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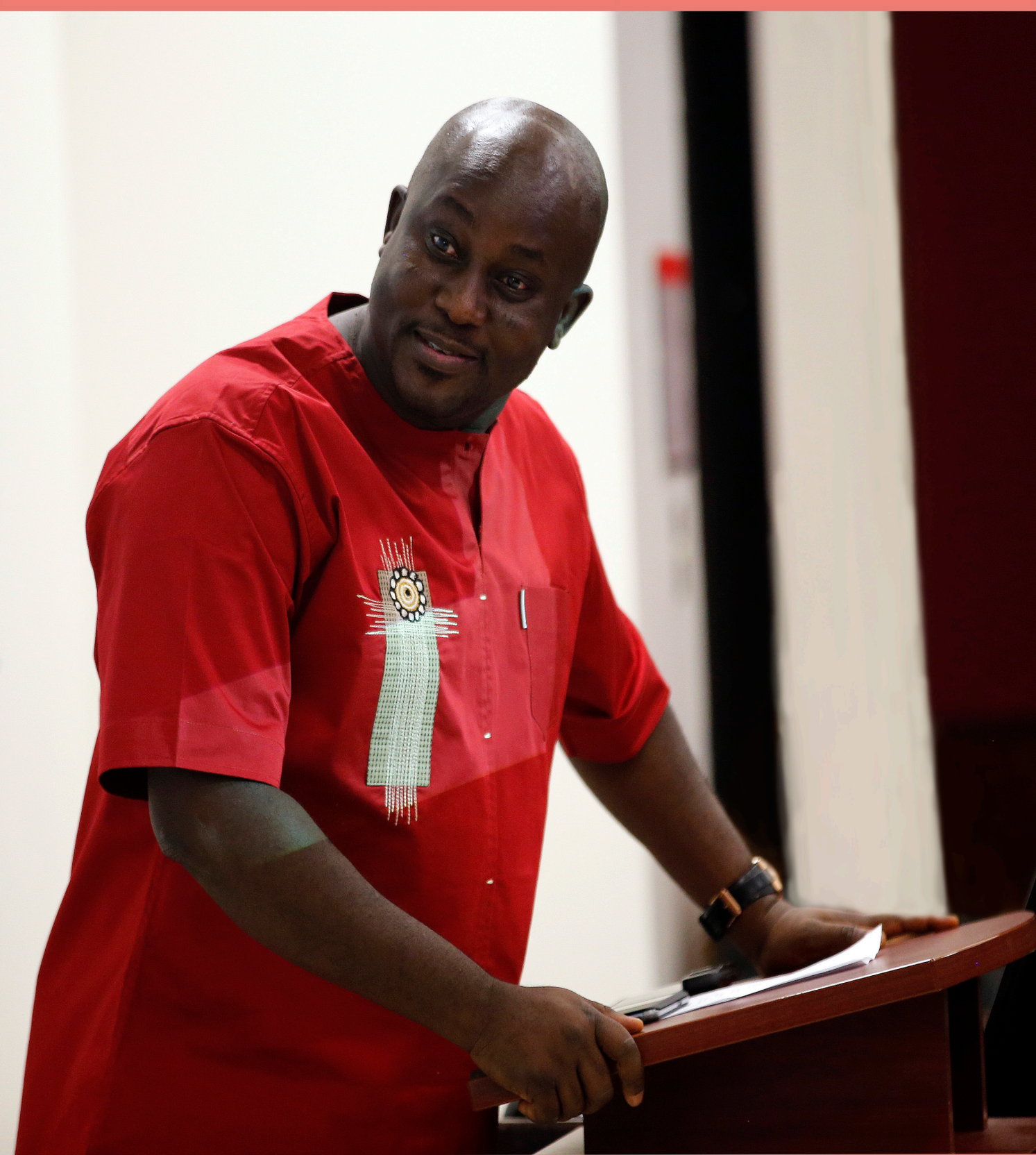

NOKOKO

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Special issue:

Africanist Public Intellectuals, Progressive Politics, and Youth Agency in a Digital Age

NOKOKO

Institute of African Studies
Carleton University (Ottawa, Canada)
2021 (9)

Nokoko is an open-access journal promoting dialogue, discourse and debate on Pan-Africanism, Africa and Africana. *Nokoko* brings forward the foundational work of Professor Daniel Osabu-Kle and his colleagues when they started the Journal of Pan-African Wisdom in 2005. 'Nokoko' is a Ga word that means something that is new, novel, surprising and interesting. The journal offers a venue for scholarship to challenge enduring simplified views of Africa and the African diaspora, by providing other perspectives and insights that may be surprising, interesting, and refreshing.

Combining spaces for academic and community reflection, *Nokoko* creates an opportunity for discussion of research that reflects on the complicated nature of pan-African issues. It provides a forum for the publication of work from a cross disciplinary perspective that reflects scholarly endeavour, policy discussions, practitioners' reflections, and social activists' thinking concerning the continent and beyond. Hosted by the Institute of African Studies at Carleton University (in Ottawa, Canada), *Nokoko* provides a space for emerging and established scholars to publish their work on Africa and the African diaspora.

Layout by **Jillian Piper**.
Cover Photo of Professor Pius Adesanmi at an African Studies event during Black History month in February 2018 taken by **Akintunde Akinleye**.

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Introduction: Africanist Public Intellectuals, Progressive Politics and Youth Agency in a Digital Age

Nduka Otiono

The terms "intellectual" and "public intellectual" often evoke a wide array of related meanings which revolve around the idea of a person of letters who professionally or vocationally engages in the four Cs: critical thinking, critical reading, critical writing, and critical engagement. Given their prevalent use in various contexts of everyday communication, the portmanteau terms raise conceptual challenges and meaning potentialities that can be confusing and sometimes lead to their interchangeable usage—even by those devoted to the business of (public) intellection. The wide-angled lenses from which the term is viewed is connected to its chequered history and genealogy, dating back to 206 BC when the idea of the "scholar-gentlemen" sprung from appointments by *Huáng dì*, the monarch of China during the Imperial Period of Chinese history. As Charles Alexander Moore (1967) has noted, "It was good enough to be praised and imitated in 18th century Europe" (22). Other early iterations of the terms include their identification with "literati" or "*litterati*" (Latin), associated with the Carolingian Empire (800–888), and mention in The *Mahabharata*, one of the two major Sanskrit epics of ancient India regarded as "the longest poem ever written" (Lochtefeld 2002: 139). Stephan Colini (2006) further traces the "occasional usage of 'intellectuals' as a plural noun" in Europe in the late nineteenth century "to refer, usually with a figurative or ironic intent, to a collection of people who might be identified in terms of their intellectual inclinations or pretensions" (20). However, it was not until the Dreyfus Affair, a political scandal that shook the Third Republic in France between the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, that the idea of the "intellectual in public life" gained considerable traction with the work of the writer and journalist, Émile Zola.

The contemporary understanding of the term "public intellectual" is largely attributable to the work of two twentieth century scholars—the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas whose ground-breaking study *Structural Transformation of Public Sphere* (1963) defined the context of the social space within which the organic or progressive intellectual (to echo Anthony Gramsci) functions, and the polymathic

French thinker Jean-Paul Sartre wittily described by Benedict O'Donohoe (2011) as "a pocket-sized person with a brain the size of a planet" (2). Other scholars, leaders, and activists who have theorized the idea of the public intellectual, whether explicitly or tacitly, cover a spectrum of political positions. They include Marx, Lenin, Anthony Gramsci, W.E.B. Du Bois, and other radical black intellectuals associated with the Black Atlantic and global south traditions. Unlike fascist public intellectuals whose work are outside our view in this essay, the works of these cited great thinkers synchronize with "Sartrean notions of intellectual engagement, political commitment and revolutionary praxis to address contemporary questions," to quote O'Donohoe (2011: 2). It is in the latter sense that most of the essays collected in this special issue of *Nokoko* on public intellectuals in Africa should be understood. More so, when considered in the context of the dedication of this issue to Pius Adesanmi, our late friend, colleague, editorial board member, and Director of Carleton University's Institute of African Studies, who tragically died in the Ethiopian Airline crash on March 10, 2019 near Addis Ababa.

In dedicating this issue to Adesanmi, we celebrate his varied academic and public intellectual disposition and practices – his multiple interests, commitments and contributions as an academic scholar, regular columnist in Nigerian (online) papers, strong mentorship activities in Africa and North America, his artistic output, an immensely busy schedule of public talks in Africa, Europe and North America, and his social media posts engaged with by tens of thousands of followers. Although not all the essays directly pay tribute to Adesanmi and his work, most of the contributors use Adesanmi's intellectual activism as a catalyst for thinking about the role of an institution builder and public intellectual and an "Africanist" scholar in the twenty-first century.

Adesanmi was extremely dexterous in his productions and interventions, using all forms of writing and speaking, and thus we welcome a range of genres of writing to explore one or more of these topics – be they academic, social activist, or artistic. Taken together, his writings as published in three volumes—*You're Not A Country, Afric*a (2011), *Naija No Dey Carry Last* (2015), and *Who Owns the Problem* (2020)—underscore the title of this Introduction in regards to the conception of the public intellectual in the context of digital democracy: "African Public Intellectuals, Progressive Politics and Youth Agency in a Digital Age." This issue pulls together essays which responded to the original call for "submissions of original manuscripts that critically reflect on what it means or what it should mean to be an 'Africanist' scholar in the twenty-first century." Taken together, the essays offer varied perspectives on the challenges of the public intellectual in Africa today. Using various lenses and case studies, they explore the African public intellectual's engagement with ideology and the politics of knowledge production and political agency. The essays address the troubling conceptual tripartite questions that various thinkers including Jean-Paul Sartre have tackled concerning the (public) intellectual: What is an intellectual? What are the functions of the intellectual? Is the writer an intellectual?

Javier Fernandez Sebastian's interesting interview with Pierre Rosanvallon, the celebrated French scholar, provides a template for engaging with the different but related approaches adopted by the contributors to this issue for dealing with these questions. Responding to a question by Sebastian (2007), Rosanvallon avers:

> For me, the role of intellectuals has always been a pivotal question, regardless of their academic functions. The academic function is producing research work. But what I call the intellectual function is the role that this research work plays in society. In France, the dominant model has been that of the individual who commits his academic legiti-

> macy or his own academic projects in the public arena in order to take a stand (714).

This "dominant model" of the intellectual has not only gained currency, but it is also coterminous with the profile of the public intellectual in other parts of the world, including Africa. Granted, as famed historian Toyin Falola notes in his contribution to this collection, "The role of a public intellectual is often a multifaceted one. The public intellectual employs informed perspectives to penetrate and reveal progressive insights into the workings of their world." The sometimes-contentious issue is the conceptualization of the intellectual as either socially conscious and politically engaged or passive and self-absorbed in their world of knowledge production. This idea is further explored in Nduka Otiono's essay in this collection from disciplinary and territorial perspectives. Nevertheless, the point can be made that all intellectuals socially engage in the public sphere to some degree, when they participate in the politics of knowledge production and professionalization.

In the contemporary African postcolonial context, the dominant theme among many intellectuals is the decolonization of knowledge. While intellectuals engaged in this ideological mission may be accorded the status of some kind of "public" intellectual, it is pertinent to contrast such acts of quiet intellection by "Africanist" scholars with the overt practical—sometimes radical—political action by the "real" public intellectuals.

Ali Mazrui grapples with these issues of "the homogenization of the intellectual culture of the world" as he addresses the question: "What makes a great Africanist? He or she needs a commitment to Africa, a capacity to interpret it, and a spirit of congeniality towards fellow Africans" (Adem 2010: 199). These look like simple dicta. But in real life these categories appear more easily identified than exemplified or justified by such "great Africanists." Mamdani (2016) seems to problematize the core challenge through the additional insight he offers into our understanding of the profile of the African public intellectual and scholar. This is evident in the dichotomy highlighted in the title of his essay that focuses on the politics of decolonization of knowledge in African universities, "Between the public intellectual and the scholar: decolonization and some post-independence initiatives in African higher education." The keywords here are "the public intellectual" and "the scholar." In everyday speech, individuals tend to confuse the terms in their association of the word "scholar" with "intellectual." Sometimes when they use the term "public intellectual," they may in reality mean a "scholar" or simply an "intellectual." Mamdani's article indeed further "explores the role and tension between the public intellectual and the scholar from the perspective of decolonization" (68). It is, therefore, worth noting that even the term "intellectual" comes with its own baggage of confusion that can lead to further to confusion. Thus, we find the clarification by Ahmed Mohiddin (2010) very germane to the discourse:

> It is important here to make a distinction between intellectual and intellectualism. The former might be defined either as a person who has been exposed for any length of time to a formal intellectual training of some sort and not necessarily Western; or a person who has the capacity for abstract thinking and is demonstrably able to articulate his views vocally or by writing. An intellectual need not therefore necessarily be the 'Degree Holder'. Intellectualism is simply an activity necessarily associated with the role of the intellectual (226-227).

This special issue not only recognizes the complex nature of the topic, but the seven essays and two reviews of Adesanmi's posthumous collection of keynote

addresses (*Who Owns the Problem?* 2020)[1] boldly underscore the nuanced differences between the "scholar," the "intellectual," and the "public intellectual." The dedication of most of the essays to the work of Pius Adesanmi is the organizing rubric. This allows for sustained discussion of the subject matter around a single African public intellectual who straddles the African diaspora and the homeland. However, it must be quickly pointed out that two of the essays in this collection, Adeolu Oluwasey Oyekan's and Otiono's, offer broader views of the topic. A third essay, by Toyin Falola, spotlights a different kind of African public intellectual as a case study.

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The territorial location of the Africanist scholar in the homeland and in the Diaspora—as exemplified by Adesanmi's life and work—calls attention to a recurrent trope in discourses of the profile of African intellectuals working in the Western academy, which is one of crisis of identity and ideology.[2] This profile is defined by the challenges of living in the Diaspora and committing to social activism in the homeland. So vital is this trope that some African scholars (Irele 1991; Njubi 2002; Irobi 2008) have devoted much time to examining how African intellectuals living abroad negotiate the "double consciousness" that virtually holds them hostage. Njubi expresses this idea with remarkable clarity in his declaration that for Black African intellectual migrants in the West, "the resolution of this identity crisis is a political act which produces three 'types' of migrant intellectuals: the comprador intelligentsia,[3] the postcolonial critic and the progressive exile" (69). While this special issue makes no pretence to *comprehensively*[4] examining the politics of location, identity, and knowledge production in relation to the work of the Africanist

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1 The book reviews are by Eyitayo Aloh and Emma Bider, respectively titled "Listening to African Voices: Adesanmi's Love letter From the Grave" and "The Privilege of Editing #WhoOwnsTheProblem: Remembering Pius Adesanmi."

2 F. Njubi Nesbitt (2002) provides more context for apprehending the point being made here, which we would like to quote at some length: "To complicate matters further, the migrants must also endure alienation from their countries of origin. Academic exiles are likely to be victims of government repression even before leaving their home countries. Many are pushed out of their countries after political disturbances at university campuses. Others are exiled because their political perspectives do not correspond with the dominant ideological dispensation of the time. Yet, these same forces that kept them from achieving their full potential at home demonize them for leaving instead of contributing to national development. These tensions between intellectuals and politicians have boiled over frequently in the postcolonial world… [as]… in a shouting match between Ghana's President Jerry Rawlings and eminent Kenyan scholar Ali Mazrui during a conference in Davos, Switzerland in June 1999 (Mwagiru, 1999). The Ghanaian president was extremely upset because medical doctors trained in Ghana at great expense were leaving for the West as soon as they completed their studies. He argued that it was not enough for the professionals to repay their student loans because it took at least 7 years to train another doctor, leaving thousands of patients without medical care" (69).

3 While we do not provide a more detailed discussion of these categories here, it is important to note the association between the "comprador intelligentsia" and those intellectuals who serve the hegemonic ruling class in contradistinction from the progressive public intellectuals who oppose and have a vision of a more democratic, just world. Indeed, as Derek Boothman (2008) rightly points out, Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony "rests, as he himself states, on a fundamental text of Marx's, the 1859 preface to A Contribution to a Critique of Political Economy, which he translated in a part of Notebook 7 set aside for such work" (201).

4 It is impractical to cover every salient dimension of this vast and complex subject matter. For example, we have not paid attention to the distinction between the 'Africanist' intellectual and the Africana intellectual—Nduka Otiono offers some insight into this area in his essay in this volume. Suffice it therefore to note that while the 'Africanist' intellectual focuses on Africa, the latter are African and diaspora intellectuals that write not just about Africa but also about its Diasporas and of much else: see for example, Lewis Gordon (2008).

scholar in the twenty-first century, some of the essays use Adesanmi's work to subvert the recurrent trope of the Diaspora African intellectual as embodying identity and ideological crises referred to above. The essays also highlight what Thandabantu Nhlapo aptly describes as "the rise of new kinds of trans-national imagined communities (e.g. Facebook) which are no longer beholden to the boundaries and binaries characteristic of the ethos of autonomy and sovereignty fostered by the nation-state" (2012, ix). Adesanmi fully understood the significance of digital humanities to Africa and for Africa's growing youth population and was adept at deploying social media as a public intellectual. Recognizing that much of the theorizing and discourses on Africa constituted what Harry Garuba qualifies as "a narrative teleology constructed from elsewhere" (2012, 44), Adesanmi committed to bridging the territorial gap between the Diaspora and the continent as Samuel Oloruntoba clearly describes in his essay in this special issue.

Like some of his contemporaries working in the Western academy, Adesanmi operated from outside the continent; but unlike many, he dug his roots deeply in the continent and used social media to reach beyond geographic boundaries. In so doing, he sought to address the notion that "[t]he scholarly study of Africa in institutions of higher learning within the domain of area studies is often knowledge constructed from a distance about an area of the world by 'experts,' from outside of the area in question" (Garuba, 44). He did not have to construct knowledge of the continent from outside; he promoted a model of the new African public intellectual's complicated relationship with the continent which required some kind of presence-absence status. As Otiono writes in his essay in this journal, Adesanmi represents a younger generation of African public intellectuals whose outstanding work "marks a shift from the traditional public sphere of intellectual discourses to hybrid formations that include digital or social media activism involving youthful 'netizens,' to use one of Adesanmi's favorite expressions." Crucial to the work of the Africanist public intellectual in our time, therefore, is the recognition that progressive politics and youth agency can be allies in Africa's quest for development in the Digital Age. Falola (2020) further highlights this point is his Preface to Adesanmi's *Who Owns the Problem*. According to Falola, "[i]n this book, Pius unequivocally demonstrates the need for African agency in order to transform the continent. He enjoins Africans to be the agents that will identify, define, and narrate African problems and also report the continent's progress . . . To lift Africa up from its subaltern state, Pius exhorts the people of Africa to be pivotal agents" (x).

Being "pivotal agents" requires bridging the gap between gown and town, finding in Adesanmi's words, "a meeting point between theoretical abstraction and empirical constrictions" (2020 xxiv). It also requires recognizing Africa's embrace of the new modernity which allows the palm wine tapper to deploy a Blackberry cellphone atop the palm tree to communicate with his clients waiting for fresh palm wine as Adesanmi writes in an essay with the thrilling title, "Face Me I Book You: Writing Africa's Agency in the Age of the Netizen" (2020: 127-136). It is no surprise then that Adesanmi's engagements as a public intellectual in both physical and virtual public spheres soon earned him, in his own words, the status of "a social media celebrity, followed on Facebook and Twitter by thousands across Nigeria and the rest of Africa" (2020: xxiv). He further explains the importance of the digital public sphere to the work of the new Africanist scholar and public intellectual:

> In a little over a decade, my Facebook wall came to acquire the reputation of a public seminar room, attracting hundreds of African doctoral students, postdoctoral fellows, and early career faculty based in the continent, Europe, and North America. I was also writing prodigiously for that audience. Social media celebrity increased the pace of my public lectures in Nigeria, necessitating another mode of writing for a third category of audience (2020: xxiv).

Beyond the content of the socially conscious discourses of Africanist public intellectuals, therefore, context matters a lot. Therefore, Adesanmi emphasizes the importance of social media as a site for his work, for reaching a diverse audience that comprises everyday people, professional colleagues, and the bureaucratic and political elite who are often the driving forces

behind the impoverishment of the continent.

The new Africanist scholars and public intellectuals, like their predecessors who deployed their intellectual resources to wage war against colonialism and neo-colonialism, must recognize the limitations of postcolonial politics of knowledge, especially given that many of them live in the Diaspora. It is pertinent to identify, as part of the advocacy for decolonizing knowledge, that "the knowledge economy is probably the most sanitised phrase that describes a knowledge capitalism which has made crude market-driven models and ideas such as value added, continual innovation, new technologies, consumers and clients all pervasive in the thinking (and speech) of university administrators" (Garuba 2012: 49). However, such broad-brushed critique of the "knowledge economy" might underestimate the politics of the corporatization of the Western and African academy, and in fact, tends to downplay the challenges of the African intellectual in the Western academy. Quite tellingly, in response to the question, "What exactly does it mean to be an 'African' in Europe or America?" which Njubi (2002) poses, he adds that "One quickly learns that the answer is not pretty" (72). He further explains that "[t]his predicament tears at the migrant's identity. It creates a duality that is the root of the existential crisis faced by the migrant African scholar," and concludes that "[i]ronically, the postcolonial flight from the African continent reinforces the worst stereotypes of Africanity" (Ibid.). Sadly, this point conduces to what Garuba identifies as "perhaps the ultimate postcolonial paradox in knowledge production: that the new producers coming on the stage sought the prestige of disciplinary validation and authority while the nature of their research and writing was undermining this authority and destabilising its foundations" (Garuba 2012: 47).

The first essay by Adeolu Oluwasey Oyekan, "The Contemporary Africanist Philosopher and the Need for Indigenous Modern Knowledge," further contextualizes the foregoing discourse by examining "what it means to be an Africanist scholar within the discipline of philosophy in the 21st century." While acknowledging that "an Africanist philosopher among other things inherits the necessary burden of decolonization on account of Africa's history and present experience," he argues that this responsibility of the Africanist philosopher "transcends the decolonization of foreign categories of ideas and the repudiation of moribund traditions in the search for eclectic concepts with utility value." Oyekan deconstructs Kwasi Wiredu's important project of conceptual decolonization which he sees as "making African philosophers simply those who unearth and transmit past knowledge rather than creators of new knowledge." He challenges the usefulness of such an exercise, suggesting that even if one can recuperate some authentic precolonial form of thought from within a particular African group, doing so likely does not assist in grappling with the range of social, environmental, ethical, and political issues facing the continent. Instead, Oyekan champions what he calls "indigenous modern knowledge systems" (IMK), or an "African body of knowledge developed by African scholars, philosophers especially, to address and anticipate present and possible challenges militating against the development of African societies morally, materially and intellectually." Oyekan concludes that "precolonial indigenous knowledge systems (PIKS) serve as a foundation, not the edifice itself, upon which Africanist philosophers ought to build." This analytical pathbreaking toward building African agency to address the range of problems resonates so closely with Pius Adesanmi's own life mission as articulated in his posthumous publication, *Who Owns the Problem?* (2020).

The need to look beyond Western paradigms and for Africans to seize their own agency which Adesanmi canvasses in his works is reinforced by Oyèrónké

Oyewùmí in her strident insistence that:

> the foundations of African thought cannot rest on Western intellectual traditions that have as one of their enduring features the projection of Africans as Other and our consequent domination. . . Sometimes scholars seem to forget that intellectual tools are supposed to frame research and thinking. As long as the "ancestor worship" of academic practice is not questioned, scholars in African Studies are bound to produce scholarship that does not focus primarily on Africa—for those "ancestors" not only were non-Africans but were hostile to African interests. The foundational questions of research in many disciplines are generated in the West (23–24).

Comfort Olajumoke Verissimo extends the conversation around the role of "Africanist" scholars and public intellectuals in the twenty-first century on the one hand, and on the other, the choice of medium or platform for their work. Verissimo focuses on Adesanmi's choice of the tabloid platform as a columnist, an idea that Toyin Falola further explores in relation to another Nigerian intellectual, Olu Obafemi. In her paper, intriguingly titled "'Stomach Infrastructure': Survival, Trauma, and the Slippery Relations of Nation-Building in Nigeria," Verissimo uses the work of Adesanmi and Abimbola Adunni Adelakun, a female academic and newspaper columnist, to demonstrate how the print and online columns of both writers have become vital spaces for engagement with questions of governance and socio-economic injustices. In looking at Adesanmi's work through a narrative lens, Verissimo's contribution echoes aspects of Ogunbayo's study in this issue. While the latter's essay brings Adesanmi's brand of satire to light through his 2011 work *You're Not a Country, Africa!*, Verissimo concentrates on the collection of Adesanmi's previously published online and print columns compiled under the title *Naija no Dey Carry Last!* from 2015. While Adesanmi and Adelakun use narrative in different ways (Adesanmi through satire, Adelakun through analogy), their objective is the same: to give voice to the lived realities of most Nigerians and to help their countrymen understand and interpret the ills that plague Nigerian society. The work of public intellectuals like Adesanmi and Adelakun, who "narrat[e] the oppression of the people into their columns" is vital to understanding the everyday economic activities of Nigerians. For Verissimo, the narrative of informal labour is an existential one: failures of leadership and lack of economic security have created a traumatized population that has to operate outside of the formal economy in order to survive. The systemic gaps in infrastructure are filled periodically by politicians who partake in the longstanding practice of "stomach infrastructure", that is the practice of wooing voters with bare necessities such as food and clothing. Where there is no social infrastructure, "stomach infrastructure" reigns. Adesanmi and Adelakun, each in their own way, pointedly show through their columns that when the population is always in survival mode, the work of nation-building is perpetually deferred.

Jane Kerubo builds on such a portrait of Adesanmi by looking at the role he played in leading and supporting work among African diasporas. In her article "Diaspora Diplomacy: Opportunities and Challenges for African Countries," she situates Adesanmi as an exemplary "diaspora diplomat" whose work in Ottawa (and elsewhere) focused on advancing the diverse interests of Africa. Drawing on her experience working as the Deputy High Commissioner for the Kenyan High Commission to Canada in Ottawa and her work with Adesanmi on various initiatives as well as a careful analysis of the varied policy frameworks supporting diaspora diplomacy for Africa, she examines how Adesanmi diligently and creatively worked to foster what she calls "brain gain, brain bank and brain circulation." She traces

his work at Carleton University's Institute of African Studies to extend its links to Africa, helping to forge partnerships with African institutions that are more equal than the typical North-South arrangements. She also examines how Adesanmi worked closely with the Group of African Heads of Mission in Canada, the African diplomatic community in Ottawa. Following her analysis of Adesanmi's impressive activities she suggests pathways for both African diplomats and African diaspora scholars to play greater roles in fostering diaspora diplomacy and infrastructural development to better support such initiatives.

The Pan African vision promoted by Kerubo informs Samuel Ojo Oloruntoba's contribution, "Pius Adesanmi: A Paradigm Shift in Pan African Humanity."[5] Hence, Oloruntoba proffers a rich analysis of some of Pius Adesanmi's important work in supporting and building up scholarly analyses and programs in Africa through the lens of Pan African Humanity, an embodied worldview in which Africans distinguish themselves from others, despite the centuries of degradation and exploitation the continent has faced since the start of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Through briefly tracing some of the learning experiences that generated this perspective for Adesanmi from the cultural dynamics of his informal education in Nigeria to the formal schooling he had in Nigeria and in the global North, Oloruntoba carefully lays out numerous initiatives taken to promote and facilitate the appreciation and cultivation of Pan African Humanity among Africans on the continent and among African diasporas. Through such a biographical lens, Adesanmi's impressive pedagogical, scholarly, and policy contributions to enhancing African self-understandings and research capabilities through unceasing forms of mentorship and collaborative work take on a new light. Oloruntoba provides incisive glimpses into Adesanmi's generative roles in initiatives such as the Pan African Doctoral Academy at the University of Ghana, the Abiola Irele Seminar in Theory and Criticism at Kwara State University, The African Doctoral Lounge on Facebook, and many other bridge-building and capacity-building activities in higher education in Africa and beyond, which substantiate the larger argument about the immense work this Nigerian Canadian scholar had carried out and the tremendous loss so many felt at his untimely passing. As Olurontoba points out, Adesanmi brought both a reverence for specific African, if not Yoruba perspectives, at the same time emphasizing the importance of university education, aiming to ensure that the latter build on the former while also addressing current concerns and challenges on the continent.

Olusola Ogunbayo's article, "Menippean Satire in Postcolonial African Literature: A Reading of Pius Adesanmi's *You're Not a Country, Africa* (2011), analyzes Adesanmi use of Menippean satire "to show the contradictions that inhere in the African continent." Describing "Menippean satiric method" as entailing "the interrogation of mental attitudes, the querying of inhumane orthodoxy as well as the re-negotiation of philosophical standpoints of persons, institutions and nations," Ogunbayo associates its "innuendoes and moral inclinations of some Nigerian folktales" with Adesanmi's "imaginative dexterity in attacking ineptitude" and "the recklessness in Africa and to promote rectitude."

The advocacy for good governance and integrity in the polity remains a denominator in the activist-scholar's work. This is the cardinal objective that drives

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5 Oloruntoba's title and insights here remind one of Ali Mazrui's article (2005), "Pan - Africanism and the intellectuals: Rise, decline and revival" in which, to appropriate Assié-Lumumba & Lumumba-Kasongo's (2010) apt summary, Mazrui "argues that as the origins of modern black intellectual traditions and those of Pan - Africanism are intertwined, African 'intellectuals and educated minds' have the capacity 'to conceive and construct an alternative social paradigm" (203).

the work of another public intellectual profiled by Toyin Falola in his article, "The Academic as a Public Intellectual: Olu Obafemi's Ideas and Ideals." Noting that "[t]he role of a public intellectual is often a multifaceted one," Falola argues that "The public intellectual employs informed perspectives to penetrate and reveal progressive insights into the workings of their world," and uses Olu Obafemi, a Nigerian academic, foremost literary critic, human rights activist, creative writer, and newspaper columnist, to demonstrate how the public intellectual's work "significantly impacts his immediate society."

Like Adesanmi, Obafemi's oeuvre covers creative writing, newspaper columns, interviews, and public speeches. Falola's essay "focuses on the ideas and ideals of Obafemi as a committed public intellectual using, for illustration, a series of interviews, his media works, his speeches, and personal notes." The author uses "the lens of critical analysis, rhetorical analysis, and cultural pluralism" to explore Obafemi's successful deployment of his "intellectual gifts to promote the cause of ordinary citizens by critiquing the ills of society."

In his contribution "The Struggle, Their Lives: African Public Intellectuals and the Crisis of Representation," Nduka Otiono explores the controversial role of intellectuals in society and the academy. He aligns with Mamdani's (2016) emplacement of the discourse within the debate around disciplinarity" (68), professionalization, labour and corporatization of universities. But Otiono goes beyond that by offering a comparative analysis of the differences between certain public intellectuals in the West and in Africa, calling attention to the dangers of universalizing the discourses on the subject matter. He identifies the "sore subtopics" which "call for further inquiry," and which he frames around three fundamental questions that the essay seeks to answer by "investigating how issues of specificity and context disturb the logics of a universalizing discourse on the role of public intellectuals." Otiono uses as case studies, two outstanding Nigerian "public intellectuals whose activism demonstrate the precarious nature of the African public intellectual's work which inspired the great Nelson Mandela to issue his popular declaration of June 26, 1961 – "The struggle is my life. I will continue fighting for freedom until the end of my days" – and which inspired the title of this essay." As Otiono demonstrates, the two public intellectuals he assesses—Ken Saro-Wiwa and Wole Soyinka—are not only celebrated creative writers but public intellectuals par excellence whose activism have earned them beatification as a special breed of activist-intellectuals.

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Together, these essays offer rigorous and insightful understandings of the profile of the Africanist scholar and public intellectual against the backdrop of progressive politics and youth agency in the digital age. Although, this special issue is dedicated to Pius Adesanmi, the essays in the issue extend to older generation Africanist public intellectuals. Among the latter are the Nobel laureate Wole Soyinka, writer and environmental rights activist Ken Saro-Wiwa, and the playwright and newspaper columnist Olu Obafemi. The period covered stretches from the late twentieth century to the first quarter of the twenty-first century; the figures represent three generations of Nigerian public intellectuals: roughly, pre-Independence, post-Independence, and millennial. Rather coincidentally, the four public intellectuals—Adesanmi, Saro-Wiwa, Soyinka and Obafemi— belong to the literati, have been academics, and have had strong connections to the popular press. Their shared professional inclination and interest therefore reinforces the popular association of writers with social consciousness and public intellectual activism as symbolized by Emile Zola and Jean Paul-Sartre highlighted at the

beginning of this essay.[6]

The focus on Adesanmi in this issue enables contributors to underscore what Oloruntoba aptly sees as "[t]he paradigm shift that Adesanmi represented in Pan African Humanity" which is "informed by his life-long commitment to work for the restoration of the above qualities through the development of a new cadre of African intellectuals who take pride in their own humanity, are socially and politically conscious, committed to excellence in both professional and public spaces with enough concern for building a better African society." Emerging from this description and the essays as a whole is the often glossed over spectrum for calibrating the level or degree of social engagement of public intellectuals. For while some public intellectuals are committed to the struggle for a better society through their "intellectualism"—in the sense delineated earlier—others extend their theorizing to praxis by intervening in the political process, as exemplified by Soyinka and Saro-Wiwa. However, the ironic reality about the work of public intellectuals in the digital age is that society has evolved and today, to borrow the illuminating words of Pierre Rosanvallon (2007),

> the public space is very open, the public space is plural . . . And as far as fame is concerned, the type of renown exemplified by all of these intellectuals of the past, like Sartre, Camus, or before that, Voltaire, has largely disappeared—just look at today's media scene. Effective media images these days are those of great sportsmen, film actors, and artists of all sorts. The media capital of an intellectual is now far weaker. The role of the intellectual, however, can be plotted out by his work itself. Not that his work should be marked by a political bias—absolutely not—but rather because his work has and ought to have the function of rendering contemporary society's difficulties more intelligible (713).

Based on this understanding, therefore, Rosanvallon defines "the intellectual as someone who first and foremost possesses tools of comprehension, tools which may also become instruments of action" (Ibid.) This definition of the intellectual, and by extension the public intellectual, is perhaps the most measured characterization of the public intellectual—whether in Africa or elsewhere. . It accommodates the various shades of public intellectual including the ones examined as case studies in this special issue. Beyond the shades or variants of Africanist public intellectuals, what unites them is what Kenneth Harrow (2020) identifies as "the quest for an African agency" (xix). And what drives them is their social vision and commitment towards the decolonization of knowledge and the rise of the continent from the stranglehold of neocolonial forces and postcolonial rapacious political leadership.

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6 The emphasis on the literary profile of these public intellectuals is not intended to exclude or downplay the non-literary types. Indeed, besides the social impact of the work of the philosopher Kwasi Wiredu as discussed in this special issue, scholars such as Seifudein Adem (2010) have argued for the disciplinary stake of political scientist as public intellectuals in Africa—with Claude Ake (especially in his ground-breaking Social Science as Imperialism) and Ali Mazrui as paragons. Adem forcefully notes that: "a political scientist combines the personal experience of political consciousness, the general ethos of scholarship, and the specialized skills of interpreting political phenomena." He further observes that "Political consciousness is sensitivity to issues of public concern and to the policy implications of private interests. The ethos of scholarship is rooted in adherence to the rules of evidence, documentation, and logic" (1).

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The Contemporary Africanist Philosopher and the Need for Indigenous Modern Knowledge

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In this paper, I examine what it means to be an Africanist scholar within the discipline of philosophy in the 21st century. I posit that an Africanist philosopher among other things inherits the necessary burden of decolonization on account of Africa's history and present experience. However, I argue that this responsibility represents the minimum. I argue further that the task of the Africanist philosopher transcends the decolonization of foreign categories of ideas and the repudiation of moribund traditions in the search for eclectic concepts with utility value. Decolonization as conceived by Wiredu while important, sets the trap of making African philosophers simply those who unearth and transmit past knowledge rather than creators of new knowledge. The Africanist philosopher I assert, has the added, and perhaps more important task of creating indigenous modern knowledge (IMK) in response to the numerous modern-day challenges faced by the continent. I conclude that precolonial indigenous knowledge systems (PIKS) serve as a foundation, not the edifice itself, upon which Africanist philosophers ought to build. While PIKS serves the purpose of repudiating Eurocentric assumptions about Africa and offers solutions to some to its current challenges, the hope of a truly developed Africa I submit, rests on the extent and richness of its indigenous modern knowledge creation.

Introduction

Philosophy as an intellectual discipline thrives more on the questions it provokes than the answers it provides. While some philosophical questions recur either because they are fundamental or difficult to answer, different factors and circumstances influence the nature and character of the prevalent questions of every epoch. Thus, philosophy in Africa, as elsewhere, ruminates upon its own peculiar

questions, even when they have universal implications and broader contexts. As has been widely asserted, African philosophy was birthed in protest, or defiance, so to speak. As gleaned from available literatures, African philosophy as we know it today developed in reaction to the Eurocentric denial of the capacity of Africans to engage in ratiocinative activity. The claim had been that a barbaric collection of people without a history are logically incapable of having a history of systematic thinking. The counter-response to this view has generated a trove of literature to assert the capacity of the African person to apply his or her mind analytically and critically to fundamental questions arising from the interaction with nature as well as others within a social system (Oladipo, 2006). The ensuing controversy over the nature and character of African philosophy, and who an African philosopher is, has bifurcated the discourse along two major lines of scholarly inquiry. Academics of these approaches are labeled respectively the Particularists and the Universalists. While the former group argues that all philosophies are cultural and context-based, and that to such an extent, western scholarship is not in a position to impose its standards of rationality on other cultures, the latter posits that philosophy as an activity has peculiar features that are universally deducible across cultures and periods (Bodunrin, 1981). These features, chief among which is individual thought as well as documentation of same were missing in precolonial Africa. Kwasi Wiredu's idea of conceptual decolonization seeks to bridge the two sides of the argument. Having in the early part of his career leaned towards the universalist position, Wiredu considered it possible to reconcile the two seemingly divergent views and use such harmonization as a framework for articulating the task of the contemporary African philosopher (Wiredu, 1998).

In this paper, I intend to show the huge ramification of Wiredu's synthesis, and the extent to which it has shaped the direction of African philosophy in contemporary times. I shall argue that conceptual decolonization, as a framework for bridging the famed gap between tradition and modernity in Africa has succeeded significantly in helping lay to rest the notion that precolonial Africans were incapable of systematic reflection and self-organization. I shall argue further that on the downside, this fact appears to have been over-demonstrated at the expense of what I consider the obligations and preoccupations of contemporary African philosophers. The paper is divided accordingly, into three major parts. In the first, I examine the Eurocentric motivation for the modernity versus tradition debate, and the efforts it elicited in defence of African identity(ies). The following section is an exposition of conceptual decolonization—middle point reconciliation of tradition and modernity—a move which seeks, as espoused by a number of scholars and of whom the most prominent African philosopher remains Kwasi Wiredu, to reconcile the relevant part of Africa's past with western modernity. In the third section, I take cognizance of the positive benefits of looking into the past to create what today has become known under the umbrella of indigenous knowledge systems and argue that it is inadequate for the 21st century Africanist scholar to commit to this task alone. I demonstrate the limitations of finding an African variant of ideas considered as Western, using the notions of consensual democracy and African bioethics as fodders. I conclude by making the point that increasingly, there is a need in Africa for the creation of modern, yet indigenous knowledge system in response to the continent's developmental challenges.

Eurocentrism, African Identity and the Tradition Versus Modernity Debate

The long years of colonial imperialism and its offspring—Eurocentrism—have their fingerprints all over the heated problem of defining the identity of African philosophy and philosophers (Fayemi, 2011). Eurocentrism, a brand of ethnocentrism (i.e. a belief characterized by or based on the attitude that one's own group is superior to others), refers to the practice of viewing the world from a European perspective, with an implied belief, either consciously or subconsciously, in the preeminence of the European culture (Bekele, 2015). This attitude permeated much of European scholarship between the 16th and 20th century. Hegel for instance in this line of thought claimed that:

> Africa is no historical part of the World; it has no movement or development to exhibit. Historical movements in it—that is in its northern part—belong to the Asiatic or European World… Africa is the Unhistorical, Undeveloped Spirit, still involved in the conditions of mere nature, and which had to be presented here only as on the threshold of the World's History. (Hegel, 1956 p. 99)

Charles Darwin's work on the origin of species by natural selection was a prelude to a culture of racial prejudice that swept through Europe for centuries, even if the primary motive was not racist (Kanu, 2014). On the basis of a theistic claim, Linnaeus (1758) had stratified human beings in a hierarchical order with the white race at the top and the black race on the lowest rung of the ladder, just above brute animals. Sentiments from Linnaeus can also be found in similar stratification by Gobineau (1915). The famous Scottish philosopher, David Hume on his part wrote that "I am apt to suspect that the Negroes to be naturally inferior to the whites. There scarcely ever was a civilized nation of that complexion, or even an individual eminent in action or speculation" (Hume, 1882, III: p. 253). Levy-Bruhl's (1949) skepticism about the African's ability to conceive any supreme deity agrees with the view of Baker, who had earlier noted that:

> The Negro is still at the rude dawn of faith-fetishism and has barely advanced in idolatry…he has never grasped the idea of a personal deity, a duty in life, a moral code, or a shame of lying. He rarely believes in a future state of reward and punishment, which whether true or not are infallible indices of human progress. (as cited in Kanu, 2014 p. 90)

Fayemi (2011), further observes that "the anthropological claims of Durkheim (1912), Frazer (1922), Levy-Bruhl (1949) and Horton (1981) also support the ethnocentric, racist and imperialist claim that rationality is the exclusive prerogative of Western civilization, while Africans are mentally primitive" (p. 260). As a result, African philosophy developed in reaction to these uncritical and denigrating biases in order to salvage its identity. Defending the existence and nature of African philosophy was the ignition for early African scholars who sought to redeem what had been unjustly marred. In achieving this goal, two emerged—the Particularists and the Universalists.

