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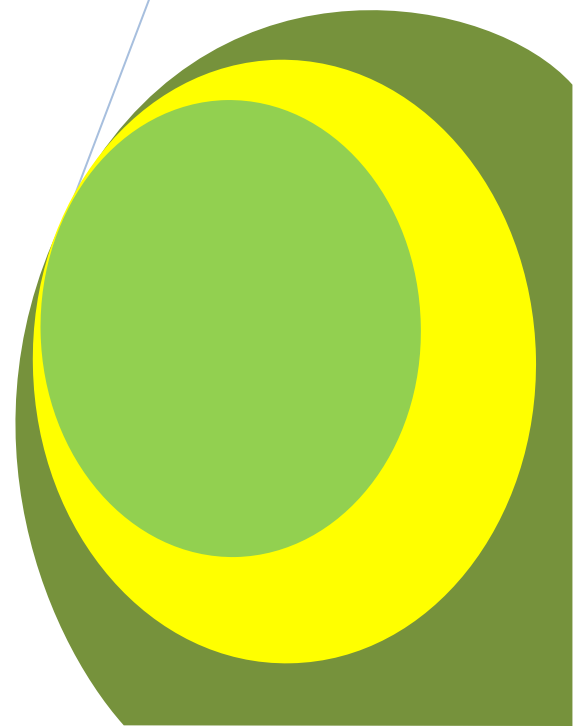
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A Fine Stalemate: Cultural Decolonisation and Imperialism's Deadlock in Gomo's: *A Fine Madness*

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A Fine Stalemate: Cultural Decolonisation and Imperialism's Deadlock in Gomo's: *A Fine Madness*

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ABSTRACT

This study is an analysis of Mashingaidze Gomo's *A Fine Madness*, which is an anti-colonial text. The continued presence and success of imperial forces in the Third World, Africa in particular, has left many troubled in spite of the attempt to fend off this menace. Direct responses to this threat have had marginal success. Even at the artistic level literary works that are decidedly anti-imperialist have had a less than desirable impact, which is a concern. This study seeks to analyse different intrinsic and extrinsic considerations that influence the construction of anti-imperialist texts. The purpose of this research is to evaluate the impact of these considerations by artists in texts that are or purport to be anti-imperialist. Content or words alone do not communicate the full message of a text, hence the need to probe further the impact made by an author's stylistic choices in presenting their narratives. Internally, form, setting/context, language/discourse, characterisation and tone will be looked at while externally target audience, authorial perspective, publishing and packaging will be looked at. The literary text is a mediated product meant to communicate messages hence the study will draw from both media and Communication studies widely. The main theoretical field which the study draws from and contributes to is cultural decolonization, with an inclination towards Marxism of a moderate type. The study will focus mainly on the local/national Zimbabwean context with spill offs into regional countries that have tried to combat imperialism some resorting to liberation struggles. The researcher, after documentary analysis, exploration of theory and discourse from Gomo Mashingaidze's *A Fine Madness*, has concluded that despite a committed effort by anti-imperialism, imperial influences are present even in anti-imperialist fiction and serve to reinforce a dominant Capitalist reading of these seemingly anti-imperialist texts.

Keywords: Cultural Decolonisation, Imperialism.

INTRODUCTION

This paper looks at literature that reflects on the struggle between imperialism and cultural decolonization in contemporary Africa, the so-called neo-colonial epoch which begins once direct occupation of territories by colonial power has ended. *A Fine Madness* by Mashingaidze Gomo is an anti-imperial text that reflects historically progressive African nations' response to imperialism. In the neo-colonial epoch, as opposed to colonialism, imperialism is no longer a direct bilateral confrontation between a metropole colonizer and a subject colonized people but sees the entry of modern powers like United States of America as well as more covert forms of interaction and exploitation between "haves" and "have nots." Cultural decolonisation seeks to eradicate all forms of political, economic, social and cultural control of any society by another.

Imperialism and Cultural decolonization defined

Imperialism is a policy of extending a country's power and influence through diplomacy or military force. It is the Western policy of extending a nation's authority by territorial acquisition or by the establishment of economic and political hegemony (Cabral 1978). It is an authoritative system of government, a policy and practice of forming Empires that seek to control raw materials, labour and markets (Frederick 1993).

Additionally Cabral makes a distinction between imperial dominations with “classical colonialism” (the normal direct colonialism) and neo-colonialism noting how, in reality, they appear very much the same;

We therefore see that both in colonialism and neo-colonialism the essential characteristics of imperialism are the same, the negation of the historical processes of the dominated people by means of violent usurpation of the freedom of development of the national productive force.

For imperialism to flourish cultural effacement of those Said (1999) calls the Oriental is important before subjecting him to products of the metropolitan culture.

Cabral, from a Marxist dialectic perspective, opines imperialism “a historical necessity, a consequence of the impetus given by the productive forces and of the transformations of the means of production in the general context of humanity” (1978; p. 18). Consequently, it is also necessary for development and historical movement towards socialism by continuously, “increasing complexity in the means of production, increasing the differentiation between the classes with the development of the bourgeoisie, and intensifying the class struggle” (p. 22).

