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Huntington Nite Blossoms

Sue Matheson

## EDITORIAL

June 2020: Black Lives Matter, inadequate responses to COVID-19 in the United States, and self-isolating continue as a healing heat settles on the land. This, *the quint's* forty sixth offering houses articles and reviews by writers from Canada, the United States, Italy, Taiwan, China, and Nigeria.

As Black Lives Matter marches and riots continue, Khani Begum's timely and insightful "Pandemics that Won't Cease: From Jonkunnu Protests & Sylvia Wynter's Maskerade to 'Black Lives Matter' in the time of Coronavirus" begins our eclectic issue. Her compelling consideration finds street dance performances in Jonkunnu and Black Lives Matter demonstrations continue to be important critiques of the dispossessed that embody and sustain the spirit of rebellion. Next, Lorraine Mayer's "When Wisahkêcâhk Meets Wétikowak," a thoughtful consideration of shape-shifting, tricksters, contemporary Cree culture, and the fluidity of narrative, argues for re-evaluation and reconciliation by Cree and non-Indigenous peoples alike. Following, Kristen Rudisill's timely examination, "Rushdie's Shadow and the Body of Haroun" examines the reclamation of 'the "shadow"' and Salman Rushdie's message of tolerance in his children's novel, *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*.

Next, in "Gender Criticism in Modern African Drama and Theatre: A Study of Nwagbo Patrick Obi's *When Women Go Naked*," Nkiruka Jacinta Akaenyi effectively argues that Obi portrays modern women's search for identity in *When Women Go Naked*, while promoting conventional male biases. The gender role that Obi finally assigns to women, Akaenyi says, is that of unquestioning submissiveness to male authority. Then, Justine Shu-ting Kao's elegant consideration of "Melancholy and Immunity in Poe's 'The

Domain of Arnheim,' *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket* and "The Island of the Fay" reminds the reader of the importance of interactions between physical and psychological landscapes and the complicated psychology/imagination/fantasies in Poe's works.

Returning to matters of the feminine in "Feminist Dimensions and Masquerade Performances in Nigeria," AbdulMalik Adakole Amali carefully considers the lack of negative gender bias and the feminist dimensions of masquerade performances in Idoma land which offer another, suitable terminology for the structure and performances of African masquerade. Zulfgar Hyder's "Get them off this habitat": Elysium (2013) as anti-thesis of globalization" offers a thought-provoking, post-colonial reading of Neill Blomkamp's critique of globalization and capitalism for followers of the dystopic. Following, Joshua Sunday Ayantayo's reasoned approach asks reader to categorize the absence of truth in the political arena. "Flouts of the Cooperative Principle Maxims by APC Presidential Candidates on The Candidates." Ayantayo scrutinizes the (mis) handling of Paul Grice's Cooperative Principle during the 2019 general elections by incumbent interviewees on Nigerian Television's *The Candidates*, a presidential town hall that aired the candidates nationally. Also arguing for progress, Osakue Stevenson Omoera and John Ndubuisi Bardi present Nigeria as a fulcrum in their discussion of rebranding their country in "INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC RELATIONS AS TOOL FOR REBRANDING A NATION: THE NIGERIAN EXPERIENCE."

Re-thinking and revising have proven to be the foci of *this quint's* film reviews. Antonio Sanna's "*The Masque of the Red Death: A Warning for the Present Age*" is fascinating in its framing of the Gothic efficacy of Poe's short story and Roger Corman's

eponymous 1964 film in light of the present COVID-19 situation. In "The Wrecking Crew and Quentin Tarantino's Efforts to Repair 60s Mod Misogyny," Emily Hoffman finds Tarantino's revision of Phil Carson's 1969 film an empowering experience when viewed "in tandem with *Once Upon a Time in Hollywood*." Finally, in "Revisiting Ousmane Sembène's *La Noire de ... [Black Girl]*: The Schism of Identity and the Wound of Colonialism," Anthony Ballas finds Diuana's tragedy in Sembène's *La Noire de ...* asking the right questions and leaves us to consider the contradictions of identity, labor, sexuality, and gender in today's social body.

No issue of *the quint* is complete without its creative component: 12.3 is honored to welcome back Xioawei Liang and her remarkably touching non-fictional account of BFFs in China in "Gone With the Wind." Rebecca Matheson and I are pleased to offer a photo essay that drifts among color and diversity found by the streets of Bowling Green, Ohio, throughout this spring. As writers and readers continue to self-isolate, here's to interesting ideas, beautiful images, and lively conversation. *the quint* will return in September, offering insightful reading in time for the fall.

**Sue Matheson**

**Editor**



Corner Garden Sunshine

Rebecca Matheson

**Pandemics that Won't Cease: From *Jonkunnu* Protests  
& Sylvia Wynter's *Maskarade* to 'Black Lives Matter' in  
the time of Coronavirus**

**Khani Begum**

**Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, Ohio**

The violence of slavery and colonization is twofold in that it is enacted not only on the physical bodies but also the psyches of the enslaved and colonized. While physical scars of the violence of slavery heal over time, the psychic damage of such violence endures through centuries. Psychic trauma passed down over generations may not readily be evident, but even as societies progress and develop, the ghostly remnants of social injustice and inequity lingeringly haunt even the most prosperous and apparently progressive of present day societies. During the era of slavery, outright protests against the slave masters were met with force and brutal punishment. One of the most effective ways that a population subjected to physical and psychic violence heals itself is through repeated

practice and transmission of their religious and cultural traditions. In the midst of the violence of slavery and colonization, song, dance, and pantomime play a key role in the transmission of folkloric culture, and in later eras after independence, in empowering post-independence national, communal, and cultural identity. In the Caribbean, slave and colonized populations found ways to relieve their psychic pain through indirect resistant action during brief periods of time when their masters, in a moment of generosity, offered them concessions such as time to celebrate Christmas.

All over the Caribbean, among slave populations, street parades and Masquerades incorporating dance, bands, music, and pantomime existed alongside formal theatrical productions of British plays and French style Masquerades. Jamaica, in particular, has a long theatrical history given that formal theatrical practice in Jamaica can be traced back to the 1700s when the first theater in Kingston was built in 1750 with two larger theaters being rebuilt on the same site in subsequent centuries. The last of these, the 1912 Ward Theater, was deemed a national monument in 2000 (Brewster 8-9). For nearly two centuries from 1750 to 1941, these theaters served mostly white slave owner and merchant class populations of Kingston where dramatic performances and other forms of entertainment were produced by touring companies from Britain and the United States.

By the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century black Jamaican populations, having begun participating in theatrical attendance and performance, started to integrate elements from the European Masquerades they saw performed by visiting foreign companies with their own pantomimes and folkloric elements rooted in African cultural and religious performances inherited from the first slaves who brought African traditions to the island,

As a result, Jonkunnu, (the name by which the slave street festival was called) developed out of a combined creation of European masquerade traditions with African rhythms and rituals, leading to a cultural mix that reflected the Jamaican condition of the time. While slaves and their masters celebrated in separate yet harmonious festive settings during the holidays, the street festival provided the slaves an opportunity to disguise, imitate, and satirize their masters. The participants wore wire screen masks, head wraps, headdresses, and danced to the fife and drum. Each dance troupe and Jonkunnu band had to have named characters with some stock characters being a requirement. Depending on the location of the festival, characters varied in style and presentation. Traditional Jamaican Jonkunnu featured costumed characters who were identifiable by their costumes as Pitchy-Patchy, Masquerade queen, Ku-Ku or Actor Boy, French set girls, Warrior, Devil, Belly woman, Policeman, Babu the East Indian, and Cowhead or Horse head. As Jonkunnu began to be improvised more and more, the desire for more spectacular performances and music led to the formation of different groups or 'bands' of masqueraders who were led by different band leaders. One of the standbys was a band called the Set Girls who had their own 'Queen' or 'Madam' and who happened to be the only women among masked men whose masks and bodies with their heavy costumes defied recognition. These core characters continued to evolve over the years as political and social issues changed for Jamaicans, and variations to the characters or new characters were created to reflect changes in social issues and new political developments in Kingston.

These street performances by slave populations always took place between Christmas and the New Year. Historians note that this type of celebration, with masked dancing,



acting processions, and revelry, has a very long tradition as a folk festival dating back to slavery times with its large bands, that were an important element in Christmas carnivals. The reason it came to be identified with Christmas festivities was because Christmas was the only major holiday for the slaves when they were given 'free' time between Christmas and the New Year. The slave owner and merchant classes celebrated the holiday season in their stately homes without the presence of their slaves, who during their "free time" took to the streets to celebrate with masquerades and colorful costumed parades. Jonkunnu dances and parades in Jamaica are thought to be the earliest of traditional dances that the slaves brought with them from Africa. The dances often combined African religious rituals with their imitations of the dances their European masters were performing inside their plantations. Jonkunnu dances are some of the earliest examples of creolization. Their imitations, often satirical, mimicked colonial cultural practices. Homi Bhabha in his essay, "Of Mimicry and Man," examines the complex ways mimicry functions in colonial discourse. In an epigraph, he quotes Jacques Lacan:

Mimicry reveals something in so far as it is distinct from what might be called an itself that is behind. The effect of mimicry is camouflage.... It is not a question of harmonizing with the background, but against a mottled background, of becoming mottled - exactly like the technique of camouflage practiced in human warfare. (Lacan 99; in Bhabha 121)

For the Jamaican slave, Jonkunnu offered an opportunity to mimic and thus critique through his mimicry colonial culture free from any threat of repercussions. It is "not a question of harmonizing" but rather that of becoming "mottled" and thus, camouflaged.

This mottling leads to a mixing of African and European elements, resulting in the formation of a distinctly unique Jamaican cultural identity.

Sylvia Wynter, tracing the origins of the Jonkunnu festivals held in the city of Kingston to African Carnival traditions, explores the folkloric roots of its pre-Christian elements, which she claims entered Catholicism and "came to "constitute in our modern world an ecumenical human popular tradition" (Brewster 21). Wynter's 1970's reworking of *Maskerade*, a popular play or skit performed during these festivals, employs traditional dance theater and popular cultural elements--costumes, masks, singing and dancing in expressing the conflicts between the different hierarchies in Jamaican society during the mid-1800s. Initially the play was inspired in 1841 because of attempts to ban the Jonkunnu festival in Kingston. Since then over the years, the play has been re-worked by many different artists to reflect current preoccupations with Jamaican politics at relevant times. Wynter, recognizing the play's communal and historical relevance sees it as a communal collaboration and historical artifact: "the play is . . . my reworking of a millennially extended popular pagan tradition which is universally applicable . . . I see myself as merely its transmitter" (Brewster 22). In analyzing this notion of 'transmitted tradition' from postcolonial theoretical perspectives, I argue that Wynter's "reworking" reveals how traditional dance performance sustains the spirits of the dispossessed and contains the spirit of rebellion that embodies the life of the city of Kingston. While the play's story allows the colonized Jamaican characters to re-affirm authentic individual identities in the face of slavery and later British colonization, the tradition of repeated "reworking" of the play, continues the accrual process of building cultural and communal identity

that empowers the national imaginary. Folk dance as cultural process resists colonial power and aids indigenous identity formation. The slaves and other colonized people of Jamaica, through masked dances in Jonkunnu festivals enact a continual resistance of colonial authority while simultaneously continuing to define and refine their sense of what constitutes Jamaican cultural identity. The inherent power of resistance inhabiting the earlier Jonkunnu celebrations was one of the significant factors that eventually led to the banning of the festival by colonial authorities in 1841.

Many theories exist about the origins of the Jonkunnu festival in Jamaica. Even the name, Jonkunnu, embodies varied interpretations and secrets making its origins difficult to trace. A few sources trace it to “John Canoe,” while others claim it refers to John Conny, the West African tribal chief who outwitted Dutch merchantmen and maintained control of the Prussian Fort Brandenburg (later known as “Conny’s Castle”), which he commanded during the early eighteenth century at Prince’s Town. This interpretation in Wynter’s play becomes a central point of discussion between the characters Lovey and Boy, when Lovey explains to Boy the origins of the name:

Him same one. John Konny the selfsame  
Ashanti chief that partner up with the Prussians  
To fight off the Dutch, beat up the British!  
Him same one. John Konny the selfsame  
Ashanti chief that partner up with the Prussians  
To fight off the Dutch, beat up the British!  
He and the Prussians were in business. Black flesh business!  
Fighting and catching, buying and selling

Any black man that wasn’t one  
Of Konny’s people! (71)

John Conny, who lived from 1660 to 1732, promoted trade between the Ashanti and the Germans for more than a decade and was sometimes called the “Last Prussian Negro Prince.” Others hold that “John Canoe” derives from the French *gens inconnus*, or “unknown people,” referring to the masked dancers in the festival (Wikipedia –John Canoe). Another theory contends that, John Canoe is a precursor of the unofficial governor African-Americans chose on Election Day in New England, where since 1750, New England slaves held elections of their own, with a parade featuring their newly elected governor. Slaves participated in such parades throughout Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island. Although the unofficial governor had no legal power, he usually held some authority over the New England slave population. Stephen Nissenbaum sees similarities between the John Canoe tradition and the tradition of Wassailing (Christmas caroling) of medieval Britain, both being ritualized inversions of established social hierarchy. He finds that Jonkunnu and Wassailing simultaneously allow for a temporary suspension and affirmation of that hierarchy. In Wassailing this inversion gets performed along the axis of social class, while in 19th-century American versions of John Canoe, as also in Jamaican ones, it gets performed along the axis of race. Nissenbaum finds the inversion rituals of John Canoe and Wassailing also bear strong resemblance to the social inversion rituals in ancient Rome’s Saturnalia celebration (Nissenbaum 285).

Scholars also trace Jonkunnu’s origins to West African secret societies that took “a central part in the seasonal festivals and recreations of the tribes, to which they belong”

(Patterson in Wynter 37). Sylvia Wynter interprets Jonkunnu's folk dance elements as a cultural process, citing Orlando Patterson's three clusters of origins for the Jonkunnu: "These were the yam festival activities of the Mno secret societies of the Ibo peoples, the recreational activities of the Egungun of the Yorubas, and the Homowa harvest festival of the Ga peoples (Patterson 245; Wynter 37)" Both Wynter and Patterson see these 'three clusters of origins' as related to agricultural societies involving "the impersonation of ancestral spirits by masked dancers at festivals." Along with masked dancing the festivals were accompanied with considerable imbibing of spirits—as a way of celebrating the earth, its fertility, and the harvest. Wynter points out that a festival that celebrates the life force is "intimately linked to the evocation of the ancestral spirits, and the gods of the forces of Nature. The folkdance of the living is made more alive by the presence of the spirit of the dead" (Wynter 37).

The Jamaican Cultural Development Commission website ([www.homesweetjamaica.com](http://www.homesweetjamaica.com)) emphasizes the importance of folkloric cultural processes in Jamaican Jonkunnu, pointing out how these folkloric performances took on different names in different parts of the Caribbean. In Bermuda, for instance, Jonkunnu is referred to as Goombay, in Barbados as Jumbies, in Guyana as Masquerade, in Haiti as Ra Ra, and in Trinidad as ole Mas. Journalistic accounts of the festival by British and other foreign inhabitants and visitors are found as early as the late 1650s. Over time and especially during the post emancipation era, the festival adapted distinct Creole elements making this the most imaginatively creative period of Jonkonnu. The innovations and creative development of this period led to a creolized profusion of dance, music, and theater that intertwined

African rhythmic drumming with European masquerades with costumes and dramatic content.

Dance and pantomime performance also functioned for the slaves and the free blacks as an avenue of expression in creative form, allowing them to voice a passive, satiric, and perceptive critique of master/slave relations and colonial power structures. Each group of participants competed with each other in creating more spectacular and outrageous costumes, dances, and set pieces every year, thus providing the slave population with an avenue to channel their creative energies whilst ingeniously slipping hidden messages of resistance and revolt in their performances. After decolonization, it continued to act as a forum for critical commentary on contemporary economic conditions and in critiquing the new nation's political figures. By combining influences from European theater that flourished in Kingston with African folkloric harvest festival rituals, Jamaican Jonkunnu played out local political and historical concerns that are visible in their original creations of pantomimes and skits, thus developing its own individual Jamaican flavor. It differentiated itself from similar festivals in other Caribbean islands and along the Eastern seaboard of North America. The facade of celebration while enthusiastically entered into, was a means to indirectly express rebellion through forms of cultural traditions that drew from both historical African pasts of the slave population and their contemporaneous popular culture during slavery. These productions were in essence protests against colonization and slavery and the inequality and injustice experienced by the African Caribbean population in Jamaica. The celebratory aspects of dance, story, and pantomime enacted with masked characters helped disguise their true intent of which the slave population

was well aware. Stephen Nissenbaum, describing similar types of ritual performances in 19<sup>th</sup> century North Carolina, describes them as involving

a band of black men—generally young—who dressed themselves in ornate and often bizarre costumes. Each band was led by a man who was variously dressed in animal horns, elaborate rags, female disguise, whiteface (and wearing a gentleman’s wig!), or simply his ‘Sunday-go-to meeting-suit.’ (28)

The essence of masquerade being that players are disguised, but the audience remains aware that the characters being portrayed represent the people. Both Frantz Fanon and Homi Bhabha have analyzed how the concepts of ‘the mask’ and of ‘mimicry’ have complex and ambivalent implications in colonial and postcolonial relations between master and slave. It is the area between mimicry and mockery where the “reforming, civilizing mission is threatened by the displacing gaze of its disciplinary double” (123). In such instances of colonial imitation, Bhabha finds the discursive process by which the excess or slippage produced by the ambivalence of mimicry (almost the same, but not quite) not merely ‘ruptures’ the discourse, but becomes transformed into an uncertainty which fixes the colonial subject as a ‘partial’ presence (123).

The perception of the masked festivities as embodying both “resemblance and menace” is reflected in journal and scholarly accounts by English and foreign inhabitants and visitors to Jamaica who witnessed these performances. The festival and parades are known to have inspired both cultural curiosity and fear among visitors to Jamaica as evidenced in their journal accounts. The fear experienced by many foreign visitors arises out of their recognition that these festivals provide an avenue for slaves and colonized

Jamaican characters in Kingston to re-affirm individual cultural identities in the face of colonization and are an attempt to reinforce the people’s struggles for independence and to re-iterate their connections to traditional African culture. In the earliest records of Jonkunnu from 1687 by Sir Hans Sloane this ambivalence is evident in his accounts of the festival when his anthropological analysis comes up against his distaste for the raucous bawdiness of the festival he witnessed during his visit to the island:

[i]n the towns during the Christmas holidays they have several tall robust fellows dressed up in grotesque habits, and a pair of ox-horns on their heads, sprouting from the top of a horrid sort of visor, or mask which about the mouth is rendered very terrific with large boar tusks. The masquerader, carrying a wooden sword in his hand, is followed with a numerous crowd of drunken women, who refresh him frequently with a cup of aniseed-water, whilst he dances at every door, bellowing out “John Connu” with great vehemence. (Long 425; quoted in Walker 46.)

Early records by white observers of the festival participants as unruly, noisy, and lewd, and the festival itself as a pagan ritual, are reiterated in the journals and records of white men and women of the landed gentry in later centuries. In 1801, Lady Maria Nugent, wife to the Governor of Jamaica, in her Christmas 1801 journal entry, anticipates the anxieties other white visitors might experience with the “incessant drumming” that gave them headaches or the noisy festivities that kept the plantation owners awake through the night. By the mid-1800s the ancient art form began to decline, and when frequent clashes broke out between the revelers and the police, Kingston’s mayor issued a ban in

Trinidadian playwright and critic Errol Hill, documents how colonial authorities, even those well disposed towards slaves, justified the banning of Jonkunnu-like festivals in other parts of the Caribbean:

Reason given for suppressing the Christmastime masquerades [in Jamaica] is that they obstructed the progress of civilization and were derogatory to the dignity of freemen. At the other end of the Caribbean, similar attitudes prevailed regarding the Trinidad Carnival. Once it was taken over and transformed by the black freedmen, the leading newspaper castigated the festival throughout the nineteenth century in the severest terms and urged its abolition. Rioting ensued. In 1838 the masquerade was called “a wretched buffoonery [tending] to brutalize the faculty of the lower order of our population.” In 1846 the carnival was “an orgy indulged in by the dissolute of the town”; in 1857 it was “an annual abomination”; in 1863, “a licensed exhibition of wild excesses”; in 1874, “a diabolical festival”; and in 1884, “a fruitful source of demoralization throughout the whole country.” These attacks served only to alienate the revelers and to stiffen their resistance to any form of control. The results, unsurprisingly, were more riots and a widening gulf between government and the people.” (279)

However, Jonkonnu continued to be practiced in rural areas of Jamaica where the ban did not apply. In 1951, the Kingston paper, the Daily Gleaner, sponsored a Jonkonnu competition to revive the festival. The level of enthusiasm and participation soon brought

it back into Kingston life on a regular basis.

Yvonne Brewster, in her introduction to *Mixed Company: Three Early Jamaican Plays*, which includes Sylvia Wynter’s *Maskarade*, Louis Marriot’s *Bedward*, and Cicely Wait-Smith’s *The Creatures*, locates all three plays within the context of Jamaica’s history of colonization. Tracing the impact of the plays on ongoing political events, she points out that the plays themselves evolved out of the political and social climate during different decades given that the plays “apart from being good scripts for acting and producing, with the many vibrant characters that abound, all have rebellion at their heart” (Brewster 11). Sylvia Wynter spells her reworked version of *Maskarade* as “M-a-s-k-a-r-a-d-e,” rather than the using the French spelling “M-a-s-q-u-e-r-a-d-e” the term that stands for the genre it draws from and imitates. By deliberately creolizing the term, she brings to it Jamaican rhythmic speech patterns, while also recognizing the play’s debt to the genre’s European French roots. Wynter’s play was commissioned in 1973 by the Jamaican Information Service for broadcasting on Television after TV director Jim Nelson happened to read Wynter’s paper on Jamaican Jonkunnu as folkloric cultural process that she delivered for the UNESCO conference on folklore. Nelson also produced it as a play for the theatre and it later represented Jamaica at the 1979 Carifesta Festival in Cuba. Wynter’s reiteration of the play documents, memorializes, and keeps alive for future generations the street performative and folkloric aspects of the Jonkunnu festival by making it one of the significant plays of Jamaica’s National Theater. The Jonkunnu festival in its contemporary street form, revived and kept alive through competitions throughout Jamaica, continues to be performed to this day. Several competitions as well

as children's and other theater performances of Wynter's play, *Maskarade*, have helped preserve and continue the traditions of Jonkunnu. A review of a 1994 performance of Wynter's *Maskarade* by Reva Klein expresses the role this play has had in keeping the Jonkunnu tradition alive:

It's a very different Christmas show at the Cochrane (071 404 5662), where Talawa Theatre treats us to the delights of a Jamaican jonkunnu or street festival. In the last century, the only days when Jamaican slaves were given free time was during the three days of Jonkunnu over Christmas. *Maskarade*, written by Sylvia Wynter and directed by Yvonne Brewster, tells the story of how the British governor of Jamaica came to ban Jonkunnu in 1841 after a particularly spirited play ended with the death of two of the actors. While the first act gets bogged down in wordy scene-setting, it's worth waiting for the intense vibrancy, colour and comic hi-jinx in the second. If you don't dance in your seat, you probably aren't alive. (Klein)

Christopher Walker in his insightful essay, "Dance Inna Dancehall: Roots of Jamaica's Popular Dance Expressions," shows how contemporary Jamaican dance hall cultures still owe many of their characteristics to the early Jonkunnu's use of creative satire and contemporaneous political critique through creative dance and improvisation. Remarking that Jamaica's popular dancehall creative expressions today "parallel elements with many traditional Jamaican dance forms" (41) he considers contemporary dancehall expression "similar to the Jonkunnu Festival" so much so that the dancehall "offers contemporary Jamaicans the medium through which they can make topical commentary

on politics, society, and religion, among other discourses—as did Jonkunnu for the enslaved and the colonized in Jamaica" (41).

Jonkunnu costumed dancers perform at Christmas and New Year as well as national holidays like Emancipation and Independence Day celebrations organized and coordinated by the Jamaica Cultural Development Commission (J.C.D.C.). They also perform at special events such as the JCDC's Children's Jonkunnu Competition, Culture Day in schools across the island organized by the Ministry of Education, cultural functions organized by the private sector, and on important state visits. (Richards and Smith 15)

The JCDC, by exposing Jamaican children today to this folk form through its Children's Jonkunnu Competition preserves tradition and promotes development of other popular cultural forms that have been influenced by Jonkunnu such as Reggae and other Dance Hall styles of dancing. Many of the popular Dance Hall forms of dancing have developed from unique creative movements performed by youth competing in the Jamaica Cultural Development Commission's annual World Reggae Dance Championship Competitions.

Periodically history repeats itself, and the present moment in the spring and early summer of 2020 is one such. It recalls not only the 1960's unrest with the Civil Rights marches and protests and the violence that followed, but also the brutality of the slave era and its physical and psychic violence that over the past several weeks has bubbled to the surface, prodding the public to note the continued existence of social injustice and inequality that continues to inform the experience of Black and other people of color

in the world today. Initially this essay was focused primarily on an account of how Jamaican slave populations through dance and masquerade performances transmitted folk traditions as a form of revolt, an expression of their experience of slavery, and a critique of their masters and how Sylvia Wynter contributes to this transmission through her reworking of the play *Maskerade*. Writing this during the upsetting past few weeks of late May and early June 2020, I cannot escape making connections between what is reflected in the daily news events of Black Lives Matter protests and militarized police and armed guard responses with the era of slavery in the Caribbean during which Jonkunnu evolved as a necessity to deal with the ongoing trauma of slavery and colonization. Globally and collectively, we are experiencing a painful period of history, first, because we are in the throes of the global Coronavirus pandemic and second, because Coronavirus has unveiled the stinging truth about the continued existence and effects of institutional and systemic racism in such a way that it cannot be ignored any longer. We are witnessing, more sharply than ever before, a form of new racism that is eerily reminiscent of its earliest embodiment in the era of slavery. Slavery in the United States was abolished in 1865 with the thirteenth amendment, but it took almost 100 years before Civil Rights Legislation came to be passed in the wake of the 1960's Civil Rights marches and protests. No legislation, however, can either eradicate "racism" or erase the trauma of the original sin of slavery in any society, so until it is acknowledged, admitted, understood, and repaired, we will not be free from its effects.

On May 25, 2020 an unarmed Black man, George Floyd, was murdered by Minneapolis Police officer Derek Chauvin who held Floyd down with his knee on

Floyd's neck for over 8 minutes and 46 seconds while three other officers held him down and watched. Black Lives Matter Protests and organized demonstrations that began in Minneapolis soon after news broke of Floyd's murder were orderly and peaceful for the most part and quickly spread to all major cities in the United States soon to be followed by those in major cities around the world. These protest marches reverberate with memories of centuries of protest at the very same time the world struggles to come to terms with an unprecedented loss of life and illness caused by the COVID 19 global pandemic since March of this year. The United States is now faced with not one, but two virulent pandemics-- the Coronavirus pandemic and that of systemic racism. By the second day of protests, in Minneapolis and other major cities some protests turned violent when protestors clashed with police and armed guards and began setting fires and looting stores. *The Washington Post* reported on Jun 1 2020: "Peaceful protests exploded into unrest and outrage in Washington on Sunday night, with some demonstrators setting and feeding fires." According to The Associated Press there were about 4,100 people arrested, one man killed in Louisville, and several people who died nationwide in the protests. The "mass protests and mayhem" continued for the next few days leading many major cities to order curfews. Jacob Frey, the Mayor of Minneapolis in an interview with *The New York Times*, said to Michael Barbaro: "This is not just about the eight minutes of time where our officer had his knee on George Floyd's neck. This is about the previous 400 years. This is about a hundred years' worth of intentional segregation and institutionalized racism" (*The New York Times* <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/03/podcasts/the-daily/jacob-frey-george-floyd-protests-minneapolis.html>). In essence, this is the result of the combined effects of a history of physical and psychic violence set in motion since the

beginning of the era of slavery.

Psychic connections are igniting between African Americans in the United States and people of color in Britain, Africa, Palestine, Australia, and New Zealand—connections that are raising the conscience and consciousness of black, white and brown people not just across the fifty states of America, but around the globe. Protestors in Great Britain include many Jamaicans, other people of color, as well as many from the white British populations, who are calling out against discrimination and unequal treatment, the result of Britain's own legacy of slavery and domination that has led to periodical racial unrest in Black and Brown communities in Britain. People are joining together calling for an end to injustice and unequal treatment of people of color not only at the hands of the police but with regard to economic and social advancement at the hands of their governments and their policies. The Coronavirus pandemic has laid bare the truth of the pandemic of racism, as the United States tabulates the disproportionate numbers of African American and Latina/o people infected and/or dead due to COVID 19. Factors such as inadequate access to health care, housing density, employment in high risk service industry jobs, poverty, and the fact that they cannot afford to stay home self-quarantined, etc., have resulted in their increasingly higher number of infections and fatalities due to COVID 19. While these truths about the lack of opportunities for underrepresented populations in the United States and their unequal treatment by Police Departments and social agencies has been going on for many decades, most of the general public have either ignored it or passed it off as an occasional incident that may need redressing. This time, however, something appears different, and people, young and old, black and white,

seem to have awakened to a new reality in the age of Coronavirus. Many seem to be realizing the truth of the state of things for the first time and are marching alongside their fellow citizens demanding equality and equal treatment for all and reminding the public about their constitutional rights. These protests have inspired protestors from all over the country who now are speaking with one voice and it is ringing out loud and clear and will be difficult to ignore.

In the wake of the Black Lives Matter protest marches, what is most egregious are the United States government's reactions to its citizenry exercising their civil rights to protest peacefully. In Washington D. C. on June 1st, a large crowd of peaceful protestors gathered in Lafayette Square in front of the grounds of the White House. About two hours before the curfew for the city was due to start, the armed guard that included the Park police, National Guard, and the rarely utilized Prison Guard unit. were given the order to clear the square. As they began moving towards the crowd to clear Lafayette square, they began firing rubber bullets, tear gas, and pepper spray into the crowd. This unprecedented act of armed and militarized police being utilized against peaceful protestors and citizens of its own country exercising their civil rights has since been denounced by what is now being referred to as "the revolt of the Generals." These include a number of retired military Generals and Admirals from Marine Corps General and former Defense Secretary James Mattis, Admiral Mike Mullen, General Petraeus, to former United States Secretary of State, Colin Powell among others. A video timeline of the crackdown on protestors before President Trump's photo-op in front of St. John's Church (the reason behind clearing Lafayette Square of protestors) posted on You Tube



Video by *The Washington Post* on June 8, 2020 gives a complete account to date of the peaceful protest and the roles of the agencies involved in removing the protestors and the tactics and weaponry used: (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JxYmILLDya0A>).

The actions and voices of protestors have also inspired vocal and dance artists who have joined in the protests despite the risk of contracting Coronavirus and are using their talent and creativity to fight injustice. While most of the mainstream coverage of the protests and the Government's militaristic response has focused on the violence and mayhem of the past few weeks, another aspect of these protests that links them to early practices of cultural forms of dance and pantomime as a means of protest has not received as much coverage. However, as the weeks progress, more You Tube videos and news articles addressing these developments have started to surface shedding light on the celebratory aspect of the protests, that do not in any way detract from the seriousness and urgency of the reasons behind them, namely the murder of George Floyd and the hundreds of Black people who are disproportionately brutalized and killed by police in the United States on an almost daily basis.

In an article entitled "Dancing Bodies That Proclaim: Black Lives Matter," Siobhan Burke in *The New York Times*, June 9, 2020 (<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/09/arts/dance/dancing-protests-george-floyd.html>) addresses the creative chants and processions that she describes as resonating with those heard at weddings and block parties and being accompanied by collective performances such as the Electric Slide:

As protesters streamed through the streets of New York on Sunday afternoon, one group's chants of "Black Lives Matter and "No justice, no peace!"

gave way to a sound more often heard at weddings and block parties. On 125th Street in Harlem, hundreds of people, many of them professional dancers, had congregated for a peaceful march across town and a collective performance of the Electric Slide. (View Electric Slide at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5jBkoEMOSSE>)

Siobhan, remarking on this event being "just one instance of dance intersecting with protest over the past two weeks of global demonstrations against racism and police brutality," describes the gathering as "alternately euphoric and somber" because of how after the dancing portion of the event, all performers took a silent nine-minute kneel in memory of George Floyd's murder. She goes on to detail how, while the event called "Dance for George" was organized to pay tribute to George Floyd, it also called attention to the work of black artists who are involved in the dance and entertainment industries. I find in this a connection that I remarked on earlier in this essay about how Wynter's reworking of *Maskerade*, in transmitting tradition through its performance during Jonkunnu "reveals how traditional dance performance sustains the spirits of the dispossessed and contains the spirit of rebellion that embodies the life of the city of Kingston" --today we see how dance performances, along with the chanting litany of names of Black people killed by police, is filling the streets of Washington, New York, Minneapolis, and other cities. Today too, these street dance performances sustain the spirits of the dispossessed and embody the spirit of rebellion, not just in one city but all over the country and even all over the world.

Siobhan further describes the dance performance thus: "[e]very so often the

jostling line dance would reshape itself into a circle, with dancers freestyling at the center as the packed crowd cheered them on. (A mix of “Electric Boogie” spliced with hip-hop and R&B classics had been prepared for the occasion.)” This brings to mind similarity of purpose in how dances and skits performed in the *Jonkunnu* festivals were commissioned and created for specific incidents or events that had taken place in the lives of the slaves. It was a way of orally documenting their lives and their suffering under slavery and colonization, much in the way the dances in New York are documenting the experiences of Black people killed by the police over the years. A major difference between the celebration/commemoration between the two time periods being that the slave performers in Jamaica had to disguise their stories and veil the true critique of their masters through masquerade and storylines that appeared fabricated and/or fabulous in referring to actual incidents that occurred in the lives of the slave population. Their critique had to be veiled in order to avoid retributive action from their slave masters. Today, we find artists and entertainers openly creating revolutionary music, art, and television that openly critiques the actions of police and the United States Government in their unequal treatment of minority populations.

The diversity of cultures and ethnicities is also present in the dance performance Siobhan reviews, and this is reminiscent of the diversity present in the many stock characters and set pieces of *Jonkunnu* performances. In the widely-shared videos that Siobhan’s article references, she points out a number of diverse performances. One is a “a rendition of the Cupid Shuffle on the streets of Newark,” another is of a young protestor in Loiza, Puerto Rico who engages in an offering of *bomba*, from Afro-Puerto Rican

traditions. Yet another is a video of a “jingle dress dance, a healing practice rooted in Ojibwe culture” that was performed in Minneapolis as a prayer for George Floyd’s family.

Some actions that have transpired during the protests of the past few weeks, however, may make us wonder just how free artists are in voicing their protests through their art and street performance, if they, with the rest of the peaceful protestors can become targets of rubber bullets, pepper spray, and teargas. Television commentators, celebrities, and leaders and even sporting organizations such as NASCAR and the NFL appear to have not only recognized that we have reached a turning point, but are taking active measures such as banning the Confederate Flag at NASCAR races and the NFL changing its policy on players taking a knee in silent protest. Sports occupies an almost sacred place in American culture and if giants like the NFL and NASCAR are moving forward, maybe we have reached a turning point and there will be change and room for artists to freely create work that speaks truth to power, and masks will only be required as protection against Coronavirus. mentators, celebrities, and leaders and even sporting organizations such as NASCAR and the NFL appear to have not only recognized that we have reached a turning point, but are taking active measures such as banning the Confederate Flag at NASCAR races and the NFL changing its policy on players taking a knee in silent protest. Sports occupies an almost sacred place in American culture and if giants like the NFL and NASCAR are moving forward, maybe we have reached a turning point and there will be change and room for artists to freely create work that speaks truth to power, and masks will only be required as protection against Coronavirus.

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Shrinking?



Rebecca Matheson

# When Wîsahkêcâhk<sup>1</sup> Meets Wétikowak<sup>2</sup>

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*The late Beatrice Lavallee once said to... [Neal McLeod] that wîsahkêcâhk is like a métis person-standing between two worlds, translating and singing these two worlds to each other, and crossing and shapeshifting across these latitudes of being.<sup>3</sup>*

I am Metis so perhaps I am like *wîsahkêcâhk* always translating from one world to the other and shapeshifting across the latitudes of my being. But perhaps in my shapeshifting I am also like a *wétikow*? Stories are vital to the life blood of Indigenous peoples and my mother Dora Mayer (nee Lavallee) used to tell stories about *wîsahkêcâhk*

1. *Wîsahkêcâhk* is known as the Cree trickster.

2. Translation: Bad Spirits.

3. Beatrice Lavallee cited on Facebook February 19<sup>th</sup>, 2016 @ 6:55 pm by Neal McLeod from his personal experience with elder Beatrice Lavallee. While I cannot relate the entire story here I can *tell you that wîsahkêcâhk* in one of his many wanderings burned his bum and scabs formed. Then one day when he was walking the scabs began to drop off and off his bum, and *wîsahkêcâhk*, seeing them and thinking of his stomach, began to eat them. This story may sound gross to many people, but it was told in such a way as to bring our tremendous laughter for the audience.

and the *wétikow*. As a child I enjoyed listening to *wîsahkêcâhk* stories with all the twist and turns. I loved everything that took me back to the north but never associated *wîsahkêcâhk* with the city. I also believed the *wétikow* was up north in the bush, so I had nothing to fear because my parents took us kids and moved to Winnipeg shortly after my birth. As an adult when I visited up north I began to notice that fewer and fewer stories about these two characters were being told. At first, I was sad thinking these stories were being lost because of residential schools and then I realized I was as guilty as anyone else who relegated the stories to the past leaving *wîsahkêcâhk's* scabs a fading memory.

