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The Crisis of Cultural Memory in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*

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If there is any single work that can be considered central to the evolving canon of modern African literature, it is, without question, Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. The novel owes this distinction to the innovative significance it assumed as soon as it was published, a significance that was manifested in at least two respects. In the first place, the novel provided an image of an African society, reconstituted as a living entity and in its historic circumstance: an image of a coherent social structure forming the institutional fabric of a universe of meanings and values. Because this image of Africa was quite unprecedented in literature, it also carried considerable ideological weight in the specific context of the novel's writing and reception. For it cannot be doubted that the comprehensive scope of Achebe's depiction of a particularized African community engaged in its own social processes, carried out entirely on its own terms, with all the internal tensions this entailed, challenged the simplified representation that the West offered itself of Africa as a formless area of life, as "an area of darkness" devoid of human significance.[1] Thus, beyond what might be considered its ethnographic interest, which gave the work an immediate and ambiguous appeal--a point to which we shall return--Achebe's novel articulated a new vision of the African world and gave expression to a new sense of the African experience that was more penetrating than what had been available before its appearance.

The second factor contributing to the esteem in which Achebe's novel is held has to do with the quality of his manner of presentation, in which the cultural reference governs not merely the constitution of the novel's fictional universe but also the expressive means by which the collective existence, the very human experience framed within this universe, comes to be conveyed. For the novel testifies to an aesthetic project which consists in fashioning a new language appropriate to its setting, serving therefore to give life and substance to the narrative content and thus to enforce the novelist's initial gesture of cultural reclamation. As a consequence, the manner of presentation became integral to the narrative development to a degree that must be considered unusual in the normal run of novelistic writing. As Emmanuel Obiechina has remarked, "the integrative technique in which background and atmosphere are interlaced with the action of the narrative must be regarded as Achebe's greatest achievement"

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[Obiechina, 1975, 142]. It is especially with regard to this close imbrication of language and theme that *Things Fall Apart* can be said to have defined a new mode of African imaginative expression, hence Kwame Appiah's description of the work as "the archetypal modern African novel in English" [Appiah, 1992, ix].[2]

The work has acquired the status of a classic, then, by reason of its character as a counterfiction of Africa, in specific relation to the discourse of Western colonial domination, and its creative deployment of the language of the imperium; it has on this account been celebrated as the prototype of what Barbara Harlow has called "resistance literature" [Harlow, 1987].[3]The ideological project involved in its writing comes fully to the fore in the ironic ending in which we see the colonial officer, after the suicide of the main character, Okonkwo, contemplating a monograph on the "pacification" of the Lower Niger. Okonkwo, we are told, will get the briefest of mentions in the monograph, but we know as readers that the novel to which this episode serves as conclusion has centered all along upon this character who, as the figure of the historical African, the work endeavours to re-endow with a voice and a visage, allowing him to emerge in his full historicity, tragic though this turns out to be in the circumstances.

Yet, despite the novel's contestation of the colonial enterprise, clearly formulated in the closing chapters and highlighted by its ironic ending, readers have always been struck by the veil of moral ambiguity with which Achebe surrounds his principal character, Okonkwo, and by the dissonances that this sets up in the narrative development; as Emmanuel Obiechina remarked in the course of an oral presentation I had the privilege of attending, the novel is constituted by what he calls "a tangle of ironies." For it soon becomes apparent that Achebe's novel is not by any means an unequivocal celebration of tribal culture; indeed, the specific human world depicted in this novel is far from representing a universe of pure perfection. We are presented rather with a corner of human endeavor that is marked by the web of contradictions within which individual and collective destinies have everywhere and at all times been enmeshed. A crucial factor, therefore, in any reading of Achebe's novel, given the particular circumstances of its composition, is its deeply reflective engagement with the particular order of life that provides a reference for its narrative scheme and development. In this respect, one cannot fail to discern a thematic undercurrent that produces a disjunction in the novel between its overt ideological statement, its contradiction of the discourse of the colonial ideology, on one hand, and, on the other, its dispassionate and even uncompromising focus on an African community in its moment of historical crisis.

I would like to examine here the nature of this disjunction, not only as it emerges from the novel's thematic development but also as inscribed, quite literally, within the formal structures of the work, in the belief that by undertaking a closer examination of these two dimensions of the work and relating them to each other we are enabled to fully discern its purport. For the moral significance of the work seems to me to outweigh the ideological burden that has so often been laid upon it. I believe the implications of the work extend much further than the anticolonial stance that, admittedly, provides its point of departure, but which, as we shall see, eventually yields ground to issues of far greater import concerning the African becoming.

It is well to begin this examination with an observation that situates Achebe's work in the general perspective of literary creation and cultural production in contemporary Africa. This is to make the point that the most significant effect of modern African literature in the European

languages is perhaps the sense it registers of the immediacy of history as a sphere of existence, as a felt dimension of being and consciousness. Achebe's work is exemplary in this regard, in the way he captures in his fiction the inner movement of transition on the continent from an antecedent order of life to a new and problematic collective existence, this new existence contemplated as the outcome of an implacable historical development. Beginning with *Things Fall Apart*, his entire work seeks to measure, in its full range and import for Africa, what Molly Mahood has called, in her study of the same title, "the colonial encounter" [Mahood, 1977]. Achebe's explicit concern with the cultural dislocations, provoked by the harsh circumstances of this encounter, and their far-reaching consequences in human terms suggests at first sight a limited point of view that appears to emphasize the primacy of an original identity owed to cultural and ethnic affiliations.

We cannot but observe however that, as a writer, Achebe is in fact situated at the point of intersection between two world orders, the precolonial African and the Western, or more specifically, Euro-Christian, that impinge upon his creative consciousness. It is important to recall this defining factor of the total cultural situation by which Achebe's inspiration is conditioned, and to stress the directing influence of his Western education and its sensibility upon his fictional reconstruction of the collective traumas enacted by his novels, and the comprehensive process of self-reflection they imply. Thus, an attention to its various inflections indicates that the narrative voice adopted by Achebe in his first novel has to be imputed in large part to his status as a Westernized African, the product of Christian education. This is a voice that speaks often, perhaps even primarily, from the margins of the traditional culture, as is evident in this passage, which occurs early in the novel:

The night was very quiet. It was always quiet except on moonlight nights. Darkness held a vague terror for these people, even the bravest among them. Children were warned not to whistle at night for fear of evil spirits….And so on this particular night as the crier's voice was gradually swallowed up in the distance, silence returned to the world, a vibrant silence made more intense by the universal trill of a million forest insects [7]. [4]

The passage suggests that the perspective that Achebe projects upon the traditional world is that of an external observer, a perspective that implies a cultural distance from the background of life -- of thought and manners -- that provides the concrete reference of his fiction. We encounter the same stance in another passage where the narrator observes of the community to which the work relates: "Fortunately among these people a man was judged according to his worth and not according to the worth of his father" [6]. Of these and similar passages, the Nigerian scholar David Ker has commented: "Umuofia is simultaneously `they' and `we' and this subtle combination of detachment and participation helps Achebe to manipulate point of view" [Ker, 1997, 136].

This is a plausible reading that brings the novel's content into functional relation with its narrative codes, except that the personal testimony Achebe provides of his own education in a Christian household indicates clearly that his identification with the indigenous heritage was a later and conscious development. In other words, Achebe can be said to have undertaken the writing of *Things Fall Apart* out of an awareness of a primary disconnection from the indigenous background that he seeks to recover and to explore in the novel.

The point can be made from another perspective by observing that, as a modern African novelist, Achebe is hardly in the same position as the traditional storyteller, creating his stories unselfconsciously, out of a full sense of coincidence with the culture within which he practices his art, and which provides objective support for his imaginative projections. Moreover, Achebe is obliged to employ a newly acquired tongue, one that is at a considerable structural and expressive remove from the speech modes, habits of thought, and cultural codes of the historical community whose experience he undertakes to record in his fiction. Contrary to the claim by Romanus Egudu that Achebe's art in the novel is continuous with an Igbo narrative tradition [Egudu, 1981], the whole imaginative effort manifested in *Things Fall Apart* was called into play and given direction by a willed movement back to what the novelist regards as the sources of the collective self, which he has had to reconstitute both as a function of the ideological objectives of his novel evoked above and also, and much more importantly, as an imperative of the narrative process itself, a point to which we shall return.

We might observe, then, that the impression of the writer's familiarity with his material and the quality of authentic life registered by his language are in fact effects of this reinvestment of the self on Achebe's part, thrown into relief by the consummate art of the novelist. It is well to bear in mind these factors that are attendant upon the very process of creation from which Achebe's novel proceeds, for they are not without important consequences for its narrative development and, ultimately, for its aesthetic and moral significance, as these are not merely entailed by the ostensible content of the work, its "propositional" ground, to echo Gerald Graff [1980], but are also inherent in its formal organization and language. It is to the relation between these various aspects of the work that we now turn.

Commenting upon his own work nearly forty years after its appearance, Achebe has declared, "The story of Okonkwo is almost inevitable; if I hadn't written about him, certainly someone else would have, because it really is the beginning of our story" [Achebe, 1991].[5] Achebe's observation concerning his fictional creation draws attention to the allegorical significance that Okonkwo has assumed for the African imagination: he is not merely a character in a novel but the representative figure of African historicity. A determining element of the novel's structure and development is thus the way in which his story is embedded within an elaborate reconstruction of forms of life in the traditional, precolonial culture, specifically, that of Achebe's own people, the Igbo of Southeastern Nigeria.

The very tenor and warmth of Achebe's presentation of the traditional world, especially in the thirteen chapters that form the first part of the novel, with their elaborate representation of setting, involving in the process an insistence in positive terms upon the cultural context within which his fictional characters have their being, leaves us in no doubt that a polemical intent informs his reconstruction. The Igbo tribal world emerges here in all its specificity, its daily routines and seasonal rituals attuned to the natural rhythms of its living environment. The language of daily intercourse that Achebe lends his characters endows with a special force the mobilization of minds and sensibilities within the society, animating with its poetic resonance its modes of social organization and cultural expression. The even cadence that marks the collective life in its normal course is summed up at one point in a simple but telling way with "In this way, the moons and the seasons passed" [p.39].

The elaborate account of the New Yam Festival that opens Chapter 5 [26] takes on added meaning in the light of this declaration of a natural order of the communal existence. We are made to understand that the extraordinary coherence that the organic rooting of the tribe guarantees to the social order in its natural environment is an immediate function of an established system of values which regulates collective life. What is more, Achebe's depiction of the prescribed pattern of social gestures and modes of comportment creates an overwhelming impression of a collective existence that unfolds in ceremonial terms, punctuated as it is by a train of activities that enhance the ordinary course of life, serving therefore as privileged moments in a more or less unending celebration of a social compact that is remarkably potent and is in any case fully functional on its own terms.

It is this intense quality of life that is conveyed symbolically by the drum, which functions so obviously as a leitmotif in the novel that it generates a singular connotative stream within the narrative. The omnipresence of the drum in Achebe's image of Igbo tribal life seems at times on the verge of betraying him into the kind of unmediated stereotyping of the African by Western writers to which he himself has vehemently objected. The intrusion into his own writing of the demeaning idiom of colonial discourse is recognizable in a sentence like this: "Drums beat violently, and men leaped up and down in a frenzy" [86]. But such a drop in narrative tone serves ultimately to enforce the larger vision he offers of the community he is presenting, for we soon come to grasp the true significance of the drum as manifesting a vitalism inherent in and interwoven with the community's organic mode of existence:

The drums were still beating, persistent and unchanging. Their sound was no longer a separate thing from the living village. It was like the pulse of its heart. It throbbed in the air, in the sunshine, and even in the trees, and filled the village with excitement [31].

Achebe presents us, then, with a dynamic framework of social interactions and interpersonal relations that lay the affective foundation for what, in the language of Durkheim, we might call a collective consciousness, one that is properly commensurate with a sphere of existence and an order of experience that, by the very fact of their being rigorously circumscribed, conduce to its institutional strength. It is instructive in this respect to remark upon the narrow range of the physical setting reproduced in Achebe's novel. This is established in what seems a deliberate manner in the novel's opening sentence, and is associated by implication with the destiny of the central character who makes his appearance at the very outset of the narrative devoted to him:

Okonkwo was well known throughout the nine villages, and even beyond [3].

The vagueness with which the narrator indicates the outer limits of Okonkwo's fame reflects the tribe's limited awareness of its location in space, of its specific place in the world. This accords with the curious indefiniteness of its name, Umuofia, or "people of the forest," a name that also doubles as that of the novel's locale, designating a community firmly situated within the natural world. The reduced spatial dimension of the tribe's sphere of existence enables a narrative focus on a world whose very intimacy appears at first sight as a source of strength, the operative factor of an intensity of social experience that underlies an achieved state of equilibrium.

It should be noted that the contraction of the tribe's apprehension of space is closely associated with its bounded experience of time. The same opening paragraph of the novel in

which we are introduced to Okonkwo provides us with a passing view of the tribe's myth of origin. It is not without interest to observe that this myth, in its evocation of a wrestling contest between the eponymous founder of the town and "a spirit of the wild," parallels the Old Testament story of Jacob wrestling with the angel, an encounter that, we are told, leaves him forever lame. The parallel suggests the way Achebe's mind is working through elements of his double cultural experience towards a unified conception of human destiny.

The tribe's myth of origin sets the keynote of its entire mode of self-apprehension and structure of knowledge, what Gikandi has called "the Igbo epistemology" [Gikandi, 1991, 31-38; see also, Nwoga, 1981]. The prominence assumed by rituals of life in the culture, the tribe's periodic enactments of the various facets of its collective imagination, its constant recall of foundations--all this ensures that time is experienced not as a static category but lived continuously and intensely, in the mode of duration. This consciousness of time permeates the collective life, so that the worldview involves a ceaseless procession of a principle of life, in an interpenetration of time and space that is ensured by the eternal presence of the ancestors:

The land of the living was not far removed from the domain of the ancestors. There was coming and going between them, especially when an old man died, because an old man was very close to the ancestors. A man's life from birth to death was a series of transition rites which brought him nearer and nearer to his ancestors [86].

The culture of Umuofia as depicted by Achebe functions through an immanence of its foundational myth in the collective life and consciousness. The immediate and practical implications of this myth and the system of belief derived from it are experienced at every level of the collective existence, for the mythic time of the ancestors serves as the measure of social control, as demonstrated by the role of the egwuwus, incarnations of the ancestors, in the administration of justice, a role that endows the laws and customs of the land with a sacred sanction. At the same time, the dialogue that elders such as Ezeudu, Ezenwa, and Obierika engage in with their own culture throughout the novel points to the process by which the principles governing the world concept and value system of the tribe are constantly debated, re-examined, and in this way, retrospectively rationalized. Thus, as represented by Chinua Achebe, and contrary to the discourse of colonial anthropology, Umuofia, the primordial Igbo village, emerges as a locus of reflective civility. [6]

Achebe's attentive recreation of the processes of everyday living in the tribal society that he depicts in *Things Fall Apart* has led to the work being labeled an "ethnographic novel." The term may be appropriate, but only in the limited sense in which it serves to indicate a conscious effort of demonstration, aimed at presenting a particular society and its culture to an audience unfamiliar with its ways of doing and feeling, with its beliefs about the world, and its strategies of response to the imperatives of human existence. The novel endeavors in this sense to create what Hochbruck (1990) has called the illusion of "cultural proximity" for the non-Igbo reader, confronted by the otherness, so to speak, of the human world that its cultural references are intended to designate, or at the very least evoke.

We need to attend carefully to Achebe's handling of the ethnographic element of his novel in order to distinguish the varying modes of its integration into the narrative, for while several instances of authorial intervention intended to enlighten the reader on matters of cultural interest seem merely to provide orchestration for the bare outline of the plot, and thus to lend it

the richness of detail, others are indispensable for a proper comprehension of the narrative development itself, and thus form an integral element of the novel's thematic unfolding. This is notably the case with the banishment of Okonkwo after his accidental killing of a clansman. The narrator points us deliberately to an understanding of the cultural implications of this episode:

The only course open to Okonkwo was to flee from the clan. It was a crime against the earth goddess to kill a clansman, and a man who committed it must flee from the land [88].

Further along, describing the organized destruction of Okonkwo's compound by the villagers after his departure, the narrator provides this insight into the mores of the land: "They had no hatred in their hearts against Okonkwo. His greatest friend Obierika was among them. They were merely cleansing the land which Okonkwo had polluted with the blood of a clansman" [88].

This last quotation illustrates the function that the novel's ethnographic content has usually been held to perform, its project of revaluation consisting in a comprehensive readjustment of viewpoint on a culture that had previously served as an object of Western deprecation. Achebe's conscious effort to project a new light upon the precolonial Igbo world is evident at many points in the novel; there is clearly at work here a resolve to promote an alternative image to its earlier representations in Western discourse, one that affords an inside view not merely of its uncoordinated details as lived in the immediacy of everyday experience, but also of its overall, functional coherence. Thus, the narrative process amounts to a reformulation, in the mode of fiction, of the "scientific" discourse of the ethnographic literature on the Igbo, a process by which Achebe seeks to reclaim a pre-existing Western discourse on his personal background for a new and different ideological purpose.

But we must go beyond the documentary aspect of Achebe's novel to consider the relation it bears to a serious artistic purpose. We need to observe the way in which the language of the novel, the whole bent of its narrative development, gives expression to an imaginative impulse that functions in its shaping, beyond the explicit revisionist intent that we may suppose to spring from its ideological conditioning that we have so far dwelt upon. It needs to be emphasized that this impulse derives in the first place from the formal requirements that Achebe as a writer knew he had to satisfy, those conducing to the quality of verisimilitude that have come to be associated with the rise and development of the conventional western novel. In other words, Achebe's fictional reproduction of Igbo life must be seen in its immediate relation to the diegetic purpose and mimetic function of the novel as a genre.[7] For the necessity to reproduce in his novel the context of life appropriate to its theme and external reference comes to govern the process of cultural reclamation to which his work bears witness. We can thus restate the connection between the two impulses at work in the novel by observing that it develops as a redirection inward of Western anthropological discourse, toward the true springs of life and expression in the African world obliterated by this discourse.

But it is evidently the primacy of art that predominates in Achebe's construction of his novel; this has a consequence for grasping its moral import that we shall come to presently. For the moment, we may note that Achebe's novel is distinguished by an economy of style and a marvelous restraint in the presentation that endow it with a certain austerity. The novel's ethnographic freight is never allowed to weigh down upon its human interest or to obscure its aesthetic significance. Every scene is vividly imagined and realized, and the more expansive

moments of the narration offer us those powerful descriptions, as of the entrance of the egwugwus or "masked spirits" at the trial and the subsequent proceedings [Chapter Ten, 62-66] which give the novel its dramatic lift at strategic moments. It is this process by which Achebe "naturalizes" his subject matter, to borrow Jonathan Culler's term [Culler, 1975], enabling him to situate the narrative development, and especially the cruel turn taken by Okonkwo's fate, wholly and convincingly within the framework of the Igbo system of belief:

His life had been ruled by a great passion - to become one of the lords of the clan. That had been his life-spring. And he had all but achieved it. Then everything had been broken. He had been cast out of his clan like a fish on to a dry, sandy beach, panting. Clearly his personal god or chi was not made for great things. A man could not rise beyond the destiny of his chi. The saying of the elders was not true - that if a man said yea, his chi also affirmed. Here was a man whose chi said nay despite his own affirmation [92].

The passage hardly serves to inform us about the nature of the chi, a task that Achebe undertakes in a famous essay [Achebe, 1975]; rather, it illuminates the ambiguous relation of Okonkwo to his personal god, a relation that exemplifies, in the specific terms of Igbo apprehension of the world, the grounded insecurity of the human condition that is the mainspring of what Unamuno has called "the tragic sense of life." The novel's imaginative scope thus extends beyond mere documentation to convey, through the careful reproduction of its marking details, the distinctive character of Igbo tribal life as experienced by its subjects, the felt texture from which it derives its universal significance. It is this that gives *Things Fall Apart* its power of conviction and validates the project of cultural memory attested by the novel.

But the effort of recall and recreation, linked as it is to the purpose of the novelist's deployment of form, also involves, as a necessary implication of the fictional process, a critical engagement with the internal dynamics and value system of the very world that he presents, one that, in the event, goes beyond its placid exterior to focus directly upon its deeper tensions, to explore its cleavages and uncover its fault lines. It is at this level of enunciation that the novel enacts what seems to me a veritable crisis of cultural memory.

We are alerted to this crisis primarily by the correlation that the novel suggests between the conditions of existence in the tribal society and the mental universe that prevails within it. Despite its admirable qualities in some important areas of human experience, the world that Achebe presents is one that is closed in upon itself, limited in its capacities and hobbled in certain crucial respects by its vision of the world. We have already remarked upon the way in which Achebe's Western education and Christian background determine a narrative point of view marked by a certain detachment, so that his narrator stands back sufficiently to indicate an external regard upon this world, for it is not seldom that he adopts an angle of vision that lifts a veil upon the grave disabilities by which tribal life is afflicted.

For the image that Chinua Achebe presents in his novel is that of a primary society, one whose low level of technicity leaves it with few resources beyond the purely muscular for dealing with the exigencies of the natural world. Because it is confronted with what is nothing less than a precarious material situation, it has perforce to accord primacy to manliness, as a manifestation of being at its most physical, elevated into a norm of personal worth and social value. The valuation of physical prowess, in play as in war, the emphasis on individual achievement, considered as instrumental to social solidarity, appear then as strategies intended

to ensure the security and permanence of the group. For, like most early societies, this is a society that is dominated by a passion for survival. On this point, Umuofia resembles these earlier societies, alike in their cultivation of the heroic ideal based on physical prowess, an ideal necessitated by their dependence on outstanding individuals for group survival.[8]

This defining feature of the tribe is highlighted by the centrality of the yam to the culture, the symbolic value with which it is invested, over and above its utility as a source of nourishment: a feature that provides a graphic illustration of the continuum from material existence to the collective vision and ethos. Because of the intense muscular effort required for its cultivation, the yam crop comes to represent an annual triumph wrested from nature, the sign of the rigorous dialectic between the human world and the natural environment that governs the communal life and conditions what one might call the social aesthetic--the festivals, the rituals and other forms of public ceremonial--that infuses the tribe's collective representations with feeling and endows them with meaning for each consciousness within the community. Thus, the image of the yam gathers up as it were the force fields of the culture and functions as a metonymic representation of the tribe's mode of relation to the world [Echeruo, 1979]. The organic-ism that we have observed as a fundamental feature of the tribal community is thus related to the fact that it has its being essentially within the realm of necessity.

If then, from a certain idealizing point of view, we come to appreciate the values of intimacy and intensity of living denoted by the closed universe of the novel, such as Gérard Genette postulates for the Cambrai of Marcel Proust [Genette, 1972], the critical current that runs through the narrative soon reveals this universe as one marked by a profound contradiction between the powerful constraints of the social ideal, which privileges the interests of the group, and the truths of individual human yearnings and desires as embraced by a modern sensibility.

It is on this basis that Achebe develops the theme of Okonkwo's struggle for recognition and the larger existential implications of this theme in its evocation of the universal human predicament. This theme, we ought to note, is framed by the triadic structure of the novel involving Okonkwo's rise to prominence at Umuofia, interrupted by his banishment and life in exile at his maternal village Mbanta, and his disastrous return to the scene of his early triumphs. The parallel between the story of Okonkwo and that of his society is thus made central to the narrative development, predicated as this is upon the interrelation between the rise and fall of Okonkwo, on one hand, and on the other, the fortunes of the society and way of life he represents and its unraveling by the forces of history.

It is useful at this point to consider the salient details of Okonkwo's story as recounted by Achebe, and its bearing on the underlying theme of his novel. This story really begins with that of Okonkwo's father, Unoka; indeed, the elements of the singular dialectic that links Okonkwo with Unoka, on one hand, and with his own son, Nwoye, on the other, determine the temporal axis of the novel, indicating the succession of generations concerned by the action. This dialectic relates in a fundamental way to the structure of images and moral propositions contained by the novel. Unoka plays a double role here: not only does his fate and its effect upon his son provide the key to the latter's psychology, he also embodies the countervalues that stand in opposition to the inflexible social ideal of the tribe. For there is a real sense in which Unoka can be considered a rebel against the rigidities of tribal society. His unorthodox style of living is a

conscious subversion of the manly ideal, to which he opposes the values of art, along with a playful irony and an amorality that accords with his relaxed disposition to the world. It is true that his improvidence turns him into an object of general contempt, and that he comes to a particularly disagreeable end that seems at first sight to vindicate the severe reprobation of the tribe. But even his end in the Evil Forest constitutes a triumph of sorts, a form of defiance that the narrator emphasizes with this significant detail: "When they carried him away, he took with him his flute" [13]. In the end, he attracts the reader's sympathy by his unprepossessing attitude and by a certain humane simplicity that is associated with his type, for the portrait we have of Unoka is that of a folk hero whose insouciance stands as a constant rebuke to the vanities of the great and powerful of this world.[9]

In the immediate context of the novel, Unoka's refusal to conform to the prevailing ethos of the tribe is of course considered in wholly negative terms. More important, its subversive significance is forcefully repudiated by his son, Okonkwo, who wills himself into becoming the antithesis of all that Unoka represents, so that he comes to assume what can only be judged a fearful aspect:

He was a man of action, a man of war. Unlike his father he could stand the look of blood. In Umuofia's war he was the first to bring home a human head. That was his fifth head, and he was not an old man yet. On great occasions, such as the funeral of a village celebrity he drank his palm-wine from his first human head [8].

