



## *the quint*

*Ehikowoicho Agada*

*Joyce O. Alade*

*Laura Alexander*

*Sheila Mcleod Arnopoulos*

*Erin Bragg*

*Chigozie Bright Nnabuihe*

*Sunny Ifeanyi Odinye*

*Stephen Ogheneruro Okpadah*

*Antonio Sanna*

*Tyler Turcotte*

*Monica Zandi* 10.4 September 2018

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editor

Sue Matheson

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Sue Matheson

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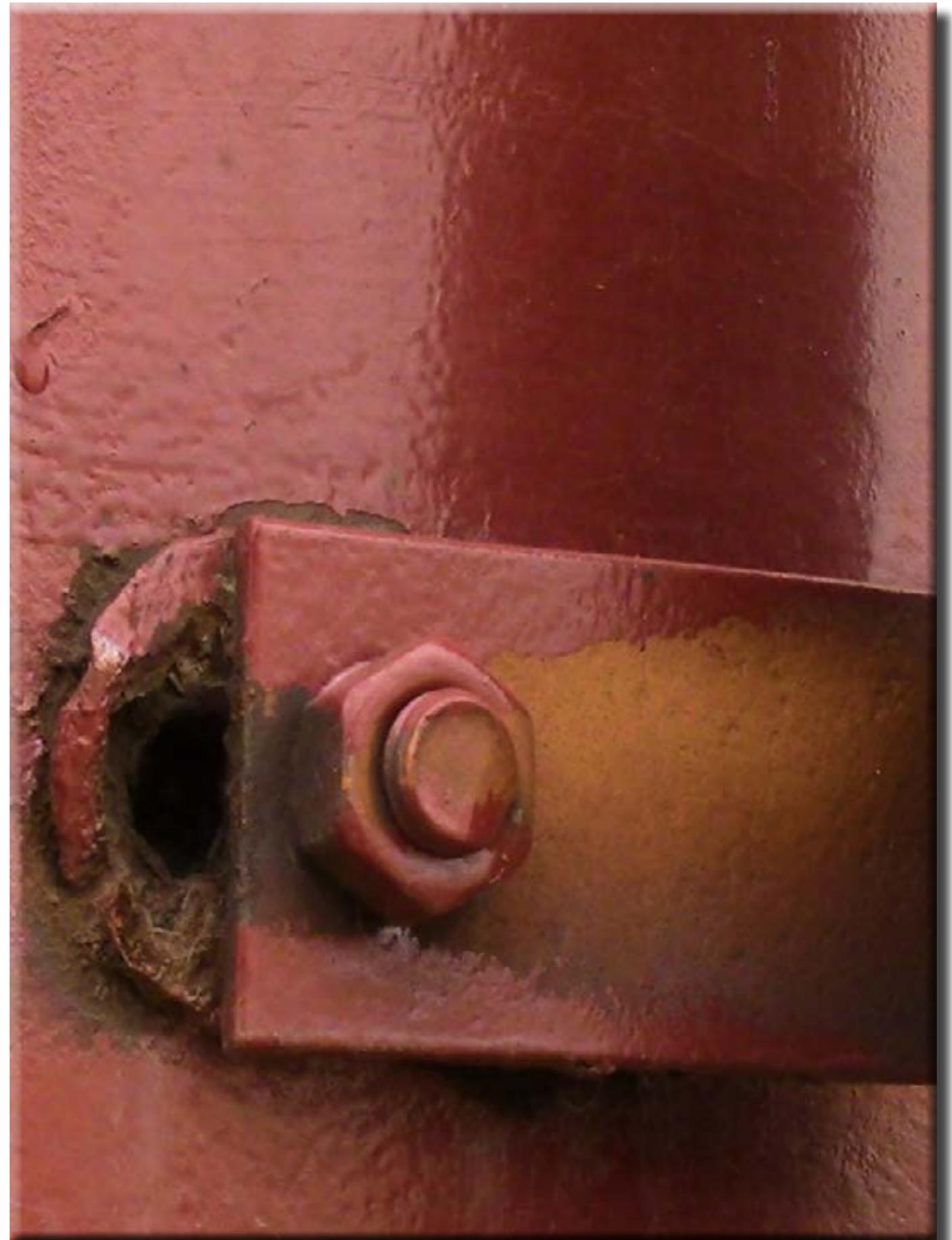
It is a wet, cold September after a blazingly hot summer marked by the dull haze of forest fires in Alberta and British Columbia. This issue of *the quint* welcomes new writers joining *the quint* and bringing with them another eclectic offering of thought provoking articles, drama, and prose. the quint, as alays, welcomes readers who enjoy diversity and are interested in new ideas.

Showcasing articles from the United States, Canada, Italy, and Nigeria, our fortieth *quint* begins with Monica Zandi's perceptive analysis into the motivations behind Paul Gaugin's correction of Andre Fontainas' misinterpretation of his work in Tahiti. In "A Brief Analysis of Paul Gaugin's Aesthetic Defense to Art Critic Andre Fontainas of *Mercur de France*," Zandi points out that without Gaugin's passionate defense, critics like Fontaines, who were accustomed to Indigenous people framed through imperialist and Orientalist structures, would have remained confused by *Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going?*'s abstractions. Then, Sunny Ifeanyi Odinye's stimulating and radical discussion, "Problems Facing The Teaching and Learning of Chinese Language in Nigeria," not only calls for establishing more Confucius Institutes and establishing effective exchange programs for language immersion, but also constructing a 'Chinese village' to address language learning barriers in his country. Laura Alexander's "'Persecutions of the Age': Public Women and the Art of Political Resistance" follows. In her important paper, Alexander points out that women in the twenty first century are still having to defend their right to speak, to write, to hold opinions publicly, to enter political discourse, and to challenge authority. Next, Erin Bragg's "A Response to Reality": Seamus Heaney's Vindication of Poetry, 1975-1996" considers Heaney's response to an imagined heckler who questions the efficacy of poetry. She concludes that in "The Redress of Poetry" Heaney demonstrates the power of poetry lies in its ability to liberate understanding and corroborate our sentiments. In "Proverbes Comme Interlangue Dans La Catastrophe Au Rendez-Vous (Rere Run) D'Oladejo Okediji Traduite En Francis Par Tunde Ajiboye," Joyce O. Alade presents a, intriguing, pragmatic analysis of Yoruba proverbs in *La Catastrophe au Rendez-Vous (Réré Rún)* by Oladejo Okediran, translated into French by Ajiboye, to demonstrate how African writers establish meaning in European languages to express their African world view and their culture. Following, Stephen Ogheneruro and Ehikowoicho Agada's absorbing paper, "A Study of Folkist Aesthetics of Tales by the Moonlight of the Nigerian Television Authority," traces the post-colonial negritization of Nigerian theatre and examines the Nigerian Television Authority's leading production of traditional African folktales. Antonio Sanna's "Sexism, Diversity and Monstrosity in Guillermo del Toro's *Hellboy* (2004)" carefully considers the film's ironies, special effects, and non-linear narrative before concluding tht the movie is surprisingly accurate, realistic and spectacular at the same time. Finally, Chigozie Bright Nnbuihe's ground-breaking study, "The Values of Kola-nut in African Religion and Spirituality: A Case Study of the Igbo of Nigeria" examines the social relevance of kola-nut in the traditional life of the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria and investigates the values of kola-nut among the Igbo in particular.

No *quint* is complete without its creative complement. Sheila Mcleod Arnapolous's "Call of the Caribou" and Tyler A. Turcotte's "Trip to the Suicide Museum" are powerful short stories, important contributions to the con-going conversation about Truth and Reconciliation that is taking place in Canada. Stuart Matheson's visual offerings in this issue invite you to further consider man-

made objects and interactions between man and nature in the North. Here's to thought-provoking reading and viewing, warm wooly sweaters, and quiet nights at home while the geese and ducks fly bravely elsewhere. Like the waterfowl, the sandhill cranes are in the fields, preparing to take their babies south for the winter. *the quint* will be back in December with more offerings for you, just in time to trim the tree for Christmas.

**Sue Matheson**  
Editor



Wear and Tear

Stuart Matheson

## The Call of the Caribou

Sheila McLeod Arnopoulos

Danielle stood nervously at the door of the room where her Grandma Jaina lay in bed. Her father, standing behind her in the hallway of the seniors' residence, had told Danielle that her seventy-five-year-old grandmother wanted to spend time with her while she still had the energy.

"Come here, granddaughter," Grandma Jaina said, waving Danielle over to her. "It's been a long time. I have something important to tell you." She slowly pulled herself up from her pillow.

Grandma Jaina's dark brown eyes still shone and her midnight black hair, in disarray around her shoulders, still gleamed. "Come up here beside me." She reached over and stroked Danielle's cheek bones.

"Listen carefully," she said. "Something you should know. My mother, your great-grandmother was Mohawk."

Danielle looked into her grandma's eyes and trembled with disbelief but also pride at this astonishing news. "Mohawk," she slowly murmured.

"Yes. You're not just French like your mother and English like my husband who took

me away from Akwesasne," her grandma said in a faltering voice. "You're also Mohawk. Never forget."

Mohawk? Why, she bristled, was this First Nations side of her heritage kept secret?

Because of her mother, over the years, Danielle had seen little of her Grandma Jaina. Christmas and other holidays were always at Grand-mère Monique's house in the east end of Montreal with the big Québécois family. Grandma Jaina was never invited.

"Come back tomorrow," said Grandma Jaina, a look of peace settling in her eyes. "We will talk. But now I must rest."

Danielle stayed close to her grandmother, holding her hand until she fell asleep. Then, in a daze, she walked slowly out of the room into the hall where her father was waiting for her.

"Let's have a coffee," he said, taking her arm and guiding her to a small family room. "Later I'll drive you to your class."

"Why didn't you tell me about our Mohawk roots?" Danielle immediately asked, her hand shaking around the handle of her coffee cup.

"Your mother," he said, "never wanted you to know. She was proud of her French heritage and you were her daughter. I respected her wishes."

When Danielle was eleven her father, a math teacher in the English school system, divorced her mother and moved away from Montreal. For many years she rarely saw him or her grandmother.

Danielle looked at her father in shock. "What? I was also yours," she said. Did he have no pride in who he was? "Why did you listen to her?" she shot out.

“I grew up being part Indian, as they called us. “At school, in the 1950s, I was the outsider. I didn’t want you to suffer the way I did.”

Danielle was silent, trying to understand. “But now attitudes have shifted,” she said. “The Mohawk stand-off last year woke everyone up. I followed what happened. 1990 changed everything. You won’t believe this, but out of interest I’m taking a First Peoples course at the college.”

“You are?” His eyes lit up and he shook his head of thick dark hair. “Oh Danielle,” he said, “You must tell your grandma.”

\* \* \*

That night, when Danielle returned home from classes, she confronted her mother about her Mohawk origins. “Grandma Jaina told me today,” she said, “at the seniors’ residence.”

“*Pas vrai*,” her mother barked. “She lies. That old woman has dementia.”

Danielle quickly boiled with resentment. “Grandma Jaina has emphysema, but her mind is clear, completely clear,” and without waiting for a reply, she left her mother silently fuming.

After that, seeking to stay close to her grandmother, Danielle went at least twice a week with her father to the residence. One afternoon, her grandma suggested Danielle look into the Mohawk standoff from the year before. “Learn about the struggles of your people. Talk to the women,” she counselled.

When Danielle announced to her mother that she was off to Kanesatake to do interviews about the land crisis, her mother screwed up her nose and said, “*Un énorme*

*gaspillage de temps* – a huge waste of time.”

“You should know,” Danielle said defiantly, “that I’m enrolled in a First Peoples course at the college.”

“What?” her mother snapped. “Remember who you are. You’re Québécoise. *Point finale*. You’re only eighteen. What do you know? *Les sauvages* could destroy the future of Quebec.

“How?” Danielle asked, seething with indignation at hearing her mother call Indigenous people *sauvage*.

“When Quebec votes to become a separate country, those people could ruin everything.” Her mouth quivered with outrage. “They could demand to remain in Canada. That’s what they’re threatening.”

Well,” Danielle burst out, “they were here first. They have rights.”

\* \* \*

Against the protestations of her mother, Danielle decided to move out. She found part-time work and took an apartment with Saraphina, her best friend who was also studying at the college.

On her next visit with her grandmother, she talked about her First Peoples course and her interview in Kanesatake with spokesperson Ellen Gabriel.

“Stay in contact with her,” her grandmother advised, holding tight to Danielle’s hand. “You can learn from her. She’s becoming an important leader.

“Why don’t you write up your interview with her for the college paper,” she said.

Danielle thought about her Grandma Jaina’s words. I’ve always liked writing, she

thought. Now I have something to write about.

“Very good,” said her grandma when Danielle showed her the article. “It reads very well. You should do more of this.”

“But now I want to hear about *your* life,” said Danielle. Tell me what it was like when you were a child in Akwesasne.”

“When I was a child?” her grandmother mused. “My best memories were when I went fishing with my grandfather in the *kaniatarowanenneh*. She paused. “That’s the big waterway, the St. Lawrence River.

“But at home things were tough, especially for my mother. I remember the day,” she said, her voice weakening, “when a priest came to our house. He grabbed my brother and took him away.”

“Why?” Danielle asked.

“For residential school. He was only seven. I can still hear his screams.” She shuddered at the memory. “Thanks to my mother, who hid me, I was saved. We were not the only family who faced this,” she said. “There were many others.

“My brother never spoke about what went on there,” she said with a resigned look in her eyes. “For several years, wanting to forget, he took off, just disappeared. Later he worked in the oil refineries in the east end. He died during the Normandy invasion, in the Second World War, probably on purpose. Before he left, he gave me a secret journal that he kept at the residential school.

“What happened to Grandma’s brother?” Danielle later asked her father, “at that school?”

“The kids,” he said, “were forbidden to speak their mother tongue. Part of the

attempt by the government and the churches to stamp out the cultures of First Nations, something I hope you’ll learn about in your course.

“There was also physical and sexual abuse. In my hands for safekeeping, I now have my uncle’s secret journal. Some day I’ll show it to you.”

\* \* \*

The First Peoples course Danielle was taking included a field trip to Great Whale village in northern Quebec. Danielle told her Grandma Jaina about it. “We’ll stay with Cree families near Hudson’s Bay.”

Her grandmother’s face warmed at this news. “The Cree are also struggling. Get involved. Find a way to help, maybe by writing about them too. Take notes on what you learn.”

She took Danielle’s hand. “Perhaps writing about social issues is your destiny,” she said. “Think about it.”

Danielle found the idea daunting. “I don’t know enough to do that.”

“You’ll learn,” her grandma said. “You’re already on a good path.”

Danielle’s commitment to explore the world of First Nations deepened the closer she grew to her grandmother. But unwilling to face an inevitable argument, she did not inform her mother about her trip to meet Cree in northern Quebec.

Instead, she shared everything with Saraphina’s handsome brother Jonas. She had known him since they were young. He always hung around when she visited Saraphina who used to tease him, saying he had a crush on Danielle. It was true, but the feeling was mutual and since high school he had been her boyfriend, despite her mother’s disapproval.

Jonas, who came from mixed parentage, Brazilian and Haitian, was studying at Concordia University's School of Community and Public Affairs. When she told him about her Grandma Jaina, he said, "I too could have aboriginal ancestry."

\* \* \*

As soon as Danielle arrived in Great Whale, her host, Kimi, an author of children's books and a teacher of Cree in the local school, made Danielle feel like a member of the family, as did her son Elijah. Right away, Kimi showed her the books she had written based on Cree legends, making Danielle eager to explore Mohawk ones.

The next day, Elijah and Kimi invited the students to a special caribou dinner. Danielle helped make the fire. Sitting cross-legged on the ground, learning to eat caribou meat off the bones, she carefully listened when Elijah spoke.

"We've got to keep our land and our way of life. Our people in Chisasibi lost their trap-lines to reservoirs. Now the fish are poisoned." He flinched with anger. "All because of Hydro Quebec. This could happen to us. We must stop Hydro and Quebec from ever damming Great Whale River."

The next day, as a special gift, Kimi gave Danielle a caribou-skin jacket that she had sewn. It matched the one Elijah wore.

"Beautiful," she told Kimi, so proud of this special Cree gift that she could show her grandmother.

"C'mon Danielle." Elijah took her outside to his all-terrain-vehicle for a ride into the hills overlooking Hudson's Bay. "I want you to see our land." They bumped over the sand dunes and up to a craggy hilltop outside the village.

Surrounded by a riot of wild flowers, her hair blowing in the wind, Danielle stood silently next to him and looked down at the mouth of Great Whale River flowing into the expanse of Hudson's Bay. The raw beauty of the place filled her with wonder.

"Could all this really be taken away?" she asked.

"Yes," he said bitterly, "all of it."

Elijah looked down into the bay. "In a few weeks," he said, "we're heading into the bush for the caribou hunt. My true home isn't in a house in Whapmagoostui," he continued, using the Cree word for Great Whale village. "It's in the bush. Come back and I'll show you what Cree life is really like."

"I would love to," she said. She wanted to experience First Nations life from the inside now while it still existed. She breathed in the fresh smell and tied up her long hair into a ponytail.

"Straight and dark, just like ours," Elijah said as he watched her.

Danielle was keen to tell Elijah about her First Nations origins but held back, embarrassed that she knew so little about her Mohawk family. She had never even visited Akwesasne. However, her father promised to take her there upon her return and also show her his uncle's journal.

Standing next to Elijah, breathing in the crisp air, she envied him his full-blooded Cree identity and his passion for his people. The year before, he'd paddled a canoe to New York City with other Cree and Inuit and asked the state to break their agreement to buy Hydro power from Quebec. He had a mission.

They sat down in the grass and from the pocket of his jeans, Elijah pulled out some dried caribou meat wrapped in wax paper and gave her a piece. "Activism isn't enough. I'm

planning to take a law degree at McGill. To stop the flooding of the land, we must use the courts. We must represent our own people, ourselves,” he insisted, “in our own way. You understand?”

\* \* \*

Two days later, the night before the students were to leave for home, Danielle learned the plans had changed. “We’re spending a whole day in James Bay. At the La Grande Complex. Hydro is giving us a tour,” she told Elijah.

Elijah groaned. Kimi, who was busy writing at her desk in the living room, looked up and shook her head in dismay.

Elijah clenched his fists. “If you want to know what’s really happening to us, make sure the Hydro people show you the monument to our ancestors that’s next to the reservoir.”

Drained of colour, Kimi stood up, walked past them and went outside.

“What’s wrong?” Danielle asked.

“My grandfather, who taught me how to hunt, is buried on a trap line that belonged to our people, long before your precious Jacques Cartier arrived. “Now,” he raged, “his body lies under the reservoir at La Grande.”

Danielle shrank at the mention of Jacques Cartier. Without thinking she blurted out, “I’m much more than just French and English. My great-grandmother was full-blood Mohawk.”

“I’m not surprised,” he said, “given the way you look. My mother noticed it right away. Why didn’t you tell us before?” He gave her a penetrating look. “Are you ashamed

of your First Nations background?”

Danielle’s face flushed. “No. No. You see. I found out just a few weeks ago from my grandmother. I know so little.”

“Now I understand,” Elijah said. “Listen. I’ll show up at the La Grande complex so the students can hear about the Cree experience. The band council has a Cessna plane I can take.”

After breakfast the next day, at their morning meeting of students, Danielle told their coordinator, Caroline about the Cree monument and how Elijah would be there to talk to the students about it.

A few hours later, Caroline showed up at Kimi’s house. “Danielle,” she said, “Moira just called me from Montreal. She wants you to take a leadership role on the Hydro tour.”

She was flattered at her teacher’s trust, but could she handle it?

“Moira is going to call you here. In a few minutes. I hope that’s okay,” Caroline said to Kimi, seated at her desk, listening.

“Of course,” said Kimi. Fingering the short braid she wore curled over her shoulder, she stood up and ushered them into the kitchen.

When the phone rang, Kimi picked up the receiver and handed it to Danielle. She and Elijah stood by quietly with Caroline. The phone was on speaker so they could all hear the conversation.

“Danielle,” said Moira. “I understand you’ve become friends with an important Cree family. I assume you’re taking notes, not just for the course, but for an article for the college paper.”

“Yes, yes,” said Danielle, glancing over to Kimi who gave her an encouraging smile.

Every night before she went to bed, she'd written down what she'd learned that day.

"Hydro is offering a bus tour where they'll talk about the glories of the dam and electricity. Caroline told me that the young man where you're billeted is prepared to present the Cree side of things.

"I'd like you to be in charge of the group. The college is paying for the transport. Therefore, you can call the shots. You okay with that?"

"Yes," Danielle said, grateful that her teacher believed in her. Did Moira suspect she was part First Nations? Is this why she'd picked her to act as leader?

When she hung up, Kimi gave her a hug, and Danielle felt a surge of self-confidence.

The phone rang again. Kimi picked up the receiver, and then handed it over to Danielle. "It's your teacher again."

"Something I should tell you," said Moira, clearing her throat. "Your mother has been calling the college, demanding to know where you are."

"What!" Danielle gulped, upset that everyone could hear.

"Look," she leapt right in. "She's furious that I'm studying and writing about First Nations. She's an extreme indépendantiste. I'm an adult. I support myself. I live away from home. She has no right . . ."

"Just wanted you to know," said Moira and she hung up.

Danielle slumped over her elbows on the kitchen table. Everyone was quiet. Now they knew her mother was against their people. She felt ashamed. After Caroline left, Elijah patted Danielle on the shoulder and Kimi poured her a cup of tea. They understood, she thought, making her feel even more dedicated to becoming a fulltime journalist about

Indigenous questions. Like Elijah, she too would have a mission.

\* \* \*

"I've been put in charge of the group," said Danielle the next day to Lise Hébert, the guide on the Hydro Québec bus tour. "I believe our first stop should be the monument to the Cree."

"It's not on our itinerary," said Madame Hébert.

"It is now," said Danielle.

Approaching the huge reservoir, Elijah was waiting for them at the edge of the water, standing tall in his caribou jacket.

At the monument, Danielle and the students clustered around Elijah. "You're looking at sacred burial grounds," he announced. "My grandfather lies under these waters."

In a voice ringing with emotion, Elijah said, "Our Cree ancestors who, having lived off this land for thousands of years, now rest under the waters of the reservoirs of the La Grande complex."

While he spoke, Danielle thought about her heritage. She was a mixture of cultures, like Saraphina and Jonas, but who in Canada wasn't?

Elijah looked at each one of the students. "Let us have a moment of silence," he said.

Back in the bus, en route to the power station, Elijah and Danielle sat at the rear while Madame Hébert called out facts and figures about the La Grande complex. Elijah rolled his eyes as he listened.

"Eleven thousand five hundred and five square kilometres of land flooded by reservoirs," Madame Hébert crowed. "The land-fill that was moved to create these dikes

and dams was enough to build the Great Pyramid of Cheops eighty times over!”

Elijah held himself still. He didn't have to say a word. These facts, Danielle recognized, as she took notes, spoke volumes about the devastation to the land and the Cree, all at the hands of Quebec's French majority, she thought, with a pang of guilt. Taking it all in, the students sat in hushed silence.

The bus headed toward the power station at La Grande-2 where turbines generated electricity that the Quebec government expected would one day help light up New York City. The students took an elevator deep into the earth.

“Twenty-three stories underground,” Madame Hébert said. The doors opened to a vast concrete bunker the size of several football fields. Harsh neon lights blazed from the ceiling several storeys above. A narrow steel balcony with bars stretched across one side.

“We call this the cathedral,” she said. Elijah raised his eyebrows at her in distain. “A Québécois sculpture called Marie Quebec, honouring the workers who built the complex, lies at the front. Follow me,” she said.

“Marie Québec,” Madame Hébert whispered in front of the sculpture, as though she were in church kneeling at the feet of the Virgin Mary. While Danielle snapped a photo of it, she thought of her mother forcing her to attend mass at Christmas.

Elijah took a few steps away from the group and raised his arms. “Our Lady of the Turbines,” he sang out to the far corners of “the cathedral” like an Italian tenor while Danielle captured him on film.

“Bravo,” Danielle called out and the students clapped. “*Merci, merci*,” Danielle said under her breath, so happy that they were all on the same side.

\* \* \*

At the end of the tour, outside the power station, Elijah said, “I have a band council meeting back in Whapmagoostui. I have to go. I'll phone you about the caribou hunt. Come with your boyfriend.

“When you're back in Montreal,” he said, “go to the office of the Grand Council of the Cree. I'll tell them you're coming. We're planning a trip to the New England states. Please join us. Maybe you could write about it for the student press.”

Yes, yes, Danielle thought. Moira would help her. Jonas could also lend a hand, maybe taking photographs, which he liked to do.

A Cree man on an all-terrain-vehicle pulled up and Elijah jumped on. “Stay in touch,” he said.

\* \* \*

It was a year later when Danielle received a phone call from Elijah late one night. Since starting her major in Indigenous studies at McGill University, she and Jonas saw him regularly.

“Guess what!” he said, breathlessly. “New York has cancelled their billion-dollar hydroelectric contract with Quebec. They listened to us! Our protests in the States paid off.

“But our work isn't over,” he said. “We'll continue our lawsuit at the federal level against the Great Whale project.”

“Let me know about every step of your progress,” said Danielle. “I'll continue to write news articles.”

“What you and Jonas have been doing is terrific. Many of your stories along with Jonas' photos have been picked up by Indigenous papers across the country.

“I read your story about the Akwesasne survivors of residential schools,” he added.

“You did?”

“Those quotes from the journal of your great uncle said it all.”

“Thank you,” she said, knowing how proud her Grandma Jaina would be to hear that.

“You’re making a big name as a First Nations journalist.”

\* \* \*

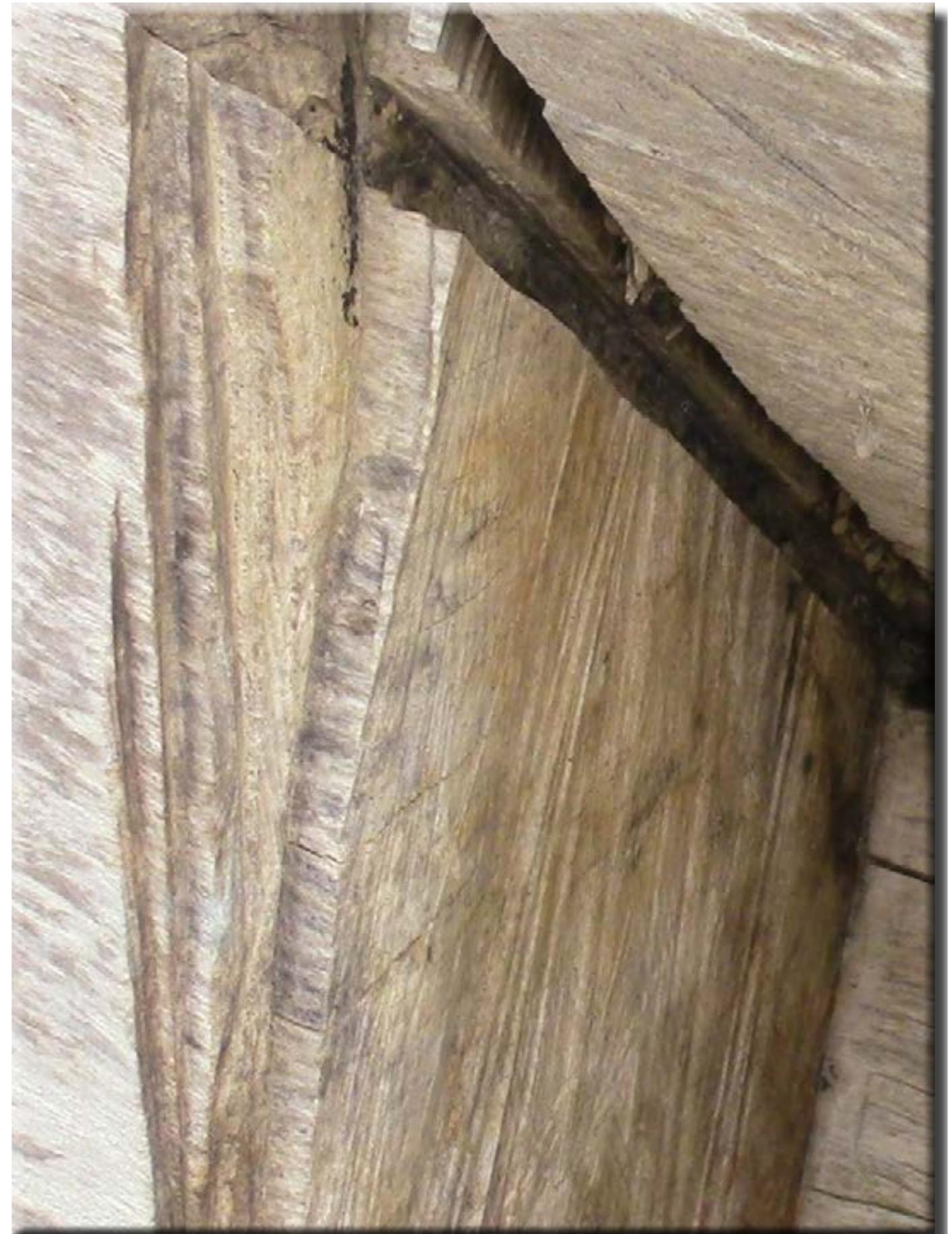
One day in 1994, Danielle received a call from Elijah in Whapmagoostui.

