



Review

The paradox of claustrophobia and agoraphobia and the search for social space in African poetry: a study of Emmanuel Fru Doh and Niyi Osundare

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Abstract

The main thrust of the argument of this paper is built around the hypothetical premise that the social isolation, political marginalization and economic exploitation of the masses in the Cameroonian and Nigerian societies have created an atmosphere of both claustrophobia and agoraphobia resulting in alienation and the social exclusion of the masses from the socio-political space. Thus, given that the political sclerosis and economic imbroglio have excluded the ruled from the socio-political affairs, the masses are seen trapped and caged in a limited socio-political space. In this vein, because of the numerous socio-political crimes committed by African leaders, they are not comfortable moving freely. Consequently, this paradox of claustrophobic and agoraphobic existence applies to both the ruled and the rulers. The rulers have social space, yet are afraid of this space; the masses need social space, yet are deprived of this space. Analyzing Doh's *Not Yet Damascus* (2007) and Osundare's *Songs of the Marketplace* (1983) using the Marxist critical theory, this study reveals that the paradox of claustrophobia and agoraphobia has created the superstructure/base dialectic in the poetic imagination of Doh and Osundare which espouses the human predicament in the Cameroonian and Nigerian societies. This paper concludes that, for these two societies to move forward, an equal social space is needed for all in these societies.

Key words: Paradox, Claustrophobia, Agoraphobia, Social and Space

INTRODUCTION

The euphoria created during the struggle for independence became a disappointment as those who took over the helm of affairs in most African countries betrayed the indigenous trust the people gave them. All the promises made by the African nationalists during this struggle were never fulfilled. Independence was like hot water in the mouth of a very thirsty person. There was neither individual nor collective fulfillment. The leaders used the political powers legitimized by the masses to amass wealth for themselves, oppress and subjugate the people. As a consequence, the masses are excluded from the socio-political and economic affairs of the

respective nations that they govern. In Africa when the people agitate, it is because they want that socio-political space as promised them by their leaders during the struggle for independence.

The leaders on the other hand who have indulged in socio-political misdemeanors like election rigging, muzzling and stifling of their opponents, corruption and embezzlement, the elimination of those with dissenting voices and the siphoning of state's funds are also afraid to go out. They are afraid because of the ills they have committed against the people. Thus, while the masses are not comfortable with this claustrophobic existence

and are in search of an agoraphobic existence, the rulers are afraid of this social space the masses are looking for because of the socio-political crimes they have committed against the people. Against this background, this paper sets out to examine the relevance of the paradox of claustrophobia and agoraphobia in the poetry of Emmanuel Doh and Niyi Osundare.

This paper sets out to demonstrate how Doh and Osundare use these two concepts to bring out the human condition in their poetic vision. The centre-periphery dialectic in the poetry of Doh and Osundare and its socio-political implications are underscored in this paper.

Operationalism

For this paper to be properly appreciated, there are four terms worth defining. This is in keeping with Bernard Fonlon's suggestion in "The Idea of Literature" that the first principle of any scientific discourse is the definition of one's terms or concepts so as to know "clearly and precisely right from the start" what these terms or concepts mean (179). These concepts are: paradox, claustrophobia, agoraphobia, social and space.

Paradox is a situation or statement which seems impossible or is difficult to understand because it contains two opposite facts or characteristics. This definition is relevant because in spite of the social space carved for themselves, the oppressors still live a claustrophobic life.

Claustrophobia according to *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary* "describes a place which is small and enclosed and makes you feel uncomfortable when you are in it". (216) Within the context of this paper, claustrophobic existence has to do with the socio-political and economic spaces both the rulers and ruled occupy in any nation. The same source defines agoraphobia as the fear of open spaces, going out or distance from a place of safety. (24) While the masses are in search of an open social space, the rulers would prefer a claustrophobic way of life because of the socio-political crimes they have committed against the people; they are not sure of their own safety and security.

