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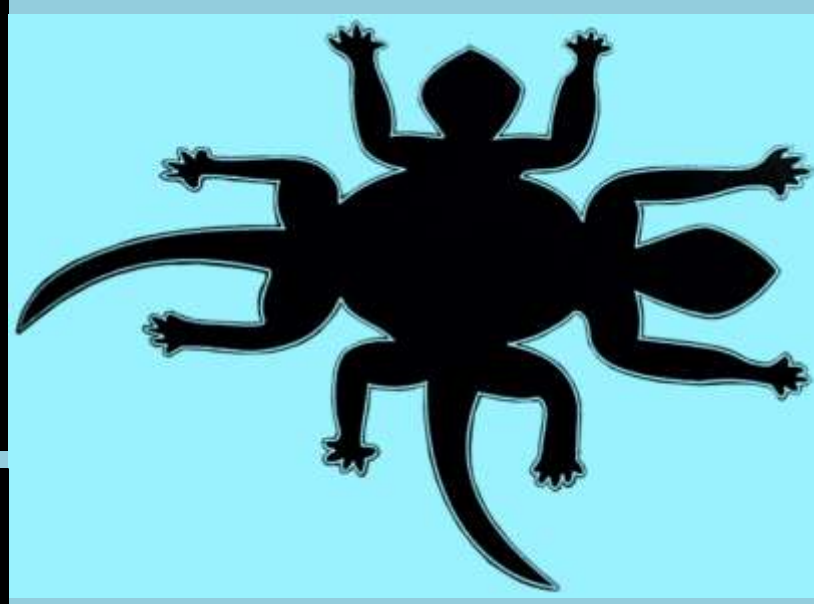

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ASEMKA: EDITORIAL

The Number 11(2) December 2022 Edition of *ASƐMKA, The Bilingual Literary Journal of the University of Cape Coast* contains three (3) papers centred on diverse areas of teaching and research in the Humanities, spanning between themes in Literature and Language. This Edition contains no manuscript in French. The papers span between thematic areas in Literature and Linguistics. The contributors are from Ghana and Nigeria. These papers were taken through rigorous blind peer-review processes and painstaking editorial work.

Asempasah, R., Emmanuel Saboro, E. & Arthur, S. P.'s paper titled "**Animality: Animal imagery, Characterization, and the Articulation of Difference in Victor Yankah's *Dear Blood***" examines animal imagery or animality as a strategy of characterization and the articulation of difference in Victor Yankah's *Dear Blood* (2014). The paper shows that animal imageries of domestication and the wild constitute the dominant means by which Yankah frames not only the different approaches of Penyin and Kakra to power, but more importantly, the possibility of woman's voice in the public space.

Coker, W. in his paper titled "**Unpaking African rhetorical theory in an African game**" theorizes Afrocentric Rhetoric. Using the indigenous Ghanaian game of *ampe*, he invites scholars of communication to reimagine African Rhetoric on its terms. The paper demonstrates that analyzing *ampe* from an Africanist perspective is a useful tactic for uncovering powerful rhetorical arguments of probability, critical-thinking, multitasking, and agility. The paper describes this rhetorical method of analysis as *Afrifuge*.

In this paper, Ademola-Adeoye, F. examines the concept of good character in selected Yorùbá proverbs. This concept, popularly known in the Yorùbá milieu as "omoluabi" is believed to be responsible for fundamental contributions of morality to the overall human flourishing and wholeness of Yorùbá societies and people. Using fourteen purposively selected proverbs that deal with the Yorùbá concept of "Omoluabi" (good character), this paper employs a socio-cultural linguistic approach to show how the rhetorical force of the proverbs can help reveal the ills in our society and reclaim some of the virtues of "Omoluabi". Findings show that Yorùbá, like many other African languages, is richly endowed with proverbs emphasizing virtues such as patience, respect for elders and constituted authority, selflessness, contentment

and dignity in labour, all of which can bring about cultural re-orientation if imbibed by citizens.

Animality: Animal imagery, Characterization, and the Articulation of Difference in Victor Yankah's *Dear Blood*

Rogers Asempasah, Emmanuel Saboro & Samuel Papa Arthur
University of Cape Coast, Ghana.

Abstract

Drawing on the literature on animality, this paper examines animal imagery or animality as a strategy of characterization and the articulation of difference in Victor Yankah's *Dear Blood* (2014). Specifically, the paper focuses on metaphors and similes that are embedded in proverbs as locations of animal imagery. It argues that animal imagery or animality is integral to how Yankah frames characterization, agency, voice, and the quest for an inclusive postcolonial society. Through the use of animal imagery or animality, Yankah recreates Sophocles' Ismene and Antigone within a Ghanaian sociocultural context as Panyin and Kakra. Seen from this vantage point, *Dear Blood* emerges as not just an adaptation, but a play with its own thoughts and modes of becoming. Overall, the paper seeks to answer two key questions: what is the dominant imagery in Yankah's *Dear Blood*? What are the ethico-aesthetic entailments of this imagery? The paper shows that animal imageries of domestication and the wild constitute the dominant means by which Yankah frames not only the different approaches of Penyin and Kakra to power, but more importantly, the possibility of woman's voice in the public space.

Keywords: animality; animal imagery; characterization; *Dear Blood;* domestication; wild.

Introduction

The adaptation of classical Greek plays constitutes a crucial fragment of the African literary imagination. Nonetheless, adaptation carries its own pitfalls. No wonder it has been the subject of criticism. As McKinnon (2011) points out "contemporary criticism often considers adaptation derivative, parasitic, uncreative and uncritical" (p. 56). According to Hutcheon (2013), this dismissive attitude can be traced to a "misunderstood assumption that the goal of adaptation [...] is simply one of replication, rather than other motivations such as interrogation, reinvention or exploration" (p. 6-7). At the heart of the hostility to translation is a romantic/idealist notion of "originality" that views adaptation as an intrusion into the creative vision, effort and output of others (Sawyer 2006; Nutsukpo 2019). However, as various scholars have shown, adaptation has been integral to the transhistorical and transcultural circulation of ideas, motifs, and stories (McKinnon 2011). Adaptation has also been influential in the emergence and consolidation of forms of cosmopolitan sensibilities; the interrogation and articulation of alternative views and knowledge. In the postcolonial world, adaptation of classical plays is a site for the dramatization of the conundrums of postcolonial existence and a commentary on the postcolonial nation-state as an arena of contending forces of tradition and change (Barbara Goff & Michael Simpson 2007; Lorna Hardwick & Carol Gillespie, eds. 2007).

Victor Yankah's *Dear Blood* (2014) adds to the growing list of African adaptations of classical Greek plays for contemporary African political and socio-cultural realities. Specifically, *Dear Blood* is an adaptation of Sophocles' tragic play *Antigone*. Set in the fictional Ghanaian village of Emukura, *Dear Blood* is the tragic tale of two sisters', (Penyin and Kakra), confrontation with a sovereign power that is manifestly patriarchal and uncompromising in its application of the law. Against the decree of King Asem, the oldest sister, Penyin, sets out to perform ceremonial duties of burial for their late brother, lost in an accursed war. The play explores the ramifications of this disavowal of the king's edict. As an adaptation, *Dear Blood* is rooted within a pretextual background: King Adinka (Oedipus), the predecessor of Asem (Creon), fulfils a gloomy accursed prophecy by unwittingly killing his father and marrying his mother. This incestuous act produces four children: Ansah and Owusu (representing Polyneices and Eteocles) and Penyin and Kakra (representing Ismene and Antigone). The incestuous act is regarded as abominable and sacrilegious. Adinka is ultimately exiled from the land of his birth whereas his mother/wife commits suicide. His two sons, Ansah and Owusu, with hopes of ascending to their father's throne, fought each other. Ansah raised an army

against Emukura where Asem, his uncle, reigned. Owusu, led Asem's army against his brother, Ansah. The two brothers died in the war. *Dear Blood* foregrounds the dynamics between gender, voice, spatiality and postcolonial futurity in ways that Sophocles' *Antigone* does not, which is why Yankah's play can aptly be described as speaking truth to postcolonial power. It explores the dangers and potentialities of unsettling the order of things, especially hegemonic cultural construction of women, agency and the differential allocation of intelligibility and recognition. In other words, *Dear Blood* attempts to redefine what constitutes cultural intelligibility, agency and recognition, especially as it relates to women and the public space. It is within this context that Penyin's becoming-animal emerges at once as a scandalous and audacious agential act.

It is significant to note that Antigone's presence in Ghanaian theatre predates Yankah's *Dear Blood*. Tracing the adaptations of *Antigone* in Ghana, Gibbs (2007) argues that *Antigone* has played a "significant role in the cultural, theatrical, and political dialogue between Europe and Africa" (p. 55). More importantly, Gibbs points out that Ghanaian playwrights have used *Antigone* "as a means of communication, self-examination, and helpful self-expression" (p. 55). Unfortunately, while adaptations by other Ghanaians and especially by Nigerian and South African playwrights now constitute canonical sites for critical reflection on the ethico-aesthetic entailments of Afro-Greek plays, Yankah's *Dear Blood* has suffered the fate of belatedness. The result is that Yankah's distinctive contribution to the transhistorical and transcultural translation of *Antigone* has not been fully explored. What is more, Yankah's distinctive use of animality or animal imagery has yet to be analyzed.

Following Wetmore's (2003) assertion that "plays do not mean, they generate meaning" (p. 4), this paper examines animal imagery as a technique for generating meaning in *Dear Blood*. Specifically, the paper draws on the literature on animality and Posthumanism in order to examine Yankah's use of animal imagery in *Dear Blood* (2014). Methodologically, the paper focuses on selected metaphors and similes that are embedded in proverbs as locations of animal imagery. It argues that animal imagery or animality is integral to how Yankah frames voice, agency, and the quest for an inclusive and egalitarian postcolonial society. By focusing on animal imagery, the paper shows that Yankah draws on indigenous cultural aesthetics and the rhetoric of communication. Seen from this vantage point, *Dear Blood* emerges as not just an adaptation but as a play with its own thoughts and modes of becoming. Through the use of animal imagery or animality, Yankah recreates Ismene and Antigone within a Ghanaian sociocultural context as Panyin and Kakra. Overall, the paper seeks to answer the two key questions: what is the dominant imagery in Yankah's *Dear Blood*? What are the ethico-aesthetic entailments of

this imagery? The paper concludes that animal imagery or animality constitutes the dominant means by which Yankah frames not only the different approaches of Penyin and Kakra to power, but more importantly, the possibility of a woman's voice in the public space. By reading *Dear Blood* along the lines proposed here, the paper points to one significant way Yankah's *Dear Blood* rewrites Sophocles' Antigone in order to rethink how to reconstitute postcolonial public sphere and gender equality.

The paper firstly clarifies the difference between character and characterization, and then draws attention to conceptualizations of animal imagery in recent theories of Posthumanism. Secondly, it analyzes specific animal imageries in *Dear Blood* with an emphasis on how they frame issues of agency, voice, spatial location and law. It concludes with a reflection on the implications of the study for the emerging field of literary animal studies.