“Good news,” Elijah shouted over the phone. “Quebec is dropping the Great Whale project! We’ve won! Premier Parizeau will announce it tomorrow. He wants to shut us up in the run-up to the referendum on sovereignty,” he said. “Not that this will do it.

“Now,” he said, “my mother wants to talk to you.”

“Danielle,” said Kimi. “Next weekend we’re planning a huge celebration. We want you to come. After all, you’ve become one of us.”

“Oh Kimi,” she said. “Thank you.” She could hardly wait to tell her grandmother, still at the seniors’ residence, that now the Cree saw her as one of them.



# A Brief Analysis of Paul Gauguin's Aesthetic Defense to Art Critic Andres Fontainas of *Mercure de France*

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In response to Andres Fontaine's critique of his "puzzling" use of allegory concerning the state of human existence in the mural, "Whence do we come? What are we? Where are we going?," Paul Gauguin's retort presents not only to the critic, but to us, as readers some one-hundred years later, an unparalleled approach to understanding and appreciating the *avant-garde*. While, in essence, Gauguin reacts to the critic's misinterpretation of his art by defending this new and developing nonacademic style of painting, which modern scholars have dubbed "Primitive Modernist," he attempts, at the same time, to bridge the gap between discerning the "nonmodern," "primitive" subjects he distinctly portrays with a modern perspective that takes into account the interrelations and the processes regarding his emotions, and the political and spiritual beliefs that he developed while living in French Polynesia. By caring about the criticism aimed against his art, Gauguin was able

to establish himself as a painter that subverted the traditional, academic and Orientalist<sup>1</sup> aesthetics. His defense of his work from Tahiti demonstrated a shift in understanding art against the "Academic" norm. Emotional, spiritual, and cognitive, the mural confronts the spectator with multiple subjectivities. As a symbolist, Gauguin wants the spectator to question their existence in modern society at these levels, as demonstrated in the painting's composition, title, and content. Thus, his written defense, though unintended, furthers the discussion about "subject matter" and "subjectivity" in modern art for his peers, critics, and spectators (Chipp and Selz 48).

Gauguin's letter illuminates the inner "processes that produced" his Symbolist<sup>2</sup> mural which mimics "Orientalist" structures (Deleuze 9). Yet, unlike Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres and Jean-Leon Gerome, who were—one might argue—the most popular Orientalist painters of the late nineteenth-century, Gauguin's use of non-Western "primitive" subjects deliberately clashed with his predecessors due to his use of brilliant and expressive color, existential themes, and staunch opposition towards all things modern (Solomon-Godeau 315).

The relationship between Gauguin and Orientalism is peculiar, so much so that it generated its own movement, "Modern Primitivism." Though Gauguin is culpable of privileged and patriarchal power during his period in Tahiti, analyzing the psychological and spiritual core of his fascination with Orientalist structures, or "Otherness," enables the reader to understand his letter to Fontaines (Solomon-Godeau 320). By using non-

1. Orientalist refers to Orientalism, a genre of painting that developed in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century which encompassed ideas about generating art inspired by the Orient, or the East; this artistic movement occurred due in large part to the growth of imperialism and colonization by European, Western countries such as France and England (Meagher 1).

2. Symbolist refers to Symbolism, a genre of painting that developing in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century which encompassed ideas about generating art from feelings and imagination (Chipp and Selz 47).

Western primitive subjects during his period in Tahiti, Gauguin was alluding to an emerging, more immanent spirituality and curiosity for primeval tropes (Roustayi 24). Prior to traveling to French Polynesia in 1891, Gauguin's personal life was in shambles—across work, marriage, and within Parisian artistic circles (Solomon-Godeau 314). His desire to travel to Tahiti and generate art based on its environs and peoples came from a “particular attraction” and psychological yearning for a “[personal] renewal” (Roustayi 3; Edmond 108). He did not ideologically prescribe to the ethnographic descriptions of indigenous inhabitants written by explorers and missionaries traveling through the South Pacific (Edmond, *Ibid.*). Instead, he envisioned Tahiti as a utopia that would provide him with creative inspiration, potential material success, and more importantly an opportunity to escape a repressive class-based, bourgeois society (Solomon-Godeau 314). These motives were a departure from prevailing Orientalist perceptions, as seen in the Romantic Period by artists such as Eugene Delacroix and Antoine Jean Gros, whose work supported European imperialism and drew denigrating images of inhabitants from the Middle East (Edmond, *Ibid.*). In one prominent example, Delacroix's *Massacre of Chios* (1824) features a harrowing scene from the Greek War of Independence in which the Muslim Ottomans are depicted in battle as sole perpetrators against the Christians of Greece (Meagher 2).

As part of his break from Parisian bourgeois society, Gauguin's move to Tahiti and subsequent output of vivid, Eden-like images of its inhabitants bearing psychological depth and sensual movement marks a separation from traditional, underlying Orientalist tropes. In its place, Gauguin's work reveals not only a sense of illusion with French

Polynesia but an impulse to communicate his emerging spirituality inspired by primeval symbolism and culture—as evinced by the primitive life he admired (Roustayi 4). In “Going Native,” Solomon-Godeau (316 & 317) notes that Gauguin coped with the troubles of modern society through “superstitious beliefs” and atavistic hope to “go back, far back” into his non-Western, Peruvian heritage. He considered Pre-Islamic and Ancient Egyptian art to be “pure” and unmarked by civilization—ideals in which he strove to emulate in his own art (Roustayi 23). While painting in Paris, Gauguin was imbued with Persian, Mesopotamian, and Ancient Egyptian influences that he referenced in self-portraits, ceramics, and wood carvings (Roustayi 30). Primordial references continue in “Whence do we come? What are we? Where are we going?,”; a Tahitian style idol is placed behind a Christ-like figure as one views the artwork from left to right, bearing in my mind the title's sequence. Gauguin's ancient referencing, composition, and title alludes to the notion that modern society has a primitive basis—a novel idea for critics like, Fontaines, to comprehend at the time (Jung 32). Gauguin, arguably, knew his mural would be critiqued with a discerning eye due to his persona and its controversial subject matter (Chipp and Selz 48). In “Symbolism and Other Subjectivist Tendencies: Form and the Evocation of Feeling,” Chipp and Selz (48) note that “Gauguin was convinced that what he was attempting in painting was unprecedented and that it, therefore, had to be worked out in ideas as well as in the work itself.”

It is within his letter to Fontaines that Gauguin manages to explain and justify his radical artistic gestures by addressing what he is most significantly concerned with while painting. He answers Fontaines' critique by drawing parallels between his work and that

of music (e.g. Beethoven's "Sonata Pathétique, oriental chants) and other artists from the past (e.g. Cimabue and Delacroix) who dared to experiment with color but are today accepted as masters; in making such a comparison, Gauguin is reiterating the fact that Fontaines and other likeminded critics, accustomed to Academic art, are misreading his style and distinct subject matter. He deems the current discourse on what constitutes "good art" as narrow and austere, especially with respect to color, content, and abstraction. Gauguin urges Fontaines to understand his mural on a deeper level that looks beyond aesthetics, literary, or historical themes.

Though Gauguin contradicts himself by critiquing the Academy's "formula and influence" while evaluating art by outlining a new "formula" for understanding his work and the greater *avant-garde* movement—he ultimately confers interpretative control to the audience whom he expects to "finish" the work, so long as they at least attempt to internalize, as opposed to just critically observing the allegories, ideas, and themes that are in this case implicitly expressed. Read from right to left, Gauguin's panel is intentionally "vague and mysterious;" his main goal is to capture these primitive peoples' simple existence and sense of spirituality, and to force the audience in the end to question the purpose of their own existence and spiritual depth during this period of industrialization and rapid urban change (Arnoson 62-4). In a lucid state following the completion of this painting, Gauguin "signed" the work with three questions ("Where do we come from? What are we? Where are we going?)" that each presents a facet of his problem with modernity that he continues to wrestle with despite living thousands of miles away from it. These questions, which correspond to the figures depicted from right to left,

are intended to provoke a self-examination of the soul that will eventually compel the spectator to abandon his or her life in the city for a more a pure and enlightened state of being. For Gauguin, the "modern" and "civilized" world does not provide an outlet for this type of contemplation; modernity, as he understands, is merely another form "bondage" in disguise that seeks to replace the innocence, mystery, and simplicity of life and nature in favor of urban displacement, industry, and capitalism (Gauguin 20).

He is aware that this mural, along with other works he has created in Tahiti, confounds Fontaines and critics alike because it is far more abstract and existential than his earlier works (e.g. "Vision After the Sermon," "The Yellow Christ") which he finds "unimportant" compared to what he is making in Tahiti; but instead of looking for familiar forms or some literary narrative to explain this painting's allegory, as demonstrated in his earlier works, Gauguin wants the spectator to perceive and understand the personal impact that these primitive individuals and the lives they lead have upon him (Gauguin 20). Fontaines' issue with the mural is his inability to comprehend it; he wrote, "In the large panel that Gauguin exhibits there is nothing that explains the meaning of the allegory (Gauguin 1)." In response, Gauguin surmises it is the use of the idol that is confounding, in which he notes the idol is not a "literary symbol" (Gauguin 2). Rather, the idol symbolizes "our primitive soul"— or as Jung postulated, "the basis for human psyche" (Ibid; MeLeod 15). Fontaines did not understand Gauguin's use of the primitive because it was "unframed" (Solomon-Godeau 323). Indigenous people from the South Pacific, for at least a hundred years prior to Gauguin's mural, were "framed" in literature, "ethnographic displays," and exhibitions through an imperialist lens (Ibid).

Thus, Gauguin's use of the idol is neither a literary symbol, reference, or travel painting with an obscure title but rather an expression of his inner psyche or as he maintains, a "raw dream" intended to shift our focus away from the material and worldly realities of his day (Gauguin 19).

While the panel is an idealized depiction of Tahitians with no traces of colonization, it is intended to capture, as Gauguin notes, "[the] mournful procession of [his] hopes"—meaning all of his anxiety, angst, and despair toward modernity and its future (Gauguin 19). He chooses to present this mural as a "fin de siècle message" to the audience and as his primary concern "of the day" (Gauguin 2). In his view, Gauguin is justified in expressing this type of statement because he authentically lives as "rebel against society" in his quest for spiritual growth (Arnason 61). He claims the mural is "free of academic influence," precisely because such influences redeem nothing (e.g., money, fame) in Gauguin's view (Ibid). Without Gauguin's passionate defense, critics of the time, like Fontaines, accustomed to Indigenous people framed through imperialist and Orientalist structures would remain baffled by the mural's abstractions.

By examining the complexities of Gauguin's spirituality amid the aesthetics of Orientalist and Symbolist structures during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the reader is able to comprehend the motivations of Gauguin's defense against his critics. Their exchange provides a meaningful glimpse into the social evaluation of an artist, like Gauguin, who faced critiques for producing work free of Academic influences. Gauguin's subsequent response to Fontaines played an important role differentiating himself from the Academic norm and reminding the critic of the shifting dynamics in the avant-garde. Inasmuch,

his letter shapes new understanding of how *avant-garde* art should be viewed— not as a "surface" but rather a portal into the artist's psyche that exists for us to relate to whether it is an emotion, political statement, and/or dream (Willick 2009).

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# Problems Facing The Teaching and Learning of Chinese Language in Nigeria

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## Abstract

It is evident that the teaching and learning of foreign languages in Nigeria are faced with series of problems. This work focused primarily on the current problems facing the effective teaching and easy learning of Chinese language in Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive survey with the application of participant/observer method of investigation. Two types of questionnaires were designed, distributed, and collected by the researchers during second semester of 2017/2018 session at Nnamdi Azikiwe University and University of Lagos. The data were elicited from the questionnaires and used for analysis. The problems identified include: lack of learning centers, lack of qualified teachers, lack of teaching materials and aids, lack of ICTs for teaching and learning Chinese, lack of language laboratories, lack of linguistics environments, and finally high cost of learning fees. At the end, the paper proffered some solutions to the problems by suggesting establishment of more Confucius Institutes, recruiting and

training of more teachers, provision of teaching materials and aids, provision of ICTs for teaching and learning Chinese, provision of language laboratories, establishment of effective exchange programs for language immersion and construction of ‘Chinese village’ in Nigeria, and finally, reduction or removal of learning fees.

**Keywords:** Teaching, learning, Chinese language, problem, Nigeria



## INTRODUCTION

An American business magnate, investor and philanthropist, Warren Buffett; who ranked the world’s wealthiest person in 2008 and is widely considered the most successful investor of the 20<sup>th</sup> century once said, “The 19<sup>th</sup> century belonged to England, 20<sup>th</sup> century belonged to the U.S., and the 21<sup>st</sup> century belongs to China. Invest accordingly”. This once world richest man saw the future of China and gave a timely advice. The advice is to invest accordingly. When the word ‘invest’ is said, what usually comes to mind is money. Yes, it is good to invest money in one business or the other in China but it is not only money you can invest in China. You can invest your time to study Chinese people, culture and language. Your monetary investment will flourish when you first invest your time to understand Chinese people, culture and language. Warren Buffet’s advice is to invest accordingly (in China). This can mean to invest your time to study Chinese language. Jim Rogers of *Worth Magazine* gave a more direct advice when he said, “If the 19<sup>th</sup> century belonged to Britain, and

the 20<sup>th</sup> century to the United States, then the 21<sup>st</sup> century will surely belong to China. My advice: make sure your kids learn Chinese”. Since kids (children) are the future of tomorrow, Jim Rogers’ advice is to give the kids keys of tomorrow’s investment. The Chinese language is the key to the 21<sup>st</sup> century investment and career. If 21<sup>st</sup> century belongs to China, then Chinese language is a vital tool to invest, work, study and live in China.

In today’s increasingly close international interaction, language as mankind’s most significant tool for communication plays an irreplaceable important role in international exchanges. It is said that the world is a global village. The invention of internet makes the world a closer global village. However, language is an important tool in internet. Without language, the purpose of internet is useless. Human communication, whether in a real community or on the internet; makes use of language. In the past, people made great effort to learn Latin, French and English according to their time of influence and importance, but today Chinese language has become a new growing choice for many people around the world. There is a global or trending language in every century. This language is a product of a super nation of the century. Many centuries ago, the global language was Latin but recent centuries ago, it was French and English. Although English language is still a global language in this century but Chinese language is taking over. This may take a long time but it will surely come to pass if China sustains its economy as the richest nation in the world by GDP. China will soon overtake United States of America as the richest nation in the world by every measurement.

The teaching of Chinese language to foreigners both within and outside China is not a recent phenomenon. Westerners started learning different Chinese languages in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The serious study of Chinese language in the West began with the missionaries coming to China during the late 16<sup>th</sup> century. Among the first were the Italian Jesuits Michele Ruggieri and Matteo Ricci. They mastered the language without the aid of any grammar books or dictionaries, and are often viewed as the first Western sinologists. Ruggieri set up a school in Macau, the first school for teaching foreigners Chinese, translated part of the Great Learning into Latin, the first translation of a Confucius classic in any European language, and wrote a religious tract in Chinese, the first Chinese book written by a Westerner. The earliest Chinese grammars were produced by the Spanish Dominican missionaries. In the recent past, there are evidences around the world of non-native speakers who are proficient in Chinese language. Here are some notable non-native speakers of Chinese: Frederick W. Baller, British missionary, linguist, translator, educator and sinologist; Jessica Beinecke, American entertainer and host of online show *OMG Meiyu*; Cuong De, Vietnamese prince; Arif Dirlik, Turkish historian; Wolfram Eberhand, German sociologist; Herbert Hoover, American president; Bernhard Karlgren, Swedish sinologist; Michiko Nishiwaki, Japanese actress; Kevin Rudd, Australian former Prime Minister; Richard Sorge, Soviet spy; and many other too numerous to mention. Today, there are millions of non-native speakers of Chinese around the world.

Although the need to learn foreign languages is almost as old as human history itself, the origins of modern language education are in the study and teaching of

Latin in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Latin has for many centuries been the dominant language of education, commerce, religion, and government in much of the Western world, but it was displaced by French, Italian, and English by the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The study of modern languages did not become part of the curriculum of European schools until the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The study of Chinese language outside China started first by the neighbouring Asian nations, then the European and American nations and lastly the African nations. The establishment of Confucius Institute in 2004 assists in taking Chinese language to the world. The first Confucius Institute was opened in Seoul, South Korea on 21<sup>st</sup> November, 2004. Currently, there are more than five hundred Confucius Institutes around the world. There are few Confucius Institutes in Africa and only two in Nigeria.

## **BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

The People's Republic of China (PRC) on Friday March 7, 2008 opened its first Confucius Institute in Nigeria at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka and the second Confucius Institute was established at University of Lagos on October 16, 2009. This means that the study of Chinese language is up to a decade. Both institutes have graduated thousands of students in diploma, certificate and HSK. The Confucius Institute at Nnamdi Azikiwe University is established with the partnership of Xiamen University, China while the Confucius Institute at University of Lagos is established with the partnership of Beijing Institute of Technology, China. Most Confucius Institutes are managed by a foreign director and a local director. The

Confucius Institutes are sponsored by Hanban (Office of Chinese Language Council International), an organization affiliated with China's ministry of Education. This makes the institutes directly under the government of People's Republic of China. Most Confucius institutes operate in co-operation with local host universities and colleges around the world, and financing is shared between Hanban and the host institutions. There are Confucius Classrooms are like branches of Confucius institutes. They operate under Confucius institutes in their localities. There are more than ten Confucius Classrooms in Nigeria.

There is another aspect of Chinese language study in Nigeria besides the Confucius institute. Both Nnamdi Azikiwe University and University of Lagos have a degree programme in Chinese studies. University of Lagos graduated first set of degree students in 2017 while Nnamdi Azikiwe University graduated its first set of degree students in 2018. At the University of Lagos, students spend two (second and third) years in China while students at Nnamdi Azikiwe University spend no year abroad at the time of this research. This is one of the problems of learning Chinese language in Nigeria. There are some Chinese native teachers and few Chinese non-native teachers in Nigeria. This is another problem in teaching Chinese language in Nigeria. There are many students willing to learn Chinese but no adequate and qualified teacher. This is also a problem of teaching and learning Chinese language in Nigeria. There are many other problems of teaching and learning Chinese language in Nigeria. We shall discuss them and proffer solutions to them.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The review of literature is divided into two sections. The first section is a review of the problems of teaching and learning foreign or second languages in Nigeria. These foreign or second languages include English, French, Arabic, etc but it excludes Chinese language. Chinese language is the newest foreign language in Nigeria. The second section is a review of the problems of teaching and learning Chinese language in Nigeria.

Kolawole (2015) wrote on the "Problems facing the teaching and learning of French language in colleges of education in Oyo State". The research was set to examine the problems facing the teaching and learning of French language in the three colleges of education existing presently in Oyo State. The study adopted descriptive survey to collect the data on the problem at hand. Forty participants were involved in the study as a result of the limited number of French students in the colleges. Questionnaires on the teaching and learning of French language were used to gather the data. The result of the research had shown that there were diverse problems such as negligence on the part of the government toward the language, unfavourable mode of admission, joblessness on the part of the French graduates, lack of motivation, attitudes of the parents and some other problems. He recommended that the government should embrace a more positive attitude towards French language learning in the country and also motivate both teachers and students of French language throughout the country.

Urujian (no date) wrote on the "Issues in English language teaching and learning: problems and prospects". The paper focused primarily on the current issue

militating against the proper teaching and learning of English language in order to bring growth and productivity to the nation. It therefore, examined the problems of teaching English studies at the junior secondary school level, negligence of the teaching of literature in English by the teachers teaching English studies, mastering of the language, reading/comprehension and mother tongue interference. The paper highlighted the importance of English language and what should be incorporated into the contents of the curriculum so as to bring its teaching and learning to international standard for the purpose of productivity to the nation. She finally gave some suggestions or remedies on some of the issues raised so as to enhance the improvement on the usage of the language by the learners in schools. The suggestions are the following: government support language; regular conferences, seminar and workshop; new practical teaching approaches; recruitment of more qualified teachers; and provision of teaching materials.

Gella and Kwaja (2017) wrote on “The problem of teaching French language in secondary schools in Adamawa State: problems and prospects”. The paper examined the problems that hinder effective teaching and learning of French language in secondary schools in Adamawa state. The paper focused on the need for integrating French language into the school curriculum, the government efforts, and the major problems militating against proper teaching and learning of French language. The paper recommended the following: government efforts and positive attitude toward French language, giving French the status of second official language in Nigeria, making French language compulsory for primary and secondary students, making

French language a compulsory art subject for high institution admission.

Obiegbu (2016) wrote on “The challenges of teaching English language in Nigeria”. The paper examined some of the challenges the teachers faced in the classroom ranging from decline in reading culture, lack of adequate attention in the classrooms, cultural and psychological background of the learners, poor motivation of the teachers, lack of exposure to the modern teaching methods and teachers inadequacy to teach effectively. She proposed the following suggestions as a solution to the problems: improvement in reading culture, the employment of more qualified teachers, the use of internet facilities and ICT, availability of adequate resources such as larger classrooms, public address systems, language laboratories and in-service training for teachers.

Adewuyi, Bernard and Adewuyi (2015) wrote on the “Problems of learning foreign languages in colleges of education and universities in Nigeria: a comparative study of English and French languages”. The paper attempted to unveil some areas that serve as barriers to easy and effective learning of French and English languages in colleges of education and universities in Nigeria. The paper identified the following problems: languages in contact, grammatical, semantic, phonological and socio-political problems. The paper concluded by saying that to attain a relatively high level of fluency, there should be a lot of practices in the area of oral speech and spontaneous writing. This demands a lot of effort from both the teachers and the learners. They went further to say that adequate mastery of the foreign languages could be attained if a systematic approach is adopted in the case of Nigeria.

Sirajudeen and Adebisi (2012) wrote on “Teaching Arabic as a second language in Nigeria”. The paper studied the challenges associated with the teaching of Arabic in Nigeria as a foreign language and consequently recommended appropriate interventions in light of the material and human resources required for teaching a second language in a developing country such as Nigeria. At rudimentary level of Arabic studies, majority of the pupils who learn Arabic do so through the non-formal Qua’anic schools. The attendant constraints of lack of a curriculum, haphazard nature of instruction, poor learning environment, lack of adequate teaching and learning aids, the excessive use of the cane to maintain discipline and limited scope of learning largely restricted to the basic literacy skills of reading and writing the Arabic script. The main teaching method in this school is parrot-like repetition and memorization method. The teacher copies the alphabets on pupil’s wooden slates and then employs the choral technique in teaching them. The paper stated that although some students are able to advance their studies through the more organized *madaris*, the totality of instruction at the lower level discourages many potential Arabists who might possess a strong aptitude for language learning but are advertently forced to terminate their studies at this level. In the Nigerian public formal school system, Arabic is not offered in public schools as an independent subject. The weaknesses associated with the teaching of Arabic at the primary level are carried on to the secondary level. This situation has inexorably provided a recipe for deficiencies in the teaching of Arabic as a foreign language at the tertiary level. The researchers found out that a combination of poor motivation and labeling produce a psychological complex among learners of Arabic that not only led to performance but also abandoning their career in Arabic in

favour of other competing ‘high priority’ disciplines after their first degree in Arabic. The paper says that the most major obstacle to effective teaching of Arabic is the gaps which exist in the training of the manpower expected to ensure that teaching Arabic is effective. The lack of qualified professional educators with specialization in teaching Arabic as a foreign language is a critical challenge. In conclusion, the paper recommended the following: government support; establishment of Arabic language village; encouraging the teaching of Arabic in primary, secondary and tertiary institutions; training more qualified Arabic teachers; the use of modern teaching methods with CALL; and provision of teaching materials suitable for Nigerians.

Odinye (2016) published a book in Germany titled “Chinese language in Nigeria: Teaching and learning”. This book is a product of his doctorate degree thesis at Xiamen University, China in 2013. The work is the first detailed research on Chinese language teaching and learning in Nigeria. The thesis has five research questions which centered on the learners’ language attitude, motivation and proficiency, teachers’ beliefs, challenges in Chinese language teaching and learning. He found out that Nigerian learners of Chinese language have positive attitude and were extrinsically motivated. It was also found out that Nigerian learners of Chinese language have above average in the HSK proficiency test. Nigerian Chinese language teachers have similar and common beliefs in foreign language teaching and learning. The research equally identified some challenges facing the teaching and learning Chinese language in Nigeria which shortage of Chinese language teaching/learning centers, lack of adequate and qualified teachers, short duration of stay for volunteer

teachers and lack of local Chinese teachers. The thesis gave many recommendations to Hanban, Nigerian universities, Nigerian Confucius institutes and Classrooms, and the Nigerian government. Some of the recommendations include: send more teachers from China, training more local Chinese teachers, increase the duration of stay for volunteer teachers up to two years, establish more Confucius institutes in Nigeria, make teaching Chinese language free unless for certificate and diploma programmes, maintain a cordial relation with the second management, make Chinese language available for primary and secondary schools in Nigeria.

## **THEORETICAL REVIEW**

The field of second language acquisition draws upon theoretical frameworks from many other fields. The following of related literature draws upon linguists as well as psychologists, psycholinguists and other theorists whose knowledge paves way towards a better understanding of first and second language acquisitions. Whether the complexity of second language learning can be or needs to be singled into one theory has been stated by Ellis (1994:689-690), “No doubt, over time the pictures provided by different sides of the prime will become clearer, but whether this will lead to single, unifying account of L<sub>2</sub> acquisition, as some believe is necessary, remains to be seen”. Although a single explanation of L<sub>2</sub> acquisition could theoretically facilitate L<sub>2</sub> pedagogy, the theories by which a second language is learned by adults (Breen 1985; Long 1993; Gregg 1993; Elli 1994; Lantolf 1996; Block 1996) suggest that it is yet too early or simply too complex to formulate a single account of L<sub>2</sub> learning.

In the 1950s and early 1960s, theorizing about SLL was still very much an adjunct to the practical business of language teaching. However, the idea that language teaching methods had to be justified in terms of an underlying theory was well-established, since that pedagogic reform movement of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century at least. The writings of language teaching experts in the 1950s and 1960s include serious considerations of learning theory, as preliminaries to their practical recommendations (Lado 1964; Rivers 1968). By the mid-1980s, SLL research was no longer subordinate to the immediate practical requirements of curriculum planning and language pedagogy. Instead, it had matured into a much more autonomous field of inquiry, encompassing a number of substantial programmes of research with their descriptive theoretical orientations and methodologies (Methcell and Myles, 2004).

Early studies on L<sub>2</sub> acquisition in the 1950s and 1960s were mainly based on the assumptions of the Contrastive Analysis (CA) hypothesis according to which difficulties that L<sub>2</sub> learners face are related to differences between the L<sub>1</sub> and L<sub>2</sub>. It was assumed that by comparing the linguistic systems of the learner’s L<sub>1</sub> and L<sub>2</sub>, researchers and teachers would be able to predict the areas of difficulty in L<sub>2</sub> acquisition and this would ultimately lead to more effective language methodology. This main thrust of the Contrastive Analysis model is rooted in the dominant psychological and linguistics frameworks of the time, namely Behaviourism and Structuralism. The L<sub>2</sub> learner was assumed to replace his or her L<sub>1</sub> habit with new habits by responding to stimuli and receiving feedback on the use of L<sub>2</sub> constructions. The primary

mechanisms of language learning were memorization, repetition and practice of correct responses, which ultimately led to the rise of the Audiolingual Method in language teaching. It was considered that when students became aware of structural differences between languages, the teacher could focus on their errors and help them overcome the difficulties.

