social resources as well the abnormal social trends which society for a long time has failed to redress. The aura of urgency and anger in post-war poetry has in turn led to speculations as to the possible Marxist 'infiltration' into Nigerian poetry,⁴ the knock Marxism has recently received notwithstanding. Whether this poetic trend will endure is left to conjecture but for now we should like to identity the new Nigerian poet with a peculiar tenor. It is doubtful if the post-war poet of social commentary in Nigeria will like to associate himself completely with Gerald Moore's notion of the poet being one whose voice is for "the triumphing warrior ... the man under his heel ... the deposed prince, the widow and the orphan" (10). In truth the recent Nigerian poet will have more affinity for "the widow and the orphan" than for "the triumphing warrior" and "the deposed prince". More than Moore's somewhat eclectic role of the poet, Osofisan's praxis would seem to define the preoccupation of this brand of poetry in Nigeria:

The poet naturally is the citizen who experiences at its most poignant this physical and spiritual hurt (of the ordinary man) and tames it into a song of anguish. ("The Quality of Hurt" 45).

The 'song of anguish' is precisely at the centre of Ofeimun's "How Can I Sing?" The poet here is shown to be a very sensitive individual who bears the burden of anger as he beholds his fellow citizens suffering in a lacklustre social environment. Not like some other people, this poet cannot blind himself "to putrefying carcasses in the market places/pulling giant vultures from the sky" (*Poet Lied* 3). These social aberrations which have caused the poet-protagonist "ingrained sorrow" will not allow him to "drink from/the gourd you hold to my lips" (3). As an artist who believes that "ultimately .. all truths need good fist (Osofisan "Interview" 18), Ofeimun invokes "a garland of subversive litanies" to answer these morbid landscapes." This poem, therefore, becomes not only a kind of introit to his own poems, but also to all poems that have one thing or the other to quarrel with the country's social life and system. Alienation results from a system that is palpably inhuman. In Harry Garuba's

"Estrangement: Kano '78" (*Shadow* 7-9) the poet-protagonist is "estranged" by the new tone of society which, it appears, comes to him in sudden realization. The poem achieves its impact by the skilful manner in which the poet is able to depict poverty and deprivation before contrasting it with the general malaise of which "businessmen, professionals, prophets, professors and/poets" are equally guilty:

*Walking along craggy footpathing,
dusty, save for the lenience of the wind;
footpaths careering along a landscape of
drought, into the belly of a land in famine.*

Estrangement is also at the root of Osundare's Akintunde, Come Home" (*Village Voices* 22-23). It is a satirical comment on the heartlessness of the city, "a land/where life is a race" and "money is god". Akintunde's father urges him to return to the village,

*Where the walls are mud and
meatless meals quiet the
howling stomach
Come back here
Where dreams spun on campaign promises
Snap in the noisy bellies
of belching parliaments.*

Akintunde's father is only sounding romantic because the village has enough problems of poverty just as his son must have experienced in the city. In Osundare's "Siren" (*Marketplace* 21-22), he initially mocks at the 'language of power' but soon descends on the failure of those at the helm of affairs in Nigeria to regard the general poverty in the country as part of their task as leaders. Villager-voters are 'rewarded' with siren noises, the signal of preeminence as leaders drive through streets accompanied by a horde of "police acrobats on motorbikes." All the way it is,

*Siren Siren Siren
the clangorous convoy
of powers and power brokers conditioned in
Mercedes back
far, very far, from the maddening crowd.*

The poet juxtaposes this irreverent show of power and dominance with the sigh of "kwashiorkored children/waving tattered flags/ in the baking sun." He also contrasts the pageantry of the escorted rulers with the poverty of the landscape, just as Garuba is able to do in "Estrangement"

Osundare further says:

*Even on highways where potholes
snail the jaguar
They manage not to see*

*a land debowelled by erosion
cornfield withering
and yam tendrils yellowing
on tubers smaller than a palm kernel
blind are they
to the seed of tomorrow's famine.*

Post-war poets are so anxious to speak to the low status citizens as well as highlight their basic problems that some of them have suddenly fallen in love with the use of Pidgin English (Nwachukwu-Agbada, "Content and Form" 91-93). Aig-Imoukhuede, Mamman Vatsa, Ken Saro-Wiwa, Ezenwa-Ohaeto, Tunde Fatunde etc are some of such poets. Aig-Imoukhuede's "Sufferhead" (28) laments the plight of the suffering masses whose daily lives are constantly marked by hardship:

*Suffering and praying
Hustling and preying
Scratching and slaving,
Only reward for poor man:
Grumbling and hard work!*

The poor man's personality is almost non-existent as his "sweating wit" bitter belleh" and "smiling like eunuch" depict him as one who is "craze for

head." Suffering is his second nature and so time and again he is,

*Grumbling and praying
Begging and Crawling,
Rising and falling,
Heaven's 'Amen'
Dey annual leave.*

Mamman Vatsa does a similar thing in relation to the projection of the plight of the poor in his "Country Make Me Good" (*Tori* 56). Here he reminds the elite class that "de fine-fine thing/vey you de see/for marketi/an' wey de make ya troat long leki snake, /you no know/say na for farm/dem bring am come?" In this poem, the poet argues in favour of social recognition for rural people who though appear unimportant are the life-wire of the nation. Similarly, in "Promise Wey Boku" (*Tori* 59), he chastises politicians who play on the intelligence of the common man by making promises they have little compunction to fulfil:

*Wen dem wan' l illi:
poor man
dem go tok
poteto inglis' so-tay,
bifor dem go
passi dem
billi for killam!*

Ezenwa-Ohaeto's "If to say I bi Soja" (*Traveller* 30-32) which is cast in the mode of a labourer's song is a deep appreciation of the plight of the lowly-placed in society. As he juxtaposes the predicament of the poor and the weak citizens with the affluence of the new power brokers – the soldiers in power – the achieves a lucid satire woven around some long drawn-out humour. "If to say I be Soja", writes Ezenwa-Ohaeto,

*Retirement no for worry me
Retrenchment no for trouble me
Irregular pay no for harass me
Police no go ask wetin I carry
Thief no go ask wetin I get
Tax man no go ask wetin be my salary.*

In the fiction tradition, quite a number of works focussing on destitution, poverty and want have been published. The destitution which Okpewho writes about in *The Victims* relate to the failure of the protagonist to manage his personal affairs well. Obanua, the chief character, is an only son who gets married to two wives because he wants to have more than one male issue even though he is a poor lorry driver. But the irony is that in his deciding to marry two women – against the advice of his mother – Obanua will be hated

by both wives. In addition, he loses the comfort of his own home and instead prefers the bar as his house. He lives a pauperized and precarious existence, having lost his job as a motor driver, and as a nightwatchman. He is so improvident that he cannot afford to buy sweets for Bomboy, and would instead prefer to tell the little boy lies in order to hide his inability to pay for such articles. As for Ubaka's schooling, he is evidently unable to pay for it. He tells Nwabunor, his first wife: "I told you last night and I am telling you again this morning. I have no money" (10). We are told on one occasion that he "lit a half-smoked cigarette" (7), which is a clear evidence of his wretchedness. To the bar woman he owes a good sum of money, being charges for the drinks he buys from her regularly. Often his income is lower than his expenditure on palmwine, in addition to his other incidental debts. On a particular occasion he comes into the bar with his salary of three pounds ten shillings when he owes both the bar woman and Sinkea a total sum of six pounds. Okpewho's attention here may have been focussed on the insolvency which polygamy can sometimes engender, his immediate interest, it seems, is on Obanua's personality development. His agony, the author seems to be saying, is a self-inflicted one. However, society has a hand in it when it demands

its male members to have male-heirs at their death. In addition, there is the role of such *nouveau-richs* as Odafe Gwam, the Ozala politician who literally buys Ogugua off Obanua. Okpewho merely treats him as a villain but does not go further than this. Otherwise a more wholistic treatment of his kind of character reveals that much of the contradiction in our present society are fuelled by such mandarin-affluent citizens as Odafe or the newly powerful as Toje in Okpewho's other novel, *The Last Duty* (1976) which focuses on the destitution brought about by the Nigerian Civil war.

However, this state of affairs, this total subjugation of the psyche of the poor and the weak can only lead to violence in the future. Festus Iyayi warns in his *Violence* through Idemudia's lawyer that,

Acts of violence are created when a man is denied the opportunity of being educated, of getting a job, of getting medical attention cheaply, quickly and promptly. We often do not realize that it is the society, the type of economic and hence the political system which we are operating in our country today that brutalizes the individual, rapes

his manhood. We often do not realize that when such men of poor, and limited opportunities react, they are only in a certain measure, answering violence with violence.... I feel and think it is necessary that all oppressed sections of our community ought to take up arms to overthrow the present oppressive system (193).

Violence examines a few harrowing days in the lives of a young and impecunious couple — Idemudia and Adisa. Idemudia is most of the time unemployed, but he strives to feed himself and his wife. Adisa, his wife, equally finds herself exposed to great temptation when Idemudia takes ill from his manual exertions and there is no money for his hospital bill. The plight of this couple is juxtaposed with that of Obofun and Queen who are rich and can afford all kinds of luxury and pleasure. But their money is accumulated through dishonest practices such as inflated contracts, shady acquisition of government property, and even prostitution as is the case with Queen.

Did she not want contracts? Only twenty thousand naira. Easy to get, the men said, if only ... She didn't

want it at first. But the men persisted and the money they offered rose higher and higher. And gradually she changed. After all she was to do everything in the name of her family. (*Violence* 203).

The easy way by which queen and her husband make their own money is contrasted with that by which Adisa and Idemudia sustain themselves: unskilled labour, petty-trading, and even blood-hawking. However, what nearly turns Idemudia crazy is the obvious gap between the poor and the rich:

Idemudia's unrelenting struggle for survival in a city offering cruel contrasts between direct poverty and ostentatious wealth almost destroys him, his health and his marriage. The bond between him and his wife, Adisa is stretched, strained, battered and betrayed.....(5) .

The way the rich work, the manner the capitalist formation operates has been made clearer by Soyinka in his *Season of Anomy*. Although Eldred Jones – basing his own inference on the interview the writer had granted the Dar-es-

Salaam *Spear* magazine in May 1966 – shows that Soyinka is not “committed to any ideology” (11), his *Season of Anomy* “comes very close to a commitment to socialist ideals” (Ngara 99). This once more brings to focus what Wimsatt and Beardsley had had to say about the hiatus between an author’s intention and what he actually achieves in his text:

... the design or intention of the author is neither available nor desirable as a standard for judging the success of a work of literary art, and it seems to us that this is a principle which goes deep into some differences in the history of critical attitudes (3).

However, it is well known that Soyinka had once advanced socialism for Nigeria in his *The Man Died* when in a conversation with Alale he said: “There is no alternative. The army must be returned to its status as part of the proletariat We need a Third Force which thinks in terms of a common denominator for the people” (178). If this is not enough to show that Soyinka does have some inclination towards socialist solutions for the social and economic problems of Nigeria, then we may have to rely on Ernest Fisher who has told us

that "socialist art and literature as a whole imply the artists or writer's fundamental agreement with the aims of the working class and the emerging socialist world" (108).

In *Season of Anomy* Soyinka is addressing his fellow Nigerians; he is no longer quibbling over who constitutes his audience. A change had come in his writing, probably occasioned by his incarceration during the Nigerian Civil War. The forced rest in detention may have enabled him to reflect deeply over the capitalist tactics which perpetually keep his country in bondage. The critics of his prison account, *The Man Died* who, among other things had accused it of lacking depth and historical base⁶ can now find profundity of views in *Season of Anomy*; Aiyero is a "quaint anomaly" (2) because of its semi-communistic community which strives to entrench material welfare, justice and even-handedness, and goes out of its way to ensure the prosperity of every individual. The youths of other neighbouring communities look to the cities as places for their survival while those of Aiyero on contact with the urban areas discover that their own community is by far more humane and superior, and therefore go home. Aiyero society is positively life affirming, being founded on truth and equity. On the other

hand, there is the cartel, associated throughout the novel with symbols of the unnatural and the abnormal. Not like Aiyero which is identified with the natural pulse, the cartel is associated with the death of the masses:

The means of this curse was however tangle, the end was the embalming of an entire people even as they breathed, deadening their nerve centres, willing the vital organs to mal-function, ending all co-ordination among the physical and thought process. (129)

For once, it is unambiguously clear that Soyinka is aware of the machinations of the multinationals which have irked compatriots like Arthur Nwankwo to write his thought – provoking *Can Nigeria Survive?* (1981) which, though lacks in vital statistical support, is a searing indictment of the commercial enemies of the country.

In *Season of Anomy*, the enemy is the Cartel which is corrupt, materialistic, and in total control of the country's resources. Its aim is to exploit the corporation that controls the cocoa crop produced by the people of Aiyero. Once its interests are challenged by Ofeyi and the Aiyero

agents, the Cartel resorts to open violence, murder and total repression. "Violence", Paulo Freire says, "is initiated by those who oppress, who exploit, who fail to recognize others as people" (21) because they "do not perceive their monopoly of having more as a privilege which dehumanizes others and themselves.... For them having more is an inalienable right, a right they acquired through their own "effort", with their 'courage to take risks'. If others do not have more, it is because they are incompetent and lazy, and worst of all is their unjustifiable ingratitude towards the 'generous gestures' of the dominant class" (35). The antagonism resulting from the two opposing forces of Ofeyi and his Aiyero supporters and those of the cartel eventually leads to an intense form of breakdown of law and order which engulfs the entire country, and gives the novel its title. The suggestion of a revolution in the book seems to be Soyinka's solution to the preponderance of exploitation, poverty, dehumanization and wanton tampering with individual liberty and consciences in Nigeria.

Post-war dramatists such as Femi Osofisan, Segun Oyekunle, Tunde Fatunde, Bode Sowande etc have also put their theatre to the cause of the poor, 'the wretched of the earth'. These

playwrights have certainly acquiesced to Kole Omotoso's praxis that "poverty, ignorance, disease" are "social challenges to be confronted with the resources, human and material of the society, including the artistic resources of the society" (12-13). Femi Osofisan's plays, particularly *The Chattering and the Song* and *Once Upon Four Robbers* place in perspective the structure of deprivation, poverty and want in relation to exploitation and resistance which can only come about once the oppressed realize their role in liberating themselves. *The Chattering* is a revolt organized by a group of educated and radical youths who are no longer comfortable with agents of corruption, greed and autocracy. It is only a social revolution, Osofisan seems to be saying, which will ensure a liberated society devoid of oppression, poverty and deprivation. *Once Upon Four Robbers* shows the operation of exploitation in action carried out first by charm-armed robbers, but sooner surpassed by gun-armed soldiers who had been instructed to keep the robbers in check. The play seems to be saying that everyone is a robber and cannibal of sorts. The theme of morbidity and mummification is pervasive in the play, but hope resides in what Major says about the future for the poor:

Serg. today that law is on the side of those who have, and in abundance who are fed and bulging, who can afford several concubines. But tomorrow that law will change. The poor will seize it and twist its neck. The starving will smash the gates of the supermarkets, the homeless will no longer yield in fear to your dainty, little children will be here where I stand now, on the firing block ... (Once Upon Four Robbers 63)

One can, with some confidence, say that the above quotation summarizes what the other post-war playwrights are doing with their dramas. They are examining the condition of the weak, helpless and unbearable members of the nation who are very much uncatered for, and who in spite of their unprotection from social and economic exploitation are expected to take it lying low. But these poor, deprived citizens later grow to realize that for their survival, they must take their own fate in their hands. They must confront their oppression with all the energy at their disposal. Hence the mythologization of the 1969 Agbekoya farmers' uprising in the former Western Nigeria in

both Osofisan's *Morountodun* and Bode Sowande's *Farewell to Babylon*.

Poverty in Nigeria is a subject matter which has for a long time been evident in the literary works by Nigerians. But the focus it has been given from text to text differs tremendously. The political issue of independence as well as the cultural subjugation of the people seems to have occupied our early writers so much that a theme as important as social deprivation and relegation in a country blessed with abundant resources seems to have been swept under the carpet. Perhaps the writers, like Kwame Nkrumah, were first seeking the political kingdom in their firm belief that "all other things shall be added unto it." However, this turned out to be a dream; in the final analysis what was achieved was nothing short of flag independence, a change of guards, a replacement of white imperialism with black imperialism. The gap between the rich and the poor widened even further, and the elite across the ethnic groups not satisfied with their private proximity to the 'national cake' began to quarrel among themselves. This inevitably led to the Civil War in the country. But this experience was to be a cradle for a new perspective of writing. From the end of the war the focus now centred on the plight of the

poor and the weak, the rejected, the ignorant, the taken-for-granted. Literary creativity remains a conjecture, a projection of a possibility, a creation of a possible world. To reduce poverty, the post-war Nigerian writer would want first, an appreciation of the fact that poverty exists in Nigeria; second, that there is a class benefiting from mass subjugation; three, that only a concerted effort, if possible a violent means, can return the society to the path of glory, to equity, and to social justice.

NOTES

- ¹See, for instance, Michael F. Lofchie's "Political and Economic Origins of African Hunger." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 13.4(1975) pp. 551-567 in which he gives capitalist reasons as to why poverty in Africa will take a long time to be eradicated.
- ²See, the following for a socialist treatment of poverty and underdevelopment in Africa and the Third World: Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*. trans. Constance Farrington. New York: Grove Press, 1968; Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. London: Bogle-L'over the Overture Publications, 1972; Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. trans. Myra Bergman Ramos. Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1972; Clause Ake, *Revolutionary Pressures in Africa*. London: Zed Press, 1978; Bade Onimode, *Imperialism and Underdevelopment in Nigeria: The Dialectics of Mass Poverty*. London: Macmillan 1983; Daniel A. Offiong, *Imperialism and Dependency*. Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishers, 1980.

It is therefore in terms of this final reality that man defines and measures himself. The consolation of distractions; opium, sensuality, music, mythomania, gambling etc. is merely illusory and brief. A keen realization of the imminence of death surges up again:

Malraux's resolution to the human situation lies in his recognition of the emanation of glory in the night and fog of the human prison at the supreme moment that man sacrifices the substance of his being for a selfless and dignified cause. "As defeat fails like a transfiguration on his heroes he fashions triumph out of doom" (Reck, 285). And Kyoshi Gisors clambering unto dignity from lowliness of man's position is indeed Malraux's demonstration piece. As Isidore Diala has noted:

In the dark prison of life, Kyo has attained his full creative freedom. He has known peace, having shunned contemptible means of escaping man's fate, and discovering in his mortal frame an essence sufficiently admirable and vitalised to negate the absurdity of life. By the intensity of his striving against destiny, Kyo has forced the hostile circumstances of his defeat to testify to his grandeur. His death hence is a celebration of life (87).

The passage in which Malraux celebrates Kyo's achievement of immortality significantly seethes with religious register. The cause for which he has elected to die "inspired the most splendid hope" (312). His death "was

hallowed by a touch of common brotherhood" (312) and he dies alongside "a gathering of broken men whom future multitudes would recognise as martyrs" (312). But these martyrs surely are not christian martyrs elected to celestial bliss.

Indeed the historical moment of Malrauxian tragedy is the unholy, lonely, fatal post-christian night. Man is rid himself of the burden of God, but himself not only failed to replace God but indeed has also died. As Ling tells A.D. in Malraux's 1926 essay, "The Temptation of the West": "Absolute reality has been for you first God, then man; but *man is dead*, after God: and you seek with anguish the one to whom you could entrust his strange inheritance" (428). And as Cecil Jenkins has noted:

In this pathetic vision of a violent post-christian night of death and despair, illusion and non-cognition, solitude and suffering, Malraux gives us contemporary man as a kind of absurd glow-worm. Glow-worm, because he somehow secretes his own light in this blackness and, by a tragic mystery, appears to deny the very principle of the night in which he moves. But absurd, because this mystery remains unsanctioned and unresolved, because the glimmer of consciousness appears to reflect nothing beyond, because he is ultimately

³See, for instance, Boris I. Bittker, *The Case for Black Reparations*. New York: Random House, 1978; Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* London: Bogle-L' Ouverture Publications, 1972; Douglas Rimmer, "The Economics of Colonialism in Africa" *Journal of African History* 19.2(1978) etc.

⁴See, my MA dissertation (unpublished) entitled, *Matter and Form in Post-War Nigerian Poetry*. Department of English, University of Ibadan, 1986 (pp268) for a fuller treatment of the issues raised in connection with the new Nigerian poet and his involvement with concerns having immediate social significance.

⁵See the Longman Drumbeat summary of *Violence* in Ben Okri's *The Landscapes Within* 1981 p 292.

⁶See, for instance, the criticisms of *The Man Died* by Abiola Irele, Dan Izevbaye and Kole Omotoso in John Agetua ed. *When the Man Died*. Benin: Bendel Newspapers Coorporation, 1975. However, see J. O. J. Nwachukwu-Agbada's essay entitled, "Protest and Faith in Wole Soyinka's Autobiography," *Literary Half Yearly* Vol.