Stories however, do not live in the past. Stories are fluid and continue in the same vein with twists, turns, interweaving and strange new protagonists and sometimes moral lessons. To believe otherwise is to believe “Indians” are also a relic of the past. In his introduction to *All My Relations*, Thomas King writes, “There is a misconception that Native oral literature is an artifact, something that vanished as an art form in the last [the nineteenth] century.” (Thomas King, 1990, xii). Not only is the art of storytelling alive and well, “contemporary writers continue to be influenced by oral literature (King, xii)<sup>4</sup>. Jeanette Armstrong’s “This Is a Story” was particularly enlightening and reminded me how we can use our Tricksters to tell new stories. (1990). Tomson Highway, believes that Canada’s Native people have abandoned the Trickster “to drift in the alien, commercialized society around them.” And while he considers it the responsibility of the artist to breathe new life into the Trickster, “[who is] passed out under some bar table at Queen and Bathurst, drunk out of his mind, to pitch him on the floor, make him stand up, back

4. For example, see: Jeanette Armstrong’s “This is a Story”; Peter Blue Cloud’s story “Weaver Spider’s Web”; and King’s own “The One About Coyote Going West” all found in King’s “All My Relations.” Coyote is also a trickster.

on his own two feet—so we can laugh and dance again.”<sup>5</sup> I worry that only the creative writers and select audience are privy to the new stories. While I agree with both Highway and King I want these new stories told in our homes and communities. How can we restore pride in ourselves if in the stories we hear to belong to someone else’s culture? The humor contained within Trickster mythology is well known so and like Highway I believe it is time for *wisahkêcâhk* to come out from under that beer table. I also believe it is us who need to come out of the colonial fog that dictates our past while controlling our present and begin again to translate and sing back our stories, our new stories. Stories are everywhere, from Facebook entries to beautiful poetry, novels and political treatises we continue to mold and remold our world in true *wisahkêcâhk* fashion, oftentimes stumbling and stumbling through the new narratives but always instructing, yet seldom if ever do we directly attribute the events to *wisahkêcâhk* and the *wétikow*<sup>6</sup>. Do we believe these spirits never existed, or existed only in the past? Are we so colonized that we don’t see the *wétikow* within us or *Wisahkêcâhk* still pulling strings causing havoc while the dangerous *wétikow* is still stealing souls.

### The Feast

*Wisahkêcâhk* was walking around the countryside one day looking for something to eat when he heard a strange noise he could not identify. Hum, said *wisahkêcâhk*, “I wonder what’s making that strange noise”? Maybe it’s dangerous and I should leave. But

5. Tomson Highway quoted in Beth Brant, p. 133.

6. Cree author Tomson Highway’s *Kiss of the Fur Queen* (1998) has the trickster being the fur queen. At one point the character Gabriel realizes what is happening, “Weesageechak for sure. The clown who bridges humanity and God - a God who laughs, a God who’s here, not for guilt, not for suffering, but for a good time.” See also, *Rez Sisters* and *Dry Lips Oughta Move to Kapuskasing*. Another Cree author Neal McLeod, (2005) has a brief but wonderful book of poetry titled, *Songs to Kill a Wihikow* (2002).

maybe if I stay real still it will go away then I can continue my journey to find something delicious to eat. As she was trying to decide what to do her curiosity took off toward the noise only to find a strangely barren area with a creature she had never seen before. Now being a bit of a coward *wisahkêcâhk* decided to hide and watch perhaps this creature had found some food and would be willing to share or she could snak some when it dwas not looking. So he backtracked a safe distance and hid behind a small mound of dirt. *Wisahkêcâhk* was surprised to see the creature twirling his tongue into the earth and coming up and stretching it down again over and over again. “Why is that guy doing that” he wondered, he must be eating something good because he keeps going back. So his hunger walked her over to the creature where he loudly asked, “Sir, would you be so kind as to share some of that food you are eating below the ground? I have travelled far and am quite hungry. But the creature totally ignored him. He was astounded by rudeness of the creature who kept ignoring him so he coughed to clear his throat and tried again a little louder this time.” Excuse me sir would you be so kind as to share some of that food, I truly am very hungry. Again the creature did not respond as he continued to bore into the ground. Furious, *wisahkêcâhk* stomped his foot and cried “I will show you I will turn into you and take all that food for myself then you will go hungry!” Still no response! Now *wisahkêcâhk* was not used not being ignored, shaking her fist she thought she could easily find something to eat in the ground if she turned into a groundhog but was no fun she’d already tried that before and *wisahkêcâhk* was well known for turning into anyone he wanted. Why, one time she even turned into a goose just to know what it was like to fly. So, anyway, on this day *wisahkêcâhk* turned himself into the rude, greedy creature and began bobbing his head up and down let his

tongue slide into the ground. She quickly found herself drawing her tongue out as fast as she could. Gagging and spitting the oily substance everywhere, she quickly turned back into herself. Well, that did not taste good! Why does that ignorant creature keep eating it he wondered? But being very hungry she thought, “Maybe you just needed to eat enough to get used to it, like those oysters she kept eating until; one day she found she quite like them. With that thought in mind, and a growling belly, he once again turned into the creature and tried once more, sticking his tongue in the ground. But again she came up sputtering and spitting, shaking her fist at the creature she yelled, “Hey you stupid fool, why are you eating that? It isn’t food?”

Disgusted he decided to keep walking, he wasn’t going to get any food from this place, it didn’t even gave any decent grass to chew on. After many, many, hours of walking an exhausted *wisahkêcâhk* came upon a wooded area and thought to himself this would make a good place to rest so he quickly found a secluded spot in the bush and started to make a bed with the boughs of nearby spruce trees. A stack of pine cones made a comfy pillow and he soon fell into a sound sleep only to be awakened by a terrible scream. At first, *wisahkêcâhk* thought it was *pakak* coming to bother him. Well, he would show that skeleton what happens when you bother *wisahkêcâhk* while he is trying to sleep! He told his ear to listen carefully for the place the sound came from. When his ear found the spot where the screaming came from *wisahkêcâhk* decided to play a trick on *pakak*. He would change into a woman and flirt with *pakak* and when he got close enough he would throw *pakak’s* bones everywhere. It would take *pakak* all day to find himself again *wisahkêcâhk* laughed with pleasure at the thought of besting *pakak*. Finally dressed as a

woman and swaying his hips back and forth *wisahkêcâhk* swayed into view only to find *pakak* was not *pakak* after all! Instead he found himself looking at the strangest creature biting the earth with teeth like the ones he’d once seen on a dinosaur. But this creature looked nothing like dinosaurs To his dismay, the creature was throwing dirt on a pile almost as big as the one *wisahkêcâhk* had made once after eating too many berries. That must be good food he thought, to make such a huge pile of shit. *Wisahkêcâhk* being quite nosy was curious and wanted to know if could make a pile of shit that big, being quite arrogant, she was sure could make her pile even bigger. So turning himself into the strange creature he began chewing up the earth. But all she found herself gobbling up were huge chunks of soil and trees. *Wisahkêcâhk* was eating soil with trees and spitting out dirt and crumbs. Gagging he quickly turned back into himself. Well, that did not taste good! Why is that crazy fool creature eating it he wondered? And that pile of shit isn’t shit. Shaking her fist at the creature she yelled, “Hey you stupid, why are you eating that? It isn’t food?” *Wisahkêcâhk* was getting nowhere, with no food and an interrupted sleep he was feeling quite sorry for himself when he noticed his friend Robin watching from of the big piles the strange creature had made. Ah yes, finally someone he could share his misery with. "Robin, Robin," he shouted, "My friend come talk to me, I am in a sorry state indeed and need someone to talk to." Robin flew over to *wisahkêcâhk* who quickly began his tale of sorrow starting with his hunger and the strange creatures he was seeing who were eating food that wasn’t food. Pointing she said look see what that stupid creature is doing. Hey, you stop what you’re doing there, he shouted, but the creature ignored her and continued ripping into the soil and mowing down the trees. Turning back to Robin, he whined, “See, see what that guy is doing, oh poor me I am

so hungry.” Robin looked at *wisahkêcâhk*, shook his head and cried, "All you ever do is complain, why don't you do something about it. You are hungry, yes, and tired, yes, but at least you can find somewhere else to sleep and there is always food for you, you are just too lazy to find it. You never once considered what that creature is doing to me and my family did you? It is stealing my home and my friend's homes and all you think about is your belly. Where do you suppose we will sleep tonight? What will become of us?" Now *wisahkêcâhk* not liking anyone to best him at anything quickly boasted "I will find another forest for you and your friends. He promised, "I will go right now, you will see, it will be an even better home" With that, *wisahkêcâhk* went searching for a new home for Robin and his friends walking and walking and walking until he forgot was he was searching for.

One day *wisahkêcâh* heard from some friends that Miss *Wacask*<sup>7</sup> from Chemawawin was going to marry *Amisk*<sup>8</sup> from Moose Lake. "Oh what fun, a wedding I better hurry or I will miss it," she thought. Now everyone knows *wisahkêcâhk* thinks too much with her stomach. He forgot how far it was from Grand Rapids to Moose Lake. After many, many hours walking *wisahkêcâhk* finally came upon Cedar Lake. "I will swim and cross quickly," thought *Wisahkêcâhk*. But she was in such a hurry to get to the wedding before the food was gone, she did not notice the strange swells on the water. As he swam he began to imagine the feast. "I bet they have lots of pickerel and maybe some fat juicy sturgeon!" Licking his lips in anticipation, *wisahkêcâhk* suddenly realized he was alone in the lake, something was wrong but he could not imagine what it was which angered

7. Translation: muskrat.

8. Translation: Beaver.

her because she thought she knew everything. Just then she was bowled over by a large wave How odd she thought, "This is Cedar Lake, I've swam here many times, I don't remember it swelling like this" Just then he spotted a family of northern Pike. "Hey Jack, he called out. What is making this terrible swell? "You probably did this yourself to trick us," yelled Jack who knew *wisahkêcâh* liked to outsmart people. "You cannot be trusted" he shouted and then before *wisahkêcâhk* could argue Jack took his family and swiftly swam away. "Well, isn't that friendly" mocked *wisahkêcâhk* sticking out her tongue. This trip is causing me more difficulty than it may be worth he thought. Her tummy was starting to growl from hunger. He hadn't eaten anything all day and had been counting on the feast to fill his belly, but it was taking too long to get there and now these swells kept fighting him. "What was he to do, what was he to do?" he exclaimed sadly. Tired from fighting the waves he tried floating on his back but that just pushed him back to where he has swam. Damn. DAMN, DAM, he cried out when suddenly in the rushing water he noticed Mr. Sturgie being tossed about. *Wisahkêcâhk* forgot he was struggling to swim and was so happy, perhaps if he could trick Mr. Sturgie into coming close enough he could finally get some food. Oh how he loved the rich delicious taste of sturgeon. But as he swam toward Mr. Sturgie, he noticed he was all bloated up and his skin was an ugly putrid color. "Why does that Mr Sturgie look like that?" he wondered, "And the smell coming from his body is probably chasing the other fish away. No wonder I have not seen anyone other than Jack and his family, they must have all run away." "But how did Mr Sturgie come to be in this condition," he wondered, "he is the oldest king of the northern waters. . Could someone have tricked her so she would drown? Who would do such a cruel thing he wondered forgetting he was just thinking of doing that himself."



It could only be a *wetigo*, only a *wetigo* could cause so much damage and scare everyone away. "I better get out of this lake," he cried, "It might still be around." Just then he saw Mrs. Cormorant flying overhead. "Hey Mrs. Cormorant" he cried piteously, "Please help me? I need to get to Cormorant there is a grand wedding feast there tonight. I swam all the way from Chemawawin. I thought to take a short cut to Moose Lake but I don't remember Cedar Lake being so big. And now there is this terrible swell and the fish are hiding I am afraid there is a *Wetigo* nearby. If you don't help me I will surely become the *Wetigo's* feast." "Oh, *wisahkêcâhk*, you've out smarted yourself have you? Well, I cannot help you. I am not strong enough to carry you and besides I never touch anything that comes from that water. It was not the *Wetigo* that started this death you silly, it was the dam." With that she flew away laughing. "Dam?" he did not want to admit he did not know what a dam was so he shouted, "I will dam you Mrs. Arrogant Cormorant," he yelled shaking his fist in the air. Sputtering great gulps of water, she quickly shut her mouth and continued her swimming, this time toward the nearest shore. But as she swam she noticed many other bodies floating. "There goes my friend little *wacask*," he thought, "Oh I do hope he was not related to the bride." Next came his friend Walleye, "Oh no, not you too Wally" he cried. When Betty the beaver floated by *wisahkêcâhk* began to cry. If Wally and Betty could not survive in this water then nobody could. Oh his dear friends, how could he stop this terrible thing.. But when she saw some of Mr. Spruce's family floating by followed by some of Little Pine's family, even baby roots were drowning, she began to wail, "oh, oh dear," shouted *wisahkêcâhk*, "maybe its not a *wetigo* causing this, the *wetigo* doesn't kill, only steals their spirit. . It must be a very powerful disease spirit killing them. Yes, yes, it must be a very powerful disease." And with that he

began to shake and sob so loudly it drew the attention of Mrs. Edwina Eagle who was soaring above the clouds enjoying her solitude. "Hey, *wisahkêcâhk*," she screeched from above. "Why all the wailing? Don't you know you are disturbing me? I never get too rest," she complained, "Always chasing after my husband who thinks he rules the sky, showing off to the young ladies with his high flying dives; oh yes," she nodded, "Then there's feeding my five eaglets. You try feeding five eaglets who are never satisfied, not to mention nest cleaning every day. When do 'I' find time to be alone, I ask you? Oh what a shame, and just when I finally get to rest you start wailing like a baby!" *Wisahkêcâhk* was so overwhelmed with death swimming all around him he could only cry more making the lake even bigger that it already was. Disgusted Edwina shouted, "Look at you, your tears are making the lake swell what use will the Dam be then?" She shrieked, "Pretty soon I will not be able to find food for my eaglets. You selfish creature you!" With that *Wisahkêcâhk* forced herself to stop crying, and with one last hiccup shouted, "Who is selfish, look around you. Can't you see what's going on? Everyone is dying from some terrible disease! And, I don't know how to stop it!" "Well I am sure whatever caused it was their own fault," she replied coldly" "How can you be so heartless?" *wisahkêcâhk* shouted, "don't you care about anything but yourself?" With a huff Edwina backed away, "Of course I know who is doing this," she bragged, "but since you are being so rude to me, me, a fine upstanding lady, I will not tell you, you can find out for yourself. How do you like that *wisahkêcâhk*" she cried, and then giving him her back she soared up into the sky leaving an astounded *wisahkêcâhk* behind.

It suddenly dawned on *wisahkêcâhk* that no one was going to help him, he would

have to help himself. He also remembered who he was and what he could do, so laughing at himself for forgetting himself he turned in to a pelican and soared over the disgusting water. And that was how *wisahkêcâhk* finally found himself at the wedding feast.

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I purposely began this paper with reinterpretations of *wisahkêcâhk*'s travels. His adventures have long amused and educated young Indigenous children. Today I tell these stories to introduce *wisahkêcâhk* to the *wetigo* effects of oil drilling, deforestation, hydroelectric dams and selfishness. Or perhaps it is *wisahkêcâhk* who has caused these things to happen. Perhaps she was passed out under the beer table when it all happened or perhaps.....

Story telling is how I address the more serious issues facing Indigenous people today. In the above stories, both Mrs. Cormorant and *Wisahkêcâhk* dismiss the idea of a *wetigo* causing the disease leading to the death of so many northern animals. Nor does *wisahkêcâhk* recognize *wetigowatsiwin* in the deforestation; drilling or dams. But one thing is consistent— *wisahkêcâhk* knows oil, trees and hydroelectric plants are not food. Indigenous people also know this truth.<sup>9</sup>

As I said I first heard about the *wétiko* as a child from my mother. She told many stories of spirits like pakak, the trickster *wisahkêcâhk*, and the dangerous cannibal spirit/creature found in the northern bush land of Canada called *wétiko*. *Wisahkêcâhk* did not recognize *wetigowatsiwin* because the *Wetigo* is a soul thief not killer. He is “a complex,

9. See, *All Our Relations: Native Struggles for Land and Life* by Winona LaDuke. Cambridge, MA: South End Press for detailed information of environmental devastation.

voracious spirit-being who “wandered the subartic forests and icy swamplands west of Hudson Bay throughout time...a [wetigo] Windigo<sup>10</sup> spirit...could take over that person's behaviour (Norman, 1982. p. 3).

Ancient stories taught that a *wétiko* could devour you, chill your heart and steal your memory yet leave a human appearance which is why *wisahkêcâhk* could be fooled. But he was certainly right about the sprit disease. Nor could she know the cause because she had not met Europeans. Indeed it has been argued that ever since the Europeans set foot on this continent, they have been devouring Indigenous peoples, sometimes overtly as in forced Christianization and introduction of capitalism, and sometimes subtly with offers of friendship, “statements of regret and promises of reconciliation” (Alfred, 1999, np.). But, the ultimate coup was the *wétiko* spirit of Canadian Residential School system (from the 1800 to 1900s) that infected many, many children and generation to follow. The implementation of residential schools caused the *wétiko* effects of chilling our hearts and stealing our memory with the devastating consequence that Aboriginal people's self-perception and perception of friends and family was altered. This separated us from *pimatisiwin* (good or healthy life) with the people and land of our mothers.

What *wisahkêcâhk* was experiencing in his travels was the effect of the spirit disease not the cause. New stories of the *wétiko* must be told to help us negotiate the rocky terrain back to our traditional teachings, because “[o]nly by heeding the voices of our ancestors can we restore our nations and our peace, power, and righteousness back into the hearts and minds of our people”( Alfred, p. xii). For me, that means exposing the

10. In Cree communities the term *wétiko* is used with various spellings and among the Ojibwa the term “windigo” is used to describe the same voracious creature.

coldness and loss of memory some of us find ourselves locked into today and paying closer attention to the ancient stories our ancestors used to guide their communities.

Distortions and denial of our ancient narratives and contempt for them can be associated with a spirit of destruction, a *wétikowá'tisewin*, “diabolical wickedness and cannibalism.” We need to be reminded that the world our ancestors lived in was not a world of a vicious or noble savage. Yes, there was and is a deeply spiritual interaction and understanding of interconnectedness, and yes, this led to an intimate understanding of our universe. But, that understanding was not learned through some mystical tree hugging Pocahontas. Our ancestors understood their environment because of their active observation and participation. Our ancestors told stories that provided knowledge of how to protect ourselves, our communities, and our homes. Looking back I wonder, much like *wisahkêcâhk* would wonder, what would have happened if our ancestors had seen through the human appearance of the early Europeans to the *wétiko* spirit? Perhaps if they had I would be telling a different story. Today I believe we are struggling with the effects of *wétikowá'tisewin* “which has consumed and turned so many of us into *wétikowak*.” We need to be reminded that a *wétiko* can disguise itself and lure the unsuspecting into a life divorced from humanity:<sup>11</sup>

### *How Wetiko Catches Wisahkêcâhk*

One time a long time ago, *wisahkêck* met some hunters near Norway House who had started to go out hunting. Hearing there as *wetigo* was in the area they were

11. This *acimowin* is an adaptation of the original “The Skeletons-Trick Windigo” found in *Where the Chill Came From: Cree windigo Tales and Journeys*” Gathered and Translated by Howard Norman, San Francisco: North Point Press 1982, pp. 69-70.

afraid but *wisahkêcâhk* being full of himself boasted that he was not afraid of any *wétikow*. “Perhaps then,” said *Ominik* (whose English name was Gray Duck) one of the hunters, “You would like to accompany us,” he challenged *wisahkêcâhk*. Because of his bragging, *wisahkêcâhk* had no choice but to go with the hunters. After a while they decided to split up but *Ominik* warned *wisahkêcâhk*, “Do not go more than five porcupines to the north ,otherwise we may lose you.”

The hunters were teasing *wisahkêcâh*, because they knew more about hunting that way than the braggart *wisahkêcâhk*.<sup>12</sup> As he was walking, *wisahkêcâhk* noticed some skeleton ducks swimming in the nearby lake. He knew it was real because he was seeing it, so talking out loud he cautioned himself to not look too closely or argue with what he was seeing. He knew it was wrong to stare and to deny what he was seeing. Something bad could happen if he pretended he didn't see the skeleton ducks just as staring caused bad things to happen. Unfortunately for *wisahkêcâhk*, he did not find any ducks to eat so he had to stay hungry. And when he got back to the hunters' camp and told the other hunters what he'd seen and how he thought it was *wetigo* floating skeleton ducks before him *Ominik* was reluctant to believe him thinking it was only *wisahkêcâhk's* hunger that saw the skeletons. Thinking it over, they all agreed that must be what happened. The next day when *wisahkêcâhk* set out again he saw the skeleton ducks floating. Fearing a *wetigo* he looked all around him and stood very still to listen, hearing nothing, he hurried back to the camp. When he arrived he found the hunters all excited. Like *wisahkêcâhk* they too

12. “How many porcupines to the north refers to the territoriality of that animal. While their boundaries may depend on terrain and availability of food bark, porcupines tend to maintain territories roughly three to five square miles. Therefore a walk of two porcupines to the north would be approximately six to ten miles” (Norman, 1982). See the full and wonderful description of Cree hunting wisdom on pages 15-16, in Norman's introduction to *Where the Chill Came From*. 1982.

had seen skeleton bones. *Ominik* had seen a skeleton of a rabbit, his sister had seen the skeleton of a moose, and on and on it went with each telling which animal he had seen. All of them wondered what happened to the good food from the hare, the moose and the duck and why they were only seeing skeletons. Someone even asked if anyone knew how to cook up bones good. But the others knew it was his hunger talking so they all went back out to hunt. When they returned, they found *wisahkêcâhk* missing. The next day when the hunters returned from hunting one of them said he had seen *wisahkêcâhk*, but he was only a skeleton. He said, "*Wisahkêcâhk* was a skeleton. I saw him. He still had his face. He was swimming with the ducks." Then the next day *wisahkêcâhk* was seen again this time he was seen with the hare and later he was with the moose. All of them were walking, standing up or swimming. Now, the hunters knew it was a *wetigo* and it had to be stopped. They had to kill the *wetigo*. As they walked they heard the sound of bones walking and when the bones stopped making noises they saw in the distance the *wetigo*. They saw that *wetigo*, it was right there! If the hunters had been starving anymore they would not have had the strength to kill the *wetigo*. They killed it and melted its heart in a fire. And while they were sitting at the fire they heard ducks. Looking over to the river they saw the ducks not the bones of the ducks. And there was *wisahkêcâhk* happily catching ducks for them to eat. Looking over at the hunters *wisahkêcâhk* laughed, "What did I tell you there was nothing to worry about, no *wetigo* would come near me." Then the hunters knew, *wisahkêcâhk* had not remembered the *wetigo* causing him to look like bones.

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Maybe *wisahkêcâhk*'s story was instruction about how hunger can affect our rational thinking. But I see instruction on responsibility. I heard the need for perception checking and rechecking. I also heard the importance of consensus and cooperation. But perhaps the most important lesson is that death of spirit does not necessarily mean a physical death or inability to heal the spirit. If these lessons were vital to survival for our ancestors, they are equally important in contemporary society. The lessons inherent in our stories are still valuable, although the context for the story may be different.

Where, for example, are perception checking, consensus building, and responsibility to confront danger when we see casinos? Are we able to re-contextualize these lessons in light of our social/political and religious concerns? Today, there are new *wétikow* stories being told and we need to pay attention to them, just as our ancestors paid attention to the ancient stories. Stories about drugs, crime, gangs, and suicides, loss of personal value, oppression of women and children, these all spell the results of a *wétikowâ'tisewin*. Being consumed by a *wétiko* is resulting in loss of our humanity, which then transmits across generations. A short excerpt from Neal McLeod reveals this new contextualization.

Windows opened

No longer covered by glass

Emptied of people

And stories

Burned out black hollow

My body  
 Has also known  
 The fire of the wihtikow  
 Bingo caller gives false hope  
 white johns  
 circle the wagon of families  
 cops drive brothers  
 to cold places  
 wihtikow wanders  
 in the grey, concrete forest Press (Neal McLeod, 2005, p. 27).

McLeod's poem yields a subtlety of warning while clearly evidencing pain and alienation. He writes of darkness, prostitution, addiction and star light tours. Without ever giving full voice to these evils he brings them to consciousness, and once in our consciousness they are able to "make the journey from the mind of one person into the collective consciousness..." (Alfred, p. xvi). This is how story works. I heard McLeod's story and I thought of Ominik. We feel the darkness of McLeod's story, and like *Ominik's* (*wisahkêcâhk* in my retelling) starvation it could rob us of humanity or push us to kill the darkness.

The late Jack Forbes<sup>13</sup> recognized Europeans coming to the Americas with a *wetigo* disease, demonstrating ravenous appetites that were aimed to destroy everything and everyone. Forbes observed that "[i]mperialism, colonialism, torture, enslavement, conquest, brutality, lying, cheating, secret police, greed, rape, terrorism...become a vicious reality which overwhelms, consumes and changes our lives forever..." (pp. 9-10). According to Forbes, "Cannibalism, ... is the consuming of another's life for one's own private purpose or profit" (p. 34). Private purpose or profit flows from the Lockean individual rights which often override collective harmony and decision-making.<sup>14</sup> We are all familiar with history and "how slavers forced blacks and Indians to lose their lives in the slave-trade and for those that did not immediately die they had their lives drained away in a slave system" (p. 34). Forbes called these slavers cannibals, "[t]hus the wealthy exploiter "eats" the flesh of oppressed workers...Anglo-American imperialism is a form of cannibalism designed to 'eat' Indians and also to consume the Native people's land and resources (a process which continues in Central America and elsewhere today)" (p. 34). "We don't think of the deaths of tens of millions of Jews and Slavs at the hand of Nazis, or the deaths of tens of millions of blacks in slavery days, and the deaths of up to 30 million or more Indians in the 1500s, or the terrible short lifespan of Mexican farm

13. Although many articles have been published about a windigo spirit in terms of its psychological impact on Native people to my knowledge Jack Forbes was the first to write a scholarly piece identifying Europeans rather than Natives with this cannibalistic spirit. My uncle, Walter Mink, once warned me of the dangers of deforestation claiming we were stripping the earth bald and one day would be sorry. Many other elders and scholars have commented on the insatiable greed of European descendants for land. For a look into mental health see Waldram's *Revenge of the Windigo: The Construction of the Mind and Mental Health of North American Aboriginal Peoples*, 2004.

14. John Locke a British philosopher writing in 1689 supported individualism and espoused the theory that each individual person had the right of ownership to their own body and the labor produced by those bodies. "When an individual adds his own physical labor, which is his own property, to a foreign object or material, that object and any resulting products become his property as well" For Locke labor is not only the determining factor of value it is the tool that makes the world efficient and rewarding. Even money which he claims is the measure of trade is still rooted in the property of labor. See Locke's *Two Treatises on Government*.

workers in Texas and of Indians today as cannibalism, but that is precisely what it is" (Forbes, p. 34).

Forbes saw Europeans as harbingers of the *wétikow* disease without actually attributing the disease to the indigenous. But as we will see a disease is contagious and we too devour everything in sight—land, and resources, even one another. Those Cree people, who survived the European onslaught of disease and murder, were later targeted by an insatiable drive to eliminate Cree-ness and an *Ininiwak* identity altogether. "It was believed that non-Western societies could be transformed through programs of directed change and by exposure to the British system of values" (Pettipas, 1996, p 19). The notion of individual rights, placing one's self separate from any other living thing/person, including friends and family, started the process of insatiable urges and worrying that others would steal from us, we began locking doors. Accumulations of wealth, even if accompanied with selfishness or greed, are often perceived as measures of success. We stop seeing selfishness or greed and see only wealth and make that our goal so that in the process to accumulate we too can become greedy and selfish. This is not unlike Swampy Cree teachings that exposure to a *Windigo* could cause "insatiable urges that alter a Windigo-person's perceptions of other humans., "(Norman, p. 3)

The colonizers did not *see* Cree persons as properly human. Distorted perceptions caused mis-naming and mis-identifying of Cree people. Europeans misjudged Cree persons as incapable of reason, and called them "savage." By enforcing the "British system of values" they attempted to alter Cree people's perceptions of themselves as *Ininiwak*. They attempted to sever their connection with the land and transform their identity. As

the *wetigo* spirit spreads, it destroys everyone's perceptions—Aboriginal and colonizer.

We also have many stories about distorted perceptions we call stereotypes but we do not talk about the misperception we have of ourselves along with the *wétiko's* coldness of heart. One of the coldest effects of *wétikowá'tisewin* are the identity authenticity debates. Contemporary arguments between Cree people about real and not real "Indian," or traditional/nontraditional, even, arguments about who can, or cannot speak on/or about "Indian" issues. These arguments divide communities, causing more pain and anguish for members and ultimately our hearts are no longer nestled within the warmth of trusted relationships. Consider for example the recent ruling that Metis are now the same as Indians placed under the responsibility of the Federal Government. Newspapers featured Manitoba Metis Federation President David Chartrand with his hands uplifted in joy along with other provincial Metis Presidents. At the same time status Indians are heard worrying about how "the government is going to take money away from us to give those Metis."<sup>15</sup> Why is money the first issue to be raised? Money and identity should not be spoken of in the same breath. We should be discussing why we are buying into the distortions of an imported and false narrative concerning who we are and letting the government control our identity. And, we even celebrate their continued manipulation and control! In truth we are suspicious of each other and walk in constant fear of what the government will do for one and not the other. Gone is our harmony, replaced by frozen hearts, serious identity conflicts, and despair.

<sup>15</sup> The colonial narrative has long dominated understandings of Aboriginal peoples, 15. This comment was made by one of my First Nations relative. Now I am being inundated with phone calls, text messages and emails asking me what is going to happen now that I am an "Indian". My answer is "I don't know. Maybe they should ask *Wisahkêcâhk*, it's probably all her doing anyway.

and today we suffer deep rejection by our relatives based on the insidious categorization of our identities. In the past, life was not always perfect, but the aim was striving for harmony. Negative consciousness or lack of rational behavior was not usually accepted, especially in the face of danger. Life centered on community and relationship building, which allowed for accepting strangers into our homes and land and sharing what we had. We only have to look at our ancient stories to see the teachings of relationship and survival. Rather than fighting over government crumbs, we shared what we had at least in our own communities. The gift of sharing is becoming lost. Perhaps we need to be reminded. We need new stories that address lack of sharing. In the past we came to learn that life is a process; an engagement with the universe. We learned the importance of relationship. We came to appreciate cooperation and sharing as vital to survival and how these relationships are necessary to maintaining harmony. Today the spirit of sharing is largely lost replaced with a spirit of selfishness, greed, and hoarding. After 1492, a foreign spirit found its way onto our land. This spirit was motivated by an understanding that did not commit to a reciprocal interaction, a spirit that upheld a philosophy of human separateness from the universe. This philosophy excluded the possibility for egalitarian human-to-human and human-to-animal relationships. This spirit saw its truth as the only possible ideal to follow. This spirit's desires countered reciprocity and harmony with power and greed, an individualism that fostered alienation. The bodies containing this spirit promptly set about devouring the world in which they found themselves. I know Europeans in Canada had, and continue to have, in *wetigo* fashion "voracious" appetites that have gone unchecked for centuries.

*Windigos* "in any form become 'outsiders' who threaten community well-being" (Norman, 1982, p 4). Whether I am talking about the ancient hairy monster with a heart made of ice from the past or a human person with a destructive, selfish, greedy, or violent spirit, the *wetigo* cannot exist as *wétigo/windigo* within a community warmed by interconnected reciprocal interactions. The Cree understood how "Exposure to cold weather or cold water not only makes one sick but can also decrease one's ability to 'be alive well'" (Naomi, Adelson, p. 87). In the past cold weather/water were obvious dangers to be avoided. Today we are in danger of a new coldness and it is reading rapidly. How can one be alive well if they harbor cold hearts? (Adelson, p. 87).

For the *Whapmagoostui Iyiyuu'ch* (Cree people), *miyupimaatisiun*, "being alive well," is central to their understanding of their identity which involves more than physical health. "A sense of health is ultimately rooted in what it means to 'be Cree,' and being Cree has everything to do with connections to the land and to a rich and complex past" (Adelson, p. 25). Today for many being alive well means a new house, a new car, and money in the bank, for others it means making the government give us more money and for a small minority it means living well with each other, being a good neighbor, treating the land with respect.

The consciousness of many Aboriginal people was forcibly indoctrinated into Eurocentric disconnection. Outsider consciousness resulted in negative perception of "Indian" cultures. Furthermore, with "the passing of the Canadian Indian Act of 1876, the social, economic, and political position of the Indian nations was dramatically transformed into one of 'dependence'" (Pettipas, p. 37). Dependence on Government originated in

and exhibited non-egalitarian principles. Pitting families and individuals against each other, dependence wreaked havoc on reciprocity. It insinuated a need for individuals to do whatever it takes to survive, regardless of the consequences for the community. This attitude, which contradicts a reciprocal understanding of reality, diminishes reciprocity, -replacing it with a materialist attitude, of give and take.

There is an uncanny resemblance to the *wétikowak's* voracious appetite, its propensity for isolation and its desire to satiate only *its* desires in the way in which Residential schools were designed. They too stole our values and replaced them with British valuing of individualism and capitalism. In the 1870s, the Canadian nation-state assumed “indigenous populations would disappear as they conformed to the Christian capitalistic state” (Pettipas, p. 17). Therefore, children became tools Europeans used against Cree peoples’ culture. “It was hoped that by removing young children from the influence of their parents and relatives, they would become “effective emissaries of Christian civilization among their own people (Pettipas, p. 38). It was imperative that children be separated from their families and subsumed into Christian values of individualism and a capitalist ideology. Defenseless children became early victims of the *wetigo*. Their memories were stolen as they became absorbed into “white” culture. And, like *Kwakwu* (“Porcupine”) forgot where to walk. In the story of “The Memory-Mud *Windigo*” *Kwakwu* repeatedly falls in the same suck hole. He fell so often that he worried his village and an elder finally told him “the mud hole has your memory.” “Yes, there are places that can take your memory that way,” another said.

Finally the elder states, “A *windigo* is causing this. I’m certain of it. It’s trying to

capture *Kwakwu* this way.” Together the elder using his skills and the community come together to help *Kwakwu*. The windigo is killed and the following day when he was “out hunting Kwakwu didn’t fall into mud. He remembered where not to walk” (Norman, pp. 34-35).

Like the *wétiko/windigo* that was causing Kwakwu to forget where to walk, Indian Affairs, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and Christian boarding schools were causing the children to forget where to walk. They lost memories of interconnectedness of all entities, of their agency, and of the land. Many lost their language and with it a deeper understanding of the philosophical life of Cree people. Like *Windigo*, these Eurocentric institutions aimed to eat away the life of the Cree and make us into *wétikowak* (cannibals). The European wanted Cree people to think and act like Europeans/Canadians. Cree were expected to live in the universe in ways that involved rampant pillaging, greed, accumulation, and destruction of collective good.

Unlike the elders in *Kwakwu's* story, who used their combined wisdom and strength to help *Kwakwu*, during the Boarding school era, many elders were prevented from using their wisdom and strength to protect the children from these destructive spirits. Elders were robbed of the linguistic tool necessary to make sense of their grandchildren’s newly learned narrative and to reverse colonial values and attitudes. Memories were stolen and grandparents were prevented from giving back the memories to those children whose schooling involved years of indoctrination in a monolingual education. Consequently, the dialogue essential for a healing story was drastically impaired.

Once the story is impaired it is easy to become like *Kwakwu* continually falling into



a suck hole. Our suck hole however is a distorted image. We rely on movie images to be truths about our past image. We reject the stories told in movies but seemingly accept the image.<sup>16</sup> Leading us to proudly parade "real Indians." Unfortunately, we may very well be stuck in our suck holes. Thomas King calls the parading of historical memorabilia an example of the "Dead Indian" (King, Just look around and you will see examples everywhere from women wearing head dresses to the preponderance of beads and braids, And heaven forbid if one should cut their hair. But what else can we produce when our memories were stolen and the historical Indian was depicted in movies and reviled and the contemporary Indian is trapped in a cycle of authenticity. And for the capitalist thinker there is a growing tendency that material accumulation is a clear indication that person/people is indeed not a "real Indian(s)." Thankfully our stories also teach that the human gone *Windigo* can be saved by destroying the *wétiko/windigo's* heart of ice.<sup>17</sup>

The attitude I associate with the Euro/Canadian/American mind is one of disconnection. There is coldness toward anything or anyone falling below one's social standing, their 'rank' in the hierarchical world of individualism. In this hierarchy, humans have not only placed themselves above plants and animals but above some races or cultures. Disconnection from the reality of the interconnected nature of life and mistaken hierarchical thinking has allowed for serious destruction of the planet. Elders

16. I often ask students to describe how their ancestors looked and lived. Regardless their Nation each student accurately described the Movie Indian, long flowing hair, wearing loin cloths or cloths made of hide and of course, riding horses. When I ask how they rode horses through the Bush up north they laugh, when I ask how a northern Cree would look wearing loin cloth in the north with all our horse flies they laugh. While recognizing the ridiculous nature of such descriptions they have no other images to fall back on and this causes confusion and anger.

17. For a human interpretation rather than legend/myth of windigo transformation see Scott Pratt (2002). *Native Pragmatism*, Indiana: Indiana University and the Machekequonabe's case, of a windigo killing in Lake of the Woods area. The trial was conducted at Kenora, Ontario, (then known as Rat Portage) in 1896, December 3. For detailed information see Sidney Harring's article "The Windigo Killings: The Legal Penetration of Canadian Law into the Spiritual world of the Cree and Ojibwa Indians" in "*Violent Crime in North America*. Ed., by Loius A./ Knafila, 2003.

say, "In the past everything was so pure, that is why people were so well. And there was nothing in the water which could make people sick; there was nothing from the air which would affect the lakes because there was nothing disturbing the land" (Adelson, p. 85). When non-natives think of the past, quite often they describe it in these terms: primitive; a hostile, demonic wilderness; needing to be controlled:<sup>18</sup>

Shortly after crossing into the Congo we entered the forest, and for the first time I felt real fear.... For the forest was evil. I felt it as I saw it....

I made up my mind that I would make it my work to bring the heathen out of the forest, to give them sunlight, to show them how to live in God's open world....