Fanon (1963 and 1967) draws towards modernity and analyses imperialism as a multi-faceted cultural process that laid the ground for the ready acceptance and adoption of mediated cultural products which came much, much later. McQuail (2005) sees cartography, religion, education, administration, technology, travel and tourism as the main areas where imperialism that is cultural manifests itself. Appadurai (1990) mentions six “scapes” which he deems crucial in promoting imperialism; cultuscapes, ideoscapes (ideology), finanscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes and ethnocapes (movement of people globally).

Cultural decolonization is closely related to Pan Africanism. Ramirez (1999; 3) notes PanAfricanism has over time developed two currents of thought. The first one supported by Irele (1971 and 1981) operates on a strictly cultural basis, analysing the role of education and the responsibility of the artist in the contemporary African context. The second perspective is more aggressive and strongly implicated in society and politics. It includes the Fanonesque notion of “cultural decolonization” (Ramirez 1999, 4). It is however Ngugi (1972, 1986 and 1993) who gives a political and aesthetic autonomy to the movement.

The distinction between Pan Africanism and “cultural decolonisation” is one of scope. While the earlier strives for a classical African nationalist vindication the latter bears a more international perspective and its genesis takes place once political independence has been acquired and when this independence reveals that there no significant changes to the living conditions of African people (Ramirez 99; 6).

Cultural decolonisation posited that political and ideological conflict is not aimed directly at the old colonial powers, but targets imperialism as represented by the US and its international policies, e.g. IMF. Ngugi (1993) explains;

If independence was the overcoming of political colonialism, it is necessary to take another step forward and overcome ideological and cultural colonialism (p.28).

For Ngugi uptake of cultural patterns alien to Africa constitutes assimilation and subservience to a covert form of imperialism. The Marxist approaches upon which armed struggles as waged in Zimbabwe rested are also implicated.

A Fine Madness is a poetic narrative told from the perspective of a raconteur who is a helicopter gunner. He is fighting for the Zimbabwean army in the Second Congo War between 1998 and 2003, dubbed by commentators as Africa’s World War. The war was precipitated by Laurent Desire Kabila’s failure to disband Rwandan rebel groups that had assisted him to seize power from Mobutu Sese Seko in 1998. Rwandan forces, together with rebel forces from the new DRC and Uganda, seized large territories in the east of the country as they sought to topple Kabila. It was then that joint forces from Zimbabwe, Angola, Namibia, Chad and Sudan emerged to prop up Kabila’s ailing government. The situation was further complicated by the recurrence of existing ethnic conflicts between Hutus and Tutsis in Central Africa as well as the MPLA and UNITA in Angola. In total twenty-five armed groups from eight African countries were involved in the fracas. Over five and a half million deaths were recorded mostly from disease and starvation (Buchanan and Patel 2015).

The narrative consists of thirty-four concise chapters that look at the devastating effects of this war in the then Zaire and the larger US and European interference in postcolonial Africa. The plot is cyclic and mostly centres on the thoughts that “haphazardly” emerge like anecdotes from the narrator’s mind. The diarist narrator is stationed at Boende base as a jet alouette fighter and recounts the effects of contact with the West ideologically, politically, culturally and even religiously. History and language are other topics that are dwelt on by Gomo. His analysis of

imperialism is not ground-breaking but Gomo manages to offer a fresh perspective whose appeal is largely in the imagery employed.

This paper will focus on Gomo's treatment of history, form, language and tone in the text. At another level matters relating to authorial influence, publishing and audience will also be explored. The aim is to assess the extent to which Gomo succeeds in presenting his anti-imperial message. Such success can only be complete if the style employed reinforces the content or themes he seeks to share with his audience. In essence it is an evaluation of how far "how" a message is being sent coincides with "what" message is being sent.

4.1 FORM

In Gomo's *A Fine Madness*, madness is not located only in the text's content or thematic thrust; in particular Africa's peculiar circumstances, but in style as well. Derrida (cited by Veit-Wild, 2006) puts it that language (as logos) and madness (as silence) mutually exclude one another' and that madness can only be expressed in the language of fiction. Madness in the text is reflected in the union of prose and poetry – two inherently divergent genres, paradox, stream of consciousness, rhetoric questions, imagery and the geographic restlessness that pervades the text.

Paradox is a prominent technique in the narrative and is reflected in how several sections in the narrative are titled; "Show me an honourable destitute," "A savage peace," "Cruel mercy," "The curse of the freed slave" and "The beauty of imperfection." The greatest of these paradoxes is the title of the collective itself *A Fine Madness*. It is for a start an expression of defiance as well as a rejection of any other course in solving African problems that is not in tandem with history. It represents the will to grasp onto a seemingly unrealistic dream, the total freedom of Africa. The situation of colonization and acculturation alienated Africans from themselves resulting in a deep-seated inferiority complex. Inferiority is equated to madness which can only be remedied, as Fanon (1952 and 1961) suggests, in and through violence. In this light, like most intuitive African literary works, *A Fine Madness* commits to two tasks; what Ramirez (1999) calls rear ward looking historicism as well as demonstrating optimism for the future that is often hard to comprehend for pragmatists.