It is this portrayal of Okonkwo that prompted Thomas Melone to propose, in his pioneering study devoted to the first four novels of Chinua Achebe, an evaluation that both captures the essence of the character and exaggerates its import, when he describes him as a "complex and unsettling personality" ("une multiple et déroutante personnalité") [Melone, 1973, 64]. Unsettling Okonkwo certainly is, but not exactly complex; given his delineation in *Things Fall Apart* one would be inclined rather to consider him as a "flat" character, to use E. M. Forster's term. It is true that, in the particular context in which we encounter the character, the novelist nudges us to the edge of what could have been a powerful psychological portrait: considering his problematic relation to his father, who throws a long shadow over his life, Okonkwo's inordinate obsession with self has all the makings of a deep neurosis generated by a tenacious and consuming existential project, that of self-realization.

Things Fall Apart can be summed up as largely the narrative of the process of self-fashioning by which Okonkwo is transformed into the somber inversion of his father. But the mental condition into which he falls as a result is not really explored, so that we are not led into the inner workings of his mind as a fully realized individual. Even at his moment of greatest mental turmoil (in the immediate aftermath of his killing of Ikemefuna), we are provided with hardly any insight into the happenings within his troubled soul. The point here is that, despite the occasional glimpses the narrative affords into states of mind that are also occasions for introspection on the part of the character, the narrative narrows our gaze, to focus upon what is presented as essential to his make-up: "Okonkwo was a man of action, not of thought" [48].

It is not, therefore, the psychological depth of his portrayal that lends Okonkwo his power of fascination, but rather his very physicality, all projected outward ("he was tall and huge," the narrator informs us [3]) in such a way as to constitute him as the incarnation of his society's ideal of manhood. This is the ideal that Okonkwo translates in his attitude and manners into an

overbearing masculinity. Even then, we cannot but respond, at least in the beginning, to what we perceive as his immense vitality,[10] made all the more intriguing by its sexual undercurrent, an element of his total personality clearly indicated through the seductive power this exerts upon Ekwefi.

The allusion to Okonkwo's sexuality raises the issue of gender and its narrative implications, for it is this element that seems to have inspired the most inattentive reading of Achebe's novel, especially by some feminists, who object to what they perceive as the work's undue focus on the masculine principle and a corresponding depreciation of the feminine. The feminist view is exemplified by Florence Stratton's negative interpretation of what she calls the novel's focus on "gender ideology" [Stratton, 1994, 164-70]. More pertinent is the critique by Susan Z. Andrade, who remarks upon "the category of the masculine" in Achebe's novel, which, as she says, "attempts to avoid the representation of colonial relations in gendered terms by inscribing an excessively masculine Igbo man." She goes on to observe:

In the Manichean allegory of anti-colonial struggle…the colonial /European side is characterized as masculine, while the weak and disorderly native/African is necessarily feminine. …Paradoxically, Achebe's preoccupation with the implicitly gendered pattern of colonial relations means that he can only imagine a negative masculinity; he has no room for a celebratory feminism [Andrade, 1996, 255-256].

It is plain that these readings and others of the same stripe ignore the evidence of the novel itself, which foregrounds the distortion of the communal ideal by Okonkwo in such a way as to suggest a narrative commentary upon the social and moral implications of this ideal. Far from endorsing what might be termed a cult of Igbo masculinity, Achebe's novel offers ample evidence of a narrative preoccupation with the less than reassuring features of what may be considered a "basic personality type" [11] fostered presumably by the work's reference culture and exemplified so forcefully by the character of Okonkwo.

We are more than once alerted to the fact that Okonkwo's adoption of the manly ideal is excessive and even wrongheaded, as when Obierika emphatically expresses to Okonkwo himself his lack of enthusiasm for the prowess in wrestling demonstrated by his own son, Maduka. Obierika seems to have been conceived as a foil to Okonkwo, serving as a kind of Menenius Agrippa to his Coriolanus, so that his attitude indicates the possibility of an alternative stance. This opposition enables us to discern a disavowal of Okonkwo at the level of the novel's system of connotations, a level at which we sense the imaginative direction of Achebe's novel and the moral sense it carries working towards a confounding of Okonkwo's exaggerated sense of self.

This critical focus is gathered up in the folktale that functions both as an interlude and as a narrative commentary upon Okonkwo's egoism, a device that is fully in line with the convention of storytelling in the African oral tradition. In this sense, it serves Achebe in formal terms as an intertextual resource in the construction of his novel, within which it is deployed, through a process of mise en abîme, both as a supplement to its ludic function, and as metafiction, in a redoubling of its narrative code [Obiechina, 1993]. As a direct comment upon Okonkwo's hubris, it points beyond the immediate action to the moral problem involved in the tense dialectic between collectivity and individual. We must recall in this connection the function of the imagination as what may be termed the preconceptual foundation of the

"lifeworld" in traditional society, a function that gave to the art of storytelling its significance in the deepest sense, as a mode of critical reflection upon the vicissitudes of human existence [Towa, 1980].

The relevance of the folktale interlude to the imaginative discourse elaborated by the novel is that it affords a clear pointer to a critical preoccupation manifested explicitly as a distinct thematic cluster centred upon the issue of gender in the novel. As Solomon Iyasere has pointed out, Okonkwo is confronted at every turn by the female principle as it informs the organization of collective life and the communal consciousness of Umuofia [Iyasere, 1978]. The female principle functions indeed as a major trope in *Things Fall Apart* and constitutes a significant dimension of its system of ironies.

A striking instance of this is provided by one of the most dramatic episodes in the novel, the abduction of Okonkwo's daughter, Ezimna, by Chielo, the priestess of the Earth goddess Agbala [70-77]. Chielo retains the girl an entire night in her cave while the great warrior Okonkwo is obliged to wait outside, unable to intervene to recover his daughter until the priestess is ready to return her to him in the morning. When we consider Okonkwo's affective investment in Ezinma, in whom he discerns the male qualities whose absence he bemoans in his son, Nwoye, Chielo's act, in its very challenge to Okonkwo's manhood ("Beware Okonkwo! Beware of exchanging words with Agbala. Does a man speak when a god speaks?" [71]) presents itself as a pointed recall to his attention of the gender category to which Ezinma properly belongs, and the possible calls upon her that the distribution of gender roles determines within the culture. More concretely, it is Chielo's way of designating Ezinma as her successor, of reclaiming the girl and restoring her to a realm of feminine mysticism from which she is beginning to be separated by Okonkwo's projection upon her of a male essence. The reaffirmation of the female principle signified by the Chielo episode is reinforced by other indications that suggest a consistent undermining in symbolic terms of Okonkwo's masculinity throughout the novel. As Carole Boyce Davis has rightly observed:

The Chielo-Ezinma episode is an important sub-plot of the novel and actually reads like a suppressed larger story circumscribed by the exploration of Okonkwo's/man's struggle with and for his people. In the troubled world of *Things Fall Apart*, motherhood and femininity are the unifying mitigating principles [Davis, 1986, 245; see also Jeyifo, 1993].

The second part of the novel, devoted entirely to Okonkwo's life in exile in his mother's village after his accidental killing of a clansman, can be read as an extended development of this secondary theme that subtends the narrative at its primary level of development. For Okonkwo's refusal to reconcile himself to the turn of events that leads to his exile provides an occasion for another reminder of the significance of the female principle, when he is instructed by Uchendu, his maternal uncle, in the culture's veneration of the mother as source of life, its association of femininity with the vital principle, enunciated in resolute terms in the dictum "Nneka" ("Mother is supreme").

Okonkwo's glum acquiescence contrasts with the enthusiasm that accompanies his return to Umuofia, where his loss of social standing soon reveals itself as irreparable, and a tragic fate awaits him. The irony that attends Okonkwo's embodiment of manhood is that, pursued by the feminine principle as if by the Furies, he is finally vanquished by a destiny that culminates in

his committing what we are pointedly informed is a "female" fault that leads first to his exile and finally to his downfall.

In its "deconstruction" of Okonkwo's masculinity, the novel also draws directly upon a significant feature of its reference culture for validation. For while it reflects, in its account of individual behavior and group attitudes within its fictional world, the reality of male dominance as an empirical fact of the social system--the order or precedence denoted by the seating arrangement at the trial scene provides a graphic visual demonstration of this point--the novel also directs our attention to the ways in which this fact is controverted in other spheres of the collective life and imagination, especially at the level of religious belief and experience. For, although the society upholds the notion of manliness as a fundamental social norm, it is also compelled to recognize the controlling effect of biology upon its life processes and the obvious bearing of this factor upon group survival. If the social dominance of the men is unequivocally asserted, the parallel valorization of women in the symbolic sphere, demonstrated by the cult of Ala, emerges as a presiding topos of "the social imaginary," one that sets up a countervailing cultural and moral force to the massive investment of the social sphere by the men. The male-female dialectic thus serves to maintain an affective and ideological balance of the group; in this, it corresponds to a certain primary perception of a felt duality of the cosmic order as a principle of the universal imaginary.[12]

This conceptual scheme is crucial for an understanding of Okonkwo's psychology as depicted in Achebe's novel, for it is against the feminine term of the gender dialectic, as understood and expressed in the culture--the nurturing instinct as opposed to the destructive, the tender as opposed to the violent, the aesthetic as opposed to the practical, in a word, the diurnal as opposed to the nocturnal--it is against these values associated with the female principle that Okonkwo has resolutely turned his face. The terms in which his cutting down of Ikemefuna is narrated suggest that behind the gesture of confident affirmation of male resolve that he intends his act to represent lies a profound discomfort in the presence of feminity. We are told that he is "dazed" with fear at the moment of the boy's appeal to him, but it is a fear that has been bred in his unreflecting mind by the image of his father, one of having to reckon with the nuanced reformulation of established social meanings by the symbolic values associated with the female principle. Indeed, for Okonkwo to be reminded anew of his father's image by Ikemefuna's artistic endowments and lively temperament is to be impelled toward a violent act of repression.

As Keith Booker has remarked, the killing of Ikemefuna represents a pivotal episode in the novel [Booker, 1998, 70] not only as a reflection of Okonkwo's disturbed mental state, but in its reverberation through the novel, as a result of its effect upon his son, Nwoye. It marks the beginning of the boy's disaffection toward his father and ultimately his alienation from the community that Okonkwo has come to represent for him. We hardly need to ponder the cleavage between father and son to realize that it provides the most potent sign of the disintegration of Umuofia society, provoked by the introduction within it of the Christian religion. Over the three years of their companionship in Okonkwo's household, Ikemefuna has come to embody for Nwoye the poetry of the tribal society, which is erased for him forever by the young boy's ritual killing, an act against nature in which his father participates. The fate of Ikemefuna, its stark revelation of the grim underside of the tribal ethos, engenders the

emptiness in his heart that predisposes Nwoye to Christian conversion. The terms in which his conversion is described make clear the conjunction between social and moral issues as the determining factor in this conversion. It is not without significance that the conversion itself is presented as an inner drama of sensibility, in which a new poetry takes the place of the ancient, filling a spiritual and affective void and thus coming to satisfy a need to which the traditional order is no longer capable of responding:

It was not the mad logic of the Trinity that captivated him. He did not understand it. It was the poetry of the new religion, something felt in the marrow. The hymn about brothers who sat in darkness and in fear seemed to answer a vague persistent question that haunted his young soul - the question of the twins crying in the bush and the question of Ikemefuna who was killed. He felt a relief within as the hymn poured into his parched soul. The words of the hymn were like the drops of frozen rain melting on the dry plate of the panting earth. Nwoye's callow mind was greatly puzzled [104].

The purple prose is integral to the language of Christian evangelism that Achebe adopts in the passage, setting in relief the last sentence that arrests its lyrical flight with its abrupt reference to Nwoye's "callow mind." The effect of the juxtaposition verges on bathos, but its purport is unmistakable, for we are left in no doubt that this phrase describes a condition for which Nwoye's tribal background is responsible. His conversion thus represents the prelude to the refinement of mind and sensibility that the new religion promises.

Nwoye's adoption of a new name, Isaac, with the significance it carries of a rebirth, consolidates his sense of allegiance to the new religion. But the particular name he takes suggests an import beyond its immediate meaning of individual salvation, for the name recalls the Biblical story of the patriarch Abraham and his substitution of an animal for the sacrifice of his son, Isaac, an act that inaugurates a new dispensation in which we are made to understand that fathers are no longer required to sacrifice their sons to a demanding and vengeful deity. Nwoye's adoption of this name in effect enacts a symbolic reversal of the killing of Ikemefuna, and gives its full meaning to his conversion, as primarily the sign of his release from the constraints of the ancestral universe.

Nwoye's story closes a family history that revolves around the troubled relationships between fathers and sons. [13] Centered as it is on the personality and tragic fate of Okonkwo, this family history constitutes the novel's narrative framework and functions as an allegory of the very destiny of the society they inhabit, and to which they relate in diverse ways. What this allegory signifies, in the particular historical and cultural context of Achebe's novel, is the state of internal crisis into which this society is plunged, a crisis that we have come to appreciate as intrinsic to its presiding ethos. This crisis is only rendered especially acute by the arrival of the white man, so that a major irony of the novel is that it is this historic event provides a resolution, an outcome that we sense as highly ambiguous, insofar as it marks the harsh intrusion of the outer world upon the tribal universe, leading to the loss of its autonomy as a sphere of existence and expression.

Achebe's understanding of the epochal significance of this turn of events represents the conceptual foundation of the novel's narrative development. Its burden of historical truth derives from its external reference, the large correspondence of the events it narrates to the internal history of the society and culture with which it deals, the profound upheaval in the

Igbo world and indeed the entire region of what is now Southeastern Nigeria that culminated in the imposition of British colonial rule.[14] The formal working-out of this understanding consists of the way it determines a double perspective of point of view that is reflected in the narrative devices through which the drama of events unfolds in the novel and by which its moral import is clarified. This is evident in what we have called the novel's diegetic function, which relates to the explicit realism associated with the genre, the imperative of representation to which it responds. On one hand, it enables a positive image of tribal society to emerge, with its coherence and especially the distinctive poetry of its forms of life. On the other hand, we are made aware that this coherence is a precarious and even factitious one, deriving from an inflexibility of social norms that places an enormous psychological and moral burden on individuals caught up within its institutional constraints, imprisoned by its logic of social organization, and inhibited by its structure of social conformities. The split that this occasions within the writer's creative consciousness makes for a profound ambivalence that translates as a productive tension in the novel's connotative substratum.

We come to some idea of this deeper layer of meaning in the novel by considering the complex of images through which it develops.[15] At the risk of a certain reductionism, it can be observed that the structure of images in the novel revolves around the theme of contradiction, which functions as its organizing principle, amplified through the structure of ironic reversals by which the narrative is propelled. This feature is well illustrated by the contradictory meanings assumed by the image of the locusts on the two occasions it occurs in the text. The first, which recounts an actual invasion of the village by locusts, provides what may be considered the high point of the novel: contrary to expectations, the normal association of this pest with agricultural disaster is reversed as the entire population goes into a festive mood collecting locusts and feasting on them.

The irony of this episode is deepened by the fact that it immediately precedes the account of the consultations among the elders regarding the disposal of Ikemefuna and the narration of his ritual killing. It is not without significance for the narrative scheme that Okonkwo's participation in this ritual marks the precise moment at which his fortunes commence their downward spiral. The connection is directly established between his reverses and the fall of the clan in the second occurrence of the image of the locust, which reinforces the dark irony intimated by this narrative scheme by returning us to the conventional meaning of the image of the locusts in Obierika's designation of the white men, whose appearance on the scene he interprets as the ominous event it turns out to be:

I forgot to tell you another thing which the Oracle said. It said that other white men were on their way. They were locusts, it said, and the first man was their harbinger sent to explore the terrain [97-8].[16]

Within this scheme, the progression of events in the novel is organized around a system of dichotomies and their transformations. We move in particular from the pre?established hierarchy of values implied in the opposition between the village of Umuofia and the "Evil Forest" [17] to a dramatic reversal of this hierarchy. The binaries by which the unfolding of events is plotted in the novel, and the ironies entailed by the process, is especially marked here, for it is in the Evil Forest, which starts out as the negative marker of social space in the community depicted by the novel, that the Christians establish their new religion, destined to triumph over

the ancestral religion. It is here that they succeed in creating a new community cemented as much by the enthusiasm called forth in them by the new faith as by its rhetoric of liberation [112]. It is pertinent to remark here that the pattern of reversals itself draws upon an eminently Christian trope, encapsulated in the Biblical sayings about the last coming to be the first, and the meek inheriting the earth, a trope that, we may recall, prompted Nietzsche's repudiation of Christianity as the religion of the weak and powerless in the world.

With these reversals as they occur in *Things Fall Apart*, the Evil Forest gradually becomes invested with moral authority, thus acquiring a new and positive significance. Furthermore, the historical connection between the Christian mission and the incipient colonial administration and their collaboration in the overthrow of the tribal system constitutes this new space as the domain within which a new social order is to be elaborated. The account of this connection in the latter part of *Things Fall Apart* propels the Evil Forest to a position of centrality in the novel's system of meanings, so that, in its association with Christianity, it comes to represent the source of new humanizing values and, in this sense, simultaneously, as an image of a transformation that prefigures a new future. In short, the Evil Forest comes to signify a new and developing realm of being.

The future to which this transformation is projected is clearly intimated in Mr. Brown's exhortations to his wards, exhortations that provide a temporal complement to the spiritual justification of his missionary activity: "Mr Brown begged and argued and prophesied. He said that the leaders of the land in the future would be men and women who had learnt to read and write" [128]. The remarkable prescience ascribed here to Mr. Brown is of course the product of narrative hindsight, propounded ex post facto, as it were, and thus prospective to the historical moment of the events depicted in the novel. It is an imaginative anticipation of the modernity that rises on the horizon, determined by the nexus between literacy and the new cash economy, and destined to flow out of the veritable process of social reconstruction set in train by the advent and diffusion of Christianity:

Mr Brown's school produced quick results. A few months in it were enough to make one a court messenger or even a court clerk. Those who stayed longer became teachers; and from Umuofia, labourers went forth into the Lord's vineyard. New churches were established in the surrounding villages and a few schools with them. From the very beginning religion and education went hand in hand [128].

Achebe's novel looks forward self-consciously here to the formation of a new Westernized elite and the emergence of a new national identity enabled by literacy and predicated on an ideology of modernization. The nationalist project that in the general consensus would devolve upon the Westernized elite finds a discreet echo here within Achebe's novel, giving it a thematic resonance that, as we shall see, extends its range into the field of utopia.[18]

Thus, by a strange and unpredictable turn of events, the Evil Forest comes to gather to itself these various intimations, so that it functions as the marker of the historical consciousness that underlies the narrative development of the novel. The peculiar imbrication of theme and imagery here enlarges the novel's field of reference and suggestion, in such a way as to point up the deep intuition it expresses of the compelling force of history.

But it is especially at the level of language that the double movement of Achebe's imagination in *Things Fall Apart* is fully manifested. It is revealing of the novel's thematic

direction to observe and follow the course charted by the language, which proceeds from the vigorous rhetoric of traditional life that infuses its early chapters with their peculiar energy, to the bare discursiveness that predominates in the later chapters. It is primarily the language of the early chapters that endows Achebe's novel with an epic resonance. The impulse to a revaluation of Igbo culture is clearly discernible here, for we are left in no doubt that the language of Achebe's characters is one that is constitutive of the culture, woven into the fabric of social experience. This language, in which social life is "objectified," becomes expressive of its seamless whole, of its tensions as well as strategies for their resolution, a language that may be said to found a whole register of the collective being. It is to this interrelation of speech mode to communal life that Bernth Lindfors draws attention when he describes the language of Achebe's world as "a grammar of values" [Lindfors, 1973, 77].

We sense then, behind Achebe's handling of language, an ideological parti-pris, which is not without its aesthetic pay off, as it were. There is an obvious delectation in language in the early chapters that betrays a large measure of complicity with his subject matter on the part of the novelist. It is this that conditions that felicity of style that has so often been remarked upon as a distinctive quality of Achebe's writing.[19] And it is indeed this aesthetic dimension-as distinct from the novel's documentary or ethnographic interest-that qualifies it as creative endeavour, as a notable instance of poiesis.

But alongside what one might call the performative style reflective of oral discourse, and as counterpoint to its expressivity, Achebe adopts the tone of objective narrative, a tone derived from the western convention of literate discourse, whose impassibility reflects the distance that he is obliged to take with regard to his subject. This tone is evident in the direct accounts of customs and of beliefs and other notations related to the tribal way of life, passages in which the skepticism natural to the rational viewpoint is barely held in check, masked only by the neutral tone of the narrative voice. We sense the way in which this skepticism is held back in the long description of the search for Ezinma's iyi-nwa [53-61], but reaffirmed in the matter-of-fact account of Okonkwo going into the bush to collect herbs that he will administer to Ezinma to combat her fever. This report of an eminently pragmatic behavior serves as a coda to the exuberance of the story of Ezinma's stone, dispelling the air of verisimilitude that seems to attach to this story with a sober notation of fact. Similarly, Ekwefi's reminiscence of her encounter with an evil spirit is juxtaposed with a realistic, almost banal explanation of her visions:

She had prayed for the moon to rise. But now she found the half light of the incipient moon more terrifying than the darkness. The world was now peopled with vague fantastic figures that dissolved under her steady gaze and then formed again in new shapes [75].

These juxtapositions reflect the workings of the novelist's mind as it hovers between fascination and unbelief, between an impulse toward an embrace of the cultural values suggested by his imaginative exploration of setting and narrative elaboration of context, and a positivist outlook inseparable from a liberated consciousness. We have no better evidence of this ambiguous subtext than the wry report of the egwugwu who is rooted to the spot for two days for daring to cross the path of the one-handed masquerade [86]. And Obierika's expression of awe at the potency of a neighboring village's "medicine" indicates that even the intelligence of a wise elder like him can be preyed upon by the superstitions of the tribe. Thus, while it is

evident that the passages in which Achebe reports these beliefs and the practices associated with them imply a certain measure of understanding of their ways, it would be clearly absurd to suggest that he identifies with them at any level of his intellectual make-up.

It is especially instructive in this regard to note the way in which the bewilderment of the villagers at the survival of the Christians in the Evil Forest affords Achebe scope for an indulgent satire upon their conceptual naïveté, as determined by the collective belief system. This naïveté takes on a more ominous character in Obierika's account of the killing of the white man by the people of Abame, who tie up his "iron horse" to prevent it from running away to call his friends [97]. It is significant that later in the novel, as a demonstration of the inadequacy of the traditional world view, we are informed of the test of efficacy passed by the new medicine introduced by the missionaries: "And it was not long before the people began to say that the white man's medicine was quick in working" [128]. The term "medicine" is now employed in the sense of a technology of healing grounded in verifiable science, in other words in association with an objectifying, "instrumental" rationality.[20]

The insistence of the narrative voice on the fundamental weakness of the traditional cognitive system is thus unmistakable and it raises the issue of the skeptical distance that, as novelist, Achebe is obliged to maintain from this system, and indeed the intellectual detachment from the world he presents, despite his deep sense of cultural involvement in and affective engagement with his material. The shifting perspectives we encounter in the novel and the varied tones of the narrative voice afford pointers to the fact that *Things Fall Apart* is written out of a consciousness that is no longer at one with the indigenous order of apprehension. We are constantly made aware that the traditional background functions for Achebe not as a reference for an objective structure of knowledge but rather for the novelist's narrative construction and imaginative purpose, as touchstone of an aesthetic, as a stock of imaginative symbols endowed with an affective value that does not depend on belief or devotional commitment for force of appeal. The relation of Achebe to his material is thus comparable in some important respects to that of the Western writer to pagan mythology, and even to aspects of Christian belief that are no longer capable of commanding the writer's intellectual assent or even emotional identification.

The fact that Achebe's second, objective style is often marked by irony does not detract from its value as the instrument appropriate to the function of chronicler that, as novelist, he assumes in those passages when he turns to this style, moments when he is concerned above all with registering the facts as they present themselves to his consciousness as a dispassionate observer of history. The interaction between the evocative parts of his novel and the realistic mode of its thematic progression is thus expressive of the interface between the oral and the written that is central to his double cultural awareness. In formal terms, this interaction marks the transition from the epic to the novel to which Bakhtin has drawn attention as distinctive of the evolution of narrative [Bakhtin, 1981; see also Ong, 1982; and Goody, 1987].

The significant point about this interaction is the tension produced in the novel between what one might call a romanticism of its oral style, which derives from a personal attachment of the writer to his African antecedents, and the realism of the western style, which corresponds to his awareness of their supersession in a new dispensation. The deep "mechanisms" at work in the novel thus come to the surface in the language, enabling us to grasp the full connotative

weight and rhetorical direction of the narrative. This is a story that begins in the register of myth and ends on a note of chronicle, a transformation that is reflected in its narrative style, which becomes progressively "de-poetized," as Thomas Melone has rightly pointed out [Melone, 1973, 65].[21]

The "downward" progression of Achebe's expression thus charts the course of the depletion of language, brought on by events, in the community to which the novel refers, a process that is registered within the work by the transition from a textualised orality through which the characters and the world of the novel are not so much represented as evoked, called forth into being, to the passive record of events imposed by the conventions of literate discourse. For the interaction between styles, the play of language on which the narrative development turns, forms part of the movement of history traced in the novel. As the story advances, we witness a linguistic process that culminates in the triumph of the culture of literacy, a process that also signals the engulfing of the indigenous voice, carried exclusively through the oral medium, by the discourse of colonialism.

