

ANGER AND REJECTION- THE RHETORIC AND DIALECTICS OF VIOLENCE IN ANGLOPHONE CAMEROONIAN POETRY

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ABSTRACT: *Change and development are embodied in the principle of dialectics and the aesthetics of violence. Gahlia Gwangwa'a, Mathew Takwi and Bate Besong in their poetry write with the conviction, orientation and consciousness that if something is not done, society will slowly but surely drift to the precincts of insanity. The radicalism and the rhetoric of violence reflected in their poetry attest to this. From this standpoint, this paper sets out to demonstrate that Gwangwa'a, Takwi and Besong in their respective collections, Cry of the Destitute (1995) People Be Not Fooled (2004) and Disgrace: autobiographical narcissus, (2007) express anger and frustration with regard to the dismal and abysmal state of socio-political affairs in Cameroon which culminate in the rejection of the neocolonial political systems. The argument of this paper is predicated on the premise that third generation Anglophone Cameroonian poets like Gwangwa'a, Takwi and Besong are radical and revolutionary in their poetic works because they use their poetic works to protest against victimization, oppression and lack of social justice in the Cameroonian society. They are as angry as they are impatient. Their poetic works are artistic missiles and arsenals that embody the rhetoric of violence. Drawing largely from the socialist realism of Lukacsian-Marxist artistic paradigms, this study underscores the fact that Gwangwa'a, Takwi and Besong's poetic vision aspires to explore and capture the reality in the Cameroonian society. Thus, this study reveals that this poetry has made conscientisation, revolts and violence its campaign themes to overcome the impedimenta that have made life a real drudgery and nightmare.*

KEYWORDS: *Anger, rejection, rhetoric, dialectics socialist realism and violence.*

INTRODUCTION

Anglophone Cameroonian poetry is an embittered poetry. As it will be seen in the analysis that follows, the poets poeticize the bluffs and systematic exploitation of the Cameroonian people by a decadent and inflexible oligarchy. From 1961 to the present day, there is a feeling amongst Anglophone Cameroonians, especially the intelligentsia that they are socially isolated, politically marginalized and economically exploited. The poetry of poets like Gwangwa'a's, *Cry of the Destitute* (1995), Takwi's *People Be Not Fooled* (2004) and Besong's *Disgrace: autobiographical narcissus*, (2007) are usually structured around some narrative, argument and moment of feeling of betrayal. The poetry of these poets as will be seen in the analysis of this article is rich in images and cultural echoes as words reflect and interact with other words to bring to mind a wide variety of associations from more than one culture and various historical periods.

The basic problems this article seeks to address are the mismanagement and abuse of power by the political leadership in Cameroon which the poets under reference think are vicious and malicious.

As a consequence, apart from negotiating for an alternative socio-political system wherein there will be social justice, the poets passionately and violently denounce such a system in their poetics. Their poetry reflects the concrete reality of a people fighting for freedom and social justice that have been denied them for a long time. The images utilized by the three poets as will be demonstrated in this article bespeak anger, rejection and violence. Their poetic voices are a counter discourse to the hegemonic policy and philosophy the present system in Cameroon stands for. From this premise, the following questions guide the appreciation and comprehension of this article: (1) what is the role of poetry in nation-building? (2) Does violence have any moral justification? (3) Can anger and violence contribute to nation-building? (4) What is the link between the dialectic principle and violence? (5) Can poetry negotiate and proffer an alternative nation? In view of the above problem and questions as stated, this paper sets out to demonstrate that Gwangwa'a, Takwi and Besong are radical and revolutionary poets who in their poetic works protest against victimization, oppression and lack of social justice in the Cameroonian society. They are as angry as they are impatient. Their poetic works are artistic missiles and arsenals that embody the rhetoric of violence.

THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This article is informed by the socialist realism of the Lukacsian-Marxist paradigm. The concept of socialist realism marks an important advance in the development of Marxist aesthetics on literature and art in general. Socialist realism according to <http://www.levengenrevaertcentre.be/> is a soviet artistic doctrine, realistic in its nature which has a purpose the furtherance of the goals of socialism and communism. Basically, some of the features of socialist realism include: optimism and hope, conscientisation and revolt. Chidi Amuta in *The Theory of African Literature* outlines the following characteristic features of socialist realism. He contends, "...the essential attributes of socialist realist expression include (a) the use of simple and accessible language (b) a sympathetic portrayal of characters from the oppressed, (c) a sense of patriotism defined in terms of concern with the struggle of socialism" (140). Socialist realist writers must be politically active on the side of the oppressed.