28, No.2 (July) 1978 pp. 91-105 for another view of Soyinka prison writing.

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9

African Literature and The Afterlife of Folklore. Afam Ebeogu

The phrasing of the topic of this essay may appear to compromise what, I hope will become obvious later, may seem to be my position as to the relationship between "folklore" and "literature." The word "afterlife" suggests "a state of existence preceded by death." In common religious connotation, the nature of an "afterlife", though determined by the quality and perhaps length of the preceding mortal existence, is not a material continuity of the mortal state. Mortal life, ends, and then the afterlife beings. One is compelled to wonder whether the expression "African Literature and the afterlife of Folklore" would imply "the nature of African Literature after the death of Folklore," or whether it is just a figurative expression for "the lingering presence of Folklore in African Literature long after the obvious folkloric content of that Literature has suffered an inevitable demise." Confronted with this ambiguity, it would seem that the topic as presently framed is good enough to stay, and one's

responsibility would then be to take a position within the content of the possibility of alternative interpretations.

Obviously, at the heart of this discourse is the word "folklore." As scholars of that discipline, like Dorson, Dundes and Bennett have pointed out, when the British antiquary, W. J. Thoms, used the expression for the first time in 1846, he was thinking of verbal and non-verbal but unwritten expressive forms which he had earlier described as "Popular Antiquities or Popular Literature," enumeratively defined as "manners, observances, superstitions, ballads, proverbs, etc of the olden time" (Thoms 4.5). Serious study of the ingredients of Folklore had of course preceded Thoms, as witnesses the fact that as far back as 1812, the Grim brothers in Germany had published their collection of "Household tales." But the expression, "Folklore," seemed an apt articulation of an emergent discipline, and its exact nature sooner than later attracted considerable debate. A leading American anthropologist and folklorist, William Bacsom, was to assert in his "Folklore and Anthropology" that "the argument about folklore continues, even among folklorists" (Dundes28), and this view is evident in the twenty-one, at times differing, at

times overlapping, definitions of "folklore" in Maria Leach's edited *A Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology and Legend* (398-403). It is, however, instructive that thirteen of the twenty-one definitions feature the word, "tradition."

Tradition is a synthesis of ideas, values and practices handed down from generation to generation amongst a family, a group or a people. It begins its formation as a percolation, and develops into a formidable mould. Its process of transmission is partly through heredity and partly through acquisition. We are born into a tradition, and for that reason are healthy or unhealthy carriers of its genes. But time and experience add new precipitates to the initial mould, with the result that man not only inherits but also creates tradition. A people's cultural tradition is the hallmark of what distinguishes them for what they are, and their greatness or otherwise is a function of the degree at which that tradition comes to terms with the fluxes of the moment within the continuum of the march of history. Cultural tradition is therefore, the sum total of a people's way of life, and is consequently timeless. From the beginning we are part of the tradition which our present either refines or degenerates. Tradition is thus predisposed to dynamism; as its antiquarian

quotient tends to associate it with conservatism the needs of survival under contemporary experience ultimately reshape it in readiness for the magnetism of change. Hence, it is that society remains "traditional" in spite of the turbulent spirit of science and technology which forever subjects the present to severe strains. Against the background of this view of tradition, we would like to examine the relationship between "tradition" and "folklore."

A brief but informative definition of the term "folklore" in Leach offered by Theodore Gaster, states that:

Folklore is that part of a people's culture which is preserved, consciously or unconsciously, in beliefs and practices, customs and observances of general currency; in myths, legends, and tales of common acceptance; and in arts and crafts which express the temper and genius of a group rather than of an individual. Because it is a repository of popular traditions and an integral element of popular "climate," folklore serves as a constant source and frame of reference for more formal literature and art; but it is distinct therefore

in that it is essentially of the people, by the people, and for the people (399).

This definition takes care of "the content" imperatives of "folklore," and we would have to refer to Marius Barbeau's own definition for that other aspect of the subject which is not taken care of by Gaster's definition. Barbeau, after highlighting and illustrating the "content" scope of folklore, adds that:

Men of learning have in the last century or so gathered, classified and studied a vast body of materials appertaining to folk tradition. They are called folklorists. According to their aptitudes and preferences, they have specialized in various aspects of their chosen field, some in folktales or folk songs, others in handicrafts, others in dances and games, still others in beliefs and customs (396).

The important point which Barbeau makes is that folklore is more than the tradition of lore which characterizes a community of people who sociologically would be considered as a group; it also includes an identifiable pattern of scholarship

with which the study of folklore has become associated. "Tradition" therefore characterizes not only the "content" of the discipline of folklore but also the system of its scholarship.

It is against the background of the imperatives of "tradition" that we can briefly review the activities of the various schools of thought in folklore studies since the nineteenth century. The folklore theorists of the evolutionary school may be classified under three groups: the ehumeristic, the solaristic and the naturalistic. The ehumeristics school, named after the third century B. C. classical scholar, Ehumerus, believed that myth and other forms of folk narratives, especially the heroic, "were fabrications which concealed purely naturalistic and historical event at best but were introduced primarily to bolster the authority of the priests and rulers" (Bidney 4). Worthy of note in Ehumerism is the link between a tradition of the evolution of the purely historical to the purely fantastical which is then bestowed with sacrosance and used to legitimize an essentially feudal status quo. The second group of folklore evolutionists, the solar theorists, represented by Max Miiller held the view that most Indo-European folklore items, especially mythic stories and proverbial expressions, could be traced to stories about the

sun and moon which the progenitors of the Indo-European race (called the Aryans) expressed in their mythology. As Charles Dorson has delineated in his essay, "The Eclipse of the Solar Mythology" (Dundes 1965, 77-83), the historical deductionism of Muller and his group was based on the discovery of the ancient Sanskrit script by the end of the eighteenth century. The script proved to be a convenient material upon which a theory of a tradition of folklore common to the Indo-Asian stock could be constructed. More than this, this folklore was presented as the "scientific" evidence of the common linguistic heritage denominating the Indo-European civilization. The mythic stories of a later world are therefore "survivors" of a now moribund Aryan language, the common stock that had nurtured the now diverse but "great" European civilization. We are here dealing with a deliberate "scholastic" attempt to construct a vision of a singularly mighty race whose peoples are at differing phases of industrial development, but who owe their ancestry to a proto cultural tradition. Max Muller's "solar mythology" may have, in the words of Dorson, suffered an eclipse, but it still conjures a vision of a racial superiority that is not characterized by a parity in industrial sophistication amongst the offshoots of that "great race." It is like saying: "*Hey*

you folks of India and Europe, do not forget that we have a common tradition of origin, language and culture, despite our present technological differences." Europe of succeeding centuries has remained haunted by the echoes of Muller's alarm, and this is reflected in the "brotherhood" of their art and science.

Evolutionary "naturalism," so vigorously articulated in James Frazer's *The Golden Bough*, did not obscure the basic relationship between Frazer's folkloric vision and that of Muller, though in place of the solar factor, Frazer slotted in the agrarian. Both scholars and their disciples believed in the superiority of their contemporary European civilization; both discussed the same divinities and their rituals. As evolutionists, both believed that culture is created by man and all cultures across the world undergo identical stages of development, so that, under similar circumstances and levels of growth, a folkloric element, like the tale, would undergo the same evolution, in the process revealing similar content even if the cultures involved were severally located. Most important, the evolutionists shared a basic similarity in their linear vision of the advancement of human culture from the atomistic and simplistic to the complex and sophisticated. In

terms of methodology, both Muller and Frazer were comparative mythologists who believed in the emassing of formidable data upon which meaningful classifications and analysis could be based. We observe the central position of "tradition" in the evolutionary thought, and the interface between historically and culturally verifiable, and the far-fetched otherworldliness of the mythological world. Evolutionism legitimizes European hegemony in contemporary world politics and ideology, as reflected in the imperialist dimensions of their *belles-letters*.

The researches and thoughts of the evolutionary scholars provided a base for subsequent schools of theorists in folklore scholarship. The historical-geographical preferences of the so-called Finnish school were to reconstruct the history of a folklore item, like a tale or a song, based on the pattern of its diffusion and the emergence of its variants. In other words, by noting the characteristics of a tale, it would be possible to recognize that tale or variants of it anywhere the tale features in the world. Scholars could then trace the origin of the tale, and establish affinal linkages between the various cultures and nationalities in which the tale and its variants feature. A significant product of the diffusionist theory was Anth Arne's classification

of tales into "types", and this exercise prepared the way for the tale-type index which Arne's student, Stith Thompson, expanded into the much-famed but highly criticized *The Types of the Folktales*. The book stimulated greater interest in the study of folklore, especially the tale; it became a model, in spite of its limitations, for the taxonomy of tale-types within the context of Indo-European and American cultures. Thompson's book, *The Folktale*, is still a standard text in European universities where Folklore is taught, in spite of the fact that the taxonomy makes no room for indigenous African tale materials. Some scholars of the African folktale have either suggested the revision of Stith Thompson's book to accommodate all the cultures excluded in the original, or are attempting to classify ethno-based repertoires of tales along the lines established by Thompson; all these efforts are reflected in the book, *African Folklore in the New World*, edited by Daniel Crowley. Of significance to this essay is the genuine seriousness with which such an ancient traditional genre as the folktale is still being studied in both developed, underdeveloped and developing world, and the tenacity with which the tradition of its scholarship is being re-examined and updated.

Another school of theorists worthy of attention in Folklore scholarship is the Functionalists. Championed by Bronislaw Malinowski, that doyen of ethnological anthropology, the school believes that social organizations can be studied and best appreciated if one examined the roles which such activities like story-telling, festivals, rituals, etc, played in maintaining the structure and functional unity of the group. Malinowski's book, *Myth in Primitive Psychology*, was a classical attempt to relate scientific data to a particular social context and ultimately make concrete rather than generalized conclusions on the nature of that society, based on the functions which folklore materials fulfil in maintaining coherence and order.

Malinowski's rather inflexible view of society was later to be criticized, revised and updated by no less figures than his own disciples, like Leach and Firth, who preferred to be seen as structural-functionalists. In place of Malinowski's one-time assessment methodology, these scholars preferred to visit the societies they studied at various stages of changes in such societies, and to take particular interest in the forces of conflict, rather than Malinowski's "harmony," characteristic of the societies at their various

transition points. The functionalist perspective in Folklore, all the same, still holds its attractions, especially in the Americas and Africa where there are still many societies visibly illiterate, and where it is quite possible to assess the functional values of folklore as "charter" for maintaining order in such societies. A recent publication by Bayo Ogunjimi and Abdul Rasheed Na'allah, aimed at introducing students to African oral literature, devotes quite some space to the discussion of the various genres of the African oral art discussed, a heritage carried over, apparently, from Ruth Finnegan (1970). The functionalist theory of Folklore, which has influenced the critical assessment of even the African written literature, is particularly attractive to scholars determined to prove the authenticity of African art forms and how sufficient they were in patterning the nature of traditional African societies.

The other theorists of Folklore whose views have remained indelible in modern psychology and literature are the Psychoanalysts. Sigmund Freud, who originated the views of the school, substituted the celestial symbolism of the solarists with a symbolism of sex in which all references to projecting items in myths and folklores, like the sticks, trees, knives, etc, are mere symbols for the

the play thing of every contingency that an indifferently hostile universe throws up as fatality. In the absence of some transcendence to turn the darkness into light, man is absurd and the human lot intolerable (59).

The oblation of self on the alter of a dignified historical cause, not the perfected radiance of the christian martyr's halo, blazes the value and the consolation of life in the dark human estate. This is martyrdom without God.

But Divinity in Sophocles *Oedipus at Colonus*, T.S Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* and wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman* is imagined not only as presiding yet in the full glory of the god-head but also can transform the passion and dread of the passage of anguish into the attainment of the aureole of martyrdom. But it is only because *Oedipus at Colonus* is not really a tragedy but an apocalyptic vision, *Murder in the Cathedral* is a play in the nature of christian martyrdom that there is no reconciliation of the tragic vision and the christian revelation; and Soyinka in *Death and the King's Horseman* offers a testament of faith in justification of the Yoruba worldview hence his obsession with dead man's paths behind the orbit of the moon through which they ascend to the Elysian Fields.

Soyinka's insinuation is that it is Pilkings' own illusion, projected unto a folk saying that the latter imagines the supreme contradiction which justifies his intrusion into the tabernacle of a people's faith. He is thus not imagined in

religious terms as a devil only because his celebrated misconception arising from his consideration of a poorly apprehended instant in Elesin's fate as absolute and self-enclosed is presented as an outsider's blindness. He is not totally discredited but only to the extent that he is not at any moment shown as a factor of conscious evil. He simply would not subscribe to any of these midnight rites. He cannot conceive of any universal principles of evil or sanctity and so makes no scruples putting on the robes of death: he stands dignified outside the reach and jurisdiction of a folk's devil.

In this light, therefore, Elesin's acceptance of a groping pilkings at the enchanted moment for which his whole life has been spent in pomp as an angel of divine light is conceived of as a mortal betrayal and a fall from the level of light and freedom and religious ideas to one of personal insecurity. For it is not when, in full consciousness of life as a sacrifice to the gods, he seeks to make the fateful circumstances of his death an achievement of apotheosis, but when he caresses "diabolical" as a possible word to use for fate, that Elesin degenerates to primitive destructiveness.

But *Death and the King's Horseman* is really Soyinka's interpretation of an event in Yoruba history and his modification of Duro Ladipo's great play let to express his own attitude towards British imperial entry into Yoruba life. In this regard Obumsele comments:

male genitals while the female genitals are usually symbolized by items that suggest enclosures, like doors, caves, boxes, etc. For Freud, myths and folktales are verbal manifestations of sexual wishes suppressed during our waking hours of conformity to the norms of the so-called civilized society. Carl Jung, Freud's student, was to expand the frontiers of psychoanalysis, making it more acceptable by rejecting Freud's sexual powerhouse to the phenomenon of the unconscious. In place of Freudian "personal unconscious", Jung substituted "the collective unconscious" of the tribe which consists of primordial "images" or "archetypes" that form the key symbols which feature in myths and tales.

The psychoanalytical, when applied to folklore, is quite illuminating. For example, Legman's treatment of jokes in his *Rationale of the Dirty Joke, an Analysis of Sexual Humour* reveals the extent to which the dirty joke has become a major genre in modern folklore scholarship, and another recent book, *Spoken in Jest*, came out of a 1988 conference by the British Folklore Society on "Traditional Humour." It is not that all the materials in these references are psychoanalytical in approach, but such essays would probably not have been natured without the

insight gained from the psychoanalytical approach to jokes. Indeed, the psychoanalytical approach as expounded by Freud tends to lead to a dead-end in actual practice, but both Freud and Jung did unveil other aspects of the unconscious, which were not properly appreciated in psychology and literature. For example, the phenomenon of the dream attracted vigorous examination in post-Freudian and post-Jungian psychology and the link between the folktale and the dream, myth and psychic repression can best be appreciated against the background of this psychology. The "traditional" has remained a veritable anchor for studies in psychology and parapsychology of our modern age, leading to a foregrounding of the fluid relationship between the corporeal and the psychic, and between the factual and the fantastical.

The manifestation of tradition and continuity in Folklore scholarship is again reflected in the views of the Symbolist theorists of the scholarship. Scholarly exploration of the place of symbols in the thoughts of the so-called "primitive man" can be traced back to the eighteenth century, from which time symbols have become recognized as reflecting a significant mental relationship between the real and the abstract. The man who in

recent times has come to be associated with the discussion of symbols as the basis of culture is Ernst Cassirer. He developed a philosophy in which symbolic forms lie at the heart of the experience of language. While Muller saw the manifestation of myth as "the disease of language," Cassirer worked from the opposite end, seeing language as a primordial cultural event which blows out into multi-faceted dimensions of mythic symbols that describe the cosmogony of a culture. Cassirer was ultimately led into a theory of levels of mythic manifestation associated with levels of social development, and one is reminded of the evolutionist thought of Frazer and his group. The link between him and the psychoanalytical perceptions of reality as a child of unconscious mental processes is also evident; his denial of inherent rationality is a symbolic manifestation – the rationality can however be imposed by the scholar involved in the interpretation of the symbols – which imposes a severe constraint on the mental advancement of the so-called "primitive culture."

Cassirer's symbolist analysis, which obviously holds brief for the integrity of traditional imagination, cannot be isolated from the mainstream of symbolist scholarship also

characteristic of other fields of study like art, language and literature. The relationship between all these fields is not mutually exclusive, and the symbolist tradition has come to occupy a central place in the creative enterprise, and in the appreciation and interpretation of aesthetic forms. As usual, Folklore has kept abreast of other disciplines in currency of scholarship.

Perhaps one of the most influential and initially mesmerizing folklore theories in recent times is structuralism. The structural vision had of course characterized the works of such folklorists as Lord Raglan's *The Hero* (1936), which examined the recurrent patterns of events in the typical "hero of tradition," and Vladimir Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale*, first published in 1928, which examines Russian folktales from the formalist perspective of "functions" or motifs that make up the structure of a standard folktale. Whereas Arne and Thompson had classified the structure of the folktales from the point of view of the dramatis personae, Prop did so from the point of view of "actions" which were recurrent in whatever folktales being considered. His approach was analytically rigorous and precise, shifting emphasis from the atomistic to the universal. The American folklorist, Alan Dundes, undertook to

advertise and expand Propp's approach, and we thus witness a movement from the merely formalistic to the purely structural; in place of Propp's Russian folktales, Dundes studied North American Indian ones, and the title, *The Morphology of American Indian Folktales* (1964) is obviously intended to reflect the Propp influence. For Propp as for Dundes, if the theory of structures could be applicable to folktales, it should also explain the structures of other folklore genres, in the process connecting social and linguistic textures, elucidating the functionalist perspective, and validating to a large extent the legitimacy of the psychoanalytical vision.

The great French anthropologist, Claude Levi-Straus, was to root the structural vision purely on linguistic paradigms. For illustration, Strauss's "The Structural Study of Myth" showed that the important issue in myth scholarship was not so much whether myth mirrored or distorted the realities of a culture as that the myths that occur all over the world reveal many similarities. The explanation appeared obvious: the human mind, "savage" or "civilized", generated consistently logical structures and common ideas always relating to each other in binary oppositions. These inherent structures of folklore

genres, like the tale, can be established by a process of identifying, sorting out, classifying and re-arranging the elements of the genre in paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations. The most important value of the structuralist heritage is the reduction of folklore genre to models and formulae that cut across all cultures. The structuralist exercise, because its pedantic claim of to pure scientification, may have come to a cul-de-sac, but its heritage lingers, cutting across disciplines and rendering Folklore scholarship with a sophistication and permanence usually associated with linguistic exegesis. It salvages "tradition" from its antiquarian associations and establishes it in company of updated theoretical postulations.

Post-structuralism has advanced into a deconstructionist vision in which the oral genres have to be best appreciated within the context of their performance. Every oral performance becomes unique in itself, modifying its antecedent, unable to predict its successor. Contextualism has become the hallmark of modern scholarship in Folklore. Its essential spirit can be traced back to Milman Parry and his student, Albert Lord, who focused on the narrator and his performance as the essential determinants of the structure of the epic,

the ballad, the romance or the tale. Lord's *The Singer of Tales*, which is an examination of the poetics of Yugoslav folk bards, is constructed on the same principles of "themes" and "formulae" which Parry had used in analysing the Homeric songs. These principles, applied by the artist in composition, ultimately determine the form and structure of the final product or performance. The text of the tale or song is thus determined by its context, which implies situation and occasion. Modern folklorists have found the theory of Parry and Lord very useful, and some African scholars, like Azuonye and Okpewho, have applied it in the analysis of African epics.

Contextualist folklore scholarship is not indifferent to cultural and anthropological content of art, but its emphasis is on the text as literature, and this tendency has influenced the analysis of other genres of folklore, as exemplified in the works of scholars like Dan Ben-Amos, Dundes, Bill Ellis, etc.

Arising from the contemporary, post-structuralist approaches to folklore is the redefinition of the term to suit the dynamics of the technological age. The concept of folklore as a collection and study of antiquarian survivals

hardly holds any attraction now. Rather, the contemporary approach is captured in the words of Bausinger, quoted in Dorson (1972):

We no longer believe that industrialization necessarily implies the end of a specific folk culture, but rather we attempt to trace the modifications and mutations undergone by folk culture in the industrialized and urbanized world (43).

As a consequence, the concept of "the folk" itself has changed; it can neither be restricted to Malinowski's "primitive" ethnic group, the Finnish nation galvanized into patriotism by the Kalevala epic, nor even to Sokolov's working class or "the masses." Any group characterized by certain common practices, occupation, traditions of belief, or even gender can constitute a "folk" and be delimited as such for study, as is shown by Gillian Bennett in her *Traditions of Belief: Women, Folklore and the Supernatural Today* (1987). Indeed, "the folk" can become almost as an amorphous group, as suggested in the following observation by Marion Bowman, quoted in Bennett:

It is not now necessary to locate some decrepit, rural, materially-deprived, preferably illiterate... peasant who has never been tainted by the media or travelled outside his/her community to find the stuff of folklore. City bankers circulate legend about computer fraud; a graduate wears a St. Anne medal to discos to help her find a prospective husband; scientific research staff worry about a haunted lab; nurses know not to put red and white flowers together in a hospital ward. Folklore is all round us, whoever and wherever we are, and we are all folk (P.10).

