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Special Issue on: 'Emergence' on Screen and on Stage

Numéro spécial sur : « Émergence » à l'écran et sur scène

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Africa Development is a quarterly bilingual journal of CODESRIA. It is a social science journal whose major focus is on issues which are central to the development of society. Its principal objective is to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas among African scholars from a variety of intellectual persuasions and various disciplines. The journal also encourages other contributors working on Africa or those undertaking comparative analysis of the developing world issues.

Africa Development welcomes contributions which cut across disciplinary boundaries. Articles with a narrow focus and incomprehensible to people outside their discipline are unlikely to be accepted. The journal is abstracted in the following indexes: *International Bibliography of Social Sciences (IBSS); International African Bibliography; African Studies Abstracts Online; Abstracts on Rural Development in the Tropics; Cambridge Scientific Abstracts; Documentationselienst Africa; A Current Bibliography on African Affairs, and the African Journals Online.* Back issues are also available online at www.codesria.org/Links/Publications/Journals/africa_development.htm.

Afrique et développement est un périodique trimestriel bilingue du CODESRIA. C'est une revue de sciences sociales consacrée pour l'essentiel aux problèmes de développement et de société. Son objectif fondamental est de créer un forum pour des échanges d'idées entre intellectuels africains de convictions et de disciplines diverses. Il est également ouvert aux autres chercheurs travaillant sur l'Afrique et à ceux se consacrant à des études comparatives sur le tiers monde.

Afrique et développement souhaite recevoir des articles mobilisant les acquis de différentes disciplines. Des articles trop spécialisés ou incompréhensibles aux personnes qui sont en dehors de la discipline ne seront probablement pas acceptés. Les articles publiés dans le périodique sont indexés dans les journaux spécialisés suivants : *International Bibliography of Social Sciences; International African Bibliography; African Studies Abstracts Online; Abstracts on Rural Development in the Tropics; Cambridge Scientific Abstracts; Documentationselienst Africa; A Current Bibliography on African Affairs, et African Journals Online.* Les numéros disponibles de *Afrique et Développement* peuvent être consultés à l'adresse suivante: www.codesria.org/Link/Publications/Journals/africa_development.htm.

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Editorial

'Emergence' on Screen and on Stage

This issue of *Africa Development* brings together two sets of articles. The first, which forms the theme of this special issue are articles selected from the 2017 25th Television Festival of Ouagadougou (FESPACO) during which CODESRIA organized a workshop on the theme 'Emergence on Screen and on Stage' in partnership with the African Guild of Filmmakers and Producers. The workshop, held from 27–28 February 2017, was the 5th edition of the CODESRIA workshop series at FESPACO and continued reflections of previous workshops on the 'screen' and 'stage' in Africa. It brought together fifty-two researchers and practitioners from diverse backgrounds – including fifteen countries – to reflect on the issue of emergence in Africa.

The 2017 workshop focused on promoting dialogue between film actors and African researchers. It was motivated by CODESRIA's commitment to foster fruitful exchanges between the social sciences and humanities, while advancing CODESRIA's commitment to promote scholarship in these two areas. In addition to promoting such dialogue, the 2017 workshop sought to contribute to debates on the issue of emergence and knowledge production in the field of cinema and furnish policy makers with practical insights into the concept of 'emergence,' which is key to development discussions and practice today.

The concept of emergence evokes mistrust given its location within a long history of "slogans" imposed by the West. For some, the concept of emergence can be considered as a "denial of intelligence in Africa today." This underlies the perceived incapacity of Africans to conceive an endogenous model of development. Beyond political economy, the performance of emergence on screen and stage has particular significance in the African context, which is currently marked by different forms of violence, including xenophobia and unending conflicts. The papers presented during the 2017 CODESRIA FESPACO Workshop series addressed topics such as: conceptual

and contextual analysis, theories of change, issues of development, citizenship, the past and prospects for the future of African countries. Four of these papers are published in this special issue, while a few others have been published in other CODESRIA publications.

The second set of articles in this volume is a selection drawn from open submissions to *Africa Development*, but with contextual relevance to the theme of this special edition of the Journal.

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Éditorial

« Émergence » à l'écran et sur scène

Ce numéro d'*Afrique et développement* regroupe deux séries d'articles. La première, qui porte sur le thème de ce numéro spécial, est constituée d'articles sélectionnés lors du 25e Festival panafricain du cinéma et de la télévision de Ouagadougou (FESPACO) en 2017, au cours duquel le CODESRIA a organisé un atelier sur le thème « Émergence à l'écran et sur scène » en partenariat avec la Guilde africaine des réalisateurs et producteurs. L'atelier qui s'est tenu du 27 au 28 février 2017, était le 5e de la série d'ateliers du CODESRIA au FESPACO et a permis de poursuivre les réflexions des ateliers précédents sur « l'écran » et « la scène » en Afrique. Il a réuni cinquante-deux chercheurs et praticiens de divers horizons – dont quinze pays – pour une réflexion sur la question de l'émergence en Afrique.

L'atelier de 2017 portait sur la promotion du dialogue entre acteurs du milieu du cinéma et chercheurs africains. Il était une volonté du CODESRIA de favoriser des échanges enrichissants entre sciences sociales et sciences humaines, tout en renforçant l'engagement du CODESRIA en faveur des études dans ces deux domaines. En plus de promouvoir un tel dialogue, l'atelier de 2017 a contribué aux débats sur la question de l'émergence et de la production de connaissances dans le domaine du cinéma et devait fournir aux décideurs des informations pratiques sur le concept d'« émergence », qui est aujourd'hui la clé des discussions et de la pratique du développement.

Le concept d'émergence évoque la méfiance compte tenu de sa situation dans une longue histoire de « slogans » imposés par l'Occident. Pour certains, le concept d'émergence peut être considéré comme un « déni d'intelligence en Afrique aujourd'hui ». Il sous-entend l'incapacité apparente des Africains à concevoir un modèle de développement endogène. Au-delà de l'économie politique, la performance de l'émergence à l'écran et sur scène revêt une importance particulière dans le contexte africain, qui se caractérise actuellement par différentes formes de violence, notamment la xénophobie et des conflits interminables. Les contributions de l'atelier CODESRIA-

FESPACO 2017 ont abordé des sujets tels que l'analyse conceptuelle et contextuelle ; les théories du changement ; les questions de développement ; la citoyenneté ; le passé et les perspectives d'avenir des pays africains. Quatre de ces articles sont publiés dans ce numéro spécial, et d'autres ont été publiés dans d'autres publications du CODESRIA.

La deuxième série d'articles de ce volume est issue d'une sélection de soumissions ouvertes à *Afrique et développement*, mais qui présente un intérêt contextuel pour le thème de ce numéro spécial de la Revue.

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Introduction

De l'émergence dans le cinéma et le théâtre africain : propos d'un historien

Mamadou Diouf*

Dans un ouvrage publié en 1964, *Dépossession du monde* qui rend compte de l'indépendance de l'Algérie après une guerre de libération meurtrière, l'orientaliste français et spécialiste de l'islam Jacques Berque identifie les deux signes de l'accession à la souveraineté internationale. D'une part, une forte accentuation des politiques d'expropriation politiques, économiques, culturelles et psychologiques, qui sont la nature même de l'ordre colonial, et, d'autre part, la mise en œuvre de procédures de réappropriation d'une identité nationale ou panafricaine et de recouvrement des ressources culturelles et historiques d'une personnalité africaine niée et piétinée quotidiennement par la domination coloniale, tant dans ses expressions répressives et administratives que dans son théâtre et ses performances publiques. C'est précisément l'association de formules et modes d'exercice du pouvoir et de représentations qui assigne aux arts visuels et aux images une place particulière au cours des séquences coloniale et post-coloniale. Berque insiste sur l'importance de la performance physique, des chants et des cris et de la danse dans cette entreprise de repossession-reconstruction d'un monde ruiné par la violence inhérente au « système colonial[1] » selon Jean-Paul Sartre (1956, 1964). L'avènement de l'indépendance se révèle dans la danse des hommes, des femmes et les you-yous de ces dernières, dans les mouvements corporels qui enroulent les fictions coloniales et déroulent à leur place, dans la transe, la fabulation nationaliste et les récits du passé. Nulle représentation de l'émergence des ténèbres coloniales et du déracinement provoqué par « [l']injure essentielle » de la situation coloniale à laquelle les Arabes ont opposé les « cris et les gestes les plus poignants » ne saurait être plus vive et plus cinématographique ou théâtrale. C'est ainsi

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que les Arabes deviennent, selon Berque, « les héros les plus scéniques de la décolonisation » (Hermassi 1965:277-278). Identifiant les marques les plus brûlantes de l'empreinte coloniale, en particulier « le désaccordement (sic) des signes aux choses qu'impose une occupation coloniale » (Berque 1967:649), il trace de manière précise le périmètre de la célébration du « rite de dé-possession » (Berque 1964:6). Dans ce registre aussi, le cinéma et le théâtre s'octroient la mission d'opérer au raccordement en défaisant, puisque « l'Europe pousse devant elle une moraine hétéroclite d'ustensiles, d'habits, de gestes, de parlers » (Berque 1979 [1962]:385).

Adoptant une vue panoramique, Berque écrit :

> Tout a fini, tout a commencé par la danse. Peut-être qu'en ce Maghreb poudreux et doré, Dieu n'avait pas achevé de mourir. Peut-être que le message sémitique, arrivé comme un cri du désert, et qui venait se mêler ici au chant païen de la Méditerranée, proclamait encore un nom, agitait son fantôme de toujours. Mais c'est bien la foule des hommes qui vociférait, et de ses milliers de bouches, de ses milliers de gestes, réclamait l'humain. Elle « avait désappris de parler » […], elle « était sur le point de s'envoler dans les airs ». C'est pourtant un langage qu'elle proférait, mais sur un ton d'indistincte véhémence où s'abolissaient les temps, les lieux, l'événement qu'on fêtait, et la mémoire des morts. Une histoire non limitative jaillissait de ses entrailles. Une histoire, ou peut-être quelque chose de plus lourd.

Il poursuit :

> Les occasions sont rares, même touchant des requêtes fondamentales, qui descendent ainsi jusqu'aux tréfonds, et engagent le cerveau, le cœur, la sexualité, les muscles, dans la même exultation. C'est en principe l'indépendance qu'Alger inaugurait ainsi. Mais si formidable que fût l'événement, il ne faisait qu'émouvoir des puissances plus formidables que lui. Celles du passé, celles de l'avenir. Ce jour était pareil aux grandes journées, *Ayyâm*, des Arabes d'avant l'Islam. D'avant le Prophète. D'avant le Déluge ! *Une continuité héroïque renouait avec l'immémorial. Car cette renaissance à l'histoire était aussi le rejet du passé intermédiaire*. Le peuple, d'un énorme tressaillement de sa crinière, semblable à celle d'un cheval barbe, secouait un siècle et demi d'histoire de France. C'était pour créer une histoire à lui. Au nom des puissances de jadis et de demain, il humiliait celles de naguère. Celles de l'autre, et aussi les siennes. Car il l'avait vécu, ce passé colonial, qui avait été vicissitude historique, et non pas injure métaphysique. N'importe. Aujourd'hui commençait l'avenir. Les calculs, les travaux, les longues patiences ou les astuces de l'action viendraient ensuite. Toujours trop tôt. En attendant, il fallait renaître, se faire un sang neuf à l'égal du nom et du drapeau. Voilà pourquoi ce peuple dansait[2]. (Berque 1964:4)

Le détour par Berque permet de recourir à sa « sémantique sociale » qui part « du postulat qu'un des aspects de la rencontre coloniale réside justement dans l'opacité des signes : le colonisateur comme le colonisé produisent des signes, qu'ils soient de pierre, de sons ou de gestes ; et la barrière coloniale fait de ces signes des agressions que l'on ne veut ni comprendre, ni saisir, mais tout juste combattre » (Lambert 2011:2). En s'adossant à « ses sentiers méthodologiques et conceptuels » (Lambert 2011:2), on peut dresser une « cartographie du rapport colonial » et de la déconstruction post-coloniale et tracer le périmètre théorique et historique dans lequel il faut conduire l'analyse relative à « l'émergence à l'écran et sur scène ». Il convient donc de placer notre interrogation dans le temps long de « l'invention de l'Afrique » par « la bibliothèque coloniale » (Mudimbe 1988), et dans le cas qui nous concerne ici plus particulièrement, en nous intéressant aux références iconographiques, visuelles (écran), corporelles et textuelles (théâtre) qui leur sont associées. Un ensemble de signes et d'indices qui établissent un lexique auquel les Africains opposent leur vision du passé, du présent et du futur de leurs communautés par la création d'un répertoire proprement africain. Ce lexique contemporain porte aujourd'hui le nom d'émergence.

La réflexion qui suit trace une généalogie dans laquelle il est possible de penser la notion en discutant les deux questions retenues dans la note conceptuelle proposée par les organisateurs de l'atelier international[3] : De quoi émergeons-nous ? et est-il possible d'identifier le temps et l'espace dans lesquels une entité (ici des pays et leurs habitants) émerge ? Le périmètre dans lequel la discussion est conduite est borné par la comparaison avec l'Occident, sa modernité, son développement économique et social et sa domination du monde, d'une part, et les tigres asiatiques, d'abord la Chine, ainsi que les pays d'Amérique latine qui ont commencé à grignoter avec voracité l'hégémonie de l'Europe et des États-Unis sur l'économie mondiale, d'autre part. Ces deniers pays imposent la notion d'émergence, en opposition/différence avec l'histoire de l'accession de l'Europe et de l'Amérique du Nord à une modernité économique, politique et sociale qui cesse d'être le modèle universel. L'émergence, telle qu'elle circule aujourd'hui en Afrique, est-elle en résonance avec les trajectoires asiatiques ou a-t-elle un nouvel habit et lequel ?

Le travail de qualification de l'Afrique a pris diverses figures. L'Europe de la philosophie des Lumières qui, s'appuyant sur ses propres caractéristiques et les gains qu'elle s'octroie, travaille à sa modernité, fabrique un autre qu'elle définit comme constitutif de sociétés primitives. Émerger de la barbarie est non pas la mission des Africains, mais le fardeau de l'homme blanc. Avec l'ouverture du monde atlantique, la traite négrière, l'accumulation primitive

de richesses et la montée du capitalisme, l'Europe s'assigne la mission de civiliser les « sauvages », en particulier les Africains, par le travail forcé et l'évangélisation, à coups de chicotte. Sortir ceux-ci de l'état sauvage est une entreprise pédagogique européenne dont les trois piliers – *the colonizing structure* – sont, selon V. Y. Mudimbe, la conquête territoriale, l'incorporation des économies indigènes dans les économies des métropoles impériales et la réformation de l'esprit indigène (Mudimbe 1988:9). Il s'agit de sortir l'Afrique des ténèbres. La mise en place des administrations coloniales renforce la tutelle européenne et la projette sur les sociétés africaines dont l'assujettissement est précisément la condition de l'entrée dans le temps du monde. L'Afrique est mise en valeur, au service des métropoles coloniales.

Avec l'accession à la souveraineté internationale, les Africains s'ouvrent un espace pour revendiquer et agir comme acteurs tant sur le continent que sur la scène internationale. Leurs territoires cessent d'être coloniaux ; ils deviennent des pays sous-développés avant d'être des nations en voie de développement. Demeure ainsi la comparaison avec la trajectoire historique des pays européens, qui eux sont développés. La notion de rattrapage devient centrale dans les politiques des nouveaux États. Restent en question les conditions, les ressources, les connaissances et le calendrier de ce rattrapage. S'agit-il de l'émergence au monde, à l'image des sociétés européennes ? Relativement à la marche à suivre, les désaccords sont nombreux, tant sur les registres politiques qu'idéologiques. Conservateurs, traditionalistes, libéraux et marxistes s'opposent les uns aux autres. Plusieurs recettes sont mises en circulation, de la nationalisation des économies des États nouvellement indépendants à la déconnexion (Amin 1986) ou au contraire au solide arrimage au marché mondial (Félix Houphouët Boigny, président de la Côte d'Ivoire (1960-1993) et promoteur du miracle ivoirien) (Amin 1967). Elles sont accompagnées de la consolidation et de l'expansion d'un investissement artistique, étatique, individuel, associatif ou communautaire, de l'affichage d'une présence africaine dans le monde des arts plastiques, de la littérature, de la musique, du cinéma et de la danse.

On pourrait faire remonter la généalogie des différentes formules aux premières manifestations de l'idée de *renaissance africaine* dès le XVIIIe siècle, dans les églises noires de l'Amérique esclavagiste ; le lancement de l'idée et du mouvement *panafricaniste* avec l'organisation de plusieurs congrès à Londres en 1900, à Paris en 1919, à Londres en 1921 et 1923, à New York en 1927, à Manchester en 1945 et à Accra en 1958, sous la conduite successivement de Sylvester Williams (1900), W. E. B. DuBois (1919 à 1927) et Kwame Nkrumah (1945 et 1958) ; la création du *Universal Improvement Association and African communities League* (UNIA-ACL) de Marcus Garvey en Jamaïque

(1914), ensuite à New York (1917) ; la Harlem Renaissance des années 1920 à New York ; le mouvement de la Négritude à Paris au cours des années 1930 avec Aimé Césaire, Suzanne Césaire, Léopold Sédar Senghor, Jane Nardal, Léon Damas et Paulette Nardal et, enfin, l'établissement de la maison d'édition et du journal *Présence Africaine* et de la *Société Africaine de Culture* (1947) et l'organisation des premier et deuxième congrès des intellectuels et artistes noirs, à Paris (1956) et à Rome (1959). La « présence africaine » renvoie-t-elle à la question de l'émergence ou plutôt à celle d'une renaissance africaine qui interroge la fragmentation (*dismemberment*) de l'Afrique provoquée par la traite négrière et la conférence de Berlin de 1854-1855, en vue de réassembler (*re-membering*) les fragments des deux moitiés de l'Afrique et de sa diaspora (Ngugi 2009[4]) ? Le souci d'une forte inscription de l'identité culturelle et artistique africaine avec ses corollaires politique et économique atteint son point d'incandescence avec le Premier Festival mondial des Arts nègres (FESMAN) de Dakar (1966), le Festival Pan Africain d'Alger (1969) et le Second World Black Festival of Arts and Culture (FESTAC 77) de Lagos (1977). Ni le second Festival Pan Africain d'Alger (2009) ni le second FESMAN de Dakar (2010) n'ont eu l'écho des premiers festivals.

La séquence qui suit est dominée par une double crise politique et économique. À l'euphorie des indépendances, qui se manifeste dans des programmes de construction de la démocratie et de la justice sociale, de recouvrement des cultures indigènes et des identités africaines et nationales qui sont professées dans le cinéma, le théâtre, les arts visuels et plastiques, la littérature, la danse et la musique, succèdent l'autoritarisme, la violence, la corruption et la dégradation des infrastructures éducatives et sanitaires, qui aggravent considérablement la pauvreté des masses populaires. La renaissance manifeste dans les activités culturelles et artistiques de la première décennie des indépendances est supplantée par la régression et la déchéance dénoncées par Ayi Kwei Armah dans *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1968), Ngugi wa Thiong'o, dans *Petals of Blood* (1977) et *Detained : A Writer's Prison Diary* (1982), ou encore dans les films de Sembène Ousmane, *Mandabi* (1968), *Xala* (1975) et *Ceddo* (1977) et de Djibril Diop Mambéty, *Contras' City* (1969), *Badou Boy* (1970) et *Touki Bouki* (1973). Comme l'observe Mbye Caam, le retour au passé pour informer le présent et se projeter dans le futur est toujours présent dans cette séquence. Il n'est plus au service d'une exaltation qui exhume des valeurs, des sonorités, une gestuelle pré-coloniales et de la célébration dans des grandes épopées théâtrales et poétiques des figures de la résistance à la colonisation. C'est le cas de Chaka (souverain Zulu, Afrique du Sud), célébré dans un poème de Senghor (1956) et des pièces de théâtre, *La mort de Chaka* de Seydou Badian (1962), *Amazoulou* de Condetto Nenekhaly-

Camara (1970), *Chaka* de Djibril Tamsir Niane (1971), *Les Amazoulous* d'Abdou Anta Ka (1972), et *Le Zulu* de Tchicaya U Tam'si (1977), et de Lat Dior (damel [souverain] du Kajoor, Sénégal) dans le théâtre d'Amadou Cissé Dia, *Les Derniers jours de Lat Dior* suivi de *La mort du Damel* (1965), et de Thierno Ba, *Lat-Dior – Le chemin de l'honneur*, drame historique en huit tableaux (1970). Aux temporalités pré-coloniale et coloniale et à ces héros et récits épiques se substitue une déchéance contemporaine dont émergent une vaillance et des ruptures sociales et politiques mises en branle par des marginaux, poétiquement dépeints par Djibril Diop Mambety[5], les ultimes subalternes, aveugles, handicapés physiques et mentaux, rebuts de la société – Senghor les qualifia « d'encombrements humains » (Collignon 1984) – et la figure des femmes et de la prostituée[6], pour réécrire l'histoire, engager les combats du présent et l'invention du futur ; ce sont eux qui sont, chez Sembène, les acteurs de la révolution. Marginaux et subalternes sociaux représentés par les personnages de films de Djibril Diop Mambéty et d'Ousmane Sembène et celui, sans nom, d'Ayi Kwei Armah affrontent avec violence la tradition convoquée par les élites post-coloniales pour asseoir leur dictature et piétinent avec férocité les règles traditionnelles du genre et de la génération qui alimentent l'injustice sociale.

L'économie politique qui s'impose au cours de cette séquence est celle des programmes d'ajustement structurel mis en œuvre au cours des dernières années de la décade 1970. Selon ses promoteurs, la Banque mondiale, le Fonds monétaire international et les pays donateurs, la seule démarche qui permettra aux pays africains d'émerger est leur inscription autoritaire dans la modernité occidentale des Lumières, qui impose une raison unitaire dont la fonction principale est de réduire le pluralisme et la diversité par le recours à son horizon technologique et développementaliste. Il ne s'agit pas à proprement parler d'émerger, mais de parvenir à un équilibre budgétaire pour payer la dette africaine et s'assurer que la crise des économies africaines ne menace pas l'équilibre des finances du monde, et d'éradiquer autant que possible la pauvreté.

L'idéologie et les politiques de développement, qui mettaient l'accent sur la redistribution économique et la justice sociale, cèdent la place à la croissance économique, à la vérité des prix, à la suppression des subventions et à l'équilibre budgétaire. L'investissement sur les activités culturelles recule fortement quand il ne disparaît pas totalement. Deux exemples : en 1983, le Village des Arts de Dakar, lieu d'une créativité plastique extraordinaire, est envahi par la police et les artistes sont brutalement expulsés sur ordre du gouvernement sénégalais ; le Musée dynamique de Dakar, pièce centrale du FESMAN de 1966, site des expositions de peintres français tels que

Soulages, Picasso et Chagall, à cause de ses colonnes, devient le siège de la Cour Suprême du Sénégal en 1988. Progressivement les salles de cinéma sont fermées et le théâtre Daniel Sorano devient une scène pour des cérémonies privées et concerts de musique.

La mondialisation consacre l'émergence pour qualifier la situation économique des pays africains. Elle trace la seule géographie susceptible de porter la croissance économique, le marché mondial et son idéologie, le libéralisme/néolibéralisme et exige une appropriation (*ownership*) des nouvelles technologies de l'information et de la communication devenues le lexique de l'universalisme et de la modernité. Le lubrifiant est le capitalisme. Inventée ailleurs par des institutions internationales, publiques et privées, l'émergence est solidement enracinée dans le moment particulier de la mondialisation. L'espace et le temps dans lesquels une entité qui émerge se réalise sont le temps du monde, de la modernité technologique, sociale et culturelle du capitalisme.

Est ainsi remise en cause l'entreprise plus généreuse et plus subversive des intellectuels, artistes, activistes et politiques africains et noirs amorcée dès la fin du XVIIIe siècle. Elle ne se limitait pas aux questions matérielles et économiques. Elle se révèle dans la mise en circulation de la notion de renaissance par diverses institutions et individualités, des églises abyssiniennes africaines-américaines à Thabo MBeki qui en reconditionne toutes les figures et modalités dans son discours de Khartoum[7]. La renaissance noire s'évertue à reconfigurer l'humanisme et la condition humaine, à subvertir et fracturer l'universalisme occidental et à ré-imaginer celui-ci en y injectant la part fondatrice de l'Afrique (l'Égypte et l'Éthiopie), retournant à l'histoire cyclique et non linéaire[8], pour reciviliser un monde décivilisé par la colonisation (Césaire 1955) et instaurer un nouvel humanisme (Senghor 1964 ; 1977). Alors que les arts plastiques, le cinéma et le théâtre sont engagés et ont une fonction politique, didactique et pédagogique, ils servent plutôt, dans le moment présent de l'émergence, à illustrer des politiques économiques et commerciales dégagées de leur environnement culturel et social et le plus souvent définies ailleurs. Ils deviennent des outils publicitaires.

Dans leur article, « Maroc : le pari de l'émergence », Sofia Tozy et Seltem Iyigun (2015:3) identifient les critères qui permettent de qualifier un pays de « futur émergent » :

> I/Un niveau de croissance de long terme moyen élevé (plus de 4 %) et en accélération par rapport à celui de la décennie d'avant la crise ; II/Une économie diversifiée dont les exportations de matières premières n'excèdent pas 40 % du PIB, et qui demeurent résilientes face au choc extérieur ; III/

> Une économie disposant d'un taux d'épargne supérieur à 10 % du PIB et donc capable de financer les investissements qui favoriseront l'accumulation du capital et/ou les gains de productivité ; VI/Un environnement des affaires favorable ou correct.

Pour sa part, l'économiste sénégalais Moubarack Lô retient les trois caractéristiques suivantes pour reconnaître un pays émergent : « une croissance rapide et durable. Quand on observe ce pays pendant dix ans, il doit y avoir un taux de croissance qui avoisine les 7 pour cent […] la croissance doit être diversifiée […], le pays doit être un acteur des échanges mondiaux en exportant des produits manufacturiers ».

Les trois économistes qui se penchent, les deux premières, sur le Maroc et le second, sur le Sénégal, s'accordent pour dire qu'aucun des deux pays n'est émergent[9]. Le premier a lancé son « Plan émergence à l'horizon 2020 » qui est actualisé en 2009 et prend le nom de Pacte national pour l'émergence industrielle (PNEI) sous la conduite du McKinsey & Company[10]. Ce bureau d'études américain a aussi conçu le Plan émergent (PSE) du Sénégal, lancé en 2014. Son intervention s'appuie sur deux piliers : la définition d'une problématique stratégique très ciblée et la mise en œuvre d'un programme d'action lourd. Le rôle de McKinsey a été très controversé et, dans les deux cas, les experts nationaux ont revendiqué le leadership pour la définition d'une stratégie et d'une politique nationales d'émergence, à la fois globale et sectorielle.

Le propos de l'historien a tenté de suivre, pour mieux comprendre la notion d'émergence, sa généalogie et ses métamorphoses sémantiques dans le temps et l'espace, dans les sciences sociales, la littérature, y compris la poésie et les arts. Ce qui est sûr, c'est que son utilisation, son déploiement – pour utiliser le vocabulaire de la note des organisateurs –, marque une rupture, brutale ou non, une évolution, voulue ou accidentelle, un changement, célébré ou honni par rapport aux différents vocables (auto) assignés qui qualifient l'Afrique et les trajectoires des sociétés africaines, de leurs économies et de leurs cultures. Même si les cibles privilégiées sont les questions économiques, sociales et politiques, les politiques ainsi portées ont des effets sur les secteurs de la culture et des arts, en particulier le cinéma et le théâtre – tout comme ceux-ci les reflètent dans leur production. Pour ce qui concerne plus spécifiquement la dernière fiche signalétique, l'émergence, quant à elle, se présente comme une reconnaissance et un archivage du mouvement contemporain, c'est-à-dire comme le passage d'un état ancien à un état nouveau. C'est aussi un discours, une rhétorique qui demande le consentement, sinon la participation. L'émergence est un discours politique qui cherche le consentement et prononce l'exclusion de certaines pratiques.

Notes

1. Berque (1979 [1962]:331) plante le décor en écrivant que « coloniser une terre, c'est y manger ou la manger. Le commentaire de cette phrase par David Lambert (2011:8) souligne la visualité de cette « formule drue et pourtant subtile qui dit bien en quoi cette volonté coloniale d'imposer partout sa signalétique (par des noms sur une carte, des routes dans un paysage, des objets sur un étal, des sonorités dans l'air...) et avant tout dévoreuse des signes autochtones ».
2. Les italiques sont de nous, pour mettre en évidence les enjeux de la représentation visuelle de l'événement que constitue l'indépendance. Ces ruptures, épistémologique, visuelle, acoustique et corporelle sont-elles en résonance avec les figures et représentations mobilisées par la notion *d'émergence* telle qu'elle circule aujourd'hui comme revendication, proclamation, du côté des gouvernements africains et des agences internationales qui les soutiennent et des prescriptions des pays donateurs et institutions financières et organisations internationales de développement ?
3. Le Conseil pour le développement de la recherche en sciences en Afrique (CODESRIA) et la Guilde africaine des réalisateurs et producteurs.
4. Prenant la suite du Sud-Africain Vilakazi et du Sénégalais Cheikh Anta Diop, Ngugi wa Thiong'o martèle que les langues africaines doivent être les véhicules de la pensée, de l'émotion et du désir (*thought, feeling and wil,* Ngugi 2009:1). Ce tournant, le projet de Restauration de l'Afrique (*African Restoration Project*) et le recours aux langues africaines, est en train d'être pris en charge, écrit-il : « *Some of Wole Soyinka's plays have been translated into Yoruba. Many works by Europhone African writers have been translated into Kiswahili, and in this respect Henry Chakava of the East African Education Publishers has led the way* » (Ngugi 2009:126).
5. *La Petite vendeuse de Soleil* (1999).
6. *Ceddo* (1977) et *Faat Kiné* (2001).
7. Il proclame « *I refer to this ancient history because of its critical importance in the struggle we have to continue to wage as Africans, to reclaim our place as equals with other human beings, and not the sub-humans others claimed we were, thus to justify our transportation out of Africa as slaves and our subjugation as colonial subjects. /As I have indicated, much of that ancient history originates from this country, and serves to confirm Africa's critical contribution to human civilisation. This cannot but position Sudan in our consciousness as Africans as a source of pride, a place from which we should draw inspiration as we work to achieve the renaissance of our Continent* », *Speech at the University of Khartoum: Friendship Hall* (05 January 2011), p. 5.
8. Voir la réécriture du roman de l'histoire universelle par W. E. B. Dubois, The *Negro*. New York, Holt, 1915 ; *Africa, Its Geography, People and Products*, Girard, Kansas, Little Blue Book, 1930 ; *Africa : Its Place in Modern History*, Girard, Kansas, Little Blue Book, 1930 ; *Black Folk, Now and Then. An Essay I*

the History and Sociology of the Negro Race, New York, Henry Holt, 1939 ; *The World and Africa, an Inquiry into the Part Which Africa Has Played in World History*, New York, Masses and Mainstream, 1947 ; *Africa in Battle Against Colonialism, Racialism, Imperialism*, New York, Afro-American Heritage, 1960.

9. Tozy et Iyigun (2015:3) citent une étude de Laura Briant et Julien Marcilly, « Quels pays émergents prendront le relais des BRICS ? », *Panorama* : Risque Pays, COFACE, Printemps 2014, qui identifie « dix pays comme de « nouveaux » émergents : la Colombie et le Pérou en Amérique latine, l'Indonésie, les Philippines, le Sri Lanka et le Bangladesh en Asie, le Kenya, la Tanzanie, la Zambie, et l'Ethiopie en Afrique. Ces pays remplissent tous les critères concernant le niveau et l'évolution de la croissance, mais ils diffèrent sur le climat des affaires. La Colombie, l'Indonésie, le Pérou, les Philippines et le Sri Lanka ont un climat plus propice aux développements d'activités comparativement aux 5 autres pays ».
10. Il se présente ainsi : *« McKinsey is a global firm, comprising more than 12,000 consultants and nearly 2,000 research and information professionals. Our clients reflect our global nature. Around 40% are in Europe, 35% in the Americas, 15% in Asia Pacific and 10% in the Middle East and Africa. We serve a broad mix of private-, public-, and social-sector organizations. / Our firm is designed to operate as one. We are a single global partnership united by a strong set of values, focused on client impact. Our firm is owned by 1,400 plus partners, spread across Europe, the Americas, Asia Pacific, the Middle East, and Africa. We have no headquarters in the traditional sense. Our global managing partner, elected by the partners, chooses his or her home office, currently London. Our Shareholders Council or Board also comprises partners elected by their peers. Its 30 members represent more than a dozen nationalities. / Our mission is to help leaders in the commercial, public, and social sectors develop a deeper understanding of the evolution of the global economy and to provide a fact base to help decision making on critical issues »* (Voir la page de la compagnie, http://www.mckinsey.com/).

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Emergence: The Indelible Face of Artistic Creativity in the Struggle for Self-Determination in Africa

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Abstract

Emergence has characterized artistic creativity throughout history due to art's proven efficacy as a vehicle for expression and self-determination. This article critically examines emergence in artistic creativity in Africa. The discussion starts with emergence and artistic creativity under feudal systems where despite the attempt to domesticate art by kings through hiring court artists, the common citizenry vented their anger or dissatisfaction against the social injustices meted out to them by the feudal systems. This is followed by a critical discussion of the use of emergence in artistic creativity to respond to slavery and colonialism, as well as the brutal systems that shook the socio-economic foundations of African societies following independence. Emergence in artistic creativity prevailed beyond colonialism as Africans became victims of exploitation by the nationalist leaders who took over leadership in post-independent Africa. A key question addressed is whether Africa's bondage to capitalism signals the end of emergence in artistic creativity, the age long indelible face of self-determination.

Résumé

L'émergence a caractérisé la créativité artistique à travers l'histoire en raison de l'efficacité éprouvée de l'art en tant que moyen d'expression et d'autodétermination. Cet article examine de façon critique l'émergence dans la créativité artistique en Afrique. Le discours commence par l'émergence et la créativité artistique dans les systèmes féodaux lorsque, malgré la tentative de domination de l'art par les rois avec l'engagement d'artistes de cour, les citoyens ordinaires exprimaient leur colère ou leur mécontentement face aux injustices sociales infligés par les systèmes féodaux. Vient ensuite une discussion critique sur l'utilisation de l'émergence dans la créativité artistique en réponse à l'esclavage et au colonialisme, de même que ces systèmes brutaux qui ont ébranlé les fondements socio-économiques des sociétés africaines. L'émergence dans la créativité artistique a prévalu au-delà du colonialisme, les

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Africains devenant victimes d'exploitation de la part des dirigeants nationalists qui ont pris le pouvoir dans l'Afrique post-indépendante. Une question clé soulevée est de savoir si l'asservissement de l'Afrique au capitalisme marque la fin de l'émergence dans la créativité artistique, longtemps la marque indélébile de l'autodétermination.

Introduction

Emergence has characterized artistic creativity throughout history for the simple fact that art has proved its efficacy as an expression of the quest for self-determination. Emergence in the arts has been most pronounced in situations of stark socio-economic inequalities, domination and oppression of the majority by a few. Those on the wrong end of such injustices have often sought to defend themselves through various forms of resistance, political engagement, sabotage or even armed liberation struggles. Artistic creativity, in the form of music, poetry, drama, dance, recitations, storytelling, painting, cartoons and many others, has rendered itself as an effective tool to express the views of the oppressed.

The history of the African continent has presented many justifiable reasons for the birth and persistence of emergence in artistic creativity. As the continent went through feudalism, slavery, colonialism, neo-colonialism, imperialism and capitalism, its people rose against the social injustices of such systems, regardless of the might of the perpetrator. Artistic creativity has been applied to express defiance, to rally people against oppression, and to urge people to rise and fight to end the injustices.

It is important to note however, that not all artistic creativity has been characterized by resistance in Africa or any other society for that matter. History has many examples of non-resistance-oriented art.

There is, for example, the art of acquiescence whereby artistic creativity joins forces in the ruling or exploiting class to reinforce the status quo. Indeed, this type of artistic creativity has, at times, produced art that has bordered on the psychopath. One is reminded of the Malawi women dance groups of the 1980s formed specifically to sing the praises of the then President Kamuzu Banda. Donned in "chitenge" clothing with pictures of President Banda, these women dance troupes performed during Presidential tours around the country. Other ruling regimes in Africa of the same period, including Tanzania, Kenya, Zambia, Uganda, applied similar, though less drastic, uses of artistic creativity for presidential or ruling party aggrandizement. See the following song from Tanzania, for example,

Nyerere baba mlezi ee
Nyerere Mwana mapinduzi
Sisi sote twakupongeza baba
Na sifa zako zimesikika duniani kote

Translation

Nyerere our guardian
Nyerere the revolutionary
We all praise you our father
Your fame has spread all over the world

(Nuta Jazz Band: 1971)

This type of art has done injustice to some African countries by painting rosy pictures of undesirable regimes and dictatorships, legitimizing their ascent or prolonged stay in power. This was particularly true of countries with single party ruling systems immediately after independence where, unless deposed through military coups, leaders tended to stay in power for years on end.