Also related to "madness" is the choice of prose-poetry genre. For poetry *A Fine Madness* is unorthodox, even loose and defective in its metric construction but the language and imagery offer compensation through their richness. Words in the narrative carry more weight than one would supposedly expect. Veit-Wild (2006) explains the appeal of madness in African literary forms;

(As he is) introducing the perspective of 'writing madness' into African literature, of 'listening to the speech of madness in the literary text' (Felman 1985:17), means seeing that literature from a different angle, through the lenses of writers who have ruffled up the surface of realist representation and have explored issues and styles that represent a trespassing of borders, including elements of risk and instability. . . The political situation in Africa is so full of absurdities, monstrosities and grotesque aberrations that it demands a literary response reflecting the innermost madness of this very situation and the structures ruling it (p. 2).

As a result it is a societal madness that Gomo seeks to depict, the maddening complexities of Africa's present circumstances. For instance, Tinyarei is a longed for and never seen but constantly recurring female figure in the text. On closer inspection one can see that Tinyarei represents not just a woman, but Zimbabwe, Africa and the black world.

Madness is also a subjective phenomenon, a counter-disposition reliant for its existence on its opposite which is sanity or normalcy. Madness is a preponderantly private experience, which accounts for the presence of a first person persona narrator. The persona narrator hardly shies away from his postured point of view as he declares it from the outset, a condition forced by historical circumstances. In a way this accounts for the intense depth of reflection and thought that frequently occupies the persona narrator. There is not much activity in the narrative as the protagonist is intrusive. Dreams and nightmares become a dominant mode of probing into his thoughts, conditions that fit properly with madness. Reflection is painful, often presenting more anguish than warfare. So is waiting. It is as if the protagonist is waiting for something important to happen. The waiting however presents a paradox. The seemingly mundane state of affairs in Boende is deceptive as significant things are already occurring in and within Africa as a whole.

The reader is forced to experience, not read, the text. Answers are hardly at a premium because DRC and the continent's concerns at large are locked up in contradictions, whose answers though can be located in history. The persona questions Euro-African relations over the last two centuries in light of policy and ideology followed like imperialism, Marxism, democracy, good-governance and aid which have been lopsided in application to serve Nordic

interests. With Gomo there can be no understanding of the present or visualization of the future without a concise understanding of the past. When studying imperialism consulting history is necessary as structural parallels can be drawn with the present.

Part of the madness in this narrative is also reflected in its geographic restlessness. There are constant shifts from DRC, to Zimbabwe, to Mozambique, to African affairs and global affairs. Or within DRC we may be taken from Boende to the war-torn areas of the country and finally back to base or vice-versa. These shifts are significant in that they highlight the worldly scope of Gomo's anti-imperial quest. They also serve to unify Africans by showing them that their conditions are similarly miserly and induced, in no small part, by imperial forces.

Conclusively madness pervades *A Fine Madness* at the formal level. This is because the circumstances that Africa finds itself are unnatural and warrant an equally unorthodox response. Gomo himself asserts this, "We are dealing with a new phenomenon and new experiences which require a new reaction. We have no blueprint to address the present" (2012). The response comes in the union of prose and poetry – two inherently divergent genres, paradox, stream of consciousness, rhetoric questions, imagery and the geographic restlessness that pervades the text.

4.2 TONE

To understand Gomo's outlook in *A Fine Madness* we need to revisit Veit-Wild. Like Fanon, she establishes the emancipatory capacity that mad writing can possess;

Mad writing cannot be anything but violent writing. The traumas, derangement and suffering that political and mental colonization have engendered in the colonized subject have brought about literary texts that are cries of anguish, of rage, and more often than not, of violent obscenity (2006: 4).

Hence his temperament can be deemed militant, introspective, deliberately postured and equally unapologetic. This emanates from the cruel circumstances of the colonial system which then fosters unorthodox responses, such as mad writing, to rid colonization. Despite this Gomo does not dwell on history alone but also offers hope of a bullish kind.

Gomo's work is in a way a great refusal of European determinism. He has the typical militancy of a man who has been on the warfront. He walks the talk. Self determination, he argues, is at the centre; "The man on the spot must tell his story in order to prevent the tragedy from being repeated" (p. iii). Yet this presents problems of its own. Such an outlook is prone to a variety of exaggerations and biases which are characteristic of all subjective works.

The opening chapter which sets the tone for the succeeding narrative is titled "Tinyarei – Give us a break." This is a stern warning to the West to give Africa a break given the close to thirteen decades of exploitation. The stranglehold on Zimbabwe and Africa has been a naked, sustained and shameless.

You see . . . I feel deeply for Tinyarei . . . The feeling I have for her is a deep and powerful thing As deep and powerful as a bottomless sea A raging, turning and twisting passion, as inexorable as it is real And the madness of falling in love with her should owe no explanation to anyone . . . Not even a group of white journalists from a European fashion magazine (p. 5).

The depth of feeling for Tinyarei (Zimbabwe and Africa) needs attention here. It is a personal and sensual feeling which cannot be understood by outsiders, nor should any effort be made to explain this to anyone outside the African cosmos. At issue once more is self-determination, the ability of a people to define their own destiny. Unfortunately bodies like the IMF (white journalists from a European fashion magazine) put conditions on assistance as well as imposing rules on Africa like democracy, austerity and human rights which are just as noxious to Africa as their perceptions of beauty and fashion. It is this that Gomo rejects.