It is this latter discourse that finally calls attention to itself, at the very end of the novel, in the total coincidence of the linguistic vehicle of the text with the actual language in which the thoughts of the colonial officer are formulated. The passage is remarkable in many respects, not least for the way it draws attention to the differentiated use in Achebe's novel of the device of indirect speech. For in its bare matter-of-factness, it stands in marked contrast to the remarkable stream of interior monologue through which, as he is led to his death, Ikemefuna's forebodings are translated, in a dramatic counterpoint between an immediate sense of personal danger, rendered through indirect speech, and the reassuring formulations of communal lore. The loss of the vivid quality of Ikemefuna's monologue in the colonial officer's reported speech indicates that we now have to do with the disembodied voice of history, manifested through this faceless, nondescript character. The historic turning signified by the end of Okonkwo's personal story is thus registered at the very level of language: from being subjects of their own discourse, Okonkwo and his people have now become the objects of the discourse of another, elaborated in a language foreign to them.

There is a sense, then, in which the advent of the imperial moment is developed in Achebe's novel as a linguistic experience, as more or less a misadventure of language that unfolds through the discursive modes of its narration. In line with this development, the temporal scheme of the novel appropriately shifts from the cyclic plane, associated with a rich organicism and an intense vitalism, to the strictly linear, the precipitation of events in the third part of the novel contrasting markedly with the unhurried pace of the telling in the earlier parts. At the same time, the spatial scheme itself becomes transformed, enlarged and, in the process, impoverished: from the affectively charged compactness of the nine villages to the impersonal perspectives of the Lower Niger, evoked in the ruminations of the colonial officer that bring the narrative to its close.

Things Fall Apart displays in its own peculiar way what Frank Kermode has called "the ambiguous innocence of the classic text" [Kermode, 1983, 74]. Kermode's phrase itself is a suggestive one, for we might conceive of the classic text in terms of its centrality to a tradition, either one that is fully established but must still accommodate new works for its reinvigoration--the sense of T.S. Eliot's celebrated essay, "Tradition and the Individual Talent"--or one that is

emerging, advertising itself by its novelty, as is generally held to be the case with modern African literature in the European languages. The poetics of *Things Fall Apart* seem in a curious way to unite both these senses of the classic text. On one hand, its economy of style derives from what seems like a complete adherence to the norms of the conventional novel, exemplified by its strictly linear structure with a beginning, a middle and an end, leading inexorably to the final catastrophe, the progression clearly marked by the novel's triadic structure. Moreover, it achieves its effects by means that refuse to call attention to themselves. This makes for an austerity that places it alongside that other classic of the African canon, Cheikh Hamidou Kane's Ambiguous Adventure. At the same time, it has claims to a uniqueness that derives from its departure from the western model in fundamental ways. For, as the discussion above indicates, a tension exists between the surface fluency that distinguishes Achebe's text and the resonances set up within it by its hidden places of signification. For although *Things Fall Apart* presents itself at first sight as what Roland Barthes has called a "readerly" rather than a "writerly" text [Barthes, 1970], the indications I have provided of key elements of its internal features indicate that there is more to its transparent texture than is at first sight perceptible. These deeper promptings of the text indicate that its apparent simplicity is belied by the complexities of reference and suggestion that lie beneath its directness of enunciation.[22]

The tension that these complexities generate in the text proceeds largely from the fraught relation that obtains between theme and form, reflecting an ambivalence that informs the fictional inspiration and therefore structures its formal expression. Simon Gikandi has endeavored to address this issue by claiming that this feature of the work derives from the writer's cultural background, which recognizes a plurality of discourse and admits different points of view, varying formulations of the truth of experience or reality [Gikandi, 1991, 44-50]. But the ambivalence in the novel is so profound as to carry much more weight than Gikandi seems willing to allow. Rather than a function of cultural habit, it seems to me that this ambivalence stems from the critical consciousness inherent in Achebe's recourse to the novel as a narrative genre. The point can be made directly by observing that Achebe presents Igbo society "steadily and whole," to borrow Matthew Arnold's expression. For while this society is indeed marked by an internal coherence of its organization and a poetry of its expressive modes, it also betrays profound inadequacies and grave internal contradictions that account for the disintegration that the novel records. Thus, *Things Fall Apart* does not merely embody a willed recall of cultural memory, but develops also as an exploration of the specificities of life within the universe of experience it unveils, an exploration that amounts ultimately to a reassessment of its nature and presiding ethos. In other words, Achebe brings to his task of historical recollection a moral intelligence.

The moral issue in *Things Fall Apart* seems to hinge upon how far Okonkwo can be considered representative of his society, how far he can be held to be its embodiment. For William Walsh, the centrality of Okonkwo to the issue is clear, as he says, "because of the way in which the fundamental predicament of the society is lived through his life" [Walsh, 1970, 52]. But any categorical answer one way or the other skirts the questions, since in fact, in real societies, individuals only partially embody the values of the community even when these are presumed to have been fully internalized, for in the very process of acting out these values, they can also be found to strain against them. It is this dialectic between the individual and the

society, inherent in what Durkheim termed "social constraint" (la contrainte sociale) that is so well mirrored in Achebe's novel in its depiction of Okonwo's relation to his society.

This is a dialectic that is of course very much within the province of the novel. Indeed, as Sunday Anozie has pointed out, Okonkwo as a character corresponds in some respects to Lucien Goldmann's concept of the "problematic hero"; in Anozie's reading, Okonwo emerges as something of a romantic hero, the bearer of a cult of the self [Anozie, 1970, 00-00]. It is easy to see how this attribute can constitute a menace to the kind of society that Achebe constructs, a potential factor of disaggregation in a tribal community. For the assiduous cultivation of individual self can only disturb the system of obligations and solidarities on which the sense of community is founded.

Okonkwo's personal attitude and social conduct as we encounter them in the novel amount in fact to an idiosyncratic interpretation of social rules and lead irresistibly to a state of moral irresponsibility, despite his apparent conformity to norms. His self-absorption is of such a magnitude as to test the limits of the dominant ideology and thus to reveal its points of weakness. It is this paradox of his situation that is dramatized by his exile, which can be read as a symbolic expression of the necessity to rein in his passionate individuality by its exclusion from the social sphere. This aspect of his character is presented as directly related to the simplified and totally unreflective approach to the world by which he lives and acts, in striking contrast to his friend Obierika. The same unreflective commitment to the communal ethos in his killing of Ikemefuna is manifested in his cutting down of the court messenger. Okonkwo's blinding passion leads him to a final act of egoism that finally marks him with a tragic solitude, rendered tersely in the line in which we finally glimpse him: "He wiped his machete on the sand and went away" [145].

Contrary, then, to Gikandi's contention, the ambivalence by which the novel is governed inheres in the text itself, emerging clearly in the portrayal of Okonkwo. We must go further to observe that the largely negative thrust of this portrayal comes close to undermining the polemical intent of the novel. For if Okonkwo's tragic fate marks him as a symbol of the passion of the African in modern times, the ironic devaluation of the character and the ethos he embodies suggests a profound sense of unease on the part of his creator regarding many issues of moral import raised by the habits of mind and social practices that define the traditional universe of life and expression. There is thus a sense in which the sustained imaginative reflection upon Igbo society in Achebe's novel begins to tend toward a subversion of its ideological premises. It is as if Achebe's intellect and sensibility and his sense of artistic integrity had entered into contention with his primary affections for his cultural antecedents, thus bringing into peril his conscious project of bearing witness to the poetic quality of the universe in which they are rooted. For although it would be extreme to read Achebe's novel as the expression of a repudiation of the tribal ethos, as a form of recoil from the tribal universe, to consider the text in light of its ambivalence is to recognize it for what it is: nothing less than an uncompromising reappraisal of the tribal world. [23]

It is important to stress that this revaluation has nothing to do with the diminished conception of African humanity and capacities constitutive of colonial ideology but arises as an immediate factor of the historical process represented in the novel. We appreciate the intense feeling of insecurity of the Umuofia elders as they sense the world with which they are familiar

going out from under them. We sympathize, therefore, with the claim to cultural integrity defended by Okonkwo and others, more so as the novel establishes a parallel between their attitude and that of Mr. Smith, whose intransigence on behalf of the Christian cause mirrors that of Okonkwo on behalf of the traditional world. They are the true protagonists, embodying each in his own way the logic of the cultural conflict enacted in the novel, the logic involved in the drama of the colonial encounter. Moreover, this conflict is situated within the perspective of a cultural pluralism that is at first rehearsed in a good humored way in the theological disputations between the Umuofians and Mr. Brown, but which soon assumes an agonistic character in the confrontation with his successor, Mr. Smith; it is this later development that is voiced by one of the elders, Ajofia:

We cannot leave the matter in his hands because he does not understand our customs, just as we do not understand his. We say he is foolish, because he does not know our ways, and perhaps he says we are foolish because we do not know his [134-5].

But this balanced view of cultural relativism hardly represents the level of the novel's groundwork of ideas or the resting place of its ideological or narrative progression. *Things Fall Apart* complicates singularly the issues so often raised in the context of debate within which it is usually situated, that of the Tradition/Modernity framework. It goes beyond the series of dichotomies so regularly invoked in this debate as to have become platitudes: established custom versus change; cultural loss versus reproduction; accommodation versus revolt; acculturation versus cultural nationalism, and the like. These issues are obviously implicated in the total discursive range of the novel's narrative development, but they do not in the end, it seems to me, constitute the real heart of the matter. For it is not enough to see *Things Fall Apart* as simply a statement of cultural and racial retrieval, as a novel that embodies a discourse of nativism. Rather than a unilateral revaluation of the past, the central preoccupation of this novel, as indeed of Achebe's entire work, revolves around the deeply problematic nature of the relationship of past to present in Africa. What is at issue here, in the most fundamental way, is the bearing of that past upon the present, fraught as this is with implications for the future perspectives of the continent.

Kwame Anthony Appiah's summing up of the novel is pertinent to this question when he remarks that, in *Things Fall Apart*, "Achebe's accounting includes columns both for profit and loss" [Appiah, 1992, xii). Given what we have seen as its ironic stances and the key of ambivalence on which the narrative is rung, it seems to me that if the novel translates a sense of loss, this cannot be overwhelming. *Things Fall Apart* can hardly be read as a wistful lingering over an elusive past: nostalgia is not a determining or even constitutive element of its atmosphere. The intellectual disposition of the writer, if not his imaginative consciousness, operating at a level deeper than any ideological conception of his function, seems here to apprehend a decided lack of congruence between the past of the novel's reconstruction, reanimated as a function of cultural memory, and the imperatives of the present, even as the claims of that past to aesthetic significance are upheld, and its psychological value in countering the debilitation of the colonial situation is activated.

We are made aware of the inadequacy of the overarching ethos by which the past was regulated, its limitations as embodied in historical forms, the inadequacy of this ethos and of these forms arising precisely from their mode of insertion in the world. Moreover, as Pierre

Nora has pointed out, the phenomenon of memory exceeds the purview of history [Nora, 1989]. In this particular context perhaps more than in any other, the dynamics of cultural memory involve much more than reaching into a past; they also engage the present, insofar as the traditional culture upon which they are focused remains a vibrant contemporary reality. But while it continues to exert its force upon minds, the question remains how far the past can be invoked to legitimize the present, how far it is capable of functioning as a practical reference in the contemporary circumstances of African endeavor.

These, then, are some of the issues raised by Achebe's work. The point is that the novel genre serves Achebe as a mode of reflection upon the nature and significance of the African past, and its relevance to the African present. In *Things Fall Apart*, this reflective tone is made evident in the conversations and dialogues he attributes to the elders of the tribe, who are thereby presented through the course of the narrative as minds engaged in a sustained deliberative process. The novel takes on a discursive character as it stages a running debate on customs and practices, on institutions and values, on systems of belief: a debate that is in reality conducted as an interrogation of the human possibilities offered by the material world and mental landscape that together compose the tribal culture and stamp it with a distinctive quality.

But although this interrogation is presented as internal, it amounts ultimately to an objective scrutiny, in the light of an alternative set of values that, in the nature of things, were not available to the subjects themselves. This scrutiny forms part of the implicit ideology of the novel, of the system of ideas presiding upon its organization, for which the Euro-Christian system of values begins to function as touchstone and measure. This is not to imply that the emphasis on Christianity as a factor of liberation authorizes us to read the work as a justification of the new religion, much less of colonial imposition, but rather as a mirror held up to African society, enabling a process of self-apprehension. In other words, a new African consciousness emerges through the mediation of the Christian/Western vision of the world.

The tension generated by the fundamental ambivalence of the novel's "propositional" content can be grasped at its most intense at this level, for the process of self-reflection manifested in the novel is traversed by what one might call a deep cultural anxiety. This is nothing like the self-contempt displayed Yambo Ouologuem's Bound to Violence, but it testifies to the way in which the need to validate the tribal culture in some emotionally satisfactory way runs up against the question of value, a question that is central to the order of meaning proposed by the novel. It is in this light that Obierika, who stands as the manifest antithesis of Okonkwo, can be said to function as the moral center of the novel. He comes closest among the novel's characters to a representation of what Valdez Moses has called a "modern sensibility" [Valdez Moses, 1995, 113].[24] It is perhaps not far-fetched to suggest that we have in Obierika not merely the one character with which, as Jeyifo points out, the novelist seems to identify, but rather a subtle projection of the critical consciousness that Achebe himself brings to the imaginative conception of the novel [Jeyifo, 1990]. The evidence of the novel lends such weight to this view as to make it a matter of more than mere speculation.

Whatever the case, the debate enacted within the novel gives the work an analytical bent to which its initial ideological inspiration is ultimately subordinated, for *Things Fall Apart* testifies to a clear recognition of a decisive break in the African experience of history occasioned by the

colonial fact. It hardly needs to be stressed that this recognition is far from committing Achebe to an acquiescence in the methods of subjugation employed by colonial agents, whether white or black, exemplified by the deception and humiliation described in the latter pages of the novel, in which the historical grievance of Africa is vividly represented, dramatized in the martyrdom of Okonkwo and the Umuofia elders. The pathos of their situation resonates through the entire society, takes on wider meaning as nothing less than the suspension of the entire culture, the arrest of those activities that gave both energy and poetry to everyday life in Umuofia. All this portends the stifling of the tribe's spirit by a collective trauma: "Umuofia was like a startled animal with ears erect, sniffing the silent, ominous air, and not knowing which way to run" [139].

The anti-colonial thrust of the novel is unmistakable here, but it becomes evident as we reflect upon the novel as a whole that this is not all there is to the story of Okonkwo and Umuofia, as recounted by Chinua Achebe. The novel ends with the hero's suicide, but there is no real closure, for we are intimated by the white colonial officer's musings with the fact that it opens onto a new and unpredictable future for the Umuofians and for the continent of which they form an integral and indeed representative part. The import of the novel arises from this intimation, for what *Things Fall Apart* registers ultimately is an acute consciousness of historical and cultural discontinuity occasioned by the colonial encounter in Africa, and of its ontological implications: the necessity for a new mode of being, of relating to the world.

It is one of the of the novel's peculiar traits that the historical realism that directs the narrative progression harmonizes readily with the elegiac mood that serves as its groundbase, a conjunction that is registered in one of the most remarkable passages in the novel:
That night the mother of the spirits walked the length and breadth of the clan, weeping for her murdered son. It was a terrible night. Not even the oldest man in Umuofia had ever heard such a strange and fearful sound, and it was never to be heard again. It seemed as if the very soul of the tribe wept for a great evil that was coming - its own death. [132].

The epochal significance of the passage is intensified, assumes cosmic resonance, in the lament that pours out of one of the characters, Okika, at the final meeting of the clan: "All our gods are weeping. Idemili is weeping. Ogwugwu is weeping. Agbala is weeping, and all the others…" [143]. Okika's lament directs us to the heart of Achebe's novel: it is as an elegy that incorporates a tragic vision of history that *Things Fall Apart* elicits the strongest and deepest response.

Things Fall Apart inaugurates the imaginative reliving in Achebe's work of those significant moments of the African experience traced in his five novels to date. Given this comprehensive perspective of inspiration and reference within which they are situated, these novels compose a historical vision. Consequently, they pose the general theoretical question of the formal relation of the novel as a genre to the substantive fact of history, a relation within which the purport of Achebe's work can be said to inhere. Because of its unique place in Achebe's corpus and in the African canon, *Things Fall Apart* presents itself as the indispensable point of departure for an examination of this question.

The transition of Achebe's style from an epic mode to one associated with the novel provides an indication of the changing modes of this relation. This stylistic evolution of the novel may be interpreted as the scriptural sign of a corresponding adjustment of the writer's

vision, reflecting his sense, as the narrative develops, of the pressure of history as it begins to exert itself upon the community that is the subject of the novel. This seems to accord with a Hegelian conception of history as the unfolding saga of modernity, with the modern novel as its imaginative equivalent. The received opinion stemming from these sources has tended to understand modernity as a historical phenomenon arising primarily from the Western experience and as the paradigm that commands the writing of scientific history, and, as a consequence, the emergence of the novel, the literary genre that is thought to be most closely associated with modern culture. In this view, the novel as a specific modern genre affords a new medium for the construction in aesthetic and moral terms of a vision of a totality no longer immediately available to consciousness in the fragmented, reified world of modern civilization [Lukács, 1977]. [25]

For the conception of history that underwrites the status of the novel alluded to above, the society depicted in Achebe's novel, along with the culture it sustains, appears as prehistoric, subsisting, as far as the record of its existence is concerned, on mythical narrative orally transmitted, and therefore unworthy of attention of serious historical scholarship. Consequently, it seems hardly appropriate as the subject of a novel in the normal understanding of the term.[26] *Things Fall Apart* challenges this conception, for the whole purpose of Achebe's novel is to bring the existence of this culture into view as a historical reality, one that bears witness to the human world realized within it. The narrative mode, in both its epic aspect and at the novelistic level of articulation, affords Achebe the means of restating the grounded historicity of the African experience, in a creative reconstruction of stages of the collective being.

It is of course true that the sequence of events narrated, and the society and culture represented, are products of an individual imagination, detached from any function of pure predication; the narrative unfolding of events conducted along a definite plot line is thus sustained by an aesthetic faculty that is fully engaged in Achebe's reconstruction. It is evident therefore that, despite their historical focus, *Things Fall Apart*, as well as Arrow of God--the two novels need to be considered together on this point--are not only not histories in any ordinary sense of the word, they cannot be considered historical novels either, in the conventional or narrow sense of their dealing with real events in the past, featuring real historical personalities as characters.[27] But this sense is hardly satisfactory for an understanding of the narrative function, hence the need for a more inclusive conception, such as the one propounded by Hayden White, which posits a fundamental relationship between fiction and history as modalities of the narrative activity and process. The point is well clarified in the following observation regarding the significance of narrative as a universal phenomenon:

The affiliation of narrative historiography with literature and myth should provide no reason for embarrassment…because the systems of meaning production shared by all three are distillates of the historical experience of a people, a group, a culture [White, 1987, 44-45].[28]

This suggests that the assimilation of fiction to history is authorized not merely in formal terms--what Hayden White calls "emplotment"--but also of content, insofar as in both cases, the real world of concrete experience features as referent of the narrative. But here, we work with a special notion of referentiality peculiar to fiction, deriving from its enhanced value as symbolic representation of experience. To quote Hayden White again: "Thus envisaged, the narrative

figurates the body of events that serves as its primary referent and transforms these events into intimations of patterns of meaning that any literal representation of them as facts could never produce" [45].

These remarks bear directly on Achebe's two novels, for they present themselves as acts of remembrance that entail an intense engagement of mind and sensibility upon a collective experience and thus move towards what, to quote him once more, Hayden White calls "an order of meaning." In specific terms, the two novels manifest an understanding of the essence of history as being bound up with momentous events which alter the collective destiny in ways that are unpredictable but prove ultimately definitive. These novels are informed in other words by a profound sense of the radical contigency of history.

It is this deep intuition of history that, it seems to me, distinguishes Achebe's work from that of every other African writer. This distinction emerges clearly when we contrast the tone of *Things Fall Apart* with that of francophone African writing roughly contemporaneous with it, especially in the works of Camara Laye, Leopold Senghor, and Cheikh Hamidou Kane, all of whom have created in obedience to a paradigm of the self that privileges the ideal of wholeness. This accounts for the nostalgia for the past that pervades their work, an impossible longing for an earlier state of being, denoted by Senghor's "le royaume de l'enfance," a nostalgia further deepened by the religious cum theological dimension it assumes in Kane's Ambiguous Adventure. It is not without interest to observe that a similar aspiration for an enhanced quality of being animates Soyinka's mythical evocations of origins [David, 1995].

Achebe's work registers on the other hand a severe recognition of the compulsions upon the human estate of the historical process itself--what he has called "the power of events"--a compulsion that admits of only narrow margins for the play of human agency. It is this that I have called elsewhere the "humane pessimism" that I believe Achebe shares with Joseph Conrad [Irele, 1988]. [29] It must be understood, however, that this pessimism is not by any means a disabling one, for it does not imply a resignation born out of a passive suffering of events. It calls rather for a purposive adjustment to those great shifts in the structure of the world that destabilize established constellations of thought, initiating a new historical process and enforcing therefore a new adventure of mind.

This seems to me the direction of meaning in Achebe's fiction, which, in its immediate reference, represents an imaginative remapping of the African experience within the space of history, the literary mode deployed as a means of shaping consciousness for the confrontation of the new realities on the horizon of African being. The ironies and the ambivalence that underscore the drama of cultural memory in his first novel emerge in a new light from this perspective, attesting to a sombre consciousness but one resolutely oriented towards a future envisioned as pregnant with new possibilities. In other words, a utopian component underlies the expressive modalities and encompassing vision in *Things Fall Apart*.

In a limited sense, the utopianism of the novel is inseparable from the nationalist vein that, as I have suggested, informs the narrative and the project of modernity that is its concomitant. This is not to imply that Achebe's nationalism in this or his other works advertises itself as a programmatic fixation upon an ideal future. However, the understanding of history that, as we have seen, underlies its system of ideas implies, as its necessary complement, a vision of African renewal. Thus, a tacit correlation exists between Achebe's imaginative discourse in its utopian

implications and what Arjun Appadurai has called "the mega-rhetoric of developmental modernization" of African and Asian anti-colonial nationalism [Appadurai, 1996, 22]. It is well to remember that Achebe continues to sustain in his fiction right up to the present moment this vision of new beginnings in Africa, as demonstrated by the conclusion of Anthills of the Savannah.[30]

But the utopianism of Achebe's fiction, as it begins to declare itself in *Things Fall Apart*, has a broader scope than is suggested by the materialist and utilitarian preoccupations of nationalism. It involves what the Manuels have called "an idealizing capacity" as a defining property of the utopian imagination [Manuel, 1979, 5]. In this respect, it accords fully with the universalist interpretation of the utopian function of literature propounded by Fredric Jameson, whose reformulation of Lukács's categories of "conservative" and "progressive" expands their meaning in a new dichotomy between "ideology" and "utopia." In this reformulation, intended to refurbish the terms earlier proposed by Karl Mannheim for historical and sociological understanding, the term "utopian" comes to designate the way in which literature, as a socially symbolic act, envisions the realm of freedom as a human possibility [Jameson, 1981].[31]

We might conclude then with the observation that what cultural memory delivers in Achebe's first novel is not so much a revalued past, recollected in a spirit of untroubled celebration, as, ultimately, the opening out of the African consciousness to the possibility of its transcendence, to the historic chance of a new collective being and existential project. The sense of the tragic clings nonetheless to this consciousness, for Achebe is aware that this historic chance, if real, is at best limited and fragile. His vision is probably best expressed by the voice of the "Oracle" in his poem "Dereliction" (in the volume Beware Soul Brother) inviting his questing worshippers to a form of action, perhaps a collective affirmation, in the precarious space constituted by the strip of dry land between sea and shore at the ebbing of the tide:

Let them try the land
Where the sea retreats
Let them try the land
Where the sea retreats

Achebe's tragic vision of history is presented in these lines in tension with his utopianism. But to invoke the tragic dimension of Achebe's first novel is not merely to seek to uncover the full scope of its statement of the colonial encounter in Africa, but also to reach for its contemplative character, the sense it contains of the general human condition.[32] It is this sense that is conveyed by Roland Barthes's summation of the tragedies of Racine as "the aesthetics of defeat" ("l'art de l'échec") [Barthes, 1963, 61]. The description applies equally to all the great tragedies of world literature, among which *Things Fall Apart* must now be seen to occupy a distinctive place. Beyond its reference to the personal dilemmas of Racine's characters, Barthes's phrase points to the apprehension by the tragic imagination of the essential fragility of our human condition. The deep insight that tragedy provides into this condition may well shake our being with fear and trembling, but it is the illumination and psychic release it generates that enable humanity to keep going. As a necessary component of its exploration of the African experience, *Things Fall Apart* embodies this fundamental truth of the imaginative vision.