By implication, folklore is far from being dead; rather it is amenable to perpetual rejuvenation in spite of the advancement of science and technology. Folk tradition is ever readapting itself in order to keep abreast of the latest fluxes in life, and it will ever afford sufficient materials for serious scholarship by the student interested in those apparently obvious but really significant aspects of life that keep a community ever vibrant.

The ever-changing status of "folklore" and "the folk" necessitates a re-examination of the relationship between Folklore and Literature. Without daring into elaborate theories of aesthetics, we can safely say that it is the society which provides the materials with which art is constructed. As Christopher Caudwell has argued in *Illusion and Reality* (1977), every work of art represents two worlds; the real world of human society, and the "mock world" of art. If we examine the factors that make the "real" world what it is, we would ultimately be driven into an examination of the elements of folklore. As we have seen, the folk is remarkable for its beliefs and common practices – beliefs in religion, superstition, mythology, history, science, cultural tradition, symbolic consciousness, linguistic tradition, political, social and economic bases of survival, etc. as each society or folk group narrates its shared experiences, cracks its jokes, tells its tales, indulges in its rhetorical and poetic expressions, that society or group is reliving its literature in its more or less pristine form. Each of these experiences, or elements of folklore, is a kind of "paraliterature." When the creative artist, whether oral or written, decides to organize some or all of these elements into a form, creating order out of deceptive chaos, then Caudwell's "mock-

world" emerges. It is this mock-world that is traditionally referred to as "literature", and for any literature to be properly appreciated, the consumer — especially as a literary scholar — is often compelled into a study of a number of supportive fields of activities or so-called disciplines, which in themselves may be "extra-ordinary." Thus, to study literature is, invariably, to study the "folklore" of the people whose world had provided the materials for the "mock-world" of that literary artifact. "Folklore" may not always be obvious, especially in our modern world. But it is invariably there, at least in the "Language" of the literature. If the "mock-world" is not an attempt to recreate a quintessential folklore genre (as Homer's songs are a "retell" of Greek myths), it may be a deliberate "prank" to model an art on a folklore prototype (as George Orwell's *Animal Farm* can be said to be modelled on the "animal tale"), or it can be a reflection of aspects of generic types which may be assumed to embody the status of "paraliterary" forms, in a culture or group (as is illustrated in much of the fiction of Salmon Rushdie and Ben Okri).

We will proceed to examine the implications of the above observations to the study of African Literature. First, African literature includes its oral

forms which ultimately form the yardsticks for measuring that literature. Because there are many non-literature cultures in Africa, the continent affords inexhaustible materials for an understanding and appreciation of the world and values of our rural communities, using many of the folklore theories examined above. There are of course inherent dangers in this possibility, like that of regarding the continent as a testing ground for evolutionist/functionalist scholarship, as evidenced in the work of Radcliffe-Brown and Baryll Forde (1950). But, in spite of this danger, there is no doubt that a study of African oral forms as they manifest in the essentially rural communities will provide invaluable information on the character and complexities of the African world and art. The pioneering work of S. A. Babalola (1960), Ruth Finnegan (1970) and Abimbola (1976) are cases in point. The serious attention paid by scholars to Africa at the moment bears witness to the importance attached to this scholarship, and it is worthy of note that, as I have argued elsewhere (Ebeogu 1988), the Nigerian Folklore Society, formed in 1980, serves as a major rallying point for nurturing the growth of this scholarship in Nigeria and Africa.

Secondly, the ultimate understanding of what written African literature means is linked in many ways with our understanding of the nature, character and scope of African Folklore. Once upon a time this point was central to the definition of this literature, as is shown in Dan Izevbaye's article, "African Literature Defined: the Record of a Controversy" (1966). The core of the argument by Chinweizu, Ihechukwu and Onwuchekwa Jemie in their controversial book, *Toward the Decolonization of African Literature* (1980) is that the validity of that literature derives essentially from its African folklore content, both in terms of matter and style. Many reputable critics of African Literature, like Obiechina, especially in his *Culture, Tradition and Society and the West African Novel* (1975), have left no one in doubt that the theories of Chinweizu *et al* enjoy considerable support. Ben Obumsele, in spite of his reservations over the heavy "traditional content" of African literature, and the energy with which the search for this content is conducted, recognizes the inevitable pioneering status of the activities of these scholars whom he refers to as the "Golden Stool" writers and critics of African literature. According to Obumsele:

Golden Stool literature and criticism have been very valuable. They have taken our minds back to the resources of the folk tradition and to the need to put middleclass experience side by side with the vision of the folk (Ogbaa 94-95).

Isidore Okpewho (1983), one of Africa's leading folklorists, discusses exhaustively the place of myth (an aspect of folklore) in contemporary African literature; a discussion that easily calls to mind the view of T. S. Eliot on James Joyce's use of mythological materials in *Ulysses*. According to Eliot,

In using myth, in manipulating a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity, Mr. Joyce is pursuing a method which others must pursue after him... It is simply a way of controlling, of ordering, or giving shape and significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history... It is, I seriously believe, a step towards making the modern world possible for art... towards order and form (Givens 1963: 201-202).

Isidore Okpewho's position with respect to African literature is in many ways reminiscent of both Eliot and Chase. Having defined myth, essentially from a literary perspective, as "that quality of fancy which informs the creative or configurative power of the human mind on varying degrees of intensity" (Okpewho 1980: 11), he proceeds to discuss its nature in African literature. For him, some African creative writers "preserve" myth and other forms of folklore materials, which he compresses under the ubiquitous term "tradition," in their works; others "observe" it, while the rest either "refine" it or "revise" it (Okpewho 1983: 153-221).

Going through Okpewho's discussion of the various African writers who use myth "in varying degrees of intensity," one is reminded of Ben Obumsele's categorization of African writers and critics under three schools: "the Golden Stool," essentially "concerned with the enunciation of traditional norms"; "the Burning Spear School," concerned with the revolutionary imperative in contemporary literary expression in African, and the "Research School" involved with "a genuinely critical activity" and whose work "has enriched not just Africa but the treasures of world literature" (Ogbaa 83-84). The writers and critics

mentioned as examples of each school includes Chinua Achebe, Kofi Awoonor, Chinweizu and the Nairobi critics for the "Golden Stool"; Ngugi was Thiong'o and Femi Osofisan for "the Burning Spear School," and Leo Africans and Loveldale – he should have added painstaking African Literary researchers, represented by the like of Isidore Okpewho and Dan Izevbaye – for "the Research School."

The limitation of Obumsele's categorization is its generalization, and the impression of mutual exclusiveness between his "schools." His argument could deceive one into believing that only "the Golden Stool" writers and critics emphasize the immense folklore imperatives and content of African literature, and that those who belong to the "Golden Stool" cannot be found in "the Burning Spear School." The categorization is therefore inherently misinforming, as Okpewho's own necessarily exhaustive categorization – Okpewho avails himself the opportunity of space provided by a full-length book discourse, whereas Obumsele had to make do with the time constraints of an interview period – proves this point. An Achebe could be both "Golden Stool" (in his first three novels, for instance), and "Burning Spear" (in *Anthills of the Savannah*),

just as Ngugi wa Thiong'o's also features in the two schools. Wole Soyinka's use of Ogun images, as discussed by this writer elsewhere (Ebeogu 1980), is "Golden Stool" in his "Idanre" poem, but "Burning Spear" in *Ogun Abibiman*. In a similar vein, Isidore Okpewho's novel, *The Victims*, may be "Golden Stool, but his very ambitious and enduring works of criticism, *The Epic in Africa* and *Myth in Africa*, would belong to the Golden school and the Research school; the latter which, by the way, is categorized essentially on the basis of research methodology than ideological posture which seems to inform the categorization of both the "Golden Stool" and the "Burning Spear".

Indeed, Obumelu's "The Burning Spear School" have relied a great deal on the traditional or folklore materials for their creative enterprise and critical analyses, and this explains why a good number of them fall under Okpewho's categorization of those African writers who "refine" and "revise" tradition. Femi Osofisan's plays and critical essays are Brechtian and thus revolutionary, as Tess Onwueme (1991) has shown. Yet no other African playwright of the avant-garde generation makes as much use of (Yoruba) "tradition" folkloric materials as does Osofisan. Similarly, Ngugi's later novels,

beginning with *Petals of Blood*, are unapologetically Marxist and revolutionary, and yet the novelist relies a great deal on Kikuyu myths, folktales, folk narrative tradition and even language for his "Burning Spear" creativity. I have, in my essay on "Feminism and the Mediation of the Mythic in Three Plays by Tess A. Onwueme" (1991), tried to show how the playwright used indigenous (Igbo) mythology and folkloric setting to sustain a creditable argument in her plays; her vision is similar to the mythic creative effort of Ayi Kwei Armah to "revise" tradition in *Two Thousand Seasons* as Okpewho has shown and as also illustrated by Chinyere Nwahunanya in his essay, "A Vision of the Ideal: Armah's *Two Thousand Seasons* (1991).

We have indicated during our discussion of the various theories of folklore that the folktale is probably one of the most studied oral genres in folklore scholarship. That genre is absolute fiction, always operating as fable at the extreme fringes of that pendulum of the imagination swinging from pure history to absolute phantasy. As Ben Obumelu puts it,

The distinguishing quality of folk tales is their frank admission that the events

described did not happen... Fiction can indulge all the liberties of the uninhibited fantasy because it does not have to pretend... that it is authentic history. Acceptance of fictionality enables the writer to invent freely at the same time concentrate his attention on meaning and value. The style of folklore or folktales may be described as fantastic realism. The vehicle is truth (Ogbaa 100).

It is obviously this folktale quality of Camara Laye's *The Radiance of the King* written in the Kafkan surrealistic tradition, that makes Obumsele believe that it is "the African novel per excellence." In other words, it is the folklore quality of this novel of fantasy that renders it the best African novel, in Obumsele's view. This option emphasizes the increasing affinity and interface between fantasy and reality in the contemporary novel, as exemplified not only in Laye's *The Radiance of the King* and Ben Okri's *The Famished Road*, but also in Naguib Mahfouz's and Salman Rushdie's novels (see Akpuda 1991 and Abani 1991). As Rushdie puts it authorially in *Midnight Children*:

Reality is a question of perspective; the further you get from the past, the more concrete and plausible it seems – but as you approach the present, it inevitably seems more and more incredible. Suppose yourself in a large cinema, sitting first in the back row, and gradually moving up row by row until your nose is pressed against the screen... [and images] dissolve into dancing grains, ... illusion dissolves – or rather it becomes clear that illusion is reality (p. 166).

This awareness of the illusory metamorphosing into the real, and the real dissolving into the imaginary, is becoming increasingly characteristic of contemporary experience and thought. In Africa of today, the dream world is increasingly becoming therapeutic, an occasional palliative escape from the pains and perhaps agonies of real events around us. The uncertainty of the future appears more and more obvious, because that future appears less palpable than the past. It can only be endured through a deliberate reconstruction of its landscape against the background of the aborted expectations of the present. The middleclass elite is hardly any more capable of good laughter, and the only laughter

In so far as the play deals with the colonial subversion of traditional cultures, *Death and the King's Horseman* is Soyinka's, *Things Fall Apart*. In Achebe, Duro Ladipo and Soyinka, tragic concentration is dissipated by the fact that we feel the inherent weakness of the tribal structure which is under attack, and we do not feel as we are supposed to feel in great tragedies, that universal values are being subverted. This is a question of how the tragic hero is seen whether he is just a person like ourselves or the representative of a cultural order. Lear is just a foolish old man whose trust is betrayed: Oedipus a determined investigator who will look for the truth even if it ruins him. We aren't asked to believe in the values of a finite historical moment of which they are the symbols (405).

Pilkings' intervention leads to the death of Olunde, but historically it has saved generations of Elesins.

Yet Elesin remains rather too human to Soyinka's dismay. All his self-deceptions about his preparedness for his redemptive role as a paschal lamb and his making that his justification for uninhibited self-gratification are comments on the modesty of our common humanity. It is all very well that Soyinka following Elesin sets a forest of words ablaze in singing the metaphysical delights of Elesin's union with the bride, yet, significantly, Elesin expresses his initial attraction to the woman in metaphors of

sensuality:

Tell me who was that goddess through
whose lips
I saw the ivory pebbles of Oya's river-bed.
Iyaloja, who is she? I saw her enter
Your stall: all your daughters I know well
No, not even Ogun-of-the-farm toiling
Dawn till dusk on his tuber patch
Not even Ogun with the finest hoe he ever
Forged at the anvil could have shaped
That rise of buttocks, not though he had
The richest earth between his fingers,
Her wrapper was no disguise
For things whose ripples shamed the river's
Coils around the hills of Ilesì. Her eyes
Were new-laid eggs glowing in the dark.
Her skin... (19).

Elesin simply cannot abstain from felicity. His lust is fed by his believed inhuman creative reach: his people's love is a salute and cheer to divine heights. But Elesin's heroism is greatly obscured by his profusion of words. On first coming on stage, and still contemplating death a vague possibility, Elesin is a passionate and eloquent speaker chanting his readiness and considering his destiny with sufficient relish:

My rein is loosened.
I am master of my fate. When the hour comes
Watch me dance along the narrowing path
Glazed by the soles of my great precursors.
My soul is eager. I shall not turn aside (14).

that genuinely warns the heart seems to be that which derives from shared values, from folkish confraternity characterized by common humour, common jokes, common memorates, common myths and legends, common songs and dance, common rituals and ceremonies (no matter how increasingly secular), common rhetorics, common tales, common past-times and, ultimately, shared symbols. These are the stuff of which folklore is made. There thus will be no "afterlife" of folklore, in Africa or anywhere else, for the folk reconfigure every moment in time. Literature, being the hob of the humanistic concern, and reflecting the contours of the various shades of reality, will always appropriate the materials of folklore for purposes of its own very survival. And African literature cannot escape from this obligation; it really has no choice in the matter.

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10

Coarse Language and the Figurative in Meja Mwangi's *Going Down River Road*

Nwizu Chinwendu A.

Communication among people is made simple and easy through the use of language; and verbal means of communication is a distinct manner of communication associated with human beings. Human thoughts, emotions, plans and achievements are expressed through the means of language. Uzoma Nwokocho shares these views about language:

"Language is the vehicle which propels human thought. It is through this vehicle that human experience, emotion, personality and psychic make-up are communicated. It is through this all-important communication vehicle that one's cultural, spiritual, or religious, as well as world view and cosmology are emptied for consumption. Moreso, language expresses one's educational and political awareness; because the language one uses is symptomatic of the total workings of one's mind (214).

The language one uses portrays one's social status and educational background; it also points at his economic status and physical appearance. "A character's language

reflects his perception of the world and what he does to bring order to that world, thus revealing much about him as a unique human being" (Hay and Howel, 254). One's environment of existence- the socio-economic factors surrounding one's existence- can also influence his use of language. Literary artists view life as it is obtainable in their given societies. In writing any piece of work, authors create characters who use language to make known the subject matter, and as well disseminate the theme of any given work. It is in the light of this assumption that Chikodiri Okpara observes that:

An appreciation of the achievement of a writer in any given literary work without a proportionate 'exploration of the language' of the work will be an exercise in futility. No doubt, characters find themselves in a given geo-social, political or other settings, which undoubtedly influence their language usage (87).

Virtually, every society is stratified, that is consciously or unconsciously grouped into socio-economic classes. Each individual in a given society speaks the language according to the individual's social class. That is what Inyang Udofot calls 'the social stratification of English' (42).

Language remains an integral part of human behaviour. It mirrors the life of an individual.

Communication to sum it all, is the ultimate aim of language. Language communication is enhanced when it is shared by people of a similar background. Writers explore literature through language; and to be studied in this essay is the use of coarse and figurative language in Meja Nwangi's *Going Down River Road*.

Meja Nwangi is an East African writer, who writes to depict the life of his people the way it is. He presents the down trodden in his society, the less privileged, who could not get themselves good jobs, good accommodation and better food to feed on, so they resort to a debased life as a way to exist. The novel presents many characters who belong to the lowest class in society and a few rich ones who are there to exploit the poor ones. The major male characters in *Going Down River Road* engage themselves in menial jobs that cannot fetch them enough money to meet their daily needs, and the little they get, they use in drinking and engaging the services of hotel prostitutes, while the few other male characters who are well placed like the Europeans or foreigners and the bourgeois native landlords exploit the poor ones and make life miserable for them.

Going Down River Road is set in Kenya. Kenya is one of the countries in East Africa which is known to have suffered foreign settlers economy. This was a situation whereby some Europeans and other foreigners from some Asian countries encroached into some East African countries, like Kenya, for instance, settling at the better part

of it, dominating the economy and driving the real owners of the land to the other less favourable parts of the country. This was to such an alarming extent that female characters in Nwangi's *Going Down River Road* engage themselves in prostitution and drinking. As these characters go about their usual duties they express their emotions, likes, dislikes and interact among themselves, they make use of a distinct language. Through these characters Meja Nwangi explores the use of coarse and figurative language to depict and achieve a real situation of subject matter and theme.

Before looking at the language of interest in this essay, it will be pertinent to give a succinct explanation of what coarse language and the figurative language mean in the context of the usage. *The New Lexican Webster's Dictionary of the English Language, Deluxe Encyclopedic Edition*, defines 'course' in terms of language and a rough, coarse-grained, not fine, vulgar, indecent (187). In other words, coarse language refers to any language usage that is not refined; that which is obscene and disgusting while on the other hand, M.H. Abrams defines figurative language as:

"A deviation from what speakers of a language apprehend as the ordinary or standard, significance or sequence of words in order to achieve some special meaning or effect" (63).

In the line of the above definition, one sees that it is a deliberate attempt at creating images into the mind of

the reader. Nwachukwu-Agbada shares this view about the figurative language usage:

"Figurative language is a writer's tool to create figures and images Words are either used literally or metaphorical. The literal meaning of a work is its surface, everyday meaning; it is its denotative significance. The metaphorical use of words and phrases refers to their transferred and connotative application in speech and writing ... Figures of speech help to raise the dramatic import of utterance" (41).

It is against the backdrop of these definitions that the use of the coarse and figurative language in Meja Mwangi's *Going Down River Road* is to be undertaken in this essay.

Ben, who is the protagonist of the novel works as a labourer on a building work site. There are other labourers there: especially his friend Ocholla, his rival Onesmus and the foreman-Yussuf. At work on the building site, Ben and the other characters engage in conversation, employing the use of some expressions which are more or less meaningless, derogatory and vulgar, and therefore coarse in nature.

Also, the name of the brothel 'Eden' could be an allusion to the biblical garden of Eden where Adam fell in the hands of a woman due to the prompting of the devil. Mwangi elucidates more on the 'New Eden' and likens it to the Eden where the devil is, with his whims and caprices. There are a variety of harlots who give the good and the bad. They give a momentary pleasure in bed, fight their men clients and get drunk, spread venereal diseases and as well as bastardise babies. These are the fruits of the labour in the 'New Eden'. Because of the inherent problems beseeching men there, their survival is a game of luck. There, Ocholla caught venereal disease three times.

"Ocholla got his last three doses of clap from here. Three times over, and each time he came for more. Ben he came for a beer, sometimes for a quick one. Whatever bad luck he had not managed to get virus yet" (123).

The use of 'clap' here is a vulgar way of presenting gonorrhea. It is therefore, coarse. There is also an allusion to the biblical Adam in describing the 'New Eden' joint.

This is what the New Eden is all about. Since Adam fought for the only woman with the devil and lost, this is how far we have come. The women are determined to make a living. The men are out for a quiet evening away from the nagging wife. There are no rules, no holds barred in Eden. You

"Ocholla takes Ben to a Karara centre for a drink, he encourages Ben to drink to his satisfaction for it is the only way they could be happy." (321)

Guys like you and me, Ben. Ocholla says suddenly turning to face his comrade, 'we have got to drink.

"Ben drink and drink. That is the only way to stay sober in this bloody hell'...

We have got to forget things, Ben; he nods in his drink-inspired wisdom, 'problems we must forget'".

Ocholla who is married, has his wives and children in his country home while he remains in town hunting and spending his money on drink and harlots, whereas not shouldering his family responsibilities. In the course of telling Ben about his family, he employs the following expressions:

'I have two wives, Ben. Two bloody wives'...

Two beastly wives back home and the devil knows how many little brats, his large eyes red and desperate bore into Ben, redialing a special blend of drunken fury and remorse.

'they just crop up, Ben. One after the other.