The Universalist orientation with adherents such as Peter O. Bodunrin, Kwasi Wiredu, Odera Oruka and Paulin Hountondji contends that philosophy has a ubiquitous appeal with a universal methodology and deals with abstract general problems found everywhere, is open to self-criticism and tailored in the dialectical or pedagogical line of enquiry (Kanu, 2013). This group of thinkers is of the view that there is

a difference between folk philosophy, preserved in the tradition of the people across different cultures in oral, unsystematic form, and critical philosophy. Critical philosophy on the other hand, is a form of intellectual inquiry that is reflective, conceptual, individualistic and logically deliberative (Wiredu, 1980 p.14). Thus, even if myths, fables and languages are suggestive of, or disposed towards some philosophical ideas, they are communal products that are at best philosophical in a secondary or parasitic sense (Bello, 2002 p. 238). While this position imbibes key elements of philosophy, Uduigwomen, (1995) raises the issue that such a standpoint is lacking in pragmatic relevance within specific and concrete realities.

On the other hand, the Particularist orientation with proponents such as Placide Tempels (1969), John Mbiti (1970) and Leopold Sedar Senghor (1964) contends that African philosophy connotes the conglomeration of her multiple worldviews as sifted from various cultures, traditions, myths, folklores and proverbs. It is taken in this light to be indigenous and unadulterated by western categories such as logic, science and argumentation. Segun Gbadegesin (1995) argued against this position due to its communal, traditional and non-literary nature which was also observed to have characterized early western philosophy (Kanu, 2013).

The traditional position which is defended by African scholars such as Sophie Oluwole, Claude Sumner, W. E. Abraham, K. C. Anyanwu, I. C. Onyewuenyi, Akin Makinde and C. S. Momoh and described by Kwame Gyekye (1997) as "cultural revivalism" accords a reverential attitude towards African cultural heritage which is manifest in its penchant for recouping and reasserting indigenous traditions that have been suppressed by colonialism, to address contemporary problems (Ciaffa, 2008). On the contrary, the modernists with a critical poise towards indigenous knowledge systems in Africa argue that the misguided and ill-suited nostalgic return to the past to work against Eurocentric bias in philosophy is not only naïve, quixotic and potentially dangerous but subtly serves to augment the Eurocentric claim they intended evading ab initio by revealing the poverty of novel ideas in the face of the problems facing 21st century Africa. Bodunrin shares the same skepticism with Hountondji who criticized the revival of traditional thought as largely impotent and incapable of addressing contemporary issues in Africa (Ciaffa, 2008).

These intellectual interchanges within the African intellectual arena birthed the tradition versus modernity debate in post-colonial African philosophy. On the fringes of this debate were questions on the relevance of indigenous African traditions to the contingencies of contemporary life as well as assessing whether these traditional knowledge systems are resources or hindrances to development and modernization in Africa (Ciaffa, 2008). Situated within the context of modernization processes in Africa, the debate on the right approach to African philosophy revolves around the changes in the physical and mental outlook of the people, thereby raising the question of what cultural and epistemological approaches are most suited for development (Oladipo, 2006). Hountondji's view, flowing from the premise above, is that the methodology of African philosophy in contemporary times "must attach itself closely to the destiny of science by integrating itself with the immense movement towards the acquisition of scientific knowledge that is now developing on the continent" (1996 p.107). Scholars who are sympathetic to the Particularist claims however, disagree. African philosophy even in its modern sense, they insist, must reject the universalization of the European model of philosophy as archetypal, and emerge in relation to the culture from which it grows because essentially, philosophy is a cultural phenomenon (Owomoyela, 1987; Gyekye 1995).

Conceptual Decolonization, African Philosophy and the Retrieval of Traditional Indigenous Knowledge

Kwasi Wiredu as earlier noted was sympathetic to the Universalist spectrum of the debate on African philosophy. His views are well outlined in his 1980 work, "How Not to Compare African Thought with Western Thought." Therein, he made the point that rationality is not exclusive to any race or group of persons. Yet, he noted that philosophy, in the ancient Greek tradition from Plato, until modern times, has evolved professionally, and is characterized by certain features that separate it from day to day layman philosophy. While the latter is a feature of all human societies, the former (i.e. professional philosophy) is a more recent activity in Africa. His conclusion on how Africa can borrow the scientific attitude from the West, while teaching it some morals to curb its consumerist and materialistic tendencies hinted at what he considered as the possibility of the two traditions engaging in a mutually beneficial exchange of influences. Subsequently, the opening remarks of his treatise, "Toward Decolonizing African Philosophy and Religion" (1998) captures the essence of decolonization as:

> [D]ivesting African philosophical thinking of all undue influences emanating from our colonial past. The crucial word in this formulation is "undue". Obviously, it would not be rational to try to reject everything of a colonial ancestry. Conceivably, a thought or a mode of inquiry spearheaded by our erstwhile colonizers may be valid or in some way beneficial to humankind. Are we called upon to reject or ignore it? That would be a madness having neither rhyme nor reason. (Wiredu, 1998 p.17)

This introductory remark hints that Wiredu was not disposed to throwing away the baby and the bath water by denying altogether the relevance of every colonial influence but that a critical and sieving approach should be adopted. In the first part of the discourse he draws attention to certain colonial influences in the areas of language, education, culture and religion (Wiredu, 1998).

Wiredu observes that the peculiar effect of colonialism on African education owes much to the fact that African philosophizing was done in a foreign language using western categories that adulterated the original meaning of words and left much room for misinterpretation and misunderstanding. Thus, there is the need for a decolonization which is basically conceptual in nature since there was nothing like a systematic African philosophy in colonial and precolonial times (Wiredu, 1998). Decolonization then for Wiredu does not only involve a critical study of contemporary African philosophy but also of the primordial knowledge systems in terms of culture and language. He noted that though disciplines like logic, mathematics and natural sciences are markedly absent in precolonial African philosophy, Africans unconsciously and unsystematically employed the underlying principles of these disciplines in their reasoning. Thus, he calls for a domestication of these disciplines with caution, bearing in mind the African context (Wiredu, 1998). To achieve this goal, he proposed that concepts such as personhood, afterlife, God, Spirit, morality etc. should not be studied generally but individually to see what they mean in various cultures and languages of different indigenous African societies. At the same time, he argued for juxtaposing them with their western counterparts to see how our notion of these concepts have been influenced by western thought and to assist in proper conceptual decolonization (Wiredu, 1998). This does not entail forcing a philosophical consensus among the diverse cultures in Africa. The diversified communal philosophy in

Africa which is the product of the thoughts of individual sages overtime becomes the bridge between traditional African philosophy and modern African philosophy. This has a double implication. The first is that traditional communal philosophy in Africa is subject to error and as such requires decolonization through constant review, reconstruction and evaluation (Wiredu, 1998). The second is a clarion call to study the thoughts of individual traditional African philosophers/sages so as to prove the essence of African philosophy in its originality (Wiredu, 1998). The attempt to unearth and showcase the indigenous and traditional knowledge systems of precolonial African societies is not limited to philosophy. Historians, ethnographers, linguists, sociologists and scholars in other disciplines are engaged on diverse aspects of the retrieval efforts of African scholarship.

The term "indigenous" here, refers to the complex, culturally diverse societies of Africa which have resulted from decades of immigration and integration (Semali & Stambach, 1997). Thus, the term Indigenous Knowledge System encompasses what local people know and do, and what they have known and done for generations. These practices are developed through trial and error and have proven flexible enough to cope with change (Semali & Stambach, 1997). Also, the UN characterizes indigenous knowledge as a form of knowledge that is:

> [S]elf-identifying as indigenous and being accepted by the community as a member; demonstrating historical continuity with precolonial and/or pre-settler societies; evincing a strong link to territories and surrounding natural re- sources; having distinct social, economic, and/or political systems; having a distinct language, culture, and/or beliefs; comprising a non-dominant part of society; and resolving to maintain and reproduce ancestral environments and systems as distinctive peoples and communities. (United Nations, n.d. p.1)

Drawing inferences from the discourse above, one sure fact is that the effects of colonialism and the ethnocentric denigration of all things African have mostly overtly or covertly influenced the trend and progression of philosophical interaction in Africa. As such, one might not be far from the truth to suspect that the undue clamor for Indigenous Knowledge System (IKS) in present day African scholarship owes much to the perceived burden by some African scholars to offset the intellectual bias about the rationality of Africans.

In spite of the benefits of the efforts to assert the mental capacity of Africans for ratiocination and defend the moral, epistemic and ontological identity of Africans in a way that exposes the insincerity of the racist logic behind the denigrations, I consider it important to draw attention to the creeping fixation with the past in African scholarship, especially philosophy. It would appear that one popular way of doing philosophy in Africa today is treating universal concepts described as western by first going back to tradition to find their corollaries before employing them. Sometimes even when adequate analogies are lacking, some go as far as doing some form of interpretative violence by distorting the original ontology of African categories in order to juxtapose them with western categories all in a bid to gratify one point which I summarize as "the rational precipitates of your philosophizing is analogous to that of our forefathers and so we are by all means equal and rational as you are".

In the end, there is a plethora of African literature doing this or that comparative analysis with western concepts, excavations into the past, retrievals, hermeneutics and the likes. In some instances, efforts are even made to show that Africans had a grasp of an idea long before westerners did. Of course, that is not impossible in some

cases, unless one assumes that an idea has to always be apprehended or comprehended first by westerners. But in making these claims without any documented account, but only a rendition of the way of life of the people, such claims fall into the same error they accuse western scholarship of, which is the denial of the rationality of Africans largely on account of the absence of documented history.

Decolonization as advocated by Wiredu has been and continues to be applied to different issues of philosophical relevance in Africa. For the purpose of this paper however, I shall limit myself to two. One area of interest to decolonial scholars is democracy. Kwasi Wiredu, in his paper "Democracy and Consensus in African Traditional Politics: A Plea for Non-party Polity" (2000), argues that multi-party democracy is alien to Africa, and breeds undue competition and conflict in a way that contradicts the harmonious and consensual procedures of decision-making in precolonial Africa. While mindful of the implications of modernization, urbanization and complex social patterns in contemporary Africa that threatens the "kinship networks that provided the mainstay of the consensual politics of traditional times, a consensual approach in African states would eliminate the destructive pandering to western pressure to democratize, and make political associations avenues for projecting diverse interests without the "Hobbesian proclivities" of the party system (Wiredu, 2000 par 28). This view is in sync with that of Claude Ake who argues that liberal democracy, by focusing on the individual rather than the collective, ignores the cohesive nature of African societies and has proven that it "is not quite appropriate to these communal societies" (Ake, 1996: 5). My intention here is not so much to discuss the merits and limitations of liberal democracy, but to highlight its critique within the debate on decolonization in African philosophy. The position of Wiredu and Ake is that traditional African societies were democratic before colonization, and that the limitations of democracy in postcolonial Africa are rooted in its detachment from its consensual and collective character. The solution then, is to return democracy to its precolonial form.

Another area of philosophy that has attracted efforts at decolonization in African philosophy is bioethics. Numerous scholars on the history of bioethics put its emergence around the late 19th and early 20th century. As a philosophical field of enquiry, it is less than fifty years old (Gordon, n.d; Wilson 2013; Reich, 1978). Reich defined bioethics as "an area interdisciplinary studies concerned with the systematic study of human conduct in the area of the life sciences and healthcare" (1978 pp. xv). The notion of bioethics as a form of applied ethics was articulated by Tom Beauchamp and James Childress in their book Principles of Biomedical Ethics (1979). Since joining the discourse however, notable African philosophers have berated what they consider the universalization of the western bioethical worldview which ignores the African perspective. This has, as expected, resulted in a flurry of academic papers that aim to decolonize the concept and offer the African variants in their diverse manifestations. These variants, however, do not reflect the original thoughts of the African philosophers espousing them. Rather, they are the re-articulation of what has been labeled traditional African bioethics, to countervail a discipline whose birth in western scholarship is a little more than four decades old.

Some African scholars whose works can be found in this area are C. Andoh (2011), Azetop (2011), Behren (2013), Chukwuneke, Umeora, Maduabuchi, and Egbunike (2014), Gbadegesin (1993), T. Metz (2010, 2016), C. Onuoha (2007) and G. Tangwa (1996). Most of these scholars see African bioethics as a:

> thinking that is rooted and which flows from Africa's innate traditional values. That is, Africa's traditional values are quintessential for moral decision making. Bioethics in this context is looking for its roots or origin in African traditional values and it also has to look

> backward in the distant past and the present so as to plot the future. (Andoh, 2011 p.69)

In rooting African bioethics in its cultural milieu, Segun Gbadegesin's 1993 article entitled "Bioethics and Culture: An African Perspective" argues for a bioethics deep-rooted in cultural realities, especially those cultures that promote human flourishing (Gbadegesin, 2009 p.33). For him, bioethics values are on the one hand universal and cut across every culture, although on the other, there might be differences in application. The problem proposed by bioethics is found in all traditions and cultures but is being tackled differently depending on the moral underpinnings of each culture. What is needed is to "pay attention to the cultural realities and assumptive frame of reference of different peoples" (Gbadegesin, 1993 p.257). What this implies is that bioethics is both universal and particular.

Gbadegesin argues further for transcultural bioethics, which stands against the monolithic western bioethics by putting together the "commonalities" in ideas, principles and beliefs of different cultures (Gbadegesin, 1993). With this, Gbadegesin establishes the case of African bioethics in Yoruba culture by exploring issues of surrogacy, euthanasia, infertility, adoption, and transplantation. He further advances his argument on bioethics in Yoruba culture in his paper; "Bioethics and African Value System" (2013). Gbadegesin avers that Yoruba bioethics are based on "wellbeing and flourishing of the person in community" (Gbadegesin, 2013 p. 8). A person in Yoruba culture, according to him, consists of "ara" (body) and "emi" (spirit). The Yoruba people believe that persons as;

> 1. Individuals are creatures of Olodumare (the Yoruba supreme deity) and are endowed with dignity and worth, with a capacity for moral reflection and virtuous life.
>
> 2. It is wrong to cause unnecessary harm to a creature of Olodumare, including non-humans.
>
> 3. A person who is a member of a community must not be sacrificed to the deities of the community.
>
> 4. Personhood is constituted by communal relationships through the articulation of values shared with other members and the actualization of individual potentials in response to, and by active participation in, the community. (Gbadegesin, 2009 p.33)

With this, Gbadegesin argues that the western notion of "beneficence, nonmalevolence, and justice can be accommodated within a traditional Yoruba ethics of healthcare" (Gbadegesin, 2013 p.13). But individual autonomy, patience confidentiality or privacy is incompatible with African bioethics. In presenting his case, we were asked to consider the case of "A Mother-as-Surrogate":

> An adult daughter, Laide, is seriously ill. Her Mother, Sade, goes to consult Healer-Diviner on behalf of Laide, the daughter. By the time that Mother gets to the diviner, other clients are waiting to see him. Mother takes her place on the queue. When it is her turn, she presents her problem to the healer by whispering to the divination chain. Healer takes the chain and consults with the oracle, chants some verses of the corpus until he strikes at Mother's problem: illness in the family. Healer tells Mother what to do—offer sacrifice to the gods and give some herbal medicine, which he supplied, to Daughter. Later, Healer visits Daughter in Mother's presence, listens to her complaints and gives her more herbal remedies. (Gbadegesin, 2013 p. 7)

In this scenario, Gbadegesin liken the family members to nurses and the healer to a doctor. The communication and interaction between the family members and the healer is likened to the interaction between a doctor and his nurse in our modern hospitals. But unlike what is obtainable in contemporary health care system where individual privacy is reverenced, the Yoruba health care system "appears to be based on trust and on the understanding that a patient's openness about what is wrong or not right with her is the beginning of her cure, which may come from unlikely sources" (Gbadegesin, 2013 p. 8). In all, what Gbadegesin has done is to begin by treating bioethics as a universal field of philosophy while ending with its particularization within specific cultures.

Just like Gbadegesin, Godfrey B. Tangwa (2004) contends that moral values are universal, although the application might be different. And since there is universalism of moral values, all cultures are equal. For Tangwa (2004); "What all human cultures have in common is that they are all creations of human beings, reflecting, on the one hand, human capabilities, goodness, ingenuity, wisdom etc., and, on the other hand human limitations, fallibility, frailty, perversity, foolishness etc" (p.126). This reaffirms the commonality of human culture.

Tangwa defends an African conception of bioethics based on the moral principles of the Nso people of Bamenda, Cameroon. In his paper entitled, "Bioethics: An African perspective" (1993), Tangwa called his bioethical exercise "eco-bio-communitarianism". This term encompasses the Nso ideas on transmigration, transformation, transmutation, and reincarnation, across and within species (Onuoha, 2007 p.220). Eco-bio-communitarian implies a "recognition and acceptance of interdependence and peaceful co-existence between earth, plants, and animals" (Andoh, 2011 p.71). This term he says, covers bioethical issues such as euthanasia, suicide and abortion. Abortion, for instance, is a taboo in Nso community. The Nso people equate abortion to the "harvesting of mature crops before it has been certified mature enough for harvesting…"(Tangwa, 1996 p.197). Such an act brings misfortune and bad fate to the perpetrator.

To atone this requires that rituals are carried out. So, abortion, in this context, is the harvesting of immature human before nine months. This is because abortion is carried out mostly during the early stages of pregnancies, whereby the baby is forced out of the womb with a drug or surgical operation. In cases where abortion has been done, the culprit must conduct a ritual ceremony in order for misfortune not to befall her. This incompatibility of Nso culture with abortion, according to Tangwa, is only limited to therapeutic abortion. The Nso people approves of abortion when pregnancy is life threatening to the mother. Reasons like the child is an "evil spirit, disguised itself and lodged in her womb under the pretext of being a child" (Tangwa, 1996 p. 197) are also invoked to justify abortion. The implication of these arguments is that what is regarded as bioethics today has a history in African communal life that transcends its historicization in western scholarship. Also implied here is the idea that current bioethical issues such as abortion and surrogacy have always had philosophical significance which are also relevant in current times in traditional African thought.

From the two instances of democracy and bioethics cited above, a number of issues arise. One is that whereas the decolonization approach especially as espoused by Wiredu can diagnose concepts and practices whose problematic nature require adequate interrogation, the proposed solution of "going back to the past" is oftentimes inadequate and riddled with its own problems. There is no reason for instance to believe that abolishing party democracy in Africa will eliminate totalitarian rule similar to that of a one-party system. In fact, the disappearance of platforms for the

articulation of divergent views may accelerate further descent into dictatorial rule.

In addition, it is not so clear that political conflicts in Africa are driven by party differences. Rather, political parties appear to be mere vehicles for the expression of more fundamental differences, rather than the core drivers of conflicts. The Rwandan genocide, or the separatist agitations in parts of Nigeria, that have given influence to movements like IPOB (Independent People of Biafra) are not products of party differences. In fact, in the latter case, separatist agitations have been undermined by elite participation in party politics that cut across several divides. Granted, without necessarily conceding that precolonial African societies were consensual, democratic and largely devoid of political contestations, the erosion of their largely homogenous nature by colonialism renders the kind of decolonization advocated impracticable. What this means therefore is that an adequate response to the crisis of democracy in postcolonial Africa requires a new thinking and imagination that is indigenous but not rooted in the past.

The other issue arising is what I consider the laborious effort to find from Africa's past, equivalences of what is regarded as a body of current western ideas. With regards to bioethics, one could see that what is being presented as African scholarly contributions to bioethics are communal practices of precolonial Africans. I do not see how this can be of much help for a number of reasons, notable among which is that instances similar to the one cited by Gbadegesin can be found in the traditional accounts of almost all societies. In the Old Testament, the bible recorded the story of Naaman, an Assyrian Army general who was afflicted with leprosy and got healed when his Israeli slave facilitated a meeting with Prophet Elisha. The bible recorded that he was skeptical about the prophet's recommended therapy of bathing in river Jordan until he was persuaded by the servant. In the same manner, relatives of Lazarus were recorded to have reached out to Jesus with the hope of getting him healed before his death (and eventual resurrection).

If we grant the preceding, it should be very clear therefore that the idea of patient confidentiality and privacy which Gbadegesin described as western and un-African, found its way into modern medical practice at a more recent time. In all probability, the attitude of many westerners who lived in the ancient and medieval periods shared many similarities with that of precolonial Africans. Gbadegesin, like Tangwa clearly made cases for African bioethics by contrasting contemporary western societies and practices with traditional African societies. The problem associated with this, in comparative philosophy leads to the problem of incommensurability. While the idea of African bioethics is not entirely out of place, its advocates so far, have mostly progressed in a manner that suggests that contemporary African perspectives on bioethical issues are possible mainly by racing back into the past. As is the case with most other areas of comparison in African philosophy, the approach has been to dig into the past as a way of contributing authentic African ideas to contemporary discourse.

There are possibilities oftentimes, of finding ideas wholly or in part, that are relevant to pressing issues of the time. In many other instances however, what is required are new ideas, borne out of reflection over challenges of the present or those anticipated. This is no less important as earlier averred, in the area of bioethics, where issues such as transhumanism, transgenderism, patient autonomy, cosmetic surgery, genetic engineering among others; continue not only to recur but also open up new areas of disputations and knowledge. In many parts of Africa, issues such as infant mortality, access to basic healthcare, the deadly prevalence of certain ailments like

malaria, polio, leprosy, Ebola, among others, pose challenges with which contemporary African bioethicists in Africa have to grapple. One big problem with the comparison by inversion, aside from that of incommensurability, is perennialism. Admittedly, this problem is not specific to scholarship in Africa. As it applies here though, it relates to how proponents of African theories, who often propose them as equivalents of versions regarded as western, proceed as if the African cultures from which these ideas emerged are frozen, and incapable of evolving. Thus, many of these accounts fail to capture the changes that have occurred within these societies between the precolonial and present time.

This is perhaps why Hountondji argues that ethnophilosophy perpetuates a false and ultimately insulting view of African peoples. When African intellectuals speak of "negritude", "timeless codes of behavior", or "the African worldview", they perpetuate what Hountondji calls "the myth of primitive unanimity" (Hountondji, 1996 p. 60)—i.e., the myth that Black persons are fundamentally united in their views about the most important matters in life. This idea originated in colonial discourse about Africa, and Hountondji argues that it is not enough to simply put a positive spin on the traits that define African identity. The very idea of a global African mentality or worldview distorts the richness and cultural diversity of African peoples. Revivalists might see such unifying concepts as a basis for needed solidarity and identity, but they can become a liability when they fail to take into account real differences among Africans in addressing the complex problems that beset the continent (Ciaffa, 2008).

These limitations apply however, not only to the idea of African bioethics, but also, works on African democracy, African theories of justice, African feminism and numerous areas of African philosophy. This is clearly exemplified for instance in the attempt to revive the idea of ubuntu since the advent of democracy in South Africa. Interpreted from varied viewpoints, ubuntu is often translated as "I am because we are" or "humanity towards others" but is often used in a more philosophical sense to mean the belief in the universal bond of sharing that connects all humanity (Ramathate, 2013). Matolino and Kwindingwi have however cautioned against the "Ubuntu-isation" of the intellectual, business, public, and private lives of South Africans. They noted that the aggressive attempt to promote Ubuntu in post-apartheid South Africa is a project championed by the new black elite and bound to end in political and social failure (Matolino and Kwindingwi 2013) Furthermore, they were skeptical of the appositeness of ubuntu as a compass for a nation's navigation due to the chasm that exists between the metaphysical prerequisites necessary for the realization of Ubuntu and the glaring ontological and moral crisis bedeviling the new elites and the contemporary man (Matolino and Kwindingwi 2013).

In many African scholarly works today, one sees a pattern which suggests that an implied interpretation of Wiredu's call for decolonization, which calls for a synthesis of what is useful in Africa's past and what the West offers as modernity, is that there is a historiographic bifurcation of knowledge (Hountondji, 1996). Africa's knowledge system is traditional and in the past. The West, on the other hand, represents modernity, which is the present. In the tussle between the indigenous past and the foreign present, we are to make something new by taking a bit from both. This is then supposed to be Africa's own present, its own evidence of modernization. One big gap left unfilled by this approach, for all its merit, is the presence, or more correctly the possibility of an indigenous present that is also modern.

To sum up, decolonization, conceived as digging back into Africa's past, is useful in significant ways for understanding the continent and its precolonial accomplishments. To this extent, historians, ethnographers, anthropologists and scholars

in a number of related areas are in a good position to bring to light many Indigenous Knowledge Systems that are yet unknown. For philosophers however, especially those concerned with normative and practical ideas relevant to contemporary African societies, there is a need to avoid being bogged down with the past. This is because in many cases, the ideas exhumed and framed as African responses to issues of the moment are ill-suited to the challenges as the ides of consensual democracy has shown, or are lacking any normatively distinct African character, as we have seen with many of the works on African bioethics.

A Task for the 21st Century African Philosopher

As has been shown, the conceptual decolonization project in African philosophy has covered so many areas. In this regard, much of the progress made in bringing to fore the IKSs that sustained individual and social lives in precolonial Africa owes a lot of gratitude to Wiredu and other African philosophers who have had to extract at great cost, many undocumented clues, and pieced some together to relive as much as practicable, the worldviews of the past.

It is my view however, that African philosophers cannot be perpetually stuck in the cycle of waiting for an idea to become popular in other philosophical circles, the West notably, as a trigger to start digging into the past to find African equivalents. The task of excavation and retrieval is best left to historians, anthropologists and ethnographers. This is not to say their findings from time to time cannot be philosophically relevant, especially at a time when scholarship continues to drift towards interdisciplinarity. But then, there is a need to understand that IKS as a category is not exhaustive and all-encompassing. Beyond the limitations that make the retrieval of all knowledge practices of the past possible, what we refer to as IKSs are oftentimes accumulated discoveries and practices of different epochs in the past. To that extent, the richness of what is to constitute the IKSs of the future is largely dependent on whether or not contemporary scholars, especially philosophers, are able to produce indigenous modern knowledge systems (IMKS). This is how, to borrow from Imre Lakatos (1978), to cumulatively build an enduring knowledge system whose linkage transcends epochs. Precolonial Africans, though rational, are not more prescient than other humans in other places, and could therefore not have foreseen, much less develop adequate solutions to many issues confronting postcolonial Africa.

By IMKSs, I refer to an African body of knowledge developed by African scholars, philosophers especially, to address and anticipate present and possible challenges militating against the development of African societies morally, materially and intellectually. At first glance, one could say that such a body of knowledge is distinct from ideas by non-Africans directed nonetheless at African challenges and problems, which are in themselves welcomed. Neither does it forbid an African philosopher or scholar from contributing to global discourses. In a rapidly globalizing world, it will be too limiting to demand of philosophers of African extraction to focus solely on the continent's problems, even when it is highly likely that such problems are not entirely peculiar to Africa. However, the term Africanist philosopher will most fittingly describe a work or body of works done by an African thinker in respect to Africa. This can be in the area of governance, institution building, conflict manage-

ment, economic theory, bioethics, philosophy of law, feminism or any other area of relevance. More broadly, an Africanist philosopher will be one using his intellectual resources to address independently or in collaboration with others, present and probable challenges in Africa.

Back to the possibility of a philosopher or scholar who is not of African origin but is interested in or has worked on issues of interest to Africa. This is not an issue I intend to explore deeply here but the question can be asked as to why such does not qualify as an Africanist scholar. In my view, there is no essential reason for such exclusion, beyond the fact that at present, it appears to be the convention to identify scholars by a combination of research area and origin (Bodunrin 1981, Hountondji, 1996). Where one has needed to take precedence, origin appears to take the edge. That is why for instance, we describe David Hume as a Scottish philosopher even if his most influential works have nothing to do with Scotland particularly. The same can be said of Immanuel Kant and other philosophers whose works have universal application but are nonetheless described by their origin. However, the origin criterion taken alone, will exclude a scholar of African origin whose works are not about Africa from consideration as an Africanist scholar. My suggestion would be then that the research criterion be given precedence, such that a non-African working on issues relating to Africa is more qualified as an Africanist scholar than an indigenous African whose works bear no resemblance to the continent.

From the foregoing, it is clear that the idea of IKSs, properly speaking, is now envisaged to encompass two categories of indigenous knowledge: Precolonial indigenous knowledge (PIKS) as well as indigenous modern knowledge (IMKS). This is the way it is for the West. To a large extent, one can document the history of ideas in the West, starting from the ancient to the medieval, modern and even contemporary. While Africa need not follow this template strictly, it should be possible, and is indeed important to be able to distinguish between its indigenous ideas of the past and those of the present. That present doesn't always have to be a synthesis of something from the indigenous past and a foreign present.

To reiterate, the past is relevant to Africa's developmental quest, but so is the present, if not more. If Africa is to develop, it needs to look inward and rely less on external support which is oftentimes halfhearted or rendered at costs much steeper than the benefits. In looking inward, the greatest resource available to Africa is the intellect of its people, the best of which are found as a collective in the ivory tower. It is not my intention here to delve into what is required of the ivory tower in contemporary Africa for it to become the incubator of transformative ideas or offer an exhaustive account of the imperatives of IMKSs. It is not too difficult nonetheless to mention one or two areas where IMKSs may be more useful to Africa than decolonization efforts invested in Indigenous Knowledge systems.

Environmental ethics is one area in which new indigenous ideas are much needed. From Nigeria to Niger, Zaire, Angola and many others, exploration activities have left massive environmental catastrophes of immense proportions (Wang & Dong, 2019). Academic conferences and publications in the West have no doubt continued to explore normative ideas that could save the world from the impending effects of climate change, protect the environment, and preserve it for future generations. What has not received sufficient attention, however, is how to put an end to the disproportionate damage done to the global south by powerful interests from the global north. The situation is worsened by the fact that the continent gets far too little from the exploitation of its resources, thereby compounding its environmental challenges with an increasing wealth gap that perpetuates its place as the poorest continent in

the world (World Bank, 2019).

Most scholarly works on environmental ethics in the global north focus on the dangers of a consumerist culture that prioritizes immediate benefits over environmental harmony and sustainability (Wang & Dong, 2019). This is a good effort. Its inadequacy though, lies in the assumption that the trading off of environmental sustainability for prosperity benefits different parts of the world equally. This contradicts the reality of many African states. While the global north continues to sacrifice tomorrow for today in its developmental quest, Africa continues to get robbed of both today and tomorrow.

A focus on this external dimension of the environmental crisis in Africa can however not be comprehensive without considering the flipside. Street littering, bush burning, poor waste management, charcoal burning, unregulated urban development among others are some of the issues that contribute to pollution, flooding, and the spread of diseases even if marginally (Fayiga, Ipinmoroti & Chirenje, 2018). While some of these issues are linked to poverty and inequalities arising from exploitation, they suggest that there is a need to revisit some of the indigenous attitudes that guide how the people relate with the environment. This requires therefore, that Africans who are interested in environmental ethics focus their interventions on the kind of situatedness that mirrors the present reality. While such interventions may be compelled by prevailing realities to depart from the inadequate yet predominant views, seeking succor in PIKSs is also not likely to offer the kinds of ideas needed to address the present challenge. Whereas precolonial Africans may well have had certain normative ideas that guided how they related with the environment, it is doubtful if the same could be developed in anticipation of capitalist and imperialist exploitation on the scale currently being experienced, or that the attitudinal and institutional shortcomings that continues to imperil the environment could be shifted in such a direction. If knowledge is truly culture-bound and situation-dependent as the Particularists have averred, then the colonial and neocolonial exploitation of Africa requires new normative and practical ideas different from those that regulated the way in which people related with the environment at a time when contact and explorative technologies were very minimal. Such precolonial ideas at best will reinforce the point already made, that precolonial Africans, like human beings everywhere else reflected on the world they lived in, and devised mechanisms for understanding, surviving and flourishing in it. Beyond that though, it will be of little practical and normative relevance.

Conclusion

I have tried so far to examine the efforts of African scholars, philosophers especially, to assert African identity and demonstrate the capacity of its people to be ratiocinative in addressing their existential challenges. This I noted has happened in large part as a response to the call for conceptual decolonization by Kwasi Wiredu. The revivalism that has accompanied the digging into the past while commendable I noted, is now in need of being complimented by the generation of new, indigenous yet modern ideas that grapple with Africa's challenges. IKSs are not an exclusive African preserve. Every human society from times past survived on some forms of it. What has contributed largely to human advancement over several centuries, howev-

er, is not so much the reliance on past knowledge but the building of new ones on it.

African scholars have done so much digging and need to now begin to build pyramids of ideas that can reverse the fortunes of the continent and transform it from the continent of ignorance, diseases, illiteracy and mass poverty into one where life flourishes. It is already a daunting task that will be almost impossible to accomplish unless the intellectual class is galvanized and ready to generate homegrown ideas that address the diverse, pressing issues, including but not limited to gender, religion, human rights, group autonomy and self-determination, economy and education. These issues, and many others like them may require a departure from dominant, narrow views that are mostly western, but doing so should mean that the anti-colonial alternatives to them are adequate to address issues within the scope of Africa's current realities.

On a last note, I am aware of the possible charge of agenda-setting, and its restrictive effect on scholarship. Far from trying to straitjacket Africanist scholars into a narrowly defined area of research however, my aim has been to widen the field of focus, in the hope that an increased focus on the present and its demands will open new vistas of engagement in Africanist scholarship, an idea that in itself appears by label to be self-defining already, even if in a loose sense.

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‘Stomach Infrastructure’: Survival, Trauma, and the Slippery Relations of Nation-Building in Nigeria

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Economic survival strategies, social injustice, corruption and crime are central to interrogating the development of Africa (Michael Waibel & Colin McFarlane, 2012). Informality, a term described by Norman Loayza (2016) as “the collection of firms, workers, and activities that operate outside the legal and regulatory frameworks or outside the modern economy” (p.1856) has become the response of citizens to the continent’s social inequalities. As Mengel and Borzaga argues, “economic and political issues” can be linked to trauma (2012).

My paper considers how structural violence spawns the deployment of informality as a means of surviving suffering in Nigeria. I argue that informal economic activities are approaches to enduring trauma resulting from poor governance and socio-economic problems. I examine this claim by interrogating the writing of two public intellectuals, Pius Adesanmi and Abimbola Adunni Adelakun, who frequently take on the dynamics of governance in their writing. I employ their thinking as a lens for examining informality as a survival mechanism by broadening my interrogation using the concept of “stomach infrastructure”. By paying attention to informality in Nigeria, I engage the role of public intellectualism and literature in illuminating the slippery dynamics of nation building and its effect on the nation’s people.

Keywords: Trauma, Survival, Informality, Social Suffering,

Introduction

Economic survival strategies, social injustice, corruption and crime are central to interrogating the development of Africa (Michael Waibel & Colin McFarlane, 2012). One noteworthy response of the continent’s citizens to social inequalities is

survival by virtue of informality, a term described by Norman Loayza as "the collection of firms, workers, and activities that operate outside the legal and regulatory frameworks or outside the modern economy" (Loayza 2016, p.1856). This response from citizens, I surmise, is a response to the trauma that emerges from social suffering. I draw this premise from Mengel and Borzaga's (2012) examination of the South African context. The authors, examining the South African situation through the lens of trauma describe the complexity of healing "psychic deformation and injuries left behind by centuries of racism and colonialism through economic reparation or by a reversal of…political power structures alone"(p. ix). They explain that while the subject of injustice is important, it brings to the fore how "trauma is deeply linked to economic and political issues, and of how the psychic dimension is inseparable from institutions and structures" (p. ix). It is this statement of how deeply trauma is linked to economic and political issues that is of utmost interest to me in this paper.

This paper considers how structural violence spawns the deployment of informality as a means of surviving social suffering in Nigeria. I argue that informal economic activities are approaches to enduring trauma resulting from poor governance and socio-economic problems. I examine this claim by interrogating the writing of two public intellectuals, Pius Adesanmi and Abimbola Adunni Adelakun on the dynamics of governance. I focus my attention on Adesanmi's *Naija no Dey Carry Last*, a collection of his column articles widely published in online and print magazines and newspapers between 2008 and 2014. For Adelakun, who has yet to collect her columns in a book, I select from her many articles published in the Punch Newspaper and culled on several other websites. I employ the thinking of Adesanmi and Adelakun as a lens for examining informality as a survival mechanism by broadening my interrogation using the concept of "stomach infrastructure"—a spontaneously generated government policy, that can manifest in the form of handing out food to citizens, for example. In this paper, stomach infrastructure illustrates the translation of trauma—created by lack of social infrastructure—into an activity tied to survival. It also exemplifies the social suffering of the people and the resulting unacknowledged trauma experienced because of poor governance. In addition, I frame the meaning of informality beyond its traditional association with economics and social behaviour, narrowing to critical engagement of the columns of Adesanmi and Adelakun, who while seen as public intellectuals, should also be regarded as "interpreters of the people's voice/mind". It is through them that we get an exposition and interrogation of the conditions of social suffering in Nigeria.

By paying attention to informality in Nigeria, I engage the role of public intellectualism in illuminating the slippery dynamics of nation building and its effect on the nation's people. The next section of my paper examines the role of the intellectual in making social suffering intelligible.

Understanding the Voice behind the Columns

Over the years, I have observed the role of the newspaper column in the Nigerian society as a platform for demonstrating and drawing attention to social and economic policies that affect the Nigerian people. This is further validated by the formation of the League of Nigerian Columnists (LNC), which says on its website that one of its objectives is, "to contribute to the attainment of the goal of holding governments accountable to the people as enshrined in the Constitution"(LNC, n.d.

para. 2). Columns have become spaces where the protean problems and collective experiences of the Nigerian nation are recorded. It is a space where the intellect and sense-making of the people about their country is made public, and this, though represented by an individual, conveys the collective experience of Nigerians. Columns, both online and in print, act as places for questioning positions and sharing insights into the responses of people to government policies and issues of social inequalities which usually have no other outlets (Kelling & Thomas, 2018).

Pius Adesanmi (2015) wrote in *Naija no Dey Carry Last*, that the main objective of his essays is to bring readers to "engage critically with the depressing condition of Nigeria!" (p. xix). This same objective can be inferred in the writing of other columnists whose differentiation is in their narrative styles and opinions on subject matters. Their ability to engage with social issues seem to have enough influence on government that a few columnists at times get invitations to join the government in her administration. Notable columnists whose influence extended to the government are Ernest Sissei Ikoli of the pre-independence era, and Ken Saro-Wiwa, who worked on the Federal side and served as a voice for minorities during the Nigerian-Biafran War.[1] More recently, the likes of Femi Adesina, Reuben Abati, Segun Adeniyi, Tolu Ogunlesi have moved from being columnists to "special advisers" to the government (Nigerian Voice, 2011; Premium Times, 2015; 2016; Todayng, 2017). This emphasizes how the evolution of the Nigerian nation is significantly linked to columnists, who over the years serve to remind the government of social inadequacies. The shift from columnist to government official is possible because of the substantial influence the columnist exerts as an individual, and the acknowledgement of the role of the columnist as a public intellectual. The question that follows therefore is, why is the voice of the columnist powerful and significant to understanding the everyday economic activities of Nigerians?

Abimbola Adelakun[2], is known for transcribing the collective experiences of Nigerians and illuminating the circumstance of the people through hermeneutical and active inferences of politics and policies and their implications, while Adesanmi used satire to express the collective suffering of Nigerians. It may however be said that both Adelakun and Adesanmi write on Nigeria's "depressing condition". These conditions emerge from issues like poor infrastructure, social injustice, corruption, poverty, among others, which I argue are tied to social suffering and consequently, trauma. According to Kleinman, Das and Lock (1996), "social suffering" is the consequence of "the devastating injuries that social force inflicts on human experience" (p. ix). This derives from "what political, economic, and institutional power does to people and, reciprocally, from how these forms of power themselves influence responses to social problems" (p. ix). The writing of Adesanmi and Adelakun act as transcriptions of economic, political, and socio-cultural activities among citizens, so social factors that place the burden of nation-building on the people are made intelligible. In their writing, which I will examine and analyze later in this paper, the columnists' draw attention to the social suffering of the people from the perspective of infrastructural violence and the avoidable limitations this violence places on citizens by narrating the oppression of the people into their columns. In effect, the columnist when writ-

1 The Nigerian Civil War took place between 1967-1970 between Nigeria and the seceded state of Biafra. The head of state, Yakubu Gowon announced a "No victor, No vanquished" policy at the end of the war as a measure, to heal the war's wound and encourage unity. It however has remained a reference point for the erasure of the war's memory and the incomplete mourning that followed the war.