Notes

1. The phrase is of course an echo of V. S. Naipaul's title for the first of his three books on India. For a comprehensive discussion of the image of Africa in the western imagination, see Fanoudh-Siefer, 1968.

2. Achebe's example spawned a cluster of novels in anglophone Africa focused on the theme of revaluation and cultural conflict. This is especially the case in the work of a group of Igbo writers who may be said to constitute a school deriving its inspiration and method from his work. Among these may be cited, as the most prominent, the names of writers like Flora Nwapa, John Munonye, Onuora Nzekwu and Elechi Amadi; Buchi Emecheta's work bears an indirect relation to this "school." [See Emenyonu, 1974] The long shadow cast by Achebe over these writers is best illustrated by the insufficient and even scant attention that has been paid to Elechi Amadi's powerful novel, The Great Ponds, in my view one of the masterpieces of modern African literature. Further afield, we may cite the case of Ngugi wa Thiongo who has acknowledged his debt to Achebe. To recognize the innovative significance of *Things Fall Apart* to which its wide influence on other African writers testifies is, however, far from stating that Achebe "invented" African literature, as Gikandi claims in his 1991 study of Achebe, a point he repeats in the introduction to the annotated edition of the novel published in 1996. Unless the anglophone area is to be taken as representing the whole field, and the novel as the privileged medium, African literature cannot be said to have begun with the publication of Achebe's novel in 1958. To do so would be to discount the whole area of African literature in the indigenous languages, beginning with the oral tradition itself, and extending to the written literature in the vernaculars, with the work of Thomas Mfolo and D. O. Fagunwa, for example, as major landmarks. Moreover, as regards African literature in the European languages, even if we set aside the work of African writers of European extraction (considered in my 1990 essay "The African Imagination"), the francophone writers had established a new tradition of African literary expression before the publication of the significant texts in English. It is of course possible to consider such figures as René Maran and Paul Hazoumé as precursors, but not Léopold Sédar Senghor, whose first volume of poems, Chants d'ombre, was published in 1945. The volume itself testifies to a conscious project of African literature, explicitly stated in the poem "Lettre à un Poète" dedicated to Aimé Césaire, a poem that presents itself as a veritable manifesto for the creation of a new literature expressive of the African environment, a point Senghor later elaborates in the essay "Comme les Lamantins vont boire à la source" which serves as postface to his 1960 volume, Ethiopiques. Indeed, if we seek a precise reference for the "invention" of African literature, this can only be the historic Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie nègre et malgache, compiled by Senghor and published in 1948. The point is that African literature in the European languages had been constituted as a distinct area of modern African expression well before Achebe came on the scene.

3. Achebe himself has sought to clarify this ideological project by presenting it as a vindication, in the face of persistent western denigration, of the African claim to human achievement. According to him, the novel was motivated by the desire to demonstrate that the precolonial order in Africa was not "one long night of savagery" ["The Novelist as Teacher." Hopes and Impediments, 45]. Furthermore, he has indicated that, in its elaboration as a work of fiction, *Things Fall Apart* represents his corrective response to the portrayal of Africa in Joyce Cary's Mister Johnson and Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness ["Named for Victoria, Queen of England" and "An Image of Africa," in the same volume, and Achebe's Preface to An African Trilogy]. To these names must be added H.Rider Haggard, Edgar Wallace, and John Buchan, whose works were staples of the colonial literature in Nigeria and other African territories in the former British Empire.

4. *Things Fall Apart*, 1996, p.7 All further references will be indicated in the text by page number.

5. We might note that Achebe's observation about Okonkwo applies equally to Ezeulu, the focus of his third novel, Arrow of God; both function as characters in what Biodun Jeyifo [1993] has described as "fictional genealogies of colonialism" in Africa.

6. Colin Turnbull's The Forest People, 1962, provides a prime example of this discourse of anthropology by which the colonial ideology was sustained. It is intriguing to observe the parallel between Turnbull's title and the name given by Achebe to the community described in *Things Fall Apart*. For an extensive discussion of the relation between Achebe's recreation of Igbo culture in his novels, and the ethnographic literature on the Igbo by Western anthropologists (Basden, Talbot, Meek and others), see Robert Wren, 1980. Talbot's Among the Ibos of Nigeria has been the standard work on the subject.

7. I have in mind here Ian Watt's thesis concerning the association between a realist convention and the modern novel in its genesis, this convention arising from the diversified forms of experiences ushered in by the change from an agrarian to an industrial mode of production [Watt, 1957]. According to Watt, this made it imperative for the novelist to provide the reader with background information (down to the baking of bread) related to the context of the narrative. The example he cites of the build-up of detail in Robinson Crusoe is especially illuminating, insofar as the economic rationale for realism is disguised in this tale of a fantastic, exotic appearance. The same propensity towards realism is also evident in the novels of Jane Austen, in which it serves a critical purpose:despite a homogenous public (or because of it?) the reproduction of everyday life and manners as part of the fabric of social experience in her time was intended to foster immediate recognition by the reader, a response conducive to the creation by the novelist of an ironic distance necessary for her critical reflection on the characters and situations she presents. The apogee of this realism was attained in the nineteeth century French novel, which combined the same ironic function with a "documentary" character. For, despite the scorn poured by Roland Barthes in Le Degré zéro de l'écriture upon the French realistic novel, its immediate connection to history and to the social transformations of the age constituted it into a powerful channel of social criticism, providing, according to Richard Terdiman a challenge to the repressive institutions of an

ascendant bourgeoisie [Terdiman, 1985]. As a genre, the novel has of course moved beyond this convention of formal realism, toward the modernist reflexive model in which we witness a reciprocal relation between its narrative content and a critical reflection on the art by which this is constituted [Boyd, 1983].

8. Arnold Toynbee's observations regarding what he calls "military virtues" are relevant to a consideration of Achebe's world: "If we wish to understand either the value of the military virtues or the sincerity of the admiration which they win, we must take care to look at them in their native social setting….The military virtues are cultivated and admired in a milieu in which social forces are not sharply distinguished in people's minds from the non-human natural forces, and in which it is at the same time taken for granted that natural forces are not amenable to human control" [Toynbee, 1950, 15].

9. The type as represented in Igbo culture reappears in the character of Danda in Nkem Nwakwo's novel of that name; the closest parallel in Western literature would be perhaps the good soldier Svejk, in Jaroslav Hasek's famous antiwar novel.

10. François Mauriac has remarked upon the procedure he terms "hypertrophie" by which novelists and dramatists tend to exaggerate specific moral or psychological traits in their characters at the expense of others, so that each one of these characters (a Iago, a Goriot, a Raskolnikov) strikes us as representative of a singular aspect of life or experience. We observe a similar process in the creation by Achebe of Okonkwo as an "outsize" character.

11. The expression served as methodological focus for the investigations in social psychology undertaken by Kardiner and Ovesey [Kardiner, 1945; see also Dufrenne, 1953].

12. It is in this light that Claude Lévi-Strauss has interpreted the Story of Asdiwal as a dramatization of the tension between the masculine and the feminine principle; the myth thus reflects, according to him, a perception of the dualism of the natural order and its resonances within the imagination [Lévi-Strauss, in Leach, 1977]. The contradiction between the symbolic representation of women and their social position is of course a feature of most traditional cultures; for a discussion as this applies to India, see Kumari, 2000.

13. As a matter of comparative interest, we might note the parallel between Achebe's treatment of the father-son conflict in *Things Fall Apart* and Samuel Butler's treatment of the same theme in The Way of All Flesh. The family story in *Things Fall Apart* is taken up again in the sequel, No Longer At Ease. We now know that Achebe's original plan was to write a trilogy based upon a family saga, a plan that he abandoned with the writing of Arrow of God, the work that is, without question, his masterpiece. The irony of history is explored more fully in this work, in a fictional register that incorporates a religious element, and is focused on a hero, Ezeulu, who assumes the dimension of a world historical figure, and whose tragic stature is underlined by the intertextual resonance of his bitter return, like Shakespeare's Lear, in a raging storm, accompanied by a character who functions as his shadow.

14. For this historical background (not directly considered in Achebe's novel) see K. Onwuka Diké's classic work, Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta; also, Wren, already cited.

15. For a preliminary approach to an explication of the structure of imagery in *Things Fall Apart*, suggestive of the possibility of a Bachelardian analysis, see Muoneke, 1994, 101-102.

16. The first title of the Italian translation is based on the imagery in this passage: *Le locuste bianche*. Tr G. De Carlo. Milan: Mondadori, 1962. The title has since been changed in a more recent translation: *Il crollo*. Tr S.A.Cameroni. Milan: Jaca Book, 1994.

17. The notion of "Evil Forest" is not unknown in English, in which the equivalent is "Devil's Dyke."

18. The implications of the historic connection between Christianity and education form the subject of J.F. Ade Ajayi's study, Christian Missions in Nigeria, 1841-1891: The Making of a New Elite. 1966. As indicated by its subtitle, the study is not merely a historical account of the Christian evangelical effort in Nigeria, but also a sociological analysis of its major consequence, the formation of a new Westernized elite in the country. A concrete testimony of this connection is provided by Wole Soyinka's biography of his father in Isarà. As with similar elites in other parts of the world, it is to this social group that we owe the national idea in Nigeria. It should be noted that for this group, an ideology of modernity is inseparable from its anti-colonial stance. [Geeetz, ed, 1963]; the tension between this stance, and the movement for cultural revival is discussed in my "Dimensions of African Discourse" [Irele, 19]. Despite the particular circumstances of its rise in the context of British colonial rule and within a multi-ethnic framework, Nigerian nationalism illustrates the determining influence highlighted by Ernest Gellner [1983] and Benedict Anderson [1983] of literacy and the role of intellectuals for the emergence of ideas of national identity. [For Nigeria, see in particular Coleman, 1958; Echeruo, 1977; and Zachernuk, 2000].

19. For an extended analysis of Achebe's style and its effect upon the organization of the novel, see Cook, 1977, 75-79. Kwame Appiah for his part remarks on Achebe's "mastery of form and language" [ix], while Margaret Lawrence comments in these terms upon his prose: "a prose plain and spare, informed by his keen sense of irony" [Lawrence, 1968, 107].

20. The logic that underlies the reference here to the potency of the white man's medicine is of a piece with the argument of efficacy advanced by Charles Taylor [1982] and others, in favour of the superior epistemological status of western rationality. See also Wilson, 1970, and the three essays in Lukes, 1977, Part 2, "Rationality and Relativism." 121-174.

21. Marjorie Winter's analysis [1981] in which she discerns an evolution of Achebe's style towards the dry prose of official documents, calls to mind Max Weber's observation on the development of institutional bureaucracy and its impersonal character as a sign of the "disenchanted world" of modern society.

22. Barthes associates the "readerly" text expressly with the established classic, requiring hardly any strenuous engagement on the part of the reader, whereas Kermode's phrase draws attention to the inherent complexity of such texts. We might observe here that the

recourse to orality gives Achebe's novel what, following Gates, one might call a "speakerly" quality [Gates, 1989].

23. It is well to place Achebe's appraisal of his own society's less flattering aspects against his now celebrated critique of Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness in his essay "An Image of Africa" [Achebe, 1988, 1-20]. Achebe assails Conrad's work as a "racist novel" though he is far from calling for its elimination from the canon of the Western canon, as David Denby asserts in his 1995 article, "Jungle Fever." While Achebe does not altogether ignore the anti-imperialist thesis of the novella, he seems to equate Conrad's compassion for the Africans of his story to the kind promoted by the RSPCA on behalf of domestic animals. This seems hardly fair to Conrad, but Achebe is not alone in missing the serious moral import of the novella as registered in the epigram to the first edition. It is regrettable that this epigram is not always reproduced in current editions of the work, the notable exception being the Norton edition edited by Robert Kimbrough, which also contains Achebe's essay as well as responses to it. On this question, see Robert Hamner, 1990. See also Cedric Watts's Introduction to the Oxford edition of Heart of Darkness, and more recently, Peter Edgerly Firchow, 1999.

24. It is instructive in this regard to consider the comparison suggested by Valdez Moses between the world depicted in Achebe's novel and the image of early Greek society that emerges from the great classical epics of the western literary tradition. Valdez Moses speaks of the "strikingly Homeric quality of *Things Fall Apart*" and discerns " certain similarities between particular Greek and African civilizations in a way that breaks down the Manichean dualism of the West and its Other." He adds: " In fact, the differences between the ethos of Homer's Mycenaean heroes and that of their Igbo counterparts in Achebe's novels are far less striking than those between either of them and the moral standards and political norms that prevail among contemporary European, American and African intellectuals." [Moses, 1995, 113]. Valdez Moses might have added that in both Homer's Iliad and Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, we witness a distancing of the narrator from the hero, amounting to a questioning of the dominant ethos. In both, we sense a marked distaste for the violence accepted in earlier societies and reflected in epic narratives, carried to remarkable heights in the wanton violence and atrocities of the Norse sagas. This narrative distance in the Iliad reduces somewhat the analytical value of the distinction so often proposed between epic and novel in terms of the degree of the narrator's investment not only in the action and atmosphere of the narrative, but in the moral values of the world it represents.

25. Fredric Jameson has sought to get beyond this privileging of the novel on the part of Georg Lucáks by recovering for critical practice a sense of wholeness for all forms of literary expression: "Indeed, no working model of the functioning of language, the nature of communication or of the speech act, and the dynamics of formal and stylistic change is conceivable which does not imply a whole philosophy of history" [Jameson, 1981, 59].

26. This conforms with Hegel's contemptuous dismissal of the literature of earlier societies as creditable historical material, a view given expression at the very outset of his Philosophy of History: "The historian binds together the fleeting rush of events and

deposits it in the temple of Mnemosyne. Myths, folk songs, traditions are not part of original history; they are still obscure modes and peculiar to obscure peoples. Observed and observable reality is a more solid foundation for history than the transience of myths and epics. Once a people has reached firm individuality, such forms cease to be its historical essence" [Hegel, tr Hartman, 1953, 3-4.]

27. The conception summarized here is that of David Daiches [1965].

28. The point is made even more succinctly and more pointedly by Michel Zéraffa with regard to the novel: " Sont en cause, dans le roman, notre historicité et son sens" [Zéraffa, 1971, 15].

29. For a discussion of the mental landscape that forms the background to Conrad's pessimism, see Jameson, 1981, 251 ff.

30. It is always a hazardous move from reading the work of fiction to speculating about the author's options in the real world. However, Achebe's nonfictional works confirm his embrace of modernity as a necessary dimension of African renewal. And as his own novels relating to post independence demonstrate, he takes full cognizance of the problems and dilemmas involved in the process of Africa's accession to modernity. Nevertheless, his commitment has remained firm, despite the frustrations and disappointments that seem indeed to have given an even sharper edge to sense of commitment; the title of his 1988 collection of essays, Hopes and Impediments, is sufficiently eloquent to indicate this direction of his sentiments. It seems therefore safe to say that for Achebe, the African personality is not incompatible with a modern scientific culture. Thus he asks rhetorically, "Why should I start waging war as a Nigerian newspaper editor was doing the other day against `the soulless efficiency' of Europe's industrial and technological civilization when the very thing my society needs may well be a little technical efficiency" ("The Novelist as Teacher" Hopes and Impediments, 43). Add to this the lament at the end of The Trouble with Nigeria, about Nigeria having lost the twentieth century and running the risk of losing the twenty-first as well.

31. In a fine passage written shortly before his death, Irving Howe expands on Jameson's notion when he defines utopianism as "a necessity of the moral imagination." He continues: "It doesn't necessarily entail a particular politics; it doesn't ensure wisdom in current affairs. What it does provide is a guiding principle, a belief or hope for the future, an understanding that nothing is more mistaken than the common notion that what exists today will continue to exist tomorrow. This kind of utopianism is really another way of appreciating the variety and surprise that history makes possible-possible, nothing more. It is a testimony to the resourcefulness that humanity now and then displays (together with other, far less attractive characteristics). It is a claim for the value of desire, the practicality of yearning-as against the deadliness of acquiescing in the given, simply because it is there" [Howe, 1993, 133].

32. The idea of *Things Fall Apart* as a tragedy in the classical sense was broached in an early essay of mine [Irele, 1965; see also Alastair Niven, 1990]. Jean Séverac discusses various responses to my classification of Achebe's novel as a tragedy [Séverac, 1997, 506-507].

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The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC): Human Rights and State Transitions--The South Africa Model

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Abstract: Post-authoritarian regimes have struggled with the most appropriate way to deal with the former regimes' human rights abuses.Several schools of though have emerged as to how this should be accomplished.Into this framework the South Africa model, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), is discussed.The TRC has completed its charge and the results vary according to one's perception of that charge.An assessment of South Africa's attempt at truth and reconciliation and the TRC's viability as a model for other transitioning societies are discussed.

"Injustice is like having an eye gouged out, but looking away is losing both eyes."--Russian Proverb[1]

Introduction

In 20 October 1998, South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) published its final report.With the exception of a relatively small minority of supporters, the TRC and its subsequent report have been widely criticized.Many in both the former ruling white elite as well as the Zulu-based Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) have called the TRC a witch hunt.Many of apartheid's victims believe the process failed them by both granting amnesties and failing to pay reparations.The minority of TRC supporters, led by Desmond Tutu, former Chairperson of the TRC, argue that the process has been both healing and necessary for the future of a South African society based on human rights. The idea of bringing to justice those within an authoritarian regime who committed human rights abuses during their tenure is not new. The evolution of a human rights paradigm and the development of mechanisms necessary for pursuing justice for the survivors of human rights abuses emerged at the end of World War II with both the Nuremberg and Tokyo tribunals. These tribunals have become the standard by which all others are measured. Duplications have been impossible, in large part due to the nature of the majority of transitions. As a result many varieties have emerged.

With roughly twenty commissions in more than fifteen countries over the past twenty-five years, it is evident that the "commission" has become an important transition tool. There are as

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many types of commissions as there are types of transitions. Each commission has its own limitations. The South African TRC is but one recent variation, albeit a variation that many viewed with high expectations. The TRC in its inception sought to alleviate the various problems and obstacles encountered by many of the recent commissions, particularly those in Latin America. Because South Africa's TRC has been seen as an improvement over other experiments, it is legitimate to assess whether or not the goals of the TRC have been met and if this hybrid model has anything to offer other transitioning societies. Thus, two questions are addressed here. Is South Africa's TRC a viable model for justice and reconciliation in a post-authoritarian society? What advantages and disadvantages does this model present?

Background

The apartheid regime stepped aside in South Africa as part of a negotiated settlement. During the negotiations for the transition, it became clear that de Klerk's National Party (NP) was unwilling to compromise over the issue of amnesty. In fact, it had tried to tie the issue of amnesty to the release of political prisoners. The first step in the development of the TRC model was the Indemnity Act, passed in November 1990. It was seen as a necessary step before any type of talks could get underway. The Act allowed the return of some exiles and the release of some political prisoners.[2]

By October of 1992, the NP was trying to expand the amnesty to cover members of its government. Over ANC objections, the regime attempted to push through a special law that would have given the president the power of indemnity. Although it passed in the House of Assembly, the bill failed. Not satisfied, de Klerk took the measure to the president's council, a parliamentary body designed to resolve conflicts over legislative issues. The NP dominated here and, as a result, the Further Indemnity Act was passed.

After negotiations and an intense public relations campaign (see below), the ANC indicated that it understood the need for a general amnesty for some who may have been in a position to obstruct the transition process. [3]According to Keightley's analysis (1993) of the struggle during the negotiations to define political offenses, the resulting indemnity process was arbitrary and very confusing for the citizenry. This cast a pall over the negotiation process as many South Africans were left feeling suspicious and angry.

As calls for some kind of commission of inquiry to investigate government abuses mounted, the NP, along with other minority parties, began a public relations campaign designed to cast aspersions on the ANC and to force them into agreement over the Further Indemnity Act. The attacks on the ANC focused on alleged abuses within its camps and for abuses allegedly committed by some in high-ranking positions within the ANC.

To the ANCs credit, and led by Nelson Mandala, the ANC held two commissions of its own to investigate those allegations. While admitting some abuses took place, the ANC was careful to point out that the abuses were not part of an official policy, but rather isolated incidents. Additionally, the ANC refused to allow the equation of abuses perpetrated by it or its supporters with those of the apartheid regime. The ANC argued that because it operated as a resistance movement, or was engaged in a "just war" attempting to bring an end to the crime of

apartheid, abuses committed by its members could not be equated with those of the apartheid state.

Critics of the two ANC reports charged the first commission with bias because two of the three members were part of the ANC. The second, they argued, did not go far enough in unearthing abuses within ANC camps and further charged that abuses are abuses and, therefore, the ANC should not be able to skirt responsibility by hiding behind the "resistance" label. Independent observers praised the self evaluation of the ANC, noting that it was one of the few times in modern history when ruling powers allowed their organization and its actions to be so scrutinized.[5] Self evaluation, however was all the Commission was designed to do.

The initial response of both major players--the ANC and the NP--to protect their own, turned out to be a good indicator of the obstacles to come as South Africa began its journey to reconciliation.

Lessons Learned

Various points of view exist with regard to how best to handle abuses of the past. Broadly speaking, these can be divided into three camps--the minimalists, the pragmatics, and the maximalists. The minimalists are those who put forth a series of arguments delineating the need for a society to move forward and not dwell on its past. Focusing on the past will only dredge up unpleasant and painful memories and will not allow the society as a whole to focus its energy on building a new society in which abuses of the past will be just that. This line of argument suggests that amnesty provides the best solution for moving ahead. Prosecutions, it is argued, would only endanger budding democracies that have already undergone the pain of transition. Additionally, minimalists raise a variety of questions. If the prosecutions begin, where do they end? Should only the leadership be brought to justice? Should bureaucrats, judiciary personnel, members of police and security forces, members of the media, the medical profession, all of whom are often duplicitous in authoritarian regimes, be eligible for prosecution? Can a state finance such an endeavor? Will these various members of the elite allow themselves to be dragged through a criminal or civil proceeding? Will prosecutions ensure that future leaders do a better job covering up abuses so as not be subject to the same? How will these prosecutions help a society move forward when a system is consumed with the past? How does a society prevent witch hunts and the guarantee of due process for those under prosecution?

If it is the military which is the target of prosecutions, then there exists the threat of a coup in order for military leaders to protect themselves. Also, if only the top leaders, those who gave the orders, are prosecuted, then the junior officers, those who carried out the bloody orders, will move into top military positions. Thus, the future will be jeopardized by having such folks in power.

Typically, those who put this argument forward can be found within the framework of supporters of the former authoritarian regimes, the NP in South Africa, and the military in both Argentina and Chile, for example. One striking example of this line of thinking was expressed in Margaret Thatcher's recent, stirring defense of Augusto Pinochet. She argued that Britain should not allow him to be extradited because he had been a friend to Britain during the

Falklands/Malvinas war. But, more importantly, the former British Prime Minister argued, it is against common sense to hold a head of state responsible for the abuses committed under his/her rule. He was, she argued, a victim of his ideology and was being sought because he had defeated communism and not because of human rights abuses, although she did admit some abuses had taken place under his rule.[6]

The maximalists are those who think anything less than full prosecution of all involved is unacceptable.[7] They argue that authoritarian regimes are at their weakest during the transition, hence the transition. During this period, the values and ideals that will set the course for the new governing apparatuses are being set. Therefore, granting indemnities may prove, in the long run, more dangerous than dealing with the past. According to Parker:

> "[i]demnities by definition involve the suspension of the rule of law. They demand acceptance of the paradox that lawlessness might be a necessary condition for lawfulness, and of the humbling admission that a state weakened by such a pact might be better than the alternative . . . victims are to respect the law their violators did not . . . ."[8]

The resentment among victims who watched perpetrators escape justice may result, and may foster, a notion of lawlessness, thus endangering the unconsolidated democracy.

In O'Donnell and Schmitter's study of transitions from authoritarian rule, they address the question of how far to go in pursuit of justice while trying to consolidate democracy. In particular, they address the minimalist argument of an impending coup should a society try to move too far or too fast this way:

> but how can those who want to push the transition avoid a coup without becoming so paralyzed by fear of it that they will disillusion their supporters and diminish their ability to press for further steps in the transition? Indeed, if they pursue this anticipated reaction too far, the promoters of the coup will have achieved their objectives without having acted: the transition will remain limited to a precarious liberalization, and the regime opponents will end up divided and deluded.[9]

The threat of a coup, they argue, is more of a bluff and further they suggest that when a country is going through a transition and has a recent history of gross violations of human rights, it is better to impose judgment on those charged and to do it through due process. Otherwise, burying the past simply buries with it the very values and ideals upon which you hope to build the new society.[10]

Asmal, also arguing from this stand point with regard to South Africa, outlines ten reasons why the past cannot be buried. The arguments can be condensed as follows. First, without thoroughly understanding the past, future problems will be unexplainable and thus roots of violence unexplored will perpetuate future violence, including the acceptance of structural violence. Second, supporters of the former regime can continue believing the unchallenged myths of the regime; thus their neglect of history will breed resentment and potential attempts at revenge. Third, there is a need for a society that emerges from such an authoritarian regime to have an outlet for its emotion. This outlet should be based on truth and justice, with justice

not taking a backseat to the consolidation of democracy because a stable democracy "is not built by granting concessions to the military on issues pertaining to its violent intrusion into civilian life."[11]

Orentlicher takes the argument further when suggesting that not only may criminal punishment be "effective insurance against future repression . . . by demonstrating that no sector is above the law" and thereby fostering "respect for democratic institutions," she also suggests where governments may be reluctant to forego prosecutions due to domestic concerns, international law and international pressure to comply with that law may be the effective way to go about securing justice.[12]

In addition to Orentlicher, there are others who suggest that international law requires the punishment of violators of various international human rights treaties. (For a discussion of this, please see Roht-Arriaza 1995, Weschler 1997 and Henkin 1989). Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch Follow in this line. Both human rights organizations have issued policy statements calling for complete justice in post-authoritarian societies.[13] Does amnesty at the expense of justice promote reconciliation? Or will prosecutions threaten democracy by bringing back the old guard? Both Neier and Hayner question the correlation either way.[14] Thus far, there is no convincing evidence to support either proposition.