Bastards'... 'Bastards, he preaches. All women are bastards. Children are sick, school fees are up, and they want new dresses, wives are animals, Ben. Children and dresses, that is all they know. They are not getting a

thing from me any more. Where do they think I am digging the money?' Bitches! "(60-1)

He tells Ocholla about his family in most crude and coarse manner. The same Ocholla who complains of not having money to send to his family complains of his need for prostitutes:

"I want a woman, 'he leans on Ben, 'I must have one tonight. Want one Ben, I must have one tonight. Want one Ben? Come with me, I will buy you one harlot at Eden. Ben wags his head. 'You have no money, mate, he says, 'I have friends. All the harlots in Eden are mine. Those women will do anything for me (64).

Let's go, Ben. Ben refuses Ocholla's bid but reminds him that he has one at home. Ben, ejected by his landlord, lives with his harlot-girl friend and wife to be, Wini and her son, whom Ben picked, likes and makes up his mind to marry. So Ben reminds Ocholla, "I have one waiting for me at home, a respectable whore. Go home too, buddy. You are drunk and penniless "(64).

However, Ocholla's description about his wives and children are not only coarse, but are also metaphoric. Likewise, Ocholla's assertion of his ability to get to Eden where he drinks and prostitutes is also figurative. He does not fall in love for his wives but falls for the women in Eden who are symbolic in their existence.

Ocholla is humbled when his wives and children trace him to Nairobi, arriving, uninformed to him. He is swept off his feet, he nevertheless accepts them, assimilates them, and adapts to them in the one room make shift he shares with Ben and Baby who are forced out of Wini's room by the landlord.

All the environmental descriptions in *Going Down River Road* are done in very coarse and figurative language. These descriptions depict an environment filled with dirt, unhealthy amenities: the streets, houses hotels and even human beings are made to appear ugly, disgusting and resentful. Through the narrator and the characters, the picture of the environment is vividly depicted. For instance, the way to a 'Karara joint', is described in these words:

"..... leads Ben into an alleyway, past a heap of excrement, a dare back street that smells of dust though it is wet. This leads into another lane that in turn vomits them into River Road. The place is crowded with its usual mass of haunted, hungry faces, poverty hypnotized faces, hateful faces, and the fragrant stink of unwashed bodies and burst sawers ... up River Road Karara centres' door are wide open .. they burst in through the grease-smearred swing door and stop just inside them for a breath of polluted air to acclimatize. A haze of four smoke hovers ghost-

like under the low ceiling A crowd of ragged, emaciated low income drinkers, pathetic and not giving a shit about it" (57).

The prostitutes in *Going Down River Road* are portrayed to be very vulgar and unrefined in their speeches and in their behaviors. Though the vulgarity of their manner could be excused, for their profession. In New Eden joint, a prostitute approaches Ben:

"Someone digs into Ben ...He steps back. A woman throws her arms around his shoulders and tries to kiss him. You want to screw, 'she breathes stale breath into his mouth. He shakes his head quickly. 'one quick one for....' 'Get lost' ... she smiles, wraps herself round him and breathes drink-sodden odour on his face. 'Fuck me', she says simply. 'Fuck off', he hisses, shoves off" (123).

The prostitutes approach their intending customers, and make advances in the very language of their class and occupation.

Similarly, in 'New Eden' (122) joint, Ben, though on sex strike because of Wini's action could not resist when a very young prostitute in her mid teens comes advancing. The details of this encounter is on pages (125-129) of *Going Down River Road*. Ben regrets this incident on

discovering that this young prostitute has a month old baby cotted in a carton in the same room where sex is going on simultaneously: she with Ben, and her room mate with her customer. The incidence is not only callous but coarse.

There is the extensive use of the figurative language in Nwangi's *Going Down River Road*. He makes use of this figures to create images of impression and as well drive his meanings home. Mwangi explores his themes using similes, metaphors, indirection, personification, overstatement, images and symbols. There is also the misappropriate use of words (Mala-propism). We find an example in the following conversation which issues between Ben and a street sweeper:

*"Not the best of them, he declared.
The old man agreed, leaned on his
broom. 'Got a light? ... I have seen
worse days he said, handing back the
match box. 'The skies are only weeping
..... we go home and leave it to
the sewage brigade'" (7).*

The old man in asking for a match stick or lighter for lighting his cigarette asks of 'light'. This is metonymy, using that which is associated with match stick to represent it. There is also personification, attributing human qualities to the sky which is said to be weeping; the 'sewage brigade' here refers to the sudden rush of the city's central sewage system, which is an attribute given to a battalion of army.

Also in trying to picture Ben's first encounter with Wini, the narrator narrates:

*"Suddenly she went beserk... The
vintage bed groaned and moaned ...
His mind whirled like an electric
fan, fanning hot air.... Wini was
no dynamite. She was neatly bound
bomb. She exploded" (21)*

Ben, uses synecdoche in asking about the more labourers to be added to their number in the site where they are working for the whiteman.

*"The extra hand you went to fetch,
where are they?"*

This is synecdoche; using a part to represent the whole. Also in reaction to how Wini's neighbours rough handled baby, Ben is depicted as thus:

*"Suddenly he realises. He has not heard or
seen Baby since he came in. Where the
hell is the little demon? Baby! Max
emerges ... to announce: The boy is here
with us ... Ben charges into the room.
Ben regards Max with large red eyes, lets
out a scream 'who did it?' He will
be all right, Ben lets go and attack..! He is
not your son ... The fact hits Ben, a sledge*

On his failure in his messianic role, he merely indulges in passionate lamentation, pondering his situation in impassioned orations. He fails to attain resoluteness until beholding Olunde's corpse he is shocked into the full recognition of the supreme score in which the world now holds him, of the utter meaninglessness of his continued existence. His belated death is surely no sacrifice: he does not die a messiah. But it is no mere unheroic gesture of escape. The moment of his awakening to the symbolic significance of his confinement and shackled hands, his imprisonment in darkness, in humiliation, in absurdity, is also the moment of his awakening to the venerable traditional concepts of duty, honour, selflessness, and high-mindedness. This makes his story tragic even in the highest sense.

Soyinka's path to heavenly bliss is merely fascinating. The entire business of death robes is a mere mystification. The extent that *Death and the King's Horseman* is not an exaltation of a tribal faith but actually a poetic text in which the experience is induced by the texture of feeling in the poetry, the resolution does not lie in the protagonist's ascension to a heavenly abode, but in the fact that the tragic gesture is imagined as an act of self-transcendence. There is pain but also glory in the offering of man's life at a supreme moment of transition to sustain the essential living structure of society. Death is transformed into a wholly new experience: a deep statement of affirmation: a rebirth of life. Olunde's tremendous will-power and high-mindedness, is fired by his expectation of a

universal catastrophe, and burnt in the cruel night of Elesin's and Pilkings' desecration with unearthly beauty and restorative warmth. He reanimates Elesin's latent heroism. This is the transcendental delight of the miracle of self-immolation in Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman*.

But all men dream of immortality and aspire to attain God. The high seriousness of tragedy in itself is thus a great temptation to the consideration of ultimate destiny and a concern with such mysterious concepts as the soul. Yet, while revealing man's connection with overarching powers above, tragedy's concern remains: the life of man in this existence. Sewall notes, "To be sure, the characteristic locale of tragedy is not the empyrean. Tragedy is primarily humanistic. Its focus is an event in this world; it is uncommitted as to questions of ultimate destiny, and it is non-religious in its attitude toward revelation" (244).

The gestures towards the completeness of a religious vision entail fundamental assumptions that deny the terror and mystery of the tragic universe and compel the dramatist on the path of a sacramental structure which attempts to incarnate the pattern of redemption. The consoling claims of the consummation of suffering in heavenly bliss are possible only in the revelation of a kind, near and concerned God, in the operation of poetic justice, and in the reassuring revelation of a divine purpose in suffering—all of which would charm tragedy to death. Soyinka in *Death and the King's Horseman*, Sophocles' in *Oedipus at Colonus* and Eliot in *Murder in the Cathedral* all aspire to a religious

hammer blow mountains of rage crumble over him, choking him He swoops down like a furious tornado, ... Ben bulldozes in, long arms flailing like a thrashing machine ..., ... Then he storms round, snorting fire and spitting venom... and like a spent cyclone that has done its destruction duty swirls out of Max's room" (142-3).

This extract is filled with figurative expressions like simile, metaphor, overstatement and images.

R. N Egudu posits that using another story of a similar information or lesson to convey the meaning and intent of another could be seen as an indirection. He explains:

"This is the act of saying or exploring some thing by suggestion or indirection".(2)

He uses the story of a man's inability to build a house or cultivate a piece of land which he is advised should be substituted with a helping hand in J.P clark's **Song of Goat**. The literal meaning is not the ordinary farm. Rather the Masseur is advising Zifa to seek the help of someone in impregnating his wife. Meja Mwangi employs a lot of indirection in expressing the act of sex. For instance, a glaring example of indirection

is the account of Ben's **sexual** experience with a sixteen year old prostitute:

Most of the Eden gang will just lie there as good as dead, let you do all the gyma-stics and get yourselves worn out ... she attacks, he defends. He struggles to keep track, tries not miss a move and stall the ball in mid-field, losing the game completely. But she is too fast for him. He skids and spils, coming crashing down, stunned and windless, gasping for breath. Susan realizes the slip, clever girl, lets him rest and regain his score. Then she gives him a chance to gain a fair shot, equalize the score ... No unfortunate accidents (128).

Reading this account, one will capture a picture of a field event, be it football or any other track event. It is interwoven, it is an indirection, it has a mixture of a match account, but it is an individual's perception of a sexual experience and encounter. But the narrator adopts an indirect approach. The interpretation and understanding of the passage calls for a beyond the immediate imaginative reception just as Nwachukwu-Agbada posits about the figurative use of language:

"They surprise the reader because the statemant or idea expressed does not ordinarily make a straight sense.

Because the literal meaning has been evaded, it requires the readers imagination to figure out meaning. He is meant to derive his meaning from certain natural apt association, comparison substitution, contrast inversion of image and idea' (4).

There is also indirection, in trying to project Ben's view on the frequency of visiting a prostitute:

But a man has got to have some exercise or the machine might fall into disuse, rust and maybe pack up" (144).

Here, the expression, indirectly presented suggests that a man should seldom engage in sexual activity so that he does not become sexually inactive.

Mwangi also makes use of allusions in striking a comparison to things and events around him. Ocholla compares his world to hell:

"We have got to drink, Ben drink and drink. That is the way to stay sober in this bloody hell" (60).

Because of the inherent problems in his life and environment here on earth, he adopts the escapist means of elation to deal with the existential world.

"The sleepy register clerk peered at him through the tiny office window 'Name, I've croaked. 'Ben' 'Ground duties today, Ben' Ground, my arse. Check again... 'Neither do you. 'You can't just put me back on the ground like that where is that bastard Yussuf? '... you are a fine bastard, Ben'(9).

The use of 'arse' here as an annoying exclamation is vulgar and derogatory, because in its conventional meaning it is an unrefined way of referring to the human buttocks. Likewise, the use of 'bullshit' and 'bastard' is also unrefined, thereby making the expressions coarse. In another similar scene on the site of work Ben and Ocholla converse:

"Ben, Ocholla calls urgently... 'Finished? He demands. Bet your arse', Ocholla says under his breath (28).

Mwangi presents characters who are in the lowest ebb of the society's class. Not only are the characters unluckily placed, they are disillusioned, they do not have a vision towards enhancing their living condition. These characters live in a world of fantasy; their stream of consciousness is filled with debased thoughts of elating incidents, and this psychological imbalance is made manifest in the language they use, which admirably matches the status, occupations and circumstances of Mwangi's characters. Palmer remarks:

use whatever you're got to get whatever you want. And the needs of the people are few in the joint: a coin, a drink or a lay (123-4).

Another facet of Nwangi's use of language in **Going Down River Road** is misappropriation of words (malapropism) in order to achieve a coarse effect,

His hands whip out, grab and yank. The bra and blouse snap. The udders pour out, threatening to spill to the floor ... her fat nude body as still as a basking hippo (119-2).

The use of the word 'udder' to mean the human breast is malaprop, coarse and figurative. 'Udder' is usually used to represent an animal's organ with many tits for suckling their young ones. It is vulgar and morally obscene but figurative because it casts the picture of a big breast. Similarly, 'snakes' is used to mean worms:

'Ben is hungry...but after dropping a few beers into the hatch he has thrown the excited snakes down there something to vent their anger on before they start chewing on his inside' (120).

Another example is "her legs oozed out the skirt soft and sure' (17). Ooze is a verb used for liquid or viscous substances.

Mwangi also uses proverbial language in exploring the feelings of his characters over things and how they react to issues and human beings. Ben believed in Wini at the beginning of the novel:

Is any of Ocholla's women as understanding as Wini? So patient, so lovable? She could have made a great wife: may be she will yet. Hell, why did she have to be what she was before he met her? Why is it the greenest healthiest grass grown over the septic tank. Damn! (93)

The 'greenest healthiest grass refers' to Wini. But Ben's attitude changes towards Wini, after eloping with her white boss, leaving Ben and abandoning her son Baby. This puts a general hatred towards women in him. He comes to believe that women are the same. He simply puts it that:

"All women are dogs; they will lay with anybody for anything. Bitches, bitches" (115).

Similarly, Palmer sees Ben in the same way, as she explains: "Ben is thus forced to realize that far from loving him, Wini does not even estimate him highly, and he is not plunged into a total disillusionment with women" (318).

In Meja Mwangi's **Going Down River Road**, we see the most extensive use of coarse and figurative language, neatly woven together to portray the socio-economic and political trends as they affect the life of the people.

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11

The Rhetoric of Violence: Egharevba's Language in *Voices of Thunder* Inyang Udofot

Rhetoric refers to the art of using language to persuade and influence others. Although the word has often been used to also refer to elegance or eloquence of language often characterised by artificial or ostentatious (often ironical) expression as well as the rules to be observed by a speaker or writer in order that he may express himself eloquently and persuasively, it is in the sense of using speech or writing to persuade that rhetoric is used here. Mark Anthony's funeral oration before the assassinated body of Julius Caesar (Act III: ii – 70 – 104) is often cited as a classical case of speech that was calculated to persuade and incite people to action.

The language of Egharevba's *Voice of Thunder* can be viewed as a calculated attempt to persuade Nigerians to rise up in violence to overthrow a decadent and greedy system by attacking the perpetuators of this decadence. This essay examines the various ways the writer uses language to persuade the readers to accept his thesis

that: ' a violent *overhaul* of the *obnoxious* system was the best method in the enhancement of the quality of life of the suffering masses" (Egharevba, 1995:128). These include a criticism and denunciation of not only the military men and their allies whose rule impoverishes the masses, but also the society itself whose members aid and abet the corrupt leaders. This large scale criticism is achieved through the author's diction and violent imagery as well as his direct suggestions and descriptions of violent acts to be used to purge the system.

Critical Verbal and Non Verbal Diction

Egharevba's first target is the military men who were ruling the country. His condemnation of them is first seen in the reaction of Charles Osahon's father when his son, the governor, announced to him after his university education that he wanted to become a soldier.

*...Become a soldier? Never!
No son of mine will join that
bunch of killers! (p.10).*

In defence of his stand against the son's wonder at his attitude to the military profession he continued:

Profession? Do you say profession?

*Is killing a profession?
Destruction, profession
Don't you know that it is the
Never do well, the dropouts that
Sign for death and call it
Profession ... the military
Ruined me and you want me to be
A part of such a group who have no
respect for human rights and property
by allowing my son to become one of
them? (p.10).*

Thus by the use of words like *bunch of killers dropouts* and *a group of people who have no respect for human rights and property* and the reluctance of Charles Osahon's father to allow his son to become a soldier the author's criticism of the military is registered.

Dr. Fred Ogbeide's reaction when he saw visitors in military uniform coming in a government car to invite him to his state also registers the author's negative attitude towards the military men. Dr. Ogbeide wondered what he had done. "He would not mind a chat with the police or the men of the NSS but certainly not with the military boys. A chat with them left one with broken teeth, swollen tongue and lips' (p.16). That such a group should not rule a country was the reason why Dr. Ogbeide

was committed to the denunciation of "**irresponsible leadership** that possessed a **thug-like** mentality, a **corrupt** and **anti-intellectual** leadership nurtured and shaped by a system that needed change" (p.14). Dr. Ogbeide often serves as the author's mouthpiece in his condemnation of leaders described as "exploiters" and 'thieves' and sees cabinet reshuffles as 'rotation of opportunities for more **rogues** for more people to have a taste of the thieving' (p. 15).

In further criticism of the corrupt leaders, Egharevba identifies the misfortune of the Nigerian society as '**mismanagement** and **embezzlement** by those opportunized to serve the people as well as '**corrupt irresponsible** and **visionless** leadership' (p. 31). The writer's verbal war on the military leadership is therefore, clearly seen in the choice of words that are so critical, and abusive that they constitute a violent assault on the ruling class. Having so verbally assaulted the leaders of the country, the author suggests a line of action:

*When a regime thrives callously
on criminality, **confront** it with
criminality and then you have
struck at its most vulnerable
part. It was Fidel Castro,
the strongman of Cuba who said*

*in a state of lawlessness-
it is illegal to be law abiding
(p.78).*

Here the writer suggests directly to the people to rise up against the corrupt leadership using even lawless mean. He realises this through the use of the alliterative words **confront** with **criminality** suggesting a direct violent reaction, and through the alliteration of the harsh sounding /k/.

Egharevba does not only suggest but also taunts and challenges the people to rise up and overthrow the decadent system with the words: "contentment in poverty was a philosophy of the weak, the defeated; it was a philosophy of those who failed to achieve meaning out of their lives at youth when suddenly they realised that they had turned sixty and that they had nothing to quantify that six decades of existence' (p.47). It is known from experience that one sure way to get a person to act is to challenge or taunt him by saying that he is incapable of action. It was Lady Macbeth's reference in Shakespear's **Macbeth**, to her brave warrior husband as 'a coward' that drew an immediate response which later led to his murder of Duncan.

The society has its own share of castigation for encouraging public servants to amass wealth. Nigeria is described as 'a society where there was no accountability by public office holders' (p.64). The young idealistic governor, Charles Osahn and the former Marxist, Dr. Fred Ogbeide abandon their philosophies because of not only suggestions from parents and friends but also trade unions, traditional rulers and church ministers. In such a society, Egharevba concludes that one has to be realistic by ensuring the continued material well being of one's immediate and extended families and by destroying all those who stand on one's way:

...In a society where if you refused to destroy, you were destroyed, in such a society, if you wanted to survive you had to destroy (p.131).

It is for this that the Voice of Thunder (VOT) a group of undergraduates of Zazzau university who thought alike about the **social injustice** and the **corruption** in the nation perpetuated by the leadership:

Combined the secrecy, efficiency and intimidatory ruthlessness that were in the preserves of campus fraternities into an effective weapon to strike fear into the minds

of the corrupt and wealthy politicians with the aim of intimidating the government into effecting a change of the unjust social order (p.79).

The author therefore puts up the VOT as a model for the populace in a bid to persuade them to act.

Linked closely with the corrupt leaders at the federal level is the Islamic religion which is described as "the religion of the slave" while christianity is described as 'the master religion, the religion of the freeborn' (p.86). Through one of the very corrupt and influential members of the society, Reverend Ugiabe, the author makes controversial statements using words calculated to incite the christians against the moslems and a call to resist attempts to islamise them.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, now is the time to assert the dominance of the Master religion (p.86).

Earlier, the same character made the declaration that 'he was prepared to eradicate years of **indignity** and **oppression** suffered by christians in the hands of the muslims in the country' (p.69). He went further to describe muslims in such

provocative words as '... the barbaric muslims whose religion was based on distortion: a distortion of the Holy Bible to promote Arabic nationalism' (p.69).

The muslims on their part are shown to be in antagonism with the christian southerners. The writer's muslim mouthpieces speak about southerners and christians in no friendly terms. Alhaji Abubakar for instance, says: 'I can never be a friend to a southerner ... they are all *cheats, dishonest, infidels*, all of them' (p.86). As regards their methods of dealing with the christians, Alhaji Abubakar Yakubu, the Emir of Bika declares:

...We believe that the era of physical violence is past. We are in the era of intellectual violence.

We have to make our religion a national religion through intellectual violence (p.87)... we need young men like you to help propagate the cause of Islam, the only true religion (p.85).

Thus the author's determination to persuade the christians to resist the attempt to convert them to Islam is shown in making the muslims speak about christians in provocative diction: 'cheats, dishonest, infidels'; and boast about their

determination to make Islam a national religion. It goes without saying that every christian would resist this attempt. In his gospel of violent reaction the author even suggests the methods: 'physical violence and intellectual violence' and identifies the members of the society who could be the best executors of the violent reaction to be the youth wing.