Social is defined by *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary* as activities in which you meet and spend time with other people and which happen during the time when you are at work". (1203) The same source defines space as an empty area which is available to be used. (1214) Social space is conceptualized in this paper to refer to the socio-political, economic and cultural advantages that accompany the occupation of such spaces in a particular nation. The ruling class occupies more of these spaces than the common people: the masses.

Statement of the Problem

The masses' efforts during the struggle for independence

and the promises made by the nationalists would create the impression that they should be socially, politically and economically comfortable. However, the masses' claustrophobic existence is an indication that they are socially marginalized, politically isolated and economically exploited. At the same time, the ruling class that is purported to have all the spaces is afraid of these spaces because of the socio-political crimes it has committed against the people. This agoraphobic existence of the ruling class constitutes a paradox in the centre-periphery dialectic in African contemporary politics. Even though this class has this open space, it dreads it.

Research Questions

Based on the statement of the problem as stated above, the following research questions arose:

- (1) What are the causes of claustrophobia and agoraphobia in African societies?
- (2) What is the relationship between claustrophobia and agoraphobia in African poetry?
- (3) How is the centre-periphery dialectic linked to claustrophobia and agoraphobia?
- (4) Why do the masses jostle for a social space?
- (5) Why does the ruling class prefer claustrophobic existence?

In view of the statement of problem and the questions posed, the main thrust of the argument of this paper is built around the hypothetical contention that the social isolation, political marginalization and economic exploitation of the masses have created both an atmosphere of claustrophobia and agoraphobia resulting in alienation and the social exclusion of the masses from the political space. Thus, given that the socio-political sclerosis and economic imbroglio have excluded them from the socio-political affairs, the masses are seen trapped and caged in a limited socio-political space. And given the numerous socio-political crimes committed by African leaders, they are not comfortable moving freely. Consequently, this claustrophobic existence applies both to the ruled and the rulers.

Doh's *Not Yet Damascus* (2007) and Osundare's *Songs of the Marketplace* (1983) will be interpreted, analyzed and evaluated against the backdrop of the Marxist critical theory.

Theoretical Framework

Marxism is a philosophy of contradictions, and any attempt to explain Marxist theory in a rational way will encounter apparent inconsistencies. The belief in the primacy of material conditions and the simultaneous effort to emphasize the human role in changing these conditions is one of the most characteristic contradictions of Marxism. (Douwe Fokkema and Elrud Ibsch, 1995:81)

In Marxist critical discourse, materialism and revolt are not compatible. That is why the accumulation of wealth by the ruling class always sparks off a revolution. Thus, materialism and heroic revolt are incompatible.

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 realist seeks to change it.

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 oppressed and the oppressors respectively. Marxism therefore is built on socialist realist thinking.

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 world would lead inevitably to the overthrow of capitalism, thus promoting the cause of social progress. (Fokkema and Ibsch, 1995:83)

Using the Marxist critical theory for this paper, the motivating factor is to attempt to proffer the possibilities for a rigorous materialist and non-metaphysical interpretation and reading of the poetry of Doh and Osundare. In this regard, both the claustrophobic and agoraphobic existence of the rulers and ruled are highlighted. Thus, the contradictions that have bedeviled the socio-political, economic, historical and cultural lives of Cameroonians and Nigerians become the focal point of this paper.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSES

The analysis of this paper is done under three thematic clusters: claustrophobia and social exclusion, agoraphobia and alienation and toward a search for equal space.

Claustrophobia and Social Exclusion

The dehumanizing influence of despair in a situation of lack of social space is traumatic and psychologically disturbing. The first part of this article answers questions to the dilemmas and delusions of those with claustrophobic existence. When a particular group of persons is cloistered and restricted to a limited space, it could be psychologically disturbing. Doh in the following poems expounds this motif: "Claustrophobia" and "Fear-fear King". Osundare on the other hand articulates this theme in "Siren" and Prisoners of Conscience".