Somewhere in between the minimalists and the maximalists are the pragmatists--those who argue that the pursuit of truth and justice must be tempered with recognition of the political reality of a given society. The vast majority of those writing on commissions of inquiry most comfortably find a home here, where the focus is often on the nature of the transition. If, as in the case of Nuremburg and Tokoyo, there is an unconditional surrender of one government, bringing them to justice presents far fewer problems than if the transition was one of negotiated settlement where one regime agrees to step aside, but often only with guarantees of impunity. Proponents of this school argue that the most one can hope for is truth and, even then, sometimes a limited version of it. Here the case of justice becomes problematic as the threat of a recidivist coup looms large. A leading advocate for this approach is Zalaquett who argues that "two considerations. . . must be balanced–the ethical principles that ought to be pursued, and actual political opportunities and constraints that ought to be taken into account."[15] Additionally, he argues that "according to the rule of law the victims cannot hold a veto power or decide on the general rules of society."[16] Thus, the overall stability of society prevails over the needs of the victims.

Also advocating such an approach as well is Huntington who offers guidelines for "democratizers . . . dealing with authoritarian regimes."[17] He suggests that the nature of the transition is key and that if the transition was a transformation or a transplacement "do not attempt to prosecute" and, even when prosecuting, such as in a replacement situation, do not go after the middle and lower-ranking officials.

Huyse offers several alternatives for dealing with the past which all conform to this approach: criminal prosecution, but only when acceptable and not risky to society; lustration- the barring of former regime officials from future office positions; amnesty, and truth commissions. Which to choose is dependent upon the particularities of a given society and the nature of the transition.[18]

Since Nuremburg and Tokyo, the majority of commissions have opted for combinations of Huyse's alternatives with most pursuing limited truth, while generously granting amnesties.

Previous Examples

In choosing its path, South Africa had several other examples to draw upon from other transitional societies.[19] Three are discussed here: Chile, Argentina, and El Salvador.

One possible variant for South Africa was the Chilean model. The Rettig Commission was set up only to investigate murders and disappearances. It, therefore, did notinvestigate cases of torture, exile, forced detention, or censorship. The final report found that 2,279 people died for "political reasons", and of those, 95 percent of the murders were carried out by official forces.[20] The Chilean Comision Nacional para la Verdad y Reconciliacion, led by Jose Zalaquett, strongly rejected the publishing of the names of the accused perpetrators in the report because the members of the Commission felt that publicizing names without giving them a chance to respond failed to provide them with due process.[21] Without being able to publish names and with only being able to investigate a very limited scope of abuses, the Commission operated under a very limited mandate. Despite this, the Commission was able to conduct quite thorough investigations. The report was praised by many in the human rights field.[22] Shortly after its release, however, several incidents of violence, including an assassination of the opposition leader, brought discussion of the report to a halt.

In Chile, there was the Pinochet factor. In stepping aside, Chile's former military dictator, Augusto Pinochet, ensured that he and his accomplices would never be brought to justice. The settlement which ushered Pinochet from power ensured that Pinochet would remain de facto commander of the armed forces, and he and his cronies would constitutionally retain enough power in the Senate, as life-senators, to veto any attempts at true justice for the crimes committed during his regime. As a result, in Chile a minimum of truth was recovered, but no justice.

Part of the continuing work in Chile revolving around its past is carried out by the National Corporation for Reparation and Reconciliation, whose job it is to promote the recommendations of the Rettig Report and to deal with the issue of financial reparations for the victims. Cases left unresolved by the Report were to be followed up on by the Corporation. While the Corporation has been heralded as an "excellent model for continuing the work of the truth commission and providing a mechanism for implementation of a commission's recommendations," the Chilean victims were left without justice.[23]

In contrast to Chile, Zalaquett has argued Argentina went too far in trying to secure justice for the abuses which occurred as part of its "dirty war." The military, after a humiliating defeat in the war against Britain in the Malvinas/Falklands islands, was forced out of office. The succeeding President, Alfonsin, attempted to both discover the truth and to bring several military leaders to justice by abolishing the military's self amnesty law. The Argentinian government set up the Comision Nacional para la Desaparcion de Personas, CONADEP (the National Commission on the Disappeared). As a result, several military leaders were imprisoned. Zalaquett argued that abolishing the law forced the military into a corner and, as a result, they felt vulnerable and less willing to come forward with the truth about what had

happened to the thousands of disappeared in Argentina.[24] Argentina's next president, Carlos Menem, pardoned those in prison and stopped any attempt to bring the military to justice, arguing that this was best, given Argentina's fragile democracy. Thus, getting the truth in Argentina has been almost impossible. The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo continue to march in search of the truth about their loved ones, but thus far their efforts go unrewarded.

One military leader, General Seilingo, did come forward on his own accord and shed some light on the fate of the disappeared. He described the flights, several per week, which flew out over the ocean, from which drugged and naked detainees would be pushed to their death. Shortly after his admission, he was arrested on "business related" fraud charges.

The silence of the military and, as a result, the lack of thorough investigations, have allowed those so inclined in Argentinian society to be able to deny the allegations of the victims. Additionally, as illustrated by the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, the victims' families are left with little or no idea of the exact fate of their loved ones. Some of the women who were incarcerated had children while in custody before they were presumably killed. The fate of those "born in captivity" remains one of the most difficult issues for the families of the victims. As in Chile, reparations were to be paid to victims, but those applying in Argentina had to produce documents indicating the dates of detention of the victims. This has been almost impossible to secure for many of the victims because of the military's refusal to produce the necessary information. The majority of Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo have refused reparations and are demanding truth with some justice instead.

El Salvador's process of coming to terms with its past was quite different because the international community, in the form of the United Nations, sponsored, financed, and staffed the truth commission for that country. The El Salvadorian report included names of the alleged perpetrators and the Commission on the Truth for El Salvador was empowered to remove members of the military who were named in the report. Civilians however, were not so threatened and the government of El Salvador did not follow up by ensuring that those removed would not be reinstated.

The government went even further, and within five days of the report's publication, the legislature passed a general amnesty. The report was also critical of the military, paramilitary, intelligence and security forces, and those who allowed the abuses or covered them up, including the judiciary. The commission also recommended the removal of supreme court justices because they were considered to be corrupt and inefficient. Strikingly, the report also criticized those that funded the military, including the United States and business leaders in Miami.[25]

Many have argued that El Salvador's Commission could have acted more boldly with its recommendations and publishing of names because it was an international commission. Conversely, since the Commission was not organic, this may have led to the El Salvadorian government's reluctance to carry those recommendations forward. Reparations were to be given to victims and their families with the bulk of the money coming from one percent of all foreign aid given to the country. Thus far very few victims have seen any money.

South Africa

The South African model sought to put together a commission which would replicate the positive aspects of the earlier commissions while avoiding some of their pitfalls. Thus it would appear that South Africa had chosen the middle path, the pragmatic approach, utilizing the truth commission and amnesty approach.

The groundwork was laid during the transition negotiations which provided, in the post-amble to the interim constitution, for the establishment of the TRC. The following provisions were contained therein: 1) the establishment of the TRC; 2) a specific time limit for the TRC to consider cases from 1 March 1960 to 6 December 1993 (later extended to 11 May 1994); 3) an amnesty for those involved in abuses, provided the abuses were politically motivated, not personal in nature, proportional, and provided the perpetrator came forward and confessed the deed(s). Only gross violations of human rights were covered by the agreement; thus other human rights violations including detention without trial, jailing of people for pass law offences, and forcible removal were excluded.[26]

In addition to the TRC, three other committees were set up to carry out the mandate of the TRC. The first was the Human Rights Violations Committee (HRV) whose purpose was to investigate human rights abuses between 1960 and 1994. It was to use statements made to the TRC to find victims and then to refer the victims of gross human rights violations to the second committee, the Reparation and Rehabilitation (R&R) Committee, whose job it was to provide support for victims in an effort to restore the victim's dignity. This committee was also assigned the task of formulating policy proposals and recommendations on how to promote the rehabilitation and healing of the survivors, their families, and the community at large. The goal was to develop affective ways to prevent such abuses in the future. Finally, the Amnesty Committee's (AC) duty was to ensure that applications for amnesty would be carried out in accordance with the act which established the process. If granted an amnesty, the applicant would not be subject to future prosecution. Each amnesty application had to be granted final approval by the president, which was expected to be Nelson Mandela. Once granted amnesty, the recipient would no longer be eligible for future prosecution in either criminal or civil court. Those who did not come forward continued to be eligible for future criminal prosecution. Supporters of this approach have called it restorative rather than retributive justice.

More than 7,000 applied for amnesty, 3,031 were thrown out as their action(s) was/were determined to be of a personal rather than a political nature, with still others thrown out because the action did not fit within the time frame guidelines of the Commission, or because the applicant refused to admit guilt. More than 200 were granted amnesty. For eighteen months, hearings were held throughout South Africa and the Commission received more than 15,000 statements from victims.[27] Hundreds of witnesses came forth to testify.

How well has the pragmatist approach worked?

Assessment

The set up of the TRC offered several advantages. First, many believed that the amnesty provision was the key negotiating plank of the NP without which a relatively peaceful

settlement would not have been possible. Thus, the end of apartheid may have prevented future human rights abuses.

Second, the TRC had asked for anyone involved in gross human rights violations which included "the killing, abduction, torture or severe ill-treatment of any person," to step forward and confess.[28] Those included ranged from the NP leaders to Chief Buthelezi to the ANC leadership to local police authorities and minor players in township liberation organizations. This approach diminished arguments of opponents who sought to characterize the process as revenge by the new government and gave credence to supporters' arguments that one key goal of the TRC process was the establishment of a human rights culture in South Africa.

Third, through the process, the truth and the true nature of South Africa's apartheid system would become public knowledge, thus the creation of a national memory. No longer could anyone in South Africa pretend that the abuses perpetrated under apartheid did not happen or were not as bad as many of its victims had been alleging. The process ensured that those who refused to believe the full extent of South Africa's crimes and who had dismissed the stories as ANC "communist" lies would be forced to hear the truth, and not from the ANC, but from the perpetrators themselves.

In almost all of the literature on truth commissions, the importance of allowing the truth to be heard is described as critical to the country's ability to move forward. Reconciliation is impossible if a segment of society wants to remain conveniently ignorant about its past while another segment has never had its suffering acknowledged.[29] According to Hamber, "when countries are attempting to overcome a violent past, it is better to deal with the past through investigations, truth recovery, justice, and support for victims and survivors of violence than to ignore it."[30] To ignore it breeds resentment and has the potential to engender revenge violence.

The importance of truth has another purpose. The power of truth to release the victims has been central to the TRC process. The power of the torturer over the victim is in part the psychological torment of the victim believing that no one will ever know the abuses that he or she has suffered. Thus the ability of victims to come forward is a central step toward healing. As Hamber notes, "past traumas do not simply pass or disappear with the passage of time. Psychological restoration and healing can only occur through providing the space for survivors to feel heard and for every detail of the traumatic event to be re-experienced in a safe environment."[31]

Fourth, this truth allowed many families to finally discover what happened to their loved ones and in some cases find their remains and give them a proper burial. This closure, it is hoped, will enable reconciliation. Television coverage of perpetrators and victims hugging at the close of hearings is a testament to the power of truth for reconciliation. Desmond Tutu, Chairperson of the TRC, has noted that a 1998 opinion poll on public attitudes toward TRC hearings indicated that "80 percent of the victims of apartheid say they believe reconciliation is possible." He went on to say "[n]ow these are the people who should be saying we want revenge, but they're saying 'we feel it [reconciliation] is possible.'"[32]

Fifth, the TRC forum allowed South Africa to present itself in the world arena as a nation of law and order where vigilante type justice would not prevail. The new government had to be cognizant of the need to prevent foreign investors, both current and future, from fearing a government bent on retribution. In addition, the government was cautious about "white flight"-

the fear that many white South Africans, in whose hands enormous economic power lay, would flee the country. With South Africa's reputation protected internationally, after a few rough years, its economy now appears to be growing and foreign investment is on the rise.

Sixth, as in many post-authoritarian societies, the TRC was seen as a way to find out about the past without too vigorously pursuing those who were responsible for the abuses, thus not jeopardizing the fragile new democracy. This way South Africans could learn about the past while continuing to move forward--the essence of Tutu's restorative justice. The danger of a violent civil war, or the break down of the South African state, has been a long-standing fear both inside and out of the country. One visit to the U.S embassy in South Africa and it is easy to see that the design of this fortress was meant to withstand what many anticipated would end apartheid–mass violence. Instead, South Africa has seen two relatively peaceful elections.

Finally, it must be said that the example and the stature of both Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu made the transition possible and the TRC palatable for many South Africans. Without Mandela's example of forgiving his perpetrators after twenty-seven years at the hands of the apartheid state, many would have found reconciliation a hollow notion. The hearings, too, could have proven a spectacle had it not been for Tutu's moral leadership. He made the process very much about human beings. With religious zealotry he demanded truth, absolution, and reconciliation.

No process is without its imperfections and such is the case of the TRC. Criticism of the TRC procedures and of the final report has come from many quarters.

Was a promise of amnesty necessary in order to dismantle apartheid? This is debatable. According to de Klerk, in his submission to the TRC, the South African government was on a course for change brought about by the fall of the Soviet Union and the worsening economic situation of the country. De Klerk also argued in that same submission that sanctions had nothing to do with the changes that took place in South Africa. While this too is debatable, given the country's worsening economic situation as sanctions tightened, what is clear is that some type of change was inevitable. The degree to which it would have been peaceful, however, is open to debate.

From the beginning, both the NP and the IFP have argued that the commission was ANC biased and as a result both participated in the process reluctantly, and defiantly, providing as little information as possible. The Commission was made up of members of the human rights community from all races. The Chairman, a Nobel laureate, Desmond Tutu, was widely regarded as a man of integrity and honesty. However, it may be argued that neither the IFP nor the National Party would have been happy with any commission that was not dominated by those who shared their version of the past. The Commission, however, didface charges that its make-up favored the ANC and came in for criticism both domestically and internationally.

Both the NP and IFP argued that their suspicions were well-founded when a blanket amnesty was offered to the ANC leadership even though amnesty applications were supposed to be done on an individual basis. Criticism of the blanket amnesty also came from victims' families. Critics charged various ANC members with kidnaping, torture, and with either using or encouraging the use of necklacing. These acts, they argued, many of which took place within ANC camps, were only given a passing glance by the TRC. One victim's brother, the current Chief Land Claims Commissioner, Wetsho-Otsile "Joe" Seremane, to say: "I cannot help feeling

that our TRC has betrayed a partisan inclination, accommodating so-called high-profile people or adherents to the 'popular party', relegating the relative unknowns to the periphery of TRC experiences and services."[33] *The Economist* opined what many others had suggested, that evidence of preferential treatment could also be found if the treatment of Botha and Winnie Madikizela-Mandela was compared. Additionally, it queried why Mangosuthu Buthelezi and the IFP were not forced to come forward, given the connection between the IFP and the apartheid regime in fermenting township violence.[34] Implicit in *The Economists'* editorials is that the TRC was designed to only go after whites from the former regime.

Truth, of a kind, did emerge. But there were several areas beyond the TRC's reach which limited the amount and extent of truth revealed about South Africa's past. Since the Commission was limited to "gross violations of human rights," it was unable to take into consideration other abuses, such as forced removals, pass laws, or atrocities in neighboring states.

More than 3.5 million people were forcibly relocated between 1960 and 1982.[35] One goal of the pass laws and the homeland systems was to provide cheap labor for mines. The treatment of workers in the mines was reprehensible. The living conditions in single-sexed hostels bred diseases, such as AIDS, and dysfunction, both for the individual miners and for their families. Specific laws impacting this situation included the use of hut and poll taxes which had to be paid in cash, thus forcing previously agricultural peasants to the mining industry in search of currency, the Masters and Servants Act which allowed for strict penalties for miners breaking their "contract" and "deserting" mines, and the 1913 Native Lands Act which allocated 8.8 percent of the country's land to 87 percent of the population.[36] The economic benefits of the mines and the cheap pools of labor trickled through South African society, benefitting many whites. As Mamdani has argued, using the Latin American analogy for South Africa does not work because it misses "the link between conquest and dispossession, between racialised power and racialised privilege, between perpetrator and beneficiary.[37]

Since the South African government had no respect for the sovereignty of its neighboring nations, its destablization policies were particularly harsh on them. Damage done beyond South Africa's borders was also not part of the TRC mandate. This also, then, excludes abuses committed in ANC camps.

The results of several studies conducted by the South African Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation reveal that the victims of apartheid, who risked much and demonstrated enormous courage to come forth and testify, (in fact, many of the victims have expressed fear of repercussions for having given testimony to the Commission) have also been critical of it. Those who testified have complained that after giving their testimony, the Commission did nothing to follow up with them. Once the hearings were over, the TRC left town and the victims never heard from it again. The victims have expressed a desire to see follow up by the Commission, including providing the victims with accessible medical and psychological services. Many feel that there has been no attempt by the TRC to deal with the process of reliving the past which the Commission has brought up. According to Hamber, one of the authors of the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation's study, the TRC should not unearth these feelings and events without providing support for the victims after they come forward, otherwise "[i]t is far more likely that the TRC will lead to feelings of

revenge, bitterness and anger if peoples who come into contact with it do not receive appropriate counseling and adequate support and service."[38][40] Most victims feel that they should have been permanently removed from office. According to Gibson and Gouws, only those who received amnesty were happy with the process.[41] The victims were not happy with the process because they wanted retributive justice. Truth, many of the victims argued, was a precondition for reconciliation. But that was only the beginning. Justice equals reconciliation and justice with punishment was favored over amnesties. Many of the victims stated that reparations were a necessary component of reconciliation.

Finally, most in the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation's study believed that the whites benefitted from the system and yet were largely absent from the TRC process. And whites continue to benefit from the system, they argue, via amnesties and economic advantages such as pensions. The result has been a false reconciliation with many of the victims feeling that they were *expected* to forgive and reconcile.[42] Mamdani warns that if, in the TRC process, the beneficiaries of the system are not perceived as taking the process seriously and seem uninterested in being forgiven, the victims are more likely to demand exactly what the TRC seeks to prevent: justice.[43] Very few members of the security forces came forward to request amnesty and the behavior of former president PW Botha toward the Commission suggests there were many perpetrators of apartheid who refused to take the Commission seriously. Even though de Klerk submitted a series of statements to the TRC on behalf of the NP, he never accepted full responsibility for the abuses committed under both the party and his rule.

If one was seeking evidence to support victims' perceptions regarding the lack of true remorse by the perpetrators of apartheid's violence, one need look no further then de Klerk's submission to the TRC on behalf of the NP. In the document he refers to apartheid and the escalation of violence in the 1980s as "the conflict" or "our conflict," he suggests that not one side alone was responsible for the violence in South Africa, and that not one side alone brought about the transformation. He, like many other former apartheid supporters, seems to suggest that apartheid, as a policy, simply proved unworkable. De Klerk has stated that it was not the policy of the government to rape or kill. Yet there were no investigations when murder, rape and other human rights violations occurred. There has been no attempt by the NP to take responsibility for the structural and long-lasting impact of its apartheid polices.

The role of the media in helping prop up and disseminate apartheid propaganda has not been fully explored. In Bird and Garda's study regarding the role of the media in the reconciliation process, the authors found that the media have been playing a positive role in informing people about the TRC process both through newspapers, although literacy levels are low with only 15-20 percent of the population reached this way, and through radio, where hearings were played until the funding ran out. Special bulletins and Sunday broadcasts regarding TRC hearings followed. The authors, however, were quite critical of the ways in which the victims were described. Rarely were they called survivors, and instead their suffering was covered in graphic detail. Thus they concluded that , "what [was] evident from media reports is a failure to explain the meaning of many of the horrific events . . . [thus] the moral distinctions between those who fought against apartheid and those who enforced it were often blurred by the lack of context and depth in media reporting."[44] This may be a contributing

factor to the results of Gibson and Gouws' study regarding attitudes toward the TRC.[45] They found that whites were much more willing to forgive whites, for example the security forces, and less likely to forgive ANC activists, and that blacks were more willing to forgive blacks, and the ANC, and less willing to forgive whites.

Women were disproportionally affected by laws regarding pass arrests, forced removals, and loss of jobs when associated with a male member of the resistance, and yet none of this, nor the economic effects of apartheid, which disproportionally affected women are considered "gross violations of human rights." Women, when arrested, and twelve percent of the state of emergency detainees in 1986-87 were women, suffered torture and other human rights abuses, but also suffered from gender specific abuses such as rapes, sexual assaults, and torture techniques such as flooding their fallopian tubes with water to make them unable to conceive.

Violence against women happened at the hands of the government within both the ANC camps and within townships. Women were forced to act as sex slaves in hostels and were the subject of attacks by such groups as the South African Rapist Association (SARA). This group sought to punish women for not acting appropriately, including, for example, not observing a boycott of a white owned shop. Women also suffered sexual harassment in ANC camps. While there was a special "women's hearing in 1997 in Johannesburg, many brushed aside women's concerns as "special circumstances." Yet pressing questions remain. Should rapists qualify for amnesty? Is rape a political act?[46] Can the failure of the process to acknowledge and take seriously the abuses women suffered be tied to the current epidemic of violence against women in South Africa?

Finally, victims have complained that they have not had input regarding the amnesties. One prominent human rights activist in South Africa, Rhoda Kadalie, draws the correlation between amnesties and future crime. She suggests that there has been an indiscriminate granting of amnesties and that this has had a negative effect on the country's crime rate.[47] The crime rate has exploded in South Africa and of particular concern is the escalating violence against women. South Africa now holds the dubious title "rape capital of the world." Estimates are that one of every three women in South Africa has been the victim of violent sexual assault. Further study needs to be done with regard to this correlation, if in fact there is one. However, it is not a far intellectual leap to raise the question of immunity here. If, as Valdez suggests, "the best way of ensuring that an emerging democracy breaks fully with an atrocious past is to accord complete respect to national and international human rights law," then perhaps the knowledge that the perpetrators of apartheid have gone unpunished has prompted others not to take the law seriously.[48]

Several issues are still left unresolved at this point. One is that of those who perpetrated abuses, but never came forward to tell the truth. According to the process, these folks are eligible for prosecution. Will they be? To highlight the problem let us look at the case of de Kock. He worked as an assassin for the South Africa government. His trial cost the state more than five million rand and prosecutors were tied up for more than two years preparing his defense. De Kock was a low level complicitor of the regime. It is safe to assume that going after bigger fish would prove even more costly. As judge Goldstone stated in a speech before the 1994 elections:

[t]here would be too many accused and adequate punishment would be too costly in human, political, as well as financial terms. Even if we had the human and financial resources, it would not be a sensible or practical route to follow. Criminal trials are unpleasant both for the accused and accusers. The technicalities and time necessary to ensure a fair trial are themselves a source of tremendous frustration. To compel the victims to be subjected to long and difficult cross-examination in many cases would be an additional punishment.[49]

This type of argument leaves many victims of apartheid cold. To suggest that trials would be costly is correct but how relevant? The TRC process itself was very expensive. No one would make such an argument about a thief or a murderer, so why is it acceptable when the thief or the murderer worked for a state? One should hope a trial would be unpleasant for the accused. For the accuser, perhaps they should be consulted before they are dismissed as not needing to face unpleasantness or "additional punishment." What of the relief of knowing justice has been done, or of knowing that criminals are behind bars? The Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation's study indicates that apartheid victims do not share Goldstone's views regarding this.

Another issued still to be worked out is how reparations will be made. Where will the money come from? The issue of implementing reparations is left to the government, not the TRC, although it is likely that victims who do not receive anything for their troubles in appearing before the TRC will likely blame it for the lack of follow up. The TRC also may take the brunt of criticism when reparations are not forthcoming.

Conclusion

"It would be impossible for the world to be happy . . . [if] the innocent were not allowed to teach the guilty a lesson."[50]

If Vitoria was right, what has been South Africa's lesson and does it offer promise as a model for other societies? Like so many other questions, the answer seems to depend upon where you sit. If one takes a minimalist position, while entirely unsatisfactory, the process is not without its redeeming qualities. Tell the truth and be granted absolution. Likewise, a pragmatist may also find the TRC process acceptable because it sought to find the middle road between amnesia and justice. For the maximalist, however, the TRC is probably little more than a "get out of jail free card."