It was wonderful to see the forest coming down on all sides. I could feel the power of Satan receding as every tree fell... (Forbes, pp. 89-90).

Indigenous peoples did not see evil in their forests or fear them as Rev. Spence did. The forest was their home, the place of their relationships. There they actively participated in the interconnectedness of all life. Good and evil were associated with the ability to be in relationships by harmonious/disharmonious behaviors.

Being in relationships, coupled with respect, leads to living in harmony. Interference with environmental harmony can result in serious consequences because of the interrelatedness of everything in the universe:

The bear will catch the [fish] sickness [i.e., mercury poisoning], too.

18. These comments were made by the English missionary, Rev. Spence cited in: Forbes, 89-90.

Also the bear will not be healthy to eat because it will eat food from the garbage dumps [when hydro projects are built]. The caribou will be sick, too because of the damage to the land because when the explosives are used and the drilling, the dust from these things will go up in the air and deposit on a large area over the land. The caribou will be sick too, because its food will be damaged, too. That is how the caribou will be affected. It is very likely that the humans will be affected too because of eating the caribou and other animals who eat the caribou will be sick too. (Adelson, p. 84).

Today the effects of abusing our land are everywhere: from mercury poisoning,<sup>19</sup> diabetes and cancer to global warming. Hence, on a physical level we need to pay attention to what the environment is telling us as well as what the colder climate within our hearts is doing. Who or what is fostering alienation from the warmth associated with the heart of land, and our mothers, turning us away from the knowledge of the beauty and power of motherhood? Who is this *wetigo*?

As disastrous as the colder climates are, whether in the physical world or our hearts (indeed belief in interconnection teaches coldness in one leads to coldness in the other) from ancient stories we see that *wetigo* the “spirit” can be beaten and destroyed. The spirit is killed but the person lives. But first we must find the *wétikowak*. We cannot defeat the *wetigo* if we do not know where or what it is.

We need new stories brought to light, like the environmental destructions in *Prison of Grass* by Howard Adams in 1989, like the inequality and abuse of women in *Enough is*

19. See Anastasia Shkilynk, *A Poison Stronger than Love The Destruction of an Ojibwa Community* (New Haven Press: Yale University Press, 1985). See also, Howard, Adams. (1989). *Prison of Grass: Canada from a Native Point of View.*

*Enough: Aboriginal Women Speak Out*, a revealing story about the struggles of women in Tobique . Indeed as revealed by the Tobique women’s group one of the most pernicious effects of the *wetigo* is the loss of respect for our human mothers. Learning the traditional teachings of our cultures means learning the importance our mothers play in creation. It means learning to respect our mothers and fighting to keep our mother’s honor. We must fight against literary productions that reduce our daughters to a Pocahontas image and our mothers and grandmothers to squaw. We must fight against false allegations that our mothers are less important than our fathers. We must restore our minds to rightful thinking.

Today it is necessary for Indigenous peoples to recover our memories, melt the hearts that keep separation between communities alive and thriving. We need to restore warmth to our hearts fight against deforestation. We must look into our hearts and see whether the union of our heart, spirit, emotions, body and experiences are in harmony. If they are not, we must understand our own contradictions. Are we acting like created “Indians?” (Huhndorf, 2001). Are we denying others’ identities based on a false Euro-created identity? (Silman, 1987). Are we playing “Indian” but disregarding the responsibility that comes with being “Indian?” (Deloria, Vine Jr., 1999).

Are we aiding and abetting the destruction of our land, while crying how it was stolen from us? Do we parade pipes, braids and feathers while beating our children or spouses? Do we sweat on Saturday and get drunk on Sunday? Are we castrating our men in the name of equality? Are we raping our women in the name of power? Do we sanctify Mother Earth, while de-sanctifying our human mothers? Are we like the hypocrites that

go to Church on Sunday, pray for forgiveness, and then start domination and subjugation again on Sunday evening? Truth and meaning can be found in our actions and in our thoughts.

I cannot say who carries a *wetigo* spirit; I can only say what I believe the spirit to be capable of perpetuating. We must fearlessly examine our perceptions and actions. We cannot exist as a people wandering around with frozen hearts in a *wetigo* condition. Our homelands cannot exist with ravenous appetites unchecked.

The story of our displacement and loss have been told many times and in many ways by numerous Native and non-Native authors. However, I wanted to show that our ancient stories are relevant today if we re-contextualize them and to see the relevance of the new stories being told. . In a sense I am also saying this is a way for us to own our worldviews. Our stories been reduced to primitive ramblings; but, they are valuable, holding our traditional values, and they can help us recover control over the authoring of our stories, listen...

A small lynx

lost his family.

He went out on his own

and began learning things.

He just set out.

One spring he saw

birds arrive

From the south.

He tasted some.

He learned those tastes.

One summer he nearly

drowned, but he saw his face

A long time

in that lake.

He learned his face then.

One autumn he was as big

as his parents,

and this made him think

about them.

That's how he learned

to remember.

Once, in the cold of winter,

he found an ice bird

who did not move.

That's how he learned weeping,

all down his face,

onto that bird.

He bent over it a long time.

I know his story,

what he learned.

I know it.

All these things!

I weep when I tell it.

I am small lynx.<sup>20</sup>

Many of us may be like small lynx and need to re-learn who we are, what we look like, and what our family looks like?<sup>21</sup> Why do children think it is okay or even fun to burn down houses?<sup>22</sup> We need these stories of suicide and arson we need stories about abuse, not to feel guilty but to be shaken out of our comfort zones. But, “you have to be careful with the stories you tell” warns King (2003). He also cautions us “to watch out for the stories that you are told.” Because although “[s]tories are wondrous things... they are [also] dangerous.” In the end, King (2003)says it best, “[t]he truth about stories is that that’s all we are.” For me, the path to reclaiming culture lies in messages inherent in ancient stories. To be proud of where we are going we must be proud of where we came from.

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20. A Cree man named Small Lynx (1970) living near Cormorant Lake, Manitoba told this poem to Howard Norman. He told Howard Norman that he had lost his parents at a young age. *The Wishing Bone Cycle: Narrative Poems From The Swampy Cree Indians*. Gathered and Translated by Howard Norman, (Santa Barbara: Ross-Erikson Publishing 1972) 108-109 reference, to the story teller, p. 178. The recent state of emergency in Attawapiskat over the rash of teen suicides has caused an outpouring of concern and offers of help. Recently in the community of Easterville there have been a number of homes burned to the ground with the fires attributed to the youth. (Personal visit, April, 2016)..

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Red Velvet



Rebecca Matheson

# Rushdie's Shadow and the Body of Haroun

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Like the Chupwalas, who are complete beings only when connected with their shadows, books have shadowy sides. One cannot look only at the text itself when reading, like the New Critics, or only at the socio-political history like so many readers of Dalit Literature.<sup>1</sup> Only in the combination of both methods can there be a complete reading. There are not only the things that are in the narrative itself, but also all those things that are not in the text, but shadow it. This shadow text, about which the text itself is silent, includes everything from the social and political context of the work to the author's life history, his or her other writings, and the works and people that have influenced his or her life and writing. Otto Jespersen confirms the idea of a shadow text and locates meaning creation in both the text and the shadow:

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1. This has been changing in recent years. An excellent example of a consideration of Dalit (low caste) literature as literature is Laura Brueck's 2014 book *Writing Resistance: The Rhetorical Imagination of Hindi Dalit Literature*.

In all speech activity there are three things to be distinguished: expression, suppression, and impression. Expression is what the speaker gives, suppression is what he does not give, though he might have given it, and impression is what the hearer receives. It is important to notice that an impression is often produced by only by what is said expressly, but also by what is suppressed. (Cited in Raja 1963, 294).

As historian Michel-Rolph Trouillot points out, one cannot express everything, so all other possible narratives are suppressed, either reduced to traces or silenced completely. The trope of the "shadow" in Salman Rushdie's novel *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* aligns itself closely with these notions of silence: it signifies on the one hand, the death of the imagination, and on the other, the other half of one's self. This shadow, in all its forms, can be read in the broader context of speech and language as "silence" which both censors and works in conjunction with speech. I look first at the "shadow" of *Haroun*, examining what lies in silence behind this delightful story, then at what is actually in the novel concerning the complex issues of speech and silence. Finally, I synthesize the two, arguing that silence due to censorship in both the book and in Rushdie's life is "unnatural" in the language of George Kalamaras, while the silences that are integrated with and inseparable from speech are "natural." Further, based on what is expressed and suppressed in *Haroun*, I argue that the reclamation of the shadow and the integration of silence into speech are Rushdie's idea of a happy ending.

## The Shadow (what is not said)

In September of 1988, Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* was published. A week later, it was banned in India. Throughout December and January, there were bomb threats and death threats in the New York publisher's office and book burnings in England and elsewhere. There were people killed in riots and demonstrations in Islamabad, Pakistan and Kashmir, India among other places. On February 14, 1989, the Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran issued a *fatwa*:

The author of *The Satanic Verses*, a text written, edited, and published against Islam, against the Prophet of Islam, and against the Koran, along with all the editors and publishers aware of its contents, are condemned to capital punishment. I call on all valiant Muslims, wherever they may be in the world to execute this sentence without delay, so that no one henceforth will dare insult the sacred beliefs of Muslims. (Cited in Gandjeih 1994, 149).

After these events, Rushdie, a British citizen, went into hiding. His adoptive country, England, took on the responsibility of guarding his life, but issued its own order for his silence. His silence was important for them to protect not only his own life from Khomeini, but also to protect the lives of Terry Waite and the other British hostages who were being held in Lebanon at that time. The hollowness behind this request for silence by the British was exposed when they conveniently neglected to inform Rushdie of the hostages' release. Exactly a year after the *fatwa*, a year Rushdie spent in hiding, working

on *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, he said on February 14, 1990,

I feel as if I have been plunged, like Alice, into the world beyond the looking-glass, where nonsense is the only available sense. And I wonder if I'll ever be able to climb back through the mirror....Please understand, however: I make no complaint. I am a writer. I do not accept my condition. I will strive to change it, but I inhabit it, I am trying to learn from it. Our lives teach us who we are. (Hamilton 1996, 113).

While in hiding, in fear of his life, in the dark basements of London, Rushdie spent his time in Looking-Glass Land writing *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*. He produced a children's book, a fairy tale full of fantasy, imagination, and hope. Rushdie mentions Alice and the Looking-Glass world specifically in this statement, but he had also published film criticism on *The Wizard of Oz*, and both of these classic fantasy stories inform *Haroun*.

The decision to turn to these books for inspiration and to choose the genre of children's literature (which he had not previously written in) and the fairy tale for this book has great significance. Ostensibly, it was chosen because Rushdie missed his son, Zafar, from whom the *fatwa* had separated him. Rushdie's conception of his purpose is encoded in the poem that he writes to Zafar as a dedication:

Z embla, Zenda, Xanadu

A ll our dream-worlds may come true.

F airy lands are fearsome too.



As I wander far from view

Read, and bring me home to you.

He remembers his son constantly throughout his hiding and wants reassurance that his son remembers him as well, so he writes a book for his son about a storytelling father who is very close to and dependent on his son for his livelihood and happiness. The fairy tale genre complicates this simple motive of communication and love. Following such a controversial work as *The Satanic Verses*, *Haroun* is written in a genre typically considered safe and apolitical. Fairy tale stories are considered by the general public to be “universal, ageless, therapeutic, miraculous, and beautiful” (Zipes 1983, 1). Fairy tales have also traditionally been written in order to teach children and help them grow up with the social, ethical, and moral values in the stories and the dominant society that canonized them. Jack Zipes argues, however, that they have also been used to subvert and question those very values along with the level of society that benefits from their continuance. He uses L. Frank Baum as one of his specific examples of a subversive storyteller and mentions Lewis Carroll as well. Were *Haroun* written in time, there is no doubt that it and Rushdie would have been included in Zipes’ study along with its predecessors. These stories are not simple shadow texts, though, for there is a magic in them that reaches beyond their moral teachings and their subversive elements, delighting children and adults alike.

The subversive element is certainly present in *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, which was clearly written to be Rushdie’s response to his situation and his attempt to learn and grow from the *fatwa* as writer, person, and father. The story he produces is complex on

a number of levels, and not easily reducible. Srinivas Aravamudan, however, in his 1995 article, gives a perfect example of a reading that ignores the text, allowing the shadow, the silent context, to overwhelm it. His reading does great violence to both the story as story and to the author’s imagination. Aravamudan reduces *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* to “a simple satire of Muslim fundamentalism from the viewpoint of the Western multicultural liberalism” and further claims that

The transportation of elements from *The Arabian Nights* and *The Kathasaritsagara* into a thinly veiled autobiography does little justice to the Asian backgrounds Rushdie treats, let alone to the cultural-political complexities of his own contemporary situation. Khatam-Shud is obviously nothing more than a hilarious transfiguration of Ayatollah Khomeini as seen through the lens of James Bond. (Aravamudan 1995, 326)

The possibility of this simplistic reading contradicts Rushdie’s own statement in 1985 that he would never write a flat allegory, though he does admit to making use of allegorical elements. The story he is telling, Haroun’s story, though influenced by the censorship and oppression in his own life, is still Haroun’s story, not Rushdie’s in disguise. Rushdie told interviewer John Haffenden, in response to a question about his novel *Shame*, “I quite dislike the notion that what you are reading is something else” (Haffenden 1985, 243). Aravamudan’s reading is more a testimony to what was at the foreground of Aravamudan’s mind during his reading than to what was on Rushdie’s mind during the writing process, which was, from all accounts, his son Zafar.

Censorship, a primary component of *Haroun's Shadow*, is an issue Salman Rushdie has fought throughout his career. He first ran into it in 1968 when he produced Edward Albee's *Zoo Story* for Pakistan TV and had to edit out the word "pork." After that episode, he left Pakistan and returned to England because "[i]n Pakistan, he discovered, censorship was 'everywhere, unescapable, permitting no appeal.' There was 'no room to breathe'" (Hamilton 1995, 97). This freedom of thought and expression is one Rushdie considers indispensable for writers. *Midnight's Children* (1980), which focused on the 1975-1977 Emergency in India, dealt to some extent with issues of censorship at that time. In 1983, years before *Haroun* was written, and in reference to Indira Gandhi's censorship during the Emergency, Rushdie wrote:

The worst, most insidious effect of censorship is that, in the end, it can deaden the imagination of the people. Where there is no debate, it is hard to go on remembering, every day, that there is a suppressed side to every argument. (Rushdie 1991, 39).

It is also difficult to continue, every day, to make that opposing argument, knowing that it will not be heard and to continue to hold onto the conviction that one is right. Rushdie was fortunate to live in liberal London at the time, but even there his fear leads him to censor himself and write in the form of a fairy tale about his hopes, fears, and pain. He felt the need to court the Muslim community after the *fatwa*, and publicly affirmed his faith after living most of his life as a proclaimed atheist. After *Midnight's Children*, he wrote *Shame*, which was banned in Pakistan, and then in 1989 the *fatwa* was issued to silence him forever. In an interview in 1995, just prior to the publication of his collection

of short stories, *East West*, Rushdie responded to questions about the *fatwa's* influence on his writing, saying,

Some of the things I've written about have come out of what's happened. Not only in this collection, but in *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*. That's an idea I had before all this happened. A storyteller who lost the ability to tell stories and in some way his son would help him get it back. But clearly the final shape of that book, with its emphasis on this discussion of language and silence, clearly was influenced by what happened to me. ("A Talk With" 1995, 81).

This discussion of language and silence is what is central to Haroun's story. There are issues of forced silence, silence due to fear, silence due to sadness, silent languages comprised entirely of gesture, and shifting registers of types of speech and song, all complicated by issues of translation between these disparate elements.

In Rushdie's fairy tale, no Gups go to the Land of Chup, no Chups go to the Land of Gup, and there has been no dialogue between the two peoples for many years. The dialogue is finally opened by Mudra and Rashid Khalifa (Haroun's father, the storyteller) through their use of the Gesture Language. This role of opening dialogues and of being an interpreter is one that Rushdie himself plays between the lands of the East and the West. He considers himself a "translated" man. Translated from East to West, both of which are apparent in him, familiar yet alien, and writing in a language it has taken him years to make his own. His books are a point of entry for many Westerners to access the East, and

the language he uses is truly a hybrid. Michael Gorra has a wonderful article in which he characterizes Rushdie's language: "This Angrezi in Which I am Forced to Write': On the Language of *Midnight's Children*." It is, in many ways, a written version of spoken Indian English, which was described by Nirad C. Chaudhuri in 1951 as "a 'mixed language,' marked by a heteroglossia in which words, phrases, and even syntactic structures from Indian languages played a role in English conversation" (Gorra 1999, 194). This in-between language is used in *Haroun* as well as in *Midnight's Children*. Rushdie's written English, Gorra argues, is a mimicry of this spoken, very Indian language. It is important, not only in accessing both East and West, but even just to access all of India, Rushdie's native country, for him to write in the English language, no matter how Indianized, and not, for example, in his native Urdu. Like most young Indians, Rushdie was educated in an English medium school, but did not speak it at home. He acknowledges the accusation of the East with regards to his use of the colonizer's language in *Shame*:

Outsider! Trespasser! You have no right to this subject!...Poacher! Pirate! We reject your authority. We know you, with your foreign language wrapped around you like a flag: speaking about us in your forked tongue, what can you tell but lies? (Rushdie 1983, 28).

Simply by writing in this more accessible language, Rushdie has alienated himself from both his home and his religion, identifying himself as a traitor who exposes their secrets. Here is a man trying not only to open dialogue between East and West, but also between the two halves of his own divided self in an attempt to establish an identity and a homeland.

In his *post-fatwa* publications, it is clear that Rushdie feels the pressure of self-censorship. Other Arab and Muslim writers have felt this same pressure, which they expressed eloquently in the letters of support they wrote for Rushdie in his time of need. Mohammed Harbi wrote "We are thousands of intellectuals, writers, artists, opponents having fled our countries, some by force, others by conscious decision, because the powers in place left us no choice but silence or compromise and life in disgrace, the splitting of the personality, permanent schizophrenia" (Harbi 1994, 170). And that, for many, is no choice at all. There is, of course, the temptation to write allegory, to speak one's mind freely yet not get caught. *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, however, is not that simple. It is not only about censorship and freedom of speech, but also about the environment, friendship, family, and gender roles. Elias Khoury, in the same volume of letters, describes "Salman Rushdie in solitude, a writer living alone and hunted, who lacks words while he no longer knows the anguish of writing but only that of heroes in novels" (Khoury 1994, 205). Rushdie the writer, however, is not silent. He published *Haroun*, the article "In Good Faith: A Pen Against the Sword" written in defense of *The Satanic Verses*, and *Imaginary Homelands*, all between 1990 and 1991. Each of these publications is a move against the oppression of censorship, some more obviously than others, and each is also a move to remind people that there is another side to all the arguments and actions against him, an act against forgetting. Tied up with themes of censorship and silence as *Haroun* is, it recalls a Rushdie who is a master storyteller, and it is full of love and hope. In a 1990 essay included in *Imaginary Homelands*, Rushdie asks himself "Am I prepared to set aside as holy the idea of the absolute freedom of the imagination and alongside it my own notions of the World, the Text, and the Good?" (Rushdie 1991, 417-418). The

answer given in *Haroun* is yes. “He [Haroun] knew what he knew: that the real world was full of magic, so magical worlds could easily be real” (Rushdie 1990, 50). Since what is imagined today could be real tomorrow, it should never be suppressed.

### **The Person (what is said)**

The storyteller is Haroun’s father, Rashid Khalifa of “a sad city, the saddest of cities, a city so ruinously sad that it had forgotten its name” (Rushdie 1990, 15). Rashid told stories and his wife Soraya sang. Until one day, “the sadness of the city finally crept in through their windows” (Rushdie 1990, 15), and Soraya stopped singing. When she ran off with the upstairs neighbor who had no imagination, Haroun yelled at his sad, storytelling father, saying, “What’s the point of it? *What’s the point of stories that aren’t even true?*” (Rushdie 1990, 22). Immediately afterwards, Rashid runs out of stories. Then his old stories begin to prove themselves true. He used to tell a story about Khattam-Shud, “The Arch-Enemy of all stories, even of language itself. He is the Prince of Silence and the Foe of Speech” (Rushdie 1990, 39). This Khattam-Shud is the very one whom Haroun later has the opportunity to meet and indeed conquer in order to save the Sea of Stories from destruction. Another one of Rashid’s stories was about the Moody Land, which adjusted itself according to the moods of its inhabitants. In the Moody Land, when everyone is angry, Haroun orders, “Everybody just stop talking. Not a word. Zip the Lips. Dead silence is very important” (Rushdie 1990, 49). When they obey him, the weather calms.

has an invisible tap from which he drinks. However, after his wife leaves, he’s too sad, and there’s no more magic, so he cancels his subscription. When Haroun catches Iff the water genie disconnecting his father’s supply, he follows him to the fairy world, the moon Kahani (“Story” in Urdu), to try and get his father reconnected. Kahani is a divided world. It doesn’t rotate, so the Land of the Gups is always in the light and the Land of the Chups is always in the dark. The Guppees argue and sing and talk so much that it drives Haroun crazy and he wonders how they accomplish anything. “In Chup City the schools and law-courts and theatres are all closed now, unable to operate because of the Silence Laws” (Rushdie 1990, 101). The Chupwalas are ruled by Khattam-Shud himself, whose closest followers have taken a vow of silence and sewn their lips shut “so they die slowly of hunger and thirst, sacrificing themselves for the love of Bezaban...a gigantic idol” (Rushdie 1990, 101). Khattam-Shud has kidnapped the Guppee Princess Batcheat (“Chit-Chat”) and is planning to sew her lips shut. Haroun has inadvertently walked into a war. Rashid has also come to Kahani on his own account, so he and Haroun accompany the Gup army to Chup, where they see a man in the Twilight Zone fighting his own shadow. After some confusion, Rashid divines that the warrior’s name is Mudra, and that he has been speaking the Gesture Language Abhinaya<sup>3</sup> to them fluently all along. Fortunately, Rashid is also versed in this language and is able to act as an interpreter, initiating the first contact between the Guppees and the Chupwalas in many years.

When Haroun first sees Mudra, the Warrior is fighting his own Shadow. In awe, Haroun watches:

          The shadow plainly possessed a will of its own. It dodged and ducked, it

3. “Abhinaya,” in Indian aesthetic theory, refers to the art of expression.

          Rashid gets his stories from the Ocean of the Streams of Story.<sup>2</sup> He subscribes and

2. “Ocean of the Streams of Story” is a literal translation of the Sanskrit *Kathasaritsagara*, which is an eleventh-century collection of Indian legends, fairy tales and folk tales.

stretched itself out until it was as long as a shadow cast by the last rays of the setting sun, and then it bunched itself as tight as a shade at noon, when the sun is directly overhead. Its sword lengthened and shrank, its body twisted and altered constantly. How could one ever hope to defeat such an opponent... (Rushdie 1990, 124).

Later, when Prince Bolo offends the Shadow, it goes “into a positive frenzy of changes, growing enormous, scratching itself all over, turning into the silhouette of a flame breathing dragon, and then into other creatures: a gryphon, a basilisk, a manticore, a troll” (Rushdie 1990, 134). The Shadow is attached to Mudra at the feet, and the two together form a whole being. However, the Shadow can say, think, and do different things than Mudra, even though both exist together. This play of shadow and person is very different from what Wendy Doniger describes in her book *Splitting the Difference*. Although Mudra and his Shadow each have their own autonomy, they are still working together and they both have always existed together, unlike Sita and her Shadow. Their complementary existence is not, unfortunately, universal among all Chupwalas. Mudra’s Shadow gives a beautifully eloquent speech in Abhinaya where he explains the Shadow’s complex relationship with the individual Chupwala:

In the Land of Chup, Shadows are considered the equals of the people to whom they are joined...A Shadow very often has a stronger personality than the Person or Self or Substance to which it is joined! So often the Shadow leads, and it is the Person or Self or Substance that follows. And of course there can be quarrels between the Shadow and the Substance

or Self or Person; they can pull in opposite directions—how often have I witnessed that! But just as often there is a true partnership and mutual respect. (Rushdie 1990, 132).

So sometimes they can pull in opposite directions, but even then, one must prevail as they are still attached. This fact reaches its tragic outcome during the war, when many of the Chupwalas’ Shadows turn on them, forcing them to spend the battle fighting their own Shadows. Sita and her Shadow actually spend the Ramayana war in different places, experiencing the event completely differently from one another. Sita’s Shadow is viewed as somehow less real than Sita herself and was created specifically for the purpose of covering for Sita and ensuring belief in her chastity at the expense of its own. Khattam-Shud’s relationship with his Shadow is closer to the Sita model than Mudra’s with his Shadow because Khattam-Shud has learned to separate himself from his Shadow and can therefore be in two places at once. His ability, notorious in the Land of the Chups, has caused jealousy, great distress, and almost civil war because other Shadows, following his lead, began to resent being joined to their People. This separation into two figures makes him a very powerful enemy, but it also makes each half of him considerably weaker. When Haroun goes down to the Old Zone, which is considered to be the “Wellspring, or Source of Stories” from which “all the Streams of Story had originated long ago” (Rushdie 1990, 84) to stop the poisoning of the Ocean, he realizes that he is dealing only with shadows (of Khattam-Shud, the Zipped Lips minions, and even of the ship itself) he formulates his plan to turn Kahani. When the moon rotates and the Dark Side of Kahani sees the sun, all the shadows without solid hosts melt away into nothing.

As Mudra is to his Shadow, thus also is language to silence according to Kalamaras' assessment of Foucault: "For Michel Foucault, language itself confronts and contains death, a death that lies both in front of language (as meaning) and behind it (as silence)" (Kalamaras 1994, 202). Language confronts and contains silence, just as Mudra both fights with and is attached to his Shadow. Without Mudra, the Shadow could easily die, and that is exactly what happened to the shadow Khatam-Shud and his associates, and what would happen to speech or silence in isolation. In *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, Rushdie sets up a complex relationship between speech and silence from the very beginning, but also between imaginative and unimaginative speech. The word "language," both in *Haroun* and in scholarly works, is used in two ways. Primarily, it is used in opposition to silence and there is a good/bad dichotomy created. Silence, of course, is the bad and associated in Foucault, *Haroun*, and elsewhere with death, the phrase "dead silent" being common in spoken English. This association of silence (the shadow) with evil holds true, also, in Carl Gustav Jung's work on the shadow. He defines "shadow" as "the inferior personality, the lowest levels of which are indistinguishable from the instinctuality of an animal" (Jung 1959, 233-4). Jung's "shadow," like Mudra's, is always with him. It is possible to repress this shadow, but if one does, it is sure to emerge elsewhere. Although it, like silence, is generally seen as evil, especially in comparison with recognized parts of the unconscious, it is not truly and completely evil. Jung adds that the "shadow does not consist only of morally reprehensible qualities, but often displays a number of good qualities as well" (Jung 1959, 266). Also similar to the Mudra paradigm is Jung's belief that a person must acknowledge, recognize, and make peace with his shadow in order to be both whole and healthy.

George Kalamaras describes the good/bad phenomenon in this way: "Particularly in the wake of post-structuralism, silence has most often been cast as the 'bad guy'... robbing speaking subjects of the ability to construct meaning and, thus, the means to personal and cultural power" (Kalamaras 1994, xi). This disenfranchisement by silence is something described in Rushdie's book as well as being evident in history. During the war, the Chupwala army falls apart:

Their vows of silence and their habits of secrecy had made them suspicious and distrustful of one another. They... betrayed one another, stabbed one another in the back, mutinied, hid, deserted... (Rushdie 1990, 125).

Kalamaras, a believer in meditation, is arguing for silence as a generator of meaning, but is still able to recognize the fact that there are different aspects to silence. He is not attempting to completely overturn the good/bad paradigm that has been constructed regarding speech and silence, only to point out that it is not infallible. He knows that when marginalized populations are silent, their voices go unheard and all of culture suffers. This is the object of much feminist, multicultural, and subaltern scholarship: to read back into texts and history the voices that are present only in traces, voices that are almost, but not quite, silenced, discernible in between that which is written or spoken.<sup>4</sup>

Performance Studies scholar Dwight Conquergood makes a similar point about the intersection of cultural anthropology and performance:

Michel Foucault coined the term "subjugated knowledges"...ways of

4. See the work of feminist historians such as Judith Bennett and Cheryl Glenn as well as subaltern studies scholars such as Gayatri Spivak, Ranajit Guha, and Sudipto Kaviraj.

knowing that dominant culture neglects, excludes, represses, or simply fails to recognize....What gets squeezed out by this epistemic violence is the whole realm of complex, finely nuanced meaning that is embodied, tacit, intoned, gestured, improvised, coexperienced, covert—and all the more deeply meaningful because of its refusal to be spelled out. Dominant epistemologies that link knowing with seeing are not attuned to meanings that are masked, camouflaged, indirect, embedded, or hidden in context. The visual/verbal bias of Western regimes of knowledge blinds researchers to meanings that are expressed forcefully through intonation, silence, body tension, arched eyebrow, blank stares, and other protective arts of disguise and secrecy” (Conquergood 2007, 370).

What is suppressed only generates meaning when it creates an impression for the reader. Kalamaras recognizes the value in this type of reclamation work and subsequently divides silence into two aspects: “natural” and “unnatural.” His project is to reclaim the “natural” silences as necessary and productive aspects of human language. This distinction between the two types of silence is also visible in *Haroun*. The Chupwalas’ silence, mandated by fear and law, is unnatural and forced, while the silence in the Moody Land is natural and creates peace. Rushdie’s warning against unnatural silences and his distaste of censorship are clearly visible in the figure of Khattam-Shud and his Zipped Lips Society. The horrific vision that he places before his readers is not one of utter silence, but of a world without imagination.

Laura Shapiro and Daniel Pederson do not quite grasp the horror of this vision in

their review of *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, reading Rushdie’s story more dramatically and silence as more evil than it actually is. They paraphrase the plot of *Haroun* in the course of the review in this way:

What would happen, asks one of the great storytellers of our time, if all the stories stopped? If they became ugly and polluted, turned into grotesque caricatures of themselves, and then disappeared altogether? The end of stories is silence, warns Salman Rushdie, a blank space where once the imagination sang freely. (Shapiro and Pederson 1990, 81).

This assessment of the novel and Rushdie’s message is not quite true to the actual story. They make it sound as if language itself would disappear, when it is actually only the imagination that dies, and silence is never presented as a “blank space,” but as holding the possibility of fluency, life, and beauty. In the examples given of polluted and ruined stories, there is never silence or death. Haroun’s first experience with the story water is polluted. He lives Princess Rescue Story Number S/1001/ZHT/420/41(r)xi<sup>5</sup> as the hero who climbs the tower to rescue the Princess. However, halfway up the tower he turns into a spider and the Princess proceeds to hack off his limbs with a kitchen knife. This is not a *dead* story or anything on its way to disappearing, but a gross mutation of the expected story. When questioned as to the nature of the pollution, Mali gives Haroun some examples of spoiled stories: “Certain popular romances have become just long lists of shopping expeditions. Children’s stories also. For instance, there is an outbreak of talking helicopter anecdotes” (Rushdie 1990, 83-4). They are grotesque caricatures for

5. This is a reference to the way fairy tales are catalogued in what is today known as the Aarne–Thompson–Uther Index (ATU Index).

sure, but they are far from disappearing into nothingness or empty space.

Khattam-Shud, the destroyer of stories himself, is not a silent man; he has not taken the vow of silence required of his followers or sewn his own lips shut. On the contrary, Haroun says, he “spoke clearly, in a dull inflexionless voice, a voice...boring enough to send a person to sleep in ten seconds flat” (Rushdie 1990, 153, 159). Khattam-Shud is not silent, just without imagination or emotion. His goal is to murder new stories by confronting them with their “shadow selves,” their “anti-stories,” which will theoretically cancel each other out. His reasoning behind this plot is that, “All worlds... are there to be Ruled. And inside every single story, inside every Stream in the Ocean, there lies a world, a story-world, that I cannot Rule at all” (Rushdie 1990, 161). Khattam-Shud has no desire to silence all language, just the threatening fun language that he is powerless to control. The idea of murdering stories with their shadows is a problematic one in the context of this story. The Khattam-Shud who is speaking in this passage is, himself, the Shadow of the Person Khattam-Shud that is separated from his body. On this paradigm, the shadow story and the “real” story could be presumed to exist simultaneously, each becoming its own entity, thereby multiplying, not murdering, stories. The other paradigm at work is that of Mudra, whose Shadow, though separate from him in many ways, is inextricably joined to him to form a complete being. Reading from this shadow paradigm, it is clear that the stories must *already* have shadows, and that the most Khattam-Shud could do would be to expose them, not create them. The pollution in the ocean has already clearly shown that killing the stories does not equal a silent story-free Ocean.

Mudra and his Shadow play an essential role in the book with respect to the question

of silence. The character of Mudra does not fit neatly into the silence/speech dichotomy that is otherwise in place in the book. He, along with his Shadow, is silent, yet “speaks” a language and is able to communicate. MacDonald Critchley, in his *Language of Gesture*, defines “human speech” as

The ability not only to make known one’s feelings and ideas, but also to recognize the feelings and ideas of another, the means by which this inter-communication is effected includes, in addition to vocal and audible articulatory sound, writing, drawing, and gesture, and even certain art-forms such as music, painting, sculpture and the dance. (Critchley 1939, 9).

Critchley expands the concept of “language” so as to incorporate Mudra into it. He limits “speech” to the vocal and audible spoken word, but conceives of language as much more elastic, stretching to encompass the various methods and combinations of methods that humans use to communicate. Mudra calls his gesture language “Abhinaya,” a term described in Bharata’s *Natyasastra* as having four elements: 1) *aharya*, which includes the actor’s accessories such as make-up, costumes, and stage properties; 2) *vacika*, the use of the voice; 3) *sattvika*, the expression of emotions; and 4) *angika abhinaya*, the use of body movements. The only discrepancy between this definition and the actions of Mudra is perhaps the *vacika abhinaya*. Although Mudra attempts to speak a vocalized language before Rashid recognizes the gesture language and is able to interpret his speech (Mudra can hear and understand the spoken words of others, so that part of the conversation works seamlessly), his voice is the one part of him that is silent during communication. Even without his voice, Mudra is not an unfamiliar character on the Indian landscape.



The description Rushdie gives of him could just as easily apply to the hero of a Kathakali dance performance:

His long, sleek hair hung to his waist in a thick ponytail. His face was painted green, with scarlet lips, exaggerated black brows and eyes, and white stripes on his cheeks. His bulky battle dress...made him seem even larger than he truly was. And his athleticism and swordsmanship were beyond anything Haroun had ever seen...Haroun began to think of their [Mudra and his Shadow's] combat as a dance of great beauty and grace, a dance danced in perfect silence. (Rushdie 1990, 124).

There are six basic make-up types in Kathakali. All dancers wear the long black wigs, but only the *Pacha* type, that of Gods and heroes, have the green-painted faces. They also have deep red lips, velvet black eyes and brows, the mark of Vishnu on their foreheads, and the *cutti*, a white paste and paper frame for their faces. K. P. Padmanabhan Tampy says of this class of characters that “their movements are dignified...they enact their roles with consummate refinement and in absolute silence” (Tampy 1963, 14). The *vacika abhinaya* in Kathakali is done by singers, never by the actors themselves, who are “tabooed from speaking while on the stage. The strides, dances, hand poses, and facial gestures are the effective substitutes for vocal expression” (Tampy 1963, 8). The only feature distinguishing Mudra from a traditional Kathakali hero is that the whites of his eyes, instead of being reddened like a Kathakali dancer's, are, in fact, blacks.