The linguistics theoretical approach continued to be concerned with an adequate description of interlanguage as well as its explanation. That is, scholars in this camp focused on the nature of the learner's internal mental representation and what constrained it. A central tenet of this approach is that language is special. By special, these scholars meant that language is uniquely human, is encapsulated in its own module in the mind or brain, and comes equipped from birth with a set of language-specific constraints called Universal Grammar. Thus, acquisition is a particular kind of experience for human's data from the outside world. The theory of Universal Grammar or UG was developed by Chomsky as an explanation for language acquisition. Universal Grammar relates to the brain, in that brain is considered at birth to have a structure called the 'Language Acquisition Device' or LAD (Macaro 2003; Sharpe 2001; Johnson 2004). Chomsky argued his concept of LAD that children were born with the facilities to learn a language (Sharpe 2001; White 1989). Chomsky believed that children could produce language without having natural conversations with others. He also stated that children and adults can produce and understand sentences they have never heard before (White 1989; Sharpe 2001). This device allows children to sort the input that they receive, the language. This theory states that children use

this Universal Grammar regardless of their native language (Kumaravadivelu 2006; Mitchell and Myles 2003).

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This research adopts a descriptive survey with the application of participant/observer method of investigation. The study benefitted from the teaching and administrative experiences of the researcher at Nnamdi Azikiwe University and University of Lagos. At the time of carrying out the research, the researcher was a senior lecturer and adjunct senior lecturer at the above universities respectively. He was the pioneer acting director and later deputy director of the Confucius institute at Nnamdi Azikiwe University. He studied Chinese language, culture and linguistics at Beijing Foreign Studies University and Xiamen University, China. The researcher has spent more than five years in China. He has more than a decade of teaching experience in Chinese language and culture. He is a pioneer in Chinese language education in Nigeria.

Data collection in second language research is multidimensional. There is no single prescribed elicitation measure, nor is there a 'right' or 'wrong' elicitation measure. The choice of one measure over another is highly dependent on the research question asked and may also be related to the theoretical framework within which research is conducted (Mackey and Gass, 2005). One of the most common methods of data collection in second language research is the use of questionnaire. The popularity of questionnaire is due to the fact that they are easy to construct, extremely versatile,

and uniquely capable of gathering a large amount of information quickly in a form that is readily processable (Dornyei, 2003). Brown (2001) defines questionnaire as “any written instruments that present respondents with a series of questions or statements to which they are to react either by writing out their answers or selecting them among existing answers”. In addition to different varieties of questionnaires, two types of questionnaires are popular: open-ended and closed-ended. An open-ended questionnaire allows participants to answer in any manner while closed-ended questionnaire does not allow the participants to answer in any manner. In this type, the researcher determines the possible answers. This study employed the use of open-ended questionnaire to elicit information from the participants – teachers and learners. This type is chosen because it allows the participants to express their thoughts and ideas in their own way. There were two questionnaires. One was designed for the teachers and another for the students (learners). The teachers’ questionnaire was intended to elicit the problems facing teachers and teaching of Chinese language in Nigeria. The students’ questionnaire was designed to collect data on the problems facing learners and learning of Chinese language in Nigeria.

One hundred (200) students’ questionnaires and ten (20) teachers’ questionnaires were distributed to the students and teachers of Nnamdi Azikiwe University and University of Lagos respectively. The questionnaires were distributed and collected by the researcher during second semester of 2017/2018 session. A total of one hundred and eighty (180) questionnaires (eighty-eight (88) students’ questionnaires and five (5) teachers’ questionnaires from Nnamdi Azikiwe University, and eighty-

one (81) students’ questionnaires and six (6) teachers’ questionnaires from University of Lagos) were returned and used for the study. The data were elicited from the questionnaires according to two topics: problems facing the teachers and teaching of Chinese language in Nigeria and the problems facing the learners and learning of Chinese language in Nigeria. It was found from the data that the teaching and learning problems are similar except one or two. Therefore, they are grouped into one: problems of teaching and learning Chinese language in Nigeria.

## **PROBLEMS OF TEACHING AND LEARNING CHINESE LANGUAGE IN NIGERIA**

### **Lack of learning centers (Confucius Institutes)**

The popularity of Chinese language learning has increase in recent years across Africa. Evidence suggests ambitious young Africans are increasingly inclined to take up Mandarin as a way to land a dream in China or benefit from China’s growing influence on the continent (Einashe, 2018). The learning of Chinese language in Africa is motivated by the offer of scholarship by the Hanban or Chinese government. Heever (2017) says that “China’s growing scholarship program is motivation enough for students...Recent data shows a remarkable spike in the number of African students studying in China, from just 2,000 in 2003, to almost 50,000 in 2015, whether on scholarships or their own steam”. Mandarin Chinese is fast gaining ground in Africa and might be a threat to former colonial masters’ languages like English and French. Heever (2017) thus states, “China’s economic success is its most potent public

diplomacy tool in Africa where ambitious Africans increasingly view Mandarin as a fast track to their own success”.

It is a little difficult to say exactly how many Confucius institutes around the world. This is because of varying figures from different bodies. According to Hanban, there are fifty-four (54) Confucius institutes in Africa but Statista says there are only forty-eight (48) Confucius institutes in Africa. Heever (2017) does not give exact figure. He states there are “over forty (40) of them in Africa”. The same confusion exists with the number of Confucius institutes in the United States. Hanban says there are one hundred and ten (110) Confucius institutes in the United States but National Association of Scholars (NAS) counts a total of one hundred and seven (107). It means that Hanban has higher or highest figure in terms of number of Confucius institutes around the world. Nevertheless, in Nigeria, there are only two (2) Confucius institutes at Nnamdi Azikiwe University and University of Lagos with some Confucius classrooms. These Confucius institutes and Confucius classrooms are located at the southern part of Nigeria. There is no Confucius institute at the northern part of Nigeria. Nigeria has up two hundred million population and most of them are young people. There are few private foreign languages learning centers in Nigeria that offer Chinese language. Many people want to learn Chinese language but there are no adequate learning centers. The few available learning centers have no adequate qualified teachers.

### **Lack of qualified teachers**

It is said that teaching is a noble profession and a divine calling. Teaching has

been defined and described by different scholars. Shulman (1987) as cited in Erbay et'al (2014) sees teaching as one of the most difficult profession as teachers are supposed to be familiar with a great number of issues. Teaching in general is difficult but teaching a language, especially to foreigners, is more difficult. Harmer (2007) as cited in Erbay et'al (2014) argues that teaching a language is a demanding activity and could be categorized as both a science and art. If teaching a language is difficult and demanding, then teachers' qualifications are very important. Dincer et'al (2013) say that the quality of education is associated with teacher qualifications. However, there is a lack of qualified language teachers around the world. Chinese language is not an exception.

The harvest of Chinese language learning in Nigeria is much but the harvesters (teachers) are very few. There is a high demand of learning Chinese language in Nigeria but there is a lack of adequate teachers. The introduction of Chinese language through the establishment of Confucius institutes in Nigeria is a decade ago. Most of the teachers are native Chinese. There are about ten Nigerian Chinese language teachers at the time of conducting the research. The native Chinese teachers hardly stay up to three to five years before traveling back to China. Some of them, like the volunteer teachers, stay just one or two years. Some of the native Chinese teachers are not qualified to teach Chinese as a foreign language. Some the teachers have no linguistic background. Some are still undergraduate or postgraduate students with no teaching experience. The Nigerian Chinese teachers are not without shortcomings. Some of them have no linguistic background and teaching experience. Some of them

do not have a degree in Chinese language.

### **Lack of teaching materials and aids**

Teaching material is a material used by a teacher to supplement classroom instruction or to stimulate the interest of students while teaching aid is an object (such as a book, picture, or map) or device (such as a DVD or computer) used by a teacher to enhance or enliven classroom instruction. Teaching materials and aids have a basic instructional viewpoint, approach, method, and content, including which provide linguistic and cultural knowledge. Jolly and Bolitho (1989) say that teaching “materials should also be contextualized to the experiences, realities and first languages of the learners. An important part of this involves awareness on the part of the teachers-designer of the ‘socio-cultural appropriacy’ of things such as the designer’s own style of presenting material, of arranging groups, and so on”. The teaching materials particularly books should be appropriate and suitable for the learners. Teaching materials should be flexible, alluring in terms of appearance, user friendliness and durability. There is a lack of adequate Chinese language teaching materials and aids in Nigeria. The significance of teaching materials cannot be overemphasized. Allwright (1990) says that teaching “materials should teach students to learn, that they should be resource books for ideas and activities for instruction/ learning, and that they should give teachers rationales for what they do”.

### **Lack of ICTs for language teaching and learning**

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is another/extensional term for Information Technology (IT) that stresses the role of unified communications

(Murray, 2011) and the integration of telecommunications (telephone lines and wireless signals), computers as well as necessary enterprise software, middleware, storage, and audio-visual systems, which enables users to access, store, transmit, and manipulate information (FOLDOC, 2008). The term Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) includes technologies in which the computer plays a central role, that is, Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL), the internet, and variety of generic computer application (Fitzparick and Davies, 2002). Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is used in almost all fields of life, including education. In education, the use of ICT has been incorporated in curriculum and classroom. The use of ICT in education has recently started to appeal the potential and important progress in language teaching and learning. The use of ICT plays important role in the language teaching and learning. Hartoyo (2008) states, “a computer is a tool and medium that facilitates people in learning a language, although the effectiveness of learning depends totally on the users”. Some language experts and practitioners in Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) support the use of ICT in language learning to improve efficiency and effectiveness of learning that can improve the quality of the language studied. Computer-assisted language learning is defined by Levy (1997:1) as “the search for and study of applications of the computer in language teaching and learning.” Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) is becoming the latest language teaching method.

Students especially the young learners learn faster with the use of ICT. Dale (2014) say, “Young people live their lives through technology: they are the web

generation and they are hungry for more. Our challenge is to channel the natural enthusiasm our pupils have for ICT by using it in their everyday lives and embed it purposefully into the foreign languages (MFL) classroom”. Most schools in Nigeria have no ICT to facilitate the teacher to teach the students in the classroom. The ones that have ICT are not effective and reliable because of no or poor electricity supply. The same problem is experienced at Nnamdi Azikiwe University and University of Lagos.

### **Lack of language laboratories**

The language laboratory is an audio or audio-visual installation used as an aid modern language teaching. In the 1950s up until the 1990s, they were tape-based systems using reel to reel or cassette. Currently, the use of multimedia computers is popular. The advent of affordable multimedia computers in the late 1990s led to a resurgence and transformation of the language laboratory with software and hard drives in place of reels of analogue tape. In the 1990s new digital, hybrid computer based systems allowed extended functionality, in terms of better ‘management’ of student/teacher audio with some levels of internet and video formats. The content that is now used in the new language laboratories is much richer and self authored or free: now not just audio, but video, flash based games, internet, etc and the speed and variety of delivery of media from teacher to student, student to teacher, is much quicker and therefore much more engaging for both teacher and student. The method and purpose of ordinary language laboratory and digital language laboratory are similar. They are still teacher-controlled systems connected to a number of student

booths, containing a student’s control mechanism and a headset with a microphone. A software-only language laboratory is different from them. A software-only language laboratory can be located in one room, from room-to-room or campus-to-campus. Language laboratory provides equal opportunity to all the students to hear the instructor irrespective of place where they are seated. With language laboratory, there is less miscommunication because of direct nature of the sound transmission. Language laboratory also provides the privacy that encourages the shy students to speak without any hesitation. Another usefulness or importance of language laboratory is that the teacher/instructor can speak to individual or group of students in privacy without interrupting rest of the class. Again, with language laboratory, attention on subject is increased resulting in better retention of the concepts. Language laboratory develops the listening and communication skills, since they hear correct pronunciation through their headphones. The language laboratory brings variety in teaching learning process instead of boring verbal centered teaching. Also, with language laboratory, the students can learn the lesson at their own pace thus allowing the classroom as student-centered approach (Leon, 1962; Roby, 2004; Singh, 2013; Hmoud, 2014). The importance of modern language laboratory cannot be overemphasized. Unfortunately, there is no modern language laboratory at Nnamdi Azikiwe University and University of Lagos. The ones they have are not well equipped.

### **Lack of linguistic environments**

The environmentalist theories of learning hold that an organism’s nurture or experience, are of more important to development than its nature, or innate

contributions. A foreign language or second language is usually learned but to some degree may also be acquired or 'picked up' depending on the environmental setting and the input received by the second-language learner. We can say that some people learn a language naturally without classroom instruction. This is not to say that classroom instruction is useless but formal (classroom) instruction is rarely a sufficient condition for learning (Wang, 2009). The linguistic environment for language acquisition is very important. What hinders students from learning foreign language and communicate with native speakers is the problem of non linguistics environment for foreign language acquisition. Nigerian learners of Chinese language have few opportunities to communicate with native speakers in Nigeria. What they need is language immersion program within the country or abroad. Matusky (no date) defines language immersion as "a teaching method whereby the student is exposed to the nonnative language ( $L_2$ ) at a high consistency". Students will not only have  $L_2$  as a class, but they will also have other non language classes taught in that second language. Learning a second language is a difficult task, and the learner must often be exposed to that language in order to truly absorb it. Language immersion programs in school is a great way to expose students to that new language, since being immersed throughout the day (month or year) aids in absorption of the language. University of language has a two year language immersion program in China for their students while Nnamdi Azikiwe University is yet to start.

### **High cost of learning fees**

Before we discuss the fees being charged by the Confucius Institutes in Nigeria,

let us first know what Confucius Institute is. Sahlins (2013) states that a "Confucius Institute is a non-profit public educational organization affiliated with the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China", whose aim is to promote Chinese language and culture, support local Chinese teaching internationally, and facilitate cultural exchanges (Penn, 2014 & Mattis, 2012). According to the Confucius Institute Headquarters,

"As China's economy and exchanges with the world have seen rapid growth, there has also been a sharp increase in the world's demand for Chinese learning. Benefiting from the UK, France, Germany and Spain's experience in promoting their national languages, China began its own exploration through establishing non-profit public institutions which aim to promote Chinese language and culture in foreign countries in 2004: these were given the name the Confucius Institute"

In other words, a Confucius institute is an educational non-profit organization set up by the Chinese government to promote, propagate and teach Chinese language and culture abroad. Our concern in the above definition of a Confucius institute is the phrase "non-profit organization". It means that it is a non-business entity or nonprofit institution. However, some Confucius institutes charge money for teaching or other activities or services. According to Wikipedia, the Confucius Institute program, which began establishing centers for Chinese language instruction in 2004, has been the subject of criticisms, concerns, and controversies during its international expansion. Many such concerns stem from the Confucius Institute's relationship to Chinese

Communist Party authorities. Additional concerns have arisen over the institutes' financial and academic viability, teaching quality, and relations with Chinese partner universities (Starr, 2009).

Students learning Chinese language in Nigeria complain bitterly of high cost of learning Chinese language. Both the Confucius Institutes at Nnamdi Azikiwe University and University of Lagos charge school or teaching fees. Students of the universities pay between 20,000 to 30,000 naira while students from outside the universities pay between 30,000 to 50,000 naira. This is contrary to the tenets of establishing the Confucius Institute as a non-profit organization. This money is paid per semester which means that a student from either of the university pays between 40,000 to 60,000 naira while a student from outside of the universities pays between 60,000 to 100,000 naira. This is more than the average federal university school fee in Nigeria. Most federal universities in Nigeria charge between 15,000 to 30,000 naira per year.

## **SOLUTIONS TO THE PROBLEMS**

In the course of the research, we have identified seven major problems facing teaching and learning of Chinese language in Nigeria through the use of questionnaires and researcher's observation and experiences. These identified problems are as follow: lack of learning centers (Confucius Institutes), lack of qualified teachers, lack of teaching materials and aids, lack of ICTs for language teaching and learning, lack of language laboratories, lack of linguistic environments, and high cost of learning fees.

After identification of the problems, we will try to proffer solutions to the problems. First, Chinese government through Hanban should establish more learning centers (Confucius Institutes) around Nigeria. Nigeria needs at least more five Confucius Institutes, that is one Confucius Institute at every senatorial zone. Second, again Chinese government through Hanban should recruit more qualified teachers, both native and non-native. Hanban should train more non-native Chinese language teachers. Also, Hanban should extend the teachers' duration of stay to five years. Third, Hanban should provide more teaching and learning materials and aids. These include printed books, electronic books and devices, pictorials, maps, dictionaries, etc. These materials and aids should be tailored for Nigerian's learners of Chinese language. Hanban should also encourage non-native Chinese language teachers to write text books suitable for Nigerian learners. Fourth, Hanban in collaboration with host universities and schools should provide ICTs for teaching and learning of Chinese language. These include desktops, laptops, projectors, power supply, sound system, internet, etc. Fifth, again Hanban in collaboration with host universities and schools should provide language laboratories for teaching and learning Chinese language. Both teachers and learners should be trained on how to use the language laboratory for effective teaching and learning. Sixth, Chinese government should provide effective exchange programs for language immersion. Governments of China and Nigeria should work towards providing a 'Chinese village' in Nigeria. Finally, the cost for learning Chinese language should be reduced or removed (subsidized). Many students are discouraged from learning Chinese language because of the high cost of learning fee. More students will be motivated by free Chinese classes and scholarships.

## CONCLUSION

This paper has identified seven major problems facing the teaching and learning of Chinese language in Nigeria. The problems identified include: lack of learning centers, lack of qualified teachers, lack of teaching materials and aids, lack of ICTs for teaching and learning Chinese, lack of language laboratories, lack of linguistics environments, and finally high cost of learning fees. It has suggested some solutions to tackle the problem. If these suggestions are taken into consideration by the affected bodies and organizations like the Chinese government, Hanban, and host universities, then it will not be long before “Ni hao” becomes the new “Hello” used by Nigerians across the nation.

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# “Persecutions of the Age”: Public Women and the Art of Political Resistance

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In Hillary Clinton’s 2016 bid for the American Presidency, she sparked controversy, political debate about women’s roles in politics, vilification, outright demonstrations of sexism, and public discussions about the treatment of women. These discussions included heated rhetoric about sexual assault. Long demonized during and after her time as First Lady of the United States in the 1990s, Clinton later served as both Senator and Secretary of State prior to her 2016 presidential campaign. To some, she is a hero; to others, a villain. During his campaign, Donald Trump called her “Crooked Hillary,” a derogatory label her critics continue to use against her, even after she lost the election. Crowds at Trump rallies continue to chant the phrase “lock her up” for her perceived crimes during her years of service in public office.

For the last twenty years, Clinton has captured the public imagination,

whatever one feels about her. A longtime champion of women’s rights, Clinton has sparked both fervent support and bitter enmity, especially as she has not remained quiet about causes she supports or the reasons she feels she lost the election. Most recently, she published a memoir about the 2016 presidential election and her meditations about her unanticipated loss to Donald Trump, entitled *What Happened*. The book is a *New York Times* bestseller. Despite continuing attacks on her character, Clinton consistently makes herself visible, discussing her ideas and book across media outlets.

*What Happened* takes into account many perspectives, including the scandals that have plagued Clinton during her time as Secretary of State and the handling of investigations by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. She links the personal attacks lodged against her to outright sexism in American culture, which she believes Trump exacerbated to win, attacking the physical attributes or capabilities (or both) of women he perceived as threats to his campaign. The group extended beyond his general election presidential challenger, Clinton, to include the journalist Megyn Kelly and Republican primary candidate Carly Fiorina, among others, including the wives of his Republican primary rivals. Pictures inviting perceived unfavorable comparison between Senator Ted Cruz’s wife, Heidi Cruz, and Trump’s wife, Melania Trump, were circulated publicly for critique. Donald Trump attacked women throughout the election season and beyond, shaping national discourse about women’s rights, bodies, and minds. Clinton’s book tackles the context and consequences of this discourse, condemning his tactics as sexist and deeply harmful to women, particularly his derogatory language about sexual assault that emerged in a videotape released during the campaign.

While much of Trump's rhetoric has seemed to usher in a new era of political discourse, it is not new. Much of my scholarship has focused on early women writers from a bygone era, the 'long' eighteenth century, which extends from 1660-1830. Most recently, I have studied and written about a nearly forgotten seventeenth-century poet and painter, Anne Killigrew, who advanced her political beliefs in her poems and was attacked by rivals at court. A member of the Stuart court in the 1680s, Killigrew wrote and painted during a politically unstable period. Charles II had no legitimate Protestant heir, and the nation had turned against Catholics. In 1686, King Charles II's illegitimate son, a Protestant, the Duke of Monmouth, staged a rebellion against his uncle, the newly crowned and Catholic King James II. The rebellion was unsuccessful, and James was later deposed in favor of his legitimate daughter, Mary, and her husband, William of Orange in 1688 during the Glorious Revolution, when James went into exile.

Strongly articulating her political views, Killigrew attacks Monmouth in two poems, *Alexandreis* and "To the Queen," both published in 1686. In her verse Killigrew supports Charles II's wife, who became a visible target in the 1670s and 80s, as did his Catholic royal mistresses, the Duchess of Cleveland, the Duchess of Portsmouth, and the Duchess of Mazarin, all satirized throughout the Restoration alongside the queen for their religion and perceived political affiliations. Like most aristocratic women, Queen Catherine had no say in her own marriage and entered a country hostile to her religion. Her married life was dominated by plots that formed around but not by her.

Many of Killigrew's works resist political attacks made against Catherine for her religion, and she frequently praises the unpopular queen. Killigrew likened her

position as a woman writer and artist at court to her monarch's. Her verse expresses outrage at the treatment of Queen Catherine and herself by satirists. Both Catherine and Killigrew experienced public humiliation. While Killigrew distanced herself from Charles's mistresses, she did defend Queen Catherine in a number of poems, including "On the Birthday of Queen Katherine" and *Penelope to Ulysses*, poems included with her posthumously published *Poems* (1686). Killigrew lauds Catherine, likening her to Thalestris, the Amazon warrior-queen in her panegyric, "To the Queen," where Catherine appears triumphant:

Alone she stands for Virtue's Cause,

When all decry, upholds her Laws:

When to Banish her is the Strife,

Keeps her unexil'd in her Life (ll. 45-48)

Hillary Clinton's supporters might apply some of Killigrew's language to their hero as well, particularly when we consider the slurs chanted at Trump rallies by his supporters. Because she has not refused to remain silent about her perspective on the election and the treatment of women, Clinton has continued to suffer humiliating attacks by detractors.

Despite the differences in background, country, age, and career, Killigrew and Clinton have similar concerns about the public treatment of women; both wrote works defending themselves. Like Clinton, Killigrew dared to speak out against expectations for women. She died in 1686 at the young age of 25, and while she never published her poetry in her lifetime (a relative published her poems posthumously), she felt intensely

persecuted at court for writing verse. Rival court poets made her into a public figure held up for ridicule. In a time when women married and were taught to keep silent, Killigrew wrote poetry and painted. She was praised by one of the leading writers, John Dryden, who wrote an elegy praising her talent after her death, “To the Pious Memory of the Accomplisht Young LADY Mrs Anne Killigrew, Excellent in the two Sister-Arts of Poesie, and Painting. An Ode” (1686). This poem has been more often researched, anthologized, and taught than Killigrew’s own verse.

Killigrew used her art to resist sexism and draw attention to women as artists. A talented poet, Killigrew faced false accusations of plagiarism. She angrily defended her verse in “Upon the Saying that my Verses Were Made By Another,” likening the attacks by male poets to a violation of her body, a site of persecution for women then as now. Killigrew experienced public scorn over her writing, and she writes in “Upon the Saying” that “What ought t’have brought [her] Honour, brought [her] shame!” (45). She compares herself to an abused, physically violated figure in “Verses.” In this poem, Killigrew describes her position as a visible woman at court, imagining herself as an abused bird: “Riff’d like her, each one [her] Feathers tore” (46). No wonder we find angry and bitter tones emerging throughout Killigrew’s verse, which examines a dystopic world, particularly for women who want agency. Her support for the vilified Queen Catherine sealed her fate. Like Clinton, Killigrew was hated by rivals and could not erase the stigma. In the 1990s, Hillary Clinton went beyond the social expectations of First Lady, incurring anger from conservatives who thought she overreached in her political influence. She also could not overcome negative perceptions as an outspoken woman,

even decades later.

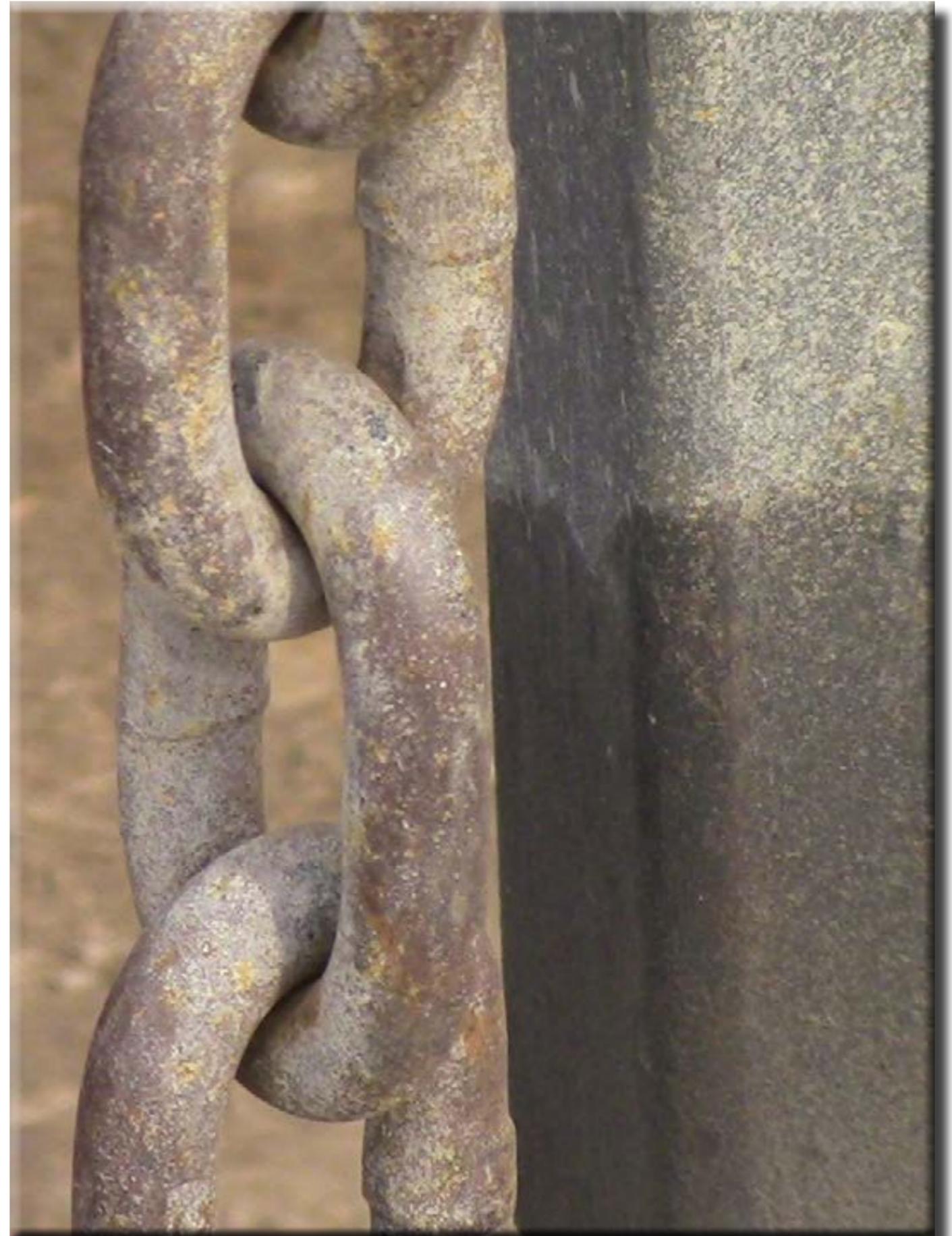
Killigrew was not the only woman writer before or after to challenge prevailing social boundaries for women, of course. In every age and country we discover women writers testing artistic and political limits. My students are often surprised to discover writers like Killigrew in recently published anthologies of early women writers they have never studied in school. They are even more appalled at the attacks made against women and the flimsy grounds for these attacks, sometimes, as in the case of Alexander Pope’s scathing satiric depiction of novelist Eliza Haywood, destroying their careers. Satires against women’s bodies and characters written by Pope and Jonathan Swift, who shaped eighteenth-century literature, strike students today as old-fashioned. But the same arguments are still regularly employed in attacking women. Clinton’s campaign showed us how relevant they are. We are still judging women’s worth by evaluating their faces, bodies, dress, sexuality, and menstrual cycles. In 2016, one might believe that Feminism had never happened. Even proto-feminists like Killigrew appear radical when we study 2016 campaign rhetoric.