2 Abimbola Adelakun writes for Punch Newspaper, arguably the most read and circulated newspaper in Nigeria: https://punchng.com/.

ing his column beyond being an individual expressing his views, is also presenting his ideas in a way that it can be owned by the people, as their position. In essence, the columnist is how the people assume the posture of speaking out against government policies. This invariably indicates that the columnist bears the narratives of the people's suppression, and inevitably dissects the significance of the people's social and economic activities in relation to government policies. This burden of representation and sense-making, I opine, is achieved through the employment of narratives in their columns.

For instance, the concept of "stomach-infrastructure" which I examine closely in the next section of this paper became a reference point after its use by a politician, Ayo Fayose, at the 2015 election in Ekiti State, Nigeria. Columnists have since used the concept widely in their critical examination of what the policy means for the average Nigerian man. In her article, "Senator Saraki and the Wretched of the Earth", Adelakun (2013) examines a calamity that occurred following a scramble for handouts of food at Saraki's residence, a two-time governor vying for a senatorial seat as a pivot for other tragedies. She uses the Saraki incident as a mirror to examine the response of the government to several tragedies that befell the country. She writes that, "As a society, we are all implicated in the politics of grief that desensitizes us to certain kinds of disasters" (Adelakun 2013, Para. 5). In acknowledgement of the mediating role of the public intellectual, which though powerless in initiating immediate placation to the people, proves necessary, she writes, "First, we all troop out to write endless op-eds. Then we agonise about the failure of our country." (Adelakun 2013, Para 6). In effect, Adelakun recognizes the democratic nature of the public intellectual, which is where her power of influence comes from. In her article on Saraki, the incident which lead to up to the stampeding to death of 20 people becomes another story to remind the people of the atrocious situation they are implicated in. This culture of "almsgiving" she writes, "feeds a system that ensures the beneficiaries remain what the Martinique-born revolutionary, Frantz Fanon, called the wretched of the earth so they will always need the Sarakis of this world to live a marginally decent life" (para. 9). This goes to confirm the survival structure model on which the people in the nation operates. Adelakun narrates the Nigerian wretched realities and provokes attention, as seen at the end of her article on the senator. She draws attention to the inexistent structures replaced by mediocre promises:

> At the start of Ramadan, he [referring to Saraki] announced on Facebook he would be giving N100m[3] donation to feeding folks; an average of N3m plus daily spent to feed people whose lives are already a daily fast. Why not provide some money towards long-term and regenerative activities? How about spending N100m to provide a digital library for the University of Ilorin? Or, N100m to upgrade the primary schools in his constituency to world standard? Or even N100m to fund research that points our society towards stronger and more viable democracies? (Adelakun 2015, Para 16).

In these ways, columnists like Adesanmi and Adelakun expose how structural violence spawns the deployment of informality as a means of surviving suffering in Nigeria. In another article, Adelakun describes Ayo Fayose's policy of stomach infrastructure as the people's "gastro-political choices" (Scoop n.d.). Adesanmi (2014) on his part, explains that with stomach infrastructure, Fayose problematized the identity behind "[t]each a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime" (para. 9) . Adesanmi writes that in the rural and underdeveloped Ekiti state, Fayose, rather than

3 100 million naira. N used before a figure in this article, represents the naira sign.

prioritizing the state's status as one with elite professors, offered to change the state's circumstances against issues of "hunger, rural poverty, and underdevelopment" (Adesamni, 2014, para.10). This prioritization became a promise which resonated with Ekiti people than the "permanently deferred promises of the elite paradigm". This inevitably means that, "[s]o long as poverty, hunger, and rural backwardness are prevailing factors in Ekiti, the hand that offers the immediate gratification of pounded yam, grasscutter and palmwine will always win the argument over sophisticated and visionary leadership (Adesanmi, 2014 para. 13)."

As a result, Adesanmi and Adelakun draw a relation between survival, trauma, and the complexities of nation building, which is where informality arises as a symptom of enduring trauma resulting from poor governance and socio-economic problems. Significantly, it is this idea of transmitting the responsibilities of government to its citizenry in the context of existing social suffering that makes an exploration of the informal economy, also referred to as "informality" an object of study and interest in this paper.

It is imperative to note that the columns of Pius Adesanmi and Abimbola Adunni Adelakun, as I will show later, are vital to illuminating the connection between the informal economy, stomach infrastructure and the response of the people to social inequalities. In the following section, I explain informality and stomach infrastructure in the context of this essay.

Between Stomach Infrastructure and Informality

The phrase "stomach infrastructure" crept into Nigeria's lexicon in 2015 after a governorship candidate, Ayodele Fayose, was accused of enticing voters with gift items that included rice, chicken and clothes. (AIT, 2015). While Fayose's motive is nothing new in a political economy where buying voters is common, his audacious and peculiar coinage of stomach infrastructure to justify a need for economic empowerment for the people, albeit unethical, is worthy of examination. First, we can start by considering that the governor explained his motive for stomach infrastructure as the desire to "banish poverty and hunger" from his state (AIT, 2015 para. 7). Understandably, as Nigeria is considered an underdeveloped economy caused largely by poor governance, corruption, and absence of social infrastructure, a motive such as the governor's become socially acceptable as a spontaneously generated policy (Awojobi, 2014). The people, correspondingly, pursue the idea of surviving and adopt stomach infrastructure as a suitable activity to combat the socio-economic inadequacies. As Gabriel Chioma acknowledges in a Vanguard article online, "[a]dvocates of stomach infrastructure believe that government cannot be investing heavily on infrastructure when the stomach is empty. To them, both development and stomach upgrade could be done side by side" (2015, para. 4). In the same Vanguard article, Chioma quotes Dr. Aluko, one of the staunch supporters of the governor who expressed that, "Poverty is poverty; it knows no religion and it has no tribal mark; and it affects everyone" (2015, para. 13). He explains further that the governor's intention is to "identify with the masses by putting food on their tables" (para. 14). This he plans to achieve by the provision of "gainful employment for the youths" as well as "assist traders with soft loans so that they can feed themselves" (2015, para. 15). In this context, the "gainful employment" being referred to is primarily about

the subjects catering for their own needs rather than relying on the government. The economic action, evoked here, is the approach for achieving political power, which is modelled after an observation of the circumstance of the impoverished subjects: there are no social structures, and the people need to survive, hence this narrative of creating employment. In offering people what he believes they need most––food and clothing––the governor and his supporters shift discussions from ethics and proper governance to the subject of survival.

This logic of survival rather than nation-building, as we see, is essentially what drives informal activities. Therefore, while the term "stomach infrastructure" speaks directly to Nigeria's social maladies of electoral inadequacies, it also infers that the average citizen navigates Nigeria's dismal economic state by seeking to satisfy existential needs. The spontaneous government policy which brought stomach infrastructure into existence also acknowledges the prevalence of poverty among the people. This foregrounds my focus on informality as a by-product of poverty, where the people turn inwards for survival mechanisms that create social and economic structures for them, in the absence of government ones. Although informal economies earn labels such as "black market", "underground", "illegal" and several other names, these monikers distract policymakers from the laudable argument that informality offers to citizens an opportunity to earn a livelihood and reduce poverty, because of the contempt associated with the names (Mason, 2007). As Jonathan Emenike Ogbuabor et al. (2014) also notes, "numerous informal sector activities in contemporary Nigeria are illicit, especially those conducted on the external scene. These activities include drug peddling/trafficking, currency trafficking, money laundering, smuggling, advance fee fraud (419), over invoicing/under invoicing, crude oil bunkering or theft, kidnapping for ransom, illegal arms trade, human trafficking, among others." Nevertheless, the chance to earn a livelihood sometimes tend to lead to criminal activities, as the corrupt practices in the country blurs the lines between illegalities and criminalities. However, economists recognize and continue to argue about informality as a means of stabilizing the economy or as a form of demand on the government for the creation of socio-economic dynamics capable of enhancing nation building (Edgar, 1990; Habib-Mintz, 2009; Keck, 2012). In these instances, there is a tendency to miss the motive of informality as a coping mechanism among the people against structural violence.

In his book, *Naija no Dey Carry Last*, Adesanmi describes the dire situation of Nigerian society. He examines and reveals the subsurface of the informal and the formal economic sectors. The book, which is divided into four parts, examines socio-economic problems created by the ineptitude of political leaders, that, in effect, create problems around the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services. It provides a context on why informality is a home-made approach to subjects' socio-economic problems, as they innovate ways to meet the demands of their economic needs. Employing his typical satirical style in "Breaking News: Envelope and Stamp Riots Spread in Nigeria," Adesanmi connects a riot following the introduction of Structural Adjustment Policy (SAP) by former head of state Ibrahim Babangida to a more recent one triggered by the scarcity of postal envelopes and stamps. The SAP, Adesanmi writes "ensured that the average Nigerian now enjoys a quality of life slightly lower than the lives of domestic dogs and cats in Euro-America"(Adesanmi, 2015 p.18). This impoverished condition the people were thrown into was never contested but was met with a "we dey manage" resolve—an utterance of re-

silience which meant facing challenges by creating ways of survival. While Adesanmi goes on to explain that eventually the resilience is broken, the idea of finding other means to survive under the weight of misery, contextualizes the idea behind how the informal economy is a survival mechanism for Nigerians.

The concept of the "informal economy" according to Markus Keck (2012) first emerged in the 1970s and was coined by the anthropologist, Keith Hart and his colleagues "within the frame of the 'employment missions' of the International Labour Organization in the 1970s" (ILO, 1972)" (p.111). It was used to differentiate transactions that the state recorded and taxed and those they did not. Jonathan Emenike Ogbuabor, Gladys C, Aneke and Chukwunweike A. Okafor (2014) in their examination of the mobilization for revenue, argue that the concept of informality came in an earlier era. In their categorization of the theories of informality, they acknowledge the existence of four main theories: Modernization, Dependency, Structuralism and Neo-liberalism. The "Modernization theory" with its main proponent Rostow (1960), characterized "informality in the less developed countries largely as a 'social problem' internal to and caused by the backward socio-economic systems of individual countries" (p. 362). Adelakun and Adesanmi's regular analysis of Nigeria's social problems in their columns also provide an avenue to understand those factors that create informality, which as mentioned earlier, operates outside the modern economy. Later in this paper, we will also examine how Adesanmi and Adelakun's exploration of policies helps us to understand stomach infrastructure as a manifestation of Nigeria's social problems and how it falls into the category of those activities that are not governed by legal and regulatory frameworks. Stomach infrastructure therefore extends beyond the informal economy in Nigeria and its traditional relations to economics. My argument, therefore, is that informality is one of the response of citizens to the continent's social inequalities, beyond the orientation of informality as an economic tool for citizens to demand the government engage more effectively in nation-building. Nation-building, in this paper, means the creation of economic majorities, with the objective to reduce poverty and enable the society to function and thrive. Under this logic, the state should be responsible for nation building. However, as Loayza notes, "[i]nformality is not only a reflection of underdevelopment; it may also be the source of further economic retardation" (p. 1856). The retardation in the case of Nigeria is the undiagnosed trauma of years of poor (or in some cases, absent) social structures.

Adelakun, reflecting on rumours of death of the Nigerian president, Muhammadu Buhari, concludes that years of social and economic negligence had led people to show their displeasure by invoking death on their leader. She explains that people do not care if "leaders live or die" since the leaders themselves do not care about the people's welfare. She writes:

> Why would people who live, move, and have their being amidst dehumanising conditions be concerned about the ethics of wishing death on someone else? The conditions of their own existence already bespeak death, yet they are supposed to writhe at the pain of a leader whose privileges are funded with their blood? (Punch, 2017 para. 14).

The state of living in a perpetual condition of misery from one government to another has resulted in a social suffering where the people are enclosed in their melancholia. Comparably, Mengel and Borzaga (2012)—in the context of apartheid in South Africa—make a valid argument about how economic and political influence further this kind of trauma. The authors explain "people seem to invest considerably—emotionally and affectively—in economic and political powers, often in a

negative way, and on the basis of unprocessed traumas experienced in the past" (v). Although Mengel and Borzaga's argument follow the concept of trauma from historical events evoked by acts of systemic murder and physical violence, it does not take away from the idea of the everyday trauma is drawn out by structural violence. Arthur Kleinman (2000) evaluating structural violence describes it as an act used to denigrate "people who experience violence (and violation) owing to extreme poverty. That violence includes the highest rates of disease and death, unemployment, homelessness, lack of education, powerlessness, a shared fate of misery, and the day-by-day violence of hunger, thirst, and bodily pain" (p. 227).

In this regard, I engage the works of Adesanmi and Adelakun to bridge the connection between the informal economy, stomach infrastructure and the people's responses to social inequalities. I argue that informality in Africa is for survival, that it is a tactic against the mental and physical debilitation imposed by the socio-economic and political structure.

Informality, Storytelling and Trauma

Informal economic activities reflect stories of human relations faced with existential problems. These stories operate in what the American philosopher Wilfrid Stalker Sellars identifies as the manifest image of the world (Sellars, 1962 p. 42-54). According to Sellars, manifest image refers to one way in which humans locate and explain their place in the world, the other being the scientific image (55). The manifest image explicates the reasons behind actions. The manifest image would be all the things found in the quotidian and represented in literature, philosophy, and sometimes psychology and, as Stellar explains, is observable, while the scientific is unobservable. It may be implied that literature (which in the context of this paper involves newspaper and magazine columns) serves as a tool to help us understand underlying economic conditions, and their social consequences, in more humanistic terms. This means that stories can help us understand how things appear to us. It is through narratives that economic terms like informality become interpretable, and this is where public intellectuals like Adelakun and Adesanmi are useful in their employment of the newspaper as a "village square".

The two writers establish themselves in the narrative of Nigeria's socio-economic and political worlds. Adelakun sometimes begins her columns with an analogy, and Adesanmi consistently used satire in his writing. Stories, I will therefore add, become applicable to creating intelligibility for the many forms and categories of informalities, especially as it reflects negotiations with existential issues and struggles with survival.

Informal labour can be thought of as an existential narrative in the African context, as it portrays the people's attempt to give meaning and structure to their economic condition in the face of social injustice. It is about innovating ways to survive, which requires modeling alternative means of existence to circumvent the formal system. Loayza (2006) explains that the presence of informality and its growth implies that subjects are denied appropriate technologies, have no access to public services, and lack protection from the state. Because representations exist outside our reality, as suggested earlier, what we have are traumatic experiences that emerge from economic inadequacies that become narratives of survival as opposed to narratives about chronic poverty. As Kai Erikson (1994) notes in A New Species of Trouble:

> Chronic conditions as well as acute events can induce trauma, and this, too, belongs in our calculations. A chronic disaster is one that gathers force slowly and insidiously, creeping around one's defenses rather than smashing through them. People are unable to mobilize their normal defenses against the threat, sometimes because they have elected consciously or unconsciously to ignore it . . . (p. 21).

An example of such "chronic conditions" can be found in Adesanmi's article, "Mrs. Clinton, Please Do Not Come to Nigeria!". In this article, Adesanmi writes a letter to Hillary Clinton, who at the time was the United States Secretary of the State and was intending to visit Nigeria to discuss election malpractices and corruption. In the letter, he satirizes what has become the norm for Nigerians and brings attention to the violence that precedes official motorcades: "…we would have been cleared off the streets, from within a forty mile radius of wherever you will be in Abuja….It is done by soldiers and antiriot policemen with koboko, tear gas, machine guns, and tanks. They will kick the heck out of our butts to ensure that our offensive presence as Nigerians does not mar your trip" (Adesanmi, 2015 p. 38). Informal activities are created in such a traumatized environment. In Nigeria, informality is thus a form of resistance to an oppression that creates acute poverty and, as a result, typifies those familiar symptoms of the traumatized. The people in their hopelessness, rage and depression live in a perpetual anxiety of their social and physical surroundings. Informality, therefore, is a form of resistance against being rejected and excluded by the political class, which not only displaces them but leaves them oppressed and defenseless against social forces that could decimate them. Informality becomes the way to ensure survival and exist and move beyond one's circumstances in the absence of a formal socio-political system.

Understandably, the problems of representing trauma––such as the agonies associated with survival mechanisms in a bad economy––could seem abortive. As the leading trauma theorist, Cathy Caruth (2016) points out in Unclaimed Experience, trauma as a deferred experience which preoccupies the survivor, defies language and representation and returns to haunt the survivor, and it continues to "stubbornly persist in bearing witness to some forgotten wound" (p. 5). By extension, Jane Robinett (2007) explains that trauma demolishes our assumptions about the world, and we find no language in which to express it (p. 297). The complexity of representing trauma's mundane nature in Nigeria with its close ties to survival, is the reason a close study of informal activities as reactionary to the oppressive conditions that grow poverty, is imperative.

Usually the question is, in a nation rife with corruption and bribery, where and how does one define the magnitude of inexpressible suffering? As Adesanmi explains in the preface of his book, whereas many of his articles describe the corrupt practices of the government, his choice to deploy a satiric style in his columns was a "political decision" which was to connect with Nigerians, who he understands, love to laugh at themselves. Hence, "If it took laughter to get people to reflect seriously on the abject condition of our country and our lives, so be it! (p. xviii).

Another fact to recognise is that informal economic activities are traumatic representations of the inadequacies of the formal sector. In a multi-ethnic country like Nigeria, with high unemployment rate and corruption, the lines between formality and informality is blurred because, people who earn below their area of expertise seek for other sources of income and turn to informal activities within the formal structure. In her online essay, "Why We wish our Presidents Dead", Adelakun examines rumors of the death of the president, as a form of "moral revanchism" which is

"a ready weapon of warfare available to the agonized poor, the helpless victims of the nation's necropolitics, the forgotten and silenced majority, and the historically and structurally dispossessed" (2017, para. 15). Essentially, Adelakun captures the traumatizing social contexts where leadership does not see the plight of the people. Similarly, in "Nigerian Leaders have Still not Learned" she explains that the dependence of government on medical tourism makes them nonchalant in the face of a national pandemic. The implication of this she explains, is that the state is "growing an army of citizens who are mentally disconnecting from the country. They are subsisting in a country that promises too little in terms of opportunities and delivers even far less" (Adelakun, 2020 para. 10).

My argument thus far is that narrative representation makes the intolerable comprehensible. The social contexts examined by Adesanmi and Adelakun demonstrate that many of the economic activities that emerge from the informal sector are riddled with stories of aspirations, ambitions, and hope; the voiceless seeking a voice to speak. Dierdre N. McCloskey (2002), recognizing the connection between economics and storytelling agrees with Peter Brook's assertion that "our lives are ceaselessly intertwined with narrative, with the stories that we tell, all of which are reworked in that story of our own lives that we narrate to ourselves…We are immersed in narrative" (Brooks 1985 p. 3 in McCloskey p. 61). McCloskey writes that storytelling is integral to intelligibility in economics, when he explains that, "[e]conomists have not lived without it, not ever. It is no accident that the novel and economic science were born at the same time. We live in an age insatiated with plot" (p. 61). As McCloskey explains, while the applied economics can be seen as a "realist novelist or a realist playwright…the theorist, too, may be viewed as a teller of stories, though a non-realist—whose plots and characters have the same relation to truth as those in Gulliver's Travels or A Midsummer Night's Dream. Most economics is saturated with narration" (p. 62).

Thus, it is through the narration of human realities that economics can become intelligible. This is evident in the columns of Adesanmi and Adelakun, which can also be described as theorizations of Nigeria's socio-economic realities. Their columns function as social commentaries that construct the unsteady dynamics of the existential conditions required for nation building. These existential conditions are usually a response to economic models and political activities.

Throughout his book, Adesanmi (2015) pays attention to Nigeria's political structure, most especially the country's leadership and its disregard for creating social structures for Nigerians. In the first part of the book, Adesanmi examines the ineptitude of government and widespread corruption, which does nothing to create social structures for the people. Adesanmi describes this as a form of "vicious, symbolic violence Nigerians have to cope with every day" (2015 p. 56). As the author writes, "[v]iolence is the kind of figures that are in the newspapers every day: billions and billions being looted in broad daylight by our friends in Abuja[4] and the state capitals" (p. 56). In another article "The Scramble for the Partition of Nigerian Ailments", Adesanmi lampoons the inexistent health structures which account for leaders travelling to the west for health and he satirically narrates how the head of a Nigerian delegation thanked Western powers for the selflessness with which they place the excellent medical facilities in their countries at the disposal of Nigerian leaders (Adesanmi,

4 Abuja is the capital of Nigeria.

2015). He adds, "[w]hat further proof of their commitment to the progress of Nigeria could there be? For it is only when Nigerian leaders enjoy good health that they are able to serve the people and deliver the dividends of democracy" (p. 12). In the article "Confirmation Hearing 101 for Senator David Mark & Co.", Adesanmi compares screening of elected officcials in the American and Nigerian senate. He examines how "the periodic circus they call senate confirmation hearings" (2015 p. 28) of political appointees, costs Nigerians a "considerable price" (p. 29), which in effect can be interpreted to mean incompetent leadership, and consequentially inexistent social structures. In the piece "In the Beginning was the Word", Adesanmi uses the historical narrative and parables of the bible to lampoon the governance, corruption and ineptitude of the period of President Goodluck Jonathan's rule (Adesanmi, 2015). Adesanmi offers another critical analysis of Jonathan in "The Prodigal Son", where he alludes to biblical verse to satirize a profligate ruling class coming to terms with the consequences of their actions. In this essay, Adesanmi portrays the president, King Jona, as the prodigal son. In his article, King Jona who has inherited a huge wealth from "black gold", which refers to the diminished economic resources that President Jonathan inherited from the previous government. He writes, "And King Jona rent his clothes and cried: "Lo, I have sinned against God and man. For I have squandered my inheritance on wine and music. Now pestilence and the abomination of desolation is come upon the land" (Adesanmi, 2015 p.102).

Adesanmi helps the people to understand that their leaders see them as perpetually lacking maturity. This means that the Nigerian people can be cheated and denied their needs, once they are distracted with irrelevancies that add no meaning to their lives.

Columns like Adelakun's and Adesanmi's narrate the underdevelopment of a nation and offer a scope to understand the reason informality is a form of sustenance, because the columnists are also the people. In this light, we come to see how storytelling is also about self-involvement, which demonstrates how human lives are interwoven with politics, social and economic activities. Through these columns, we hear the responses of people to social inequalities and therefore see a connection between the informal economy which develops and the policies like stomach infrastructure which reinforce the survival mechanism the people have to create for themselves.

Examining Ayo Fayose and his concept of "stomach infrastructure" Abimbola Adelakun (2014) in her article, "Why Ekiti Voters are Nigeria's most Sophisticated," explains that Nigeria's political scene reiterates how the country has been reduced to stomach infrastructure, which leaves people in a constant debate of what she calls, "bread-and-butter-issues" (2014 para. 7). The deduction here from Adelakun is essentially that it is the desire to survive that births informal activities. According to Adelakun, survival takes precedence among citizens, and leaders use this as a tool to ignore the major restructuring which should evolve the country's development. As she writes, "Nigeria currently faces a major crisis of underdevelopment and for an economy that remains undiversified, clogged in the wheels by the shortsightedness of her greedy and myopic leaders, you can be sure we will run into a major trouble at some point" (2014 Para 7).

Conclusion

In his article "Defining and estimating underground and informal economies: The new institutional economics approach," Edgar L. Feige (1990) identifies four types of "underground" economic activity:

> illegal; unreported, unrecorded and informal to explore their nature and interrelationships and relevance for different economic issues. Each underground activity is characterized by the particular institutional set of rules that it circumvents. The metric for measuring the dimensions of each underground activity is the aggregate income generated by the activity (p. 991).

As is usually the case, the illegality of informality is compounded by the context of its slippery relations with criminality. The thin line between illegalities and informality in Nigeria informs an economy where arguments occur on social media and public spaces on the legitimacy of 419 as a "business", because it falls into the category of a form of survival. As Adelakun suggested "Let us face it, integrity does not live in our society. Our institutions—political, social, religious, educational, and financial—lack integrity just like our leaders" (Adelakun, 2018 para. 10).

Although arguing that some of the concepts assumed to be informal are cultural, Yeboah's explanation that some of the informal economic activities are largely indigenous systems of production and culture is not tenable, as it further complicates the relationship of the formal and the informal. In what context does one place the traditional way of life, which is not simply an economic boost for the society, but exists also, as a cultural structure? And while economic statistics show, or continue to show, increasing unemployment (Statista, 2019), and an almost inexistent social infrastructure (Punch, 2016), citizens are left to making economic opportunities for themselves in the absence of choices.

Public intellectuals like Pius Adesanmi and Abimbola Adelakun, undertake the task of narrating economics in the Nigerian context. By identifying as "the people", they make the nation's political problems, economic policies, and activities, less ambiguous and more visible and meaningful. More significantly, they illuminate the slippery dynamics of nation building, in their narratives that show that existential conditions reflects economic activities which are not choices, but creative responses to what the socio-economic situation dictates.

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Diaspora Diplomacy: Opportunities and Challenges for African Countries

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The African Union recognises the important role played by the African diaspora in the development of the continent and seeks to encourage their full participation in its activities. In its migration policy framework and plan of action for the period 2018-2030, the diaspora engagement pillar, among other things seeks the development of strategies to foster diaspora participation in the development of the continent and their countries of origin. Some African countries like Kenya have embraced diaspora diplomacy as a key pillar in their foreign policy. The late Prof. Pius Adesanmi worked closely with African Heads of Mission in Ottawa, Canada to organise various academic forums where the African diaspora engaged in academic discourses on emerging global issues in relation to the African continent. This article seeks to recognise Prof. Adesanmi as a true embodiment of diaspora diplomacy by summarising some of his activities as an African intellectual and diaspora member. The paper starts with a brief discussion on the African Union's recognition of the African diaspora as an important partner in development, and then moves on to define diaspora diplomacy. The second part explores the rationale for diaspora diplomacy, while the third part summarises some of the activities of Prof. Adesanmi as an African intellectual and a diaspora member. This is followed by an examination of ways in which the African diaspora and African Heads of Missions can work together to harness the diverse skills, knowledge, expertise and resources of the African diaspora in Canada. Challenges facing diaspora diplomacy are highlighted. The article concludes that diaspora diplomacy has benefits for African countries if well structured and well implemented.

Introduction

Migration from one location to another has been a feature of human existence since time immemorial. Since 2000, international migration within the African re-

gion has increased significantly. According to United Nations World Migration report, in 2017 most African born migrants living outside Africa were residing in Europe (9.3 million), Asia (4.4 million) and North America (2.6 million) (IOM -UN Migration, 2018). It is estimated that about 70,000 skilled professionals emigrate from Africa each year (African Union Commission, 2018). Mrs. Amira Elfadil, the Commissioner for Social Services at the African Union observes that "Africa has witnessed changing patterns of migration in the recent years," and if this migration is managed in a coherent manner she suggests that "nations and regions can reap the benefits of the linkages between migration and development" as the continent strives towards the realisation of its Agenda 2063 (African Union Commission, 2018 p.8). Given the changing trends in migration being experienced in Africa, diaspora engagement is considered a key aspect in the migration-development nexus.

The late Prof. Pius Adesanmi worked closely with African Heads of Mission in Ottawa, Canada to organise various academic forums where the African diaspora engaged in academic discourses on emerging global issues in relation to the African continent. By summarising some of Prof Adesanmi's activities as an African intellectual and member of the African Diaspora, this article seeks to recognise him as a true embodiment of diaspora diplomacy. The second part explains the rationale for diaspora diplomacy. The third part summarises some of the activities of Prof. Adesanmi as an African Intellectual and diaspora. This is followed by an examination of ways in which the African diaspora and African Heads of Missions can work together to harness the diverse skills, knowledge, expertise and resources of the African diaspora in Canada. Challenges facing diaspora diplomacy are highlighted followed by a conclusion.

Diaspora Diplomacy: Definition

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) defines diaspora as "migrants or descendants of migrants, whose identity and sense of belonging have been shaped by their migration, experience and background" (IOM, 2018 p. 305). It is used to describe those who identify with a "homeland" but live outside of it. Diasporas leave their countries for various reasons, including seeking greener pastures, seeking opportunities abroad in the realms of education, tourism/visits and economic activities. This type of diaspora possesses skills that can be tapped by their countries of origin to enhance development.

The African Union defines the African diaspora as "peoples of African origin living outside the continent, irrespective of their citizenship and nationality and who are willing to contribute to the development of the continent and the building of the African Union" (African Union – Economic Social & Cultural Council 2018). Mwagiru identifies three types of African diasporas: African diasporas abroad comprising of the historical and contemporary diasporas, intra-Africa diasporas who live on the African continent; and other diasporas of the other regions in Africa. He uses the term diaspora to refer to Africans living outside the continent but "who retain some loyalties for the countries that they came from, and who, in their new habitat retain also some social exclusiveness" (Mwagiru, 2012 p.73). This article adopts this definition of the diaspora and uses it to refer to Africans living in Canada who have retained links with the continent and their countries of origin.

Diaspora diplomacy has gained currency in recent years. Scholars in this area of research have tried to define what it means and how it can benefit countries of origin. Kishan defined diaspora diplomacy as a "sub-branch of diplomacy that involves engaging a country's overseas community to contribute to building relationship with foreign countries" (Kishan, 2014 p. 70). This definition suggests that high commissioners and ambassadors accredited to various countries can seek partnerships or work with citizens of these countries who originally migrated from their countries. Mwagiru (2012) on the other hand, sees diaspora diplomacy as that aspect of diplomacy that involves Africans "living abroad in the policy making process as well as seeking to ensure that their role, the social, economic and political welfare as citizens of their country of origin is taken care of" (p. 76). Diaspora diplomacy has gained currency because of the increased awareness that the continent needs new partnerships for its development. In this article diaspora diplomacy is used to mean a partnership between African Heads of Missions/ambassadors and the African diaspora in Canada aimed at advancing and protecting the African continent's interests and their countries of origin. This partnership should put Africa and the country of origin at the centre of engagement.

Following the African Union's recognition of the diaspora as the sixth region of Africa and the several interventions put in place to enhance their involvement, there is need to explore ways in which diaspora diplomacy can be strengthened.

Rationale for Diaspora Diplomacy

There are several reasons why diaspora diplomacy is important. This section summarises some of the justifications for diaspora diplomacy in Africa.

African Union's Agenda 2063

The engagement with the diaspora by the African Union is premised on the realisation that Africa will only develop if all its peoples are involved. This led to the amendment of the Constitutive Act to include a new article which invites and encourages the participation of the diaspora in the Union. The African Union's agenda 2063 aspires for a dynamic and mutually beneficial link with her diaspora. There have been efforts made to realise this goal. First, during the first 10-year Implementation Plan of the Agenda 2063, members states were requested to ratify the amendment to the Constitutive Act to enable the diaspora to participate in the AU by 2023. Second, the AU made provisions for diaspora representation in the Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC) created in 2001 where 20 of its 150 seats have been allocated to diaspora members. Third, the declaration of the Diaspora as the Sixth Region of African in 2005. This was done with the objective of "inviting and encouraging the full participation of the African Diaspora as an important part of the continent, and the building of the African Union" (African Union Commission, 2018 p.42). Fourth, the first ever Global African Diaspora Summit was held in 2012 in South Africa where it was resolved that:

> …the production of a Skills Database of African Professionals in the Diaspora; b) the establishment of the African Diaspora Volunteers Corps; c) the African Diaspora Investment Fund; d) a Programme on the Development Marketplace for the Diaspora, as a framework for facilitating innovation and entrepreneurship among African and Diaspora; and e) the African Institute for Remittances (AUC, 2018 p.42).

The African Union proposes several strategies for engaginAfrican Union proposes several strategies for engaging with the African diaspora. These include: the establishment of diaspora focal points or agencies to manage diaspora affairs and dual citizenship programmes, facilitation of the return of qualified nationals residing in developed states through appropriate resettlement incentives and creating appropriate institutional mechanisms within relevant ministries to manage relations with nationals abroad and to facilitate the transfer of scientific knowledge and encourage trade and investment; expanding South-South and North-South dialogue and partnerships to foster sharing of human resources, skills, technology, and knowledge in Africa, as well as best practices on Diaspora engagement (African Union Commission, 2018 p. 43).

Following the African Union's resolutions several African countries have adopted these strategies to enhance diaspora engagement in national development. For example, the Government of Kenya recognizes the importance of the contribution of the Kenyan diaspora to the economy and to the development of the country in general. As a result, a diaspora office was created in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs through a Presidential Circular No. 1 of 2008 on Organization of Government. The Government of Kenya, through the ministry of foreign affairs, launched the Diaspora policy on 20th January 2015. The policy largely emphasizes the need to mainstream and empower the Kenyan diaspora to participate in the national development agenda. There is a fully-fledged Diaspora and Consular Affairs department in the ministry that also acts as the liaison office for Kenya's Honorary Consuls abroad. Kenyan Missions abroad have desks that deal with diaspora issues (Republic of Kenya, 2014 p.21).

Some of the efforts by the African Union's engagement with the diaspora have resulted in the creation of Pan African associations or networks. For example, in 2015 the Pan African Australasia Diaspora Network (PAADN) was launched in Australia. The network, which comprises 100 organisations, has various thematic groups including Education, Women and Gender, Youth and Community Engagement (African Union 2016).

Fostering Brain Gain

The diaspora especially those in North America comprise of the most highly skill labour migration. This has led to what is referred to in the literature as brain drain. Brain drain if left unchecked can have negative effects on the economic and social development of the countries where the skilled diaspora is immigrating from (Zeleza, 2013). A study carried out on African born academics in Canada and United States by Zeleza found that "many of these academics do or seek to actively engage African institutions of higher education" (2013, p.6). Most African diaspora academics possess complex transnational trajectories with cross country and international professional experience, which can be tapped through diaspora diplomacy resulting in brain gain. Therefore, their extensive networks that can be tapped to benefit African universities.

The African Union Commission, in its Migration Policy Framework for African and Plan of Action (MPFA), advocates for free movement of workers as a means of advancing regional integration and development. The MPFA suggests that countering brain drain and mitigating its effects on national economies are important poli-

cy objectives. The framework urges African countries to "encourage their nationals living abroad to contribute to the development of their countries of origin through financial, skills, technology and knowledge transfer" (African Union Commission, 2018 p. 10). It furthers recommends the implementation of brain gain strategies such as temporary return programs for diaspora members to alleviate skills shortages in critical sectors, and foster skills development and facilitation of regional and continent mobility of professionals (African Union Commission, 2018 p. 10).

Working with the diaspora in diplomacy has benefits, including, at the national level, reversing the "brain drain" and potentially turning it into "brain gain" and "brain mobility" (Zeleza, 2013 p. 23). Diaspora diplomacy can foster brain gain, brain bank and brain circulation[1] that can help Africa overcome critical skills shortages especially in higher education institutions. It can create opportunities for student training and mentoring, research collaborations and joint publications, sabbaticals and conferences, and the transmission of new knowledge and technology. Collaboration in research and publications can improve African universities' research capacities and reputation by expanding their international networks and resources.

The African Diaspora and the Willingness to Give Back

The African diaspora has a willingness to give back to the continent in terms of financial remittances. The remittances paid by Africans living abroad has been found to rival official aid to the continent. In 2019, remittances were reported to be the largest sources of foreign exchange earnings in low- and middle-income countries (Ratha, De, Jukim, Seshan & Yameogo, 2019). For example, the total diaspora contributions to Africa in 2010 stood at US $51.8 billion compared to about US $43 billion in Overseas Development Aid (ODA). This figure has been growing over the years especially with the formation of new diasporas in economically fast developing areas of the world like China, Russia, India and Brazil. In 2012, the total diaspora remittances to Africa amounted to US $60 billion (Bodomo, 2013 p. 23). It is important to note that the figures reported here exclude the value of all the merchandise that is sent to family and friends through informal channels. Diaspora remittances are contributing to economic growth in various African countries (Aboulez, 2015). The fact that the diaspora is already committing huge amounts of resources to support the economy of their countries of origin presents a good opportunity for diaspora diplomacy. The African Union has recognised diaspora efforts and has established the African Institute of Remittances whose aim is to work with African governments to reduce the cost of remittances.

The African diaspora is also engaged in several philanthropic activities in addition to the remittances (Agunias & Newland, 2012). A good example of the African diaspora's willingness to give back to the continent is the work being done by the President of the Toronto Raptors, Masai Ujiri through his organisation Giants of Africa (GOA). A native of Nigeria, Mr. Ujiri is the first African-born General Manager for a major North American sports team. The GOA, formed in 2003, runs basketball camps in Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya and Rwanda for about 50-60 youth in each country. According the information provided on their website (https://giantsofafrica.org),

1 **Brain gain**: skilled African diaspora offer their services to their countries of origin; **Brain Bank**: a skills database of African Diaspora who can be called upon whenever their skills are needed in Africa; **Brain circulation**: Free movement of African Diaspora between countries of origin and host countries through exchange programs.

the mission of the GOA is to use basketball as a means to educate and enrich the lives of African youth through the provision of quality facilities, gear and coaches. Most of the coaches who run the basketball camps in Africa are members of the African diaspora who live in North America and use their summer breaks to give back to the continent through their skills. The program has seen many young people from African access education. It is estimated that over 80 youth have gone to high school or university in the USA and over 100 have attended university in Nigeria. Some of the young people from Africa have been able to play basketball in junior teams in Europeans clubs. In addition to basketball camps, GOA has an outreach program that includes visits to underserved areas and charitable organisations in the countries they operate in where they give inspirational and educational talks. The message that Masai Ujiri passes to the young people he interacts with is that they can make their countries better and they can become giants of Africa. He encourages them to dream big and aim higher despite their circumstances.

African diaspora intellectuals and academics have also been willing to give back to the continent through supporting African institutions of higher learning. Zeleza (2013), found that African diaspora academics are motivated by the desire to give back to their countries of origin or other African countries as a way of sharing their privileges. One professor interviewed said:

> I always think of it as national service. I particularly work with black women scholars. That's my commitment to make sure they have support, because they are critically underrepresented. If they are in the ranks, they are junior lecturers (Reitumetse Mabokela, an education professor at Michigan State, in Zeleza, 2013 p. 8).

African diaspora intellectuals want to keep up to date on is happening in Africa in terms of current research:

> As an African intellectual, that's the source of everything you do. You cannot not be active. You lose your critical edge; you lose the very source of information of your scholarship. It keeps you rooted, grounded (Pius Adesanmi, in Zeleza, 2013, p. 9).

The quotations here suggest that African diaspora intellectuals have attachments to the continent, and they are willing to give back based on their skills, knowledge and economic ability. Diaspora diplomacy is one avenue for tapping their willingness to give back to Africa.

The foregoing section shows that indeed the time is ripe for diaspora diplomacy. The African Union has set the right tone by recognising them as the sixth region of Africa and proposing specific strategies that are geared towards diaspora participation. The skills, knowledge, economic power and philanthropic goodwill of the African intellectuals and diaspora in Canada presents an opportunity for them to be diplomats for Africa and their countries of origin. Prof. Pius Adesanmi demonstrated how they can go about their diplomacy. The next section summarizes some of Prof. Adesanmi's activities that bear testimony that he was indeed an African intellectual and a diplomat.

Dr. Pius Adesanmi: An Embodiment of Diaspora Diplomacy

Professor Pius Adesanmi served as Director of Carleton University's Institute of African Studies. As an academic, scholar and African intellectual he engaged in various activities and commented on various topics in relation to Africa. Whereas this section does not intend to reproduce all the activities that he was engaged in it will highlight some of them that portray him as a true African intellectual in the 21st Century as well as a diaspora diplomat for Africa.

Director of Institute of African Studies

Prof. Adesanmi led the only full-fledged and stand-alone Institute of African Studies in a Canadian University since January 2016. In a director's note in the IAS Newsletter, Prof. Adesanmi noted that his vision as the director was to "open new horizons in order to consolidate its distinction as Canada's premium site of Africanist knowledge production" (2016 p.1). He hoped to achieve this vision through offering new courses covering regional and geographical realties of the African continent as well as themes and topics pertaining to Africa's agency in the contemporary global economy of knowledge. A review of the courses taught at the IAS, and an examination of the research undertaken by the professors and partnerships established during his tenure as director reveal that indeed he believed that Africans cannot be ignored when global issues are being discussed. As a professor of African Studies, he believed that understanding the African continent was a prerequisite for understanding what is happening in the whole world. He endeavoured to make his students, colleagues and Canadians understand that the African continent has a role to play in world history. Commenting on why he enrolled at the Institute of African Studies, Kenneth Aliu a student in an English Literature class taught by Pius Adesanmi before his death, said that Adesanmi had instilled in him the idea that "to understand the world, you must understand Africa" (FASS News June, 2019[2]). Adesanmi strove to make the IAS a reputable and dynamic destination for the study of Africa in Canada.

In the course of his work at the Institute, Prof. Adesanmi established academic linkages with African universities through the Carleton University Study Abroad Program, encouraging his students to undertake a semester abroad. He believed that the study abroad course in Africa provided "experiential learning" for his students (IAS Newsletter, 2016 p.2). The course entitled AFRI 3100/5100: African Studies Abroad, enabled students to study a selected topic in African Studies with a Carleton professor in an African country (or countries), in which the professor carries out research. The students also learn from experts on the topic in the African country (or countries).