Figure 1. A Kathakali performer in the virtuous pachcha (green) role at Kochi, India by Qnonsense with CC-BY licence

Mudra and the Zipped Lips minions are classic examples of the “mute character” rhetorical device described by Leslie Kane in his book *The Language of Silence: On the Unspoken and the Unspeakable in Modern Drama*. Mute characters such as Mudra, whose gesture can be translated into speech, communicate even if they don’t speak. These characters function differently from the hissing Zipped Lips minions on the ship in the Old Zone. Mudra transcends the silence/speech dichotomy because both come together in him. It is his character that breaks down the artificial divisions on Kahani and gives the promise of an integrated, peaceful world. Whereas Mudra is a bridge character, in several different senses (brings together language and silence, Shadow and Person, Gups and Chups, etc.), the Zipped Lips minions are described as unimpressive, boring, office clerks. They symbolize the death of the imagination as they perform their “mindless routine jobs” (Rushdie 1990, 152) and slowly starve to death. Mudra represents natural silences while the Zipped Lips Cult represents unnatural silences. The mute character is only one out of the many rhetorical strategies revolving around silence used by contemporary playwrights. Rushdie, also, employs some characteristic features of the playwrights’ “language of silence” such as pauses, ellipses, unanswered questions, mute characters, repetition and echoing, and silence used as a metaphor. The most obvious example of this is in the way the book is organized. Haroun is divided into twelve chapters, but within each chapter there are subdivisions every two pages or so. These are indicated by double spacing after a paragraph, then “---” followed by another double space before resuming with a new topic and new paragraph. The silence is especially evident when read aloud, for with the move to a new subdivision can come a passage of time and/or a change of character, scene, or space. As a children’s story, this book is meant to be read aloud, and the silences

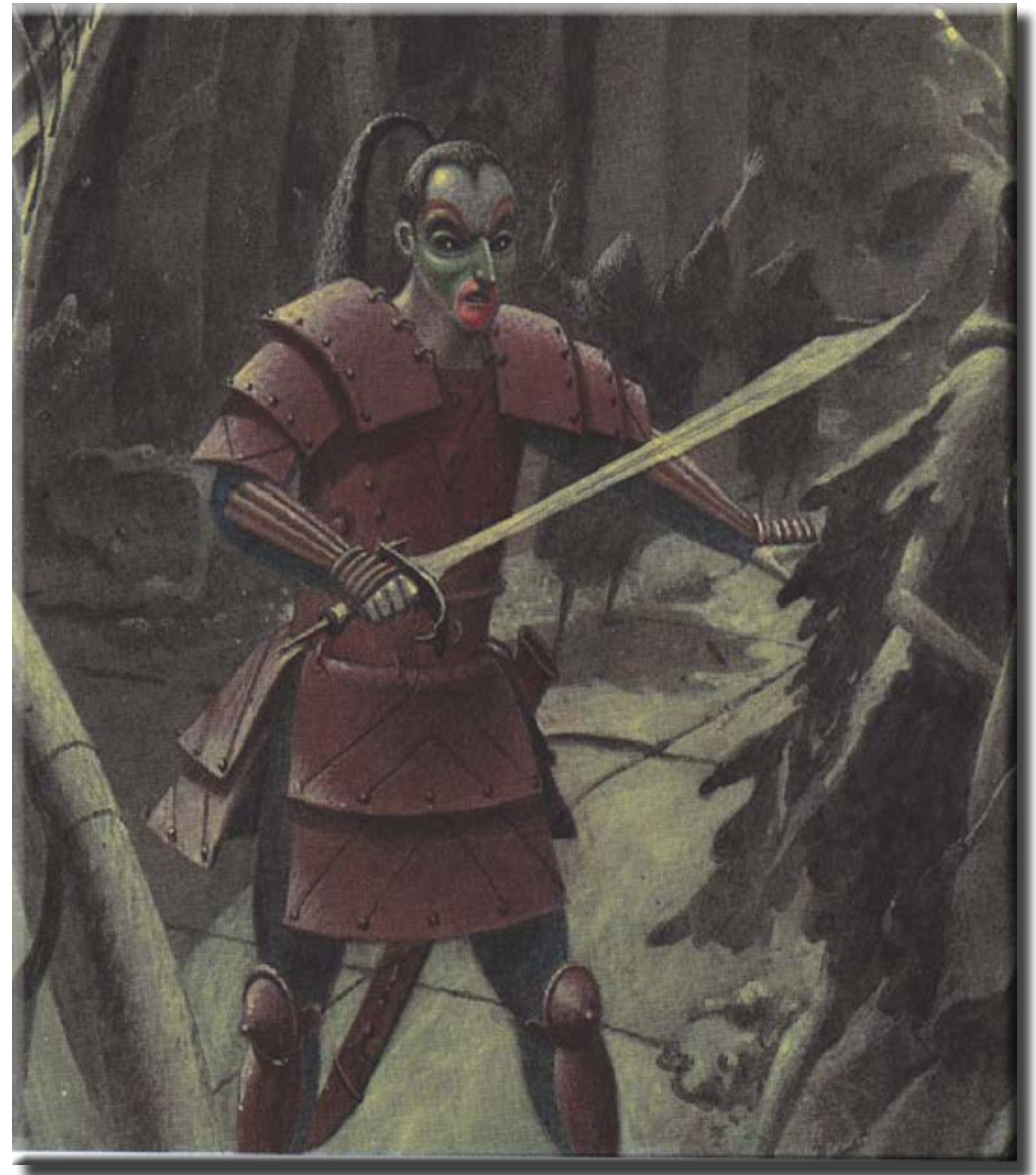


Figure 2 . "Mudra the Shadow Warrior" image detail from *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* by Salman Rushdie, Illustrated by Paul Birkbeck, London: Viking Press, text copyright, Rushdie 1990, illustrations copyright Paul Birkbeck,1999.

are dictated not only by the organization, but by Rushdie's liberal use of devices such as ellipses and dashes. Most significant to the message of this book, however, is the inclusion of these two very different mute characters with their different functions in the telling of the story.

Mudra's silence is completely natural, unlike the silence of the Zipped Lips minions, which is unnatural and forced. He is anxious to communicate with the Guppees ("His hands were moving furiously in something like a dance of rage or hate" (Rushdie 1990, 126)), though it took some time before Rashid was able to understand. None of the Guppees can "speak" his gesture language at all, and gladly accept Rashid's offer to "interpret." During this first exchange is when Haroun gets a closer look at the gesture language, and realizes that it

involved more than just the hands. The position of the feet was important, too, and eye movements as well. In addition, Mudra possessed a phenomenal degree of control over each and every muscle in his green-painted face. He could make bits of his face twitch and ripple in the most remarkable way...

(Rushdie 1990, 131).

This facial control is not only characteristic of Mudra, but it is also the single most distinguishing feature of the Kathakali dance form. *Mudras* in general are signs, meaningful hand gestures, not just the hand positions themselves. These *mudras* signify meaning, and truly form an artificial gesture language, much like American Sign Language, which also involves facial expressions as well as hand gestures. The challenge in a pure gesture

language is to be capable of expressing objects, emotions, abstract concepts, and whatever else is necessary for full communication and comprehension. This challenge is met by both *abhinaya* and ASL. Clifford and Betty Jones, in their book on Kathakali, write that

There are mudras for nouns, for verbs, for adjectives, for adverbs, for prepositions, for suffixes, denoting the infinitive, the conditional mood, the optative mood and the imperative, the plural, the adjective form, the locative, and for the case called by some linguists the "ablative of connection" (*sanyojika*), meaning "together with." There are mudras for pronouns...all of these follow the grammatical structure of Malayalam. So complete is the codification of gesture in Kathakali that the poet Vallathol, when he became rather deaf in his later years, requested that his friends "speak" to him through mudras, and carried on a great part of his conversation in this manner. (Clifford and Jones 1970, 85).

There are other accounts of deaf dancers, or dancers studying outside of their language area, who communicate with students, teachers, and colleagues exclusively in this manner. Complex as *abhinaya* is, it is possible to completely forego the *vacika*, or speech, element and still communicate fully using the other components. This characteristic is true of Mudra himself as well as of the role the Gesture Language plays in Rushdie's novel, bringing together the Guppees and the Chupwalas despite their significant geographical and language barriers.

Chup and Gup constitute the two halves of the moon Kahani, a divided self,

resembling the author, Rushdie himself, who is part Easterner, part Westerner, and also in need of synthesis. The space in which dialogue is possible between the two races on Kahani is the Twilight Zone, where the two worlds overlap. The medium is the Gesture Language, which falls between speech and silence, so intimately associated with the two countries and productive of so much division between them. The division collapses, however, thanks to Mudra, once both Khattam-Shud and his Shadow are dead:

The new government of the Land of Chup, headed by Mudra, announced its desire for a long and lasting peace with Gup, a peace in which Night and Day, Speech and Silence, would no longer be separated into Zones. (Rushdie 1990, 191).

This integration and recognition of the need for both speech and silence is the ultimate goal; not the destruction of silence itself. This is the true happy ending of Rushdie's novel. There is much more that happens to Haroun once he returns home—his city remembers its name, his mother comes home and sings again, and best of all, his father again becomes capable of telling the best, most imaginatively *true* stories ever. In order for all that to happen, though, things must work out in the fairy world. The later happy ending is arranged by the Walrus as a favor to Haroun for saving the Ocean and helping to unite all the people of Kahani. Had Khattam-Shud triumphed, happy endings would have disappeared along with the imagination. Rushdie's message, cleverly disclosed during discussions about Mudra, the mute bridge character, is that these divisions are illusory. They were created by the artificial separation of Kahani into Zones and of the People of Kahani into Chupwalas and Guppees. This is not a simple story concluding that silence

is bad and speech is good; it instead teaches that communication and understanding are good, while fear, mistrust, and oppression are destructive and therefore bad. Watching Mudra spar with his shadow, Haroun muses about the divisions he has found in Kahani:

How many opposites are at war in this battle between Gup and Chup!... Gup is bright and Chup is dark. Gup is warm and Chup is freezing cold. Gup is all chattering and noise, whereas Chup is silent as a shadow. Guppees love Stories, and Speech; Chupwalas, it seems, hate these things just as strongly. (Rushdie 1990, 125).

He characterizes the war as being between Love and Death, then realizes the truth and delivers the moral of the story:

“But it's not as simple as that,” he told himself, because the dance of the Shadow Warrior showed him that silence had its own grace and beauty (just as speech could be graceless and ugly); and that Action could be as noble as Words; and that creatures of darkness could be as lovely as the children of the light. (Rushdie 1990, 125).

The divisions between them are illusory. In actuality, there were very few Chupwalas who supported Khattam-Shud and his plans to destroy the Ocean and silence the noisy Guppee Princess Batcheat. Most of them were ready to join the Guppees along with Mudra and break the Laws of Silence at the first opportunity. Before Khattam-Shud is even dead, they are racing around cheering and calling the Guppees the “Liberators of Chup” (Rushdie 1990, 185).

The counterpart to Mudra and the beauty of silence is, of course, the Princess Batcheat. Her role in the dialectics of speech and silence complements Mudra's. The Princess's very name is defined in the glossary as "Chit-Chat" and she is constantly making useless noise. When the Guppees go to rescue her from Khattam-Shud, they are able to locate her in Chup by the sound of her voice:

And now, wafting down to them from the Citadel of Chup, came a woman's voice singing songs of love. It was the most horrible voice Rashid Khalifa, the Shah of Blah, had heard in all his life.

"If that's Batcheat," he thought—but did not dare to say—"Then you can almost understand why the Cultmaster wants to shut her up for good."  
(Rushdie 1990, 186).

Her singing, which never seems to stop, is notorious throughout Gup and has been tormenting the Chupwalas ever since her capture. Shapiro and Pederson argue in their review that the character of Batcheat "conveys a nice little message about the cumbersome baggage that accompanies many a quest for free speech" (Shapiro and Pederson 1990, 81). This is a pretty accurate summary of her role in the story. While Mudra dissolves divisions, Batcheat creates them: the great debate amongst the Guppees is whether they should focus their energy on saving Batcheat or the Ocean. Although many Guppees are unsympathetic about Batcheat, who endangered her own life by venturing into the Twilight Zone, not to mention her voice, nose, and teeth, which everyone keeps referring to, her fiancé Bolo comes to her rescue. Bolo, who thinks Batcheat's singing

is "Beautiful! That's so beautiful!" (Rushdie 1990, 187) has been trained by her to think of himself as a hero. Batcheat has inserted his name into all the stories written on the pages' uniforms, inciting the page Blabbermouth, embarrassed by her "Bolo and the Golden Fleece" uniform, to rave to Haroun that Batcheat "had all the greatest stories in the *world* rewritten as if her Bolo was the hero or something. So now instead of Aladdin and Ali Baba and Sindbad it's Bolo, Bolo, Bolo, can you *imagine*" (Rushdie 1990, 106-7). Bolo, the hero, is the Prince of Gup and calls the shots on where to focus the army's energy, leaving Haroun with only four others to help him save the Ocean. Batcheat is also divisive on the level of stories themselves. She does not pollute or destroy stores like Khattam-Shud, but when she inserts Bolo into the classic tales she divides them, creating not new variants, but mere perversions of the old stories. She is not the calm and dignified Mudra, breaking down barriers, but a creator of divisions and abuses her right to speak and be heard. However, as Shapiro and Pederson so rightly imply, free speech, if truly free, will always be abused. That abuse however, does not license Khattam-Shud to silence the abuser or to kill free speech itself. Batcheat is proof that freedom of speech in Gup is a fundamental right, not a privilege.

### ***Synthesis (the integrated whole)***

Michel-Rolph Trouillot, in his book *Silencing of the Past: Power and the Production of History*, asserts that there is no speech without silence. When one story is told, there are many others that are not. He says, "Any historical narrative is a particular bundle of silences" (Trouillot 1995, 27) and "Mentions and silences are thus active dialectical counterparts of which history is the synthesis" (Trouillot 1995, 48). History, like fiction,

involves the creation of a narrative, which is necessarily incomplete and distorts reality. When Rushdie narrates the story of Haroun as such, he does not include the diverse perspectives of Princess Batcheat, of Mudra, or of Haroun's mother Soraya. They have each experienced this event differently and the silences created by the absence of their narratives is enmeshed in the voicing of *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*. The final form of the book emerges from Trouillot's dialectic of speech and silence. The silences due to censorship as well as the natural silences, the suppressed shadow text, shape the narrative and the reader's impressions as much as what is actually included and expressed. In the language of Wolfgang Iser, these silences are "gaps" to be filled in by the reader. The silences are read differently by each reader, who possesses a certain body of knowledge and is in a particular historical place and time, which varies even with different readings by the same reader. Trouillot identifies the different places and times during the narrative process when silences can enter, but doesn't address their being voiced again. Part of the role of the reader is to locate and voice these gaps, and it is visible in Trouillot's own method when he reclaims the story of Sans Souci from the scattered traces in his sources. He takes a text and breaks it down into its parts (mentions and silences) in order to expose the power involved and to create a new narrative with its own, different mention and silence components for the next reader in the chain to identify.

One of the primary devices Rushdie relies on in his play with the mention/silence dialectic is that of Naming. This powerful strategy imposes a reading of an event or character and Trouillot refers to Naming as "a narrative of power disguised as innocence" suggesting that "Castilian Invasion of the Bahamas" would be a truer name for that

event than "The Discovery of America." *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* would be a very different book if it were titled *The Kidnapping of Batcheat*, *Mali Saves the Day*, or *Silence Conquered*. The people of the Khalifa's city, which has become so sad it has forgotten its name, don't know how to interpret their city or themselves until, in the happy ending (or "cheering things up for a while in the middle") they remember their city's name: Kahani. Rushdie actually gives a glossary in the back of *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, explaining the names he has selected. For example, the glossary informs readers that Batcheat means "chit-chat," Bolo is the imperative of the verb "to speak," Chup means "quiet," Gup means "gossip," and Kahani means "story." He has clearly chosen his names carefully to focus attention on one particular characteristic of each person or place in his story to the exclusion of others. Many names will be recognized by readers familiar with Urdu, Hindi, or Sanskrit, but unless they find the glossary early on, it will be used as a device to interpret what has already been read and cause readers to leave the book remembering the speech and silence dialogue more clearly than anything else. Rushdie's play with names serves to emphasize this discussion in the book between speech and silence and to influence the reader's impression formed from the expressed and suppressed elements of the story.

Trouillot's theory, that language and silence come together to form a text or conversation also applies to the way the Shadow and the solid Person come together to form a complete entity in Rushdie's novel. As Mudra's Shadow says, "Peace with the Chupwalas means Peace with their Shadows, too" (Rushdie 1990, 132). Michel Foucault addresses this interconnectedness of language and silence in his *History of Sexuality*. The

issues he is discussing in this book, though the focus is markedly different, bear a close resemblance to the issues Salman Rushdie is dealing with at the time *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* is written and published. Foucault's book focuses on the discourse about sex starting in the seventeenth century. Like Islam, especially during the rule of the Ayatollah Khomeini, it was pretty much a taboo subject, limited to the language of the medical profession the way discourse about Islam was limited to agreement with Khomeini's conception of the religion. In both cases, in response to the taboo, "a whole rhetoric of allusion and metaphor was codified" (Foucault 1978, 17). The creation of this rhetoric is part of Rushdie's project in *Haroun*. In both cases, people were expected to censor themselves, to know what it was okay to say in which circumstances and company, and what it was not okay to say.

Rushdie recognized and addressed this concept of self-censorship as early as 1980, when he writes in *Midnight's Children*, "History, of course, has its proper dietary laws. One is supposed to swallow and digest only the permitted parts of it, the halal portions of the past, drained of their redness, their blood. Unfortunately, this makes the stories less juicy" (Rushdie 1980, 64). And in *Midnight's Children*, *Shame*, and *The Satanic Verses*, Rushdie continues to flout these "laws" and presses on with his bloody, juicy stories even after he realizes that writing is itself a political act (and hence dangerous). He explains why writing is so dangerous in *Imaginary Homelands*: "Writers and politicians are natural rivals. Both groups try to make the world in their own images" (Rushdie 1991, 13). And when he goes too far, and Khomeini calls his bluff, Rushdie produces *Haroun*, a juicy children's story riddled with the suppressed rhetoric of censorship, with a complicated

and dangerous political and historical content concealed in the silence behind it. Foucault recognizes that silence and speech go hand in hand:

Silence itself—the things one declines to say, or is forbidden to name, the discretion that is required between different speakers—is less the absolute limit of discourse, the other side from which it is separated by a strict boundary, than an element that functions alongside the things said with them and in relation to them. (Foucault 1978, 27).

Salman Rushdie shares with Foucault this post-structural reluctance to create binary oppositions: Haroun himself says, "It's not that simple."

The idea of signs (words, gestures, etc.) as being on a continuum is a useful model for examining notions of speech and silence in *Haroun*, and in language in general. The continuum of language ranges from (mostly) pure speech (telephone language) that nevertheless relies on silence for comprehensibility, through mixtures of gesture and speech to (mostly) pure silence, which still communicates something to its observer/hearer by virtue of its very existence. It is clear that there cannot be speech without silence or silence without speech, and that they are only themselves in so far as they are not each other. They are elements functioning alongside one another like the Person/Shadow relation in *Haroun*, not separated by a strict boundary. Khattam-Shud in particular has become indistinguishable from his Shadow: he is "changeable, dark, more like a Shadow than a Person. And as he has become more Shadowy, so his Shadow has become more like a Person" (Rushdie 1990, 133). The Khattam-Shud in the Old Zone is, in appearance and

action, a Person, except in so far as he is more essentially a Shadow. The two Khattam Shuds (and likewise speech and silence) can only be distinguished in so far as they are not each other. Yet to be uniquely themselves, they require the existence of the other, in order that they may stand in opposition to it.

The Shadows of Mudra and Khattam-Shud are effective rhetorical devices used by Rushdie to express his story. According to Leslie Kane, there are many reasons why contemporary playwrights might employ silence as a literary device. The primary reason is that language has become a prison for them, constraining “the artist’s efforts to convey the quintessence of human experience: uncertainty, incompleteness, inadequacy, impermanence” (Kane 1984, ii), and so they have turned to the freedom of silence. The paradox, of course, is that they still *write*. In this study, Kane is examining the written works of such prolific playwrights as Chekhov, Ionesco, Pinter, Beckett, and Albee. Rushdie, too, instead of succumbing to Khomeini’s will and being silent, reacts to the challenge by writing and creating a space in which to express his frustrations with his experience and to try and change it. Rushdie’s writings have turned the prison metaphor literal as he writes *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* heavily guarded and “far from view.” Yet, inadequate as language is, he continues to write, unlike some of the authors George Steiner refers to in his book *Language and Silence*, for whom the freedom of silence has meant the freedom not to write at all. Steiner believes that a writer will arrive at a crossroads at some point during his or her career, when language will fail, and the writer must then decide either to create their own idiom or to “choose the suicidal rhetoric of silence” (Steiner 1967, 69). Steiner, in this statement, equates silence with death and

posits it as an alternative to language, but it doesn’t have to be. Silence can influence readers’ and listeners’ impressions and generate meaning; even the unnatural silences have this capacity. As Rushdie and Kane’s playwrights conclusively demonstrate, the natural silences in a text are as integral to the completed work as the silent intervals in music or the empty spaces in paintings and sculptures. Even unnatural silences contribute to the meaning determined by the reader/hearer of a tale who is guided by the subtle art of suppression.

There are many different ways to express the inexpressible. Michel Foucault wrote about the things not said for any number of reasons (authority, discretion, etc.) that there are “different ways of not saying such things...There is not one but many silences, and they are an integral part of the strategies that underlie and permeate discourses” (Foucault 1978, 27). There is much that is expressed but not said in a book such as *Haroun*, and this suppressed shadow text is as essential to the book’s overall effect as the openly expressed text. By employing these strategies of not saying things, Rushdie has opened the dialogue in many other circles because his situation is so high profile. *Satanic Verses* and the controversy surrounding it incited discussions about censorship and free speech in countries around the world. These discussions were fueled by the issues raised and the silences maintained in *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*. There were volumes put together with letters of support and solidarity from other authors and artists in many countries and from a variety of religious backgrounds. In a P2C2E (Process too Complicated to Explain), Rushdie himself has come to be a symbol of everything from anti-Islamic ideas to free speech. In trying to regain control of his person and his life,



Rushdie chose, in his first major work since the *fatwa*, to remain silent (at least on the surface) concerning those momentous events and return to an idea conceived prior to their occurrence. And while he cannot escape the fact of their occurrence in his thinking or in his writing, *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* is a lovely book to be enjoyed by children and adults alike in the company of *The Wizard of Oz* and *Alice in Wonderland*. Its political silences are deliberate and cleverly hidden behind the message of tolerance, overcoming of divisions, and Rushdie's concept of a whole person or society. Haroun Khalifa's story is not merely Salman Rushdie's in disguise, but what both stories do have in common are their ordinary brave heroes fighting powerful enemies and their (at least temporary) happy endings.

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Lilacs after shower

Sue Matheson

**Gender Criticism in Modern African Drama and Theatre:  
A Study of Nwagbo Patrick Obi's *When Women Go  
Naked***

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**ABSTRACT**

When discussing issues of gender equality and differences between genders, feminists argue from the *a priori* that women are the subordinate gender and always are oppressed by patriarchal system. This study examines how Nwagbo Patrick Obi advocates for conservative sexual politics in his play, *When Women Go Naked*. Although Obi portrays modern women's search for identity in *When Women Go Naked*, he also promotes conventional male biases through female characters, and the gender role that he finally assigns to women is that of unquestioning submissiveness to male authority. Power relations between the sexes and the representation of modern woman in this play are, at base, propagandas of patriarchy.

**Keywords:** Gender, Stereotype, Empowerment, Subordination and Patriarchy.

## Introduction

The tradition of portraying empowered women via the stereotypical notion of what her role should be in the works of Nigerian male playwrights has drawn much criticism in literary scholarship, especially among women critics and playwrights. Osita Ezenwanebe gives an insight on these notions about successful women in her study of Ahmed Yerima's play, *The Sisters*. Ezenwanebe points out that "[t]he art of repudiating learned or highly educated women even when they are victims (example Funmi in *The Sisters*), and sympathizing with rural, uneducated and less privileged young girls, implies that economic powers through education is the bane behind marriage failures" (199). In the words of Katherine Frank, these women are "shadowy figures that hover on the fringes of the plot" (15). In short, these women are projected from social, traditional and cultural points of view.

The pervasiveness of sexually stereotyped roles in drama is not only limited to Nigerian playwrights; a strong similarity of this gender role in literature can be seen around the world. The leading female protagonist in the play, *In the Chest of a Woman* by Efo's Kodgo, a Ghanaian playwright, is a typical example. Nana Yaa is an embodiment of all that is repulsive in women. The representation of the destructive tendencies of Nana Yaa, is used to support patriarchal beliefs that a powerful woman is injurious to the welfare of the society. Daniella's high academic achievement in Bode Ojoniyi's play, *Our Wife Has Gone Mad*, is also seen as being incompatible with her desire to function effectively as a good wife and mother.

Stereotyping representations of empowered women undermines women's status

and advancement in the modern African society by suggesting women are prone to abuse power. According to Archana Kumari and Himani Joshi, "[w]omen have crucial role to play in every sphere of life whether it is household, economic contribution child rearing or improving the quality of life. To play these role women should be conscious of their potential and it can only be possible when they will not be deliberately marginalized by male domination" (44). In this context, Nigerian drama has an important role to play to awaken women to achieve their potential as the prime movers of change in society. This paper considers the ways successful women are portrayed in drama and the ways in which these representations may have a detrimental impact on women's empowerment.

## Theoretical Background

Here, feminist theory will provide the foundation for the analysis of relations between genders. The relationship between the sexes has always been a power relationship. In the case of gender relationships, the oppressors are men and the oppressed are women. Femininity and masculinity are well defined by patriarchy, and the continuity of the imbalance in this power relationship is attained through a set of applications. Ela Akgun says that "instead of eliminating women from society, the system systematically and politically reduces their status while ensuring men's higher status (9). Bob Connell defines this as "hegemony" which "means ascendancy achieved within a balance of forces, that is, a state of play" in which "other patterns or groups are subordinated rather than eliminated" (60). Akgun says that "in an effort to sustain this subordination, the first premise of the patriarchal system is to identify the roles in order to impose an inequality between the sexes from the very beginning. Therefore, the roles that are assigned to

genders by the patriarchal system support the authority of the male” (9-10). While men are associated with all human activities and values, including “intelligence, force and aggression,” the female is reduced to her biological existence that of giving birth to and rearing children by the patriarchal settlement. The association of men with force and women with motherhood obviously defines their place in society and puts women in a private sphere while men control positions of power in society. This is a kind of prejudice, which colours what may be thought of as patriarchy's collective unconscious. Like Millett, Clare Wallace and Pamela Abbott say that the unequal treatment of men and women and men's superiority over women is “collective.” Evans says that “patriarchal ideologies support and sanction the power of men over women” (16).

As well, many researchers believe that differences between men and women occurs due to “biological differences”. They see women as the inferior sex that has limitations by birth while men are superior by nature. Millet avers that, biology should not enter into the argument since like any other political theory, sexual politics is a theory, which has its foundation in culture. Like Millett, Connell also challenges the idea that the “biological make-up of our bodies is the ‘basis’, ‘foundation’, ‘framework’, ‘essence’ or ‘mould’ of the social relations of gender” (67). The biological differences exist and affect human relations, but the power-relation between the sexes have more cultural than biological explanation. Ela Akgun says that “the formation of identity is shaped by cultural expectations of society, which are conveyed through language and certain behavioral codes that are ascribed for each gender (11).

The construction of gender identity through patriarchy takes place during

childhood. Connell says that the child, who is born with a biological sex but lacks a “social gender,” is socialized through “a string of prescriptions, templates or models of behaviour appropriate to the one sex or the other” via “the family, the media, the peer group and the school” which concretize the gender identity (191). The child's early exposure to imposed identity is followed by adolescence during which the adolescent tries to conform to the socially sanctioned roles and femininity or masculinity is internalized. It is pertinent here to note that the social roles which are defined by patriarchy for the sexes is not being “male” or “female” since they are biological terms while “masculine” and “feminine” are terms defining gender and the roles ascribed for each sex. Millett argues that the ascribed roles are “activity” for males and “passivity” for females (26). As the active principle that controls power, the male dominates and rules over the female, and in turn, female submits to male power as a result of socialization. Akgun says that:

the teachings of patriarchal culture are so powerful that the male forms a misconception that the power he has is something that he owns by birth, but this is a phallic illusion of patriarchal society. The female, on the other hand, is programmed not to rebel against the power of the male. The imposition of patriarchy is so organized and the roles are so clearly defined that the female automatically avoids the task of questioning male authority, which is definitely a result that can be called a political programme (13).

This policy is first reinforced by family, which is considered by Millett as “a microcosmic representation of society” (33). Children take their parents as role models, and gender roles are acquired in the family under the rule of the father. Much of the literature,

including the work of Mary Evans and R.W. Connell, supports Millett's argument that boys are taught to be aggressors whereas girls are prepared as wives and mothers. The consequences of this can be seen in boys' evasion of domestic tasks during their childhood when compared to girls, who are educated to participate in domestic duties. In the family, the father is the dominant figure who is the breadwinner and who has the right to rule over the household. Akgun says that

the supposed inequality between genders is not only seen in the father's absolute rule of the household but also mother's subservience role. While boys generally take their fathers as role models, girls imitate their mothers. In this stereotyping, girls are influenced by their mothers, and they believe that motherhood is the ultimate goal of being a woman. Along with their upbringing, which prepares them to be housewives, the idealization of motherhood and marriage stabilizes the targeted gender role. Being exposed to such a kind of relationship, children adopt these roles and become representatives of the patriarchal society performing the same roles in their future lives by becoming powerful husbands and subservient mothers. As a result the policy held by patriarchy ensures the continuation of the tradition through the socialization process within the family (13).

Moreover, as Millett says, "the restrictions on women are not only limited to family and marriage" (35). The gender roles, which are learnt initially in the family, are consolidated in social and educational life. According to Millett, "in traditional patriarchal societies women were not allowed to work outside their homes, and if they were allowed,

the jobs available for women were not qualified. In fact women have always worked in patriarchal societies, but their work has been unpaid" (39-40). In agreement with Millett, Evans also observes that "the economic market operates a significant degree of control over motherhood and over the evaluation of paid work associated with women's role of 'caring' " because the likely professions for women are nursing or teaching or professions closely related to women's domestic work" (68). The implications of this systematic elimination of women from the workplace can be traced in history, according to Millett. One of the examples that she gives is that of Nazi Germany. Millet says that "[d]edication to motherhood and the family was the idea, which was propagandized by Hitler" (161). In Nazi Germany, the increasing movement of women into the paid labour force was seen as a threat to patriarchy since the increasing number of women who earned money meant a higher status for women not only in the workplace but also it awarded them a share in ruling the house and challenging to men's power within the family. Kate Millet remarks that as a solution, Nazi Germany tried to "take women out of professions and put them into low-paid occupations" to discourage them from working outside the home (162). As an indicator of sexual politics, Millet argues, the practice of removal of women from the professional life can be considered as an ideological practice as well as an economic one (168).

Of course, the reason for this sexist act stems from the patriarchal understanding that the primary goal of womanhood, preferably femininity, are motherhood and submission to male power. While men dominated both the public and private spheres, women were limited to the boundaries of domestic service. In order to maintain this

state of affairs, another policy was adopted. According to Millet, to ensure women's subordinate position in society, patriarchy not only restricts women to their sexual roles as wives and mothers but also deprives them of education. Because education brings power and knowledge with it, patriarchal society places strict limitations on women's opportunities for education. Since readers often identify themselves with the characters in literary works, literature is a strong weapon to manipulate women into the norms and behavioral codes of the patriarchal system. Patrick Nwagbo Obi's *When Women Go Naked* is a powerful example of these sexual politics.

### **Synoptic Analysis of gender issues in the play**

*When Women Go Naked* by Nwagbo Patrick Obi is a play that won SONTA-Olu Obafemi award for unpublished play in 2015. *When Women Go Naked* is a dramatization of African culture and tradition and how it affects women. It is set in the post-colonial Eastern part of Nigeria. The Umundiagu community is a traditional Igbo society in the dawn of modern experiences of western values. In general, *When Women Go Naked* examines the impact of patriarchal cultural traditions on the new women's quest for freedom by recreating an authentic Igbo cultural tradition in which the experiences of men and women differ based on their sex. The play ripples with rituals, ceremonies, feasts, festivals, dance, songs, incantations, proverbs, chants and different traditional forms of performance acts that are found within the Igbo culture. The gender issues dramatized are aspects of the people's culture.

In this play, Obi introduces palm oil in Umundiagu, the society of the play, as a symbol of Nigeria's economic backbone and lifeblood. The play uses palm oil production

in a typical Igbo society to examine the place of women in a changing modern society. The palm oil, which serves as women's major source of economic empowerment, is taken away from them. The women are producers of palm oil. Masquerades go to *Unoakwu*, the oil producing houses to scare women with canes and steal oil. Udenkwo, the leader of Oil Women Union, a group made up of *Umuada* engages a masquerade in a fight, and eventually kills the masquerade. Ogana, the king pronounces that she will be flogged naked in the market square by *Ayaka*, the night masquerade. Retaliating, the women threaten that if that happens they will go naked.

The play opens with a beautiful, scintillating child dedication ceremony in which Ogana is present. In the midst of the performance, Ogana is introduced to us. Ogana is a wealthy man whose personal aspiration of having a son is being frustrated. He is a symbol of oppressive cultural tradition, which relegates women. The traditional belief in the superiority of male children over the female ones is demonstrated in his conversation with Ugoli:

UGOLI: What did Onwuka, an elderly *dibia* without teeth do

OGANA: He lacks teeth, but has the tongue to forecast what is impossible. (Mimics) "Ogana, what is coming this time unlike others before is a male child, a chip of the old block". He has always predicted wrongly for me and I have always relied on him.

UGOLI: You do not rely on human beings for the gift of children

OGANA: That is what I am saying that Onwuka has deceived me for a very long time



UGOLI: I have been telling you that it is only *Chiokike*, the God of creation, we can rely on for the gift and the sex of the children. He knows why he is giving you the one he is giving you

OGANA: *Chiokike* knows that I am wealth and as such will need a man to inherit my wealth; unless he has created me to live forever. Even if Onwuka has entered an ant's hole, I must trace him and show him what fire does to the ear of a rat (19).

The excerpt above shows that Ogana's fear is about who will inherit his wealth, when eventually he passes on. Osita Ezenwanebe says that "the presence or absence of children especially a son in a home creates much tension in patriarchal societies where descendant is raced through the male line. In fact it determines the level of love, affection, care and harmony in such homes" (286).

Ogana's oppressive, aggressive, and immoral attitude leads to the death of his wife and daughters. His obsolete notion of culture and tradition makes him ignore the plight of women. He even says "I do not have the time to talk about women" (37). Here it is important to note that the playwright does not consider maternity per se the source of his wife's oppression. The overt oppression connected with her maternal status is Ogana's desire for male children and his subsequent irritation with their daughters.

Through the characters of Nnuona and Ugoli, the playwright cautions against such obnoxious attitudes towards women by traditionalists. Similarly, it is through these characters that the idea of raising awareness about the need for female liberation, which

has become a global discourse is articulated. Indeed, Ugoli's agitation for equality of the sexes can be seen in her conversation with Ogana: "It is a heavy pronouncement that *Nwadiana*, a daughter of *nwada*, will pose nude before the market square for a masquerade to flog her under the moon" (67). Udenkwo serves as an example of how women go all out to make their home and to provide for their children despite the odds. She is very familiar with the tradition of her people. In the Igbo culture, masquerades are not to be seen by women.

The playwright's use of these female characters to check Ogana's oppression of women is to remind Ogana's men (who oppress women), the consequences of oppressing the opposite sex. Nonetheless, masquerades make incursions into the *Unoakwu* to steal oil for themselves. Not only that, Ogana complains that women who are mostly palm oil producers should pay him a tribute. Udenkwo, the voice of the marginalized female folks as she speaks against such marginalization, does not fail to express her grievances over the ill treatment when she says "The tribute is an indirect extortion from industrious people by a lazy king. Anyway, is there really a king?" (72). It is important to stress here that Udenkwo's brutal murder of the masquerade, in the name of setting women free from their oppressive condition, is undoubtedly, inconsistent with the ideological underpinnings of African feminism, which aims at extolling the virtues of womanhood.

Ogana's condemnation of Udenkwo is simply because she is a woman. There is no condemnation of the masquerades who steal gallons of oil that belong to women. The patriarchal social order does not question why masquerade should terrorize the lives of women and steal from them. The punishment of Udenkwo by the masquerade is

seen as “correction” and the violent nature of the behavior is minimized. Ogana says “correction is the duty of the masquerades. So there is nothing to reconsider” (77). The use of masquerades as (judges, faceless and impartial), to settle cases between persons towns and communities is reiterated in the words of Ifejirika Echezona when he says that “...masquerades are used to restore law, order, sanity and justice in Igbo society. That is tradition” (96).

Denkwo’s act of killing in the masquerade, a defiant confrontation of patriarchy, is regarded as an abomination and she must be punished. The play shows how a phallic-centred society employs cultural myths and taboos in its arsenal in order to marginalize women. Ogana is an avowed defender of tradition. He stands rigidly in support of an oppressive tradition. The women, aware that the wicked and unjust tradition is meant to subjugate them, embark on a nude protest. The nude protest is one of strategies of female resistance in precolonial West Africa. While Umundiagu women are united in their struggle for equality with men, the men defend their superior status. The battle line is drawn, and the resultant effect is crisis and death in Umundiagu community. Remarkably, the end of the play proves Ugoli right and Ogana wholly wrong as the Umundiagu women win the struggle at the end of the day; they emerge victorious from the battle against oppression.

### **Patriarchal representations of gender roles in the play**

Although the play seems to be representative of women’s awakening, it suggests that Nwagbo Patrick Obi’s attitude towards gender roles is in harmony with the patriarchal system. *When Women Go Naked* is set in a patriarchal society in which marriage is seen

as the only suitable place for women to exist. Margaret Frances Savilonis says that “the traditional arrangement of the nuclear family, with women as homemakers and caretakers of children, requires that a woman’s identity is linked to her husband, and women who fall outside of this standard are seen as a threat to the society” (112). Tellingly, Obi never fails to lead Udenkwo to wealth without making her long for the presence of a man. Ogana says “the wealth of a woman is an appendage. Its value is only when you attach it to a man behind her even if the man is poor” (37). Udenkwo’s political activism also is not sufficient for her, and she is represented as suffering from emotional deprivation due to a lack of realization of her womanhood.

When Udunna, her suitor, who has come to ask for Udenkwo’s hand in marriage, angrily gets up to leave, after being embarrassed by Ogana, Udenkwo cries out, “Uduu, don’t go without me” (45). The stage direction reads that Udenkwo runs after Udunna, but Ugoli does not waste time in stopping her from eloping with Udunna when she cautions her:

UGOLI: (*Holds her*) Ude, come back. A woman does not follow a man when her bride price has not been paid. Elopement is a shameful behavior to a family and womanhood. It has not happened in our family. Nkechi, your mother did not do it. You are part of us, you will not elope. Udunna has said it all. If it is the will of Chukwu, your bride price would be paid (46).

Here, Obi deliberately introduces a man to strip the loneliness and desperation of

Udenkwo. Wifehood, as presented in the play is not only a social role but is also a biological stimulus to make women live. Ogana's wife, Nwamma laments:

NWAMMA: Every couple prays to bless their children's marriage. But my husband's lot is to curse. That was what caused Akunnaya, my first daughter's death. All her age mates got married. In her own case, it was not as if suitors were not coming; but her father walked out on them. she was heartbroken. One night, she slept and did not wake up again. The predicament of her other sister was worse. He was forcing her to marry a man he wanted, but she stood her ground. When the man she wanted came, he told the suitor and his people to wait so that he would bring his cup to drink their wine. He left through the back door and did not come back till the next day. When he returned, he told her (Mimics) you disobeyed me and I have to pay back. One day Akuzulum went to the village river to fetch water and drowned (47).

Obi's point here is to present men as life-giving. The deaths of the two women foreshadow the possible illnesses women can suffer from if their biological needs are not met. As Oram Allison claims, spinsters had a possibility of suffering from "harmful consequences such as 'nerves' and neuroses" because of "repressing their sexual and parental instincts" (419). The presence of Udunna makes Udenkwo proud, and she even considers eloping with him, but reconsiders for Ugoli who tried to stop her. However, she is not relieved at all by her decision, because she is still not a wife (nor a woman) to a man. Udenkwo remains adamant and almost followed Udunna, but for Ogana who threatened her with a gun.