Doh's poem titled "Claustrophobia" recounts the loss of the rhythm of harmony in human existence. It is a poetic rhapsodic piece that brings out the disharmony of the rhythm of the people's lives and their environment. It adumbrates the lack of social space in all its ramifications. As vast as the world is, the poet/persona's social space has been carved for him, first by the oppressive rulers; secondly by the Francophonie assembly; third by colonialism and fourth by virtue of his sex- gender. He lacks social space for the following reasons: he belongs to the dregs of the society; secondly he is an Anglophone-minority; thirdly he is a victim of colonialism (a black man) and finally he is a man dominating women. Hear the poet/persona,

Wherever I am in this vast world
I feel the pressure encroaching
Violating my right to life
One of God's own creations. (23)

The poet bemoans the fact that this violation of his inalienable right stems from the fact he is a minority Anglophone Cameroonian:

At one place I am Anglo-minority
And so I do not belong
And could very well go elsewhere
My responsibility it is to survive
Amidst the chosen ones
Of the malnourished Francophonie assembly.
(23)

The poet touches on one of the very burning issues in Anglophone Cameroonian literature, namely, the Anglophone marginalization which has been described as the 'Anglophone Problem'. In the labyrinth of human disillusionment, the poet/persona wishes that heaven will have enough space that is void of injustice, distrust and deception common in the Cameroonian society:

Pray Lord, led Heaven be different,
Bigger and free, free of race, color and gender
That at last I may find room and peace

Room enough for me to have space, (23)

Gender is another point that reduces the poet/persona's social space. By virtue of the fact that he is a man makes him an oppressor of the opposite sex. The poet/persona becomes a victim of his own sex; he is at the centre and the woman is at the periphery and he only closes ranks with her in bed. Even in bed he uses his phallus as an oppressive instrument:

Goodness, now I am suddenly
The oppressor, a man-male!
Women can't stand me either, except
To share in the nocturnal apple. (23)

The venom of resentment of the deprivation of social space continues to smolder in the spirits of the depressed personified by the poet/persona, while the ruthless passion for power and dominance gnaw at the oppressors like a cancer. Indeed, the entire poem is remarkable in its portrayal of the dilemmas and delusions of claustrophobic existence. The poem illuminates an overwhelming sense of emptiness, an awareness of vacuum and lack of social space which breeds rages, interiorized violence and destruction.

His own color also narrows his social space and reduces him only to a laborer. He is Beelzebub because of his color complexion"

At another place I am black
"Beelzebub's alter ego" they say,
And so I do not belong
Else I am barely tolerated,
For my strength, a labor hand. (23)

To feel cast aside and excluded without purpose is demoralizing. That is why the poet-persona who finds himself in this dilemmatic situation bemoans. Life in such a situation becomes a bewildering dilemma. The persona despises and disparages the present socio-political dispensation which limits and restricts him to claustrophobic existence.

Two important poetic devices have been exploited to good effect: biblical allusion and irony. The poet more than once makes reference to the bible. For example, he appeals to God to intervene because he is one of God's creations. Ironically, the dominant Francophone Cameroonians who wield both economic and political powers are referred to as the "chosen ones" even though malnourished. "My responsibility it is to survive/Amidst the chosen ones". (23)

Niyi Osundare in "Siren" expresses the same ideological vision; that of lack of social space. In Osundare's poetic imagination life becomes a bewildering dilemma and a vexing enigma. In "Siren" an absentee

politician is visiting his constituency after a long time probably because elections are around the corner. The masses who are socially isolated, politically marginalized and economically exploited come out en masse to welcome someone who has compromised their very existence. The poet blames both the masses and the politicians; he blames the masses for their cynicism and the politician for depriving the masses of some basic social amenities.