The course had enabled students to study abroad in South Africa, Ghana, Burkina Faso, Rwanda, Malawi and Kenya. In 2018, the course was titled *Kenya 2.0: Social Media and Youth Cultures in a Changing Continent* and was offered in Nairobi, Kenya in partnership with the United States International University-Africa. Prof. Adesanmi accompanied the students to Nairobi. In his letter to the Kenya high commission in Ottawa, Adesanmi wrote

> I am writing to notify you that our IAS study abroad course will be going to Kenya in May 2018. The study abroad course in Africa is one of the selling points of the Institute of African Studies at Carleton University and has attracted students from all over Canada to our program. It is also the standpoint which allows the Institute to forge capacity building alliances with Universities in Africa. Developing higher education in Africa is an area

2 Further information available at https://carleton.ca/africanstudies/2019/african-studies-twins-graduate-together.

> which the Kenya Mission in Ottawa has been our most outstanding partner among the African missions (Prof. Adesanmi September 2nd, 2017).

Prof. Adesanmi's engagement with African studies and encouragement of student exchange or study abroad is a good example of what it means to be an African intellectual in the 21st Century. The Canadian students who get an opportunity to study in Africa get to learn a lot about the continent. Jim Carr, Minister of International Trade Diversification while announcing the Canadian Government's financial boost to the Study Abroad program at the University of Alberta on August 22, 2019, underscored the importance of the program by saying that:

> Canadians who study abroad gain exposure to new cultures and ideas, stimulating innovation and developing important cross-cultural competencies. Students from abroad who study in Canada bring those same benefits to our shores (Beaulne-Stuebing, 2019).

Prof. Adesanmi, the African intellectual, demonstrated that one needs to be constantly engaged with the happening in the continent through research, speaking engagements, teaching and guiding students in African studies. Most of his colleagues at the IAS undertook a few funded research and projects involving partnerships and networks in Africa. They spent their summer months in various parts of African undertaking research.

Support for African Higher Education Sector

Prof. Adesanmi was active in the higher education sector in Africa through various forums. He made contribution to higher education in Africa through his work as Carnegie Diaspora Visiting Professor of African Studies at the University of Ghana, Legon during the 2013-2014 Academic year. After his visiting professorship ended, he continued to be engaged in developing research capacity in African universities through the University of Ghana's Pan-African Doctoral Academy. This was a summer school for doctoral students from West and East Africa.

Prof. Adesanmi advocated for an internalisation of high education that was balanced, in which partnerships between the global north and south was beneficial to the all partners. On November 16, 2016 he was a panelist at the conference: Advancing Education: The Canada-Africa Roundtable organised by the Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE) in Ottawa, Canada. The goal of the roundtable was to share experiences of working across borders on education initiatives to foster new ideas and develop linkages among different stakeholders working in education across sub-Saharan Africa. He was in fact recognised for his exceptional leadership in internationalisation education by the CBIE who awarded him the 2017 Board of Directors Leadership Award. The award was in recognition of the "impact of his work in postgraduate research capacity development in African universities especially in Ghana, Nigeria and South Africa" (IAS Newsletter, 2017 p.11). Indeed, as an African intellectual he was an ever-present voice in forums where African education was discussed, not least of all in the many conferences that he organized.

Organisation of Academic Conferences

Prof. Adesanmi, through the IAS, developed strategic partnerships with individual African diplomatic missions (Kenya and Nigeria), the Group of African Heads of Mission, Pan- African Affairs Division at Global Affairs Canada and the Human Rights Research and Education Centre at the University of Ottawa. Through these partnerships, Adesanmi helped to organise conferences, symposia, public lectures and workshops where intellectual and scholarly engagements on issues of concern to Africa were discussed. The IAS organised three annual international conferences, namely the IAS annual conference, IAS annual undergraduate research conference and the IAS/ African Heads of Mission annual conference (IAS Newsletter 2016, p.1).[3]

In addition to conferences, Prof. Adesamni along with the Pan Africanist Diaspora also took part and organised public lectures, guest lectures, book launches on various themes where issues of the African Continent took centre stage and showed that Prof. Adesamni wanted his students, academic colleagues, African diaspora contemporaries and Canadians to constantly engage with the issues, opportunities and challenges in the African continent. Some of these themes have also been highlighted in the African Union's Agenda 2063. It is no wonder that the African Union recognised him as a Pan Africanist. He was a member of the Diaspora Consultation series of the African Union's Agenda 2063 in New York. His heart was in African and as fate would have it, he died on the continent on his way to do what he loved: putting African issues on the global stage. African heads of mission and ambassadors in Canada and the African intellectuals and diaspora can continue with the partnership with IAS to keep the legacy of Prof. Adesanmi alive.

Diaspora Diplomacy: Opportunities for Partnership with African Heads of Missions/Ambassadors

If Diaspora diplomacy as defined here has potential and can be utilised by African countries to foster partnerships with various countries, then African diaspora intellectuals, scholars and academics like Prof. Adesanmi have demonstrated an important role to play in this endeavour. In this section some further examples are given on opportunities for partnership.

Establishment of Academics Linkages and Partnerships

A number of African universities face several challenges, among which are inadequate facilities, unsuitable teaching and learning environments, large class sizes, inadequate staff, weak collaboration with professional accreditation bodies, a lack of external quality assurance, and weak linkages between the competences acquired in some programs, and the demands of the market and inadequate research funding. There are opportunities for linkages with Canadian universities, which Carleton University has demonstrated through its partnerships in several countries around the world, five of which are with African universities.[4] The African heads of Mission/ Ambassadors can use diaspora diplomacy to expand the partnership between Cana-

3 Further information on these conferences can be found in the IAS newsletter archives: https://carleton.ca/africanstudies/news/subscribe-to-the-weekly-newsletter/.

4 In 2019, University of Witwatersrand, University of Sierra Leone, University of Lagos and University of Nigeria; and the University of Ghana, See https://carleton.ca/myexchange/partners.

dian and African universities.
Academic linkages will help the diaspora academics in Canada to maintain contacts with their countries of origins, family members and colleagues who still work in the continent. One professor interviewed by Zeleza (2013) summarised the benefits of academic linkages thus:

> I get to maintain my research interests and contact with institutions and colleagues in Africa, while colleagues from the other side have the benefit of interacting with me and, through me, my institution in the US. They also facilitate the possibility of collaborative teaching and research on both sides and opportunities for faculty exchange visits... (Tiyanjana Maluwa in Zeleza, 2013 p.9).

Once linkages have been established, the African diaspora get to partner with African colleagues. Research partnerships and scholarship boosts the prestige and ranking of African universities. Research has found that the top ranked universities in Africa, for example the University of Cape Town, which is often ranked the best in Africa, boasts the highest number of co-authorships with overseas scholars. Between 2007 and 2011, its academics produced 646 co-authored articles with colleagues at six top US and Canadian universities. Some of these were results of collaborations with the South African academic diaspora. (Wangenge-Ouma quoted in Zeleza, 2013 p. 24).

Resource Mobilisation

African diaspora academics and intellectuals can also help to mobilise resources from their own institutions, foundations, and national and international agencies to support research, scholarships and other projects on and about Africa. There are several ongoing initiatives that the diaspora and the African Heads of Mission can tap into in the process of establishing linkages.

One example is the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA), African Academic Diaspora Support to African Universities. The program is funded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York and involves African academics in the diaspora to support academic activities in African universities. The participating countries in 2016 were Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda. The program encourages, organises and facilitates linkages and exchanges between the African diaspora and African universities. During the 2017-2021 programme cycle, CODESRIA awarded 12 grants to African academics in the diaspora for visiting fellowships to African universities. The grantees will spend time in African universities to undertake academic activities aimed at strengthening teaching and research in social sciences, humanities and higher education studies. The tenure of the visiting professorship will range from two weeks to three months. An analysis of the grantees reveals that most of them (eight) were from the USA, Belgium (one), United Kingdom (one), Germany (one) and Portugal (one). The African countries receiving the grantees were Kenya (five), South Africa (three), Nigeria (one), Ghana (one), Mozambique (one) and Uganda (one) (CODESRIA Newsletter 2948, accessed September 25th 2019). This is an opportunity that African Heads of Missions/ambassadors whose countries have not benefited in the past can explore.

There are other programs that target the African diaspora. One such example is supported by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) known as the Migration for Development in Africa (MIDA). The program aims at mobilising the skills and financial resources of African diaspora to support development projects in Africa. It supports the short term, long term or virtual return of expatriate skills to key sectors. The IOM supports MIDA through designing projects in various regions, countries and sectors. It operates in 11 African countries (Benin, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Rwanda, Senegal, United Republic Tanzania and Uganda) (Agunias & Newland, 2012 p.166).

There are government resources that the African diaspora can access to support their partnership with African Heads of Mission/ ambassadors. For example, on September 4th, 2019 the Canadian government released details of a CAD $150 Million strategy to promote study abroad program (Beaulne-Stuebing, 2019). The Initiative, shared by Jim Carr, Minister of International Trade Diversification aims to increase the number of Canadians studying abroad, diversify the countries from which students come to Canada, as well as expand the range of their fields of study, their levels of study, as well as their destinations. It is estimated that in 2017, 11 per cent of Canadian undergraduates studied abroad during their degrees. However, the popular destination countries are skewed towards the USA, France, Australia and United Kingdom, while Canada receives more than 50 per cent of its international students from India and China. The new strategy seeks to expand the source of international students, hence an opportunity here for African diaspora and Heads of Missions to tap into. There is need to attract more students from African countries to come and study in Canada and more Canadian students to study in Africa. Here, Diaspora diplomacy can play a big role.

Curriculum Development

African heads of mission can work with the African diaspora in Canada who are academics in universities to lobby, develop and introduce African studies curricula in Canadian universities. African studies courses will allow the new generation of African diaspora, Africans and non-Africans to learn more about the African continent, its people and culture. This will go a long way in removing misconceptions, prejudices that result from lack of knowledge and information about the continent. African studies programs will also allow more scholars and researchers to conduct more research about Africa.

Creation of a Skills Database

There is a highly skilled African diaspora in Canada. According to Statistics Canada, based on census results of April 2016, Canada is projected to be an even more diverse country in the future. This census projects that by 2036, 3 in 10 Canadians will be foreign born. Two thirds of the population growth in the five years before 2016 was because of immigration. The census results of 2016 also found that Canada's population is increasingly well educated. According to OECD indicators of 2017 over 55 per cent of adults aged 25 to 64 have tertiary education in Canada (LaRochelle-Cote, 2017 pp.18-20). The African diaspora and the African Heads of Missions/embassies can partner to collaboratively collect data on the numbers, skills and experiences of the diaspora in Canada. Once the numbers, distribution and skills have been identified, then the modalities of partnerships can be developed based

on the needs of the countries of origin and the African diaspora. A database can be created by encouraging the African diaspora in Canada to register with the missions/ embassies.

Organising and Hosting Conferences

As we have seen in the case of Carleton, the African diaspora can partner with the Heads of Missions/ ambassadors to organise conferences, symposia, public lectures and other forums that can be used to discuss issues of concern and current affairs affecting the continent. Presently, the diaspora might be better placed to host these conferences in their institutions where they can mobilise academics, students and scholars in specialised areas such as climate change, immigration, refuges crisis and conflict resolution. These scholars can share their research findings, policy proposals and recommendations geared towards solving the challenges facing the African continent. The Heads of Missions/ambassadors on their part can invite government representatives, policy makers and civil society organisations and representatives who are based in the continent to come and share their current practices and engage in academic discourses that can lead to policy formulation or revision. Such forums, if well planned, and executed can go far in identifying strategies that can be used to engage the diaspora in the politics and governance of their national governments or countries of origin. The forums can be based on regional blocks like East African Community (EAC), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and a North African group since the different regions have specific issues that concern them. The joint forum can be used to enhance economic partnership, creating incentives for innovation and entrepreneurship, research and development and knowledge transfer (Mwarigu, 2012).

Partnership in the Provision of Consular Services

African governments establish consulates in various countries as a way of reaching out to the diaspora in those countries. Consulates play an important role in linking the diaspora with government of their countries of origin. There are opportunities for African Heads of missions/ ambassadors to partner with the African diaspora in Canada in the provision of consular services. The African diaspora has played a key role in marketing their countries and organising trade exhibitions and trade delegations from Canada to their countries of origin through the consulates. Some have offered their services pro bono as counsellor general officers or consulates where they offer services or advertise their countries. African diaspora has offered their expertise and resources to support their countries of origin by accepting the position of honorary consuls. The consuls play an important role in supporting their High Commissions/Embassies through provisions of consular services such as visa services, passport services, citizen registration and legalisation of documents of the diaspora. Those that are well established (businesspeople and entrepreneurs) use their networks to build trade and investment partnerships with their countries of origin. They provide free office space as well as host trade, government and investor delegations from African countries.

The opportunities for partnership summarized here are by no means exhaustive.

Each African country has different foreign policy emphasis and therefore will seek to work with the African diaspora based on their specific needs and emphasis. This section suggests that there are opportunities for diaspora diplomacy in Canada.

Challenges of Diaspora Diplomacy

Although diaspora diplomacy as defined here has indeed many benefits for the African continent, there are some challenges that may prevent its effective implementation. Some of these challenges arise from the complex nature of the diaspora population while others are as a result of inadequate policy frameworks within African countries on diaspora diplomacy. Some of the challenges are summarized in this section.

Inadequate Policy Framework for Diaspora Diplomacy

Diaspora engagement is a new phenomenon on the African continent. Although the African Union has proposed strategies for diaspora engagement, individual countries have yet to develop national policies and strategic plans on the same. The countries that have policies like Kenya have not harmonised their policies with regional and continental frameworks. Most African countries have yet to develop policies that will involve diaspora Africans in the political system, governance and national decision making. Although dual citizenship provisions have been made in some countries like Nigeria, Kenya there have been challenges associated with dual citizenship especially where African diaspora members have wanted to run for political positions like members of the national parliaments or have been nominated for appointment to positions considered sensitive and touch on national security. Question of loyalty may arise when they want to serve in their African countries of origin. For example, a Kenyan diaspora member, Mwende Mwinzi, who holds both Kenyan and US citizenship by birth was nominated by the President of the Republic of Kenya as Kenya's ambassador to Seoul, South Korea in June 2019. During her approval hearing at the national assembly, parliament approved her nomination but asked her to renounce her US citizenship before taking her appointment. For her, the question being asked was whether being ambassador could put her in a conflict of loyalty. Parliament cited Chapter six of the Kenya Constitution 2010 on leadership and integrity that stipulates that state officers should not hold dual citizenship. Ms. Mwinzi on her part, thought that parliament was being unfair to her since she cannot renounce her birth right to be both a Kenyan and US citizen. She is a philanthropist who operates a children's orphanage in Kenya. She sued the Kenyan parliament for discrimination. She defended her loyalty to Kenya by saying that "from my adulthood, everything about my life has been Kenya-bound" (Mutambo, 2019, para 2). Members of Parliament on the other hand asked the national assembly to rescind its decision to approve her nomination after she failed to renounce her citizenship before taking the appointment (Mwere, 2019).

The experience of Ms. Mwinzi has made the Kenyan diaspora feel that they are being locked out from serving their country. The Kenya Diaspora Alliance (KDA) which represents a grouping of associations of Kenyans living abroad argues that the national assembly is engaging in an illegality by forcing a Kenyan to renounce a citizenship she did not choose. Moreover, they think that the Kenyans in the diaspora already send in more money than Kenyan's annual foreign direct investment, making them the highest foreign earners for the country (Mutambo, 2019). This points to

a policy gap and implementation framework challenge that may prevent diaspora diplomacy.

Absence of Data on Diaspora Population

The diplomatic missions lack the capacity to map and build a database on the diaspora. The absence of data can be attributed to inadequate reliable data on individuals and organisations within the diaspora. Attempts to encourage the diaspora to register with the diplomatic missions have not been successful. This is partly attributed to the fact that some members of the diaspora are suspicious about how the information they give to the diplomatic missions is going to be used. As a result, very few diasporas register and engage directly with the diplomatic missions. The younger second and third generation diaspora are not easy to reach as most of them do not have strong affiliation to the countries of origin.

Inadequate Resources for Diaspora diplomacy

There are inadequate financial resources in the diplomatic missions to support diaspora diplomacy. Given the program-based budgeting that is used in most governments, sometimes missions/embassies lack adequate finances to organise for meetings with the diaspora. So, the missions rely on the good will of the diaspora to organise activities where they are invited to attend. On the other hand, the diaspora imagines that there is a budget allocated for their involvement.

There are challenges associated with unrealistic expectations from the diaspora as well as the African Heads of Missions. Some diaspora may expect to be recognised or remunerated for the services/diplomatic engagements they engage in by the embassies who may not have a budget to meet the costs. Canada being a large country in terms of land mass makes it difficult for all the diaspora to engage especially since most of the embassies/ high commissions are based in Ottawa.

Whereas most African diaspora academics in Canada may be willing to support or offer their time during their summer breaks, the infrastructure to support diaspora academics is sometimes lacking at African universities. Some academics interviewed by Zeleza (2013) shared their frustrations for not being provided the facilities, including accommodation and office space promised prior to their arrival. Few African institutions have the resources to bring in diaspora academics. In addition to inadequate resources, there can sometimes be hostility towards diaspora academics, especially those who may want to work with their counterparts in African universities. Prof. Adesanmi described his experience of working with African universities thus:

> It's not easy. There's resentment. We get called names…Colleagues treat us as traitors. You abandoned us when the going got tough. We deal with a lot of hostility. They say it on listservs and they call you names and stuff. Sometimes you can't even critique their work. It's very challenging. You go out of your way to be overly humble to deal with them because you are dealing with fragile sensitivities (Zeleza, 2013 p.17).

Such hostility is likely to inhibit African intellectuals who are willing to help build the capacity of African institutions. The diaspora sometimes finds work environments in Africa challenging, regarding access to computer facilities, Internet

access and suitable accommodation, making it difficult for them to transfer their knowledge, technology and experience to their countries of origin (Agunias &Newland, 2012). Such challenges suggest the need for a more robust framework to delineate how diaspora diplomacy can be rolled out to benefit African countries.

Conclusion

Through the work of the late Prof. Adesanmi, this article has explored diaspora diplomacy as a venue for tapping the skills and knowledge of the African diaspora in Canada. African diaspora members have a role to play as intellectuals and academics in the development of the African continent, and they have the good will to engage with the continent given their skills, knowledge and resources. The African Heads of Missions/ambassadors can tap into their good will through diaspora diplomacy, and they can use the diaspora to enhance relationships with the Canadian government.

For diaspora diplomacy to be enhanced there is a need to promote continuous dialogue with the African diaspora to explore meaningful ways of engagement. The dialogue will also help to build trust among the diaspora. Heads of African Missions/ambassadors in consultations with their governments and diaspora need to work on a road map for diaspora diplomacy along the lines proposed by Agunias & Newland (2012). The key elements of this road map include identifying goals and capacities, knowing your diaspora, building trust, mobilising stakeholders (government, diaspora and civil society) and effective engagement of diaspora in development. For diaspora diplomacy to be effective and sustainable there is a need to develop organizational infrastructures that minimize the challenges and maximize mutual benefits for African diaspora members who are willing to participate. If there are no adequate incentives and a well-established framework for engagement, African intellectuals and diaspora members are not likely to be attracted to diaspora diplomacy. There is thus need for governments to allocate a budget and a dedicated desk for diaspora diplomacy to be fully implemented. The capacity of the African missions and diaspora community organisations in Canada needs to be strengthened to enable them to engage in diaspora diplomacy.

African intellectuals in the 21st Century, African diaspora members in Canada and those in other parts of the world, have much to learn from the work of the late Prof. Adesanmi. The diaspora in Canada can support universities in Africa by teaching courses, participating in curriculum and program review and development, running joint summer schools whereby several African universities host post-doctoral fellows and visiting researchers and professors and supervising or mentoring masters and doctoral students. Diaspora intellectuals can also serve as mentors to graduate students in African universities.

Prof. Adesanmi's love and devotion to the African continent, as shown in his activities, illustrate that he was indeed a Pan Africanist intellectual who left this world too soon. However, his spirit and legacy will continue to be carried on by the many students, academics, government officials and readers of his literature whom he has greatly inspired. May your soul rest in peace Pius.

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Pius Adesanmi: A Paradigm Shift in Pan African Humanity

Samuel Ojo Oloruntoba

The paper locates the professional worldview and personality of Pius Adebola Adesanmi, who died in the ill-fated Ethiopian Airlines crash in the early hours of Sunday March 10, 2019, within Pan African Humanity (PAH). Pan African Humanity refers to the embodiment of values, mores, norms and character of an African in relations to others. The paradigm shift that Adesanmi represented in Pan African Humanity is informed by his life-long commitment to work for the restoration of the above qualities through the development of a new cadre of African intellectuals who take pride in their own humanity, are socially and politically conscious, committed to excellence in both professional and public spaces with enough concern for building a better African society. While the distinctive features of Pan African Humanity are still cherished by Africans, many of these have been lost due to the degradation, distortion, pollution and disruption that Africans have had with other parts of the world, the resulting competition that have come to define their daily experiences and changes in the global value system.

This paper is based on experiential personal encounters that the writer had with Pius Adesanmi as well as his numerous updates on social media and literary texts. The paper will focus on his numerous engagements in mentoring African scholars at various sites, such as the Pan African Doctoral Academy in Accra, Ghana, the Abiola Irele Seminar on Theory and Criticism and the African Doctoral Lounge on Facebook, which he created. The paper seeks to answer the questions: What are the factors that motivated his commitment, even at personal costs, to these activities? How did these link to his reflection on building Pan African Humanity? How can these initiatives be maintained to sustain the legacy of Pius Adesanmi? This paper will involve an historical investigation and analysis of the above questions through personal experiences of collaborating with Pius Adesanmi on various projects, as well as his writings on his motivations for relentlessly pursuing these ideals.

Introduction

This biographical paper chronicles aspects of the professional life and engagements of Pius Adebola Adesanmi, the late Professor of English and Literature and former Director of the Institute of African Studies, Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada. Born on February 27, 1972, to the Adesanmi family in Isanlu, Kogi State, Nigeria, he died in the ill-fated Ethiopia Airlines crash shortly after takeoff in the early morning of March 10, 2019. This paper is based on experiential personal encounters that the writer had with Pius Adesanmi, testimonies from other professional colleagues, which came in the form of tributes after his passing, as well as his numerous updates on social media and literary texts. The paper will focus on his numerous engagements in mentoring African scholars at various sites, such as the Pan African Doctoral Academy in Accra, Ghana, the Abiola Irele Seminar on Theory and Criticism, Kwara State University, Nigeria, where he was a Co-Director, identification of talents and commitment to their development and maturity and the noble objective that informed the creation of the online platform, African Doctoral Lounge. What are the factors that motivated his commitment, even at personal costs, to these activities? How did these link to his reflection on building Pan African Humanity? How can these initiatives be maintained to sustain the legacy of Pius Adesanmi?

This paper will involve a historical investigation and analysis of the above questions through personal experiences of collaborating with Pius Adesanmi on some of these projects as well as his writings on his motivations for relentlessly pursuing these ideals. It commemorates the life of a man whose star burnt brightly across continents, spaces and generations, but disappeared too soon. While not exhaustive, it attempts to locate the life and time of Pius Adesanmi within a particular worldview where epistemological grounding in one's traditional values, norms, history and philosophy informed and inspired a life dedicated to the service of crafting a better human society.

After this introduction, the rest of this paper proceeds as follows. The next section provides a biographical sketch of Pius Adesanmi, in terms of his formative years, educational training, socio-cultural inclinations and how his background reinforced his social activism, public intellectualism and other modes of social interventions. Section three contains the existential struggles that continue to define daily experiences of Africanism, especially Nigeria, and how this constituted a burden of action for Pius Adesanmi. In section four, I lay out the concept of Pan-African Humanity as well as the contentions that have come to undermine it. In other words, although certain qualities, mores, and what Irele (1993) calls African Imagination have defined Africans for centuries, the changes in the organization of the society, largely exemplified by commoditization of life under capitalism, the reification of what Chomsky and Barsamia (2017) refers to as a culture of consumerism and exhibitionism in the age of technology, appear to have caused massive disruptions in interpersonal relations, aggravated micro-aggression, fostered territorial thinking, unhealthy rivalry and cut-throat competition. The next section locates Pius Adesanmi's efforts at reconstructing Pan-African Humanity not just by his satirical writings on the failure of the elites in Africa to judiciously use the resources of the continent to foster inclusive development, but by his numerous practical, if selfless, involvement in restoring lost values of mentoring, creating opportunities for scholars through information shar-

ing, writing reference letters, inspiring people to look inward and develop their own talents and building bridges across generations and spaces. I will argue that contrary to the culture of professional insecurity that pervades the academia, especially in Africa, Pius Adesanmi was secured in his own space and unperturbed by the rise of other stars. In contradistinction to the destructive culture of *kenimanism* and *kenimatoism*[1]that have become so pervasive, in which some who claim to be senior scholars feel threatened by the profiles of junior scholars, Adesanmi acknowledged excellence and talents and inspired those who possess these qualities to do even more for Africa. Adesanmi's involvement in various initiatives such as the Pan African Doctoral Academy, Abiola Irele Seminar on Theory and Criticism, African Young Graduates and Scholars Conference and the creation of the African Doctoral Lounge attest to his commitment to the improvement of higher education in Africa. The next section details his efforts at building bridges between the academia in North America, especially through the Institute of African Studies at Carleton University and universities in Africa, mediating the spaces between the town and the gown through engagements with African Diplomats in Canada and seeking for ways to develop the Institute of African Studies to a formidable site for the production of knowledge on Africa. The last section concludes with reflections on how to sustain the legacies of Pius Adesanmi by consciously replicating his models of engagement through the mobilisation of people in his networks.

The Essential Pius Adesanmi-upbringing, values, socio-cultural inclinations

Pius Adesanmi was born to the family of Mama Louis and Pa Joshua Adesanmi in Isanlu, Yagba West Local Government, Kogi State Nigeria. He was the third and only son of three children. His parents were of Catholic background and educationists with training in England. In Yoruba mythology, Pius was an abiku, who is a child who died after birth and returned again to the earth only to appear and re-appear. As Adesanmi himself wrote in 'Escape on my mind', after the first two girls, the mother gave birth to two children in quick successions both of whom died in infancy (Adesanmi, 2020). It was the third attempt that resulted in the birth of Pius. Despite the Christian faith of the parents, the consciousness of the circumstances of his birth and the important void he came to fill as the only male child of the family predisposed them to treat him in a special way. While his parents wanted him to be a Catholic priest, who is completely dedicated to God, and with full assurance of divine protection and possible hedge against another sudden disappearance, the paternal grandmother would have none of that as she ensured there was a continuous dose of application of African 'insurance' in the form of incisions and traditional medicines on Pius' body each time he visited home. Perhaps a consciousness of the possibility of his sudden disappearance also made him accept the application of the 'insurance'.

Pius grew up as a prodigious child under the tutelage of the Catholic priests

1 These two concepts are formed from the Yoruba language. The first one denotes the prevalence of a cultural practice where those who have advanced in their careers or have accumulated much wealth will do everything possible to hinder any one outside their group from moving near the circle of success. *Kenimatoism* is a bit different from *Kenimanism* in that it represents resentment to other people who aspire to succeed or move near the level of success of others, even though the upcoming ones might have the same level of qualifications.

who, according to him, were of the puritan type from France and Quebec, Canada. He graduated with First Class in French from the University of Ilorin, Nigeria in 1992, obtained a Masters's Degree in French from the University of Ibadan in 1994 and proceeded to obtain a Ph.D. in French at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada at the age of 30. Before joining Carleton, he held a faculty position at Penn State University in the United States of America.

Pius Adesanmi's personality was formed by formal and informal education. Both forms of education reflected the excellence of his spirit, his humanity and humanness and advocacy for social justice. If formal education gave him the global platform with which he shone so brightly, the knowledge of his Yoruba culture, omooluwabi ethos, social mores and a sense of community underpinned his relentless pursuit of the restoration of the lost pride of Africans. Pius was rooted in Yoruba language and the mastery of the proverbs. His ability to make and maintain such wide professional networks, even with those he criticized in government, was borne out of his sense of community and associational life. His capacity to serve as a big umbrella under whom many young scholars could hide for mentorship is rooted in his cultural Yoruba upbringing in which the training of every child is the responsibility of every member of the community. In the African setting, the wisdom of elders provides invaluable lessons of life for any willing child. The unparallel wisdom that Pius exhibited and the brilliance of thought that he displayed can be attributable to the repertoire of knowledge that he was exposed to as a child growing up among the elders in his native town of Isanlu and Kabba. The combination of the native knowledge and the world-class education that he received at such a tender age contributed to his global and local relevance. Falola (2019) alludes to this in his tribute thus:

> Pius understood the core of the capitalist system, set against the context of the rural background of his parentage. He became audacious, seeking the ways to transform the rural into the modern, and means to tame capitalism into one with a soul. He resided in the heart of the capitalist system but his mind and spirit are in the rural. He successfully created a community of language to capture the minds of his commune.

If the received knowledge from various universities that Pius attended contributed to his sophisticated mind and high level of articulation, the cultural upbringing from his cultural roots laid the foundation for his angst against misgovernance and irresponsibility of the political elites, as well as his persistent propping of the followership in Africa to rise above passivity.

The Challenge in Africa and Pius Adesanmi's Burden of Action

That Africa has underperformed below her potential in all spheres has been a subject of much debate among scholars in the humanities and social sciences (see Arman, 1968, Ayittey, 1994, Bayart, 1993, Osaghae, 1998, Chabal and Daloz, 1999). These works show how the failure of governance exemplified through weak institutions, predatory elites and the pursuit of personal interest as against the advancement of the common good have kept Africa in chains of poverty and underdevelopment. Indeed, the combination of historical forces of colonialism, contradictions

of political independence and economic dependence, imposition of external political system in the form of state institutions, dependent capitalism, dictatorship, an emasculated civil society sector, weak and corrupt bureaucracy and near absence of a developmental political class to chart the course of transformation, have ossified the gains of independence in postcolonial Africa (Shivji, 1980, Taylor 2014, 2018). Although scholars like Mkandawire (2011, 2005) would disagree that post-independent African leaders have not put development on the agenda and that experiences of African countries are very diverse, this does not detract from the prevalence of poverty and inequality as well as limited access to social services such as quality education, public health, clean water and good infrastructure in Africa. Development indicators from international development agencies like the United Nations Human Development Report and African Development Bank, among others, show that despite recent improvements on key indicators in some parts of the continent, the majority of countries remain on the Low Human Development Group (UNDP, 2018, African Development Bank, 2017). Worsening human conditions on the continent have fuelled forced migration, insecurity.

The political economy of post-independent Africa, especially those of the petrol-states, such as Nigeria, have evinced what Karl (1997) calls the paradox of plenty. While the ruling elites and their cronies live in conspicuous consumption, the majority of the citizens are left to survive on meagre handouts. Several studies have revealed that elite parasitism and exploitation have fostered accumulation by dispossession in different parts of Africa (Joseph 2016, 1987, Adebanwi, 2012, Okonjo-Iweala, 2012). Struck by high levels of poverty and occupied by the need to survive and make ends meet, many citizens have become disillusioned and demoralized. Lacking in extra capacity to engage and force changes in the accumulative predisposition of the governing elites, many have become apolitical. Yet, the deliberate pauperization of the majority of the people by the elites has succeeded in making many citizens susceptible to exploitation, especially during elections. In what Ake (1984) calls democratization of disempowerment, elections have become mere rituals through which elite circulation takes place. In this context, godfatherism, a process through which old or retired politicians sponsor emergent political elites for elective posts, has become rampant (Obi, 2011, Onwuzuruigbo 2013). Many disempowered citizens are happy enough to get handouts in the form of vote-buying during elections, leading to what Mkandawire (2010) calls voting without choosing. More worryingly, rather than organizing themselves to make demands for change, the struggle for competition over the remaining resources have forced citizens to turn on themselves. In the process, insecurity becomes rife. The age-long practices of being one's brother's keeper under the African philosophy of Ubuntu have become endangered or totally undermined in the game similar to the Hobbesian state of nature of the war of everyone against everyone.

It was in the context of the failure of governance, failed expectations and disillusionment among citizens across many countries in Africa, low quality of social services, uncritical acceptance of anything foreign, the docility of many of the millennial generation on issues that affect their lives, that Pius Adesanmi located his numerous interventions through social media updates, newspaper articles, speeches at public events and direct engagement with universities to provide support in training and mentoring emerging scholars. The next section analyses the concept of Pan African Humanity as the motive force for the numerous public engagements that Pius Adesanmi was involved in towards achieving a better Africa.

Pius Adesanmi and the reconstruction of Pan-African Humanity

Conceptually, Pan African Humanity refers to the embodiment of the values, mores, norms and character of an African in relation with themselves and others. While the distinctive features of Pan African Humanity are still cherished by Africans, many of these have been lost due to centuries of degradation, subjugation and exploitation that Africa has been subjected to through various forms of the slave trade, colonialism and neo-colonialism. These experiences have led to distortion, pollution and disruption of African value systems in ways that have altered the underlying principles that informed the organization of society.

Unlike Asia, where postcolonial ruling elites ensured that the influence of external values was minimized after independence, coloniality, the continued form of colonialism, has continued unabated in Africa in being, power and knowledge (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018, 2013b). To elaborate, post-independent Africa is mired in the contradictions of nationalism and the pursuit of Eurocentric modernity. The hegemony of market ideas and capitalism created social disruptions that reified unhealthy competition, possessive individualism, exhibitionism, conflicts and territorial thinking. The changes in the global value system that followed from the commoditization of the society have undermined the spirit of brotherliness, cooperation and a sense of communalism that previously defined African societies. The paradigm shift that Pius Adesanmi represented in Pan African Humanity is informed by his life-long commitment to work for the restoration of the above qualities through the development of a new cadre of African intellectuals who take pride in their own humanity, who are socially and politically conscious, committed to excellence in both professional and public spaces with enough concern for building a better African society. Pius Adesanmi believed in the power of the written word to bring about change in society. Dissatisfied with the overarching failure of political leadership in Africa, he used satire in many of his opinion articles to criticize and put the leaders on their toes. From Nigeria to South Africa, from Kenya to Algeria, he did not spare the political elites for their profligacy and irresponsibility. He pointed the follies in their policies, the contradictions between policy pronouncements and personal actions of the politicians, wastefulness of public resources, the low standards to which governance has sunk in comparison with other countries, as well as the lack of accountability. Adesanmi also called out the youth of Africa for their complicity in being passive or sometimes even cheering the same group of elites that are carelessly mortgaging their future. Unlike many Africans in the diaspora who care less for what is happening back on the continent, other than sending remittances, Pius Adesanmi used every available opportunity to point out the failings in contemporary Africa and adopted a comparative approach to suggesting solutions on how the continent can be better governed.

Pius Adesanmi's efforts in the reconstruction of Pan African Humanity transcends armchair criticisms. By the sheer force of personal example, he sacrificed time and resources and eventually his very life to the idea of seeing a better Africa. As earlier mentioned, he raised the consciousness of the citizens to their civic duties and sensitized them to the possibilities of a better Africa. While the past might not have been golden, he provided historical narratives that enabled Africans of all ages to

understand the role of civic agency in building a modern society. He made the youth understand the roles of the nationalist leaders in the struggle for political independence from the colonialists, as well as the role of the youth in reclaiming democracy from the military dictators across Africa.

From his location in Canada, he drew parallels between how public servants conduct themselves as servants of the people to the culture of bigmanism that defines leadership style in Africa. Adesanmi's role in the construction of Pan African Humanity went beyond public intellectualism. He ruptured the culture of hierarchization in the academia in which some senior scholars find it difficult to mentor junior scholars. Adesanmi filled the vacuum in mentoring by generously sharing his time, knowledge and other intellectual resources. He linked prospective students with prospective supervisors across spaces, contributed to finetuning proposals for graduate students, encouraged bright students to pursue higher degrees and intervened where such students face problems, as much as possible within policy. Although he knew that not everyone will agree with what he did, his belief in Ubuntu and the practice of the *omooluwabi* ethos[2], provided him with a compelling reason to continue what he did to advance the cause of humanity. As Ochonu (2019) writes in his tribute, Adesanmi detested mediocrity and he fought hard to ensure that African institutions aspire to and accord other Africans the same respect that they accord people from other parts of the world. In this respect, Ochonu notes,

> He lived what he preached, rejecting mediocrity, berating Africans who accepted it, and calling for a cultural turn that normalizes excellence rather than regards it as an unattainable Utopian quest. No domain was too mundane or trivial for him to live out this philosophy of excellence. When he travelled on his continental speaking and public engagements, he insisted that African bureaucrats and protocol personnel make the right arrangements. Flights had to be booked properly and at the right time. Hotel arrangements had to be made ahead of time, and the hotels had to have the right amenities. If honorariums were promised, they had to be paid promptly.

Ochonu continues,

> Pius never entertained bureaucratic excuses for mediocre treatment or mediocre amenities…For Pius, the campaign for excellence was thus about racial equality and human dignity. The way he saw it, everyone, black or white, Nigerian or Canadian, had a right to be treated with dignity in Africa and everywhere, and the racial pathology of reserving excellence for and expecting excellence only from white people in Africa was a colonial racial hangover that needed to be exorcised (p 5-6).

Another aspect of Pius Adesanmi's demonstration of and reconstruction of Pan African Humanity was in his ability to collaborate with diverse sets of people across time and spaces. Perhaps on account of the psychological damage that poverty and many generations of suffering have inflicted on the minds of Africans, it is very difficult to have professionals or even scholars collaborating for long without stories of exploitation, abuse and in some instances, deliberate silencing and dehumanization. Contrary to this culture of the mindless pursuit of self-glory, underpinned by singing individual songs of achievement, Pius Adesanmi collaborated with scholars and professionals in different sites. Rather than taking the glory for the success of any initiative, he recognized the importance of team-work and attributed success to the efforts of others. Even though he was trained as a literary critic, his ability to build

2 Omoluabi is a Yoruba word used to describe a person of honour, dignity and hardwork. He is person who is ever conscious of his or her identity, projects culture and ensure the advancement of his or her community.

networks across professional lines saw him contribute to policy issues at national, regional, continental and global levels. The example of selflessness and pre-occupation with the pursuit of public good for the greatest number of people that he pursued to the end, present distinct possibilities in the reconstruction of Pan African Humanity.

Beyond the general efforts to reconstruct Pan African Humanity are the specific initiatives that he either started or collaborated on with others, especially in the higher education sector, to which we now turn.

Pius Adesanmi and interventions in the Higher Education Sector in Africa: Personal Reflections and Collaborations

Since I met Pius Adesanmi through our mutual mentor, Professor Toyin Falola of the University of Texas in 2014, we struck a bond that continued until the day he left Ottawa for Nairobi on the ill-fated journey. We struck the bond because of the common passion that we shared for a better Africa. In this section, I present some of Pius Adesanmi's engagements as well as my involvement with him.

Pan African Doctoral Academy (PADA)

The Pan African Doctoral Academy was established in the University of Ghana, Legon with funding support from the Carnegie Corporation of New York in 2013. It was established to train doctoral students and early career scholars on how to manage the process of starting and completing their graduate studies on time and in good quality. The program holds twice in a year (January and June/July). Courses that are run include, but are not limited to, the following:

Academic Writing and Communicating Research Results, Career Development for the Emerging Scholar, Innovative Thinking in Research, Teaching and Learning, Managing the Ph.D. Process (including Managing Literature Review), Presentation Skills (including oral and poster conference presentations), Qualitative Research Methodology and Using NVivo for Analysis. Quantitative Research Techniques Using SPSS.

Professor Pius Adesanmi was involved in PADA since its inception in 2013. Apart from teaching the module on Managing the Ph.D. Process, including Managing Literature Review, he organized writing clinics for participants at the Doctoral Academy. He also provided support to the Director of PADA, Professor Yaa Ntiamoa-Badu. From various accounts, Adesanmi made positive impacts in the lives of the students and participants in PADA. Apart from bracing the inconvenience and the sacrifice of having to travel to Accra, Ghana, twice a year to facilitate his assigned module in PADA, he latched onto his networks of social media followers to inform eligible Doctoral students to apply. He also facilitated the involvement of other African scholars in the program. For instance, in January 2019, he put me on Skype from Pretoria, South Africa to join him to teach the PADA students on the benefits of interdisciplinarity and multidisciplinary research. He introduced me to the pariticants as a colleague with whom he travelled all over Africa to mentor students and build the capacity of emerging scholars. Although the notice of my involvement with the

participants was short, I put everything aside to interact with them. Such was the belief that Pius Adesanmi had in the ability of other people to support the cause that he was championing.

His involvement in PADA transcended classroom interactions. He maintained a strong relationship with graduates from the various cohorts of the program long after they had completed the program. These relationships allowed him to monitor their progress in the journey to academic excellence. As in many other initiatives, his commitment to PADA was done at the expense of his convenience and comfort. As Professor Yaa Ntiamoa-Baidu, the Director of the program noted in her tribute, she was shocked when Pius Adesanmi told her that he would be attending the January 2019 edition of PADA. Her shock was borne out of the fact that Pius had not fully recovered from the life-threatening accident that he had in Nigeria in July 2018. In her own words, 'When we expressed surprise at having him join us in Accra so soon into his recovery, he replied, with his signature laugh, 'My sister, you know nothing competes with PADA in my calendar!' (https://pada.ug.edu.gh/announcement/tribute-professor-pius-adesanmi). The response was another demonstration of the level of sacrifice that Pius was ready to pay to contribute to building research capacity in Africa.