Conceptual clarification: character, characterization, and metaphor

Although the organizing idea in this paper is animal imagery or animality in *Dear Blood,* the analysis nonetheless encompasses character and characterization insofar as the focus is on Panyin, Kakra, and the law. Therefore, it seems appropriate to begin by clarifying the distinction between character and characterization, not least because these concepts are crucial to the way literary works create imaginary worlds and generate meaning. It is also useful to place the paper within a broader discussion of animal imagery in literary studies and posthuman studies. From the onset, it is vital to state that there is a rich corpus of scholarship on characterization, especially on characters and their immense role in the development of plot, conflict, and theme (Abbas, 2018; Docherty 1983; Hochman 1985; James 1972; Margolin 1986; Oscar 1980; Stanzel 1981; Woloch 2003). Writing on the importance of characters in a narrative, Kort (1975) asserts that a "character in a narrative is an image of human possibilities; either for good and creativity or for evil and destruction, and the rise of […] narrative is very much tied to explore or to render paradigms of those possibilities." Characters have therefore been studied as "models for human virtues and vices" (quoted in Malbon, p. 260). According to Abrams & Harpham (2009), "characters are the persons represented in a dramatic or narrative work, who are interpreted by the reader as possessing particular moral, intellectual, and emotional qualities by inferences from [...] the dialogue and [...] the action" (p. 42). Precisely because characters are fundamental to narrative, Culler (1975) argues that they are the "major tantalizing force" in any literary work (p. 230).

Characterization, on the other hand, refers to the process of "shaping characters" (Bin 2018, p. 284); it is the playwright's tool for differentiating one person from another. Therefore, according to Thrall and Hibbard (1936), characterization refers to the "depicting, in writing, of clear images of a person, his [his or her] actions and manners of thought [that] go to make the people what they are." (pp. 74-75; quoted in Bin 2018, p. 284). Characterization then designates the ways in which fictional characters are created, either through imagery or the systematic manner in which they are presented to the audience. This indicates that while characterization refers to the process of creating or depicting, character refers to the product of the process. In spite of this difference, character and characterization are mutually interdependent. As Lothe (2000) succinctly put it:

> [T]he distinction between character (at the level of the story) and characterization (at the textual level) is not absolute [...]. Discussions of fictional characters become more convincing if they refer to and are based on characterization, for it is through such characterization that the characters are introduced, shaped, and developed. (p. 81).

There are various ways fictional characters are created or brought to life, depending on the artist or playwright. For example, novels that seek to project or echo a form of individuation or becoming that foregrounds awakening may be developed along the lines of the bildungsroman. In this instance, characters who are initially presented as naive undergo transformation through encounters that lead to enlightenment (Asempasah 2020). Novels like *Beyond the Horizon* (1992) and *Purple Hibiscus* (2004) follow this trend of characterization and character development. Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, on the other hand, follows a developmental trajectory that revolves around what Aristotle in the *Poetics* calls anagnorisis (recognition) and peripeteia (reversal).

As representations, characters may take the form of a human being, an animal, an object, a hybrid of human and animal, or even a machine. There are two ways animals appear in literary works. First, as animals in the sense that these creatures act as real characters, like Napoleon in George Orwell's *Animal Farm* (1945). That animals have been central to tragedy and other literary forms and philosophical discourse is no longer debatable. Animals are the dominant characters in folk tales and fables. Furthermore, there is a growing body of scholarship on Greek tragedy and comedy that shows the multiple functions of animals and animal imagery (Heath 1999; Lonsdale 1990; Buxton 2013; Pütz 2014; Thumiger 2014; Kostuch 2017). Secondly, animals appear in literary works in the form of animality, i.e., using animal behaviors, attributes,

or imagery to describe or characterize human behavior. It is within this context that animal imagery becomes pertinent in *Dear Blood*.

Posthumanism and the changing conceptions of animal imagery

The dominant interpretation of the presence of animals and animal imagery is that they are essentially for rhetorical purposes (as symbols, metaphors, and allegorical figures that help define human qualities, feelings, or behaviors) (Gilhaus 2006). However, in the last few decades, this traditional understanding of animal imagery has been problematized with the emergence of animal studies and posthuman theories and discourse. Braidotti (2009); Derrida (2008); Lippit (1998; 2000); and Wolfe (2010) among others, have variously contested the traditional notions of the animal and, in the process, redefined our relationship to the animal. One result of this evolution has been a radical rethinking of animals and animal imagery in literary works and philosophical discourse. In his zooanthropological theories, Marchesini shows that the development of human knowledge, imagination, and culture is the result of our interaction with animals and other species (see Gilebbi 2014, p. 94). For Marchesini, human interaction with animals is nowhere more evident than in the animal images or imageries that pervade human language. From this perspective, animal images are used, among other things, to store, communicate, and expand knowledge.

Furthermore, Derrida (2008) and Lippit (1998) have also shown that animal metaphors can be used to raise animal questions rather than merely for rhetorical purposes. In that sense, animal metaphors constitute a special type of metaphor. For Derrida, as Gilebbi (2014) points out, an animal image embedded in a metaphor "carries an alien element, an element that does not belong to the human linguistic system. The animal we embed in our language is an animot... that marks the invasion of animality with the word "(Gilebbi 94). Glossing Derrida, Gilebbi argues that "Entering human language, the animal "animates" it, shows its potentialities and limits in describing and interpreting reality, and marks the otherness that the animal represents from a human standpoint" (p. 94). Building on Derrida's work, Lippit (1998) coins the word "animetaphor" to describe how animal metaphor "transports to or breathes into language the vitality of another life, another expression" (p. 1113). According to Lippit, the animal functions not only as "an exemplary metaphor but, within the scope of rhetorical language, as a kind of originary metaphor" (p. 1113). We raise these contemporary thoughts on animal imagery within a metaphor not because the current paper claims that the animal imagery in *Dear Blood* raises the animal question, but to emphasize the centrality of animal imagery and animality in philosophical and literary

discussions. As we shall show, the animal imagery inside proverbs, similes, and metaphors animates or breathes into the language of *Dear Blood* another way of looking at the characters and the law. Beyond grounding the play in African rhetorical and communicative acts, the proverbs are crucial to the way *Dear Blood* generates meaning. Throughout this paper, animal imagery refers to images that are embedded in words or proverbs and make explicit reference to animals. In Yankah's *Dear Blood,* animal imagery is crucial to understanding how Yankah frames Penyin, Kakra Asem, and the law. The next section examines animal imagery as a representation of spatial location and agency.

Of animal imagery, agency and space in *Dear Blood*

The spatial location of characters and their awareness of the implications of transgressing socio-politically defined boundaries is crucial to appreciating the contrasting agential and ethical choices of Penyin and Kakra, and the tragic essence of the play. Panyin's defiance of Asem's edict is at the core of Yankah's interrogation of the established modalities of constituting subjectivities (voice and agency) that revolve around gender and spatial location. And it is here that animal imagery becomes paramount in grasping Yankah's strategy of characterization and the violence of law. Yankah draws attention to these through the use of animal imagery expressed through proverbs. Proverbs in *Dear Blood are* sites for the generation of metaphors, similes, or animal imagery and are an essential part of the process of characterization rather than merely indicating the African context of the play. The importance of animal imagery or animality to Yankah's dramaturgy is heralded early in the encounter between Appiah, the stranger to Emukura, and Kwamena, an elder of Emukura. In the opening dialogue between the two, during which Kwamena informs Appiah about the monstrous happenings in Emukura, Kwamena describes King Adinka's children in zoological terms. The family is presented as belonging to the feline family:

> Kwamena: "Prepare to dance to the end. The fertile heat of their bed yielded four fruits: *two tiger-limbed boys*, and *a pair of female felines* born on the same day-one *a soft purring domestic cat*, and the other, *a stubborn panther*." (Act One, Scene Two; our emphasis).

This animalization of King Adinka's progeny gives us the first hint that the tragedy that surrounds this mythical family is framed around animal attributes. The tiger-limbed nature of the boys explains their war-like or aggressive nature which eventually leads to their tragic deaths. More important for our purpose,

however, is Kwamena's distinction between the twin sisters in ways that highlight differences in character and ideological thinking that boarder on animality and spatial location: Kakra (Ismene) is a "soft-spurring domestic cat," while Penyin (Antigone) is "a stubborn panther." Also, it is important to note that these animal images are inside metaphors. This shows, very early in the play, that Yankah is beginning to foreground "domesticity" and "wildness" as contrasting modes of subject location. In the above quotation, the animal imagery regarding Penyin and Kakra operates in a dual, contrasting sense. First, it marks an intimate connection between animality and spatial location. Kakra is the domesticated animal (a compliant or subjugated subject), while Panyin is framed as the radical other, a wild, unrestrained panther, and therefore outside the boundaries of civility or law. Secondly, this framing of Kakra as a domesticated or compliant subject, which by extension is the fate or condition of the women of Emukura, is embedded in African traditional patriarchal forms of governmentality. Therefore, to understand Kwamena's feline imagery, it is vital to pay attention to the traditional African conceptualization of domestic space in relation to gender.

African traditional society, like the Athenian society, is patriarchal in nature; it is a society dominated and ruled by men and therefore characterized by unequal power relations. As a result, women are assigned specific roles owing to their gender. According to Ifechelobi (2019) women are "systematically disadvantaged, subdued, and oppressed" (p.18). Domestication of women, therefore, is founded on gender roles that restrict women within the boundaries of the home and house. This implies, according to Chukukere (1995), that:

> the woman's major function revolves around the family. These include her responsibility as a mother, wife and home administrator. The role of the mother is considered vital as it is through her that the lineage is perpetuated…In her role as wife and administrator, she undertakes all domestic duties… (p. 2).

To veer off this well-cut out path, then, is to defy the existing norms and structures of patriarchal dominance and subservience. To leap out of one's domestic space and to attempt to engage in other activities assigned to the superior gender or space is usually regarded as an act of defiance. In some societies, it is unheard of for a woman to venture into politics, which is considered the prerogative of men. This marginalization of women makes them passive and silent when it comes to political affairs and activities in the public sphere.

Kakra emerges as Yankah's representation of the passive woman in relation to the public sphere. Responding to her sister's request to help her bury Ansah, she replies, "It is a pity, sister. What can we do"? (Act One, Scene Two). Kakra's response demonstrates not only her unwillingness to assist but also her helplessness; a helplessness that stems from the realization that she is a subordinate, a lesser being in relation to the public sphere. The contrast between her and Penyin, is deeply rooted in her acceptance of her place, which is beneath a power that is above her. By telling Penyin that "this is beyond us" (Act One, Scene Two), she not only confirms Kwamena's imagery that locates her within the domestic sphere but also affirms her unwillingness to transgress or unsettle the normative spatial distinctions. Throughout the play, similar animal images are used in reference to Kakra, all pointing to her passivity in the face of Penyin's quest to fulfil a duty to their family. After watching her responses to the Executioner, Appiah describes Kakra as one who is "... like a heifer for the slaughter" (Act One, Scene Three). While this appears to show her innocence in the crime, it also reflects an important aspect of her personality, namely passivity and indifference. It's no surprise that the Executioner refers to her as a "little puppy," implying a weakling. Panyin puts Kakra's refusal to support her in the following ways:

> I thought I could bend you, *green sapling*, little did I know there is *dry wood* behind the *green bark*. Stay, stay and wait for life. Wait for the rain….You won't help me. It is fear isn't it? Your face betrays a head full of unspeakable fears." (Act One, Scene Two; our emphasis).

Penyin's reference to her sister as a dry wood behind a green bark suggests that, contrary to her earlier view of her as her twin and therefore united in thought and action, Kakra proves otherwise. She recognizes that her sister's inactions emanate from fear; fear of going against established authority and the law. She is quick to notice that her sister's words lack agency, hence her use of the word "dry." Dry is Penyin's way of describing Kakra as a character who lacks possibility because, as a dry wood, she signifies the exhaustion of possibility or alternative way of being and action. Hence, not only do Kakra's words lack action, she also lacks courage in the struggle against totalitarian or hegemonic norms. In fact, the Executioner who is placed in charge of Ansah's body goes as far as to label Kakra "little puppy" (Act 1, Scene 3), echoing the notion of domestication. Kakrah therefore emerges as Yankah's symbol of servitude, continuity of subjugation, and disavowal of agency within a hegemonic masculine socio-political and ethical context. Interestingly, this domestication in Yankah's play finds a parallel in the Athenian system of

governance. An exploration of domestication within the Athenian polis will therefore strengthen our argument.