Another type is the neutral art which opts not to side with the oppressed or the oppressor and instead loses itself in some irrelevancies, often in the form of frivolous entertainment, devoid of any commentary or ideological position on the welfare of the country and its people. This type of artistic creativity is also dangerous because it turns a blind eye to undesirable regimes and does not offer a hand in the struggles to better the lives of the oppressed and exploited. Indeed, it even diverts the attention of audiences to fun-fare, instead of providing a catalyst for critical thinking towards action for change. At times, it serves as some kind of opium to make people forget their woes.

The colonial masters, for example, encouraged this type of art and introduced it in schools with the basic aim to merely entertain. The Shakespearean drama, British country dance and European songs on winter and spring that had little or no meaning to life in Africa, dominated artistic performances in schools during the colonial time and kept the colonial subjects entertained.

Emergence, however, is a factor associated with the art of resistance against injustices because emergence is driven by the need to change life for the better.

Why Emergence in Artistic Creativity in Africa?

The African continent has never been short of reasons for emergence in artistic creativity. This is due to Africa's unfortunate history of oppression and exploitation of the majority of its people through feudalism, slavery, colonialism, neo-colonialism, imperialism, and capitalism. The suffering of the masses from these systems inevitably moved people to fight for liberation from economic, social, political and cultural dehumanization. As Cabral rightly puts it;

> "Whatever the condition of subjugation of a people to foreign domination and the influence of economic, political and social factors in the exercise of this domination, it is generally with the cultural factor that we find the germ of challenge which leads to ….development of liberation movements" (Cabral:1980)

Language and the arts have always been part of the cultural manifestations of resistance to domination.

Artistic Creativity under Feudalism

Whereas sometimes there is a tendency to romanticize precolonial Africa, the truth is that there were many cases of exploitation and oppression through feudal systems where powerful kings or chiefs subjugated the serfs into servitude. While kings and chiefs managed to domesticate court artists into singing or reciting praises for them, resistance art was also present whereby the ruled found space to vent their anger or dissatisfaction with the social injustices meted out to them by their feudal rulers. At times, even court artists, specifically employed to praise the king or chief, managed to sneak in messages critical of the king or chief, taking advantage of the poetic license they enjoyed to criticize the ruler without fear of repercussions.

The Diwiku (post-burial ceremony) among the Wakaguru of Kilosa district, Tanzania, offers examples of resistance art against rulers. A Diwiku ceremony is a forum for people to praise or critique any relative of the deceased. During the ceremony, there is a poetic recitation performance where, if someone was wronged by a relative of the deceased, he or she tables the complaint. But the case must be presented in the form of the Diwiku poetic recitation and the accused must also defend himself or herself using the same form. If one is not good enough artistically, one can request an artist to present it on his or her behalf. There is a responder who urges him or her to say it all and who responds to every verse he or she recites.

Finally, on the basis of the facts and arguments presented, the matter is settled by the elders where the guilty person has to apologize and pay a fine of a declared number of goats or cows, depending on the seriousness of the offense.

Every member of the community, including the ruling elite, was subject to Diwiku because the ceremony had to be performed whenever a person died. This Diwiku was an effective way of keeping everyone, irrespective of their class or status, in check in terms of how they related to their fellow citizens. See the following example of a Diwiku recitation directed at a traditional chief (Mundewa) who was famed for ill-treatment of his people.

> Mwidiki mwidiki
> Hee!
> Mwidiki mwidiki
> Hee!
> Kulila nikulila ninga indilo isihelaga
> Heeeeeeeee!
> Moloko isimonga chikutalasila isimonga chikuleka
> Heeeeeeee!

I mundewa yuno ninga mundewasi nhanga
Heeeeeeeee!
Moloko monahi mundewa nghena wanhu?
He!
Hambiya loo chusage chinangiligwaki kwi wiku?
He!
Diyelo chigaluka cha wanhu?
He!
Moloko chikiyuse digoya ahano nhafo chilondaki?
He!
Cho chikugonela meso choni ?
Diyelo chigaluka wanhu seye?
Ase cha wanhu chelu hegu uposi wetu umoto wochikotela?
Nyusileni munhu yuno, kachinangilaki kwi wiku?
Mnghona ninyamale kumlomo kwichaka
Heeeeeeee!
Nigambeni mateto
Matetoooo!
(Recited by Mzee Msagala Mbilu, Chibanhi village, 1971)

(Translation from Kikaguru)

Hear me, hear me out responder
Yes!
Hear me out responder
Yes!
Yes, we are mourning but mourning never ends
Yeeeees!
Friends some things we shall talk about, some we shall not
Yeeeeeees!
This one is really much more than all other chiefs put together
Yeeeees!
Friends where have you seen a chief without subjects?
Yes!
We should ask ourselves, why were we invited to this wake?
Yes!
Have we today turned into people?
Yes!
Friends we should ask ourselves, what are we doing here?
Yes!
We are staying awake the whole night for who?
Yeeeeeeees!
Are we people to him? Are we only worth the fire of the wake?
Yeeeeeeees!
Someone please ask him for me. Why did he call us to this wake?

Yeeeeeees!
If you see me quiet there is nothing in my mouth
Yeeeees!
Call me the most bereaved
Yes!

Artistic Creativity Against Slavery

Slavery which ravaged the African continent with the forceful exodus of millions of Africans, who ended up as slaves in North and South America and the Caribbean, was another catalyst for emergence in artistic creativity. Except in this case, the bulk of the anti-slavery art was produced outside Africa where slavery was practiced. The "Negro Spirituals" among Black American slaves, for example, though often interpreted as a source of religious inspiration and solace from the suffering in the hands of the slave owners, contained a deeper level meaning of hidden resistance and defiance.

See for example the following "negro spiritual" song whose underlying meaning is claimed to refer to the underground railroad, an informal organization that helped many slaves to flee to freedom.

Swing low sweet chariot
Coming for to carry me home
Swing low sweet chariot
Coming for to carry me home.
I looked over Jordan and what did I see
Coming for to carry me home
A band of angels coming after me
Coming for to carry me home
If you get there before I do
Coming for to carry me home
Tell all my friends that I am coming too
Coming for to carry me home
(Negrospirituals.com)

Open defiance to the inhuman treatment from the slave master was met with indescribable cruelty and torture but did not stop the quest for freedom, expressed in various forms of clandestine art. Unfortunately though, besides the "negro spirituals" that were considered harmless by the slave owners, most of the protest art produced by the slaves was not recorded.

In addition, most of the recorded art against slavery appears during the slave abolition movement and is often art that was authored by white slave abolitionists. The "Anti-Slavery Medallion" (1787) by Thomas Wedgwood, an abolitionist, depicting a black man shackled in chains with the inscription "Am I not a man and a Brother", is one example. This piece of art engraved

in such artifacts as bracelets or hair pins was widely used in the campaign to end slavery in Europe and America and was adopted as the seal for the Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade in 1787. Other examples of anti-slavery art include "The Anti-Slavery Harp" (1848) a collection of anti-slavery songs by William Wells, as well as the engravings by the English artist William Blake including "Flagellation of a Female Samboe Slave" and "A Negro Hung Alive by the Ribs to a Gallow". In addition, there are huge collections of anti-slavery art in museums such as the Burell Collection at the Whitworth Art Gallery in Manchester, (Real life histories:2017). Even though the emergence relating to the fight against slavery was basically located outside the African soil, one should not forget that it was for the African people. The horrific nature of slavery which made it almost impossible for the slaves themselves to rise and openly fight for freedom moved white abolitionists to end it. But it was a war fought on behalf of the African people in the bondage of slavery away from home. It is unfortunate that not sufficient attention has been paid inside Africa to this artistic creativity which though produced outside the continent, contributed towards saving the African people in captivity in foreign lands.

Another factor that calls for attention is the need to acknowledge that the African slaves are the origin of what today is known as the "Afro-beat" which has influenced music on a global proportion. It was the African slaves who transported African music abroad as they used it as work songs during slave labour or as a balm for the untold pain they suffered under the slavery system or as quiet defiance to bondage. The dominance of the Africa-beat today, especially in pop music, is a product of the resistance to slavery of the African people. As such, emergence relating to the fight against slavery took on a global proportion.

Anti-colonial Artistic Creativity

Even as Africa was still reeling from the mass exodus of its people into slavery, the continent had to grapple with yet another monstrosity in the form of French, British, German, Belgian and Portuguese colonial rule. Colonialism shook the very socio-economic foundations of African societies, leaving many people devoid of their human dignity and deprived of their cultural identity. Even though the might of the colonial powers enabled them to rule Africa for over half a century and for the Portuguese colonies for much longer, Africa had no option but to rise and apply all means to gain independence.

Emergence in artistic creativity accompanied the various forms of resistance and the struggles, peaceful or armed, against colonial subjugation. Dance, music, poetry, recitations and drama became part of political rallies, clandestine campaigns and mobilization processes and liberation wars against the colonial master.

In Tanzania, for example, the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU) party used indigenous dance troupes that were established with the encouragement of the British colonial power to provide entertainment for the "native" labourers in Dar es Salaam, to recruit party members and garner support for the struggle for independence. Kiswahili poets along the coast and inland in Tabora composed poetry in support of independence. Even Mwalimu Nyerere himself turned poet and wrote poetry to rally people to support the cause for freedom. This includes his poem "Kunakucha kulichele na kulala kukomele" (Dawn is here, it is the end of sleeping) where he urged people not to give up or slacken the fight because freedom is about to be won (Nyerere: 1961).

Indigenous Dances such as Beni, Lelemama, and Gombesugu as well as songs and poetry recitations were a common feature of TANU rallies across the country. See the following example;

> Amka msilale
> Msiwe wajinga mu Tanganyika
> Tanganyika ni mali yetu
> Tukidai tutapewa

Translation

> (Wake up don't sleep
> Don't be stupid you are in Tanganyikan territory
> Tanganyika is our property
> If we demand it we'll be given)
> (Hiari ya Moyo dance song 1954 as quoted from Semzaba 1983 by Vincensia Shule 2010)

It is argued that the key role played by the arts in mass mobilization for independence was one of the reasons Mwalimu Nyerere included a full ministry of Culture in the first cabinet on gaining independence.

Some of the best examples of the application of artistic creativity are however, found within the armed liberation struggles, particularly in Southern Africa including Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Angola and South Africa. Music, song, dance and drama became a common phenomenon of the war for liberation. As Elliot Siamanga observes of Zimbabwe "The war was won through song and dance, drama and poetry" (The Herald – Music motivated the Fighters – 8th August 2010).

According to Siamanga, in Zimbabwe, music united freedom fighters and the masses. Using the "Pungwes" which were all night vigils where people gathered to dance and sing, supposedly for entertainment, the freedom fighters performed song and dance to educate and inform the masses about the struggle. Other songs

such as "Tumira Vana Kuhondo" were used to motivate young people to join the armed struggle as fighters. The people also used song and dance to confirm support for the fighters and the struggle. Songs were also used extensively to raise the morale of the fighters at the war front. The famous Zimbabwean musician, the late Oliver Mutukudzi is also famed for his songs dedicated to the struggles of the black people under the white minority rule in the then Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe. His Song "Dzandimomotera" (1970s) for example, is an expose of the suffering of the Zimbabwean under the white settler regime.

The war of liberation against the brutal apartheid regime in South Africa is another example of the use of artistic creativity as a weapon against the oppressor. Both within the liberation movements in exile and the resistance movement inside South Africa, the arts played a key role in the fight to bring apartheid to an end. The Soweto uprising in 1976 for example, led to an increase in the production of overt or covert protest art. Anti-apartheid graffiti, posters, mural images became part of protest rallies even though the artists remained anonymous to avoid stiff punishment under the strict apartheid laws.

The war against apartheid was also fought outside South Africa in countries like Tanzania where songs, dance, poetry, drama were composed to rally the masses in support of the liberation struggles. The Nkrumah Hall of the University of Dar es salaam, which in 2014 was accorded the status of a UNESCO cultural heritage site for its historical role in providing space for intellectual discourse on Africa's liberation struggles and development, was home to numerous artistic performances by Southern African countries liberation movements in exile. Dance, poetry and song also reverberated across Tanzania where community and school-based groups rallied support for the liberation struggle.

A song popular in schools during that time was:

Vijana twendeni,
Vijana twendeni
TANU inaita Msumbiji
Tukawaokoe ndugu zetu

(Translation from Kiswahili)

Rise up young people
Rise up young people
TANU is calling us to go to Mozambique
To liberate our brothers and sisters.

The spirit behind this was that Tanzania was not free as long as some countries continued to suffer under the yoke of colonial or other forms of bondage like apartheid or white minority rule.

Similar application of the arts in support of the liberation struggles in Southern Africa were present in other countries including Mozambique, Namibia and Angola which were engaged in armed struggle for their independence.

At the intellectual level, the African continent was for a long time during the colonial period engaged in literary movement to free the mind of the African from intellectual and psychological domination. Beginning from the 1930s and inspired by Caribbean writers, particularly Aime Cesaire, African poets, especially Leopold Sedar Senghor, advocated for Negritude, a movement which was a rejection of colonialism and an assertion of black identity.

Eventually the bitter wars for liberation against colonial rule across the continent, the white minority settler rule in Zimbabwe and against apartheid in South Africa and Namibia were won. From the above examples, it is clear that artistic creativity joined hands with other forces of liberation to free the continent from colonial bondage. Once again emergence in artistic creativity in the fight for Africa's rights, dignity and self-determination prevailed.

Post-independence Artistic Creativity

It was not long after the attainment of political independence that the African continent realized that the war for liberation was far from over. In fact the post-independence war for economic, social and cultural liberation was to prove even tougher than that for political independence for most countries.

The Tanzanian poet and singer, Kalikali, captured the illusion with independence in his poem below, composed in Kisukuma language in 1964.

Ukitawala twitawalile
A bana Tanganyika
Nghana twitawalile
Bakulumbagawitawaji
Abo bali na milimo mitale
Abo balipandika magana
Buli ng'weji
Al'abalimi ba baluba
Nduhw' iyakupandika
Litingang' ili busese
Ililima lyingile
Tubyulima buluba
Buguji bushike
Guchel' umpango
Tuliginya sumba Ng'wana Mbagule
Ming'wana gakwigutaga
Kulola ha sa kwesa
Na kumigija mu shitambala

(Translation)

We have really got independence
The people of Tanganyika
Truly we are independent
They are giving thanks to independence
The ones with big jobs
The ones who earns hundreds
Month after month
But the growers of cotton
Have nothing to gain
Prepare farms
As the planting session comes
Growing cotton
The prices fall
This is not a good plan
We are fattening other people, son of Mbagule
They are really eating
They are laughing and dancing
And blowing their noses with handkerchiefs.

(Songoyi, 1990, p 57-58)

Besides the mismanagement of resources by the new African ruling elite, as portrayed by Kalikali above, the forces of neo-colonialism and imperialism were quick to impede the development of the African continent through the control of its major resources including natural resources, industry, agriculture as well as the provision of social services such as education and health.

The need for socio-economic self-determination, after the political independence, is manifested in various movements adopted by African countries individually or collectively to combat these forces of their continued domination. These range from Zambia's President Kaunda's Humanism, Tanzania's President Mwalimu Julius Nyerere's Ujamaa na Kujitegemea (Socialism and Self Reliance), South Africa's Thabo Mbeki driven African Renaissance or South Africa's Ubuntu.

African Renaissance's essence was in the desire to harness Africa's potential, to remove sources of conflict, restore its self- esteem and turn it into a zone of economic prosperity, peace and stability. Senegal's former President, Abdoulaye Wade even attempted to capture this essence through the erection in 2010, as part of Senegal's 50th Independence anniversary from France, of a mammoth 160 feet African Renaissance monument on a hill in Dakar. The monument depicting a man with a bare ribbed torso holding an infant aloft in one arm and guiding a woman with the other, is meant to represent Senegal and Africa emerging from centuries of slavery and colonialism (Atlas Obscura:2014).

Unfortunately, this monument has been mired in controversy, part of it around the fact it was not an African creation but rather of a North Korean artistic production firm, the Mansudae Overseas Projects.

Even as Africa struggled at the ideological level for self-determination and identity, there was a clear emergence at the artistic creativity level through which Africa expressed a refusal to return to foreign or other forms of domination by fellow countrymen and women.

Taking Tanzania as an example, artistic creativity has accompanied all phases of the post-independence attempts at self-determination. The neo-colonial tendencies of the post-independence political elite was met with various forms of artworks which ridiculed what they called "Manaiza", civil servants who took over from the colonial machinery through the Africanization process, Naiza is a corruption of the Word Africanization and "Manaiza" people from this process. The "Manaiza" were particularly ridiculed for their tendency to get into the shoes of the colonial master and behave like "Black Europeans" against the interests of their fellow Africans.

"Vichekesho" an improvisation-based drama genre was a forefront art form in this castigation of the "Manaizas" and depicting a refusal of people to be reminded of the colonial mind-set that saw Africans as devoid of human value. One storyline of a "Kichekesho" is about a man (a "Naiza") who was promoted to be the manager of a public institution, taking over from a former European boss. As soon as he assumes office, he changes his manner of speaking and talks like a European. He refuses to shake hands with the staff, bosses them around, shouts and threatens to sack them all the time. At home, he refuses to associate with the uneducated and does not allow village people, including his own parents, to enter his home because they are beneath him. Eventually the workers rebel and go on strike, as a result of which the manager is sacked and ends up in the streets.

One is here reminded of similar artistic creations on the "black European" syndrome like Uganda's Okot Bitek's "Song of Lawino" where Lawino decries her husband's "black European" behaviour.

A similar spirit was portrayed in indigenous dance in Tanzania. It is important to note that indigenous dance was largely prohibited during the British colonial period, particularly by European Christian missionaries who preached that African indigenous dances were symbols of paganism and the work of the devil. Christians were therefore, prohibited from participating in such dances. Only much later, the Colonial Office in London directed the colonies to allow a bit of indigenous dance performance in town so that the "natives" could entertain themselves with their dances and be distracted from organizing against colonial rule.

On attainment of independence the government allowed the performance of indigenous dances and other artistic forms in villages, schools, public institutions and public events. This move unleashed a country wide expression of the spirit of independence and the refusal to ever be under bondage again. Many dance songs were composed castigating the colonial powers and urging people to guard their independence. See the following Mbeta dance example from Morogoro, Tanzania.

Panua uwanja tuwale
Uwanja tuwale lelele
Lelele tuwale panua uwanja tuwale
Utu wetu tumepata tuwale
Asirudi mtawala kutusoza
Lelele tuwale panua uwanja tuwale.

(Translation from Kiswahili)

Widen the dance floor for us to have fun.
Yes let us have fun, widen the dance floor.
We are human once again
No ruler should ever come back to frustrate us
Yes let us have fun, widen the dance floor.
(Mbeta dance song from the 1960s, from Morogoro,
recorded by Mlama, 1984)

Kiswahili poetry and popular music which, as mentioned earlier, played an important role in mobilization for independence, also flourished in support of independence and self-determination.

In a way it is not surprising that artistic creativity in Tanzania wasted no time to rally behind the ideology of Ujamaa na Kujitegemea when it was introduced in 1967, just six years after independence. This ideology which espoused equality, human rights, human dignity and non – exploitation found willing allies in the masses, the majority of whom were poor and still reeling from the impact of colonial exploitation and denigration.

Emergence in artistic creativity against capitalism was triggered by the spirit of freedom from exploitation offered by the principles of Ujamaa. The resistance was against capitalist forces that continued to oppress the poor masses even after the attainment of political independence. For some time, artistic creativity was at one with the political leadership in their quest for an egalitarian society. Even a new artistic genre was born out of Ujamaa, namely Ngonjera. This is a type of dramatic poetry, founded by a renowned Tanzanian poet Mathias Mnyampala. A typical ngonjera poem has a protagonist and an antagonist who, through poetic recitation debate on an issue. In this way the

merits and demerits of the Ujamaa ideology were expounded upon but always ending on a positive note for Ujamaa.

Unfortunately, very soon artistic creativity assumed the role of propaganda to exult the virtues of socialism. The period between 1967 and 1980 witnessed a huge production of propagandistic art in Tanzania. It is this development that triggered the introduction in the 1980s of the "Theatre for development movement" in Tanzania. There was an urge to counter propagandistic art with art forms where the people could find space to express their views about the socio-economic developments in the country instead of only posing the official views and positions. The theatre for development process involved active participation of grassroots people in critique of development processes and how they impacted on their welfare and then create and perform artistic performances where they portrayed what action needed to be taken to solve the problems impeding their welfare.

Theatre for development used the same art forms of song, dance, drama, storytelling, ngonjera but this time the content was critical of the shortfalls in the socialist development processes. These artistic performances castigated corrupt leaders, mismanagement of resources by officials, oppression of citizens by political leaders and the failure of government machinery to achieve meaningful economic and social development for the ordinary people (Mlama :1991).

As disillusion with Ujamaa continued to set in, other forms of artistic creativity were not slow in providing a critique of where the values of socialism had been betrayed and how corruption, mismanagement of resources or lip service to equality had replaced the hope for an egalitarian society. Tanzanian song, poetry and theatre once again took up the mantle to raise the voice of the people against tendencies towards injustices.

See for example the following poem by Euphrase Kezilahabi,

Picking up Rice
News came from Arusha
We began sorting out the rice of *Ujamaa*
With eyes ahead, eyes sideways, we removed sand
We made a small burial place for the sand
We began to remove broken rice one by one
The fingers worked like a sewing machine
Night and day until the eyes hurt
We made a small white pile
There was too much broken rice and sand
We cooked after labouring a long time
We began to eat
We found out there was still sand and broken rice

When shall we eat without sand, without broken rice?
(Euphrase Kezilahabi in Shule 2010, pp 93)

See below another example of a song by the The Kilakala theatre group in Morogoro, Tanzania, performed in 1983 as a critique of leaders who enriched themselves through illegal trade.

Tunalaani sana enyi viongozi wetu
Mnaoshiriki madhambi nchini mwetu
Biashara mwaendesha kwa siri tunatambua
Biashara uchwara wala msikatae
Mmekabidhiwa madaraka muongoze
Mnayatumia kwa manufaa binafsi
Utasikia simu yapigwa maulizo
Ngano imefika gunia mbili nyumbani
Kesho kutwa hotelini maandazi
Twatambua sana kuwa mnayashiriki
Watu hatupati ngano imeadimika
Mnastawisha huko mfaidikako
Hao hao viongozi na walioshika madaraka
Hao ndio chanzo cha hali ngumu

(Translation from Kiswahili)

We curse you leaders who engage in evil deeds in our country
You are engaging in private business secretly, that we know
Petty business and do not say, it is not true.
You have been given positions to lead us but you are using that for your own benefit.
You will hear the telephone inquiring; Has wheat flour arrived? Two sacks at my house
The day after, buns at the hotel
We know that you engage in this, we do not get flour because you send it where you benefit
It is the leaders in power,
They are the cause of our economic hardship
(Mlama 1991:105)

Tanzanian theatre of the Ujamaa era, most of which was in Kiswahili, was in the forefront in critiquing Ujamaa and pointing out what was not working for the interest of the broad masses. The Kiswahili plays that can be listed in this type of theatre include Kaptula la Marx (Marx's oversized short trousers) (Euphrase Kezilahabi, 1979), Duka la Kaya (The village shop) Ndimara Tegambwage, Nguzo Mama (the Mother Pillar) (Penina Muhando), Lina Ubani (There is an antidote for rot) (Penina Muhando), Ayubu (Job) (Paukwa Theatre Association), and Mkutano wa Pili wa Ndege (The second conference of the birds) (Amandina Lihamba).

It could be fairly argued that artistic creativity in Tanzania kept alive the spirit of refusal to succumb to any type of bondage, in this case from a bureaucracy or central political leadership that attempted to replace the intended values of Ujamaa based on the concept of egalitarian, with other socio-economic systems of exploitation and subjugation of the ordinary citizen. In this way, emergence in artistic creativity became necessary and was present even during the period of Ujamaa, whose ideology was basically about equality and dignity of all people.

Artistic Creativity under Capitalism

The most intriguing question about emergence in artistic creativity relates to capitalism. The African continent has reeled under the forces of capitalism since the onset of foreign rule. Except for a few countries like Tanzania, Guinea or Ethiopia, that briefly experimented with socialism, capitalism has been the socio-economic development path for the Africa continent. Capitalism has been floated as the only sure way to socio-economic development and its character of private ownership, free market economy, competition, profit and democracy paraded around as the most efficient means of wealth creation and human advancement. It is true that a few people in Africa have become very rich under capitalism.

It is true, however, that the majority of Africans are wallowing in abject poverty due to capitalism. It is also undeniable that external forces, supported by external capital and globalization forces, are the major beneficiaries of capitalism in Africa. There is no denying the fact that Africa's natural resources have been exploited to the full by foreign companies and the small profits that have remained in Africa, have mainly ended in the pockets of a few local businessmen and more often, corrupt political leaders. The continent is mired in a culture of greed, exploitation, cut throat competition, corruption, consumerism, and commoditization of everything, including people, that has the potential to fetch profit. Attitudes which exult individual interests over the common good and which value material goods over human beings are common place. It should further be noted that capitalism has intensified in Africa, especially after the demise of communism in Russia and Eastern Europe and the end of the cold war which used to provide a check to the spread of capitalism. It is also sad that Africa is yet to find effective ways of protecting the majority of its people from this intense exploitation through capitalism.

Has there been a response by artistic creativity in Africa to capitalism? The answer is yes. As has been the case with capitalism globally, many artists have been quick to swim with the tide of capitalism and grab the opportunity

to make quick money, like everybody else. They have turned their art into commodities and sold them to the highest bidder. Artistic creativity has been driven by profit, stardom and individual benefit rather than the collective social good. Because entertainment has proved to sell better than social commentary, education, correction or sanction, the bulk of artistic productions have settled for meaningless fanfare, often bordering on titillation or vulgarity.

The irony of capitalism is in the fact that the cut throat competition characteristic of its economic survival, demands high levels of creativity. There is almost a craze for creativity and new thinking in order to survive in business as manifested, for example, in the advertisement industry. Yet there is very little creativity in confronting or resolving the numerous problems arising out of capitalism faced by the majority poor. The traditional function of the artist as an educator, a critic, a mentor or guardian of accepted societal values seems to have gone with the wind. The creativity of the artist, like the millions of Africa's poor masses, and their drive to change their fate for the better, seem to have been paralyzed by the forces of capitalism.

As Maxine Haven puts it;

> "The making of money is arguably engaging the creative minds of our time, while artists play the ever malleable court jester, abdicating their responsibility in time of political and cultural turmoil, to point the saner way forward" (Maxine Haven 2010)

It is no wonder therefore, that a lot of artistic creativity, particularly in popular music, is content with playing the copycat to western artists, and finding no shame in competing to copy the latest fashions instead of producing original creations that reflect Africa's reality of huge socio-economic challenges.

Has there been emergence in artistic creativity in Africa to fight the bondage from capitalism?

Before we answer this question in relation to artistic creativity, it is fair to ask whether Africa as whole has shown any intention to fight capitalism. If we go by the political leadership, one can argue that no such will exists. Unlike the political leadership of the struggles for independence against colonial rule, contemporary African political leadership does not often show any signs of understanding that Africa has an enemy, even more formidable than colonialism, in capitalism. It is this same political leadership that has willingly opened the doors of Africa to the many capitalist-based policies, development plans, strategies as well as the foreign companies that seriously exploit the continent's resources. It is this leadership that is benefitting from capitalism through which it has acquired untold wealth, more often than not, through corrupt means.

How can one expect the same leadership to take any interest in leading the African people in a fight against the bondage of capitalism when it is clear that it has sided with the enemy?

Are the artists, on the other hand, fighting against Africa's bondage to capitalism? For reasons explained above, many of the artists have no interest or intention to fight capitalism. They are busy playing the jester, the entertainer. Other artists are not fighting capitalism because they have sold out to the ruling elite, the custodians of capitalism, and are now busy using their artistic creativity to keep political leaders and their regimes in power. Artistic troupes have, for example, become a necessary feature of political campaigns, particularly during general elections, where artists have become willing praise singers of even the most incompetent or corrupt leaders. In Tanzania, for example, pop musicians, poets, dancers refer to general election years as "years of harvest" and compete to be part of the campaign teams of major political parties, regardless of a party's ideological position or its possibility to win the election. Many artists have no qualms to shift political parties where a more lucrative financial offer is made.

As such when the question is asked "Is there emergence in artistic creativity to fight the bondage from capitalism in Africa?" it is not far from the truth to state that, to a large extent, the answer is no.

But it is also true that despite the fierce grip of capitalism in Africa and its lure of the creative minds of the continent, there are sure signs of the seeds of emergence in the artistic creativity of some of the exploited classes. Popular music, poetry, songs and paintings offer space for disadvantaged classes to vent their protest and anger against the injustices they suffer. They castigate the leaders and their foreign collaborators for their corrupt ways and betrayal of the interests of the majority.

See below an example of excerpts from a popular music song by the Tanzanian musician, Ney wa Mitego (2017).

> Hivi uhuru wa kuongea kwenye nchi hii bado upo?
> Usije ukaongea vitu kesho ukajikuta central…
> Kuna viongozi wanavuta bangi "Wapo"
> Maana wana maamuzi ya kise "wapo"…
> Kuna radio na TV naona vimeshapoteza CV
> Hakuna uhuru wa habari wala taarifa ya habari…
> Kiongozi mwenye busara anapokea ushauri
> Anapokea mawazo haweki mbele kiburi…
> Siamini nchi hii inaenda kwa haki…
> (Nay wa Mitego: 2017)

(Translation from Kiswahili)

> Is freedom of speech still present in this country?
> You don't want to say things and end up at the central (police station)
> Are there leaders who smoke marijuana? "Yes there are"
> Because their decisions are of a strange type… "Yes there are"
> There are radios and TVs which I think have lost their curriculum vitae
> There is no freedom of information or news…..
> A wise leader listens to advice
> He is open to ideas he does not stick to arrogance…
> I don't believe this country is led on the basis of justice.

This type of artistic creativity, however, remains largely ignored by the powers that be. Since those in power do not show much willingness to fight the status quo and since a critical mass for resistance against capitalism from the ordinary citizens is yet to develop, emergence in artistic creativity against the bondage of capitalism is deprived of the fuel necessary to make it a formidable force to fight the forces of exploitation and oppression.

In conclusion, it important to point out that the current situation regarding artistic creativity under capitalism should worry Africa's creative fraternity. Will the apparent intensification of capitalism in Africa be the end of emergence in artistic creativity that has, for generations, been the indelible face of self-determination?

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It's our Turn to Lead: Generational Succession in Hawa Essuman's *Soul Boy* (2009)

Jacqueline Ojiambo*

Abstract

This article examines the contribution of Kenyan films to everyday life and public policy debates. Using Hawa Essuman's *Soul Boy* as a case study, it examines how the film critically engages with the gerontocratic texture of the Kenyan political landscape. Reading the film through an allegorical lens, it shows how the film strategically contributes to initiatives that advocate for a more inclusive political processes and also how the film advances the cause of imagining processes of change in leadership by creatively drawing on the rich repetoire of African cultural forms. The article argues for a re-composition of roles and responsibilities in leadership that includes the youth.

Keywords: Allegory, *Soul Boy*, Youth, Leadership, Gerontocratic

Résumé

Cet article porte sur la contribution du cinéma kenyan à la vie quotidienne et aux débats de politique publique. En utilisant *Soul Boy* de Hawa Essuman, il examine l'implication critique du film dans la texture gérontocratique du paysage politique kenyan. En lisant le film à travers une lentille allégorique, il montre comment le film contribue de manière stratégique aux initiatives qui défendent un processus politique plus inclusive et comment le film avance la cause d'imagine des processus de changement de leadership en puisant de manière créative dans les riches référentiels culturels africains. L'article plaide pour une recomposition des rôles et des responsabilités dans le leadership associant les jeunes.

Mots-clés : Allégorie, *Soul Boy*, jeunesse, leadership, gérontocratique, réinvention des corps

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Introduction

The first generation of African leaders has, to a very large extent, failed to respond effectively and positively to the challenges of change. For various reasons, the first generation of African leaders lacked the capacity to fully comprehend the long-term implications of the domestic and global changes, the problems facing their people and the competence to provide sustainable solutions. More importantly, they failed to create an environment that would enable the continuous evolution of succeeding generations of young African leaders with competence, integrity, vision and commitment (Mohiddin 1998:2).

These words by political scientist Ahmed Mohiddin, written close to two decades ago, still hold true given the political landscape in many African countries. Questions of generational succession continue to puzzle the minds of many, as the older generation of African leaders do whatever it takes to stay in power. Before being ousted, Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe had been in power for 30 years and was the world's oldest sitting president at 93; Uganda's Museveni has been president for 30 years. Before them was Gabon's Omar Bongo, now deceased, who served for 42 years. As in many other African countries, the youth in Kenya have, for a long time, been politically marginalised as persuasively suggested by the works of Mshai Mwangola (2007), Grace Musila (2010), Forti and Maina (2012) among others. This has resulted in the rise of movements such as 'vijana tugutuke' (youth, arise), whose aim was to encourage young people to be active participants in the political sphere of the nation. Organisations such as the Youth Agenda have also focused on youth matters including pushing for good governance and offering programmes that support the development of Kenyan youth's leadership capacity.

This article focuses on how the youth as a politically marginalised constituency in Kenya, have begun to challenge the status quo by voicing their desire to be included in the political leadership of the country. Grace Musila's work focused on the comedic performance of the Redykulass trio that aired on national television and the written work of Binyanvanga Wainaina and Parseleo Kantai. She explored how the younger generation questioned the 'gerento-masculine texture of power in Kenyan public life' (Musila 2010:280). Her work demonstrated the use of various platforms including comedy, to condemn gerontocratic tendencies on the Kenyan political landscape. This article seeks to show how Hawa Essuman's feature film *Soul Boy* (2009), read under an allegorical lens, joins the emerging voices seeking the inclusion of youth in political leadership in Kenya.

Soul Boy (2009) is an extraordinary film for a number of reasons. It draws its aesthetic authenticity from orature by invoking the Nyawawa myth and adapting some of the tenets of coming-of-age folktales from some Kenyan

communities. *Soul Boy's Nyawawa* is drawn from the nyawawa myth of Western Kenya. The myth commonly exists in oral form and has many variants. The most common version is that the nyawawa are inhabitants of Lake Victoria, evil spirits imprisoned in the dark waters. Occasionally, when too much water evaporates in the heat, they escape on warm clouds of air drifting away from the lake and make their way through the surrounding foothills. The spirits are said to be harmful if allowed entry into a home. Their presence is identified by howling sounds that cannot be attributed to any living being. To drive the spirits away, the locals bang pots and pans. The version adopted by the film's script is the one that had been picked up by the residents of Kibera, to explain the bodies of dead men found in the Nairobi Dam which is close to the slum.

The film draws a Kenyan viewer to identify with its content while constantly encouraging them to participate in making meaning of the narrative. *Soul Boy* predominantly uses Kiswahili and Sheng with English subtitles. The film tells the story of 14-year-old Abila who sets out on a quest to save his father's soul which was allegedly taken by the mythical creature, Nyawawa. Though there seems to be a question on the 'Africanness' of *Soul Boy* due to German Tom Tykwer's involvement, I view it as a Kenyan film for its involvement in the Kenyan national issues, its choice of language and cast and by extension, it adds to the larger body of African cinema. The Kibera residents where the film was shot and eventually screened, embrace the project as their own (Africa journal, n.d.). *Soul Boy* was born from a project supported by Tykwer to train local artists in film production. Eighty per cent of the crew that participated in making the film was Kenyan. Essuman, its director, asserts that it is a 'Kenyan film with international polish'.

The film opens with Abila waking up from a disturbing nightmare in which he is almost run over by a train. He wakes up to the noise of angry customers outside his father's kiosk. They are angry because the shop is closed, and this draws Abila's attention to the fact that his father is not well. On Abila's enquiry, his father tells him that he no longer exists and that Nyawawa has taken his soul. The idea of a soul being taken/lost signals the reader to attend to the metaphysical in the film. In a humorous yet provocative way, Abila tells his father 'you are not lost, I can see your hands, your legs, your nose', Abila does not understand what losing a soul means. Troubled by this, Abila runs to alert his mother, who is apathetic towards her husband's condition. She seems to have lost hope in the possibility of her husband changing. Afraid of losing his father, Abila realises that only he can bear the burden of saving his father's soul. His girlfriend Shiku guides him to Nyawawa's shack. Portrayed as assertive and bold, Shiku is Abila's voice of reason, often helping him to make the right choices as he tackles his tasks. On reaching Nyawawa's house,

he pleads with her to restore his father's soul. Nyawawa agrees to his request, on condition that Abila accomplishes the seven tasks she assigns him.

Abila successfully executes his tasks, and the film ends on a happy note, with his father opening his kiosk and saying it was just a hangover. His response demonstrates the films two levels; Abila's father does not realize he is an allegorical figure and as he returns to his usual self the message of the film is that though the film hopes for a better nation, the realities of slum life and poor leadership still exist. In the last scene, the happy family is singing in church. The employment of magical realism invites us to decode the meaning of, for example, the seven tasks assigned to Abila, the symbols employed, the types of characters and what their roles are. The structure of *Soul Boy* 'lends itself to a secondary reading, or rather, one that becomes stronger when given a secondary meaning as well as a primary meaning' (Fletcher 1965:7). This essay thus seeks to engage with *Soul Boy* from this level to unpack how it performs political and social functions. I read *Soul Boy* as a national allegory due to its concern with the national issues and their use of ordinary people's life experiences to reflect on the state of the nation. The phrase 'national allegory', initially proposed by Jameson (1986) in relation to third world literature, has been taken up in film studies. Jameson stated that:

> Third-world texts, even those which are seemingly private and invested with a properly libidinal dynamic – necessarily project a political dimension in the form of a national allegory: the story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the public third-world culture and society (Jameson 1986:69).