His perception and analysis of the problem is also appealing. He tells the story of Africa's history in a language all Africans understand. The depiction of the Europe induced death of Tinyarei (captured from page 69 to 72) bears an African semblance. In the African cosmos the female child is a priceless communal asset. Tinyarei's murder cannot be offset by small meaningless forms of compensation (aid or globalization), nor a flamboyant funeral but revenge, an eye for an eye. In short it is contact with Europe that is the root of the matter. To appreciate imperialism one has to see it in operation, not to be merely told. Eyes "video screens" do not deceive; the unsaid is complemented by vision (p.28). Western civilization, indefensible as Césaire (1972) asserts, harbours no 'light' for

Africa. Perspective is significant here. African history ought to be told by guerrillas, detainees, villagers, African armies, African pilots and gunners, commando, first hand victims of neo-colonialism and by;

Hard old men wise enough to know that strength is not always in colour, numbers or sophistication but mostly in being right (p. 43).

The simple charge is that Europe has already lost morally by attempting to wipe out the history of Africa (Cesaire 1972). Instead, to combat this toxic waste, a rallying point is needed. One of the rallying points is to be found within oral African forms of expression. Of music Gomo adds;

Song fosters unity . . . It demands that one man raise his voice in lead And that the singular voices of the rest should unite and rally around that pillar of voice, reaching out cohesive hands of rhythm and rhyme Gravitating into anchor around it (p. 97).

Song becomes a symbol and its performance becomes reality, which translates to anti-imperial war in Africa. Song is equally appealing because its performance is usually a collective effort with people coming together to carry out important emancipatory acts. In the chapter "Mukombe weropa (cup of blood)" mbira music is also given similar emancipatory potential because of its traditional origin and authenticity.

Ultimately, for Gomo, resolving Africa's ills is a question of employing the right technique.

African people must know that it must be a matter of technique to carry a demonised Zimbabwe and a beleaguered Africa to independent prosperity African people must know that sometimes it is fine to be mad African people must know that a madness they believe in must be a fine madness (p. 169).

Despite all the complications noted by the end of the narrative future prospects are still bright. Gomo is emphatically denouncing European determinism and placing the power to direct Africa's future in the hands of Africans themselves. He concludes, "The future is a resolution. We chart our own destiny" (2012). It is sentiments like these that firmly affirm Gomo's spirit in the poetic narrative as positive and optimistic.

4.3 CONTEXT/SETTING

In contextualizing his fiction Gomo draws on two important aspects; on one hand history as well as the early twenty first century events that is the backdrop of his war torn DRC setting. Gomo does not simply draw on history but first makes a staunch defence for the preoccupation with historicism that pervades oppressed peoples' literature. Appreciating history is significant in that there are structural similarities in how imperialism operates. The DRC war is also drawn upon because it demonstrates how imperialism has taken a new form. The charge that Gomo makes is that the West is prepared, where covert operations have failed, to make war in order to help capitalism flourish. Gomo is however silent on class matters within social groups in Africa, a point which will be picked up on in this section.

Gomo manages to do the dirty work, piecing together the patched up and smeared history of Africa as he explains the forces working against the fulfillment of African aspirations. Initially Gomo (in the chapter "Divine abstraction") sings praise to the rich landscape and history that stood pristine until imperial forces rudely interrupt. Further romanticized is the African response to such an onslaught as the mobile commando is deemed an African analgesic to the scourge of imperialism. But if the African past is being romanticized then Europe itself is culpable of a similar charge. For Gomo history and time are inseparable, cyclic and obligatory if present conditions are to be explained. The past presents;

Ghosts that occasionally re-enacted their demise for the lonely late night native traveler ... influencing them to stop and take notice of the past in order to recognize it as the faulty foundation of the faulty present ... a wake-up call to recognize the present and the future as a resolution of an action that originates in the past ... to see the future as directed by the present and the past (p. 20).

Before explaining caution must first be sounded that the past is not a haven to shelter in periodically whenever fortunes are dismal. Nor should the mere study and glorification of it be a preoccupation in itself. Time and history are both important because the past “inspires ... informs ... contextualizes” (p. 117). Studying the past, present and future in Europe and Africa presents similarities in experiences that led to the French Revolution, World War I and II on one hand and anti-imperial wars in Africa on the other;

And contrary to imperialist design, some of the educated elite sampled their experience and compared notes with the European man's history And the findings led to war (p. 40).

Nor are these lessons found in history restricted to politics alone. The African anti-imperial cause is just as legitimate as the biblical Jewish quest for liberation from bondage in Egypt. The past is a guide and particularly informative to contemporaries who have no reference to draw upon as they attempt to negotiate present experiences. As Gomo concludes the past is a mixed bag, “That is where curses originate and that is also where heritage is anchored” (p.118).