Images of Violence

The symbol of the VOT, Egharevba's freedom for the masses fighters, is a white flag that bears the image of a bleeding moon. Ameze, one of the female members of the fraternity explains both the symbol and the rationale for the activities of VOT thus:

We are not terrorists but we believe that in a nation like ours terror is a pragmatic instrument to usher in sanity. For after violence comes peace. That is the meaning of this symbol (p.157).

The name of the organisation -Voice of Thunder- is itself a personification of the blood chilling violence that characterised the activities of the members. The founding father of the association

who became a major in the army Major Mike Adolor describes the organisation's agenda:

... And the VOT was prepared to kill. No one would be spared as long as one belonged to the cult of the sons or daughters, wives or mothers but never the men themselves. The money so realised would be used to finance the final stage of the revolution (pp.79-80).

The voice of thunder therefore refers to one or the other of the activities listed in the agenda above and the revolution referred to as legacy of thunder which could take one of several forms:

... Thunder spoke in several cities in the country. The voices were deafening and alarming: the messages were frightening as a series of bomb blasts caused panic and a sense of insecurity in the public. The messages of chaos destroyed the confidence of the people on the governments ability to provide security to lives and property ...In Yola, Alhaji Abba Abubakar the controversial FUIN man was blast outside his guest house ...

then it happen in Benin, Reverend Dr. Moses Ugiabe was found dead in his guest house in very horrible and almost ritualistic manner. The controversial and powerful church leader was found nude, his hands and legs tied to the four posts of his magnificent bed, his organ chopped off. In Calabar, Obong Ette Umana, the controversial politician who perfected the theory that ethnicity was the pragmatic instrument for material unity was killed in a sensational letter, some judges, some security agents, military whether serving or retired and left messages of death and deformity (p.153).

In the rhetoric of violence above it is clear that violence in one form or the other is articulated and rationalised in a manner which tends to persuade the reader that it is a necessity, sometimes with an added irony as can be seen in the description of Obong Ette Umana as 'the politician who perfected the theory that ethnicity is the pragmatic instrument for national unity which is certainly the reverse.

The voice of thunder and its message of violence is sometimes described in such detail that the sensory appeal to the readers senses of sight,

touch, hearing, taste and smell are engaged to the extent that the reader feels like he is watching a thriller or horror film as is typified in the above quotation from the novel and scene where Ameze in the middle of lovemaking with Alhaji Musa Ismaila, the Director of National State Security asked for a rope and tied his hands and feet securely to the bed and while tickling his manhood with her tongue told him about the VOT and ended up cutting off his male organ despite pleas and promises, took photographs of the struggling man and with unbelievable ruthlessness gave two gun shots when he stopped struggling to make sure he was dead. Before leaving she left a printed card with the VOT emblem on the bed. The card bore the message: THIS IS THE LEGACY OF THUNDER TO AGENTS OF SUFFERING IN OUR SOCIETY (p.157). The speech of thunder therefore becomes the dominant image of destruction in the novel, its message, frightening, destructive and irresistible:

... 'when thunder speaks the earth trembles, frightened. No one dares say no to thunder' (p.80).

In addition to the symbol of the flag and the personification of thunder, the novel is full of images of violence. Talking about Alhaji

Abubakar's recall of the event that led to his first meeting with the Emir of Bika, for instance, the author writes: ... 'the event that led to the chance meeting reoccurred *like an automobile accident* heightening his distrust and hatred for anything south (p.84). A description of a simple interview of Dr. Omeregrie with the press and the answer he gave is presented in uncomfortable imagery: '... the late don's answer was crisp and *chilling like the harmattan wind* that evening (p.50). Even descriptions of sexual pleasure are given in unpleasant images as, for instance, the following: 'she saw the governors face radiating the *agony of orgasm* (p.63). 'She watched the governor *thrash* his orgasmic *threos* under her; (p.63). ... he shook and screamed simultaneously as jets of love *erupted in volcanic force* into her and that was when she too *screamed* and *collapsed* on him (p.63). In Egharevba's world of *Voices of Thunder*, therefore, everything is violent including pleasure. His only other subtle way of suggesting pleasure is in the use of alliterative sounds as in the repetition of /g/ in the *agony of orgasm*; the repetition of /o/ in 'thrash in orgasmic threos and the repetition of /p/ where Rev. Moses Ugiabe reminiscences happily on the events that, 'paved the way for the present power he possessed. Even here, the sounds are cacophonous rather than euphonic.

revelation and comprehensiveness in attempting to illuminate the soul's gateway to bliss. But the African dramatist's path to Elysium is completely obscured by an inherently weak tribal structure which is no virile beckoning to spiritual effort. Soyinka is even at great pains to make the perhaps-unconvincing equation of a British soldier's self-sacrifice in war with Elesin's suicide at the Alafin's death. He is moreover, partly inspired by the tragic muse. Significantly, however, the British dramatist seeks an interpretation of martyrdom not in a tragic but in a sacramental vision, while the Greek dramatist aspires, beyond the tragic moment of *Oedipus the King*, to reanimate a religious worldview in which our conception of divinity in good receives consecration.

Indeed, the great necessity of *Oedipus at Colonus* is not only the justification of Oedipus, but the desire to assert a divine pattern which the association of Apollo with the apparently chaotic and diabolical order of *Oedipus the King* seems to contradict. Oedipus has gone beyond his self-forgetful stance of self-laceration at the close of *Oedipus the King* arising from his awareness of the enormity of his abomination. Attaining a clearer vision of his innocence of moral responsibility for his actions, he recurrently insinuates the primacy of a diabolical influence in bringing about those actions. Only the endowment of a now holy and enchanted Oedipus with the highest possible reward man can have-- apotheosis itself-- would be divine. His spectacular suffering clamorous for its transformation into the rugged and steep ascent to divinity.

All who scorned and abandoned him now seek his love and blessing. He even becomes oracular. And finally amidst peals of thunder and flashes of lightning, and beckoned by a divine voice, he goes unguarded, led by an inward vision, to the sacred spot of his glorification. His death is no ordinary mortal lot. It is a translation into immortality by an absorption into supreme reality. The messenger sings his apotheosis:

No fiery thunder bolt of the god removed him in that hour, nor any rising of storm from the sea; but either a messenger from the gods, or the world of the dead, that neither adamant, riven for him in love, without pain; for the passing of the man was not with lamentation or in sickness and suffering, but above mortals wonderful (259).

But the fact really is that *Oedipus at Colonus* would be a moment in tragedy -- the resolution--but ends up a theological statement. Beyond Oedipus' moment of enlightenment, Sophocles invites us to the faith that looks through death. Perhaps after all, *Oedipus at Colonus* is an attempt by the revelation of a trustworthy pattern in divine justice to placate Apollo who, were he not a god, would be the villain in *Oedipus the King*.

But if Oedipus engages our sympathies seriously because of his measure, that is the measure of our common humanity, he struggles against a harsh destiny to glory.

The task of this essay has been to show how Egharevba in his *Voices of Thunder* has used verbal and non verbal language to persuade the readers that the society and its leadership are corrupt and decadent and need a violent and systematic overhaul. It has been shown that the author uses mainly critical and provocative diction comparable to Osofisan's art in *Who's Afraid of Solarin* as examined in Udoeyop's: *The Rhetoric of Negation* to denounce the leaders and the society as well as challenge the people to rise up and liberate themselves from the corrupt leaders who impoverish and rob them. The author suggests violence, deaths, and kidnaps as the methods of doing this and identifies the youth as the people who can best carry out this bloody revolution. In addition he uses images of violence to buttress his argument that since the society is one that destroys, in order to survive the people must destroy and their very pleasure should be violent. In order to incite the christian members of the society to resist attempts to islamise them he uses direct statements of provocation aimed at inciting both the christians and the moslems against each other.

His painstaking descriptions of the formation, the agenda and the execution of this agenda by the VOT presents the final act of persuasion by showing the people that it can be

done and the way to do it. Although the writer by his detailed description of the atrocities of the ruling class and the decadence in the society has shown that the system needs change; it is the opinion of this paper that since lessons from history show that political revolutions produce leaders who end up following the footsteps of their predecessors, (the Nigerian society is a case in point here) the philosopher's suggestion that 'it is by evolution rather than revolution that changes occur in permanence' should be given a thought.

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Eliot's Thomas Becket knows grace and is really an incarnation of the christian will to martyrdom. Sewall has noted that,

The christian in his suffering can confess total guilt and look to the promise of redemption through grace. The martyr seeks suffering, accepts it gladly, 'glories in tribulation'. Tragic man knows nothing of grace and never glories in his suffering. Although he may come to acquiesce in it partly and 'learn from it..... his characteristic mood is resentment and dogged endurance. He has not the stoic's patience, although this may be part of what he learns (247-8).

The tragic hero, believing in no sure divine recompense for his experience, probes "the eternal silence of these infinite spaces"; the saint's very dream of the aureole of blessedness soothes his pain.

Becket's unquestioning willingness to suffer even death for his faith is really a perfection of the christian teaching that death in Christ actually entails the extinction of the flesh but resurrection in the spirit. The seeming ambiguity that may be discernible in this surrender lies at the very heart of the concept of christian martyrdom itself. Ali Mazrui, seeking a distinction between suicide: self-

destruction, and martyrdom: self-exposure to destruction by another, has noted that the death of Jesus Christ himself dramatizes the difficulties of disentangling martyrdom from self-embraced death (164). That archetypal self-sacrifice is Eliot's model and inspires his interpretation of Becket's murder as a sacramental action. Hence Spanos writes:

In order to give his historical action a symbolic dimension and accordingly, contemporary relevance without sacrificing its historicity, Eliot resorts to the strategy of figural imitation. He projects Thomas' murder, the present action, as an analogy of the archetypal figure, the sacrifice, or rather the incarnation, of Christ which prefigures the action, clarifies its significance, and extends its effect beyond itself ... He shapes the action of Thomas' murder within the matrix of various kinds of verbal and visual references and allusions which evoke the pattern of the Incarnation: the Coming, the Temptation, the Passion, and the Redemption (94-5).

In the universe of Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*, unlike in that of Sophocle's *Oedipus the King*, Shakespeare's *King Lear* and Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman*, a principle of goodness identified specifically as the orthodox christian God is rendered potent enough to triumph fully over evil. And before this sure

divine presence all the latent tension of the circumstance: that compel Becket to elect for martyrdom finds resolution. Indeed in the distillation of human suffering into eternal happiness inheres a full resolution beside which the tragic form stands banished. Becket at the moment of his election to martyrdom already has an intimation of heavenly bliss and echoes the first martyr's, Stephen's, beatific vision:

*I have had a tremor of bliss, a wink
of heaven, a whisper and I would
no longer be denied; all things
proceed to a joyful consummation (46).*

Christ's crucifixion and resurrection consecrate the experience of christian death, and christian martyrdom culminates not in cessation but in the rediscovery of life eternal in the divine. The religious vision surely has its own delights. But this is an invitation to the realm of mystery, to faith. Tragedy lays no claim to the ultimate consolation of heavenly bliss but in its truest expression, its fundamental delight is also the fundamental delight of religion and of all the humanities: to make life contemplate itself as an experience of value.

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Editorial

There is no doubt that since the emergence of African written literature, a motley of critical essays have emerged which respond to the critical demands of this continental literature. These essays have been published in foreign journals and books that are either very expensive to procure or highly competitive for one to appear in, because, they are few in number. The locally published journals have not been regular on bookstands. The usual reasons for such irregular appearances are often linked to lack of funds or the problem of logistics.

Africans do not consider education as a realistic area to invest heavily on. Sequel to this, there are often no foundations or where they exist, they are in very limited number that are ready to sponsor literary publications. Our universities do not have workable university presses. Where a university press exists, it largely exists in the subconscious of the initiator. To become a well published scholar in this continent may therefore, be likened to a critic passing through a tunnel of brimstone: sending papers to either dead publishers or spending by spilling the last drop of the critic's earnings to pay in dollars. Consequent upon these, African critics flourish in thousands with success stories abroad, against their contemporaries who cough out very few articles in their career as scholars in Africa.

The birth of Jane Mos's *Ekwe: Journal of Languages and Literary Studies* is an attempt to fill the gap created by this drought which impedes success stories in the regular publication of journals in Africa. The publisher wishes to participate in uplifting the efficiency of African critics and their essays. This does not however imply that papers from non-Africans shall not be published in this journal.

Scholars have been given a free hand to contribute in any area of their choice as a way of extending a literary felicitous hand of friendship to them. This does not imply that papers in this issue, or in subsequent issues are not written by, or expected to be written by, experts in their various areas. All the essays in this volume are profound in their thought-provoking nature. Efforts were made by the editor to make a shift from orthodox thematic papers to articles that blossom in refreshing newness. Essays published in this volume are fundamental as they embody the stand point of all the participating critics.

The title of this journal-*Ekwe*-is drawn from Igbo folklife. It is a specially carved wooden object with a rectangular shape. It has two short handles at the edges and a long slit opening that covers the top of the entire range of the wooden object. It is the fastest and most reliable means of attracting the attention of the folk. Once 'ekwe' is beaten, the community in question assembles in their village hall or market square. It is an unbeatable source of clarion call. The sound that is emitted by 'ekwe' changes according to the styles of beating. It may herald danger or war through its

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2

Theatricality and the Times of William Shakespeare

Uwemedimo Atakpo

When talking about William Shakespeare, superlatives are always used. Critics have always seen him as the greatest of English writers and even perhaps, the greatest poet in all world literature. Literary historians of England in their works edited by Albert Bough (1967) say this of William Shakespeare (1564 – 1616): he was born in the 6th year of Queen Elizabeth's reign, at Stratford-on-Avon, Warwickshire in the rural centre of England, rich in legend and in association with leading events and characters of the wars of the Roses. The poet's parents, John Shakespeare and Mary Anden, were both from the adjacent country and particularly his mother, had valid claims to gentility. Shakespeare's father is said to have prospered at the local industry of glove making and also attained the highest municipal offices in the town.

But by the time Shakespeare was growing up, his father had met reverses in consequence of law-suits and a too sanguine temperament. William Shakespeare attended the Stratford Grammar School. There is even a possibility, (though there has been no definite proof), that he may have had a term or two at Oxford. However, his hasty marriage at the age of eighteen to Anne Hathaway of Shottery village and the birth of his three children in quick succession put an end to his regular schooling. There is no evidence how or

where he lived during the next half-dozen years. The seventeenth century tradition, reported by Aubrey from Beeston, that he had been in his younger years a school master in the country is most plausible, for there is much about schools in his works which suggests the teacher's rather than the pupil's point of view.

Life in London

Evidently, Shakespeare followed the procession of talent to London and gave himself to the rapidly expanding vocation of the stage. By 1592, when he was singled out by Greene for notice, he had obviously attained some prominence as an actor and playwright while Chettle's apology of the same year shows that he had become the esteemed protégé of "divers of worship", i.e., persons of high standing, and was favourably known for the qualities of geniality and good breeding which the Elizabethans described by the word gentle, and which are the traits most noted in the contemporary mention of him. Before 1594, by means that are unknown, Shakespeare had established a friendship with the young Earl of Southampton, to whom he dedicated his two long poems and to whom he addressed the bulk of his sonnets. His purely literary ambition appears to have been soon crowded out by increasing theatrical business. He was a principal actor in the Lord Chamberlain's company till 1603. He was one of the seven partners in the building of the Globe Theater in 1599. When in 1603 James I took the Chamberlain's men under his personal patronage, Shakespeare shared largely in the

mounting prestige and prosperity of the company and had a modest place in court. His ties with Stratford remained close. He invested his wealth largely in Stratford property and in 1597, he bought "New Place", one of the great houses of the town which became his residence and the home of his family.

His Works

Shakespeare's first published play was *Titus Andronicus*, which was printed anonymously in 1594 and was closely followed by *Henry VI Part II*, which was likewise anonymous and of still disputed authorship. Sixteen other plays were published in his life time in separate "quarto" form. In 1619, three years after the death of Shakespeare, ten plays by, or ascribed to him, were published by Thomas Parier without authority, and some with protective predatings. Soon after, Shakespeare's actor colleagues, John Heninge and Henry Condell, with the backing of Ben Johnson, undertook the editing of his complete dramatic works in 1616.

The First Folio

Difficulties arose in publishing this work. Publishers' rights, mislaid manuscripts, and rival demands upon William Jaggards printing press caused delay, and it was only in 1623, that the *First Folio* edition appeared. It is a large and sumptuous volume, betraying indeed many evidences of the confusions amid which it had been

compiled, but essentially well printed. *The Folio* is our only source for eighteen of the plays, and for the rest except *Pedicles*, which the *Folio* omitted, it offers texts that, if not invariably better than the corresponding quarto texts, are always of capital importance.

Shakespeare's After Fame

The post humous life of Shakespeare, as expressed in the influence of his work on the intelligence of later generations, has been the most active of which we have record. Many of the most significant writers of the last three centuries have found channels for their own thought in criticizing Shakespeare. This is notably true for example, of Pope, Samuel, Johnson, Coleridge, Lamb, Shaw, Voltaire, Victor Hugo, Goethe and many others. The results which have often been of the highest literary value, are sometimes more important in the aesthetic history of the writer's own ages than they are for Shakespeare absolutely considered. At the end of the eighteenth century, and in the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Shakespearean interest effervesced into a movement known as "Shakespeare Idolatry". There grew a romantic fallacy that Shakespeare – the humble "Man of Straford" was superhuman and could do nothing wrong.

The Development of Shakespeare's Style

According to a theatre historian, Bough (1967), the best way to bring into focus the multifold activities of

Shakespeare's first ten years as a writer is to view them as efforts to acquire the various 'skills' of his profession. He always followed what other men began. The broadest simple fact about his poems and early plays is that he followed the lines of least resistance from the crowd. This was done both in choice of materials and in workmanship. *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece* for instance, deal with the kind of classical story which had the greatest popular appeal at the time, and written in the two stanza forms most conventional in such works. His sonnets differ from their only worthy competitors, those of Sidney and Spenser, in being composed in the form that was commonest and easiest to write.

Shakespeare's Imitations

It is very difficult to say whether Shakespeare began as a dramatist by imitating Plautus, Greene, Lyly and Marlowe. However, it is clear that Shakespeare imitated Plautus in *The comedy of Errors*, Munday and Greene in *The Gentlemen of Verona*, Lyly in *Love's Labour Lost* and Peale and Marlowe in *Henry Vi*. In each case, his major preoccupation seemed to be to turn out a workman's product along lines which public tastes had already approved.

He showed at this time no prepossessions concerning metre. The broken-backed rhymes of the interludes which are most frequent in *Comedy of Errors*, his use of prose, pentameter couplets, blank verse, and the six line (ababcc)

stanza which *Venus and Adonis* exemplifies had made second nature for him. All mix themselves in his earliest plays in an anarchy for which it would usually be absurd to seek any special purpose. His main ambition apparently, was to learn how to write and he was willing to adapt himself humanly enough, to models that were then in vogue.

It is impossible to give exact dates for the writing of Shakespeare's works, but his plays can be put in four categories which can as well represent Shakespeare's life from youth to an approaching old age. The plays of the first period are marked in youthful dreams and exuberant spirits. Foremost among them are *A Midsummer Night's Dream* which is one of the loveliest of poetic fantasies; *The Merchant of Venice*, with its dramatic trial scene, his most popular farce; *The Taming of the Shrew*, and the romantic tragedy and greatest and ageless beauty of world tragedy, *Romeo and Juliet*.

The second period chronicles the romantic comedies. By this time, Shakespeare had become one of the proprietors of the Globe Theatre for which he wrote his comedies. They include *Much Ado About Nothing*, *As You Like it* and *Twelfth Night*. These comedies have certain things in common which include the profusion of choice lyrics, the plot which involves concealed identities, the highly individualistic comic characters, the witty, and the self reliant heroines.

Plays Structure

Shakespeare did not divide his plays into acts and scenes. His characters were seen to be coming and going. In their conversation, they explained where they were and who they were. In the Elizabethan period and theatre, there was no tab or curtain to be drawn, hence there were no dramatic curtain lines. Each scene had to blend into the next scene. However, Shakespeare most of the time, used a rhymed couplet to show when a scene was over and producers of his plays often used this clue in dividing the plays into acts and scenes. The openings of the plays set the characters, the preliminary situation, and the mood of the play as a whole. Because of the invariably complicated action, the exposition usually takes several scenes. The rising action begins at the first act and reveals the main problem of the play, the opposing forces, and the conflict, which maybe between two characters or groups of people, or within the soul of the leading character himself. The climax usually comes in the third act, when the eventual outcome of the play is definitely foreshadowed and the main groups of characters are brought together in a single dramatic situation. The action is built often by the use of minor plots so as to maintain interest through the fourth and fifth acts. The plays conclude with the resolution and the plays endings are usually as effective as the beginning. The concluding scene most often help to make a complete unit of the play.

Shakespeare's Themes

The premise, the theme of the underlying idea of Shakespeare's plays, are always found while analysing the leading characters, their motivations and their goals, the manner in which they solve or fail to solve their main problems. Most times the theme is expressed in one important line, but it is often repeated in varied forms for emphasis and most frequently condensed into the play's title.