His formulation of allegory as being a third world mode of representation, and his claim that all third world texts are allegories of the nation provoked controversy and his concept has been criticised most eloquently by Aijaz Ahmad among others. Some of the contentious issues arising from Jameson's conceptualisation of 'third world literature' as raised by Ahmad are: the limitation of third world texts by identifying them in relation to oppressive systems unlike those of the first and second world (Ahmad 1987:6); the 'national allegory' as the primary form of narration in the third world (Ahmad 1987:8); the homogenisation of the third world category by submerging it within a singular experience; and the description of third world texts as 'non-canonical'(15). Despite these criticisms, Jameson's approach of the 'national allegory' could be used to interpret texts that suggest a leaning toward the nation within the framework of their compositions. Jameson's term is closely aligned to Third Cinema culture, which concerns itself with 'the cultural and political needs of the society it represents' (Gabriel 1979:2). Although the term national allegory was not used in the earlier years, film critic and theoretician

Ismail Xavier observed that in Latin America, Brazilian Cinema Novo, 'Third Cinema' from the 1960s took national destiny as a key focus. (Xavier 1999:355). Xavier's observation suggests that the idea had been appropriated in films way before Jameson's essay. *A Dictionary of Critical Theory* stated that, since the life of a nation, large or small, cannot be contained in one novel, allegory becomes a useful vehicle through which narrative fiction can express broader aspects of the lives of its individual characters (Buchanan 2010). Notwithstanding that the definition refers to the novel, it presents the potential of national allegory as a means of packaging aspects of national concerns.

Re-imagining National Leadership

I begin this analysis by exploring the family nation metaphor; following McClintock, who has argued that '[n]ations are frequently figured through the iconography of familial and domestic space' (McClintock 1993:63). She considers the family as a metaphor for the nation and explains that the family trope offers a natural figure for sanctioning social *hierarchy* within a putative organic unity of *interests*' (McClintock 1993:63, italics in original). The family, which is believed to consist of a father, mother and children, becomes an apt figure to use to define the nation due to its shared socio-cultural, political and economic borders. It is not surprising, then, that writers and filmmakers engage this metaphor in writing about the nation, and there has been no shortage in the use of this metaphor on the Kenyan political scene either. During former President Daniel Arap Moi's tenure in the 90s, songs that referred to Kenya as mother and father played on the airwaves, especially around national celebrations. President Uhuru Kenyatta and Moi were addressed as the fathers of the nation; the first ladies of Kenya are usually referred to as mothers of the nation. Filmmakers find this metaphor useful as the idea of a nation-family already exists in the minds of Kenyan audiences. Therefore, for a national audience, it becomes easy to connect the private family to the public family, thus making meaning of the films. Here, I analyse and interpret the symbols and codes used to develop the filmmakers' thematic concerns.

The anthropologist, Bronislaw Malinowski argued that a family 'is the group constituted by husband, wife, and their children'. He further contended that a family is a 'tribal unit' (Malinowski 1963:132, 136) which determines the general structure and organisation of the society. The family lineage continues as the older members of the family pass the mantle to the younger generation who then pass it on to the next generation and so forth. Using the family as a metaphor for the nation, this essay concerns itself with the representation of the youth who feature predominately in Kenyan feature

films. Abila, the protagonist of *Soul Boy* and other key characters in the film, fall in the youth category. I focus on the youth because they are relatively understudied when examining the nation under the lens of the family nation metaphor. The mother trope has been studied extensively in African literature to various ends. Nuruddin Farah's (1970) *From a Crooked Rib*, Mongo Beti's (1974) *Perpetua and the Habit of Unhappiness*, and Wole Soyinka's (1973) *Season of Anomy,* for example, employ the mother figure to reflect the state of the nation. The father of the nation trope has been used to interrogate state paternity in nations where presidents are regarded as fathers of the nation. My approach takes a different turn by examining generational succession. Specifically, the article investigates the role of the youth in the nation family as depicted in the film *Soul Boy*.

The narrative focuses on youth struggles such as identity, ethnicity, crime and unemployment. Youth, as a social category, takes on symbolic meanings such as 'hope of the nation', and 'leaders of tomorrow'. This article examines how Essuman illustrates the youth as the hope of the nation and how they function as metaphors for broader social and national issues. *Soul Boy* centralises characters associated with hope for a better nation and, through these characters, demonstrates what such hope may be.

The article shows how this hope is represented by examining *Soul Boy's* adoption of a coming of age oral narrative as an allegorical tool. As Teshome Gabriel indicated '[t]he stories of African tradition are built of layers upon layers, of figures, of metaphors and analogies, of sly references to political and social events and institutions' (Gabriel 2002:x). In light of Gabriel's ideas, I argue that by drawing on the coming of age story model, *Soul Boy* facilitates its allegorical import and thus becomes a commentary on the past and present Kenyan leadership situation. It also imagines a hopeful future for the nation by presenting the model as a potential solution. *Soul Boy*, which was produced for international distribution, works on two levels. Whereas for an international audience *Soul Boy* may offer the exciting adventure its tagline promises 'A lost Father. A dedicated Son. A magical journey.' (Soul Boy), for the national audience, it acquires allegorical significance by borrowing the style of a local oral narrative and incorporating a known mythical figure. These stylistic devices invite viewers to peel off the layers to get the deeper meaning. Similarly, Xavier observed that '[a] variety of films from different countries provide interesting examples of the use of myth or traditional story lines to give shape to an experience lived in the present or even the future' (Xavier 1999:353). The filmmaker, in this case, employs the mythical figure of Nyawawa to re-imagine a better-governed nation. Essuman adopts this strategy in the narrative to situate the film within an African context and offer the Kenyan audience a model of a process of generational succession that is familiar to them.

This process is eloquently presented in Mwangola's analysis which traces the evolution of a youth discourse that demands a reconfiguring of roles and responsibilities in the Kenyan political sphere. Mwangola contends that in traditional societies the youth had to prove themselves as being ready to take up leadership positions. She goes on to delineate the plot of oral narratives that were directed to youth:

> An analysis of many oral narratives specifically directed to the youth revolves around a test where the hero, whether female or male, is faced with a choice of some kind. The protagonists in such cases find themselves in a situation where the security of the society or their family is threatened by some outside force, for example, some natural disaster or enemy, who could be supernatural or human. In many cases, these heroines/heroes have to challenge some illegitimate authority, such as those imposed by brute strength, in their successful pursuit of their objectives. (Mwangola 2007: 139)

Abila's story exhibits many of the characteristics of the coming of age tale explicated by Mwangola. As the hero of the film, he is faced with the difficult choice of either helplessly watching his father lose his soul or face Nyawawa whose wrath is well known in Kibera, the largest slum in Nairobi, Kenya. His family is threatened by Nyawawa having taken his father's soul. Nyawawa is said to take the souls of the men who are drawn to her; she strangles and then drags them into the dam. If Abila's father's fate ends up being like that of the other men whose dead bodies were found in the dam, his family is at risk of losing their home and the father's small business, which is in rent arrears. Abila sets off on a journey to complete the seven tasks given to him in order to regain his father's soul. This journey develops the coming of age theme while simultaneously serving as a structuring device for the film. I read Abila's successful accomplishment of the tasks as figurative of the potential role of the youth in taking up leadership of the nation.

At the time of *Soul Boy's* release in 2009, Kenya's third president, Mwai Kibaki was still in power serving his second term after a flawed general election. Before this, Kibaki held ministerial positions in both Kenyatta and Moi's governments. Kenya's youth were and still are a marginalised constituency within the political arena. Forti and Maina (2016) observed that there had been intergenerational tensions between the youth and elders. They write, '[t]he relationship between these generations has often been marked by one generation using the next to further their stay in politics – as politically eligible youth widely touted as 'Young Turks' were rendered powerless and kept in the service of their respective elders' (58). Kenya's political history may be characterised as largely gerontocratic with a slight shift starting in 2008 onwards. *Soul Boy*, thus, furthers the discussion on the political involvement of the youth, a discourse that is ongoing.

Kenyan political leaders often employ the trite phrase; 'the youth are the leaders of tomorrow'. Usually, the aim is to be politically correct and appeal to the youth public. The question has always been 'when will tomorrow come?' (Mwangola 2007: 129; Forti and Maina 2016: 77). This issue refers to concern around when the youth will be given the space to take up political positions. The scholars mentioned above observed that there seemed to be a desire from the older generation to hold on to power, resulting in few positions being available for the youth.

Mwangola (2007) disavowed this domination of political parties and other instruments of power by the elders. She argued that this tradition was in part created by the colonial rule in Kenya. She wrote that [t]he imposition of colonial rule in Kenya resulted in the systematic erosion of all forms of democracy (141). Mwangola further showed how pre-colonial systems of government embraced generational politics in which youth were groomed for the responsibilities of leadership so that as adults they take on leadership, and eventually they become elders who oversee the smooth running of the nation (Mwangola 2007: 133) Unfortunately, due to lack of proper structures within political parties, the youth are not offered room to develop their leadership skills. The country requires leaders who are willing to attain the ultimate level of elderhood and social authority. Thus, generational succession is impeded by leaders who reach the leadership status and then hold on to it. This crisis has resulted in an outcry from both the youth and non-governmental organisations such as The Youth Agenda Kenya.

The Youth Agenda is formulated around the youth's drive to have direct involvement in national matters. There have been campaigns in Kenya beginning in the 1990s onward, aimed at empowering youth to take up political leadership positions. For example, President Moi rallied behind Uhuru Kenyatta as his successor in the 2000 general elections. Uhuru lost to Mwai Kibaki in that election and, in a sense, the youth lost again. Kenyatta's loss was understood to be a loss to the youth because he was seen as a representative of the youth. This loss further revealed that the electorate was not ready to support a younger candidate, nor were the gerontocrats willing to share power. Mwangola (2007) observed that '[t]he period 1990-2005 has brought to the fore an aggressive youth discourse that has rejected prevailing perceptions of youth and demanded a reconfiguring of the social roles and responsibilities of this category' (130). Mwangola's observations are important because they help contextualise the *Soul Boy's* focus on Abila and his father's soul.

The youth's desire to be involved in national matters stems from their perception that the older generation has failed them. In my reading of the film, I contend that Abila's father is a metaphor for the older generation of leaders. Nyawawa in *Soul Boy* says she has seen Abila's father's 'darkness, failings, fears and weaknesses.' These weaknesses as depicted in the film are, for example,

poor governance portrayed by Abila's father's alcoholism which eventually leads him to Nyawawa, who takes his soul. Furthermore, the choice of the slum as a setting highlights a dystopian space of impoverishment. The fears are portrayed through some of the tasks assigned to Abila such as 'fighting a new world order', this may be indicative of some of the challenges that the older generation of leaders has failed to confront. From the film, a key concern is the widening class divide as exemplified by the disparity between the slum and the Karen suburb. The film suggests that this has become normal and highlighted it as an issue of concern. In assigning Abila, the task of saving his father's soul Essuman is suggesting that perhaps the youth may be the hope of the nation because of their ability to bring new vigour and fresh insights in the political and economic spheres of the nation.

In the film, Abila is an embodiment of the realisation of this hope and serves as a model of who good leaders may be. After losing his soul, Abila's father resigns to his fate. He is depicted as being overwhelmed by the loss of his soul and unable to help himself. Nyawawa views him as a coward as the following statement shows.

> Nyawawa: Baba ni mwoga sana, lakini kijana wake ni shujaa.
> (The father is very fearful; but his son is brave.)

Nyawawa makes this statement when Abila insists that he is ready to take on the challenge of saving his father's soul. Nyawawa tries to dissuade him by telling him that only another adult male would be able to redeem his father's soul, but Abila insistently pleads for a chance. The camera focuses on Abila's eyes, almost teary, as he gazes at Nyawawa, who, moved by his gaze gives in. Abila, Shiku and their friends are symbols of the youth in the nation. The youth are portrayed as being capable of saving the lost soul of the nation.

Abila's father who represents the leaders of the country is responsible for taking care of the nation-family. He fails the nation by not guarding his soul, therefore, placing the nation in a precarious state. The soul-less father is representative of soul-less leaders (father figures) who threaten to let the integrity of the nation family disintegrate. This idea of looking after the 'soul of the community' is also seen in some African societies like the Yoruba of Nigeria, where priests are entrusted with the responsibility of looking after the c community's soul (Mbiti 1993:188). In such societies, the chief priests or priestesses were also regarded as mother/father, as such 'the people saw them as symbols of their country's existence, prosperity and continuity' (189).

Early in the film, Abila struggles to understand his father's irrational answers:

> Abila: Are you ill?
> Father: I am not here, this isn't me.

Abila: What happened?
Father: They took my soul.

The use of the child protagonist enables us to question things we would otherwise take for granted. His naïve questions about his father's lost soul serve to reinforce the two worlds of the film hinting at the need for an allegorical interpretation. When his father says, 'they have taken me,' he begins to ask questions that point us to look beyond the ordinary. Who has taken the father? Why? And if he has been taken why do we see him? Through Abila's eyes, we see the anguish of a child about to lose his father; his terror is juxtaposed to his mother's apathy. His panic drives him to urgently take on the task of saving his father's soul. Abila's mother, I contend, responds to issue of her husband's lost soul by inaction. Her indifference is an indicator of the hopelessness she sees in her husband's weaknesses. Abila's mother takes her husband's despondency to be the norm and is not compelled to take any action. She says, 'he lost his soul a long time ago' meaning that he had made it a habit to live a reckless life. Rather than take no action like Abila's mother the filmmaker suggests that the body politic needs to concern itself with matters of the nation's state of affairs.

Abila's father's transgressions are revealed through flashbacks playing in Abila's mind. The flashbacks show that the father used to be a responsible referee and spent time with Abila. Eventually, he became a drunk. Just as Abila's father, through his irresponsibility, nearly costs his family the loss of their home due to rent arrears, the national fathers mismanage the country evidenced by the corruption, social injustices and social segregation seen in the film. The film starkly juxtaposes the son and the father. The father is shown to be fearful while the son is brave. The older generation of leaders is depicted as being afraid of confronting the issues at hand, for example, bad governance and corruption. The son is portrayed as willing and courageous enough to take on the challenge to save the nation and, indeed, he completes the seven tasks given to him. These tasks represent the concerns that need to be addressed so that the nation is restored to a more positive state, characterised by good governance.

This change is envisioned through the tasks laid out for the new crop of new leaders. The seven herculean tasks Abila has to complete are verbalised by Nyawawa as follows: 'slip into someone else's skin and inhabit it in the presence of others, pay someone else's debt without stealing, help a sinner in trouble without judging them, fight against a new world order, use your wits to save someone else, discover an unknown place and know the difference and finally confront the monstrous snake you fear' (*Soul Boy*). The bulk of the film revolves around Abila performing these tasks within a day, and the pace of the movie is intense as Abila moves from task to task. The tasks recall mythological tropes (shapeshifting and snakes), religious and moral tasks (paying someone else's debt and saving a sinner), tasks that shape ideology (fighting a new world

order) the use of wit rather than force to win battles and even whimsical and childlike feats such as adventuring to find the unknown and the keenness of spirit to know the difference. In as much as some of the tasks do not readily lend themselves to an allegorical reading, they illustrate the moral, intellectual and ideological hurdles that the new crop of Kenya's leaders need to deal with for the good of the nation. Abila is directed to each task by a sign (a symbol of the sun) which also serves as a marker of some the central themes of the film.

The first sign leads Abila to a community education project. The project's focus is on HIV awareness and seeks to educate the youth about HIV. HIV/AIDs has been considered a threat to youth in Kenya and one of the strategies taken by both government and non-government actors has been to engage the public in education on the causes, risks and prevention of HIV. The training session in the film is carried out through an improvised performance on an elevated podium in the slum. As Abila and Shiku approach the crowd, the camera focuses on the stage, where a man is arguing about whose responsibility it is to educate his children about HIV/AIDS. The facilitator calls Abila and Shiku to perform a role-play on the responsibilities of mothers and fathers. Abila, ironically, acts as a father who does not want to take responsibility for his family. In this scenario, the father is blamed for not taking an active role in raising his children. Shiku, on the other hand, represents women and argues against the patriarchal views held by men, suggesting that the burden of raising children should not be left to women only. By accepting to participate in the role play, Abila takes on his first challenge, 'slip into someone else's skin and inhabit it in front of others'. As he does this, he takes on the allegorical role of his father, thus, the representation of the nation's failed leaders and negative masculinity. Ironically, this may be connected to the larger private story of Abila's father's irresponsibility on the one hand. Abila thus embodies his father on the stage for the task of slipping into the skin of another, and therefore, he now becomes the representation of the failed leader.

On the other hand, it may signify taking on the mantle from the older generation. Yet, when he leaves the stage, he leaves the skin and what it represents (poor governance by the fathers of the nation). However, he still symbolically takes the mantle as he goes on to demonstrate better leadership. In this performance, Abila replays a male attitude of dominance over women which reflects the effect of socialisation on the youth. Shiku challenges his line of thinking, leaving him speechless and the crowd bursts out in laughter. After this act on a public platform, Abila accuses Shiku of making him a laughing stock. Shiku replies that the crowd was laughing because of his father's private lifestyle. The laughter of the crowd is used to expose and critique the irresponsibility of the leadership depicted by Abila's arguments as he enacts his father's position.

The second and third tasks relate to moral integrity. Drawing from a coming of age tale these two tasks focus on Abila's psychological and moral growth. His third challenge requires him to 'save a sinner without judging him'. In an action-packed moment in the film, Abila and Shiku encounter a phone thief being chased by an angry crowd. The two assist him to hide and point his assailants to the opposite direction, thus saving the man from mob justice. Afraid of being found with the phone the thief gives it to Abila, who sees this as a solution to his family's rent arrears and plans to sell the phone. Shiku strongly dissuades him from doing so (a woman, in this case, represents the moral centre of the film). Shiku's insistence enables him to pass the integrity test linked to his second task – 'pay your debts without stealing from another'. As an embodiment of future leadership, he is expected to be a man of integrity and to use wisdom in matters of justice.

The fourth task is for Abila to fight a new world order. To achieve this task Abila secretly follows his aunt to Karen (an upmarket suburb in Nairobi), where she earns wages as a domestic worker in a white family's home. Later in the day, his aunt asks him to help her set the table, Abila figures out how to do it without ever having done it before. The new world order appears to be a fight against the still continuous process of gendered labour division and class divisions. Abila thus helps his aunt, a woman close to him, to fulfil her paid domestic roles and thus ideologically challenge the gendered division of labour. In the new world order, there are racial, class and gender divides which Abila confronts when he fits into that order without prior knowledge of how things work there. Abila also takes on the fifth task of saving someone using his wits. When Emmy chokes on her food and her parents are at a loss on what to do, Abila steps in and saves her life. This deed earns him the money to pay his father's rent without stealing from someone, as instructed by Nyawawa. The troubling racial and class divides illustrated above is not explored by the filmmaker in this instance, the racial and class divides are explored through the portrayal of the slum against the suburbs in the film.

In addition to the youth being depicted as the hope of the nation in matters of leadership, they are portrayed as being less inclined to ethnic intolerance. Essuman reflects on the ethnic tensions in Kenya often depicting them negatively. *Soul Boy* exhibits hints of ethnic tensions. The nameless man who used to work for Abila's father asks Abila if he was not stopped from speaking to him, suggesting that Abila should not have anything to do with him because he comes from Mt. Kenya a region that is home to the Kikuyu community. Abila and his family are from the lake region that is home to the Luo community. Abila's friends ask what the 'Kikuyu girl' is doing with him.

The fact that Abila's friends refer to her this way, rather than by her name shows the level of entrenchment into ethnic divisions that exist in Kenya. The women who work with Abila's mother invite him to eat a piece of arrowroot which they say tastes like fish. Another lady speaks in Luo saying that the Luo have now become like the Kikuyu, where food choice is concerned. The Luo tribe of Kenya resides around Lake Victoria, where fish is a staple item in their meals. Alternatively, the Kikuyu tribe resides in the highlands and, until recently, were said not to eat fish. The women thus use the cultural aspect of food to poke fun at different ethnic groups. The fact that both the older generation and younger generations in the film are preoccupied with ethnic identities shows how steeped Kenyans are in this culture.

Conclusion

The preceding analysis has demonstrated how *Soul Boy* contributes to the conversation on and around youth involvement in leadership in Africa. By way of allegorical reading of *Soul Boy*, the article demonstrated the potential of youth, represented by Abila, as capable leaders who can restore the lost souls of their nation's leaders (Abila's father). Examined through the family as nation metaphor, the film brings to the fore the impact of poor leadership on the nation. The family as nation trope, coming of age tale structure, the nyawawa myth and the idea of a lost soul fuse together to support the allegorical structure of the film. Accordingly, the film suggests that the youth have potential to be better leaders of the nation. The film achieves this through a stark juxtaposition of a brave son and a cowardly father. As illustrated, the older generation of leaders is depicted as unable to confront issues such as bad governance and corruption whereas the son is portrayed as willing and courageous enough to take on the challenge to save the nation. This is partly because of a degree of selflessness on the part of the son and the fear of a volatile future characterised by fatherlessness. Through Abila's characterization, the film suggests that good leaders are men/women of integrity, intolerant of ethnic divisions and see women as equal partners in the pursuit of good governance. It joins the emerging voices crying out for a change in leadership not only because of the age of the leaders but because of the poor governance and the attendant issues such as poverty, corruption and weak political and economic structures.

Notes

1. *Soul Boy's* Nyawawa is a character with mostly human features except for her hoofed feet. The nyawawa, on the other hand, refers to the collective spirits that roam around Lake Victoria. I use 'Nyawawa' with capital N to refer to the character in the film and 'the nyawawa' to refer to the spirits.

2. Sheng is a social dialect that works by hybridization; words from various languages are combined with Kiswahili words. For example, English and Kiswahili. In other cases, words are reversed.
3. See Dorothee Wenner's 'Post-colonial Film Collaboration and Festival Politics' in *Gaze Regimes: Films and Feminisms in Africa* (189-190)
4. Africa Journal interview and review of *Soul Boy* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q_Gs6tpAP_E
5. See Daniel Forti and Grace Maina (2016) 'The Danger of Marginalisation: An analysis of Kenyan youth and their integration into political socio-economic life'. They detail the challenges of youth and explain gerontocracy as one of them.

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De l'appropriation ou non de l'émergence dans les films camerounais (1962-2010) : essai d'analyse historique

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Résumé

Au lendemain des indépendances, les Camerounais ont immédiatement saisi la caméra pour se représenter et représenter leur société à leur manière. La présente contribution scrute l'appropriation et la visualisation de l'émergence dans les films camerounais. Elle a pour objectif de montrer comment les cinéastes camerounais des différentes générations ont ou non visualisé l'émergence et les slogans politiques dans leurs œuvres. Dans sa première partie, elle fait une analyse historique du contexte et de la manière dont les cinéastes se sont approprié et ont mis à l'écran les slogans politiques pour décrire l'émergence dans leurs œuvres. Dans la deuxième partie, elle démontre la négation de l'émergence dans les œuvres filmiques camerounaises des décennies 2000 et 2010.

Mots clés : cinéma ; émergence ; cinéastes ; Cameroun ; slogans politiques ; Pouvoirs publics.

Abstract

In the aftermath of independence Cameroonians immediately seized on cinema to present and represent their society in their own way. This contribution examines the appropriation and visualization of emergence in Cameroonian films. It shows how Cameroonian filmmakers of various generations have or failed to visualize emergence and political slogans in their works. The first part of the paper outlines a historical analysis of the context and discusses the way in which filmmakers have appropriated and used political slogans to depict emergence in their works. The second part demonstrates the negation of emergence in Cameroonian films in the 2000 and 2010 decades.

Keywords: cinema; emergence; filmmakers; Cameroon; political slogans; public authorities.

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L'appropriation des slogans politiques et de l'émergence dans les premiers films camerounais (1970–1990)

Les Camerounais font partie des premiers en Afrique à se mettre derrière la caméra au lendemain des indépendances. L'ambition était de s'approprier cet outil magique dont on leur avait ôté l'usage pour se raconter et se montrer. Jean-Paul Ngassa est le premier à faire un film, *Aventure en France*en 1962, Thérèse Sita Bella réagit un an plus tard avec son film *Tam-Tam à Paris* (*Dictionnaire du cinéma africain* 1991). Le premier long métrage *Point de vue n° 1,* est réalisé, quant à lui, en1966 par Urbain Dia Moukouri. Dans ces premières œuvres, les auteurs font le choix d'ignorer la situation politique, économique et sociale endogène. Ils décident de tourner leur regard vers l'hexagone et de raconter la vie des Camerounais en France, l'ex-puissance colonisatrice.

Les premiers balbutiements des cinéastes se font dans un contexte politique et économique ambivalent, contexte qui amène les cinéastes de la génération suivante, de véritables francs-tireurs, à jeter et exprimer un regard endogène dans leurs œuvres.

Un contexte ambivalent pour l'expression de l'émergence dans les films camerounais

L'appropriation de l'émergence dans les films camerounais des décennies 1970, 1980 et 1990 s'est faite dans une conjoncture marquée sur le plan politique par le désir de construire une unité nationale encore embryonnaire et, sur le plan économique, par la volonté d'impulsion et de promotion des politiques de la révolution verte et du développement durable.

Suite à la défaite allemande au Cameroun pendant la Première Guerre mondiale, les vainqueurs, la France et la Grande-Bretagne, se sont partagé le territoire, trois quarts pour la France et un quart pour la Grande-Bretagne. La Conférence de Versailles de 1919 a entériné ce partage et le Cameroun fut placé sous mandat de la Société des Nations (SDN) de 1919 à 1945 et sous tutelle de l'Organisation des Nations unies (ONU) à partir de 1945 jusqu'aux indépendances. Le Cameroun sous administration française accède à l'indépendance le 1er janvier 1960, le Cameroun britannique le 1er octobre 1961 et il vote pour le rattachement au Cameroun français. Les deux Cameroun créent la République fédérale du Cameroun. Le 20 mai 1972, le gouvernement du président Ahidjo fait fi des dispositions du fédéralisme et institue l'État unitaire. Le président Ahidjo fait de la construction de l'unité nationale, très fragile, son cheval de bataille.

Le rappel historique ci-dessus a pour but de faire comprendre les raisons pour lesquelles l'unité et l'intégration nationales étaient les slogans forts du premier gouvernement post-colonial. L'enjeu était d'amener tous les Camerounais, du nord au sud, de l'est à l'ouest, à s'aimer, à s'accepter et à apprendre à vivre ensemble. Cet idéal devait être intégré par tous les Camerounais, d'autant plus que ceux de la partie anglophone menaçaient de faire sécession. Du fait que « les yeux et les oreilles apprennent très vite la langue des images et des sons » (Haffner 2002:190), l'image, et particulièrement l'image cinématographique, a été apprivoisée pour l'acceptation et l'intégration des slogans politiques.

Visualisation des slogans politiques et de l'émergence dans les premiers films camerounais

Le cinéma est le médium par excellence à travers lequel on peut évaluer la santé politique, économique et sociale d'une communauté ; c'est le miroir d'une communauté.

En d'autres termes, l'image, et particulièrement l'image cinématographique, est plus forte que l'écrit d'un roman. Conscient de ce fait, le premier gouvernement camerounais n'a pas hésité à s'approprier les images cinématographiques pour illustrer sa vision et son idéologie à l'écran. « *Cameroon Actualités* », une structure parapublique de fabrication des actualités camerounaises, est créée en 1963 dans ce dessein. Il était plus particulièrement question de confectionner et de diffuser dans les salles de cinéma les faits de la vie de l'État camerounais, notamment les visites du président Ahidjo, les grands projets, et les grandes réalisations effectuées sur le territoire. Le premier gouvernement camerounais, tout comme l'ex-puissance coloniale à qui il avait succédé, portait, pour justifier son règne, l'émergence et la prospérité sur les écrans.

L'enjeu de ces actualités de propagande, d'après Gilbert Doho, était de rehausser l'image du Cameroun, une image que les romanciers comme Mongo Beti et René Philombe s'attelaient à ternir. Les pouvoirs publics cherchaient un médium à l'écho plus fort que le roman, c'est la raison pour laquelle ils n'hésitèrent pas à utiliser le cinéma surtout qu'il est dit que :

> Cinema is more efficient means of communication than literature, more expressive of modes of interaction of African publics than literary texts could be. It allows one to put into play the most functional languages and, at the same time, textual forms in Africa societies, allows one to value diverse kind of spaces, to make explicit their meanings and to offer to a public previously marginalized by the French language innumerable occasions to describe itself and to observe itself according to criteria that it will have defined itself. (Doho 2005:35)

Les images se devaient donc de porter à l'écran les grands slogans politiques de l'époque, notamment la prospérité et l'émergence du Cameroun.

D'autres acteurs, notamment les cinéastes des premières générations, aidèrent les pouvoirs publics à porter à l'écran les slogans et l'émergence du nouvel État indépendant. Dikongue Pipa, Daniel Kamwa et Arthur Si Bita font partie de cette écurie.

Daniel Kamwa, à travers des documentaires aux titres révélateurs tels que *Le temps de l'unité* (1965), *Le Cameroun et les États-Unis* (1965), *Dix ans de liberté et de paix* (1970) renforce clairement le discours politique en portant à l'écran un pays prospère, paisible et uni. Dans cette spirale, l'unité nationale, leitmotiv du président Ahidjo, est très présente dans les films des cinéastes des années 1970.

Kamwa l'illustre dans son premier long métrage de fiction, *Pousse-Pousse*, réalisé en 1976. Pousse-Pousse est un jeune homme bamileké d'origine qui désire une jeune fille, Rose, d'origine douala. Mais il se rend très vite compte que son futur beau-père, papa Bisséke, interprète abusivement la dot. Les exigences de ce dernier se font de plus en plus excessives au fur et à mesure qu'approche la date prévue pour le mariage. Pousse-pousse se résout même à retirer l'argent qu'il a versé pour garantir son pousse, pour satisfaire l'avidité et la cupidité de papa Bisséke, mais cela n'empêche pas celui-ci de demander encore et encore, et de remettre même en cause le mariage. Mais il aura pourtant lieu grâce à la complicité de tous, notamment de Bernadette, la sœur de Rose et d'Hélène, la sœur de Pousse-Pousse. Papa Bisséke sera berné et les épousailles pourront se dérouler (Gansop 1985:90).

Dans cette œuvre, qui a rencontré un franc succès en termes de popularité, Kamwa met à l'écran le mariage d'un couple de deux régions très différentes sur le plan culturel. Pousse-pousse est des Grassfields et Rose de la région côtière. Par le fait de faire naître une histoire d'amour et de mariage sur les écrans, Kamwa contribue au renforcement des slogans de construction, d'intégration et d'unité nationale prônés par le gouvernement Ahidjo.

Dikongue Pipa s'inscrit dans la même perspective avec le film *Muna moto* (1975). Le film commence par une histoire de vol d'enfant pour raconter l'histoire d'un jeune couple Ngando et Ndome, tous deux très amoureux et qui avaient décidé de se marier. Restait à régler l'épineux problème de la dot : orphelin, Ngando n'avait pas pu réunir la somme demandée et avait fait appel à son oncle Mbongo. Mais celui-ci, bien que très riche, avait refusé de l'aider, car il avait des vues sur la fiancée de son neveu. Pour tenter d'échapper à ce mariage qu'elle ne veut pas, Ndome sacrifie sa virginité dans l'espoir que l'oncle de Ngando ne veuille plus d'une femme déshonorée. Mais ce dernier s'en réjouit, d'autant plus qu'il était devenu évident que la jeune femme était

enceinte. Mbongo, bien que déjà marié avec trois femmes, n'avait toujours pas d'héritier et était prêt à tout pour assurer sa descendance. Le mariage avait donc eu lieu et Mbongo affectait de considérer l'enfant de Ngando comme le sien puisqu'il était né après les noces. Ne pouvant supporter cette injustice, Ngando finit par reprendre son enfant par la force, d'où l'éclat relaté au début du film (Gansop 1985:93).

Muna Muto est une véritable satire de la société qui dénonce les coutumes comme la dot, le mariage forcé, la polygamie, les violences faites aux femmes. Toutefois, dans le film, on ressent le désir de l'auteur de participer au discours de la construction de l'unité nationale, slogan phare des années1970. En effet, lorsqu'il met en scène une forte histoire d'amour entre deux jeunes gens, Ngando et Ndome, de tribus différentes,Dikongue promeut le mariage exogamique, symbole fort de la lutte contre le tribalisme et de renforcement de l'intégration nationale.

Par ailleurs, au début du film on peut apprécier, du moins pendant les dix premières minutes, les différentes sphères culturelles du Cameroun. Ngando s'introduit aisément dans la fête du Ngondo, une séquence dans laquelle on apprécie la richesse culturelle du peuple Sawa ; par la suite on le découvre en train d'admirer les danseurs d'Assiko, une danse du peuple bassa, enfin on voit Négondo s'intégrer, et danser avec un groupe de danse de l'Ouest-Cameroun. De même, les musiques du film sont celles des grandes aires culturelles du pays, symboles de la richesse et de la diversité culturelle.

Dans la même disposition, le film *Les coopérants* d'Arthur Si Bita montre parfaitement l'émergence sur les écrans. Le film a été réalisé en 1981, au moment où le concept de la « révolution verte » était vendu par les pouvoirs publics au peuple camerounais.

L'idée était d'inciter les Camerounais à se livrer intensément à la pratique de l'agriculture (l'or vert) comme garantie d'un Cameroun prospère et émergent.

Le film raconte l'histoire de sept jeunes étudiants qui, d'un commun accord, pendant le temps de leurs vacances acceptent de quitter le confort citadin pour aller s'intégrer dans la communauté villageoise d'Ebizok. Les jeunes coopérants apprennent que les villageois vivent dans un climat de totale dépendance envers un certain Nti, haut fonctionnaire en retraite anticipée, ayant profité on ne sait trop comment de quelque importante somme de financement pour investir dans la terre. Nti oriente les paysans vers une culture spéculative qui ne rapporte qu'à lui seul. Les coopérants travailleront avec les paysans dans les champs ainsi qu'au village, sans incident et toujours en accord avec leur idéal, jusqu'au jour où un personnage, Boo, vient annoncer l'organisation d'une fête pour permettre aux autorités administratives locales et aux villageois eux-mêmes de remercier nos jeunes

étudiants pour ce qu'ils ont pu réaliser. La fête marque la fin du séjour de nos coopérants. Elle se fait en présence des officiels et des artistes célèbres camerounais de l'époque, à l'instar d'Archangelo de Moneko, des gospels singer de Yaoundé et bien d'autres. Pendant le temps des festivités, on mange, on boit, on danse en l'honneur de nos jeunes coopérants.

Ce film, qui a été produit par l'État du Cameroun à travers le Fonds de développement de l'industrie cinématographique (FODIC) qui avait donné à Si Bita la somme de cent cinquante millions de francs, traduit mieux que n'importe quel outil la politique de la révolution verte impulsée par le président Ahidjo dans les années 1980. Dans le film on voit une fête, en présence des administrateurs et des artistes qui célèbrent la réussite de nos coopérants, comme pour dire : ils ont fait le bon choix, toute la nation est fière d'eux, à vous d'en faire autant. Arthur Si Bita, tout comme ses prédécesseurs, s'approprie et visualise l'idée d'un Cameroun fort et émergent.

De nombreux chercheurs en cinéma, à l'instar de Tcheuyap Alexie ou de Gilbert Doho, constatent et soutiennent que les cinéastes de la première génération avaient choisi d'ignorer les problèmes politiques, notamment la répression et l'assassinat des nationalistes upécistes. Ils avaient plutôt choisi d'accompagner et de renforcer les discours politiques en orientant leurs œuvres vers les aspects de la prospérité économique sociale et culturelle prônés par les gouvernements. Gilbert Doho explique ce choix par le contexte politique de l'époque, lorsqu'il affirme que

> Thematic and socio-historic analysis determines the social cries and the political silences in the works of these major filmmakers…cultural representations of Cameroon are due to the violence of a post colony dictatorship that had very well succeeded in what had blatantly failed in novel writing. (Doho 2005:40)

Ceci pour dire que le contexte de dictature et d'oppression qui régnait au Cameroun au lendemain des indépendances peut expliquer le fait que les cinéastes, pour s'exprimer, aient volontairement choisi d'ignorer les faits politiques et de présenter dans leurs films la santé économique et les problèmes sociaux à l'écran.

Quoi qu'il en soit, l'émergence, la prospérité, l'unité nationale étaient très présentes dans les premiers films camerounais. À ce propos, Gibert Doho (2005:25)soutient que les cinéastes ont contribué, tout comme pendant la période coloniale, à renforcer le discours politique.