Strategically, however, Nwagbo Patrick Obi does not make Udenkwo settled. Despite her wealth and efforts to attain an individual place in society, what occupies Udenkwo's mind is the need for a man who would add meaning to her life and save her from being a desolate old woman. Remarkably, Nwagbo Patrick Obi does not focus on Udunna's being a bachelor since this social role is, to some extent, acceptable for men. Because the play deals with the story of Udenkwo's search for happiness, Obi's emphasis falls on the woman character. It is women who need to be instructed regarding patriarchy's expectations. Despite all the manifestations of Udenkwo's need for a male presence, Obi does not allow Udenkwo a marriage with Udunna in order to make his point even clearer. Incidentally, Udunna is left with his father and kinsmen who have accompanied him to Ogana's house for the marriage rites.

All of Udenkwo's other efforts to acquire social status are presented as futile, because the realization of womanhood can be accomplished only by the presence of a man. Udenkwo is worn out, having tried her chances in the world—but not having realized her womanhood, she is pitied, looked down upon by the patriarchal society. The play's unquestioning acceptance of male superiority when it is concretized in Udenkwo's consent to marry Udunna. Nwagbo makes Udenkwo to suffer for a long time in her loneliness and makes her realize that independence is something alien to the nature of her sex. Thus, at the point of death, Udenkwo does not want to be rescued by the women as she bewails the death of Udunna. His death renders her life meaningless:

UDENKWO: (Cuts in) No, do not take me to anywhere. Ugoli, let him kill. Let me die. I know that Udunna shall be waiting for me, for us to

continue our marriage in the land of the dead... (104).

The misery in the portrayal of Udenkwo is literary propaganda promoting marriage for women to realize their sex-roles. In her seminal article, *Challenging the Master's Craft: Nigerian Women Playwrights in the Theatre of Men*, Irene Isoken Salami-Agunloye says:

[w]hen successful, women are portrayed as usually husbandless-single, divorced or widowed. In their works, they dwell on patriarchal philosophy, which has no room for women except as a shadow of her husband. The characters of women in these male-authored plays are defined by their relationship to men: they are someone's wife, mother, daughter, mistress and daughter-in-law or sister-in-law (119).

In *When Women Go Naked*, women are reduced to their biological existence. Through Udenkwo, his female protagonist, Nwagbo Patrick Obi promotes the male bias that women to exist for the presence of a man and the only **suitable** place for women is a marriage in which the woman willingly submits to male authority. Many African women and scholars like Ezeigbo and Ezenwanebe lament the deprivation of economically empowered women their sexual roles as wives and mothers in the works of contemporary Nigerian male playwrights. They share a similar opinion that stereotypical images of empowered women in literature embody patriarchal ideology. Even though Udenkwo tries to break gender power relations, the playwright's stand is that she can only find her identity in the man she marries. As a result, she remains oppressed. Thus, Nwagbo Patrick Obi's portrayal of the women's movement's search for identity does promote independence but is only more patriarchal propaganda designed to encourage women to give up their struggle for independence and individuality and to guide them back to

patriarchy.

## Conclusion

*When Women go Naked* buttresses patriarchal assumptions that the only real social status that women can have is that of marriage. The realization of "femininity" and womanhood only through marriage in this play is designed to make female audience members recognize and accept patriarchal limitations of this gender role. The misery conveyed by women's status in this play is the result of women is reduced to their biological existence. This study lends its voice to those of feminists all over the world who insist that women have important roles to play in every sphere of life be it in the public or private domain. To be able to take on these roles, women cannot be marginalized. In this context, Nigerian female playwrights have a crucial part to play in sparking political awakening in women by counteracting the detrimental impact of the portrayal of successful women in the works of Nigerian male dramatists, like Nwagbo Patrick Obi's, on women's empowerment.

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Class of 2020

Sue Matheson

**Melancholy and Immunity in Poe’s “The Domain of  
Arnheim,” *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of  
Nantucket* and “The Island of the Fay”**

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**Abstract**

Islands, oceans, and archipelagoes in Poe’s literary corpus resemble Poe’s dark, mist-wreathed landscape. Both of them engage with an inescapable force that brings decadence and dissipation to all lives, whether animate or inanimate. Nature presented in *Pym* and “The Island of the Fay” ranges from violent destruction to tranquil stillness: Poe’s oceans and islands are a rhythm of dissolution, orchestrating the music of death; they are also picturesque representations of beauty and death. Moreover, like Poe’s macabre haunted house, they evoke complex emotional responses within Poe’s protagonist-narrators. It is the melancholy within geographical objects (a lake, a mountain, a field, and so forth) that triggers emotional responses that might assist Poe’s protagonists in generating immunity for them to coexist with the decay of nature. Thus, this article investigates the interplay between individuals and their surroundings in “The Domain of Arnheim,” *The*

*Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket* (1838) and “The Island of the Fay” (1841), tracing melancholy and mankind’s complicated psychology/imagination/fantasies in Poe’s surroundings.

**Keywords:** melancholy, immunity, “The Domain of Arnheim,” *Pym*, “The Island of the Fay”

## Introduction

In general, the landscape in Poe’s works bears the characteristics of decay or destruction. Critics have identified this force of destruction not as God’s Will, but rather as resulting from the evil of humanity projected onto nature. Those natural disasters in the physical world (earthquakes, floods, extreme weather, forest fires, etc.) are consequences or mirrors of man’s guilt. Poe believes that evil is not part of God’s First Creation. Jacobs, in “Poe’s Earthly Paradise,” notices Poe’s association of man’s prelapsarian state with God’s Will: “The earthly immortality of man had been God’s first intention” (Jacobs 408). Man’s aberrations cause themselves to fall from God’s arrangement of eternal life. “Poe explicitly denies any inherent evil God or nature,” and “he argued that what appeared to be a breach in nature [occurred because of] the inability of fallen human reason to penetrate to the divine will” (Sanford 59). Indeed, Poe associates the destiny of destruction with the evil of humankind. In *Eureka*, where the (re)creation of the sublime/the beautiful/the picturesque is revealed in terms of science, Poe suggests that the existence of evil is a reflection of man’s fallen state, and the success of the artist in reaching a divine oneness depends on the adjustment of one’s vantage point. In *Eureka*, Poe elucidates

the creation of the Universe. In the history of genesis—God’s creation of the world, “the primordial particle is Beauty in its ultimate state” (Schaefer 361), and then Beauty “incarnated itself into many particles which radiated further and further from unity, that is, from itself” (356). God’s creation in the process of diffusion of objects/particles is not infinite; “the impetus behind the diffusion was not continuous” (361). As the work of creation finishes, “the diversification or heterogeneity” is created. The two universes were distinguished: the universe of stars and the universe of space. “The universe of stars” “represents the universe of essence, or the universe of meaning” while “the universe of space” “represents the universe of non-essence or non-meaning” and contains the universe of stars (the universe of meaning) (360). God has created the world; he has finished the First Creation. God has left the world after His creation; thus it is not God, but something else that causes misery on Earth. The world is currently in a state of diversification which will not exist perpetually. The sole purpose of the diversification or heterogeneity is the return to unity or homogeneity; “All things’ might be annihilated in the end” (356). The artist’s imagination of the object as a beautiful thing is the process of the second creation, which is intended to revive God’s First Creation. However, none of Poe’s protagonists or narrators (including the artist in “The Domain of Arnheim”) successfully returns to God’s First Creation, and many of them are not annihilated by the destructive force of nature. To us, Poe’s nature remains mysterious since it is neither controlled by God (Poe argues God does not intervene in matters of the Earth after His First Creation), nor completely held at the hand of evil. Yet we can still attribute man’s rehabilitation to an unknown agent that assists humans in alleviating fears and horror or even strengthening the immune system as they are living in a physically mutable world.

How the psyche feels the sentient nature that draws it to a vision of dream remains a mystery to us. One undeniable insinuation by Poe is an unknown force—the melancholy within geographical objects (a lake, a mountain, a field, and so forth) that triggers the emotional responses that might assist Poe’s protagonists in generating immunity.

### **Melancholy in the Landscape of the Soul/Ego**

In “Poe’s Landscape of the Soul,” Barton Levi St. Armand notes melancholy in the landscape. To elucidate this influence on psychology, St. Armand applies Kurt Koffka’s theory in *Principles of Gestalt Psychology* (1935)—a classical work on Gestalt psychology grouped under Associationist Theory. Kurt Koffka argues that as we are viewing the landscape, an Ego or Soul in geographical objects initiates the shaping of our emotions for the purpose of guiding us to communicate mysteries. Geographical objects (a lake, a mountain, a field, and so forth) contain the cumulative messages of melancholy, whether in a pleasurable or chaotic condition (that is, earthquake or storms), and the initial emotion they elicit within us is sadness. As Barton Levi St. Armand summarizes, the gist of Associationist Theory predicates that we feel sad when viewing the landscape because the landscape is a stimulus which triggers a definite response—a response not automatic, but rather subtly cumulative (35). Our initial sensation is like a needle dipped into a chemical solution, the human memory, through which certain particles of experience or trains of images cluster and crystallize (St. Armand 35). The complex, kaleidoscopic relationships and associations between and among these clusters or trains of thought then produce that reverie which results in sadness itself (35). The clusters have both personal and general characteristics, and reverie involves the particular pleasures of private

recollection as well as an overall emotional appreciation for larger aesthetic categories such as the sublime, the beautiful, and the picturesque (35).

St. Armand’s application of Associationist Theory serves to perceive the landscape in Poe’s stories as having the power to terrorize the psyche—the power of drawing the psyche to the field of the Ego/the Soul. The landscape is animate, alive, and sentient, ineffably imparting a melancholy/sad mood to the psyche of the viewer. Under the influence of the Soul’s sadness, the viewer of the landscape “is being shaped by the imagination of the landscape rather than exercising the shaping power of his own imagination” (St. Armand 36). Even though the viewer rejects accepting the shaping power of the landscape, the landscape still can forge a bond with his mind.

Apart from its impacts on psychology, melancholy in the landscape/seascape triggers the emotion of sadness through which a defense mechanism might be built against destruction. For instance, Pym, frightened as he is drawn into a full-fledged sentience of the Soul in the landscape, is eventually immune from destruction in his southward journey. In addition, there is the narrator in “The Domain of Arnheim” (1847) perceiving the prosperous Ellison’s landscape gardening. The narrator adjusts his vantage to an angle that transcends the present gloomy environment as he is being drawn inextricably into the landscape of horror and darkness. In “The Island of the Fay” (1841), as the narrator reinterprets the life and death of the spirit ‘Fay,’ identifying an eerie, mutable nature orchestrating the rhythm of dissolution on the island of the Fay in the mood of melancholy, he seems to perceive the coexistence of vitality and decay in nature. In those diverse responses to the melancholy/sadness/dolor, most of Poe’s characters are



capable of staying well in the mood of full-fledged melancholy. Under the influence of the sentient Ego/Soul, the defense mechanism acts, and the psyche might be awakened and subsequently stream into a certain collective consciousness (e.g., a religious faith) or an individual's memory/imagination without being hurt by the force of evil.

## The Domain of Arnheim

Artists' aesthetical adjustment in the mood of melancholy is not simply a process in detecting beauty and truth in the worlds of diversification and heterogeneity, but it is also a process of rehabilitation. Poe's "The Domain of Arnheim" exemplifies this aesthetical adjustment.<sup>1</sup> Ellison's task in the story is to "adapt nature to the limitations of man's perception and to his psychological needs" (Jacobs 412). To adapt nature to his limitations as a man, he adjusts his view of the landscape amid the nature—"the intermediate space" (Jacobs 412)—that bears the message of unity. In other words, the process of creating the gardening landscape in "The Domain of Arnheim" is the process of the artist's adjustment of vantage point—a new attitude on which the artist depends for spiritual elevation as he inevitably coexists with the decaying world. This adjustment depends not on philosophical knowledge, but the "mechanical theory of combination to produce pleasurable ideas and emotional effects" (Jacobs 411). In this adjustment of

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1. Joel R. Kehler in "New Light on the Genesis and Progress of Poe's Landscape Fiction" countenances the similarity in Poe's demonstration of landscape and that of Andrew Jackson Downing. Though Poe does not label Ellison's gardening as "ancient or geometric," as Downing uses in his distinction between natural style gardening and artificial, his artificial gardening is indeed based on Downing's geometric nature. Poe's knowledge comes from, as Kehler points out, the review of Downing's works, rather than the first-hand acquaintance of Downing's works. Nevertheless, Poe is inspired by Downing and sees an opportunity to "demonstrate the superiority of art over phenomenal nature" (Kehler 176); that is, to compose an artificial gardening that ameliorates the imperfect physical state. Apart from Downing, Poe's references in his gardening works includes William Howitt's *The Rural Life of England*, *The Tour of a German Prince*, *Arcturus*, Giles Fletcher's poem *Christ's Victorie on Earth*, "Rural Architecture," Andrew Marvell's "The Garden," and Thomas Love Peacock's *Headlong Hall*.

the angles of nature, the artist aims to give "indifferent and seemingly chaotic nature a form and expression that will satisfy our emotional needs" (Jacobs 406). Eventually, the narrator, who dogs Ellison's tracks towards Arnheim, remains within a world overlapping good and evil: though he cannot reach God's first creation of Truth and Beauty, he is immune from/symbioses with evil, free from falling into destruction, as evil invades the garden.

The story begins at the time of forenoon, when the narrator, along a river on a vessel, perceives a distorted nature:

While the long plume-like moss which depended densely from the intertwining shrubberies overhead, gave the whole chasm an air of funereal gloom. The windings became frequent and intricate, and seemed often as if returning in upon themselves, so that the voyager had long lost all idea of direction. He was, moreover, enwrapt in an exquisite sense of the strange. ("The Domain of Arnheim" 1279)

The scenery on the river, paralleling the opening scene in "The Fall of the House of Usher," underscores itself with strangeness, gloom, and somber that implies the fallen state of nature. The vessel seems "imprisoned" in limited circumstances. Nevertheless, this is not a hopeless state when things turn around; the voyager (Ellison) senses divinity in the mood of melancholy as he changes the vessel to a light canoe:

...while the slight ripples it creates seem to break about the ivory sides in divinest melody—seem to offer the only possible explanation of the

soothing yet melancholy music for whose unseen origin the bewildered voyager looks around him in vain. (“The Domain of Arnheim” 1281)

As the behavioral objects in the geographical objects shape the emotions of the voyager, who believes “the fates will take care of him” (1281), he senses “a new race of fairies,” as if he has anticipated a new life different from the gloomy, somber world. Nevertheless, his vision is “impeded by an impenetrable screen of foliage” (1282). Sometimes, the chasm-like appearance “vanishes,” or a wall or vegetation makes him “shut in the scene” (1282). His perception, impeded, is confined to a space where the new race ‘fay’ is “laborious, tasteful, magnificent, and fastidious” (1280). Under this condition, Ellison is urged to adjust his view to an angle attainable to a world beyond the foliage or the leaves, beyond the confined space.

Ellison eventually reaches Arnheim, but the narrator’s description of the paradise still contains a breach. As Ljungquist points out, “the scenery discloses only an equivocal connection between its caretaker-improver and the genius of the place” (“Picturesque Disorder” 131).

Meantime the whole Paradise of Arnheim bursts upon the view. There is a gush of entrancing melody; there is an oppressive sense of strange sweet odor;—there is a dream-like intermingling to the eye of tall slender Eastern trees—bosky shrubberies—flocks of golden and crimson birds—lily-fringed lakes—meadows of violets, tulips, poppies, hyacinths and tuberoses—long intertangled lines of silver streamlets—and, upspringing confusedly from

amid all, a mass of semi-Gothic, semi-Saracenic architecture, sustaining itself as if by miracle in mid-air; glistening in the red sunlight with a hundred oriels, minarets, and pinnacles; and seeming the phantom handiwork, conjointly, of the Sylphs, of the Fairies, of the Genii, and of the Gnomes.

(“The Domain of Arnheim” 1283)

The landing garden alludes to “apocalyptic figures which grace Cole’s architecture” with “the exotic and strangely fashioned dome on Cole’s palace” (Hess 184), rather than that of heaven. This garden “assumes the air of an intermediate or secondary nature—a nature which is not God, nor an emanation from God, but which still is nature in the sense of the handiwork of the angels that hover between man and God” (Jacobs 409). Yet the narrator circumscribes Ellison or himself amid nature—a *mélange* of divinity and evil, where Ellison has experienced being shaped by the emotions of the Soul and strived for emendating nature through adjustment of the anthropocentric view. The narrator’s claim of perceiving an immutable universe (unity) in a mutable world—a paradise divorced from the cruelty of a real/changeable world—is questionable, as his description of the final scenery of paradise forms a gap or distance from the original vision of the artist. His landscape vision is “presented to us second-hand, in the view of one commentator on the tale, a thoroughly unoriginal paradise” (Ljungquist 131). In other words, whereas the artist Ellison has created a paradise in the form of secondary nature, the narrator stands a far distance from this second creation. What interests us is that neither Ellison nor the narrator is annihilated by the impact of evil in this garden. The complex and kaleidoscopic world in the garden contains the secondary imagination of the artist as well

as the fantasies or reverie of the narrator. Both involve the particular pleasures of private recollection as well as an overall emotional appreciation for larger aesthetic categories (or a combination of the two). In other words, melancholy in the gloomy atmosphere has eventually motivated them to generate a defense mechanism in their world of art.

### *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket*

Pym's oceanic adventure, as it is characteristic of a hellish and barbarous experience, underscores strangeness and a multitude of gloomy feelings that parallel what appears to be a breach in nature. The narrator is oppressed by the vehement feelings of gloom and horror as a certain evil activity is incessantly taking place. For example, as a brutal mutiny occurs on the ship *Grampus*, Pym, hidden in the hold and starving, is "oppressed with a multitude of gloomy feelings" (*Pym* 17) and imaginings, in which "the dreadful deaths of thirst, famine, suffocation, and premature interment" (22) crowds upon him. The smell of the cold mutton "in a state of absolute putrefaction" (17) symbolizes the putrefaction of the human soul. The letter that Pym receives through the dog Tiger transfers the message "blood" with "vague syllables" "amid the deep gloom of [his] prison, into the innermost recesses of [his] soul" (28). Later, the survivors go on their grotesque journey to the south, which is still embedded in the gloomy atmosphere of circumstances, and re-experience the catastrophes—famines, shipwrecks, illnesses, shark-attacks, etc.—since they are not disengaged from guilt or evil activities such as cannibalism and tortoise slaughtering for survival. Perhaps the ghost vessel on which the dead 'nod' to the crew of the *Grampus* stirs the most grievously gloomy feelings:

Twenty-five or thirty human bodies [...] lay scattered about between the counter and the galley in the last and most loathsome state of putrefaction [...] in the agony of the moment, that those silent and disgusting images would stay for us, would not abandon us to become like them, would receive us among their goodly company! We were raving with horror and despair—thoroughly mad through the anguish of our grievous disappointment. (*Pym* 80-81)

We saw the tall stout figure still leaning on the bulwark, and still nodding his head to and fro [...]. There sat a huge sea-gull, busily gorging itself with the horrible flesh [...] and, flying directly above our deck, hovered there a while with a portion of clotted and liver-like substance in its beak. The horrid morsel dropped at length with a sullen splash immediately at the feet of Parker. (*Pym* 81)

That the carnivorous seagull drops the meat at the feet of Parker forebears/suggests an upcoming human evil activity—cannibalism. It is Parker who proposes and insists the idea of drawing lots to decide the victim of cannibalism so as to preserve the lives of the others; ironically, it is the same Parker who is instrumental in bringing about his own death in drawing the losing lot. Indeed, the ship *Grampus* never disengages from its gloomy atmosphere. As Pym senses its involvement in gloominess, a disaster ensues. For instance, he senses "a gloomy and uncomfortable day" (*Pym* 100) several days before the death of Augustus; Augustus' death fills them with "the most gloomy forebodings" (102) as Pym and Peters witness the corpse being devoured by the sharks.

Furthermore, Poe presents the island of Tsalal as a geographically gloomy locale symbolic of evil humanity. Almost all objects on the island are black.<sup>2</sup> Even the albatrosses are black and they always return to that particular island. Poe reiterates the idea of the gloomy circumstance in connection to the fallen state of humanity through the form of metafiction or chiasma so as to perfectly iterate that it is men, rather than God, that cause their own miseries. To iterate the human evil manifesting itself in nature through the form of catastrophes such as storms and shipwrecks, Poe develops the episode of Pym's adventure on the island of Tsalal as a chiasma for the previous horrible situations Pym has experienced on the *Grampus*. For example, the cavern where the Tsalalians bury Pym and his companions parallels the hold in the ship *Grampus*; Pym re-experiences starvation in a confined space. As Pym and Peters successfully escape through the exit of the cavern, their "situation" is "still sufficiently gloomy" (*Pym* 170). In mirroring the series of catastrophes that Pym and the crew of the *Grampus* confront in their southward journey, the danger replicates itself in the encounter between Pym and the Tsalalians. As "the most barbarous, subtle, and bloodthirsty wretches that ever contaminated the face of the globe" (*Pym* 148), the Tsalalians avoid any white objects in their environment, since whiteness is connected to "biblical apocalyptic judgement" (Robinson 7). They shriek "Tekeli-li!" in fear as they encounter anything white—the carcass of the white animal, the white linen, etc. The Tsalalians' punishment is illustrated in the cavern: the indentures that Pym and Peters see in the cavern forming the shape of "a human figure standing erect, with outstretched arm" (*Pym* 164) toward the south are reference to the vengeance on the wicked Tsalalians (*Pym* 177). Tsalal or Tsalalian is a universal concept

2. Not all objects on the island are black. One of the chasms on the island, Kennedy points out, is sealed off by white arrowhead flints (131).

regarding the fallen state of humanity. The island of Tsalal serves as a chiasma paralleling the shadow/evil of humanity in a Dystopian world epitomized on the ship *Grampus* as well as the *Jane Guy*.

Apart from evil projected in nature, Poe's landscape/seascape is suffused with a melancholy/sad atmosphere (something beyond men's recognition). The Ego or Soul in the sentient ocean-scape wills itself to terrorize the mind, ineffably imparting a melancholy/sad mood. It separates the mind from the commonsense world or converts the mind to a dreamy vision. Augustus senses the cumulative messages of sadness before the *Grampus'* southwards voyage. Pym recalls his *Ariel* adventure with Augustus:

In one of our conversations Augustus frankly confessed to me, that in his whole life he had at no time experienced so excruciating a sense of dismay, as when on board our little boat he first discovered the extent of his intoxication, and felt himself sinking beneath its influence. (*Pym* 9)

Augustus, under the influence of the sad mood, stays in "a highly-concentrated state of intoxication—a state" "like madness" (*Pym* 3). "By the light of the moon" his face "is paler than any marble, and his hand [shakes] so excessively that he [can] scarcely retain hold of the tiller" (2). This is not simply caused by alcohol; it is also a sign of behavioral objects' vehement activity on the mind.

Pym is infected by Augustus' madness, being drawn into the somehow mysterious force, yet he eventually builds a defense mechanism that survives destruction. Similar to the narrator in "The Domain of Arnheim," Pym initially quests for divine eternity but

eventually fails to perceive Ellison's second creation of Truth and Beauty. As he comments on himself, his perception of the world is what the physical world reveals, rather than a metaphysical one, which is accessible through specific pleasurable ideas or imaginations: "My vision were of shipwreck and famine; of death or captivity among barbarian hordes; of a lifetime dragged out in sorrow and tears, upon some gray and desolate rock, in an ocean unapproachable and unknown" (*Pym* 11). In the most miserable and chaotic circumstances, Pym recognizes melancholy in the Ego or Soul: "The circumstance occasioned us the most bitter regret and filled us with the most depressing and melancholy forebodings" (103). This third agent might reveal the reality of this world to humans and prevent them from committing their crimes when that evil consciousness streams into the environment, converging into a collective consciousness of evil which has been accumulating since the fallen state as a consequence. It stirs emotions and accompanies the individual in a state of dissolution, alleviating both fear and depression.

Embedded in an atmosphere of sadness, Pym takes a strategic retreat to a *revelatory transcendence*: "I recommended myself to God, and made up my mind to bear whatever might happen with all the fortitude in my power" (4). Later, it is this unknown force of sadness in Augustus that affects Pym and orients the latter to make a decision for his southward maritime adventure. "I have since been assured, to the whole numerous race of the melancholy among men—at the time of which I speak I regarded them only as prophetic glimpses of a destiny which I felt myself in a measure bound to fulfil" (11). Pym idealizes his adventure as his epistemological quest. He imagines that his surroundings constantly reveal to him the message of divinity or salvation. For him, the

large whaling ship that rescues him and his companion Augustus from the shipwreck of the *Ariel—Penguin*—symbolizes spiritual salvation. In other words, Penguin represents a symbiotic relationship with the existence of evil symbolized in the geometric shape of squares/parallelograms formed by the rookery of penguins and albatrosses during their breeding time.

At each intersection of these paths the nest of an albatross is constructed, and a penguin's nest in the centre of each square—thus every penguin is surrounded by four albatrosses, and each albatross by a like number of penguins.... (*Pym* 114)

The geometric shape composed of penguins and albatrosses reflects Poe's theory of the heterogeneous universe. To reach the center of the penguin, i.e. Truth in the universe, artists have to grope through darkness in the state of diversification (the albatross), taking the risk of falling into the net of evil which is an illusionary obstacle to Truth.

Another example of Pym's *revelatory transcendence* can be seen in the aperture. While the penguin is symbolic of spiritual salvation, the aperture that frequents the novel is equated with an access to salvation. As the aperture remains open to a confined space, Pym feels hope of escape from a plight. Pym depends on the aperture to reach to Augustus as he is hiding in the hold: "It was agreed that I should remain near the opening, through which my companion could readily supply me with a part of his daily provision, and where I could have the advantages of breathing an atmosphere comparatively pure" (*Pym* 49). Later the survivors of the *Grampus* dive several times into the hold in order

to look for food. Moreover, any fissure or opening through which dim light emanates renders the survivors who have just been *buried alive* a hope of finding “a clear passage into the open air” (152). Pym and Peters do successfully escape through an opening, and they spy the activities of their enemies through “a very small opening just wide enough to admit of [their] seeing the bay, without the risk of being discovered from below” (154). Imagination of salvation in connection with particular incidents avails one to assuage anxiety and fear in a gloomy world, and this can be explained as the force of immunity fabricated in the mood of melancholy.

Pym is affected by the Ego or Soul to a degree no less influential than what Ellison senses, yet he activates more spatial hoaxes to help him assume that he has survived or escaped dangers. Poe’s *Pym*, as Kennedy indicates, features the structure of deception, either in its narrative incoherence or contradictory language. Nevertheless, those reactions to these grotesque gloomy and somber surroundings result from the defense mechanism opposing destruction.

Pym periodically shakes off his imagination and behaves with a nonchalant attitude towards the horror in nature. In the case of perceiving the hieroglyphic indentures in the cavern on the island of Tsalal, Pym is convinced that they have been naturally formed from the convulsion of the surface; he (un)consciously refuses to accept the indentures as evidence of the will/power of the landscape. Perhaps the narrator responds in his most obvious nonchalant attitude toward the sentient nature in perceiving the human figure “standing erect, with outstretched arm” (164) toward the south as a “pornographic caricature” (Kennedy 129), rather than identifying it with the revelation of horror (reality).

Pym’s indifference or remaining distance from the power of the landscape/ocean-scape can also be seen in his wordplay, jokes, or ironic mockery. For example, for the scenery of the ghost ship, on which the huge seagull is “gorging” on the flesh of the dead (*Pym* 81) and a shipman nodding to the crewmen of the *Grampus*, Pym translates the world of horror into a comic effect so as to assuage his fear. For example, in the episode of the death of Augustus, Pym describes the corpse as something loathsome, rather than as a loss of a beloved member being ritually mourned. To inhibit his sadness, Pym takes a nonchalant attitude toward death.

Moreover, Pym resorts to reason, dismissing fantasies. He prays to God for his deliverance to life (preservation of life) or retaining reason/common sense. The episode of the *Ariel* adventure exemplifies this: Pym desperately draws Augustus back to common sense as the latter falls into intoxication like a plunge into deep water. As a chiasma to the following episode, Pym’s returning to common life in the episode of the *Ariel* replicates itself in conditions such as starvation, fever, and confinement. “There appeared to us no earthly prospect of deliverance...By the mercy of God, however, we were preserved from these imminent dangers, and about midday were cheered by the light of the blessed sun” (*Pym* 72). “Throwing ourselves on our knees to God, we implored His aid in the many dangers which beset us; and arose with renewed hope and vigor to think what could yet be done by mortal means toward accomplishing our deliverance” (77). “Giving thanks to God for this timely and cheering assistance....We then carefully recorked the bottle, and, by means of a handkerchief, swung it in such a manner that there was no possibility of its getting broken” (86). “The overturning of the brig...the accident we had so greatly

dreaded proved to be a benefit rather than an injury; it had opened to us a supply of provisions which we could not have exhausted” (105). Pym believes that God’s injunction helps him retain his reason and recollection as a seaman in this brutal life of the sea. His perception of the animals in the surroundings is anthropocentric. Whether they are a threat or a help depends on their immediate relationship with him and his companions drifting on the ocean. For instance, the tortoise that they find in the storeroom and kill for food is seen as a gift sent by God. “This was indeed as a treasure; and, falling on our knees with one accord, we returned fervent thanks to God for so seasonable a relief” (97). Though his attitude towards the tortoise is anthropocentric, he retains reason by praying to God to survive the horrible circumstances. As an “apocalyptic figure” appears, Pym becomes dumb, unable to assume spiritual salvation through aesthetic replacement; he cannot adjust his perspective to convert the terrible scenes to a picturesque one that exists in the realm of immutable truth. Nevertheless, he is not killed in the ocean. Pym’s unconventional attitude towards the series of horrible events—deceptions, narrative inconsistencies, jokes, etc.—insinuates that melancholy has transformed him into an organism capable of coexisting with the force of evil in the landscape/ocean-scape.

### “The Island of the Fay”

Similar to the narrator in “The Domain of Arnheim” and that of *Pym*, the narrator in “The Island of the Fay” is drawn into the sentient landscape that is composed of the cumulative messages of melancholy. Contemplating in solitude the life of eternity among the geographical objects, the narrator does not elevate his spirit as he expects. Instead, he is conscious of his mind being at war with ‘the genius of the scene,’ and he knows well

that all forms of lives, including human life, are a stain upon the landscape that ruins the original life of eternity. Nevertheless, the narrator is not killed by evil since he eventually generates defenses on the island of the fay.

As St. Armand indicates, “The Island of the Fay” is a “full-fledged testament to the sentience of the landscape” (40). The narrator approaches the sentient being in the geographical objects through non-anthropocentric view. What he perceives and senses are not simply objects perceived by human beings, but those that can perceive him and all human beings.

...the colossal members of one vast animate and sentient whole...the animalcule which infest the brain—a being which we, in consequence, regard was purely inanimate and material, much in the same manner as these *animalculoe* must thus regard us. (“The Island of the Fay” 600-601)

Moreover, the animate and sentient whole, as mentioned in the gist of Associationist Theory, predicates how the subject feels as the subject is viewing the landscape, and the feeling of sadness or melancholy is the most definite response that the landscape actively triggers. That is why the narrator in solitude senses inexplicable melancholy in the tarns, the rivers, etc., and the feeling grows “more melancholy as the hours run on” (599).<sup>3</sup> Not insentient to the feelings that the sentient nature urges him to feel, the narrator perceives a fay through a non-anthropocentric vision that Blake adopts in his vision of a fairy’s funeral. Mabbott points out that Poe might have seen the story about William Blake

3. According to Mabbott, Poe might draw upon a dream fantasy from his own dream, and this dream was described in “Hans Pfaall.” See pages 598-599 in Mabbott’s *Collected Works of Edgar Allan Poe, volume II Tales and Sketches*.

and the fay in Robert Macnish's book or cited by Macnish. Mabbott quotes the story as follows:

“Did you ever see a fairy’s funeral, madam?” he [Blake] once said to a lady... “Never, sir,” was the answer. “I have,” said Blake, “but not before last night. I was walking alone in my garden; there was great stillness among the branches and flowers, and more than common sweetness in the air; I heard a low and pleasant sound, and knew not whence it came. At least I saw the broad leaf of a flower move, and underneath I saw a procession of creatures of the size and color of green and gray grasshoppers, bearing a body laid out on a rose-leaf, which they buried with songs, and then disappeared. It was a *fairy funeral*.”<sup>4</sup>

The fay on the island repeats her journey from the radiantly-gardened west to the gloomy-dark east until she fades away, vanishing into the east. Moreover, the fay’s being swallowed into the darkness increases the density of darkness of the east. Thus, the narrator’s island is a rhythm of dissolution orchestrating the music of death, and the death of the fay symbolizes the sacrifice of young lives for the expansion of the unknown force of horror.

A stain on the landscape crawling over the island of the fay is the result of the intrusion of evil at a rapid speed. Critics have identified this evil as the result of cultural/political invasion. Sanford parallels the island of the fay to the new world in America. In “Edgar Allan Poe: A Blight Upon the Landscape,” he argues that the mysterious blight

4. See page 598 in Mabbott’s *Collected Works of Edgar Allan Poe, volume II Tales and Sketches*.

on the island signals the invasion of the corruption originating in the eastern ancestral Europe. In much the same vein, in his study of the effect of ironical distance in “The Island of the Fay,” Ljunquguist argues that the fay’s destiny suggests Poe’s lament of the advancement of science. “The disappearance of the figure of spectral beauty on an east-west axis reflects the narrator’s futile attempt to find a safe haven for the poetic spirit, banished from its safe haunt by the onset of scientific inquiry” (Ljunquguist 138-139). The theme in “The Island of the Fay” echoes the one in “The Elk,” in which purity of pre-industrial times is disappearing. Poe might express anxiety over the disappearance of Adam’s dream in a new country that eventually falls into the violent encroachment of industrial Europe. This historical insinuation relevant to the development of the new world might be a reference to the struggle that the young poet confronts in his career as a poet eager for paradisiacal fulfillment (Sanford 54-55).

The narrator knows the existence of “the green tombs” (Poe 604) where fays have exhausted “their substance unto dissolution” (604), and he becomes distant from the fay who is disappearing into darkness that “fell over all things” (605). The major reason that the narrator holds distance is that the narrator has been immune from the damage in the garden. This does not mean he transcends to immortality; instead, he remains in the garden as a mortal. He becomes more adaptable to these surroundings of decline and has more defenses. As the atmosphere of melancholy slows down the tempo rendering the time of the interval for an organism’s metabolism and rehabilitation, the narrator begins a reverie on an islet of the fay. As he lies beneath a shrub and receives a “topsy-turvy perspective” (Ljunquguist 115), his view begins with multi-dimensional expansion



to the merging of reality and fantasies, in which his fay does not die but disappears into darkness; the narrator eventually ignores the evil force in the garden.

## Conclusion

Poe's landscape/ocean-scape narrative is characteristic of a full-fledged sentience toward the force of evil—the natural force of decline and destruction. Melancholy in the Ego/Soul—the medium between the evil force of destruction and human beings—affects the mind as efficiently as drugs, alcohol, or hypnotism, partially because the mind is inclined to be overpowered or relinquish its consciousness. It slows down the tempo of time so as to alleviate men's anxiety and fear in their confronting destruction. Under the trance of the Soul/Ego, the destruction of the organism is carried out. Yet, in most of the stories in which the narrator usually escapes destruction, Poe perceives the possibility of rehabilitation or immunity built up in the mood of melancholy. The artist's second creation of a spiritual paradise exemplifies the generation of immunity through the form of aesthetics: the artist imagines a spiritual resurrection at the apocalyptic moment as all lives return to unity/homogeneity.<sup>5</sup> Other examples regarding immunity can also be seen in those psychological responses (nonchalance, rationality, disengagement from nature, etc.) on which the organism depends in order to survive in the environment of disaster. Evil, if it does not destroy the organism, strengthens life as the psyche in the mood of sadness streams into a certain collective consciousness (religious faith, aesthetic formation, cultural consciousness, etc.) or an individual's memory/imagination/fantasies.

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5. Wagenknecht infers this return to unity as "a passion for God on Poe's part and a longing for salvation, or, to put it another way, a Sense of the Whole and a hunger for union with the Whole, by which one cannot be other than profoundly moved." See Richard Kopley's "Poe's Lives," page 79.

To describe it metaphorically, melancholy in Poe's landscape/oceanscape functions as a vaccine that contains the force of evil (virus or bacterium) in a form that prevents destruction caused by such evil.

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Waiting in line



Sue Matheson

# Feminist Dimensions and Masquerade Performances in Nigeria

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## Abstract

Masquerade performances in Nigeria are rich cultural engagements are important means by which the traditions of indigenous Nigerian societies are measured and transmitted into the future. This study considers feminist dimensions and masquerade performances in Nigeria, with particular reference to masquerade engagements in Idoma land. Gender politics found in masquerade performances of ethnic groups situated in Yoruba, Efik, and Ibibio lands are not evident in the masquerade performances found in Idoma land in which women are prominent. Historically, the Idoma people have not displayed negative gender biases regarding women, and women have been an integral part of the propagation of the Idoma cultural heritage. Remarkably, the dynamism of the feminist dimensions of masquerade performances in which women participate in Idoma land has created new vistas for cultural revival and interdisciplinary discourse in the Performance Arts—in particular, another suitable terminology for the structure and performances of African masquerade.

**Keywords:** masquerade, performance, feminism, cultural revival, Idoma land

## Introduction

Masquerade performances in most Nigerian cultures are almost exclusively a male activity. In fact, performing arts scholars such as Enekwe (1987) and Nzewi (2009), among others, affirm that masquerading has been the exclusive affair of the male gender. Masquerades, such as the *Oro* masquerade of some spaces in Yoruba land, attest to this as it is believed that women who participate in this—the *Oro* performance—find it difficult to procreate. In the Omanuku masquerade performance of the Ughelli people in Southern Nigeria, the male participants assert their prowess by dominating the womenfolk, who, on the other hand, are not allowed visual accessibility to the performance. Hence, rape cases and molestation are not rarities during the festival.