In fact, the fascination of working out the key ideas of Shakespeare's plays are considered by many authorities. *Hamlet*, for instance, is considered by many as the greatest play ever written. As in every play, there are various brilliantly worded ideas about which whole dramas could be set or built. Shakespeare is "full of quotations", but there is always one dominant thought around which his actions are centered.

Shakespeare's Language

Shakespeare's language strikes with power and beauty when the form is not overtly considered. The language of Shakespeare's plays are modern in spirit. There is music in the language as the words form a definite rhythm. The movement of the lines and the choice of words express the spirit of a scene and suggest the manner in which it must be played. The rhythmic beauty of Shakespeare's poetry and the power of his prose held the

noisy Elizabethan audiences enthralled just as they do the politer audiences of today. There are famous quotations and perfectly expressed ideas in most of his work. For example:

*"What a piece of work is man!
How noble in reason!
How infinite in faculties!
In form and moving how
express and admirable!
In action how like an angel!
In apprehension, how like a god!"*

*"God made him, therefore, let him
pass for a man".*

*"I had rather have a fool to make me
merry than experience to make me sad".*

*"We are such stuff as dreams are made
on, and our little life is rounded with a sleep".*

*"Cowards die many times before their
deaths; the valiant never taste of
death but once".*

*"All the world is a stage, and men
and women are merely players".*

*"The time is out of joint; O cursed
spite that ever I was born to set it right".*

Shakespeare also coined a lot of phrases that are still in vogue today. Examples survive- "strange bed fellows", "towering passion", "fools paradise", "cold comfort", "cares of state", "at one swoop", "flaming youth" etc.

Shakespeare's Theatricalities

The Globe Theatre- Shakespeare was one of the proprietors of the octagonal globe theatre. The theatre or 'pit' as it was fondly called, has an open clearing in the center where the commoners push their way. Here there is protection from the cold wind, and the crowd provided their own warmth of spirit. They ate their food, drank and guffawed loudly. If the play pleases them, they may grow so noisy that no one hears the actors; if the play is boring, they would start cord games or dice or interrupt the actors with jeers and coarse laughter.

Above and surrounding the "pit" are tiers of balconies which are occupied by the upper classes – noblemen, students and some squires who have come to London from their country estates and masked women with male escorts.

The acting platform juts out into the midst of the audience and is partially covered by a small roof. On either side were doors by which the characters entered or disappeared. To the rear of it is the inner stage, hidden from the eyes of the audience by a curtain which may be drawn aside when indoor scenes are required. The balcony above the inner stage was used for the supernatural (like the ghost of

Hamlet's father in *Hamlet*), or when an upper scene was needed – as when Romeo climbs up to Juliet's room in *Romeo and Juliet*. The balcony was also used for the musicians who appeared in some plays. It was also used as a second storey of a house in a street scene. At the rear and sides of the stage inside, are the dressing rooms for the actors. There was no general curtain concealing the whole stage, so that all scenes on the main stage began with an entrance and with an exit. Thus in tragedies, the dead must be carried away.

Performers

Men and boys were the only ones allowed on the Elizabethan stage. Young boys played the female roles for no actresses were permitted on the Elizabethan stage.

Scenery

There was little scenery or props on the Elizabethan stage; the audiences supplied these with their imaginations. Since there was no scenery, there was no limit to the number of scenes, for a scene came to an end when the actor left the stage. When it was necessary for the exact locality of a scene to be known, then Shakespeare indicated it in the dialogue, otherwise a simple property or garment was sufficient; a chair or stool stood for an indoor scene; a man wearing riding boots was a messenger; a king wearing armour was on the battle field. Banners and other devices

were employed to distinguish between armies and knights, there were many battles, processions and dances.

Music and Songs

Music was an integral part of Shakespeare's drama. Shakespeare wrote beautiful songs and more than a hundred of the songs are woven into his plays and most of the songs are best appreciated in their dramatic settings. This is even truer in the romantic comedies. There are also his other songs that are better known than the plays from which they were extracted. The songs were set to music in Shakespeare's days and over the years, many composers have given them musical settings.

Lighting

The Globe Theatre and other Elizabethan theatres were roofless and performances occurred in the afternoon, hence there was no need for artificial lighting. Night scenes in the plays were indicated by the presence of candles, lanterns and torches.

Costumes

For the Elizabethan stage and Shakespeare's plays,

costumes were of two basic types, contemporary clothing and conventional dress. Most of the roles in Shakespeare's plays were costumed in Elizabethan garments which were appropriate to the rank or profession of the character. However, certain stereotypes of the period made it necessary to set off some roles. Principally, the use of conventional costumes were for four distinct groups. These were (1) special foreign groups such as Romans, or Spaniards; (2) Supernatural beings such as the witches, fairies, classical gods, ghosts; (3) Professional types, such as senators, clowns, clerics, lawyers; (4) Animals, such as lions, bears etc. The bulk of costumes were however basically Elizabethan garments and most of the conventionalized costumes were done by creating a few simple elements on the Elizabethan contemporary dress. An outstanding example was showing a Roman character with the addition of a drapery over his Elizabethan clothing.

Shakespeare's literary and stage works rightly marked him out as the greatest English writer and performer. Early in his life, Shakespeare was singled out for notice as he had obviously been a successful actor and writer. His works were published from 1594 and he developed his own peculiar style which involved imitations of earlier playwrights. Shakespeare's themes are found while analysing the major characters as they solve or fail to solve their problems. Most times, such themes are expressed in a line and repeated in varied forms for emphasis and also compressed into play title.

Shakespeare's language has such power and beauty,

modern in spirit, having music in it as the words for a basic rhythm. Shakespeare's theatricalities involved the performers who were men and young boys playing the female roles. There was paucity in use of scenery, there was no lighting for illumination as the plays were done in the day time. There was an elaborate use of costumes, and most of all, there was music procession and dance.

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3

Can Themba's Place among the Protest Writers in South Africa.

Nnamdi Effe

The literary creativity of a group of people is usually a representation of the life patterns and characteristics of that people. South Africa, as a matter of fact, has had some experiences that distinguish her and are peculiar to her in all ramifications. Before 1994, the blacks in South Africa were under the yoke of imperialist domination and exploitation; and the most nightmarish realization was that the black were the authentic owners of the land, which was the source of their domination, exploitation and humiliation.

In other words, South Africa before the majority rule of Nelson Mandela was characterised by intimidation, pauperization, victimization and horribleness of the blacks by the whites. The situation was too gruesome that the inevitable life of fear, frustration, despair, disappointment and death became the toll of the black people. Writing on Can Themba's obituary, Lewis Nkosi passionately says:

At any rate, the deaths of our writers are some times more dramatic than most deaths but are nonetheless part of the slow undramatic death of many (The will. vii).

In the face of this tyranny, oppression, brutality and exploitation, South African writers are left to reflect in their works this "morbid landscape". In their depiction of this landscape of chaos, these writers usually delineate the response of the blacks and this response is usually suffused with anger, hatred and protest. In short, among black writers, there grew the feeling that if there is no protest there will be no progress. Lewis Nkosi puts this feeling of the writers and their audience thus:

... the literature of southern Africa is committed to the notion that certain 'tasks' are the legitimate function of socially responsible writers. Protest, commitment, explanation: South African readers and critics expect these qualities of their authors ... (76).

Further down the passage, he continues,

South African literature of protest and social commitment is the only mirror through which the nation hopes to catch glimpses of its face even if only to later reject or denounce what it sees there as an outrage or falsification (76)....

The fact still remains that the black South African writer

discovers that the only option left for him is to cry a cry of anger and to protest against the inhuman, tyrannical and exploitative propensity of the imperialist whites; and he carries out his task with zeal and gusto that he is seen first and foremost as an embodiment of revolt. It is this same preoccupation that we find in Can Themba's in *The Will to Die*. Themba tries in this collection of short stories and reports to paint the picture of injustice and expose and attack what he considers as the South African "horrificency" that dehumanises him. Lewis Nkosi explains this effort thus:

... for Can Themba, the African township represented the strength and the will to survive by the ordinary masses of the African people. In its own quiet way the township represented a dogged defiance against official persecution ... (The Will. vii)

As a proper political protest, *The will To Die* presents an artistic canvas of a society in turmoil. The turmoil is that which manifests in the form of the brutality of the blacks in the hands of the imperialist whites. Again, the turmoil manifests in the resistance, violence, roguery and the sheer destruction of the appurtenance of oppression. After an apprehension of the cheating, dehumanization and rejection of blacks as humans, Can Themba arrives at some conclusions which form part of his starting point of protest in *The Will*:

production of coarse sound. It may also connote love, peace, ceremony or happiness through its melodious tunes. Apart from its 'assemblage' function, 'ekwe', in the Igbo community serves as a source of authentication of views during meetings.

Ekwe: Journal of Languages and Literary Studies is an assemblage of critics and their opinions; assessment and acceptance of a paper is itself reflective of the paper's authenticity in its contribution towards the furtherance of global literary scholarship. As a major source of rallying the folk together without discrimination, *Ekwe: Journal of Languages and Literary Studies* welcomes articles from any part of the universe and on any creative writer no matter his/her continent.

Uzoma Nwokochah,
Abia State University,
Uturu.

1

Tragedy and the Elysian Fields.

Isidore Diala

One fundamental delight of tragedy is its attempt at an interpretation of the totality of man's experience on earth. The distinction and terror of that vision lie essentially in its utter disbelief in the existence of an ever awake and presiding cosmic goodness or benign divinity. Tragedy, by definition, contemplates man as a being ultimately condemned to destruction by external forces. His salvation is worked out in terms of his transformation of the forces of his destruction and in compelling the hostile circumstances of his defeat to testify to his grandeur. The admission of the tragic hero into post-lethal heavenly bliss by the transfiguration of his suffering into purgatorial flames is thus a denial of the devil-ridden universe of tragedy and a sub-mergence of the literary imagination in a harmonious religious vision. The world of redemptive suffering and ultimate emergence into the beatific vision is not tragic, pointing away, as it does, from fateful circumstances and events, undeserved and unelected for agony and even often the death of innocence, to a divinely ordered universe with a benign God presiding.

Tragedy illuminates the total conception of man as a being whose mortal condition pitted against overwhelming circumstances and human fate is doomed to humiliation and death. And it is this basic assumption in the conception of the tragic universe that fully accounts for the pervading

"Look, boys" I explained, "you don't understand, you don't understand me. I agree with you that these whites take advantage of our girls and we don't like the way our girls act as if they are special. But all you're done about it is just to sit and sizzle here at them. No-one among you has tried to take revenge. Only I have gone to get a white girl and avenged with her what the whites do to our sisters... I seek revenge. I get the white girls. Well, it's tough and risky, but you guys, instead of sitting here crying your hearts out, you should get yourselves white girls, too, and hit back"
(Crepuscule 9 – 10).

For Themba, the blacks in South Africa should pay the white impostors back with their own coin. Can Themba's message is that though it is risky for the black man to throw back the pebble at them, yet there is no harm in trying; and that it will invariably increase their self dignity. Hence, Themba admonishes his African brothers and sisters not to be jealous about themselves. Also he encourages them to understand the self-inflicted inferiority complex they are suffering, and at the same time shake it off.

Part of Themba's portrayal of protest by the blacks in South Africa comes in the manner of thievery and roguery perpetrated against fellow blacks and at times against the

imperialists. Bruce King et al, identifies this forced propensity of the blacks when he talks about "a life of petty crime and violence" (xvi). For instance, it is this experience of squalor, want and sheer humiliation and exploitation that forced Maria Mabiletsa in "Kwashiorkor" to take to a life of petty crime, a life abnegating real life. Moreover, it is the detribalization or lack of culture that makes the blacks to change to this kind of life. Themba, laments in an emotion that touches the cord of existence:

... and detribalization, modernization, adoption, acculturation, call it what you like has to tear its way into their psychological pattern, brute-like. At first, before the shock, these girls really just float loosely about in the new freedoms, not really willing evil, not consciously flouting the order, but they're nevertheless playing with fire, and there's no one knows how to tell them no. Their parents themselves are baffled by what the world's come to and there's no invisible reality like tribe, or comprehensible code like custom or taboo, to keep some kind of balance. Meanwhile, the new dispensation – the superior culture, they call it; the diabolical shadow life, I call it – pounds at them relentlessly (Kwashiorkor 18).

Eventually, this pulverizes them into petty thievery, stealing, fighting and killing. It is Macala in "The Urchin" that truly and cruelly exhibits this ugly trait of violence,

even towards his black brothers and sisters. Whenever Macala performs one of his nasty actions against his fellow blacks from the country side, he usually enjoys the vitrolic curses heaped on his head; they prove to him "the superiority of the townsman to these old creatures from the country." (27) Though, blacks sometimes vent their hatred and anger on fellow blacks, the crux of the class and race war is that it is the exploitative tendency of the racist regime which excludes Blacks in the scheme of things that forces them to behave the way they do; to register their protest against the reactionary apartheid system.

In "Ten - to - Ten" the spirit of protest is vividly crafted. The fact is indisputable that Ten-to Ten, the main character and also a black policeman refuses to brutalize his fellow blacks, despite the fact that he is being paid by the nefarious system. In the same vein, he resents his fellow black policemen who brutalize fellow blacks; and he wonders what sort of blackmen they are:

*But, God! See these chaps in the location
on the beat. They treat their own people like
odure. And when the whiteman is with us on
the beat, they surpass themselves. Damn that
Ramokgopa! I felt so ashamed the other day
when he hit a hopeless drunk with a baton
until sergeant du Tuoit said, "That's
enough, now, Ramokgopa". God, I felt ashamed!
The blackman strikes, the whiteman says
"that's enough, now."*

(Ten-to-Ten 54).

Given the opportunity, Ten-to-Ten would have resigned from working for the system. He did not, not because he loves the system he works for, but because he has to live. In South Africa, the blacks must be engaged with any form of demeaning work; just to make sure they exist:

*But I have to work. I came here to work because
I like to work. No, because back home in
Tzaneen the people are starving, the rains
haven't come these many years and the land is
crying out, giving up the vain struggle to
live - to push up one, little green blade (54).*

Ten-to-Ten goes a step further. He uses the power the apartheid system has given him to protect his soul brothers. It is a sheer case of protestation against the evil system.

The experience of the average blackman in south Africa is somewhat similar to the experience of blacks everywhere the imperialists have decided to concentrate development in the urban areas, leaving the country-side with little or no amenities. Little wonder, the blacks are seen always flocking to the gleam of the urban centres, in order not to die of starvation, thirsty and malnutrition. In other words, the democratic process in South Africa is sheer orchestration of violence against the blacks in every ramification. The violence perpetrated against the blacks is not only in the form of brutalization as depicted in "Ten-to-Ten"; but it also manifests in form of denial of everything that makes life worth living: education, accommodation,

food and freedom of self determination.

It is because of this nasty socio-economic and political atmosphere that Macala, for example resorts to violence on the system that has been unleashing terror against the black people. However, Macala's violence is not only channeled directly against his enemies; and with his gang he also terrorizes the neighborhood. In one of these terrorist attacks against the state, Themba imagistically writes:

Stones and sorts of other missiles were hurled in all directions. Knives were brandished and plunged, big-buckled belts were swing in whistling arcs, arms were flailed in the centre of the imbroglio with desperate savagery. Women screamed, shops closed, traffic diverted itself. Now and then, a blood-bespattered boy would stagger off the street to a side wall just to sit down and watch, too done in to flee (The Urchin 32).

It is in "Terror in the Trains" that Themba really shows his talent as a good descriptive writer and his craft of imagistic pictures vividly shows the results of the years of exploitation and subjugation in south Africa. Here the blacks have resorted to crime, and it is the kind of crime that reminds one of Oswald Mtshali's "NightFall in Soweto" in which the poet laments that "man has become beast and prey" (196). Also in "Terror in the Trains" man has degenerated to a sub-human being that he:

Was packed, jammed like putty. On all sides humans were pressing against us; in the passage, between seats, on seat-backs-human. Four on three-men seats, three on two-men seats. Crammed. One woman screamed for help because some body pressed against her hard and her purse seemed to be sliding out of her pocket. At intermediate stations more and more people forced their way in (69).

As we said earlier, this horrifying experience is the result of many years of exploitation, slavery, segregation, intimidation and pauperization of the blacks by white minority. Hence, Themba, concludes that:

the situation has been aggravated, according to many people, by the policy of ethnic grouping, which has led the more tribal among us to think of other tribes as "foreigner's", enemies. We are not allowed to learn to live together in peace ... (70 - 71).

Can Themba was born in 1924 at Marabastad in northern Transvaal. He grew up during the period when the racist regime was in its apogee; but it was also a time when black protest writing blossomed, negating everything the white imperialist had wanted blacks to be. Udenta agrees with this position and he puts it this way:

Modern South African poetry, just as its prose and dramatic counterparts is a direct response to states of living conditioned by the deliberate barbarization of the individual in what was the then apartheid system (123).

Though, at a time Themba went into exile in the manner of his contemporaries, he is one of the exciting voices to have emerged from south Africa. This his exciting voice and "quickness of mind" (Lewis Nkosi 99), was evident in his sojourn as the Editor of *Drum* and *The Golden City Post Magazines*. It is in these media outfits that Themba exposed the evil that is inherent in racism, segregation, exploitation and cultural subjugation.

Indeed, in a careful study of Can Themba's *The Will*, one is bound to discover that the protest proclivity of the artist is more glaring in "Brothers in Christ", "Nude pass parade", "Let the people Drink", "Political offenders Banned to the Bush", "Henry Nxumalo", and "Requiem for Sophiatown". If we pay attention, for example, to "Brothers in Christ" we will experience the bang i.e. the anger, in the voice of the writer. It is no accident, because we can see Themba himself experience first hand segregation, colour bar and humiliation that are the lots of the blacks:

On another Saturday I again went to the Seventh Day Adventist Church. I walked through the people waiting outside the church, hoping to find somebody I could ask to allow me in. At the head of the stairs in

the doorway of the church I was suddenly yanked off my feet and rushed down the steps. A big, hefty man, without even stopping to ask me to leave the church twisted my arm behind my back and together with two others bundled me over to a waiting car. It was the "bums rush". When we got to the car my huge escort pressed me sharply into it. My head struck the side and started bleeding slowly (76).

Yet, the interesting and exciting aspect of the nightmarish experience is that the writer persists in his right to worship in any church of his choice. Hence, on another Sunday, he rebelled and ignored the horrifying bartering he received in the hands of the "Brothers in Christ" and went to "St. George's Anglican church in Parktown" (77).

The point Can Themba struggles to make in *The Will* becomes no other than, that it is only through concerted cry of anger, protest, commitment and explanation that the clutches of oppression can be dismantled. T.J. Couzens qualifies this attitude as "the sureness of touch of writers as Can Themba, Alex La Guma and others ... (13).

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4

Prospero, Caliban and Justice: A Linguistic and Legal Analysis of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*

Ugochukwu F. Nwaogu

The Tempest is one of Shakespeare's most interesting and popular plays. The hero, Prospero, is usually portrayed as a good-natured, kind-hearted and easily-forgiving man who was wrongly cheated out of his dukedom in Milan and banished to a lonely island. On the other hand, Caliban is seen as a 'savage' who does not even appreciate Prospero's attempts to 'civilize' him.

In this paper, we intend to consider Shakespeare's use of language in *The Tempest*. Furthermore, we shall look at the relationship between Prospero and Caliban from a legal point of view. We shall conclude by giving our opinion that Prospero's treatment of Caliban shows nothing but cruelty, oppression and abuse of Caliban's fundamental rights. It is our sincere belief that this essay would contribute albeit modestly, to the current attempts to forge an alliance between law and literature.

The exact time *The Tempest* is written is uncertain. However, critics believe the play must have been written sometime after the autumn of 1610. They base this belief on two facts. The first is that Shakespeare borrowed some ideas from a shipwreck that occurred in the Bermudas in

1609 from which Sir Thomas Gates and Sir George Summers returned safely to the surprise of their friends and relatives. Secondly, the play was performed for the first time in 1611 at White Hall Palace during the reign of King James I of England.

The characters bear Italian names. This was as a result of the influence of the Renaissance which came principally from Italy. Their names notwithstanding, they have familiar English character and manner of speech. This is more easily noticeable in the characters without any royal background. For instance, Stephano the butler and Trinculo the jester are not only English in thoughts and ways of life, but also talk about familiar English events. They use English proverbs, talk about sailors' lives, crack familiar English jokes and also mention constables.

Besides, we observe the reference to pagan gods and goddesses. This is because in 1606, a law was passed in England making it a culpable offence to utter holy Christian names on stage. This piece of legislation was passed to assuage the puritans whose influence had spread widely by the beginning of the 17th century. There is proof that Shakespeare respected this law while writing *The Tempest*. For example, Sebastian says

'Save his majesty!

(Act. two, scene i, line 160)

when he really wants to say "God save his majesty".