L'émergence dans les films camerounais s'exprime également à travers l'évolution des situations et des personnages des films des années 1990. Cette évolution est ressentie dans *Quartier Mozart* de Jean Pierre Bekolo, un film

qui raconte l'histoire d'une jeune fille (chef du quartier) qui est transformée en jeune homme pour épier la vie et surtout les secrets des habitants du quartier Mozart, un quartier populaire de Yaoundé. L'émergence dans cette œuvre est vécue à travers l'évolution de l'environnement dans lequel la plupart des films camerounais étaient faits. On quitte un environnement rural pour un environnement urbain. *Sango Malo* de Basseck Ba Kobhio raconte l'histoire d'un jeune enseignant, Bernard Malo, affecté dans un établissement scolaire à Lebamzip, un village. Ce dernier s'oppose au système éducatif néocolonial pérennisé par le directeur d'école, son supérieur hiérarchique. Il réussit à imposer un système d'enseignement local adapté aux besoins du village. Le film montre la progression et la victoire de ce personnage qui fait face à son directeur et amène les villageois à accéder à une nouvelle économie et à la pratiquer. Bien qu'il perde son poste et soit arrêté, Bernard Malo participe à l'émergence de son lieu d'affectation grâce à l'institution d'une coopérative. Il réussit à sauver un village de l'aliénation.

S'il est vrai que les premiers cinéastes camerounais ont choisi, en fonction du contexte politique et économique, de renforcer le discours politique en s'appropriant les slogans politiques de l'émergence et de la prospérité du territoire, il n'en demeure pas moins vrai que ceux de la nouvelle génération ont choisi d'ignorer tout slogan politique.

De l'émergence à la déchéance dans les films camerounais : 1995-2010

Nous l'avons déjà dit, le cinéma est le reflet de la société. Si les cinéastes des décennies précédentes ont su s'approprier les termes de l'émergence et les traduire dans leurs films, on ne peut pas en dire autant de la génération qui se situe entre 1995 et 2010. Ici, on assiste plutôt à la traduction d'une certaine dégradation sociale. On pourrait parler, à l'inverse de l'émergence, de la déchéance. Il faut aller chercher les causes de cette tendance cinématographique dans le contexte social, économique, et même politique.

Un contexte social et économique favorable à la négation de l'émergence dans les films camerounais

Les années quatre-vingt-dix sont marquées au Cameroun par la crise économique. Pas moins de deux plans d'ajustement structurel viennent obliger les pouvoirs publics à prendre des mesures qui vont affecter, pire, dégrader les conditions de vie des populations. La dévaluation du franc CFA et la fermeture de bon nombre d'entreprises publiques et parapubliques entraînent un taux de chômage record. Les salaires sont divisés par six dans

certains cas. L'État est obligé de tourner le dos à un des secteurs essentiels sous la pression de Breton Wood. La société est à l'agonie. Joindre les deux bouts relève presque du miracle.

Dans ce contexte, même l'art cinématographique est affecté. Les salles de cinéma ferment les unes après les autres. Beaucoup de cinéastes se reconvertissent. Ceux qui résistent s'expatrient pour la plupart. De l'extérieur comme de l'intérieur du pays, la misère, la déchéance sociale s'imposent dans la vision des cinéastes. Les films traduisent une réalité sociale rude, reflet de la vraie réalité qui se situe, elle, aux antipodes des grands slogans politiques « Grands projets », « Grandes ambitions », « Grandes réalisations », slogans qui, à en croire les films, n'ont de sens que pour leurs concepteurs.

Il faut aussi noter que le contexte politique marqué par la démocratisation et la liberté d'expression qu'ont connu les pays africains au cours des années1990 a permis aux cinéastes de s'exprimer et de traduire à l'écran la paupérisation vers laquelle plongeait la majorité des Camerounais.

Traduction de la déchéance dans les films camerounais de 1995 à 2010

Dans les œuvres de fiction comme dans les documentaires, les films camerounais dans les années 1990 à 2010 font la part belle à l'expression de la déchéance sociale. Celle-ci s'exprime autant dans les histoires racontées que dans le parcours des personnes. Une petite analyse de certaines de ces œuvres nous permet de nous en rendre compte.

Au rayon de la fiction, arrêtons-nous sur *Paris à tout prix* de Joséphine Ndagnou, *Waka* de Françoise Élongé, *Nina's dowry* de Victor Viyuoh.

Paris à tout prix, réalisé en 2005, met en scène une jeune fille qui se lasse de baigner dans l'ambiance de la misère camerounaise et décide d'aller trouver son bonheur dans l'eldorado parisien, peu importe le prix. D'ailleurs, qu'y a-t-il de pire que de vivre dans cet environnement ? semble se dire l'héroïne du film. À la suite de multiples échecs, l'héroïne finit par réaliser son rêve, elle arrive en France. Sur place, elle fait face aux réalités de la vie des Noirs au pays des Blancs. Le film s'achève par son rapatriement, le retour au point de départ. Dans ce film, on ne voit de l'émergence ni dans les images qu'on montre ni dans l'évolution du personnage. Il en est de même dans le film *Waka* de Françoise Ellong.

Waka, en revanche, ne met pas son personnage principal dans une situation d'expatriation. Pour nourrir son fils, l'héroïne décide de se prostituer, après avoir échappé à une tentative de suicide. Le suicide ! Combien de personnes l'ont pris pour raccourci dans notre société pour échapper aux turpitudes imposées par l'environnement socioéconomique

délétère ? Le sort de l'héroïne dans ce film est pire que celui de celle de *Paris à tout prix* ; en effet, à la fin, notre héroïne succombe aux coups de son bourreau et laisse un orphelin. Dans ce film, loin d'assister à l'émergence, on assiste plutôt à la déchéance d'un personnage.

Nina's dowry de Victor Viyuoh s'inscrit dans la même configuration. Le film décrit, en la dénonçant, la cupidité d'une famille qui, pour échapper à la misère, oblige sa fille à rester dans un mariage où elle est traitée comme une esclave par son mari. Même quand elle réussit à s'échapper des mains de son gourou, sa famille la ramène à la case de départ, son foyer. Dans cette œuvre, on voit une jeune femme qui se bat pour émerger, mais son environnement la ramène à sa situation initiale.

Le chapitre des documentaires est encore plus incisif. Cyrille Masso avec son film *Au prix du verre*, Gérard Désiré Nguele avec *Deuxième classe* ou encore Oswald Lewat avec *Le bois des singes* mettent à nu une réalité qui reflète le chaos ambiant.

Nous sommes dans une décharge, au cœur de la ville de Yaoundé, capitale politique du Cameroun. Des familles trempent leurs mains dans une décharge, seule source de revenus dont elles disposent, à la recherche de leur pain quotidien, s'exposant aux maladies de toute nature. *Au prix du verre* est une incursion dans l'univers paupérisé des petites gens qui ne savent plus à quel Saint se vouer pour survivre. Dans ce film, on est très loin de la prospérité économique que montraient les films des années1970, 1980.

Deuxième classe de Gérard Désiré Nguele va dans le même sens et raconte les derniers jours d'une vieille locomotive poussive, à bout de souffle. Ce train qui relie deux localités distantes de 35 km est le seul et unique moyen de transport pour les populations désespérées qui ne voient aucune alternative poindre. Dans ce film, qui se passe pour l'essentiel dans cette vieille locomotive austère, on peut lire sur les visages des passagers du train la misère, la souffrance, la lassitude face à une situation qui dure et qui semble ne pas préoccuper les politiques. Il n'y a pas d'évolution d'un personnage, d'une situation, bien qu'on soit dans une locomotive. On a l'impression d'un statu quo, pire, d'une régression.

Le bois des singes d'Oswalt Lewat revient sur une période de répression tristement célèbre au Cameroun. L'opération dite « commandement opérationnel » réduit à néant tous ceux qui essaient de s'opposer au pouvoir en place. Il en est de même pour les films de Jean-Marie Teno. *Vacances au pays, Le malentendu colonial, Afrique je te plumerai, La tête dans les nuages, Chef,* etc. font l'autopsie de tout un système politique, le système né au lendemain des indépendances.

Dans *Afrique je te plumerai*, loin de l'émergence, on montre le Cameroun des années1990, un pays miné par la violence, une violence omniprésente comme le confie Teno quand il soutient :

> Dans la rue ? la violence quotidienne est partout. Seulement verbale pour le moment, elle entretient néanmoins un niveau de tension élevé. Ce qui est normal. Tout se passe comme si le système refusait un développement pour la société, comme si une partie de ses fils devait expier quelque chose.

Pour ce cinéaste, la vie dans un État violent justifie la présence de la violence dans ses films.

En somme, la dénonciation semble dominer la création cinématographique camerounaise des années 1990 aux années 2000. La déchéance sociale manifestée par le chômage, l'inflation, le vieillissement des infrastructures et un système social défaillant jaillissent de l'imaginaire des cinéastes.

La présente contribution avait pour ambition d'analyser comment les cinéastes camerounais des différentes générations ont saisi ou adapté l'émergence et les slogans politiques dans leurs œuvres. Il ressort de ce questionnement que l'appropriation de l'émergence et/ou des slogans politiques dans les films camerounais a évolué en fonction de la conjoncture et surtout des gouvernements politiques qu'à connus le pays depuis son accession à l'indépendance.

Indifférents, les cinéastes de la décennie 1960 étaient plus préoccupés à montrer dans leurs films la vie de leurs compatriotes en France. Ceci ne fut pas le cas pour leurs successeurs. Vivant dans un milieu politique allergique à toute forme de liberté d'expression et marqué par de nombreuses années de répression coloniale et post-coloniale, les cinéastes ont choisi de jouer le jeu des politiques en s'appropriant les slogans politiques qu'étaient l'émergence, la prospérité et surtout la construction de l'unité nationale. Ils ont choisi de mettre en valeur dans leurs œuvres la prospérité économique dont jouissait le Cameroun à cette époque. Ces slogans sont présents dans les films de Dikongue Pipa, Daniel Kawas et Arthur Sibita. Ces derniers n'avaient pas boudé la main que leur avaient tendue les hommes politiques. L'émergence est sensible également dans les films des cinéastes de l'écurie des années 1990. On la ressent dans l'évolution du personnage de Bernard Malo de *Sango Malo* qui sauve un village de l'aliénation. Toutefois, le passage d'un système politique moins allergique à la liberté d'expression et surtout l'environnement de crise et de misère dans lequel vivent les Camerounais depuis les années

1995 ont amené les cinéastes à se désolidariser des slogans politiques et de l'émergence dans leurs œuvres. Dans ces dernières, la paupérisation, la violence, le combat pour la survie, la déchéance de toute une société est portée à l'écran. Parce qu'ils dénoncent, parce qu'ils revendiquent, les cinéastes sont de plus en plus considérés comme des opposants politiques. Serait-ce à cause de ces faits que les pouvoirs publics camerounais ne font rien de concret pour permettre à ces petits dieux de s'exprimer ?

Notes

1. *Deutsche Kolonization am Kamerunsberg, IA in Kamerun, Kristus im Urwald, Unser Kamerun* sont quelques titres de ces films.
2. *À travers le Cameroun, Les richesses du Cameroun* sont quelques titres de films de propagande faits par les cinéastes français à cette époque.
3. Ce film est souvent boudé par les historiens du cinéma comme premier film camerounais, car il a été coréalisé avec le Français Philippe Brunet.
4. Gando est douala et Ndome est bassaa.
5. *Les coopérants* est le premier long métrage professionnel d'Arthur Si Bita. Avant, il avait réalisé son premier court métrage, *Les enfants de l'écran* et son premier long métrage *La guitare brisée* en 1974, puis il tourna en 1981, à Ouagadougou, le film «*No time to sa $ay good bye*». Arthur est décédé lors du dernier festival des arts et de la culture de Yaoundé des suites d'une crise cardiaque. Il a été inhumé à Tsangue à 28 km d'Ebolowa. Les œuvres de ce pionnier du cinéma camerounais marqueront à jamais les générations.
6. Le FODIC a été créé en 1973 par les pouvoirs publics camerounais pour favoriser la mise en place et le développement d'une industrie de cinéma au Cameroun. C'était une banque de cinéma qui devait opérer soit en octroyant des prêts directs aux cinéastes, soit en les avalisant auprès des banques camerounaises. Elle était alimentée par les subventions de l'État et les taxes diverses telles la taxe spéciale additionnelle. Cette structure n'a malheureusement pas produit les réalisations escomptées et en 1990, elle a été liquidée. Depuis lors, aucune structure de financement des œuvres cinématographiques n'a été créée et aujourd'hui, faire un film au Cameroun relève du miracle.
7. Depuis la dissolution de FODIC en 1990, aucune structure n'a été créée pour financer les films camerounais. Le dernier texte sur l'orientation cinématographique date de 1988. Toutes les salles de cinéma ont fermé, il y a pas de marché. Aucun accord n'existe entre les cinéastes et les télévisions. Celles-ci préfèrent acheter les *telenovelas* pour occuper leurs antennes.

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Concepts of Cabralism: On Cabral's Intellectual Contributions

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Abstract

This article evaluates Reiland Rabaka's book, *Concepts of Cabralism: Amilcar Cabral and Africana Critical Theory*. In the context of calls for knowledge 'decolonisation' on the African continent, the book is relevant and important for a variety of reasons. In the first instance, Rabaka traces the genealogy of Amilcar Cabral's intellectual and political thought to leading figures of the Negritude Movement such as Aimé Césaire and Léopold Sédar Senghor, and then to Frantz Fanon. In doing so, Rabaka argues that, unlike other revolutionaries, Cabral avoided an uncritical regurgitation of orthodox Marxism. Instead, Cabral studied the concrete conditions of his locale not only to lead the liberation struggles of his people, but also to enrich revolutionary theory. In this regard, he was able to critique and, where necessary, dispense with some of the taken-for-granted categories of orthodox Marxism. Ultimately, Rabaka sees Cabral not only as a 'revolutionary nationalist' and 'revolutionary humanist', but also as a critical theorist. Consequently, he suggests that Cabral should be read as contributing to 'Africana critical theory'. This article will take up each of these issues in its proper course.

Keywords: Africana critical theory; Amilcar Cabral; Aime Césaire; Frantz Fanon; Negritude; Return; Léopold Sédar Senghor

Résumé

Cet article évalue le livre de Reiland Rabaka, *Concepts of Cabralism: Amilcar Cabral and Africana Critical Theory*. Dans le contexte d'appels à la « décolonisation des connaissances » sur le continent africain, le livre est pertinent et important pour diverses raisons. En premier lieu, Rabaka retrace la généalogie de la pensée intellectuelle et politique d'Amilcar Cabral à des personnalités du Mouvement de la négritude, telles qu'Aimé

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Césaire et Léopold Sédar Senghor, puis à Frantz Fanon. Ce faisant, Rabaka soutient que, contrairement aux autres révolutionnaires, Cabral a évité une régurgitation sans critique du marxisme orthodoxe. Au lieu de cela, Cabral a étudié les conditions concrètes dans son pays, non seulement pour mener les luttes de libération de son peuple, mais aussi pour enrichir la théorie révolutionnaire. À cet égard, il a pu critiquer et, le cas échéant, se passer de catégories considérées comme acquises du marxisme orthodoxe. En fin de compte, Rabaka considère Cabral non seulement comme un « nationaliste révolutionnaire » et un « humaniste révolutionnaire », mais aussi comme un théoricien critique. Par conséquent, il suggère de considérer Cabral comme une contribution à la « théorie critique d'Africana ». Cet article abordera chacune de ces questions en son temps.

Mots-clés : théorie critique d'Africana ; Amilcar Cabral ; Aimé Césaire ; Frantz Fanon ; Négritude ; retour ; Léopold Sédar Senghor

Introduction

Reiland Rabaka argues that there are five distinct stages of Cabral studies. The first stage relates to studies of Cabral's critical theory in the last decade of his life – from 1962 to 1972 (see Chaliand 1969; Davidson 1964, 1969; Magubane 1971; Pinto 1972; Zartman 1964, 1969). The second stage relates to posthumous biographical studies on Cabral (de Braganca 1976; Nikanorov 1973; Vieira 1976). These studies centre on his life, intellectual growth and revolutionary praxis in the context of 'historicity' and 'cultural specificity' of Cape Verde and Guinea-Bissau. These biographical studies, Rabaka argues, set the tone for subsequent stages of Cabral studies which interweave his life with 'makeshift multidisciplinary' discussions of his thought and influence on theories and praxes of his time, viz. African nationalism, African socialism, Marxism and Leninism. The third stage of Cabral studies focusses on his work on social theory and political praxis. These studies aim to show the relevance of his ideas to the social sciences (see Chabal 1980, 1983; Dadoo 1973; Davidson 1981, 1984; Ignatiev1984, 1990; Magubane 1983; Nyang 1975, 1976; Nzongola-Ntalaja 1984; Rahmato 1982).

The fourth stage of Cabral studies centres on his contribution to African literature and what is known as the 'African Renaissance' (see Hamilton 1979; Moser 1978; Perkins 1976; Vambe and Zegeye 2006, 2008; Vambe 2010). In this sense, Rabaka suggests, Cabral can be located 'within the *African liberation leader-poet-politico* paradigm' (2014: 11, emphasis in original). Rabaka does not offer to explain this paradigm. One surmises, however, that he likens Cabral to African leaders such as Leopold Senghor and Agostino Neto. The fifth stage of Cabral studies turns on developing

Africana studies generally, and Africana philosophy specifically (see Abdullah 2006; Birmingham 1995; Jinadu 1978; Manji and Fletcher 2013; Serequeberhan 2004). The fifth stage is concerned with using Cabral's ideas to develop the growing Africana studies rather than 'Cabral studies' as such. Rabaka contends: 'A core characteristic of the works within the fifth stage of Cabral studies is that even books or articles where Cabral's name is prominent in the title, the overarching intellectual agenda is essentially aimed at contributing to "African studies", in the most general albeit critical sense of the term' (2014: 11-12). Rabaka confesses that his unique field of study, 'Africana critical theory', is not only rooted in, but actually grows out of, the fifth stage of Cabral studies. This notwithstanding, Rabaka feels that his work is 'distinguished' from the aforementioned five stages of Cabral studies. According to him, his study is the first to engage Cabral's ideas, 'consciously', in relation to Africana critical theory. Logically, Rabaka's study has to be distinguished from others because he is in any case the first to speak of a field of study called 'Africana critical theory' rather than Africana studies or Africana philosophy.

It should be said that this article owes its title to Rabaka's book, *Concepts of Cabralism: Amilcar Cabral and Africana Critical Theory* (2014). In the book, Rabaka not only follows the unit of Cabral's thought, but also attempts to deepen and develop the 'Africana tradition of critical theory' or Africana critical theory. It is an excellent book for which Rabaka deserves all the credit. The article engages Rabaka's arguments in the order in which he presents them in his book. As such, this article is organised along three main parts – each of which follows his arguments such as they occur in the three main sections of the book. Accordingly, the first section of the article deals with the philosophical foundations of Cabral's critical theory. The second section addresses Cabral's critical theory and revolutionary praxis. The remainder of the article remarks on the notion of Africana tradition of critical theory or Africana critical theory.

The Philosophical Foundations of Cabral's Critical Theory

Rabaka's study 'identifies and analyses Cabral's contributions to the deconstruction and reconstruction of Africana studies, radical politics, and critical social theory in the interests of the wretched of the earth of the twentyfirst century' (2014: 12). Rabaka sees his work as engaged in a critical dialogue with Cabral. In the main, the book 'keeps with Cabral's own predilection for connecting critical theory to revolutionary praxis by utilizing his thought and texts as paradigms and points of departure to deepen and further develop the Africana tradition of critical theory' (2014: 12). Rabaka

says he has always been bothered by social scientists' tendency to downplay Cabral's contribution to Africana studies. He is also irked by a related tendency to render Africana studies invisible. Having put his cards on the table, he is quick to point out that in declaring his position, he is not in any way engaged in what Lewis R. Gordon (2006) calls 'disciplinary decadence'. Gordon observes: '*Disciplinary decadence* is the ontologizing or reification of a discipline. In such an attitude, we treat our discipline as though it was never born and has always existed and will never change or, in some cases, die' (2006: 4-5, emphasis in original). Rabaka's attempt, in the light of Gordon's warning, is to build a case for 'knowledge which *transgresses, transcends*, and *transverses* disciplines or specific fields of scholarly inquiry' (2014: 13, emphasis in original). Rabaka argues that refusal to credit transdisciplinary knowledge is indicative of 'epistemic closure'. Rabaka's use of this concept seems to differ from Gordon's understanding of the same (see Gordon 1998, 2000). Gordon uses the concept to refer to those instances in which white social scientists limit black intellectuals to essentialised biographical narratives, as against engaging the substance of their ideas. An example of this would be an excessive focus on Frantz Fanon's or WEB Du Bois' life experiences rather than their ideas. In this way, rather than being intellectuals who produced knowledge they would be known for providing experience.

Against decadent disciplinary approaches, Rabaka argues that he provides 'a more philosophically flexible and epistemically open *human scientific* (re) interpretation' of Cabral's ideas (2014: 14, emphasis in original). It is not immediately clear how this differs from other human or social scientific writings on Cabral – particularly the fifth stage of Cabral studies. Rabaka has set before himself a very difficult task, the outcome of which might be much more difficult than he is willing to admit. At any rate, what Rabaka wishes to do is to 'circumvent the very tired tendency to read or, rather, misread Cabral in reductive disciplinary terms where his thought is validated and legitimated only insofar as it can be roguishly reframed and/or forced to fit into the arbitrary and artificial academic confines of this orthat decadent discipline' (2014: 14). He adds that on his proposed schema, 'it is foolhardy and completely fallacious to criticise or condemn a theorist because his or her ideas (and/or actions) do not fit nicely and neatly into the, again, arbitrary and artificial academic categories and confines of one's respective (or, rather, *irrespective*) decadent discipline' (Rabaka 2014: 14, emphasis in original).

Rabaka argues that Cabral was not simply a 'military strategist', a 'philosopher' or a 'revolutionary', but an 'organic intellectual activist'. Quite correctly, he argues that Cabral's ideas are as important today as they were

when he was alive. In fact, Rabaka argues that Cabral's 'are more relevant now than they were during his lifetime' (2014: 15). Perhaps what is most important about Rabaka's claim is its sense of urgency and call to action. After all, Rabaka sees his work as engaged in a struggle against 'overlapping, interlocking and intersecting systems of violence, exploitation and oppression in the guileful guises of racism and colonialism as well' (2014: 15). It is because of these scourges in our societies that a return to Cabral'sideas becomes important. Rabaka observes that 'Cabral's thoughts and texts and intensely emphasises that Africana studies' distinct *transdisciplinary human scientific research methods and modes of analysis* may have or, rather, indeed, does have much to offer the, as of late, frequently stunted field of Cabral studies' (2014: 15, emphasis in original). In engaging Cabral's ideas, Rabaka first traces Cabral's intellectual genealogy (or 'discursive points of departure') to the Negritude Movement and Frantz Fanon, respectively.

In engaging Cabral's ideas, Rabaka also sets out deliberately to deconstruct conceptions of human science which have come to consolidate in the academy. By 'human sciences', he refers to 'the systematic, critical study and interpretation of the thought, behaviour, constructs and products created by, and/or associated with human beings' (2014: 17, emphasis in original). On the basis of this conception, he builds on the works of various thinkers and seeks to go beyond them in order 'to consciously include the wretched of the earth's (especially, classical and contemporary, continental and diasporan African) contributions to the human sciences' (Rabaka 2014: 27 endnote 14). Rabaka has rather lofty and noble ideals in that he seeks to:

> …deconstruct and reconstruct and, in a sense, synthesize the human sciences and Africana studies, and ultimately assert that Africana studies has epistemologically matured to the point where it needs to be conceived of as nothing other than a transdisciplinary human science. To continue to speak or write of Africana studies as a 'discipline' or, as I have in my previous works, as an 'interdisciplinary' or 'transdisciplinary' discipline, simply does not do justice to the new kinds, and innovative combinations of knowledge that are more and more frequently emerging from its various fields and subfields of critical inquiry. (2014: 27 endnote 14, emphasis in original)

His conception of 'human sciences' includes 'non-traditional' 'disciplines' or fields of enquiry such as 'racial studies', 'cultural studies' etc. Rabaka may be inadvertently reinventing the wheel here. These disciplines (if that is what they are) are usually included in the social sciences or human sciences. It is not clear why they deserve a special mention in Rabaka's new 'human science'. Methodologically, Rabaka's 'human sciences identify and analyze, as well as compare and contrast, aspects of past and present human life-worlds

and life-struggles in order to critically comprehend human phenomena and, most importantly, to improve the prospects of the human condition' (2014: 17–18). Appropriately, Rabaka's human science endeavours to provide an informed understanding of human existence and lived experiences. Surely this task cannot be unique to Rabaka's conception of the human sciences. It would be uncharitable, however, to undermine his project by simply questioning its novelty as against its substance.

Rabaka goes on to argue that what distinguishes Cabral from Du Bois and Fanon, respectively, is not only his ability to identify problems confronting the damned of the earth, but also his ability to offer 'solutions' to sociopolitical problems. Rabaka says this 'irrefutably distinguishes' Cabral from the two thinkers. This is a controversial remark at best. It is one thing to say Cabral succeeded in actualizing his ideas through revolutionary work, in ways that Du Bois and Fanon did not. But it is quite another to imply that the latter two did not offer solutions. In an attempt to validate his claim, Rabaka says: 'The wide-range and wide reach, the sheer scope and high level of commitment of Cabral's radical politics and critical social theory is often simultaneously awe-inspiring and overwhelming' (2014: 19). Rabaka sees Cabral's ideas as transdisciplinary insofar as they cut across the social sciences. Moreover, such critical theories as Cabral developed, were rooted in his commitment to liberate the exploited and the oppressed. Rabaka goes on to argue that Africana studies has overlooked Cabral's discourse on 'revolutionary decolonization' and 're-Africanisation' 'in favor of his contributions to political theory, sociology, Marxism, Pan-Africanism, and African nationalism' (2014: 20). The validity of this argument is in doubt. Does Pan-Africanism, for example, preclude revolutionary decolonisation and re-Africanisation? If so, what then is it all about if not revolutionary decolonisation and re-Africanisation? Rabaka seeks to synthesise what he calls 'Cabral's critical theory of human science' with Africana studies. He does this in the hope that it would lead to '*a form of human studies incorrigibly obsessed with eradicating the wretchedness of the wretched of the earth and indefatigably geared toward the ultimate goal of deepening and developing the Africana tradition of critical theory*' (Rabaka 2014: 21, emphasis in original).

Having outlined the problematic and its matrix, Rabaka attempts to situate Cabral in the intellectual and political tradition that shaped his thoughts, i.e. the Negritude Movement and Fanon. He goes farther than that and argues that in order to understand the Negritude Movement, one has to contend with the Harlem Renaissance. To see the link between the Negritude Movement and the Harlem Renaissance, one must remember that the latter waned in the wake of the Great Depression of the 1930s. As

a result of the declining economic fortunes and cultural scene in the US, Africans in the diaspora and those on the continent alike, increasingly made their way to Paris instead of Harlem, New York. Against this background, Rabaka is able to conclude, following Abiola Irele (1986), that the Paris intellectual and political scene gave birth to the critical concept of Negritude. Rabaka refers to Negritude theorists as 'guerrilla intellectuals' who were 'able to synthesize a wide range of black and white radical perspectives' (2014: 32). These intellectuals earn the label 'guerrilla intellectuals' because they read any text that would equip them intellectually and politically to advance their struggle against racism, colonialism and capitalism. They read anything and everything from Du Bois to CLR James, from Jean-Paul Sartre to Andre Breton and many others. Rabaka's judgment is that, insofar as the Negritude Movement was the 'first modern black aesthetic movement' that sought spiritual and cultural redemption of the continental and diasporan Africans, it was unique. Accordingly, this movement sought to redefine and radicalise the black aesthetic by bringing different political and intellectual strands to bear on black art. As is known, some of the best exponents of the Negritude philosophy were Aime Cesaire and Leopold Senghor, respectively. To this duo, Rabaka adds Jean-Paul Sartre. As a result, he speaks not only of 'Cesairean Negritude' and 'Senghorian Negritude', but also of 'Sartrean Negritude'.

Before discussing the Negritude movement in detail, Rabaka offers a prelude in the form of a discussion of the Harlem Renaissance. The latter was itself preceded by the 'New Negro Movement' which was made up of African-American and Caribbean cultural icons. The New Negroes were calling for Pan-African unity. Rabaka argues that if one fails to acknowledge the role of the New Negro Movement and the Harlem Renaissance, one would not be able to understand the roots of the Negritude Movement and subsequent black radical intellectual traditions. He argues that the Harlem Renaissance should not be viewed as an exclusively African-American affair. Rather, it must be viewed as an 'early twentieth-century *Africana* affair' (Rabaka 2014: 34, emphasis in original). The negative images and stereotypes which had come to characterise the 'Old Negro' and the African continent generally, were now turned into positive images. Thus the Harlem Renaissance sought to 'rehabilitate the image of the black man wherever he was' (Masolo 1994: 10). Rabaka argues that in order to understand the philosophy of Negritude, one ought to grapple not only with the Harlem Renaissance, but also with the ideas of black thinkers such as Du Bois and Marcus Garvey. Although the radicals of Harlem Renaissance took Africa as a source of inspiration, their conception of it was often Eurocentric. The

sociologist Bernard Magubane pursues similar themes in his book, *The Ties That Bind: African-American Consciousness of Africa*. Yet, the Renaissance radicals were able to retrieve from their African heritage cultural values which they thought were undermined not only by white people, but also by black people themselves. In this regard, Rabaka speaks of 'continuity in black radical thought'.

Although the Negritude theorists drew from the Renaissance thinkers, they advanced it in innovative and complex ways. In Rabaka's words: 'they appropriated and applied liberating visions, views, and values from the precolonial African past to their then colonial and neoconial present' (2014: 36). He points out that the link between the Harlem Renaissance and the Negritude Movement is not as tenuous as it appears. The Paris based Negritude intellectuals acquainted Harlem based intellectuals mainly through Louis Achille, a former Howard University professor who had emigrated to Paris. In the period between 1930 and 1940, Senghor, Cesaire and Leon Damas were, through Achille, in close contact with African-American writers such as Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen etc. In reading the works of their African-American counterparts, the Paris based Africans were able to appropriate the political, intellectual and aesthetic insights of the Harlem intellectuals. Rabaka argues that 'it is here that the strongest line(s) of continuity between these two movements may be ascertained' (2014: 37). The theorists of the Negritude Movement were not only concerned to vindicate their 'Negro heritage' (as Cesaire puts it), but were concerned to critique European imperialism and the values it espoused. Thus, the 'values of the African past', which were at all times obliterated by Europeans, were in the discourse of the Negritude foregrounded and used to contribute the contemporary black world. This was not a call to a return to the African past. Nor was it a mere celebration of African past achievements. Rather, it was a call 'to discover the lessons of "a classical background", "discipline", "style", and technique' (Rabaka 2014: 38). This is a bit cryptic. But having discovered what is usable in the 'artistic legacy' bequeathed to them, the Negritude theorists were able to augment their own artistic achievements.

According to Rabaka, both Cesaire and Senghor championed a 'critical return' to the pre-colonial African past. Yet a distinction between their conceptions of the 'return' ought to be made. He reports that Cesaire's return 'to Africa is more spiritual and cultural than physical, and it requires a critical (dare I say, *dialectical*) exploration of the past, which for many continental and, especially, diasporan Africans means salvaging what we can in the aftermath of the horrors of the African holocaust, enslavement, colonization, segregation, and Eurocentric assimilation' (2014: 60,

emphasis in original). Unlike Cesaire, 'Senghor's work consistently exhibited an intense preoccupation with and openness to contemporary European colonial, particularly French, philosophy and culture' (Rabaka 2014: 61). As such, Senghorian Negritude is characterised by notions of assimilation, synthesis, symbiosis, African socialism and primitivism. This is in contrast to Cesairean Negritude which is characterised by an emphasis on African history, self-determination, culture and the struggles of the working people. Rabaka concedes, however, that Senghor's work, as with Cesaire's, was characterised by complexity and contributed to African and European radical political and philosophical thought. Senghor utilised and synthesised both thought traditions with the hope of creating a 'Civilization of the Universal' (Rabaka 2014).

Having engaged in a lengthy but critical discussion of both the Cesairean and Senghorian versions of the Negritude philosophy, Rabaka concedes that the two versions combine to contribute not only to Cabralism, but also to Africana critical theory. The contributions of Negritude, Rabaka argues, are to be found in: (i) its cultural kinship with the Harlem Renaissance; (ii) African anti-colonial struggle and the 'theory and praxis of Pan-Africanism' (iii) its unique 'African-inspired poetics'; (iv) its 'emphasis on the need to "return" to, or better yet the *re-discovering*, appropriating and applying, extending and expanding of indigenous African thought and practices'; (v) its 'earliest critiques and rejections of the grafting of western European philosophical concepts and categories onto persons of African descent and Africana cultures'; and (vi) its search for a 'functional philosophy' i.e. a 'philosophy that is at once intellectual *and* political, academic *and* activist' (2014: 81, emphasis in original). Having discussed the Negritude Movement, Rabaka proceeds to 'look at ways in which Fanon builds on and goes beyond Cesaire's conception of decolonization' (2014: 83).

According to Rabaka, Fanon was a 'deep, dialectical thinker and critical theorist of extraordinary insight' (2014: 87). As such, Fanon and Fanonism have had a great influence on the twentieth and twenty-first centuries particularly on the questions of race and racism. For Rabaka, Fanon wanted to be known as human and was therefore a 'radically humanist'. Whatever the merits and demerits of this label, assigning labels often gets in the way of a difficult task of thoroughgoing analysis. In any event, as Rabaka correctly puts it, Fanon holds 'a special place in the hearts and minds of black radicals, revolutionary nationalist, and Pan-Africanists' (2014: 88). Fundamentally, Fanon was against the colonization of the Africans, their thoughts and their continent. Much like his contemporary Amilcar Cabral, Fanon's 'contributions were not merely theoretical or epistemological,

but profoundly *praxeological*' (Rabaka 2014: 88, emphasis in original). On the basis of this claim, Rabaka concludes that Cabral was 'indelibly influenced' by Fanon and 'Fanonism'. According to him, Cabral made Fanonism 'speak to the special needs of the revolutionary decolonization and liberation struggle in Cape Verde and Guinea-Bissau' (Rabaka 2014: 88). He argues that 'Cabralism is virtually incomprehensible without first grasping Fanonism' (Rabaka 2014: 89). For Rabaka, Cabral may be the 'greatest Fanonist of all time' (2014: 89). Yet, he concedes later on in the book that 'Cabral was more than a mere Fanon disciple' (Rabaka 2014: 141). He argues that Fanon's critique of colonialism went far beyond economic analysis and focused on 'psycho-social-political pitfalls' and 'racial colonialism'. The latter sounds like a tautology. Yet, Rabaka argues that it is to be distinguished from 'colonialism in a general sense' in that 'racial colonialism' 'intertwines, interlocks, and intersects with racism, which ideologically undergirds and provides a wrongheaded, racist rationale for the division of the world into white "human beings" and non-white "native" subhuman "things" that are brutishly bound together by white supremacist production and reproduction processes of racial colonialism, as well as *racial capitalism*' (2014: 114-115, emphasis in original). This is quite a mouthful but it makes some sense. It is also true, as Rabaka insists, that in the world of white supremacy and capitalism, black people 'do not have the right to exist on their own terms' (2014: 115).

Thus for black people and the colonised people generally, there is only 'one real recourse' – the Fanonist 'true decolonization' (anti-racist, anti-colonialist and anti-capitalist revolution). Rabaka concedes that decolonization is a 'complicated phenomenon'. Following Fanon (1961), he argues that 'revolutionary decolonization, therefore, makes a distinction between the class politics and class projects of the racially colonized bourgeoisie and those of the wretched of the earth' (Rabaka 2014: 127). As such, 'decolonization is not neutral and, consequently, not always automatically in the antiimperialist interests of the wretched of the earth' (Rabaka 2014: 127). In short, decolonisation can take 'different directions'. Hence a distinction ought to be made between what Rabaka calls 'true' and 'false' decolonisation. In discussing Fanon, he hopes to demonstrate how Cabral can be said to complement Fanon's 'radical disalienation and revolutionary decolonization'. Rabaka believes that Cabral's contribution to Africana critical theory 'deepens' and at the same time dialectically deviates from Fanon and Fanonism. The following section explores Rabaka's discussion of Cabral's contribution to critical theory and revolutionary praxis.

Cabral's Critical Theory and Revolutionary Praxis

Rabaka observes that although Cabral did not quite present 'his critical theory in any discursive or systematic manner', he nevertheless made 'critical comments' on colonialism, capitalism, and imperialism. This is not quite a profound insight from Rabaka. A discursive or systematic contribution to critical theory is not a *sin qua non* for a critique of colonialism, capitalism, and imperialism. It is quite possible that Cabral did not see himself as contributing to 'critical theory' in any case. There are any number of African/black intellectual traditions and Rabaka himself is well aware of this. He almost contradicts himself when he says Cabral's ideas can be understood as a culmination of several waves of anti-colonialism, Pan-Africanism and black radical politics 'that aimed at developing a critical theory of imperialism and revolution in colonial and neocolonial Africa' (Rabaka 2014: 152). What brings Cabral's thought in line with other forms of critical theory is his critique of domination and his theory of liberation. What distinguishes his critical theory from others is that Cabral was concerned with the domination of the downtrodden the world over, not just the developed countries. As Rabaka puts it, 'Cabral challenges conventional critical theory in the sense that his critical theory is not quarantined to the life-worlds and life-struggles of white workers in capitalist societies' (2014: 152). Over and above that, his ideas were both 'revolutionary nationalist' and 'revolutionary humanist'.