Maxim Gorky, the doyen of socialist realism summarizes these socialist realist features thus: ... it is clear that in addition to the necessity of studying the language and developing the ability to select the simplest, most graphic and colourful words from a literary language, which while perfected to a high degree is nevertheless littered with empty and ugly words, the writer must also have a good knowledge of the past history and of the social phenomenon of contemporary society in which he is called upon to fulfill his dual role of midwife and grave-digger (32-33). Finally, Es'kia Mphahlele contends that African writers especially critics must always "hammer their theories out of their social realism" (84).

The aim of Marxism is to bring about a classless society, based on the common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange. Marxism is a materialist philosophy: that is, it tries to explain things without assuming the existence of a world or of forces beyond the natural world around us and the society we live in (Peter Barry, 156). The antithesis of Marxism is idealism. Marxist philosophy is materialist based. According to Maynard Solomon, Marxism is the symbolism of dialectical conflict, of drama, of the unity of opposite, of revolutionary change,

of matter and man in motion, constantly transcending the moment, pointing into the future (qtd in Chidi Amuta, 52) All these articulations point to one thing: that whereas other philosophies merely seek to understand and interpret the world, (critical realism), Marxist criticism like socialist realism seeks to change it. The power dialectics exhibited in Gwangwa'a and Besong's poetic vision is essentially meant to usher in change for the better.

There were various influences on early Marxist thinking in addition to that of the political experiences of its founders, including the work of eighteenth-century German philosopher, Hegel (especially his idea of dialectic, whereby opposing forces or ideas bring about new situations or ideas. These two opposing forces are the Base and the Superstructure representing the ruled and the rulers respectively. This conflict reinforces the dialectic principle which this article addresses. Marx and Engels who were the brain behind Marxism applied the dialectic principle mainly to the sphere of social development. They believed that the class struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat would lead inevitably to the overthrow of capitalism, thus promoting the cause of social progress. (Fokkema and Ibsch, 1995:83)

Textual Analysis

In order to proffer the possibilities for a rigorous materialist interpretation and reading of the poetry of these three poets, the Marxist critical theory and the concept of socialist realism are employed. In this regard, the contradictions that have bedeviled the socio-political, economic, historical and cultural lives of Cameroonians become the focal point. Thus, the discussion of this article is done under four thematic clusters: 'conscientisation and revolt' and 'the rhetoric dialectic of violence and nation-building'.

Conscientisation and revolt

The term conscientisation is derived from the Portuguese word; "conscientizacao" which means learning to perceive social, political and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality (Paulo Freire, 1970:17). Freire argues that the raising of social consciousness can lead to social discontent and even anarchy. "Critical consciousness...is anarchic. Others add that critical consciousness may lead to disorder." (1970:17). According to Osofisan (in Takem, 1990:174) "man can change his society if the right decisions are made. There is no reason why we should not be able to move our society from its present chaos. And this is one of the fundamental duties of literature". Since Gwangwa'a, Takwi and Besong are concerned about change for the interest of the masses and the working class, their poetry becomes instructive. Poetry becomes a viable means of effecting the necessary critical awareness in the consciousness of the audience of the socio-economic and political malaise overwhelming their society. Seen from this perspective, it is one of the contentions of this article that the primary virtue of literature is its subversive change hidden behind the façade of entertainment. This section examines the role of poetry in the conscientisation process of the society.

The concept of conscientisation which leads to the raising of social consciousness finds both ideological and aesthetic expression in the following four poems by Gwangwa'a, Takwi and Besong respectively: "If an Anglophone must die", "Art after them", "Writing" and "Poetry is." In "If an Anglophone must Die" written within the framework of Claude McKay, Gwangwa'a brings out the predicament of Anglophone Cameroonians who are socially isolated, politically

marginalized and economically exploited. He exhorts and appeals to the oppressed Anglophone Cameroonians not to give up the fight because any death registered in the process of this struggle/fight is a noble one:

If an Anglophone must die, let it be a noble death
 So that his precious blood is not spilled in vain
 Let no scream be heard in the glimpse and breath
 Though, by grenades, he suffers much in utter pain. (*Cry of the...46*)
 Even more, the poet is concerned with the radicalization of this section of the country which has been subjected to Sisyphean existence by virtue of their numerical disadvantage. The feeling is that Anglophones are not part of Cameroon:
 And if the Anglophone is outnumbered, be sternly brave
 The frightened's blows deal severe death blows
 Before tumbling into the frog's odious grave. (*Cry of the...46*)

The poet decries the absence of dialogue and insinuates that alienation is the basis of the absence of dialogue. He thinks that this "continuous feigning for dialogue" accounts for the endless cycle of destruction and of the perpetual strife in human nature. The poem, "If an Anglophone must die" sounds like a war song. The poet in a very satirical style is preaching a subversive message, trying to incite the oppressed against constituted authority. He places the two inherited cultures side by side and metaphorically refers to the oppressors as "frogs". He mediates on the fluctuations between joy and despair, fulfillment and devastation which operate as invariable law both within the individual and the society which he incarnates. Through such a stance, the poet subscribes to the conception that poetry as a fighting weapon/guerrilla poetry must be on the side of the oppressed, a people's poetry that creates as Ngugi wa Thiong'o submits in *Writers in Politics*, "positive heroes from among the workers, positive heroes who would embody the spirit of struggle and resistance against exploitation and naked robbery by the national bourgeoisie and its global allied classes. (5-6) The poet makes a passionate appeal to Anglophone Cameroonians to stop living with a victimization consciousness and fight for their freedom, liberty and social justice: Anglophones! Fiercely face whatever be the attack;

When helmed in a corner, die fighting back.
 Those who survive the fight of your might
 Will lead the rest with your light. (*Cry of the...46*)

This four- stanza-poem offers a bold challenge to the present neocolonial system as the poet echoes a wide range of themes using different images. He starts by sensitizing the oppressed, and the end product of sensitization or conscientisation is revolt. The first three stanzas of the poem have alternative rhyme scheme which bespeaks the anger, outrage and anguish in the poetic voice of the poet: death/vain/ breath/pain. In the second stanza, we have: dog/spot/dialogue/lot. In the last stanza of the poem, the poet employs a regular rhyme scheme to indicate the hope and optimism that characterize this struggle. This is in line with Gustavo Gutierrez submission in *The Power of the Poor in History*, that:

To struggle without hope would be futile, leading to cynicism or despair: To hope without struggle would be irrelevant, cheap and self-defeating. But to struggle while affirming hope is to have a future and to be more empowered by it for the present. (155)

The poet's diction is effective as it reinforces his thematic preoccupation. Words and phrases like 'death', 'die', 'precious blood is not spilled in vain', 'scream', 'grenades', 'he suffers', 'like a dog', 'feigning for dialogue', 'severe death blows', 'odious grave' and 'fighting back' portray the system as abstracting and falsifying. "If an Anglophone must die" is therefore structured around some narrative, argument and moments of betrayal. Traits of the poetic voice include: a personal voice, realism, moral consciousness and the economy and precision of language and images that Gwangwa'a exploits. For example, the dog and frog images are bestial images which reflect the repetitive cycle of human bestiality and stupidity in the Cameroonian neocolonial dispensation. Gwangwa'a's argument in this poem is that disharmony and deceit, jealousy and hatred, envy and lust, violence and murder have poisoned every fiber of the present system in Cameroon. Consequently, such a system is just as good as rejection.

In "Art after them" and "Writing", Takwi writes with the same consciousness and orientation. Takwi like Besong in "Poetry is" tries to define the role of the poet in the Cameroonian contemporary society. A similar debunking of the neocolonial system is evident in these particular poems. The theme of life as change and the sub-theme or motif of the continuity of a continually changing individual identity recurs throughout Takwi's "Art after them" and "Writing". The poet in "Art After Them" and "Writing" writes as someone who is concerned with the need for change and renewal. Thus, he writes with the same revolutionary conviction and consciousness. Like any radical and revolutionary poet who is angry with a system, Takwi's poetry like that of Gwangwa'a and Besong is not so much to inform and entertain but to change society. According to Eugene Lonesco, the poet as a revolutionary thinker must strive "to change the world", to redirect and channel the minds and consciences of his people towards a new set of values, a higher awareness or reality (qtd in Jesse, 291). Takwi demonstrates that poetic writing can be as dangerous as a gun especially when the person holding the gun is angry:

Sprinkled drops of heavenly tears,
New seeds of scribblers sprout
To spin the wheel of change
Through their
Positively inspiring lines,
In muscles flexing attempt
To transform this planet,
To a quieter reassuring
Relaxation place,
In man's meandering and laborious journey
To the wide-eyed staring unknown. (*People Be Not...3*)

Takwi sees the role of the poet as divine and sacred, "Sprinkled drops of heavenly tears". Consequently, he must change the society by virtue of his divine assignment: "New seeds of scribblers sprout/To spin the wheel of change". The poet makes the point that freedom and the

choice to determine the type of future that the people desire can never be given on a platter of gold especially when confronted with a ruthless leadership. Muscle-flexing and arm-twisting are crucial in effecting change in a system that is adamant to change and insensitive to the plight of the masses:

In muscle flexing attempt
To transform this planet,
To a quieter reassuring. (*People Be Not...3*)

This indicates that the task of achieving freedom and a promising future depends on the downtrodden's determination to overthrow an oppressive regime that does not plan for a "relaxation place". It is evident that it is solely by risking life that freedom is obtained; the individual who has not staked his or her life may, no doubt, be recognized as a person; but he or she has not attained the truth of this recognition as an independent self-conscious person.

According to the poet, given that the present system lacks a political compass and focus, the use of force is imperative. The political leadership seems to be carrying the people to an unknown political destination, and only force can bring it to order:

In man's meandering and laborious journey
To the wide-eyed staring unknown. (*People Be Not...3*)

Faith in the leadership has been subverted by distrust, and confidence is displaced by deception by the political leadership. Given this bridge of contract, the poet appeals to the oppressed to say no to the aesthetic of submissive acquiescence; to say no to unfairness, injustice and oppression. And this is possible only through "...muscle flexing..."

Takwi again expresses the same ideology in "Writing". To him, poetic radicalism, nourished by a critical spirit is a subversive weapon that can transform society. In this one-stanza poem, the poet avers:

Like drops of spittle in dry mouth
New scribblers sprout on Arts vibrant farm
To spin in the heart-leaping wheel of change
Through mind piercing lines
In a tiny bid to metamorphose
This spicy planet of black and white
To a better stop over shady groove
In man's rough smooth odyssey,
To the shaky unknown. (*People Be Not...1*)

The paradox of "...man's rough smooth odyssey" has been effectively used. The odyssey is smooth to those who hold the reins of power, but rough to the ruled. This paradox is a stylistic device par excellence. The theme of life as change which is facilitated by 'muscle flexing' is rough yet smooth when the time for the celebration of the victory is done. It would appear that the only way to overcome an oppressive regime and bring in change is to engage in drag-out fights. In line with socialist realist art, a good poet is one who wants to plead the cause of his people, and he must not necessarily be God's advocate; he must also do duty for the devil. This explains the anger, bitterness, outrage and confrontation in their poetry.

Besong too in "Poetry Is" writes with the same orientation that human liberation should not become the prisoner of a circle of certainty within which reality is also imprisoned. "Poetry Is" is a revolutionary precepts and theoretical articulations of the poet. To him,

Poetry is

Reggae, not irate Marxist slogans

Not hatchet-swinging mallams not

Poetry is

Not the Gulag

Poetry is Jua

Voice of Anglophone Universe. (*Disgrace*...108)

Poetry is perceived as reggae music and Jua. These are two dense symbols and images with both metaphoric and revolutionary possibilities. The form and content of reggae music are always revolutionary. This explains why reggae musicians like Bob Marley, Peter Tosh and Luke Dube were considered as subversive elements and rebels to dictatorial regimes. They question the status-quo in their music/songs. He debunks the empty slogans of Marxist ideology in poetry.