Domestication within the Polis

The place of men and women in the Athenian political system has been highlighted by Saxonhouse (1980) According to Saxonhouse (1980), "in the life of classical Greece the *polites*, initially a member of the family, finds his fulfillment in the life of the community" (p. 65). This is because the community is male-dominated. The polis is therefore not only the means by which governance is established; it is also a way of recognition of the individual. It is the foundation of identity and an indirect [re]presentation of the individuals' psychosocial and religious makeup. But to what extent is domestication embodied within the Athenian system of the polis? To raise this question is to further interrogate the structure of the polis itself because therein lies a system of education that creates its civic space. According to Davies (1977), the polis consists of "citizens". However, the Athenian notion of citizen had a rather specific definition as it referred to "those who were male; were sons of a citizen father; were born from a woman who was pledged and had been accepted as part of the father's phatry and deme" (p. 105). To be a citizen came with the privilege of owning property and assuming a State office (Davies, p. 105). Van de Vliet (2008) further categorizes the State in these words:

> The [homologue] of 'extended kinship relations' in the polis is the *oikos*, the 'house' or 'household' of the citizen, the (landed) possessions on which he subsists, including his farm animals and slaves, and the others who belong to it, his relatives with whom he lives and who are dependent on him and his *oikos*—his wife and children, and occasionally a sibling or old father (p. 198)

The notion of domestication is broached in the above quotation. Within the polis, two broad categories of individuals emerge: the citizen and his 'extended kinship relations' (a categorization which creates a domestic empire within the state); the recognized and that which comes into recognition by reason of affiliation with the recognized. This separation of citizens into citizens, women, and slaves not only creates a class distinction, but also creates a society where women, children, and slaves become subservient to the citizens. Within the confines of the polis, therefore, there exist assigned roles that place

restrictions on the Other, those who must become signified by relating to the signifier.

To be located in the domestic sphere or *oikos* is not only to be within the confines of the polis, but to be subservient to the citizen; to accept this as the status quo and to relate as such. As Saxonhouse (1993) makes clear, the polis was "an arena for action among equals in a realm of freedom, transforming man from a laboring animal to a human being giving expression to his individuality" (p. 488). In other words, action and agency, properly understood, take place in the polis. Just as a domesticated kitten is at the master's beck and call, the woman and slave must submit to the citizen. By employing the domestic kitten metaphor, therefore, Kwamena not only describes Kakra's cowardice in submitting to the existing norm; he also portrays her as one who has no voice but can only "purr." In choosing not to defy King Asem's edict, Kakra has taken the path of inaction and forfeited the possibility of giving expression to her individuality. In Sophocles' *Antigone,* Ismene puts the situation in its proper context as follows:

> If we violate the laws and override
> The fixed decree of the throne, its power-
> We must be sensible. Remember we are women,
> We are not born to contend with men. Then too,
> Were underlings, ruled by much stronger hands?
> So we must submit in this, and things still worse (p. 70).

In *Dear Blood,* Kakra's response to Penyin's call to "Attempt what no one will dare" is simply: "But my sister, this is beyond us" (Act One, Scene Two). Kakra not only states her stance; she also shows herself as one who is but an insignificant in the organization of the polis and therefore not only must she submit, but also accept her fate as one born not, according to Ismene, "to contend with men". By telling her sister that "this is beyond us", she implies that they act within their respective roles as women and accept the status quo. In other words, Kakra is suggesting that one can be a law abiding citizen only by acting rationally, adhering to the existing codes of conduct within an established community or society. She paints a picture of her servitude in two ways; by showing that not only must she submit by virtue of her gender as a woman, but also by being an underling; a child who is supposed to be taught the differences between right and wrong. She rightfully justifies Kwamena's deployment of the purring kitten imagery, a state which worsens their plight and makes the situation quite pathetic. To her, not only is she governed, she is a subject; grounded in servitude to things even worse; a submission that comes with the recognition that she is but a woman; one without voice in the order

and nature of the public space. To go contrary to this norm is to override the laws; the laws that create the existing structure that upholds the Emukura and to unleash anarchy, thereby becoming a wild and uncivilized woman who is not fit to associate within the confines of Emukura. This description is similar to Apostle John's vision of the exiled or the condemned outside the gates of the New Jerusalem : "outside the city are the dogs - the sorcerers, the sexually immoral, the murderer, the idol worshippers, and all who love to live a lie" (Revelation 22:15 N.L.V). Kakra therefore submits to the gendered roles assigned to her; "a social sphere which is private, particular and weak; dependent upon the protection which the polis dominated by the males can provide" (Saxonhouse 1980, p. 65). The next section analyzes Penyin's character within the context of animal imagery.

Penyin: A Quest for Voice and Agency

Penyin, the older of the twin sisters, presents a stark contrast to her sister Kakra. She is Yankah's revolutionary figure of women's emancipation. As a result, she is animalized as wild; a "panther" who disturbs the existing norm by contesting the silence that prevails in Emukura. She represents a line of flight or exit from bondage and, therefore, her defiance constitutes an act of decolonization; a decolonization that emerges from "engaging in epistemic disobedience" which in turn "results in civil disobedience and freedom" (Tonelli 2020; Asempasah 2020). Her most fitting description in *Dear Blood* is provided by the Executioner, who is placed in charge of Ansah's corpse. In the process of performing her brother's burial rites, she is caught by the Executioner, who moves stealthily towards Penyin like "a hunter stalking her prey". He describes her actions in the following proverbs:

> Executioner: "The *green mamba* thinks its hiding in the grass. But it forgets, it's longer than the leaves.*The chicken* that tries to swallow *a mother earthworm* will end up with its victim in the soil. Is it not complicity that throws the river and the fish together against the rock"? (Act 1, Scene 3)

Again, the animal imagery embedded in these metaphors is obvious. The executioner describes Penyin's actions as naive and an act of rebellion. He tries to justify this with proverbs implying that Penyin attempted to perform the burial rites in secret by pouring libation near the pile of leaves covering Ansah's mortal remains. By deploying this animal imagery, he claims that

nothing can be hidden from him, who has been placed to watch over the corpse.

The rhetorical function of the proverbs and animal imagery, however, goes beyond the simple framing of his vigilance and diligence. The proverbs foreground the impossibility of escaping the powerful arm of the law and, by extension, foreshadow Penyin's doomed fate. In other words, the proverbs and animal imagery describe the power of the law symbolized by Asem, a patriarchal figure of domination and oppression. By ascribing the images of the "mamba" and "a chicken that tries to swallow mother earthworm fish" to Penyin, not only does the Executioner recognize her actions as deadly [venomous] and therefore a threat to the law and society, but as one who thinks differently from her sister, a little puppy. His usage of these animal images again echoes Kwamena's "panther" imagery or metaphor. Both men describe the nature of the older daughter of their former king, Adinka, using animal imagery.

Despite these descriptions, the Executioner knows that Penyin's wild nature will be inevitably tamed by the law, since no citizen is above the decree set up by Asem. In so doing, not only does he acknowledge the power of the law but also acknowledges patriarchy's dominance over the women of Emukura. Just as the mamba cannot hide because it's longer than the leaves, and just as the chicken that attempts to devour the mother earthworm is doomed to be a victim, so will Penyin, despite her wild and uncouth behavior, be subdued by Asem in the long run. It is important to note that when King Asem makes his first appearance in Act Two, Scene One, the praise singer indirectly animalizes his power in the following way:

> You never trace roaring to the antelope
> The angry bull may hoof up sands
> But can it stand the earth in a fight?
> Let him ask the *pig* who thought
> He could man the earth
> With his curly snout; if he could,
> Where would he stand to rule it?
> Nana Asem, Namkese…breew…breew

In this quotation, it is clear that King Asem is unfazed by rebellion or transgressive behaviors from opponents like Penyin, who are characterized as weak. They are doomed to fail just like "the angry bull" and "the pig." In fact, like "the antelope," they are not biologically and socio-culturally capable of roaring.

All of this, then, creates pity and fear as it foreshadows the clash between Penyin and Asem, whose name, placed within the Akan epistemological context, signifies trouble. Asem means trouble, a diabolical challenge or even a conundrum. And as *Dear Blood* shows, it is the law itself that eventually emerges as a pathological challenge that must be confronted. Part of Penyin's initial naivety, therefore, is her failure to properly frame her defiance as a confrontation with the law. This is clarified in her dialogue with the Executioner at the site where she performs the burial rites for her brother:

> Penyin; "What have I stolen?
> Executioner: The Law. You've stolen a march on the law".
> (Act One Scene Three).
> Penyin: What Law?

In her confrontation with the law, Penyin comes to the realization that the law is founded on violence; it authorizes what is acceptable, intelligible, visible, and invisible. More importantly, Penyin also realizes that beyond, to borrow Butler's (2004) felicitous phrase, the "differential allocation of grievability" (p. 37), the law also defines what is human and animal. This explains why the Executioner, an agent of the law, calls Penyin "a stubborn goat" (Act One, Scene Three). In her encounter with King Asem, who embodies the Law, the King describes Penyin as "a viper," "an insolent cow," "a crawling viper," and "a foolish cockroach" (Act Two, Scene One). The imagery of the "viper" signals rebellion and therefore a threat to what Derrida (1992), in a different context, calls the "mystical foundations of authority" (p.11–12). The snake appears in several cultural representations of evil or the devil as a symbol of stealth, deceit, treachery, betrayal, and backstabbing. For example, the devil is described in the Judeo-Christian religion as the "ancient serpent" in Revelation 12:15 and in Genesis 3:15 as the sly creature who induced Eve into disobedience. By referring to Penyin as a "viper", Asem frames her defiance as a repetition of the rebellion initiated in the Garden of Eden by the serpent. Only in the case of Emukura, the serpent's place has been taken over by Penyin. For Asem, just as the serpent introduced sin into the world by challenging the Divine edict, so does Penyin's transgression of his edict constitute a challenge to the social order of Emukura.

From the perspective of the law, all of the above animal images position Penyin as reckless, rebellious, and outside of the law. This in itself is not surprising because the analysis has shown that subjects in the domestic sphere always already occupy the category of "bare life", and are therefore excluded from the polis, or the political sphere. "Bare life, according to Agamben (1998), designates human life that is excluded from politics yet exposed to

sovereign". As we have shown in our analysis above, Penyin and Kakra represent "bare life" not because they are human but because they are women and occupy a sphere that is below the polis. The tragedy for Penyin is that by defying the law, she is transformed from the category of "bare life" into a dangerous or venomous animal that must be killed in order to guarantee social harmony. Penyin is fighting against the animalization of women as a result of their exclusion from politics. This is clearly illustrated in Penyin's dialogue with the three women of Emukura.

> **First Woman**: I am sorry, Penyin. But why did you do it?
> **Penyin:** You might as well ask the caged bird why it struggles to escape. Are you women blind? Can't you see the daily smear of shame? On your womanly dignity? Are you insensitive? Everything ends, life, food, drink everything…even dreams end; Must our nightmare continue even in our wakefulness? Tomorrow, Penyin must die; I go to the grave because I would not be anybody's doormat. Because I dare to be other than woman
> **First Woman:** In that case you have been too bold. Penyin, too bold. It is not for us to fight against the canons.
> **Penyin:** Canons! Who built them? Was is it not the same selfish grandfathers, fathers, husbands and big brothers? Would a leopard ever build a house to love an antelope in? (Act Two, Scene One).