What’s striking is not how different modern public women and their predecessors are; it’s the similarity in their concerns. Women are still defending their right to speak, to write, to hold opinions publicly, to enter political discourse, to challenge authority. In five hundred years, will another Killigrew or Clinton feel compelled to write a defense of themselves as public women, whether poet or politician?

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Link

Stuart Matheson

## **“A Response to Reality”: Seamus Heaney’s**

### **Vindication of Poetry,**

**1975 – 1996**

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Over the course of literary history, poets have frequently felt the need to defend their art against accusations of inefficacy. From Plato’s ardent objection to the idleness of poetry and banishment of poets from his *Republic* in Classical Greece to Theodor Adorno’s oft-cited post-World War II declaration that “to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric” (34), writers have long felt compelled to justify the act of composing imaginative prose and verse amid a tumultuous surrounding reality of hostility, warfare, and bloodshed. Acknowledging the efforts of previous poetic apologists, such as Sir Philip Sidney, William Butler Yeats, T. S. Eliot, and Wallace Stevens, renowned Irish poet and Nobel Prize recipient Seamus Heaney devotes much of his work to this justification of poetry and the arts in general. Throughout several poems, essays, and lectures, composed at various

points in his career, Heaney makes a cogent case for poetry that refuses to dress itself up as poetry and exists without political agenda or bureaucratic slant; he discourages the placement of socially prescribed limitations around creativity and suggests that poetry free of restrictive ethical obligations has an active force in and of its own equilibrium, providing consciousness, clarity, and the ability of the imagination to “[press] back against the pressures of reality” (*Finders Keepers* 281).

In his 1990 work “The Redress of Poetry,” Heaney presents a response to an imagined heckler, a dissatisfied protestor who jeers out from the crowd, “[wanting] poetry to be more than an imagined response to conditions in the world; he or she will urgently want to know why it should not be an applied art, harnessed to movements which attempt to alleviate those conditions by direct action” (*Finders Keepers* 282). Citing Stevens’ insistence that the poet “creates the world to which we turn incessantly and without knowing it, and . . . gives life to the supreme fictions without which we are unable to conceive of [that world]” (*Finders Keepers* 282), Heaney affirms:

Such an operation does not intervene in the actual, but by offering consciousness a chance to recognize its predicaments, foreknow its capacities and rehearse its comebacks in all kinds of venturesome ways, it does constitute a beneficent event, for poet and audience alike. It offers a response to reality which has a liberating and verifying effect upon the individual spirit, and yet I can see how such a function would be deemed insufficient by a political activist (*Finders Keepers* 282).

The desire persists among hecklers for poetry to *do* something, to be “of present use” (Heaney, *Finders Keepers* 281), to have some tangible, explicit effect on the political,

regional, or religious conflicts of the day. Likewise, a similar desire persists among poets, like Stevens, to prove the legitimacy of their work, “to insist that [their] own words are intended to be more than sonorous” (Heaney, *Finders Keepers* 281). In his response to the fancied heckler, Heaney summarizes a view of poetry that he has examined in various other works throughout his lifetime, in addition to “The Redress of Poetry,” including “Whatever You Say, Say Nothing,” “The Flight Path,” “The Government of the Tongue” and his 1995 Nobel laureate lecture “Crediting Poetry.”

True to his *Incertus* form, Heaney is understandably reluctant to accept poetry that takes a staunch political position or toes a particular party line. Poetry that does so may placate the heckler who wants “the entire weight of the thing to come down on their side of the scales” (Heaney, *Finders Keepers* 282), but also crosses into the unsavoury realm of propaganda. In his 1975 poem “Whatever You Say, Say Nothing,” composed in response to external pressures urging him to take a stand on the contemporary Irish conflict, Heaney states:

I’m writing just after an encounter  
With an English journalist in search of ‘views  
On the Irish thing’. I’m back in winter  
Quarters where bad news is no longer news,  
Where media-men and stringers sniff and point,  
Where zoom lenses, recorders and coiled leads  
Litter the hotels. (*Opened Ground* 123)

Similarly, in “The Flight Path,” written over two decades later, Heaney describes an encounter with an Irish Republican while on a train to Belfast in the 1970s. The Sinn

Féin recognizes Heaney and immediately demands to know “‘When, for fuck’s sake, are you going to write / Something for us?’” to which the poet replies, “If I do write something, / Whatever it is, I’ll be writing for myself” (*The Spirit Level* 29). These two poems reinforce Heaney’s argument that the establishment should not make it the responsibility of artists to campaign for one side or the other, thereby palpably altering the course of conflict. In both compositions, Heaney eschews the temptation to infuse his work with political slant, renouncing the idea that the artist must adulterate his or her own art in order to become a duty-bound mouthpiece for one cause or another. “Whatever You Say, Say Nothing” criticizes the sound bite hunters who “Litter the hotels” and entreat Heaney to take some sort of stand regarding “the Irish thing.” In much the same manner, “The Flight Path” criticizes the republican’s idea that Heaney should be a spokesman for the Catholic side of the conflict in Ireland, that an artist’s work should satisfy any agenda other than that of the artist’s own intangible desire. Here, Heaney’s stance brings to mind the words of acclaimed poet and scholar Meena Alexander in her essay “What Use Is Poetry?” in which she attests to “the force of the quicksilver self that poetry sets free – desire that can never be bound by laws or legislations. This is the force of the human, the spirit level of our lives.” As Heaney states above in his response to the heckler, poetry “does not intervene in the actual” but still manages to have “a verifying effect upon the individual spirit,” namely through its freedom to put that spirit into words, to transform the inherently immaterial into the infinitely perceptible.

In his 1986 essay entitled “The Government of the Tongue,” Heaney explores in even greater depth these notions of poetic freedom and restriction, in addition to the

tendency toward self-condemnation on the part of the poet. At the beginning, Heaney outlines two possible readings of the essay's title: the first pronounces "the idea that poetry vindicates itself through the exercise of its own expressive powers," while the second "[implies] a denial of the tongue's autonomy and permission" (*Finders Keepers* 197). Regarding the former interpretation, Heaney articulates that:

the tongue (representing both the poet's personal gift of utterance and the common resources of language) has been granted the right to govern. The poetic art discovers an authority all its own. As readers, we are prepared to be ruled by its rightness, even though that rightness is achieved not by the moral and ethical exercise of mind but by the self-validating operations of what we call inspiration. (*Finders Keepers* 197)

In other words, Heaney views language, poetry, and poetic inspiration as possessing a valid relevance to the world, without having to be imbued with a righteous sense of political correctness. The alternate understanding of the title suggests, in Heaney's terms, "monastic and ascetic strictness" (*Finders Keepers* 197). This reading evokes "a world where the prevalent values and necessities leave poetry in a relatively underprivileged situation" which "discloses a condition of public and private repressions where the undirected hedonistic play of imagination is regarded at best as luxury or licentiousness, at worst as heresy or treason" (Heaney *Finders Keepers* 198). In this section, Heaney establishes the oppressiveness of imposing political, or governmental, restrictions upon the arts, limitations which only serve to suffocate inspiration and straight-jacket the imagination. Heaney goes on to quote T. S. Eliot, who struggled with the guilt of writing during the chaos of World War II, citing a portion of Eliot's letter to his theatrical

collaborator E. Martin Browne: "In the midst of what is going on now, it is hard, when you sit down at a desk, to feel confident that morning after morning spent fiddling with words and rhythms is a justified activity" (qtd. in *Finders Keepers* 207). In response to this passage, Heaney acknowledges the contention described by Eliot while also offering another gracefully constructed defense of the arts:

Here is the great paradox of poetry and of the imaginative arts in general. Faced with the brutality of the historical onslaught, they are practically useless. Yet they verify our singularity; they strike and stake out the ore of self which lies at the base of every individuated life. In one sense, the efficacy of poetry is nil – no lyric ever stopped a tank. In another sense, it is unlimited. (*Finders Keepers* 207)

It is clear from this paragraph that Heaney appreciates, and perhaps at times has even shared, the frustration felt by hecklers and political activists over the seemingly inconsequential act of writing – indeed, "no lyric ever stopped a tank." However, he also recognizes the immense power that lies in poetry's unique ability to illuminate and express the innermost sentiments of the individual, both poet and audience alike, "[helping] us to say in the first recesses of ourselves, in the shyest, pre-social part of our nature, 'Yes, I know something like that too. Yes, that's right; thank you for putting words on it and making it more or less official'" (Heaney *Finders Keepers* 206). Poetry has the capacity to shape its audience's consciousness, to articulate the reality of their surroundings in a wholly indirect, sometimes abstract manner, which would certainly appear to the heckler as trifling and futile in the face of "the historical onslaught." But it is this precise manner, this "unlimited" realm of wordplay, metaphor and hypothesis in which poetry and the

arts operate, that is often singularly qualified above all other mediums to appropriately illustrate and cohere with the intricacies of the human condition – particularly during extended periods of external tribulation and internal uncertainty.

Furthermore, Heaney's 1995 Nobel lecture "Crediting Poetry" also centres around this defense of poetic works. Near the latter half of the lecture, Heaney recounts W. B. Yeats' "Meditations in the Time of Civil War," which he considers to be an example of poetry that achieves the desired balance between realism and idealism, neither restrictively pragmatic nor "all flourish" ("Crediting Poetry" 258). Heaney thus describes the poem:

...as tender-minded towards life itself as Saint Kevin was and as tough-minded about what happens in and to life as Homer. It knows that the massacre will happen again on the roadside, that the workers in the minibus are going to be lined up and shot down just after quitting time; but it also credits as a reality the squeeze of the hand, the actuality of sympathy and protectiveness between living creatures. It satisfies the contradictory needs which consciousness experiences at times of crisis, the need on the one hand for a truth-telling that will be hard and retributive, and on the other hand the need not to harden the mind to a point where it denies its own yearnings for sweetness and trust. It is a proof that poetry can be equal to *and* true at the same time. ("Crediting Poetry" 258-9)

Here, Heaney clarifies his conception of poetry that suitably represents its circumstances yet avoids being weighed down by them. Yeats' poem reifies not only what is negative and finite and realistic but also what is positive and boundless and idealistic. "Yeats' work," Heaney states, "does what the necessary poetry always does, which is to touch the base of our sympathetic nature while taking in at the same time the unsympathetic

nature of the world to which that nature is constantly exposed" ("Crediting Poetry" 259).

Finally, Heaney warns against placing so much emphasis on morality that we forget about the enjoyment of the creative process. The "response to reality" that Heaney mentions in his answer to the heckler's concerns should not be a lens, but a mirror. The outside pressures bearing down on poets to construct their art within a socially sanctioned ethical framework not only shackle the imagination, but also strip the artistic process of the very pleasure that incited the artist's creation in the first place. Circling briefly back to "Redress," we see Heaney make the assertion that "Poetry cannot afford to lose its fundamentally self-delighting inventiveness, its joy in being a process of language as well as a representation of things in the world" (*Finders Keepers* 283-4). As he continues, recalling the words of Yeats, "the will must not usurp the work of the imagination" (*Finders Keepers* 284). It is this enjoyment of the creative process that contributes to the finished product's "liberating and verifying effect on the individual spirit" – although in this respect, it is not necessarily the reader's spirit that is affected, but the writer's. Moreover, in "Crediting Poetry," Heaney recounts an earlier period in his career, during which the pressures of his "dolorous circumstances" (256) weighed on his mind and inhibited his ability to create. He describes his younger self as "bowed to the desk like some monk bowed over his prie-dieu, some dutiful contemplative pivoting his understanding in an attempt to bear his portion of the weight of the world, knowing himself incapable of heroic virtue or redemptive effect, but constrained by his obedience to his rule to repeat the effort and the posture" ("Crediting Poetry" 256). Only after beginning "to make space in my reckoning for the marvellous as well as for the murderous" could Heaney see

himself “[straighten] up” (“Crediting Poetry” 256), find his voice, and begin creating the authentically sourced compositions that would later earn him a Nobel Prize in Literature in 1995.

Seamus Heaney’s response to the imagined heckler in “The Redress of Poetry” serves to illuminate his stance on the overall validity of the imaginative arts – a stance he has explored in many of his previous and subsequent works over the course of his nearly fifty-year career. He disapproves of the heckler’s idea that art should bolster one side at the expense of the other, leaving itself unbalanced and impoverished, for the sake of political effect. Instead, Heaney suggests that poetry has the capability to impact its environment as a result of “its given, unforeseeable thereness, the way it enters our field of vision and animates our physical and intelligent being” (*Finders Keepers* 284). Heaney illustrates this idea at the end of “The Redress of Poetry,” using one final metaphor centered around “those bird-shapes stencilled on the transparent surfaces of glass walls or windows” which “suddenly enter the vision and change the direction of the real birds’ flight. . . . An image of the living creatures has induced a totally salubrious swerve in the creatures themselves” (*Finders Keepers* 284-5). In this sense, Heaney views poetry’s very presence, its existence in our field of vision, as inherently beneficial to the life of the individual. In much the same way that the birds recognize themselves in stencilled images, we see a fundamental aspect of ourselves reflected back at us through the medium of poetry. Free of the pragmatism coveted by the heckler or the political endorsement longed for by the Irish republican, poetry in its purest form allows for a reassuring glimpse into the penetralia of the human condition. In many ways, the heckler is understandable in

his or her dissatisfaction; no poem has ever sprung, fully-armed and battle-ready, from the poet’s mind. Yet the power of poetry lies not in its ability to leap off the page, take up a sword and fight the good fight; as Heaney demonstrates, the power of poetry, and indeed the power of the imaginative arts in general, lies in their ability to provide us with the liberating capacity to understand our situations, corroborate our sentiments, and substantiate our essential human spirit.

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## INTRODUCTION

La langue française est maintenant devenue une langue véhiculaire utilisée par beaucoup de Nigériens, soit dans les milieux académiques, soit dans les entreprises publiques ou privées, et même dans les marchés ou dans les foyers, partout, on rencontre plusieurs nigériens qui s'expriment couramment en français. Mais, la grande question c'est, est-ce que ces Nigériens parlent le vrai français de Molière ou une version fabriquée à leur gré? Le français n'est plus limité à l'usage des personnes de langue maternelle française, ni aux francophones dans le monde. Elle est maintenant utilisée dans des contextes interculturels partout dans le monde, y compris au Nigéria, un pays anglophone, mais francophile. L'usage pragmatique de la langue française par beaucoup des Nigériens qui ne sont pas des personnes colonisées par la France, peut donc se voir au niveau de l'interlangue à travers les proverbes africains que nous allons discuter dans cette communication.

## L'INTERLANGUE

Qu'est-ce qu'on entend par l'interlangue? C'est un phénomène qui définit le rapport entre deux ou trois langues différentes. C'est l'usage d'une langue (L2) par une personne d'origine étrangère qui se sert de cette nouvelle langue pour exprimer sa culture de (L1). C'est un terme introduit par Larry Selinker, (1972) le linguiste américain qui renvoie au système linguistique quand un apprenant adulte d'une langue seconde veut essayer de s'exprimer dans la langue nouvelle. L'interlangue est un système linguistique séparé, tout différent de la langue maternelle et de la langue cible que l'adulte apprend, mais les deux sont liées par des identifications interlinguales dans la perception de l'apprenant. C'est donc la forme de langage intermédiaire produit par les apprenants d'une langue seconde

ou étrangère (Encarta). Au cours de cette association il peut y résulter des fossilisations (Tarone, 1994). L'interlangue peut se définir comme la forme de langage intermédiaire, c'est l'association de deux ou plusieurs langues. Quand un écrivain d'une œuvre littéraire fait un intermariage de deux langues différentes pour exprimer ses points de vue sur les situations socio-économiques, politiques et culturelles de sa société, c'est l'interlangue qui est en jeu. Le langage de l'écrivain africain est librement utilisé dans une autre langue étrangère comme stratégie d'écriture des faits divers de sa culture. Mais, cette communication s'intéresse à l'usage des proverbes africains de la pièce satirique d'Oladejo Okediji (*RÉRÉ RÚN*- traduite en français par Tunde Ajiboye comme *La Catastrophe au rendez-vous*) dans le but de les énumérer tels qu'ils sont utilisés pour décrire les réalités de la société africaine présentée.

Au dire d'Ayeleru (2014), les écrivains africains ont déployé des stratégies différentes pour manipuler les langues européennes dans la création de leurs textes, surtout, ceux de la troisième génération. Ces écrivains adoptent des stratégies radicales d'innovation de leur langage à travers l'oratoire africaine, les proverbes, la traduction/translittération, la pidginisation, l'intra/intertextualité, l'euphémisme, la métaphore et la métonymie. Ils ont des choses à dire, des points de vue importants à soulever, et sans restraints, ils jouent la politique du langage en se permettant de manipuler les langues européennes dans leurs écritures. D'après Pius Adesanmi (2002:126), la nouvelle génération des écrivains africains ont droit d'utiliser les langues européennes telles qu'ils veulent pour exprimer leurs pensées africaines. Ils vont subvertir, approprier et décoloniser ces langues pour démontrer leurs expériences africaines et leurs points de vue mondial. Selon lui:

*My generation writes predominantly in English, Nigerian English, and shall continue to do so in the foreseeable future. That does not in any way make us Europhilacs or agents of imperialism. The Igbo genius is unmistakable in Oguibe's poetry, as the Yoruba genius is in the poetry of Adewale and Raji.*

Ma génération écrit essentiellement en Anglais, l'anglais Nigérian, et on va continuer à le faire dans un avenir prévisible. Cela n'implique pas qu'on est Europhilacs ou agents de l'impérialisme. Le génie Igbo est évident dans la poésie d'Oguibe, autant que le génie Yorùbá se voit dans la poésie d'Adewale et de Raji. (Notre traduction).

Donc, nous aussi, en tant que francophiles, nous pouvons utiliser la langue française en faisant sa modification, domestication et indigénisation pour mieux exprimer nos pensées africaines, et particulièrement d'exprimer les proverbes Yorùbá de notre auteur choisie. Le renommé écrivain Nigérian, Achebe (1964:348), soutient aussi l'usage de l'interlangue et l'indigénisation des langues européennes dans ces mots,

*"I have been given the language (English) and I intend to stretch it to accommodate my African thoughts".*

«On m'a donné la langue (anglaise) et j'ai l'intention l'étirer pour accommoder mes pensées africaines ». (Notre traduction)

Ayeleru (2014) quand a lui, donne son approbation au point de vue d'Adesanmi

que ce n'est pas étrange qu'un écrivain littéraire africain reproduit ou façonne les langues européennes pour montrer ses compétences linguistiques, afin de montrer ses valeurs et cultures africaines. Abiola Irele (1981:55) a déjà mis son appui sur la capacité des auteurs africains d'écrire avec succès soit en anglais ou en français assurant une prolongation des langues coloniales en les africanisant de sens et de structure. Et en parlant de l'usage des langues européennes dans la littérature africaine, pendant l'interviewe faite avec Ayeleru, (Zabus, C. 2010) nous dit que son œuvre, *le Palimpsest Africain* s'intéresse beaucoup plus à la manière distinctivement africaine dont les auteurs écrivent leurs textes littéraires pour satisfaire à leur besoins car le langage est un point d'origine par lequel les écrivains africains présentent leurs œuvres littéraires dans la langue anglaise ou française déjà africanisée. Selon Ayeleru, depuis le *Makerere outburst* d'Obi Wali (1963), jusqu'à la position de Marxiste idéaliste d'Ngugi (1981) et à la posture modérée d'Achebe (1965), les écrivains Africains ont déployé des stratégies différents pour manipuler les langues Européennes pour la création de leurs œuvres littéraires. La question de l'usage du langage dans la littérature africaine a attirée les discours critiques de plusieurs écrivains y compris Niyi Osundare (1983, 1984, 1995), Ahmadou Kourouma (1970, 1978), Gassama, Makhily (1995), Chantal Zabus (1991, 2007), Blachere, Jean-Claude (1993), Adewole Adejare (1992, 1998), Kayode Omole (1998), Bill Ashcroft (1998, 2001), Anatole Mbanga (1999), Herbert Igboanusi (2002), Femi Osofisan (2006), Ayo Kehinde (2009), et Jane Bryce (2010).

Donc, cette communication prend son intérêt dans l'usage libre du proverbe Yorùbá traduit en français dans *"La catastrophe au rendez-vous"* comme une interlangue

qui doit être encouragé; car selon (Adélékè Adéèkọ, 1998) la véritable libération africaine demande que l'écrivain africain écrive sa littérature pour montrer son nativisme. Jean-Pierre Dozon (non daté) de sa part avoue que la littérature est importante, pour apprendre plus, sur le pouvoir d'Etat africain, la situation actuelle en Afrique, et les développements politiques. Dans cette analyse, nous allons apprendre quelques proverbes Yorùbá et leurs significations en contextes.

### PRESENTATION DE L'AUTEUR

L'érudit Monsieur Oladejo Okediji figure parmi les tous premiers experts de la créativité littéraire Yorùbá dans la région Ouest du Nigeria. Il a été professeur qualifié à Wesley College, Ibadan où il exerçait son métier depuis 1948. Il s'est mis à la retraite en 1984, ayant passé 36 ans dans le service. Il a commencé l'écriture littéraire depuis 1954, une réponse à l'appel de Western Region Literature Committee pour des ouvrages de fiction. D'après Tunde Ajiboye, on peut s'inspirer par la sagesse théâtrale d'Okediji et par son style à la fois sobre et brillant. Il s'est servi de la richesse de sa langue première en puisant de réserves de proverbes, le langage caché, pour dévoiler les excès du conseil exécutif d'une ville/un pays imaginé représentant d'autres pays où les leaders embauchent les subalternes, la classe ouvrière.

### PRESENTATION DU TRADUCTEUR

Monsieur le professeur, Tunde Ajiboye est le traducteur de la pièce "RERE RUN" d'Oladejo Okediji de la langue Yorùbá en français. Il a fait ses études au Nigéria, à l'université d'Ibadan en 1974, et quatre ans après, en France à l'université de Nancy,

où il a obtenu le doctorat ès lettres. On a fait figurer le nom de ce professeur titulaire de langue française et de linguistique dans *Newswatch Who's Who* en 1990. En 1996, le Gouvernement français lui a donné une récompense au nom de Chevalier des Palmes Académiques. Il fut élu le premier Président de l'Intercaft (Inter-College Association of French Teachers), une association professionnelle fondée par lui-même. Il a été professeur de français à Osun State College of Education et chef du département avant d'y quitter en 1986.

L'un des pères de l'expansion et de l'apprentissage de la langue française au Nigeria, il est actuellement professeur de français à l'université d'Ilorin, au Nigeria, où il finit par devenir chef du Département de Langues Moderne Européennes (Onyemelukwe, 2004: 261). Un auteur renommé de nombreux articles dans le domaine de la linguistique appliquée et de la langue française, ainsi que des manuels de français dont *le Témoin*, *Nouvel Horizon*, et *Olurombi ou le prix d'un pari*. Il s'intéresse vivement au devenir de la langue française non seulement au Nigeria ou en Afrique, mais nous pensons qu'avec la traduction de cette pièce riche et en abondance des proverbes africains, il témoigne la richesse de la langue Yorùbá et sa culture orale. Avec l'étayage de ces proverbes qu'Achebe nous dit "est l'huile avec laquelle se mangent les mots" en français, Ajiboye "fait un appel pour la renaissance de la culture africaine qui est en voie de se flétrir" (Ayeleru, 2011).

### RESUME DE LA PIECE

La pièce que nous travaillons est un œuvre littéraire qui nous dévoile les malheurs accumulés d'un leader syndical au nom de Lawuwo, qui a carrément refusé de se plier aux contraintes et manipulations imposées par une élite malhonnête et ridiculement

corrompue. L'union des travailleurs de construction de Mogun se met en grève pour soutenir leurs demandes pour une augmentation de salaire, un barème fiscal progressif, des soins médicaux adéquats, et une représentation politique. Dans la première partie, ils décident de ne pas retourner au travail jusqu'à ce qu'il y ait une augmentation de leur salaire, et que Lawuwo leur leader retenu soit libéré. Dans la deuxième partie, les chefs, qui comprennent du conseil exécutif de la classe dirigeante, sponsorisent un autre syndical pour rivaliser le premier, diviser les travailleurs et leur créer un manque d'harmonie. Ils ont vaincu la classe ouvrière, car dans la troisième partie, le conseil des chefs ont discrédité Lawuwo par la distribution des photos truquées qu'ils ont pris avec lui en train de bouffer avec eux. Mais c'est le mensonge de la classe bourgeoise représentée par les chefs. Lawuwo perd la confiance des travailleurs à cause des photos compromises. Les travailleurs qui ont maintenant éprouvé une profonde méfiance à l'égard de Lawuwo changent leurs opinions et reprennent leurs instruments de travail. Ils s'avouent vaincu. A la fin de la pièce, Morenike sa femme, dans la croyance qu'elle avait trahit son mari, elle s'est suicidée ayant été dupée de l'argent du syndical par des escroques.

## LES PROVERBES

Un proverbe est une formule qui présente des caractères formels stables, souvent métaphorique ou figurée exprimant une vérité d'expérience ou un conseil de sagesse pratique et populaire commun à tout un groupe social. (Robert, 2009). Les proverbes peuvent être définis aussi comme un aspect de la littérature africaine qui met en garde contre les maux dont un individu peut s'ériger ou s'évertuer. C'est du langage codé, sauf les initiés peuvent le déchiffrer. Selon Adam Parry, (1971) les proverbes sont des formules

d'expressions courantes dans toutes les traditions et comment ils sont utilisés varient selon les valeurs de validation.

En même temps, les proverbes proviennent de la littérature orale traditionnelle et peuvent être présentés en vers ou en prose, car ils ont la fonction dans la culture orale plus cruciale et omniprésente que dans la culture d'écriture ou électronique. En Afrique noire, le proverbe occupe une place de choix dans toutes les discussions. C'est à travers les proverbes que certains aspects de la littérature orale furent préservés, puisqu'ils sont des aide-mémoires pour la préservation des pensées traditionnelles "exprimées en une formule elliptique généralement imaginée." Au temps jadis, l'utilisation et la manipulation au moment opportune pendant les réunions sous l'arbre de baobab ou de cachou constituent une force et une plateforme de respect pour celui qui arrive à les contrôler.

## IMPORTANCE DES PROVERBES

Le renommé D.O. Fagunwa, l'un des premiers écrivains littéraires en langue Yorùbá recommande fortement l'usage du style natif dans son écriture pour accentuer les thèmes d'une œuvre. Ajayi Samson (2012) en parlant de l'importance profonde des proverbes et adages en Afrique avoue que la richesse du style d'un auteur africain est déterminé le plus souvent par l'emploi des proverbes et d'adages, deux éléments parmi d'autres qui font le noyau de la littérature africaine. L'un des buts de cette présentation est de montrer la prouesse de la culture africaine que l'on peut trouver dans les proverbes énumérés dans l'œuvre que nous avons choisie. Quelle sagesse faudrait-il en tirer de ces proverbes? Il faut regarder l'aspect positif dont l'homme a besoin pour mener la vie descente dans une

société humaine. Que ce soit la vie sociale dans un pays développé ou sous-développé, les proverbes enseignent toujours une morale et il faut en profiter.