The fact that Cabral was concerned with the liberation of the oppressed people everywhere, means that his critical theory is essentially 'global theory'. It transcends the Eurocentric limitations of the Frankfurt School, for example. In Rabaka's words, it 'traverses the colonialist/capitalist divide and engages the world as it actually exists' (2014: 153). Cabral's critical theory not only combats global imperialism, but also 'Eurocentric critical theory'. Cabral's struggle for 'progress for our people' is such that it critiques 'anyone and anything that might hinder human beings from democratically to their highest and fullest potential' (Rabaka 2014: 154). Rabaka goes on to argue that Cabral's critical theory is also a historical, cultural and social theory. For Cabral, it was important to struggle not only against the 'enemy', but also against forms of oppression within the ranks of the oppressed. Fighting against oppression would require a 'concrete philosophy', or a philosophy of praxis, and not simply praying or wishing it away. This concrete philosophy, 'requires a radical break with the abstractness of academic and/or "traditional" philosophy, and a dialectical deconstruction and reconstruction of philosophy towards its practical potentialities and possibilities' (Rabaka 2014: 159).

Rabaka reports that his Africana critical theory 'refuses to be reduced to a biologically determined or racially essentialist position' (2014: 155). As such, he argues that there are white people who have made progressive contributions to national liberation struggles. He observes that this line of thought enables one to avoid what Cornel West calls 'the pitfalls of racial reasoning' (1993: 21). In this regard, Rabaka declares that Cabral prefigures Cornel West's 'coalition politics'. It is for this reason that Cabral was not just against colonialism or racial oppression in the colonies, but also capitalist exploitation and imperialism more broadly. Cabral's critical theory, therefore, is 'aimed at the complete destruction and revolutionary replacement of the imperialist world-system(s) with new forms of government and social organizations that would perpetually promote democratic socialist global co-existence' (Rabaka 2014: 156). Cabral located the liberation struggles of the oppressed people in a global and historical context.

One of the major problems with colonialism and imperialism is their hindrance to national consciousness, national culture and national liberation. This is something that Cabral understood very well. Once the colonised regain these important elements of their being, they would transcend the 'sad position of being a people without history' (Cabral 2007: 156). This turns on the question of culture primarily. According to Rabaka, 'culture is he conscious consequence of the economic and political activities of any given society' (2014: 158). Hence colonialism builds systems that stifle cultural life of the colonised people. This makes cultural resistance a key element of anti-colonial struggles. In engaging Cabral's critical theory of colonialism and imperialism, Rabaka argues that:

> …it is important to emphasize that it essentially argues colonialists utilized unprecedented violence to colonize the lives, labors, and lands of other peoples; that superior science, technology, and military enabled colonialism to succeed in its formative phase; and, finally, that technology transformed the means of production, intensified the socio-politico-economic organization of labor, and brutally brought the cultures and products of colonized peoples on the world market. (2014: 161)

Cabral was critical of neocolonialism (as an 'indirect domination …by means of political power made up mainly or completely of native agents') as he was of colonialism (cited in Rabaka 2014: 162-163). Rabaka points out that in this regard, Cabral was indebted to Fanon's ideas in the book *The Wretched of the Earth*. Rabaka says: 'Faithfully following Fanon, then, Cabral's critical theory goes far to identify, explain, critique, and combat neocolonialism' (2014: 162).

For Rabaka, 'imperialism is the principle foci of Africana critical theory' primarily because it 'retards colonized peoples' development and has deep ramifications in both the public and private spheres of the dominated peoples' lives' (2014: 163). For Cabral, in order to evolve an effective critique of imperialism, one ought to begin with pre-colonial African history, culture, and society. The point is not to romanticise the African past. It is to show that colonialism interrupted or disrupted African history and culture. Rabaka declares:

> In light of this Cabral deliberately and contradictorily chose to analyse precolonial African societies utilizing the vocabulary and concepts emerging from Marxist discourse on class formation and class contradictions. His writings demonstrate that he firmly believed that class antagonisms existed within several African societies long before the onslaught of European racial colonial conquest, but that this historical fact had been hidden by the edifice and subterfuge of the racial state. (2014: 165)

One can hear Archie Mafeje objecting to this by saying 'To conduct class analysis we do not have to invent classes, but rather to be alert to possible mediations in the process of class formation' (1981: 130). Mafeje's point is that overreliance on theory (however progressive the theory may be) without taking seriously concrete conditions, is likely to be as dangerous as the reactionary scholarship it is meant to critique. Bernard Magubane spoke at length about the confusion between class and social stratification in the 'colonial situation' (Magubane 1968). Social stratification is a descriptive concept which 'implies sets of positions in a hierarchical arrangement' (Magubane 1968). It simply means income differentiation, but not necessarily different class positions. Class, on the other hand, is a much more analytical concept insofar as it relates to primary divisions in society on the basis of individuals' relationship to the primary means of production. As such, due to its antagonistic nature, class divisions imply political action. What does Rabaka make of Cabral's pointed critique of the orthodox Marxian position on the universality of the history of class struggle? Cabral observes:

> Does history begin only from the moment of class and, consequently, of class struggle? To reply in the affirmative would be to place outside history the whole period of life of human groups from the discovery of hunting, and later sedentary and nomadic agriculture, to cattle raising and to the private appropriation of land. It would also be to consider – and this we refuse to accept – that various human groups in Africa, Asia and Latin America were living without history or outside history at the moment they were subjected to the yoke of imperialism. (1979: 124-5)

In his excellent book, titled *The Theory and Ethnography of African Social Formations*, Archie Mafeje goes out of his way to demonstrate that the precolonial Great Lakes region, for example, does not lend itself to class analysis even though there were patterns of exploitation.

In any case, Rabaka goes on to discuss Cabral's conception of imperialism. Cabral's (2007) position on imperialism goes beyond the question of intervention into the colonies. Lenin (1999), too, saw imperialism as more than a mere question of annexation, but over and above that as the 'highest stage of capitalism'. For Cabral, in order for imperialism to fulfil its mission, it must encompass cultural, social, political as well as economic factors. Thus although imperialism may introduced money economy, nation states and so on, these were not to the benefit of the African people but the imperialists themselves. Although in classical revolutionary theory colonialism and imperialism denote different stages in history, Rabaka argues that Cabral used these terms 'synonymously'. In doing so, Rabaka suggests, Cabral avoided drawing 'hard and fast discursive lines between "First World" (i.e. "developed") societies and "Third World" (i.e. "underdeveloped" or so-called "backward") societies' (2014: 166). For Cabral, colonialism and imperialism led to 'blocked development'. 'On the other hand, his conception of "blocked development" was quite vague when he used the term to refer to the relative failure of imperialism to bring about the growth of productive forces and the birth of a proletariat' (Rabaka 2014: 167). Rabaka goes on to argue that in Cabral's critical theory, imperialism 'did not do enough to create conditions conducive to an anti-colonial and Decolonial democratic socialist revolution. Hence, in a Marxist sense, it might be said that imperialism in Africa, especially in light of neocolonialism, was not sufficiently exploitative enough' (2014: 167). This is an orthodox Marxian position which sees capitalism as a necessarily stage for development, and ultimately socialism. Ironically, however, the Chinese experiment with socialism was succeeded by capitalism – underpinned by state-capital. If capitalism is a necessary stage, is the cruelty visited by it on poor peasants and workers justified? Rabaka does not entertain these issues. The issue is that in avoiding this question, one is left wondering whether Rabaka actually commits himself to universalizing tendencies of orthodox Marxian discourse. At any rate, he goes on to argue that Cabral made a distinction between classical imperialism and neo-imperialism. The two, Rabaka observes, are important in explaining the origins and evolution of 'blocked development'. The only problem that Rabaka has with this idea is that it does not explain 'the failure of imperialism as a transformative force that contributes to conditions conducive to revolutionary change in the

racial colonial world' (2014: 167). If this is the only problem that Rabaka has with imperialism then he is not likely to find answers to his inquiry. Imperialism, as an advanced stage in capitalism, is not likely to be altruistic and kind to the wretched of the earth. Nor is it clear why Rabaka expects it to be. He blames lack of explanations to this issue on Cabral himself and says the latter is at his weakest in failing to explain why imperialism is not a transformative force. One must confess that it is a bit strange to expect imperialism to bring about 'conducive conditions' of any kind. What of the anti-colonial and anti-imperialist struggles?

Rabaka argues that, theoretically, workers throughout the world are united in their fight against imperialism. Yet practically, there can be no actual operational unity between the worker in Europe and America and their counterparts in the ex-colonies. He says 'Cabral openly admitted that that it is not realistic to hope for any alliance between these disparate arms of the world-historic revolutionary struggle' (Rabaka 2014: 168). This sounds like a fairly honest confession, but it makes nonsense of Pan-African struggles (which are *ab initio* transatlantic). What does Cabral's and Rabaka's confession mean for the struggles of the continental Africans and their diasporan counterparts? At any rate, in the ex-colonies conditions are made worse by the problem of neo-colonialism and the petty bourgeois leadership which perpetuates it. Rabaka observes that 'the actual degree of change and independence is not as great as it appears since the racially colonized petite bourgeoisie is quite incapable of rupturing their wrongheaded relationship of subordination and exploitation with European and American imperialism' (2014: 168). Cabral argues that for development to occur, there must be complete freedom. There are people who do not see freedom or democracy as a necessary condition for development. Such a discussion merits a separate article. Although Cabral was clear on the distinction between colonialism and neo-colonialism, Rabaka argues that he was silent on the link between 'post-independence colonialism' and 'post-World War II international capitalism'. He argues that this lack of clarity on the part of Cabral led to a '*conceptual cul-de-sac*' on how imperialism influences and operates in neocolonial societies. For Rabaka, this presents us with a paradox:

> On the one hand, Cabral argued that in light of the contradictions at the heart of imperialism the evolution of capitalism directly corresponds with the emergence of African nationalism. Nonetheless, counterbalanced against this, he also surmises that neocolonialism is a necessary and completely logical offshoot of classical colonialism. On this account, imperialism is simultaneously extremely malleable and motive, always and ever adaptive to change, all the while ironically remaining simultaneously narcissistic,

> hedonistic, nihilistic, and totally self-destructive. All of this ultimately leaves unanswered the preeminent question of how and under what specific conditions can national liberation movements within the racial colonial world avoid the pitfalls and poisons of neocolonialism. (2014: 169)

But the genius of Cabral, like Fanon and Cesaire (1972), was in pointing out that the major political forces in contemporary history and culture were anticolonial national liberation struggles. For Rabaka, therefore, '*the class struggle between European workers and European capital has been superseded as the foremost historical force by the struggles of simultaneously anti-racist, anti-colonialist, and, therefore, anti-imperialist agents against, well imperialism (and neo-imperialism)*' (2014: 169, emphasis in original).

Rabaka argues that Cabral's explanation of the degeneration of 'nationalism' into neocolonialism was 'predestined' because imperialism was such that it did not make conditions 'conducive' to revolutionary changes in the ex-colonies. Yet it needs to be said that although this dialectic explains the inadequacies of nationalism, it naively assumes that imperialism could not have been to the benefit of the colonised. Yet, he submits that Cabral's notion of class suicide was an alternative to the orthodox Marxist idea that imperialism was a necessary stage for or 'conducive' to revolutionary change. The class suicide thesis was a call on the African petty bourgeoisie to steer clear of power mongering and neocolonialism, and for them to join forces with the downtrodden. Rabaka pointedly asks 'why would the inchoate African petite bourgeoisie commit suicide? Why would it do anything different than the longstanding and even more privileged European and American bourgeoisies, which it apishly idolizes and materialistically mirrors' (2014: 171)? The two questions are in a sense rhetorical since Rabaka goes on to answer them in this illustrated quote:

> In Cabral's critical theory of class suicide he identified two characteristics of the racially colonized bourgeoisie that he believed provided it with a unique disposition in relationship to imperialism and revolution. First, the position of the racially colonized bourgeoisie under colonialism and neocolonialism in many ways made it a prime competitor for state power based on the simple fact that no other class the adequate skills and knowledge to wield the colossal colonial state or neocolonial state. Secondly, the racially colonized bourgeoisie, for the most part, shared myriad familial and cultural connections with the masses (i.e. the peasantry) of their respective countries, which meant that they remained within earshot of the frustrations and aspirations of the peasantry. (2014: 171).

Yet, for Archie Mafeje, although the notion of class suicide is desirable, so far there are no examples of it. Mafeje observes:

> Everywhere, even the radical petit-bourgeoisie continues to be privileged after the revolution or independence. …Even in cases where they started the revolutionary movement, they cannot be judged as having died socially until the revolutionary class which is their constituency transforms them into its own image i.e. until their antithesis negates them. The opportunism of the petit-bourgeoisie, including the radical elements, can only be defeated by a working class, and a peasantry which has grown and matured in the struggle for a New Democracy. Bourgeois or petit-bourgeois charity has so far led to immiseration of and death among the labouring classes in under-developed countries including the 'socialist' examples. (1992: 52)

Yet Cabral saw the petty bourgeoisie as potentially progressive in ways that orthodox Marxists did not. Rabaka suggests that Cabral's war on imperialism took a three-pronged approach. First, the people of Cape Verde and Guinea-Bissau had to do away with racial colonial relations with Portugal. Second, the liberation movement had to lobby the United Nations. Third, and this seems to have been the last resort, the people of Cape Verde and Guinea-Bissau would wage war of national liberation through the armed struggle. These elaborations do not consider the context of these two then Portuguese colonies, Cape Verde and Guinea-Bissau, in the overall scheme of Portuguese colonialism, the nature of Portuguese colonialism itself, and the internal divisions between Cape Verdeans and Guineans in the context of the liberation movement. Ultimately, Rabaka argues that Cabral distinguished himself from orthodox Marxists by arguing that the mode of production rather than class struggle, is the 'true and permanent motive force of history' (Cabral in Rabaka 2014: 177). He points out that Cabral has always been accused of being a Marxist, although there are reasons to believe that this may not be the case. Indeed, Bernard Magubane declares that Cabral 'did not want to be called a Marxist' (1983: 12).

Cabral often urged the colonised and the liberation movements to speak from the standpoint of their own conditions, rather than superimposing generic and catchall phrases and categories. This is what Rabaka calls 'ideological independence' and a warning against 'conceptual incarceration'. So instead reading Cabral as a Marxist, it might be better to read him as a 'materialist' (Rabaka 2014). Insofar as Cabral's ideas transcend Marxism, he is according to Rabaka a 'critical theorist'. This is not to deny the importance of Marxism in radical thought. Rather, it is to take seriously the fact that Marxism is not synonymous with radicalism. It is but one of many strands in radical thought. Cabral's critical theory, therefore, is important precisely

because it transcends the inadequacies of Eurocentric critical theory. This is where Rabaka finds Cabralism most useful, particularly because it converges with his Africana critical theory. First, Africana critical theory 'comprehends that it is not merely "social problems" that must be addressed, but also social constructions, such as "race"' (Rabaka 2014: 189). Second, 'Africana critical theory, unlike most Marxist discourse and contemporary European and European American critical theory, comprehends that it is not only race and class struggles that obstruct and impede the improvement of human life-worlds and lived experiences. Surely gender and sexuality must be considered, amongst other areas and issues' (Rabaka 2014: 190). In taking all of these factors into account, Africana critical theory appropriates some of Cabral's insights and brings them to bear on questions of race, class, gender, sexuality etc. Rabaka concedes, however, that Cabral did not necessarily advance any theory of gender and sexuality.

What is important to bear in mind is that unlike orthodox Marxists, Cabral did not view the working class alone as the primary agents of revolutionary change. Having studied concrete conditions of the Cape Verde and Guinea-Bissau, he concluded that the struggle had to be waged by various classes, ethnicities and so on. Due in part to his reluctance to accept willy-nilly radical sounding categories, Cabral knew that much of what was said to be 'African socialism' was no more than 'reformist nationalism' (Rabaka 2014). 'One of the bridges Cabral identified to aid the transition from colonialism to decolonial democratic socialism was *revolutionary nationalism*' (Rabaka 2014: 210, emphasis in original). This is based on history, culture and 'revolutionary anti-imperialist praxis' of those who are waging the liberation struggle. Rabaka says Cabral's revolutionary nationalism was infused with 'revolutionary humanism'. His verdict is that 'Amilcar Cabral was not a Marxist or a Marxist-Leninist, but an African revolutionary' (Rabaka 2014: 213).

Cabral's work cantered on the question of national liberation. It is important note, as Rabaka suggests, that Cabral made a distinction between national independence and national liberation. Rabaka explains:

> The former, on the one hand, entails the transfer of political power from the colonizer to the colonized without any substantial structural (or superstructural) changes in the newly 'independent' nation-state. The latter, on the other hand, essentially involves the complete destruction of the colonial apparatus (most often by way of armed struggle and a systematic program of authentic decolonization and re-Africanization), which ultimately leads to the emergence of a new type of human being and nation-state… (2014: 219).

Rabaka believes that this distinction is important if one is to understand Cabral's critical theory of national liberation. Cabral's idea of national liberation turned on four 'coordinates': (i) 'rescued and reclaimed history'; (ii) the salience of culture; (iii) inchoate African class structure; and (iv) the struggle against colonialism and imperialism (Rabaka 2014). Central to these four coordinates is the notion of return to the source. Rabaka reports that for Cabral, the notion of return to the source meant that the liberation movement must preserve its precolonial traditions and values. Yet, these traditions and values must be transformed through the difficult process of 'revolutionary decolonization' and 'revolutionary reAfricanization'. Rabaka links the notion of return to the Ghanaian concept of *sankofa* which 'entails taking from the past those things which are deemed to be most useful in the present with the ultimate intention of moving forward… [It] boils down to *the benevolent use of knowledge from the past to positively alter the present and ensure the future*' (2014: 244, emphasis in original). The question of traditional values inside the liberation movement is far more complex then the simplicity of this elaboration suggests. Early on, and in the spirit of Negritude, Cabral advocated a return to the source. Later one, however, he changed his view, for the PAIGC got caught in the contradiction between, on the one hand, preserve traditional values and, on the other, eradicate them from the movement. In the end, a number of what Cabral called 'negative practices' were expurgated from the movement. Others resisted, though. What Rabaka takes to be the most important aspect of Cabral's contribution to radical politics and to Africana critical theory 'is his high level of conceptual consistency and pragmatism' (Rabaka 2014: 248).

Cabral and the Africana Tradition of Critical Theory

For Rabaka, Cabral presents Africana theory with significant challenges. These challenges necessitate a major overhaul or 'rethinking' of critical theory generally. What is most important about Cabral's ideas is the fact that they were not intended merely to contribute to theory, but to liberate the people of Africa, the diaspora, and the downtrodden more generally. Insofar as this is true, his ideas must be viewed as a contribution to a concrete philosophy or, as Rabaka puts it, '*an Africana philosophy of praxis*: a historically nuanced, culturally grounded, socially situated, and politically charged from of critical social theory that speaks to the special needs of continental and diasporan Africans' (2014: 255, *emphasis in original*).

Although Cabral valued the idea of learning from one's concrete realities, he was not averse to learning from others. Rabaka says: 'In good dialectical fashion Cabral suggested that we start with our own circumstances and

situations, but maintain an *epistemic* and *experimental openness*, and be willing and able to appropriate and adapt the advances or breakthroughs of others' (2014: 256, *emphasis in original*). Inasmuch as Rabaka holds Cabral's ideas in great esteem, he nevertheless cautions against an uncritical regurgitation of Cabral's ideas. He argues that while much of his ideas are relevant to today's struggles, one needs to be mindful of new socio-political challenges which Cabral may not have foreseen. This is a call for developing and generating new ideas in order to supplement ideas of intellectual progenitors such as Cabral. In making this plea, Rabaka is not saying Cabral's ideas are outdated. On the contrary, he believes that they are still relevant to this day – particularly in relation to struggles against racism, neocolonialism, imperialism etc. Thus, Cabralism 'does offer critical concepts and innovative analytical categories' (Rabaka 2014: 257). Equally important is the fact that:

> Cabral's critical return to the source(s) suggests in no uncertain terms that Africana critical theory of contemporary society concern itself with the deconstruction of European-driven continental and diasporan African philosophical discourse, the reconstruction of a radically decolonized and re-Africanized critical theory and praxis tradition – that is to say, what I have been referring to as the Africana tradition of critical theory and revolutionary praxis. (Rabaka 2014: 258, emphasis in original)

When Rabaka speaks of an Africana critical theory in the contemporary moment, he speaks of a critique, deconstruction and, at times, appropriation of abstract academic and Eurocentric discourses.

What Cabral does is to provide the Africana critical theory 'with a deep and abiding grounding in African history, culture, and struggle' that links the struggles on the African continent with those of the African diaspora and workers and peasants around the world (Rabaka 2014: 261). Africana critical theory, such as Rabaka conceives of it, is not a mere 'neo-black radicalism'. Rather, it is 'a twenty-first century outgrowth of efforts' aimed at deconstruction and reconstruction of the life-worlds of the continental and diasporan Africans. In discussing Cabral's ideas and praxis, Rabaka hopes to introduce some of the 'core characteristics of the Africana tradition of critical theory' (2014: 265). According to him, Africana critical theory is 'incomprehensible without a thorough and critical knowledge of Africana intellectual history' (Rabaka 2014: 268). Hence he engages not only Cabral, but also such intellectual progenitors as Cesaire, Senghor and Fanon. He argues that on the basis of this rich African and diasporan intellectual history and tradition, Africana critical theory cannot be dismissed as nothing more than 'Frankfurt School critical theory in a blackface'. If anything, the Africana critical theory pre-dates the Eurocentric critical theory insofar as Rabaka traces it to Du Bois.

Although Rabaka dissociates African critical theory from other forms of critical theory, he nonetheless concedes that it shares with them 'the same methodological orientation and approach' (2014: 283). Methodologically, the ultimate goal of his critical theory is to: '(1) comprehend the established society; (2) criticise its contradictions and conflicts; and (3) create egalitarian (most often radical/revolutionary democratic socialist) alternatives' (Rabaka 2014: 283). Furthermore, Rabaka acknowledges that the Africana critical theory is not only grounded in Africana studies, but also emerges from Africana philosophy. He believes that Africana critical theory is about offering alternatives to what actually exists. It does this by projecting possibilities of what ought to be done and what could be done. It is not entirely clear whether this is necessarily a new or novel idea. Most, if not all, radical theories turn on this question of finding alternatives and on what is to be done. On this score, Rabaka belabours a fairly conventional idea.

Conclusion

To conclude, it needs to be said that Rabaka's book, *Concepts of Cabralism*, is quite exceptional. This is necessarily so because, unlike other studies on Cabral, Rabaka did not just engage Cabral's ideas, but actually contextualised them by locating them within the rich black radical intellectual tradition – what he calls 'Africana tradition of critical theory'. Specifically, Rabaka traces the genealogy of Cabral's intellectual and political thought to key thinkers of the Negritude Movement such as Aime Cesaire and Leopold Senghor, and then to Frantz Fanon. Rabaka goes on to demonstrate that unlike other revolutionaries, Cabral was not merely regurgitating or applying orthodox Marxism. Instead, Cabral studied the concrete conditions of Cape Verde and Guinea-Bissau, and led the liberation struggles of his people accordingly. In doing so, he was able to enrich revolutionary theory. For Rabaka, Cabral was not only a 'revolutionary nationalist' and 'revolutionary humanist', but also a critical theorist. Hence Rabaka's Cabral should be read as contributing to 'Africana critical theory'.

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Médias, contestations et mouvements populaires au Sénégal de 2000 à 2012

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Résumé

Ce texte pose la problématique du décalage entre les promesses électorales du pouvoir de l'alternance en 2000 et le sentiment d'insatisfaction qu'éprouve une bonne partie de la population, notamment les jeunes issus de certains quartiers populaires défavorisés de la capitale (Dakar) et de certaines régions intérieures du pays (Sénégal). Cette amère déception a eu pour conséquence l'émergence des mouvements spontanés de contestation et des collectifs d'autodéfense pour exiger du pouvoir en place le respect de ses engagements à mettre fin aux souffrances du peuple. La presse, dans ce contexte, a joué un rôle important d'accompagnement de toutes ces aspirations, ce qui n'a pas manqué de créer des malentendus entre les autorités gouvernementales et les acteurs de la presse durant les premières années de l'alternance au Sénégal.

Mots-clés : Médias, contestation, mouvement, populaire, émeute, alternance, journaliste, collectif.

Abstract

This text addresses questions related to the discrepancy between the election promises of the power of alternation in 2000 and the feeling of dissatisfaction experienced by a good part of the population, especially young people from certain disadvantaged neighborhoods of the capital (Dakar) and some regions in the country (Senegal). This bitter disappointment resulted to the emergence of spontaneous protest movements and self-defense groups in demanding for local government to respect its commitments and to put an end to people's sufferings. Within this context, the press played an important companionship role in these aspirations, which created misunderstandings between government authorities and the press during the first years of transformation in Senegal.

Keywords: Media, Challenging, Motion, Popular, Riot, Alternation, Journalist, Collective.

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Introduction

Cette période coïncide au Sénégal avec la gouvernance du président Abdoulaye Wade (2000-2012). Elle fut marquée par des débats d'idées, des controverses entre intellectuels, journalistes et quelques têtes pensantes du pouvoir libéral dirigé par Abdoulaye Wade, élu président de la République du Sénégal en 2000 face à Abdou Diouf, président socialiste sortant. En 2003, un face-à-face éditorial oppose un cercle d'intellectuels proches du régime de l'alternance au journaliste Abdou Latif Coulibaly. L'auteur du brûlot *Wade, un opposant au pouvoir, l'Alternance piégée* va révéler les écarts entre les promesses électorales et la situation d'insatisfaction consécutive à l'avortement des rêves suscités par le *Sopi* (changement en wolof). Pour lui l'alternance a été piégée par une nouvelle élite, plus habile dans la posture d'opposant que dans le statut d'homme d'État.

Son ouvrage, écrit Momar Coumba Diop, est la plus importante production contre-hégémonique notée au Sénégal depuis mars 2000. Elle a dynamité le système de légitimation de la classe dirigeante et ses manoeuvres de séduction, en réduisant en cendres une partie de ses masques (Diop 2004:34).

Pour sauver la face, un comité de rédaction affilié au pouvoir lui apporte la réplique dans un ouvrage intitulé *Un procès d'intention à l'épreuve de la vérité*. Selon les rédacteurs du livre-réponse, « incontestablement animé par une volonté inextinguible de nuire » (Thiam 2004:13), le journaliste aurait sciemment occulté l'actif du bilan, uniquement parce que le régime lui aurait refusé certains privilèges.

Ce « terrorisme médiatique », destiné, selon le professeur Iba Der Thiam, à faire se révolter les populations, met en exergue le rôle présumé des médias dans la déstabilisation du pouvoir issu de l'alternance. L'irruption subite de la contestation dans l'espace public (Watin 2001:56) et sa forte médiatisation sont les principaux signes annonciateurs du désenchantement des masses. Ainsi, selon le professeur Iba Der Thiam, tête de file des penseurs du régime, « le nombre de manifestations publiques, de marches, de sit-in, d'interpellations publiques et de revendications de toutes sortes a connu une augmentation exponentielle ».

Avec l'effet d'entraînement, cette contestation fait tache d'huile à travers le pays où les populations s'unissent en collectifs d'autodéfense afin de briser leur marginalisation dans les politiques publiques nationales. Ces dénonciations s'alimentent dans le fossé des insatisfactions et semblent inaugurer une rupture dans un pays où les populations ont toujours été réceptives au *ndigueul* (consigne) des marabouts pour prendre leur mal en patience.

La longue séquence historique choisie (2000-2012) a permis d'avoir plusieurs éléments d'appréciation à propos de l'objet d'étude, et la diversification des cas étudiés a fourni davantage d'aide à la décentration. Malgré la complexité du phénomène observé, plus d'une décennie d'observation constitue, sur le plan méthodologique, une durée intéressante à étudier.

Pour parler de ces douze ans d'observation, nous noterons que deux phases historiques sont à retenir. La première part de mars 2000 à juillet 2003, et une autre tranche historique se déroule de 2003 à 2012. La première phase est une période d'observation et d'agrément de l'action politique de la nouvelle élite. Elle est dénommée la période d'état de grâce, où le pays pardonnait tout au nouveau régime. Les médias et les acteurs de la contestation s'accommodent de cette situation. C'est la période faste de l'euphorie de l'alternance, des slogans du Sénégal qui gagne, à l'image des Lions de la Téranga, qui se sont distingués respectivement à la coupe d'Afrique des Nations du Mali en 2002 et à la coupe du monde de la même année en Corée du Sud.

Cependant, l'épopée des Lions et l'allégresse qu'elle provoque seront stoppées très rapidement, la même année, le 26 septembre 2002, par le naufrage du Bateau *Le Joola* (2000 morts). Un coup dur pour le régime avec un cycle de manifestations du Collectif des familles des victimes et des rescapés du naufrage. Cet événement tragique amorce les timides débuts de la remise en cause du système en place. Les gouvernants appellent à un examen collectif des consciences. La presse et l'opinion publique s'indignent des négligences qui ont produit cette catastrophe, la plus grande de l'histoire de l'humanité.

Pour mettre en relief toute cette histoire, notre travail sera divisé en deux grandes parties : dans une première phase, nous allons parler du mécontentement populaire caractéristique de l'alternance et de l'aboutissement de cet état d'âme dans des mobilisations sous forme de collectifs d'autodéfense dans les localités-fiefs et chez la presse. Dans une seconde phase, il s'agira des formes d'interaction entre le mouvement populaire et les médias, qui provoquent souvent des troubles de l'ordre public, avec un effort de mise en lumière du rôle crucial de la presse durant cette période.

Problématique

La marginalisation des études sur le mouvement populaire en tant que tel et ses interactions avec les médias reste un fait au Sénégal. En dépit des nombreux efforts consentis par les chercheurs sur le mouvement social (syndicats, mouvement paysan, mouvement étudiant, etc.) et sur les thèmes portant sur la relation entre médias et démocratie, peu d'intérêt

est accordé aux mouvements de contestations émanant des cadres moins formels, nouveaux, dans les quartiers populaires, les banlieues où émergent des mouvements insurrectionnels appelés collectifs d'autodéfense.

Avec les promesses non tenues de l'alternance, le creusement des inégalités, le champ revendicatif (partiellement déserté par les structures classiques victimes de leur émiettement ou de leur faiblesse) est vite occupé par les populations des quartiers populaires et des bidonvilles. Des collectifs se mettent sur pied, ils prennent en main les luttes contre le coût élevé de la vie, les délestages de l'électricité et les diverses formes d'injustice. Les démonstrations aux brassards rouges, les marches, les sit-in, huées, grèves de la faim, etc. préfigurent le temps des révoltes. Les porteurs de cette révolte partagent leur frustration avec une bonne partie de la presse sénégalaise. Cette dernière considère qu'elle est victime d'un système de censure institutionnelle alors qu'elle a joué un grand rôle dans l'avènement même de l'alternance. En plus, les promesses de modernisation de l'environnement des médias et de la législation qui l'encadre sont restées lettre morte au moment où l'État tolère de moins en moins la liberté de ton des journalistes.

Les mouvements de contestation qui se font jour sont ainsi relayés par une presse, surtout privée, qui rumine sa frustration vis-à-vis du pouvoir. Le commentaire fait par cette presse sur les malaises sociaux donne l'impression d'une intention manifeste de vouloir déstabiliser le régime. Mieux, les journalistes confrontés à la censure éditoriale se regroupent dans leur propre structure d'autodéfense. Une logique similaire est observable chez des patrons de presse qui s'appuient sur leurs propres comités populaires de lutte contre la censure entrepreneuriale.

L'État fait face désormais à un mouvement populaire et à des acteurs médiatiques organisés et en interaction étroite avec les collectifs d'autodéfense. Ce phénomène social émergent est l'un des événements phares observés pendant l'alternance. Ce potentiel retour du citoyen dans l'espace public, à travers ses propres modes d'expression, de légitimation, d'interaction avec la presse, la société civile et l'opposition, est l'une des problématiques majeures au Sénégal et prend pour cadre temporel la période de l'alternance entre 2000 et 2012.

Le choix du sujet

Pourquoi avoir choisi le mouvement populaire et non les mouvements sociaux d'une manière générale ? Au Sénégal, les études portant sur les mouvements sociaux sont très nombreuses. Une abondante littérature existe sur les mouvements sociaux, étudiants, paysans et autres. Dans cette étude, nous allons parler de ses mouvements structurés, mais nous voulons surtout

insister sur le mouvement spontané. Ce sont des collectifs éphémères notés par-ci par-là, à l'instar des émeutes de Kédougou, des émeutes de l'électricité, des mouvements du 23 juin et 27 juin 2011 et des émeutes préélectorales de 2012.

S'agissant des types structurés, le choix de la Convention des jeunes de Kolda (CJK), du Collectif des imams et résidents des quartiers de Guédiawaye (CIRQG), du Collectif des jeunes de Kédougou et de Y'en a Marre (YAM) obéit au principe d'élection des entités les mieux organisées. Ce focus va aussi dans le sens d'une perspective comparatiste entre le profil des collectifs dans les grandes villes à tradition contestataire (Dakar) et des régions lointaines (Kolda et Kédougou), réputées pacifiques et implantées dans un espace géostratégique. L'implication de YAM dans le mouvement structuré de type synthétique qu'est le Mouvement des forces vives du 23 juin (M23) a placé ce dernier dans notre ligne de mire.

Sur quelle presse porte cette contribution et pourquoi ? L'étude porte sur la presse d'une manière générale. En effet, de tous les médias, c'est la radio qui est le plus populaire au Sénégal, et certainement, elle est aussi celle qui a le plus d'influence sur l'opinion. Cette prépondérance devrait nous amener à l'élire d'office. Toutefois, comme on peut le remarquer, malgré sa popularité, elle n'est pas totalement indépendante des autres supports. En outre, il commence à naître au Sénégal des radios ou des télévisions hybrides et des groupes de presse qui, malgré la diversité de leurs supports, emploient les mêmes correspondants pour faire un travail polyvalent. Ils sont à la fois journalistes radio, télé, presse écrite et *on line* (en ligne). Puisque ce sont les mêmes qui collectent, traitent et diffusent la même information dans divers médias, la différence traditionnelle entre supports s'amenuise. Ainsi, ne voulant pas faire de cloisonnement entre les médias qu'emploient indifféremment, à travers leurs reporters, les groupes mobilisés, nous avons choisi de centrer l'étude indistinctement sur la presse.

Les hypothèses de travail

Deux facteurs pourraient être à la base de l'aboutissement de la frustration et de la révolte populaire :

– premièrement, le sentiment d'injustice et de marginalisation qui laisse croire à certaines couches sociales qu'elles sont les laissées-pour-compte des politiques de développement national. Ces dernières vont se constituer en collectifs d'autodéfense pour réclamer plus de justice sociale et une distribution beaucoup plus équitable des ressources nationales.

– deuxièmement, la frustration d'une presse mécontente, empêchée par la censure d'exercer sa fonction critique envers le régime de l'alternance qui se croyait toujours l'allié de cette presse, comme c'était le cas du temps où il était dans l'opposition ou dans la conquête du pouvoir.

Le mécontentement populaire et l'émergence des collectifs d'autodéfense

Avec l'avènement de l'alternance politique au Sénégal (mars 2000), les populations s'attendaient avec enthousiasme à ce que la demande sociale laissée en l'état par le défunt régime socialiste trouve une solution. Plusieurs couches sociales n'obtiendront pas satisfaction à hauteur de leurs attentes. C'est le cas notamment des populations, mais aussi de la presse privée qui, armée de téléphones portables (armes anti-fraude), a participé, auprès des masses, à la transparence et à la sincérité du scrutin de février et de mars 2000[1]. Cette partie va tenter de déceler les sources du potentiel de violence collective en partant des origines de cette frustration.

Afin d'expliquer ce phénomène soumis à notre réflexion, il importe de faire une brève évaluation de la situation économique et sociale d'après 2000. En effet, il est reconnu que la finalité de l'État est de satisfaire l'intérêt général dans le respect du principe de l'égalité de tous devant le service public. L'impératif de justice sociale doit régir la politique de l'État, car on ne peut parler de développement que si la croissance est correctement redistribuée, que si elle est ressentie dans le panier de la ménagère. Elle doit aussi impacter l'éducation, la santé, l'alimentation, etc.

Pour ce qui est du Sénégal, malgré les politiques d'ajustement structurel des années quatre-vingt, le pays a renoué avec la croissance après 2000, avec un taux de croissance de 3,2 pour cent[2].

En 2001, l'alternance avait réussi à améliorer le taux de croissance de l'année précédente en le portant à 4,6 pour cent. L'année suivante, c'est-à-dire 2002, ce taux dégringole à 0,7 pour cent. Après cette dégringolade, le taux de croissance s'est nettement amélioré entre 2003 et 2005. Il a oscillé en 2003 : 6,7 pour cent, en 2004 5,8 pour cent, en 2005 5,3 pour cent. La chute a repris en 2006 avec 2,4 pour cent pour remonter en 2007 à 4,7 pour cent avant de tomber à nouveau en 2008 à 2,5 pour cent. Cette tendance baissière a été confirmée en 2009 avec un taux de croissance de 1,5 pour cent.

En dépit de cette tendance régressive, le Produit intérieur brut (PIB) par habitant est passé de 500 à 1 600 US dollars en 2011 et classe le Sénégal parmi les pays à économie intermédiaire. La question légitime qu'on peut

se poser est la suivante : qu'a-t-on fait des années de forte croissance et de performance économique ? En réalité, selon certains chercheurs, la croissance, censée diminuer les inégalités, n'a pas fait l'objet d'une redistribution équitable. En plus, les produits de première consommation ont connu une augmentation drastique.