ABIOLA Irele Seminar in Theory and Criticism: Kwara State University, Malete, Nigeria

One of the other ways through which Pius Adesanmi contributed to building research capacity in Africa was the Abiola Irele Seminar in Theory and Criticism. Named after former Harvard Professor of Literary criticism, the late Professor Francis Abiola Irele, the Seminar Series was established at the instance of diaspora returnee, former Vice Chancellor of Kwara State University, Professor Abdul-Rasheed Na'Allah. It started in 2015 with Professor Adeleke Adeeko as the Director, while Professor Adesanmi served as the Deputy Director. Like PADA, the two-week intensive Doctoral Academy involved training on various modules such as managing the Doctoral process, managing relationships with supervisors, research methodology, publications, knowledge production, innovation in research as well as interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research.

As the Deputy Director of the Seminar Series, Pius Adesanmi was actively involved in designing annual themes and modules for each of the years that he served and participated. Additionallly, he was responsible for identifying and persuading seasoned African scholars both within and outside Nigeria to serve as visiting Faculty members on the program. In 2017, he contacted me to act as one of the faculty members. Despite a gruelling and busy travelling schedule, I agreed to participate, if only for two days as I had to travel to Kigali, Rwanda for another program that I was organizing with the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. In 2018, Pius Adesanmi ensured that I stayed throughout the two weeks to facilitate various sessions of the program. Apart from the facilitation that we provided during class sessions, the faculty members also had one-on-ones with the participants, who were mostly doctoral students and emerging scholars from different universities in the country. The direct engagement with the participants provided opportunities for mentoring, some of which continued after the program.

The poor state of critical infrastructures in Africa contributes to why many Africans in the diaspora have no incentive to travel back to the continent. However, Pius Adesanmi would not be deterred by this challenge. Indeed, the bad state of the

road from Ilorin to Ibadan was responsible for a life-threatening accident that almost consumed his life on July 18, 2018. After facilitating for one week at the Abiola Irele Seminar, he had left me and other colleagues at the venue to travel to Dakar, Senegal for yet another continental engagement with the United Nations. Barely two hours after he left Ilorin, I received a call from him that he was involved in a ghastly car accident. Although he survived the accident by the whiskers, the scars remained until his untimely death in the air crash of March 10, 2019.

In December 2018, Pius and I were together at the General Assembly of the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA). He was invited by Professor Godwin Murunga, the Executive Secretary of the organization to cover the General Assembly and write some reflections. Prior to that, we had not met physically since the accident happened. Shortly after we started our meeting on yet another project, he started feeling the pains on his leg. I was startled that he could travel back to Africa despite the pain. This was another testament to the fact that Adesanmi's commitment to Africa's higher education was unusual and unparallel.

Continental Forum on the role of the diaspora in the revitalization of higher education in Africa

At the instance of the Carnegie Corporation of New York, Pius Adesanmi was invited in August 2018 to write a proposal in partnership with the Citizens and Diaspora Organisation unit of the African Union, for a "Study and Forum" on the role of the diaspora in the revitalization of higher education in Africa. This was in recognition of his position as a towering figure and active agent in bridging the gap between Africans in diaspora and those on the continent. Immediately, he approached me to draft the proposal. This was done within a week. The process of writing the proposal, receiving internal and external evaluations and eventual approval by the Board of Carnegie Corporation took approximately eight months. In anticipation of the approval, we had mobilized all relevant stakeholders on African higher education both in the diaspora and on the continent. Potential researchers and participants were identified. State and non-state partners with whom we could work with for the sustainability aspect of the project had equally been identified. The announcement for the approval of the grant was made on March 8, 2019. Pius' ecstasy knew no bounds as he communicated the approval to the Dean of his faculty as well as other relevant people in his network. Despite the tragic incident of March 10, 2019, other team members carried on with the program and held a successful forum on the subject matter in Addis Ababa from November 13-14, 2019. In her opening statement, the Principal Investigator of the Project, Professor Pauline Rankin, Dean, Faculty of Social Science, Carleton University, had this to say about Pius at the Forum:

> While it is thrilling to contemplate the intellectual power assembled in this room that will address these questions over the next two days, it is also bittersweet as we must acknowledge the absence of our beloved late colleague, Dr. Pius Adesanmi, whose energy and vision is responsible for convening us here today and whose voice will be missed in every conversation. Pius Adesanmi's life work embodied the goals of this Forum. A bril-

> liant scholar, he worked with boundless energy to build academic bridges between African scholars, between anglophone and francophone colleagues, and between African and non-African professors and students. As a citizen of two continents, he passionately sought to engage diasporic populations in support of higher education and challenged us all to imagine previously unimagined ways to develop and strengthen African higher education. The last email I received from Pius just before his passing was, in fact, about this project. He wrote enthusiastically that with the generous support of the Carnegie Corporation and in partnership with the African Union, we were going to be able to "do something big." And, indeed, that is where we stand this morning – at the cusp of accomplishing "something big" for African higher education.

The array of scholars and policymakers that attended the Forum, the quality of discussions and the actionable points agreed upon towards the improvement in the quality of higher education in Africa underscored the global recognition that Adesanmi's work and legacy earned and commanded in this important sector. Despite his physical absence, echoes of his memories and contributions reverberated throughout the two-day Forum. Participants also echoed the need to continue where Pius stopped in ensuring that African academics in the diaspora continue to engage with their counterparts on the continent. The need to establish an alliance of institutions and scholars geared towards the sustainability of diaspora engagements in the higher education sector in Africa was also highlighted.

Adesanmi as the transcontinental bridge builder: Forging a partnership with African universities

Pius Adesanmi recognized the importance of building bridges between academia in Africa and North America. This recognition is premised on the universality of knowledge, the enduring politics of knowledge production and the increasing flow of African students to North American universities (see Oloruntoba 2015, 2014). There is also the issue of the differences in research capacity among universities in the two continents. In Africa, research capacity became negatively affected from the 1980s, when neoliberal policies forced the state to cut back on spending on higher education (Zeleza, 2015). In what Mamdani (2006) calls scholars in the market place, in a book of the same title, the structural adjustment programs imposed by the international financial institutions on African countries, following the economic crisis of the 1980s effectively undermined the capacity of universities. Faced with low salaries and inadequate or near absence of research funding, faculty members were forced to fend for themselves through massive engagement in consultancy and other side jobs. The university system suffered a colossal loss as experienced and well-educated faculty members migrated in droves to the United States of America, Europe and to a certain extent, Asia.

The gap in research capacity this mass exodus created in African universities also motivated Pius to seek to build institutional partnerships that can contribute to boosting research capacity on the continent of Africa. His focus in this regard was creating opportunities for early-career scholars, who have faculty positions in African universities to have the opportunity to spend between three months to one year in a Canadian university. The time away from the burden of teaching, supervision of students and other distractions could help them to learn from more established

scholars, get abreast of new methodologies and concepts as well as have the opportunity to concentrate on research. He also explored the prospects of a joint Ph.D. Degree between Carleton University and some universities in Africa. Thus, as the Director of the Institute of African Studies, he made conscious efforts to forge partnerships with some of the best universities in Africa, especially in Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya and South Africa. These series of partnerships created room for exchanges of ideas through research visits and other forms of collaborations. Pius Adesanmi was also involved in organizing the Study Abroad Program for students of the African Studies program, who wished to travel to a particular African country during the summer. In 2018, he led students to the American International University in Kenya. He was also preparing for the 2019 edition of the Study Abroad Program before the tragedy struck.

Beyond the aforementioned institutional interventions of Pius Adesanmi in higher education in Africa were his numerous speaking engagements at academic conferences and policy roundtables. For instance, he was a regular speaker at the annual African Unity and Renaissance conference organized by the African Institute of South Africa, Human Science Research Council of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki African Leadership Institute, University of South Africa and the Tshwane University of Technology from 2014. His name was included as one of the keynote speakers for the May 2019 edition of the Conference. He was also one of the speakers at the African Young Graduates and Scholars Programme organized by the African Institute of South Africa.

In his home country Nigeria, he was involved in several initiatives geared towards the revitalization of higher education. I worked with him on several such initiatives such as the Education Summit for the six states in Southwest Nigeria, which was planned under the aegis of the Development Agenda for Western Nigeria in 2017. The program was still-born because after several weeks of planning, the Director-General of the organization, Mr. Dipo Famakinwa suddenly died. There were also plans to engage with Kaduna State University to host workshops for doctoral students and early career scholars. The sudden and tragic death of Pius Adesanmi left many projects uncompleted, many words unsaid and many well-intended interventions unactualized. However, the conditions that motivated Pius Adesanmi to pay the ultimate price in the service of human remains as gargantuan as when he was here. The need to sustain his legacy and suggestions on how this can be done constitutes the concluding section of this paper.

Conclusion: Sustaining the Legacy of Pius Adesanmi

This paper has examined the various dimensions of Pius Adesanmi's commitment to Africa. Whereas his burden for a transformed Africa led him to intervene on various issues through his satirical writings, the focus of this paper was his direct engagement with the transformation of the higher education sector. With the benefit of direct involvement in some of his activities, I have shown that Pius Adesanmi's multiple engagements with the higher education sector in Africa were borne out of the need to meet a need. In doing this, he embodied Pan African Humanism by seeking for the recreation of lost values of community service, selfless devotion to

the advancement of the public good. In the context of Pan African Humanity, he was a secured person, who transcended ethnic jingoism, narrow nationalism and rabid class consciousness. He, Pius, also went beyond the idea of self to build a wide network of likeminded people across Africa, North America and Europe, with whom he laboured tirelessly to give back to a continent that gave birth to him.

Preserving the legacy of Pius Adesanmi will require that more people subscribe to the idea of Pan African Humanity - a principle that undergirds his motivations. This requires thinking beyond the self and living with a sense of mission to contribute to the pressing and challenging tasks of seeking for the revitalization of higher education in Africa. As one of the outcomes of the Forum in November 2019 indicated, there is space for more Africans in the diaspora to be engaged in higher education on the continent. While there could be opportunities to join existing programs such as PADA, new initiatives can be introduced to meet old and emerging needs of building research capacity on the continent.

At the institutional level, it is inspiring that the leadership of the Institute of African Studies at Carleton University has indicated and has shown by practical examples the desire and determination to continue the legacy of Pius Adesanmi. The support that the leadership of the Institute and the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences provided for me to manage the Carnegie funded project on the role of Africans in the diaspora in the revitalization of higher education was an incontrovertible evidence of the positive disposition of the leadership to sustaining the legacy of Pius Adesanmi. The proposed dual Doctoral Degree with African universities, short term visits by emerging African scholars and Study Abroad programs for students of the African Studies program should be vigorously pursued.

One of the ways through which the legacy of Pius Adesanmi could be sustained for the foreseeable future is to commence a bi-annual conference in his honour. The themes of the series of conferences will be centred around his engagements in Africa, both on governance, education and citizenship action, among others.

Pius Adesanmi lived his life in the consciousness of the famous quote by Stephen Grellent: (.n.d) I expect to pass through this world but once; any good thing therefore that I can do or any kindness that I can show to any fellow creature, let me do it now; let me not defer or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again'. Pius Adesanmi's goodness transcended doing good to individuals. By his advocacy for an inclusive and de-racialized global society that values community life, by lifting up the young and emerging scholars and creating opportunities for as many people as came his way, he filled a void in the fragmented modern society.

Despite the brevity of his life, Adesanmi exhibited the quote credited to George Bernard Shaw as follows,

> This is the true joy in life, the being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one; the being thoroughly worn out before you are thrown on the scrap heap; the being a force of Nature instead of a feverish selfish little clod of ailments and grievances complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy. I am of the opinion that my life belongs to the community, and as long as I live, it is my privilege to do for it whatever I can. I want to be thoroughly used up when I die, for the harder I work, the more I live. Life is no 'brief candle' to me. It is a sort of splendid torch which I have got hold of for a moment, and I want to make it burn as brightly as possible before handing it on to the future generations (Forbesquotes, n.d)

The challenge is on those who share his ideals of a better Africa and indeed, a better global society to go beyond the platitudes of lamentation, armchair criticism and sheer passivity to look for ways to engage in various capacities to contribute to

the revitalization of higher education in Africa.

The need to raise political consciousness of the teeming African youth and mobilize them for better and informed participation in the project of accountable governance is an unfinished task that requires volunteers in the mould of Pius Adesanmi. Beyond citizens' action is a functional and responsible state. To achieve the much-needed transformation in all sectors, the state in Africa, must be made more accountable. As Green (2008) concludes in his book *From Poverty to Power: How Active States and Effective Citizens can change the World* achieving inclusive development requires active citizens and effective states.

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Menippean Satire in Postcolonial African Literature: A Reading of Pius Adesanmi's You're Not a Country, Africa

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In *You're Not a Country, Africa* (2011), Pius Adesanmi employs Menippean satire to show the contradictions that inhere in the African continent. The Menippean satiric method includes the interrogation of mental attitudes, the querying of inhumane orthodoxy as well as the re-negotiation of philosophical standpoints of persons, institutions and nations. This form of satire resembles the innuendoes and moral inclinations of some Nigerian folktales. This similarity largely informs Adesanmi's imaginative dexterity in attacking ineptitude and shortcomings of the interrogated space. Indeed, with the combination of Menippean ridicule and the narratology of African folklore, the satirist, Adesanmi, is methodologically equipped to inveigh against the recklessness in Africa and to promote rectitude therein. This study, therefore, examines the constituents of Menippean satire such as multiple viewpoint, discontinuity, humour, and mind setting as preponderant elements in Adesanmi's You're Not a Country, Africa. These constituents have a distinct interface with the allegory and didacticism of African folklore all of which enable Adesanmi to foreground the need for renewal and rebirth in a promising continent.

Keywords: Menippean, Satire, Postcolonial, Adesanmi

Introduction

In reshaping the often misrepresented and manipulated history of Africa, cultural critics like Lewis Nkosi in Homeland and Exile (1965), Chinua Achebe in Hopes and Impediments: Selected Essays 1965-1987 (1988) and Ngugi wa Thiong'o in Homecoming: Essays in African and Caribbean Literature, Culture and Politics

(1972) are a few examples of fiery satirists who demonstrate great intellection in refocusing the distinctive cultures of Africa and in rebuking the inhumanity of certain aspects of Africa's socio-cultural and political experiences. In their various polemical submissions, these critics show sheer doggedness in intellectualizing the condition of Africa with the aim of highlighting theoretical frames which, perhaps, will preserve the future of Africa. But the dimension of satire that Pius Adesanmi deploys in You're Not a Country, Africa (2011) is poignantly cerebral because he effectively uses the Menippean form of satire to query inhumane value systems, to renew the mindsets of readers and to offer subtle panaceas to the average and decaying existence of the African continent.

Named after the Greek Cynic philosopher Menippus (3RD century BC), Menippean satire is an intellectual work of intense scrutiny and pontification which is marked by humour, irony and innuendoes. Like other forms of satire such as "Juvenalian Satire" and "Horatian Satire", the Menippean form is stylized by the satirist to register personal views on diverse human existential crises in social, political and religious experiences. The Menippean form of satire is an appropriate satiric style for Adesanmi's You're Not a Country, Africa not only because the method of narration and the thematic preoccupations align with the features of Menippean satire but also because the author attacks institutionalized establishments within and outside Africa in a bid to free the readers of being enslaved to certain inhumane ideologies as well as to renew the mindsets of Africans. According to The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms, Menippean satire is "a form of intellectually humorous work characterized by miscellaneous contents, displays of curious erudition, and comical discussions on philosophical topics" (Baldick, 2008, p.178). The Encyclopedia Britannica defines it as "an artistic form, chiefly literary and dramatic, in which human or individual vices, follies, abuses or shortcomings are held up to censure by means of ridicule, derision, burlesque, irony, or other methods, sometimes with an intent to bring about improvement" (Kniper & Lotha, 2010, p.476). Curiously, the definitions offered by The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms and The Encyclopedia Britannica are somewhat circumscribed in that they do not carry the distinctive history of Menippean satire. In an excellent M.A thesis entitled The Characteristics of Menippean Satire in Seneca, Lucianus and Erasmus (1999), Daynath de Silva points out that little is even known about Menippus:

> The date of his birth is considered to be around 300 B.C but knowledge of Menippus is scarce and indirect and much of his attitude to life comes indirectly through the Syrian satirist, Lucianus of Samosata, who often imitated him and introduced him as a figure in several of his dialogues. (1999, p.14)

A Roman writer called Varro later expanded the usage by imitating the few sample satires that remained in the lost works of Menippus. In addition to its intent of rebuking false mental attitudes therefore, Menippean satire is characterized by the mixture of prose and verse; the deployment of allegories and humour and the unabashed attack on organized institutions in politics, culture, civil service and other formal systems as enunciated by de Silva. De Silva adds that:

> The background spirit of Menippean satire is the Spirit of the Cynic philosophers and just like the Cynics, the writers of Menippean satire ridicule or rather scoff at institutions, philosophers, intellectuals, material goods and worldly aspirations. (1999, p.16)

This style became exemplary in Lewis Carroll's Alice's Adventures in Wonderland (1865) and John Barth's Giles Goat-Boy (1966). In modern times, Mikhail Bakhtin (Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics: Polyphony and Unfinalizability, 1972) and Northrop Frye (Anatomy of Criticism, Four Essays, 1957) are notable figures in the revival of the term.

For Bakhtin, Menippean satire was not exclusive to the Greco-Roman intellection but continued during the Middle Ages, the Renaissance and the Reformation, though in different forms. Revisiting the idea of Bakhtin, de Silva (1999) further reveals that humour, freedom of plot, philosophical inventions, mystical-religious elements, moral-psychological experimentation, violation of established norms of behaviour, scandal scenes, sharp and oxymoronic contrasts, "prosimentrum" (mixture of prose and verse) and the bent towards journalism are features of the Menippean satiric form. This view is sustained by Howard Weinbrot (2005) and the duo of Brancht Branham and Marie-Odile Goutlet-Caze (1996). Evidently, in Adesanmi's You're Not a Country, Africa, some of these Bakhtinian types of Menippean satire such as "humour", "scandal scenes", "moral-psychological experimentation" and "sharp and oxymoronic contrast" abound. Frye, preoccupied with the taxonomy of literature in Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays, mentions that Menippean forms of satire are "the digression of air, of the marvellous journey, the digression of spirits, of the ironic use of education, the digression of the miseries of scholars, of the satire of the philosophus gloriosus" (1957, pp.311-312). Thus, for Frye, Menippean satire is chiefly an attack on mental attitudes. Referring to Frye's polemical perspective, de Silva emphasizes that "[...] the writer of the Menippean satire describes pedants, hypocrites, bigots, and incompetent representatives of various occupations" (1999, p.100). Frye's notion of Menippean satire is, like Bakhtin's, to cure any anomaly of the intellect and the inhibiting conundrum of average existence as well as to foreground established codes of behaviour.

Bakhtin, Frye and Adesanmi: Theoretical Intersections and Departures

The theoretical framework of this discussion rests principally on the polemics of Mikhail Bakhtin and Northrop Frye. Bakhtin's and Frye's critical positions are appropriate in foregrounding Adesanmi's satirical intents in querying inhumane orthodoxy, renewing the minds of Africans and non-Africans and unveiling the distinctive and utilitarian aspects of Africa's worldviews.

In *Problems of Dostoyevsky's Poetics: Polyphony and Unfinalizability*, Bakhtin holds that Menippean satire is not exclusive to Greco-Roman literati. Philosophically, he sees it as closely linked to his idea of "polyphony" (Bakhtin, 1972, p.17), which is humankind's method of comprehending reality through multiple structures. To him, Menippean satire has been in existence right from the Middle Ages, through the Renaissance and the Reformation periods of literary history. It may be in different form, but it is not a copyright of Greece and Rome. Inferably, therefore, Menippean satire equally has its variant in African culture, which Adesanmi has sufficiently explored to foreground his intents.

In addition, Bakhtin describes the world that Menippean satire inquires as a "carnival", that is, a place replete with disorderliness, incoherence and pandemonium (Bakhtin, 1972, pp.189-203). Similarly, the reality portrayed in Pius Adesanmi's You're Not a Country, Africa is also full of social, political and cultural topsy-turvy. In a related sense, Bakhtin holds that Menippean satire features "scandal scenes" (1972, p.4) which, of course, are plenty in Adesanmi's in You're Not a Country, Africa. There are myriad examples of scandals in Adesanmi's narratives. To Bakhtin, Menippean satire interrogates all violations of proper human behaviour which are typically scandalous.

Next, Bakhtin emphasizes that Menippean satire is concerned with philosophical questions and contemplations. The intention is to query and subvert any inhumane orthodoxy. Closely linked to the art of interrogation is the creation of alternatives. Certainly, as queries are being put forward, there are also speculations of newer ways of doing things. To Bakhtin, Menippean satire is a useful critical tool in renewing and re-focusing the minds of readers to see alternative patterns of reality. Meanwhile, Adesanmi is equipped with the variant of this in the Yoruba cultural worldview. The writer calls this the "Ifa corpus" (Adesanmi, 2011, p.159), divination through critical questioning.

Like Bakhtin, Northrop Frye interprets Menippean satire to mean the kind of literary style which interrogates "the digressions of air, of the marvellous journey; the digression of spirits, of the ironic use of education; the digressions of the miseries of scholars…" (Frye, 1957, pp.311-312). In Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays, the Canadian critic reveals that the chief premise of Menippean satire is to query human "digressions" in history ("marvellous journey"); in religion ("spirits"); in education ("ironic use of education") and in human civilization ("miseries of scholars"). Evidently, these areas are Adesanmi's foci in his satirical essays.

Furthermore, Frye classifies each piece of literature based on what it imitates. While making an attempt at taxonomy and definition of Menippean satire, Frye philosophically suggests that the themes are the contradictions of politicians, the hypocrisy of religious bigots and the manipulators of history.

While Bakhtin and Frye respectively contextualize and exemplify their positions on Menippean satire on the works of Dostoevsky, Shakespeare, Milton and so forth, they do not address writings outside the Western Classics. This discussion shall therefore extend the rich theoretical positions of both thinkers to the non-fiction of a prominent African writer, Pius Adesanmi, and explore how he deploys queries and questions to renew the mind of readers with respect to the African continent.

The foregoing theoretical views about the origin and critical advancements of Menippean satire do not make this satirical style of writing exclusive to Western intelligentsia. Sharp oxymoronic contrast, ironic presentation of scandal scenes, and the subtle foregrounding of didactic standpoints are similar hallmarks of African myths and folktales. In defence of this, Adesanmi postulates:

> To understand what I believe is going on here,
> you must be willing to suspend your subscription
> to the explanatory authority of all the Euro-philosophical
> and Americo-modern analyses...let the African world view
> offer an explanatory grid for these things. The African
> world view I have in mind here is Yoruba, my primary tool
> of analysis (2011, p.179)

In other words, there is an African variation of Menippean satire with which Adesanmi can "offer an explanatory grid for...things". The variations are not actually overt, rather we have Adesanmi drawing parallels in worldviews and visions as he satirizes the bigots, pedants, scholars, and politicians within and outside Africa. Thomas King (1990), using certain aspects of North America as examples, foregrounds the view that if indigenous knowledge is stressed and intellectualized, it can become locally usable and universally acceptable:

> For the Native reader […] in addition to the usable past that the concurrence of oral literature and traditional history provides us with, we also have an active present marked by cultural tenacity and a viable future which may well organize itself around major revivals of language, philosophy, and spiritualism. (King, 1990, p. 570)

Adesanmi's "usable African past", derived from his Yoruba culture, is part of the "explanatory grid" of his own version of Menippean satire in You're Not a Country, Africa. Specifically, the author combines his Yoruba satirical "tool of analysis" with some of the core features of Menippean satire that Bakhtin and Frye enumerated. We can derive, therefore, that Adesanmi questions retrogressive values, renews readers' minds and offers subtle panaceas in You're Not a Country, Africa. These tripartite elements from the rigorous intellect of Adesanmi are portrayed in humour, irony, multiple perspectives and, sometimes, allegory. Adesanmi's African mode of Menippean satire is reminiscent of Ngugi wa Thiong'o's remark that:

> Satire takes for its province a whole society, and for its purpose criticism. The satirist sets himself certain standards and criticizes the society when and where it departs from these norms. He invites us to assume his standards and shares the moral indignation which moves him to pour derision and ridicule on society's failings. (Ngugi, 1972, p.55)

Adesanmi is adept in using his Yoruba "tool of analysis" as a distinct cultural mechanism of interrogation and, combining it with the multiple perspectives of Western Menippean satire, employs it to reveal the inanities of certain African and Western ideologies.

Divided into four parts, You're Not a Country, Africa contains thirty-one satirical essays that reveal the complexities of Africa in the face of cultural bankruptcy, moral degeneration, civil disturbances and international misrepresentation. While the task of Adesanmi is to intellectually attack the unrepentant bigots, the misplaced academics, the carnal politicians and even the disoriented civilians with Menippean modes of satire, the author is preoccupied with using the didactic elements of his folkloric Yoruba tradition like the use of proverbs, the incorporation of "Ifa corpus", the deployment of aspects of mythology and the apologia for communality as panaceas to the battered present and past of Africa.

Menippean Satire and Questionable Values

Bakhtin and Frye concur that Menippean satire is employed to question the values of persons and institutions. The latter is emphatic in enumerating the targets of the Menippean satirist: pedants, hypocrites, bigots and incompetent representatives of various occupations. Similarly, in Adesanmi's Yoruba culture, the intention of the

satirist is to use language to confront an inhumane status quo. Replete with humour, language is characterized by allusions, allegories and proverbs. Beyond this, Adesanmi draws from the Yoruba philosophical standpoint to inveigh against the follies and foibles of the community. Adesanmi's cultural standpoint, which distinguishes his own Menippean satire, is succinctly captured thus:

> Whenever I'm invited to reflect critically on the condition of the state in Africa using Nigeria as an example, I always love to unpack the philosophical underpinnings of orile ede, if only to illustrate how and why Nigeria's project nationhood was doomed from the very beginning and why we need to revisit those beginnings, and correct so many errors of the rendering, if we are to stand any chance of renegotiating our way out of the current stasis to genuine nationhood. (Adesanmi, 2011, p.224)

Adesanmi's Yoruba tool of Menippean satire, "orile ede", is defined as "[...] how Yoruba express the geographical and political categories of country, nation and state" (Adesanmi, 2011, p.224). The writer, in other words, draws from the "philosophical underpinnings" of a cultural ethos to query the socio-religious and political anomalies in the quotidian experiences of his Nigerian community. Whatever is different from the "origin, fate and destiny" (p.225) of the articulated philosophies of the Yoruba like the production of and dissociation from the Other and the endorsement of absolutisms (pp.231-237) should be tackled and jettisoned because they are "errors of the rendering" (p.224). In order not to be "tone-deaf to the memories logged in their cultures" (p.230), Adesanmi advises that "Questions. Questions. Questions" (p.37) should be asked if Africa is serious about removing acute retrogressions in all spheres of existence. Using the Menippean satire of interrogation of value, Adesanmi advances the view that progress is far-fetched without questions. Questioning is the bedrock of civilization and progress. He argues that "From the ancient times to our days, the philosopher has always been the man or woman who doubted, who queried, who relentlessly said no" (p.156). Accordingly, Adesanmi, drawing from the utilitarian parts of his Yoruba philosophy, conceives of the Menippean satirical method as an embodiment of questions and queries which aim at interrogating the motives of institutions. Similar to the interrogative styles of Menippus, Epicureans and Stoics in the Greek 3rd Century BC, Adesanmi queries the values in the cultural (race), religious, social, educational and political experiences with local and global references.

With respect to culture, Adesanmi queries the double standard of the Western elites whenever they profile the African continent as a black race. For instance, in "Don Williams: Fragments of Memory" (p.10), Adesanmi, armed with philosophical interrogations, chronicles his love for country music but wonders why African artists are despised:

> How do you love the art and hate its creator on account of his or her colour? How do you admit that a work of art by a black artist is pure genius while believing that black people have no genius? (p.13)

The satirist uses the foregoing questions to reveal other African cultural values despised by Western intelligentsia. The question raised by Adesanmi is a Menip-

pean style of satire which is the querying of organised cultural institutions that are responsible for the creation of values. The author reinforces this notion in "Of Cats and Catritude" where he opines that "in my more than a decade of circulation in Euro-America, I've had to learn to listen to the West and know when it summons me to perform any of my identities" (p.73). To him, the cultures of Africans are under perpetual negotiation from "North American institutional establishment" like the universities that have endorsed France, for instance, as the only "producer of original thought" (p. 76). This is exemplified in "Accent Wars" (pp. 82-85) where the encounter between the writer and a Scottish racist reveals the disdain of the West for the food culture of Africans. Although Africans travel far and wide, there are cherished aspects of African cultures like food, courtesy and communality that should be respected by European hosts. Adesanmi sustains this view in "The Boy from Ghana" (p.88) by adding that "a tree trunk may spend twenty years in the river but it will never become a crocodile. There will always be the artillery of the West's stubborn image of the Other to remind him of his savage origins" (p. 92). In these two essays, the Menippean satirical temper of querying past and present institutions is deciphered in the way Adesanmi views the inhumane impact of Western cynicism against African cultural values:

> On my way home, I thought about my three-
> month-old daughter. What will I tell her, how
> will I react when she is older, goes to school, here
> in Canada, and returns home one day to ask me about
> tribesmen from Africa? (p. 93)

Adesanmi observes that when the West focuses any attention on Africa, it usually carries racist intention. Discussing extensively on the worthlessness of Western intervention on HIV/AIDS in "Africa, Vanity Fair, And the Vanity of a Cover" (p. 94), the satirist queries the self-absorbed motive of Western media:

> By now your mind should be approaching the obvious
> question: what are three American billionaires doing on
> the cover of such an important magazine when the special
> and 'historic' issue is devoted exclusively to Africa?
> Vanity Fair is, no doubt, telling us that sending its radar on a
> fishing expedition across the vast expanse of Africa, it could not
> find three or even a single African worthy of gracing the cover.
> (p. 95)

To Adesanmi, it is "inconceivable that a special issue of Vanity Fair on any of these three countries [France, Japan or China] would carry three American faces on its cover" (p.96). This idea is strengthened in "I, Sarah Baartman, Invisible!" (p.105) where the satirist reveals the hidden ideology of Western temperament towards Africa's cultural values: "After all, as seasoned academics in the United States, you both know that exclusions tell much louder stories than inclusions" (p.108). African cultures are being silenced by Western hegemony to the extent that it is becoming the norm to accept everything coming from France, Britain and America. "You will admit, from what you now know from my own story, that I am quite used to being silenced, being disappeared" (p.108), Adesanmi submits.

The Menippean mode of satire does not only ridicule the obvious, it also brings to the fore the excluded and the dominated. For instance, Adesanmi queries how

African women are being marginalized in the mainstream of feminist dialogue:

> Could it be that you imagined that voices of the
> African American women you selected adequately
> speak for those of their continental sisters? Possibly.
> If this is the case, I must tell you that African American women
> cannot be made to stand in and speak for continental African
> women… Could it be that you are simply unaware of the considerable
> body of African feminist intellection right there in your neck
> of the woods in the US academy? (p.109)

Adesanmi's satirical attack against Western elites recalls de Silva's notion of Menippean satire where the critic opines that the central theme of Menippean literature "is that the world is replete of men and women with questionable values. Delusion as well as illusion are rampant […] nothing is what it seems to be and appearances seem to have triumphed over reality (de Silva, 1999, p.16). These people of questionable values operate in what Bakhtin (1972) calls "carnival" and "scandal scenes". For Adesanmi, Western elites are a product of a long history of self-serving manipulators and scandal-scene creators, within and outside the continent of Africa.

In the area of religion, Adesanmi in "Dewdrops of Memory: Isanlu and the Islam of My Childhood" (2011, p.17) queries how Christianity has incapacitated his Yoruba traditional belief system:

> Of the scores of Isanlu rituals and traditional festivals my
> maternal grandfather told me about as a kid, I met only the
> Ogun, Sango, Egungun, new yam, and a handful of other
> festivals, and they were all in intensive care at the hospital
> because of life-threatening injuries sustained from contacts
> with Christianity. (p.17)

In this essay, as well as in "Why I Will Not Emulate Jesus" (p.242), the satirist employs the Menippean style of interrogation to reveal the contradictions of following Western religious systems to the detriment of the Sango, Ogun and Egungun festivals of his Nigerian heritage. Humorously, Adesanmi reveals how his traditional belief system "devised ways of dealing with Christianity" (p.18) by showing the ritual elements in both:

> The new yam festival became part of the annual harvest
> and thanksgiving activities on the calendar of every Christian
> denomination in Isanlu, especially my local parish of the
> Catholic Church […] In Isanlu, you took the first and choicest
> yam harvest from your farm to the Christian altar. (p.19)

The quality of good leadership from Jesus of Judeo-Christian tradition is also decipherable in the acts of certain gods and heroes in Adesanmi's traditional African religious system as shown in "The Myth of the Good Yoruba" (2011, p.231). With copious references to the ideal patterns in the Yoruba worldview of inclusiveness rather than the production of "otherness" (p.231), the writer condemns the myopic vision of those who create stereotypes. The satirist balances this essay with the worrisome absolutism of the Christian narrative in "Why I Will Not Emulate Jesus" (p.242), where he argues "that those who invest in the production of otherness are often blind

and deaf to the intrinsic humanism of their own cultures" (p.237). This statement underlines the thrust of "Why I will Not Emulate Jesus" (p.242) where Nigerian political leaders, for instance, take Jesus as a referential archetype of Good whom they hypocritically enjoin their followers to emulate.

Politics and governance in postcolonial Africa are dominant subjects in Adesanmi's Menippean satirical narratives. For instance, the author queries the politicization of oppression in "We, the Colonized" (2011, p.41) by intellectualizing that the exclusivity of oppression to a region is capable of breeding sets of elites who take advantage of certain historical happenings of colonization/oppression:

> When oppression is transformed into a sacrosanct territory, the implacable spectre of Orwell emerges in which a people's oppression is perceived as being more equal than all forms of oppression. When a people derives its sense of history, memory, and identity from such an exceptionalist formulation, the articulation of other forms of oppression competing for narrative space is felt as either a threat, an invasion of sacrosanct territory, or mockery of one's specific, unequalled historical particularity. (p.48)

Adesanmi queries the politics behind the projection of oppression by redefining power to mean the negotiation of the exclusivity of oppression. He asks: "how do you narrate Palestinian suffering without appearing to water down the dominant Jewish narrative of suffering?" (p.48). Certainly, the socio-political unrest in the African continent and the rest of the world stems from the "territorialisation of oppression" (p.49). For the satirist, the "constant tensions between specific ethno-cultural groups and the state in Africa" (p.49) are borne out of new ways of personalizing the experience of oppression. Furthermore, political leaders use the historical fact of oppression to create new myths of engagements with the Other. Whether within the politics of Africa or in international politics, words such as "militants", "infidels", "natives", "terrorists", "revolt", "rebellion", "riot", "mutiny" and "uprising" are created and recreated to ward off threats to the idea of sovereignty even when the leadership is fast failing. This query is unfurled in "Britain, Hiss-Hiss-History, And the Ni-Ni- Niger Delta" where Adesanmi contends that the

> higher up you are on the ladder of oppression and
> historical transgressions, the more impecunious your
> vocabulary becomes in terms of your capacity to describe,
> name, and engage your victims. (pp. 192-194)

Political leaders find new labels to describe nationalists and activists who intend to query the inhumane status quo of postcolonial oppressors:

> Strange descriptions dignifying such events with names
> like decolonisation, liberation struggle, freedom struggle
> and wars of independence would enter the picture only
> when the native decided to seize the narrative through
> the pens of African nationalists. (p.195)

This trend continues in post-independence Nigeria, for instance, with political elites reinforcing the European conqueror's style of governance:

> If you remove the fact that the Nigerian people today are
> dealing not with European conquerors but with much
> deadlier internal colonisers, our condition replicates the
> essential features of the Native American situation in terms

> of the loss of the struggle for meaning. (p.200)

The loss of national meaning in the political sphere is a function of the continuation of the colonial style of political leadership.

In his polemical analysis of Menippean satire, de Silva (1999) contends that the motif of Menippean satire is cynicism (p.16). Adesanmi's cynicism against the educational system is his way of interrogating the space. The writer queries the professoriate in the university system by using rich allegories such as 'Professor Errand Boy', 'Professor Nutin Spoil' and 'Professor House Nigga' in "Professing Dangerously: An African Professoriate in the Eyes of a Country Boy" (2011, p.27). The satirist attacks the educational institution by revealing the ways in which professors and other highly lettered Nigerians are used to propagate a military agenda and other functions unbecoming of high-profile academics. With reference to two dictatorial archetypes, the satirist observes that the "combined effect of Babangida's and Abacha's assault on the professoriate was to erase the halo, aura, and ideal that society had invested in those persons" (Adesanmi, 2011, p.34). The newer political parties also contribute in defiling the noble profession. "This purulent political institution", Adesanmi adds, "benefited immensely from the demystification of the professoriate by the military" (p.35). The professors, in Frye's words, are embroiled in "the digressions of the miseries of scholars" (1957, pp .311-312).

Western postmodern thought still sees Africa's form of education as backward. For instance, while narrating the African worldview, North American institutional establishments expect African critics to draw compulsorily on Claude Levi-Strauss, Gilles Deleuze and Jean Baudrillard for theoretical inspirations. Therefore, in "Of Cats and Catritude", Adesanmi faults Western perceptions of African scholarship:

> The most problematic consequence of this new politics
> of knowledge production and new ways of writing Africa
> has been so surreptitious in its workings that very few
> African intellectuals are mindful of it. Part of the long-term
> project of postcolonial discourse has been to question narratives
> – Western and African – that are deemed to fix Africa as a permanent unchanging victim
> of the West and its violent modernity.
> (2011, p.77)

One of the handmaidens of the colonial enterprise is the Christian religion. The satirist decries how other African belief systems have collapsed under the hegemonic influence of Euro-Judeo Christianity. Similar to the postcolonial dimension to modern politics and its attendant Eurocentric imitations, religion in Africa, Nigeria as an example, is motivated by the greed of self-serving capitalists who have mastered the arts of culturally and psychologically exploiting their adherents. For instance, in "Dewdrops of Memory: Isanlu and the Islam of My Childhood" (2011, p.17), Adesanmi employs the Menippean form of satire to ridicule the contradictions of Christian proselytization and wonders: "Why have the educated elite from this part of Nigeria pretended thus far that they can do nothing about this nonsense for which they all, without exception, must be held responsible" (p.26). Similarly, in "Violence Against Women in Nigeria: The Internet as Amebo" (p.169), the materialist and capitalist enterprises of Christian priests such as Chris Oyakhilome and other "purveyors of Pentecostal hyper-prosperity" (p.171) are revealed in the way in which

the "Founder General Overseer" (p.170) is seen as the archetype of divine prosperity that others must follow. Religious institutions, the targets of Menippean satirists, are among the numerous retrogressive agents of developing societies like Nigeria.

Menippean Satire and Renewal of Minds

In using Menippean satire to renew the mindsets of his readers, Adesanmi states:

> I tried as hard as I could to disentangle Africa:
> to present it to them as a diverse geography of
> some fifty-four countries as opposed to the
> homogeneous, singular basket of savagery that
> America had woven into their imagination. (p.69)

Adesanmi's philosophical queries are intended to shift paradigms and to renew the mindsets of people who have been largely misguided by false narratives. This is in consonance with Howard Weinbrot's (2005) submission that Mennipean satire uses language, historical and cultural periods, or change of voice to oppose false orthodoxy (p.38). In the same vein, Adesanmi uses Menippean satire to renew the mindsets of readers on matters of civility, belief systems and arts. This intellectual task is captured in "Philosophising Africa: Responsibilities" (2011, p.154), for instance, where the satirist delineates the importance of thinkers in charting developmental paths for their countries. Specifically, he reasons that the task of changing the society or the mindsets of a people "implies the acquisition and ordering of knowledge in order to generate desired realities and narratives" (p.154). While Adesanmi deploys the Menippean satirical style of querying organized institutions by "restlessly" saying "no" and doubting all inhumane "modalities of experiencing the human" (p.156), the ultimate end is to change the mind of readers to see the values inherent in African culture like "Ifa" divination:

> If you know what the Ifa corpus is all about,
> you will understand that all Yoruba artists,
> writers, and thinkers have ever done is to continuously
> amplify, interpret and reinterpret the holistic gamut of
> experience lodged in the corpus. (p.159)

There are abundant utilitarian forms of knowledge in the Yoruba belief system. In "Oota" (p.3), the satirist, in spite of his exposure to Western Christian/Catholic tradition, has a strong belief in the worldviews – health, spiritual and intellectual views – of his Yoruba religious belief system. Against Western Christian practices, he allows his paternal grandmother to perform some rites on him:

> I let her do all that. I endure all the incisions, drink all
> the concoctions because I no longer believe that those
> things are pagan or idolatrous practices as I was taught in
> Catechism years ago. (p.9)

The Christian hegemonic practice of seeing healing only in Judeo-Christian forms of prayer and communion should be unlearned in order to see and experience the healing/therapeutic properties inherent in the "Ifa corpus". "Ifa corpus" divination, among other things, incorporates multifarious queries and dialogic approaches to bewildering issues such as the nature of one's existence, the crowning of kings,

marital conflicts and other crossroads of life. It involves sustained questionings and self-appraisals: a style which recalls Bakhtin's multiple structures called "polyphony" (1972, p.72). But by embracing non-African belief systems like Christianity, Islam and democracy, for instance, African leaders become co-suppressors and co-oppressors of Africa's religious structures (Adesanmi, 2011, p.79). The agenda of contemporary Europe (Britain, France, Spain and Portugal) to recolonize and to re-enslave Africa will enjoy more success when their belief systems are embraced by African intellectual elites.