The above exchange encapsulates the driving force behind Penyin's defiance of the law. Penyin positions herself as a radical figure of emancipation who views the normative position of women in Emukura as caged birds. For Penyin, freedom lies in seeing the law as fundamentally patriarchal and violent. Therefore, to reconfigure society, the leopard and the antelope must rethink the very structure of social organization in terms of dwelling. For Penyin, a new sociality should be founded on learning to build a house that is radically different from the existing differential allocation of recognition, agency, voice, and vulnerability. Asem recognizes the danger that Penyin's emancipatory actions and rhetoric pose to the existing order of things. Hence, his reference to Penyin as an "insolent cow," an animal imagery that not only signals disobedience but also Penyin's outright rejection of the domestication that traditional society confers on the women of Emukura. Through this animal imagery, Asem frames Penyin's defiance as an attempt to disrupt the hegemonic structure of society. Just as an insolent cow that runs riot must be

returned to domesticity, so Penyin's insolence must be forcibly curtailed by the law.

At this stage, we must wonder in what way Panyin's disobedient or untamed actions and rhetoric constitute a form of radical agency and voice. To answer this question, we must pay attention to Asem's attitude and behavior towards the women, and Penyin in particular. Ansah's attitude towards women of Emukura recalls characters like Eugene Achike in Chimamanda's *Purple Hibiscus* (2006) and Osey and Akobi in Amma Darko's *Beyond the Horizon* (1992), who also display contempt and disregard for women as partners in the decision-making process. *Dear Blood* does not only show Ansah as a strict, legalistic ruler within a time-bound ethical space, but also as a patriarchal figure who will not tolerate any insolence from women. As he tells the women, "See what we do to her and learn not to play with gunpowder" (Act Two, Scene One). By his choice of the word "gunpowder" Asem is drawing on a notion of domestication popular in traditional Ghanaian society. Specifically, he is referencing a traditional proverb that admonishes women to conform to their assigned places and roles. Actually, the above warning is an indirect reference to the Akan proverb "obaa ton nyadowa na onton atuduro" which translates as a "woman sells garden eggs and not gunpowder" (Diabah and Ampofo, 2014). According to Diabah and Ampofo (2014), this proverb reveals that it is "traditionally unacceptable for a woman to sell gunpowder," which is an "image of war; a stereotypically masculine arena" (p. 20). The underlying message of this proverb, therefore, is for "women not to rub shoulders with men, but rather stick to their socio-culturally assigned roles and behaviors" (p. 20). In other words, the responsible woman is the one who knows her place. By turning to look at the women, Asem uses this gesture as a warning that women should not meddle in the affairs of the state. King Asem suggests that the socio-culturally intelligent woman is the one who knows her place.

By not just defying the edict but, more importantly, owning up to the crime, articulating an alternative perspective, and challenging the subservient position of women in open court, Penyin succeeds in enacting a radical agency and voice. That this has a revolutionary effect on the women of Emukura is indicated towards the end of the play, when the women who initially accused Penyin of being "too bold" are ready after her execution to challenge the patriarchal attempts to silence them.

> **Elder:** Ha! Woman I believe you know whom you're talking to. You call me blind?
> **First Woman:** I will call blind several times over, even if it costs me my neck. Can't you see the gods disapprove of the king's ruling against Penyin?

> **Elder:** That is not for you to decide, woman. And I'd rather you shut up!
> **Second Woman:** Shut up indeed! You keep going on "woman…woman". Yes. Women have no tongues …no voices. Penyin found her voice, and what he do to her? Go on … "woman" us. Only Asem rules. We have found our voices too, and we tend to use them. (Act Three, Scene Two).

This illustrates Penyin's radical agency manifested through the act of introducing her voice into the public sphere. Butler's (2000) insightful assertion that Antigone "speaks and speaks in public, precisely when she ought to be sequestered in the private domain" (p. 4) aptly applies to Penyin and describes her radical agency. It is this refusal to be sequestered in the private realm that eventually infects the women of Emukura. From the declaration by the women, it is obvious that Emukura will never be the same, especially if we remember that "Emukura" literally means "the village of the dumb or mute." Beyond the literal, however, as the activities of King Asem and the law show, "Emukura" refers to a city-state whose socio-political ideology is conformism. The transformation of the women is actually the most radical change in the play. They have progressed from fear, indifference, and acceptance of their oppression, for which Penyin describes them as "blind," to exhibiting Penyin's revolutionary quest for "womanly dignity"; they have refused to be "anybody's doormat" and daring "to be other than a woman" (Act Two, scene One). Herein lies the emancipatory effect of Penyin's agency, and herein also lies her portrayal by Yankah as a wild female. Although she is a woman (from a feline family in terms of the animal imagery), she refuses to be domesticated like her sister and the fellow women (kittens). She accepts her fate not because of death, but because she refuses to follow the beaten path of subservience, humiliation, and conformism. It is not a wonder then that Asem refers to her as a "stubborn louse" (Act Two, Scene One). In *Dear Blood,* Penyin emerges as the heroine who champions the cause of rebuttal through speaking for a gender that has no voice in the public arena and she does so in a bold, open manner.

So far analysis has focused on animal imagery in relation to Penyin and Kakra. However, it would be wrong to conclude that animal imagery in *Dear Blood* relates to only the twins. In fact, beyond referring to Penyin as a "foolish cockroach," an insect that is detested in homes because it is a carrier of pathogens that endanger human health, Asem also animalizes the law in order to reiterate the violence or ruthlessness of the law. As he tells Penyin, "Like the foolish cockroach, you have filliped the talons of the hen, and now *the sharp*

beak of the law must strike. You will be sent to the execution hut." (Act Two, Scene One; our emphasis). Here, Asem frames the law as an animal (a bird) too, but one with a "sharp beak" that can trample or kill lesser animals like Penyin who transgress the norm.

Conclusion

Yankah's greatest achievement in *Dear Blood* is that he makes animal imagery or animality integral to characterization, the articulation of difference, and the quest for an egalitarian community. Specifically, animal imagery is deployed in *Dear Blood* for three crucial purposes: to establish a contrast between Penyin and Kakra in terms of agency, voice, and spatial location; to indicate how the law defines its insolent or unruly subjects; and to describe the authority of the law. Animal imagery is generally embedded in proverbs through metaphors and similes. Precisely because the animal imageries are located in traditional African proverbs, the point can be made that Yankah deftly indigenizes *Dear Blood* by incorporating proverbs as traditional communicative and rhetorical acts. While this is true, it would be more rewarding, as we have shown, to focus on how the animal imagery inscribed in the proverbs generates meaning. If we take seriously Thumiger's (2014) contention that animality or the use of animal imagery in Greek tragedies "objectifies the human" and therefore functions as "an instrument that disregards inwardness and psychologism" (p. 85) seriously, then this paper has shown that Yankah's play departs from this Greek tradition by making animal imagery integral to the actions and ethical choices of human characters. In other words, in *Dear Blood,* animal imagery or animalization is the key to understanding the inwardness and psychologism of Penyin and Kakra. Nonetheless, our findings confirm Thumiger's assertion that animal imagery is commonly conveyed through metaphors and similes. Furthermore, the paper shows that animal imagery in *Dear Blood* draws on two distinct categories of animals: wild and domestic. Penyin, who defies the law and articulates an alternative world, is associated with wild animals, while Kakra, who subordinates herself to the norm, is associated with domesticated animals. *Dear Blood* seems to suggest that women who want to "dare to be other than woman" must become wild animals. Therein lies the road to reconfiguring society.

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Unpacking African rhetorical theory in an African game

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Abstract

African rhetoric usually stands accused of one basic charge: false equivalences. Scholars argue that the burgeoning field, for instance, heralds Afrocentricity to rival Eurocentricity. In responding to this concern, this article seeks to reimagine ways of conceptualizing African rhetoric on its own terms in order to propose an alternative concept termed as *Afrifuge*. Focusing on *ampe*, a traditional Ghanaian game, the paper demonstrates how scholars of African rhetoric can draw on unique tropes to think, speak, learn, and write about African rhetorical inventions and processes. The analysis brings to light significant rhetorical arguments when scholars closely examine the game from an Africanist perspective. These include a discovery of the laws of probability and calculus, critical thinking skills, multi-tasking, and agility. The overarching goal of the paper is to invite scholars to build a meta-theory of African rhetoric.

Keywords: Afrocentricity, African rhetoric, African philosophy, *ampe,* indigenous game

Introduction

This paper begins with a vignette. In August 2018, at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa, a fellow Mellon scholar, a Nigerian, had a riveting conversation with me about the rhetoric of naming. To my colleague, I couldn't pass for a true Ghanaian, and for that matter, a true son of the African soil. And what was my crime? "This, your name now, Wincharles, is it not European, specifically English or French, abi?" Chichi (not his original name) passed his verdict. Two things may have emboldened

my friend to think the way he did. The workshop was *ab initio* squarely about decolonizing knowledge systems, where participants read non-Western revolutionary works like Mignolo (2009) and his bon-mots such as *decoloniality*, *de-linking*, and *epistemic disobedience*. Second, Chichi is a proud member of the Igbo ethnic group; he insists, it is a nation unto itself. Therefore, for Chichi, one can truly be African so long as one has an African name.

As our dialogue piqued the interest of all the participants and the director of the workshop, Dilip Menon, including invited guest scholars, Magid Shihade, Nivedidat Menon and Carolyn Hamilton, I was presented with the opportunity to give a formal response concerning what Nivedidat Menon described as an unprovoked polemic on my person. I raised three fundamental points in my defense. I argued that yes it was factual to say that the name "Charles," as Chichi emphasized, was indeed European. I told the gathering that *Charles* is a masculine name from the French form *Charles* of a Germanic name *Karl*. The original Anglo-Saxon was *Ċearl* or *Ċeorl*, as the name of King Cearl of Mercia that disappeared after the Norman conquest of England. But my name is not Charles, I insisted: it is Wincharles. I intimated that it did not lie in the mouth of Chichi to point out to me what ought to be foregrounded in my first name, and that which ought to be at the background. Second, I reminded my Africanist purist that although the disyllabic name X may be phonologically English, same is not common among Europeans, to say the least. I also argued, more forcefully, just as Fanon (2008) did in *Black Skin, White Masks*, that I am a product of the colonial experiment. Therefore, it could not be that by obtaining a local name such as Kofi Acheampong, I simply could undo the impact of the legacy on my intersectional, fractured self *stricto lato*. Indeed, Lee (2005) reports that Fanon's renunciation of his name and French citizenship in favor of an Algerian nationality did not matter to a fraction of local Algerians who still saw him as an outsider.

What, then, was at the heart of our conversation was a negation of my Ghanaianness and/or Africanness. My colleague, I think, was casting a penumbra of doubt on the purity of my identity. He was weary of me. Perhaps, he conceived of me as a tainted *métis* whose commitment to the cause of African scholarship may be suspect.

Making a case for African rhetorical theory

The paper is woven around the following questions: What conceptual maps are useful for reading African rhetoric? How should scholars of rhetoric in/about sub-Saharan Africa get to change the content and terms of the conversation in rhetoric, and how can rhetorical scholarship be truly decolonial by neither being stubbornly indigenous nor religiously Western?

The focus of this paper, then, is to explore the politics of that liminal space in rhetorical pedagogy in Africa. Reflections on the attainment of this goal in the Global South, *ipso facto*, point to minimal contributions from African scholars. The knowledge economy in African universities writ large is shaped by a multilayered imperative. In *Rethinking Africa's Globalization*, the Malawian historian, Zeleza (2003) bemoaned the tendency to reduce Africa into a descriptive appendage of theoretical formulations manufactured in other historical contexts. This is because, according to him, globalization (such as the global criteria for the world's university ranking), is a kind of universal elixir utilized by groups of people to sell their own political, cultural, and economic 'goods'. Scholarly efforts that valorize the differing and productive knowledge systems in, about, and for Africa are urgent to counter reification of Western thought about the continent, its vast cultures and vast peoples. It is, thus, of mammoth importance to conduct research and build theory grown on African soil. As Nwosu (2014) recently pointed out, "There is a growing discourse in Africa regarding how best to position African scholars as strategic partners and competitors in knowledge production and distribution" (p. 39).