While conservative gender politics are evident in masquerade performances in Nigeria in ethnic groups such as those in the Yoruba, Efik and Ibibio lands, they are not in Idoma land, an ethnic nationality in Benue state Nigeria, where women have been an integral and important part of the propagation of cultural heritage. This study employs the literary and descriptive methodologies to appraise feminist dimensions and masquerade performances in Nigeria, with particular reference to those engagements in Idoma land, in particular, the *Ichahoho* masquerade festival, the *Odumu* festival, and the *Ogliye* festival.

## Perspectives to Masquerade Performances in Nigeria

The masquerade art in Africa is essentially ritualistic and culturally relevant to the  
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worldview of the society in which it is located. Therefore, masquerade performances have continued to be assessed and re-assessed by scholars. Having investigated the likely origins of the masquerade art using the Power Balancing Theory and the Omnipresent Theory, Asigbo (2012) attests to the mystic nature of African masquerade performances within the nexus of ancestral worship. In his submission, he maintains that:

[t]he phenomenon of Masquerades, Spirit manifests or Ancestral masks in most places in Africa, has continued to be shrouded in mystery. This is more so in view of the fact that donning the ancestral mask is almost always, an exclusive act. Seen as symbolisation and manifestation of the continuing relationship between the living and the dead, masquerades continue to play a vital role in the life of many African societies. We thus have different types of masquerades for various purposes ranging from those that entertain to those that fulfill ritual functions and those that are used for war or for the enforcement of justice. Judging by the pivotal role masquerades play in African life, one must therefore of necessity investigate the origin(s) of that phenomenon (pp. 1-2).

Critical attention has also been focused on masquerade performances in Nigeria because of their multi-dimensional nature. For example, Adedeji (1978), Ogunba (1978), Echeruo (1981) and Ododo (2001) have contextualised masquerade performances, costumes, performance space, socio-cultural relevance, ritual essence and so on in Nigeria and indeed throughout Africa. In addition, the Egungun masquerade of the Yoruba people cannot be discountenanced in the discourse of masquerade performances

in Nigeria. Willis' study of the Egungun within the wider frameworks of gender, power, and spaces in masquerade performances in Nigeria becomes germane here due to his insistence that:

Egungun is a Yoruba ancestral masquerade ritual that has been practiced for centuries. Shifting coalitions of individuals and factions have vied for social and political influence through this practice. In the nineteenth century, when western missionaries, explorers, and colonial officials first documented this phenomenon, any individual who could sponsor an Egungun performance was a force to be reckoned with in Yoruba society. To this day, Egungun masquerades are understood as vehicles through which individuals and groups can assert influence in their communities. (2012, p. 322)

Stanley-Niaah (2004) concurs with Willis, observing that:

Egungun masquerade performances are enacted in a number of public places – the town square, the market, the street, the war camp, and the war front – as well as in private places such as shrines and family compounds. Egungun performances are nomadic; performances move from space to space, and in the process, entertain, honour, and police all of the inhabitants of a community: men, women, and children, as well as the spirits believed to influence every aspect of human endeavour. (cited in Willis [2012, p. 327])

It should be stated, however, that the central theme of the critical submissions from Stanley-Niaah (2004) and Willis (2012) has been re-contextualised by Akubor: that “all

over Yoruba land, the Egungun represents the spirit of the ancestors who have descended from heaven/ mountains. It celebrates a period when the dead interact with the living, as it is their responsibility to compel the living to uphold the ethical standards of past generations” (2018, p. 32).

In 2001, the Facekuerade Theorist and Technical Theatre Expert, Sunnie Ododo brought to the fore, a critical introspection into the Ekuechi masquerade ensemble of the Ebiras people of Nigeria within the purviews of the theatrical aesthetics and functional values of the masquerade. Ododo remarks that:

[a]s a popular festival, Ekuechi is full of pomp and pageantry, with a dynamic integration of poetry, chants, mimicry, mime, dance, song, music, drumming, mask, make-up, costume and significant cultural symbols. All these cohere vibrantly to attest to Ehusani (1991: 181)’s claim that “it is in Eku that the vitality and vivacity, and also the artistic genius of Ebiras find the highest expression.” Eku is ancestral masquerade. Eku, which represents the ancestors, is believed to ‘descend’ (Chi) from the world beyond during Ekuechi festival. Eku and Chi thus respectively form the prefix and suffix in Eku e Chi. Literally translated, it means, “the ancestors are descending.”

This partly explains how the name of the festival is derived. (2001, p. 3)

In their review of the mask, masking, and curtailment of domestic terrorism in Ika through Akakum performance of Nto Usoh people in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria, Akpan and Udofia also provide critical perspectives on the historiography and performance

dynamics of the Akakum masquerade performance by observing that

traditional performances maintain in-built principles that prevent members from transgressing . . . Akakum is also called Asakum but following the nature of its performance, it is traditionally addressed as afum (wind). Akakum and Asakum are onomatopoeic, conveying two sounds: aka which suggests the breaking off of a tree branch while kum suggests a hit. Both asa and aka before kum are descriptive sound conveying the process and the result. Akakum and Asakum mean the same thing. The performance gains the nomenclature from its performances activities not by myth, deity, or spiritual label. The origin of this performance in Nto Usoh is conflicting. In an interview with Essien (2010), Akakum was formed in 1472. It was introduced as an entertainment to mark the fullness of harvest time. During this period, Nto Usoh sons and daughters wherever they stay would come home and celebrate Uchoro Ilok (harvest celebration). The most significant of the season was in addressing all offences, granting offenders pardon, and making general reconciliation. The emergence of Akakum will mark a total sanctification of the land. Akakum used to be played once in seven years and it was highly ritualised. (2019, pp. 14-17)

Accordingly, that masquerade performances cannot be disconnected from societal functions cannot be overemphasised. On one hand, this accounts for the constantly growing perspectives from scholars of the masquerade art and tradition in Africa and indeed, across the globe. On the other hand, these functionalities vary according to the

perspectives from which human societies view the masquerade art.

Masquerade performances are therefore used to achieve a remarkable number of goals in the societies that own them. A typical example is found in the theoretical summation from Amaechi (2018) who examines critically, how masquerade performances especially, the Umu-Ada fraternity (Igbo Daughters) can be a veritable option for the attainment of peace and conflict resolution in Eastern Nigeria (Igbo Land). In the case of land disputes or communal clashes for example, Amaechi (2018, p. 87) reveals that the masquerade

...will surround the disputable environment, bound people not to cross nor penetrate into the environment for some period. Sometimes, palm front will be tied at the disputable environment, warning people not to make use of the place. The masquerades will later invite the people concerned who are involved in the matter, listen to their various grievances after interviewing or questioning them as mediator. Whoever that is at fault will pay penalty for defaulting or punished accordingly to restore peace.

Another critical work from Akubor (2016) investigates masquerade performances and their roles in societal control and stability using the masquerade performances of the Esan people of Southern Nigeria as paradigm. The hallmark of Akubor's (2016) postulation is that:

[m]asquerades occupy a central position in the mythogonic structure of Esan pantheon. They are organic to their myth of creation. In this way, they function as the major stabiliser of people's destiny. Thus, the masquerade

in Esan society (just like in other African communities) is the process of man's attempt to give being to those very significant aspects in the depth of thought in his universe. For this reason, *elimin* appears as a robed figure who is designed specially to give the impression that the deceased is making a temporary reappearance on earth. This impression is enhanced by the complete coverage of the individual. It is absolutely essential that not a single particle of the human form should be visible; for, if this rule is broken, the man wearing the dress must die (*elimin ki khue lo*). It is therefore not surprising that they are considered as having power over life and death and people who have committed the most evil crimes against society were summoned before the masquerade and could expect the most severe punishments. Thus, an appeal to this masquerade was the highest appeal a group or an individual could make. Thus, the *elimin* indeed provided a certain amount of stability and control on Esan people and their society (p. 47).

In light of the above, the perspectives about masquerade performances in Nigeria remain elastic due to the dynamic nature of the masquerade art in Nigeria. Masquerade performances, however, are struggling to maintain their core values in the face of religion, modernisation, and technology to mention but three pivotal factors. In view of this,

chaos [is] developing in communities as sub-cultures like traditional performances which were viable tools for curtailing antisocial manners have been relegated to the background because of the constant absorption

of foreign cultures that do not fit into the context of Nigeria's perception of social manners (Akpan and Udofia, 2019, p. 14).

Despite the truth of the submission of Akpan and Udofia (2019), it is worthy to mention that masquerade performances are still being celebrated in some part of the country irrespective of the constant torrents of the above-mentioned factors.

### **Feminist Dimensions of Idoma Masquerade**

In Idoma culture, women play significant roles and are part of the masquerade culture. Though they are not allowed to take part in the actual masquerading, they historically play important roles in masquerade institution. The prominence of women is reflected in the oral historical chant of Alekwu masquerade of Odegwudegwu, who is a woman. This myth was converted to a drama created by S.O.O. Amali in 1985 entitled, *Odegwudegwu*. Its story recounts the misadventures of an elderly woman, Odegwudegwu, who breaks a taboo on her way in hurrying to take medicine to her sick children by seeing the nakedness of the ancestral spirit masks which is forbidden for women to see and her punishment is to be buried alive. Because of this taboo, the chief arranged an inquest for her in seven days' time. The punishment for breaking this taboo ensures that when Odegwudegwu is buried alive, according to the age long tradition that the entire community, can be cleansed. When she was about to be buried, her children who are also major components of the ancestral spirit masquerade (without them the masquerade cannot exist) come to the square and insist to be buried with their mother. As it is forbidden in Idoma culture for children to be buried with their mother,

the situation compels the elders rethink, and after consultation with the ancestors, they instruct mankind not to bury any woman in the kingdom alive anymore, but instead order that they should be cleansed by paying fines and losing livestock.

Women play important roles in the origin of masquerades in Idoma culture. A typical example is Ekwootokpa masquerade which, according to an oral history in an interview with Ismail Amali (2018), is believed to have been founded by women and this is why it has hatred for them. The Ekwootokpa masquerade was founded by women but controlled by men. This is the core reason why it goes round to destroy women's pounding mortar with its spear whenever it comes out to perform.

Women perform pivotal functions in the creation of the Alekwu masquerade. If a man does not have a female child while alive, he cannot be re-incarnated into the Alekwu masquerade. The last child of the man to be re-incarnated into the Alekwu masquerade spirit is used in the final ushering of the masquerade into the human world in order to give voice to the masquerade to speak. This important and final spiritual role can also be played by women.

Women are also prominent in the creation of new Alekwu masquerades. They must be the ones to perform the final rituals called *Okpa Ochoje* (Owu Obiyinla), a night before the Ikwu festival. This ritual ushers in new sets of Alekwu masquerades from the spirit world to the human world.

Another major ritual role played by women is called *Ikpa okwo okwu*. During this ritual, a woman and Alekwu masquerade pair together to perform a compulsory ritual



called *Ikpa okwo okwu* which is a major ritual for a departed person. This particular woman must have passed her menopause stage and does not have any form of sexual contact.

In Idoma culture, some masquerades appear the performance arena in pairs of a male and female. However, “men always perform the masquerade, while female characters are . . . portrayed” (Spring, 2009, p. 26). In other words, while the male which is the principal masquerade performs, the female character is merely symbolic. This is similar to the masquerade of Abeokuta people in Yorùbá culture in which it is believed that “*Gèlèdè* masks represent Yorùbá women, but are actually danced by men who dress like women and employ movements that mimic feminine attributes” (Scruggs and Fellow, 2011, p. 1).

Examining gender divisions in the Egungun masquerade, Willis also asserts that:

Western scholars have portrayed Egungun as a hegemonic masculine performance space through which men assert their dominance over women. In privileging the writings of English missionaries, explorers, and colonial officials, we have tended to neglect the oral traditions and histories of specific Egungun masquerades in which women feature prominently . . . scholars have oversimplified and misrepresented the complex ways in which these performances are gendered as well as the ways in which they offer women opportunities to shape the identities of the places they inhabit. (2012, p. 322)

To this end, tenent of the Greek theatre tradition, Roman theatre culture, and the Elizabethan theatre in which female roles were performed by male characters, also holds sway in the traditional masquerade performance art. It should be remembered, as Shapiro points out that, “[a]cting was an all-male activity in ancient Greece and Rome. The same was true in medieval Europe” (1994, p. 31). At that period, the great women characters which include *Clytemnestra* in Aeschylus’s *Agamemnon*, Jocasta in Sophocles’s *King Oedipus*, the eponymous character of Medea in Euripides’ *Medea*, Juliet in William Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*, Reagan and Cordelia in *King Lear* and the all powerful character of Lady Macbeth in *Macbeth*, were played by male actors in female togas and/or garbs. Levine (1994, p. 1) agrees that the “theatre effeminized the boy actors who played women’s parts by dressing them in women’s costumes.” These skillful young actors were highly trained to bring out the best of the female characteristics.

However, Lawal is of the opinion that, women cannot be associated with *Gèlèdè* masking, “because of its male association; can metaphysically interfere with the innate reproductive powers of a woman” (1996, p. 79). This fully captures the spiritual potency of masquerades. The actual masquerading is completely men’s affairs which is also identical to that of the Igbo people who have a contemporary maiden spirit masquerade called *Adanma* which, according to Ezeliora is “literally translated respectively as ‘the princess or beautiful daughter’ and ‘the lady/queen of dance’” (2014, p. 46). They are costumed in female attire with female nuances, but “generally, women and girls were excluded from participating in masquerading in Igbo society. In the same vein, Chukwu agrees that, “masquerade and masquerading are exclusively men’s affair” (2016, p. 64). Despite

the submissions from Ezeliora (2014) and Chukwu (2016), it should be mentioned that women are still recognised in masquerading culture among the Igbos. Afigbo (1972), Nwabueze (2003) remark that

masquerades symbolise societal conception of certain qualities, for instance, while the “agaba” symbolises strength and masculine vigor, the aggboghommanwu (the maiden masquerade) that usually depicts feminine beauty portrays acceptable qualities of maidens as exemplified in their beautiful outlook, careful gout and dancing ability. (cited in Amaechi [2018, p. 85])

Flowing from the above, masquerading among men is more visible than masquerading among women in Nigeria and most parts of Africa. It is worthy of note, however, that masquerading among women is practised in places like the Sande Society of the Mende people in Sierra Leone, which is responsible for teaching young girls the skills and knowledge to become a woman. Kleiner acknowledges that, “the Mende and neighbouring peoples of Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Guinea are distinctive in Africa because the women perform masquerades. The masks and costumes they wear conceal the women’s bodies from the audience attending their performance” (2013, p. 1075). Joyce also notes that female masquerading can also be found among the women of Ejagham society of Cross River, Nigeria who, “have two different types of women’s masquerades; *Ekpa* masquerades reveal the dancer’s identity, and *Agot* masquerades conceal it” (2004, p. 487).

Rare situations like these, however, are very different from others found in the Idoma

culture, where masquerade and masquerading is exclusively a man’s affair. Masquerade beliefs are enveloped in myth, having only male initiates and generally members of the community understand the mysteries behind it. Women are usually kept away from the affairs of masquerade which are referred to in the Idoma culture as a terrain exclusively for men. On the whole, masquerades have a secluded environment created for them with restrictive access to non-initiates and members.

## **Conclusion**

The dynamism of women's roles in masquerade performances in Idoma land has produced new vistas for cultural revival and discourse in the Arts. Indeed, the feminist dimensions of these masquerades offer a new appreciation of masquerade itself, new and suitable terminology for the description of the African masquerade cultures, and an understanding of female roles which make women integral to the African cultural system. These feminist dimensions have also created a festival theatre discourse which is an omnibus. If masquerading is to continue to thrive in Idoma land, the role of the woman in the masquerading process should not be disregarded, and it certainly should not be jettisoned.

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Purple Dawn

Rebecca Matheson

# "Get them off this habitat": *Elysium* (2013) as anti-thesis of globalization

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Neill Blomkamp's prognosis of the world in his 2013 dystopian movie, *Elysium*, deconstructs the optimism invested in globalization. This politically conscious sci-fi is set in 2154 in Los Angeles that has become a post-apocalyptic slum. The plot hinges on issues like health care, immigration, economic inequality, and environmental decay. The impact of and response to these issues separate the two classes of the imagined future defined by stark disparities. "Earth's wealthiest inhabitants have fled" to a ruthlessly exclusive space station, Elysium, where Med-Bays "can cure all diseases" (Hiscock n.p.). The dying poor of Earth will risk their lives to reach Elysium, only to be shot down by its rulers who consider their privilege a right, and self-preservation a moral absolute (Aitkenhead n.p.). Accordingly, the two classes presented in the movie are in effect the

colonizer and the colonized.

Blomkamp's understanding of an artist, significantly, incorporates the notion of being "political or observant" to prevent the role of an artist from becoming uncertain (Godfrey n.p.). He maintains this balance between art and politics through his allegorical presentation of questions about global injustice. This is a rare feat as western audiences identify with those who gamble with their lives to reach the west every day. Matt Damon expresses this observation in his interview to *The Guardian* that nobody would "feel like they're the ones on Elysium" (Aitkenhead). Blomkamp achieves this by exposing the world that exists behind the promise of globalization, which George David, former CEO of United Technologies Corporation, emphatically expresses:

We are at an optimistic time in our world: the barriers between nations are down, economic liberalism is decidedly afoot and proven to be sound, trade and investment are soaring, income disparities between nations are narrowing, and wealth generation is at record high levels, and I believe likely to remain so (Steger 104).

David's statement echoes the optimism which existed at *fin de siècle* when many believed that twentieth century would bring prosperity to everyone. However, "everyone" did not include women and non-Caucasian populations. David's optimism, like that of those who lived at the turn of the twentieth century, is exclusionist on two accounts, as it neither defines "we" nor provides any objective statistics to verify the soundness of "economic liberalism." In contrast to David's view, Blomkamp offers a very grim vision

of the globalized world. Moreover, he lays bare the allegorical character of the movie by insisting that *Elysium* is neither futuristic nor a science fiction but “[t]his is today. This is now” (Godfrey n.p.).

To explore Blomkamp’s depiction of the globalized world, I will cite two definitions of globalization and show how *Elysium* deconstructs both of them. The World Health Organization defines globalization as:

the increased interconnectedness and interdependence of peoples and countries. It is generally understood to include two inter-related elements: the opening of international borders to increasingly fast flows of goods, services, finance, people and ideas; and the changes in institutions and policies at national and international levels that facilitate or promote such flows.’ (www.who.int/topics/globalization/en/)

Manfred Steger defines globalization as:

a multidimensional set of social processes that create, multiply, stretch, and intensify worldwide social interdependencies and exchanges while at the same time fostering in people a growing awareness of deepening connections between the local and the distant (13).

This interdependence happens as a result of advancements in technology. As Steger observes, it results in “movement towards greater interdependence and integration” (9). Other defining characteristics of globalization include equal economic opportunities

for different countries, increased interdependence of different regions, governments, societies to an extent that geographical borders become irrelevant, having a genuine global transport infrastructure by overcoming geographical obstacles.

In stark contrast to these definitions and characteristics, globalization is a one-sided affair in *Elysium*, reminiscent of what Ginger Nolan explains in *The Neocolonialism of the Global Village*. Nolan argues that the idea of creation of a global village as a result of globalization ‘was born of colonial thought [...] in reference to various devices of British colonial and neocolonial power’ (1), since Marshal McLuhan had coined the term, the ‘global village’ in his *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man* (Nolan 1). This is reflected in the movie which opens with a view of Earth plagued with extreme poverty, the houses are destroyed, the land is barren and dilapidated. The rich live in Elysium, a “hi-tech orbital space station where life appears to be one long garden party” (Hiscock n.p.) with the total absence of poverty and disease. Earth, in contrast, is “diseased, polluted, and vastly overpopulated” with little technology and medical care. Resources of Earth, human and natural, make it possible for Elysium to sustain the privileged life-style of its citizens. Industry has been outsourced to Earth to manufacture weaponry and other technology for Elysium. The first dialogues of John Carlyle, who wrote the software for Elysium and is the CEO of Armadyne, an arms manufacturing company, explain the purpose of his trip to Earth as well as the relationship between the two places. He is here to maximize profitability of Armadyne. This information identifies Earth as a colony which ensures capitalistic profits for Elysium. The nature of this relationship between the two creates the binary of the colonizer and the colonized

that remains operational throughout the movie. “[I]ncreased interconnectedness and interdependence of peoples and places” function within that binary. Consequently, the relationship between the two turns ruthless and dangerous.

This relationship reflects all the traits of colonial capitalism that Syed Hussein Alatas lists in his study of the myths which European colonizers constructed about the laziness of maritime Southeast Asians. According to Alatas, colonial capitalism has the following characteristics:

- (a) predominant control of and access to capital by an alien economic power, (b) the control of the colony by a government run by members of the alien power, acting on its behalf, (c) the highest level of business, trade and industry, held by the alien dominating community, (d) direction of the country’s export and import trade to suit the interest of the alien ruling power, (e) a bias towards the agrarian mode of production as opposed to that of industry, (f) the minimal expansion of technological and scientific skill, (g) the organization of production around semi-free labour, (h) the absence of guilds or trade unions as a counterweight to exploitation, (i) the noninvolvement of large sections of the population in direct capitalist enterprise, and (j) the presence of a set of antitheses in the colonized society described by the term dualism (2).

The first indication of “predominant control” of Elysium over Earth is evidenced by the flying objects surveying the populace amidst ruined skyscrapers. Soon, we see a vessel

leaving Elysium for Earth. The condition of Earth as shown in the preceding scenes suggests that there is one-way traffic between the two. A little later, we see Max Da Costa, the protagonist, a former car thief on parole. Police robots which “act on behalf” of Elysium authorities interrogate him when he is in line to board a bus to go to the factory where he works in an assembly line. During the interrogation, they consider him to be resisting authority and hit him, fracturing his arm. They order him to see his parole officer, an “intransigent robot,” who is one of the many important macro and micro metaphors (Godfrey n.p.) that demonstrate the “remote” relationship that exists between the administration and the common people. After getting his arm plastered and seeing the parole officer, he arrives for his work late. Max desperately pleads with his supervisor to allow him to work despite the fracture. The supervisor agrees but decides to pay him for half a day. The supervisor’s statement that “you know, you are lucky to have this job,” explicitly suggests “the absence of guilds or trade unions as a counterweight to exploitation” (Alatas 2).

When Max starts work, he looks at John Carlyle through the glass wall of his office on the first floor, where he is in a virtual meeting. The exchange of dialogues between Carlyle and other participants establishes that the highest level of business, trade and industry is held by the alien dominating community as per Alatas’s definition of colonial capitalism. Ironically, the factory builds police robots and other weaponry which the Elysian administration uses to control Earth. The direction and purpose of industry on Earth suits Elysium. The movie mercilessly inverts what Steger would recognize as globalization’s social processes—the “growing awareness of deepening connections

between the local and the distant” (13)—by bringing to the fore the impact of outsourcing industry. As Blomkamp argues, “You’d literally have to change the human genome to stop wealth discrepancy. But it’s happening now on a globalised level. The outsourcing of whatever you need done, at low cost, can happen in a different country; you don’t even need to know about it any more” (Godfrey n.p.). Consequently, Earth and its residents bear the brunt of the ecological cost as well as face the on-job hazards.

Max encounters a life-threatening on-job accident which leaves him with only five days to live. Blomkamp alludes to the parallels this has with developing-world labour, especially Bangladesh textile industry, in his interview (Godfrey n.p.). The accident happens the next day when the door of the chamber to irradiate the robot is stuck. Max’s supervisor threatens to fire him if he does not go inside to see why the door cannot close. To save his job, Max reluctantly goes inside the chamber but the door closes behind him and radiation starts immediately. Irradiation of his body makes this inevitable for him that he travels to Elysium and use a Med-Bay. However, borders are irrelevant for one class only. The swift and frequent movement from Elysium to Earth is a privilege of Elysian government officials and their operatives. They can enter the atmosphere of Earth at their convenience. Contrary to this, for people of Earth to go to Elysium is potentially suicidal. What Steger term “[s]ocial interdependencies and exchanges, deepening connections between the local and the distant, [and the] extinction of geographical borders” have different implications for the two classes. Max, as a last resort, goes to Spider, who transports Earthlings illegally across strictly monitored Elysian borders. Spider has earlier sent three vessels to Elysium. After they ignore repeated warnings of not breaching the

atmosphere of Elysium, missiles are fired at them at the orders of Defence Secretary Delacourt. Two of them are destroyed while the passengers of the third reach Elysium but are apprehended. Delacourt orders their deportation saying: “Get them off this habitat.” Her ruthless response to the breach of Elysian borders exposes the inherent contradictions of globalization which eventually culminate in totalitarian control of the regions under dominant power.

The totalitarian control of Earth by Elysium imitates the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. Technological advancement contributes to consolidate this control, for it benefits one class only. The progress does not create a world free from fear due to exclusive control over technological advancement by Elysian authorities, which they use to control Earthlings. This can be understood by studying the role of robots. On Elysium, the robots serve and protect the population whereas on Earth, they control and subjugate. The theoretical dimension of globalization that everybody would be watching the same programmes, eating the same food, wearing the same dresses fails to camouflage the differences between groups which control the society and which are being controlled. In fact, the movie contradicts Steger’s observation that globalization connects human beings at least on two accounts: the air we breathe and the water we drink (86). Those who come from Elysium avoid sharing the same air and water with Earthlings. Carlyle wants to leave Earth at the earliest, for he does not “enjoy breathing [its] air.” He orders the supervisor of the factory on Earth to cover his mouth when he talks to him. Moreover, the waste that we see spread across Earth becomes a tool of Elysian colonial strategy to construct both wasteland and wasted lives as dangerous “Other,” in relation to its norms,



order and development. Consequently, “the whole world has become the third world, a giant slum, a totalitarian nightmare in which citizens live like rats” (Godfrey n.p.). The presence of the “Other” is evident in the fearful and panicked reaction of Elysian people to Earthlings’ presence when Spider’s third vessel lands on Elysium, and they come out of it.

In the current international context, we see this in North-South trade and its ecological cost, which even economically powerful and technologically advanced countries like China face. There has been a dramatic increase in North-South Trade since China’s accession to the World Trade Organization in 2001. Northern firms have outsourced their industrial work to the South which has inflicted massive damage on the once clean air and fertile soil in the South:

[China] the so-called “world factory,” where the production of myriad outsourced goods and services (i.e., garments, apparel, toys, footwear, tools, light machinery, electronics, and information technology products) is contaminating air, water, and soil, and depleting labor [sic] and material pools, triggering deforestation, desertification and global warming, and seriously endangering public health. However, the vendor countries in the South are mostly developing countries with the primary goal of economic development. Hence, despite the environmental damage, they opt in their early period of international offshoring to provide a hospitable business environment to the Northern outsourcing firms. (<https://www.asiapathways-adbi.org/2017/12/international-outsourcing-environmental->

costs-and-welfare/)

The situation of the South described above has a strong parallel in the film, where we compare the lifestyle of the people living in Elysium and that of Earthlings. The quality of air, fauna and flora, and overall cleanliness suggests that no industrial waste contaminates the Elysian environment.

Steger looks at globalization project in North-South binary as well. He argues that “the claim of a leaderless globalization process does not reflect reality in today’s world. Rather, it serves the political agenda of defending and expanding Northern interests while securing the power of affiliated elites in the global South” (103). The movie symbolises this binary through Elysium, which represents the affluent North in current globalized context and Earth, which represents the underprivileged South. In the movie, this is also represented by the position of Elysium, high in the space and Earth is always shown placed downwards. Young Max always has to look up when he has to look at Elysium, which glows above Earth like, in Blomkamp’s words “Bel Air in space.” The movie suggests that Elysium’s image as an ideal, coveted place is constructed the way colonizers, especially the English, constructed the image of London and England. Young Max and his friend, Frey, read stories about Elysium with the same fascination which was injected in young colonized children through colonial education system.

The movie tactfully hints at the possibilities of continuity of such an equation through absence of government on Earth. As a result of this, there are no representative of Earthlings who can negotiate with Elysian administration on their behalf. This situation

gives Elysian authorities total control over Earth and they reduce it to a colony. This situation can be explained by an incident from actual history of Tunisia when it was a French colony. On January 14<sup>th</sup> 1952, Tunisian political leaders who were fighting for Tunisia's freedom from French colonial rule, wanted to use the forum of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to speak about their conflict with the French military. However, the UNSC denied them the right to speak on the grounds that as a French colony, the French government was supposed to represent them (Youssef 59). The status that Elysium has acquired because of its scientific progress accords it the right to rule Earth. Nevertheless, as Earth's ruler, Elysian government is not willing to afford the minimum standard of living to Earthlings, which is measured against "access to clean water, food, electricity, and health care" (Mazierska & Suppia n.p.). Such discrimination is reflected in three cases in the movie. The third vessel which Spider has sent to Elysium carries a woman and her daughter who has multiple fractures. She cannot walk without clutches and needs to use a Med-Bay to recover. However, only Elysium has Med-Bays which can reverse aging and cure even the most complicated diseases. Earth only has very basic health facilities which are meant to keep the workers alive. The second incident is the irradiation of Max. He cannot be treated on Earth and Carlyle is more worried about ruining the bedsheets if Max died on the bed in the factory than about his survival. This indifference to the lives of Earthlings suggests complete disinterest in providing Earth any health facilities. This suggests that only the colonizer can create the colonized and perpetuate his existence (*Colonialism and Neo-Colonialism* xi). This results in surplus human resource which can be dispensed with. The third situation is the medical condition of Frey's daughter who suffers from leukaemia. Frey, despite being a nurse, can do nothing

to save her but to create a possibility to take her to Elysium. As Jean Paul Sartre explains, "Colonialism denies *human rights* to people it has subjugated by violence, and whom it keeps in poverty and ignorance by force, therefore, as Marx would say, in a state of 'sub-humanity'" (xxi), the Elysian authorities maintain this "sub-human" status of Earthlings and maintains its colonial hegemony over Earth.

The final aspect of the movie that defines Earth as a colony is the absence of religion and religious symbol on Elysium, unlike Earth. Elysium relies on its scientific progress and technological advancement for its security and well-being. The first and foremost religious symbol on Earth is Max. He is presented as a product of Immaculate Conception who lives in a convent where he is brought up by a nun, a symbol of virginity. Elysium becomes a kind of a paradise for him, the desired coveted place of religious significance. He has to make sure that the poor and destitute reach there even if the price is his blood. He emerges as a Christ figure, the saviour of the people of Earth as the movie progresses. By the end of the movie, he sacrifices himself and saves everyone on Earth. Like Christ, he alters the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. As Sartre would say, "[b]etween these two principles no reconciliation is conceivable; one of them must triumph and the other be annihilated" (40–1).

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Elegance

Sue Matheson

## Flouts of the Cooperative Principle Maxims by APC

### Presidential Candidates on *The Candidates*

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#### Abstract

Communication between people are guided by certain norms and principles that enable smooth communication. Participants in any communicative event are expected to comply with these norms and principles. Grice (1975) refers to the latter activity as the maxims of cooperative principle. In most cases, however, interlocutors, consciously or unconsciously, flout these principles. In an interaction between President Muhammadu Buhari (henceforth PMB), his running mate and Kadaria on *The Candidates* (a town hall meeting that took place between Kadaria and presidential candidates) the President and his running mate flouted these maxims excessively. A good deal of scholar attention has been paid to interviews and speeches using cooperative principle and other linguistic theories, but there is no known study on this interview. This study focuses on the interview

to evaluate the significance of the Cooperative Principles in political discourse. The data for the work was downloaded from the Youtube page of the Nigeria Television Authority. . Employing purposive sampling to allow manual evaluation of the data. This study selected eleven (11) out of fifty three (53) interview questions, and adopted Cooperative Principle as the theoretical framework to qualitatively analyse this data. It is concluded that during this interview all the Maxims which guide Cooperative Principle were flouted to achieve certain objectives which included face saving, concealing of information, and the marketing of the contestants.

**Keywords:** Presidential Candidates, Cooperative Principle, Flout, Interview, APC

## Introduction

In any communicative event, participants may choose to be explicit or obtuse. A participant may choose to be explicit by giving more information than what is required. They may be obscured by not releasing as much information as expected. However, in any discourse, it is expected that participants cooperate so as to ensure smooth communication. Lack of cooperation may lead to a breach in communication. Grice (1975) proposes some maxims of cooperation which participants are expected to obey in order to achieve success in communication. Grice proposed what is known as Cooperative Principle (CP, henceforth). In this, he proposed that speakers are expected to cooperate in terms of what is required of them to achieve the desired goal in discourse. The principle is guided by four different Maxims; Maxims of Manner, Quality, Quantity, and Relation.

During the build up to the 2019 general elections in Nigeria, the candidates at

different levels, on different political platforms were interrogated by Nigerians in order to elicit information related to their plans and agenda for the country and to demonstrate whether or not they should be given the mandate. Sanitizing the political landscape of the country, such interactive sessions were aimed at sensitizing the electorates to make the right decision as to whom to vote into office. Different media platforms were involved in this sensitisation. One of such platform is *The Candidates*, a presidential town hall that aired interviews on national television. Each interview was anchored by Kadaria Ahmed, a seasoned journalist, and produced by Daria Media and Nigeria Television Authority (NTA). Supported by the MacArthur Foundation, it aired live on (NTA), African Independent Television (AIT) and all radio Nigeria stations. It also treamed online on NTA and Dtv.media. Individuals could also apply to participate online on @daria.media or #NgTheCandidate.

*The Candidates* engaged the presidential candidates of major political parties and their running mates in an exclusive interview based on their agenda. On the 16th January, 2019, the All Progressive Party's (APC) candidate and his running mate were interviewed. APC is the ruling party in Nigeria with President Muhammad Buhari (PMB) as the incumbent president and the then-presidential-candidate of the party and Professor Yemi Osinbajo (PYO) as the then-incumbent Vice President and running mate. During this interview, the President and his running mate answered different questions tailored to their agenda which borders on security, economy and fight against corruption. Throughout, the interviewees flouted, on several occasions, the Maxims of CP. This hindered the free flow of information requested by Kadaria (the interviewer),

and betrayed the purpose of the interaction and the cooperative principles which guide interaction between interlocutors. This study sets out to investigate how and why these Maxims were flouted by the interviewees.

## **Previous Studies**

There are existing works that have investigated interviews and PMB speeches from different perspectives. For example, Khoiyi and Behnam (2014) examine how Gricean quantity maxim is violated by more than 50 defendants in relation to different speech acts which are used by interrogators in criminal courts. Sobhani and Saghebi (2013) investigate new ways of understanding non-cooperative attitudes of the speakers and the violation of Cooperative Principle maxims in real Iranian psychological consulting sessions. The interviews of the President of Republic of Indonesia, Susilo Bambang Yudoyono (SBY), were analysed by Fadhly (2012) using Grice's theory of the Cooperative Principles (CP). Yang (2014) considers how a Chinese host in the TV talk show "Yang Lan One on One" interviews her guests who are native Mandarin speakers and native English speakers using discourse analysis (DA). Yang's findings suggest that the Chinese host applies Grice's cooperative principles at all times in her interviews, and she often uses confirmation as a way of understanding and to check her guest's message. Using critical discourse analysis (CDA), Nnamdi-Eruchalu (2017) studies the maiden speech of PMB as a Military Head of State in 1984, and his inaugural speech as a democratically elected President in 2015. A discourse analysis of a video clip of job interview between a job applicant (interviewee) and the director (interviewer) of human resources department of the Procter & Gamble Company was conducted by Jiang (2013). The analyses

are based on appraisal system and generic structure of Martin & White, 2005 under Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and politeness theory and cooperative principles in pragmatics domain. Jiang's research reveals how the interactants give respect to positive politeness considerations and cooperative principle. Koutchadé (2015) uses discourse analysis to study the acceptance speech of the Nigerian President, General Buhari in 2015. This research adopts the systemic functional linguistic model to inquire into the language of the speech.

The studies above have contributed to scholarship by using different theoretical insight to analyse interviews and speeches of presidents. Khoiyi and Behnam (2014) investigate criminal court interviews, Yang (2014) interrogates TV programs, Sobhani and Saghebi (2013) examines consulting sessions and Fadhly (2012) studies Indonesia presidential interviews. They show the efficacy of cooperative principles in revealing how interlocutors puncture smooth communication by flout the cooperative maxims. In addition, Nnamdi-Eruchalu (2017) engages the speech of President Buhari of Nigeria as a military head of state and a democratically elected president using CDA, Koutchade also engages Buhari's presidential speech with Systemic functional linguistic. They have shown the resourcefulness of presidential speeches via the use of linguistic instruments to win people's mind while differing in term of domain and focus but do not address the use of CP as a meaningful concealment strategy, face saving strategy, and instrument for marketing the contestant. This study examines the usefulness of abandoning CP when electioneering and while engaged in other political activities.

## Research Objectives

The aim of this research is to use CP to examine the interview of PMB and PYO on *The Candidates*. Specific objectives include the following:

1. To identify the maxims flouted by the interviewees.
2. To examine how the maxims are flouted.
3. To know the functions of the flouted maxims in political discourse.

## Research Questions

At the end of this research, the work proposed to answer the following questions.

1. Which maxims of the Cooperative Principle are flouted?
2. How are the maxims flouted?
3. What purpose does the violation of the maxims serve?

## Theoretical Framework

Herbert Paul Grice introduced the Cooperative Principle in 1975. According to Grice, human conversations do not normally consist of succession of disconnected remarks, and would not be rational if they did. They characteristically to some degree, at least, have some cooperative efforts; and each participant recognizes in them to some extent a common set of purposes, or at least a mutually accepted direction. It is possible to then formulate an estimate general principle which participants will be expected to observe. Grice (1975) puts it as follows:

Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged. One might label this the Cooperative Principle. (Grice 1975:45)

As Grice's (1975) remark above shows, there are some underlying set of assumptions guiding human communication. Levinson (1983:101) suggests that "these assumptions stem from basic rational considerations for the efficient and effective use of language to further cooperative ends. Cooperative principle is built on four basic Maxims. They are: the Maxim of Quality, Maxim of Quantity, Maxim of Relation and Maxim of Manner.