In Adesanmi's view, collectivism, humaneness, magnanimity and courtesy are integral to the Yoruba belief system. When political leaders fail to honour their responsibilities or when they exploit Christianity or Islam to loot the treasuries and store the commonwealth of the people in foreign reserves, they are simply foregrounding the agenda of Western ideals:

> As long as Nigeria is peopled mainly by selves alienated from the accommodationist and pluralistic humanism of their own cultures, as long as these lost selves refuse to listen to what their cultures have to say about the validity of the multiple roads leading to the market of spirituality, Nigeria will never know peace (Adesanmi, 2011, p.151)

Adesanmi notes that Islam and Christianity are potent weapons in the hands of Western supremacists in keeping Africa under mental slavery. Africans must change their mindset to see the significant potentials in their spiritual cultures:

> Recovery of the self implies an unconditional acceptance of the fact that everything you need for the accommodationist efflorescence of your humanity is logged in your culture and whatever version of Christianity or Islam you embrace must accept and respect those values, not condemn them. (Adesanmi, 2011, p.153)

The writer calls our attention to the fact that Africa has its own mythological patterns that are inventive, humane and utilitarian. They are encapsulated in what he succinctly delineates as the "Ifa corpus" defined earlier:

> Because I consider the Ifa corpus as complete a philosophy as can be, because I read it and see in it a people's genius in history, myth and science in their attempts to make meaning out of primordial chaos, it follows that I do not invest in French existentialism or phenomenology because I believe that French philosophy has anything to say that I have not encountered in my forays into Ifa corpus; I do not read German idealist philosophers because I foolishly believe that they have anything to say that Ifa corpus didn't spell out more brilliantly centuries before them. (Adesanmi, 2011, p. 160)

Africa has its own "explanatory grid" (p.179), derived from diverse cultural practices and which are sufficient as basis of invention, breakthrough and spirituality. In "The Voice of Mutallab, The Hands of the Dead" (p.178) and "The Myth of the Good Yoruba" (p.231), the satirist deploys the Menippean methodology of seeking to renew the minds of the readers by querying organized religious institutions and then presenting alternative worldviews which serve as new belief systems. For instance,

Adesanmi reveals that African consumers of Western arts (music, literature, dance and so forth) should be wary of their heroes and mentors:

> 'Have you heard the news? Don Williams is a racist!' Don Williams
> a racist? We were crushed. In our young minds, it was simply
> unthinkable that our hero could be a hater of black people. (p.13)

This style of disrupting the status quo in order to re-orientate the readers is reminiscent of Howard Weinbrot's intellection of Menippean satire in Menippean Satire Reconsidered: From Antiquity to the Eighteenth Century (2005). Emphasizing constant cynicism against inhumane established orders, Weinbrot argues that progress is ensured when the Menippean satirist's critical disposition is directed towards texts and sub-texts of European and African cultures and politics (p.28). This disruptive technique, as deployed by Adesanmi, is used to re-conscientize the readers and the perceivers of the African continent.

In "Professing Dangerously: An African Professoriate in the Eyes of a Country Boy" (2011, p.27) Adesanmi highlights intellectual profiles of Nigerian literary thinkers and lyricists who stand shoulder to shoulder with their Western contemporaries. Similarly, in "Accent Wars" (p.82), he narrates his encounter with a Euro-American who mocks the eating habits of two Africans. The Westerner finds it strange that Africans are "civilized" enough to know how to wine and dine in the European tradition:

> All it took was just a fraction of a second […] for us to
> notice those ominous movements of facial muscles
> that are very often the loquacious abode of the unsaid
> and the unsayable […] the rapid flicker of the eyelids; the slight
> quiver of the eyebrows; then the smile and the statement
> that gives everything away: 'Hey, they serve a nice breakfast here,
> don't they? Different from African food, eh?' (Adesanmi, 2011, p.85)

Another purview of Menippean satire is in the area of civility. In "We, the Colonized!" (2011, p.41), Adesanmi redefines the phenomenon of oppression to mean an experience which any race – white, black – are forced to go through in historical times. The author reawakens the minds of the readers to the fact that oppression is common to any people who are victims of imperialist domination. He explains that "we were not only united by a common colonial experience, we also faced essentially, the same enemy – English-speaking whites" (p.42). Adesanmi reveals that the Québécois people of Canada, for example, share the same tortured history of colonial oppression with Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone and the Gambia:

> The entire universe of meanings Africa had given to me
> until then was suddenly threatened […]. It was one thing to
> read a Tunisian thinker analysing Québec in the registers
> of colonial discourse analysis, and another thing entirely
> to sit a few inches away from someone I considered a
> privileged white man and listen to him unite Africa and
> Québec as co-victims of the West and white Europeans. (p.43)

Adesanmi is also preoccupied with the task of resetting the minds of the international community about Africa. In "Makwerekwere" (p.54), he reveals how one gets "tired of the ritual of explaining to charmingly ignorant interlocutors that there is a fundamental distinction between the Africa they see on CNN and the real Africa" (p.55). Adesanmi expatiates on the idea that the pictures of oppression and civil

violence in Africa have entered the subconscious minds of even the blacks to such an extent that they fear one another:

> Here was I, a black man, looking anxiously for
> white faces to feel safe from black violence in an African city!
> […] I had dismissed insinuations that I could be scared of 'black
> violence' in South Africa! I reluctantly came to the realisation
> that I was far more affected by the oppression of the image than
> I had been willing to admit. The image of the post-apartheid
> black condition in South Africa is constantly constructed in the
> Western media around the problem of violence. (p.57)

With Menippean satire, Adesanmi seeks to change the stereotyping of Africa as a domain of oppression, a false image constantly exaggerated by the Western media. For instance, in "Going to Meet Black America" (p.61), the author says he tries "to disentangle Africa: to present it to them as a diverse geography of some fifty-four countries as opposed to the homogenous, singular basket of savagery that America had woven into their imagination" (p.69). The use of the internet and social media to denigrate Africa through the choice of images has a long history even before the desecrations of Joseph Conrad in Heart of Darkness (1899). Similar to the pontifications and cultural apologias of Adesanmi, Chinua Achebe in "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's Heart of Darkness" (2016) offers a counterattack against Conrad and all other misinformed receivers of Africa.

Furthermore, Adesanmi reasons that renewal of reality begins with the renewal of methods. In "The American South as Warning to the Nigerian North" (p.185), the author criticizes a segment of Nigeria where the residents assume that they are destined for leadership at the expense of other regions. Adesanmi argues that the "northern leadership […] is too moribund to think beyond oil and too weak to think beyond narrow class interests" (2011, p.191). The northern region should re-orientate their minds by "developing the vast agricultural and mineral potentials of Arewa land" (p.191). The northern part of Nigeria needs a renewal of method which includes "a brand-new generation of sufficiently dissatisfied northerners forty years old and below […] to take radical stock of things" by changing the false orientation of "the old and current guard of the northern elite" (p.191).

One of the high points of Menippean satire is the rejection of average and selfish mentalities. Hence, in "Project Nigeria: The Struggle for Meaning" (Adesanmi, 2011, p.198), the satirist points out that Nigeria as a nation does not have "a foundational national myth" (p.200) and that is why leadership and followership embrace sheer corruption, carnality and mediocrity. It is disheartening that Nigerians see Nigeria

> […] as national cake – which in fact means accepting
> defeat in the struggle for meaning – and proceed to
> devote strategic civic struggle to the creation of more states
> and local government areas to better access the national cake!
> (Adesanmi, 2011, p.202)

Civic struggle must be devoted to the creation of meaning and not the looting of the nation's wealth.

Adesanmi and the Menippean Template for a Newer Africa

This study has examined how Pius Adesanmi deploys certain features of Menippean satire to communicate the ethos and contradictions of Africa within and outside its borders. The Menippean satiric form is a veritable method of narrating the dilemmas of the maligned and maladjusted continent called Africa. Although fashioned after Western literary approaches from Bakhtin and Frye, Adesanmi has reworked the Menippean form with patterns of Yoruba culture ("Ifa corpus" as example) to query inhumane orthodoxy and to make readers unlearn retrogressive ideas of racism, neo-colonialism and marginalisation which characterized colonialism and are now sustained by most African elites and leaders.

In addition, this study has advanced the richness of Menippean satire in the non-fiction category of African scholarship as revealed in Adesanmi's You're Not a Country, Africa. The Menippean form of satire has been used as a communicative tool in the genres of poetry (David Musgrave, 2014) and the novel (Dieter Fuchs, 2019). Meanwhile, little attention is paid to the application of this invaluable form to the non-fiction category. For instance, critics such as Jose Lanters (2000) and Amy Friedman (2020) have respectively improved the readership and reception of Irish and Indian writers by using aspects of Menippean satire as theoretical tools. But there are scant critics who have deployed this tool to reveal the originality of African literary scholarship, especially from Nigeria. Hence, Menippean satire suffers from a paucity of interpretation/application in African literature. Therefore, this study has advanced the applicability of Menippean satire not only as a rich historical genre but as a potent tool of cultural communication as distinctively exemplified in selections from Pius Adesanmi's 2011 work.

Furthermore, armed with the narrative principles of Menippean satire - humour, allegory and conversational language - this study demonstrates how Adesanmi suggests panaceas to the contradictions occasioned by mismanagement, neo-colonialism, racism and bigotry. Some of these panaceas include a conscious rejection of mediocrity and constant creative use of indigenous systems of knowledge. According to de Silva, "Menippean satire often offers a solution, subtle as it may be, namely, that the simple, natural, ordinary common life is the best and finally, the only solution" (1999, p.16). The "simple, natural, ordinary common life" is the best solution to the mismanagement of the continent of Africa. The simple life proffered in You're Not a Country, Africa is the type that draws from the distinctive values of culture; that is sensitive to nationhood and communal feelings and that is determined to ask for responsible leadership.

Lastly, this study reveals that Africans should not project the phenomena of oppression and colonialism as peculiar only to Africa. Numerous world populations have passed through the stage of tormenting and turbulent encounters with white settlers. Africa should be more progressive by embracing enterprise, excellence and hard work through the appropriation of the values in its distinctive cultures.

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The Academic As A Public Intellectual: Olu Obafemi's Ideas And Ideals

Toyin Falola

The role of a public intellectual is often a multifaceted one. The public intellectual employs informed perspectives to penetrate and reveal progressive insights into the workings of their world. Olu Obafemi, a Nigerian academic, foremost literary critic, human rights activist, creative writer, and newspaper columnist, fits into this description as his works significantly impact his immediate society. In his literary oeuvre, newspaper columns, interviews, speeches, and role as a public servant, Obafemi reveals himself as a public intellectual in different variations and forms. This essay focuses on the ideas and ideals of Obafemi as a committed public intellectual using, for illustration, a series of interviews, his media works, his speeches, and personal notes to the author. His speeches and media works are viewed through his language and communicative style to portray him as a thinker and dissenter. Using the lens of critical analysis, rhetorical analysis, and cultural pluralism, this paper establishes that Obafemi is a public intellectual who has deployed his intellectual gifts to promote the cause of ordinary citizens by critiquing the ills of society.

Keywords: Olu Obafemi, Public Intellectual, Social Commitment, Ideas and Ideals

Introduction

It is pertinent to state that the concept of, and what it means to be, a public intellectual is quite unstable. In previous studies on the topic of who should be called a public intellectual, the concluding opinions are usually fluid and academics, social scientists, and educators have all provided different dimensions to the definition of this concept. To corroborate this, John Issitt and Duncan Johnson could not easily resolve their discussion on whom to call a public intellectual (Issitt & Johnson, 2013). In their paper, they offer "a minimal introductory brief" mainly voiced by Issitt and conclude that:

> there is no institutional agenda save wanting to support the exchange of ideas and explore the interesting topic of the public intellectual but what they say is wholly up to

> them. If they press me for some starting suggestions, I say that I am looking for what the public intellectual might be, what it might become, its tensions, its changes, its history, its locations, its roles, its responsibilities, its status and its ideological conditions. If they want even more direction, I say that I'm interested in how they feel about their role, what identity they feel they should have / or adopt and what voice they think they have. (p. 1)

Similarly, in his discussions and notes on public intellectuals, Olu Obafemi, a distinguished Nigerian academic, foremost literary critic, human rights activist, creative writer, and newspaper columnist, concludes that there are different variations surrounding the conceptualization of who a public intellectual is: "I have ventured on two previous public occasions dedicated to the commemoration of two seniors-friends and elder brothers—Professors Bolaji Akinyemi and Olatunji Dare—one a political scientist in the political arena and the other a media practitioner—to render fluid definitions" (Obafemi, 2012 p. 3). Due to this lack of specificity and pinning the roles and responsibilities of a public intellectual to a particular or single function, it will be important to highlight the different spheres that a public intellectual might fit into. In other words, those to be regarded as public intellectuals are those who engage in the affairs of the public and offer their opinions to the various discourses of their immediate society. This assertion is in line with the thoughts of Obafemi as he believes that a public intellectual should be heavily involved in the happenings of his immediate environment. Thus, Obafemi suggests that the examples of two senior colleagues he commemorated in a public speech—Professors Bolaji Akinyemi and Olatunji Dare, as mentioned above—underscore the profile of a public intellectual through "the specific spheres of their commitment as intellectuals," and their participation "in the public affairs/public policy discourse of the Nigerian society and perhaps the world" (Obafemi 2012 p. 4).

Hence, it may appear quite easy to answer the critical question of who is a public intellectual and how Olu Obafemi's life and work fit into that answer. A permissible and moderately apt definition of the public intellectual refers to someone who commits themselves to work with their intellect through critical thinking and reading, research, writing and reflecting about society. Based on the foregoing clarifications, this paper focuses on the work and personality of Obafemi, which fits into this definition of a public intellectual in different ways. The paper draws from compilations of interviews and conversations in "The Toyin Falola Interviews" (Falola, forthcoming) Obafemi's literary texts, and popular articles in the Nigerian journalistic space, as well as from some of his keynote speeches in academic settings.

Through the Lens of Cultural Pluralism: Obafemi's Ideals on Peaceful Co-existence and Social Cohesion

Born in April of 1950, the future Professor Obafemi was raised in an environment where the prospect of education was seen by the few prescient people who took the bold decision to send their wards away for a Western education. Behind every Nigerian who was educated in the colonial period was a suspense-filled history. After all, schools were conceived as an avenue for intellectual baptism, usually from the colonial imperialists' perspective; yet, they were also seen as a forest of identity reconstruction, whereby African cultural retrieval would be difficult.

For this reason, the reluctance of African parents to send their wards to school

was evident in their outright denial of enrollment opportunities for their children and in how they engaged them in farming. However, those who had the option must show a compelling reason why their education investment was not ill-conceived. Obafemi fell into this category, and the present results of his academic brilliance are proof of his commitment.

After his elementary education in the present-day Kogi State in Nigeria, he proceeded to Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, where he studied English. During that time in Nigeria's university history (and even in the whole of Africa), there were not many institutions that offered postgraduate studies. This meant that progressing in one's academic pursuit was dependent on distinctive performance in order to attract willing sponsors or government scholarships to continue in their intellectual quest. Therefore, it was not surprising that Obafemi continued his postgraduate education at the University of Sheffield and the University of Leeds where he earned his Master's and Ph.D. degrees, respectively.

Having acquired these remarkable academic credentials, Obafemi was battle-ready to enter into the African intellectual market to maximum impact. However, it became a challenge for him to make his mark in the literary atmosphere with Chinua Achebe, as well as Wole Soyinka, Amos Tutuola, and D. O. Fagunwa, as his Nigerian literary ancestors. From Ibadan, for example, Soyinka had already gone to Leeds to leave his literary footprints in the Yorkshire enclave of the UK.

More beneficial was the fact that post-colonial Nigerian and African political infrastructures left sufficient socio-political and socio-cultural situations in pragmatically difficult conditions, allowing for a site of literary exploration to emerge indiscriminately. In other words, the area of engagement was vast, and what was necessarily required was the discerning ability of writers to see these situations and, in the end, turn them into helpful information sites to negotiate social equity, cultural rejuvenation, and political freedom for the subalterns. Therefore, we are not overestimating Obafemi's intellectual talent when we infer that his body of work has contributed to shaping public consciousness in resisting social inequities and promoting good governance especially as it affects the less privileged members of the Nigerian society.

Obafemi belongs to the distinguished category of Africans whose early life was an admixture of African cultural traditions and Western culture, infused with formal education. They can be said to be the last generation of Nigerians who experienced the beauty of African customs, traditions, and mores combined in some uncontaminated form. Before the cultural deracination of African values especially in the modern era, several rural settlements in the continent were immune to the blinding effects of imperial cultural encroachment, which later decomposed the people's cultural traditions and distorted their orientations. These settlements enjoyed a certain degree of immunity from the insanity of colonization since the imperialists abhorred interior African environments and because of this, they had limited influence in many rural settings. Their engagement with any rural environment was determined by the quantity of raw materials they could extract from the place. This meant that the more distant a people or community was from direct imperial power, the safer their cultural traditions were. They would remain original to themselves and not become cultural outcasts, forced by the prevailing manipulations of these external conquerors.

Bunu, where Obafemi comes from, is a sub-group of the Yoruba, which means that they share a common linguistic and philosophical ancestry. Obafemi enjoyed the beautiful combination of African cultures and civilizations because he witnessed

some cultural traditions in their older forms. For instance, during his childhood in Okun, there was the annual celebration of indigenous traditions, such as the masquerade festival, where participants treated their audience to the beautiful spectacle of Yoruba artistic performance in oral and acrobatic displays. Through the celebration of ancestors, the Yoruba pass on their indigenous values and social behavior to younger generations. Contrary to the Europeans' misconception that these practices were used to display Africans' unholy traits, the worship of unseen forces, or the conjuring of spirits for nefarious reasons, African peoples use these cultural platforms in ways that a non-member or non-practitioner would not easily understand at first glance.

For one, the masquerade activities that graced Obafemi's childhood experience, along with other Yoruba or Africans of that time, are an important part of the people's culture where they celebrate their ancestors whom they believe can see them from the realm they occupy. The system achieves several things, including the validation of their perception about the triadic levels of existence—the unborn, the born, and the dead—and to celebrate their existence as it is the umbilical cord between the past and the present. But beyond these, masquerade celebrations have additional value. They are regarded as conflict resolution agencies in many African societies, mediating between warring factions of family members, communities, or resolving other disputes that cause chaos in communities. As such, young people who witness these events are tutored about their impending roles as members of society and their expected contributions to that society's development.

African societies are a site of numerous socio-cultural activities where different events serve interrelated functions. Cultural osmosis takes place during these events, and as a result, the people extend the lifespan of their cultural traditions to future generations. Aside from the social development value that these activities represented in Obafemi's childhood, they provided enough entertainment to ease public tension. The entertainment segment always features the cultural dance, rites procession, and wrestling, among other things. Many ideas are shared and ultimately evolve to the point where society will integrate those that are applicable to them and discard those that are morally unappealing. Unfortunately, some of these practices have become rare since the time of Obafemi's childhood. However, anyone familiar with Obafemi's level of cultural rootedness and cosmopolitanism would understand the connection between him and his rich cultural background.

Again, Obafemi's childhood experiences enable us to understand the gendered cultural underpinnings of the Yoruba, as well as of many other African societies. Like many other Africans, he came from gendered roots because his people recognize the significant place of women in society. Better than the ways children relate with their paternal siblings, the Yoruba have a socio-cultural arrangement that emphasizes women's roles, and as a result, various elements of "matrilineal" connections. This structure reveals a great deal about the people. With the widespread misconception that Africans are solely patriarchal, a number of anthropologists believe that the odds are stacked against women in the social makeup (McClaurin, 2001). This is not only contrived, but it also shows that there is an information or knowledge deficit about these civilizations. Women have their roles in the social arrangement in the same way that men have theirs, and they are never considered as being below men in the social hierarchy. In Yoruba society, there are few social positions from which females are excluded. Every trade and many endeavors require the registration of both genders in equal measure. Being treated to this kind of ideological configuration helps to facilitate a knowledge of gender equality. Sadly,

the above equality no longer exists as a result of colonial gender norms.

However, Obafemi's childhood experience would be grossly under-represented if the colonial or European influence were not discussed. Fortunately for him, he belongs to a generation that accessed Western education when it was both poisonous and liberating. In the former case, Western education was toxic for African children because it challenged their existential values and ridiculed their inherited epistemology. This was done by subtly promoting the narrative that the African cultural infrastructure was weak and inappropriate for the development of a worthwhile civilization. African children, even while in the African classroom, got the impression that their indigenous education system was inferior and dangerous to their own sanity. In essence, the classroom became an abattoir of identity lynching where the pupils' cultural existence was sacrificed at the altar of Western epistemology. The reincarnation of their indigenous structures was not possible until certain courageous African intellectuals began to challenge the established misinformation so that the future of Africans would not be left entirely for the Europeans to determine. Obafemi went to a missionary school for his primary school education. However, since he was well-versed in African cultural traditions, he was able to strike a balance.

Proximity brings about the stimulation of ideas, and from Obafemi's extensive experience, it is undeniable that he has been a product of multiple cultures. He was born in Nigeria, one of the modern-day monuments to cultural pluralism, and was raised in border areas where two or more civilizations still exchange culture very closely and easily. Okun, his ancestral lineage, shares geographical boundaries with different cultures, making cultural osmosis very easy for him. Bordered by the Hausa, Igala and Ebira people, it is understandable that ideas would flow in the head of this intellectual figure. In the early period of Nigeria's independence, the regional governments embarked on various projects, including the sponsorship of an educational system that would promote excellence. Obafemi had his secondary education in a different cultural setting under the northern regional government. Although he was gaining the necessary knowledge in these schools, he was simultaneously absorbing the cultural information that would eventually help him navigate his journey as a Nigerian and a Yoruba icon with a stake in the provincial and national eco-political developments.

After informally imbibing an assortment of cultural and social history, Obafemi continued his education in England at the Universities of Sheffield and Leeds, where he obtained an English education. As an undergraduate student, he received some training as a journalist. As expected, Obafemi did extraordinarily well in his studies both at home and abroad, which prepared him for the excellence he was later known for in his career. Upon graduation, Obafemi's academic adroitness was put to a practical test. His knowledge acquisition in journalism was immediately set in motion when he was employed as a journalist at The Herald Publishing House in Ilorin in 1973. There, he worked exceptionally well and built a robust ethical structure that continued to dictate his trajectory even when he considered pursuing a career as an academic where he would eventually build a greater profile for himself. After nearly five decades of service as an academic, he influenced the Nigerian educational system. Even after retirement in 2020, he became more valuable in the public sector where he was engaged in different capacities.

The Socially Committed Intellectual: Obafemi's Ideas on Leadership and Development

The assumption that we can control the activities around us, though understandable, can be open to both contention and interpretation because of the timeless quandary between fate and faith. With the latter, humans depend primarily on their intuitive capacity to influence activities around them, while many seek divine collaboration to unlock the potential to affect their wishes. However, with the former, the situation is nuanced. No matter how cautious and intellectually active one would later become, it is difficult to determine either the season or the timeframe when one would arrive on earth and the level-playing environment where their brilliance would be put into use. Our struggles and concerns are also shaped by context and historical circumstances. In the Maiden Valedictory Lecture (2021) delivered by Obafemi discussing the state of affairs of Nigeria, he notes the importance of creating an ideal society and how leaders should help in its creation:

> Every society is shaped by socio-political and economic values. This implies that social, economic, and political factors are the fundamental metrics for measuring the state of any nation. Some nations are adjudged greater than the others based on the extent to which their people are willing to propel the factor of national development and national reconstruction. Each nation is dynamic in the ways in which it has established her socio-political and economic perspectives. Every nation possesses the propensity for development to its desired level. It is therefore imperative that a nation should strive to fulfil the dreams and visions of its people for an ideal society. My concern, and that of all committed humanists in our country, is to mobilize our creative resources for the realisation of our national ideal. (Obafemi, 2021 p.3)

For Obafemi, one of the most prolific intellectuals of his generation, it cannot be over emphasized that fate had placed an assignment before him given that he was raised under a post-colonial umbrella, with its overdose of administrative incompetency. Although one would argue that not everyone who is physically available in the socio-politically cancerous timeline undertakes the duties of social liberation through their intellectual engagements with ravaging issues, it must be said that such an assumption would be ridiculing the fact that some people invest more effort than others in society's development.

With Obafemi professionally advancing against the backdrop of Africans' cultural and political de-articulation supervised by European imperialists, it became a natural call for him to dedicate his intellectual agility and vibrancy to challenging not only institutionalized structures but also to interrogating moral and infrastructural legacies. Not many members of his generation who undertook this social responsibility demonstrated the level of commitment Obafemi did. His history of dedication has been a powerful rod, dividing the seas of uncertainties for him to make an impact.

Being a playwright, poet, scholar, professional biographer, translator, and professor of English are markers of Obafemi's academic brilliance and an indicator of what sets him apart. In these various fields, he has made impressive landmarks, coupled with the remarkable impact that identifies him as an exceptional character in the culture of writing. As a playwright, for example, he published Nights of

a Mystical Beast (1986), The New Dawn (1986), Suicide Syndrome (1993), Naira Has No Gender (1993), The Love Twirls of Adiitu-Olodumare (2016), and Iyunade (2016). These texts addressed different socio-political conditions with varied success. For example, the Nights of a Mystical Beast is a canonical play which reflects the post-colonial and post-truth decadence in which Nigeria is circumscribed. The play is characterized by ambivalent insensitivity to the impending plight of citizens subjected to the abuses of power in the hands of those with whom power is reposed.

At the early stages of the post-independence era, political insincerity was prevalent and the playwright effectively captures the events that continue to frustrate the efforts of Nigerian civil society. The play dispassionately examines the propensity of Nigeria's post-independence era elites for backstabbing, and how they have chosen to backstab the innocent Nigerians looking to them for economic and social redemption.

Most certainly, any writer who wishes to become a social emancipator must first begin by being the people's conscience, which will involve serving as the moral inspiration for their social attitudes. By the 1980s, people were experiencing deprivations of great magnitude, abuse of unimaginable proportion and economic decline of accelerated speed. These were all byproducts of the irresponsible leadership that beleaguered them, and they needed a moral scaffold that could support them when they wanted to fall to ethical pieces.

The preceding position of support, which writers always occupy in the society, and the opportunity to serve in this position, is determined when the writers are faced with the barrage of political injustices. Obafemi demonstrates that he is worthy of critics' plaudits for his literary engagements. Having produced works that exposed the growing decadence in society, signaled by the political impoverishment observed in the corridors of power, he released another important literary text whose title is couched in a query—Dark Times Are Over? (2006). The play, an evaluation of Nigerian society's challenges, remains one of his most vital intellectual Trojan horses. It pierces through the conscience of its audience/readers about how centers of knowledge production are fast becoming an arid land that incubates delinquent and morally reprehensible behaviors. Only the hiss of the highest contempt imaginable in the Yoruba speech pattern would capture such idiocy—Shiọ!

Like the questions posed by Shakespeare's historical drama, Julius Caesar (1991), by the character Marc Anthony, in the historical indictment against his person about Julius Caesar's death, Dark Times Are Over? interrogates society because of its active complicity in the erosion of values in knowledge generation centers—namely universities. Contrary to what such citadels ought to represent, some of them have become grounds for producing intellectual prostitutes, religious tensions, social injustices, divisive agendas, and pervasive cultism. Some others have imported religious crises into the educational setting by their erection of religious centers in schools, which allows for the continuation of the internal contradictions already ignited by religious pluralism. Like his predecessors, Obafemi has established the necessary impression that drama and theatre can be used as socio-cultural development instruments. Play on!

Besides his literary successes exemplified by Dark Times Are Over?, Obafemi has equally critiqued the country's socio-political conditions through his scholarly publications. One significant example in this category is his book Nigerian Writers on the Nigerian Civil War (1992). Here, Obafemi uses the piece to x-ray many writers' works on the historical Civil War, which became a painful thorn in the national flesh. While doing this, he does not forget to explore the war's basis and the corresponding devastating consequences that greeted its demise.

From the very ashes of the Civil War, which lasted for thirty months (between 6th July 1967 and 15th January 1970), arose xenophobia, ethnic hatred, political discordance, and other multiple divisions. Given the persistence of these issues in contemporary times, the writer might assume that the problems ravaging the country are congenital. But when scholars address a sociopolitical problem, it is not to add to the issues already on the ground but to find a standard solution to a collective problem. This is why Obafemi would later write about the beauty of Nigerian culture in Contemporary Nigerian Theatre: Cultural Heritage and Social Vision (1996). The abiding theme of the work is that the country is rich in its cultural diversity, and the people can tap into this for collective advantage. In essence, Obafemi's prolific nature can never be in doubt. He has convincingly proven himself as an intellectual who continually raises the bar and maintains a brilliant consistency. The man continues to break boundaries and receiving national and international accolades is a crown to his efforts.

Growing up under Nigeria's sociopolitical conditions enabled him to understand the expanding gap between the privileged in political circles and the unlucky masses. The latter's fortune is perpetually tied to the apron strings of the former. Sadly, the occupants of the positions in the former category are unapologetic about their financial deprivation of the defenseless masses. Inequity continues to grow and class stratification has become so pronounced that the future has a bleak outlook.

Even when the subaltern understands the source of their political and economic decapitation, they are eternally disallowed from airing their grievances. When they do, these agitations have minimal or no social significance. The horrible situation that confronts them, notwithstanding, public intellectuals—who serve as their conscience—do not cease to represent them at given opportunities. One of them is Obafemi. The source of his intellectual and literary motivation was the gross class stratification imposed on Nigerian and African societies by political elites. To construct a morally upright society takes the conscious sacrifice of personal industry and a sentiment for collective goals.

It was in this thinking, therefore, that he decided to identify with the subaltern in his writings and engagement. He believes that even when individuals benefitting from the rot refuse to reconsider the appropriation of a better social and political philosophy, the nature of tyranny can change the course of events to everyone's disadvantage. When an equitable financial flow is difficult to achieve, the overstretched system can soon explode with consequences that may not be easy to contain. Hence, Obafemi ensures that his works are constant harbingers to the few privileged ones in society. He believes the system created by the privileged few could turn on them, and his works are a message of hope to the helpless.

In essence, Obafemi can comfortably be described as a committed activist-writer who challenges political domination by the privileged class with its patronage network. He is a celebrated writer whose engagement of political representatives who encouraged this social condition is not motivated by vindictiveness or bitter ambition. Instead, he continues to challenge them with the need to build a just society in which everyone can benefit. The tentacles of Obafemi's academic ingenuity spread to the international community too, as he has made several appearances in the Black diaspora where he gave notable contributions to biting social issues. In an international conference in 2012,[1] he was generally evaluative and

1 Olu Obafemi delivered a Lecture to participants of the Executive Intelligence Management Course, Institute of Security Studies, Abuja, "Effective and Functional Communication Skills", February, 2012.

particularly scientific in his diagnosis of the world's current security situation, and he suggested different ways to forge a path out of the doldrums.

Nigeria is currently immersed in a cancer of internal violence that has birthed ethnic panic and suspicion. Insecurity in the country has become a hydra-headed challenge that threatens the country's stability and frustrates all efforts at social rebuilding. This is more disturbing in the context of a novel coronavirus that challenges the global security and safety architecture of the country. Apart from the growing concerns that this has ignited in the hearts of many, it has equally ridiculed the knowledge and research infrastructure of the intellectual elite whose years of knowledge production and research engagement did little to mitigate the damage of the novel coronavirus. The devastating effects on developing countries such as Nigeria hardly need to be imagined.

To successfully combat this situation means that the government must create an enabling atmosphere for dialogue where proper recognition would be given to the country's multi-ethnic colors for progress. Of course, we are aware that Obafemi continues to provide fresh perspectives on the country's issues, and his revolutionary dispositions cannot be neglected. Through his efforts, people have added their mental resources and redefined the simple gift embedded in them. As President of the Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA) between 2001 and 2004, with the writer-journalist Nduka Otiono as the General Secretary, he encouraged writing on an extensive scale. In 2018, the Governing Board of the Nigerian National Merit Award (NNMA) considered him worthy of being honored with the Nigerian National Order of Merit (NNOM) in the Humanities category. This award was one of many he has obtained. His nationalist posture, above all, reinforces his commitment to his field, his nation, his people, and the world at large.

The responses elicited from Obafemi when asked about the roles of a dramatist or a creative artiste in the development of their immediate society are inspiring. People can quickly identify with a medical doctor's job, but not many individuals know the roles that creative professionals play in society. To their general audience, dramatists and literary scholars are mere entertainers whose relevance ends with their ability to make the audience laugh. However, the social and cultural engineering activities that people in the drama or entertainment industry undertake as their responsibility goes beyond their commitment to providing comic relief to a burdened society or interlude to the barrage of social challenges. In the spirit of public intellectuals, they have the self-assigned duty of serving as society's conscience while also being known as the eyes of their cultural identity, seeing far into the future and making necessary indications to encourage planning and to avoid imminent melancholy. Even when their role goes primarily unnoticed, they remain dedicated to their profession with a fantastic work ethic. Obafemi belongs to this category, and from my interviews with him, one can deduce the assortment of ideas he has contributed to society through his works. A number of these will be extensively discussed shortly.

Incidentally, Obafemi is both a literary artist and a scholar-critic. More importantly, he has remained successful in the two domains. As a literary critic, Obafemi's cardinal philosophy of evaluating a work of art is to consider its practical importance. Like other African writers on the continent, Obafemi does not write just for pleasure. He shares the commitment to social responsibility with them. African countries are ravaged by insecurity, disease, economic degradation, political insincerity, among many other ills. Therefore, it is only logical that intellectuals, especially those from the literary sphere, reflect these challenges in their work to be project-

ed to places not imagined. This is what Obafemi has been doing in his criticism. In other words, the appropriateness of a particular work of art is measured according to how it can reflect sociopolitical conditions. When books satisfy these preconditions, they are seen as contextually fitting and socially significant to society.

By investigating writers' works regarding their ideological standings, sociocultural, and sociopolitical exigencies, Obafemi has been recognized as an impartial critic whose judgment of literary material is informed by objective scholarship. To get to this position in academic engagement means one has vast knowledge of globally canonized literary theories. Theories are to literary critics what syringes are to doctors or what gasoline is to every car owner. The former would find it extremely difficult to provide medical services to patients without the aforementioned instrument, while the latter would make no observable move without gasoline. Theories are the abstract mechanisms through which literary works are evaluated and appreciated. Obafemi has a good mastery of the theories associated with literary scholarship (Obafemi, 2003). He has deployed them in his intellectual examination and evaluation of works produced by various scholars. It is noteworthy that being accustomed to criticism enables one to understand people's political and economic composition, contributing to society's configuration.

Literary critics are, by profession, expert social scientists who reflect on the emerging discourse in a text in relation to society in order to arrive at informed conclusions. Looking at the technical aspect of their work as mentioned above, one can ask how literary critics are significant to national development. To such curious minds, Obafemi states that their trade is appreciated by individuals who can establish the connection between their works and society. For example, the critic analyzes a work of art and brings out society's economic structures responsible for distributing wealth to steer society's trajectory in a specific direction. He looks at the instances of capitalist culture and how it has been the basis of the social relationships between different classes in society. From there, the critic can be predictive of such a society's future, making informed projections about the probable outcome of an excessively capitalist adventure and its disposition to birth an overly chaotic and generally detached society that does not cater to the well-being of the average individual. As consumers of such scholar-critic works, one would understand that the society reflected in the writings is sitting on a keg of gunpowder, waiting for an explosion at the slightest provocation. Such works are exceptionally informative because they reveal the oddity involved in the appropriation of any philosophy in the running of society's affairs. Still, they also show the intricacies of human relationships encouraged by such a society's forms of ideas. Whatever the critic shows can be used as a basis for measuring the society to understand what is most suitable.

As a creative writer, however, the above system's internalization helps create his artistic productions. Obafemi belongs to a school of scholars who appreciate works of art by using a series of theoretical models as a guide, so it becomes significant to use them in his artistic creations. He is aware that the successful sustenance of the audience's attention lies in providing sequential and captivating results because that would be the basis for getting their unalloyed attention. This inevitably places a level of pressure on him and every committed artist like him. For reasons that are not unconnected from their desire to carry the audience along, writers must conduct an accurate feasibility study of their intended audience so that the materials handed down would have maximum impact. For example, suppose one aims to write about the moral decadence evident in loose or indecent dressing that has perforated contemporary time's moral architecture; in that case, the most suitable audience for

such work is the youth demographic, who are experiencing the process of enculturation. Therefore, it places some responsibility on the writer to consider the age bracket's language peculiarity to achieve the predetermined goals. Informed critics who are also creative writers understand their works' enormity in this sense, and they always stand up to the responsibility.

As a result, what the artist is doing is no less than a leader's work because literary works simulate leadership roles in many ways. For one, the audience whose intention is strictly entertainment would not be forsaken at the behest of others whose concern is didactic or moralistic fervor. Thus, it is incumbent on the dramatist to factor in the audience's concerns so that none of them would have reason to despise his/her intellectual productions. Apart from the fact that this places much responsibility on the producers of these works, it also brings out their leadership capabilities. This is where Obafemi's message becomes more explicit; the onus of leadership lies in responding to diverse and differing opinions without making either side feel disrespected. Here, the emphasis is mainly on managing diversity and various views, especially about the world's current sociopolitical conditions.

At the intersection of globalization and civilization is the responsibility to update one's attitude to accommodate society's changing dynamics. Individuals from different sociopolitical backgrounds look up to leadership to provide solutions to their existential challenges and expanding issues. This is one of the numerous lessons that being a dramatist has taught Obafemi. It therefore justifies the thematic and ideological focus around which his works are circumscribed. Although it is clear from literary scholars' efforts that behind the production of celebrated works of art is an eternal circle of activities that authors indulge in to bring satisfaction to the audience, it comes at a personal cost.

In most cases, writers like Obafemi have to sacrifice their time and leisure to explore all the possible ways to ensure that their audience is satisfactorily catered to. They view their profession as a means of achieving humanity's ultimate plan, to lighten people's lives through their works. While they are duty-bound to make sure that their audiences across every setting are sufficiently engaged, they equally must check that they do not sacrifice truth-telling, originality, and ethics in the process so that the quality of their works cannot be questioned. They must understand that beyond their desire to ensure that their audience gets maximum satisfaction, there remains a social responsibility to x-ray what is happening in their society through their creativity. A society that is corrupt to an unimaginable proportion of the population or that is plagued by insecurity caused by the inability of its politicians to manage its territorial integrity cannot be rebranded as if nothing is wrong with its political system. As much as their profession binds them to reduce the social pressure and burden placed on them, they are equally expected to showcase the environment's downsides through their works.

When asked about the possible solutions for Africans to "get out of the woods", Obafemi is very pragmatic and analytical. Like many African scholars, he traces Africa's underdevelopment to the western imperial system that has erected a barrier to Africans fulfilling their potential. He laments that this wall was erected during slavery and was succeeded by its destructive accomplices' colonization, neocolonialism, and the contemporary neoliberal economy tailored to exploit Africa and Africans. Being trapped in the middle of nowhere is a condition traceable to Africa's recent European relationship (Falola, 2021). For people whose human capital was exploited for more than four centuries, it is impossible that the consequences are not subsequently seen in their public life. During slavery, the continent's best hands

were forcefully displaced because of the duress of expansionist ideologues. Enslaved Africans became outcasts in two different civilizations. Those left behind suffered a psychological backlash from the experience and became incapacitated by their people's violent extraction. This would be immediately followed by the colonization agenda where the colonial powers indiscriminately seized Africa's political institutions and structures.

Obafemi further explains that the continuation of exploitation during colonialism sent Africa centuries back in the development trajectory. Having their political systems controlled by imperialists meant that their natural resources were taken in overflowing abundance. In the process, their institutions worked essentially for the West to the misfortune of African countries. The assignment of domination and subjugation was in place with colonial infrastructure as Africa's economic and political life was subsumed by a foreign one. Therefore, the combination of slavery and colonialism became so poisonous for the people that it comfortably inhibited them from growing maximally. Consequently, every African country, without exception, became vulnerable to economic and cultural predation because they were exposed to activities that critically challenged them beyond what they could handle.

During the post-independence period, emerging African leaders became willing collaborators with Western imperialists, thereby inaugurating the era of neocolonialism. They offered themselves as conduits for the continuous exploitation and despoliation of African resources. With a tempting financial and political offer, post-independence African leaders succumbed to the colonial Europeans' pressure and conceded to the unholy demand of sabotaging African development. It was almost unbelievable that the people who should have been the cornerstones of African transformation, despite their awareness of the long-lasting dehumanization that their forebears suffered under the same colonial systems, erected a mercantile political structure in the post-independence period where significant positions and juicy appointments were reserved for the highest bidders. As Obafemi implies in his critique of the postcolonial political system, the consequences entangled African progress and civilization because it mushroomed into something bigger, incapable of being handled without extreme diplomacy (Falola, 2021). Heightened by globalization's pressure, the African people became lost and were constantly in a state of flux. They did not have a central philosophy with which their civilization could be developed or launched. Indeed, constructing an effective solution becomes part of the problem.