The history of dealing with post-authoritarian regimes demonstrates that a variety of mechanism have been used to varying degrees of success. Of course the central question must be: what is success?

The standard has been the tribunals of both Nuremburg and Tokyo which provided examples of some types of justice, albeit a victor's justice. These were unique because they were an international effort. Currently there are two such efforts underway to deal with the former Yugoslavia and with Rwanda. Both are ongoing and, as a result, it is too early to fully assess their impact, but several themes have emerged which are relevant to our discussion. Since the vast majority of authoritarian regimes of late have negotiated their own departure, bringing the leaders to justice is much more difficult then it was in the post World War II setting where unconditional surrender made indictment of the former leaders much easier. Additionally, the

legacy of Nuremburg, which tried leaders using their own government documents has ensured that future authoritarian leaders won't make the same mistake. The apartheid state destroyed thousands of documents upon realizing Mandela's ascent to office was immanent. Thus, given the nature of transitions today, it is unlikely that we will see the duplication of Nuremburg.

Even with the first two international attempts, we must question how successful they have been. Their success should be measured, in part, on what the victims had hoped to gain from the process. Certainly, the demand from the Holocaust was "Never Again" and yet, while not in either Germany or Japan, genocide has been repeated many times since. Germany has apologized for its actions in WWII, while Japan has not. And, while Germany and Japan have been peaceful, democratic societies since the end of WWII, we have not yet seen the end of history.

So, if the question we seek to address with regard to the first set of international tribunals is "success at prevention of such abuses," the answer is clear. While genocide of the Jews has not again happened, genocide has indeed happened. While totalitarian regimes have not re-emerged in Germany or Japan, they have indeed wrought their terror upon other societies. Perhaps instead all we can hope for is that the types of abuses perpetrated in one society will not reappear within that society. In evaluating South Africa's transition and its attempt to deal with its past, perhaps the only acceptable measurement is whether or not an "apartheid-like" regime re-emerges. Reconciliation may not be possible there or anywhere.

What is insidious about state oppression and repression is the ease with which citizens in whose names these abuses are carried out can walk away from the past without accepting responsibility for it. We have in the U.S. "Daughters" of the American Republic, for example, which seek to demonstrate familial pride at helping found this country. Yet there is no "daughters of slave holders" or "sons of Native American slaughterers" simply because we accept no responsibility for those actions the state carries out in our name. We seek only credit for that which is perceived as a societal good.

As a collective society we were unable to apologize to the Japanese for interment camps until the 1980s and we still have not apologized for slavery or the treatment of Native Americans. South Africa will likely be no different. Those who were abused will continue to feel so and those who did it or in whose name it was done will continue to seek to distance themselves from their responsibility. The recipe that South Africa has formulated for dealing with its past may in fact produce more ghosts then it hoped to lay to rest. As Simpson warns:

> Apartheid rendered it noble for most South Africans to be on the wrong side of the law and it must be acknowledged that there is a grave risk that a sense of impunity based on the granting of amnesty to confessed killers, may actually compound the problems of non-existent popular confidence in the rule of law or in 'politically polluted' institutions of criminal justice in South Africa. The result is sustained or growing levels of violent crime - or anti-social violence - which presents as if it is a new phenomenon associated with the transition to democracy, but which is in fact rooted in the very same experiences of social marginalisation, political exclusion and economic exploitation which are slow to change in the transition to democracy and which previously gave rise

to the more socially functional violence of resistance politics. The criminalisation of politics and the politicalisation of crime are really flip sides of the same coin.[51]

Simpson also warns that one must beware of show trials which, while accommodating the principles of international law, do little to restore faith in domestic criminal justice institutions. Motala shores up this point in his 1995 study of the constitution, which set up the Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act. His conclusion suggests that the act is constitutionally suspect. In addition, Motala argues that by giving "amnesty for individuals engaged in crimes against war, crimes against humanity, and crimes against peace, violates peremptory norms of international law, which call for mandatory prosecution for these offences."[52]

So restoring law and order requires extra-legal measures. This may be acceptable in societies, such as those of O'Donnell and Schmitters's study, where people have felt comforted by being outside the realm of politics,[53] but in South African society, where every act of daily living has had political consequences, the reverse is proving to be the problem. South African society is far from apathetic and is in fact incredibly political.

South Africa is a model, like the Chilean, Argentinian and El Salvadorian examples before it, from which other transitioning societies may draw in dealing with a post-authoritarian regime. It should be used as a format from which to garner that which seemed to work. What is clear from the South African case, and certainly is also true of the other cases discussed here, is that reconciliation is a personal endeavor that no state alone can deliver. No state mechanism will satisfy the victims or the perpetrators. The best interests of the victims will never be the top priority, because they will remain objects in the process where elites secure their own egress and protect their own, all in the name of furthering the transition or some polluted sense of democracy. Because without justice, democracy is shallowed and attempts at consolidation may prove fruitless. The epidemic of violence in South Africa suggests that many refuse to accept the parameters of the transition and instead are taking it upon themselves to continue to operate outside the law to further their selfish aims. That is one of the legacies of the TRC.

Valdez suggests that a state which wishes to deal with its authoritarian past must include four components in its efforts: "to investigate and make the facts known (truth); to put on trial and punish the guilty (justice); to redress the moral and physical damage caused (reparation); and to eradicate from the security forces those known to have committed, ordered or tolerated the commission of abuses."[54] South Africa was somewhat successful at achieving truth, but much less successful at the other three components. At this point, the main goal of the TRC--to promote reconciliation--appears to be faltering.

Notes

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3. Berat, Lynn. "South Africa: Negotiating Change?" in *Impunity and Human Rights in International Law and Practice*. Naomi Roht-Arriaza, ed. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1995, pp. 267-304.

4. Hayner, Priscilla B. "Fifteen Truth Commissions-1974-1993: A Comparative Study" in *Transitional Justice How Emerging Democracies Reckon with Former Regimes, Vol. I General Considerations*, Neil J. Kritz, ed. Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1995, pp. 225-261.

5. For further discussion regarding the maximalist position, please see Nino 1995.

6. National Public Radio, 7 October 1999.

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8. Parker, "The Politics of Indemnities," p.12.

9. O'Donnell, Guillermo and Philippe C. Schmitter. *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions*. Baltimore, MY: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986, p. 24.

10. Ibid, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule*, p. 30.

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13. Amnesty International. "Policy Statement on Impunity" in *Transitional Justice How Emerging Democracies Reckon with Former Regimes, Vol. I General Considerations*, Neil J. Kritz, ed. Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1995, pp. 219-220 and Human Rights Watch. "Policy Statement on Accountability for Past Abuses" in *Transitional Justice How Emerging Democracies Reckon with Former Regimes, Vol. I General Considerations*, Neil J. Kritz, ed. Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1995, pp. 217-218.

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15. Zalaquett, Jose. "The Dilemma of New Democracies Confronting Past Human Rights Violations." *Transitional Justice How Emerging Democracies Reckon with Former Regimes, Vol. I General Considerations*, Neil J. Kritz, ed. Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1995, p. 206.

16. Ibid, in *Dealing with the Past Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa, 2nd ed.* Alex Boraine, Janet Levy and Ronel Scheffer, ed. Cape Town: Institute for Democracy in South Africa.1997, p. 103.

17. Huntington, Samuel. "The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century" in *Transitional Justice How Emerging Democracies Reckon with Former Regimes, Vol. I General*

Considerations, Neil J. Kritz, ed. Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1995, p. 81.

18. Huyse, Luc. "Justice After Transition: On the Choices Successor Elites Make in Dealing with the Past" in *Transitional Justice How Emerging Democracies Reckon with Former Regimes, Vol. I General Considerations*, Neil J. Kritz, ed. Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1995, pp. 337-349.

19. In addition to those discussed below, commissions of inquiry have also occurred in The Philippines, Chad, Uruguay, Uganda, Bolivia, Germany, Rwanda, Honduras, and Guatemala.

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21. Kaye, Michael. "The Role of Truth Commissions in the Search for Justice Reconciliation and Democratisation: The Salvadorean and Honduran Cases." *Journal of Latin American Studies*, Vol. 29, #3, 1997, pp.693-716.

22. Hayner, Priscilla B. "Fifteen Truth Commissions-1974-1993," p. 236.

23. Ibid., "Fifteen Truth Commissions-1974-1993," p. 237. Pinochet has found himself subject to a different kind of justice, that of the international community. At this writing, Pinochet's return from Britain without having to face charges appears immanent, but precedent set in his case offers yet another possible route for dealing with authoritarian leaders.

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25. Kaye, Michael. "The Role of Truth Commissions," p. 709.

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27. Gibson, James L. and Amanda Gouws. "Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa: Attributions of Blame and the Struggle over Apartheid" *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 93, #3, 1999, pp. 501-517.

28. Goldblatt, Beth and Shiela Meintjes. "Gender and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission: A Submission to the Truth an Reconciliation Commission" May, found at http://sunsit.wits.ac.za/csrv/papkhul.htm, 1996.

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31. Ibid., "Dealing with thePast and the Psychology of Reconciliation" Public address presented at the 4th International Symposium on the Contributions of Psychology of Peace, Cape Town, 27 June, found at .,1995

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34. *The Economist*. "International: How Imparial?" 346, 8052, 24 January 1998, p. 44.

35. Mamdani, Mahmood. "A Diminished Truth" *Siyaya!* Spring, #3, 1998, pp. 38-41.
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38. Hamber, "Dealing with the Past and the Psychology of Reconciliation at http://sunsite.wits.ac.za/csvr/papdlpst.htm ,1995.
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The Land Of *Jilali*: Travels Through Kenya's Drought-Stricken North.[1]

PAUL GOLDSMITH

This is the journal of the journeys of a Kenya Agricultural Research Institute (KARI) team studying natural resource management in Marsabit District. Our mission--to assess environmental degradation, and how sedentarisation may be contributing to desertification around settlements and on the range.

As we zoom across the flat hardpan of the Chalbi desert, the sun is spreading its soft, brilliant blanket over the silhouette of Mt. Kulal. We pass small Rendille camels from the fora satellite camps, grazing in the twilight, unfazed by our speed. We are in no hurry, and on a twilight break we inspect the Chalbi's crusty, salt-impregnated surface. When precipitation exceeds evaporation, insoluble minerals and salts are leached out of the soil. Eons of rainfall have concentrated soda in the wind-scoured floor of this former inland sea. Once upon a time, this was a very lush land.

It is early June, 2000. Kenya is hurtling toward a massive combined crisis of power shortfalls, water rationing, and shrinking informal sector employment. The drought-crippled economy is fueling new and unique expressions of social tension: rioting school children in Nairobi capture a Tusker beer truck, and drink it dry.

But we are far from Nairobi. Out of the desert we suddenly enter glades of stunted doum palm. We have arrived in Maikona, a small collection of houses that in the glimmer of early starlight seem to have sprouted mushroom-like out of the Chalbi's sun-baked mud. A small crowd gathers. Over a plate of leathery meat I ask, "*Habari ya Maikona?*" "*Jilali tu*", is the reply. (What news of Maikona? …. Drought, only.) A hyena crosses our path on its way out of town.

On our way here we passed through Isiolo, immediately after the clashes there between the Waso Borana and the Degodia Somali. These cattle people were fighting over land rights; others are invading Laikipia ranches in search of grass. Here, in the distant north, the camel herding populations tread the thin line between survival and *jilali*-induced disaster.

Jilali describes the conditions in the rangeland of Marsabit after the rains have failed for the third straight season. Isiolo and Laikipia look lush in comparison. "Since El Nino," people tell us, "it has only rained once, for a few hours." Pressing on, we re-enter the Chalbi and proceed to Kalacha. As I discover during the coming days, the landscape appears far less bleak in the cool, muted light of night.

GABRASTAN

The Gabra people range into Ethiopia, but their main settlements are located on the edge of the Chalbi for the simple reason that this is where the most permanent water sources are found. Since 1971, each successive *jilali* has forced more nomads to settle around these springs.

Pastoral dropouts are swelling the size of Kenya's desert towns. Relief food provides the pull; loss of their herds exerts the push. This demographic shift is presumed to be driving environmental degradation. Fuelwood consumption is depleting tree cover around settlements; the herds of the settled degrade forage resources beyond the zone of naked plain. Actually, things have been going downhill since *Homo sapiens* crawled out of a local hole 1.8 million years ago.

Downtown Kalacha is a wide avenue of desert separating lines of modest houses and shops, giving way to tiny suburbs of traditional huts interspersed with the occasional block of more modern "maisonettes". Kalacha is sandwiched between the Chalbi and a barren expanse of lava rock that we will later cross on the way to Badhahurri. Decapitated stumps of *Acacia tortillis* along the roadside appear to confirm the human-impact hypothesis.

A mother and daughter talk to us as they make final adjustments on their load camels. The men have headed north in search of grazing. KARI research officer Godana Jilo Doyo remarks that the Gabra art of packing one's worldly possessions on a camel--a scene reproduced on Kenya's fifty shilling notes--is a disappearing tradition. The two camel, two women caravan sets off, perhaps for good, for Kalacha, forty kilometers of rocks and boulders away.

We continue on toward Badhahurri. Outrageously spindled *Acacia seyal* trees mark the approach to the Hurri Hills. The track rising from the desert pavement transits a series of small valleys. The hills on either side are tapered cones with uniformly scalloped windward slopes. Gravel and boulders segue into a dirty carpet of cropped brown grass as we pass through overlapping ecologies.

A few cows lounge inside a copse of *Erythrina burtii*, gnarled and deeply grooved trees closely related to *E. africana*, whose bright red-orange flowers add a dash of color across Kenya's central highlands. On the high plateau of Badhahurri, the area's dusty rain catchment, naked plots attest to the severity of the drought.

Several hundred Borana and Konso agropastoralists, immigrants here from the escarpment beyond Ferole, occupy scattered human settlements. Kulal, the sacred mountain of the Gabra, is a jagged silhouette marking the Kenya-Ethiopia border. This fairy-tale landscape is otherwise protected by its total absence of water; there is nothing here to fight over.

THE SANDS OF HORR

Ubiquitous rocks and boulders are the principle feature distinguishing Gabrastan from Rendille country, whose sands and intermittent stretches of gravel support significantly more bush and trees. North Horr, however, is the rockless and sandy exception; shifting dunes threaten to engulf the town. North Horr's periphery is devoid of trees and grass except for patches of the evergreen *Sueada monica*, which form a barrier of sorts against the Chalbi.

Average rainfall here is 150 mm per year, compared with 800 mm for Nairobi in a very dry year, and the soil is extremely alkaline, with a pH between 9.5 and 10.5. Not ideal tree-planting conditions, but this is what a local women's group is doing. One fenced-in enclosure protects a few dry sticks. But another *boma* shows off a mix of *Salvadora persica* (the *mswaki* or toothbrush tree), *Acacia tortillis*, and *Azidirachta indica* (neem)-most of which are flourishing. Women arrive during the late afternoon, each carrying a pair of one litre containers of precious water to share with their personal plants. Why did the plot next door fail? "Improper organisation." Will their twice-daily devotion make a difference? It's hard to say. On the other side of town another enclosure houses a small community of coconut palms. They are several feet high, and if they make it to maturity it may mark the start of a new agro-industry.

We depart. The vegetation begins to improve on the track south. One of our riders tells us about his life with the Dassenech, who snatched him from his Gabra manyatta at a tender age. He escaped back to his people many years later, and now runs a shop in the small oasis of Gas, on the southern fringe of Gabrastan.

LOYANGELANI

I last visited Loyangelani in 1976. During the interim, Loyangelani has evolved from a hamlet of drought refugees into a tourist town on the shores of the Jade Sea. Now it is a cosmopolitan community of Rendille, Samburu, El Molo, and growing numbers of Turkana taking the place of the Luo fishermen who have shifted to the Lake's west coast. This port could support a lucrative fishing industry.

A tan and slender European, escorted by several uncircumcised boys, walks his heavily panniered mountain bike up the main drag. He is Dutch. He began his journey in India; South Africa is his destination. Asia was easy, he says, but the heat nearly killed him in Sudan, and Ethiopia tested his limits. "It's good to be back in civilisation" (defined as food, water, and a common language) he tells us.

GATAB

On a landscape otherwise devoid of vegetation a Turkana boy tends a large herd of goats feeding on invisible shoots of *Spirobolus*, a spiky grass growing in the cracks between rocks. We leave the fortress-like walls of the Turkana escarpment behind and turn onto the road to Mt. Kulal, which passes through richer country dotted with trees and grass cover, undisturbed due to insecurity.

In the past, raiding was rare during droughts; basic survival is an all-consuming task. Driving weakened livestock across waterless countryside is a low percentage gambit; raiding after the onset of rain a conventional re-stocking technique. But the world is no longer normal; a Turkana raiding party successfully attacked a group of Samburu in this area several days ago. The bandits came from distant Lokorio, perhaps the inhabitants of a recently abandoned Turkana manyatta we passed on our way.

At the Kenya Telkom relay station above the small plateau which is home to Gatab, Kulal's only permanent settlement, we listen to the President's Madaraka day speech, in which he tells

the nation, "*Moi si mvua*" (Moi is not rain.) In the land of famine relief, rainmakers are redundant.

KARGI AND KORR

The Rendille are the true *wenyewe* of Marsabit District, by virtue of never having lived anywhere else. Their tenure in this exceedingly austere environment is the product of a resilient techno-cultural adaptation personified in the Rendille camel, a small but highly drought-and disease-resistant animal also herded by the Gabra. Though not prolific milkers, they boast attractive anti-*jilali* features, such as a narrow body profile designed to reduce radiation absorption in the absence of shade.

Marsabit's camel-centric communities' demographically-conservative strategy includes delayed age-set initiation, primogeniture favouring the first son, and a high canon of reles and centralised rituals. The cultural matrix makes for late marriage, smaller households, and in the case of the Rendille, a steady spin-off of individuals and groups responsible for the replication of their clans among the Gabra, Sakuye, and Somali Garre, Ajuran, and Degodia.

The Arial embody the transitional dynamic. Rendille by origin, they have adopted Samburu ways and cattle, while living in symbiosis with both groups. The Gabra are allied to the Borana; the Turkana are allied to no one.

Modern change had overtaken traditional cultural strategies. The settlements of Korr and Kargi reveal the most advanced environmental degradation we have yet seen. Korr enjoys the dubious distinction of being one of the most widely cited examples of the process of desertification. Over a decade ago, Herlocker and Dierk noted in *The Marsabit Range Management Handbook* that in many places erosion had worn soils down to the bare underlying rock. There is a point where environmental degradation is irreversible.

The concept of non-equilibrium environments is the new orthodoxy in African range management. Simply stated, it holds that the vegetation change and erosion formerly attributed to pastoralists and their herds is actually insignificant over time, that ecological changes are more the product of long-term rainfall patterns.

Empirical studies of range conditions and stocking rates in this region support the thesis. But permanent settlement is another phenomenon: the pressure on forage and fuelwood has now extended the naked perimeter around Korr to a radius of ten kilometers.

NETWORK SHUNGWAYA

Mobility has always been an important coping strategy in the face of environmental crisis. In Kalacha, I came across the following passage while rereading Gunther Schlee's brilliant work on proto-Rendille Somali clans, *Identities on the Move*.

"One group [of the Garre] moved to Giumbo, near the mouth of the river Juba, but after being repeatedly attacked were forced to cross the river and eventually moved north to Merca. A second group of Garre moved to the coast and then crossed to the Dendas Islands where they sought the protection of the Bajuni and were eventually absorbed by them."

On the same page, Schlee quotes a document from the Kenya National Archives which says that these "refugees" came from the Banna sections of the Garre, lending support to Jim Allen's interpretation of the Shungwaya legend.

Allen hypothesizes that Shungwaya, the homeland once shared by the Bajuni, Miji Kenda, and Segeju, was not the capital of an ancient multi-ethnic kingdom as depicted in oral history. Rather, he marshals archaeological and linguistic evidence showing that Shungwaya was actually the hub of a trade network linking early Swahili settlements to areas of the interior as far inland as Lake Turkana. Artifacts not found anywhere else connect the distant interior to ancient Baghdad and Cairo. Satellite photography shows that the Uaso Nyiro river once reached the coast, entering the sea through the channels of Mongoni and Dodori. Have water, will travel.

The people of Lamu town used to perform an annual ritual of purification called *kuzungusha ng'ombe*. A cow is led through the town's streets, prayers are recited, the animal is sacrificed and the meat roasted for a public feast. During a visit to Lamu last year, we were discussing the petty political infighting responsible for the community's disunity when I commented that perhaps the *kuzungusha ng'ombe* ceremony should be revived. A Bajuni friend responded that they had in fact performed a *sorio* only a few weeks before.

I double-check to make sure he really used this proto-Rendille cultural term for the important ritual in which dispersed herders gather at a central location and sacrifice an animal to invoke blessings for the community. Different communities now associated with the Borana and Somali still perform it, albeit cloaked in Islamic garb. The Bajuni-Shungwaya-Proto Rendille Somali link is just one variation on the precolonial pattern: almost every Kenyan tribe is composed of multi-cultural clans on the move.

FORWARD TO THE PAST

In late June, the team returns to Kalacha for the KARI/Marsabit field station annual review. We stay in several tourist bandas gracefully nestled among the doum palms that mark the spring. The ruffling (racket to some) of the palms I have come to associate with the oasis at night is interrupted by the yipping of a hyena, a voice that can agitate penned-up animals until they stampede.

Blustery wind and an overcast sky above the white sands give the following early morning landscape an oddly wintry cast. Could even the most brilliant of team scientists, operating with unlimited resources, devise technological alternatives approaching the complex of finely tuned resource management and cultural systems of the pastoralists who have survived and flourished in this impossible environment? No, they can only expand on it.

The traditional system included critical mechanisms for keeping population inline with carrying capacity. Though the more expansionary proclivities of cattle people contrast with the conservative strategies of the Rendille and Gabra, in the end the result was roughly the same:

small populations. But in modern Kenya, small populations mean social exclusion, the continuing post-*Uhuru* marginalisation of many northern and coastal communities.

Large-scale famine relief first appeared during the drought of 1971, and each successive *jilali* has quickened the rate of change and the number of pastoralists dropping out of the livestock economy. This time around, even the husky local camels are already dying, and the worst is yet to come.

Kenya's poorest districts are the ones where today's indigenous peoples were confined to ghettoes by *laissez faire* colonial policy. Our verdict: the problem is not so much environmental degradation as a lack of economic diversification. There are untapped resources in these remote regions, including nutrient-rich salt from the Chalbi, gum arabic, stunning landscapes for the high-end adventure tourist. But exploiting them has been constrained by a combination of poor infrastructure, restrictive laws, a lack of services, and the social prejudice engendered by separation. Isolation has bred war parties that roam the land with the unpredictability of rain-bearing clouds.

The trajectory of modernisation-for farmer, forager, fisherman, and herder alike-involves migration, settlement, and diversification of livelihood. As towns grow, degradation of the peri-urban fringe paves the way for expansion. Tree cover improves within the new pastoralist settlements even as it is denuded without. Tree planting, unless for generating future income, is unlikely to solve the environmental crisis.

The Borana recall two famines of decades past by the blueflies that swarmed over the cattle, both dead and alive. Perhaps the system-level impact of the *jilali*, underscoring the national crisis of planning and resource management, will be reforms that promote the comparative advantage of cultural diversity, like the Shungwayan example. Kenyans, despite some parties' best efforts to prove otherwise, are poor tribalists simply because, over the long-run, the environment selects against it. The drought has exposed the futility of petty local agendas.

Our landrover dies in the Chalbi night. A jury-rigged repair gets us moving again. A hyena slinks across the track as we approach Kargi, where we diagnose the problem-a faulty wire to the fuel pump. Two cheetah streak across the desert rocks as we approach Marsabit mountain in the early morning light. I see my first bluefly.

Note

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REVIEW ARTICLE

The State and Economic Reform in Africa

MICHAEL CHEGE

Carol Lancaster, 1999. *Aid to Africa: So Much To Do, So Little Done*. University of Chicago Press. 303pp. paper $22.00.

David L. Bevan, Paul Collier, Jan Willem Gunning, 1999. *The Political Economy of Poverty, Equity, and Growth: Nigeria and Indonesia*. 464pp. Oxford University Press. Out of Stock

Thandika Mkandawire and Charles Soludo, *Our Continent, Our Future : African Perspectives on Structural Adjustment*. Council for the Development of Social Research in Africa. 176pp. Hardcover $79.95

To go by the press, and according to many objective observers in Africa, the African continent is in deep, self-made trouble in multiple dimensions-mass poverty, wars, famines, corruption, ethno-linguistic fragmentation, the AIDS pandemic, dictators, even inability to utilize external donor money to cure itself.[1] The press is right but its explanations are often wrong and tendentious. So is a growing number of academic publications on the subject.