### A. The Maxim of Quality:

Try to make your contribution one that is true, specifically:

- (i) Do not say what you believe to be false.
- (ii) Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

### B. The Maxim of Quantity:

- (i) Make your contribution as informative as is required for the current purposes of exchange.
- (ii) Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

### C. The Maxim of Relation:

Make your contributions relevant

#### D. The Maxim of Manner:

- (i) Be perspicuous, and specifically:
- (ii) Avoid obscurity
- (iii) Avoid ambiguity
- (iv) Be brief
- (v) Be orderly

#### E. How to break a Maxim:

Grice (1975) identifies four ways through which participants may break the Maxims. The suggested ways are:

- ❖ **Flouting a Maxim:** An individual may flout a maxim by deliberately refusing to fulfil its conditions.
- ❖ **Violating a Maxim:** A speaker may violate a maxim by quietly or modestly saying something that is misleading or false.
- ❖ **Opting out of a Maxim:** A participant in a discourse may opt out of the Cooperative Principle or one of the maxims of conversation by indicating that he/she no longer wishes to cooperate in the way the maxims require.
- ❖ **Clashes with other Maxims:** A third way in which Grice's maxims of conversation can be broken is when there is a clash between the maxims. For example, a person may be unable to make his/her contribution as informative as

is required for the current purposes of exchange (the first maxim of Quantity) without saying something for which he/she has lacks adequate evidence (the second maxim of quality).

#### **Research Methodology**

The data was downloaded from the Youtube page of the NTA. The video interview was saved on the researcher's mobile device and laptop for easy access. The interview was transcribed for the purpose of this research. There are 53 interview questions altogether. Kadaria, the anchor of the programme asked 40 questions from the interviewees. Eight questions were asked by the audience while five were read from the twitter handle of the platform, *The Candidates*. Eleven (11) interview questions were purposively sampled for this work.

Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle Theory was adopted as the theoretical framework for analysis, because it helps to know how and why the maxims are violated. It also helps to determine the functions of the maxims in communication. The work is qualitatively analyzed. Among the interviews featured on *The Candidates*, the PMB and PYO interview was purposively sampled, because it involves the incumbent president who is expected to justify his second term of office. Because of his performance, this interviewee caught the attention of many Nigerians including this researcher. The methods of flouting used during the interview was noted and identified. We categorized them under each Maxim to identify the methods used to flout the CP by the interviewee. The purposes of the flouting Maxims are also discussed in response to research question



three.

## Data Analysis

This work examines how President Muhammad Buhari and his running mate refused to obey the CP during the interview. It examines various methods used in the flouts and the purpose of each flouted Maxim. This section presents the analysis according to each Maxim flouted.

### 1. The Maxim of Quality

This Maxim requires that participants should try to make their contribution as true as possible. In other words, they are not expected to say what they lack adequate knowledge of. In the interview under review, we identify instances where the interviewee did not only violate this Maxim but also flout it. This was done by the interviewee to save his face and also positively present himself and his party for the forthcoming general election. The interviewee decided to hedge to flout the Maxim. This is a political strategy, because the interviewee did not want to be held responsible if the information is finally adjudged to be incorrect. The following are instances from the interview.

A. Interviewer: After asking him to go, how come he hasn't been prosecuted?

Interviewee: I think the matter is already before the EFCC and I believe, in fact a directive has been issued regarding all persons who has cases.

B. Interviewer: the national assembly alleged that you appropriated money without going through proper channel. How do you respond to the allegation?

Interviewee: I think the allegation was that some money which was approved for the emergency was without appropriation but that was not correct at all and we pointed out very clearly to them that when I was acting president, some money was appropriately allocated...

C. Interviewer: would you be willing to re-examine the UBEC fund because those are for the federal and yet they are meant for primary education?

Interviewee: I think what has happened so far about UBEC, I think there are agencies that sometimes support the local government and state but bulk is on primary education lies with local government....

In this interaction, the interviewee flouted the Maxim of Quality. In response to the first question, the interviewee is expected to provide answer to the reason the 'accused person' has not been prosecuted. Instead, the interviewee gave an uncertain answer. Also, in the second question the interviewee is expected to state his reason for the allegation of the National Assembly. In the third question, he was supposed to say categorically if he has another plan for UBEC or not. Instead of providing the expected answer, the interviewee hedged and refused to provide a precise answer.

In the responses, the interviewee used the word 'think' to express his lack of ade-

quate knowledge of what he is saying. In those responses, the word 'think' expresses uncertainty. This reveals that he is supplying the answer which he lacks adequate knowledge. This flouts the Maxim of Quality. The interviewee used this to save his face in the public. As the incumbent president, it is expected they have sufficient and accurate answer to questions that related to happenings in the government. Using the words, 'I think,' is a strategy to avoid responsibility.

## 2. The Maxim of Quantity

This Maxim forbid participants from saying more than what is expected. It states that participants should not make contribution more informative than is required. It is expected that participants be as precise as possible in releasing information. In an interview of this nature, both the interviewer and the interviewee are expected to abide by the principle of this Maxim. However, it may be difficult for politicians to abide by the principle, especially during the campaign towards election. Politicians will want to provide more answers than is expected of them. Doing so enables them to express their plans and possibly make people to accept their agenda. It is therefore difficult for them to abide by strict conversational rules. Politicians usually see an interview as an opportunity to respond to public agitations.

In this interview, the interviewee comfortably flouted this principle by adding more information than is required by the interviewer. He is doing this to boost and showcase their performance in the last four years and also market themselves for another four years opportunity. Where simple and precise answer is required, they went into tale telling to

showcase their achievement over the years. The president, in most cases, went into story of the military era. The following are instances of how the interviewee generously flouted and violated the Maxim.

A. Interviewer: how do you intend to bring a permanent stop to the difficulties and conflict going on between the farmers and herdsmen?

Interviewee: started from Benue state, unfortunately, we foresaw it and we ask the minister of Agriculture to go to the archive to find out the gazette from the first republic where those credible leaders of first republic... there was route, there was grazing areas with little resource, they set up grazing route and grazing area and veterinary clinic...

In the response, the interviewee states more than required information by going into story narration. The interviewee is expected to itemise precisely what his plan is to permanently end the menace of herdsmen. Instead of giving a precise answer, the interviewee decided to narrate his effort that is not openly known to the public. This is a political attempt to tell the whole world what he has done. As well, the interviewee flouted the principle by telling his audience what previous government did. This is not the expected reponse. The expected reponse is his plan to solve the problem. The interviewee prefers this strategy to market his candidature and political party.

B. Interviewer: those are old maps and old solutions. It may not work. What are we going to do to stop the conflict, like now?

Interviewee: what we are doing, we have already started especially the governor. The movement is from the north to south and is quiet predictable. After the harvest, they move from north to south for water especially from our borders... like Benue governor they say they have banned grazing. We are in the same country. I expect our government to insist on the route to be re-established in the grazing area but to say cattle cannot move is very difficult...

The interviewer tried to repair the violated maxim by asking the question again but in a paraphrased form. The interviewee again violated the Maxim by going to another narration of what his government is doing and his expectation from state governors. This violated the Maxim of Quantity. This violation is used by interviewee to invade the question asked by the interviewer. It is a demonstration that the interviewee has no blueprint to end the menace. The interviewee also used this strategy to save his face from the public because one of the agenda upon which they campaign is adequate security. The issue of herdsmen attack is a great setback to security system of the nation. This informs while the interviewee made effort to invade the question as this may be used by his opponent to campaign against him.

C. Interviewer: are you getting a little bit frustrated by the slow pace in the fighting against corruption?

Interviewee: I can't afford to get frustrated. I keep on telling the law enforcement agencies, the administrators in the ministry. It is their

responsibility to document in their ministry, if it has to come to president it should...

The interviewee again provides more answer than expected of him. The question is a yes/no question. The interviewee decided to go further to explain and give ministries responsibilities to perform. This violates the Maxim as the first sentence of that response has answered the question. The interviewer did not ask about the role of ministries. The interviewee did this to shift responsibility to the ministries. This is to also save his face on the issue of corruption as people have been accusing his government of being bias.

### 3. The Maxim of Relation

The principle of this Maxim states that participants should make their contribution as relevant as possible. The expectation of this Maxim is that there must be a relationship between the topic of discussion and the contribution of participants. This makes a discussion precise and smooth. It saves time, and avoids ambiguity and unnecessary information. In this interview, the interviewee deliberately violated this Maxim in most part of his responses. This violation is used to conceal information. It is a deliberate strategy to deviate from the discourse. The violation of this Maxim is an avoidance strategy, which participants used it so as not to have to give certain responses. It sometimes exposes the knowledge of discussant about the issue being examined. The following are examples:

A. Interviewer: you have been ruling for four years and you are looking for another four years. Why?

Interviewee: I said it much earlier that if my party recommends me to represent

them, I will contest and I did that to save time and wide discussion among the party. So those who feel strongly about it, they left the party and the party nominated me...

B. Interviewer: why have we not heard you make comment on Ganduje matter?

Interviewee: I will defend myself. I haven't gone to kano yet. I have just gone to kogi today. That video clip, somebody brought it to me. The governor of kano receiving dolar smiling and puting in his pocket. I don't know the extent of technology used because state assembly has got it and go to court. I decided to keep quiet...

In the interaction above, it is clear that the interviewee ignores the subject of the discussion and opts for different issue. In the first question, he was asked the reason he wants people to vote him to power again, instead of responding to this question, the interviewee talks about his party nomination. The response to the question on governor Ganduje is not different from others.

The interviewee deliberately evaded the questions because he does not want to expose some facts. In the first question, the interviewee decided to narrate his party's decision rather than highlighting the performance of his government and new agenda. He ignored the reason he should be voted for and was stating the reason his party selected him. This violated the maxim of relation because the response is not relevant to the question asked. One wonders what the relevance of the statement to the reason why people should vote

a candidate. The expectation is for the interviewee to debunk the allegation with facts rather than resulting to storytelling and accusing the populace of listening to criticism.

#### 4. The Maxim of Manner

This Maxim expects participants to be as clear as possible in their contributions. This principle prevents participants from being ambiguous. As much as possible, the Maxim states that the participant must be precise and brief in their contributions. A participant is expected to also avoid obscurity. Being brief, however, may be difficult for politicians because they always want the floor to market themselves. In the interview under question, the interviewee provides much more information than is required. Politicians find it difficult to be brief in their responses in an attempt to express themselves. This violates the Maxim of Manner. The interviewees violated the Maxim to market themselves to the general public because being too brief will definitely conceal vital information which needs to reach the hearts of their audience. The following are instances of this:

A. Interviewer: as the commander in chief of armed forces, how much are you holding the leaders of the army accountable given the complains that we get from the rank and files about welfare.

Interviewee: I received weekly situation from military. It is extremely difficult to accuse, you know soldiers of going to the extent of demonstrating but the consequence of that now the army commander investigating. Court marshall all sort of demand for demonstrating because soldiers are

not suppose to demonstrate and the action the military is taking in the frontline is not normally given to the press.

B. Interviewer: what is the basis for deciding who you are going to prosecute and who you just allow to return fund?

Interviewee: let me say straight away that there is no distinction. The mere fact that someone has returned asset doesn't mean that they are free and can walk away. There are so many people walking the street who are on trial but you know they are on bail.... what the prosecutor does is if you return money he might decide to pardon...

C. Interviewer: are you aware of this thing? Is it part of the policy, as alleged, not to investigate people in government?

Interviewee: we can't. I told you, the public should help. If there are strong allegation about bank accounts, name of company floated, then we take them before the court through EFCC and ICPC and we have to trust the system and allow them to complete their investigation... if you accuse them, you have to produce evidence...

In these responses, the interviewee flouts the Maxim of Manner by being obscure, ambiguous, and verbose. Throughout this excerpt, his response is disjointed and very difficult to understand. This impairment of his answers makes his information obscure and creates comprehension problems for the other party in the discussion. The interviewee also was highlighting the code of conduct of the military instead of responding to the

accusation of holding the army chiefs responsible for any misconduct in the army. The interviewer, of course, will be confused with such response. In **10**, the interviewee is orderly but not brief. The Maxim of Manner requires that participant should be orderly and brief. This makes communication smooth. The interviewee in this case opened his response with a simple answer. He violated the Maxim by adding more information than necessary to make the interaction complicated for other parties. When the interviewee responded in **11** that the public should help, he did not state the type of help he wants. This left the other party wondering. The interviewee's absence of specificity makes his response ambiguous and obscure and ensures that the audience and other participant in the discourse will not understand.

This violation conceals information from the audience. The interviewee disjointed his response to hide information from listeners. This strategy was also used to avoid certain details and save face for the military chiefs. Notably, the interviewee is a former military head of state. He is also a military man. He would not want to insult or embarrass his colleagues in public. By doing so, he also saved face for the government and his political party which was seeking vote in the general election.

## **Conclusion and Summary**

The cooperative principle of Grice (1975) proposes four Maxims which should guide conversation in order for speakers to have a smooth interaction. Violation or flouting of these Maxims can distort communication. In the interview between Kadaria and the APC presidential candidate and his running mate (PMB and PYO), we discovered that

all these Maxims were violated. In part, this may be attributed to the electoral season and personalities involved. The interviewees were the incumbent President and Vice President. As such, they were expected to showcase all their achievements over a period of more than three years. It was not easy for them to abide by the Maxims of Quantity and Quality. In fact, they were bound to violate the Maxims of Relation and Manner, because they needed to buttress every point they raised and had to be able to state their achievements convincingly, especially when considering the attack from the opposition. They also needed concealment strategies to hide vital information in order to save face. Contesting their return to the same office in the general election, they needed to employ every available opportunity to re-market themselves to the public. They therefore were obliged to elaborate and be generous in their responses to any question raised. Because failure to exploit the visibility offered them by national television could have damning consequences, they flouted the Maxims of Quantity and Quality to maximise their opportunities.

The Maxims of Quantity and Quality were also flouted to save face and perform other functions. The interviewees hedged in some cases and provided more information than required to save face from public attack. The interviewees also flouted these Maxims to conceal information from the public. The obscurity and ambiguity of their answers concealed vital information. This concealment via violations of the Maxims of Quality, Relation and Manner was achieved by giving more information than required or by deliberate deviation from the issue under discussion. The interviewee also flouted these Maxims to market themselves to the electorate. This was done while giving more

information to buttress their points. They also hid information that may have been damaging to their platforms and performances.

By and large, the violation of the Maxims were not unintentional. As much as it is good to obey the Maxims for smooth interactions, flouting the Maxims also serves certain functions in communication, especially in political discourse and has implications for the violator. This activity performs face saving, information concealment and marketing ideas and agenda. We can therefore not totally condemn the flouting of the Maxims especially in a political interview.

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Bowling Green Bauhaus

Sue Matheson

# INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC RELATIONS AS TOOL FOR REBRANDING A NATION: THE NIGERIAN EXPERIENCE

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## ABSTRACT

International public relations (IPR) is the establishment of a mutually beneficial relationship between a nation, organization or an individual with its foreign counterparts. IPR is an aspect of or a promotional tool used in integrated marketing communications (IMC), a multi-media strategy deployed in marketing or selling or rebranding a product, service or entity (Nigeria in the case of this study) in contemporary media scholarship and practice. It is within this context that this paper adopts the System Approach to



Management (SaM) to look closely at how international public relations can be applied in rebranding a country, using Nigeria as a fulcrum of discussion and analysis. To achieve this, the descriptive, historicocritical and direct observation methods of research are employed to collect relevant data. We raised the question, does Nigeria need rebranding? The answer is in the affirmative. As such, we looked at how attempts in the past to rebrand Nigeria have failed due to lack of adequate planning, poor execution and corruption and made some critical suggestions on the way forward. The conclusion reached is that for rebranding to succeed in Nigeria, there should be proper planning and execution of the rebranding programme. The Nigerian government should deliberately integrate strategic communication, marketing communication and media experts into a specialist team that will plan and execute a formidable rebranding campaign for the country. In doing this, the team would do well to employ international public relations strategies such as sponsorship of films and documentaries, media advertisement, cultural diplomacy, truthful propaganda, organization of international press conferences and seminars, reinvigorating of the National Orientation Agency (NOA) and cognate agencies, through adequate staffing and funding, and sponsorship of Nigerian literary icons and other Nigeria brand ambassadors in local and international fora to achieve its goal.

**Keywords:** IPR, Rebranding, Nigerian government, International public relations strategies, SaM, NOA, Truthful propaganda, Cultural diplomacy, Nigerian literary icons, Nigerian media celebrities

## INTRODUCTION

Public relations entails the ability to build a reciprocally beneficial relationship between an organization, nation or individual and different publics. The publics include both the external and internal publics. International public relations is simply the practice of public relations across borders. That is the establishment of a mutually beneficial relationship between a nation, organization and individual with its foreign counterparts in another country. Public relations aim to build an understanding that can lead to the patronizing of the products, services and ideas of an organization, nation or individual.

This article looks closely at how international public relations can be applied in rebranding a nation, putting Nigeria into perspective. This can be seen as “nation or place branding” which is the process whereby a town, region, country, actively seeks to have a special and competitive identity for itself which is positive, to reposition it as a good place for tourism, trade and investments. Countries such as India, the United States of America (USA), Britain, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Singapore, among others, have country branding. For instance, in the USA, you have a campaign – “I Love NY” (New York); in the UK – “Cool Britannia.” Even of recent, African countries have joined the fray. The latest is Rwanda after the genocide with its “Visit Rwanda Campaign.” Branding is the ability to make a product or service unique or rather different from others in the same category to entice people to desire the product or service. Rebranding is a marketing attempt to reposition a product or service in the marketplace for better performance. Aside from products and services, a place can also be rebranded; hence, we are talking of rebranding Nigeria.

Consequently, we need to ask the question, does Nigeria require rebranding? The

answer is in the affirmative. Nigeria needs massive and well-coordinated rebranding. This is because Nigeria has a negative image in the comity of nations. Nigeria is seen by many as a country full of corrupt people, fraudulent individuals, drug traffickers, terrorists, kidnappers and what other evils. Even though Nigeria has a majority of its citizens not involved in the above crimes, but they are wrongfully and ignorantly grouped with the dubious few. As such, Nigeria as a country, in an attempt to attract international investment and enhance trade and tourism needs to launder its image in an aggressive, creative and consistent manner.

### **NIGERIA: A FLOWER WAITING TO BLOOM**

Although Nigeria re-achieved democratic governance in 1999 after decades of military incursions, interregnums and bastardization of the polity, a careful observation of the contemporary happenings in the Nigerian political, social, economic, cultural and religious arenas clearly shows that the country has not fared better under civilian rule. Bad leadership and corruption have continued to manifest themselves in virtually every aspect of national life in Nigeria (Omoera and Aiwuyo 423). Despite being a growing democracy (Omoera “Public Relations in a Growing Democracy” 62) with abundant human and material resources at its disposal, it has metaphorically remained a flower waiting to bloom. Many responsible Nigerians have become antsy as they are daily harassed, embarrassed or discomfited by the way they are treated nationally and internationally because of the perceived image problem occasioned by the actions or activities of a few irresponsible persons, which could have been better managed. Nigeria is made up of thirty six states and a federal capital territory (FCT). It has neighbouring

countries such as Niger, Chad, Benin, and Cameroon (see Figure1). It is supposed to provide leadership for Africa as a continent but because of its seeming off-putting image, the most populous black nation on earth, with over 2 million people (knoema.com 1), has become a sorry story.

Let’s instantiate the above by considering just an aspect of Nigeria’s socio-economic and socio-cultural strengths – tourism – that is yet to be fully harnessed to achieve set deliverables, including the much needed rebranding of Nigeria. Tourism for both national and international tourists and visitors has huge potentialities as a tool for branding or international public relations in Nigeria. Like trade and international investment, tourism has become a global phenomenon which is being embraced by different peoples for international public relations, among other purposes. Omoera claims that the Nigerian tourism industry offers wide range of opportunities to local and foreign entrepreneurs/ tourists to invest/ luxuriate in the various sectors of the industry across the country (Omoera “Potentials of the Television” 119).

Furthermore, Omoera identified three major sectors/forms of tourism in Nigeria: (A) Eco- tourism, (B) Cultural and religious tourism, and (C) Sports and conference tourism that could be included strategically in an IPR campaign for reinventing Nigeria (Omoera “Potentials of the Television” 119). (A) Eco-tourism resources are found in the forests, savannahs, shrines, groves, rivers, mountains and other areas of the Nigerian ecosystem. The chief eco-tourism sites and destinations in Nigeria include the eight national parks, numerous games and forest resources, wetlands, sanctuaries and other conservation centres. The popular ones are Yankari NationalPark in Bauchi



Figure 1: A Clickable Map of Nigeria Showing its 36 States and the Federal Capital Territory

State; Gashaka Gumti National Park in Adamawa and Taraba States; Chad Basin National Park in Bornu and Yobe States; Kainji Lake National Park in Niger and Kwara States; Cross River National Park in Cross River State; Kamuku National Park in Kaduna State; Okomu National Park in Edo State and Old Oyo National Park in Oyo State (Omoera “Potentials of the Television” 119).

Other eco-tourism attractions are Obudu Cattle Ranch in Cross River State; Bar Beach, Lekki Beach, Whispering Palms/Badagary Beach, Akodo Beach in Lagos State; Ibeno Beach in Akwa Ibom, Port Harcourt Tourist Beach in Rivers State; Abraka River Resort in Delta State; The Perching Rocks in Ebonyi State; Azumini Blue River Rose in Abia State; Birnin Kudu Rock Painting in Jigawa State; Olumo Rock in Ogun State; Farinwa Waterfalls in Nasarawa State; Ososo Tourist Centre in Edo State; Confluence of Rivers Niger and Benue in Kogi State; Gurara Waterfalls in Niger State, Birikisu Sungbo Shrine in Ogun State; Ikogosi Warm & Cold Spring in Ondo State; the Millennium Park in Abuja, National Theatre in Lagos State, Assop Waterfall in Plateau State, Igun Bronze Casting Guilds in Edo State; National Commission for Museum and Monuments sites across the country, to mention a few. These centres provide opportunities for the preservation of the ecological resources, holiday camping, sightseeing and picnicking, canoeing, honeymooning, swimming, climbing, angling, yachting and other gaming and recreational activities which, in turn, could easily and steadily provide jobs and empowerment platforms for many Nigerians if well tapped (OnlineNigeria.com 1).

(B) Cultural and religious tourism: Nigeria is blessed with rich and diverse cultural and religious resources including events, festivals and ceremonies, which are celebrated by different tribes/religious groups at different times in the different regions of the country.

Some of the memorable ones are Argungu Fishing Festival in Zamfara State; Igue Festival in Edo State; Eyo Masquerade Festival in Lagos State; Abuja Carnival in Abuja; Calabar Christmas Festival in Cross River State; Osun-Osogbo Festival in Osun State; the several Durbar Festivals across the northern states; Mmanwu Festival in Anambra State; Synagogue Church of All Nations' retreats in Lagos; Uhola Festival of the Dakakari in Sokoto State; Awon Mass Wedding of Awon in Kwara State; Sharo of the Fulanis in northern Nigeria; Igbabonelimhin Masquerade of the Esan in Edo State, Shiloh Festival in Canaan Land by the Winners Chapel/Living Faith Church; Holy Ghost Service of the Redeemed Church; Night of Bliss of Believers Love world Ministries/Christ Embassy; Fire Conference of the Omega Fire Ministry; Leboku Festival of the Ugep in Cross River State, among others. These cultural and religious assets are amongst the most fascinating in Africa (Omoera "Potentials of the Television" 200).

(C) Sports and conference tourism: While sports is one of the rapidly growing sectors of domestic and international tourism in Nigeria, conference tourism, is an emerging sector in the Nigerian tourism industry. Active and leisure sports such as football, chess, boxing, lawn and table tennis, polo and golf, athletics, basketball, cricket are popular across Nigeria. With the hosting of competitions in some of these sporting activities, Nigeria provides opportunities for the setting up, management and sponsorship of state of the art sport facilities, clubs, shops, hotels, theatre halls, transport and catering facilities. This, in turn, provides an enabling and conducive environment for international sports meet, conferences, workshops and seminars to hold in places such as Abuja, Lagos, Port Harcourt, Calabar, Jos, Kaduna, Bauchi, Benin, among many other cities(Omoera "Potentials of the Television" 200). Sports and conference tourism

attracts and makes people to converge on a venue which is ultimately used as a platform for communicating, networking and negotiating business portfolios, proposals and ideas. The social capital and economic multiplier effect of sports and conference tourism in conjunction with other forms of tourism are immeasurable. The IPR potential of the above, particularly when beamed or targeted at the international media and audience in Nigeria cannot be gainsaid but what is critical is how they can be harnessed to reposition or reinvent a country that sorely requires rebranding.

### **METHODOLOGICAL AND THEORETICAL PREMISES**

The article uses the descriptive, historicocritical and direct observation research methods to gather data for discussion and analysis of the issues at stake. In this connection, historical documents and other materials are reviewed and used to advance our argument for rebranding Nigeria. Being citizens and residents of Nigeria, we have also observed how attempts have been made to rebrand Nigeria in the past. Taking cognizance of all these coupled with professional wisdom we give suggestions on ways to properly and efficiently rebrand Nigeria. The research problem is that Nigeria as a country has a negative image internationally and even locally; and no successful attempt has been made to alter such a negative image despite attempts in the past, which were largely uncoordinated and inconsistent. Hence, this article contributes to scholarship in the area of using international public relations (IPR) as a strategy of rebranding Nigeria in a coordinated and consistent manner.

Furthermore, the fulcrum of the study is to advance IPR as an effective tool for rebranding the battered image of a country in the context of Nigeria. The idea of using

IPR to launder the image of the product - Nigeria to its internal and external publics is compellingly imperative in birthing a new Nigeria as a public relations' brand. We live in a very dynamic world where every well-meaning or responsible individual or organization or country must consider or pay attention to his/her or its human and public relations management. Given the above, we will theoretically adopt the "System Approach to Management (SaM)" (Omoera "Human and Public Relations" 2) in our conversation. Simply put, in a system (such as a functional vehicle, a functional lift in a high-rise building or any functional machine), every aspect or component is important and critical to its overall functioning. The success or achievement of the system is the aggregate accomplishment of its parts. The functioning of every part of the machine is crucial for the system to function efficiently (Omoera "Human and Public Relations" 2). For instance, SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis is a strategic planning or management tool that could be used to help a person or an organization or a country to attain his/her or its set goals. It is a consideration of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to the wellbeing of a person or an organization or a country at a particular point in time.

SWOT is a useful SaM practice for understanding your strengths and weaknesses and for identifying both the opportunities open to you and the threats you may face as an individual or a corporate entity (in the context of this study, Nigeria). It makes a boss in an organisation to be realistic and be in a position to effectively manage his or her staff or external relations with a 'human face' for excellent service delivery. It is important to note too that while strengths and weaknesses are often internal issues in an

organisation, opportunities and threats are generally related to external happenings. It is on this systematic lodestar we anchor our argument that international public relations management is critical to the success or failure of a country such as Nigeria. Hence, its political leaders or those at the helm of affairs must bear in mind the various elements of planning and management as well as international public relations strategies under the rubric of SaM to achieve some mileage in the rebranding of the country to have a competitive advantage at the global level.

## **CONCEPT OF PUBLIC RELATIONS AND INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC RELATIONS**

According to Asemah, public relations is seen "as the promotion to rapport and goodwill between a person, firm or institution and other persons especially public or community at large, through the distribution of interpretative materials and the development of neighbourly interchange" (249). The British Institute of Public Relations (BIPR) described public relations as "the deliberate, planned and sustained effort to establish mutual understanding between an organization and its publics" (Asemah 250).

Furthermore, the Mexican declaration in 1978 view public relations as "the art and science of analyzing trends, predicting their consequences, counselling organization's leadership and implementing planned programmes of action which will serve both an organization and public's interest" (Ogbemi 3-4). To Bittner, there is a fine line separating public relations from advertising. Omoera agrees with Bittner to the extent that in all both concepts aim to increase the market share of businesses or brands ("Advertising and

the Logic” 23) and in the case of this study, the mileage of a product or an entity such as Nigeria. Lattimore et al. claim that public relations are a leadership and management function that helps achieve organizational objectives, define philosophy, and facilitate organizational change (4). They see public relations to involve the following – research, counselling/advising, government affairs, investor relations, development or fund raising, multicultural affairs, media relations, public affairs, community relations, employee relations, publicity and promotions and marketing communications (Lattimore et al. 4).

From the foregoing, public relations could be apprehended as the establishment of a commonly beneficial relationship between an organization, nation, individual and its publics. The publics here imply both internal and external publics. Internal publics are the internal staff of the organization while the external publics include the customers or any other person that deals with the organization outside the establishment.

## **INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC RELATIONS**

International public relations according to Keghku is “a deliberately planned systematic and research-based activities of industry, marketer, organisation, state or a nation, which are aimed at maintaining sound productive and mutual relations with international publics such as, customers, government, agents, business organizations, non-governmental organizations and many others” (78). From a similar perspective, Asemah, Akase and Nkwam-Uwaoma describe international public relations as “an attempt made by an organization, an institution, a state or nation, to create goodwill for itself in the international community” (14).

Igben posits that international public relations is “the various efforts of an organization to establish or maintain a positive image in the international community” (10). These efforts refer to policies and activities that are put together to project a reputation that embodies honesty, reliability, care, public interest, confidence and understanding. In essence, international public relations is principally concerned with an attempt by a nation, an organization or an individual to create a mutually beneficial friendship or alliance or association between the organization, etc., and the international public with the aim of attracting liking or love and ultimately patronage by the external bodies. The main difference between local public relations and international public relations is that international public relations is targeted at an international audience and it mostly uses the foreign media while the local public relations deals with local audience and media, that is an audience within a nation.

## **BRANDING AND REBRANDING**

Branding is “a symbolic embodiment of all the information connected with a product or service. It includes a name, logo and other visual elements such as image, fonts, colour, and other elements connected with the product or service” (Ekemezie, Odigbo and Aniuga 8). Also, as the *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary* points out, branding is “the activity of giving a particular name, image to goods, and services so that people will be attracted to them and want to buy them” (170). Branding is all about giving a unique image to a product, manufactured goods, a person, a service, a place or location (country) so that the name can be identified easily by prospective customers or clientele who will be inspired to take action by patronizing the product or service. As regards place branding,

Adebola, Talabi and Lamidi assert that it “can be defined as the process whereby a town, region, country (Nigeria) actively seeks to create a unique and competitive identity for itself, with the aim of positioning it in formally and externally as a good destination for trade, tourism and investments” (424).

Asemah, Akase and Nkwam-Uwaoma affirm that rebranding is about changing the particular image of something that is no longer acceptable or representative of what one expects. They further assert that rebranding is a total repackaging to eliminate elements that are no longer suitable or representative and, in this vein, introduce elements that will project a new image of the entity or nation in question (Asemah, Akase and Nkwam-Uwaoma 36). Rebranding in the context of this study is an attempt to change the image of Nigeria in the eyes of the comity of nations to attract investment, tourism and trade and ultimately repositioning it for greater achievements.

## **TOOLS AND STRATEGIES OF INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC RELATIONS**

We shall attempt to look at some of the tools and strategies of international public relations as posited by Asemah, Akase and Nkwam-Uwaoma (31-37). Some of the tools and strategies include:

1. Establishment of Cultural Centres: A country can project its image by establishing cultural centres in foreign countries where the culture of the establishing country can be projected. Examples of such in Nigeria include – Goethe Institute and British Council owned by Germany and Britain respectively.
2. Organising International Trade Fairs: This offers opportunities for interaction with

foreign participants to sort out the way of enhancing the technological and societal development of both nations in bilateral talks and fairs. Such fairs organized in Nigeria include – Lagos International Trade Fair, Kaduna International Trade Fair, Enugu International Trade Fair, and so on.

3. Organising Seminars Locally and Internationally: The government can organize both local and international seminars where topical issues will be the centre of attraction. Nigeria as a country can use the Nigerian Institute for Cultural Orientation (NICO) to organize such lectures on cultural heritages of Nigeria.
4. Periodic Organisation of Press Conferences: Periodic international press conferences can be organized by the Nigerian government or its relevant agencies. Such press conferences can help to correct misconceptions about the image of the country. It can also project the image of the country and its policies can be explained to the international community(ies). The government through the press conferences can produce feedback from stakeholders to the government and its strategic communication team.
5. Effective Community Relations Application: Nigerians abroad should live in peace with their host communities. They can take part in developmental or productive activities in the host communities. This can go a long way in laundering the image of the nation in foreign countries. The government should through their embassies abroad, educate Nigerians abroad to participate in the activities of their host communities. Such acts of inclusion can ameliorate the problem of xenophobia in South Africa and racism in other countries.
6. Effective Media Relations: There are no public relations without the media. The

government public relations managers should develop a good relationship with the media to engender positive reportage.

7. **Sponsorship of Sports Activities:** Nigeria is good at using this strategy of international public relations. They have hosted sports events in the past such as – the All African Games, African Nations Cup, Under 17 and 20 Football World Cup tournaments for men. These activities go a long way in contributing to the economy of the nation, its image, trade and tourism.
8. **Sponsorship of Literary Works:** Literary giants such as Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe (late), Femi Osofisan, and Chimamanda Adichie, abound in Nigeria. However, the nation has not utilized this opportunity through sponsorships. Most of these writers are not sponsored; they project themselves through self-sponsorship or the private sector.
9. **Film and Documentary Productions:** This is a strategy that the Nigerian government has not taken seriously. Despite the success of Nollywood in projecting the image of Nigeria and contributing to the economy, the Nigerian government is yet to take a cue from that. The government should embark on the production of films and documentaries that can tell the story of the unique nature of Nigeria's cultural heritage to the whole world. Such films can be televised in the international media and shown in film festivals across the world.
10. **Advertising in International Media:** Advertisements that project the image of the country can be published or broadcast in the various media such as – magazines, newspapers, television, cinema, internet and radio.
11. **Mass Reorientation:** This is an area that Nigeria as a nation needs a massive

investment. This is because the Nigerian masses appear to have lost hope in the nation; not just foreigners. There should be a massive reorientation in the country and outside the country. To achieve this, the National Orientation Agency (NOA) and cognate agencies should be reinvigorated. They should be adequately staffed by experts and well sponsored. This will enable them to meet up with the enormous responsibilities of a national and international re-orientation interventionist programme.

## **REBRANDING NIGERIA THROUGH INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC RELATIONS**

There have been some failed attempts in the recent past to rebrand Nigeria as a country. In 2004, the government of President Olusegun Obasanjo launched an image campaign called the “Nigerian Image Project” anchored by Chief Chukwuemeka Chikelu, the then Minister of Information and National Orientation. This project aimed to change positively the international perception of the country. The project did not see the light of day before a new Minister was appointed. The new Minister changed the name of the “Nigerian Image Project” to “Heart of Africa” (HOA). About 600 million naira (3 million dollars) was budgeted for the project. Despite the massive investment, the project was a stillbirth. Nworah avers that the projects failed because of the following reasons: (a) they did not conduct an image analysis; (b) stakeholders were not involved in the development of the brand; (c) no coordination of the Heart of Africa (HOA) campaign; (d) low involvement by public relations, advertising and media practitioners; and (e) lack of confidence in the economic, political and social reforms (2).



The Freedom of Information Bill (FOIB) which was later passed into law as the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) in Nigeria (Omoera “Freedom of Information Bill” 59; “The Quest for more Effective” 85) is another attempt to attract foreign attention to a seemingly transparent government. Charles Soludo’s banking sector recapitalization drive that saw the emergence of viable banks restored faith in Nigeria’s financial markets locally and internationally. The petroleum downstream sector was also deregulated to attract foreign interest and investment. Even though they were not specifically tagged IPR projects but they provided some kind of image laundering or building for a growing economy such as Nigeria that should be taken seriously at the global stage at a time.

Furthermore, other historical administrative attempts by the Nigerian government, both military and civilian, at different times, to market or rebrand country include programmes such as “Green Revolution,” “War Against Indiscipline (WAI),” and “Kick Against Indiscipline (KAI).” These were classic examples of instilling discipline in its citizen and a way of rebranding to project value for agriculture or civility or its appearance to the outside world. It is the same conviction that informed the establishment or creation of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC), National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC), and other sister-agencies to raise Nigeria’s integrity profile amongst nations. However, inconsistent government policies, nepotism and corruption have not allowed the country to reap the fruits of such strategic programmes.

At any rate, there was the much-publicized “Rebranding Nigeria Project” championed by the former Minister of Information, Late Professor Dora Akunyili that also failed allegedly due to poor marketing communications strategies (Ekemezie,

Odigbo and Aniuga 7). Another factor that contributed to the failure of the above projects is corruption. The organizers could not use massive financial investments in the projects wisely. There was no proper planning and execution. Before embarking on any international public relations in Nigeria, we need to settle the home front; whatever we are seeking to do internationally should be in collaborating conjunction with our resources and strengths such as the abundant tourism potential earlier indicated and a crop of strategic communicators at home. There should be some internal reforms in the country; some SWOT analysis within the framework of SaM. There should be political, economic and socio-cultural policy reforms. Infrastructure such as roads, electricity, water, security and so on should be provided. This will make the masses to believe in the project and also ‘calm’ the nerves of the international community that we hope to attract to Nigeria through the international public relations campaign.