It must be noted that unlike the West, Africa has little to show for its involvement in rhetorical communication research. A number of the countries on the continent have for a long time pursued a media-tropic pedagogy. A media-tropic pedagogy considers the core of communication studies to be mass media-oriented. Taylor *et al.* (2004) have blamed this development on four events: (*a*) the colonial experience (*i.e.,* print journalism was used as a tool for colonization and liberation); (*b*) the dependence of psychology-based solutions to media uses and effects; (*c*) the idea of mass communication as a means of modernization, and (*d*) the problem of technological determinism (*e.g.*, the role information and communication technologies play in teaching and learning). The authors added that the teaching of introductory classes in human communication in Africa relies on research findings and textbooks that are often unsuitable to explain the African communication experience, and thus called for a shift in paradigm that will "permit better understanding of the African communication environment" (p. 1).

An empirical exploration into these perspectives in an African nation such as Ghana is important in order that the scholarly community may understand, further theorize about, and seek ways to help address the political texture of rhetorical communication which has undeniably undergone a massive global, or more appropriately, a transcultural transformation. In an ever-globalizing work culture, interventions from colleagues from the West can no longer be interpreted as interference as stakeholders in the educational enterprise seek new ways to make education more responsive to the exigencies of the 21st century. Technical communicators Brady and José (2009) couldn't

have been more right stating that, "… the globalization of the workplace increasingly requires that students be prepared to work in linguistically and culturally diverse contexts" (p. 41).

Problems facing scholars of African rhetoric

Scholars of African indigenous communication systems are confronted with two basic problems. The first concerns the trap to return to what may be referred to as "the romanticization of an Idyllic Africa" seeking to purge itself from the vestiges of the ex-colonial leviathan. Some commentators have observed that to think of what constitutes African indigenous communication is to idealize rhetorical traditions and practices that were privileged and conventionalized in pre-colonial Africa where the continent was "untouched." Following the work of Fanon (2008/1952) and his edict not to be slaves of the past, it can be contended that the effort would yield little results in unearthing African indigenous communication theory to the rest of the world. This is because although Africa does not belong in the abbreviated time of modernity, it certainly does not belong in the past. As a matter of fact, Africa belongs in the present of the past. Thus, scholars of African rhetorical thought and media can look back at the past to nuance thinking of the present and future. But to posit that African rhetoric should look up to Kemet as its crucible is to deny the complexities confronting it.

Another problem the scholar of African communication and media needs to grapple with is what may be termed as the *theory of equivalence*. Very often, in the quest to show the world that the continent has rich rhetorical and communication practices, African and Africanist scholars tend to create an unintended impression that it is only by reifying knowledge systems and tropes afforded in Western thought that they can legitimize African rhetoric. How do the five canons of rhetoric, for instance, look like in many African contexts? What kinds of *pistei* (appeals), *topoi*, or *kairoses* (contexts) characterize African rhetorical traditions? What is the nature of deliberative rhetoric in indigenous African court systems, and how do rhetorical situations shape, enact, or give rise to African oratorical discursive practices? Such questions, it may be noted, satisfy the quest to tell the West that Africa too has a unique type of rhetoric. What is even far more reaching, and I daresay quite risky, is the theorizing of African rhetoric, using Western tropes through and through to understand Africa. The *African Journal of Rhetoric*, the leading journal of rhetoric in Africa, recorded its earliest volumes (circa 2009-2010) in this tradition. For example, one of the leading scholars on the continent, Philipe-J Salazar is notably a French phenomenologist who draws on the works of Heidegger and Foucault to theorize about African rhetoric. So, what is risky about this? I used the

modifier *risky* because it will be of little consequence to learn, and hopefully unlearn, from other contexts culturally different from the West if we keep holding on to what we already know. Rather, our knowledge of the world, and for that matter, rhetoric, will grow if we practice radical ignorance. That is to say, we want to proceed on the assumption that the cultures we're entering and wish to know are epistemologically different from our own.

The nexus between African rhetorical theory and African philosophical thought

Any inquiry into the essence of African indigenous communications, it may be suggested, must first unpack the difficulty surrounding the concepts *Africa* and *African*. These labels are complex, and have multiple meanings. Africa is not a single continent with a single identity. There are multiple Africa*s* that have and continue to give rise to a bundle of identities. The identities can be mapped on the basis of race, representation, or history. Two of Mudimbe's (1988; 1994) renowned books, *The Invention of Africa* and *The Idea of Africa,* show that arguments about the histories, representations, and identities of Africa are nuanced. We, then, need to be clear about what we mean when we employ the descriptor *African*. What exactly is an African identity, and what does it entail? For Azenabor (2000), *African* can only mean a specific race which relates to individuals whose identity derives from the African continent. These individuals, Azenabor (2000) explained, may be blacks, non-blacks, Carribeans, White, or Arabs, and that despite their cultural diversity they share a relatively common history of colonial experience and tutelage. Writers from these cultures have greatly influenced African philosophical thought from their unique perspectives.

That said, African philosophy is not a homogeneous body of thought. In the first place, it is often confused with African communal thought. The latter represents mores, wise sayings, customary laws, folklore. These communal collections have didactic values, and carry the history and identity of the group (Boaduo, 2011). African philosophy, on the other hand, refers to a systematic inquiry into the epistemologies, ontologies, phenomenologies, and hermeneutics of Africans obtained through formal training. The difficulty with this training, as I have said before, is that when it does not proceed on reflexivity it presents African philsophical thought as an extension of Western ideation. For example, how much can be understood about African enthymemes, using the tools of Cartesian logic? (Wiredu, 1998). Another issue is that, African philosophy shares some commonalities with other fields such as Black Studies, African-American Studies, Afrocentrism, Cultural Theory, Postcolonial Studies, and Race Theory (Janz, 2007). There also are scholars

whose philosophic engagements are a reaction to the colonial obliteration of the African continent, or pre-colonial discourses of utopia, commonly termed as *narratives of return* (*e.g.,* Boaduo, 2011; Gade, 2011). Such dialectics may be considered as a postcolonial agenda in which African philosophers heavily rely on hermeneutics to deal with the *mis*understandings about/of Africa. Here mention must be made of the works of Outlaw (1998) and Asante (2007), and their coinage of such terms as *Afrocentricity* and *Afrology*.

What, then, is African philosophy, and what is its scope? It is interesting that pioneering work in this field formally commenced by Father Placide Tempels, a non-African, who in 1945 published *La Philosophie Bantoue* [*Bantu Philosophy*] as a challenge to Western philosophy. Tempels (1945) contested the claim that Africans were less capable of engaging in 'true' philosophy (see also Outlaw, 1998: 24). In particular, he disproved the idea that Africans cannot dissociate the subject from the object, nor time from space. Tempels' work, however, is criticized for its generalization and inability to articulate nuances of African lived experience. For instance, the work emphasizes Bantu communal wisdom, and yet says little about Bantu hermeneutics. In other words, Tempels' work tends to conflate the communal thought of the Bantu and the ability of the Bantu to philosophize.

African philosophy also struggles to establish geographical *versus* conceptual distinctions. Although a legion of scholars have argued that contemporary contemplations in African philosophy theorize the abstract (*e.g.*, Wiredu, 1998; Fayemi, 2011; Metz, 2014), their treatments tend to focus on geographical locations or ethnocultures, which gave birth to the pejorative term *ethnophilosophy* attached to this pursuit (*cf.* Mbiti, 1971; Gyekye, 1995). Geographical philosophical accounts problematize practitioner identity, concepts, and claims, as well as anthropology located within traditional communal wisdom. It was only in the 20th century that African and Africana scholars (the latter being scholars of African descent) took the spatial dimension much more seriously because it offers a phenomenological basis upon which African philosophy articulates an African lifeworld.

That said, I now wish to turn to a classification of African rhetorical traditions. Here I am inspired by the pioneering work of Oruka (1990) in his bold attempt at creating a taxonomy of African philosophy. Below is my own effort:

1. Ethno-rhetoric: This area examines the collective traditional wisdom or generally ontological assumptions and worldviews of African ethnic groups. An example may be Kwesi Yankah's (1995) of-cited *Speaking for the Chief*.
2. Sage rhetoric: This branch explores repositories of cultural wisdom.

3. Nationalistic/Ideological rhetoric: This is the critical examination of the rhetorical contemplations of emancipation and nation-building of key African political figures such as Kwame Nkrumah, Nelson Mandela, Julius Nyerere, and Leopold Senghor. An example is Nkrumah's (1963) *Africa Must Unite* and Mandela's (1995) *A Long Walk to Freedom*.
4. Literary/Artistic rhetoric: This area articulates concerns raised by literary stalwarts like Wole Soyinka, Ngugi w'a Thiongo, and Chinua Achebe. Examples of their works are *Brother Jero*, *Weep Not Child*, and *Things Fall Apart* respectively.
5. Hermeneutic philosophy/rhetoric: This field first began as the analysis of African languages for the sake of finding African philosophical content, and currently is understood as the philosophy of interpretation. Examples of scholars here are Kwesi Wiredu, Kwame Gyekye, and Godwin Azenabor.

Upon a careful examination of the taxonomy I have attempted to construct, we may hold that if rhetoric is construed as the study of the principles undergirding argumentation, thought, and knowledge, then, African rhetoric may be described as the rhetoric "that is nourished within an African cultural experience, tradition, and history" (Azenabor, 2000: 321). What makes African rhetoric unique is that, it has a metaphysical dimension and spiritual orientation which is more of co-existence with nature rather than conquest, more of collectivism rather than individualism, more of holism rather than atomism, more of synthesis rather than analysis. African rhetorical thought is, therefore, fundamentally subjectivist. It contemplates the human experience. This understanding is crucial for doing research in rhetorical communication. Obeng-Quaidoo (1986) argued that in order to propose communication theories and methodologies congruent with the African lived-experience, researchers need to understand African ontology and cosmology. According to him, "any discussion of methodological innovations without considerations for the underlying cultural imperatives is like a mouse gyrating forever" (p. 91). Because rhetoric is an enterprise of the culture from which it emerges, scholars of rhetoric need to grasp the basic philosophies that shape their discipline. One such tenet is the place of the individual in the social order. For Gyekye (1995), the African identity is largely amphibious, that is, it is neither communalistic nor individualistic. The admission of one does not negate the other; there is no dualism in the Akan, and possibly by extension, the African, idea of the human person. He posited that communalism is the Akan social thought of humanism which ensures the welfare of each member of the society. This means that no one individual is born outside of a community.

"Communalism insists that the good of all determines the good of each or, put differently, the welfare of each is dependent on the welfare of all" (p. 156). One's sense of responsibility, the author stressed, is measured in terms of one's responsiveness and sensitivity to the needs of the group. In his view, emphasis on community should not be read as whittling away individual identity, initiative, and responsibility. This is because the African, he said, has proverbs and dicta that expressly reflect the values of personal worth, aspiration, interests, and identity. After all, a society is a community of individuals, and individuals are individuals in society (p. 162).

The world senses I have discussed so far have implications for studying rhetoric in Africa. I am of the view that non-African scholars, in particular, need to be mindful that many local Africans will, in some cases, find it discomforting to isolate a member of their family or community for interview purposes; in such an instance, group or focus group interviews will be more appropriate because of the communal spirit of Africans. Obeng-Quaidoo (1988) notes that whereas Western communication is persuasive (*meaning giving*), Afro-centered communication tends to be cooperative (*meaning sharing*). The problem of the relationship between an individual and society is a problem of what I term "collective subjectivity." To be a human subject, I contend, is to be able to understand how to negotiate one's own agency in the web of structural constraints society has established. Anthony Giddens intimates that subjectivity is the pre-constituted center of experience of culture and history. In his theory of the duality of structure, Giddens (1984) argues that human action, meaning, and subjectivity are always shaped by the duality of individual agency and societal constraints. These activities, he stresses, shape the conditions that make social practices possible because "actors draw upon the modalities of structuration in the reproduction of systems of interaction" (p. 28).