In a recent cover story of this genre, *The Economist*, often well-informed and judicious in its coverage of the region, declared Africa "the hopeless continent", at a level below the deplorable standards of "the dark continent" which was customarily entitled to the hope of light, at the very least. It traced the root source of the continent's chronic problems to a perverse all-African culture, a servile lack of self-confidence among Africans on which tyranny, disorder and corruption perpetually thrive. It would be fair to remind ourselves that there are forty six countries in Africa south of the Sahara, a region with the largest diversity of languages, cultures, and national economic performance in the whole world. If the sweeping generalizations now in vogue about Africans as a people were made about all Asians in continental Asia, the Jews, or the Americans, there would be a global outcry of unprecedented proportions. According to conventional wisdom in the new discipline of all-Africa catastrophe studies, however, the shocking human mutilations and senseless carnage of the Sierra Leone and Liberian warlords become symptomatic of "Africa" in a way the violence in Sri Lanka or the Khmer Rouge could never be typecast as an "Asian" political affliction. Yet so widely publicized and accepted has the notion of a pitifully homogenous, lachrymose Africa become that a vocal squad of African intellectuals has now thrown its weight behind it, the better to give an authentic native voice to the cultural perversity theories of their own societies. Their school of thought should recall, however, that whether in Africa or elsewhere, the sweeping cultural model has historically been a weak weapon in solving the intractable social and economic

problems of the sort Africa now faces. On the contrary it has often served as a handy tool for aggravating them, if not inventing them in the first place.

We owe to the late Thomas Kuhn the observation that the most spectacular breakthroughs in scientific knowledge originate from accumulating *anomalies*, starting always with a few, that are observed between conditions normally assumed to behave identically. Contradictions to the norm stimulate the formulation of superior paradigms that enable us to transcend a problematic present. The all-Africa catastrophe tradition, in contrast, denigrates any anomalies in the shape of African success which it encounters as trivial, few, foreign-made and inconsequential. But given the demonstrated potential of anomalies in advancing both scientific and social transformation, it would be as foolhardy to ignore them as it would be to deny African culpability in the continent's well-rehearsed litany of disasters--a favourite tactic of the "white imperialists" baiting African left. Thank heavens then for these three newly published books which deal with the vicissitudes of development policy-making and implementation in Africa. Not only are they exceedingly well-documented and authoritative in their analyses, they also courageously take on board the norm of failure, the successes, and the gray zone in-between. Our Continent, Our Future in particular deserves a special accolade. A truly refreshing product from two of Africa's most outstanding economists, it draws heavily from the research efforts of their African colleagues, a group seldom heard from in Africa's raging debates. Each in its own way, the books provide uncommonly fresh and persuasive explanations of variations in African economic performance between countries and over time. They also deal with the problematic relations between African development initiatives and external donors--yet another controversial headline story relevant to the elusive search for the cure of Africa's multiple problems.

By most informed accounts on the subject, the seeds of the mushrooming official development aid movement in the second half of the past century were planted unwittingly by the British Colonial Development Welfare Act of 1940. Designed to alleviate mass poverty and modernize economies in the then colonial world, the movement's administrative framework of choice was government-to-government financial assistance, complemented by the efforts of official multilateral institutions like the United Nations' specialized agencies, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund. Although, in their infancy, these efforts earned a stern rebuke from a few critics like Lord Peter Bauer, an advocate of free enterprise and local initiatives as the ideal path out of third world poverty, aid programs multiplied through the years under the benign indifference of Western voters and a grudging acceptance by their third world beneficiaries. But after six decades of chequered expansion, that uneasy honeymoon is all but over.

In mid-April, over 10,000 demonstrators converged on the mecca of the global development business-the World Bank and the IMF in Washington DC-determined to shut down their normally sedate annual gathering of the world' finance ministers and central banks governors. Fired by the their successful routing of the World Trade Organization meeting in Seattle in November 1999, the demonstrators berated the IMF and the World Bank for pandering to multinational corporations at the expanse of workers, funding environmentally disastrous projects, aggravating world poverty, and consorting with third world dictators. With specific reference to Africa, western finance ministries and the multilateral agencies were

accused of saddling the countries with huge debts whose repayment now made it impossible for African states to vaccinate and educate the sickly children, and to feed the hungry-an outcome the protestors have compared to slavery. Pope John Paul II, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and a coalition of chief rabbis have demanded a debt moratorium for Africa. In fairness though, it should be pointed out that nobody forced the African governments to take the external loans at gunpoint. More than anybody else, they should take responsibility for the fact that despite receiving the highest amount of foreign grants and loans per capita of any region in the world--$26 in 1997, as compared to just $3 for South Asia and $13 for Latin America-Africa's quality of life on average has deteriorated whilst it shows guarded promise in other parts of the third world. Even then, donor agencies still need to be put in the dock to explain why they kept the financial spigots wide open, long after it had become clear that the gushing dollars mostly ended up in the African quicksand or in numbered Swiss accounts.

What went wrong? Anybody who is curios about the internal functioning of the multiple official aid agencies working in Africa should be directed immediately to Carol Lancaster's Aid to Africa, a thorough compendium and evaluation of who is who among Africa's external donors. Invoking Tennyson's *In Memoriam*, it concedes at the outset that the aid fraternity has a case to answer since there has been "so little done, such things to be." A former deputy head of the United States Agency of International Development, Lancaster ploughs through a vast amount of published sources and unpublished government documents, supplemented with oral interviews, to provide detailed portraits of the aid bureaucracies of Africa's top bilateral donors (the USA, France, Britain, Sweden, Italy and Japan), before turning the analytical spotlight to the leading multilateral agencies (the World Bank, the European Commission). In a rhythmic, if sometimes tedious pattern, the structure of each one of these institutions is laid out, followed by its goals, levels of its funding over time, a list of the target African states, concluding with lucid evaluations of the organizational capacity to deliver aid effectively and the reasons behind it. Overall, she finds that "aid itself has been relatively ineffective in Africa." The principal reason, she argues, can be traced to the inchoate nature of the aid bureaux, and their mission creep into all aspects of African societies, combined with insufficient understanding of the latter. Compared to their counterparts in Italy, the US and elsewhere, the denizens of Britain's Department of International Development should be pleased with the top ranking they receive for combining professionalism and effectiveness with intellect, give or take a few scandals like the Malaysia's Pergau dam in the Thatcher years. Lancaster attributes aid's failure primarily to political interference by Western governments as they seek to promote "non-development" goals like culture in case of France, the welfare state by Sweden, and cold war strategic interests by the US. Predictably, Aid to Africa makes a spirited case for politically-insulated, technically-oriented aid agencies dispensing funds-under mutual consultation--to the best achievers on the basis of merit. However, growing doubts about aid in Western legislatures, more open political systems in Africa, the massed ranks of street demonstrators and dissenting non-governmental organizations, and mistrust of the donors' mecca by religious leaders, will all ensure that the opposite happens: more, not less political involvement in aid policy-making and implementation.

In that regard, it is a pity that Lancaster omitted the shadowy and unaccountable IMF in her study-"a law unto itself" according to Harvard's Jeffrey Sachs. Though technically not a

donor, its economic "stabilization" programs in Africa are now blamed, among other things, for aggravating poverty, dissipating good projects, and undermining democracy. Mkandawire and Soludo share these sentiments, while *Nigeria and Indonesia* is a little kinder. Though censored for incapacity to formulate workable national economic programs, African states get off far too lightly, even as the three books demonstrate how quickly they gave the game away to the donors. Strikingly, Lancaster arrived independently at a conclusion similar to those of the much-praised 1998 World Bank study, *Assessing Aid: What Works, What Doesn't and Why*: since aid is "fungible" (usable anywhere), it should aim not just at promoting sound macro-economic policies and projects, but also at wall-to-wall institutional reforms from the rule of law, secure property rights, participatory decision-making and accountability-a solution which resembles democratic rule. This root and branch approach, much beloved of revolutionaries in human history, is but the latest unwitting admission of how central political reform is to economic development. As the new "comprehensive" reform paradigm now attempts to refine its practical strategy from the divine oracles of mathematical economics, African policy-makers and intellectuals should weigh the doubtful prospects of a democratic capitalist revolution by algebra.

Fortunately, there are compelling options on the policy menu, more inspiring than mathematics. Nigeria and Indonesia breaks from the econometric pack to provide a truly outstanding account of the anomaly between economic regress in Nigeria, and Indonesia's faster and more equitable growth between 1973 and 1990, using the comparative case study method which has largely disappeared from economics. In fact the book is part of a new World Bank publications series, intended to discover what reform policy lessons can be gained from the divergent national economic experiences between states which otherwise share broad similarities. Nigeria and Indonesia are large, multiethnic, agricultural yet oil-rich economies with long traditions of military rule. Until the 1997 Asian financial crisis, ribald, jokes were made comparing Indonesia's "functional" corruption with the self-destructive variety pursued by Nigerians. This book should disabuse anyone who believed in them. In highly intricate detail, it shows that although the initial economic conditions slightly favoured Indonesia, both states were for years prey to corrupt elites, wrong-headed economic nationalism, faltering commitment to liberalization, and sterile domestic factional conflicts. But while successive Nigerian governments failed to learn lessons from this, Indonesia made a clean break with the past between the 1973 oil boom and Mexico's default in 1982, courtesy of an unprecedented alliance between enlightened technocrats, the army, foreign investors, and powerful civilians. That almost accidental constellation of events, the authors hint, shows that large scale social transformation is subject to human choice, and that given current levels of technical knowledge it can occur in relatively short periods-in the case of Indonesia a mere twenty years. This should open a window of opportunity to the now problem-ridden Olusegun Obasanjo government in Nigeria. Whatever happens there, this book-a product of threes scholars associated with Oxford University's Center for the Study of African Economies--should be required reading for the Nigerian government, and for anyone else desirous of turning Africa's most populous country around at this, its greatest hour of need.

Part of the now controversial debts to Africa were incurred to finance the most expensive external "technical advice" per loan dollar ever given, and of the type Nigeria may be told it

now needs, given Indonesia's experience. But the research output of the twenty five African economists which informed *Our Continent, Our Future* should be cited as evidence that plenty of the technocratic talent for turning African economies around may be already at hand. Nigeria and Indonesia considers that true of Nigeria. Mkandawire and Soludo deplore any "paternalistic and contemptuous" attitudes to African technocratic talent, and proceed to demonstrate the need for case-specific remedies for a continent as diverse as Africa, without once shying away from the catastrophic conditions that afflict large parts of the region. While fully acknowledging the domestic origins of Africa's economic regress after the 1980 oil crisis, the book juxtaposes that experience with the more positive one between 1965 and 1975. Though not problem free, the earlier phase witnessed rapid growth, more local savings, and an expansion of education and health services under the tutelage of more effective African governments than we observe now. The book contains a stinging rebuttal of the World Bank's now defunct structural adjustment programs, an accessory to the regress that befell Africa after the 1980s, and concludes with a clarion call for African elites to begin the reconstruction of effective and broadly legitimate states, which an African market-led recovery now so desperately needs.

That of course will be easier said than done. The ideas of a state accountable to the governed, based on separation of powers and the respect of private property are essentially Lockean in origin. In practice they take diverse institutional forms. How to match them to specific African conditions is now the key challenge. Indonesia's current political problems ought to serve as a salutary warning that tolerating a fragile political constitution of dubious legitimacy can ruin the best results of any economic "miracle". Throughout the pages of these three remarkable books, the ideals of governmental reforms for Africa are presented primarily in formulaic and narrow technical terms. In line with that, the World Bank office in Kenya (and elsewhere) was in mid-2000 underwriting "governance" reforms for accountability, corruption prevention, better commercial laws, and an efficient executive branch---all this with an autocratic ruling party which would not countenance growing public pressure for a broad-based constitutional review. As they watch all this, the ghosts of the 1940 Colonial Welfare Act must surely feel tickled, knowing all too well how an anti-Lockean nationalism in the 1950s ruined their best laid plans and ultimately led to the havoc which the press is now reporting on Africa.

REVIEW ARTICLE

Justice and Morality in South Africa

DAVID R. PENNA

James Cochrane, John de Gruchy and Stephen Martin, eds. 1999. *Facing the Truth: South African Faith Communities and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission*. Athens:Ohio University Press. 238pp. paper $18.95.

Kenneth S. Broun. 2000. *Black Lawyers, White Courts: The Soul of South African Law*. Athens: Ohio University Press. 286pp. cloth $45.00; paper $19.95.

Almost a decade after apartheid began its death throes, South Africans are still considering the perversion of values and, at least implicitly, the consequences that survivors must pay almost daily at the turn of the millenium. Disparities in wealth, unequal ownership of land, and a rising tide of crime are the most visible and policy-related impacts of apartheid. The books under review, while touching upon some aspects of policy, address much more directly (and quirkily) the psychological and intellectual legacy of the South African past.

Facing the Truth confronts the role of "faith communities" during the apartheid era. The book's point of departure is the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) hearings on this subject. The Introduction, written by the editors, a short historical and intellectual background to the issue and to the hearings, provides a rich summary of many of the themes to follow. Next comes the Research Institute on Christianity in South Africa's "Faith Communities and Apartheid." The Institute's report (largely written by one of the editors), which is the largest and most comprehensive contribution in the volume, is evidently intended to provoke reflection by the rest of the contributors. The report defines, describes, and attempts to evaluate the role of faith communities under apartheid. The report contends that faith communities should have been "prophetic" in denouncing apartheid and should have taken positive actions to resist apartheid. It evaluates the actions, omission, and reports of the various faith communities to the TRC very critically. The report itself is copiously documented with more than 300 footnotes and is written from a critical perspective that does not attempt to exonerate any faith community.

The rest of the contributions come from a variety of analytical perspectives, and most consider the roles of differing religious traditions. Most contributions assume the reader possesses a fairly thorough background in South Africa's constellation of religious traditions and organizations. But if one is not familiar with the Dutch Reformed Church, the Zion Christian Church, African Initiated Churches, the South African Council of Churches or the

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Study Project on Christianity in Apartheid Society, one should not choose this volume-it does not waste time giving background on these organizations.

Most of the contributions struggle with a similar set of issues-how to understand or evaluate the role of specific faith traditions during the apartheid era; how to evaluate the submissions (or lack thereof) by various faith communities to the TRC; how to achieve reconciliation in a post-apartheid society. While many of the contributions are necessarily abstract, a few ably illustrate the relevance of this debate for individuals. Striking is Carl Niehaus' description of meeting his torturer in post-apartheid society. An evidently genuinely sorrowful policeman called Niehaus out of the blue and asked to meet him to ask for forgiveness. Niehaus realizes that the torturer was also a victim of apartheid, taken in by an evil ideology and indoctrinated by a church that seemed to accept such actions as moral since they were done in defense of "Christian civilization." Niehaus admits that he has not yet forgiven the man, although he is trying. This, among other things, leads Niehaus to wonder if religion has much to offer to the reconciliation process in South Africa.

Other interesting contributions include Tinyiko Sam Maluleke's critical evaluation of the TRC from the perspective of a black theologian. This might strike one as initially confusing, since the TRC is headed by Archbishop Desmond Tutu. Further, the absence of the majority of the victims from the process threatens to result in their silencing if the TRC production of its narrative report is effectively equated with reconciliation. According to Maluleke, the experiences of the majority of apartheid's victims will become devalued if this is allowed to occur.

Equally interesting is Robin M. Petersen's consideration of African Initiated Churches such as the Zion Christian Church (ZCC). During the anti-apartheid struggle, many people within the movement looked down on churches such as the ZCC because they refused to engage in political resistance or criticism of the government. The churches professed an apolitical stance but were seen as giving aid and comfort to the apartheid state by interacting with various government structures and leaders. Petersen explains that criticism of the ZCC's refusal to admit any guilt to the TRC comes from a fundamental misunderstanding of the ZCC's theological perspective. Petersen suggests that the ZCC's focus on creating self-reliant individuals who would "refuse to be hurt" was a profound act of resistance. What mainstream churches and activists saw as disengagement and neutrality toward government, the ZCC saw as an act of empowerment.

While this book draws no conclusions about the role of faith communities in apartheid or in the reconciliation process, it issues a call for reflection and dialogue. It successfully presents a variety of perspectives and benefit those who have an interest in the reconciliation process in South Africa; however, it will not be very accessible to those lacking a prior understanding of the South African faith communities.

In contrast, Kenneth Broun's Black Lawyers, White Courts is accessible to both those outside of the legal profession and those with only a passing familiarity with South African events. At times, those with some background in the history of South Africa may feel that Broun includes too much basic information throughout the excerpts. In the early chapters this sometimes disrupted the flow of the interviews, but by the second half of the book the

intrusions are more limited. Overall, the book reads very well although Broun could have more clearly delineated the format in his Preface.

This interesting volume is based on interviews with twenty-seven prominent non-white lawyers who practiced law under the apartheid regime. Many of them were significant actors in the anti-apartheid movement and several are government officials in the post-apartheid government. The arrangement of the book is very unorthodox: two chapters, Chapters 1 and 12, are complete interviews with two lawyers; chapters 2 through 11 are organized around themes (Bantu education; university; starting practice, etc.) and contain excerpts of interviews with the other 25 lawyers. Broun provides background information about the interviewees and weaves the various excerpts together by providing perspective on the experiences of the lawyers and making comparisons to other interviewees.

Broun's book provides a rich description of the indignities imposed by both petty and grand apartheid: separate tables for non-white counsel in the courtroom; the inability to officially share office space among barristers from different racial backgrounds; the lack of a "colored" break room forcing a non-white barrister to eat a packed lunch rather than enjoying tea with his colleagues; the difficulty of meeting clients or investigating cases when contacts needed to cross racial lines; the attempt of a white secretary to force an African female lawyer to stop using the "white" ladies room. There were the unofficial attitudinal barriers as well: clients, judges, and colleagues who did not think non-white lawyers could be as competent as white ones; the difficulty of becoming an apprentice in exclusively white firms; the psychological impact of being the only non-white in an otherwise all-white firm. Of course, there are also stories of how all of these lawyers overcame the everyday challenges faced by all non-white South Africans during apartheid: an inferior educational system; poverty (at least in most cases); lack of housing; arbitrary arrest and imprisonment.

While the structure of the book seems unconventional, one of its effects is to more emotionally involve the reader in the last few chapters, where one discovers the experiences of the interviewees in post-apartheid South Africa. Several have served in political or judicial positions, and others have established profitable practices, suggesting that the tribulations of the early years have been recompensed-at least almost. Broun uses this as a nice transition to the chapter on Dullah Ohmar, who became Minister of Justice and is in charge of the process of creating a non-racial system of justice for the new South Africa. Broun and several interviewees note that the apartheid system had fostered an unusual respect for law, allowing black lawyers to win important cases even when police or the government had not followed the letter of the law. This respect for law, along with the introduction of constitutionalism, suggests that there may be some basis for hope in the new South Africa. On the other hand, there are many judges and lawyers who benefited from (and continue to benefit from) the old system of apartheid. Additionally, there is the problem of equalizing access to justice. The new South African legal system must provide representation for what is still a mostly poor black majority.

Broun draws upon these experiences to offer a few observations. He notes, for example, that one characteristic most of these lawyers shared was coming from families where education was valued. Indeed, many of these lawyers had at least one parent who was a teacher. Further, most lawyers saw the legal profession as a way not simply of bettering their own lives, but the lives of all non-whites in South Africa. Broun notes that all the interviewees were people of

extraordinary intelligence, but it is clear from the interviews that they were also people of extraordinary courage.

Both of the books under review here offer us glimmers of hope for the new South Africa, yet both are sobering. Both contain astonishingly frank accounts of the injustice and immorality of the old system. Yet both books recognize that there are significant obstacles on the road ahead. How can faith communities who abdicated or misused their prophetic role under apartheid be seen as moral authorities after apartheid? How can a justice system that countenanced the unjust brutalization of the majority of the population be seen as an instrument of justice in a new millenium? Of course, control of these institutions is changing, even if slowly, and that will help. But the bigger question remains: can these societal institutions help contribute to the genuine reconciliation that South Africa needs to emerge from the shadow of apartheid? Niehaus, at the end of his contribution entitled "Reconciliation in South Africa: Is Religion Relevant?" suggests that perhaps the best that can be hoped for is individuals "struggling sympathetically" rather than any institution offering answers. It is also certainly true that law alone will not lead to reconciliation in South Africa. Any law, for example, that ratifies economic inequalities built up under apartheid is likely to be seen as unjust by the majority of the population. Any law that attempts to abruptly equalize wealth is likely to be seen as oppression of the minority. All such attempts (and there certainly must be attempts) can only succeed if they are understood by every sector of the population. Such understanding can only be the by-product of a genuine reconciliation which has yet to occur. Both of these books suggest that we might only be at the beginning of such a process of achieving justice in South Africa.

BOOK REVIEWS

Africa's New Leaders: Democracy or State Reconstruction? Marina Ottaway. Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1999. viii + 138 pp. paper: $10.95.

Africa's New Leaders is almost certainly the most authoritative study yet published on this subject. It is also far more significant than its brevity suggests. A critique of the politics of rising expectations, régime survival, and structural change in the 1990s, its analytic frame rests on two main pillars. One is modernization theory, at least its still-fashionable assumptions in US policy and NGO circles regarding the promotion of Western-style democracy in different climes. The other concerns structural spin-offs from Cold War's end, in particular opportunities for autonomous initiatives by new-generation state élites in Uganda, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Rwanda, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (formerly Zaïre). The study's focal puzzles are no less clear. How did five of Africa's most prominent new "élites of means" seek to reconcile their régimes' military antecedents and weak social institutionalization with heightened expectations for government openness, political accountability, and economic reform? Are these leaders veritable agents of social transformation, or pragmatic tacticians seeking to reinvent - and put their own imprints on - the respective states? How had fundamental principles and incremental process blended under these régimes, and how did this effect state-society relations?

Ottaway's answers are expressed in original, accessible language, although few will fail to notice pointed similarities with modernization discourse of the 1950s and 1960s. New-generation leaders, she argues, are not politically chaste or ideologically naïve. Rather they are well-honed tacticians who rejected the "failed policies of their predecessors" and are willing to challenge the global order, promote new identities and interests, and "devise new strategies to overcome old problems" (pp. 1, 10, 83, 106, 110, 126). No exemplars of transformation (p. 5), all except Kabila have had the institutional landscape "unusually" inclined in their favor (p. 14). They also symbolize some craving for change best understood through a combination of empirical and interpretive methods. Hence, Africa's New Leaders does straddle policy and academic analysis. It probably will not excite readers seeking elegant engagement with theory, detailed documentation of sources, or an index. Surely, however, it offers down-to-earth lessons to Africa watchers - policy experts, aid managers, democracy activists, scholars.

The leaders' collective record, Ottaway concludes, has been mixed. In real terms "new-generation" rhetoric and praxis had differed very little from the founding fathers' (pp. 8-9). Yet the cases have varied significantly: Uganda, Ethiopia, and Eritrea stand far above Rwanda and the Congo in attainment. Ottaway herself doubts whether Laurent Kabila fits in the group élan (p. 13, 92-3) as others have doubted Ugandan President Museveni's putative grandfather status. Factors shaping differentiation within the bloc have included the character of domestic social

forces, the leader's personal rôle and régime leverage, and how the mix has shaped constructions of political and economic reform on domestic and international levels.

As the 1990s dawned, several African dictators saw power slip through their fingers. With local pressure for change reaching new heights, some of Africa's tyrants lost their once-gilded thrones. Successor régimes in turn courted groups and élites less beholden to foreign powers and more inclined to unorthodox methods, including force (pp. 10-2, 112, 126). Thus there was the emergence of "African solutions to African problems," a troubleshooting quasi-strategy that has met the leaders' propensity for forceful self-assertion without undermining the West's interests (pp. 115-6). For example, military intervention in the Sudan and in Zaïre not only showed how resolute the new régimes could be, but both adventures also hinted at some pro qui pro with US interests in the region and an all-too-easy blurring of principle and exigency in their policy processes (pp. 108-13).

The domestic arenas have been more convoluted still. All five societies were in some "protracted turmoil" (p. 10) through the 1980s. The leaders' bequests were institutionally bankrupt estates with high ratios of liabilities to assets. Little surprise then that the first overriding public priority was to restore or establish minimum conditions of collective existence - productive infrastructure, traditions of civil life, effective authority structures, and mechanisms for conciliation and participation. All this Ottaway calls "democratic capital," incorporating Putman's social capital (p. 13). Without plentiful supplies of it, she argues, periodic elections, competing political parties, independent media, free market economy, the attributes of democracy beloved of US policy and Western NGOs, are likely to accentuate pre-existing ethnic, religious, and social divisions in society, at least in the short term (p. 124). Better an unfashionable transition agenda then perdition by indiscretion!

Here lies the case for "sequencing of reforms" (p. 133), a re-affirmation of conventional wisdom on the "crisis of adaptation" in Africa. Such discourse had peaked coincidentally with "political order" in the 1970s, prompting the debate as to whether economic development and political liberalization should be pursued (and achieved?) one at a time before or after each other, hardly in tandem. In theory, a phased transition does offer a promising, "steady as she goes" process. In the hands of politically insecure state élites, however, it has long helped to reinforce self-serving experiments from colonial indirect rule to Uhuru and Ujamaa. Such paradigms proliferated in Africa through the 1970s, occasioning neither political liberalization nor economic development but near-total collapse that necessitated the structural adjustment programs during the 1980s. In this circumstance, the either-or format of the study's sub-themes, Democracy or State Reconstruction, may have, in effect, lent scholarly credence to the leaders' self-legitimizing platforms. At this stage some might ask what is new about the new leaders - apart from the delusions of élite cycles and vitriolic criticism of international actors. Others simply will murmur déjà vu in cynical resignation!