Gomo is not limited to history alone but covers important events in Africa at the turn of the millennium, that is, the “African World War” or as Gomo puts it “Operation Sovereign Legitimacy.” Nor does he confine himself to principal actors in the struggle DRC and Zimbabwe alone but the greater picture, the regional and continental concerns of Africans. Gomo and Muchineripi's travels have given him a better understanding of the wider issues that affect the continent. Zimbabwe's soldiers and security forces have served repeatedly in African hotspots like Somalia, Ethiopia and Rwanda. In the DRC history is actually being relived with the conflict that the narrative presents. In the narrative the traditional men who were the spirits of the First Chimurenga are now joining fighters in the DRC riding alouettes with them as they aim blows at imperialism. The most painful thing in the Congo, though, is that it is not an anti-colonial war, nor is it a civil war but African armies self destructing. The principal source of this problem, meanwhile, is aloof, spectating.

The narrative scores well in identifying the role of imperialism in Africa's demise. The Western world is deemed a corrupt wasp. At one level we marvel at the wasp's industry and then its ability to fly without formal instruction. But it is industry directed at reaping where the wasp has not sown, hence the West's systematic robbery of the caterpillar who in turn is Africa. Modernization and neo-liberalism are also deemed deleterious. The message from elders is clear, white patronage is a cursed cup “... of blood/And it will not get you far” (p. 165) and bent on destroying African culture, tradition and norms. Aid, likened to *lokoto* (whiskey), is a drug meant to keep developing nations tied to the international finance system and adhering to metropole interests and demands. Nor does a neo-colonial co-existence with whites seem tenable even when based on hollow terms like tolerance, good governance and unreciprocated reconciliation, in particular at the economic level;

And just what kind of democracy would have four thousand Europeans whose loyalties lie with our enemies controlling the means of production in a sovereign state of thirteen million landless black people whom they all hate with passions that are demonic? (p.49)

The point that is made in this section entitled “A savage peace” is that the peace that Africa earned with decolonisation, the neo-colonial peace, is made savage by the reality that economic conditions are even more miserable for these new countries than they were.

This acknowledged the author exposes himself to criticism. Firstly, for a contemporary publication his perception of imperialism, or the enemy, is dangerously narrow. The West is no longer the sole threat to Africa as China, for instance, is aggressively exploiting African resources. The inheriting decolonizing African bourgeoisie has also joined in the party. For Ranger (2003 and 2005) this clique uses a particular form of nationalism to keep subjects in check as they assume the role of the former masters. He defines “patriotic history” thus;

It is different from and more narrow than the old nationalist historiography, which celebrated aspiration and modernization as well as resistance. It resents the ‘disloyal’ questions raised by historians of nationalism. It regards as irrelevant any history which is not political. And it is explicitly antagonistic to academic historiography (2003. p 5).

In a succeeding publication Ranger adds;

It prevents any self-reflection on the part of the regime because criticism of any kind can at once be categorised as treasonable and imperialist. It enables its exponents to invent desired realities, like 'good harvests and economic recovery' or a Victoria Falls entirely in Zimbabwe (2005. p11).

Hence it is narrow in scope and yet elastic depending with the needs of those that control it. It is arbitrary and extremely useful in crisis situations. Godfrey Chikowore, a keen adherent, is quoted by Ranger for illustrative purposes to show the full extent of its illogicalities;

Zimbabwe is the product of a bitter and protracted armed struggle. That armed struggle should serve as the guiding spirit through the presidential elections and even beyond. The right to choose a president of one's own choice should not be considered as a mere exercise of a democratic right. It is the advancement of a historical mission of liberating Zimbabwe from the clutches of neo-colonialism. Any other wild illusion about it constitutes a classic example of self-betrayal and self-condemnation to the ranks of perpetual servitude. The stampede for democracy should not undermine the gains of the liberation war (2003: p6).

To illustrate this point in *A Fine Madness* we can observe how Gomo aligns two succeeding sections "Human contact" (seemingly benevolent exchange between a Congolese woman and the protagonist which leads to sex) and "The rape" (which shows malevolent European application in Congo) to perhaps sugarcoat the former and brandish the latter. And yet both acts are based on seeking wealth or resources from a host experiencing an unnatural situation. The point is, intervening countries' (like Zimbabwe) exploits in the DRC were not entirely above board. They may have been motivated in a large way by the desire by political and military generals' desire to loot Congolese wealth. Hence innocent soldiers like Takawira Muchineripi may have, inadvertently, been facilitating the looting of diamonds by Zimbabwean businessmen and politicians.

A related point of weakness in Gomo's contextual analysis of the forces at work is the role of class in the African question. Upon independence the course of most African countries was charted by a nationalist bourgeoisie that was educated but lacking in capital and resources (Babu 1981). Ultimately they assumed the role of the departed colonizers as they are unable to reconcile the contradiction between international finance capital and the popular will of their citizenry. Mandaza and Sachikonye (2002) argue that such a class is left with no option practically but to further their own class interests. Babu (1981) adds that when the bourgeoisie talk about "National interests" what they are really talking about is their own class interest, which includes their exclusive right to exploit the workers of their own countries "without interference" as well as the right to grab colonial wealth. The bourgeoisie as a class has the fewest antagonistic contradictions among themselves since they share a "class interest" although their "national interests" may temporarily come into conflict on occasion. They have, for Babu, the same world outlook (Capitalism), motivations (private enterprise and profit), cultural foundation (Judeo-Christian), political ethics (liberty, equality – but exclusively for themselves), politico-economic aspirations (world domination) and International obligation (Whiteman's burden). The classification in reality is not this binding. It is apparent that when African countries adopted a more or less similar attitude to foreign relations, she took a bourgeoisie class position in international affairs, and consequently not the people's "National Interest" (1981). In support Ngugi notes in *A Fine Madness*' preface;

By subsuming class divisions in Africa under the struggle between two colour monoliths, he denies himself a perspective that might better explain the emergence of postcolonial dictatorships and their actual relationship to the Western corporate bourgeoisie (p. 2).