Par exemple : le riz, en tant qu'aliment de base, a connu une hausse importante. De 140 F le kilo en 2000, il est passé à 240 F le kilo en 2007. Pour ce qui est de l'huile, elle a connu un taux d'inflation de 44,23 pour cent. Pour ce qui est de l'arachide, dont le Sénégal est producteur, le prix a augmenté entre 2000 et 2007 de 230 F.

Le record des hausses a été battu par le lait en poudre. Dans la séquence de 2000 à 2007, son prix est passé de 1 200 F à 3 200 F, soit une augmentation de 2 000,00 F. Les sources d'énergie comme le gaz butane ont enregistré elles aussi une hausse. La bouteille de 2,7 kg a connu un taux d'inflation de 158,82 pour cent et la bombonne de 6 kg un taux d'inflation de 108,4 pour cent.

De ces épreuves imposées aux populations se dégagent une insatisfaction et un mécontentement. Cette perception négative est accentuée par les surfacturations de l'eau, de l'électricité et le déficit d'accès aux besoins sociaux : l'eau, la santé, l'éducation, la salubrité et l'emploi. Aux pénuries d'eau, aux délestages intempestifs et à la cherté de la vie s'ajoutent les attentes insatisfaites dans les autres secteurs sociaux comme l'éducation et la santé.

C'est dans ce contexte de morosité que des acteurs collectifs issus des quartiers populaires, des villages, des communautés rurales, des villes et des régions de l'intérieur se sont mobilisés pour défendre leurs intérêts matériels et moraux malmenés par les pouvoirs publics. Ce sursaut populaire peut être circonstanciel, voire spontané, et disparaître aussitôt après l'atteinte des objectifs. Néanmoins, ces collectifs engendrés dans la spontanéité peuvent décider de s'organiser pour devenir des mouvements structurés. C'est cette mutation qui fait que ces types survivent à la revendication fondatrice. Les membres du bureau sont élus ou désignés, assurent la pérennité du mouvement, son élargissement. C'est ici que se révèle le rôle moteur des éléments ayant appartenu au mouvement des élèves et étudiants. Le plus souvent, ils sont les pièces maîtresses du mouvement populaire observé dans les quartiers. Ces mouvements structurés (Ndiaye 2009) comportent deux variantes : une variante essentiellement populaire et une variante synthétique. En ce qui concerne la variante populaire, elle est décelable à travers le profil du Collectif des imams et résidents des quartiers de Guédiawaye (CIRQG), de la Convention des jeunes de Kolda (CJK), de Y'en A Marre (YAM), et, dans une moindre mesure, du Collectif des jeunes de Kédougou. S'agissant

de la variante synthétique, son émergence sera plus tardive. Ce mouvement synthétique, parce qu'unissant dans une synergie d'action des forces populaires, politiques, civiles, syndicales, patronales et médiatiques, va se révéler à partir de 2011 avec l'émergence du Mouvement des forces vives du 23 juin ou du M23. Il y a eu d'autres mouvements que nous ne pourrons pas étudier dans ce travail. Par conséquent, nous allons nous limiter à trois d'entre eux qui sont : la Convention des jeunes de Kolda, le Collectif des imams et le mouvement Y'en a marre.

La convention des jeunes de Kolda

La Convention des jeunes de Kolda (CJK) a commencé à prendre forme au début de l'alternance. Elle est initiée par un groupe de jeunes dont le chef de file est un ancien étudiant, ancien caporal de l'armée et ancien syndicaliste. L'ossature de cette association est formée par les associations sportives et culturelles (ASC), les foyers scolaires (FOSCO) des lycées et collèges, les Groupements de promotion des Femmes (GPF), les Associations de développement des quartiers, etc. Le but est de réaliser une synergie d'action pour le développement local et la défense des intérêts moraux et matériels de la région. Dans cette logique de structuration, elle met sur pied un organigramme. Celui-ci définit les tâches et compétences des membres du bureau impliqués dans les différents organes de cette structure.

Le déclic contestataire de ce mouvement n'est intervenu qu'en 2002 dans les premières années de l'alternance. Cette date coïncide avec la coupe d'Afrique des Nations de football (CAN) pendant laquelle toute la région constate une disparition systématique des images de la télévision nationale en raison d'un problème technique. C'est dans ce contexte que le leader de cette association fait appel à la population pour un sit-in devant la Radio-Télévision sénégalaise (RTS). Le lendemain, une vague populaire déferlante s'est abattue sur les rues de Kolda. Le gouverneur de région saisit les autorités centrales et très rapidement les images sont revenues. Une prise de conscience de la force du mouvement populaire est donc née. Il devient un creuset de rencontres où se côtoient plusieurs forces vives et catégories socioprofessionnelles. Dans l'espace régional, ce mouvement met son expérience et son expertise au service d'organisations en gestation, les encadre, les appuie sur le plan logistique, moral et stratégique. Il offre un savoir-faire pour la confection des pancartes, des banderoles, des brassards, et aide à l'organisation des manifestations. Grâce à la CJK, la région de Kolda est grandement prise en compte dans les politiques publiques et dans les programmes de développement. Elle a multiplié les sorties médiatiques pour rappeler à l'État ses multiples promesses et parfois même projeter

des manifestations de rue, ce qui a permis aux Koldois de bénéficier de certaines réalisations promises aux régions pendant les fêtes de préparation de notre accession à l'indépendance (Diome 2011/2012:98). Cette forme de lutte commencée par la CJK contre l'injustice et la marginalisation avait commencé à faire tache d'huile et ressemble beaucoup aux initiatives citoyennes élaborées dans la banlieue dakaroise avec les imams de mosquée qui prennent la tête des collectifs d'autodéfense de Guédiawaye.

Le Collectif des imams de Guédiawaye

Le Collectif des imams et résidents des quartiers de Guédiawaye (CIRQG) s'est révélé au public en décembre 2008, suite à la spirale de surfacturation et lors de la tentative d'imposition de la double facturation aux usagers de la Société nationale d'électricité (SENELEC). En effet, jusqu'alors, les factures d'électricité, même surévaluées, étaient bimensuelles. Malgré tout, la nouvelle politique va chercher à abroger la méthode de facturation bimensuelle pour la remplacer par un système de facturation mensuelle.

Le caractère unilatéral de la mesure déclenche un mécontentement populaire qui vient se sédimenter sur le lit d'un potentiel de violence déjà existant et exacerbé par la hausse des denrées de première nécessité. C'est ainsi que des imams de la banlieue de Dakar, très sensibilisés sur le problème des populations, décident de les accompagner et de les encadrer dans leurs initiatives contestataires.

Cette initiative des imams a retenu l'attention pour deux raisons. La première est que leur engagement s'est fait sans l'assentiment des guides confériques, la seconde est que leur action semble indépendante des structures classiques. Ces facteurs nous amènent à présenter le CIRQG comme le fruit d'une double rupture. D'une part, il rompt avec les forces institutionnalisées (coopératives, syndicats, partis politiques, associations consuméristes, organisations de la société civile, etc.), d'autre part, il se soustrait subtilement à l'emprise des confréries et des mouvements islamistes connus au Sénégal.

L'irruption du CIRQG montre l'émergence ou la résurgence d'un islam de type contestataire dans un pays traditionnellement dominé par un islam attestataire. La mise en évidence de cette fonction protestataire de l'islam à travers l'œuvre surprenante d'imams constitue une fissure de plus au fameux contrat social sénégalais, pacte social pourtant loué pour son efficacité et ainsi qualifié d'exception, notamment en référence à la démocratie sénégalaise.

En définitive, la CIRQG a principalement tenu l'État pour responsable des dysfonctionnements du service public de l'électricité (cherté des

factures, délestages intempestifs, etc.). Lesquels dysfonctionnements se sont négativement répercutés sur l'économie, la sécurité et la stabilité du pays. Le CIRQG a contribué à faire de la SENELEC un outil important de souveraineté nationale. Ce secteur très stratégique doit être pris en charge par les autorités étatiques, qui doivent l'aborder comme un domaine stratégique et une surpriorité dans la politique nationale. Refusant avec intelligence le fatalisme habituel des Sénégalais, les imams du CIRQG organisent les populations et les associations locales dans le cadre de ce collectif d'autodéfense contre l'État, pour réclamer, par d'intenses campagnes de boycott, leur droit au bien-être et le respect de leur statut de citoyen (consommateur). Un pareil souci semble motiver les jeunes de Y'en A Marre qui font partie des figures de proue de cette période d'agitation au Sénégal.

Le mouvement Y'en a Marre

Les coupures d'électricité constituent le facteur déclencheur de ce mouvement qui, parti d'une bande d'amis réunis autour du thé, a pris, en un temps record, une dimension nationale avec l'essaimage d'un esprit Y'en a Marre un peu partout à travers le pays. En effet, porté sur les fonts baptismaux en janvier 2011, l'action révélatrice de YAM se trouve dans sa campagne « 1000 plaintes contre le gouvernement du Sénégal ». Il profite de la tenue, en février 2011, du FSM (Forum social mondial) et de la forte présence de la presse étrangère à Dakar pour se faire connaître[3]. Le FSM lui offre une tribune adéquate. À cette occasion, et en une seule matinée, près de 5 000 personnes présentes dans l'enceinte de l'Université de Dakar, lieu de rassemblement des altermondialistes, avaient adhéré de manière spontanée au mouvement[4].

Au sortir du FSM, YAM prend de l'ampleur. Malgré les déboires, les convocations de la police, l'interdiction et la dispersion des assemblées, il se massifie, multiplie les stratégies et les conférences de presse. Le 5 mars 2011, ses membres débutent les concerts mobiles de dénonciation politique. À Rufisque, ils sont arrêtés, leur logistique et leur sonorisation saisies.

YAM gêne et fascine à la fois, et est présenté par Moustapha Niasse, leader de l'Alliance des forces du progrès (AFP), comme un mouvement qui va dépasser de loin le « Sopi » de 2000. En mars 2011, le patron de presse Sidy Lamine Niasse, s'estimant lésé par l'Agence de régulation des postes et télécommunication (ARTP) qui lui réclame des redevances, appelle par voie de presse les populations à la révolte le 19 mars 2011. YAM surfe sur la vague de mécontentement. Malgré les menaces d'interdiction, il lance à son tour un appel pour un rassemblement contestataire à la place de l'Obélisque de Dakar.

Pour être à la hauteur de sa mission, YAM se structure, développe une politique de communication et de sensibilisation originale, marque sa présence sur les réseaux sociaux et installe des sections locales dans les régions et à l'étranger.

YAM, dans sa stratégie marketing, confectionne des *tee-shirts* avec le logo « Y'en A Marre » qu'il vend à 7 500 francs CFA (le coût de production étant de 4 500 F). Certaines bonnes volontés achètent même ces *tee-shirts* à 100 000 F pour aider, disent-ils. Ces vêtements sont portés lors des activités, des conférences de presse, des émissions à la télévision, des manifestations, etc. Des célébrités les mettent, le slogan fait sensation. Les portes des représentations diplomatiques (ambassade des États-Unis d'Amérique, représentante de l'Union européenne, médiateur de l'UA et de la CEDEAO) deviennent accessibles. YAM s'illustre de plus en plus comme une structure influente et que l'État doit prendre au sérieux. Il va démontrer cette force et cette compétence non seulement à travers sa campagne des « mille plaintes contre le gouvernement du Sénégal », mais surtout par le truchement de ses campagnes « *dass fanaanal : ma carte d'électeur, mon arme* » qui est un concept de veille pour bouter dehors les gouvernants qui ne sont pas là pour le bien-être des populations. On ne peut pas parler de YAM sans relater les violences politiques de juin 2011. En effet, le 17 juin 2011, le chef de l'État signe un décret de présentation du projet de loi n° 13/2011. Introduit en procédure d'urgence, le projet de réforme constitutionnelle a, entre autres, pour objectif l'élection simultanée au suffrage universel du président et d'un vice-président à partir de l'échéance électorale de février 2012. Ce nouveau schéma doit remplacer le système en cours, à savoir celui de l'élection, lors du suffrage, d'un président de la République avec plus de 50 pour cent des suffrages exprimés. Le projet de loi prévoit : « En cas de démission, d'empêchement définitif ou de décès en cours de mandat, le président de la République est remplacé par le vice-président ». Une autre disposition prévoit l'instauration d'un « quart bloquant » en disposant que « le vote a lieu en un premier tour au scrutin de liste majoritaire. Un ticket est déclaré élu s'il vient en tête de l'élection et réunit au moins le quart des suffrages exprimés ». Et d'ajouter que « si aucun ticket n'a obtenu le quart des suffrages exprimés, il est procédé à un second tour de scrutin le troisième dimanche qui suit la décision du Conseil constitutionnel ». Un tel projet de loi a provoqué une levée de boucliers de la part de l'opposition, de la société civile, des journalistes et patrons de presse, des leaders d'opinions, du mouvement populaire, des syndicats, etc. Ces acteurs réunis au sein d'un collectif y voient ni plus ni moins qu'une machination pour la suppression du second tour et un acte de plus destiné à concrétiser le projet dit « de dévolution monarchique du pouvoir » d'Abdoulaye Wade, 85 ans, au profit de son fils Karim, 42 ans, alors à la tête de pas moins de

quatre ministères. Avec le slogan « touche pas à ma Constitution », ce collectif convoque ses militants et la presse dans l'après-midi du mercredi 22 juin 2011 à la grande salle du Centre Daniel Bottier au centre-ville de Dakar. La société civile – principalement la Raddho et les leaders de la principale coalition de l'opposition (Benno Siggil Sénégal) en conclave – affûte ses armes pour décider de la conduite à tenir. Les leaders de Y'en A Marre, en ce qui les concerne, incitent la jeunesse à transformer « ses énergies négatives » (émeutes locales dans les quartiers-fiefs) en « forces positives » (inscription massive sur les listes électorales pour peser sur le scrutin de 2012).

Dans l'entendement des « esprits Y'en A Marre », comme le pouvoir voulait utiliser une procédure d'urgence afin de mettre l'opinion devant le fait accompli, il fallait répliquer par une autre procédure d'urgence (la rue). Le 23 juin, l'Assemblée nationale devait examiner le projet de loi pour le voter. Très tôt, à quatre heures du matin, le domicile et le véhicule de fonction de M. Abdoulaye Babou, président de la commission des lois de l'Assemblée nationale, sont incendiés par des individus non identifiés. Des menaces sont envoyées par SMS aux députés, à des membres du gouvernement ou à leurs familles. Dès le début du jour, les contestataires attaquent les symboles de l'État, principalement le Palais de justice et assiègent la Place de l'indépendance, comme l'atteste ce SMS de YAM dont le contenu est le suivant : « Le combat contre la loi satanique démarre, tous à la Place de l'indépendance ». Jeunes de l'opposition, de la société civile, de YAM, étudiants, élèves, marchands ambulants, simples citoyens affrontent dans le centre-ville les forces de l'ordre. Des véhicules de l'administration sont incendiés, des barricades surgissent de partout et des scènes de pillages sont enregistrées dans plusieurs magasins du centre-ville. Malgré les grenades lacrymogènes, les balles à blanc avec impact, le canon à eau, les matraques, les arrestations, les SMS ont fonctionné. Ils stipulent : « Ensemble, convergeons vers l'Assemblée nationale », les foules parviennent à force de se battre à atteindre les grilles de l'Assemblée.

Au bout du compte, les différents amendements proposés au moment des débats finissent par vider la loi de sa substance. Ils présageaient en même temps le recul progressif du pouvoir devant les multiples pressions.

Après des entrevues entre le chef de l'État et les délégués des guides confériques les plus influents du Sénégal, la décision de retrait du projet de loi est prise.

Le retrait du projet de loi produit un soulagement général surtout chez les députés. Dehors, les populations qui s'étaient érigées en « comité de vigilance » semblaient redécouvrir leur force. Désormais, disaient-elles à travers la presse, à tort ou à raison, rien ne sera plus comme avant.

Ces « comités de vigilance », armés de téléphones portables dans leur lutte contre la modification de la loi fondamentale, rappellent pour beaucoup l'engagement des journalistes et des populations en février et mars 2000 devant les bureaux de vote. En effet, pour empêcher le bourrage des urnes, la falsification des résultats et la confiscation de la volonté populaire par l'ancien régime socialiste, des journalistes, massivement déployés autour des bureaux de vote déjà assiégés par des comités de vigilance, ont fait de leurs téléphones cellulaires de véritables « armes » anti-fraude, annonçant les résultats sur les grandes radios de la place et permettant aux Sénégalais de suivre en direct le dépouillement des bulletins de vote.

Au total, on peut dire que le mécontentement sera non seulement politisé par les collectifs structurés, mais aussi par les spontanés. Cette oeuvre de politisation est du reste médiatisée et c'est cette médiatisation et les problèmes qu'elle rencontre qui feront l'objet de notre deuxième point de développement.

La presse et l'alternance

Les journalistes et la censure des libertés éditoriales

Après le 19 mars 2000 (date de survenance de l'alternance au Sénégal), la liberté de presse, d'expression et d'opinion est remise en cause et le pouvoir manifeste peu d'intérêt envers la modernisation de la législation et la dépénalisation des délits de presse. Le régime exhume en plus une rhétorique que la presse croyait révolue avec l'époque du parti socialiste : « l'information sensible ». Il déclenche une série de mises en garde dont la première est lancée neuf mois seulement après l'investiture du chef de l'État.

Dès le 4 décembre 2000 (l'alternance a eu lieu le 19 mars 2000 et l'investiture en avril), le général Mamadou Niang, ministre de l'Intérieur, menace de poursuite les auteurs de « propagande, diffusion ou amplification de propos séparatistes » (Diagne 2008:30). Le 10 décembre 2000, le président de la République monte au créneau et déclare que la liberté de la presse doit avoir des limites, notamment pour le traitement de certains sujets sensibles. La presse, déçue, refuse d'obtempérer. En représailles, Mamadou Thierno Talla (directeur de publication) et Sidy Diop (journaliste) sont gardés à vue pendant des jours au commissariat du Port. Leurs confrères partis leur rendre visite trompent la vigilance des gardes et prennent une photo des détenus alors dans un état déplorable. Sa publication suscite les condamnations de Reporters sans frontières (RSF) dans une lettre de protestation adressée au ministre de l'Intérieur Mamadou Niang.

Le 7 octobre 2003, Sophie Malibeaux, correspondant permanent de *Radio France Internationale* (RFI) à Dakar, est arrêtée et expulsée du Sénégal le 24 octobre.

Officiellement, les autorités ont invoqué une nécessité d'ordre public, l'accusant d'avoir traité de façon tendancieuse la question casamançaise, d'ingérence grave dans les affaires intérieures du Sénégal et de tentative de sabotage contre le processus de paix (Havard 2004:22-38).

Son bureau à Dakar est fermé dans la foulée. En réalité, elle aurait commis l'outrecuidance d'interviewer, en Gambie (pays voisin du Sénégal), Alexandre Djiba, l'ex-porte-parole du mouvement indépendantiste casamançais. Il semble cependant que le pouvoir sénégalais avait déjà quelques griefs contre la journaliste française à laquelle il reprochait notamment sa couverture des suites du naufrage du bateau *Le Joola* en 2002.

L'intimidation de Sophie Malibeaux n'est pas un fait isolé. Elle s'insère dans une série de menaces dirigées contre la corporation. Le 12 septembre 2004, deux mois après l'affaire Madiambal Diagne (juillet 2004), le procureur de la République met en garde la presse dans un communiqué qui invite les journalistes à développer leur sens des responsabilités.

S'agissant toujours de l'information sensible, Alioune Fall, responsable de la rédaction du quotidien le *Matin,* est convoqué à la DIC pour avoir titré : « Les rebelles circulent en toute liberté dans Ziguinchor ». Mais le cas le plus marquant est celui de Sud FM avec l'interview que Salif Sadio, un des chefs rebelles, a accordée à Ibrahima Gassama, directeur de la Station locale de Ziguinchor. L'auteur de l'entretien est arrêté ainsi que tout le personnel de Sud FM Dakar, l'édition du jour de Sud quotidien saisie et des poursuites judiciaires enclenchées contre le Groupe Sud Com.

Le nœud du problème sur le dossier de la Casamance repose sur le fait que la presse a sans cesse rappelé la promesse faite par le président Wade de régler la crise en 100 jours. Le journaliste et politologue Babacar Justin Ndiaye, se présentant comme un expert de la question, va faire les frais de son audace intellectuelle. En effet, le 9 décembre 2000, lors de la conférence de presse organisée par l'association Forum civil sur le projet de la nouvelle Constitution, il est rabroué et presque soupçonné d'intelligence avec la rébellion. Pour M. Wade, les journalistes devraient avoir une conscience nette des enjeux de la stabilité du pays. Et d'ajouter en direction des journalistes : « Vérifiez vos informations avant de les diffuser sur les ondes. C'est ainsi qu'un de vos confrères a failli provoquer une guerre entre la Mauritanie et le Sénégal sur la base de fausses déclarations ». Le président avait pourtant manifesté une volonté ferme de créer un environnement propice à l'épanouissement des médias. Dans sa campagne électorale, le

président Wade disait souvent « Mon gouvernement va travailler rapidement à [mettre en place] d'importants programmes pour le développement des médias nationaux ». Cette promesse, dit Abdou Latif Coulibaly, est restée vaine au moment où il dispose de tous les leviers du pouvoir et peut, à sa guise, requérir facilement la Division des Investigations criminelles (DIC) de la police d'État pour tenter de faire taire la critique. Le mécontentement des journalistes va en outre être généré par la mauvaise gestion par l'État de l'aide à la presse votée par l'Assemblée nationale. En effet, des organes de presse font remarquer la discrimination qui les frappe et marquent leur désaccord par rapport au mode de distribution. Pour eux, l'aide à la presse figure dans le lot des dérives constatées que seule justifie l'hostilité affichée par l'État contre une presse qu'il cherche à contrôler par tous les moyens. Face donc à un pouvoir qui conditionne son aide, les rédactions sont gênées dans leur travail d'investigation, de traitement et de diffusion de l'information. De l'avis de certains journalistes, l'autocensure a prévalu dans nombre d'organes par crainte de la prison, des procès coûteux, de l'humiliation et de la censure sous toutes ses formes.

La censure et les libertés entrepreneuriales

Avec l'alternance, la presse s'attendait à ce que les fréquences hertziennes soient libéralisées. Compte tenu de ces attentes, certains opérateurs privés vont réaliser des études techniques, procéder à des emprunts bancaires et investir leur capital. Ces promoteurs impatients devaient attendre les années 2006 et 2007 pour voir les premiers balbutiements de l'État dans le sens d'une libéralisation qu'on peut qualifier de sélective[5]. En effet, le président Wade va déclarer publiquement que tant qu'il sera au pouvoir, il ne donnera jamais une télévision à des gens qui utilisent leur radio et leur journal pour l'attaquer et ternir son image[6]. C'est la raison pour laquelle de grands groupes de presse sénégalaise attendront longtemps ce sésame, jusqu'à sombrer dans des difficultés financières. Selon le président du groupe *Walfadjri,* Sidy Lamine Niasse (2003:41), « Il n'est pas exagéré de parler d'un rêve brisé, de la fin d'illusions prometteuses pour la presse », car les patrons de presse avaient beaucoup investi avec la certitude que les médias allaient enfin bénéficier d'un environnement propice. Le même son de cloche est observé au sein du Groupe Sud Com. Dans un chapitre de son brûlot intitulé « Des visées sur Sud Com », Abdou Latif Coulibaly revient sur le rêve brisé de Sud Com. En effet, avec l'alternance, le groupe nourrissait l'espoir d'ouvrir la première chaîne de télévision privée au Sénégal. Cela d'autant plus que lors de l'émission *Xell – Xelli*, la dernière à laquelle il avait participé pendant la campagne électorale de février et mars 2000, M. Abdoulaye Wade prenait solennellement l'engagement d'autoriser, une

fois élu, le transfert à Dakar de la chaîne *LCA* du groupe en question. Cette promesse du président ne verra jamais le jour durant son règne.

Dans le domaine radiophonique, la censure de l'esprit d'entreprise a fait son effet sur le Groupe Avenir Communication du journaliste Madiambal Diagne. Ayant acquis clandestinement l'émetteur de l'ancienne radio communautaire *Envi FM*, Diagne lance la radio *Première FM*. L'aventure est vite stoppée par l'Agence de régulation des télécommunications et des postes (ARTP). Suspendue pendant des semaines et obligée de payer son personnel durant cette période de stand-by, *Première FM* est contrainte de cesser d'émettre pour des raisons financières.

Conclusion

Dans cet article, l'objectif principal était de montrer que l'importance des écarts entre les attentes populaires et les possibilités concrètes de satisfaction a causé une frustration qui va être génératrice d'un potentiel de violence collective. La prégnance de ce mécontentement chez les couches sociales entretient un lien étroit avec l'absence d'offre de débouchés pour la satisfaction des convoitises populaires et la réduction de l'injustice sociale.

Le même mécontentement affecte la presse. Celle-ci estime qu'elle est la victime d'un système de censure volontairement développé par un pouvoir qui perçoit négativement sa liberté de ton. Cette posture gouvernementale se traduit contre toute attente par une criminalisation du débat démocratique. En dehors de cette censure éditoriale, le pouvoir remet en cause ses promesses de modernisation de la législation encadrant la presse et brandit l'arme de la censure entrepreneuriale. Il met ainsi en oeuvre des mécanismes de sabordage des politiques de développement et de diversification des entreprises de presse jugées indociles et hostiles. Ce climat ouvre la voie qui mène vers l'édification des collectifs d'autodéfense pour faire face à l'État.

Les mouvements spontanés et ceux plus structurés poussent comme des champignons dans presque toutes les collectivités du Sénégal. Usant de plusieurs répertoires, les contestataires occupent l'espace public. Leur action s'est parfois muée en émeutes violentes et tragiques. Les cas des « émeutes de Kédougou », des « émeutes des marchands ambulants », « des émeutes de la faim » et des émeutes préélectorales de janvier et février 2012 sont constitutifs de violence politique d'ampleur, dans un pays réputé comme étant une démocratie apaisée eu égard à son passé démocratique en Afrique.

L'espace scolaire et universitaire, en tant que site traditionnel de dissidence, devient aussi le lieu d'incubation et de formation de futurs leaders, mettant leur expertise contestataire acquise au « front » au service des comités populaires et des émeutes locales. En sus, avec les délestages,

pénuries, hausses des denrées, les populations, barricadées dans leurs fiefs pour lutter contre les forces de l'ordre, se sont progressivement entraînées à jouer à l'émeute. Il en est ressorti des habitudes, l'assimilation aux techniques de la guérilla urbaine.

On peut aussi noter l'utilisation des nouvelles technologies de l'information et de la communication (NTIC) dans cette lutte. En effet, l'usage du téléphone portable pour des fins de transmission de la position des forces de l'ordre et de la réorganisation des mobilisés, de même que l'appropriation d'Internet (SMS, blogs, Facebook, twitter, etc.) sont venus relativiser leur dépendance traditionnelle vis-à-vis des médias classiques. Le recours aux NTIC et à la science, d'une manière générale, met en exergue le portrait-robot de nouveaux contestataires scientifiquement armés de leurs gadgets numériques et de leurs documents de droit. Cette expertise a apporté de la valeur ajoutée au style de management, de communication et de combat aux structures revendicatives. Cette « qualification » s'est surtout illustrée lors des émeutes du 23 juin 2011 quand, prétextant une loi de modification constitutionnelle, un comité de vigilance populaire, armé de téléphones portables, de feu et de pierres, a freiné le régime dans ses dérives. À cela s'ajoute l'exercice de la fonction critique de la presse à travers la couverture, la collecte, le traitement et la diffusion de l'information relative aux malaises sociaux, ce qui a permis de dire que la presse a beaucoup contribué à la politisation du mécontentement des populations. La presse apparaît dès lors comme un amplificateur de tension et un déclencheur de révolte avec des appels implicites ou explicites à la violence.

Notes

1. Les journalistes annonçaient en direct à l'antenne les résultats des bureaux de vote pour assurer la transparence du scrutin et empêcher les tentatives de fraude.
2. ANDS cité par Mame Birame Diouf dans la *Gazette* n° 101 du 17 au 24 mars 2011, p. 10.
3. *Nouvel Horizon*, n° 770 du 15 au 21 avril 2011, p. 11.
4. *Jeune Afrique*, n° 2622 du 10 au 16 avril 2011, p. 33.
5. *Le Populaire*, quotidien sénégalais n° 2389 du mardi 6 novembre 2007.
6. *Le Matin*, du samedi et dimanche 21 mars 2004.

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Devolved Power: A Critical Interrogation of the Place, Roles and Obligations of the Media at the Grassroots in Kenya

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Abstract

The promulgation of a new Constitution in August 2010 opened a new chapter in Kenya's political history. The constitution set in motion various actions, one of the most critical being the creation of county governments, effectively devolving power and attendant decision-making to the grassroots. Whilst the counties have faced myriad problems since the March 2013 general election, there is an overarching view that they have helped deliver political and economic goodies and development. The optimism is, however, dimming due to poor governance. Moreover, the media that is supposed to help advance transparency, accountability, constitutionalism and democracy seems emasculated due to various reasons including intolerance to press freedom, and the journalists' inability and/or unwillingness to hold county governments and their leadership to account. This article critically examines the media's coverage of the devolution process, and interrogates its capacity and efficacy in promoting accountability, constitutionalism and democracy at the county level in Kenya.

Keywords: media, devolution, county governments, accountability, democracy

Résumé

La promulgation d'une nouvelle constitution en août 2010 a ouvert un nouveau chapitre de l'histoire politique du Kenya. La constitution a mis en place diverses actions, l'une des plus importantes étant la création de gouvernements locaux de comtés, avec le transfert effectif aux collectivités du pouvoir et de la prise de décisions concomitante. Les comtés ont été confrontés

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à une myriade de problèmes depuis les élections générales de mars 2013, mais il est généralement reconnu qu'ils ont contribué à des réalisations politiques et économiques et au développement. L'optimisme s'est toutefois estompé en raison d'une mauvaise gouvernance. De plus, les médias censés aider à faire progresser la transparence, la reddition des comptes, le constitutionnalisme et la démocratie semblent émasculés, pour diverses raisons, notamment la tolérance à la liberté de la presse et l'incapacité et / ou le refus des journalistes de demander des comptes aux gouvernements des comtés et à leurs dirigeants. Cet article examine de manière critique la couverture médiatique du processus de décentralisation et s'interroge sur la capacité et l'efficacité des média en matière de promotion de la responsabilité, du constitutionnalisme et de la démocratie au niveau des comtés au Kenya.

Mots-clés : médias, décentralisation, gouvernements de comté, responsabilité, démocratie

Introduction

Debates over the media's roles and responsibilities are often couched in its and journalism's professional ideology that they serve the truth and public interest by acting as both watchdogs against official excesses, and spaces for construction, dissemination and sharing of important information. In fact, according to Louw (2005: 61), journalism and media are expected to play three critical roles in liberal democracies, namely: to be critical of politicians (adversarial); to champion citizen rights against the abuse of state power; and to provide a platform for debate. The foregoing arguments bestow the onus of checking political power on the media, which is often referred to as the fourth estate alongside the three other pillars of state – the executive, legislature and judiciary. This institutional status is based on the notion that the media is an important pillar of democracy. Indeed, as Lister *et al*. (2003) posits, as the fourth estate and as an institution of democracy, the media (ought to) scrutinises the operations of power. In essence, the media 'facilitates' the practice of democracy because the expression of popular will and public opinion is disseminated through the media (McNair 2006: 139). Besides, the notion of the media as the pillar of democracy rests on the idea that the actions of state are represented, debated and evaluated in that public space, or what is commonly known as the public sphere (Habermas 1974).

However, as evidence shows, the media in Kenya has often failed to safeguard genuine participatory democracy as it offers limited or little space for ordinary citizens to express popular will and public opinion. The reasons for this failure include such issues as increasing commercialisation as well as elite and political control of the media. In essence, while the media is keen

to be seen as guardians of public interest and watchdogs against county government and leadership excesses, it has thus far performed poorly. This is despite the fact that many people in Kenya, as evidence from this research shows, trust the media as a credible and reliable provider of information that citizens need to make sense of Kenya's devolved politics.

Thus, whilst there have been heated debates on whether the media really serves truth and public interest in Kenya's current political dispensation birthed by the Constitution of Kenya 2010.

To help make sense of its station at the county level, this article discusses the efficacy of the media in Kenya's devolved system of governance and whether it provides the space through which people can engage critically with the issues affecting them and their leadership. The paper starts by contextualising devolution in Kenya's political and democratic context.

Contextualising a New Promise in Kenya's Political and Democratic Life

The Constitution of Kenya 2010 birthed two levels of government – the national and county governments – which are distinct and interdependent. The constitution created 47 counties, namely: Mombasa, Kwale, Kilifi, Tana River, Lamu, Taita-Taveta, Garissa, Wajir, Mandera, Marsabit, Isiolo, Meru, Tharaka-Nithi, Embu, Kitui, Machakos, Makueni, Nyandarua, Nyeri, Kirinyaga, Murang'a, Kiambu, Turkana, West Pokot, Samburu, Trans Nzoia, Uasin Gishu, Elgeyo-Marakwet, Nandi, Baringo, Laikipia, Nakuru, Narok, Kajiado, Kericho, Bomet, Kakamega, Vihiga, Bungoma, Busia, Siaya, Kisumu, Homa Bay, Migori, Kisii, Nyamira, and Nairobi

As the constitution indicates, county governments are, inter alia, meant to promote democratic and accountable exercise of power, and foster national unity by recognising diversity; give powers of self-governance to the people and enhance the participation of the people in the exercise of the powers of the State and in making decisions affecting them; recognise the right of communities to manage their own affairs and to further their development; facilitate the decentralisation of State organs, their functions and services, from the capital of Kenya, Nairobi; and enhance checks and balances and the separation of powers.

The promulgation of the constitution in August 2010 thus gave Kenyans great optimism. The optimism was grounded on the notion that the constitution would enhance political responsibility and accountability, transparency, respect for human rights and rule of law, and promote development at the grassroots. What's more, the transfer of power from the central government to the counties marked the end of an almost five decade political modus operandi in which the 'big man' sitting in the

capital Nairobi was the custodian of the national cake that he dished to the grassroots based on no rational criteria than personal choices and whims.

The promise of a new dawn in Kenya thus gave Kenyans hope that change was on the cards, and that challenges like poor political and fiscal governance and leadership, corruption and infringement on human rights would be things of the past. The media, as a watchdog, was thus considered a key actor in the development of a cleaner government and state mainly because it could guard against the abuse of power and mismanagement of national resources. However, years down the line, people have increasingly become disillusioned with various institutions, including the media, for their inability to check county government excesses, and abuse of power, high-level corruption, misrule and other political maladies.

Since the advent of devolution and attendant creation of the county governments, the EACC has published information relating to the levels of "developed" corruption and accused executives at the grassroots of either misusing and/or stealing resources meant for development activities. For example, the EACC in 2015 indicated that a third of Kenya's state budget – the equivalent of about $6 billion (Sh608 billion) – is lost to corruption every year. Although some of that money is lost at the national government level, the EACC indicated that corruption had become devolved to the counties where funds were lost through bribery, theft in revenue, procurement irregularities, nepotism, shoddy road and bridge construction, forgery of documents and conflict of interest in awarding of tenders and recruitment of staff. The chairman of the EACC Philip Kinisu said in the report that 'corruption has resulted in County underdevelopment, poor service delivery at the counties, poor road construction, budget deficits, denial of public participation in project selection and budgeting process, unfair recruitment process, hampering service delivery as public funds are embezzled, widened gap between the rich and the poor and enormous loss of Government funds' (EACC 2015: II). In 2018, the EACC ranked some county governments, particularly Murang'a, as some of the most corrupt institutions alongside the police department.

As this paper argues, although the constitution and its creation of devolution opened wider avenues for greater engagement between the governors and the governed, a lot has changed since the March 4, 2013 general election. As evidence from the counties suggest, the democratic space, and the freedom of the media have been impacted by recalcitrant political actors including governors, members of county assemblies and officials keen on maintaining the status quo by limiting civic space which would have allowed people to organise, participate and communicate freely and thus influence the political and social structures around them.

Public Participation and Consolidation of Democracy

Communication, and the means through which mass communication is achieved, is one of the most fundamental aspects of transparent and accountable politics and democracy (cf. Almond and Powell 1966; Rush and Althoff 1971; Rush 1992; Ranney 1996; Wolfsfeld and Philippe 2003). The foregoing truism is based on the fact that every citizen, political leader, office bearer and other political actors rely on information to participate and contribute in the political system (Almond and Powell 1966; Dowse and Hughes 1972; Heywood 1997; Wolfsfeld and Philippe 2003). Thus, communication and information are considered the vital sinews in the body politic. Indeed, as a communications-intensive mode of governance characterised continual discussion, analysis, debate, and study, democracy is built on the notion of an informed citizenry.