Let us conclude this introduction by pointing out that *The Tempest* reveals Shakespeare's interest in colonization. After the 'discovery' of the West Indies by 1492, interest in colonization grew and by 1610 or thereabout when *The Tempest* was written, Shakespeare might have been attempting to incorporate a popular subject at the time.

Shakespeare's Use of Language in *The Tempest*

Chomsky (1975:3-4) observes that the most compelling reason of studying language is because it is not only a mirror of the mind, but also gives an insight into the patterns of the organisation of the human intellect. Again, the use of language is an extremely complex process. This highly abstract and intimately productive system lies beneath our subconscious. Jannedy et al (1991 : 1) sums it up this way:

*Language fills every part of our lives;
it gives words to our thoughts, voice
to our ideas and expression to our feelings.
It is a rich and varied human ability –
one we can use without even a thought,
that children seem to acquire
automatically, and that linguists
have discovered to be complex, yet
describable.*

Furthermore, Leech (1968:25) citing Chomsky (1957) points out that in linguistics, it has become widely

accepted that a language such as English has theoretically infinite resources that is, consists of an infinite number of sentences, most of which have actually never been uttered. This claim becomes credible when we consider that the largest English dictionaries do not contain the whole of contemporary vocabulary.

Shakespeare therefore chooses the lines of his characters very carefully in order to manage the vocabulary at his disposal. To begin with, the kind of English language used in the 17th century when *The Tempest* was written is different from the one in use today. Let us consider some words and what they mean in the text.

Hath	-	has
Prithee	-	please
Ere	-	before
Twixt	-	between
Sirrah	-	fellow
Methinks	-	I think
Nay	-	no
Peace	-	keep quiet

Many more examples abound.

That is not all. Shakespeare uses the verbal variants – do, does and did in situations which by modern standards, they ought not to occur. Consider Ferdinand's words to Miranda in Act three Scene i, line 64.

*The very instant I saw you, did
My heart fly to your service ...*

Conversely, Shakespeare omits this auxiliary where modern English would not. An example is Alonso's question to Gonzalo in Act two Scene i, line 305:

Heard you this, Gonzalo?

The result of all these is that the kind of English used in *The Tempest* may present a first-time reader with problems.

Another important feature of language use in *The Tempest* is that just like in most other Shakespearean plays, the characters without any social importance speak in prose. Put another way, the characters who lack a royal background use common, everyday kind of English language while the important characters' lines are poetic in style.

Let us illustrate the speech style of the lowly-rated characters with the Boatswain's Speech in Act one, Scene i line 31.

*Down with the topmast! Yare! Lower,
Lower! Bring her to try with main-course
... A plague upon this howling! They are
harder than the weather or our office.*

The above lines lack any rhyme scheme or metrical pattern. They are delivered in free-flowing style.

On the other hand, let us use Prospero's speech to show how the royal characters use the English Language.

No harm

I have done nothing but in care of thee-
of thee, my dear one; thee my daughter – who
Art ignorant of what thou art; nought knowing
of whence I am, nor that I am more better
Than Prospero, master of a full poor cell
And thy no greater father (Act two, Scene ii line 15)

This is an example of a free-flowing verse – that is, it does not have any rhyme scheme. Instead, it has ten syllables to each line.

The spirits and gods in the play use rhymes.
This can be noticed from Ariel's songs:

*Full fathom five thy father lies;
Of his bones are coral made
Those are pearls that were his eyes
Nothing of him that doth fade
But doth suffer a sea-change
Into something rich and strange
Sea – nymphs hourly ring his knell
(Burthen:) Ding – dong.
Hark! Now I hear them – Ding-dong bell.
(Act one, Scene ii, line 399).*

*Where the bee sucks, there suck I
In a cowslip's bell I lie*

*There I watch when owls do cry
On the bat's back I do fly
After summer merily
Merily, merily shall I live now
Under the blossom that hangs on the bough
(Act five, scene i, line 88).*

The rhyme scheme of the first song is ABAB, CCDEED while the second song has the following rhyme AAAAA, CDD. However, Ariel's use of rhymes is limited to his songs only.

Shakespeare's efforts at making the unearthly beings use rhymes gets to its peak during the presentation of the masque. All the lines rendered by the gods – Iris, Ceres and Juno during the presentation of the masque fall into easily identifiable rhymes. Consider Ceres' speech in act four, scene 1, line 76:

*Hail, many – coloured messenger, that ne'er
Dost disobey the wife of Jupiter
Who, with thy saffron wings, upon my flowers
Diffusest honey-drops, refreshing showers
And with each end of thy blue bow dost crown
My bosky acnes' and my unshrubbed down
Rich Scarf to my proud earth. Why had thy queen
Summoned me hither, to this short-grassed green?*

Bradbrook (1978:3) believes that this masque is a reflection of the country where Shakespeare was born and from which

his attention was never divided.

We do not mean to say that characters who have neither a spiritual nor a royal background do not use rhymes at all. This is because even Stephano's song in act two scene i line 43 also rhymes:

*The master, the swabber, the boatswain and I
The gunner and his mate
Loved Mall, Meg and Marian, and Margeny
But none of us cared for Kate
For she had a tongue with a tang
Would cry to a sailor, go hang!
She loved not the savour of far nor of pitch
Yet a tailor might scratch her where she did itch
Then to sea, boys and let her go hang!*

Again, we notice the use of rhyme in Caliban's freedom song in act two, scene ii, line 165. In the same vain, high-born characters sometimes use prose when they speak on informal occasions. For instance, Cronzalo uses prose in act two, scene i, line 65.

*Methniks our garments are new as fresh
as we put them on first in Afric, at the
marriage of the king's fair daughter
claribel to the king of Tunis.*

Swan (1984:X) points out that the rest of what is said is in a fairly free blank verse usually with ten syllables to

each line mainly with five iambic feet (i). He illustrates with Francisco's words in Act two Scene i, line 107:

I sáw/ him béat / the súrg/ ês ún/dêr him
Swan believes that the next line after the above example shows the freedom which Shakespeare gave himself in his later plays in not only breaking out from the limits of five iambic feet to the line, but in letting the sense run from line to line:

I sáw/ him béat / the súr/ ges ún/ der him
And ríde/ upón / their bácks;/ he tród/ the wát/ [er]
Whose én/ mitý/ he flúng/ asíde/ and breast / [ed]
The súrg/ most Swóln/ that mét/him; his/ bóld héad
Bóve the / contén/ tious wáves/ he képt ...

There is an extra syllable in the second and third lines, the ending of the fourth line which normally would be stressed – HIM

HÍS BÓLD HÉAD and the first foot of the last line which is trochaic (´ ~) and not iambic. Swan argues that the variations above kept Shakespeare's audience from feeling that his language was too regular and also helped Shakespeare to produce special effects.

We would conclude this part of the essay by pointing out that Shakespeare exploited language to create very vivid pictures in the minds of his audience. Since the play was acted on a stage, Shakespeare relied heavily on the imagination of his audience and used language to create the

desired images. For instance, Caliban's words in act three Scene ii line 128 are instructive in this respect

*Be not afeard; the isle is full of noises
Sounds and sweet airs that give delight and hurt not.
Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments
Will hum about mine ears; and sometime voices
That, if I then had waked after long sleep
Will make me sleep again ...*

As Caliban speaks these lines, the audience would ordinarily make mental images of a beautiful Island with sweet – smelling flowers, peopled by creatures with delightful voices for music. These are not ordinary words indeed. They were carefully chosen for effect and therefore border on poetry.

A Legal Analysis of the Relationship between Caliban and Prospero

William Shakespeare portrays Prospero as a tender-hearted and studious duke of Milan who was deposed by his mischievous and ambitious brother Antonio. He is a magician who is in complete control of the Island to which the waves take him after he and his little daughter, Miranda, were put into a faulty ship to drift to nowhere and die. It is in this state that he and his daughter land on the Island in which *The Tempest* is set.

On the other hand, Shakespeare portrays Caliban as devilish and uncivilized. The list of the dramatis personae in

The Tempest describes him as “a savage...” Prospero says Caliban's father is the devil and his mother, Sycorax, a witch.

In this analysis however, we shall look at the justice in the ill treatment meted out to Caliban by Prospero from a legal point of view. We shall apply English law and by extention, Nigerian Law to the situation for three reasons. The first reason is that as we pointed out in the first part of this essay, even though the characters bear Italian names, their speech and manner of life are genuinely English. Secondly, Shakespeare himself is an Englishman and was therefore subject to English law until his death in April 1616. Thirdly, the common law which operates in England and Nigeria and which came into being from the 12th century incorporated the usage of the Romans after the Norman conquest of 1066 AD. (Metcalf 1976:1).

Justice, Like many concepts in legal and political philosophy is capable of being used in many different ways. (Farah and Dugale 1990:260). However, as Lord Denning M.R pointed out in the English case of METROPOLITAN PROPERTIES LTD V LANNON (1969) 1 QB 577

*Justice must be rooted in confidence
and confidence is betrayed when
RIGHT THINKING people go away
from the court saying that the Judge
was biased. (my emphasis)*

terror that emanates from it. We are deeply touched and terrified on beholding mortals who, for all their human frailty, we feel are condemned to a degree of suffering immensely disproportionate to their initial acts. Clifford Leech has indeed observed that tragedy would be practically impossible but for some measure of free will conceded to the characters, and that Elizabethan tragedy because of its closer approximation to the everyday appearance of things perhaps endowed its characters with greater freedom than Greek tragedy did. Leech nevertheless insists that the pattern of events in tragedy on close consideration is essentially fore-ordained, and that it would be a great failure indeed if in contemplating the tragic picture of the universe we failed to realize the absence of poetic justice, the essential hostility of destiny, and that:

The 'justice' of the gods, as seen in tragedy, is as terrible as their indifference: in fact we shall not see tragedy aright unless we recognize that the divine justice mirrored in it is an indifferent justice, a justice which cares no whit for the individual and is not concerned with a nice balance of deserts and rewards (294).

We thus pity the characters whose unhappy lot is to experience this bizarre dispensation. And a recognition of their fate even as a remote possibility in our experience as mortals inspires terror in us. Yet as perceptive commentators and beholders alike have observed, the

ultimate and deepest effect of great tragedies is not incapacitation but indeed exultation. But this exultation really cannot possibly emanate from our belief in the election of the hero into the divine fraternity or his ascension to the Elysian fields. The tragic picture of the universe in the first instance expresses no faith in a just, comprehensible, benevolent, and divine scheme. It derives instead from man's transfiguration of the cruelty and terrible pain of his defeat into a magnificent testimony of his glory. This is the tragedy equivalent of the Saint's halo whose radiance flashes in triumph in the dark night of tragedies of great rank such as Sophocle's *Oedipus the King*, Shakespeare's *King Lear* and Andre Malraux's *Man's Estate*.

Oedipus the King does not lack commentators. So a statement would do. The whole pattern of events of *Oedipus the King*, the poetry and the imagery state one grim fact: the delusion of pomp and the total inconsequence of man's perceptions and aspirations when he is pitted against overarching powers beyond his control. Oedipus, being mortal, is certainly not conceived in perfection. But he is imagined and presented not in terms of his weaknesses but of his strength. His patricide and incest, being acts he absolutely abhors, makes deliberate efforts to evade but commits unwittingly, can beget all the infernal horror they do only in a tragic universe. His spectacular misfortune, for all his high-mindedness, discrimination and dedicated aspiration to a dignified plane of human existence terrifies the beholder.

This same issue was stressed by the supreme court in NIGERIA-ARAB BANK LTD V BARRI ENGINEERING NIG LTD (1995) 9 SCNJ 147.

Certainly, right-thinking readers frown at the ill treatment Prospero metes out to Caliban without any justification. He speaks to Caliban in very foul language and even calls him a slave:

Ahorred Slave

*Which any print of goodness will not take
being capable of all ill !*

(Act one, Scene ii line 353).

But it is clear that Caliban is not even a slave properly so called. He is in fact, the real owner of the Island. Caliban tells Prospero to his face that the latter learnt many things about the Island from the former.

I must eat my dinner

*This Island's mine by Sycorax my mother
Which thou tak'st from me when thou cam'st first,
Thou strok'st me and made much of me, would'st give me
Water with berries in 't and teach me how
To name the bigger light and the less,
That burn day and night. And then I loved thee
And showed thee all the qualities o' th' isle
The fresh springs, brine-pits barren place and fertile
Cursed be I that did so! ...
(Act one Scene ii, line 333).*

It is therefore obvious that after learning the secrets of the Island from Caliban, Prospero turns around and oppresses him. In a way, Prospero is guilty of the same offence Antonio his brother committed against him – Treason. See the case of R V BORO (1966) 1 ALL NLR 266, (1967) NMLR 163.

Prospero does not know who Sycorax was. He relies on what Ariel tells him and the fact that Ariel was imprisoned by her in a tree and summarises that she is a "blue-eyed hag" (Act one, Scene ii, line 269). He therefore imagines that Caliban cannot be anything but a "poisonous slave, got by the devil himself" (Act one, Scene ii, line 321) Prospero himself confesses in Act one, Scene ii, line 270 that he relies on Ariel's tales.

... Thou, my slave

As thou reportest thyself was then her servant ...

This is a breach of one of the cardinal principles of fair hearing-audi alteram partem (hear the other side). In other words, no one must be condemned unheard. This was pointed out in the old English case of R V UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE (1723) mod. Rep. 225. The above case was heavily relied on by the Nigerian Supreme Court in the case of GARBA & Ors v THE UNIVERSITY OF MAIDUGURI (1986) 2 SC 128.

Caliban is simple hearted and somewhat childish. This is depicted by the fact that he believes Stephano's claim in Act two Scene ii line 126 that he is the man in the moon. He is even willing and ready to help the newcomers whom he regards as gods.

Caliban is also very intelligent as shown by his ability in learning Prospero's language (English) and being able to curse in it. This is especially when we consider that as Allen and Campbell (1972:8) point out, Teaching and Learning English as a second language (ESL) is a very complex activity. Caliban's ability to achieve proficiency in the language therefore shows his intelligence.

This essay would not be complete if we fail to draw attention to the fact that Prospero's punishments on Caliban are of the worst kind and amount to criminal assault:

*For this be sure tonight thou shalt have cramps
Side-stitches that shall pen they breath up; urchins
Shall, for that vast of night that they may work
All exercise on thee; thou shall be pinched
As thick as honeycomb, each pinch more stinging
Than bees that made 'em (Act one, Scene ii, line 327).*

Section 252 of the Nigerian Criminal Code cap 44 Laws of the Federation of Nigeria 1990 (which is derived from English law) provides:

*A person who strikes, touches or
moves or otherwise applies force of
any kind to the person of another*

*either directly or indirectly, without his
consent, or with his consent if the consent
is obtained by fraud or who by any bodily
act or gesture attempts or threatens to apply
force of any kind to the person of another
without his consent, in such circumstances
that the person making the attempt or threat
has actually or apparently a present ability
to effect his purpose, is said to assault
that other person and the act is called
an assault. The term 'applying force'
includes the case of applying heat,
light, electrical force, gas odour, or any
other substance or thing whatever, if
applied in such a degree as to cause
injury or personal discomfort.*

The above legislation is buttressed by the English cases of R V ST GEORGE (1840) 9 C & P 483 and R V JAMES (1844) 1 C & K 530.

Prospero would also be liable for the tort of assault and battery under civil law. This is because even if he does not actually touch Caliban, his words are such as to make a reasonable man fear that violence is about to be applied to him and that is enough to prove the above-mentioned tort. See the English case of STEPHENS V MYERS (1730) 172 E.R. 735.

Interestingly, Ayodele (1996:27) argues that Prospero might have been so appalled at Sycorax's treatment of Ariel

that he justifiable makes Caliban pay for the sins of his mother. If Ayodele had any legal knowledge however, it is doubtful if he would have held on to such opinion. This is because the principle of vicarious liability does not apply to criminal law. See *HONEYWILL V LARKIN* (1934) 1 KB 191.

Caliban is a different and separate individual from Sycorax, his mother. There is therefore no way any punishment meted out to him for the offences of his mother can be supported by law.

Our humble submission is that "uncivilized" Caliban is a better person than "civilized" Antonio and Sebastian. It is true he plots murder in Act three Scene ii line 58, but this is in revenge for all the devilish treatment he receives from Prospero. Antonio and Sebastian, the so called men of honour and dignity, plot murder for personal gain against their own brothers. Even in the midst of maltreating Caliban, Prospero perhaps unwittingly, acknowledges Caliban's indispensability.

But, as it is

We cannot miss him. He does make our fire fetch in

Our wood and serves in offices

That profit us ...

(Act one, Scene i, line 312).

In conclusion, Caliban's "offences" are by far simpler in nature than those of some other characters who do not receive half the ill-treatment and abuse of human

rights he does receive. It was such cruelty and oppression that culminated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948- a couple of centuries after Shakespeare's death.

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Drama of History:

King Lear and the Nigerian Situation

N. J. Udoeyop

There have been few Nigerian dramas of history. Among them may be mentioned Soyinka's plays like *A Dance of the Forests*, *Kongi's Harvest*, *A play of Giants*, *The Beatification of Area Boy*, and Osofisan's *Morountodun*, which, among other things seek to capture and analyse conflict in a particular historical moment or in man's progression through history. For its part, history is nothing more than a "text" of events in the relationship between men in a community, or of events in the relationship between nations. To the extent that any number of authors can write different "texts" of the same events to that extent history itself is more of the authors story (his *storia*) rather than reality and its affinity and relationship to drama is therefore not in question. But a drama of history may draw freely from actual events or from a mythical past to bring out something universal in human nature and deliver a socio-political message.

In seeking to apply Shakespeare's *King Lear* to the Nigerian situation we are not setting "fiction" against "reality" as such. Rather we are considering the play as an artifice of human experience, like history itself, which like drama, is grounded, that is to say, derives its existence and its meaning in language as an institution, which determines even our desires, and all relationships whether public or private. The dramatist has this advantage over the historian,

namely, that he is not limited by actual events but can give to his characters, whether drawn from our contemporary world or from a mythical past, the nature of our common humanity. We do not intend here to buttress any new insight of scholarship in Shakespeare's *King Lear* but the simple act of speculating the possibility of some areas of comparison between Lear's kingdom and the Nigerian nation, especially given the traumatic experiences which the misrule of our country has witnessed in the last two decades of the twentieth century.

King Lear was first performed in London on 26 December, 1606, and was probably written between March 1603 and Christmas 1606. The reference to "these late eclipses in the sun and moon..." may relate to the eclipse of the sun of October 1605 and of the moon of September of the same year. These were recorded and published in 1606 and are quoted by Professor G. B. Harrison. Although these may not have been the only recent eclipses, Shakespeare may very well have alluded to them in his usual way of establishing a correlation or correspondence between natural phenomena and human society. I cannot be sure now but I think during the Babangida and Abacha years we had at least one eclipse of the sun and one of the moon¹.

It is also a historical fact that between 1604 and 1605 King James I of England, who was also James VI of Scotland tried to get the English Parliament to approve an Act of Union of the two countries. It is possible therefore that Shakespeare intended the play to illustrate the evils of disunity. In it he places responsibility for any threat to

national unity squarely on the king, his daughter Goneril and Regan together with their husbands. That is to say, the responsibility for unity and stability of the kingdom, in the drama, rests on its rulers. For us in Nigeria the single, most important question has been the question of national unity. Lugard's amalgamation of North and South in 1914 has not resolved the question, nor has the Federal experiment of three Regions adopted in 1948. Indeed the unitary government initiated by the military regime of General Aguiyi - Ironsi and practised in everything but name by succeeding administrations to date seems to have compounded the question.

The problem of leadership – political leadership - has often been associated with the question of national unity, and the absence of a national leader, so it has often been argued, is responsible for our failure to achieve national unity. The acts of commission and omission on the part of those who attempt to lead are generally held responsible for our many crises, including the civil war of 1967 – 1970. In this connection Omafume Onoge has had this to say:

That "the trouble with Nigeria" is primarily a leadership deficiency which is a recurrent diagnostic assertion in Nigerian popular opinion and serious literature from a variety of disciplinary persuasions. In certain circles, the protracted political crises of June 12 has also brought to the fore a more strident assertion of the leadership question as part of the

competitive "national question" debate.

I refer to claims and counter-claims about the ascriptive suitability of particular ethnic nationalities usually one of the big three, to either political, commercial or industrial leadership (43 – 44).

In *King Lear* the personal and the political themes are introduced in the first line of the very first scene:

Kent: *I thought the King had more affected the Duke of Albany than Cornwall.*

Gloucester: *It did always seem so to us: but now in the division of the Kingdom, it appears not Which of the Duke he values most(I.i.)*

The initiating act of the tragedy is the king's "resolve" to share his kingdom among his three daughters, divest himself of all authority and responsibility of ruler and yet retain the privileges of ruler. Lear's reason for dividing his kingdom among his daughters is "... that future strife may be prevented now" (I.ii. 45). However, the dowries are given not on the basis of any intrinsic worth on the part of the daughters but on the basis of their ability to flatter their father:

*Which of you shall we say doth love us
Most that our largest bounty may extend
Where nature doth with merit*

Challenge (1.i.55-58).