In bringing this section to an end, it is important to draw some connections between African Philosophy and European Continental Philosophy. Both African and Continental Philosophies recognize that communication is an embodied practice. For example, the African social thought of communalism parallels Heidegger's (1962) concept of *thrownness (Geworfenheit)*. This idea explains that humans (*Dasein*) do not choose the material conditions of their existence. On the contrary, it is these conditions that determine human existence. Being 'thrown' into the world means learning to deal with life as one knows it. Thrownness explains the perennial conditions of humans with all the attendant frustrations, sufferings, and demands that humans do not get to choose. A critical study of rhetoric, must, therefore, explicate how the perennial conditions of human existence impact on the communication behaviors of social actors. An Afrocentric study of embodied

communication, in a similar fashion, should articulate the idea that rhetoric is engaging when it involves the whole gamut of the human person. This means that some African conceptions of communication, as in Continental philosophy, valorize a comprehensive approach to communicating with the other that is not limited in scope. It can be reckoned that they both focus on how mind and body cohere to give meaning to particular acts. An embodied ritual is filled with a number of meanings to be decoded within specific cultural contexts. In North America, for example, a thumbs up is an expression of cheer and approval, although this may attract outright condemnation because it is considered an insult in many Ghanaian cultures. It is precisely because of the possibility of *mis*reading the meaning of communication outside of the West in African cultures that it is important to understand why it matters to theorize African rhetoric.

The next section discusses the usefulness of studying rhetoric in Africa, using African tropes by focusing on an indigenous game called *ampe (am-pay)*. Interviews with elderly women in Cape Coast, former administrative seat of the Gold Coast, have revealed to me that the name is an onomatopoeia that imitates the repetitive clapping of hands (*am*) and the thrusting of one foot forward (*pay*).

What does Ghana's *ampe* teach us about African rhetoric?

Ampe is a traditional Ghanaian game or sport usually played by two or more among females. It is especially commonplace game among young girls which involves jumping up and thrusting one foot forward while clapping simultaneously. The game is also played in some parts of Nigeria and Cameroon where it is known as *oga* and *nzango* respectively. It is difficult to trace the exact origin of *ampe* because information about the game has been by word of mouth. Our interviews with elderly women in surrounding villages in Cape Coast show that *ampe* dates back to more than two hundred years ago.

Fig. 1 School children playing *ampe* on a school compound

In times past, the game was played among females to entertain themselves. Even though *ampe* may have originated from Ghana, its popularity spread to other African countries such as Congo, Togo and Ivory Coast. In Ghana, the game is played only during the day because superstition has it that if played at night, the participants would lose their mothers. It was sometimes a competitive sport between groups from several villages. Some tournaments were watched by a number of spectators and could last for as long as two to three days. The type of clothes worn to play the game was very significant in the early years of the game. Each player was supposed to wear a short and tight skirt which was necessary in facilitating the movements of the legs during the game.

The popularity of *ampe* has waned over the years due to a number of reasons. The first could be the allure of technophilia. Millennials would rather play video games or surf the internet rather than play *ampe*. Another reason that accounts for the non-popularity of the game is the absence of the game in Ghanaian schools' co-curricular activities. Unlike popular games such as football, handball, high jump, and volley ball, *ampe* is excluded from the physical education programs in Ghanaian basic and high schools. Since the history of the game is passed on through word of mouth, valuable information may be missing during the process of passing the information from one generation to another.

Because *ampe* is a game, albeit one on the decline in Ghana, its valences are often overlooked. That is to say, the significance of the game is usually taken for granted, and worse of all, it has attracted little scholarly scrutiny. Our analysis of the game shows that *ampe* is a highly rhetorical engagement in which affordances such as rhetorical appeals are highly deployed. For instance, the game stimulates intellection in many performers or players. The most obvious rhetorical strategy in playing *ampe* is *multi-tasking*. This may be

explained as simultaneous rhetorical performances in which a player/s draws on all available means of winning the game of play. It involves clapping, jumping, singing and thrusting a foot forward simultaneously. Focus on the game is thus key to emerge victorious. This task requires sharp cognitive skills displayed by opposing players to combine all these embodied actions at once in addition to thinking of what foot the opponent will thrust forward. In a word, *ampe* is a game that teaches critical-thinking, agility, and concentration. These are some of its inherent rhetorical arguments. It sharpens players' cognitive reflex and alertness for precision and quick decision-making.

The game also thrives on the *ethos* of opposing teams. Each opposing team relies on the dexterity of their protagonist. This is because the game thrives on the rule of *probability*. Probability is the measure of a chance that an event will occur as a result of experiment. A team, usually even in number (two, four, six), is made up of a *mother* (captain) and her *daughters* (or team mates). It is the mother who comes forward to take on the mother of another team in a competition. In *ampe*, either party wins only when the same legs of the two players meet or when they thrust their foot forward in opposite direction. My research shows that when legs don't meet, it is called *ampaho*, to wit the legs did not meet. This is what is called *oppositionality* or *divergence*. The reverse is *ehyiam*, that is to say, the legs have met. This is termed as *convergence*. The probability that either of them will occur is one. It follows, then, that there is only one chance at winning an opponent and moving on. Since the ultimate goal is not to lose but win, only one who is observant and is able to predict an outcome has the tendency of wining over an opponent player one at a time. All these processes take someone who is sound and has a reasoning capacity to arrive at this. *Strategy* is thus key in this enterprise. How this comes to play in *ampe* is in terms of selection of players to make up a team. As simple as it may seem, there is an ultimate goal that a team desires. In order that it is achieved, the team needs someone who is very skilled and predictive of how the game goes to identify who their threats are in order to quickly eliminate them from their opponents' team so they can have a way to victory. This is because, if proper selection of team members is not done, the opponent may be a threat to victory for the leading team.

Fig. 2 Two young 'White' girls explaining the rules of *ampe*

It must also be noted that playing *ampe* evokes *high pathos*. This is often made possible through the artistic deployment of songs that are quite simple in composition. Singing is the wheel upon which the game runs. For instance, there are special songs that are sung prior to the commencement of the game proper, and there are those that are sung during and after the game. Here is an example of a song sung before the start of the game:

Mother mother mother
Paaa paa paa (while clapping of hands)
Are your buttocks shaking?
Paa paa paa
Are you ready to learn?
Paa paa paa
Blue, white, and yellow (Repeat the same line)

The chant above presents powerful rhetorical arguments. At the outset, the song lets us in on the nature of humor afforded in a child's world. At least, they are capable of starting a competition on a lighter note by making fun of the derrière of their mothers. More important, the song is didactic in nature; that is, it is a call on players to learn although they may be playing in the process. "Are you ready to learn?" emphasizes the rhetorical question. Compare the song above with the following performance which is chanted while the game is ongoing. Like the previous song, the next song also features very forcefully the theme of motherhood:

Mother go last
Mother go last
Mother mother do something
Before you die

When this song is performed, the leaders of the team, that is the *mothers*, rotate when they stop winning. "It means instead of having a *shoot,* you will be the last person to play" Akosua explained to me. Here is another one. Notice how all the songs are gendered, and reflect the lived-experience of the performers: they are girls and so sing songs that seek to challenge as well as educate them about their femininity What do you think the reference to vegetables mean in the following recital?

Armooo (tomatoes)
Shitɔ (pepper)
Sɛbɛɛɛ (garden eggs)

Here, each team decides what vegetable or sometimes fruit they would like to be called. As they win, they call out the names.

It is now necessary to point out that one of the overlooked usefulness of *ampe* is that it turns our understanding of what competitions and winning are all about *topsy turvy*. While modern sports, as we have come to know, tend to show gladiatorial tendencies, *ampe*, on the contrary, tends to make a different argument. That is, it is communitarian in nature. It is a kind of Ubuntu that aims to promote unity among players and their cheering audience. The story is told of an anthropologist who proposed a game to a group of African children. He placed a basket of sweets near a tree and made the children stand 100 meters away. Then he announced that whoever reached first would get all the sweets in the basket when he said, "ready, steady, go!" Do you know what these children did? They all held each other's hands, ran together toward the tree, divided the sweets equally among themselves, ate the sweets together. When the anthropologist asked them why did they do so, they all said in unison, "Ubuntu." They meant to say, "How can one be happy when the others are sad?" Ubuntu in their language means "I am because we are, and because we are I am." Recall that what makes African rhetoric is its spiritual orientation which is more of co-existence with nature rather than conquest, more of collectivism rather than individualism (Azenabor, 2000).

Conclusion

This paper sought to reimagine ways of looking at the idea of rhetoric in Africa. It has advanced a dialectic that aims to recognize the power of rhetoric unto itself not as a way of paying obeisance to indigeneity but as a way of conceptualizing African rhetoric on its own terms. This paper has argued that it is by thinking, speaking, and writing about African rhetoric in these terms that we can contribute meaningfully to the web of global scholarship. Such

conceptualization of rhetoric within the context of sub-Saharan Africa should rightly be termed *Afrifuge*. Afrifuge is not a nonce word reminiscent of Afrocentricity. For the latter, as we have indicated earlier, is caught in the trap of establishing an idea parallel to Eurocentricity. By using the term *Afrifuge*, on the contrary, we invite all scholars of rhetoric, communication, and allied fields to collaborate in order to theorize the lived-experience of the contemporary African.

Afrifuge offers a conceptual metaphor for finding solace in a liminal space not bounded by filiation with the past nor romance with the West. It should be understood as an attempt to unpack, deconstruct, and unearth unknown and already known forms of rhetorically speaking about communication phenomena in a conceptual Africa. Thus an *Afrifugal* theory of rhetoric should be bold to add to the canon of rhetorical studies by seeking to develop novel ways of thinking about rhetoric. *Afrifuge* is an invitation to theorize anew.

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Language, culture and the conceptualization of character in selected Yorùbá proverbs

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Abstract

This paper investigates the cultural import of proverbs in contemporary Yorùbá society in Nigeria. Proverbs are short, witty, popular expressions that contain morals, truth, socio-cultural precepts and heritage of a particular group of people. Every ethnic group the world over has its set of proverbs formulated and collected over several generations. Proverbs give insights into wise living and stimulate good decisions thereby satisfying the concept of moralities in African realities. One common thread that runs through world religions and cultures is the universal affirmation of the cultivation and practice of "good character". This concept, popularly known in the Yorùbá milieu as "omoluabi" is believed to be responsible for fundamental contributions of morality to the overall human flourishing and wholeness of Yorùbá societies and people. Proverbs constitute a veritable component of 'ways of speaking' among the constituents of Yorùbá speech communities across age groups, as well as social and occupational categories of speakers. Using fourteen purposively selected proverbs that deal with the Yorùbá concept of "Omoluabi" (good character), this paper employs a socio-cultural linguistic approach to show how the rhetorical force of the proverbs can help reveal the ills in our society and reclaim some of the virtues of "Omoluabi". Findings show that Yorùbá, like many other African languages, is richly endowed with proverbs emphasizing virtues such as patience, respect for elders and constituted authority, selflessness, contentment and dignity in labour , all of which can bring about cultural re-orientation if imbibed by citizens.