Given its great reach and impact, effective utilisation of the media often leads to an informed citizenry capable of not only engaging the leadership in meaningful discourse but holding them to account on the basis that information gives them the knowledge upon which their 'rational' arguments and opinions are based. Concomitantly, by providing information, the media helps set and build agenda, mobilise the public (and public opinion) for various causes, and provide the platform for the articulation, aggregation and formation of public opinion. Accordingly, the mass media have gradually become an essential element in the process of democratic politics by providing an arena and channel for wide debate, for making candidates known for office widely known and for distributing diverse information and opinion (cf. Hartley 1992; McQuail 2005). This resonates with the concept of public sphere to represent the space that mediates between society and the state 'in which the public organises itself as the bearer of public opinion … ' (Habermas 1974: 50). Normatively, the media, according to transformed public sphere arguments, ought to provide the 'space in which people can discuss civic issues on their merits without distortion by pressures of state or market institutions' (Blumler & Gurevitch 2005: 116). Simply put, the public sphere represents an open and autonomous forum for public debate and political engagement, and the media in Kenya has often been considered an important space through which people can make their views known (Nyabuga 2012).

However, the foregoing arguments are sometimes incongruous with reality. Although the communication environment and media landscape in Kenya have changed significantly in recent years due to the diffusion of media especially to the grassroots, most "traditional" media, particularly newspapers, commercial radio and television stations, are often inaccessible

to the majority, and the quality of use of new media remains relatively low (Nyabuga 2015). The elite still control the media. Commercialisation and the profit motive are key drivers and determinants of media content (Nyabuga 2015). Even 'public' and 'community' media like the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC) seem not have escaped tentacles of commerce which privileges profitability and ratings. In effect, the increasing corporatisation of media somewhat invalidates claims about a transformed or transforming public sphere. This seems to support the Habermas's view that corporate ownership of news media undermines the public sphere. Thus, the domination of the media by a few constructs an elitist present-day public sphere in which the elite exclude the majority poor.

Political Participation

Classical political thinkers like David Hume, John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau and John Stuart Mill believe that participation lies at the heart of political and democratic processes. Their positions are rooted in the belief that the ultimate authority in any state rests with the people and that their participation in the political process is required to fulfil the 'social contract' drawn by both the citizenry and elected government.

Democracy is dependent upon effective participation particularly in a public sphere where debate is free and public opinion formation is encouraged. The failure of democracy (and growth of autocracy) is premised on citizen preclusion from decision-making processes mainly by those seeking to maintain their positions in power or those promoting minimalist democratic approaches in which their positions are sanctioned by minimal acts of citizen participation.

However, as evidence shows, democracy cannot thrive in an environment of minimal participation, disenfranchisement and marginalisation. In other words, democracy is built on popular and widespread participation and inclusion. In fact, participation and inclusion are the hallmarks of a legitimate, open, fair and effective electoral, democratic and political processes (Pateman 1970). What's more, information is vital to democratic and transparent political process, and deliberative and participatory democracy (Bimber 1999; Browning 1996; Bryan, Tsagarousianou and Tambini1998; Buckler and Dolowitz 2005; Coleman, 2001; Grossman 1996; Loader 2007; Owen, 2006; Street, 2001; Stromer-Galley and Jamieson 2001; Wilhelm 2000). There is little doubt that democracy demands a well-informed populace who are more likely to actively contribute and participate in the political process (cf. Barber 1984; Berelson, Lazarsfeld and McPhee 1954; Gutmann 1987; Gutmann and Thompson 1996; Milner 2003; Nisbet and Scheufele 2004;

Norris 2001; Pateman 1970). In Voting: A Study of Opinion Formation in a Presidential Campaign, Berelson, Lazarsfeld and McPhee (1954: 308) for instance argue that the 'democratic citizen is expected to be well-informed about political affairs. He is supposed to know what the issues are, what their history is, what the relevant facts are, what alternatives are proposed, what the party stands for, what the likely consequences are'. This view is reinforced by Norris's (2001: 221) argument that political knowledge helps people make sense of the complexities of the political process and has over time proved to be one of the 'predictors of conventional forms of [political] participation such as electoral turnout, and party membership'.

It is thus through political communication and the media that people not only access information but also the leadership or the governors. Such engagements and relationships can hardly be achieved without information, and the media facilitates, and widens opportunities for political participation which brings 'more people into active involvement in public life' (Norris 2001: 59-60). In addition, by providing information and enhancing scrutiny of grassroots political activities and decisions, the media facilitates and encourages citizen participation in county governance as the constitutions stipulates.

Methodology

This study was broadly concerned with gaining and presenting 'objective' and 'truthful' descriptions, explanations, and interpretations on the modes of the media as public spaces on issues surrounding devolution in Kenya.

A survey was conducted to generate primary data from nine counties in Kenya. This mainly involved the administration of a questionnaire to various actors in the counties, namely: Nairobi, Nyamira, Migori, Kilifi, Kericho, Bungoma, Mombasa, Nyeri and Kiambu.

Although some of the questions were closed, most were "open-ended", requesting respondents to give their views, or reasons for their answers. Open-ended questions allowed informants to express themselves freely, providing rich information that would otherwise not have been possible with closed questions.

In total 283 randomly selected people, among them 136 'ordinary' citizens, 49 journalists, 77 civil society workers and 21 country officials were interviewed. Accordingly, this study was able to gather a rich mixture of information from the various groups considered key to the understanding of media's role in governance issues given they are important players in the way devolution works or how various actors at the devolved level operate.

Efficacy of Media in Promoting Democracy at the Grassroots

As indicated above, the media plays a critical role in political systems in Kenya's national and county governments, offering channels and platforms through which the complementary parts interact. Karl Deutsch (1953: 87) has, for example, argued that the 'processes of communication are the basis of coherence of societies, cultures, and even of the personalities of individuals'. In effect, communication offered via the media is critical to engagements between both leaders and the governed and is undoubtedly critical to the consolidation of democracy and associated values.

Although there are mixed feelings on the place and performance of the media at the grassroots, there is an overarching view that they are critical players in Kenya's political and democratic systems. Despite suggestions that the media has more or less failed its watchdog role, and performed poorly as far as protecting public interest is concerned, it still plays a critical role in Kenya's democracy (see Table 1). Granted, the common or "ordinary" citizens have the most serious indictment of the media for apparently failing to mainstream rural or grassroots issues and inability to investigate and report on rising cases of abuse of power, corruption and excesses in public expenditure.

What's more, ordinary people feel the media have been unable to provide a genuine platform through which they can make their grievances known. Contradictorily, however, many people still trust the media as Table 1 below shows. In fact, two thirds or 75 per cent of those who responded to the question on whether the media is trustworthy answered to the affirmative. Nonetheless, some respondents were adamant that media credibility, reliability and trust have been eroded due to what one respondent thinks is elite or political control of the media. 'The media are often controlled by politicians through ownership and manipulation, legislation, threats, intimidation and corruption and thus rarely do their stories reflect the real goings-on, the real story,' one respondent said. Even those who thought it trustworthy had some reservations, suggesting that oftentimes the media favour those in power and the elite in society. This is borne out by a respondent who said: 'Yes [I trust the media], to some extent as they report on social injustices like rape, defilement … but reporting on corruption, high crimes is always done in a way that favours those in power and the powerful.'

The arguments above notwithstanding, there are differing opinions between the "ordinary" people and county leadership. In other words, while ordinary citizens indicate that the media is biased and incapable and/

or unwilling to investigate and critique county government leadership, the leaders believe it has been critical to the "success" of devolution in Kenya for being "partners" in the articulation and advancement of rural or grassroots development agenda.

Table 1: Trust in media

Group	**Yes**	**No**
Ordinary people	60	20
Civil society	41	21
County officials	23	2
Total	**124**	**43**

While the county leadership, however, focus on gaining popularity, and use the media to promote positive images of themselves and their counties, it is not lost to ordinary citizens that democratic principles are being surrendered to the leadership's or governors' self-promotion and aggrandisement. In fact, a large majority of ordinary Kenyans, 101 out of the 136 interviewed or more than 74 per cent, doubt country officials are interested in promoting democracy and associated tenets of transparency, accountability and responsibility at the country level. This is a serious concern on the efficacy of devolution particularly because the promise of participatory democracy is ebbing only a few years after the elections that actualised devolution.

It is worthy, however, to note that some of the responses here demonstrate people's frustrations with what they see as the strangling of democracy at the grassroots as well as increasing mismanagement of public resources. 'They [county officials] believe achieving democracy will undermine their leadership,' says a respondent. Another one argues that 'there is little evidence of democratic accountability … Most officials are only interested in personal gain.'

Such pessimism seems to be permeating people's opinions on devolution as they start to experience lack of or little accountability and transparency within the county governments. Once thought to be the remedy to centralised excesses and misrule, those interviewed point to the declining levels of democratic rule at the grassroots levels, and the reemergence of challenges such as grand corruption and abuse of power.

Surprisingly, however, despite rising cases of what people consider to be corruption at the grassroots (see Table 2 below), few have used the media to report poor fiscal and resource management. Neither is the media keen on reporting most of the malpractices. In effect, people see the media as part of elite hegemony and control of political and economic activity. This has

somewhat eroded people's faith in the media. A respondent, for example, said: 'The media is not objective and is not doing enough to report on corruption and abuse of power. They are in bed with the government.' Another respondent opined that the 'media is highly politicised' thus unable to safeguard public interest. Yet another respondent pointed out that the media 'gives a lot of time to politicians and not development'. The foregoing views are supported by a respondent who says that while poor leadership has become commonplace, the media is unable to investigate and report such issues. Instead, according to the respondent, the media often focuses on positive stories 'meant to promote relationships with the county governments at the expense of "truthful", "credible" and "reliable" information.'

Table 2: Perception of corruption at the country level

Group/Perception	**Corrupt**	**Not corrupt**
Ordinary people	111	10
Civil society	54	21
Journalists	30	7
Total	**195**	**38**

The observations that the media and county governments are partners resonate with viewpoints that the two actors have a 'symbiotic relationship' that does little to advance grassroots concerns. This is based on the fact that the media provides the channel for information dissemination while the county governments offer the media the information and monetary resources and support they need for their operations and survival. This is illustrated by the fact that counties have spent millions of shilling in newspaper supplements and advertisements in the recent past. There is evidence of media groups, for example, the Standard Group, and Nation Media Group, sponsoring governors', and investors' meeting as part of "supporting" county governments' development activities and agendas. Such relationships may, however, mean that the media is incapable of safeguarding public interest and being and effective watchdog. This may be supported by evidence showing relentless rise in devolution communication budget which, whilst not immediately obvious, can be linked to the need to use information to win over citizens not necessary because the governors and their counties have delivered tangible goods and services but often because they seek to publish positive stories of their apparent "achievements" and "development" records. In other words, while the counties have enjoyed a spending spree financed largely by the taxpayer, the media has not offered opportunities

for scrutinising expenditure, and providing information through which the people can hold the leadership to account. This is compounded by evidence showing that county assemblies that are meant to scrutinise the decisions of the governors are increasingly becoming emasculated and ineffective. The situation is further compounded by the apparent increased demand for "positive" stories that can attract investments to boost grassroots economic development.

Nonetheless, asked whether the media is capable of promoting political responsibility at the country level, more than 93 per cent of 28 out of the 30 respondents said it does. A member of a county assembly, for instance, offered that the media is the best channel of communication between the leaders and the people and has played a significant role in educating people on country political and democratic processes. 'It informs leaders on what is going on at the county level,' he said. However, there are opposing views suggesting that the media is partisan and is incapable of offering meaningful information on the mismanagement of county affairs. Even so, it seems county officials are convinced the media has also played a significant role in unearthing and contributing to the fight against corruption. In this regard, 23 out of 26 or almost 88.5 per cent think the media is doing well in unearthing and reporting corruption. 'It's a whistle blower on behalf of the common citizen,' said an official. 'Because of the information provided mostly by the media, citizens know their rights and are able to demand accountability from their leaders.' Another respondent said: 'Through the media, the common man can report corruption, follow up corrupt leaders and report them and this reduces corruption … the media can be used as a channel of curbing graft by promoting transparency and accountability in the counties.'

Surprising, however, are views of civil society workers who think the media, whether at the county or national level, are doing relatively well in terms of articulating grassroots issues. They also believe the media often offers citizens the opportunity access "credible" and "reliable" information that is critical to decision-making and growth of democracy (see tables 3 and 4 below). 'They [the media] are willing to work with citizens to get detailed information on air,' says a respondent. Another reckons that although the media are 'biased to some extent', they are 'doing a great job'.

Based on the idea that democracy rests on accountability, transparency and responsibility, there is a popular view the media has done well in promoting democratic values. As seen in tables 3 and 4 below, many of those surveyed consider the media critical to the consolidation of accountable and transparent leadership and democracy in Kenya.

Table 3: Is the media capable of promoting accountability?

Group/Perception	**Yes**	**No**
Ordinary people	118	16
Civil society	33	44
County officials	28	2
Total	**179**	**63**

Ordinary people consider the media's capacity to promote accountability to be based on its ability and willingness to expose through, for example, investigative journalism corruption, misappropriation or theft and misuse public resources at the county level. 'By naming and shaming corrupt leaders, the media can help promote constitutionalism and accountability,' says a respondent. This is supported by another view that 'by gathering information and publishing information, the media can enhance transparency and accountability'. Such positive viewpoints do not agree with investigations from organisations like the EACC that has indicted governors and other officials from various counties. For example, officials and governors from Machakos, Isiolo, Migori, Wajir and others have been cited by the EACC for corruption and other malpractices that point to rot at local polities. In many instances, other actors unearthed the malpractices before being picked up by the media. Even though this is what happens in many cases, it shows that oftentimes the media do not have the capacity or resources to investigate and report cases of corruption and malpractices.

The arguments above resonate with some pessimistic voices indicating that the media is just but one "minor" actor in the political system and, accordingly, whatever scrutiny, coverage and exposure it undertakes is not enough to engender genuine change. 'The media has no capacity on its own to promote accountability due to lack of political will and support from political leaders. Political willingness and support is important in the promotion of accountability and democracy,' says a respondent. Some of these views do not, however, dampen the fact that more 78 per cent of those interviewed indicate that the media is capable of promoting democracy (see Table 4 below). These viewpoints are based on what respondents see as the mediation of county issues at this nascent stage in Kenya's devolution process. Moreover, respondents point out that such challenges are often expected and the media usually focuses on negative issues that are not necessarily reflective of change and developments at the grassroots.

Table 4: Is the media capable of promoting democracy?

Group/Perception	Yes	No
Ordinary people	112	20
Civil society	46	31
County officials	26	1
Total	**184**	**51**

Conclusion

There is no gainsaying that the media plays a critical role in political and democratic processes. Given the new political dispensation birthed by the Constitution of Kenya 2010, the media was expected to play an important role particularly with regards to the scrutiny of county affairs and provision of information critical to the consolidation of democracy and attendant values such as transparency, responsibility and accountability, and the rule of law. However, a serious examination of the place and role of the media at the grassroots indicate that it has largely failed its watchdog role. This is based on the idea that the media seems emasculated, and that journalists and media organisations tend to serve elite political interest at the expense of truth and public interest. This is borne out by increasing cases poor political and fiscal management of county affairs, and inability of the media to help bring those guilty of bribery, theft of revenue, procurement irregularities, nepotism, shoddy road and bridge construction, forgery of documents and conflict of interest in awarding of tenders and recruitment of staff to account.

Granted, as the arguments above indicate, the challenges facing county governments were somewhat expected given years of grassroots marginalisation by the national government. That notwithstanding, people at the county level seem disappointed with their leadership. This is exacerbated by the fact that they have been unable to potentiate their participation in county affairs as Kenya's constitution demands. Furthermore, the people's inability to provide the necessary checks and balances means they have not been effective in holding those in leadership to account. This is compounded by accusations that the media seems incapable of speaking truth to power or investigating and publishing damaging information. In essence, people at the county levels believe the media has become largely compromised even though it remains a 'trusted' actor and partner in the grassroots development agenda as well as in the growth of democracy, responsibility, accountability and constitutionalism.

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Imperfect Journey, Imperfect Cinema
"A fast, 'zinging' shot scares the baboon!"

Tekletsadik Belachew*

Abstract

This article focusses on key themes in Haile Gerima's *Imperfect Journey*, which, despite being one of the most important African documentaries, is often neglected by film critics and historians.[1] Abba Gerima, the traditional playwright, dramatist, historian, and epic-poet, is discussed through selectively translated passages from two historical masterpieces that he originally wrote in Amharic and English translations. Abba Gerima's and Haile Gerima's historical and artistic texts are critically examined across history, aesthetics and the three mega themes of *Imperfect Journey* in order to understand how Abba Gerima's vision is carried forward in the cinematic works of Haile Gerima.

Résumé

Cet article porte sur les thèmes clés du *Voyage imparfait* de Haile Gerima, qui, bien qu'étant l'un des plus importants documentaires africains, est souvent négligé par les critiques de cinéma et les historiens. Abba Gerima, le dramaturge traditionnel, historien et poète épique, est décrit à travers des passages, traduits de manière sélective, de deux chefs-d'œuvre historiques initialement écrits en amharique et traduits en anglais. Les textes historiques et artistiques d'Abba Gerima et de Haile Gerima seront examinés de manière critique à travers l'histoire, l'esthétique et les trois méga thèmes du *Voyage imparfait* pour comprendre comment la vision d'Abba Gerima est reflétée dans les œuvres cinématographiques de Haile Gerima.

Prologue of *Imperfect Journey*

In the prologue of *Imperfect Journey* (1994), three skillfully blended artistic features grace the storytelling: the stained-glass art, griot's provocations, and the song of hope. Each feature illustrates a Pan-Africanist perspective as the prologue unlocks the universal message of

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the documentary. The folkloric, iconic and hymnodic-poetic elements create symphonic unison. The first few minutes of the prologue alone, are worthy of the audience's meditation on the iconographic and poetic improvisations.

Stained-Glass Art: "The Total Liberation of Africa"

Maître Artist World Laureate Afewerk Tekle's (1932–2012) most famous iconic piece, "The Total Liberation of Africa," (1959) is the first visual landscape encountered by audiences of *Imperfect Journey*. Afewerk's creation of the struggle and aspiration of the African people 1959 – 1961 is a 150-square-meter stained-glass triptych covering an entire wall of Africa Hall, which houses the United Nations (UN) Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

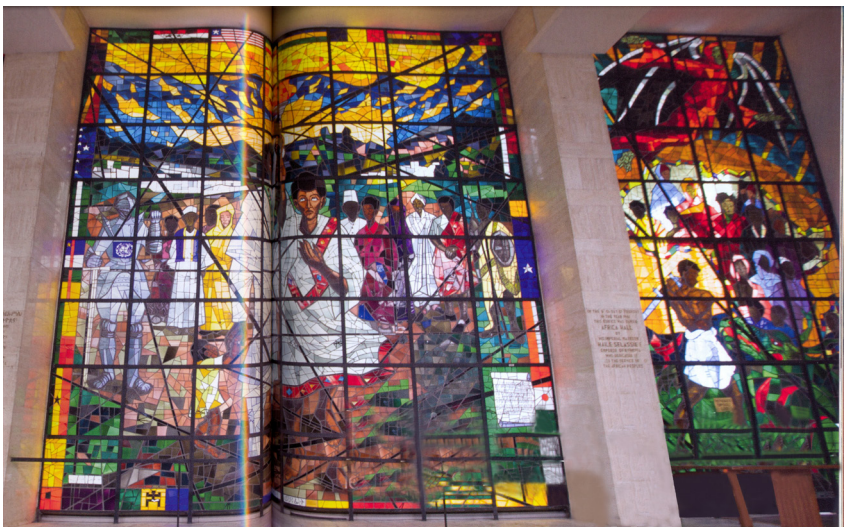

Figure 1: "The Total Liberation of Africa" by Maître Artist World Laureate Afewerk Tekle, Courtesy of Tekletsadik Belachew

The hovering demon in the triptych signifies the evils of colonial forces.[2] And the invisible faces of Africans represent those whose liberation is not yet fully realized. This piece of art also depicts how Africans slayed the dragon of colonial forces.[3] In the context of *Imperfect Journey* and other cinematic works by Gerima, the concept of neo-colonialism or invisible colonialism, which belongs to the cultural and mental battlefield, manifests itself in the psychological realm.

Similarly, the theme of slaying the dragon is also central to another documentary by Gerima, *Adwa: An African Victory* (1999). Before marching to the battle of Adwa (1st March 1896), Emperor Menelik II (1844–1913) makes a vow to St. Gyorgis (George), who is believed to accompany the king to the battle of Adwa.[4] In the prologue of *Adwa*, the griot's fading memory is reinvigorated in his telling the story of the warrior and the dragon. In the voiceover of the aged man, which signifies memory and the fact that the griot's memory is fading, the griot asks why they [the filmmaker and also the audience] did not come earlier. The griot then tells the folkloric story about a brutal dragon in a village and how a gallant and brave warrior killed the dragon, which evokes the return of his memory. Different iconographic elements solidify the narrative.

Returning to the stained-glass art of "The Total Liberation of Africa," each section of stained glass represents a major epoch of African history: past, present, and future. In his lecture titled "The State of Art in Ethiopia" that was delivered at the Library of Congress (2009), Afewerk Tekle, the creator of this art, stated that this stained-glass art has three panels representing three epochs of Africa. The first shows the Africa then or under the slavery of colonialism with the gloomy color of black and red showing the devil dancing. Second, Africa now is the progress but not complete and perfect liberation of Africans. Some are free but the other are not free yet. Those who are free gaze at the audience, but those who are not are in the corner and out there with the unbroken chains. The devilish bird is flying, a symbol of the evils of colonialism. This happens as the Africans throw them away. In the center an Ethiopian peasant and his wife who is pregnant, and a little child, holding the torch, the torch of the rising sun, of the *new dawn* of the *new day.* And behind them, there are the different African nations in their national costumes, who are already free.

One can observe a Pan-Africanist sensibility in this magnificent piece of art work. The paradox of liberation is also represented in the invisible faces. The colonial condition creates this sense of invisibility, including the cinematic invisibility of African humanity that results in actors of African descent being placed in the background or assigned subservient roles. Gerima's cinematic resistance (as a shield of culture) is exemplary. It embodies his desire to be remembered as a symbol of resistance, cinematically. The other aspect of the prologue along the stained-glass art is an elderly griot who narrates the challenges of Africans after independence.

The Griot's Provocations: "*What happened to us?*"

"The Total Liberation of Africa" is accompanied by the storytelling and provocations of a griot, an elderly storyteller. Gerima often opens his movies for example, *Adwa* (1999) *Sankofa* (1993) and *Teza* (2008) with a griot speaking.[5] Across many cultures in Africa, the griot speaks boldly and chastises the hypocrites – the elites in power. As a "musician-cum-narrator," he/she is a social critic who prophetically speaks against the ills of social injustice.[6] The elderly griot in *Imperfect Journey* claims he has been in the world for a long time – since the beginning – and has witnessed what has happened with the struggle for the liberation of Africa. He represents the consciousness of the society. The griot also expresses the frustrations and problems that Africans are facing (colonialism then and neocolonialism now, manifested as militarism). He also provokes the audience by asking questions about the huge problem of militarism and its devastating effects. The griot begins speaking in the African Hall facing the stained-glass art "The Total Liberation of Africa". The griot speaks:

> We start having coup d'etas here, coup d'etas there. A lieutenant taking over power here. And then you say to yourself "What is going on?" A lieutenant, or a major or a colonel for that matter, replacing Tefari Bedewa; a colonel replacing Modibo Keïta; or some General replacing Nkurumah. And then at the end we had a Major replacing Haile Selassie. *So, where did the vision go?*
>
> And so, here we are. As if we have lost our compass, as if we have lost our objective, as if we have nothing to live for. And that is what really bothers a person like me, who was there at the beginning and who is still alive to witness to what depth of incertitude Africa has come to … […silence]. What happened?

The griot also represents memory that never dies. He is a witness, a consciousness of the community and the generation that may be gratified by the *status quo*. What comes next is the chanting of the song of hope.

Song of Hope: "*Ethiopia Shall Stretch Out Its Hands Unto God!*"

The griot in *Imperfect Journey* laments. Then, another person sings a morning song, a song of hope, in conjunction with the liturgical dance of the priest. This opening echo the same polarity exhibited by the "two beautiful daughters of hope" – anger and courage – to use an expression of St. Augustine. Anger's task as expression of indignation is to resist the status quo, whereas courage's role is to transform oppressive situations. An old man narrates – telling the stories, including the crisis under the military coup d'état, of many nations in "post-independent" Africa that hailed foreign iconographic figures.[7] In *Teza*, Anberber's library bereft of works of African intellectuals. Later in the

story, Anberber holds the Amharic book titled *Fikir Eske-Mekabir*, which is translated as Love *Unto Crypt*.[8] The novel has a striking similarity to the main character in *Harvest: 3,000 Years*, Kebebe, and his Malcolm X – like speech.[9]

The griot poses critical questions of neo-colonial miseducation that manifests itself in the form of militarism. He laments, "as if we lost our campus, as if we lost our vision." Then, the sense of despair is traded for a song of hope and courage. In Ge'ez or Ethiopic, the song sounds "ኢትዮጵያ ታበፅህ እደዊሃ ሃበ እግዚአብሔር! ሃሌ ሉያ!"! The song renders Psalms chapter 68, verse 31, and uses "Ethiopia" to speak symbolically of and in solidarity with all people of African descent: *"Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God! Alleluia!"*

Standing in the Epic-Poetic Tradition: "My Father, my Strongest Inspiration"

As an "auteur"– that is, a screenwriter, director, and editor of a significant corps of cinematic works – Haile Gerima is an able artist whose films all convey his own signature vision. His familial – cultural initiation into folkloric storytelling provided him with significant inspirations. In many of his interviews, Gerima talks about his early childhood, cultural nurturing and early storytelling inspirations. Gerima's philosophy of film "has not developed in a proverbial vacuum";[10] rather, his inspiration came from his family: his father, mother, and grandmother who all nurture his particular cultural aesthetic of storytelling.

> My grandmother was a storyteller. Before I had a camera or even electricity, she taught me to ignite my imagination. I sat fireside countless nights, imagining the vivid details of the stories she told. And my father, a playwright, took me with him to theaters from province to province in Ethiopia. So I grew up around stories and songs that come out of my particular cultural aesthetic….[11]

Gerima is greatly indebted to the ingrained cultural aesthetics of folkloric storytelling that he inherited from his family, particularly his father.

> My romance with the stage began as a young man in Gondar, Ethiopia. *My father, my strongest inspiration*, is the great historian Abba Gerima Tafere of Gondar. He is the author of major historical works such as *Gondere Begashaw*, one of the most authoritative chronicles of anti-fascist uprisings during the Italian occupation of Ethiopia in World War II. His other book, *Abba Tateq Kasa Yequaraw Anbessa*, is, in my view, one of the most thoroughly researched books on the ascent to power and reign of Atse (Emperor) Tewodros II. To bring the life and times of *Atse* Yohannes [the IV] to the realm of common knowledge, Abba Gerima penned and staged the epic play *Yamakara Dawal*

> [Bell of Torment]. He also wrote and directed *Yemaichew Tornet* [The War of Maichew], a play about the local and international struggle to assert Ethiopian sovereignty during the last Italian occupation. I could easily say that by the time I reached adolescence, history and storytelling was [sic] in my blood.[12]

Regarding his childhood aspirations, Gerima says, "I always aspired to become my own father's protégé."[13] Here, the father–son inspiration is evident with regard to both history and the art of storytelling. Abba Gerima's sense of history will be illustrated from his historical books originally written in Amharic and selectively translated passages in the following sections. The following translations from Amharic to English is mine.

Abba Gerima: Historian, Playwright, and Master-Poet

Abba Gerima (1912-1982) was a priest, theologian, patriot, historian, epic poet, playwright, teacher, administrator, and kin-dramatist who also ran mobile theatrical troops.[14] His intellectual formation was rooted in two main sources: his family – particularly his father, Merigeta Tafere – and the traditional schools of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.[15]

Abba Gerima was highly trained in the rigorous traditional schools,[16] where iconography, calligraphy and bookmaking, grammar, and poetry were taught in addition to theological studies.[17] Learn *Qene*, which is a rhyming form of poetry that is extremely rich with hidden meanings, takes years of preparation.[18] Abba Gerima was a Master-Poet, known in Amharic as *Bale-Qene*. In fact, in Gondar he embodied what was known as *Seme ena worq,* "Wax and Gold," a multi-layered poetry with both surface and deeper meanings.[19] It is beyond the space and purpose of this article to say much more about *Oene*, but it is important to highlight two of its defining aspects. First, like jazz, the oral poetic tradition requires improvisation of the actual composition of the Qene event. No Bale-*Qene* (master-poet) in the Ge'ez (also Amharic) Qene tradition would repeat the same poetic verses. Rather, they would orally improvise ever new poetry at the schools of poetry, feasts or liturgical services as well as social events including wedding and funerals.[20] Second, there are many functions of *Qene*, one is *Yaaimiro tifsihit* – which means "liberation of the mind."[21]

Gerima on his part translated folkloric orality and poetry in his innovative cinematic storytelling. His visual poetics, slow motions, and repetitions all render the aesthetics of African folkloric orality, symbolism, and religious and cultural iconography. Gerima in his exploration of folkloric orality proposes a "Cinema of Silence." A cinema of silence is against the enormous problem of noise that is

common in conventional cinema that often makes the audience passive spectators. The noise hinders the audience to dialogue with cinema and critical reflection.[22] Decolonizing the filmic mind with the ultimate goal of liberation is his goal.[23]

Father-Son Connections

Gerima was given a special opportunity for father–son collaboration, as Abba Gerima wrote and sang songs in Haile's *Harvest: 3000 Years* (1976). In that movie, Abba Gerima also appears in the *Tej-bet* (honey-wine place), where Kebebe plays his Begena (Ethiopian Harp) and tells stories of resistance against the fascist invaders.[24] Here again, drama is mixed with the real-life story of Abba Gerima and the generation who fought.

Figure 2: Abba Gerima Taffere – In Adwa (1999) reciting poetic lines from his play *Bell of Torment*. Courtesy of Haile Gerima

Abba Gerima was also present in one of Haile Gerima's documentaries, *Adwa: An African Victory* (1999), in which Gerima incorporated his father's image, voice, and a poem taken from Abba Gerima's drama የመከራ ደወል ከምጥዋ እስከ መተማ *Yemekera Dewel (Bell of Torment or Harbinger of Adversity from Massawa to Matamma).*). In Adwa, Gerima connects the historic and aesthetic aspects of his father's influence on him by asserting that the stories his father told him became "lifetime pillars." Even after Abba Gerima passed away, Haile Gerima witnessed he was encouraged by the stories and the parables his father used to illustrate the story of Adwa. The memory of his

father and ancestors has powerful implications for storytelling, as it is best described in the song the audience hear in *Adwa*:

> Past spirits summoned each-other
> From here and everywhere
> The congregated spirit of the dead gathered
> to counsel the worldly soul of the living.[25]

Both in life and death, Abba Gerima encouraged Haile Gerima by the stories he told him. In terms of cultural aesthetics of symbols related to the history of resistance, both Abba Gerima and his son Haile Gerima have employed the spear and shield: Abba Gerima on the cover of his book *Gondere Begashaw* and the poster for his play *Yamakara Dawal* (Bell of Torment), and Gerima in the logo of his film production company, Negeod-Guad Productions, in which patriots holding spears and shields signify cinematic resistance against the conventional cinematic narrative. For the patriot Abba Gerima and his historical works, the spear and shield signifies patriotic resistance against colonialism and fascism that includes cultural and artistic resistance against Fascism as it is depicted in the stories told in *Gondere Begashaw*. The battle for the filmmaker Gerima has been against invisible colonialism, a war he wages via his alternative and truly independent cinematic resistance, counter-narratives, counter-images, and counter-stories.

History as a Beautiful Monument, and Monumental Cinema

Abba Gerima's view of history as dynamic, monumental, and iconic is best illustrated in the prefaces of his historical books. Here is the translation of a lengthy quotation from the preface of Abba Gerima's *Abba Tataq Kasa Yaquwraw Anbesa* አባ ታጠቅ ካሣ የቋራው አንበሳ፤ ዳግማዊ ቴዎድሮስ ንጉሠ ነገስት ዘኢትዮጵያ.[26] Here Abba is used as a horse name of a warrior or king. So, the horse name Abba Tataq implies readiness for war or great effort.

Abba *Tataq* is the horse name of Kassa who became Emperor Tewodros II (1820 – 1868), who unified the country and ending the era of princess as well as resist colonial attempts. As it is mentioned earlier, Abba Gerima's father was the secretary of Emperor Tewodros II. What follows is an extended translation from the preface of this book by Abba Gerima.

Monument, the History-Makers' Tribute

The author writes in Ge'ez [Ethiopic] "*Hintsa mewlude yeabyu seme*." This implies that the building honors the builder; the son honors and venerates the father. A building can bring honor to its architect only when it is built on

solid rock, not on shaky sand. Let the wind blow, let the rivers overflow; it will remain and not be swept away. Its memory is eternal. It brings praise to the builder. Likewise, a child is a constant reminder of his father's legendary and heroic pursuits, not merely because of his physical resemblance that causes the observer to exclaim, "Look at him – he looks just like his father!" Also, and more importantly, the child may follow in the footsteps of his history-making father by striving to leave an even greater legacy than his father.

It is praiseworthy for a person to die for his forefathers' and foremothers' land. Being born from history and being a history-maker is possible only by offering a blood sacrifice, such as the sacrifices in the Old Testament. Without marching, without dying, without slaying, or without seizing [the enemy], to say that "I am born from such history" is vainglorious. It is considered vanity, like chasing after the wind, to try to capture the wind in one's hand – and is nothing more than a wishful (unsatisfying) dream. Therefore, those majestic monuments, erected in the cities and public spaces for history-makers, are undiminishing and undying relics (*aetsemte*); the commemoration (*mezekirenetachew*) of their subjects will remain forever. The construction of historical monuments should make us proud and be our shield.

In its earliest and immature stage, history is sour and even bitter. But when it has ripened, it is a canopy of grapevines. Its sweetness satisfies the spirit and pleases the mind.

History for humankind is a *hibest,* a sacred bread. History is also a deacon who rings the bell to summon those who are in the area so that they can be agents [of history who also resist colonizers]. Moreover, history serves as a close escort in the journey of life. When someone dies, history is a covenant-brother who will never forget.

Since history is a major chapter of life that holds indispensable treasures, we shall never forget the times that pass by. Let us put their lyrics in books and monuments with the glorious theatrical cascade kerse mekabir (*Abba Tateq Kassa*, 9 – 10).

Abba Gerima in telling the stories of the struggle against colonialism and fascism and the heroic act of the forefathers who deserve monument as remembrance and gratitude. Humans as history-makers or historical memory is a very important theme in the works of Abba Gerima's books and theatrical works as well as in Gerima's cinematic corpus both in the documentaries and dramas. Monumental historical and artistic works as a representation of living memory enriches human flourishing. The following translation from Abba Gerima further elaborates historical memory in the form of resistance against the colonial invaders. As his subtitle tells, monument is the beauty of history.

Monument, the Beauty of History

The leprosy of colonialism infected Ethiopia, as well as its hands of freedom and feet of civilization that were stretched out from East to West and from North to South. This contagious disease was spread all over Africa. In resisting the widely disseminating disease that threatened to contaminate Ethiopia's whole body, her heroic children pulled out their long sword (*shotel*) and their formidable shield, and with the philosophy of heroism treated and healed her.

This happened because of the sure medication of history that has been half-full and half-empty, long and short, diminishing and flourishing. As a result, a shining marble was made into a monument depicting history's smile and beautiful countenance.

> … [Our] national heroes sacrificed in the battlefield for the sake of their country. Such sacrificial actions of our forefathers became the lifeblood of the nation that enabled the nation to move forward with the dignity of freedom.

Our heroic fathers and mothers, with their sword and their double-pronged spears, shed their blood to keep the nation's borders tight. They are pillars of freedom. Moreover, their fallen bones and their shed blood kindle an unextinguished torch, igniting our beacon of freedom.

What, then, can we do in response to our forefathers who passed down to us an inheritance of freedom? How can we repay our debt? The only thing we can do in return to keep their memory alive, as has been done in our nation and other nations, is to construct monuments for our heroes (Abba Gerima's *Abba Tataq*, 10 – 12).

The sacrifice paid for freedom is too precious and dare not forgotten, Abba Gerima contends. And the purpose of monument is to keep the memory alive. But, when the attempt to remember history-makers through monuments fails, such persons may still be commemorated in historical books, such as Abba Gerima's, and in monumental documentaries and historical dramas, such as Haile Gerima's.[27] In the next section, we shall see how visible and invisible colonialism and fascism depicted in the historical and artistic works of Abba Gerima and his son Haile Gerima.

Historical–Artistic Resistance

Visible and Invisible Colonialism/Fascism

Here is a translation from the preface of Abba Gerima's another historical book *Gondare Bagashaw – The Gondarian in His Shield*.[28] 'The Gondare in His Shield' chronicles how Ethiopians in the districts and city of Gondar

that resisted the Italian Fascist occupation and struggle (1935 – 41). The shield imply the protection of the Almighty.