Les proverbes rappellent en quelque sorte le célèbre argument du pari pascalien, un pari par lequel on essaye de convaincre les incroyants qu'en pariant pour l'existence de Dieu, on n'a rien à perdre, mais tout a gagné. Les proverbes donnent des informations. De fait, « toute information mettant en garde contre un danger à éviter devrait être prise au sérieux même si la menace est plus probable que certaine » (Kasende, 1992: 47). Les proverbes selon Quitard, (1860: 420) ont par eux-mêmes un prix assez grand pour pouvoir se passer de celui que leur prêterait un habile agencement. Ils ressemblent aux perles qui, pour être mal enfilées, n'en sont pas moins précieuses. D'autres proverbes déconseillent le vol et tous les méfaits nuisibles à l'humanité. L'usage des proverbes africains dans une œuvre littéraire écrite en langue étrangère peut se considérer comme la régénération de la tradition africaine pour que la culture et les valeurs africaines soient protégées de la domination totale des influences étrangères. Car, selon (Ayeleru, 2011), la littérature sert à promouvoir la culture en général, et plus particulièrement la culture africaine qui doit être exposée au monde entier. En utilisant des proverbes africains dans sa pièce, Okediji fait une valorisation de la culture africaine qui doit être protégée car au dire d'Ayeleru nous avons préservé les langues européennes au détriment de nos langues nationales. Mais d'après Ajiboye (2003) le traducteur de la version française de *Rere Run- La Catastrophe au Rendez-Vous*, "il entend permettre aux lecteurs francophones de déguster de la saveur littéraire de la pièce et de mieux connaître les enjeux de la culture Yorùbá, surtout du point de vue de l'interprétation de cette culture avec les impératifs de

la culture syndicales modernes" (Ajiboye, 2003)

Les proverbes africains d'Oladejo Okediji présentés en français par Ajiboye montrent l'usage spécial que l'on peut faire de la langue de Molière pour exprimer la culture Yorùbá. Ci-dessous sont quelques uns des proverbes tels qu'ils apparaissent dans la pièce: *La catastrophe au rendez-vous*, quelques-uns sont suivis de leurs traductions ou équivalents Yoruba et le message auquel chacun se rapport.

### **ANALYSE DES PROVERBES DANS LA CATASTROPHE AU RENDEZ-VOUS**

1. *Le tigre marche à pas dérobés, tu ne sais pas que ce n'est pas par lâcheté qu'il se comporte ainsi, mais que c'est par prudence* (p. 2) : (En Yorùbá: Yí yó ẹ̀kùn t'ọ̀jo kó....) le tigre ne veut pas manquer sa proie. La leçon à tirer ici c'est que, l'apparence du tigre, cette démarche, ne veut pas dire qu'il a peur. Il s'agit de la sagesse du tigre. C'est-à-dire qu'on ne juge pas par l'apparence. En français, on dit que *l'habit ne fait pas le moine*.

2. *Il n'y a pas deux oiseaux qui se nomment aigrette* (p. 6). (En Yorùbá: Ẹ̀yẹ̀ méjì kìí jẹ àṣá) on peut aussi dire (Ìgbéraga ní n síwájú ìparun). Le message ici c'est de l'orgueil. Nous devons développer et démontrer l'esprit d'humilité. La leçon c'est que quand un homme est sage, il n'aimerait jamais être orgueilleux, car il sait que la fin de cet esprit orgueilleuse est toujours négative.

3. *C'est seulement un ignorant qui prend une potion médicale pour une soupe* (p. 6).

(En Yoruba: on dit souvent "ọ̀mọ̀dẹ̀ ò m' òògùrn ó ní pẹ̀ é l'ẹ̀fó") La leçon c'est qu'on doit être sage, il ne faut pas avaler des médicaments sans aucune prescription.

4. *Celui qui nous envoie une mission mérite plus d'obéissance plus que celui qui est l'objet de la mission* (p. 7). (En Yoruba on dit: "Èní rán ni n'íṣẹ l'àà n b'èrù a kù í b'èrù ẹni à n jẹ fun. L'objet c'est le nœud de ce message, celui qui envoie le message est plus important. Il faut être déterminé dans la vie pour atteindre le succès. "No matter the gravity of a threat, we must determine to achieve our goal, which is success.

5. *Si le sauvage t'envoie en mission, tu n'es pas obligé de te composer comme un sauvage* (p. 7). (En Yoruba, on dit souvent: T'á a bá rán ni n'íṣẹ ẹrú, àá fi t'ọmọ jẹ) La leçon à tirer ici c'est de faire le bon choix et d'être prudent. En Français, on dit quand on est à Rome, on vit comme les Romains. Cela veut dire que si les romains sont bandits, tu dois être bandits aussi. Mais dans cette situation, si on est dans un pays où tous sont des bandits, on n'a pas besoin de devenir bandit si on vit dans ce pays.

6. *A quoi bon l'épervier qui ne peut pas s'abattre sur les poussins?* (p. 10). (En Yoruba on dit : Kí ni àwòdì rẹ n ẹ ti kò lè gbé adìẹ). La leçon: il faut être un leader exemplaire. C'est un leader que les autres suivent dans un système donné.

7. *Celui qui, selon nous ne vaut pas une chandelle, le voici devenu indispensable à notre vie collective* (p. 10). (En Yoruba: Ẹni t'á a rò pé kò ní le pàgó, t'ó wá di ẹni t'ó ní kó ilé alárinrin. La leçon à tirer c'est d'avoir le courage, la persévérance, il ne faut jamais se décourager pour réussir dans la vie. Et il ne faut pas mépriser personne, car on ne sait jamais ce qu'il sera capable d'accomplir.

8. *Lorsque le moustique se perche sur la tête de notre enfant, il serait peu prudent de le tuer à coup de bâton* (p. 11). (En Yoruba: Adìẹ dà mí l'óògun nù, màá fọọ l'ẹyin).

La leçon ici, c'est qu'il faut être prudent pour ne pas tout perdre; il faut de la prudence.

9. *Tu vois, tout vient à point à qui sait attendre* (p. 12). (En Yoruba: Onísùrùrù, l'ó n j'ogún ayé./ Onísùrùrù ní n fún wàrà kinniún.) Le conseil ici, c'est d'avoir la patience. C'est-à-dire quand vous espérez quelque chose, il vous faut de la patience. Attendre c'est la patience, on dit souvent en français que 'la patience est un chemin d'or'.

10. *L'enfant qui décide de ne pas laisser dormir sa mère, comment arrivera-t-il à dormir, lui aussi* (p. 12). (En Yoruba: ọmọ t'ó ní kí iyá òun má sùn, òun náà kò ní fi ojú ba oorun.) La leçon: ce proverbe prêche la bonté, il faut être bon. En Français: Qui sème du vent, récolte la tempête. La charité bien ordonnée commence par soi. Si vous voulez que la charité vous entoure de tous côtés, il faut que vous commenciez à l'appliquer.

11. *Dites-moi à qui appartient la ferme: au piège ou bien à l'écureuil?* (p. 13). (En Yoruba: b'íkun l'ó ni oko, bí tàkúté ni, ipádé di ojú alá. Le message: c'est pour montrer la supériorité. En Français, la raison du plus fort est toujours la meilleure (p. 13).

12. *Une fois la poule est en otage, les poussins errent partout* (p. 13). (En Yoruba: Baálé ilé kú, ilé d'ahoro. On peut aussi dire, Ài sí nílé ológíní, ilé d' ilé èkúté. La leçon à tirer: Se confier à l'être humaine, n'est que vanité, c'est le vide.

13. *Voici une affaire qui demande du tact, mais que le roi Onimogun cherche à rendre tendue* (p. 13). (En Yoruba, on dit: Òrò tí ò tó búr t'á n y'òbẹ ti.) Le message de ce proverbe est qu'il faut être diplomatique pour aborder certaines choses dans la vie, surtout quand on est leader.

14. *Qui ne dit mot consent.* En français, qui ne dit rien consent, il est d'accord. (p. 14).

La leçon: il faut être courageux pour exprimer son opinion devant les gens, au lieu d'avoir peur. Quand vous ne parlez pas, même quand vous n'êtes pas d'accord, on sous-entend que vous êtes d'accord.

15. *Quand un esclave se trouve chez un maître bienveillant, il se moque de ses semblables.* (p. 14). (En Yoruba: Ènià l'asọ̀ò mi.) C'est-à-dire, un esclave qui se moque de ses semblables, c'est parce qu'il a des supporteurs, il est couvert. Quand un enfant a des parents riches, il jouit de la richesse, il est vénéré à cause de ses parents.

16. *Le monde tourne sans cesse et sans signal; c'est effrayant. Celui qui ne sait pas nager risque de noyer* (p. 16). (En Yoruba: Bíríbirí l'aye n yí, aye kò duró de ẹ̀nikan. Eni tí kò mò wè á bá odò lọ.) La première leçon à tirer du proverbe c'est que la vie est comme un caméléon, qui change de temps en temps de couleur, rien n'est permanent; deuxièmement - A qui mieux mieux. Si tu n'es pas sage ou tu manques de sagesse, tu périras. Si tu joues bien, tu auras de bons résultats.

17. *Le jour où on abat un éléphant, toutes sortes de couteaux sont au rendez-vous* (p. 18). (En Yoruba: Oríşirísi òbẹ́ l'à n rí l'ójó ikú erin.) La leçon: Quand vous êtes chasseur, et vous vous lancez dans la chasse aux éléphants, personne ne vous suit. C'est quand vous arrivez à obtenir le butin que vous aurez beaucoup d'amis qui viendront célébrer avec vous. Quand vous êtes entrain de souffrir pour obtenir un résultat souhaitable, quand vous faites des sacrifices, vous le faites presque tout seul, ce n'est qu'à la fin quand il est temps de faire une bonne récolte, de jouir de l'appart, que vous aurez beaucoup d'amis.

18. *L'avare se justifie toujours en disant: c'est parce que ce n'est pas assez* (p. 18). (Du fait qu'il

n'en a pas assez). En Yoruba: Àwáwí ò k'a jọ. Le message est de toujours chercher des alibis pour se défendre. C'est du camouflage.

19. *Ceux qui travaillent se trouvent sous le soleil, ceux qui en profitent se trouvent à l'abri* (p. 19). En Yoruba: Òşìşé wà l'òòrun, a bá ni ná 'wó wà ní ibòji. La leçon: C'est un conseil de travailler bien, et avertissement contre la paresse. Ce proverbe s'emploie pour exposer l'exploitation des travailleurs.

20. *Le menteur a toujours quelqu'un comme confident* (p. 21). C'est-à-dire le menteur a toujours quelqu'un qui mentira comme lui, quelqu'un en qui il a confiance c'est pourquoi on dit 'montre moi qui tu hantes, et je te dirai qui tu es.

21. *Il passe beaucoup d'eau sous le point mais vous ne pouvez pas le savoir. La poule est capable de sueur, mais les plumes le rendent peu évidents* (p. 21). (En Yoruba, on dit: Adię ní l'áàgùrn, iyé apá rẹ̀ ni kò jẹ́ kí á mọ.) La leçon: il y a le destin. Le destin de l'homme, rien ne peut changer.

22. *Si à la vue des mouches qui s'abattent sur la blessure, personne ne se montre étonné, que personne ne rouspète si le blessé descend sur les mouches pour les manger* (p. 22). (En Yoruba: Nígbà tí eşinşin n jẹ́ elégbò ẹ̀nikan ò ríi, t'élégbò bá níjẹ́ eşinşin....) La leçon: il y a un aspect d'égoïsme, la réciprocité dans les relations humaine, le riche aimerait toujours continuer à être riche, il n'entend pas que l'opposée ait lieu.

23. *Qu'a-t-on faire de la fourmi alors que l'éléphant se trouve à notre portée...* (p. 23). (Qu'allons nous faire de la pénurie et l'opulence? a cote de l'opulence, la pénurie n'existe pas, on fait la comparaison entre l'abondance et la pénurie.

24. *Est-ce que le balai n'est pas le roi des mouches?* (p. 23). (En Yoruba: Òṣùṣù ọwò l'ọkọ eṣinṣin.) La leçon: On parle de deux individus. Il y a le premier qui a une connaissance qui n'influence personne. Mais la connaissance qui profite dont on se sert pour aboutir à une fin souhaitable est la meilleure.

25. *Les lianes qui cherchent à entraver le mouvement de l'éléphant finiront par partir avec l'éléphant* (p. 23). (En Yoruba: tàkùr̀n tó ní k'érin má w'ọ̀dò, t'òun t'erin l'ó ñlọ.) Leçon : la raison du plus fort est toujours la meilleure, aucun obstacle ne pourra déranger.

26. *Fait un peu le diplomate: ton cœur croit au noir, mais que ta bouche préfère le blanc* (p. 24). (En Yoruba, on dit, ènià f'èjè s'ínú, tu itó funfun jáde.) Ça c'est l'hypocrisie. La leçon: il faut se méfier de l'hypocrite. Il s'agit d'un fumiste, une personne qui vous le voyez avec vous, et vous le prenez comme un ami de confiance, mais après il va raconter votre confort. Il va vendre la mèche à l'ennemie.

27. *Une affaire qui, chez certains, provoque les larmes, la voici qui est la source de joie chez d'autres* (p. 26). C'est-à-dire ce qui fait pleurer certains peut servir de source de joie aux autres. Par exemple, quand il y a des gens qui s'accaparent des biens de l'état ou font usage des biens de l'état pour leur propre fin, définitivement, il doit y avoir des dépourvus qui en souffriront.

28. *Celui qui se chauffe au bois non séché est, de toute évidence, condamné aux supplices du froid* (p. 29). C'est-à-dire, ce n'est pas que l'homme ne fournisse pas d'effort, mais des efforts que l'on fournit mais qui ne rapportent rien, ces efforts finiront par ruiner. Il faut que l'on ait des objectifs atteignables.

29. *Vous qu'on cherche à détruire par le feu, n'est-ce pas vous-même, qui vous vous enduisez d'huile* (p. 29). (Qui vous mettez près du feu?). Leçon: Il ne faut pas être agent de sa propre ruine par ses actes.

30. *La mouche sera toujours dans la compagnie de la plaie* (p. 30). (En Yoruba: Ta l'eṣinṣin ì bá gbè, bí kò ẹ̀ elégbò). La leçon: La plaie peut être facteur qui entrave la présence des mouches si l'on manque du savoir, ou des moyens pour se protéger contre les effets de ces mouches qui sont d'ailleurs dangereuses pour la santé parce que les mouches sont porteuses de bactéries. La négligence est dangereuse pour la santé humaine.

31. *A quoi rêve la poule si non à la possibilité de manger du maïs* (p. 30). La leçon: le ventre affamé n'a point d'oreille. L'homme qui a faim ne cherche rien que de trouver à manger.

32. *Le petit qui sait garder ses mains propres mangera volontiers avec les grands* (pp. 35-36). (En Yoruba: B'ómọ̀dé ba m'ọ̀wó wè, á b'ágbà jẹun,) La leçon: Un enfant qui n'est pas têtu, qui a du respect, qui n'est pas désobéissant aura toujours des faveurs de ses aînés.

33. *La charité bien ordonnée commence par soi-même* (p. 41). La leçon: Fait aux autres ce que tu aimerais que l'on te fasse.

34. *Láwúwo est un véritable idiot et il va souffrir énormément, pis que la vache qui se montre difficile au berger au cours du pâturage* (p. 42). Leçon: La bête qui se montre désobéissante au berger toujours va souffrir. Donc, il faut être toujours obéissant, pour mériter de bénéfices ou des gloires.

35. *A quelqu'un qui ne mérite que de dormir par terre, lui proposer la natte, c'est perdre son temps* (p. 43). La leçon à tirer ici, c'est que l'habitude est une seconde nature.

36. *Une divinité ... Indifférente à toutes les sollicitudes finit par tomber dans la disgrâce* (p. 43).

37. *Tu es comme la blatte qui voudrait bien danser, mais la poule est bien à côté* (p. 45). La leçon: Il faut se méfier des ennemies, un poussin qui s'expose au danger de l'aigle finira par être détruit.

38. *Le bien conduit vaut mieux que mille parures* (p. 46). (En yoruba: Ìwà rere l'ẹ̀ṣo ẹ̀nià.) La leçon: On veut établir la relation entre la bonne conduite et le matérialisme. En d'autre terme, ce qu'il y a de précieux, de qualité, innée en soi vaille mieux que des milliers de dollars. Il faut être un homme de morale dans la société. Ça c'est dans l'ancien temps. Ceux qui ont de l'argent, sont ceux qui dictent dans notre société d'aujourd'hui, ce n'est plus question de qualité.

39. *Le chat parti, la souris peut donc se permettre de danser* (p. 49). La leçon: Quand le maître n'est pas là, les serviteurs se font roi. Dans un pays où il manque des vrais leaders sur qui l'on peut compter pour faire régner l'ordre, la paix et la justice, les subordonnés créent l'anarchie.

40. *C'est la pluie qui force le pigeon dans la compagnie de la poule* (p. 75). (En yoruba: Òjò t'ó p'àlàpà, l'ó k'ẹ̀yẹ̀lé pò m'ádiẹ.) Leçon: Il n'y a pas d'ordre, chacun fait à sa tête quand il y manque de direction.

## LA CONCLUSION

Ayant lu soigneusement la version traduite de *RÉRÉ RÚN- Le catastrophe au rendez-vous*, nous remarquons l'étayage des éléments de l'oralité à savoir des proverbes,

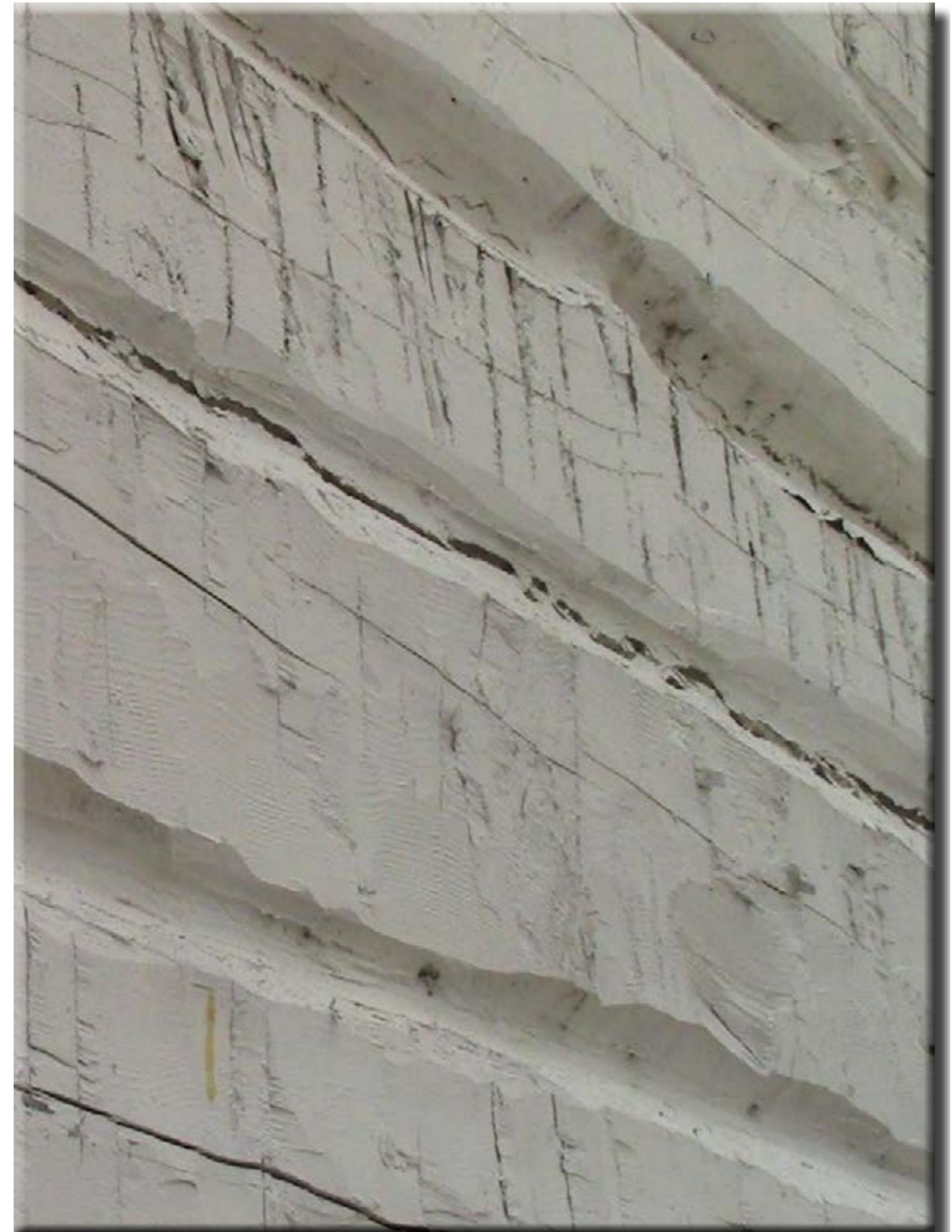
une beauté artistique distincte, faite par Ajiboye (2003) en respectant aussi que possible les règles de la grammaire française. La langue européenne (Française) est manœuvrée pour refléter la tradition africaine, un effort digne de louanges. Alors, nous proposons que l'on puisse se servir des proverbes africains de doubles fonctions. En les apprenant, on peut les utiliser en même temps à enseigner la langue française dans nos écoles à tous les niveaux, au Nigéria. Il nous faut aussi faire l'usage libre de la langue européenne pour encourager un mariage de la culture africaine et celle des pays occidentaux pour qu'il y ait du progrès sur le plan social. En faisant "le maniement de la langue" (Lanson, 1912), on peut trouver les aspects positifs de la culture africaine et les marier aux aspects positifs de la culture occidentale. Un mariage de ces deux cultures engendra la promotion des valeurs de deux côtés. L'une ne devrait point être prévaluée sur l'autre.

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# **A Study of Folkist Aesthetics of Tales by the Moonlight of the Nigerian Television Authority**

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## **Abstract**

Folktales are not only a product of culture, they also constitute what define a people. They are stories of past heroic events, construct the thought pattern of a people, and deconstruct the ills of the society. *Tales by Moonlight* on the Nigerian Television Authority is an initiative geared towards archiving Nigerian cultural heritage by placing the traditional African folktales tradition on a modern stage. This paper, a study of folkist aesthetics of *Tales by Moonlight*, is based on Sam Ukala's theory of "Folkism," a theory that is suitable for interrogating traditional African folktales and predicated on already

existing theatre models and other advancements also in the African theatre spectrum. This study concludes that if the objectives of the programme, *Tales by Moonlight*, which include education, information, entertainment and cultural propagation, are to be achieved, then adequate research must be made by its producers to expand the scope of the folktales presently offered. We recommend that other television stations in Nigeria and the Diaspora also chart the path pioneered by the Nigerian Television Authority in producing folktale performances.

**Key words:** Yoruba, folk tales, ritual, performance, theatre.



## **Introduction**

Traditional African dramatic modes include "simple enactment, ritual and ritualised enactment, storytelling performance, spirit-cult enactments, masquerades and masquerade enactments, ceremonial performances and comedies" (Andrew Horn cited in Musa 113). All the aforementioned, form the whole gamut of the Nigerian corpus of performance aesthetics. These "cultural expressions are also harmonisations of the diverse habitual norms and values manifested in a social set-up" (Anigala 11-12). Storytelling performance which is the focus of this study, have gained prominence in the Nigerian cum African theatrical scene. From J. P. Clark's *Ozidi* and *The Smart Game* which forms the crux of the theatre of Abdul Rasheed Adeoye, through Femi Osofisan's *Once Upon Four Robber* and Sam Ukala's *Iredi War*, there have been a modernization cum transition from the traditional African festival and folktales model, onto the modern stage. Hence,

one finds the conceptualisation of the terms, AbdulRasheed Adeoye's *Neo-Alienation*, Sam Ukala's *Folkism*, Femi Osofisan's *Theatre of Poverty* and *Fabulous Theatre*, that are rooted in the aesthetics of Marxism cum dialectics, amongst others. Adeoye's *Neo-Alienation* technique makes him a Brecht Marxist, while Ukala's *Folkism* is an extension of the theatre of Efua Sutherland-the *Anansegoro* tradition, which is a transition from the Anasemsem storytelling culture of the Akan people of Ghana transforms to the modern stage.

All the theatres above are festival theatres due to the utility of the audience element. The appropriation of the term festival theatres is not far-fetched as the festival theatres discussed are prototypes of the African festival model and the Western paradigm, that have emanated into a syncretic archetype. Colonialism in Africa was not only in its economic and political framework, it also dovetails into the socio-cultural. The socio-cultural in this context, refers to the traditional African theatre culture (theatre in the pre-colonial era) subjugated and redefined by the colonial masters. Thus, there was an erosion of the theatre of the colonised which was termed by the imperialists as primitive, uncivilised, pristine, and even below what should be termed the theatrical. In a nutshell, Eurocentric elements, such as Ruth Finnegan, relegated the theatrical in Africa, into mere quasi-dramatic forms and ritual displays. Consequently, "the Victorian Lagos Handel festivals, Brazilian Glee Singer, the Prof. Robert Coker Concert, the Academy and the Herbert Macaulay led dramatic shows were Western culture influenced" (Echeruo 358). Though there was an attempt at indigenising the content and style of these performances, the Western theatrical elements still persisted.

However, with independence, there came an attempt at decolonising the content of dramatic performances as well as a call for cultural revival and renaissance. All these coupled with the wave of Negritude, led to interest in the African and the Nigerian past. Experimenting, Nigerian theatre practitioners began a syncretic theatre model in which the traditional storytelling mode was transposed to the modern stage. As Biodun Jeyifo notes, "Clark's *Ozidi* and *The Raft* and Osofisan's new plays-are theatrically stageable, rich creations fusing the new textual dramaturgical modes with dance, song and mime" (417). Then, with the emergence of television in Nigeria in 1959 courtesy of the Western Nigerian Regional Government, there came a transposition of the storytelling model not only from the enclave of the popular or moonlight culture to the modern stage, but also, from the modern stage in to the screen (television).

### **The Search for an Authentic Nigerian Theatre**

Despite the fact that a total attempt at a total Nigerianisation of the theatre was in the post colonial era, the search for Nigerian aesthetic theatre model, was inherent in the Colonial Concert tradition. "Victorian Lagos with the Brazilian glee singers, the Prof. Coker Concert and the Academy were a total exploration of the western ideal" (Echeruo 358). There was at this time, some anxiety felt and expressed over the importation of European manners along with Christianity, and over the subsequent discarding of local material. In retrospect, this agitation was for an indigenous inspiration in the theatre and the concert, a feature which, had it worked itself out, would have certainly made a great difference to the cultural and literary history of Nigeria. In fact, "... there was also at this time a strong demand for Yoruba Literature and for a standard Yoruba orthography,

at times for reasons we would today call Africanist... they voted for the adoption of the native costume in furtherance of the cause of Christianity and education” (Echeruo 362).

Beyond the concert tradition, the birth of the Yoruba travelling troupes reflected an indigenous dramatic form in the face of colonialism. Thus, Hubert Ogunde’s theatre was rooted in the tradition and culture of the people. Hubert Ogunde, in an attempt to create what we could call a traditional Nigerian theatre, took the theatre from the confines of the church and fused in element of Yoruba culture. Thus, Egun Clark in reference to Hubert Ogunde’s decision, posits that “Ogunde and his group together with Yoruba cultural group were pioneers in reasserting cultural consciousness among urbanised Yoruba” (13). The aforementioned is not far-fetched from the content and style of Ogunde’s theatre.

Being influenced by the Egungun Apidan or the masquerade theatre of his people, coupled with the Western dramatic mode which he had experienced as a semi-literate, he established what could be called a syncretic theatre. He utilised traditional Yoruba instrumentation, songs, dances and other signs and symbols such as the Yoruba verbal language of communication. Furthermore, he fused in the opening and closing glees that characterised the Alarinjo theatre (Egungun Apidan) and the folktale theatre corpus. Historically, “from such plays such as *Africa and God*, Ogunde was the first playwright to arouse the interest of his people in their tradition and cultural heritage” (Clark 22). Beyond the aforementioned, the question is, what constitutes an authentic Nigerian theatre? Theatre is the sum total of the beliefs, the worldview and the whole socio-political gamut of a people. In other words, it is the “cosmology of a people that determines their

theatre. The early Greek theatre was a discourse on man and the gods, the subject of fatality. This was because of their belief in fate and the place of the gods in the society and the affairs of man” (Horowitz 90).