Gomo thus overgeneralises. As Pepetela in *Mayombe* demonstrates, tribalism and ethnicism are real while George Orwell in *The Road to Wigan Pier* and Olley Maruma in *Coming Home* jointly remind us that, in Europe especially, class divisions are not a new phenomenon and continue to exist to this day. An acknowledgement of the class forces taking shape at the time would have given his work an extra dimension.

4.4 LANGUAGE

The major motivation to write for Gomo is the desire to transcribe African experiences in a literary form that is “inculcated into the mental make-up of African children as a security vaccine. . .” (p. 27). He is struck by the fact that the rich African story has stayed untold. While Amuta (1989) identifies orature as the ideal medium for the lower classes Gomo feels the issue must be reflected on further;

It must be known that orature alone cannot hold fort against purposefully well-documented Western media propaganda that hypnotizes African children into zombies donning British and American flag bandanas, entranced by organized confusion and speaking in colonial tongues yet surrounded by neocolonial squalor (p. 27).

Orature alone will not suffice. It needs to be transcribed as written records have a longer life span than oral messages, hence literature.

The concern however is when the chosen medium is the English language. Femi Ojo-Ade, cited by Kehinde (1999), contends the African writer in English is first and foremost a translator. Meaning can be doctored for good or for bad in translation. For instance Gomo’s translation of the Shona expression “*nekuti kuzvara kumwechete*” in the footnotes is “Because the pain of childbirth knows no race.” It is apparent that the latter is a more detailed contextual version whose impact cannot be matched by the former.

Gomo’s position on language and the language debate is spelt out in the section entitled “Impeccable English and French.” He commences by noting the strong links in language between Shona and Lingala which supports the idea of a common North African ancestry. But Lingala like all African languages is marginal, as are many forms of expression and cultural products in Africa. Language and culture become synonymous, “Since language transmits and is itself transmitted by a/people’s culture” (p. 55). Language is not just a collection of words but a medium that expresses existence.

Resultantly for Gomo choosing to write in the English language serves simply to reinforce colonial interests. He himself concedes that the Patriotic Front (PF) was already defeated in the Lancaster negotiations because the medium employed was the language of the oppressor. The PF was a coalition of the two major parties that negotiated the settlement against Rhodesian colonizers. The Lancaster agreement in London paved the way for a ceasefire which led to independence in 1980 and elections in Zimbabwe. The ideal medium for expression in these negotiations, even for Gomo, would be an indigenous language as identity and concepts are best spelt out in it. A semantic, syntactic and pragmatic analysis of these claims may however not corroborate this convincingly. The present language mix-up does not aid African interests;

It must surely be tragic to be an African blank and writable CD . . . just there, available for any programme, even to self-destruct (p. 57).

The image is striking, but Homi Bhabha in *The Location of Culture* believes Africans are worse than that as they are caught up in the hesitancy of not belonging to any group. Positioned on the threshold of two “adversary” languages and cultures, African literature seems to open up an in-between (third space) of cultural ambivalence (1994). Ngugi adds that a divorce is apparent between public and private spaces which perpetuate the cultural alienation of Africans;

The language of an African child’s formal education was foreign. The language of the books he read was foreign. The language of his conceptualisation was foreign. Thought, in him, took the visible form of the foreign language. So the written language of a child’s upbringing in the school (even his spoken language within the school compound) became divorced from his spoken language at home (1986: 17).

The remedy, for Ngugi, is to adopt local languages in writing “all the way” (1986, XIV). And yet he retracts as he pens the preface to *A Fine Madness* in English, neglecting his commitment to African languages. The point is, by committing himself to Gomo’s project he downplays his earlier argument which prioritises an audience-centered literature. The “linguistic freedom” crusade his protégé Gomo advocates at the end of the section becomes merely showmanship and playing to the gallery. The most obvious contradiction is that *A Fine Madness* is written in impeccable English, the very English he seeks to subvert.

For Amuta (1989), in an argument Achebe would probably vouch for, this concern is misplaced. Emphasis should be placed on breaking the power structures that give French and English hegemonic power as means of expression, a conscientious deconstruction of the sacrosanct rules of imperial languages. Amuta also notes that these European languages have helped cement and sustain African nation states as homogenous political entities thus negating their originally negative imperial "mission." At the level of social experience, the use of English in a country like Nigeria, for instance, makes it possible to sustain interaction among members of nearly 350 ethnic groups. Hence to insist on exclusive creation of literature in either of these languages is to ignore the social and historical predication of the language situation itself (Amuta 1989: 113). It is through these languages from Europe that we realise and express to each other that we are one and that our suffering is shared.