In the process, Cordelia, his only honest daughter who truly loves the king is dispossessed and banished for refusing to flatter. The king professes of Cordelia: "I loved her most" (1.i, 123) and it may therefore be assumed that since the kingdom had already been divided before his daughters' declaration of their love his division could not be fair or equitable, for Cordelia obviously had a greater claim on his affection.

The first scene of the play contains all the seeds of tragedy which may be applied to the Nigerian situation. First, because Lear is king he has and demonstrates absolute authority, at least until he publicly renounces it nobody dares question his decisions. Secondly, for Lear, his kingdom is a private estate which he alone can divide among his daughters. Thirdly, the king's division of the kingdom is based on nothing more than public declaration of love, which is evident of the king's vanity, foolish pride, and lack of understanding of human nature. He could not "see" through Goneril's and Regan's flattery nor could he see Cordelia's honest and sincere love. Now if we reflect on the Nigerian situation of the past two decades or so it will not be difficult to find at local, state and nation levels, rulers, especially military rulers who treated the public treasury and other public resources as if they were their private property; rulers who tolerated no dissent or criticism, no matter how innocent or well-intentioned. Also, it is not difficult to identify rulers who have mistaken flattery and sycophancy for loyal services until events kick

them out of power. The relationship between Babangida's and Abacha's administration on the one hand, and *NADECO*² on the other, readily comes to mind. Nor can we easily forget the intolerance of both erstwhile rulers, nor the many allegations of tyrannical rule and plundering of public office made against them.

For Lear, and his two treacherous daughters it is significant that Regan should claim to be "made of the self same *metal* as my sister" (1.i.69) so that we are not surprised when they compete together who will "punish" their father most till Regan finally says: "What need one?" (11.iv.265), just as they had earlier competed who should flatter him most. Cordelia's refusal to flatter is Lear's first shock and as a result of this he breaks the natural *bond* between father and child in banishing her, when she declared: I love your majesty, According to my *bond* (1.i.93). It is also for the same reason and with the same arrogance of tyrannical power that he banishes Kent who tries to intercede on behalf of Cordelia, so in the end Lear falls victim of his own arrogance, of his abuse of power and love of flattery, just like some of our rulers, especially our military dictators. Cordelia is not being mathematical in her distribution of love but is merely making what may amount to an ideal truth that a woman cannot marry without love. On the other hand "unnatural", that is a dishonest woman such as Goneril and Regan can. Concerning the public theme of the drama, Kent is not being insubordinate when he openly opposes Cordelia's punishment but merely demonstrating the courage of an honest adviser in the face of wrong and foolish policy or decision by his ruler. Thus

he says:

*... be Kent unmannerly when Lear is
mad ... think 'est thou that duty shall
dread to speak when power to flattery
bows. To plain honour's bound
when majesty stoops to folly. Revoke thy
doom (1.i.145-150).*

In his treatment of Cordelia and Kent the king breaks two major **bonds** or contracts. If he were an ordinary private citizen his treatment of the two would not have had the tragic consequences of such apocalyptic proportions as we witness. But he is king with absolute powers and his "madness" in his domestic and political decisions in act I spell doom for him and the state. With Cordelia he breaks the **bond** (contract) between father and loving, honest daughter; in Kent he breaks the bond (contract) between ruler and a courageous, bold, plain and honest adviser. We may use this to reflect, for example, on Abacha's treatment of Ebenezer Babatope, and Chief Ibru over the detention of Chief Abiola; of Babangida's treatment of Ebitu Ukwie over Nigeria's membership of the Organization of Islamic States³. We can say then, that Lear's tragedy, which is the tragedy of his country – as is always the case for any country under a dictatorial, tyrannic rule – begins with his breach of these two vital bonds.

In Kent's speech above, the word "mad" is first introduced and it foreshadows Lear's madness later in the play. It is madness when Lear abdicates responsibility to rule and still seeks to retain those privileges which belong

to the office of a king. This theme of madness is coupled with that of blindness both in the king and in Gloucester when his eyes are plucked out by Lear's daughters. So that in the end he laments: "I stumbled when I saw", on realizing the treachery of his bastard son Edmund. Gloucester's realization confirms Cordelia's prophetic statement that "Time shall unfold what plighted cunning hides (1.1.280).

Instability and rash judgement are part of Lear's weakness. We may compare him here to Babangida's manipulation of the electoral process in the presidential election of 1993 when it dawned on him that the election of a democratic president means, among other things, his loss of dictatorial power and concomitant privileges. The same can be said of Abacha's even more brazen manipulation in an effort to perpetrate himself in power. Let us know that Lear is "too full of changes" at his age (1.1.288). This is in contrast to the king's arrogant claim: I have sworn I am firm (1.1.248), she also sees that the King's treatment of Cordelia is very poor judgement and because they believe the king has been "rash" and "choleric" they decided to take away all authority from him.

The plot of *King Lear* divides into two: the main one concerning Lear and his daughters, and the subplot concerning Gloucester and his two sons – Edgar and illegitimate Edmund. We will observe, in passing, that like Lear, Gloucester also broke the marriage bond to beget Edmund. We are not attempting any close analogy between Lear's kingdom and contemporary Nigeria, though one can

speculate the possibility or even the probability of comparing the three major ethnic nationalities with Lear's daughters. If we consider the main plot, (the only problem of course in such comparison would be) given the many crises that we have experienced, which of them can we say would be Goneril and Regan; and which Cordelia? Put another way, which of the three major ethnic nationalities – Hausa/Fulani, Ibo and Yoruba “shall we say doth love Nigeria most”, given our slogan of “one Nigeria”, “national unity” etc? Which is most guilty of merely flattering the concept of national unity in order to best exploit the resources of the nation? And which of them has made the supreme sacrifice in the effort to make Nigeria one and prosperous? Which of them has conspired with which, at any time in our national history to seize upon the weakness or excesses of our rulers through flattery of their madness, blindness, rashness and arrogance, and corner the resources of the nation to themselves, pushing the country from one disaster to another, both economic and political? At a time when almost all ethnic nationalities consider themselves “marginalized” it is useful to pose these questions for sober reflection if we want to avoid another civil war which could very well spell the end of the federation.

Again, if we consider the subplot alone, the one concerning Gloucester, it may offer a possibility in speculation to group the major ethnic nationalities together. Again we may ask: which of the two groups is Edgar and which Edmund? That is to say, which of the two has by any form of dishonesty or slight of hand cheated the other out of its birth right, caused its alienation or exile from main –

stream politics and economy of Nigeria to become a political and an economic beggar? These are not vain speculative rhetoric because, even now, when the chips are down, two or all three of the major ethnic nationalities have always demonstrated their ability and willingness to gang up politically and economically against the ethnic minorities.

And yet again we may ask, given the long-standing geopolitical division of Nigeria into north and south (although there was never really any political South until recent apparent or obvious excesses of some Northern rulers “threatened” to make that concept a reality) yet given that division into north and south; which is Edgar and which Edmund? Which has flattered the concept of national unity more; alienated the other more; and sought to inherit what is not its own or take away the others birth right? Which is more honest and loyal in its dealing with Nigeria?

It is of the essence of Shakespearean tragedy, especially of Lear, and a paradox of the man's nature that he seeks desperately to retain the very thing he has given up. Thus the king's intention is:

*To shake all cares and business from our
Age conferring them on younger strengths
while we unburthend crawl toward grave
(1.1.40-42).*

Lear considers his abdication of royal responsibilities a service to the nation. Yet he would retain the privileges of

royalty. We can compare this to our rulers – military or civilian – when they give up the profession or business in which they were trained for the fruits of political rulership which will enhance their profession or business. Thus their declared intention and private motives are at variance with one another. It is also of the essence of Shakespearean tragedy that nature destroys what it has nurtured. Now ambition is part of human nature and in politics as in the military, ambition nurtures yet more ambition. And when political and military powers become one in the hands of a tyrant such as we have had, you arrive at a situation where absolute power corrupts absolutely. This is true of Lear and his two dishonest daughters and has been true of Nigerian military dictators, whose credibility (and persons in the case of Ironsi and Abacha) were destroyed by the ambition which nurtured them. Yet a third essence of Shakespearean tragedy is that man is destroyed by his own strength or by the thing (institution) he has created for himself alone. For if what blesses one cannot bless all, the one becomes victim of his own blessing. Lear created a monster of Goneril and Regan and was forced to lament:

Hast thou given all to thy two daughters?

And hast come to this?

(111.iv.49-50)

And later he says:

"Then let them anatomize Regan see

What bread about her heart"

(111.vi.80).

In the same way, our dictators create monsters of the armed forces which turn out to be their undoing; of the economic institutions which enable them hide their stolen wealth, and of the press – print and electronic – which turn out to mock them when they are forced out of power. The deep sense of nihilism which pervades the closing acts of the play elicits from Edgar the fear that:

Humanity must perform prey on itself

Like the monster of the deep

(IV.11.49).

Although justice may not be the central theme in *King Lear* such as it is in *Measure for Measure*; it is nevertheless an important theme. In this connection one does not only have to consider the usual so-called "poetic justice" but also Lear's acting out a mock trial of his two daughters in his madness as well as the views expressed by various characters on the subject. Thus, for example, Lear summarizes his predicament by claiming that he is "a man more sinned against than sinning" (111.ii.59). At surface this verdict may appear to be even-handed justice but it is a statement of self pity and partial truth because the greater responsibility for his tragedy lies with him. But neither Babangida has been willing to go even that far in acknowledging personal responsibility for what happened especially during the last years of his misrule. Nor would Abacha have either, had he left power alive.

Gloucester's "As flies to Wanton boys are we to the

The tragic exultation arises however from the overriding conception of Oedipus not as the archetype of criminal man but of man as a seeker after truth even in full awareness that his investigations may be his ruin. In the background of the mysterious and ravaging plague, only the truth is redeeming, its brilliance imagined as an illumination of the path to the beautiful and to man's salvation. And in this lies the great relevance of the entire complex of speculations about the nature of ocular and spiritual vision. Oedipus despises Teiresias on account of the latter's blindness only to be led to the agonizing discovery that in the state of ocular blindness is the perfected radiance of divine truth perceptible and endurable. This moment of final illumination and full perception is tragedy's grim equivalent of the beatific vision.

The blossoming of Oedipus' heroism at the ironic close of the drama even into self-forgetfulness is surely another mark of his distinction. Indeed a measure of his greatness at this moment is the pattern of the movement of his thoughts. He abandons a possible stance of self-justification. When he thinks about himself at all, it is to express the direst self-loathing and to plead for expulsion from human habitation:

*Lead me away, my friends, with utmost speed
Lead me away, the foul polluted one,
Of all men most accursed,
Most hateful to the Gods (138).*

He repeats this plea on Creon's coming in on stage. Then his thoughts shift to Jocasta for whom he appeals for interment in Thebes. He contemplates next his daughter's plight and entrusts them to Creon's care. There follows the grand culmination in his altruistic prayer for Creon:

*A blessing on thee! May the powers on high
guard thy path better than they guarded mine!(139).*

It is thus Oedipus' exaltation at the ironic ending of the drama arising essentially from his appropriation of the latent but austere possibilities of greatness inherent in his fateful circumstance and defeat that changes the total perspective of the drama and ensures the beholder's acceptance not rejection of the tragic experience. Oedipus, Conrad would say, wins a moral victory over destiny.

The Renaissance was the next triumphant moment for tragedy and Shakespeare of course would be the automatic choice for consideration in that period. He too started by laying a great deal of emphasis on the concept of fate. The hero and heroine of *Romeo and Juliet* written in 1596, after only *Titus Andronicus* are for instance explicitly conceived as an aspiring and creative energy frustrated and dissipated by powers beyond man's control. Romeo's expression of premonition before he goes for the Capulets' party:

*I fear too early for my mind misgives
Some consequence, yet hanging in the star
Shall bitterly begin his fearful date
With this night's revels and expire the term*

gods/they kill us for their sport" (IV.i.36), is not only nihilistic but seeks to place responsibility for human fate on delty. And we cannot ignore the claims of some of our rulers that sad consequences of their acts of omission or commission should be regarded as an "act of god". Albany's "this shows that you are above, you justicers" is not necessarily a "fair" and an impartial judgement because it is spoken about his unfaithful wife. At best it belongs with Gloucester's "The gods are justice", in the category of poetic justice, such as some expressed over Abacha's sudden and mysterious death. But it is left for Cordelia to express a sense of justice that is enduring, without vindictiveness or self pity:

We are not the first

*Who with best meaning have
incurred the worst (V.iii.3).*

This is justice and mercy hand in hand; it is divine in the deepest sense of the word, it combines courage with humility – courage to act in love towards those who have wronged us; humility to accept the ironies of life, even the sad consequences of our public or private acts of love, blaming no one and without self pity. The redemption of a nation resides in such a character but a nation which alienates, banishes or destroys it courts causes its own tragedy. As the play ends both Lear and Cordelia are dead; Gloucester has been permanently blinded; treacherous Edmund along with Goneril, Regan and Cornwall are dead; Edgar has had to survive by a strategy of disguise; Kent who also survived by a similar strategy has apparently seen

too much of human brutality and ingratitude and so abhors governance. What lesson can Nigeria learn from all these? I may suggest two lessons. One: when a tyrannical ruler makes himself the only subject of history then history become tragedy. The ruler then runs the risk of being forgotten in the larger history of humanity or of being remembered as a disgusting footnote, his evil genius or diabolical intellect notwithstanding. Two: history becomes tragedy when honest and unselfed service given with courage is rejected in preference for dishonest and cowardly flattery.

NOTES

1. In Shakespeare's tragedies any disorder in natural phenomena is generally reflected in human society and in some human beings.
2. General Babangida, a northerner and military Head of State and Government, annulled the presidential election of June 12, 1993, which was won by Chief M.K.O. Abiola, a Yoruba westerner. Before then, some powerful voices in the north had persistently said that they could not and would not accept a southern Nigerian Head of State.
3. NADECO: National Democratic Coalition, an umbrella organization opposed to all forms of dictatorship – military or civilian. Leading members of NADECO including late Chief Alfred Rewane, Chief Anthony Enahoro were harassed and persecuted by the military regime of General Sani Abacha in particular.
4. Both Babotope and Ibru were either forced out or left Abacha's government voluntarily when the dictator would not take their advice against the continued detention of Chief M.K.O. Abiola, winner of the 1993 presidential election. For his part Ukuiwe, a navy commodor, was removed from office as Babangida's second in command when he opposed Nigeria's membership of the Organization of Islamic States.

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6

"Goats, Monkeys and Asses: Racial Prejudice against the Blackman in Shakespeare's *Othello*"

F. A. Okon

Shakespeare's *Othello* has been a much-discussed play by critics. One of the topical issues that has generated debate concerning this play has been the issue of racial prejudice, that is so outstanding in it. Othello, a black man, is the object of white racial prejudice externalized in the person of Iago.

Since any literary work x-rays the soul of its author, it therefore means that William Shakespeare was a racist, using his "Other – self" Iago, to express racial prejudice against the blackman. This paper therefore examines the indices of racism and racial prejudice against the blackman represented by Othello the Moor in the play of that name.

Racism and racial prejudice are as old as the human society itself. They have their antecedents in the earliest human societies far back in historical time, and have

predated all other man – made ideologies including the rise or capitalism (Weaver 302). Therefore, in Shakespeare's time racism and racial prejudice were nothing new. It is to be noted that the issue of prejudice in *Othello* has been given treatment by Hunter (1978), a white critic.

Though racism has been defined as a biological fiction (Brown '30), nevertheless it can be defined as:

the dogma that one ethnic group is condemned by nature to congenital inferiority and another group is destined to congenital superiority (Benedict 87).

This "congenital" notion is further expanded upon by Bonilla – Silva (465), who, quoting Van den Berghe (1967), explains the current notion of racism as:

Any set of beliefs that ...organic, genetically transmitted differences (whether real or imagined) between groups are intrinsically associated with the presence or the absence of certain socially relevant abilities or characteristics, hence that such differences are a legitimate basis of invidious distinctions between groups socially defined as races (Bonilla – Silva 465).

In other words, the assumption is that the characteristics and

abilities of an individual are determined by race and that one race is biologically superior to another. This mind – set usually goes along with hatred of one race by members of another race, as well as unfounded negative myths and stereotypes believed to be true by the races against each other. In this respect, skin – colour is seen to be synonymous with either good or evil.

In addition, Bonilla – Silva (460) sees racism as having acquired the value of a radicalized social system, in that an entire ethnic group can be seen to be exhibiting certain behavioural attitudes that can be described as racist inclined even when the majority members of that group do not share in the racist beliefs. This sociological theory though criticised by Loveman (891) and further defended by Bonilla-Silva (899), can be further explained from the view point of Jungian psychology, as being similar to what may be described as the “racial memory” of the “collective unconscious”, that is certain shared attitudes of mind common to an ethnic group without conscious transmission, but buried deep in the recesses of the primordial past of the group, which manifest through myths (cf Offor 37). This becomes almost as strong as the inbuilt reflex of the kite or hawk to prey on the chick and the chick’s reflex for survival. Since racial hatred is in-built, small wonder then that in Shakespeare’s era racist tendencies were quite strong and widespread, hence the creation of *Othello* to carry the brunt of this racist prejudice by Shakespeare.

Racism and Prejudice in Shakespeare’s *Othello*

Many writers and critics have debated on Shakespeare’s *Othello* without there being any consensus one way or the other. It is in this regard that White (1982) has seen the portrayal of Othello alongside a few other selected characters in Shakespeare’s plays to call them “victims of injustice”. Othello the Moor as a blackman is particularly singled out for study as a victim of racial prejudice by Shakespeare.

Prejudice against other races may be on the diminishing side, but the prejudice against the blackman even in today’s computer age still remains very strong in the white-world (Bonilla-Silva 465, Taylor 513) as a reflection of the darker recesses of the human mind, revealed through myth.

The Myth of the Blackman

The blackman has mythically been viewed by the whitman in three negative complementary stereotypes namely: (a) a goat (a sexually – obsessed beast); (b) a monkey (a clown) and ass (a person

childlike who can be easily manipulated to the benefit of the manipulator, and finally dumped if his services are no longer needed). It is through these stereotype images and their correlates that Shakespeare presents to us the portrait of Othello the Moor, using Iago as his mouth-piece.

Therefore, Shakespeare is a racist. In other words, if one studies this play from the view point of Jungian psychology, Iago is an archetype, a "shadow" (cf Jung), the literary externalization of the complex racial attitudes, "the darker side of the unconscious self" of the white race which they are intent on suppressing" (Offor 38; Guerin 138) on the one hand, while Othello the Moor, the persona, is the externalization of the supposed racial complex of the blackman. To extend the metaphor further, Iago assumes the hawk complex" while Othello assumes the "chick" complex. The hawk complex represents white (superior) racial attitudes and stereotypes while the "chick complex" represents black (inferior) racial attitudes and stereotypes. To worsen matters, Othello's situation is pathetic because he is thrown into the whiteman's world; he is in a near laboratory condition for close observation as to how far he can by his actions prove or disprove white racist myths concerning the blackman. Also, to extend the metaphor further, Desdemona is "the anima" "used as a white bait to trap the blackman Othello in order to destroy him.

Indices of Racism in Shakespeare's *Othello*.

Hatred:

One index of racism and racial prejudice the world over, is hatred. In Shakespeare's *Othello*, hatred stands out as one of the greatest factors for the tragedy. Othello the Moor is a general in the Venetian army and has recently married Desdemona the daughter of the Venetian senator

Brabantio. This event and the fact that Othello has chosen Cassio as his lieutenant has triggered-off hatred for him in Iago who feels that he should have been promoted over Cassio, and who further believes that Desdemona should have married from her race. For these reasons he tells Roderigo his hatred in a taciturn manner thus:

*Now, Sir, be judge yourself
Whether I in any term am affined
To love the Moor (I. 1, lines 38-40).*

In another scene he directly expresses his hatred loudly to Roderigo:

*I have told thee often, and I retell thee
Again and again, I hate the Moor.
My cause is hearted: thine hath no less
reason (I.3, s. 357-361).*

This hatred is kept away from Othello who is Iago's commander, though supposedly racially inferior to Iago. Therefore, Iago schemes behind the scenes for the down fall of Othello, while pretending to be a loyal, faithful and trustworthy soldier serving his commander. This mark of Iago brings out the theme of "appearance versus reality". To prove that he is a mask, Iago exclaims out of exasperation:

"I am not what I am" (I. 1, l. 66).

And even takes time to explain his relationship with the black general whom he confesses his hatred for, and the

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Uzoma Nwokochah,
Department of English Language and Literary Studies,
Abia State University,
P.M.B. 2000, Uturu,
Abia State, Nigeria.

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