The poem depicts the people's struggles and their sufferings, achievements and hopes. This is captured in the image of Jua. Historically the late Augustine Ngom Jua was appointed Prime Minister in the then Southern Cameroons in 1965 and fired by the Ahidjo's regime in 1968. He proved himself to be a no nonsense politician. Besong recreates history based on history. Thus, history is shown to be a construction based on perspective, knowledge and attitude at various times. That is why the poet tries to immortalize Jua, the no nonsense Anglophone Cameroonian Prime Minister of the 60s. The past itself in this case is varied, has many branches, and changes as we seek it. Besong often appears to be carrying on a quarrel with both the Ahidjo's administration and the contemporary Cameroonian society. He tries to show where "the rain began to beat Cameroonians." He portrays Jua in this poem as a metaphor of struggle and a symbol of conscience. He concludes by saying that the poet should be a Spartan:

The poet is

Solemn like Spartan fakirs

In vision, more erratic-if tuned so

Than, Aro inmate

The poet is. (*Disgrace*...108)

It is evident in this poem that the poet as a soldier of words and guerrilla fighter prescribes violence because the analysis of existential situations of oppression reveals that their inception lay in an act of violence.

The historical theme in this poem assumes a global dimension:

Poetry is,

Sunshine and moon wreaths

Cycles of redemption

Love-portions and amber, wines

Phoenix of Ujamaa

Soyinka not Hitler

Peace now, not Hiroshima.

Nyerere not Marshall Amin

Easter phase of Ujamaa. (*Disgrace*...108)

Poetry should provide peace and succor and not misery and discomfort. Besong stands tall as a poet committed in a manifest overt sense because it is poetry expressed in terms of time and space. Reference to Ujamaa is reminiscent of the concept of African socialism as coined by Julius Nyerere. By making reference to Ujamaa, Besong demonstrates that national liberation, national survival and national assertion are preconditions of a vibrant national culture that brings the people together against the exploitative neocolonial elite.

The third and fourth thematic concerns that this paper preoccupies itself with are “The rhetoric and dialectics of violence.” The increasingly frenzy and acceptance of change through violence is poetically articulated in poems like “In Search of my People,” “Their Champagne Party will end” and “Redress” by Gwangwa’a, Takwi and Besong respectively.

The Rhetoric and Dialectic of Violence

The patterns of change are embodied in the fundamental laws of the dialectics. These patterns serve as the broad framework in which to look for particular development. The omnipresence of the dialectic principle in the poetry of Gwangwa’a, Takwi and Besong has been emphasized as a theory of development and change. It describes a process from a lower to a higher level. In dialectics there are statement (thesis) and counterstatement (antithesis) which may give rise to a certain conclusion (synthesis).

Commenting on the moral concept of violence in African literature, Ngugi wa Thiong’o contends that,

Violence in order to change an intolerable, unjust oppressive social order is not savagery; it purifies man. Violence to protect and preserve an unjust oppressive social order is criminal and diminishes man. (28)

In their “The Moral Concept of Violence in African Literature: Bole Butake’s Vision in *Lake God* and *And Palm Wine will Flow*,” Henry Jick and Andrew Ngeh contend that “The struggle for humanization and the fight against dehumanization constitute the base of violence in contemporary African literature.” (32) Wole Soyinka also comments on this when he says that “Now, nothing can be more proletarian than violence: violence, we know is one of the few commodities: unlike rice, it cannot be placed under license. Even so, I wish to stress that violence has to be produced.” (98)

Finally, Andrew Ngeh in *Power Dialectics in Anglophone Cameroonian Poetry* opines that, Gwangwa’a, Besong and Takwi in some of their poems have demonstrated their sense of patriotism which is perceived only in the activist and combatant dimension of their commitment. The three poets depict violence as an inevitable part of their affection and patriotism to their nation. (28)

The three poets in the following three poems demonstrate this dialectical opposition between the political leadership and the ruled: “In Search of my People”, “Redress” and “Their Champagne Party will end.”

In “In Search of my People”, Gwangwa’a combines history with fantasy as a way of raising awareness in the people about real patriots who waged a ferocious war against French imperialism in Cameroon. The poet admits that the past cannot be changed, but that the future can be ruined if the present is not well handled. To him the real patriots of Cameroon’s independence were fighters like Um Nyobe, Moumie, Kingue and Ernest Ouandie:

In search of my people
Patriots Um Nyobe, Moumie,
Kingue, and of course Ouandie
Takala, Wambo Le Courent, et al
In their brothers paid the supreme
Sacrifice. (*Cry of the...22*)

All these names are household names in Cameroonian history. Gwangwa'a's identification with these patriots and nationalists brings him very close to the ideals and ideas these people stood for. His criticism of the present neocolonial system is a way of instilling a fighting and violent spirit in the oppressed to reject the aesthetics of submissive acquiescence. They should be seen as actors in the reconstruction of their society and not passive observers. He concludes that if these heroes could live again, the disturbing situation in Cameroon will be solved:

If only they could live again
The new trend plaguing today's society
Will have no place
In the pages of Cameroon history.
If only they could live again
They would inject courage
In the inmates of Cameroon territory
And rid the masses of endo-imperialism. (*Cry of the...22*)

Gwangwa'a uses some historical figures in Cameroon's history to satirize, ridicule and exhort the very passive Cameroonians who have refused to fight for their rights to stand up and say no to this aesthetics of submissive acquiescence. They are even described as prisoners in their own country. He asserts in the last stanza that:

The biggest mistake in living
Is the fear of dying
When each enters the dock of history,
The charge shall be what was not done
To alleviate the people's constant bondage. (*Cry of the..., 22*)

This pedagogic methodology facilitates the process of sensitization which can create tension and conflicts within the society and this can lead to the creation of a new man who will mark the beginning of a new era in history. This is a fundamental forte of the philosophy of dialectics and the concept of violence. Like Besong and Takwi, Gwangwa'a writes with the strong conviction that if something is not done, society will slowly but surely drift to the precincts of insanity; the people will become strangers and inmates in their own society because they have been estranged by an inflexible phantasmagoria oligarchy.

Takwi in "Redress" also dwells on the themes of violence and dialectics. This poem is a hypothetical statement on the challenges that are involved in meeting an African President. There are a series of speed breaks on the way to the presidency. The poem is an irritable response to the superficialities that surround African presidencies. This eight-stanza poem is an exploration of the

grotesque and macabre in Cameroonian political affairs. From the poem as it will be seen in the analysis that follows, there are legitimate grounds for rejecting this system. The speaker says:

If I were to meet the President
I would tell him that his people
Are ropy and their pockets hollow.

If I were to meet the President
I would beckon him to see
How his people shiver in groans
How maggots twist to tunes
Of stinking cans. (*People Be Not...4*)

The lines “I will tell him that his people/are ropy and their pockets hollow” bespeak the material privation and destitution of the populace in the midst of a world of abundance. The world of the masses as painted by the poet is a restless ocean of disharmony, discouragement and frustration. Deprivation, destitution, indigence, drought, deficiency and famine have plagued every fiber of life of this political system:

If I were to meet the President
I would show him the pictures
Of the leaking thatched roofs and
Oozing sores of wrinkled-faced youths

If I were to meet the President
I would take him out for a stroll
Around his marbled palace to
Enjoy filtered air void of mosquitoes. (*People Be Not...4*)

The poet exploits contrast in the two stanzas above to demonstrate that while others languish in mosquitoes infested environment, others “enjoy filtered air void of mosquitoes”.

In the last stanza, the speaker is running out of patience. He moves from the ‘if clause’ to a definite stand:

Now, I stride to meet the President
And to hit his glittering glass table
And pour venom into his face:
Your numerous receptions are too sumptuous
Your countless guests only ostentatious
You toy with the life of the masses
While their hardship embrace your messes. (*People Be Not...5*)

The poetic voice in this last stanza symbolizes an act of violence. The poet is saying that a people can take so much and no more. He is determined to meet the president, and not only that, he will “hit his glittering glass table.”

The poet uses the “if clause” in the poem seven times to reinforce the challenges that go with meeting the President of Cameroon. This repetition is effective because most African Presidents have arrogated to themselves the title of demi-gods, and this makes it difficult for the common man to see him, talk-less of talking to him

Besong in “Their Champagne Party will End” tries to instill violent and revolutionary spirits in the oppressed masses so that they can reject the present system. According to Paulo Freire, “The awakening of critical consciousness leads the way to the expression of social discontents precisely because these discontents are real components of an oppressive situation” (18). All history has shown that the domination of man by man must in the end bring revolt, passive or active, when the right of the individual or the group triumphs over suppression and oppression. In dialectical thought, words and action are intimately interdependent. But action is human only when it is not merely an occupation but also a preoccupation, that is, when it is dichotomized from reflection. Reflections and actions which have elements of violence and revolt are important in Besong’s “Their Champaign Party will end.”