Keywords: culture; good character; re-orientation; Yorùbá proverbs

Introduction

Nothing defines a culture as distinctly as its language, and the element of language that best sums up a society's values and beliefs is its proverbs. Mbiti (1981:7) suggests that "in proverbs, there is a rich deposit of the wisdom of many generations". Similarly, Usman (2018) views a proverb as a piece of folk wisdom expressed with terseness and charm and characterized by the economic use of words, sharpness of focus and a touch of literary/poetic beauty. They convey nuances of culture and through their transmission from one generation to another, ensure the continued relevance of such nuances (Ademilokun, 2014). Among the Yorùbá, proverbs 'constitute a powerful rhetorical device for the shaping of moral consciousness, opinions, and beliefs" Akporobaro & Emovon (1994:169). Proverbs are believed to be inherited from the ancestors and used to communicate a dogmatic wisdom. They constitute one of the privileged deposits of popular wisdom and philosophy. They are the library of general African Culture (Tchimboto, 2017:7). A proverb is a simple and concrete saying popularly known and repeated. It expresses a truth based on common sense or the practical experience of humanity, and are often metaphorical. While previous studies (Ojoade, 2004; Adeleke, 2009; Daramola, 2013; Ademilokun, 2014; Ehineni, 2016; Faloju, 2020) have focused mostly on the significance, categorization, discourse and structural analysis of Yorùbá proverbs in terms of syntax, semantics and semiotics, this paper examines the cultural aspects of Yorùbá proverbs.

The importance of proverbs in African cultures

Every ethnic group in Africa and the world over has its set of proverbs, maxims and popular sayings formulated and collected over several generations. Proverbs reflect the community's world view by projecting its beliefs, moral, attitudes and inner life. They are found in every language community and constitute a very important category in African folklore. African proverbs offer wisdom and poetry in just one sentence. Even though proverbs are universal and everyone can relate to them, they are also uniquely African and provides insight into African cultures. African proverbs can convey wisdom, truth, a discovery of ideas, as well as life lessons.

The Yorùbá are mostly found in the South Western region of Nigeria even though, over the years, they have migrated to other parts of the world – Togo, Benin Republic, Côte D'Ivoire and some parts of Brazil, among other

places. Proverbs are the poetry and the moral science of the Yorùbá nation (Ajibola, 1979). Yorùbá proverbs are not only just a significant part of the daily life of the Yorùbá people, they constitute a rich integral part of the linguistic repertoire of the speech community (Ehineni, 2016). The importance of proverbs in Yorùbá context is underscored in the Yorùbá proverb that says "Owe l'esin oro, bi oro ba sonu, owe ni a fi nwa a" (A proverb is a horse which can carry you swiftly to the discovery of ideas sought). During deliberations among elders in council and at home settling disputes, a relevant proverb throws light on the subject and drives home the points. In the Yorùbá society, no one can be considered educated or qualified to take part in communal discussions unless he is able to quote the proverbs suitable for each situation. (Delano, 1976). According to Sheba (2006), Proverbs are a condensed form of the wisdom of the people accumulated over the ages through a careful observation of everyday experiences involving human beings, animals, nature, natural phenomena and social events.

The Yoruba people are moralistic. Many of the Yorùbá ideas on religion, morality and courtesy are woven into proverbs. It is therefore expected that many Yorùbá proverbs will be laden with thoughts on good living and high moral standards. A unique attribute of Yorùbá proverbs is that some proverbs are historical in origin, and bring to remembrance the events (Such as wars, battles, famine, pestilences, social experiences, etc.) that led to their establishment (Fasiku, 2006). For example the proverb, *Bi o ba laya 0 se ka, bi o ba gbo kuu Gaa o o sotito* literarily translated as, 'if you have the mind to be wicked, if you hear about Gaa's death you will be truthful'. This proverb suggests that there was once a major character named *Gaa*. *Gaa* was a Prime Minister in the old Oyo Empire (1759-1775 A.D.). Yorùbá history has it that he was cruel, oppressive and responsible for the dethronement and execution of four successive *Alaafins* (Kings). *Gaa* died a slow and painful death as the king instructed that he should be chopped alive till he died. The derivation of this proverb from history is aimed at deterring evil and immoral acts. Some Yorùbá proverbs are derived from folktales:

> *Àḷọ ni ti Ahun, àbọ̀ ni ti àna ṛ̀è*
> 'Going is for the tortoise and returning is for his in-law.'
> 'If the righteous has gone too far, he will receive criticism.'

According to the Yorùbá folktale from which the proverb above was derived, once upon a time, the Tortoise tried to break into his in-law's farm and when caught, he was tied to a tree along the road leading to the fields by his in-laws. At first, all the farmers who heard what the Tortoise had done condemned

him for his deed and supported his in-law's decision to tie him to a tree. However when the tortoise was still strapped to the tree by the time the farmers were returning from their farms in the evening they laid the blame on the in-law and questioned what he had done to warrant such a severe punishment. Since then, the saying "going is for the tortoise and returning is for his in-law" has gained a proverbial status.

There are also some Yoruba proverbs that originate from the Ifa Corpus. An example is:

A fipá lówó kì í kádún, a fi wàràwàrà lówó kì í pósù.

'A person who acquires wealth via force does not survive a year, a person who acquires wealth hastily will not live beyond a month,' which means that 'He who acquires wealth forcefully hastily will not live long.'

Ogúndá méjì

I	I
I	I
I	I
II	II

A fipá lówó kì í kádún

A person who acquires wealth forcefully does not survive a year

A fi wàrà wàrà lówó tíí ṣ'ológun wọn ì í dọ̀la

A person who acquires wealth hastily will not live beyond a day.

Bọ́ pẹ́ tití n ó lówó;

In a while, I'll become wealthy.

Wọ́n ń bẹ lábà tí ń jẹ ẹ̀sun iṣu.

They are consuming roasted yam in the village.

Ọjọ́ ẹ̀san ò lọ títí

That the day of reckoning is drawing near

Kò jẹ́ ọ̀rọ̀ ó duni

makes things bearable.

Adífá fún Adigunlà, tí ó digun sèsêê

For a hunter who will be pursued, divines

Kèè pẹ́ o, kè jìnà

In a jiffy

Ẹ wá wo' fá awókì bí ti í ṣẹ

See how the priest's holy words are manifesting.

Functions of Proverbs

Proverbs remain a most powerful and effective instrument for the transmission of culture, social morality, manners and ideas of a people from one generation to another. The reason for this efficacy of a proverb is that, it is an aphorism, a wise saying based upon people's experience, and it is a reflection of the social values and sensibility of the people.

A collection of the proverbs of a community/nation/society represents the ethnography of the people, capable of providing a penetrating picture of the people's way of life, their philosophy, their criticism of life, moral truths and social values. Through proverbs, the tradition, culture and norms of a group of people can be preserved. Not only are proverbs used to make effective points, they are also used to embellish speeches and add colour to everyday conversations (Akanbi, 2015). Proverbs are essential to life and language. Without proverbs, language would be like a skeleton without flesh; body devoid of soul (Ashipu, 2013:11).

Whenever there is doubt about an accepted pattern of behaviour, doubt about a stipulated line of action, or traditional norms are threatened, there are always proverbs and indeed tales or myths to affirm, illuminate and buttress the wisdom of the traditional code of conduct. Proverbs help to strengthen tradition and contribute to the life and continuity of a given society, as well as the individual who lives in it. Proverbs are carriers of culture, they convey the

nuances of culture and by their transmission from one generation to another, they ensure the continued relevance of such nuances (Ademilokun, 2014).A proverb is a tool to teach people to practice ethical value and sociable behaviours. Proverbs constitute one of the privileged deposit of popular wisdom and philosophy. They are the library of general African culture (Tchimboto, 2017:7). Proverbs can be used to '…recall particular events in the life of the community which created them and in which they are used'. These events include wars, battles, famines or pestilences and other social experiences that are characteristic of such a community (Delano, 1973:77). The next section reviews some studies on proverbs, followed by a brief discussion of the theoretical framework for the paper. I then explain the data collection procedure before presenting and analysing them. Thereafter I present the concluding remarks.

Literature Review

A number of scholars have made fruitful efforts to demonstrate the value and the importance of proverbs among the Yorùbá and other ethnic groups in Nigeria. Delano's (1973) paper makes a passing reference to the significance of Yorùbá proverbs as one of the sources of Yorùbá history. Udoidem's (1984) paper examines the epistemological significance of proverbs among the Ibibios in Nigeria. Using an eclectic approach, Ojoade (2004) classifies Yorùbá proverbs under religious, moral and psychological, environmental and climatic proverbs, oriental and occidental borrowing of proverbs. Adeleke's (2009) study illustrates the value of proverbs to Yorùbá historiography, using the concept of globalisation as a launch pad.

Using Eco's concept of 'Semiotics of Metaphor', Daramola (2013) attempts an exploratory categorization of aspects of the semiotic systems of English and Yorùbá . Ademilokun's (2014) paper focuses on Yorùbá proverbs and the anti-corruption crusade in Nigeria. Dickson & Mbosowo's (2014) paper examines the semantic import of African proverbs about women and their status as depicted by selected proverbs and wise sayings from several ethnic groups across the continent. Ehineni's (2016) study, a discourse and structural analysis of Yorùbá proverbs collected from oral interviews and native Yorùbá texts, shows that proverbs are a culturally and linguistically rich significant part of the Yorùbá speech community. Faloju's (2020) paper focuses on the worldview, the socio-cultural and the anthropological linguistic import of children and childbirth in Russian and Yorùbá proverbs. Using the worldview theory, the paper brings to light the peculiarities, similarities and differences in the representation of children and childbirth in the two cultures. It however argues that the cultural phenomenon observable in the

representation of children and childbirth in these two cultures is somewhat universal.

Yorùbá proverbs are one of the tools for communicating, negotiating and practising moralities. They constitute the foundation on which moral positions can be taken and established. Using some purposively selected proverbs that deal with the Yorùbá concept of "Omoluabi' this paper employs a cultural linguistic approach to scrutinize selected proverbs in order to unveil the underlying cultural patterns in the proverbs.

Methodology

Proverbs used for analysis in this study were drawn from written texts and journals. In addition, different informants volunteered some proverbs, while the researcher also took advantage of being a native speaker and user of Yorùbá language.

Theoretical framework

The theoretical anchor for this study is Cultural Linguistics. Cultural Linguistics is a field of research which explores the interrelationship between language, culture and conceptualizations (Sharifian, 2011, 2017a, 2017b) by integrating cognitive linguistics with three anthropological traditions namely ethnography of speaking, ethnosemantics and Boasian Linguistics (Palmer, 1996:10-26). This multidisciplinary field of study explores conceptualizations encoded through linguistic elements (one of such culturally defined linguistic elements is the proverb) and is able to reveal the values and beliefs hidden in a people's language. Cultural Linguistics provides insights into the nature of, and the relationship amongst, cultural cognition, cultural conceptualizations, and language. Cultural cognition is the cognition that results from the interactions among the members of a speech community. As a "collective memory bank" of the cultural cognition of a speech community, language is presumed to store and communicate cultural cognition. In other words, language is a tool for the transmission of cultural conceptualizations.The analytical framework of Cultural Linguistics provides a number of analytical tools (cultural schemas, cultural categories, and cultural metaphors which is the most relevant tool for the current study), referred to as 'cultural conceptualizations,' and explores how they are encoded in certain features of human languages and language varieties. Cultural metaphors are cross-domain conceptualizations grounded in cultural traditions such as folk medicine, worldview, or a spiritual belief system (see Sharifian et al, 2008). For example, temperature terms, in particular the terms garm 'warm' and sard 'cold', are used as cultural metaphors in Persian to

categorise not only edible things (fish is "cold", but walnuts are "warm), such as food and fruit, but human nature as well. Thus, individuals may also be characterized as having a hot or a cold "nature". These categorisations have provided Persian speakers with a kind of folk medicine approach to people's health problems. Thus, people diagnose each other's rather mild illnesses as due to a kind of temperament imbalance, such as having had too much "cold" or "hot" food, and the opposite type is often recommended as a kind of remedy. For example, someone may feel lethargic and that can be attributed to the result of eating beef, which is categorised as a "cold" food. The person may then be advised to have some "warm" food to rebalance his/her digestive system. This advice is consistent with Iranian Traditional Medicine (ITM) and the theory of the four humours, in which temperature concepts play a pivotal role. In the following section the data for the study are presented and analysed using a socio-cultural linguistic approach.