Furthermore, medieval theatre addressed the subject of morality, man’s relationship with the supernatural; in short, this theatre was the theatre of God. In the same vein, the Machiavellian spirit found in the theatre of William Shakespeare was because of the upsurge in the popularisation of the philosophy of wickedness and individualism propounded by Nicollo Machiavelli. Thus, a Nigerian theatre, is one that ought to fully incorporate the philosophy, the mores, traditions, cosmology and belief system of the Nigerian cultures. In other words, any digression from the world view or identity of the people in the theatrical process, would amount to a dysfunction in the theatrical as AbdulRasheed Adeoye avers that “...the theatre exists primarily for a people and any attempt to insulate the theatre from the people will serve nobody” (25).

In the literary tradition, the call for the indigenisation of the Nigerian theatre began in the Universities of Ibadan and Ife respectively. This was in the late 1950s and the early 1960s. Consequently, Wole Soyinka’s *1960 Masks*, a theatre group, his *Orisun* theatre, Ola Rotimi’s adventure at the University of Ife and Duro Ladipo’s collaboration with Ulli Beier were attempts to project a Nigerian theatre. “In Nigeria, many spirited attempts have been made, and are being made today to evolve an African theatre idiom” (Nwoko 467). Beyond Nwoko’s attempt at creating designs of the Nigerian cultural motif, there was also the subject of language, brevity and clarity in expression. Playwrights such as Wole Soyinka in his plays such as *The Road*, *Dance of the Forest*, *Kongi’s Harvest* wrote

in a language that is elitist in nature. To this end, Femi Euba notes that “most Nigerian playwrights writing in English find it difficult to hold a substantial Nigerian audience or fill a theatre. Ola Rotimi’s popular play, *If* played to empty houses in Lagos. Akin Isola’s *Madam Tinubu* had a very poor audience” (390-391). The implication is that the mainstream audience found it difficult to comprehend the message of plays such as Ola Rotimi’s *If*. However, Rotimi’s subsequent plays became mainstream audience oriented as Femi Euba elaborates thus:

Without suggesting that Ola Rotimi’s plays are surface-material with no intellectual depth, it seems that there is a deliberate effort and tendency on his part to win the audience over in his productions with actions, language and theatricality.. And for the same effect his actors are constantly expressing values, mannerisms, and speaking in the dialect very familiar to the audience (395).

The success of Ola Rotimi’s dramaturgy is not far-fetched from his utility of simple language, Nigerian proverbs and parables with Yoruba names being given to the characters and some of the titles are Yoruba titles (a play such as *Kurunmi*). On the subject of previous Yoruba oriented plays carrying English title, Euba Clark articulates that “why do Yoruba operas with Yoruba music and words carry English titles?” (395). In other words, she contends that it is not commendable for Hubert Ogunde’s Yoruba oriented Operatic and Dramatic pieces such as *Africa and God*, bear an English title. “Nigerian literary drama now embraces other languages besides English” (Jeyifo 415). The language of expression used by some of these playwrights is what conforms to the understanding

of the audience. “One way is to follow a kind of Rotimi’s “Yorubanglish” dialogue, which tries to translate the Yoruba nuances of expression into literal English (Euba 395). Tunde Fatunde’s theatre of Pidgin English expression, is not an exception.

Furthermore, one dramatic mode that has not eluded the Nigerian theatre, is the folktale or storytelling theatre. In the larger theoretical framework, Efua T. Sutherland, the founder of the Drama Studio in the University of Accra Ghana, in her search for an authentic African theatre, utilised the Anasemsem storytelling tradition. What she did was a transmission of the traditional storytelling model, in to the modern stage. A good example of such a play is her magnum opus, *The Marriage of Anansewa*. “In the play, there is a narrator and players as is characterised of the traditional African storytelling technique” (Sutherland 1). In Nigeria, J. P. Clark’s *Ozidi*, is also a utility of the folktale tradition. Ijaw sagas like the *Ozidi*, are usually told seven nights consecutively.

### **Towards a Theorization of Folkism**

Our study above shows that there have been various attempts by dramaturges such as Efua Sutherland, J. P. Clark, Wole Soyinka, Wale Ogunyemi and others at theorising what could be called an indigenous Nigerian theatre. Hence, a discourse on the theory of Folkism is one on the advancement of already existing dramatic modes and experiments as Austin Anigala avers that “the folkist tradition exists in Africa and other parts of the world” (47). However, on a theoretical and practical framework, Sam Ukala could be said to have integrated the various elements of the folk tradition with a view to propagating and propounding a theory of Folkism, nay a theory with which African plays could be

evaluated. From Classicism to Romanticism, through Realism, Naturalism, Surrealism, Dadaism, Expressionism, Futurism, Cubism, Absurdism and Postmodernism, there are various tenets through which the aesthetics of these theories are judged. These tenets form the nucleus in which dramatic works written or performed in conformity with these theories are interrogated. Folkism therefore, is a theory that is used to interrogate and evaluate traditional Nigerian cum African dramatic modes.

In the light of the above, Austin Anigala defines Folkism as “a dramatic concept derived from the African folktale narrative technique. It is a strategy of using traditional folktale aesthetics in creating a dramatic work that is reflective of the African way of life” (5). Thus, Anigala compares Ukala’s Folkism with Sutherland’s Anansegoro. Furthermore, Sam Ukala in an Inaugural Lecture presented at Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria, copiously states that he “branded or theorised the modern African theatre, which informed critics think African audiences would identify with- I call it Folkism and clearly delineate its features” (31). The major nucleus of Folkism, are the eight laws of aesthetics response or what I call the poetics of Ukala dramaturgy. They are:

- The law of opening;
- Joint performance;
- Creativity, free enactment and responsibility;
- The urge to judge;
- Law of protest against suspense;
- Expression of the emotions;
- Ego projection; and

- Law of closing. (Anigala 42).

The implication of the above assertion therefore, is that every play written in the folktale performance model, must be evaluated with the aforementioned poetics. Thus, plays such as Ukala’s *Break a Boil*, *Akpakaland*, *The Placenta of Death*, *The Last Heroes*, *Iredi War*, Femi Osofisan’s *Once Upon Four Robbers*, and AbdulRasheed Adeoye’s *The Smart Game* could be read with the eight laws of aesthetics response, however, Adeoye foregrounded his *The Smart Game*, in the mask of neo-alienation. However, Sam Ukala placed dramatic pieces such as J. P. Clarks, *Ozidi*, Sam Ukala’s *The Slave Wife* and Efua Sutherland’s *The Marriage of Anansewa* in the spectrum of pseudo or quasi-folk scripts. This is because they do not incorporate all the laws of aesthetic response. Citing Saint Gbileeka, Austin Anigala notes that “Sam Ukala’s theatre leans heavily on folkist techniques based on the aesthetics of the storytelling theatre” (5). He also corroborates Steve Ogude’s assertion which posits that “rich in the folk tradition, Ukala explores and exploits the moral energy of the folk tale in his characterisation of contemporary society and his exposure of its weaknesses”. (Anigala 5).

To this end, Folkism is a marriage of traditional African theatre and the western theatre model that are joined together to produce and respond to diverse folkist aesthetics. The tropes of folkist aesthetics hangs mainly on the narrative and call and response traditions of numerous storytelling. The socio-political relevance of Ukala’s theatre cannot be over-emphasized as is exemplified in folk scripts such as *Placenta of Death*, *The Log in your Eye* (which is also an absurdist play), *AkpakaLand*, *Break a Boil*, *Iredi War* among others. Like Osofisan’s political dramas, the aforementioned plays treat the subject of political

corruption and impunity as well as class struggle.

### ***Tales by Moonlight of the Nigerian Television Authority***

From its formative years in the 1960s, the Nigerian Television Authority whose one of its objectives is to project and propagate the Nigerian cultural heritage, have done this with a portrayal of the programme, *Tales by Moonlight*. This programme is a manifestation of the traditional African storytelling archetype. Structured in the storytelling tradition of the African people such as the *Ozidi* Saga told for seven consecutive days of the Izon people of Delta State, the Anasemsem of the Akan people in Ghana, the *Tales By Moonlight* programme organised by the Nigerian Television Authority incorporates the total theatre aesthetics. However, the synopsis of three tales by moon light stories are first looked at and subsequently analysed with Sam Ukala's theory of Folkism. Various stories on this programme, abound. They are *Ikpeama the Lazy Man* and *Wisdom of the gods* and *Amadi*.

### ***Synopsis of Ikpeama the Lazy Man***

Ikpeama, the eponymous character of this folktale is a lazy man. On Ekene's way to the farm, he wakes the sleeping Ikpeama that they should go to the farm but Ikpeama refuses. When it is time for harvest, he discovers that the farm did not do well. He asks Ekene to allow him harvest two corbs of maize from his (Ekene) farm but the latter refuses. Out of hunger, Ikpeama resorts to secretly selling palm fruits when it is an abomination in the land. This act causes tribulation and death of people in the land. At last, one of the village people catches Ikpeama. He is taken to the town leader who banishes Ikpeama

from the village for life.

### ***Folkist Aesthetics of Ikpeama the Lazy Man***

In *Ikpeama the Lazy Man*, the narrator who is a woman, is dressed in a traditional attire of a native cloth tied around her waist, a headgear tied on her head and beads worn around her neck. As the raconteur, she is expected to give her best performance. In African folktale technique, Ukala posits that the narrator must be creative. There is the narrator and spectator rapport as it is exemplified below:

Narrator: *My first story is Ikpeama the lazy man. What did I say?*

Audience: *Ikpeama the lazy man*

Narrator: *A long long time ago, there was a village called Okpanta.*

The above statement made by the raconteur ushers in the action. The statement makes the spectators visualise the action as one that took place in the distant past. Folkist plays are products of the society and what take place in the society. Thus, it is predicated on the action of the individual. The Action could be good or bad. The plays usually, are in favour of virtuosity while vices are criticised. This is to make the audience better people. *Ikpeama the Lazy Man* is a destructive critique of indolence. The eponymous character, Ikpeama, refuses to be hardworking despite the advise being given by his friends, which include Ekene. The resultant effect of his action is hunger. This leads him into committing an abominable offence by selling palm fruits at a time palm fruits are not suppose to be sold. Hence, he is later caught and punished is offence by being banished for life.

One of the major features of folktales is the use of metaphor to explain realistic

events and situations. Thus, the name of the village, Okpanta, plays this role. Okpanta is a metaphor for every society in the Diaspora. It is not a specific community or place that is being referred to, but all societies in the world in general. Furthermore, the law of suspense comes to play as well. The tale begins with Ikpeama sleeping on a bench, when Ekene, his friend, tell him to wake up and prepare for farm but Ikpeama refuses and Ekene warns him that the end product of his (Ikpeama's) laziness will not be good. Thus, the spectator is placed on suspense as he is eager to know the result of Ikpeama's indolence. They would want to know if Ekene is right in his advice or not.

### **Synopsis of *Wisdom of the gods***

For three years, the people of Udeno did not hear the cry of a new born baby so they consult their oracle to know the cause of the calamity. Four maidens are called for the gods to choose the next priestess. After dancing, three of the contestants are able to drop some required beads but Olama, one of the girls among them who is from a poor home is unable to drop beads. Uju, one of the contestants wants to lend her the beads but the two other contestants discourage her. The leader of the elders also refuses to give her an opportunity for the other round of the competition. The three other contestants dance but they are rejected by the gods. A mysterious child touches Olama's mouth and she speaks what is required of the priestess elect. This is because she is a virgin while the three others are not.

### **Folkist Aesthetics of *Wisdom of the gods***

In the play *Wisdom of the gods*, the aesthetics of Folkism abound. In fact, beyond

the law of opening, the law of joint performance is also inherent. This means audience inclusivity. Thus, in the story titled *Wisdom of the gods*, the narrator/storyteller/raconteur says that:

Narrator: *The title of my second story is wisdom of the gods. What did I say?*

Children: *Wisdom of the gods.*

With the above response, the audience becomes part of the action, hence, they could be called spec-actors. This is because of their being immersed in the action and also being in a joint rapport with the narrator. There is the folkist aesthetics of the opening and the closing glee. In traditional African storytelling session, there is the opening glee which is usually at the beginning of the dramatic action. In the folktale corpus, this is called the law of opening. In Urhobo society for example, the raconteur says *Itaye* while the audience reply *Ye*. In Ika of Delta State, the narrator says "*E ye m onu uzun* and the audience replies *I gwo, ore-e!*" (Ukala 11). It is at this stage of the law of opening, that the characters are also introduced. Sometimes, folkism advocates the folkist aesthetics of song and dance for the opening glee. In this case, the narrator and audience rapport starts on time because the narrator dances with the audience for dramatic familiarity. The closing glee ends with the audience expressing their having enjoyed the story and the narrator promises to narrate another story the following night. Sometimes, it ends with a song. In *Wisdom of the gods*, below is the narrator's closing glee:

Narrator: *We will be back again with more interesting stories.*

### **Synopsis of *A Festival of the Maiden***

In *A Festival of the Maiden*, Ndidi, Ibifuro's friend uses love charm to snatch Ibifuro's husband, Amadi from her. She places a love charm in the drink for him and he falls in love with her. He takes her for a second wife and she bears him a daughter Ebere. Ndidi poisons Amadi's food and accuses Ibifuro of attempting to kill their husband. Ibifuro is banished from the village. Ndidi maltreats Olana, Ibifuro's daughter. After some time, the maiden festival in which the prince is suppose to choose a wife approaches. All the maidens including Olana fetches water to the palace. On their way, they meet an old man who begs them for water. All of them refuse to offer him water. However, Olana offers him water. The prince places his bead on the ground in the palace so as to know the first maiden that will sweep the palace. On the final day of the maiden festival which is suppose to end with the dance competition, all the maidens except Olana dance. The prince asks who had seen his bead. Olana emerges and produces the bead. The prince says that he was the old man who Olana offered water two days before. He marries Olana.

### **Folkist Aesthetics of *A festival of the maiden***

The folkist aesthetics is more apparent in *A festival of the maiden*. The law of joint performance, the law of creativity, free enactment and responsibility and the law of the urge to judge come to play at the beginning of the folktale. The audience which is made up of the children, exclaims at the attitude exhibited by Ndidi at snatching Ibifuro's husband:

Audience: *Oh no*

M. O. A. 1: *What! Nne, this is sad*

The law of *the urge to judge* also comes to play here as the audience therefore, judges the antagonistic character, Ndidi for her action. In the traditional Nigerian cum African theatre setting, there is a polemic among the audience in relation to the characters, and the audience and the characters. They criticise the antagonist for their bad actions and commend the protagonists for their moral uprightness. Thus, the audience which Ukala calls the co-performers sympathizes with Ibifuro in a critical recap of the folkist aesthetics:

Narrator: *Yes, my dear. That was how Ibifuro lost her husband to friend. Amadi later married Ndidi and took her to his home as a second wife.*

M. O. A. 2: *Nne, did she give birth to many children?*

Narrator: *No she only gave birth to a baby girl called Ebere*

The creativity of the narrator determines the success of the tale. Thus, the narrator must be ready to give an answer to the questions put forward to him or her by the audience. She is thus, responsible for the success and failure of the tale. The law of protest against suspense is portrayed as a member of the audience asks how Ibifuro took it. A third Member of the audience is optimistic of the event that trailed Amadi's action. The audience does not want to be placed on the cliff. They want to know what happened next. Another feature is the law of ego projection. "The law of ego projection is exhibitionistic. It is the expression of self-to show off personal skills or talents that is the chief motivation of this law" (Anigala 46).

The folkist aesthetics also incorporates epic theatre. The break in the action and the discussion between the narrator and the audience, shows the poetics of the Brechtian

technique. This is to tell the audience that what they are watching is only a drama and as such, they should not be engrossed emotionally, rather, they should have a rethink and reflect on the issue being treated. At the end of the narration, the narrator asks the audience what they had learnt from the story. This shows a dialectical theatre. This is a theatre where the audience must not be emotionally engrossed, but they must have a subject to reflect on when they leave the storytelling ground. The narrator also tells the audience that there will be another story some other time. This is to make them understand that the story is a fiction.

### **The Folkist Aesthetics of Minimal Properties and Characters**

The story *Ikpeama the lazy man* makes use of only eight characters. While *The Wisdom of the gods* incorporate ten characters. In *A Festival of the Maiden*, nineteen characters are incorporated. Although *A Festival of the Maiden* is a long folktale, it incorporates only nineteen characters. The properties in Nigeria Television Authority moonlight stories in general and *Ikpeama the lazy man* in particular, are minimal and simple in nature. A near Grotowskian technique, only an animal skull serves for a native doctor's shrine.

*A Festival of the Maiden* makes use of more properties, but they are also minimal. At the beginning and on her way from the market, Ibifuro carries a hand bag. In the same vein, Idifuro and Amadi use two animal tusks to drink palm wine. The maidens carry various calabashes and pots of water while the town crier uses a wooden gong for announcing the commencement of the maiden festival the following day. Olana, Ibifuro's daughter who later becomes the prince's wife sweep her step mother's compound with

a broom. At the A festival of the maiden, there are drummers who drum to the dancing of the maidens. The drums are properties as well. There is also the use of a walking stick by the prince who disguises like an old man. The old woman Olana helps also uses a walking stick to support herself. Ndidi sends Olana into the forest to cut some woods for her. In this scene, the latter uses a cutlass which is also a property. Thus, Austin Anigala posits that "elaborate scenic exploration is usually minimal at the physical performance of folktales" (48).

### **The Aesthetics of Costume**

There is the use of minimal, but traditional costumes. One function of the costume at the beginning of every story is to convey the setting or locale of the story. Ukala's theory of Folkism calls for an incorporation of minimal costumes in traditional African folktale performances. It is one of the indices that is used to distinguish distinctive personality traits. In *Slave Wife*, his pseudo folk-script, he introduces the use of minimal costumes. In *Wisdom of the gods*, the chief spokesperson ties a cloth around his waist while the top of his body which comprises of his waist upward is bare. One other chief dresses the same way but he wears a singlet to differentiate himself. However, to show that he is the head of the chiefs, the leader wears a red cap. In Igbo land, the red cap portrays a chief of high rank. The girls (maidens) on their part, ties two wrappers. One covers their waist region while the other wrapper covers the region of their breasts.

In *Ikpeama the Lazy man*, Ikpeama the eponymous character ties a wrapper around his waist. In the second, third, fourth and fifth scenes, he wears a singlet to support

the wrapper. This is minimal enough for a major character. In the same vein, the man, Ikpeama sells the palm fruits wearing a wrapper and a singlet too. To mystify the native doctor who banishes Ikpeama, he does not only ties a wrapper and wears a singlet, he also has the mark of a white chalk drawn under his eyes. The white chalk depicts how spiritual, the native doctor is. With this, he is able to easily see more than what the ordinary human sees.

In the folktale *Festival of the Maiden*, the costumes are that of the highly placed. Although they are Igbo traditional costumes, they are elitist in nature. They are clothes of the rich as Amadi, the major character of this folktale wears a red, traditional cap, bead and a beautiful cloth tied around his waist and shoulder. Ibifuro, his wife ties the same type of cloth as it is characterised of married couple.

### **The Folkist Aesthetics of Dance**

In traditional African societies, dance is not art for art sake. It is functional. It is used occasionally for celebrations of special significance in the cultural calendar of a people such as; in marriage ceremonies, in burial rites, when the gods are about to be communicated to and in almost every day to day activity of the African in general and the Igbo man in particular. In other words, dance is part of man. In the moon light story of the *Wisdom of the gods*, when Olana is made the priestess who saved the people of Olana from infertility, the preceding action is celebration which is accompanied with music. The dancers dance to the rhythm of the flute.

In *Festival of the Maiden*, the third day of the maiden festival is characterised by the

maiden dance. It is the dance that determines who the king marries. Thus, dance serves as a determinant of a good wife. In the same vein, when the king chooses Olana for a wife, dance is used to welcome her into the palace that night as all and sundry joins in the folkist aesthetics of dance.

### **The Folkist Aesthetics of Music and Sound Effects**

The use of traditional African songs is typified in *Ikpeama the Lazy Man*, *Festival of the Maiden* and *Wisdom of the gods*. The flute is used not only to heighten the tension in the play, *The Wisdom of the gods*, but it is also used to portray the setting of the play. The flute is one instrument in the archive of the Igbo people of South Eastern Nigeria. It is used to communicate. In *Wisdom of the gods*, sound effects are used to communicate an impending message. An underground sound effect also heightens the tension in *Ikpeama the Lazy man*.

### **Other Elements of Folkist Aesthetics**

Folktale performances are situated in the culture of a people. In other words, Folkism is people oriented. It is not elitist theatre. Other elements used in *The Wisdom of the gods* are the use of traditional beads. Beads play a major role in the traditional Igbo cultural system. Besides they are used as physical adornment. Beads are also used for ritual purpose. In this moon light story, not being able to present her beads make the elders to disqualify Olana from contesting in the second round of the event. Consequently, she goes from one place to the other trying to borrow beads or money with which she can buy one so as to be reincorporated into the competition of this folkist theatre. In the

same vein, in the last scene where the gods choose her as the priestess, beads also play a major role for her. The elders take all the beads from the other girls and wear them on Olana's head and wrists. In the folktale of *Festival of the Maiden*, the maidens wear beads on their heads and wrists to beautify themselves. The beads which are red in colour, match the colour of the clothes they tie across their chests and waists.

Another element of folkist aesthetics in the framework of semiotics, is the handshake. In the traditional setting, chiefs and elders have a particular way of shaking hands. Thus, a chief uses the back of his hand on the back of the hand of another chief. This shows the hierarchy or status of those involved in the Igbo poetics of handshake.

There are elements that are used to mystify issues and places in traditional African societies. One of such elements is the human skull. The human skull characterises a shrine of the gods and ancestors in traditional African societies. The drama of *Ikpeama the Lazy Man* incorporates this. When pestilences strike the land, the people decide to consult the oracle and the skull singularly serves as a semiotic tool to tell the viewers or co-performers that the house is that of a native doctor within the expanse of the traditional African theatre.

In *Amadi*, there is the use of the gong. In Igbo society in particular, and many African societies in general, the gong serves many functions. The gong is used by the town crier to alert the people that he is about to communicate a message across. In *Festival of the Maiden*, the town crier announces the commencement of the festival of the maidens with a wooden gong. When he beats the gong, everybody leaves whatever they are doing and go out to listen to him.

The use of the traditional calabash is not an exception. These calabashes are used for various functions. They are used for domestic functions such as keeping house wares like clothes in them. They are also used to fetch water in the stream. The calabash is used in *Festival of the Maiden*. The maidens use the calabash to fetch water to the king palace. In the same vein, a traditional pot is used to keep the palm wine which Idifuro serves Amadi. There is also the use of animal tusk for the drinking of palm wine.

## Conclusion

Storytelling performance has gained prominence in the Nigerian cum African theatrical landscape. From J. P. Clark's *Ozidi* and *The Smart Game* which forms the crux of the theatre of AbdulRasheed Adeoye, through Femi Osofisan's *One Upon Four Robber*, Sam Ukala's *Iredi War*, *Break a Boil* and *Placenta of Death*, there has been a modernization cum transition from the traditional African festival to folktales model and its presence in television. In essence, folkist aesthetics, based on traditional African theatre and traditional African theatre archetype on the modern stage, have been explored by various dramaturges on the endless space of the African theatre. This study concludes that if the objective of the programme, *Tales by Moonlight*, which include education, information, entertainment and cultural propagation, are to be achieved, then adequate research must be made by its producers to expand on the scope of the programme by incorporating the folktales of various Nigerian and African cultures. To this end, we recommend that other television stations in Nigeria and the Diaspora should chart the path pioneered by the Nigerian Television Authority in area of folktale performances. We also recommend that sponsors of television programmes should help in funding

such television programmes with a view to correcting moral decadence and laxity among children and youth in Nigeria and the Diaspora.

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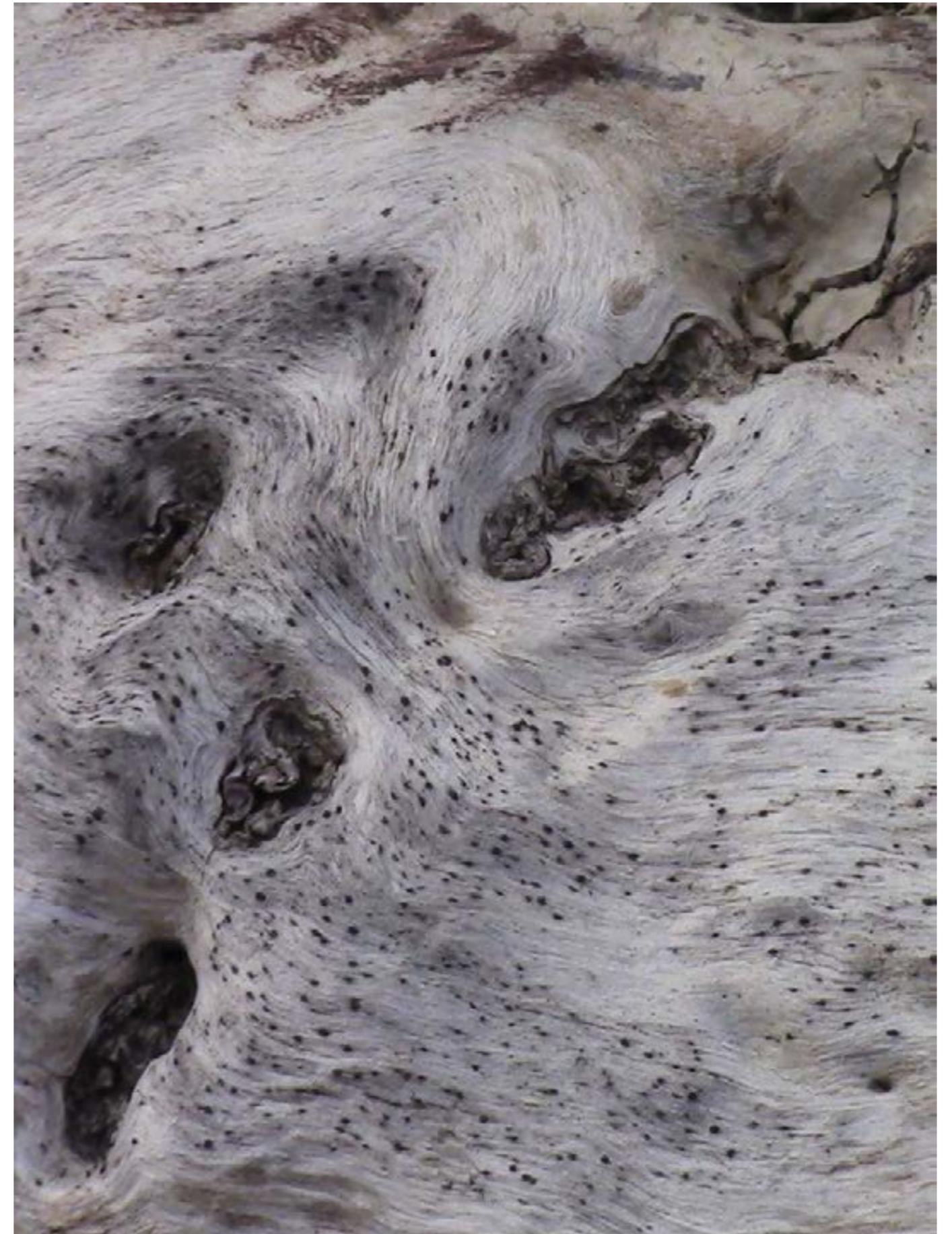
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## **Sexism, Diversity and Monstrosity in Guillermo del**

### **Toro's *Hellboy* (2004)**

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*Hellboy* is the fifth film by Mexican director and screenwriter Guillermo del Toro (b. 1964), whose works include *Cronos* (1993), *The Devil's Backbone* (2001), *Blade II* (2002), *Pan's Labyrinth* (2006), *Pacific Rim* (2013) and, more recently, *The Shape of Water* (2017). *Hellboy* is a 117-minute superhero film based on the character that was created in 1993 by Mike Mignola for Dark Horse Comics and was subsequently adapted in some animated films and videogames. Much of the storyline is specifically adapted from the graphic novel *Seed of Destruction* (1994) and the short story "The Corpse" (1995-96). A sequel live action film, titled *Hellboy II: The Golden Army*, and directed by del Toro, was released in 2008. A reboot of the film series, filmed in late 2017 and directed by Neil Marshall, is going to be released in 2019.