The important language issue is thus left hanging once more. Gomo supports Ngugi emotionally but by also drawing images and symbols that are intrinsic to Africa in an adopted language manages to buttress Achebe's very argument. All he has managed to explain is that the language debate is still very much alive. Very rarely does he do what Orwell (1937) decried in *The Road to Wigan Pier* i.e. taking away the socialist text and movement away from its true owners. Still, though, there is a world of difference between socialism, anti-imperialism and cultural decolonisation but that distinction is not this study's main focus.

4.5 AUTHORSHIP

Gomo is a well-travelled and experienced soldier who fared in the Zimbabwe and Mozambique's liberation struggles and then DRC. He was born in 1964 in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), third in a family of eight where he was raised during the struggle for Zimbabwean independence. He joined the Airforce of Zimbabwe in 1984 as an aircraft engines apprentice and later joined 7 Squadron as an Alouette 111 helicopter technician and gunner in Mozambique where Zimbabwean Defence Forces protected the fuel pipelines from Beira during the Mozambique civil war. He returned to the Zimbabwean Airforce School of Technical Training as an instructor in aircraft engines and later served in the war in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). After the DRC, he completed a BA degree in English and Communications. In 2007, he retired from the Airforce to study for a BA (Hons) degree in Fine Arts at Chinhoyi University of Technology and to pursue a life in the arts. Gomo is married with three children and lives in Zimbabwe (Mengestu, 2011).

As such the writer does not pull any punches in his narrative; history for him has been in equal measure blunt. He warns readers from the outset that neutrality in art is a myth;

The personal experiences that informed it are not neutral. It is a weapon of war and no weapon of war in the hands of a combatant is neutral (p. VI).

An artist must be close to the particular elements on which the most important experiences are built. The challenge Gomo has is going beyond the particular so as to elevate personal history into a universally credible work of art. The war experiences that Gomo has faced breed anger, but it is an anger that is facilitative and informative. It should help polarized communities create a tolerant world in what for him is a "last ditch fight for Africa" (p. xii).

Gomo does well to enlist the services of one of African Literature's marquee names in Ngugi wa Thiong'o whose embroidery graces his narrative's preface. If it is the other way round (that critic attracts writer) then Ngugi wins himself a new convert, ideologically. African scribes have of late been viewed skeptically. They are viewed as constituting a class that theorises, writes fiction and critiques it, in a way that is not really useful to anyone but their own pockets (Ramirez 1999, Ogoke 2011). It is interesting where Ngugi's participation here leaves him given his radical views in the language debate. *A Fine Madness* is written in English and his comments are equally in English.

Amuta (1989) takes a slightly different perspective in his analysis of the writer critic. For him the African writer's entry into criticism is a function of two interrelated motivations; an attempt to lay bare the peculiar social and philosophical outlook that informs *his own* work and secondly, but related, an attempt to use this outlook as a basis for evaluating the works of his fellow writers. Resultantly there is a propensity, mostly unconscious, to evaluate the works of other writers and even attempt to "correct" their world view and social vision according to the writer-critic's own subjective world view. Benjamin Lukacs, cited by Amuta (1989), illuminates this point when he observes;

No matter how broad the horizon of his social and personal interests or how original and profound his intellect, the writer-critic generally approaches aesthetic problems from the point of view of the concrete questions arising in his own creative work, and he refers his conclusions . . . back to his own work (p. 27).

What this demonstrates is a lack of consensus amongst African writers. This also shows how marketplace considerations are impacting on both the writer and the writer critic (Gomo and Ngugi) as both have practical advantages to gain from this collaboration. For Amuta, once writers of an epoch are involved in criticism of the literature of their contemporaries, their value judgements also reflect the class and ideological conflicts which define social life and which they recreate in their own artistic works (1989).

4.6 PUBLISHING FOR PACKAGED AUDIENCES

Factors relating to publishing are necessarily related to the nature of the audience. This is because the two go hand in hand. This relationship is particularly apparent in *A Fine Madness*. Upon completion of what Amuta calls “the literary event” the writer’s power over the destiny of his work diminishes considerably (1989). It is now up to publishers by acceptance or rejection of the text to determine, in extension, who reads the text. In other centres of the world the relationship is less apparent but in the third world this factor may even supersede the writing process in importance.

A Fine Madness was interestingly published in the United Kingdom (UK), after difficulties in finding publishers around Zimbabwe or Africa, a point which Gomo expresses cynically in a recent interview, “If I had approached Weaverpress I would be a rich man” (2012). Failing to find a publisher earlier or within was no surprise because *A Fine Madness* is deemed a “transgressive” text (Kehinde; 2008). Gomo, in a recent interview adds; Adeeko (2002 cited by Kehinde) explains the dominant stream of literature flourishing on the international stage at present;

At this moment, African texts that are circulated internationally deal with topics that are easily assimilated into larger global concerns, like feminism and transnational migrations and their repercussions in the politics of multiculturalism. Works that deal with national issues like development, social dislocation, problems of democratic institutions, and so on will have to be written in post-modern styles with which cosmopolitan critics can easily identify in order to enter the international circuit (p. 317).