According to Obafemi, what is needed to combat these existential challenges, having understood that the burden of solutions lies with forward-looking individuals, is to develop the right set of leaders who understand the importance of shared leadership. Leadership attracts the necessary encomium whenever something is done correctly, just as it receives criticism for a society moving in a purposeless direction. Thus, understanding places a responsibility on the leaders to develop the right frame of mind to combat the continent's problem. To do this, the class stratification that has become a part of African culture must be carefully and effectively dismantled. The existence of class presupposes that it would be subject to intimidation. The upper-class occupants would find sufficient reason to challenge those in the middle class, who would, in turn, scout the lower class to flex their muscles against. All of these are a means of weakening social infrastructure, which would have a detrimental effect. To corroborate this, in his media work in The Sun Newspapers, Obafemi (2016) laments the dysfunctional leadership in the country and how it breeds poor structures and institutions thus:

> Those of our so-called elders who canvassed for and brought to reality the existence of that state today must writhe in grief and pain of guilt wherever they are—on earth or in sepulchres! The question that discerning minds—either citizens or concerned empathisers raise today is why is the state so jinxed or jaded or both rolled into a pathetic mimic of statehood? And this situation has arisen, painfully with regard to poor and dysfunctional leadership, which has erected weak and non-thriving institutions (5).

As a realist, Obafemi concludes that Africa still has the potential to leapfrog others in the development index if it quickly works towards translating its human and natural potential into tangible results. This can be achieved by having a structured plan for growth because it is important to define one's trajectory of development against going into the unseen future without active plans. To do this, one needs vision, driven by incurably patriotic sets of leaders who would accept the duty of advancing the society as natural and generous. Leaders who cater more to their elitist group above most people would have difficulty transforming humanity into something exceptional. Representative leadership starts from how leaders prioritize the people and how they conduct themselves. The ones who prioritize the people above themselves would consider the masses' welfare as primary and non-negotiable. When these leaders occupy the various leadership seats in the continent, they will begin to untangle the colonial and neocolonial web, thereby giving the continent a clear direction.

Accountable Public Intellectual: Obafemi's Ideas on Effective Transformation

Extensive academic research has cemented the place of mentoring and career guides for people in contemporary times. The action of guiding people to choose a particular career path had no place in the Nigerian education system, especially during the heyday of colonialism and Nigeria's post-independence era in the 1960s. The reason for this is not unknown. There was a scarcity of academic graduates who understood the place of mentorship to develop individuals coming behind them. In addition to this, not many career opportunities were available or open to these individuals.

Thus, individuals usually chose their career journey based on a factor associated with personal preferences or social pressure. It was more difficult because the availability of courses and career options determined, to a large degree, the career choice of prospective graduates. This was the social and historical context in which Obafemi was raised, and therefore, he was affected by this same condition. For someone who would choose to be an academic, the assurance of that career choice was not something he had, even at the early period of his school days as an undergraduate. With little vital counseling, if there was any at all, the prospect of being a future academic was not forthcoming. Still, the fact that he had engaged in a few commitments made it one of his career directions.

Obafemi engaged in social activities that sharpened his communication abilities and increased his persuasive skills. As a university student, he was exposed to several group activities, such as the drama society, current affairs club, debate society, editorship of school magazines, among many other engagements. It was in these various areas that he had the opportunity to improve himself in many ways. For example, becoming a member of the drama society exposed him to audience dy-

namics and how to confront them in a public situation. It is incontestable that many individuals have glossophobia (fear of public speaking). To be candid, people who confront a large audience for the first time are usually faced with this challenge. It requires a gradual engagement with the public before one can conquer the fear. However, the situation was different for Obafemi because he belonged to a drama society where the opportunity to speak to an audience was offered to him on many occasions. Without knowing it, he was being groomed for a teaching career. But if the drama society meant anything to him, it was that it exposed him to the act of speaking in public without nursing much fear.

We would be right to say that the university provided mentors and guides that helped Obafemi in his choice of teaching and acting career. Because he was unsure of following this trajectory at the beginning of his academic enrollment, what life introduced to him in the university showed him his career journey. Being a member of the debating society improved his persuasive skills. To debate in Nigeria, tertiary institutions are meant to involve a series of mental gymnastics where one makes conscious efforts to keep one's brain fit and agile. Debating precludes shyness, and because one would be duty-bound to make people understand a situation from a person's perspective, one needs more than substantial evidence of facts. One needs the ability to make the listeners understand issues from one's standpoint. From what Obafemi implicitly conceded to, the debate club helped sharpen his communication skills and persuasive power. Without a doubt, a teacher would need these attributes to achieve a successful interaction with their learners. Looking at this great man's social involvement, one would undeniably understand why his artistic productions are a reflection of brilliance and intelligence. Apart from dedicating his time to social events as a student, he belonged to a series of groups that added to his academic ingenuity.

Being an editor of a magazine meant that Obafemi was gifted in his mastery of the English language. After he was established as a public actor and figure whose communicational competence could not be contested, he dived into the stream of advocacy where he employed his communicating to challenge authority in a quest for equity and justice. Whereas society usually likes to celebrate the genius among students and individuals, they can be critical of them when they use their intellect to organize demonstrations, especially whenever they consider that there is injustice in the environment. In Obafemi's case, he had once been a voice of freedom in a particular demonstration in his school, Ahmadu Bello University, Nigeria, and because of the hostility of postcolonial African leaders to criticism of any color, he barely escaped rustication for his involvement (Falola, 2021). Although the school was successful in repressing his voice after he engaged with the said affair and struggle, it ignited a passion in him to consider public speaking in his determination to educate people on essential ideas regarding their environment. Becoming a teacher readily came to mind. There are not many opportunities for people to carry a message to their desired audience, but teaching offers this golden opportunity, as we all know. Also, the media presents a similar chance, and it is rewarding that he explored both options in his two careers.

In the age of Obafemi, if one did not belong to a political circle, the choice was limited to either becoming a teacher or belonging to the civil service. This was so because the government controlled the bulk of employment opportunities and there were not many private corporations to work for. This meant that Obafemi was open to serving as a civil servant, but he refused to follow directions for many reasons. He confessed that the country's civil service was a site of vindictive politics where superiors deliberately toy with the futures of their subordinates and thus prevented

them from reaching their fullest potential. He was not unaware of this decadence and, realizing how being a victim of such an antagonistic system would compound his woes, it appeared preferable to consider a career in teaching rather than to subsume his future under the exceedingly corrupt and particularly disconcerting civil service system. He laments that authorities in the system always got themselves involved in actively denying their subordinates' progress without necessarily having a reason for their actions other than to be outrageously vindictive.

Bureaucratic decadence thrived for a long time because of the association of absolute power and authority among the occupants in office. Meanwhile, it has allowed the system's destabilization because it especially discouraged individuals who would have added to the beauty of civil service and crushed their productivity in the process. Anyone familiar with the destructive politics in this sector would run kilometers away from it. One such individual is Obafemi, who decided to move away from the possibility of functioning as a civil servant. Here, postcolonial politics are unraveled, and because they encouraged corruption and other forms of condemnable behaviors, they prevented the people from reaching their potential. During this time, the foundation for Nigeria's decline in economic and political virtues was sedimented and the people's moral decadence took off at an accelerated speed. The ubiquity of unpatriotic people in different parastatals in contemporary Nigeria started when the civil service who constituted the labor force of the country was treated with such a level of disdain and disrespect. Even though the country underwent a record-breaking economic transformation from its mono-economic business, the elite class' extravagance negatively impacted the people as it impeded their progress.

These became the factors that determined the quality of individuals who enrolled in the civil service, and that also chased some individuals away. Because the teaching and acting sectors were comparatively better than others, they became the preference of this man who was already built with an interest in sharing knowledge with the people. Obafemi was aware during these periods that the inherent leadership deficit and moral decadence pervasive in the civil service were something to educate the citizens about, perhaps hoping that they would contribute positively in fighting the menace. He considered the classroom as the grounds where challenges confronting the country would be appropriately corrected. The continuation of decadent behavior is naturally impossible when conscious efforts are made to educate the younger generation on the devastating consequences it would have on society. Teaching, therefore, became a natural call to service. It was the only platform where the construction of a better and fair society was possible. It was natural for someone who had already developed reliable communication skills to consider teaching as the career choice to help him fulfill his God-given potential. Without mentoring and guidance, he dived into it and became successful at it.

Invariably, the other side of Obafemi, which teaching and acting have revealed, is his leadership qualities. Apart from being a seasoned academic, Obafemi has had a good record as an administrator and an organic intellectual, dating back to his undergraduate years. He led several demonstrations to reveal the excess among authorities while he was a student. In addition to this, teaching exposed him to the ills of academic inquiry in a country like Nigeria. It appears the solution to these challenges is naturally beyond the confines of a classroom. The domain of making policies and formulating regulations is something beyond what a teacher can do. To provoke a noteworthy change in the polity, one must belong to the circle where decisions about education affairs are made. It became necessary for Obafemi to be a

representative at the union level before he would ever undertake broader administrative positions.

He had information about the Nigerian Academic Staff Union of the Universities at his fingerprints, so the political dynamics of union affairs were not strange to him. Immediately after taking the role of the Union's secretary in 1982 and that of Chairman in 1983, he recognized his capacity to impact the academic and political spectrum of the country. The union was seen as the firebrand advocacy group for fairness in government. However popular, the political structure of the country was hijacked by the capitalist culture that has been deep-rooted in the nation's political system. His generation was especially radical, committed to the people's emancipation and the enhancement of fair treatment of staff and students in tertiary institutions. Unionism became the only platform for the projection of their voices against the government, whose members were distracted by the euphoria of power and their desire for personal aggrandizement. There were eminent personalities in the union at the time. Because they shared a common interest in creating a fair society, it became exceedingly difficult to compromise their moral principles.

Having done essentially well at the union level, Obafemi eventually considered an administrative assignment beyond the union and competed for the Vice Chancellor position at his university, a reflection of his exceptional service at different levels. He was the Head of Department of English at the University of Ilorin and eventually graduated to the deanship. In these two positions, he brought innovations to leadership. He was student-friendly and became very active in the enhancement of the welfare of staff under him. Ascending to a greater position of power in an academic environment is a testament to one's progression and achievements. If a leader does not introduce new leadership trends or is operationally deficient in managing a team, the opportunity to function in greater positions would be taken away from him. However, this is not the case with Obafemi. Having served successfully in the role of the head of department and dean of his faculty, he was promoted to fill in a senate capacity. To cap it off, he was chosen as an administrative head by popular election.

For Obafemi, the evidence of success in the positions where he had been chosen is substantial. In Nigeria, one earns the opportunity to be nationally known if one contributes immensely to the advancement of activities for which one is elected or selected. Obafemi became popular because of his activism through academic labour union positions he had held at different times. This level of popularity eventually helped his upward mobility and career trajectory. He became actively involved in shaping the country's educational system in his position as the head of a department, the deanship, and then the school generally. But this would be surpassed by the positions he subsequently occupied. Having realized how important he was in the various positions where he served, he was called to serve in higher roles of national importance to the country, generally. In the year 2000, he was appointed Chairman of the Governing Board of the National Commission for Museums and Monuments.

Before being appointed as the chairman of the Governing Board of the National Commission for Museums and Monuments, Obafemi served in several positions with records of enviable achievements. When he served on the Board of Governors of the University of Ilorin Teaching Hospital, he brought his leadership experience and made notable contributions to the committee's enhancement of success. However, one thing that stands out is that he was never so distracted by these positions as to waiver in his commitment to teaching. Despite being bombarded with respon-

sibilities, Obafemi found no difficulty in managing his business with respectable performance

Obafemi recalls that upon voluntarily retiring from his work as a columnist and freelancer in 2015,[2] his critics assumed that he quit because he had become frustrated "about the seeming unchangeable nature of Nigeria" or because he "became close to government" (2). However, Obafemi countered that his work as a columnist, heavily criticizing and attacking the government as well as his work during his role as a public servant, are of the same significance and with the same level of social commitment. He asserts that in the context of the 1990s "and its turbulence, first following the annulment of the very free and fair democratic election by the Babangida Government and the mass fury that culminated in the June 12 activism with the formation of NADECO and the authoritarian militocracy of Sanni Abacha" (2), his columns became fiercer and more virulent in The Comet (what later transformed into The Nation). One of my columns in June 1998 actually predicted the end of the Abacha regime, just as one of my poems in "Song of Hope" asked IBB to quit or be rid of by mass anger. I moved on to The Sun Newspaper from The Comet in 2003 where I had my longest tenure of 11 years until 2014 when I moved, first to Daily Trust and started a syndicate column with both Daily Trust and This Day. In most of these papers, especially since The Post Express, I was both a columnist and a member of the Editorial Board. I voluntarily rested my work as a columnist and freelancer in 2015, not as some people hazarded because of frustration about the seeming unchangeable nature of Nigeria, or because I became close to government. The fact is that the periods that I took appointments with government where the times when my criticism of the state was more virulent, 2001-2004 and 2010-2015. (2021 p. 2)

For him, at every point in time a writer should be a bearer of hope, empathy and deliverer of solutions as no writer can choose to bask in disillusion and terror. To buttress this point, he emphasized: "If ever I was to see the end of hope or the loss of faith in society, and therefore humanity, then I should cease to be a writer, which I am not about to contemplate" (Ibid). This proves that Obafemi is a writer and public intellectual who not only dissects the problems of society but who is also accountable to the public itself.

Conclusion

Scholars such as Homi Bhabha (2012), Edward Said (1978), and Frantz Fanon (1963) write negatively about the impact of colonization and its destructive infrastructure because of the complex effects of identity politics in a postcolonial environment. Children's psychological domain is developed by the philosophical constructs used in their immediate environment. Moreover, because their minds are susceptible to manipulation when they have the wrong impression about an environment, it goes on to determine their social behavior, not only in the society in which they developed, but also toward the people with whom they will share future relationships. For instance, Said discusses the unhomeliness of the postcolonial

2 Prior to quitting writing for the press and serving on the editorial boards of newspapers, Obafemi acquired extensive media experience dating back to 1981 when he first began to write a column for The Herald and did a weekly serialization of his novel-to-be, The Wheels, in the Sunday Herald. Other newspapers for which he wrote and served on their editorial boards included: The Punch, The Triumph, The Tribune, The Post Express, The Comet, Daily Trust, The Sun, and ThisDay.

African child whose mind and psychology are divided between two diametrically opposed civilizations. By being "unhomed," according to him, the ex-colonial candidate oscillates between the indigenous community's cultural traditions and that of the European world that has been imposed. In fact, it was more sardonic with the introduction of the internet as a means of globalization. There is little opportunity for the ex-colonies to continue with their cultural systems because they have not only been carefully displaced by European systems, but they also face critical challenges in reclaiming "traditional" African culture. As a result of this condition, they have struggled with identity issues, and the problem of unity persists.

In essence, individuals who fall within the minority circle in Nigeria face a perpetual problem of segregation and subversion. They are vulnerable because getting the appropriate political attention in the country remains a constant challenge. In addition to this, there is the possibility that they are reaping unsatisfactory dividends of democracy due to ethnic politics. Meanwhile, intellectuals like Obafemi have ideological reservations about the state of affairs in the country and commit themselves to the business of public intellection. Perhaps being a member of the Okun community exposed him more to inequities. The experience of Okun people is more complicated because postcolonial Nigerian society mobilizes political power to advance a parochial agenda. For example, categorizing Okun, which culturally and ideologically belongs to the Yoruba, among the northern bloc, has put them in ambiguous, marginalized political positions. When the issue of political power surfaces, they are considered as northerners, and because of this grouping, they use their political stake to influence the concession of power to the said bloc. All of these are factors that contributed to Obafemi's position in the messiness of politics and his profile as an intellectual activist. He understands that the politics of difference is mobilized by the elite for their parochial objectives, allowing them to remain in power even when they have no credible credentials to operate at these political levels.

Regardless of their conflict-prone experience, people can make something out of every situation based on some approaches: One, an individual who is determined to become very great, will always consider pressure and widening challenges as the necessary instrument for the crystallization of their life agenda and goals to make maximum impact in their lives. Two, rather than being encouraged or challenged by daring situations, some people are usually downcast and forlorn, allowing the pressure of situations to overwhelm and submerge them beyond repair. Three, there are those caught between these horrible conditions, and who, because of their indecision, make no meaningful addition to themselves, and neither would be considered backward. It would not be a mistake to say that Obafemi belongs to the first category. In the process of being affected by a polarized environment, he used the experience as a motivation to build a lasting legacy by attaining a level of academic excellence that would project him beyond the confines of his cultural geography.

There is no better way to demonstrate how important Obafemi's sociological background was to his eventual intellectual growth and public intellectual orientation than to provide evidence of his involvement and success in different personal, professional and public engagements. He is an actor, a playwright and a theatre director in part because he was involved in itinerant school, acting during his formative years. As a student, he was equally outspoken, and all of these reflected very well in his life in the later stages of his journey. He has been using his intellectual property as a tool to negotiate political justice in an environment where equity is allowed and fairness is possible. Participating in preliminary verbal debates and polemics laid the groundwork for his future journalistic adventures. Life has thrown a

sizeable number of challenges at him in the form of growing up in an environment where pluralism is a given. Beyond this, he was shown a cultural economy that enriched his moral and sociological experience while also guiding him in his engagements. He has worked as an administrator in different capacities, has successfully organized a handful of academic programs, and created a patronage network that continues to propel him beyond expectations.

As previously stated, Obafemi's grounding in tradition gave him the opportunity to create a culture that would later transform him into someone of international relevance. It appears that the cultural pluralism of the environment did not become an albatross to his career and social development. Instead, they became a pool of cultural possession in which lay different possibilities for him. During one of my engagements with him, he fantasized about the masquerade celebrations during his childhood and how this introduced to him the heart of Yoruba culture. He confessed that these cultural activities became the creative inspiration behind his literary and artistic productions.

The multicultural society in which Obafemi grew up influenced his future creativity, as the icons of his cultural traditions are the muses and indexes of literary engagements. He has successfully transformed what was considered an inhibiting challenge into a motivating factor in developing a worthwhile academic and moral ideology, while exemplifying the profile of an academic and a creative artist as a public intellectual.

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The Struggle, Their Life: African Public Intellectuals and the Crisis of Representation

Nduka Otiono

> "Academic intellectuals are ardently confused about their social roles in advanced capitalist societies"
> — Michael Berube (2003: 169)

> "The intellectual's role generally is to uncover and elucidate the contest, to challenge and defeat both an imposed silence and the normalized quiet of unseen power, wherever and whenever possible. For there is a social and intellectual equivalence between this mass of overbearing collective interests and the discourse used to justify, disguise or mystify its workings while at the same time preventing objections or challenges to it."
> — Edward W. Said (2002: 31)

> "I have devoted my intellectual and material resources, my very life, to a cause in which I have total belief and from which I cannot be blackmailed or intimidated."
> — Ken Saro-Wiwa (1995: 173)

The controversial role of intellectuals in society has engaged public culture and caught the attention of cultural history scholars. The discourse is "epitomized by the debate around disciplinarity" (Mamdani 2016: 68), professionalization, labour and corporatization of universities. Contradictions and apprehension underline several texts by some North American scholars (John Michaels, 2000; Bill Readings, 1996; Linda Martin Alcoff 1995; Cary Nelson and Stephen Watt, 2004; Randy Martin, 1998; Michael Berube, 1994, 1998) addressing various aspects of the subject. Three sore subtopics call for further inquiry, and can be framed in the following questions: Firstly, "Does any specific practical politics or political position necessarily follow from one's

professional practice as an academic cultural critic?" (Michael 2000: 57) Secondly, "Can the public intellectual successfully represent the people outside of his/her own social class? Thirdly, what are the implications of universalizing the discourses of the North American scholars? This paper seeks to answer these questions by investigating how issues of specificity and context disturb the logics of a universalizing discourse on the role of public intellectuals. I use as case studies, outstanding Nigerian public intellectuals whose creative output and activism demonstrate the precarious nature of the African public intellectual's work. It is this precarity that spurred the great Nelson Mandela to issue his popular declaration of June 26, 1961 – "The struggle is my life. I will continue fighting for freedom until the end of my days" – which inspired the title of this essay.

Keywords: public intellectual, activism, professionalization, agency, politics, dictatorship

Introduction

The controversial role of intellectuals in society has engaged public culture and caught the attention of cultural history scholars. The discourse is "epitomized by the debate around disciplinarity" (Mamdani 2016), professionalization, labour and corporatization of universities. Contradictions and apprehension underline several texts by some North American scholars (John Michaels, 2000; Bill Readings, 1996; Linda Martin Alcoff 1995; Cary Nelson and Stephen Watt, 2004; Randy Martin, 1998; Michael Berube, 1994, 1998) addressing various aspects of the subject. Three sore subtopics call for further inquiry, and can be framed in the following questions: Firstly, "Does any specific practical politics or political position necessarily follow from one's professional practice as an academic cultural critic?" (Michael 2000: 57) Secondly, "Can the public intellectual successfully represent the people outside of his/her own social class? Thirdly, what are the implications of universalizing the discourses of the North American scholars?

By limiting their discourse essentially to the North American context without comparative analysis of international experience, the dominant scholars in the field shrink our grasp of the role of intellectuals in other climes, especially in developing countries. This has created a lacuna which this paper seeks to fill. I propose to investigate how issues of specificity and context disturb the logics of a universalizing discourse on the role of public intellectuals. Using Nigeria as a case study, I will show examples of public intellectuals and activists whose mode of practice risk their lives. These intellectuals not only write and talk, they walk the talk as the cliché goes, by working with civil society groups to speak truth to empower the people, and to challenge regressive political hegemony. Beyond the experience of their western peers, the experience of the postcolonial African public intellectual will demonstrate the perils of being a public intellectual especially in totalitarian regimes. It should also reflect, as leading Africanist scholar Mudimbe (1988) has argued, that in Africa "[t]oday…journals [newspapers too] and university departments have become the loci not only for academic exercise, but also for questioning the meaning of political power and interrogating all power-knowledge system" (40).

To buttress the point, I will sketch a brief contemporary history of the tradition of such intellectuals. Then I will focus on Africa's first Nobel laureate for literature,

Wole Soyinka, as a political activist and the late Ken Saro-Wiwa, whose celebrated work as an environmental rights activist and public intellectual remind us of D'Souza's (2014) insightful definition of "activist scholars" as those who "affirm human emancipation as the goal of scholarship and set themselves the task of building bridges between theory and practice" (n.p.).[1] While Saro-Wiwa was martyred because of his work in Nigeria, Soyinka suffered imprisonment and was hounded into exile for his political activism. I shall also revisit the experience of a group of academics now sympathetically referred to as the UNILORIN 44 who were sacked for activism by the establishment. Given the public orientation of the work of these intellectuals, I will highlight the role of the media in the pursuit of their objectives as critical intellectuals and academic professionals, in the sense of Jean Baudrillard's concept of "ecstasy of communication" and its amplification by Angela McRobbie (213). This should prove useful for evaluating their performance against the backdrop of arguments that as "progressive intellectuals" they cannot really be spokespersons for the oppressed for whom they "purport to act" (Michael 1). In the end, the study will expectedly put us in a better position to appreciate the "crisis of representation"—to appropriate Fredric Jameson's (1984: viii) fine expression—and to answer "the question of intellectual responsibility and intellectual agency in communities" (Michael 26).

The above epigraphs to this essay encourage a contrastive analysis of the role of public intellectuals in "the advanced capitalist societies" represented by Michael Berube and those from developing political economies. For this paper, I am conducting my comparative analysis by focusing more on American "public intellectuals" and cultural critics who have essentially concentrated on professional and institutional issues. These include Evan Watkins; Stephano Harney and Frederick Morten; Stanley Aronowitz; Cary Nelson and Stephen Watt; Lorraine Daston and Michael Berube. But beyond the professional and institutional preoccupation of these public intellectuals, Antonio Gramsci, Stuart Hall, Michel Foucault, John Michael, Noam Chomsky, Cornel West, and others align with the public concerns of organic intellectuals in society, for which their African counterparts are more actively entrenched.

Indeed, the well-stablished tradition can be traced from the works of the pioneering generation of anti-colonization nationalists including Kwame Nkrumah, Leopold Sedar Senghor (poet-President of Senegal), Augustinho Neto (poet-President of Angola), Nnamdi Azikiwe, Dennis Osadebay, Robert Mugabe, and Nelson Mandela, on the one hand, and on the other hand, the works of their Black Diaspora liberation kinsmen W.E.B. Dubois, Marcus Garvey, Walter Rodney, Frantz Fanon and others. Beyond a common African ancestry, the two groups are united by their shared experience of slavery and colonization. The more modern figures include Ken Saro-Wiwa, Ali Mazrui, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Chinua Achebe, Samir Amin, P.L.O. Lumumba, George Ayittey, Claude Akeh, and Nadine Gordimer. More recently, a contemporary generation has bloomed by leveraging the millennial digital revolution, youth agency, and social activism, with Binyanvanga Wainana and Pius Adesanmi among the notable figures of the generation[2].

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1 Importantly, D'Souza rightly observes that: "There is a spectrum of views on the theory-practice nexus. Regardless, they all share certain common grounds that affirm (1) a nexus between theory and practice; (2) a relationship between knowledge and action; (3) knowledge as a condition for emancipation and freedom; (4) the affirmation of love and solidarity for social change; (5) the importance of everyday life; and (6) the role of the activist scholar in social change" (n.p.).

2 Both authors represent a younger generation of African public intellectuals whose outBoth

Cultural Intellectuals, Public Intellectuals, and Practical Politics

Revisiting Michael Berube's, *Public Access: Literary Theory and American Cultural Politics*, where he asks the poignant question: Does any specific practical politics or political position necessarily follow from one's professional practice as an academic cultural critic? To foreground the question implicit in Berube's own subtitle is there any specifiable relationship between "literary theory and cultural politics?" His answer is "No" (56).

To fully appreciate the implications of the above question and answer, we may need to ask the seemingly innocuous question: What/who is a public intellectual? Remarkably, it is not easy to define, even if most people appear to "know" what the term means. To understand the term and its meaning potentialities we shall turn to the composite conceptualization of the term by Edward Said in his works, *Representations of the Intellectual* (1994) and "The Public Role of Writers and Intellectuals" (2002). Together, the two texts provide, perhaps, the most coherent review of the evolution of the term from Gramsci's division into "traditional intellectual" and "organic intellectual," through Julien Benda's "real intellectuals" or "clerisy," and Michel Foucault's distinction between the "universal intellectual" and the "specific intellectual," to Isaiah Berlin's idea of the "testifying" intellectual. As Said succinctly encapsulates it in *Representations*:

> in the end it is the intellectual as a representative figure that matters—someone who visibly represents a standpoint of some kind, and someone who makes articulate representations to his or her public despite all sorts of barriers... And the vocation is important to the extent that it involves both commitment and risk, boldness and vulnerability (12-13).

For our purposes in this paper, it is pertinent to clarify the choice as case studies, two writers whom some would rather refer to as "cultural producers" than "critical intellectuals"—Wole Soyinka, who makes the list of the 100 outstanding intellectuals of the world and the late Ken Saro-Wiwa, who was executed in 1995 for his activism. The temptation to identify the two writers more as "cultural producers" than "critical intellectuals" arise from the fact that their primary vocation is the production of cultural artefacts. Again, Said's reflections on the subject provide an excellent guide here. In "The Public Role of Writers and Intellectuals," he cautions against such differentiation when certain writers—such as Soyinka and Saro-Wiwa—are involved. Alluding to their kind of work in terms of "the technical characteristics of intellectual intervention today," Said contends that:

> In that wider setting, then, the basic distinction between writers and intellectuals need not be made. Insofar as they both act in the new public sphere dominated by globalization (and assumed to exist even by adherents of the Khomeini fatwa), their public role as writers and intellectuals can be discussed and analyzed together. Another way of putting it is

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authors represent a younger generation of African public intellectuals whose outstanding work fall outside of the focus of this paper. Their work marks a shift from the traditional public sphere of intellectual discourses to hybrid formations that include digital or social media activism involving youthful "netizens." For more on this, see Adesanmi's posthumous book, Who Owns the Problem?: Africa and the Struggle for Agency. Michigan State University Press, 2020. Also see my essay which explores African netizens' social struggles using social media and digital tools titled "Dream Delayed or Dream Betrayed: Politics, Youth Agency, and the Mobile Revolution in Africa" and published in Canadian Journal of African Studies. DOI: 10.1080/00083968.2020.1798258.

> to say that we should concentrate on what writers and intellectuals have in common as they intervene in the public sphere. (26)

It is in the above context that our Nigerian experience challenges Berube's statement.[3] Bearing the dynamic nature of our terms of reference in the discourse—traditional intellectual, organic intellectual, specific intellectual, public intellectual, critical intellectual, progressive intellectual—there appears to be no confusion in the ranks of the intellectuals for our case study concerning their roles in society; that indeed there is a specifiable relationship between literary theory and cultural politics. This is the guiding principle that guides my position in this essay.

An indication of the dangerous choice African intellectuals need to make is the sacking of 49 academics from a Nigerian university on May 22, 2001 for activism under the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU). Media reports stated that three of the unjustly disengaged academics died possibly due to stress and other challenges associated with their unfortunate ordeal. Reacting to the news at the time, Taiwo Oloruntoba-Ojo, chairman of the University's branch of ASUU, said: "They have become heroes and martyrs of the struggle. Another way of looking at their death is that the stress of the struggle may also have taken its toll them."[4] For the activists, the media is a very important site for the struggle. Hence, many of them are freelance journalists who have written popular columns in newspapers, and host or featured on notable television and radio programs. This reminds us of Jean Baudrillard's concept of the "ecstasy of communication" which Angela McRobbie further develops in her book, Postmodernism and Popular Culture (1994). The idea, McRobbie explains, applies:

> to the sheer speed, intensity and extensiveness of the media as they effortlessly create a web of interconnecting meanings each of which has its own momentum, its own pacing, its own narrative structures, its own accompanying images, its own experts and witnesses and victims and when appropriate, its own parliamentary spokespersons, according to the story or issue of the day (213).

Rather predictably, both Soyinka and Saro-Wiwa deployed popular media platforms from print to electronic (more on this below), as part of their commitment to mass mobilization. For them, as for most other writers cum intellectuals from developing countries, the twin forces of political crises especially under General Sani Abacha's dictatorship (1993-1998) and global capitalism shape the socio-political tropes of their creative works, the medium of their struggle, and their social

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3 The distinction made here with regard to the public intellectual clearly calls for a rethinking of John Michael's conflation of college professors to public intellectuals in the following words: "At the very least, as teachers and scholars, cultural intellectuals already function as public intellectuals in an important segment of the public sphere. The negative and sensationalized attention that cultural intellectuals in the university have recently received—distorted as it may be—indicates that the critical work we do still maintains a degree of ideological potency (3). Julie Rak puts it in a better perspective when she asserts during a private correspondence on November 23, 2006.: "Technically speaking, everyone who would claim to be an intellectual, I believe, has a responsibility to be a public intellectual, or else he or she will risk being a structural intellectual who is just part of Coleridge's clerisy or Gramsci's traditional intellectual class."

4 Elijah Adewale Taiwo offers more details on this case as well as other instances "that the Nigerian government…dismiss[ed] academic staff on issues relating to academic freedom" (9). https://codesria.org/IMG/pdf/Taiwo_Adewale.pdf Also, in an online article entitled "NIGERIA: Academic union threatens indefinite strike" and published in University World News, Tunde Fatunde reveals that "Between 1993 and 2008, universities in Nigeria were closed for nearly 36 months owing to various strikes called by the ASUU" (https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20080522124752614)

commitment in the finest tradition of the artist as l'homme engage. Saro-Wiwa powerfully foregrounds this profile of the artist in his prison memoir A Month and a Day as he affirms his "credo that literature in the case of Nigeria cannot be divorced from politics…and writers must not merely write to amuse or to take a bemused, critical look at society. They must play an interventionist role…Therefore, the writer must be l'homme engage: the intellectual man of action. He must take part in mass organizations" (55). Onookome Okome corroborates this view in Before I am Hanged, a book that probes the politics and literary oeuvre of Saro-Wiwa in the following words: "Ken Saro-Wiwa was a man who was conscious of his role in his community and in the larger political configuration called Nigeria" (xiii). Saro-Wiwa understood his communication orbit, deploying television, newspaper columns and other significant communication tools for mobilizing a mass movement under the banner of Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP).

Setting Forth at Dawn

The profiles of the Nigerian public intellectuals chosen for this study is unwittingly inspired by the French public intellectual tradition, with Michel Foucault and Jean-Paul Sartre as well-known examples. Remembered for his intellectual output as well as for his coffeehouse conversations, Sartre lives in the popular imagination more as a political figure than a writer. He was conscripted into the military and held hostage by German invaders. He advocated a form of Marxism as the best plan for human welfare without being a communist. By the 1950s, his theorizing on existentialism and other ideas earned him a cult following that included members of the Beat Generation. He rejected the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1964 because, in the words of a critic, he associated it with "the bourgeois trappings of success he had long opposed."[5] He was quoted as telling the Nobel committee: "A writer must refuse to allow himself to be transformed into an institution" (ibid). So popular had Sartre become as a public intellectual that more than 25,000 people reportedly lined the streets of Paris for his funeral procession on April 19, 1980. That was reportedly unprecedented for such an occasion in French history. Although less celebrated, Sartre's partner, Simone de Beauvoir, even fitted more the profile of a public intellectual. She ventured into taboo topics on feminism and gender, writing *The Second Sex and The Mandarins*, two books that were so controversial that the Roman Catholic Church put them on the index of Forbidden Books (Price 2008: 127). She was "an ardent women rights activist … participating in demonstrations, as well as writing and speaking on many women's issues" (Price 130).[6]

For his part, Michel Foucault further theorizes the tension between theory and political practice—the intellectual and the citizen—in the role of the public intellectual. Foucault argues that "[t]he role of the intellectual transcends telling others "what they have to do" or "shap[ing] others' political will" as the intellectuals may not necessarily have the right to do so. Instead, he insists, the

5 See page 121 of Joan A. Price's Understanding Philosophy: Contemporary Thought. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 2008.

6 The contributions of female public intellectuals have not been fully documented in scholarship. While this is not the focus of this paper, for more insight on this subject, readers may like to see Brittney C. Cooper's award-winning book into Beyond Respectability: The Intellectual Thought of Race Women. Illinois: University of Illinois Press. 2017.

work of an intellectual is to deploy their intellectual resources to "question over and over again what is postulated as self evident, to disturb peoples' mental habits, the way they do and think things, to dissipate what is familiar and accepted, to reexamine rules and institutions and on the basis of this reproblematization (in which it carries out his specific task as an intellectual) to participate in the formation of a political will (in which he carries his role as citizen to play). (1988: 265).

Beyond the French prototype signified by Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, and Foucault, even closer to the Nigerian public intellectual profile are the examples of their Latin American counterparts such as Mario Vargas Llosa, the Peruvian writer, college professor journalist, and politician; Pablo Neruda (Chile); Alejo Carpentier (Cuba); and Octavio Paz and Carlos Fuentes (Mexico). The roles of intellectuals exemplified by these distinguished Latin American writers synchronize with the artist-activist role of the quintessential Nigerian public intellectuals. For them, the urgency of human rights, social justice and democratic governance exceed recognition as academic or literary superstars in the mold of some of their North American contemporaries.

The necessity for civic engagement, for the African public intellectual to be related but different from their western counterparts, is echoed in a rhetorical question by Mewesigire (2020): "What if Africa needs or desires a different intellectual from what the West needs?" An understanding of this question has driven African intellectuals such as Saro-Wiwa and Soyinka to extend their influence beyond the ivory tower and media punditry to mobilizations on the streets. In addition to Saro-Wiwa and Wole Soyinka, Christopher Okigbo was another intellectual who transcended theory into praxis. Okigbo, a celebrated poet who weaponized his poetry to prophesy war finally went to war on behalf of Biafra and died a martyr; Saro-Wiwa was hanged by the military regime for his minority and environmental rights advocacy; and Soyinka the Nobel Laureate for Literature, was imprisoned for his activism during the Biafran war, an account of which he has published in his memoir *The Man Died* (1972). Thus, a combination of cultural imperative or a political exigency has led these African public intellectuals to differ from their western counterparts in their commitment to going beyond professing public awareness and institutional critique to fostering civil disobedience or armed struggle as the case might be.[7]

Soyinka underscores the peculiar context of the African public intellectual in his Introduction to Saro-Wiwa's *A Month and a Day* (1995). In the following excerpt, Soyinka laments the international community's misreading of the political situation that culminated in the tragic execution of the environmental rights activist by Nigeria's maximum leader at that time, General Sani Abacha:

> I was saddened, not angry, because it was clear they could not understand. They had never encountered, nor studied a creature of Sani Abacha's cast of mind. It was my cast of mind that they found abnormal, the more I tried to wear them down with the brutality of my conviction: *If you fail to act, that man is going to hang Ken!* (ix) [Author's emphasis]

Among the books published by Nigerians which deal with citizenship and nationhood, Soyinka's *Open Sore of a Continent* (1996) and Saro-Wiwa's posthumous publication, *A Month and a Day*, stand out. It is noteworthy that perhaps more than any other contemporary of theirs, both writers have demonstrated the most sustained

7 Ashenafi Alemu Aboye (2019) offers a fascinating study of the profile of African public intellectuals in his doctoral dissertation titled Academic Public Intellectuals' Lives: Negotiating the Borderlines.

interest in the genre of autobiography/memoirs. The genre allows them to robustly share their personal struggles, social history and cultural critique, and to spur others into collective social commitment and action. In *Open Sore*, as in other books and public speeches, Soyinka identifies with a compatriot, highlighting the ripple effect of Saro-Wiwa's minority rights activism on the "public sphere" in Habermas's sense:

> It is not just in the Nigerian free media that this minority tyranny is discussed... Public debate — in such places as bars, bus stops, markets, garages, staff and student clubs, government offices (largely in the South naturally) — has catapulted the activities of this minority to the heart of the national crisis, resulting in questioning the presumption... of the nation as a single entity (8).

In another context, Soyinka pays tribute to Saro-Wiwa's "talent for organization." As Soyinka tells Okome (2003), Saro-Wiwa "moved people in a way which very few people can do" (362). Deeply aware of his looming martyrdom, Saro-Wiwa declared in one of his last letters to Mandy Garner of International PEN, UK:

> Whether I live or die is immaterial. It is enough to know that there are people who commit time, money and energy to fight this one evil among so many others predominating worldwide. If they do not succeed today, they will succeed tomorrow. We must keep on striving to make the world a better place for all of mankind - each one contributing his bit, in his or her own way" (1995: 179).

During his kangaroo trial at the Nigerian Military Tribunal, Saro-Wiwa offered the following allocutus before he was condemned to die by hanging:

> My lord,
> We all stand before history. I am a man of peace, of ideas. Appalled by the denigrating poverty of my people who live on a richly endowed land, distressed by their political marginalization and economic strangulation, angered by the devastation of their land, their ultimate heritage, anxious to preserve their right to life and to a decent living, and determined to usher to this country as a whole a fair and just democratic system which protects everyone and every ethnic group and gives us all a valid claim to human civilization, I have devoted my intellectual and material resources, my very life, to a cause in which I have total belief and from which I cannot be blackmailed or intimidated. I have no doubt at all about the ultimate success of my cause, no matter the trials and tribulations which I and those who believe with me may encounter on our journey. Nor imprisonment nor death can stop our ultimate victory" (1995: 173).

The conflict between Saro-Wiwa and his kinsmen ("the Ogoni four")[8] which precipitated his tragic trial indicate the challenges to the public intellectual in rep-

8 The four Ogoni chiefs—Edward Kobani, Theophilus Orage, Sam Orage and Albert Badey—known to be opponents of MOSOP were murdered in May 1994 under controversial circumstances. The government of General Abacha blamed their murder on MOSOP without evidence. Then they proceeded to arrest scores of MOSOP activists, including Ken Saro-Wiwa. For more on this subject see Amnesty International's report, "Nigeria: Shell complicit in the arbitrary executions of Ogoni Nine as writ served in Dutch court." https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2017/06/shell-complicit-arbitrary-executions-ogoni-nine-writ-dutch-court/ Accessed July 5, 2020. The four Ogoni chiefs—Edward Kobani, Theophilus Orage, Sam Orage and Albert Badey—known to be opponents of MOSOP were murder in May 1994 under controversial circumstances. The government of General Abacha blamed their murder on MOSOP without evidence. Then they proceeded to arrest scores of MOSOP activists, including Ken Saro-Wiwa. For more on this subject see Amnesty International's report, "Nigeria: Shell complicit in the arbitrary executions of Ogoni Nine as writ served in Dutch court." https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2017/06/shell-complicit-arbitrary-executions-ogoni-nine-writ-dutch-court/ Accessed July 5, 2020.

resenting the people. Whereas he was convinced that his struggle was dedicated to the common good, it was indeed tough for Saro-Wiwa to stop the fractionalization of the struggle under the aegis of the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni (MOSOP) which he galvanized into a potent force against Shell and its Nigerian military collaborators. For years, Saro-Wiwa used his intellectual gifts and financial resources to drive the campaign against environmental degradation in his homeland where multinational corporations chiefly Shell and Chevron exploited crude oil. He escalated his campaign for resource control in the Niger Delta region to the United Nations where he presented the Ogoni Bill of Rights, and further infuriated the military regime in Nigeria. His campaign proved hugely successful, much so that it earned Nigeria's government a pariah status especially after Saro-Wiwa's execution in 1995.