The story begins in 1944 during a classified mission of the American military off the coast of Scotland, where a group of Nazis belonging to the occultist Thule Society opens

a portal towards deep space to awaken the seven gods of chaos. The Nazis are stopped before completing their mission and the portal is closed, but a creature comes through it, a young devil with red skin, a tail and a stone hand. The creature is taken and nurtured by Professor Trevor Broom (Kevin Trainor), a paranormal advisor to President Roosevelt, and is named "Hellboy". Sixty years later the Nazi survivors of the mission in Scotland, "Ilsa Haupstein" (Bridget Hodson) and the assassin Karl Ruprecht Kroenen (Ladislav Beran), resurrect their Russian leader and occult priest Grigori Efimovich Rasputin (Karel Roden) in Moldova. In the meantime, Hellboy (Ron Pearlman) has grown into an adult and muscular being in the research facility of the Bureau for Paranormal Research and Defense in Newark, New Jersey – a covert facility that is very similar in its scope to the organization at the center of the *Men in Black* films (1997-2012). An elder and sick Professor Broom (John Hurt) still takes care of Hellboy and other supernatural and mutant beings, including the amphibian Abraham Sapien (Doug Jones) and the pirokinetic Liz Sherman (Selma Blair).

The title character is specifically charged with the duty of capturing and eliminating a supernatural creature (called Sammael) that has been unleashed by Rasputin, a creature that can regenerate and duplicate itself after death. While searching the underground tunnels under the city, Hellboy, who is accompanied by Abraham and FBI agent John Myers (Rupert Evans), finds a secret subterranean facility where the monster has laid hundreds of eggs. Two agents are killed during the mission and Abraham is severely wounded. Kroenen (Hitler's unbeatable number one assassin, who suffers from a surgical addition that compels him to substitute parts of his body with mechanisms and blood

with dust in his alternative pursue of eternal life) then pretends to be dead and thus manages to infiltrate the Bureau where he kills Professor Broom. Hellboy, Liz, Myers and the FBI squad therefore go to Russia to locate Rasputin's subterranean mausoleum and stop his evil attempt to evoke the seven gods of chaos. The enemies are defeated after a furious battle during which Liz is killed by Rasputin. However, Hellboy manages to resurrect her. The film concludes with Hellboy and Liz coming back together.

The film could be accused of sexism for its depiction of a woman (Liz, the only major female character of the narrative) as hysterical and needing psychological and medical cares. Liz's tantrums are literally represented as blue flames pouring out of her body over which she has no control. This would apparently suggest that female emotional instability is dangerous and women are prone to hysteria, as Becca Bleznak argues. Furthermore, the very fact that Liz has no total control over her powers seems to affirm that women are necessarily dependent on men for guidance. Such an assumption would be confirmed by the fact that Rasputin magically inspires the nightmares that cause a devastating eruption of flames out of Liz's body without any actual opposition on her part. Similarly, near the end of the film, Liz asks Myers to be slapped in order for her powers to activate, although she has previously declared to be in full control of them. Such a sexist representation of the leading female character is reinforced by the fact that Liz is also represented as the center of attraction of the two male protagonists, Hellboy and Myers, who compete with each other for the woman's attentions. Hellboy (who invades her privacy when she is hospitalized in the psychiatric clinic near the beginning of the film [IMAGE #1]) actually follows her and Myers around during their date and attempts to disturb them,

thus demonstrating his possessiveness towards the girl and his (implicit) belief in her lack of choice for a partner. The film's ending would seem to confirm such a sexist argument because Liz chooses to stay with the man who has literally stalked her, although the narrative has simultaneously evidenced the continuous attraction and affection of the two characters for each other.



IMAGE #1: Liz Sherman (Selma Blair) showing her alleged control of her powers during Hellboy's (Ron Perlman) visit at the psychiatric clinic (copyright owned by Revolution Studios).

On the other hand, the film is an almost explicit (and granted) praise to diversity, or, as Professor Broom explains to Agent Myers, "uniqueness", a term apt to describe the supernatural members of the team set against evil. In this respect, Hellboy alludes to the "alternative" talents possessed by all those other comic characters and cinematic adaptations of them that represent the non-acceptance of the different individual, "the

Other” on the part of the “normal” (or, we could say, common one), such as the X-Men saga (2000-17). The sense of camaraderie of Hellboy and the other “talented” beings towards each other (Abraham uses the term “freaks” to describe themselves) is a nice metaphor for the union of those minority groups who claim their rights across the world and whose activities still involve the fight against prejudices and non-acceptance.

Considered by Matt Goldberg to be “too esoteric, ... too weird”, *Hellboy* has instead a pleasant pace that alternates slow, explanatory or romantic sequences to entertaining fight scenes. The latter provide viewers with several fascinating frames that follow the actions and movements of the combatants through the horizontal/vertical axes and that simultaneously endow the film with moments of hilarity due to the hero being beaten by his rivals and commenting ironically upon it (“Second date. No tongue!”). Indeed, one of the film’s greatest merit is certainly its irony, which is provided frequently by the protagonist, whose comments on the nature of love or on the fighting style of his adversaries and whose interaction with the obtuse character of FBI Director Tom Manning (Jeffrey Tambor) confer great levity to a story filled with supernatural creatures and events as much as with several cruel deaths.

The plot of the film is not as “preposterous” as Roger Ebert affirms, but, although apparently not-linear, it proceeds pleasantly through several unexpected (though, sometimes unmotivated) twists. Certainly, the film benefits by the impressive visuals, especially in the case of the settings, such as the ruins of the abbey off the coast of Scotland beaten by incessant rain at the beginning of the film or the arched half-flooded vaults of the underground tunnels under the metropolis. Indeed, as it occurs in many films by del

Toro, who is indubitably a master of suspense as much as a visual artist who can visually enthrall his works’ spectators, the film is noteworthy for its dark, labyrinthic settings and its gloomy atmospheres. Del Toro also makes an expert use of colors, focusing often on their juxtaposition, as is the case of Rasputin’s resurrection scene, in which the villain’s naked body drenched in bright red blood is set against the surrounding stone temple white with snow.

Typical of the director’s style is also the preference for gears and monstrous or grotesque creatures. Indeed, in many of his films del Toro seems to lose no occasion to show the former, which, in this case, are manifest in the mechanisms activating the booby traps inside Rasputin’s mausoleum, but are also literally embodied in Kroenen. Secondly, the creatures (such as the four-eyed, slobbering Sammael and the tentacle-being resurging from Rasputin’s dead body) are certainly realistic and menacing, whereas the reanimated corpse offering directions in the Russian cemetery is hilarious for its vitality and cynicism. The villainous monsters are clearly set against the humanity of the FBI supernatural squad, whose appearances are not synonymous with monstrosity but with humanity and goodness. Furthermore, all of the creatures play perfectly along “real”, human actors, whose performances are convincing (especially Ron Pearlman’s and John Hurt’s). In spite of its release in the early 2000s, *Hellboy* is therefore surprisingly accurate, realistic and spectacular at the same time, especially when compared to contemporary productions on superheroes such as Josh Trank’s *Fantastic Four* (2015), David Ayer’s *Suicide Squad* (2016) and Patty Jenkins’s *Wonder Woman* (2017). All of these films employ amazing special effects, realistic characters (whether they are the products of make-up or digital

effects) and captivating stories (although they do lack the epic tone and grandiosity of Zack Snyder's *Man of Steel* (2013) or the *Avengers* films [2012-18]). Almost fifteen years after its original release, *Hellboy* can be still experienced as an entertaining film, with convincing characters and special effects as well as a dose of irony that can conquer all spectators.

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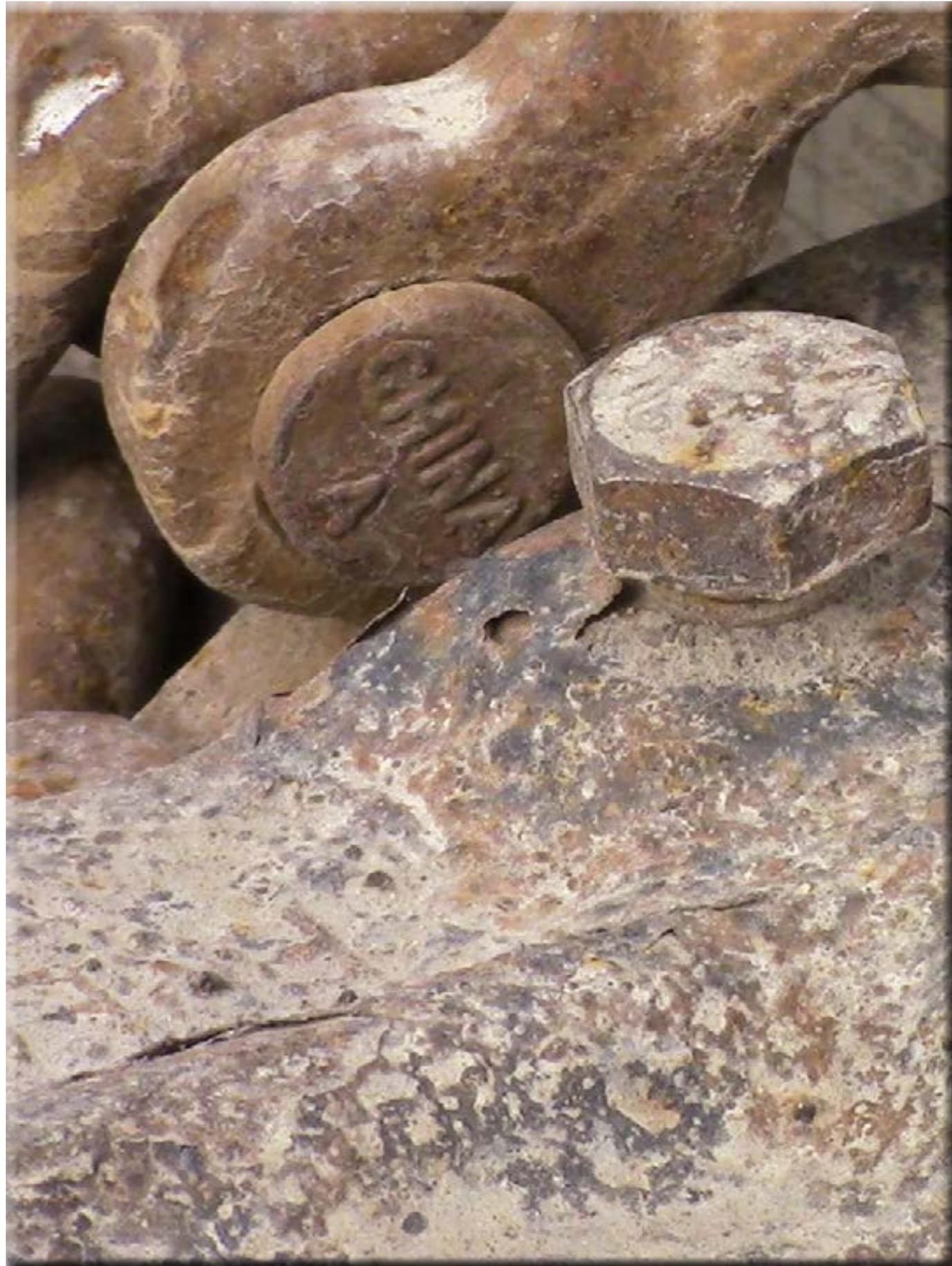
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## **The Values of Kola-nut in African Religion and Spirituality: A Case Study of the Igbo of Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

Kola-nut is one of the edible fruits that can be found in Nigeria. Also, it occupies a preeminent place in the social life of the three major ethnic groups of Nigeria: Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba. The kola-nut fruit did not assume this position among Nigerians on account of its size, colour or taste, but rather, due to the importance the people attach to it. This paper takes a cursory look at the social relevance of kola-nut in the traditional life of the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria. It delves into greater depths to examine the values of kola-nut among the Igbo in particular. The paper categorically states why and how kola-nut assumes the enviable position of honour in Igbo spiritual life and religious worldview. The paper concludes with an explication of how the Igbo use kola-nut as

a symbol to demystify the bewilderment of existence and human belief in the union of man and his fellow men in the society on the one hand and the communion of the spirits on the other hand within the Igbo milieu.

**Keywords:** Values, Kola-nut, Religion, Spirituality



## Introduction

Kola-nut is, to say the least, the closest companion to the traditional Igboman. Kola-nut as meant in this page is *kola* acuminata which the Igbo call *Oji Igbo*; the Yoruba call *obi abata*, while the Hausa has no name for it. It is not *kola nitida* which the Hausa call *goro*; the Igbo call *Oji Awusa* or *gworò* as a loan word from the Hausa *goro* while the Yoruba call it *obi gbanja*. The traditional Igbo man's relationship with kola-nut begins from conception to parturition. This relationship which begins from the womb continues, even when a person is born, until he is lowered in tomb. There is hardly anything a traditional Igbo man would do all through his life that kola-nut would not be presented. This explains the saying about the Igbo that kola-nut and the Igbo share their common feelings in comfort and in sorrow. They are friends in need and as such, friends in deed.

Kola-nut is one of the edible fruits popular in West Africa, especially, Nigeria. Apart from being an edible fruit and a cash crop, it goes further to occupy a place of prominence in the traditional Igbo worldview. It assumed an esteemed position among the Igbo of Nigeria, not on account of its size, colour or taste, but due to the religious and socio-cultural importance the people ascribe to it. This writer will therefore, like to

examine the importance of Kola-nut among the Igbo to be able to state categorically why and how it came to assume such position of honour.

This paper relies on oral traditions as the basic source of information. Attempts were made to collect as many versions of the traditions with a view to synthesizing them and using them for reconstruction. It should be noted that the subject of discourse is relatively new in Igbo academic studies, and to that extent there is yet no comprehensive treatment of the nature, importance and social symbolism of kola-nut in existing works. The present effort is therefore largely exploratory and a first attempt to examine in details the relevance of kola-nut in Igbo social-cultural consciousness.

## Origin

As stated earlier, kola-nut is one of the edible nuts of the Igbo people. Just like it will be very difficult to state clearly how man came about most of the other fruits and nuts he enjoys on earth except that they are made available to him by nature, so it is with kola-nut. But in addition to the indubitable truth that kola-nut is a nut like the other nuts, the traditional Igboman weaves some other myths around the nut apparently to explain the uniqueness it possesses when it is compared with the other nuts. The mythical narrative about the origin of kola-nut stored in oral traditions vary according to their conception and perception in different Igbo culture areas.

An oral tradition, drawn from Ubesie (1978: 30) for instance, has it that kola-nut was the first nut God gave to the Igbo of Nigeria in West Africa. This accounts for why it is shown God first in the process of it being blessed and broken for consumption or

other ritual practices. Another version of the oral rendition has it that a host once gave it to his guest who was exhausted and it got him revitalized. Hence the name: *Oji* literally meaning “that which revitalizes” or ‘revitalizer’ (Ubesie, 1978). There is yet another oral tradition of the Igbo which holds that two relations who were long at brawl at last used kola-nut as symbol of their acceptance to reconcile the differences. This, according to Obike (2007:10) in one of his oral collections, depicts the reason kola-nut is still used for reconciliation during adjudication among disputants in all Igbo culture areas. However, an oral tradition which has gained popularity among the Igbo is the following myth:

The Igbo progenitor left his abode one day to visit *Chukwu Okike Abiama* “God the Benevolent Creator” in His own abode. God felt pleased with that visit and thought of a way He could make that visit a memorable occasion. God thus gave him kola-nut from the numerous other fruits He (God) had. He instructed Igbo to take it home and show his people. On getting home, Igbo who had already learnt that the best way to multiply any fruit was by cultivation, tilled the land and planted the nut. In due time, the nut germinated, grew and yielded bunches of pods which contained white coated red-cum-yellow nuts.

At an oral interview with Joseph Chukwuwena Mmaduekwe (Nze Oduche), an 84 year-old traditional title holder held in his home town in Ojoto, Anambra State, Nigeria in September, 1994, the interviewee added that when Igbo saw that the kola-nut had become fruitful, he reported his findings back to God. God then advised him to preserve the nuts and make offerings of them to his own guests as a mark of godly reception with

purity of heart.

Thus, *Chineke kere Igbo* ‘God who created Igbo’ or *Chukwu Okike Obioma* “God the Benevolent Creator’ entered into a covenant with Igbo progenitor, using the *ofo* (*Datarium Microcarpium Senegalensis*) to seal the covenantal act as its symbol. Hence, the two items: *ofo na oji* ‘*ofo* and kola-nut’ are ever present in the hand, the abode and the *akpa nwaewu* ‘goatskin bag’ of any traditional Igbo man, blessed with longevity to assume the place and position of *okpara obi* ‘the eldest male folk’. This status bestows on him as the middle man between the living and the dead. As the Igbo would say it: *okenye no n’agbata ndi di ndu na ndi nwuru anwu* ‘An elder lives between the quick and the dead.

### **Its Nature**

Kola-nut is reddish in colour. However, in rare cases, there are kola-nuts which are yellowish. The yellowish ones are called *oji ugo* ‘eagle kola’. The Igbo cherish *oji ugo* ‘eagle kola’. Following Uchendu (1965) on the nature of kola-nut, elegant looking female children are sometimes named *Ojiugo* ‘eagle kola’ by the Igbo. *Ugo* ‘eagle’ is the king of birds in the Igbo cosmos. Kingly disposition epitomizes elegance and regard. Furthermore, a typical kola-nut fruit is naturally segmentalized into dividable sections. Each section is known as *ibe oji* ‘a lobe of kola-nut. Kola-nuts are distinguished by the number of lobes each contains. This varies from four to seven lobes. In rare cases, it could be more or less. But whatever the number of lobes a kola-nut has, a significant meaning is attached to it. The significance of kola-nut lobes is related to the issue of child bearing in terms of sex and number. This issue of significance in the number of kola-nut lobes

shall also be discussed later in this paper. However, if for any reason, a kola-nut has only three lobes, it is called *Ikenga* ‘strength’ by the Igbo. So, if a kola-nut presented to a king is by any chance *Oji Ugo*, and at the same time *Ikenga*, it is believed to be spiritually symbolic: a symbol of good omen predicated by strength and elegance evenly matched. These are attributes believed to have been duly bestowed on *onye eze* ‘a king’ by *Chukwu Okike Obioma* ‘God the Benevolent Creator’ and *ndiichie* ‘the ancestors who instituted the tradition of kola-nut ritual practices among the Igbo.

The four-lobe nature of the Igbo kola-nut is one of the complementizers of the mathematical number, four, in the metaphysical thoughts of the traditional Igbo man which this author will also attempt to clarify

### Significance of Kola Lobes

Naturally, kola-nut is divisible into lobes (that is its cotyledons) but the traditional Igbo man tries to ascribe metaphysical meanings to whatever number of lobes a kola-nut has. Before giving any further explanations about the significance of the number of lobes a kola-nut has, let us first and foremost cast a quick glance at its presumed number-four, its meaning and other significance of the number, four, to the Igbo traditional adherent. The Igbo tradition upholds the mathematical number-four-in several ways. An examination of these ways produces the following results:

*i. Greetings:* The traditional Igbo man’s form of greetings, whether verbal or mimed, is four times. Verbally, the Igbo would greet a gathering of Igbo:

Ọhanaeze mmammanụ o!

Mụọnu!

Zụọnu!

Mekaanụ!

The people and kings (leaders) I greet!

May you beget (children)!

May you train (your children)!

May you live long!

The miming aspect of the people’s greeting is seen in the manner Igbo elders and title holders shake hands. These are people respected as *ndiokenye*, *ndinze na ndiọzọ* ‘the elders, the noble ones and the traditional title holders’. Such individuals dramatize exchange of hand shakes in a manner that sees them hit the back of their hands three times in the first instance and conclude the fourth time with a usual way of exchanging handshakes.

*ii. gbo Week:* Days in the Igbo week are four, namely:

*Èke*, *Orie*, *Àfọ* and *Nkwọ*. These days are called *Ụbọchị Abịa* “Market days”.

Every market in Igbo land must have one of these market days attached to its names as in: *Ekeọha* Aba, *Nkwọ* Nnewi; *Oboloafọ* Nsuka; and *Orieagu* Mbanọ.

*iii. Societies:* All Igbo culture-based societies like *m mọnwū*, *ọkọnkọ* and *èkpè* require certain rituals as processes of initiation necessary for one to belong. Each phase of the ritual processes an initiate passes through to belong is usually accompanied with four four-lobed kola-nuts.

*iv. Activities:* Most of other Igbo cultural activities either last four days or are repeated after four days or four weeks.

*v. Sacrifices:* Most often, oracles divine that sacrificial items duly prepared for the deities be placed at an intersection along a footpath. The intersection points to the four Igbo markets which the deities and humans attend regularly. It also points to the four cardinal points which in the traditional Igbo life are called:

**Ọwụwaanyanwụ**            The Rising of the Sun

**Ọdịdaanyanwụ**        The Setting of the Sun

**Ugwu**                    The Hill

**Ndịda**                    The Valley.

*vi. Igbo Titles:* The Igbo are noted for taking titles. This activity is both tasking and demanding. It is not everybody that is capable to bear the involvement and cost of having just one title. Therefore, anyone who is consequential enough to take up to four Igbo titles becomes **Omezuo** ‘one who fulfils’ or what may be regarded as a high chief in the modern times.

*vii. Igbo Burial:* A traditional Igbo man who had come of age is not hurried to his final resting place if he falls asleep. He must lie in state for four days. If this ‘sleep’ exceeds the fourth day, the general conclusion will be; **Ụra Kwere Izu aghoṣala ọnwụ** “a sleep that lasts four days is indeed death”. At interment, he is bade farewell with the firing of four cannon-shots or more, but in multiples of four while the funeral lasts four days after burial.

## Symbolism of Kola Lobes

The symbolism of Igbo kola lobes takes root from the fact that these lobes, like children born into a family within a society, are identifiable as male or female lobes by the Igbo themselves. A lobe which has a single line straight to the end is male while a lobe which has flattened end is female. For this reason, the sex and number of lobes in a kola-nut is associated with human fertility believed to have been approved by the deities and ancestral spirits in a family that presents it as follows:

- i. A kola-nut which has no divisible lobes like the bitter nut is called **Ọjị Ogbi** “dumb kola”. It is believed to depict unmarried life. The most acceptable means of procreation among the Igbo is by traditional marriage. Therefore whoever fails to marry has taken a stand not to procreate and the Igbo reject it outright. **Ọjị Ogbi** is, therefore, an unacceptable kola that is not eaten but is thrown away because celibacy has no place in the life of the Igbo.
- ii. If a kola-nut has two lobes only, it is called **Ọjị ụchụ** ‘ill-ominous kola’. **Ọjị ụchụ** signifies a decline in child bearing and an ebb in progress.

The Igbo who are a people that crave for abundance in human wealth to maintain the continuity of their lineage (**ụba dị icheiche ụba nwa ka mkpa** ‘wealths are of sorts but that of child is most important’), and material wealth to ensure that well being, do not eat **ọjị ụchụ** especially a couple whose marriage has not produced children. If a kola-nut has three lobes, it is **Ọjị Ikenga** ‘Ikenga kola’ which signifies strength. It symbolizes three male children because the three lobes must be male lobes. The anticipated male children are believed to have

been destined to be prosperous in life.

- iii. A kola-nut that has four lobes signifies completeness. The lobes are usually two males and two females predicating two male and two female children. The four lobes kola-nut is preferred for every socio- ritualistic occasion because it symbolizes the complete Igbo understanding of the world.
- iv. A five-lobe kola-nut contains three female lobes and two male lobes. This phenomenon is perceived differently by Igbos in different areas within the environment. In Mbaise and other areas that surround it, a five-lobe kola-nut is held to have yielded gain. The gain goes to the person who breaks it. In other areas like Arondizuogu and Nike, the extra female lobe is thrown away while the rest four lobes are eaten.
- v. As in the case of a five-lobe kola-nut, a kola-nut that has six lobes depicts gain. It entails gain in the life of the person who presents it. The lobes are made up of two male lobes and four female lobes. One may wonder why female lobes outnumber male lobes as the number of lobes a kola-nut contains increases. But the Igbos are least surprised because there is no doubt in the mind of any traditional Igbo man that *nwoke di ukọ* 'males are scarce'. In Nnobi, one lobe is thrown to the spirits as their own share of it.
- vi. In the event of a kola-nut that has seven lobes, the Igbos believe that the presenter of the kola-nut is destined to have abundant life, wealth and children. It is a rare case indeed. It is often easier to have kola-nuts with more number of lobes than seven. In parts of Igboland like Ezinachi, seven-lobe kola-nut is not eaten at once. It is parceled and preserved in the fireplace (mantel). A substitute is

provided for the occasion while the one which has seven lobes awaits proper ritualisation that is subsequently celebrated. The seven-lobe kola usually contains two males and five females. Males are scarce indeed. Apart from the three-lobe kola *Ikenga*, that contains all males, **kola**-nut hardly contains more than two male lobes irrespective of the number of lobes in it. This explains why the Igbos uphold polygamy but do not tolerate polyandry. Being a people who long to have many children through the institution of marriage, the Igbos permit a man to marry more wives just as they forbid a woman from marrying more than one husband. This is to create the opportunity for all women to get married and be blessed with children. This forestalls the possibilities of *Igba akwula na igba okēōkpòrò* 'harlotry and celibacy' which Igbo tradition does not accept.

- vii. Where a **kola**-nut is seen to have eight lobes, it symbolizes a full cycle of time which characterizes the dualisation of the Igbo week which is mystified in some parts of Igbo land as: *ubochi asatọ di n'igwe, anọ mmụọ na anọ mmadu* 'the eight days in heaven, four for spirits and four for the humans'. Thus for such people we count: *Eke Ukwu* (big Eke), *Orie Ukwu* (big *Orie*), *Afọ Ukwu* (big *Afọ* and *Nkwọ Ukwu* (big *Nkwo*) belonging to the spirits before counting: *Eke Nta* (small *Eke*), *Orie Nta* (small *Orie*), *Afọ Nta* (small *Afọ*) and *Nkwọ Nta* (small *Nkwọ*) belonging to the humans to arrive at the full cycle. In essence, an eight lobe kola-nut depicts double measure of whatever blessings others may have in addition to eight children. Any kola-nut that has nine, ten or more lobes depicts numerosity of children. As a pointer to that Igbo belief: *Otu onye anaghị azu ụmụ* 'an individual does not train children alone', anybody who is

present where a nine or more lobe kola-nut is broken gives whatever he has as gift to the person who presented the kola-nut. The gift is a token of assurance that others are ready to assist in training the children who are believed to be on their way coming.

In areas like Mbaise, a woman who bears children to the tenth one performs the rite of *Igbu eghu ukwu* literally, 'to slaughter goat for the waist'. It is a ritual that involves the killing of goat for the woman to be initiated into the guild of others who have achieved that feat. Once the ritual is observed, the woman could go on having more children uninhibited. Otherwise, she may experience complication in her attempt to have more children. This tradition of *igbu eghu ukwu* is still being practiced among the people to this day.

### **Presentation of Kola-Nut**

During presentations of kola-nut, especially at gatherings, absolute cares are taken to ensure that no mistakes are made. This is because presentations of kola-nut mark the height of all regards the Igbo have for it and epitomize its ritualisation. Any form of mistake at this point is heavily penalized instantly.

Presentation of kola-nut is a very important phenomenon in the life of the Igbo everywhere. It was in the news sometime ago that a respected Igbo traditional ruler shunned all official protocols and walked out on the state Governor as a way to register his protest against a mistake made in the process of a traditional presentation of kola-nut in his West Niger-Igbo domain. That was "an eloquent" way of decrying the unwarranted

deviation from the norm handed down to him as a custodian of the Igbo culture by his forebears.

### **Blessing the Kola-Nut**

In any traditional gathering of the Igbo, kola-nut is usually presented to a guest or guests as a mark of hearty reception. Maduekwe (1981: 1) captures this when he states: *...ka a taa oji, ...oji abiala*. "...let us eat kola-nut, ...kola-nut has come." Kola-nut whenever and wherever it is presented must be blessed before it is broken for everyone to partake. Kola-nut is blessed according to an occasion that produces it. The protection, life, wealth and the continued well-being of everyone present is petitioned during a traditional blessing of kola-nut. However, kola-nut is simply broken and placed at the centre for anyone who cares to collect where a dead person is being mourned. There are no rituals observed at an instance of death. The reason for this is that when kola-nut is being blessed, longevity is craved. After the blessing session, kola-nut is broken according to the natural lines which demarcate the lobes vertically. Where the partakers are more than the lobes, a knife could be used to cut the lobe vertically, too, to reach all present. In extreme cases, the knife could be dropped for the thumb nails to do the needful. At this point, it would be in small pieces which do not matter whether vertical or horizontal. The important thing is that all must partake. However, in the instance of death, kola-nut is mournfully broken or cut horizontally short to depict that life which the living crave to live long has been cut short by death.