From the foregoing, it is right to deduce that despite attempts in the recent past to rebrand Nigeria, none has been successfully executed due to improper planning, implementation and corruption. As such, to effectively rebrand Nigeria through international public relations, the nation, through the Ministry of Information and Culture, should carry out exploratory research on the image of Nigeria and why it needs rebranding and how it can be executed successfully. It should be a long-term project. This should be done not just by government staff, but a team of experts made up of – ministry workers, the academia, media, marketing and strategic communications experts. They should be the think-tank to carry out the rebranding project. They should be supervised by the National Orientation Agency and the Minister of Information, but the specialized team should be given a free hand to operate. There should be proper

coordination of the rebranding project and the local and international media as well as Nigerian media celebrities such as Onyeka Onwenu, Anthony Joshua, Burna Boy, Tu Face Idibia (Innocent Ujah Idibia), among others, should be involved.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Nigeria as a nation needs massive, consistent, and aggressive rebranding to be adequately recognized by the international community. Based on the tools and strategies of international public relations highlighted, it is clear that Nigeria can be rebranded through international public relations. Therefore, there should be a new beginning in the attempt at rebranding Nigeria; that the country should succeed once and for all in the rebranding Nigeria campaign attempt. There should be proper planning and execution and the whole process should eschew corruption which is a bane of Nigeria. It is on the strength of this that the following recommendations are made.

1) The Nigerian government as a conscious policy should rebrand the country through the planned, deliberate, and sustained sponsorship of films and documentary productions that deal with Nigeria's cultural heritage and tell Nigerian stories uniquely. These films and documentaries can be exhibited in international film festivals, international cinemas and television channels. This will help in projecting the cultural image of the nation. Similarly, there should be mass media advocacy and corporate advertisements. These advertisements can be placed in international newspapers, magazines, cinemas, radios, televisions and the internet (that is, it can be used strategically in various social media such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and so on).

- 2) Nigeria should also practice cultural diplomacy. It should emulate foreign countries and establish functional cultural centres abroad. It can be named after a Nigeria cultural icon such as late Chinua Achebe, late Gabriel Okara, late Fela Anikulapo-Kuti, Chimamanda Ngozi Adachie, or Wole Soyinka. The Nigerian National Troupe should be reinvigorated to perform in these centres on regular basis. Private theatre troupes in Nigeria can also take advantage of and perform in these centres to be established. Through this way, the beauty of Nigeria and its rich cultural heritage will be promoted, presented and preserved consistently. This will, in turn, attract foreigners to the country for tourism, investment and trade.
- 3) Trained marketing communications and strategic communication experts should be engaged in the proposed rebranding campaign. It should not be left in the hands of core civil servants alone. The private sector and the academia should be involved too. Also, it is recommended that there should be effective media relations. The Ministry of Information should liaise with both the local and international media for creative, effective and efficient coverage of the proposed rebranding campaign in Nigeria.
- 4) There should be "truthful propaganda" (Adebola, Talabi and Lamidi 428) about Nigeria. There should be a deliberate and planned effort to establish a communication line where truthful propaganda about Nigeria will be expounded. In doing this, Nigeria should strengthen and improve the staffing and funding of the National Orientation Agency (NOA) and cognate agencies such as the National Institute for Cultural Orientation (NICO), the National Institute for Hospitality and Tourism (NIHOTOUR), the Centre for Black Arts and African Civilization (CBAAC), the National Film and Video Censors' Board (NFVCB), the National Film Corporation

(NFC), the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA), the National Film Institute (NFI), the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN), the Nigerians in Diaspora Commission (NiDCOM), the National Council for Arts and Culture (NCAC), etc., to carry out a mass reorientation of Nigerians locally and internationally. The beautiful Nigerian stories should be told by Nigerians and not by foreigners who may be biased and ignorant of some facts.

5) Nigerian government should also embark on the sponsorship of literary icons that write stories that project the good image of Nigeria. On the other hand, they can sponsor any literary project that can project the image of the country. In this connection, the Ministry of Information and other relevant organs of government should also be consistently organizing international press conferences, among other fora. This will provide an avenue to project government policies and create rapport with the international media. It could also generate feedback about the image of the nation from local and global stakeholders. The press conferences can also be used to correct wrong notions held by the international community about Nigeria.

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Pottery Walk

Rebecca Matheson

*Film Review:*

*The Masque of the Red Death: A Warning for the  
Present Age*

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Edgar Allan Poe published the short story “The Masque of the Red Death” in 1842. The narrative, set during the Middle Ages, recounts the attempt by “happy, dauntless, and sagacious” Prince Prospero to defy the titular plague by barricading himself up along with a thousand noblemen into his castellated abbey (Poe, 145). While outside the plague exterminates the population (“no pestilence had ever been so fatal, or so hideous”, the text reports), the prince and his guests lead a life of tranquility and revelry (Poe, 145). After five or six months, however, during a sumptuous masque ball, an intruder dressed as an impersonation of the Red Death is revealed to be an incarnation of the plague itself,

which massacres within a few minutes all the people who thought of eluding it. Poe's text can be read as an allegory of the inevitability of death and as a moral against those people who use their riches as a means to decadent self-indulgence and selfish self-preservation and not to help the needy. As his very name indicates, Prospero has therefore been seen as the representative of a feudal system in which richness was exclusively in the hands of the aristocracy, whereas the Red Death is egalitarian in its contagion and punishment.

In 1964 the story was adapted into a film, directed by Roger Corman.<sup>1</sup> *The Masque of the Red Death* was the seventh production in a cycle of eight films based on Edgar Allan Poe's horror tales, which included *House of Husher* (1960), *The Pit and the Pendulum* (1961) and *The Premature Burial* (1962). In the film, Prospero (Vincent Price, 1911-1993) is depicted as a cruel and sadistic tyrant who does not hesitate to burn an entire village down as soon as he discovers that one of its inhabitants has been contaminated by the plague. The prince's disdain and indifference for the people who are trying to escape from the Red Death is consistent with the original text and is further evidenced in the film by two scenes in which he refuses access to his castle to both noblemen and peasants. However, one of the major differences of this adaptation from its original text—apart from the addition of Poe's 1849 short story "Hop Frog" to the plot—consists of the characterization of the protagonist as a worshipper of Satan, intent on experimentally practicing the cruelties of life and on corrupting the body and the soul of Francesca (Jane Asher), the young girl he has abducted from the village. The film also focuses on

1. Corman (1926-) is a producer, an actor and the co-founder of New World Pictures. He has been the mentor of popular directors such as Francis Ford Coppola, Martin Scorsese and James Cameron, and is also known as "the Pope of Pop cinema." He has directed over fifty films since 1955, including *Not of This Earth* (1957), *The Little Shop of Horrors* (1960), *Tales of Terror* (1962) and *Frankenstein Unbound* (1990). He has produced over 380 films and received an Honorary Academy Award in 2009.

the representation of the ostentatious noblemen and their childish and decadent revels, slowly progressing towards the final sequences of the ball. The prince's prohibition to mention the pestilence (and, therefore, to wear the color red) during the masque then results in his profound disdain for the presence of the hooded red figure walking hurriedly among the guests—a detail that is highlighted by the fact that, as Jonathan Rigby notes, "Corman cleverly withholds any significant use of red until the climatic masque" (125). The director modifies the original narrative's finale (in which the red figure has actually no physical form) by revealing that the unwelcome guest is Prospero's doppelgänger, who declares: "there is no face of death until the moment of your own death," before turning the masque into a *danse macabre* leading to the death of all the noblemen.

*The Masque of the Red Death* has been praised for its visual exuberance and for its allusions to Ingmar Bergman's works as well as for Price's performance, which is "deliciously malevolent" (Nick Schager) and epitomizes "the essence of evil, albeit charming when need be" (*Variety* staff). Corman's film has been interpreted as "a macabre alternative to the revelry of Boccaccio's *Decameron*" (Leo Goldsmith), but also as alluding to the specter of communism—the red enemy—feared in the United States during the Cold War (the Cuban Missile Crisis had occurred only one year before the film's production), as David Melville suggests. In this sense, Corman's film perfectly exemplifies Steven Bruhm's argument that "the Gothic has always existed as the barometer of the anxieties plaguing a certain culture at a particular moment in history" (260). Though *The Masque of the Red Death* was produced over sixty years ago, such a function has lost none of its efficacy today. The protagonist's refusal to help the needy and recognize the danger of

the epidemic can be easily re-read through our contemporary situation of emergency as due to the diffusion of the COVID-19 virus throughout the planet. Now more than ever Poe and Corman invite us to reflect on the inevitability of death and the risks associated with ignoring the threat of a global epidemic or indulge in self-complacency. As the film indirectly suggests, risking human lives in favor of personal satisfaction or gain (and, by extension, we could say, in favor of the economical gain of an individual or a nation) is never a wise or humane decision.

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Summer Sunshine

Sue Matheson

## *Film Review:*

# *The Wrecking Crew* and Quentin Tarantino's Efforts to Repair 60s Mod Misogyny

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There is no point in denying it, or, to borrow from the imagery of the film itself, gilding it with a deceptive coat of shiny gold paint, *The Wrecking Crew* (1969), directed by Phil Karlson,<sup>1</sup> is not a good movie. The fourth in a series of adaptations based on Donald Hamilton's Matt Helm novels starring crooner Dean Martin as the boozing, lascivious counter-agent, *The Wrecking Crew* confirms the franchise's status as a more crass, more camp imitation of the glossier James Bond films.<sup>2</sup> While Bond films continue to engage moviegoers 56 years after the release of *Dr. No*, the Helm franchise quickly receded into

1. Karlson began his career directing B movies for Monogram Pictures in the 1940s and is perhaps best known for directing 1950s *noir*-inflected crime films, including early heist films like *Kansas City Confidential* (1952) and *5 Against the House* (1955). He is a "plain, seemingly graceless stylist" and "the key figure in fifties violence, specializing in foreground placement of smashed, bloody faces" (Shadoian 196). While *The Wrecking Crew* is true to Karlson's B movie roots, its mostly bloodless, cartoonish hijinks are at odds with the gritty, unsparing style of his earlier films.

2. For discussion of Bond's influence on Matt Helm, see Brian Patton's "Derek Flint, Matt Helm, and the Playboy Spy of the 1960s" in *James Bond and Popular Culture* (2014).



obscurity. That is, until July 2019 brought the arrival of Quentin Tarantino's ninth film, the elegiac and nostalgic *Once Upon a Time in Hollywood*. One of *Hollywood's* most discussed moments depicts Sharon Tate (Margot Robbie) watching herself on screen as Freya Carlson in *The Wrecking Crew*. Rather than recreating scenes from the film, Tarantino incorporates the real thing. Just as he has a reputation for reviving the dormant careers of once prominent and, in some cases, once beloved actors—like John Travolta—he revives this obscure film. In doing so, he invites viewers to reread *The Wrecking Crew* in a new way that privileges Tate's perspective and partially neutralizes the film's pervasive objectification of its female characters.

*The Wrecking Crew* begins with Count Massimo Contini's (Nigel Green) heist of \$1 billion worth of gold the United States is shipping by train to London. Unlike Bond villains, whose motivations have been suffused with the political, even if it is only a superficial Cold War malice,<sup>3</sup> Karlson's film offers no reason why someone with conspicuous wealth would want to steal the gold. That Helm will recover it and save the economies of the West is as much of a foregone conclusion as Bond's own third-act triumphs. Overall, *The Wrecking Crew* is not terribly interested in its plot. Its primary concern is presenting Helm with a bevy of exotic, buxom would-be *femme fatales* who are perhaps even more eager to seduce him than he is to seduce them.<sup>4</sup> There is Tina Louise as Lola Medina, Contini's sultry gypsy mistress, who wants to team up with Helm to betray Contini just as he betrayed her. Elke Summer plays Linka, another apparent lover of

3. Bond films featuring villains with allegiances to the U.S.S.R. include *From Russia With Love* (1963), *For Your Eyes Only* (1981), *Octopussy* (1983) and *The Living Daylights* (1987). See also *The Politics of James Bond: From Fleming's Novels to the Big Screen* by Jeremy Black (2005).

4. Tom Lisanti and Louis Paul argue that the women in Helm movies are superior to those in Bond films because they are "of stronger disposition and [do] not melt when kissed by the hero or immediately change their wicked ways" (19).

Contini's and his partner in crime. She hopes to use seduction as a prelude to murdering Helm at Contini's behest. Finally, Nancy Kwan, as Contini's ally, Yu-Rang, attempts to use her own feminine wiles to thwart Helm's efforts. Essentially, these sexually-charged encounters form the structure of *The Wrecking Crew*. To recover the gold, Helm must survive a series of liaisons-cum-assassination attempts.

Freya (Tate), an agent herself, is Helm's unwanted sidekick, and her efforts to help repeatedly ruin his trysts. Helm is relentlessly dismissive of and cruel to her. At one point, he tells her to "go play in the freeway." Nevertheless, by the end of the movie, she is shamelessly offering herself to him. In a clingy white slip she dances for him, wiggling her rear end in his face as the camera captures it in tight close-up. Until this moment, there has been no sexual tension between the two characters. They surrender to their newfound desire just when they have wrested control of the gold-carrying train away from Contini's henchmen. Despite Helm calling her "a mess" moments before, which is intended as not just a reference to her muddy clothing and tangled hair but to her peculiar blend of girlish naïveté, klutziness, and earnestness, she emerges from the engine car's unseen (and spatially impossible) bathroom/closet in pink lingerie and freshly styled hair. Helm, meanwhile, has discovered a hidden Murphy bed and minibar. As the credits prepare to roll, the two can have their "little talk," the film's winking, oft-used euphemism for sex. Helm can now conveniently forget Freya's irritating qualities and supposed messiness because she has presented herself as a willing lover and a doe-eyed admirer of his casual but effective tradecraft.

*The Wrecking Crew* shamelessly and aggressively foregrounds the male gaze in nearly

every scene. It is guilty of the same kind of misogyny Tarantino has been accused of throughout his career.<sup>5</sup> Critics reignited the debate over his treatment of women when they noted that Margot Robbie's/Sharon Tate's voice is silenced throughout the movie in favor of the film's two male protagonists played by Leonardo DiCaprio and Brad Pitt.<sup>6</sup> However, as part of *Once Upon a Time in Hollywood's* larger revisionist goals, which hinge on Tate narrowly avoiding the Manson family members who come to disrupt quiet Cielo Drive, Tarantino radically revises *The Wrecking Crew's* problematic gaze. By positioning Tate in the theater audience and repeatedly cutting back to her as she smiles and laughs along with the audience at the pratfalls and double-entendres, the gaze shifts. It shifts from that of the default leering male to Tate's female gaze. Rather than a tasteless relic, the film becomes a document of dreams fulfilled, of burgeoning talent transcending a derivative script, low-budget sets, and retrograde orientalism. Tarantino does not use those scenes of *The Wrecking Crew* that most flagrantly objectify Tate's body or reduce her to just another of Helm's potential conquests; he highlights her versatility. He shows her willingness to do goofy physical comedy when Freya first appears and promptly falls over Helm's luggage and her climactic girl-power martial arts showdown with Kwan. Just as Tarantino "rescues" Tate from her tragic death, he rescues her on-screen legacy by presenting *The Wrecking Crew* as an empowering experience not defined by "cool" mod misogyny. In order to fully appreciate Tarantino's recuperative efforts, *The Wrecking Crew* becomes an essential viewing. Tarantino is renowned for the dense intertextuality of his films. To not view *The Wrecking Crew* in tandem with *Once Upon a Time in Hollywood* is

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5. For a pre-#metoo discussion see A.O. Scott's *New York Times* review of *The Hateful Eight*.

6. This controversy generated far too many online articles to cite. Among the more thoughtful considerations is Bilge Ebiri's "So, How Much of *Once Upon a Time in Hollywood* is Margot Robbie Actually In?" at vulture.com.

to miss a clear onscreen counterargument to the Robbie/Tate controversy that has gone unacknowledged.

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## *Film Review:*

# Revisiting Ousmane Sembène's *La Noire de ...* [Black Girl]: The Schism of Identity and the Wound of Colonialism

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Independent Scholar

Ousmane Sembène's 1966 film *La Noire de ...* is a portrait of Diuana (Mbissine Thérèse Diop), a black domestic laborer who has emigrated from Senegal to France in search of a new life. The film shifts between an apartment in France where Diuana is employed, and post-independence Senegal, where she reminisces of her pre-emigration life in Dakar and the small village where she lives. Thus, right from the beginning of the film, it is evident that Diuana is a split subject, caught between tradition, assimilation, the present and the past, and, ultimately, the material conditions of her labor and the more idealistic

projections of herself that she attempts to maintain whilst in the midst of her alienated labor.

Diuana is from a country which, as a result of French colonization, has been split into two; post-independence Senegal attempts to maintain its regional identity and traditions while simultaneously practicing a Francophilia evident in the clear distinction between town and country visible in the film. Thus spectators see Diuana as she occupies different spaces (city, village), switches between a traditional Senegalese boubou (a kind of wrap worn as a skirt) and a European style dress as well as sports her braided hair or a wears a wig—indications of her struggle to situate her identity in the split cultural and social landscape of her home country.

Cinematically, Sembène<sup>1</sup> indexes this condition of being split in a rather interesting way, as Diuana's body is separate from her voice; Diuana's interior monologue narrating the film is a disembodied voice, often at odds with what is visible on the screen (Sembène even cast two different actresses to play Diuana, her body being played by Mbissine Thérèse Diop, whereas her voice is by Toto Bissainthe). Diuana as a subject emerges at the intersection of a series of contradictions: her anticipated ideal-ego and the reality of her alienated labor; her traditional culture versus the modern, urban lifestyle she desires; and even through language and writing—although Diuana is fluent in both French and Wolof, her employers (Robert Fontaine and Anne-Marie Jelinek) are in control of her written correspondence with her family back in Senegal, drafting a letter on Diuana's

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1. Sembène (1923-2007) is credited with being the first black filmmaker on the continent of Africa, debuting with the short film *BaromSarretin* 1963. Sembène wrote and directed ten of his thirteen films, often adapting them out of his novellas and short stories. *La Noire de...* was originally a short story, and subsequently became Sembène's first feature film. Sembène was a Marxist and a member both the General Confederation of Labour and the Communist Party in France.

behalf and mailing it to her mother. These contradictions form the conditions of Diuana's alienation, as well as the schism at the center of her identity: far from identifying with either side of these antinomic elements, Diuana's subjectivity is split from within: it occupies an *atopia*—a veritable “no place” in relation to the external world. This relation is indexed in the French title of the film, (which gets lost in its translation to English); *La Noire de ...*, translatable roughly as “the black girl of,” connotes a sense of belonging, but a belonging to an ellipsis, a ‘nothing,’ an interval of suspense with no particular content suggestive of a perpetual movement within a vacuum: Diuana's spirit is the epitome of a homeless *cogito*.

Part of the genius of Sembène is in the way in which the filmmaker subverts the male gaze in a perhaps unprecedented and hitherto unacknowledged form: the camera peers at Diuana as she labors in the household, cooking, cleaning, and serving her white, petit bourgeois employers and their guests while donning a low-cut dress, and often bending over allowing a glance at the top of her breasts. At one point, an old male guest (Raymond Lemerle) grabs Diuana and kisses her, exclaiming that he had never kissed a black girl before. Male characters in the film stare at Diuana while she labors, as though to freeze her subjectivity into a fetish image while in the midst of her labor. She is urged by her employer to wear a new dress, as she is accused of wearing the one (above mentioned) too often. Later in the film, Diuana changes into her traditional Senegalese boubou in protest of her maltreatment. Her male employer stares at her longingly, indicating the way in which she has been pinned between the assimilating European style dress, and the exoticized appeal of her traditional garment.

In the film, the male gaze thus appears as a composite of Diuana's labor and a

sartorial fetish imposed on her by her employers. However, quite late in the film, this gaze is subverted when Diuana literally strips herself bare in her room in preparation for her act of suicide. What is unique about this scene is that it could not be more de-eroticized: in her naked state, Diuana has paradoxically dissolved the tension between two competing fetishes (exoticism versus European chic) which fought for hegemony over her body. Alone in her room, although confined in many ways, Diuana is nonetheless able to escape the eroticization of her body while paradoxically being in a state of full exposure to the camera. This characteristic of the film demonstrates that it is not the body itself which stands in as the sole surface of eroticization/sexualization, but rather the body *plus* an element which signifies the erotic to the gaze. In this case, the elements are not simply the European dress or the traditional Senegalese skirt, but the complex matrix which includes the context of the female character's labor, within which Diuana is forced into a sexualized and subservient subject position. As well, it is not one of these elements (the dress or skirt) which eroticize her body, but rather the very tension between the two; the perpetual movement from one to another and the inability of Diuana to completely occupy either suggests the possibility of her becoming denuded—suggesting her immanent disrobing. However, as the film shows us, without these competing fetishes, and without performing her servitude through her domestic labor, her nude body, radically, becomes devoid of all signification.

This is ultimately what *La Noire de ...* is about: Diuana's painful resistance to interpellation at the level of (erotic, sexual, cultural, and economic) signification, culminating in her final free subjective act—her suicide. After divesting herself of all cultural indicators (no dress, no wig), Diuana enters the bathroom to kill herself. Through

editing, Sembène accomplishes a moment of sublime, radical temporality: the camera is no longer fixed on Diuana, but instead reproduces her point of view as it tracks into the bathroom and focuses on a blank wall. There is a cross dissolve, and Diuana's robe hanging on a hook on the blank wall comes into view. This small device inscribes a gap into the film, as Diuana is finally able to, in a sense, escape diegetic time and commit her free act outside of the narrative, and thus, outside of the hegemonic hold of cultural, social, or economic forces. This gap, marking a true confrontation with the void, seems a direct reference to Jacques-Louis David's famous painting *La Mort De Marat* (1793) from the French Revolution. Both Diuana and Marat lie in repose in bathtubs, oriented in the same direction, their right hands hanging over the side. Marat holds a final revolutionary letter in his other hand, whereas blood is smeared on the side of the tub in which Diuana lie dead. This could be interpreted as a kind of ambiguous proto-signifier, a symbol which, although ultimately standing for nothing—perhaps for void itself—ironically gives the appearance of meaning where meaning is itself lacking in death.

Unlike Marat, and the bloody reign of terror in the wake of the French Revolution, the ultimate symbol of violence is not a severed, bloody head in *La Noire de ...*, but rather a disembodied Senegalese mask. The mask, which was previously a gift to her employer, is returned by the latter to the village where Diuana was from along with other of her belongings. A child (Ibrahima Boy) picks up the mask, wears it on his face, and ominously follows the employer as he leaves the village—as though the spirit of revolution is born upon Diuana's suicide, inhabiting the body of a small child. Diuana's spirit, her *cogito*, thus finally finds a proper home, a proper place.

The film could not offer a more valuable rumination on today's social and political

climate; from identity politics, to the continued rise of neo-colonial and neo-liberal projects around the globe, *La Noire de ...* does not provide any right answers, but rather asks the right questions apropos of the contradictions of identity, labor, sexuality, gender and ultimately the subject's contentious relationship to (and as a member of) the social body. In this way, *La Noire de ...*, although focusing on a particular Senegalese, female subject, has a universal message: the universal must be embodied in and through a particular manifestation, and not maintained as an ideal, free-floating form devoid of substance. Freedom, as a universal project, can only be accomplished from the perspective of a particular set of political and social demands, a condition which must be met in order not to erode freedom into a whitewashed utopia with no substantial content whatsoever. The tragedy of Diuana demonstrates how the wound of colonialism and the subsequent schism of identity it produces haunts not only the oppressed and marginalized, but ultimately comes to haunt the privileged, bourgeois subjects which reproduce the conditions of oppression as part and parcel of the colonial project itself.



Mellowyellow

Sue Matheson

## Gone with the Wind

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*I sat upright and pricked up my ears. The knock at the door stopped, and the sounds of footsteps faded away. I sighed with a relief and buried my head into the soft pillow. That winter, the outside wind was howling as usual, with leaves rustling. However, lots of things were different.*

When I was a Grade-Two student, my family moved into a new community. Several days after we moved in, my mother led me to make friend with a girl called Qiqi whose family lived on the second floor. She told me that girl also was seven years old and studied in Central Primary School, but she was in Grade One now.

“Qiqi, come here, I will give you some sweets.” My mother said to a girl seated on a small stool in a living room. We stood at the door of an apartment and watched the girl trotting towards us. She was chubby, wearing a red coat, black trousers and red boots, just like the girl printed on the *New Year Picture* that my mom pasted on our door yesterday. Her hair was parted and plaited into two braids.

“Hello! Auntie.” She looked up at my mom with her dewy eyes and grinned, with two shallow dimples in her cheeks.

My mom squatted, gave her some sweets and nipped her chubby cheek.

“Qiqi, I bring a new friend for you. This is my daughter Weiwei. Would you like to play with her?”

We looked at each other straightly. I didn't know what I should say.

“Hi, Weiwei!” She beamed at me.

“Hi, Qiqi.” I greeted to her as well.

“Well, Tomorrow is New Year's Eve. You two can watch the fireworks play in our community's small garden together.”

We both nodded our heads.

“Eh, can you play finger puzzle?” she asked.

“Yes, I am good at it.”

“Great! Let's go to my bedroom and play now.” she held my hand and led me into her bedroom.

New Year's Eve came, requested by my mom, I went to Qiqi's home and invited her to watch the fireworks. She was eating her third chicken leg. “Wait a minute, I will eat quickly” She uttered and went on to take a big bite of the chicken leg.

“Bang! Band! Bang!”

“Ah” We both shouted out. That was the sound of bursting fireworks!

“It started! Weiwei! Let's go!” She put down her chicken leg in the bowl immediately and stuffed his feet into the red boots.

“Yes! Quick!” I pushed her out of the door.

We darted through the corridor, ran downstairs and rushed towards the garden. The cold wind blew on our face, but we just wanted to arrive there at once. In the midway, we could already see the fireworks, so we stopped and looked up to the sky. Dozens of fireworks burst simultaneously in midair, like gorgeous blossoming flowers, illuminating the night sky. Blue, pink, orange, green, yellow, red... colorful flowers were



shining over our heads. We were immersed in the spectacle until it disappeared.

“Ah! Wonderful!” We spoke at the same time and then looked at each other. “Ha ha!” we giggled and then continued to walk to the center of garden. That night, though the chill wind was blowing, we still stayed there and enjoyed the glorious sky until all the fireworks were completely shoot off.

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Although Qiqi and I neither go to school nor play in school together, Qiqi would often come to do homework with me after school. And we always had fun at weekends together. We usually played games with other friends in the community, such as hide-and-seek, throwing sandbags, skipping and dancing over a chain of rubber bands, and “one, two, three, don’t move” game, etc.

At times, we would go out of our community to enjoy the beautiful scenery. In spring, we liked to go to the park. In the soft warm breeze, thousands of peach blossoms would be swaying slightly. We would climb up the trees, pick up some peach blossoms secretly and run away quickly. In summer, we would swim or catch the small fish in the limpid river; we would wander around the green field and dig up potatoes in someone’s vegetable plot; we would climb the mountains to see the sunrise with adults. In autumn, we preferred

to ride our bikes to the expressway lined with parasol trees, which shivered their green or yellow leaves in the souging wind. Some yellow leaves whirled in the air, as yellow butterflies were flying. And we collected the fallen leaves to create various kinds of bookmarks. However, in winter, the wind was roaring outside, so we just stayed at home. We enjoyed leaning against the sofa next to the heater, watching cartoons all day. We enjoyed drinking hot tea when doing winter vacation work.

Days passed. The days were always peaceful and life was like a placid lake.

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“Dong!” The stone draw a graceful curve through the air and dropped into the middle of river, making ripples spreading across the surface of the river. Qiqi and I were throwing the stones at the riverbank.

“Remember Xuemei I mentioned to you before?” She turned to me and asked.

“The transfer student of Grade Four that came into your class?”

“Yes,” she shook her two braids delightfully and said, “We have become good friends. And we decided to go back home together every day. I’ve told my mom not to pick me up.”

“Oh, when?”

“Last week. She is really pretty.” she took out a photo sticker from her pocket and showed it to me.

Two girls were smiling brightly in the photo, with their heads close. One was Qiqi, and the other had a quite delicate oval face, with beautiful pink-and-white complexion. “She looks very beautiful.” I thought but I felt hard to speak it out.

“You took the photo sticker for the first time, right?”

“Yes. It was my first sticker photo with a friend.”

“I envy you. I have never taken a sticker photo yet.”

“Hee hee. It feels like a very fresh thing.”

I expected she could say something, but she didn't say a word any more. I wanted to say but repressed myself because some words would make me seem so mean.

“Let's go back home.” I said and hold her hand.

...

Two weeks passed. I stared at the calendar on the desk for a while and continued to bury myself in homework. Not long after the autumn semester began, Grade-Five

students had to do many texts and exercises, in preparation for the entrance exam to the junior high school. I began to study hard, not only because my father hoped me to get into the best junior school in our city with high grades, but also because a lot of his colleagues' children had entered that school and I didn't want to be looked down upon by those adults any more.

“Du Du!” The telephone was ringing. I went to answer it.

“Hello! Weiwei.”

“Hey! Qiqi!” I nearly jumped up, “You didn't have homework last two weeks?”

“Not so. I do my homework in Xuemei's home after school every day. Eh, sorry, I didn't tell you...” she stopped for a while and continued to say, “that we decided to do homework together two weeks ago.”

I disliked this call suddenly, “Oh, of course, it doesn't matter. Xuemei and you do the same homework. You can help each other a lot.”

“Yes! And Xuemei and I are going to do some shopping this Saturday. Would you like to join us?”

“Eh...Yes...Yes I'd like to. Maybe I also have something to buy.”

\*\*\*\*\*

After shopping for almost the whole day, I came back home, exhausted, and threw myself into the bed.

It was really not a wise idea to go shopping with them. They wandered around rows of clothes to and fro, and tried on this or that, while I just had a look, sat down to wait, and was asked to comment on their clothes (My parents didn't give me much money, because they would take me to buy what I need). When they selected the nail polishes, lipsticks or mascara cream in the boutique, I still glanced over, sat and then said something meaningless--I was usually responsible for smiling or saying something like "Wow!", "Really?" and "Great!". In fact, there was an invisible glass wall secluding me from them. If I had bought some cosmetics, I bet my mom would've been discontent. To be honest, I thought it was too early for us to buy cosmetics. We were still pupils. Why did they like to wear a heavy make-up?

"Oh, I don't want to shop with them any more." I groaned, lying on the bed.

...

About a month later, Qiqi phoned me to go outside again. This time it was not shopping but going to web-bar!

"Why? You know it is not good. There are lots of bad boys, which the adults told us

for many times."

"Don't worry. Xuemei's boyfriend will come together. His boyfriend is an awesome guy. His boyfriend's brother is the boss of the gangs in our Chengxi District."

"Gangs? It is scary."

"No! Actually, they are nice and loyal to friends."

"Xuemei suggested going to the bar?" I asked continuously.

"Yes. But I also wanted to go and have a look."

"But have you told your mother?"

"How dare I tell her!" she suddenly raised her tone, "Ah, if you don't want to...?"

"I will go with you."

The Internet bar was not as terrible as my parents told me. They didn't fight with each other, but I still felt uncomfortable. Many boys and girls there were taller and more mature than us. There were some punk boys and girls with makeup. Some of them spoke out dirty words and sometimes smoked. We four played games online on that afternoon, but I felt uneasy all the time and was scared of coming across some classmates who often went to the bar.

When Qiqi and I went back home, I intended to say that she had better keep away from Xuemei and his boyfriend, but I watched her purple fingernails and new hairstyle (side-swept fringe that almost covered her left eye) for a while and kept silence on our way home.

Afterwards, Qiqi asked me to go shopping for several times, but I made excuse not to go. We seldom played games in the garden at that time, not only because I had lots of exercises, but also we no longer played games like “Hide and Seek” and “Skipping rubber ropes”. We just played badminton in the garden at times. I tried to persuade her not to go to the web-bar but I failed. She was unhappy whenever I said Xuemei and his boyfriend were bad students. I was a little angry about this and gradually lost patience in talking her over. Gradually, she seldom came to my home. Neither did I. She played outside with Xuemei more often. I also got used to study hard with my classmates at weekends. Days passed, I made progress in my performance little by little.

\*\*\*\*\*

In the autumn semester of the Grade Six, I became the top 3 students in our class and was more and more passionate about study.

From one day on, my mom would sometimes tell me something about Qiqi. “Her

mother always complains that she plays outside with her friends too much, even including some bad boys. She dresses really unlike a child. I heard that she spent much money, copied homework and performed badly in study. Do not get too close to her. Do you understand?” My mom said in a serious tone.

“She seldom comes to our home now. We haven’t been outside together for a long time.” I refused to promise that I won’t play with Qiqi anymore.

“That’s good.”

\*\*\*\*\*

The autumn semester finished and New Year was coming. The outside howling wind was rustling the leaves while the warmer was giving off heat. I drank a cup of hot tea and then did my vacation work.

“Dong Dong!” Someone was knocking at the wooden door. I opened it and saw Qiqi grinning at me.

“Hi! Weiwei. Let’s do homework together.”

“Come in!” I took her arm and pulled her into my bedroom. I still felt happy whenever she came to play with me.

“Our Chinese teacher gave us six articles to write, but I haven’t written one.”

“You must hurry up.” We walked to the desk.

“But it is too hard. Can you help me write some of them?”

“Eh?” I stared at her and stand rigidly.

She shook my arm and smiled to me, “Please. You are so kind and generous. Just do me one favor.”

“Please!” She blinked her watery eyes at me.

“Emmm...All right.”

The whole day, I helped her write three compositions under her continuous begging, while she just finished half of an article by herself.

“There are just two left. I believe we can finish them tomorrow.” She showed her usual smile, “Thank you so much, see you!”

“Ha ha. Goodbye.” I tried my best to close the door gently.

I went back to my bedroom. My exercise books were left aside on the desk. I felt like I was an idiot. Why hadn’t I rejected her request? Why hadn’t I asked her not to come tomorrow?

On the morning of the next day, I was seated on the sofa, waiting for the knock of the door quietly.

“Dong Dong” I didn’t move, holding my breath and waiting for it to stop. What should I explain to her afterwards? My classmate invited me to her home? My mother took me out to the shopping mall?

“Dong! Dong Dong! Dong Dong Dong!” The endless knock at the wooden door became louder and louder.

“Insufferable!” I cursed in a low voice, leaning back on the sofa.

“Dong Dong. Dong.” The annoying sound was fading out.

I sat upright and pricked up my ears. The knock at the door stopped, and the sounds of footsteps faded away. I signed with a relief and buried my head into the soft pillow. About half an hour later, I heard the wooden door creak. I turned around quickly. Oh, it was just my mother.

“Weiwei”, my mom asked, “Did you go out of home for a while just now?”

My heart was overshadowed by a sense of foreboding.

“I met Qiqi just now. She asked me where you went. I said you were at home.”

“And then?” My heart was beating fast.

“She said she knocked the door but no one answered. I said maybe you went outside.”

“And then?”

“And then she left.”

“Yes. I came out for a while.” I lowered my head and dared not gaze at my mom.

“Why did she come to our home?” My mom said with hints of complaint.

“I don’t know.” I responded curtly.

“How did she think? Did she think that I was really outside? Or did she think that I was actually at home? What should I say when we meet?” These questions reverberated in my mind like circulating noises for days until New Year’s Eve came. Qiqi didn’t ask me to watch the fireworks that night. Sure enough, she thought I was at home then.

\*\*\*\*\*

The spring semester came. I was so fearful of seeing her. I didn’t know what I should explain to her. I was dishonest, but she was also wrong. Whenever I walked in the community or school, I walked as fast as I could. I seldom went out of home or my classroom as well.

But not long after, we met each other. One afternoon, I was walking with my classmate out of the school gate, while she was walking out with Xuemei. I walked slowly behind them, trying to keep a safe distance.

“How about going to the river? We haven’t gone there for a long time.” she turned around and asked me after my classmate and Xuemei arrived their homes.

“Of course, I’d love to.” I thought she wanted to talk about that thing. I had avoided that thing enough and I could face it courageously.

The long willow twigs along the bank hung low, brushing the surface of the river gently. We were seated on the riverbank, feeling the soft wind across the river touching our face softly.

“How do you do recently?”

“Fine. Just lots of work to do. You will also have lots of work to do soon in preparation for the entrance exam.”

“Yes, study is so annoying!”

I had developed great interest in study and hence didn’t know how to respond to it. We kept silence for a while.

“When the spring semester finishes, my family will move to Qinghai Province.” She suddenly said.

This bombing news shocked me. I stared at her for a while. She just smiled to me.

“But...Eh...I mean why?”

“My father agreed to help his friend with business there. He said the Gaokao passing score is lower there. In the future, I will have more chance to get into a good university. You know, my grade is always low.”

“Don’t worry. If you work hard, you can get good marks.” I repressed my sense of loss and said, “And moving to Qinghai province is indeed good for you.”

She shrugged her shoulders. We stopped this topic and talked about other things. She didn’t mention that unhappy thing. Neither did I. Nevertheless, we had nothing to talk about soon, so we walked back home, speechless.

Afterwards, she invited me to play outside for several times. We two revisited the park, the river, the field and the expressway. But the parasol trees along the expressway were still green. She said it was a pity that she couldn’t wait until the autumn when the leaves would turn yellow.

\*\*\*\*\*

Time flew. Not long after I took the junior high school entrance exam, the day of her department came.

“Live happily in Qinghai Province. There is a wonderful blue lake.”

“Sure. I will definitely come to see it. I am always doing what I like.”

She got on the car. We tried to look happy and waved good bye to each other as the window glass was rising. The branches of the trees on both sides of the road crossed each other, with green leaves swaying in the summer wind. The car drove along the road and left the community.

\*\*\*\*\*

After they left, my mother told me that Qiqi’s parents actually intended to separate her from her friends. I wanted to send some parasol leaves to her but her family changed the phone numbers and didn’t leave the address. Maybe her family decided to cut off her contacts with her previous friends.

Years after, I gradually realize I was too passive to maintain effective communication with her. Every time, it was her who offered to come to me, but I seldom walked to her.

Maybe our interests and opinions were different, but if I had understood her more or done more for her, many things could have been different.

The parasol trees are still rustling and growing yellow every autumn, but something was gone with the wind many years ago.

In Sync



Sue Matheson



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## *call for papers*

The *quint's* forty eighth issue is issuing a call for theoretically informed and historically grounded submissions of scholarly interest—as well as creative writing, original art, interviews, and reviews of books and films. The deadline for this call is the 15<sup>th</sup> of November 2020—but please note that we accept manu/digi-scripts at any time.

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