Ideologically charged and politically motivated, Besong has crafted poetic aesthetics of liberation predicated on the impulse to map out an alternative political vision for the oppressed Cameroonians. The poet understands too well that violence that has moral justifications can transform the social reality of his society; but violence that is intended to protect and preserve a totalitarian system is criminal because it dehumanizes man.

In “Their Champagne Party Will End” and “The Party’s over”, the poet asserts that the mismanagement and squandermania of the ruling class will one day end. This is a common feature that binds socialist realist writers together: violence, optimism and hope. The poet does not doubt the fact that the present obnoxious system will one day end. In “Their Champagne Party Will End” for instance, he states:

For sure there is evidence that they could bomb
our towns and playgrounds with warheads;
containing irradiated nuclear wastes and bubonic
plagues (if we apprehend them).
There is evidence that this will be provided
by their reactionary comrades after Benghazi
But surely, their champagne party will end. (*Disgrace*, 88)

In this poem we find the essential challenge of the exploited working class; there are continual anxieties of failure and death, the deepest level of emotional concern. Cameroonian/African neo-colonial leaders are noted for their repression, brutality and political victimization. Besong is disturbed and even perturbed by the shabby treatment workers in Cameroon are given by the parasitic bourgeoisie class:

Dead after day;
When our workers died of chronic shortages,
of overwork and exposure
It was fashionable for the repulsive old creeps;
with large baskets of cash
to give their champagne parties in open defiance of the
victims they had exploited wretched. (*Disgrace*...88)

This stanza sums up the colossal moral failure within a system. There is an increasing focus on the political leadership as dangerous to the working class. In Besong's poetic imagination, fears of survival in a world of power, of conquest, fears of losing and being unable to protect and secure one's future are made evident.

Another disturbing motif in this poem is the elimination of critics of the system. This poem is a reaction to an independence that has been betrayed by the neocolonial elite and it speaks with an assertive firmness and an aggressive and violent voice/tone. The brutal elimination of "men of consciences and courage" is not caused by the imperial powers, but by Cameroonian leaders. The poet avers:

Indeed, it was fashionable for men of consciences and
courage;

People who spoke out too inconveniently

It was fashionable to invite them to gallows

built with multiple steel hooks,

and permanent nooses, swinging...

but how did they fare? These bodies splitting like

rotten calico... (*Disgrace*...89)

Finally, the poet addresses one of the issues that causes underdevelopment and retards national development in Cameroon, namely, capital flight. He thinks that if this is not stopped, Cameroon will not forge ahead:

We have watched our oil bonuses spreading,

along their cobbled facades;

the posh suburbs neighbouring the foreign multinational

ware houses on the

coast

where, the arriviste-factor looking frightened behind

the wheel of his chocolate citroen-maserati

hurries home to his plastic daughter. (*Disgrace*...89)

The poet identifies capitalism not only as a bane to underdevelopment, but as a system of unabashed theft and robbery. Thus, capital flight, theft, robbery, corruption can never be wrong under a capitalist and neocolonial dispensation like Cameroon.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it is important to restate the hypothetical contention of this paper. This paper set out to demonstrate that the failure of political leadership in the Cameroonian socio-political system has resulted in anger and rejection of the system by Anglophone Cameroonian poets. Gwangwa'a, Takwi and Besong in their poetic voices utilize images that bespeak the passionate denunciation and condemnation of the neocolonial structures put in place. They are not entirely satisfied with the approaches of governance adopted by the ruling class. Thus, in striving to recreate poetry that tyrannizes the spirit, the three poets construe that the erosion of state legitimacy is what might have caused and compelled authoritarianism and neocolonial politics in Cameroon.

Drawing largely from the socialist realism of Lukacsian-Marxist artistic paradigms, this study underscores that the poetic vision of these poets aspires to explore and capture the reality in the Cameroonian society. Thus, this study reveals that this poetry has made anger, conscientisation, revolts and violence its main campaign themes to overcome the impedimenta that have made life a real nightmare and drudgery to Cameroonians.

Finally, with selection of poems from Gwangwa's *Cry of the Destitute*, Takwi's *People Be Not Fooled* and Besong's *Disgrace: autobiographical narcissus*, this paper submits that the material privation, destitution and estrangement which have resulted in dilemma, despair and despondency have provoked the three poets to poetically and violently denounce the political system put in place in Cameroon. And it is from this denunciation and criticism that an alternative nation is proffered in their poetic imagination.

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