This creates problems for Gomo and prospective publishers including Ayebia Clarke at two levels. The first concerns motives as sponsors that are predominantly European would not be kindly disposed to Gomo’s radical revolutionary ideas. Secondly his ideal target audience is likely to be priced out of contention in buying power hence leaving a default middle class or privileged audience who, like the publishers and financiers, would have reservations on reading literature that disparages them, their continents or their classes. An investigation of the class question in African literature takes us to the national question (Amuta 1989: 70). A truly representative or national literature is made impossible by class and ethnic antagonisms. In this class sense, man is no longer just “the African” but the exploiter and the exploited, the rich and the poor, the literate and the illiterate, the hungry and the overfed.

Ayebia Clarke and Ayebia Clarke Publishing Limited, who published *A Fine Madness*, have done well to advance the creation of knowledge and wisdom by publishing (also) literature that is considered anti-European. This publishing firm, based in Oxford, was established as a successor to the waning African Writers’ Series (AWS) with the aim of publishing outstanding literary works from the continent. Clarke, with support from her white husband managed to raise thirty thousand pounds after the predominantly Western financial backers of the AWS pulled out (Mengestu 2011). Ownership and control patterns in Ayebia Clarke Publishing Limited are hard to determine, even Gomo admits this while citing that in his case a group of young and eager blacks at the company were crucial in allowing the publication to sail through.

The African writer is no different from writers in other open market economies. Writing a published text is an economic undertaking which stands the writer/producer in a definite relationship with the publisher and the market (Ogoke 2011, Ramirez 1999). Profit-making in the book selling industry is increasingly becoming more and more complicated. Publishers and promoters in the industry seek to break even before all other considerations. The profit motive of the publishers and booksellers is important in understanding the writer’s socio-economic standing and hence relationship with the members of his immediate society. As with music, before giving out royalties publishing companies first ensure they recoup all monies invested in printing, advertising and distribution. Artistic products are also single creation products which are risky in the sense that unlike bread which is purchased continuously they are usually a one off acquisition.

Moreover, publishing is one thing, while distribution is another. As stated the ordinary man, the pan-Africanist or the Leftist may be priced out of acquiring the text. The key point is that the bourgeoisie class network of writers, publishers, distributors, critics and retailers is unlikely to allow imperialism to fall. Imperialism becomes a kind of regulator as the market place determines who can read what. Officially no writer is barred from radical anti - imperial

writing (funding may even be made available for this enterprise by imperialists in the name of liberalism) but an equal amount of resources and impediments are imposed in the system to ensure that this literature does not reach significant sections of the population. As a result only the middle class and those above can access this literature and, ironically, not those that may really need it.

With *A Fine Madness* it could be that the imperial centre is doing administrative work for itself, accepting and allowing constructive criticisms that ultimately serve to strengthen the system. There may be nothing for imperialism to be afraid of in the past, if such a past is not informing the likes of Gomo on how really to deal with the present beyond the abstract level and beyond mere rhetoric.

4.7 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the categories selected for stylistic analysis in this paper generally present mixed results, in one way supporting cultural decolonisation while equal warning is being given that imperialism is still a threat. At the formal level madness appears the chief technique Gomo employs when writing. It is reflected in various ways; imagery, poetic prose writing, constant shifts in subject and location and use of paradox. This conforms to either tradition. Fanon's writings (which Veit Wild 2006 picks upon) posit that the colonial condition is an unnatural mad one. Yet contemporary and postmodern writing forms accept this form of writing again as depicting liberalism in literature. Madness again coincides with the absurdist school of writing whose chief proponents include Martin Esslin, Samuel Beckett and Harold Pinter. Hence there is no outright victor there.

In spirit, *A Fine Madness* is radical and to some extent revolutionary which is an expected characteristic of all emancipatory literature. Gomo again does well to pick out the historical context and then socio-political context in sub-Saharan Africa as its "World War" transpired around DRC. Here Gomo's commitment to cultural decolonisation is apparent. Again, as an author he is clear on his commitment to liberate Africa through not just his writing but on the war front, as a soldier. He does not hide behind fiction but argues that African literature ought to be written by Africans. Yet in respect to language he does little to convince readers that his rejection of European languages in African literature is not merely lip-service. This is because he employs the same language in his writing. In short he demonstrates that the language debate itself is still very much alive. At this level a stalemate results.

Imperialism's major strength, though, remains on the extrinsic aspects, in particular publishing and access to audiences. The Ayebia Clarke Publishing House may have noble intentions but remains, through political economy constraints, tied up to the very system they may seek to supplant. The state of affairs in relation to publishing in the third world mean the content (ideas) and distribution of these ideas is determined by people whose world view may not correspond with anti-imperialism.

Ultimately, as a literary text consumed by a middle class audience, or studied as a course text in schools, colleges and universities, *A Fine Madness* as a project qualifies to be deemed anti-imperialist. It does so with great conviction. But as a functional weapon (as Gomo would wish) in the hands of the majority of Africans down-trodden by imperialism its success is more diluted, chiefly due to problems with publishing and the relatively modest literacy levels on the continent. This situation is not helped by use of the English language as the medium of exchange. A fine stalemate.

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