The head of any family blesses kola-nut within his compound. The eldest male member in a gathering undertakes the blessing of kola-nut in the absence of a male title

holder. Where there is a male title holder, irrespective of his age, he takes the honour to bless the kola-nut for others. In an instance where there are many male title holders, the one who took his title first becomes the *primus inter pares* “the first among equals” who takes the honour to bless the kola. It does not matter whether he has only one title while others have more than one. The fact that he took the title before others places him ahead of all.

### **Breaking the Kola-Nut**

Breaking of kola-nut the traditional way is a ritual that is performed differently by distinct personalities in different areas of Igboland according to the people’s belief. In some areas, the oldest male member of a gathering blesses the kola-nut and passes it on to the youngest male in their midst to break and pass round for all to have their due. In some other areas, the rites of blessing and breaking the kola-nut rest with the eldest male member of that gathering. Wherever there is a male title holder, he blesses and breaks the kola-nut for others while the youngest male amongst them carries it round for all to pick a piece. Where there are more male traditional title holders in a gathering as already stated, the person who took title before others takes the honour irrespective of his age. Hierarchically, according to the Igbo, *nsi mbụ dara n’ogwe bụ ọpara nsi* ‘the first excrement which falls into the cesspit becomes the first born son’.

Whoever breaks the kola-nut must break it long to depict a wish for long life to its partakers as earlier stated. Efforts must also be made to see that it reaches everyone present no matter how small because all are expected to partake in the socio-religious communion. Where women alone gather, they have to look for a lad to break it for

them. In the absence of a male, the oldest woman in their midst breaks it for others.

One thing worthy of note among those who permit the youngest to break kola-nut at an occasion is to show that a child should serve his elders. Others try to explain that children have purity of hearts that do not harbour enmity. Hence they cannot attempt poisoning others in the process of breaking the kola-nut.

### **Uses of Kola-Nut**

Any attempt to recall all the uses of kola-nut among the Igbo can hardly be realized. However, efforts will be made here to point out some of its outstanding uses. These include:

- i. to perform morning devotion/worship;
- ii. to receive visitor(s) as a token of welcome;
- iii. to maintain healthy relationship between man and his fellow man on one hand and man and the spirits on the other;
- iv. to declare traditional ceremonies open;
- v. to sue an aggressor for the purpose of opening up a case;
- vi. to invite people for an occasion;
- vii. to make enquiries from diviners;
- viii. to initiate new member(s) into a society/societies whether secret or open; and
- ix. to make covenants.

From the foregoing, it becomes clear that the traditional Igbo man and the traditional Igbo kola-nut move together as compatible partners. It further affirms the words of Ogbalu

(2011) who says: *Oji bu isi emume* 'Kola-nut is the core of all occasions. However, while occasions like child birth, naming ceremony, marriage, title-taking and death warrant the presentation of kola-nut as cultural activities, during certain anti-cultural activities like places where murder and sorcery are being perpetrated, kola-nut does not surface because it is an anathema!

### **Taboos of Kola-Nut**

Our analysis, so far about the place of kola-nut among the Igbo has proved that kola-nut is perceived as a sacred object in the people's world. To maintain the sacredness of kola-nut in the Igbo worldview, certain taboos are observed by certain communities within the Igbo society according to their understanding and convention. The taboos are that:

- i. kola-nut shall not be eaten unbroken. This negates the spirit of oneness and humane communal living the Igbo have;
- ii. talkativeness is avoided when kola-nut is being ritualized. This besmacks lack of respect for God and the ancestors;
- iii. kola-nut shall not be cut into short pieces except where people are many while kola-nuts are not enough for everyone to have a lobe. The short pieces must be cut with finger-nails or teeth not knife;
- iv. kola-nut shall not be shown to females during its presentation at any gathering whatsoever;
- v. a female shall not break kola-nut where there is a male;
- vi. females shall not climb the kola-nut tree even where they are the ones who

planted the trees;

- vii. females shall not pick a kola-nut pod that falls from its tree even when the tree belongs to her. She has to look for any male around to pick it from the ground and hand over to her;
- viii. a female shall not deep hand into a kola-nut tray to pick an unbroken kola-nut in a public gathering;
- ix. kola-nut shall not be passed round anti-clockwise. This would mean backwardness in life; and
- x. nobody shall reject kola-nut presented to him even if he does not eat it. This would mean ill-intention toward others.

It is instructive to clarify some taboos related to kola-nut which seem to belittle females to non natives or the uninitiates. All about kola-nut and its ritualisations are sacred. They forbid blood. A female who is up to child bearing age naturally sheds blood monthly. This is a cycle no one knows when it comes. Hence, all females, are, by tradition, precluded from certain rituals pertaining to kola-nut among the Igbo.

### **Summary and Conclusion**

From this paper, certain facts about the place of kola-nut among the Igbo of Nigeria become clear: (a) the importance of kola-nut as an object that reflects much of the Igbo life is explicated; (b) kola-nut has been seen as an inseparable companion of the traditional Igbo man in life and as well in death; and (c) it has been discovered that the myths which the traditional Igbo man wove around kola-nut rest on the fact that they helped him to explain his understanding of the world in which he found himself more vividly than

he would have done in abstraction. Hence, he used the object as a suitable symbol to demystify the labyrinths of human existence and his belief in the union of man and his fellow men in the human society on the one hand and the communion of the spirits on the other hand.

Finally, it should be noted that the whole riddle concerning the Igbo man and his interactions with kola-nut can only be resolved by an understanding of one basic fact – that all the ritualistic ceremonies and obsequies the traditional Igbo man accords kola-nut are handed down to him as tradition. He does them because he observed his father and elders as they did and learnt from them.

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## A Trip to the Suicide Museum

Tyler A. Turcotte

Garden River, Alberta

*...for Anita Scatch...*

*Sisip...Sisip...Sisip...Niska!*

It seemed the ducks and geese would never make their return flight to the northern hamlet of Patuanak. Spring hunting for migratory birds was a ritual Ben Jack had picked up from the Swampy Cree in northern Manitoba. He looked forward to it now because he knew spring was around the corner. He thought about hunting throughout the winter but he could almost feel the cold steel barrel of his shotgun in his hands after four straight days of snow in April. He could almost hear the shots fired and see the birds in flight. He could almost smell the warm plates of food and taste the sweet tea that warmed his hands and belly following a kill during the spring thaw.

Swans are the most beautiful migratory birds, but as a hunter Ben thought not of their beauty but about their thick layers of feathers and fat that made them difficult to kill in the air. They were the most satisfying to kill in the early spring because of the impact they made on the ice after they collapsed in flight from a number two steel shot. It is quite a show. Not unlike letting the Canadian geese land after calling them in, but soup tastes a lot better, so say the Swampy Cree, when you shoot the birds out of the air. Letting them land ensures your soup, however mediocre from being shot on the water, does not get away from you. Young people don't like the taste of the swans, they usually give them to an elder, but no youth had he met ever passed on goose soup and fried bannock with an extra serving of rice pudding. *Wicasin...*

It had snowed for four straight days. Swampy Cree say that after four straight days of snow in April spring will come, the snow simply goes home. Ben did not know where home was that the snow went but he believed in the Cree wisdom. He soaked it all in and took them at their word asking no more than was necessary. It was enough for him that they didn't believe in ground hogs bringing in the good weather because they were afraid of their shadow. He could not remember how it went really. None of it really matters anyway.

Ben Jack and his wife Helen Betty drove home ignoring each other in peace. They were not angry with each other but were occupied with memories from the past winter on the reserve where they worked and lived. They fixed their thoughts on the summer to come and were equally hopeful spring would begin tomorrow. Ben knew this because the Swampy Cree told him, four days have passed - the snow is going

home.

If you were wondering, Ben and his wife were more a shade of white than brown. Although they were not status aboriginals they had long since the days of their teenage years abandoned their church and its rituals. Ben had especially abandoned his Christian faith when it came to meteorological predictions and had adopted the pantheistic worldview belonging to the Cree in its place.

"Four days, now she's going home," Ben said aloud to his wife. Helen stirred but did not open her eyes. She was resting from their trip to the Capital. He hoped she could rest easy without the thought of what they were returning to on the reserve. To Ben their poorly heated, moldy, and mouse infested home was a comfort. In the house he felt absolutely no desire to kill himself. Not that he had suicidal thoughts often or many reasons to kill himself, it was just that outside the walls of their home there was a lot of suicide. It had been a rough winter on the northern reserves and his hadn't been a unique experience. Many reservations were impacted and forgotten, sent money and forgotten. Nevertheless, four days had passed, now she's going home, Ben thought, spring will be here tomorrow.

He had nothing against the Dene people of Patuanak, but on weather predicting experience and expressions they had none, and Ben thought if you could not come up with a single prediction about the weather you would probably fail at everything in life. It was evident that the small Dene community was suffering from their lack of weather predictions. The population in the northern hamlet now numbered a little over four hundred. The Dene were defeated before they could even start in a new white

man's world. Ben blamed it on Dene men not knowing how to hunt with the weather anymore. They have forgotten how, and young women disconnect themselves from their mothers who are getting younger all the time, they have forgotten how to listen to the signs of the land. *Tapwe*. Dene people are malnourished around the hamlet. They eat more starch than protein, all bought at their grocery store that has the selection of a convenience store gas station in the city. While the Dene population dwindles the Cree are out of the hole and running. They seem to double their population every decade. The big game revitalization program is working for them as the men kill only male moose and buck deer allowing both populations to thrive. Women listen to their *kookums* who share wisdom over their artful crafts. It was for these reasons that Ben put his faith in the Cree people over the Dene people.

It was quiet in the truck except for the CBC broadcast that kept cutting out between bursts of white noise. Sheila Coles was babbling over the speakers about the weather in Saskatchewan as she did every morning on the Morning Edition program.

“Don'tcha know, I bet if and when it warms up, and I say if, the wind, well it's just going to howl I tell ya, the rain will come down in buckets and sheets”. Four days have passed, Ben thought to himself again, spring has to come tomorrow. Reception on the radio in his beat up Ford fizzed in and out and then went silent. It did this every time he got to the turn off where he could go north west towards Patuanak or north east towards La Ronge. There was a slight bump in the road as the pavement stopped and the dirt started. It was enough to wake Helen who screamed something about a raven on the dashboard. He did not see it, he said nothing and Helen fell back

to sleep. These outbursts about tricksters in her dreams were not at all uncommon.

What did Sheila Coles know about the weather anyway? Nothing that the Cree couldn't tell him in a single expression. He sang quietly to himself this time,

“Four days, four days, now she's got to be going home, she's got to be going home, she's got to go on home.

If spring don't start tomorrow, I'll die from my sorrow, on the damn reservation tomorrow”.

Sheila Coles finished with the weather and the CBC played its jingle signifying a program change. A whiskeyjack collided with the windshield on the passenger side and spun off into the ditch when the jingle ended. A raven, Ben smiled to himself looking over at his dream catching wife.

Ben was less than an hour outside Patuanak. He had to take his time on the dirt road because of the strange weather. The sun seemed to taunt and tease him through the shadows, and the light struggled to free itself, time struggled to free itself. The wind picked up and large snowflakes came down with the southerly wind. Bottles clinked and clanked along with other supplies from the Capital in the back of the truck from the poor traction on the ice and mud. He lifted his foot off the accelerator so that the noise of the clanking bottles would ease and his wife would not be disturbed with more frightening visions of ravens and whiskeyjacks.

A young and enthusiastic female voice came on the speakers. It was difficult through the static to make out what the advertisement was for. Ben thought

perhaps it was an ad for a book; he heard the word “celebrate” and thought it must be for a festival or event, then he heard a man who was saying the word museum over and over and this was all very confusing for Ben. He slowed nearly to a stop in the road when the broadcast came in clear enough to understand. The voice belonged to that of a museum’s curator, collector, and owner. The woman was being interviewed by someone who sounded nothing like Peter Mansbridge, and after the museum’s curator, collector, and owner was interrupted by an irrelevant question about residential schools she redirected and went on to describe the range of emotions and experiences that can lead one to take their own life. It was not like the one-dimensional portrayals of aboriginal youth suicide Canadians were accustomed to hearing about.

Ben had been working with his wife on a Swampy Cree reserve and lost five students to suicide over the past winter. He thought to rouse his wife from her sleep so she could listen, he could then, once again, justify his drinking. He brushed the hair away from her face when the broadcast cut out to more static and white noise. He whispered something sweet to her and thought it better to wait until the museum’s representative came back on the radio again.

He switched to the AM frequency and hit scan on the radio but nothing but static came through. He was about to switch over to his burnt BB King cd when the voice of the representative fought the white noise to be heard on the AM frequency and so he switched back to the FM where the CBC was always clearer.

“People should always celebrate life’s small victories because they run out. It is

the running out of life that is underrated. We at the Suicide Museum don’t think it is underrated. We at the Suicide Museum don’t think that Aboriginal youth suicide should go unheard. We at the Suicide Museum celebrate Suicide. We give the dead a voice, a voice that was silenced while they lived but is silenced no more.” The reception was beginning to fade so Ben stopped the truck to hold onto the signal.

“Our exhibit in the Capital opening today will showcase items directly related to the suicides of Swampy Cree youth in our northern prairie provinces. Our mandate is to immortalize the names of youth so they haven’t died for nothing...just because the federal government is not listening it does not mean the public shouldn’t”.

The radio went silent. Ben had never heard or seen anything like what the voice was describing before in his life. He had to see it. All he knew of the Suicide Museum was that it was opening in the Capital that very day but it was enough to spark the impulse he needed to change direction. Without asking his wife Ben started to turn the car around on the ice and mud so that he could head back the way he came towards the Capital.

While he was maneuvering the truck on the narrow stretch of road he thought about how best to persuade Helen that the museum was worth seeing when she woke up and found they were going in the wrong direction. He hoped that she would find the museum as interesting as he found it now.

They continued on in silence until Ben reached the small gas mart in Beauval. He pulled in for gas, paid for full service without exchanging a single word with the

attendant and continued on with the white noise from the radio and the faint breathing of his passenger. The radio broadcast from the CBC crackled in from a far off distance and was suddenly clear,

“Welcome back, with us in the studio today is suicide collector, curator, and confessed suicide attempter, Dr. Artine Wendigo. Dr Wendigo is behind the exhibit at the Suicide Museum and she claims that she opened the museum to draw attention to the absurd underfunding of mental health services on reserves across the north. She admits that the idea of a Suicide Museum was only an afterthought to the idea of exposing a corrupt band council and inadequate mental health services. These paled in comparison to the provocative Suicide Museum and so it was born. Dr. Wendigo, is what I have said correct?”

“Yes.”

“And, ok, Doctor, why is the Suicide exhibit essential in preserving the memory of Swampy Cree youth who have taken their life? I see you have brought with you today a long yellow extension cord. Are you going to tell us that this cord was used in a Suicide attempt?”

“No. It was a successful suicide. You see here how it is cut in half? This is where a young RCMP officer cut through the cord to free her body.”

“I see. I see. Tell me, do suicide attempts get the same recognition and celebration as suicides at the Museum?”

“Well, no...as it says on our website, many believe that the majority of suicide

attempts are failures because of poor planning, poor parenting, and lack of drive in school. We at the Suicide Museum disagree with this model of thinking. We are confident that through the Suicide Museum we can turn failed suicides into true celebrations of life...” While the curator described the goals of the museum her voice faded into static. The radio voice became a distant murmur when they came in through the valley of Green River where flat lands unrolled into ridges and ravines uncharacteristic of what people imagine of the prairie province.

Ben’s explanation to his wife about why he had pulled a U turn on the north side of Beauval to head back to the Capital could go one of two ways, she could be happy or she could be pissed. She would be within reason to be angry with him for making an executive decision to turn towards the Suicide Museum. Especially because it was only to see if any of his former students were being celebrated. There was a part of Ben’s conscience that was worried. He was worried that some part of his educational practice would be there on display to shame him in front of his wife and the public; some work of fiction that he had taught hanging, some obscure reference projected onto the wall, any of these things would ruin the celebration for him. The logic of the order leading up to the taking of one’s own life for the Swampy Cree is more relentless than the act of suicide itself. This is what Ben believed the museum would celebrate alongside the names of youth and it is on this point that he feared he would see himself or some aspect of the environment he influenced. It would challenge the whole nature of his servitude; there would be little to celebrate at the Suicide Museum if it were true.

Helen was roused from her sleep in the passenger side seat, and mumbled more

to herself than to Ben,

“Where are we now?”

“Outside of Green River”.

This was certainly the truth but had she sat up to look out the window before falling back to sleep she would have certainly noticed that the truck was heading south. For now, the will of his destination, the Suicide Museum, encouraged him to hold onto his explanation as long as he could. It could certainly wait as long as Helen rested.

The CBC chimed back in with a different tune signifying that the morning edition of *Bad Writers and Bad Company* had finished. It was time for the world news report when a voice a lot like Sheila Coles would talk about tweets from politicians and the strange weather over the prairies to complete the programming cycle. It was not the first time that he had heard all this. He found comfort again in the old Cree belief that spring would come tomorrow. It did not really matter what the CBC had to say anyway.

He touched Helen’s hand and said, “I’ve got a surprise for you”. She did not seem to hear him. She kept her eyes shut, but Ben felt some relief at breaking the silence between them. Once they arrived at the museum Ben supposed he could lie and say he had taken her back to the Capital to surprise her with a delayed return to the bush, but he could also confess that the trip to the museum had been for him alone. Whether it was denied by Helen, their families, the school, the community, the government, or himself... conservative backlash to progress is inevitable. Some people, Ben knew, would

*never* be ready to see inside the Suicide Museum.

The return trip from where Ben turned around in the road back to the Capital would take about four and a half hours. He decided to head through Meadow Lake rather than through Big River to avoid the howling winds and rain Sheila Coles had warned about. It was on this stretch of the road that he contemplated the impressions of native suicide in a work by Farley Mowat.

Ben knew that Swampy youth had less reasons to be brave and more reasons to end their life than the Ihalmiut Mowat lived with in the 1940’s. Mowat said that among the Indians living in the Barren lands suicide was not lawful, but to the people it was a very heroic sacrifice.

He said that it is the old who fear death the most and who find it the hardest to die. It is very different among the Swampy youth who have no fear of death and who find it easy to die.

Swampy youth do not take their own lives as martyrs for a social cause; they do not take their lives as sacrifice for their family and community; they do it because they know the difference between right and wrong. They do what they think is the right thing because they cannot control the wrong conditions of their environment. They are overcome by the impulse, the gratifying impulse, to end it all. Rather than deal with anxiety and grief caused by the novelty and ambiguity of the future - they wash their hands clean of it and start over.

It was at this time that the snow turned to sleet and hail. Ben smiled with

anticipation of oiling his shotgun and getting out in the field to build his duck blind. Off on the shoulder of the road was a sign that read Big River. Ben decided he would pull in at the full serve Esso and gas up. When he pulled in the attendant exited the little shack beside the pumps and Ben stepped out of his truck to greet him.

“Tansi, boy”. “How you doing, buddy?” “How much?” “Fill ‘er up, please”. “You a newf?” “Nah, man. I’m from New Brunswick”. “Where that? England?” “Nah, not that far east. East coast.” “Ah, I see. Weird weather, eh? Suppose to go home tomorrow”. “Yes, that is what I keep telling myself”. “Where ya heading, boy?” “To the capital to check out the Suicide Museum”. “Ah yeah? It’s good man. I heard they added some exhibits since the last time I was there.” “Added exhibits?” “Yeah, man. They are always adding to the collection. I saw the exhibit when it was starting out. It really only started gaining popularity after the she-chief from up in Ontario somewhere went on hunger strike, sparked the Idle No More movement.” “Yes, I heard about it. I did not think the museum was that old”. “*Mamascatch*, boy, the Suicide Museum has been around as long as we Indians have. It has had terrible advertising since the... beginning... That will be fifty, I’ll let you use my treaty number.” “Thanks, man. Have a good day”. “*Huy-Huy*, enjoy the celebration. *Ekose*”. “Ekosani, ekose”.

Ben got back into the vehicle quietly so as not to disturb Helen resting her eyes in the passenger seat. Travel conditions might improve if the rain held. On the south side of Bodmin Ben switched the radio from FM to AM but nothing came through on any of the channels but static and white noise. Strong winds out of the south along with sleet and rain made visibility less than a couple hundred meters. It worsened to

the point that he could no longer identify the familiar landmarks of tall spruce and lakes along the route. What Ben failed to realize as they drove in the slush with the windshield wipers trying to keep up with the oncoming rain was that he swung off course. He went off too far to the west on highway 40 from Prince Albert and ended up going south on highway 4 towards the Red Pheasant Reserve. It did not matter whether the storm had taken them slightly off course. If he kept to the south he would make it to the Capital eventually. There was still plenty of time before the museum closed. He imagined that if it was locked and closed for some reason he would break into the building to see the exhibit with his own eyes. He was not going to let anything stop him from seeing inside.

While driving through the city towards the museum Ben felt doubt and started to breathe deeply to calm himself down. There was a part of himself that wanted to pull into the parking lot and see a sign on the door that said closed: closed for some legitimate reason, some way out of the reality he was about to face. Closed due to weather; closed due to lack of funding; closed due to a death in the family; closed due to fire damage; closed due to anything but suicide. He pulled into the parking lot, put his truck into park and looked on his wife Helen before taking in the museum. He was about to wake her and surprise her but he hesitated. He hesitated because she looked so content in her sleep catching dreams of trickster figures. Looking down on her sleeping innocence he quietly shut off the wipers and exited the truck, leaving it running so Helen would be warm.

There was only one other car in the parking lot which was a relief to him. He

walked up to the front entrance, opened the door and stepped in out of the rain. When he stepped inside he heard the steady beat of a drum that he knew to be the heartbeat of the people playing over cheap speakers.

“Welcome to the Suicide Museum!” said a young woman who he presumed to be the curator of the museum.

“So happy you could make it here in this miserable weather!”

“Well, it’s my pleasure to be here. How much?”

“If it’s your first time to the Suicide Museum your visit is free. Would you like a tour?”

“If it’s all the same, I’d just like to browse, thank you”.

“Enjoy, but remember, here there are no bright lights and there are no illusions, what you see is what you get at the Suicide Museum. We are always in the process of adding to our exhibit. Here we celebrate the lives of aboriginal youth that ended too soon, so if you don’t find the celebration sufficient today come back another day completely free. Please, it is important, for the love of the creator, that you don’t touch anything. No pictures and please sign the guest book as you leave.”

Ben nodded and smiled, leaving the woman where she stood at the entrance to the museum. He walked up to a sign describing the aims of the museum, it read,

“The items of this museum have been miraculously preserved to celebrate the names of our fallen warriors and braves. The items you will see on display today have

been brought into the light and given a voice. We at the Suicide Museum feel that the long chronicle documenting the abuses of residential school are irrelevant to the current state of crisis and overshadow the names of youth dying every day. The Suicide museum offers a fresh paradigm that captures the immediate spirit of suicide in our northern communities.”

Ben ignored most of the sign. It was more of the same with special thanks to donors in the senate with an honorable mention to Caroline Bennett and Justin Trudeau. Politicians who he knew did nothing to curve the rate of suicide among the Swampy Cree youth except get their picture taken and donate the materials to build storage barns for dusty canoes and plastic packed paddles.

He walked through a small corridor that opened into the gallery of the museum. At the first display he was taken aback by the unique horror of a spent twelve gauge slug shell and a scribbled suicide note. On the note he read the scribbled hand of a child who had written, “Tell my parents I’m depressed”. After reading bits of the note that failed to capture his interest he turned around to see that the exhibit was a lot of the same. Spent rounds, bottles, cords and rope, snippets and snapshots of youth wasted here and there; artifacts that were capable of rousing admiration for the child and loathing for the institutions, communities, and parents that produced them. The impact of this display in its entirety was substantial enough.

There was a sign near the emergency exit that read, “The Real Poundmakers Pipe”. This was strange to Ben as this was the Suicide Museum and not the pipe Museum. As he neared the pipe he saw that it was not the pipe Poundmaker smoked casually but it

was the real ceremonial pipe. Why was something so sacred being celebrated among the ranks of suicides? The caption below the pipe read,

“...like the lives being here celebrated through their names and instruments of death, the pipe here displayed is a priceless artifact stolen by the British Empire, its reclamation is here celebrated like the lives of the Swampy Cree youth whose names are here reclaimed after being stolen...” The tone of the caption did little to move him towards celebration and so he continued on to another display. It offended Ben that the pipe should be given a platform here as though its story could be equated with the lives of the Swampy youth. He thought to seek out the curator and complain but it was an argument he was not equipped to begin and so he lost interest.

The third display must have had some spiritual significance to someone. This artifact of priceless antiquity was encased in glass and on first inspection he thought the item was only a dark colored rock. After reading the caption he discovered that the rock was actually a meteorite seized from a band of natives by missionaries. In place of the meteorite the band was given bibles. It had only recently been reclaimed from an illegitimate museum in a neighboring province.

Dr. Wendigo interrupted Ben's trance brought on by the meteorite by saying, “the artifacts on display are returned to the earth so we can make room for new items and names to celebrate. More names and items come in everyday, but the Poundmaker's pipe you saw and this meteorite will remain with the museum forever so that they can never be stolen again. The rest of the items and names return to the lands that gave them

life and are buried alongside their graves. The spirits you have celebrated today depart from the museum when we return them to their homes to be buried. We celebrate the spirit of the name so it doesn't feel the need to return and make itself heard. That, in truth, is the real aim of the Suicide Museum.”

As abruptly as Dr. Wendigo appeared she faded into the background so Ben could browse alone again. Next to the meteorite display was a familiar name. He was drawn to the rest of the display because of the name alone. He recognized the name from papers he had graded in class, but as he tried in that moment to remember her voice and her face he drew a blank and felt sad. For Ben the celebration had ended. He stood there frozen in time staring at the instrument of her death, a yellow extension cord cut in half to free her body.

Ben could hear keys jingling behind him and he knew Helen had woken up and come into the museum. He heard her step close to him and felt her hand on his back.

“Surprise,” Helen whispered.

There they stood celebrating silently. Ben thought to look around for some of the other names he and his wife had loved and lost, names also deserving of celebration, but he knew that new names were coming in all the time. He was lucky to see one. There was very little to give voice to the name on display, only her name in bold print and that cord. It saddened him to think that she should be immortalized by a name and an instrument of death alone. Ben wanted to leave something next the cord and her name but he had nothing but his own name to leave, nothing worth celebrating,

and so he signed the guest book and walked outside with Helen.

Outside the museum the rain had stopped. Ben and his wife emerged to see the clouds clearing and the sun fighting to be seen before it set for the night. Helen got into the driver's seat so that Ben could rest and they set their sights again on the northern hamlet of Patuanak. The strange museum in the capital that celebrated the suicides of Swampy Cree youth had told Ben and Helen all it could. Prior to this trip to the Capital Ben would have forgotten most of the sights and sounds before reaching their place on the reservation but he knew he would never forget this trip. Ben fell asleep and Helen turned off the radio and switched on the BB King cd, "The Thrill is gone". Ben slept soundly while Helen looked for signs of spring along the northern bound highway in the setting sun.

*Sisip...Sisip...Sisip...Niska!*



Fissure

Stuart Matheson

# CONTRIBUTORS

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**Doug Lauvstad** is passionate about northern people and northern issues. He is widely recognized as a strong advocate for northern Manitoba economic and social progress. His accomplishments are many, particularly in the areas of building educational and other programs that support "Northern People for Northern Jobs," Doug has been the strongest voice from the Northern Manitoba and brings the issues and context of northern

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## *call for papers*

The *quint's* forty second 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. The deadline for this call is the 15<sup>th</sup> of March 2019—but please note that we accept manu/digi-scripts at any time.

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All contributions accompanied by a short biography will be forwarded to a member of the editorial board. Manuscripts must not be previously published or submitted for publication elsewhere while being reviewed by *the quint's* editors or outside readers.

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