> Victor, Conqueror, and Almighty God punishes the defiant, but shelters those who trust in Him. The oppressed who trust the Almighty will be protected under His *gasha* shield (on the left), and His *goradee* sword (on the right). His majesty panics the oppressors. Since He alone is victorious, we shall not fail to remember Him.
>
> Whenever colonial predators attempt to put the yoke of slavery on people who were created free, and these people employ the natural horn of resistance to hit and overthrow the predators, a supernatural heroism – a weapon of God Almighty – is evident. And in His sight, the people's actions will be considered a sacrifice.
>
> As for oppressors who intrude into someone's house to destroy it or to shed the blood of someone inside, God Himself opposes such tyrants and they shall never be victorious. Though they initially destroy, God does not allow them to ultimately prevail as if they are superiors to the people. First they are destroyers; later they will be destroyed, for they are accursed. It is right and fitting for any human to die in the act of resisting colonizers who instigate destruction. For sure, such a death has its rewards: history on earth and a crown in heaven. Remember!
>
> Unless one tastes the sourness and even bitterness of suffering, a lasting legacy is not something he or she can obtain. In order to shine through the pages of history and be remembered by the next generation, one must fight for the freedom of his or her country and the honor of its king. (Gondare Bagashaw, 7).

The above translation from the two historical books of Abba Gerima briefly illustrates the sense of history or memory and the cultural aesthetics shared by his son Gerima, the filmmaker and the storyteller. It also helps to point out the historical background of the filmmaker that is available by studying historical books and dramas of Abba Gerima. Here time and space does not allow any further detail analysis to contrast the works of Abba Gerima and Haile Gerima. But in the future, this can be studied further by contrasting the father-son connections through their works and relations. Since, we have seen the place of monumental memory in the works of Abba Gerima, the next section will illustrate, how the films and production company of Gerima signify the value of memory through symbolism of names and icons.

Mypheduh: Shield of Memory, Shield of Culture

Gerima and his wife, Shikiriana Aina, who is also a film professor and producer, in 1997 created the production company Negod-Gwad (transliterated which means "thunder" or "thunderstorm" in Amharic), as well as Mypheduh Films, one of the largest African film distribution

companies in North America. They also run Sankofa Video and Books, which they call "a liberated territory for independent thinking,"[29] specializing in African and African American films.[30] Mypheduh ማዕፈድ means "sacred shield" for the holy bread in the Ge'ez (Ethiopic) language and ecclesiastical vocabular, a nickname given to Haile Gerima by his father. Icons and names blended together.

Figures 3 & 4: The cover of Abba Gerima's book 'Gondere Begashaw' and the logo of Negod – Gwad Production, Courtesy of Tekletsadik Belachew

Names are powerful symbols in African societies. The following parable in Ge'ez (Ethiopic) illustrates this:

> '*Semu yemarreha haba gebru*' (ስሙ፡ ይመርሐ፡ ኀበ፡ ግብሩ)፡፡ 'One's name leads one to one's action.' This proverb links a word to a deed. The notion shows the spiritual, physical, or psychological influence of a name over the destiny of its bearer. The name represents parental aspirations and determines the future roles of its bearer.[31]

In addition to this being true of the characters' names in Gerima's films,[32] he employed his own nickname as a powerful symbol in both his production company and his cultural cinematic storytelling. In naming and exploration of other cultural symbolisms he asserts that, "Culture is really a sacred shield."[33] It is important to note, though, that Gerima does not simply embrace every element of a given culture, but, rather, deals with each one critically. He maintains that the cultural war has been the longest war. Colonizers did not start with guns; they started with culture and education.

The conventional cinema contributes a lot to this war. "One of the most brutal and violent accomplishments of Eurocentric literature and mass media is the historic representation of Black men and women as outside the context of the human experience," Gerima explains.[34]

Gerima's naming his production company "Negod-Gwad" has its own history. As the story goes in the Orthodox Church where his father belonged, there were two well-known spiritual criers or narrators. These were anti-materialist speakers who were also deacons, and resembles gypsies. What they did was "*Mebreq*" (lightening) and "Negod-Guwad" (thunder); that is, they took turns shouting out to reawaken people to the dangers of materialism and to urge them to become more spiritual. Aesthetics played a primary role in the delivery of their spiritual message, as their voices, and the personalities of their voices, were key components.[35]

If Mypheduh implies a shield of memory and culture, then how can that contrast with the problem of militarism which is one of the theme of Imperfect Journey? The works of Gerima can be seen as memory films. And the relation between memory and militarism illustrated in a still image captured from Sankofa (1993).

Memory Versus Militarism

How can remembering the historical legacy of slavery, colonialism, and genocide help transform the present and the future? Gerima insists that the dichotomy in historical memory between good and bad is artificial and not helpful. He also rejects, in both his documentaries and dramas, the dichotomy between the past and the present. Without realistically dealing with the whole (time and everything that happened in time – past, present, and future), one cannot come to grips with creating a better and more humane society.[36] In Imperfect Journey, the documentarian poses rhetorical question, "Will the future break from the past?"

Gerima begins his *Imperfect Journey* narration by naming the places where the military armaments came from. Instead of importing constructive and humanizing technology, those who were in power built their security through militarism. Here, one can make connections between foreign icons (political, religious, or cinematic) that were imported and imposed at the expense of remembering indigenous history-makers; imported non-contextualized but westernized curricula; and imported weapons that enabled ruling over the people by terrorizing them. For example, in Teza, the political cadre preaching at the people had no history of the self to tell, yet they bombarded the villagers with foreign ideologies and monotonous repetitions saying "In China, in

Korea, in Russia, in Albania." Repetitive monologues of naming foreign ideologies from the mouth of intellectuals in the Diaspora is a sound track of Anberber's nightmare.

Figure 5: Memory vs. Militarism from Sankofa (1993), Courtesy of Haile Gerima

The intertwined themes in *Imperfect Journey* represents the multifaceted problem of fascism that manifested itself both in colonial and neo-colonial epochs in the forms of militarism and miseducation. Miseducation as an expression of cultural displacement triggered a huge identity crisis, repeated memory erasures, and human loss – including the "Red Terror" that "eats its own children" under the military junta (1974-1991) and its subsequent repression.

In *Imperfect Journey,* Haile narrates:

Right after the fall of Mengistu's Military Junta, I took a trip on the same highway that always takes me to my birthplace.

I remember miles and miles of abandoned armaments from the Soviet Union, the United States, East Germany and North Korea, littered along the road.

When I finally returned with a film crew,

I saw only a handful.

Where did they all go?

To where did they suddenly vanish?

> *Were they taken to a place to be melted and turned into ploughs, to farm the land and feed the people?* [Isaiah 2:4][37]
>
> I want to find out from the people: *How have they endured the turbulent years since the fall of the emperor? How did they survive the last two decades of repression under the military junta? How did they feel about the future under the new government?*

These questions were answered by soil-tilling peasants who chased pest-like birds and wild animals from their farms, as well as by students whom the documentarian and his crew encountered around the Gorge of Abay – the Blue Nile river. These students (like many others across the African continent) traveled three and four hours by foot to receive only two or three hours of schooling from, and by marginalized intellectuals discussing the dysfunctional educational systems. Survivors of the "Red Terror" and families still mourning the loss of their beloved also told their stories. Mothers and sisters still carrying the scars of loss of their beloved children and brothers, and hooded men out of fear disguised but speaks their grievances of the silence genocide committed, as well as demonstrators and intellectuals – all expressed their disappointments and continuing injustices committed in the new government known as Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) that ruled since 1991. Children also told stories about the struggles of peasant life, relayed their hunger for a better education and life, and recounted the war that claimed the lives of many. The documentarian listened to the suffering people; they were agents of their own stories and he stood in solidarity holding their hands to hear their pain, disappointment, and hope.

Scenes in *Imperfect Journey*, *Harvest,* and *Teza* capture children of peasant farmers being interrupted and snatched by exploiters while tilling the soil. Gerima's films connects land and land issues with education in a random, yet organically coherent and logical manner. *Imperfect Journey, Harvest* and *Teza* are perfect examples of such connections. For instance, in Harvest, Kebebe challenges Berihun to obtain education so that he will not remain enslaved, but become truly liberated. This is more relevant now where land grabbing is a huge problem in Ethiopia and many places across the African continent.

Gerima's interest in transgenerational storytelling or transmission is evident in his films. For example, children are part of the storytelling in both *Imperfect Journey* and *Adwa*, and elderly griots serve as custodians of history and memory. In *Adwa,* two young boys narrate the story of Adwa while gazing at a commemorative church painting that depicts the battle of Adwa.[38] Repetition of the slayed dragon imagery reminds us that this is a very important cultural and artistic symbol. These two friends hold hands, while one tells the other – who happens to be blind – the story of Adwa and

"shows" him the painting. When Gerima asks the sighted boy what he is doing, he replies that his friend's eyes are a little impaired. He does not say he is blind; he says his friend cannot see, but he sees for him. And he explains what he is describing. "I tell him what I see. When he doesn't understand, I tell him again.'" One boy is a Muslim, and the other one is a Christian, yet, they are best friends. This is a powerful critique of contemporary Africa, where the despot in power who divides to rule following the footsteps of their colonial masters fuels neo-colonial religio-tribalism.[39]

In Imperfect Journey the documentarian had a very interesting conversation with young people from a farming family including students and a 12 years old young girl that deserves attention for many reasons and the subtitle of this article comes out of this conversation.

"A fast, 'Zinging' Shot Scares the Baboon!"

Gerima asked a young girl (12 years old) why she needed to protect the harvest. The girl was multitasking, telling her stories while weaving a basket. Yet, was fully engaging in the conversation. With confidence, she tells that she protects the farm from the wild animals and the baboon is afraid of her.

Haile Gerima: How can you scare him since you're so small?

Young Girl: It does not matter how small I am – it depends on the heart.

Haile Gerima: How?

Young Girl: Courage has nothing to do with [being] big or small.

The courage of this young girl amazes the documentarian and he further ask her questions.

Haile Gerima: You have a powerful sling?

Young Girl: Yes … but – it depends on the throw. A fast, *"zinging" shot scares the baboon*; but a weak shot, with no "zing," only encourages his boldness. He just sits and stares at you.

Thereafter, Gerima asks about the girl's experience during the Civil War. She is the first in *Imperfect Journey* to tell how her uncles and villagers fared in the Civil War. Some returned home mutilated, some died, and others disappeared. All brought misery to their parents and the villagers.

Another striking feature of Gerima's interview with the young girl is her astonishing courage to obtain an education before she dies. Such courage is like that of Beletech, the young daughter of a peasant, from *Harvest: 3,000 Years*. The gender disadvantage is vividly apparent in both works. The young girl's courage and powerful "zinging" shot also remind us of

the biblical story of David, who slayed the giant Goliath with a slingshot. Metaphorically, her courage to keep the baboon away from the farm it has been destroying speaks of the courage of Africans who resist colonial forces and the victory of Adwa against Italian colonialism (1896) and the courage of Adwa's children forty years later resisting Italian fascism (1935-41). Emperor Haile Selassie I's in a recorded speech after exile and victory in the palace garden in Addis Ababa stated: "Even in the 20th century with faith, courage and a just cause, David will still beat Goliath!"[40] The Pan-Africanist vision and struggle scares the "baboon" – i.e., they ward off the colonial powers and the colonial mindset. *Adwa* is also another documentary that tells the legendary stories of *Itege*/Empress Taitu Bitul, Menelik II's wife and other heroines. Taitu was the first who identifies the craftiness of the Wuchale Treaty drawn up by the colonial agent "I am a woman and I do not love war, but rather than accepting this article XVII I prefer war" and when Antoneli express the honor issue from the Italian side to amend the Treaty she affirmed "we also have our honour to protect."[41] Indeed, she greatly contributes to the permanent victory of Adwa. This victory illustrates "the symbolic importance of Adwa in the conception and development of pan-African solidarity and identity."[42] In *Gondere Begashaw,* Abba Gerima chronicles the extraordinary contributions of Ethiopian women in resisting the Mussolini's Fascist invasion during the Second World War (1935-1941). As Abba Gerima chronicled "They [Ethiopian women] harassed the enemy forces by sending down avalanches of stones from hilltops and setting fire to their camps."[43] Gerima's forthcoming *Adwa II: The Children of Adwa Forty Years Later* profiles the same story. The main storyteller of The Children of Adwa Forty Years Later is Felekech, an Ethiopian female Azmari traditional singer whose cameo performance ends the story of *Adwa*.[44] In the next section, we shall look at the manifestation of invisible colonialism in the contexts of miseducation and cultural displacement.

Miseducation and Cultural Displacement

The Dysfunctional Education System and Westernized Curricula

It is only people who are historically disoriented who wonder about the contribution of colonialism to education and economic development. Colonial education is, in fact, miseducation. Fascists killed our intellectuals and even that their primitive instincts killed the children of our intellectuals.[45] Schooling was used as an instrument to further advance colonization. Solomon Getahun, in his *History of the City of Gondar,* states:

> The Italians opened two schools ("asquaāllās"), one for whites and the other for blacks, in the city. The "whites only" school was located in today's Hibrat (the former Princess Tanāgnā Warq) school building. For the blacks, a building that served both as a prison and a school was opened in Gira Wanbar area or present-day ṣādiqu Yohannis School. There, students were taught up to fourth grade.[46]

The Italian Fascists used the school as a prison and it functioned as a space of segregation by color. When contagious disease broke out among the prisoners, it also afflicted and sickened students and caused many deaths. Emperor Haile Selassie's (1892-1975) modernization agenda did not include integration of the traditional school system, but the replacement of foreign curricula, Westernization, and even Japanization.[47] The primary agents of Westernization of education were missionaries and Peace Corps. SIM's (Sudan Interior Mission, began in 1983 and in 1980 adopted a trade name or slogan 'Serving in Mission') missionary policy in Ethiopia was strikingly similar to the colonial fascist education policy. Both the colonial and missionary education policy limited Ethiopians' educational level to the fourth grade. Those who transgressed the missionary policy used to be punished. They would be excommunicated from church membership and expelled from their job by the missionaries if they or a family member worked for the missionary institution.[48] In several interviews and writings, Gerima mentions how generations of Ethiopians were misplaced by Western education.

Gerima's generation of students, as well as those who preceded and followed him, are victims of foreign curricula who do not know anything about Ethiopian history or civilization. That lack of knowledge creates alienation. Given the additional lack of the privileges of informal education, education-around-the fire, cultural storytelling, and the generational transaction of history that was helpful to and evident in the cinematic works of Gerima, the crisis continues to prevail.

Miseducation as Invisible Colonialism and Cultural Displacement

Long before Gerima left his homeland, he had already experienced some forms of cultural dislocation. Such cultural alienation began through the medium of Euro-American-centric education and cinema. This is a symptom of "self-alienation," the phenomenon of self-hate ushered in and through the exploitive *Tarzanic* film screen.[49] The Italian Fascists produced cinema that misrepresented Ethiopia and screened it in the theaters.[50] Even worse, the post-Fascist generations fell more deeply into the victimization pit. Gerima recounts his own personal unpleasant experience as the result of such victimization:

> As kids, we tried to act out the things we had seen in the movies. We used to play cowboys and Indians in the mountains around Gondar ... identifying with cowboys conquering the Indians. ... Even in Tarzan movies ... whenever Africans sneaked up behind Tarzan, we would scream our heads off, trying to warn him that "they" were coming! It was [a] ... politically and psychologically damaging exploitation of my very being.[51]

Besides the exploitation cinema, missionaries and Peace Corps students serving as educators played a significant role in Gerima's cultural displacement, as well as that of others in his generation and the one that followed it. Haile's "miseducation" came through the American Peace Corps and "Western" missionaries who were present at the time when he was a student in Ethiopia. Gerima comments on the "Westernization" of education in Ethiopia and its effect on Ethiopians' cultural and identity crisis as follows:

> From the British design of the Ethiopian educational system in the 1940s, young people were contaminated by the false notion of Europeanizing themselves. "It was an invisible cultural colonialism teaching the children of Ethiopia to hate the past, to hate everything Ethiopian, to die and integrate the whole demented idea of modernization. The American Peace Corps were teaching us about the American Revolution. We were studying Kentucky and Chicago rather than Gojjam and Jimma."[52]

Although Ethiopia has never been colonized by a particular European colonial power apart from the five-year Italian Fascist occupation (1935 – 41), cultural (or invisible) colonization has had devastating effects. Ethiopians during the Haile Selassie I era faced the dilemmas of both "Westernization" and "Japanization" seeking otherness at the expense of the self. This was evident in the adoption of the Japanese Constitution, as if both Western education and the Japanese Constitution were synonymous with, rather than mere vehicles for, modernization.[53] In Gerima's view, the elites in twentieth-century Ethiopia "came up breathing the air with somebody else's lungs, not with their own lung."[54] Ayele Bekerie maintains that the miseducation of Ethiopian historians, who bought the idea of the so-called "Ethiopianist" who wrote following the legacy of Hegel and other racist prejudiced intellectuals, completely denies the historical, cultural, and artistic contributions of Africa.[55] Another feature of the intellectual elites is that they do not create dialogue with the community but talk to themselves.

Gerima also presents a compelling case about the miseducation of Ethiopian intellectuals in both his interviews and cinematic works, particularly in *Imperfect Journey*. In a conversation that I had with Gerima, he mentioned the predicament of the intellectual elites in Ethiopia who looked

down on oral sources when they began writing history. What they neglected was not only the folkloric orality, oral-literature (orature), and oral history, but also the iconographic and even written texts. Gerima explained that, "Often Ethiopian historians borrowed from Europeans, the very Italians we defeated, the very British and French who collaborated with Italians for the invasion of Ethiopia in 1935. Ethiopian historians go to them as sources, instead of researching from our own Ethiopian folkloric and oral traditions."[56] There are many examples of historians following such a paths of elitists.[57] For now, it is suffice to mention a recent book that deals with the subject of miseducation by Yirga Gelaw Woldeyes, *Native Colonialism: Education and the Economy of Violence against Traditions in Ethiopia*, The Red Sea Press, 2017. The authors pause the following questions: Why did a country that was never colonized replace its government, legal system and educational institutions with foreign imitations? How did ti come to have a European language as aits medium of higher education and why was the rich philosophy, literature, history of the country replaced by western knowledge? What is the impact of this process in the identities and daily lives of contemporary Ethiopian students? Next, we shall see how an indigenous knowledge system namely storytelling or the fire-around-education represented and used in Gerima's works.

Figure 6: Invisible Colonialism – Haile Gerima in the documentary Adwa interviewing, courtesy of Haile Gerima

The Fire-Around-Education: "*I Tell Stories, Therefore I Exist!*"

Fire-around-education is an alternative and informal education that addresses the deficiencies of formal curricula. Such education is what sparked Gerima's imagination for his cinematic works. Similarly, Walter Rodney critic elitist education that serves primarily colonial purposes and alienates from the community.[58]

In *Teza*, Anberber, the idealist doctor, had a dream in which he was struggling to prevent the massive pouring of grain out of the container by using pieces of paper. He was confused by this dream and had his dream interpreted by the elderly priest around the fire. *Yeneta*, the priest-teacher, interpreted Anberber's dream by telling him that the pieces of paper signified that his imported and foreign knowledge system was failing to solve local problems. Later, *tebel* (holy water) was used to exorcise Anberber's demons. For Gerima, culture is analogous to holy water. "We need to make films about our past because the past is like *tebel* (holy water)."[59] The twin problems of intellectuals are marginalization and elitism will be discussed next.

Marginalization of Intellectuals and Elitism

As one of the professors whom Gerima interviewed in *Imperfect Journey* mentioned,

> the university in Addis Ababa has always been portrayed as a hotbed of opposition by each government: as a communist breeding ground by Haile Selassie; as reactionaries by the junta; as ethnic chauvinists by the present administration, which claims to embrace national unity.[60]

The intellectuals always threaten the elites in power, and some of the professors Gerima interviewed relayed how they were even fired from their teaching positions from the universities. Forty-two university professors were expelled under the new government. The schoolteacher in *Teza* suddenly disappeared. This was not because the educators threatened with guns; rather, they presented ideas that could challenge and mobilize the people. Again, liberating ideas are more powerful than military might. At the end of *Imperfect Journey,* young peace-walkers are shown marching toward the creation of a new humanity.

Epilogue of Imperfect Cinema

Imperfect Cinema as a Cultural Aesthetics[61]

What does Gerima's aesthetic concept of "imperfect cinema" entail? Does it reflect his philosophical outlook on life? And how does the concept positively affect his cinematic corpus? Interwoven cinematic concepts in Gerima's

films include accented cinema, cinema of silence, and triangular cinema. The notion of imperfect cinema rejects epistemological arrogance. In terms of vision, Frantz Fanon's famous quote captures this best: "Each generation must discover its mission, fulfill it or betray it, in relative opacity."[62] As an independent filmmaker, Gerima embarked on a long journey, during which he refused to compromise the stories he listened, but, rather, offered counter-narratives, counter-stories, and counter-images.

The weapons of storytelling, and the shields of culture and memory, are aimed at bringing cinematic resistance, transformation and liberation from neo-colonial oppressions. Gerima's *Imperfect Journey* and four decades of producing eleven cinematic corpuses, plus more than fifteen manuscripts waiting in the wings, have gifted us with a visual poetics packed with mystery and brimming with "Wax and Gold" – the deep meanings of the ups and downs of people of African descent. In terms of historical consciousness and aesthetics, Haile Gerima has fulfilled his aspiration to become a "protégé" of his historian father, Abba Gerima. Like his father, Gerima is a filmmaker whose documentaries and dramas reveal *symbolic reality* – and who uses monumental cinema as a weapon of resistance and a means to heal the self. *Aluta Continua*! "The struggle continues; victory is certain!"

Notes

1. Haile Gerima and the Polish journalist Ryszard Kapuscinski collaborated to make a documentary in which Africans speak for themselves. Gerima agreed to partner with the journalist, and the BBC that commissioned Imperfect Journey, without compromising his stories. Only two brief notes on/reviews of Imperfect Journey are available. Michael Dembrow, "Imperfect Journey." CFAF 14, "Notes and Resources." http://spot.pcc.edu/~mdembrow/imperfectjourney.htm and also Sharon Hutchinson and Bruce Wiegard's, "Gerima's Imperfect Journey: No End in Sight." American Anthropologists, n.s. 100, no. 1 (1989): 169–71. For further bibliographic work, see Tekletsadik Belachew, "Close Up: The Genius of an African Storyteller: A Selectively Annotated Bibliography of Work by and on Haile Gerima," Black Camera: An International Film Journal 4:2 (Spring 2013):144-62. Film critics and scholars ignore the documentaries of Haile Gerima, including his *Adwa: An African Victory.* Scholars who wrote about Adwa did not interact with this documentary. See, for instance, Paulos Milkias and Getachew Mekuria, *The Battle of Adwa* (New York: Algora Publishing, 2005). See also a non-African writer: Raymond Jonas, *The Battle of Adwa: African Victory in the Age of Empire* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2011). Note the later title resembles the documentary title and yet not mentioned at all.
2. Afewerk Tekle. "The State of Art in Ethiopia." Library of Congress. http://www.loc.gov/today/cyberlc/feature_wdesc.php?rec=5509
3. Ibid.

4. The victory of Adwa happened on the feast day of Gyorgis.
5. In *Teza*, the opening voiceover is that of the griots, known in Ethiopia as Amina or *Lalibela*. In their morning song, they sing their messages and thereby awaken the society.
6. Chineweizu, Voices from Twentieth-Century Africa (London: Faber and Faber, 1988), xxxiv – xxxv.
7. For example, when Marx, Engles, and Lenin were captured in Teza, Anberber jokingly inquired, "*Who are these trinities?*".
8. See Haddis Alemayehu's *Fikir-Eske Mekabir. Love Unto Crypt*. Translated by Sisay Ayenew (Bloomington: Authorhouse, 2005). The central character is Gudu Kassa (a nickname that literally means "Weird Kassa"). His revolutionary ideas and speeches against the corrupted and oppressive system resemble Kebebe's ideas and speech in Harvest. See also a commentary on *Fikir-Eske Meakabir (Love Unto Crypt)* by Fikre Tolossa, "Realism in Haddis Alemayehu" *in Silence is Not Golden: A Critical Anthology of Ethiopian Literature*, 123-134, edited by Taddese Adera and Ali Jimale Ahmed, Lawerenceville, NJ: The Red Sea Press, 1995.
9. See Greg Thomas, "Haile Gerima's Pan-African 'Message to the Grassroots': Hearing Malcolm X in Amharic– or *Harvest: 3,000 Years*" in *Film in African Literature Today*. 55-72, Ibadan, Nigeria: HEBN Publishers, 2010.
10. Diane D. Turner and Muata Kamdibe, "Haile Gerima: In Search of an Africana Cinema," *Journal of Black Studies 38*, no. 6 (2008): 969.
11. See Haile Gerima, "Close-Up: Director's Note," Black Camera, An International Film Journal, 4:2 (Spring 2013), 47.
12. Haile Gerima, "On Film," http://seleda.tripod.com/Nov/jebdu.html
13. Ibid.
14. For a brief encyclopedia entry on Gerima Tafere, see LaVerle B. Berry, "Gärima Taffärä" in *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*, edited by Siegbert Uhlig, 706, Vol. 2 D-Ha (Harassowitz Verlag: Wiesbaden, 2005), 706.
15. Ayele Bekerie, Ethiopic, *An African Writing System: Its History and Principles* (Lawrenceville, NJ: Red Sea Press, 1997).
16. See Imbakom Kalewold, *Traditional Ethiopian Church Education*, translated by Mengistu Lemma (New York: Teachers College Press, 1970).
17. See Ayele Bekerie, Ethiopic, An African Writing System: I*ts History and Principles* (Lawrenceville, NJ: Red Sea Press, 1997), 35-40. This book is written from a gripping Pan-Africanist perspective.
18. Alaka Imbakom Kalewold. *Traditional Ethiopian Church Education*. Translated by Mengistu Lema. (New York: Teachers College Press, 1970), 27. Chapter V is about the Kine (Qene) School. See also Bekerie, *Ethiopic.* 128-130.
19. Haile Gerima, "Who is Haile Gerima?" An Interview. *Focus Magazine* (January-February 2009), 11.
20. Gerima also improvises in his numerous interviews. In his filmmaking, he also improvises in collaboration with the actual space of shooting and even allows actors who are in line with the story to improvise (both are betrayals of the script and dynamic relation with the script).
21. Bekerie, *Ethiopic*. 130.

22. Haile Gerima's lecture "Noise, Silence and Memory: Towards a Cinema of Silence against the Noise!" at the University of Chicago, IL, May 10, 2013. My personal note taken from the lecture. He also said, "There is no music without silence. No light, without shadow. Now sound without silence. A cinema of silence is a therapeutic exercise."
23. John L. Jackson Jr., "Decolonizing the Filmic Mind: An Interview with Haile Gerima." *Callaloo* 33, no. 1 (2010): 25–36. Gerima speaks about his journey, including his experience of colonization and decolonization, and how he is using cinema as a weapon to find himself. He says, "I don't think I sacrifice aesthetics for politics, but cultural expressions don't come out of a vacuum" (33).
24. See Ashenafi Kebede, *Roots of Black Music: The Vocal, Instrumental & Dance Heritage of Africa and Black America* (Trenton, N.J. Africa World Press, 1995), 20-35.
25. For further elaboration of alternative but not contradictory meaning of 'the dead speaks to the living', see Belachew. *The Dead Speaking to the Living*, 85 – 87.
26. All translations from Amharic to English particularly the works of Abba Gerima in this article are mine. ገሪማ ታፈረ። አቦ ታጠቅ ካሣ የቋራው አንበሳ፤ ዳግማዊ ቴዎድሮስ ንጉሠ ነገስት ዘኢትዩጵያ። 1961 ዓ. ም. ሁለተኛ እትም። ፊንፊኔ ማተሚያቤት። Gerima Tafere, *Abba Tataq Kassa Yequwaraw Anbessa Dagmawi Tewodros Niguse Negest Zethiopia* (Abba Tateq Kassa, the Lion of Quara: Tewodros II, King of Kings), Addis Ababa: Finfine Printing & Publishing, 1969. This is a 256 pages book in Amharic. See Elias Yemane, Amharic and Ethiopic Onomastics. 174 -181. Abba Tateq or Kassa who later become Tewodros II is known for unifying the nation and fighting several attempts of colonial powers. As it is mentioned earlier, the history of Tewodros II (1820-1868) chronicled by Abba Gerima's father, Merigeta Tafere who was the secretary of emperor Tewodros II. See Gerima Tafere, Abba Tateq, 13.
27. In 2012, a memorial monument of Rudolfo Graziani was erected in a village south of Rome in Italy. Graziani was responsible for the massacre of 30,000 Ethiopians in Addis Ababa and using poisonous and checmical weapon. See Sarah E. Lewis and Dagmawi Woubshet, moderated by GerShun Avilez, "Love Visual: A Conversation with Haile Gerima," Callaloo 36.3 (2013): 655.
28. ገሪማ ታፈረ (ዘብሔረ ጎንደር)፡ጎንደሬ በጋሻው (አዲስ አበባ፡ በተስፋ ገብረ ሥላሴ ማተሚያ ቤት 1949 ዓአ.ም)7-9. Gerima Tafere (of Gondar). *Gondare Bagashaw (The Gondare with His Shield)*, Addis Ababa: Tesfa Gebre Selassie Publisher,
29. Haile Gerima, "A Moment with ... Haile Gerima," http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p4ZmNclDqFw. For similar phraseology, see Kwame Nkurumah, Consciencism: *Philosophy and Ideology for Decolonization* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1964), 103.
30. www.sankofa.com
31. Elias Yemane, *Amharic and Ethiopic Onomastics: A Classic Ethiopian Legacy, Concept, and Ingenuity* (Lewiston, New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2004), 88.
32. For example, in Harvest, the faithful servant of the oppressive master is named Kentu (Vanity). This name implies his being in a subservient role, serving the exploitative master and hoping to be given his shoes when they become worn out. Blinded by the propaganda, Kentu even hopes to become a servant of the master's son, Tenku, when he returns from abroad.

33. Francoise Pfaff, "From Africa to the Americas..." Interviews with Haile Gerima (1976-2001)," in Focus on African Films, ed, Francoise Pfaff (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004), 209. See also Steve Howard, "A Cinema of Transformation: The Films of Haile Gerima," Cineaste 14 (1985): 39.
34. Diane D. Turner and Muata Kamdibe, "Haile Gerima: In Search of an Africana Cinema," Journal of Black Studies 38, no. 6 (2008): 968.
35. Haile Gerima. Who is Haile Gerima? Focus Magazine (January-February 2009), 13. Amina or Lalibela are like gypsies, or town criers, who speak to the society in the morning. Legend has it that King Lalibela unleashed them. In Teza, the opening voice is the voice of Amina or Lalibela.
36. 'An interview with Haile Gerima.' Tekletsadik Belachew, Representation of the Self: Theological Reflections on Haile Gerima's Cinematic Storytelling, MA Thesis, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (2012): 140-161. Available http://1.1.1.1/#http://thesisbank.jhia.ac.ke/
37. This query echoes the eschatological vision of Isaiah 2:4: "They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore."
38. See Girma Fisseha, "Ethiopian Paintings on Adwa" in Adwa: Victory Centenary Conference, 26 February – 2 March 1996, edited by Abdussamad H. Ahmad and Richard Pankhurst (Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University, Institute of Ethiopian Studies), 691-698.
39. Haile Gerima, "New film 'Adwa' by director Haile Gerima," an interview with Jacki Lyden. "All Things Considered" Weekend Edition (NPR). 11/21/1999.
40. Available on https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Y9txgoiHrU See also Jeff Pearce, Prevail: The Inspiring Story of Ethiopia's Victory over Mussolini's Invasion: 1935 – 1941, (Skyhorse Publishing, 2014).
41. Minale Adugna, "Women and Warfare in Ethiopia. A Case Study of their Role During the Campaign of Adwa, 1995/6, and the Italo-Ethiopian War, 1935-41", in Gender Issues Research Report Series. No. 13. (Organization for Social Science Research in Eastern and Southern Africa. 2001), 16. No place of publication mentioned. During the war times women participated "in the mobilization of troops, organization and transportation of supplies and provisions, raising the morale of fighters, gathering intelligence information, nursing the wounded, and in the actual fighting. Women that did not go to battlefields had to carry the burden of men's work at the home front." For a collection of essays, poetries, novel and paintings, see Pamela S. Brown and Fassil Yirgu, ed., *One House: The Battle of Adwa 1896 – 100 Years* (Chicago: Nyaala Publishing, 1996).
42. Ayele Bekerie, "The 1896 Battle of Adwa and the Forging of the Ethiopian Nation" in Themes in Modern African History and Culture, edited by Lars Berge and Irma Taddia (Padova, Italy: Libreriauniveristaria, 2013), 178. This essay also depicts the role of Empress Taitu in Adwa and beyond.
43. Quoted from Adugna. "Women and Warfare in Ethiopia." 25. The original source is Abba Gerima's Gondere Begashaw.

44. On March 1, 2014, The Ethiopian Community Association of Chicago hosted the event at the Northeastern Illinois University, in Illinois. On the accession of the celebration of Adwa victory (118th) Gerima introduced and screened a musical video "Felekech Celebrating Adwa" by a female Azmari (traditional musician-singer). Felekech who had a brief appearance in Adwa and became the main storyteller in Adwa II: "The Children of Adwa Forty Years Later."
45. See Bahru Zewde, Pioneers of Change in Ethiopia: The Reformist Intellectuals of the Early Twentieth Century (Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press, 2002).
46. Solomon Getahun. History of the City of Gondar (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2005), 146.
47. See Bahru Zewde. "The Concept of Japanization in the Intellectual History of Modern Ethiopia" in Society, State and History (Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press, 2008), 189-214.
48. Getachew Belete, Elohi and Halleluya: YeEthiopia Kale Hiwot Bete-Kirstiane Tarik. (Agonies and Halleluias The Story of the Kale Hiwot Church in Ethiopia. Vol. 3, 1974-2000 E.C). (Addis Ababa: The Ethiopian Kale Hiwot Church Literature Department, 2000), 26-27. Getachew interviewed Peter Cotterell a long time missionary in Ethiopia, was the leader of SIM Ethiopia and the first director of the Ethiopian Graduate School of Theology who replied the missionary policy was right at that time. This missionary defended the rightness of this oppressive education policy invented by his predecessors. This is just one example of unrepentant missionaries who served more the colonial purposes and continued the legacy of miseducation. For an Afro-pessimistic missionary view of education see Paul D. Fueter, "Theological Education in Africa." The International Review of Missions (1956): 377-395
49. Frantz Fanon, Black Skin, White Masks, trans. from French by Richard Philcox (New York: Grover Press, 1952), 17, 119.
50. AnneMarie Tamis-Nasello, "Italian Colonial Cinema: Nationalism and Notions of Alterity" (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 2008), 209-210.
51. Quoted by Francoise Pfaff, "Haile Gerima (1946-), Ethiopia," in *Twenty-Five Black African Filmmakers: A Critical Study, with Filmography and Bio-Bibliography* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988), 138.
52. Haile Gerima, "Ethiopians should find their own medicine," http://arefe.wordpress.com/2009/03/02/ethiopians-should-find-thier-own-medicinehaile/
53. Bahru Zewde, Society, *State, and History* (Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press, 2008). The Japanese Constitution was adopted at the expense of the Ethiopian Constitution, known as Fetha Negest, which was thereby neglected.
54. Haile Gerima, "Who is Haile Gerima?" An Interview. *Focus Magazine* (January-February 2009), 11.
55. Ayele Bekerie. Ethiopic, *An African Writing System: Its History and Principles* (Lawrenceville, NJ: Red Sea Press, 1977), 35-52. See Maimire Mennasemay, "Ethiopian History and Critical Theory: The Case of Adwa," in The Battle of Adwa: Reflections on Ethiopia's Historic Victory Against European Colonialism (New York: Algora Publishing, 2005), 297

56. See Belachew, "Representation of the Self: Theological Reflections on Haile Gerima's Cinematic Storytelling," 144-45.
57. For example, after hearing allegations that Ethiopians' stories were exaggerated, the popular Ethiopian journalist and writer Paulos Gnogno completely rejected Ethiopian sources and wrote a book on the history of the Ethiopian–Italian war based solely on Italian sources – as if that was a better and neutral perspective. See Paulos Gnogno, YeEtyopia Ena YeItalia Torenet [The War Between Ethiopia and Italy] (Addis Ababa: Bole Printing Press, 1980 E.C.), 5. Such rupture from the self and Ethiopian sources has been a predominant mark even among Ethiopian scholars that is best combated in Haile Gerima's Adwa and the forthcoming Adwa II: The Children of Adwa After Forty Years. He uses iconographic church paintings, oral history, and folkloric orality such as *fukera* and *shilela* (war songs) in these films.
58. See Walter Rodney, "Education in Africa and Contemporary Tanzania," in *Education and Black Struggle: Notes from the Colonized World, edited by The Institute of the Black World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Educational Review,1974), 82-99. See also Carter G. Woodson, "The Miseducation of the Negro," Crisis 38:8 (August 1931), 266-267.
59. See Gerima, Focus Magazine, 12.
60. See the cover page of Imperfect Journey's VHS.
61. Interwoven cinematic concepts in Haile Gerima's films include accented cinema, cinema of silence, and triangular cinema. See Haile Gerima, "Triangular Cinema, Breaking Toys, and Dinknesh vs Lucy." In Questions of Third Cinema, edited by Jim Pines and Paul Willemen (London: BFI Publishing, 1989), 71.
62. Frantz Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth, trans from French by Constance Farrington (New York: Grove Press, 1963). 132

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Sankofa: 35mm, color, 125 min. Washington, DC: Mypheduh Films, 1993.

Imperfect Journey: 16mm, color, 96 min. Washington, DC: Mypheduh Films in coproduction with BBC, 1994.

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