Ottaway's goal, it seems, is not so much to advance the leaders' claims. It is rather to show how unrealistic and insensitive to sub-optimal African conditions US policymakers and NGOs have been in pushing democratic reforms (p. 105). The "development first, democracy later" strategy is fraught with risks; Uganda, Ethiopia, and Eritrea's leaders, Ottaway asserts, admitted that, "if their present policies are successful, they will have to be modified radically in the future" (p. 9). This need not make them closet despots in the eyes of donors and opposition figures. But progress on the transient frame is not democracy either, only further confirmation

that the transition to democracy cannot begin in these societies until after "basic problems… are resolved to some degree" (pp. 12, 130). What constitutes "some degree" is open to interpretation. It is also open to abuse by wily rulers; but so too is precipitate unleashing of competitive elections and market forces on societies just emerging from long-running conflict. In this frame, Ottaway's innocuous realpolitik meets scholarly endeavor. Western donors and activists need to rethink their paradigms lest they become irrelevant (p. 5); leaders who had shown "much less concern for the final outcome" of their policies (p. 9) deserve the benefit of the doubt nonetheless (p. 9). Yet, because arbitrary reversals and even re-traditionalization are real possibilities, today's incremental choices might well be building blocks for tomorrow's personal or small-group empires (p. 130). So where are the new-generation régimes headed?

There are no definitive answers, only pointers. Economic restructuring was high on the agenda; production had improved dramatically in all cases except the Congo. Policy reform, including deregulation, decentralization, and privatization had proceeded apace, more intensely in Uganda and Ethiopia than in Rwanda and Eritrea. Some pluralism has emerged in Uganda and Ethiopia (pp. 120-1); moreover, Ugandan NGOs have been more receptive to incremental change than opposition parties (pp. 40, 44). Étatism has remained Eritrea's favored strategy (pp. 57-8), while Rwanda has prevaricated, and Kabila's Congo has slipped into virtual paralysis. In all cases, a ghoulish fear of the recent past has dominated popular imaginations nonetheless, fueled in part by official discourse (pp. 89, 128-9). As a result, domestic opposition has been ineffectual, or driven to embrace self-defeating measures, from obdurate insistence on principles through election boycotts to armed attacks on régime symbols (p. 120). The populace also seemed quiescent, keeping (or kept) well away from matters substantive as state-led mobilization subsumed popular participation (pp. 26, 43-5, 53, 79, 88) and rulers tried out new and not-so-new mechanisms constructed in their personal or small-group images (pp. 27, 118, 126).

Africa's New Leaders is strongly recommended, as much for its authoritative analysis as for its wider import. The study bears out several general lessons. First, to the extent that gaps between expectations and social reality are proverbial in institution-building the world over, the euphoria of the 1990s most certainly reflected dissatisfaction with ousted régimes rather than with the potential of the new. Second, new leaders' seeming rejection of institutional perspectives in favor of "everyday approaches" is far from realistic. While institutions themselves do not make social change any more feasible, change is not sustainable at all without institutions. Progress has been slow in these cases partly because of the leaders' high personal stakes in possible outcomes. If developmental states are almost always ruler-friendly, then opportunities to construct new mechanisms in situations of near-zero institutionalization must promise abundant payoffs, including variants of gerrymandering. Africa's new state élites have yet to face the challenge of creating an environment that includes all publics and encourages the growth of productive debate and countervailing viewpoints. The well-worn game of doing one thing at a time, although convenient, has merely postponed doomsday time and again, providing justification for sit-tight leaders of all hues. It is far too costly in the long term.

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North Africa in Transition: State, Society, and Economic Transformation in the 1990s. Yahia H. Zoubir (ed.). Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1999. 299pp. Cloth: $ 59.95.

Yahia H. Zoubir has compiled a fine collection of essays about developments in North Africa in the 1990s. Although this collection of essays represents a variety of viewpoints, some even contradicting the others, the stress is always on the social, political, and economic explanations for developments in North Africa. In the Anglo-American academy, North Africa has not received much attention and, as such, the literature on the region lacks depth. By making use of his personal connections, Zoubir has elicited contributions for this book from the well-known scholars of Maghreb, adding to literature on this underrepresented region. While the focus of this book is North Africa, Algeria gets more coverage than other countries of the region, perhaps due to the Algerian focus of the editor himself.

The book is divided into three parts. The first five chapters in part one address economic and political developments in the Maghreb. In particular, the authors try to account for the failure of the "development phenomenon" in the Maghreb. Pointing to constant political instability in Maghrebi states, the authors place the reason for this failure at the feet of a weak civil society with constant repression from above. While Henry Clement's chapter involves a dialectical exposition on the development of civil society in the Maghreb as a whole, Zoubir, Layachi, King, and Deeb focus on the development of civil society in Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, and Libya, respectively. Both Zoubir and Layachi deal with the changes arising out of economic liberalization, and predict a bright future for civil society. With a comparative focus on East Asian cases, King attempts to account for the failure of Tunisia in fulfilling "Western expectations" (p. 61). In the case of Libya, Deeb advances a well-rounded argument that the health of the Libyan economy, in spite of oil revenues, remains fragile. All this is set to lead towards a conflict-filled transition if and when Qadaffi's rule comes to an end.

The second part of the book deals with more specific issues in the Maghreb. Claire Spencer cautions policy-oriented researchers to pay more heed to the history and diversity of Maghreb in their research, which she argues is focused heavily on Islam at the expense of other socio-cultural explanations. In the following two chapters, Mohammad Azzi and Yocef Bounandel deal with the topics of youth and human rights in the Maghreb, respectively. Azzi examines the prevalence of alienation among the youth, who form the majority-approaching seventy to eighty percent-of the unemployed in the Maghrebian countries. A worsening socioeconomic situation, according to Azzi, leaves the Maghrebian youths with violence as the only medium of expression. According to Bounandel, the worsening socioeconomic conditions over the last decade are also responsible for the worsening human rights situation in the Maghreb, although Morocco is an exception to this secular trend.

International pressure has proven especially important in bringing about improvement in the human rights situation in Maghreb. Francophone intellectuals in Maghreb, who have raised

human rights issues repeatedly, have not fared well in their own societies. This, according to Geesay, could be accounted for by the colonial baggage of the French language, which is viewed with mistrust by the Maghrebians. Nora Colton examines the emerging markets in Maghreb, and prescribes cautious liberalization because of the unpredictable political ramifications of speedy liberalization. Robert Mortimer rounds off the second part of the book by examining the rise and eventual decline of the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU), which he blames on the tensions between Algeria and Morocco over the Western Sahara.

The last four chapters are more or less in the field of security policy studies, with the first two-by Youbir and Volman-tackling the issue at the Maghrebian level, while the rest concentrate on the international level beyond the shores of the Mediterranean. Youbir's chapter on the geopolitics of the Saharan conflict, which has been a bone of contention between Algeria and Morocco, reveals that although France and the United States support the Moroccan position, Spain still supports the Saharawi people because of its historic guilt over not addressing demands for Saharawi self-determination. Following this, Volman looks at the military expenditure in Maghreb, which at this moment favors Algeria over Morocco, because of its oil and gas revenue receipts.

In the last two chapters, the authors deal with US policy in the Maghreb (Zoubir and Zunes) and the European Union's policy toward the Maghreb (Joffe). Zoubir and Zunes examination of the US policy orientation toward different members of the Maghreb finds a policy that, although mindful of the longtime friendship with Morocco, singularly emphasizes economic liberalization. They also notice that the US is moving to lessen the hegemony of France in the region. Lastly, George Joffe provides a well-rounded chapter on European Union policy toward the Maghreb, focused on economic issues at the expense of political and security issues. Although the EU agenda toward the Maghreb is mainly driven by Spain and France, of late Germany and Britain have started making their presence felt.

Although this is a fine collection and the editor has received significant participation of authors from the Maghreb, there is a paucity of references to Arabic sources. There is also a neglect of the cultural issues in explaining the events of the last ten years, which have been fostered mainly by the Islamic opposition challenge. Although the authors do address the issue of the international dimensions of the Maghrebian issues, there is no systemic treatment of how the Maghreb fits into global capitalism. Finally, even though women authored four of the chapters, there is no specific piece devoted to the roles of women in the Maghreb.

This being said, I would not hesitate to recommend this book to a wide variety of audiences. There is something here for all interested parties.

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Success and Failures of Microbusiness Owners in Africa: A Psychological Approach. Michael Frese (ed.). Westport: Quorum Books, 2000. Pp. 203. Cloth $59.95.

Which factors make for entrepreneurial success or failure in Africa's microbusinesses? Who do you ask and where do you go for answers? The authors of Success and Failures went into African cities to observe and interview microbusiness owners. They talked to real people enmeshed in the daily grind of survival, impregnated with the uncertainty of success and failure in a precarious business environment. Altogether five studies were conducted in Zambia, Uganda, South Africa, and Zimbabwe.

The studies focused on two broad sets of factors that influence microbusiness success: psychological and socio-demographic factors. Psychological factors include entrepreneurial orientation, personal initiatives, innovativeness, proactiveness, planning strategies, and motivation of employees. Some of the socio-demographic factors include the age of the business, unemployment as the reason for start-up, employment of family members, and education. By investigating both of these aspects, the authors show that psychological variables are the better predictors of microbusiness performance. Frese and his collaborators challenge many stereotypes about microbusiness owners in Africa. For instance, they discovered that employing family members does not necessarily decrease success. The authors advise policy makers and researchers alike to pay more attention to psychological factors than the typical socio-demographic factors that have usually received more attention from governments, donors, and researchers.

The psychological factors identified in this book really amount to plain old management. This reveals a basic and commonly made observation: microenterprise owners in Africa need management skills. The authors are simply saying that owners who have applied some management principles (planning, goal setting, employee motivation, competitive analysis, etc.,) are more likely to succeed than their counterparts who have not recognized that management works. The researchers examine how thoughts, ideas, and attitudes regulate and control management actions. Their investigations reveal that psychological strategies (i.e., management techniques) are used when they are compatible with the personality characteristics of the owner and environmental constraints (resources and restrictions).

From this finding the authors argue that it is possible to find people with the "right" personality who are likely to succeed in entrepreneurial ventures. They advocate that training, selection, and support systems ought to be put in place to ensure that persons with the identified psychological factors are nurtured to success from adolesence. There are serious problems with this view. Advising African states to go beyond setting up proper economic and legal frameworks to selecting the "right" persons to succeed seems very unpalatable. Second, administering a test to ferret out who will succeed or fail is not in the spirit of competitive capitalism. This idea admittedly comes from the failed policies of communism. The authors state that "Many countries, particularly the early socialist ones (even poor ones), have used an early selection approach of high potentials in the areas of sports and music. Thus, often four-or-five-year-old children were selected in competitions and offered unique training opportunities in special schools. We think a similar model can be used in the areas of entrepreneurship" (p. 187). It is important to identify teenagers with high potentials in entrepreneurship, but this

should be left to parents and the market. Government and public institutions should not use taxpayer money to give privileged access to resources and skills.

There is yet another problem with the advice offered here. These scholars unfortunately "psychologise" the whole development process in Africa. No doubt it is important to understand the actions and motivations of entrepreneurs, but it is more important to understand the historicity, institutional framework, and dynamics of social forces in Africa. To sever entrepreneurs from the specificities of Africa's colonial and postcolonial experience places undue weight on psychological matters instead of the concrete socio-political conditions that have primarily fueled development efforts.

At this point, what is needed in Africa is a balanced approach to tackling the recalcitrant problem of underdevelopment, not another scholarly perspective or tantalizing tool. Psychology can help us formulate policies for the ubiquitous informal sector, but it is wrong to over-emphasize this in defiance of the logic and dynamics of social forces.

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Free Speech in Traditional Society: The Cultural Foundations of Communication in Contemporary Ghana. Kwesi Yankah. Accra: Ghana Universities Press (distributed by ABC Ltd, Oxford, UK), 1998. Pp 46. Paper $8.50.

Kwesi Yankah's 1997 inaugural lecture at the University of Ghana raises the question of how African structures and norms of communication have coped with European intervention. He asks,

"Are modern notions of free speech, free press, free expression which are already operative in our post-colonial regulative institutions, compatible with communicative norms and social structures in traditional society?"(p. 3).

Yankah identifies and describes the norms, modes, and functions of speech in pre-colonial Akan society, from instruments connected with speech (such as talking drums and the linguistic staff carried by the chief's orator) to forms and modalities (verbal taboo, silence, indirection, and open critique). All of these, according to Yankah, demonstrate the existence of a wide latitude for expressive freedom in pre-colonial Akan and other African societies.

Against this background, Yankah discusses the consequences of colonial intervention and new media such as print and radio which arose from and reflected the socio-economic system of capitalism. When introduced into Akan and other societies, these new media complicated the relationship between free speech and appropriate cultural behaviour. Although Africans were capable of both adopting and resisting the foreign systems, genuine tensions emerged, which remain today.

To illustrate his point, Yankah cites conflicts between leaders and the media in contemporary Ghana and, by extension, other parts of Africa. He highlights the problems of keeping inherited cultural communicative norms in the face of these new developments

resulting from European intervention. In pre-colonial African society, norms and parameters guided free speech, but European institutions and media forms destabilized these parameters. As a solution, Yankah suggests that the indigenous cultural norms need to recognize and adapt to certain exigencies of contemporary reality, such as electronic media and radio. Those involved in contemporary media and its institutions need to study and pay attention to the indigenous cultural norms.

In terms of identifying and describing the resources and modalities of speech in pre-colonial Africa, Yankah's book is very useful. His theoretical framework, however, is rather conventional, if not unhelpful. He sees Africa in terms of a dualism between "traditional" and "modern" and associates "modernity" with "western." This framework, well-entrenched in African studies, is very problematic, to say the least. Do we need this Eurocentric perspective, which categorizes pre-colonial African societies as traditional and equates modernization with "western" influence? Is there no African modernity? Did Africans sit still for millennia waiting for Europeans to come and modernize them? There must be a better way of theorizing the notions of tradition, traditional, modern, and modernity.

Each cultural institution, object, and practice must be seen as the result of many forces and processes. In every society, there were rebels and critics who challenged the norms; there were people who disobeyed, questioned, mocked, or ignored tradition; there were also pioneers. All these were the forces of change from within. Even such a "traditional" figure as the chief's orator, whose office and paraphernalia Yankah considers as having been there from time immemorial, has not been static (p. 9).

Another common error in African studies which also appears in Yankah's book is generalizing about Africa on the basis of a specific African society. Again and again, scholars of Africa study a culture -- Yoruba for example -- and then write as if Yoruba and African were synonymous. Since his study focuses on Akan society, Yankah needs to maintain that focus consistently and never confuse Akan with African, as he does occasionally.

The failure to theorize afresh the notions of traditional and modern, or at least to realize the essentially neo-colonial ways in which these terms are used in relation to Africa, is the chief weakness of Yankah's book. This problem runs throughout the book to the very end. This problem aside, Yankah's book is very informative. It covers a broad range of issues and has a bibliography valuable for further study. This book is suitable for any library.

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Traditional African Names. Jonathan Musere. Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2000. 400 pp. Cloth $65.

Until the publication of this book, it was extremely difficult to find any volume that collects and defines the meanings of African names in English. Africa is a diverse continent with many cultures, traditions, and languages. Names are part and parcel of all African traditions, and

virtually every African indigenous name has a distinct meaning or connotation. While it would be next to impossible to compile a comprehensive thesaurus of all African names, let alone their synonyms, this book compiles about 6,000 names from central, eastern, and southern African countries, such as Burundi, Congo-Kinshasa, Kenya, Rwanda, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

Although the compilation of African names is not entirely a new phenomenon, what distinguishes this book from previous ones is its simplicity in name descriptions and definitions. This volume looks at the in-depth meanings of indigenous as well as adopted African names. African personal names have multitudinous functions such as the association of one's occupation, habits, or personality. Many African names emanate from one's ancestry through clan, ethnic/tribal, or religious affiliation. Names can also be commemorative of ancient wars and conquests. Since most of these names emanate from the "Bantuphone" region of east, central and southern Africa, it is not uncommon for many of them to have a similar meaning, albeit different pronunciations. A word such as Muntu connotes a person, but actually it is derived from the common linguistic descent of people in this region. It is therefore not surprising that the word "ntu" is common among most ethnic groups in this region and carries the same meaning. For example, a word such as "Gahungu," which denotes a small or young boy, has a similar connotation amongst the Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa ethnic groups of Rwanda and Burundi.

The author also includes new African words that have been adopted from Western political and cultural contexts. For example, the word "Democracy" in most African contexts is pronounced as "Demokrasi." Like other African names given to people during a certain historical phenomenon, this word has been given to some newborns during the current democratic struggle on the continent.

The alphabetical listings of these names as well as the book's well-prepared index will be very helpful to those that are not familiar with African appellations. This book is highly recommended for scholars and students of African anthropology, linguistics, literature, history, and politics, as well as anyone interested in learning more about an important aspect of African culture.

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Runaway Slaves: Rebels on the Plantation. John Hope Franklin and Loren Schweninger. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999. Pp. 455. Cloth: $35.00.

Runaway Slaves addresses the still widely held belief that, in the slave system of the United States of America, "slaves were generally content, that racial violence on the plantation was an aberration, and that the few who ran away struck out for the Promised Land in the North or Canada" (p. xv). Throughout *Runaway Slaves*, John Hope Franklin and Loren Schweninger stress that the majority of slaves in the United States fought the system and their white oppressors. Moreover, they lived under constant threats of physical and mental violence and were

conditioned to respond in kind. Furthermore, slaves ran away in great numbers, and when they ran they did not necessarily go North. In fact, they more often ran to places where they had relatives or loved ones.

The book is well-organized, with chapters describing everyday acts of rebellion, reasons for running, how they tried to keep their families together, their reasons for becoming violent, how they planned escapes, and where and how they hid. Moreover, the book details how the slaveholders hunted fugitives, what happened to the slaves once they were taken back into bondage, and how the slaveholders attempted to manage their human property. The authors attach seven appendices, including advertisements, petitions, tables of locations and destinations of runaways, and examples of correspondence. Almost one hundred pages of notes detail the sources.

Franklin and Schweninger undertake a detailed analysis of hundreds of newspaper articles, advertisements, and court documents in order to establish many of the "facts" of life in slavery, as well as a foundation for the tenor of relations between blacks and whites. Their analysis of these documents addresses a gap in contemporary scholarship on slavery, which has focused on slave narratives, diaries of slave planters, and plantation records. In fact, the authors assert that newspapers and court documents have their own "unique strengths" as primary source materials. For instance, masters advertising for the return of their runaways "had little reason to misinform their readers and every reason to be as precise as possible" (p. 295). They gave graphic physical descriptions of the runaways and their known connections around the country. Moreover, court petitioners suing for release from slavery "realized that it behooved them to be as forthright and candid as possible" (p. 295). These petitioners often had nothing to hide, because all the community knew their circumstances; furthermore, presenting the facts in graphic detail could possibly sway the verdict their way. Therefore, contemporary white notions of slaves and black resistance to slavery are well-represented in these documents.

The bits and pieces of stories that the authors put together from the fragments of newspaper clippings and runaway notices are remarkable. This technique, however, can be a bit confusing when several different notices or runaways are mentioned in the same paragraph. Moreover, the reader may become intrigued by the ways a particular slave rebelled and wish to know more about that particular individual. The downfall of writing from advertisements is that, in most cases, one never does know what happened to the person in question. This narrative angst, of course, only replicates to a small degree the terrible anxiety that the friends and family of the slave must have felt. For as Franklin and Schweninger make clear, slave families often did not know where their loved ones had fled. They also understood very well the penalties inflicted upon captured runaways. For example, slave owners often contracted professional slave catchers with dogs to chase their runaways. One plantation owner admitted to using such methods: the catcher's dogs treed the man and pulled him out of the tree. The owner then had the dogs bite "him badly, think[ing] he will stay home a while" (p. 161).

In addition to detailing the reasons and the methods of those who ran, the authors "seek to analyze the motives and responses of the slaveholding class and other whites" (p. xv). To this end, they have detailed the owners' announcements about runaways, their rewards for apprehending the slaves, and their discussions of the tribulations that pursuing the runaways caused. The results of this analysis are telling. Masters were often incensed that trusted slaves

ran away without "any unjust or injurious treatment" and they would pursue those slaves until the time and expense became overwhelming (p. 169).

Franklin and Schweninger have done a thorough job reading runaway advertisements and court cases "against the grain" to determine the possible reasons why the slaves ran away and committed other crimes. For instance, they claim that "fear, anxiety, retaliation, frustration, anger, and hatred propelled slaves toward violence" (p. 79). When slaves ran, they often took more of their owner's property than just themselves. The owners described every item stolen. One runaway called Jerry took with him "a 'considerable quantity' of clothes, 'an aged sorrel horse,' a pistol, and eighty dollars in cash" (p. 145). A slave named Sam left wearing "a green frock coat with a black velvet collar, blue pants, a high-crown black hat; he carried with him a black leather trunk containing a variety of other clothing, including a reddish frock coat with a velvet collar, a green cloth coat and a white hat" (p. 80). What this detailing makes clear is the slaves' understanding that anything preventing them from acquiring material and intellectual resources was the basis of their continued enslavement. When they absconded, they took some of the materials that could help make them free.

Runaway Slaves does well in discounting the popular myth that slaves were docile and cowered in the face of white oppression. In fact, as Franklin and Schweninger show, a great deal of violence was inflicted upon slaves, and the slaves reacted in kind. The authors establish that "most of the violence was spontaneous, and most of it was directed against whites-owners, members of the owner's family, overseers" (p. 77). In nearly every Southern state, slaves were indicted for killing their owners or members of their owner's family. For this reason in particular, *Runaway Slaves* is a valuable resource for undergraduate courses dealing with slavery, as undergraduates often come to this subject with "romantic, Gone with the Wind" notions of the peculiar institution. Moreover, the authors cite all the primary sources they use, making this book a valuable resource for those interested in archival research on slave narratives, slave codes, and African American history.

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Women of the Sahel. 1995. Directed by Paolo Quaregna and Mahamane Souleymane, 52 minutes. Distributor: First Run/Icarus Films. 52 minutes / Color / Sale/video: $390; Rental/video: $75

This documentary presents women of Niger and the range of activities in which they engage to make a living. The video's title evokes Niger's geographical location, namely the Sahel region of West Africa. Niger's economy is based on herding, agriculture, and mining. The industrial sector is extremely small and people in salaried employment counted only about 150,000 out of a population of eight million when the film was made in 1995. As a result, women -- as well as men -- look to the so-called "informal sector" to generate cash. In the course of the film, its directors take the viewer on a journey across Niger, demonstrating the vital roles

women play in supporting themselves and their families. They do not dwell on the fact that most, if not all, of the women presented are Muslims, but it is noteworthy in light of the popular images of Islam in the United States. The women in the video provide a good counterpoint to prevailing stereotypes.

The journey begins in Gaya, a town on the banks of the Niger river close to the border with Benin and Nigeria. The narrator introduces "Mamou", who heads a busy household while her husband works as a truck driver. The filmmakers show how she takes advantage of available opportunities. In a peanut-producing area, but with no field of her own, she buys groundnuts in the market and turns them into oil and snacks; she purchases fish and fries them for sale; and she occasionally travels to Benin to buy goods for resale locally.

For enjoyment, Mamou still participates in rehearsals of the local dance troupe, although she has stopped going on tour with it as a singer. The narrator's explanations in English language voice-over are interspersed with Mamou's own commentary on what she is doing. Her words, spoken in Hausa, appear as subtitles in English. In like manner, the viewer encounters women in other parts of the country who extract and process salt from the soil; dig up gypsum and transform it into plaster; weave brightly-colored mats, or make pottery to sell to traders or leather products to sell at the local craft center.

The emphasis throughout is on women's activities, but ethnicity also is highlighted in the last segment dealing with Tuareg women. The comparison that is drawn here between "Tuareg women [that] are not exhausted by hard physical work ... [and] other women in the Sahel" implicitly resurrects colonial distinctions between the "noble" nomads and sedentary folk dulled by hard labor. It also ties labor to ethnicity rather than to class or social hierarchy. The statement that "[for Tuareg women] there is a great freedom of expression [in] celebrating births and marriages" reinforces this impression and glosses over the fact that women of nearly all ethnic backgrounds also celebrate life cycle events through dance and other forms of artistic expression.

Placed in the context of Women's Studies, the video uses a "women's roles" approach to the subject matter. This means that women's activities are presented and their contributions highlighted with no more than passing reference to gender relations and the wider political economy of which they are a part. Cooperatives are mentioned in several instances but their benefits and problems, the impetus behind their creation, or their relationships to local household and community structures are never seriously discussed. In spite of these criticisms, the video is suitable for use in a range of classrooms (e.g. women's studies, introduction to Africa, economic anthropology) at the secondary school and college levels and is a welcome addition to the available audiovisual resources on the subregion.

Instructors and students interested in complimentary readings may wish to consult: Marriage in Maradi: Gender and Culture in a Hausa Society in Niger, 1900-1989 by Barbara Cooper (1997); The Poetics and Politics of Tuareg Aging: Life Course and Personal Destiny in Niger by Susan J. Rasmussen (1997); Historical Dictionary of Niger by Samuel Decalo (1997).

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