Presentation and Analysis of Data

Proverb: *Iwa ni orisa; bi a ba ti hu u si ni ifi gbe 'ni*
Translation: Good character is a deity; it favours one as it is exhibited.
Interpretation: If you have good character, you will benefit from it. As you sow, so will you reap.
Cultural metaphor: In traditional African religion, deities are supreme beings that elders regularly pour libations and offer prayers to, giving thanks to them and seeking their blessing. They are also highly venerated and considered guardians of the moral order. To equate good character with a deity, therefore, is to say good character is something to be desired, hallowed and sought after, the same way we seek God.
Proverb: *Apa Lara, Igbonwo ni iyekan; bi a o ri eni fehinti bi ole li a nri; bi a ko ri eni gbojule, a tera mo ise eni.*
Translation: A man's arms are his relatives, his elbows are his brothers and sisters; if we find no one to lean on, we are like a Lazy man; if we find no one to rely on, we apply ourselves to our work.
Interpretation: people should apply themselves to their work instead of hoping for help from others. (The proverb extols hardwork)
Cultural metaphor: In the traditional African setting, relatives/family are the people one maintains close ties with, exchanging visits, phone calls, letters and email, holiday or birthday gifts and turning to one another for assistance in times of need. Family members are the ones who provide socialization, affection and emotional support. Their functions also include economic, protective, educational, religious and recreational ones. By saying 'a man's arms are his relatives', one is more or less saying that the same way one

depends and counts on one's relatives for all manner of support, one should consider one's hands as dependable and reliable tools of labour that will never fail one.

Proverb: *Ibi ghogbo ni iro adaba l'orun*.

Translation: The dove finds everywhere comfortable (the dove is noted as a bird of peace). Symbol of peace

Interpretation: A peaceful man is likely to find peace where ever he goes; it is the state of his own mind and thoughts which determines the situation in which he is likely to find himself. (a piece of advice on the need to be a peace-loving individual)

Cultural Metaphor: The dove represents love and peace. A person referred to as a dove is usually peaceable, loving and kind with a good understanding of life and problems that others may be having; he or she is also very devoted to his or her goals and loved ones. He/she would go to any length to ensure that others achieve their goals. Such a person is sacrificial and altruistic by nature.

Proverb: *Aguntan ti o ba ba aja rin yi o je imi*.

Translation: The sheep that moves in the company of dogs will eat excrement (dogs, although very useful in Yorùbáland, are considered to be low animals because of their habit of eating human waste. In the olden days, many nursing mothers kept dogs as pets. The dogs served the purpose of eating the excrement of infants.

Interpretation: This is a warning to avoid bad company.

"Evil communication corrupts good manners"

Cultural metaphor: In Yorùbá culture, the sheep is known for its gentility or at times, its sheer stupidity or sluggish intellect, while the dog is known for being an uncritical follower (strays easily); also for sexual incontinence / promiscuity and lack of table manners.

Proverb: *Alaso ala ki ilo iso elepo*.

Translation: One who is clad in fine white clothes (apparel) does not go to the stall of a palm-oil seller.

Interpretation: If you have a good name it is unwise to move in bad company. (If you have a good character (alaso ala) you won't hang out with people of questionable or dubious character (elepo)

Cultural metaphor: In African, including Yorùbá culture, white ('ala' or 'funfun') symbolizes purity, innocence and all that is good. The Hausas, for example, believe that white is a symbol of positive and desirable things. In Yorùbá colour classification, '*funfun*' represents a category of colours which includes white (other colours in this category are turqoise, blue, silver, chrome and other icy colours) that connotes peaceful feeling. White is seen as a replica of purity. Therefore, white attire is worn by people who are not expected to participate in or do evil. The gods and goddesses that are described and

represented with '*funfun*' colours are practically accepted as the 'good ones'. In contrast, pupa (which is the colour of palm-oil '*epo*') refers to a category of colours that encompasses colours such as orange, dark yellow, gold, etc., which relate to hot, fiery characteristics. The colour of fire (as well as palm oil) is red which connotes danger and fearful individuals or creatures. '*Pupa*' (red) has the psychological dimension of a dangerous personality who possesses a trait of wickedness and lacks mercy; someone who is passionate about evil, gets angry very easily and whose second nature is evil. The associated deities are the ones involved in carrying out evil. Buildings that are not meant for the general public (e.g. shrines) are painted red. Examples of such buildings in Yorùbáland are the buildings of Orisapopo in Ogbomoso, Obatala in Ila, Oya in Jebba and Irele in Ikirun (see Oluwole, Ahmad & Ossen, 2013).

Proverb: '*Fila ko dun bi ki a mo o de; ki a ri owo ra eleya ko to ki oye 'ni*'

Also: '*Gele odun bi ka mo we, ka mo we ko to ki oye ni*'.

Interpretation: Having a cap is not so pleasant or as important as knowing how to wear it. Having money to buy eleya cloth is not as important as the fit of the apparel on the wearer (There are different ways of wearing a cap in Yorùbáland; Eleya is an expensive native fabric).

Interpretation: To reach a position of honour and regard is less important than to know how to maintain the dignity such a position requires. Looking like a dignitary is less important than having dignity that befits the office. Do not just look the part, have the character. This is the English equivalent of "Appearances are deceptive".

Cultural metaphor: In Yorùbá culture, it is expected that respectable, responsible and wealthy men and women would dress in expensive attires complete with caps (for men) and headpieces (for the women). But we all know that it is not the clothes that make a man or woman. This proverb delves into the core of Yorùbá value system, reminding one that the real beauty is the inner beauty and not the outer one. Thus, to emphasize the importance attached to good character, the Yorùba people would say: "*bíbíre kò se fowó rà*" (that is good character/reputation cannot be bought with money). Another proverb with a similar interpretation is:

Proverb: '*Iwa rere l'eso eniyan.*'

Interpretation: This means that 'good character is the perfect adornment. A good name is better than riches.

Cultural metaphor: Outward dressing/adornment is not what makes you a person. What makes you beautiful as a person is your character. Good character, therefore, is like wearing gemstones: a self-adornment that stands you out.

Proverb: '*Ìdọ̀bálẹ̀ kì í sèwà, tinú ń bẹ níinú.*'

Interpretation: Prostration is not synonymous with virtue, one's intention is in the mind.

Cultural metaphor: The proverb preaches caution in terms of interpersonal relationships. Among the Yorùbá, prostrating (or kneeling) is a sign of respect, a gesture which elders do not joke with. The proverb, however, takes that into account to caution people that prostrating to show respect does not erase the person's ulterior motives. Simply put, that a person shows traditional ethics by prostrating to an authority is not a sign of full support or loyalty, and should not be wholly taken as such.

Proverb: '*Ìjàkùmọ̀ kì í rìnde òsán, ẹni a bíire kì í rìnru*'.

Interpretation: The jackal is barely seen during the day, one of noble birth shouldn't be seen at midnight.

Cultural metaphor: Traditionally, the Yorùbá believe that the night is a respecter of no one. Hence, the saying, '*òkùnkùn ò mẹni ọ̀wọ̀*'- 'once it's dark, your reputation is unnoticed'. It is also believed spiritually that one may encounter malevolent spirits when it is dark. Hence, it is advisable to do whatever one has to do during the day, and remain indoors at night.

Proverb: '*Bí ẹnu bá ti ń gba dòdò, kò ní gba òdodo*'.

Interpretation: When the mouth is well fed, it becomes docile.

Cultural metaphor: The proverb cautions against incessant acceptance of gifts, especially by people saddled with responsibilities to maintain law and order. It draws example from the fact that when one has his/her hands in a cookie jar, he/she finds it difficult to criticize others that have decided to do same. '*Dòdò*' is symbolises anything tempting or pleasurable. It does not necessarily translate to 'fried plantain'.

Proverb: '*Ìjekúje ni kì í jẹ́ kí ẹnu àgbà ó tọ́ẹ̀*.'

Interpretation: An elder who eats without caution loses respect.

Cultural metaphor: Elders are authorities in Yorùbáland. It is expected of the youth to listen whenever an elder admonishes or advices. However, the proverb is a warning to the elders that the position is not automatic, or synonymous with age. It belongs to elders who have been able to caution themselves on how they relate with the younger generation in all aspects.

Proverb: '*Orúkọ rere sàn ju wúrà àti fàdákà lọ.*'

Interpretation: A good name is better that gold and silver

Cultural metaphor: The proverb reiterates the tradition of knowing the source of a person's wealth before partaking or spending with such a person. Among the Yorùbá of old, if a person's source of wealth is not well defined or known, the community will distance themselves from such a person. This is because the society believes that for an individual to have acquired such wealth suddenly, they must have thrown caution to the wind, not minding whatever

the consequences will be. They have chosen wealth over humanity, and others will not allow this to happen to them. Silver and gold represents wealth and other good things that may lead to greed.
Proverb: '*Owó tán ọ̀wọ́ oníwà, ó dọ̀sonù.*'
Interpretation: In the absence of money, a good person becomes despondent.
Cultural metaphor: This proverb reiterates the position of the Yorùbá on the importance of money. This Proverb preaches against the act of greed and how important it is to maintain a good reputation, and not lose it over money. This proverb however insists that money is key to existence, and in the absence of money, especially from one who once had enough, such a person's attitude may be affected. Simply put, lack of money is frustrating.
Proverb: '*Ọba tó je tí ìlú dẹ̀rọ̀, orúkọ rẹ̀ kò ní parẹ́, èyí tí ó je tí ìlú tú, orúkọ rẹ̀ kò ní parẹ́.*'
Interpretation: History will not forget the king whose reign was peaceful, and one whose reign was full of turmoil.

The proverb implies that in whatever we do, we should always remember that our acts will someday become history. More importantly, things that will be said about us after our demise, will be far more than what actually happened. For example, if a king is seen as wicked by his subjects during his reign his subjects might not be able to say what and how they feel about him, but long after he is gone, his acts will be narrated and made to look worse than how they really were. The proverb preaches the importance of living a decent life in order to leave good legacies. More importantly, it must be remembered always that nothing lasts forever. Every action will someday become history but history will last forever. The proverb highlights the fact that one is immortalized in the memories of others through ones actions and inaction long after one has left the scene.

Conclusion

The Yorùbá culture is a repository of traditions, norms, values and social thoughts which structure social relations and actions according to indigenous value systems regardless of modernity induced by the over 100 years of colonisation (Laitin 1986; Okunoye 2010). A significant aspect of Yorùbá popular culture propagated through proverbs and songs as well as everyday routine interactions accentuates the value of good character. This paper has explored the inherent principles of '*omoluabi*', as reflected in selected Yorùbá proverbs. The main thrust of the paper is that a cultural re-orientation of Nigerians towards the ideals of the Yoruba philosophy of *omoluabi* (good

character) would bring about positive effects in remoulding the Nigerian society towards a moral path. It is important for the society to go back to the basics by integrating programmes that will teach young Nigerian citizens at the primary and secondary school levels aspects of the Yorùbá notion of good character. Proverbs that emphasize virtues such as patience, respect for elders and constituted authority, selflessness, contentment, dignity in labour and hard work as reflected in many of the Yorùbá proverbs should be incorporated into the primary and secondary schools' Civic Studies curriculum. If the youth, in turn, imbibe the lessons behind these proverbs, it is very likely that many of them will grow up with the right attitude.

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