For Soyinka, working with various civil society groups has also thrown up its own challenges about the status of his representation of the people. Amongst the more recognizable groups he had co-organized are the Committee for the Defense of Human Rights (CDHR) and PRONACO (Project on Sovereign National Conference). He was also actively involved with NADECO (National Democratic Coalition). Despite his outstanding credentials as an activist and public intellectual there have been questions about his peculiar grandiloquence and association with some political elements especially former Governor Rotimi Amaechi of Rivers State. Notable Soyinka scholar, Biodun Jeyifo, recognizes the Nobel laureate's idiosyncratic style and its implication for popular representation, and states that it serves as "the organizing principle for selection of material for inclusion" in *Perspectives on Wole Soyinka: Freedom and Complexity* (2006). "Soyinka's most important works, most critics and scholars now agree, are unquestionably extensions of his often courageous and progressive political activism," writes Jeyifo, "however, at the same time, to most students of Soyinka's writings, many of these works seem to embody attitudes of language, style, communication, and artistic vision which are calculated to alienate or perplex readers and audiences, thereby often subverting, so it is thought, Soyinka's progressive, revolutionary intentions" (xii). The relative inaccessibility of Soyinka's writing to a general readership has attracted criticism from other scholars (especially Chinwiezu et al 1983). However, it is crucial to note that Soyinka has calibrated his literary style and media of communication to suit his mission, subject matter and audience. Like Saro-Wiwa, his creative oeuvre includes audio-visual productions, drama, pamphlets, press releases, and op-eds.

Jeyifo (2004) stoutly defends Soyinka against charges of alienating the very constituency which he deigns to represent—through what the critic appropriately terms "ritual of affirmation and negation" (127). Yet, the very idea for Jeyifo's book itself suggests that Soyinka may have a case to answer on the matter. Stanley Macebuh captures the critique of the Nobel laureate's difficult language by Nigeria's intellectual Left—represented by the troika Chinweizu, Jemie and Madubuko—in the following words:

> Language in Soyinka is difficult, harsh, sometimes tortured. His syntax is often archaic, his verbal structures sometimes impenetrable... There is, nevertheless, the possibility that a good many of Soyinka's critics have failed to pay sufficient attention to the internal, that is, ethnocentric compulsions in poetic dramas that render this condition nearly inevitable (203-204)

It is the delicate management of the local within a wider context that many consider one of Soyinka's greatest achievements. In his review of Soyinka's memoir *You Must set Forth at Dawn* (2006) for the *San Francisco Chronicle*, award winning writer Chris Abani highlights the Nobel laureate's significance as a public intellectual thus:

> It is a rare thing in this century (early as it is), and probably will get rarer, to read the memoir of a writer and public intellectual whose life and growth as an artist and voice of conscience mirror the growth of an entire nation. It is even more rare to know that it is inconceivable to think of Nigeria as a political entity without Soyinka. This may perhaps be because his coming of age as an artist begins really at the moment of the nation's independence from England. In this way, the artist (Kongi, as he is affectionately known as) becomes inexorably interwoven with the fate and destiny of this country. Perhaps it is because, more than any other activist or political individual in Nigerian history, he is able to remain firmly committed to his Yoruba ethnicity and nationality and yet paradoxically achieve and maintain a wider and uniquely Nigerian identity" (n.p.)

Soyinka's outstanding credentials as a public intellectual dating back to the period of his coming of age at the time of Nigeria's independence which Abani emphasizes above is partly the consequence of his acute understanding of the context for his work as writer and activist. In what may be taken as response to his critics, he has consistently expressed himself in two essential voices, depending on the subject and environment in which he is functioning. As suggested above, he has a more accessible style with which he traces the contours of his political rhetoric in public speeches and journalistic spaces, and a more learned style with which he pursues his robust intellectual interests. Thus, his oft-critiqued learned style has not stopped him from effectively working with civil society. This may also explain why he has also been closely associated with the work of Saro-Wiwa—in fact, the Foreword to Saro-Wiwa's prison memoir is written by the Nobel laureate.

Soyinka's denunciation of the Dafur genocide in his 2006 lecture at Harvard University titled "Darfur, Cartoons, and Other Images of Race"[9] points to his restless dynamism and commitment to theoretical positions he has advocated in scholarly texts, memoirs and creative writing. For his work, he shares similar suffering with Saro-Wiwa, having to endure incarceration, fleeing into exile to escape assassination, and traversing the global lecture circuit in service to community. Like Saro-Wiwa, too, Soyinka tactically abandoned the security of appointment in the ivory tower for a life in the "trenches."[10] What William Boyd, the British writer and Saro-Wiwa's friend reports on this choice by the environmental rights activist thus would also have significance for Soyinka: "As I saw him over the coming years it was clear that literature, publishing, television and the rest had been pushed to one side as he began the struggle for reparations and the international recognition of the ecological disaster and 'slow genocide' that had been visited on Ogoni" (2005: 13).

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9 "Soyinka decries lack of outrage over Darfur 'pogrom,'" The Harvard Gazette, https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2006/04/soyinka-decries-lack-of-outrage-over-darfur-pogrom/ Accessed July 23, 2020.

10 In Marxian terms, Saro-Wiwa could be said to have committed class suicide. Victoria Arana (2008:390) offers more insight into Saro-Wiwa's eclectic professional life. His long resume includes appointments as a faculty member of University of Nigeria, Nsukka, a secondary school teacher, a teaching assistant at University of Lagos, the administrator of Bonny Island, Commissioner in his home state, Rivers State, before finally making a fortune as a businessman and publisher. Soyinka, for his part, gave up a secured job as a tenured professor at University of Ife to work as an independent scholar, writer and activist.

Intellectual responsibility and intellectual agency in communities

Soyinka's near omnipresence in protest marches against oppressive government policies in the past five decades speaks volumes too. Clearly, the high-profile public intellectuals are aware that only organized mass action disturbs otherwise recalcitrant and high-handed government. In fact, some colleagues during my years as a journalist in Lagos in the 1990s expressed the belief that General Abacha did not care much about public intellectuals and activists who merely articulated their discontent against government. But he moved brutally against such intellectual "dissidents" who, like Saro-Wiwa, embarked on active organization and mobilization of people to resist his dictatorial regime. It is for this reason that many activists, including Soyinka, fled into exile at the time. Saro-Wiwa undoubtedly understood the power of mobilization as he noted that his experience had been that "African governments can ignore writers, taking comfort in the fact that only few can read and write…That is why a writer who takes part in mass organizations will deliver the message more effectively that one who writes waiting for time to work its literary wonders" (55).

Commenting on Soyinka's protean profile as a public intellectual, South Africa-based philosopher, Sanya Osha (2011), writes:

> Soyinka's creative and intellectual itinerary has for decades been marked by an astonishing combination of political and cultural concerns: a leading figure of African letters, an indefatigable champion of African culture, an analyst of the politics of identity, a political commentator and social activist among other things. Very few other African writers have this range of gifts... Soyinka has had to contemplate the conditions of possibility of the concepts of justice, truth and reconciliation. These concepts are issues that demand a considerable degree of theoretical systematicity and perhaps also, conceptual distance and Soyinka being such a formidable social activist has probably not had the time to cultivate these qualities. His writings on politics are urgent, visceral, vitriolic and often impatient. Thus, in a way, the distinctions between theory and praxis often become blurred. Perhaps this is one of the reasons he has not made the impact in the social sciences even though he addresses concerns that are so central to them. (96)

It is not surprising, therefore, that Soyinka was nominated as one of the top one hundred outstanding public intellectuals in the world.[11] Osha's mention of Soyinka's limited impact in the social sciences is worth reflecting upon to highlight the often ignored disciplinary undertone in our appreciation of the profile of public intellectuals. The question may be asked: What distinguishes a social scientist and public intellectual such as Ali Mazrui or Claude Akeh from humanistic public intellectuals such as Okigbo, Soyinka, Achebe, or Chinweizu? To answer the question, it is necessary to consider Mazrui's definition of a political scientist in his personal essay "Growing up in a Shrinking World." According to Mazrui (2010), "a political scientist combines the personal experience of political consciousness, the general ethos of scholarship, and the specialized skills of interpreting political phenomena" (1). He further states that "[t]he ethos of scholarship is rooted in adherence to the rules of evidence, documentation, and logic. *But the discipline of political science itself requires additional specialized skills concerned with handling data or effectively using the discipline's conceptual tools*" (1. my emphasis).

11 See "The Prospect/FP Top 100 Public Intellectuals" survey published in https://www.infoplease.com/culture-entertainment/prospectfp-top-100-public-intellectuals#:~:text=What%20is%20a%20public%20intellectual,influence%20debate%20outside%20of%20it.

Thus, the *handling of data or an effective use of the conceptual tools* of political science differentiates the political scientist and the humanistic public intellectual. Yet, it needs to be noted that in everyday business of public intellection, this methodological difference is often a moot point. This is particularly exemplified by the fiery debate between Mazrui and Soyinka over Henry Louis Gates' controversial TV documentary, *The Wonders of the African World with Henry Louis Gates Jr.* (1999). No one seems to adjudicate the exchanges on the disciplinary bias of the two great scholars or their recourse to the data or conceptual tools employed. Indeed, the public engagement consumption of the ideas popularized by public intellectuals has no bearing on the methodological protocols adopted by the public intellectuals. However, it is worth acknowledging that while political scientists may use the protocols identified by Mazrui, the humanistic public intellectuals depend on what Houston Baker Jr. (2008) describes as "hermeneutical and poetically interpretive protocols" modelled by the great Du Bois (xvii). These, partly entail, as Baker Jr. further frames it, buttressing one's "arguments with ample references to and citations from the best sociological, historical, political science, and economics scholarship" (xvii) as well as everyday life. Baker Jr. urges black intellectuals to forge both sacred and secular connections with local communities and rededicate themselves to social responsibility. He poignantly notes that "[t]he ubiquity and accrued cultural currency of black public intellectuals in our era has helped foster a myth of racial progress" (xii) and asserts that while we recognize Du Bois' "empirical research, he is equally cherished for his skillful, analytical, creative, interpretive brilliance with respect to the sung, written, chanted, preached, moaned, and orated textual records of Afro-American life and culture".

Baker Jr's book is an unpretentious critique of the disingenuous posturing of some Western Black public intellectuals whose "intellectual charisma, financial success, media revelry, and celebrity book sales of an elite black few does virtually nothing to feed the desires and needs of the black majority" (xiii). Implicated in this critique therefore is what Mamdani (2016) has identified as "the role and tension between the public intellectual and the scholar" in his brilliant paper "Between the public intellectual and the scholar: decolonization and some Post-independence initiatives." I would argue that data-driven and empirically heavy scholarly public discourse sometimes alienates ordinary people in the public sphere whom the public intellectual purports to represent. So, too, does the focus of the activist scholars of the Western academy represented by Sartre, Michael and his American contemporaries identified in the opening section of this essay elide the context specific experience of the African public intellectuals used as case study in this article. Interestingly, in one of his most lucid and persuasive passages, Michael echoes Said's view on the intellectual's "personal inflection and the private sensibility" (*Representations* 12) as Michael argues:

> Teaching and intellectual work generally cannot always be popular. Good teachers and responsible intellectuals do not necessarily make their constituents comfortable or happy, especially if one of their important functions is to engage students and the public in the painful practice of interrogating their own prejudices and assumptions. . . Professors, unlike other purveyors of services, cannot always be judged on the basis of customer satisfaction. Their relation to the popular is and must remain vexed (171).

The commodification of intellectual engagement and the equation of the intellectual's work to "customer service" has partly fueled some of the anxieties evident in North American 'public' intellectuals and advocates of academic professionalism which lead us to classify them into a different sub-group. While recognizing their

advocacy for the decorporatization of the academy as a form of public intellection, their work is different from those of some of their Black contemporaries such as Cornel West, Henry Louis Gates Jr., Susan Sontag, bell hooks, Angela Davis, Amiri Baraka (who was stripped of his Poet Laureateship of New Jersey city when he mocked America after 9/11 in his controversial poem, "Who Blew Up America?"), and a few others. The latter sub-group understandably focus more on the crusade for racial equity and social justice than on decorporatization of the academy.

The preoccupation with the intellectual's fate as an academic professional by Michael and his cohort then is indeed a true reflection of Berube's viewpoint in the epigraph. The specific reference to advanced capitalist societies needs to be underscored. For this group, Michael appropriates Carl Boggs' expression, "technocratic intellectuals" (1993: 2) to deride champions of the retreat into the ivory tower. They are "university-based technocrats operating in a moral vacuum, lost without a political compass or a popular agenda."[12]

Generally, the key aspect of public intellectual work that Michael beautifully refers to as "question of intellectual responsibility and intellectual agency in communities" (26) resonates more like an adjunct to the larger concerns with labour issues and "professional obligations," to borrow from Berube. This is understandable considering the differences in racial and socio-political experience. It also accounts for the ideological dichotomy between the African Americans in the United States and other non BIPOC[13] intellectuals, which comes to the fore in Michael's critique of the works of 'superstar' Black scholars represented by Henry Louis Gates and Cornel West. Their work provides the leitmotif for Michael's declamation of the public intellectual as a "purported" spokesperson for community in the first chapter of his book unpretentiously entitled "Publicity: Black Intellectuals as Inorganic Representatives." To better appreciate Michael's critique of the 'cultural elites,' we may invoke William Maxwell's mockery of the "populist masquerade of contemporary humanist intellectuals" (n.p.) in his supportive albeit witty review of *Anxious Intellects*.

As Dumain (2004) observes in his acerbic review of Michael's book, Michael "tellingly fails to go far enough in analyzing the problem, thus remaining as gullible as the rest of the cultural left." He labels Michael "the Cultural Studies parasite" (n.p.). From the first page of Michael's *Anxious Intellects*, the "fundamental confusion" is evident for the critical reader:

> All these dithyrambs (from Greek I believe) and diatribes share a fundamental confusion about the character and role of intellectuals in contemporary society. Are intellectuals an empowered elite, or are they a vestigial organ of modernity with no function in a commodity-driven social order that no longer requires the regulative work of representation and legitimation that intellectuals once performed? Can progressive intellectuals speak for the oppressed, or does their intervention inevitably reproduce the silencing and marginalization of the oppressed for whom they purport to act? Can conservative intellectuals preserve the common grounds of a democratic social order, or can they only reproduce structures of privilege and exclusion that the status of intellectuals, an issue fundamental to our work as intellectuals, remains confused? (1)

The word "confusion" and its modifiers are so emphasized that one begins to wonder about the author's obsession with it. However, it reveals Michael's contempt

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12 For more on Boggs' authoritative theorizing on technocratic intellectuals/ technocratic intelligentsia see his book Intellectuals and the Crisis of Modernity, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993.

13 Black Indigenous People of Colour (BIPOC). It should be noted that of course the politics of race plays differently across the world, including some African countries, especially South Africa.

for the contradictions and pretensions in the work of several intellectuals, public or 'private,' and how that coheres with the theme of corporatization of universities. It also redirects us to transformations taking place in the politics of the academy which Mudimbe (1988) partly envisions within journals and university departments as platforms for "questioning the meaning of political power" in the early part of this paper.

Some contradictions and crises of representation—the idea of the intellectual representing those on behalf of who they claim to be speaking for—which Michael deals with are also identifiable in the works of some Nigerian intellectuals as stated above. One of the most vitriolic attacks against such Nigerian public intellectuals complicit in the crises of representation emanates from an American-based journalist and writer, Rudolph Okonkwo. Chiding the public intellectuals who betrayed the masses they purported to serve, Okonkwo (2000) rages, and I quote at length:

> There are two things that are very abundant in Nigeria. One is crude oil and the other is public intellectual. And both are curses to Nigeria … The world of the Nigerian public intellectuals is a zoo. It is a zoo full of nihilists. Some are sectarian in their outlook and others are humorless. Some are eccentric while others are comical. But one thing they all have in common is an over-inflated ego of their importance in the scheme of things. This is more glaring in those who managed to escape the academic environment where they are buried in obscurity. Out in the real world, they confuse abstract reflection with critical intelligence. When they look at vanity, they see a gallant struggle. From some outdated textbooks, they borrow paradigms, which they will tout around as messianic sacrament. They distance themselves from the mainstream whenever it would convey an air of superiority. They embrace arrogant group solidarity when it would extol their ingenuity. They confuse pomposity with enthusiasm. They assumed the role of the temporal as well as the eternal. When they are not trapped in one form of dogmatic hole, they are prone to premature closures. When they are not practicing the religion of formulaic Babalawo [traditional doctor] they are chained by rigid conclusions (n.p.).

Okonkwo's disillusionment with some Nigerian public intellectuals, though reductionist in its scathing generalization, aligns with a recurrent theme in the criticism of certain public intellectuals: that they do not practice what they preach. However, there is unusual expectation of sainthood from these intellectuals who sacrifice so much to the struggle, indeed sometimes martyred in the process as was the case with Saro-Wiwa. This sense of sacrifice is highlighted by Michael who sketches the dangers in public intellectuals speaking truth to power while making even their own constituencies uncomfortable or happy (171), and in some cases, having their own popular works suffer discrimination from colleagues as a result.[14] The danger in Okonkwo's generalization is implicated in the apposite reflections of Edward Said (1996) in his chapter on Professionals and Amateurs when he posits: "We come back once again to [the] main theme, the representation of the intellectual. When we think of an individual intellectual...do we accentuate the individuality of the person in drawing his or her portrait, or do we rather make our focus the group or class of which the individual is a member" (68).

The dilemma of the public intellectual with regard to representation is deepened

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14 An interesting case in point is discussed by Rosemary Cowan in her article, "Cornel West and the Tempest in the Ivory Tower." Here, she explores the 2002 dispute between Lawrence Summers, Harvard University President, and superstar scholar, Cornel West. The focus of the article is the controversy around the quality of West's scholarship, and a consideration of "whether his commitments to publics outside the classroom detract from his scholarly work." It also confronts the critical question, "Is the release of a hip-hop CD an appropriate form of intellectual activity for a senior Ivy League professor?" (2004: 72).

in Alcoffs (2002) fascinating examination of "the devaluation of the work of public intellectuals within the academic community" and promotion of the "intellectual integrity of the public intellectual," and the idea "that both independent thought and original scholarship are possible within work that is engaged with nonacademic publics" (521). Implied in the argument are the reasons Michael considers the disquieting paradox of the intellectual and why he cannot easily be a spokesperson for the people. He references Gates Jr. and Cornel West's declaration that being an intellectual "Does not necessarily mean being loved; loving one's community means daring to risk estrangement and alienation from that very community, in the short run, in order to break the cycle of poverty, despair, and hopelessness that we are in, in the long run" (171) Michael tellingly surmises that "[p]rofessors, unlike other purveyors of services, cannot always be judged on the basis of customer satisfaction" (ibid).

Fortunately, it seems to me, Said resolves the inherent contradiction for us, and humanizes the public intellectual in a most memorable passage hinged on Sartre and his foibles. He argues that when we read about Sartre's controversial "involvement with Simone de Beauvoir, his dispute with Camus, his remarkable association with Jean Genet," we do not condemn him but "situate him in his circumstances" and recognize that "Sartre was Sartre, the same person who also opposed France in Algeria and Vietnam." Then Said delivers an interesting defense of the public intellectual: "Far from disabling or disqualifying him as an intellectual, these complications give texture and tension to what he said, expose him as fallible human being [not superman], not a dreary moralistic preacher" (1996: 14). Coincidentally, this somewhat controversial statement—some would argue that great public intellectuals should be held accountable for their foibles—serves as the template for the memoir of Saro-Wiwa's son, Ken Wiwa, ironically entitled In the Shadow of a Saint and provides a fitting conclusion to this discourse. The irony in the title and in the book is Ken Wiwa's robust portraiture of his father's heroic stature as well as his shortcomings.

Conclusion

As noted earlier in this essay, D'Souza (2014) rightly observes that "[t]here is a spectrum of views on the theory-practice nexus" of the public intellectual. This study explores this "spectrum" and identifies some sub-categories of public intellectuals across the world, especially from North America, Europe, Latin America, and our principal focus: Africa. While there are context-specific variations in the profile and work of public intellectuals, a common denominator is a commitment to social change. Still, it would appear that the sub-category that Michael recognizes in North American as 'public intellectuals' in their polemics are better understood as 'intellectuals" concerned with the politics of institutional building and knowledge production. However, it is pertinent to highlight the association between the African public intellectuals that I focus on and "the origins of modern black intellectual traditions and those of Pan-Africanism" (Mazrui 2005: 203).[15] Like their historical predecessors mentioned above, these progressive intellectuals occasionally suffer crisis of representation due to the complex nature of the publics which they serve and the political (or corporate or ideological) hegemonies which they confront.[16]

15 Quoted in Public Intellectuals and the Politics of Global Africa, edited by Seifudein Adem (2010).

16 Pierre Phillip Fraiture (2013) offers more insight into the point being made here in his discussion of the reasons, that Mudimbe (and his associates including Pius Ngandu Nkashama in East Africa) for example, "opted for a more abstruse form of writing…out of self-preservation in the face of political oppression" (79) from the brutal dictator, Mobutu Sese Seko, former President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and later Zaire.

Nevertheless, those who disqualify public intellectuals from representing the people for whom they speak because of their imperfections may have to look to another planet for the ideal public intellectual. As I have tried to show in this essay, there are intellectuals and there are 'public' intellectuals. While the former may be content with professional polemics and labour issues (which are useful too), the latter immerse themselves in social movements and struggles for civil liberties, often at great personal costs. It is for this reason that Funke Michaels (2020) responding to a draft of this paper states in a private correspondence: "When younger intellectuals look at the fate of the heroes that walked before them, the African examples seem to take on personas of tragic superheroes. It makes it easy to surmise that one must be ready for bodily harm, exile, imprisonment, and even death in pursuit of ideals that are taken for granted in other places."

Saro-Wiwa understood the precarious nature of the African public intellectual's work which inspired the great Nelson Mandela to issue his popular press statement of 26th June 1961 from which inspired title of this essay. In Mandela's words, "The struggle is my life. I will continue fighting for freedom until the end of my days." These words encapsulate a recognition of the difficulty, the risk, and the hardship in choosing *not* "to remain silent and neutral in a matter of life and death" to the people, as Mandela declared. Insights from Mandela's life as well as a realization that "we write best of the things we directly experience," as Saro-Wiwa acknowledges in *A Month*, "is probably the reason the best Nigerian writers have involved themselves actively in 'politics'" (56). Saro-Wiwa cites the examples of his contemporaries: Soyinka, Chinua Achebe (who was literally "forced to work with one of the political parties to buttress his call to 'proselytise' for civilized values," Chris Okigbo, and Festus Iyayi, who was "involved in labour unions" and "in the Campaign for Democracy organization" (56).

The model of Wole Soyinka and Ken Saro-Wiwa, as well as the lives of some other significant public intellectuals across the world—especially under totalitarian regimes— lend credence to my thesis in this essay. We do not need to wait until such public intellectuals pay the supreme price as Saro-Wiwa did before recognizing them as representatives of the people and canonizing them for making the struggle their lives. Indeed, Saro-Wiwa's epitaph leaves us with an unsettling quatrain that forever reminds us about the perils of being a public intellectual especially in the so-called Third World: "Here stands the funny little sweet/ The Nigerians loved to cheat / So much that e 'en in death/ They denied him six feet of earth."[17] Perhaps more than any other public intellectual of our time, Saro-Wiwa's experience underscores the fact that it is high time that (non-African) people looked to the quintessential African public intellectual to see how they negotiate the crises of representation, how sacrificing for ideals actually works, and how it is possible for public intellectual to truly give a voice to the voiceless, and to pay for equity in blood, if necessary.

17 It was believed that Saro-Wiwa's epitaph became prophetic because rumours had it that he was 'buried' standing in a shallow grave and acid poured on his remains. Owens Wiwa, brother of the executed activist, reflects this narrative in his biography written by Timothy Hunt titled *The Politics of Bones: Dr. Owens Wiwa and the Struggle for Nigeria's Oil*, McClelland & Stewart, 2006.

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Listening to African Voices: Adesanmi's Love Letter From the Grave

Eyitayo Aloh

Who Owns the Problem? Africa and the Struggle for Agency by Pius Adesanmi. Michigan State University Press, Michigan.

In January 2020, when Ugandan climate activist, Natashe Nakate, was cropped out of a group photo with four other Caucasian activists after a climate meeting of the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos, Switzerland, by press agency AP, it once again spotlighted the question of African agency in a world where every decision for and about the continent is made outside the continent. The problem is further compounded by another agency, Reuters, denying Nakate a name by misidentifying her as Natasha Mwansa.

In cropping Nakate out of the photograph and denying her a name and by extension, a space and voice in a global conversation, Western media once again prove that when it comes to global issues and problems, it is not an African matter unless they—the Western folks, as represented by their media—say it is. Africa does not even have the right and the power to partake in global problems that are outside the ascribed ones of poverty, war and crime. This is the disconnect between global possibilities and realities that makes the question of African agency to be one that is relevant at the dawn of a new decade, a decade that the African Union in its charter assures will witness a rebirth on the continent.

Pius Adesanmi, incidentally, is one of those who believes in that rebirth, one where Africa regains agency that was lost to colonialism and the postmodern evolution of neo-colonialism—the capacity to act independently in global affairs and make choices for itself and its inhabitants as opposed to the dictates of the structures of politics and economics. That capacity includes owning and defining its own problems without recourse to outside influence. That is the message that permeates Adesanmi's latest book, *Who Owns the Problem: Africa and the Struggle for Agency*. In what is perhaps the last testament of the late erudite Nigerian scholar and Pan Africanist, Pius Adesanmi, we see a scholar with a vision that transcends his academic discipline. Adesanmi describes Africa's problems, tells the stories of its origin and proceeds to prescribe viable solution in the book that follows the straight-talking

style of its predecessors, *You're Not a Country, Africa* (2011) and *Naija no dey Carry Last* (2015).

Who Owns the Problem is a collection of 16 keynote speeches and essays that Adesanmi delivered across the globe from 2010 prior to his tragic death in March 2019 on the Ethiopian Airlines crash. Characteristically unapologetic, Adesanmi tackles the question of agency through the framework of problems and issues that beset Africa. Adesanmi addresses issues such as the ever-present socio-economic problems that have plagued Africa as a continent and continuously make it the subject of "development" issues at global conferences. This book is a powerful statement to the strength of African Studies as a discipline; it is Adesanmi's love letter to his people from the grave. In the book, he strongly argues for an African voice and an African presence in any discussion about development and the definition of the problems, or challenges that face the continent. This is needed if Africa wants to be developed and relinquish the image of a beggarly continent. And in a clear homage to his oral African background, Adesanmi keeps the speeches in their original form, complete with opening greetings and acknowledgement of the people in the room as well as sponsoring agencies. His reason? He explains this decision thus:

> By keeping the exact mode and format in which each lecture was delivered, I not only invite the reader of this book into the full spectrum of the affective responses of the audience in situ, but I also hope that I am performing an act of resistance. In the last two years as I prepared this book and revised content as necessary, I came to resent the pressure to also revise form. There are certain disciplinary protocols of discourse and delivery—all Western—which confer the title of scholarship. In a book about Africa's agency, I was not going to revise and rework form to conform to Western ideals of the packaging, standardization, and delivery of knowledge. Form may very well be the next battle ground in Africa's long struggle for agency.

It appears that Adesanmi is putting himself in the forefront of the movement to reclaim Africa's voice, and by extension agency from the dictates of Western ideals. And if the question of agency is about equals having a conversation, then he equally invites all his readers, particularly those of African extraction to come and have a conversation with the economic, political and social leaders that he was engaging in his speeches.

However, despite the fact that the speeches were made over a period of time that involved specific and significant shifts in the socio-cultural milieu of the African continent (for example, the political transition in the two powerhouses of the continent, Nigeria and South Africa), the book manages to stay close and relevant to contemporary issues. This is due in no small measure to the thematic division of the book into three distinct sections that, despite their individual distinction, still manage to contribute to the central thrust of the book.

In Section One, "Crossfire," Adesanmi foregrounds his arguments by highlighting the fact that the world prescribes a solution to African problems without listening to Africa. This could partly explain why the prescribed solutions never work. Global economic institutions, especially the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, come under heavy criticism in this section for their prescriptive Western solutions that are ever incompatible with African problems. In fact, in the title essay, "#WhoOwnsTheProblem," he spares nothing in condemning Western institutions for their focus on the problems. War, Hunger, Genocide all seem to be the sole preserve

of Africa and as such must be tackled on African soil. Yet, he counters that in the face of these narratives of horror that have come to define Western dialogue on Africa, similar problems abound in territories across the globe. Therefore, to have an African solution that will probably work, Africa must own its problems. And when Africa owns its own problems, then it can proffer an African solution. For that to happen though, there has to be a cultural shift in mentality. A shift that must acknowledge that Africa can come up with solutions to its own problems, or maybe it only needs to draw on the abundance of its cultural heritage in arriving at the solution. Nowhere else is this argued stronger than in the essay, "The Disappeared African roots of Emma Watson's Feminism." Here, Adesanmi takes on feminism as a Western concept and points at some of the strong female African thinkers who said most, if not all the things Emma Watson is credited with saying, long before the Hollywood actress was born. Yet, it appears Africans actually need a Western voice, Western codification for permission to own what is theirs and in the process, forever play catch up in a game that they practically invented.

Beyond the focus of Section One, "Crossfire," on the problems tagged "African," Section Two provides the road map to tackling those problems the African way. Titled "Imagining Culture, Figuring Change," Adesanmi once again proves himself to be a sage with farsighted vision. Adesanmi argues strongly for a cultural approach in the quest for solutions. With poignant essays that explore the loose definition of culture from clothing ("Aso Ebi on my Mind"), urban spaces ("Ara Eko, Ara Oke: Lagos, Culture and the Rest of Us") to food and drink ("Ode to the Bottle: For Ken Harrow who laughed"), Adesanmi points to the values inherent in African culture, the ones being neglected as backward and rural, and identifies culture as the starting point of the march towards what can be defined as the African solution to African problems. His convincing and yet witty explanation of the problems is profound, and so are the solutions that he proffers. If anything, he puts the African back into the sphere of the human as opposed to some disembodied construct without agency.

The final part, Section Three, is a pointer to what an Africa for Africans can look like if leaders take advantage of the culture and people for the purpose of creating a harmonious society for all— an Africa with agency and self-determination. Aptly titled "Variations on Self and Love," it is in this section that we see the Adesanmi that is lost to the world of letters. Embodying Africa as a lover with many suitors, Adesanmi amplifies the good of the continent and the beauties that go unreported in the Western narrative of Africa. In "Dowry: Managing Africa's Many Lovers," Adesanmi highlights the ongoing, and so far successful, quest by China to court Africa and how it is being hampered by Western colonial powers, afraid to lose the beautiful bride that they hadn't cared for properly until being noticed by Eastern powers. Human agency is imbued in the ability of a bride to choose her groom from the many suitors and he extends this to African agency as well.

However, a book that advocates for Africans to own the definitions of their problems cannot be complete without a discussion around the major causes of such problems. The author minces no words in locating the problem facing Africa: bad leadership. In the final essay, "Post Centenary Nigeria: New Literatures, New Leaders, New Nation," he laments the poor leadership that has bedeviled Africa's most populous country and his country of origin, Nigeria. Yet, even when he laments, Adesanmi manages to find a glimmer of hope, a witty celebration that points to a better future. That future he believes lies in the people of the continent. The brains that dot the African diaspora and serve as better ambassadors than the politically appointed ones. "Africa is blessed with talented people," he writes, "[y]et, this vast amount of talent is

managed by a corrupt and clueless few in leadership positions." So to whom are we to turn for redemption? Adesanmi does not leave readers in doubt as to his belief in the youths of the continent. In the essay, "Face Me, I Book You: Writing Africa's Agency in the Age of the Netizen," he points to these active and agile minds that seem ever buoyed by new ideas as Africa's hope for a future where Africa's destiny lies in African hands.

Given that these are individual speeches collected into a volume, some readers may find the repetition of facts off-putting, especially in Section one where the speech by Chinua Achebe to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in 1999 is repeated in almost all the essays and still manages to find its way into another essay in Section Two. Paraphrasing and referencing of the material would have sufficed in certain places.

Readers who are also looking for big answers to burning questions, especially of the political kind, may also find themselves disappointed. While the book touches on the problems of leadership or lack thereof in the continent, it does not delve deep into the issue of how it can be resolved. Rather, the book raises more questions than answers and invariably invites readers to move the discourse beyond the pages and unto the public sphere of academic and social engagements. The book is designed to generate these kinds of conversations: conversations that constantly challenge the African populace to rethink their position on issues surrounding their immediate environment and to engage where possible. There are a few lessons that can be learned from past mistakes that the continent and its populace have made, mistakes that are well outlined in the book, and some ways in engaging them.

However, the ultimate triumph of the book lies in its ability to reposition the human agent at the heart of the discourse on African agency. Through anecdotes, witty tales of human failure and success as well as an elevation of the oral cultures of Africa, Adesanmi provides a way of seeing African studies through African eyes, beyond the study of a geographic area. He shows that within that geographic space are people with knowledge and talent that are good enough to not only tackle their problems, but also offer input into global issues. And rather than cut them out of a conversation like the Associated Press did to Nakate or deny them a voice, the world can engage them for the good of the world. And that is Adesanmi's love letter from the grave.

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The Privilege of Editing #WhoOwnsTheProblem: Remembering Pius Adesanmi

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In January 2011, I sat in a small yellow classroom with no windows, emblematic of Carleton University's Southam Hall, with the syllabus for AFRI1001 in front of me. This was only the second semester of my first year at Carleton and my first introduction to Pius Adesanmi. Though I didn't know it, Pius was already a household name in African literature, already a "cultural commentator", already delivering keynote lectures at conferences, art galleries and various other institutions around the world. Incidentally, he went on in those four months to show me many other things I didn't know, about Africa, its arts and its formidable artists.

Two aspects of that class still stand out. The first is J.P. Clark's poem *Abiku*, which has been circulating briskly since Pius's untimely departure, and was a foundational introduction to African poetry in his introductory class. Not only did I find it particularly fascinating from a cosmological perspective (having never before encountered baobab tree spirits or shamans), but after reading it aloud to us in class, Pius dutifully bowed his head, showing us his own scars and describing how this poem was more than mere metaphor, but told of real fear, love and hope.

The second hews closely to the first. Pius was an orator. I cannot read any of the poems from that class without hearing his distinct voice, the rumbling from his chest while he took pause between stanzas, the way he strode purposefully down the aisle in our dingy classroom, bringing each poem to life. This oratorial tenor stays present in his writing.

I will not bore you with further details of our semester. Suffice it to say my mind was expanded and I went on to major in African Studies. I never took another literature class, but I did spend my down time gorging on the writings of Chimamanda Ngozie Adichie, Teju Cole, A. Igoni Barrett, J.M. Coetzee, Tahar Ben Jelloun, Maryse Condé, Alain Mabanckou…some came as a direct result of AFRI1001, others I found because, in his enthusiasm for all things African literature, Pius pointed me in their direction.

Six years later I was in the last year of my Master's in Anthropology specializing in African Studies. Pius was the head of the African Studies department at the time and wanted me to manage a call for papers for the department's 10-year anniver-

sary book. "I might have a few other more personal projects for you to work on, if you have the time" he said. Apparently, he had conferred with another professor in the department for whom I'd done some editorial work and determined I could be of use to him as an editor as well. Which is why, a few months later, the manuscript for *#WhoOwnsTheProblem? Africa and the Struggle for Agency* appeared in my inbox.

A confession: I was not a great editor when I first received Pius's manuscript. Reading that initial draft now, I find myself noting missing commas, overlooked mistakes, sentences that could have been restructured. Admittedly, beyond these nitpicky details, there was not all that much for me to do, which may have led to my less than careful review. However, I try not to be too harsh on my younger self, because I can also understand why I might have forgotten to peer through the prose for grammatical errors. I was caught in the grip of a master storyteller.

Were I in the publishing business, as opposed to the freelance editor and grad student business, I think I would be cautious about accepting a manuscript of lectures and keynote addresses by an academic. For one, who would the audience be, beyond other academics? Of the keynote lectures I have witnessed, I can tell you that few of my friends outside my field (never mind the general academy), would care one iota about their content. For two, writing and speaking are two very different things. Not all speeches are well suited to be read, not all papers suited to verbal articulation. And of course, there is the problem of sheer mass. Is there enough to fill 200 pages? How prolific must one be in order to fill up that much space with lectures, keynote addresses or commencement speeches?

Pius did not have any of these problems. If you are even remotely interested in the goings on of Africa, *#WhoOwnsTheProblem* will inform and entertain. It is likely his ability to make sense of complex issues via stories, clear imagery and a vast understanding of not only the players involved in the continent's pressing issues, but of the creators, writers and thinkers who may have some answers that made Pius such a desirable public speaker. He is heavily influenced by the graceful narrator of all things surreal and wondrous about Africa's relationship with the world, Chinua Achebe, who Pius quotes heavily. And while most of the chapters speak from a Nigerian perspective, the topics concerned are wide-reaching. Having been a columnist and a professor of literature, Pius knew how to translate a casual, conversational style to vibrant prose with ease. Even those chapters, such as "The Disappeared African Roots of Emma Watson's UN Feminism" which were not originally speeches, nevertheless have a collegial tone. Reading these articles often felt like having discussions over a pint and this, I suspect, would suit Pius just fine.

Beyond searching for errant commas or en dashes to be replaced with their sibling em dashes, a good editor's task is to help clarify the writer's narrative. In the years after editing *#WhoOwnsTheProblem* I have had the pleasure of doing this for several graduate students and the occasional creative writer. How can your central point be best expressed? Is this the tone you want to convey? How does this paragraph bring your argument forward? Such are the most common questions I ask myself when doing editorial work. In the case of *#WhoOwnsTheProblem*, these questions were of little use to me. The questions I required were more subtle. Each essay wove a compelling argument and when put together in a book, become a cohesive mosaic, a portrait of a man and his most pressing ideas. The division of *#WhoOwnsTheProblem* into three parts was, to my mind, largely unnecessary. The themes, that culture is Africa, is

Africans, that globalization is no match for the African particularity, and that social media and technology will wear an African face, are clear and salient.

For me, it was like glimpsing one of the minds behind my own education.In this sense, I suspect for many readers, the book will feel like a return to a favourite class with a favourite teacher. I was proud of myself when I understood the references Pius regularly sprinkled in the essays, though I inevitably missed a few. As I was adding indents to paragraphs, I was being re-schooled in post-colonial discourse, African critiques of feminism, international politics, the politics of development, contemporary Pan-African movements and even occasionally the politics of football on the continent. Though his anecdotes may be contemporary, the topics Pius chose for the book span the years. A chapter recounting an unexpectedly harrowing car trip through Missouri reminds us that the US is still a dangerous place for Black folks, as the country's racist President blows by his impeachment, and the Democrats consider electing a racist candidate of their own. On topics closer to the continent, Pius deftly reminds his audiences that the question of who owns the problem has been asked for decades, by a slew of academics, politicians and philosophers alike.

Indeed, Pius does not jealously guard his own authority on the question. Readers will encounter a plethora of authors, thinkers, Twitter personalities (mostly Nigerian) and hopefully will look them up and read their thoughts on matters large and small on the continent. Wole Soyinka and Chinua Achebe are present practically between every word. You could call this book an homage to the fecundity of their own work across disciplines and continents. But there are dozens whose contributions to writing, theorizing and thinking Africa are thoroughly and lovingly mentioned throughout the book.

It is here where Pius cleverly combines practice with his artful preaching. In listing artists, thinkers or scholars, he is reminding his readers of the good, artful work that is being done and that will continue to be done, though without his collegial presence. He is similarly reminding his colleagues that they ignore African and global lay audiences at their own peril.

"The Yoruba have always insisted that the crowd is the owner of culture," Pius wrote in his chapter "Aso Ebi on my Mind" and indeed, this can easily be forgotten in academic or literary scenes. Pius was a beacon of validation for the arts and social sciences in Africa and this book is yet another tribute to their value. His writing is a reminder of why culture matters, why studying the arts, music, literature, matters. But they only matter if they are shared, created or metamorphosed by the crowd. Readers will note that while a number of the book's essays were originally keynote lectures for large academic conferences, others were for diverse audiences. There are many disciplines in which there remains much handwringing about the dangers of scholar activism and community-based research. Pius reminds us that the crowd keeps the entire academic operation in business.

It is tempting to say that I didn't learn much about editing from working on *#WhoOwnsTheProblem* because there was so little for me to do. But the learning experience of editing good writing is just as important (if not more important) as editing bad writing. If I learned nothing else, it's that good writing can dance on the page. That is definitively what Pius's writing does. The stories are vividly retold, and it is easy to hear a crowd chuckling on cue in the space between paragraphs.

I did not know it at the time but working for Pius as a research assistant and

editor led to many more editing contracts and the privilege of reading many more authors. This past summer for example, I did the final proofread of the Institute of African Studies' 10-year anniversary anthology—a project come full circle—and I did some editorial work on the anthology *Wreaths for a Wayfarer*, a collection of poems written in honour of Pius. I remain a student of this man who taught me about African literature, who reminds me that culture cannot be separated from politics or technology, and who introduced me to the comings and goings of *abiku* children. To paraphrase a great man, departed too soon: I wish you successful deliberations in reading Pius Adesanmi's final book. You will find, as I did, something new each time you read it.