The hilarious and befitting welcome accorded this politician brings out the naivety and cynicism of the masses:

Siren, siren, siren
Police acrobats on motorbikes
wielding whips with consummate dispatch
the road must be cleared at once
for which worthy ruler
ever shares the right of way? (21)

This very first stanza of this poem makes use of irony and a rhetorical question to emphasize the fact that even though this particular ruler has more social space than the ruled, his existence is claustrophobic. He moves in a heavily guarded police escort riders because he is not supposed to share the road with the less privilege of the society. The poet ironically describes this politician as a "worthy ruler" when it is evident in the poem that he has neglected his constituency for a very long time. The people do not have good roads and hospitals.

As this politician sits in a Mercedes chauffeur driven, the masses stand under the scourging and baking sun clapping for someone who has neglected their welfare thereby compromising their very existence:

Siren siren siren
The clangorous convoy
Of powers and power brokers
Conditioned in Mercedes back
Far, very far from the maddening crowd. (21)

This very important personality cum ignorant personality is far from the maddening crowd because he does not share his social space with the people.

In this vein, the masses who have been socially isolated come out with, "kwashiokored children/waving tattered flags/in the baking sun." (21) That this very important personality/very ignorant personality is far from the crowd attests to the fact that he is socially isolated from the common man.

Evidence in this poem is the dehumanizing influence of despair snared by a sense of negativism. The void of peace in this society is depraved and perverted by the destructive influences of the ruling class. There are no hospitals; no schools and the roads are an eyesore:

Siren Siren Siren
 no time for dry days
 and dark nights
 or food whose price
 costs a ton of gold
 no time for hospitals
 and schools and roads
 their Excellencies are not here
 for the begging bickering
 of a faceless rural crowd. (22)

In spite of the presence of “their Excellencies” in this society, the amelioration of the human condition is not their preoccupation. Their motives are devious; their objectives distorted. The sense of inadequacy is omnipresence and engenders an inferiority complex in the depressed masses because loneliness, material privation, destitution and indigence demoralize humanity in the world of abundance. That notwithstanding, the leaders pretend not to see the poor state of the roads: “Even on highways where pothole/snail the jaguar/they manage not to see/a land debowelled by erosion. (23) The alliteration b, b, in “their Excellencies are not here/for the begging bickering” is effective in the sense that this leader has not come to argue with the people about developmental projects, but to impose his will on the people. He has not come to beg for their votes either because elections in contemporary African countries are won before the electorates ever go to the polls. Their kwashiokored infested babies who are supposed to be future leaders are question marks for tomorrow’s answer. These kwashiokored babies symbolize poverty, lack and penury in this society. Hear the poet:

But babies contorted
 in mothers’ backs
 are question marks
 for tomorrow’s answer. (23)

Osundare juxtaposes the contented and comfortable lives of the autocratic leadership with the oppressed manifesting discontent at the present socio-political dispensation. He does this through the exploitation and exploration of devices like symbolism, animal imagery, repetition, alliteration, rhetorical question and irony.

The party men who come out to welcome the politician are described as “party men kangarooing” demonstrating the beast-like nature of these party men and their party. These party men use brute force to keep the populace at arm length because the commoners must not share the same road with “their Excellencies”. This leader who is supposed to mingle freely with his people is being restrained and restricted to a claustrophobic existence. Repetition is another poetic device the poet exploits.

The lines “siren siren siren” are repeated seven times in the poem to announce the coming of a very ignorant personality (VIP) who is given a red carpet reception in spite of the precarious existence of the masses. This poem is vivacious and jocular, but the language is robust, serious and incisive. There is no doubt here that the poet/persona is aware of planned deceit characteristic of neocolonialism. In such a political dispensation, neuroses, hypertension, fear and paralyzing pessimism dominate much of human existence. The clangorous siren is almost a sound pollution disturbing public peace. These are also clearly seen in the poet’s diction. Words and phrases like: “blind”, “no time for hospitals”, “faceless crowd”, “babies contorted”, “organized grin”, “tattered flags” and “rehearsed pledges” all represent a pathetic quest for a denied social space, thereby reducing the masses to a claustrophobic existence.

The second part of this paper undergirds the socio-political implications of the possession of social space by rulers who are afraid of this very space. The rulers who have this space are even afraid to move freely because of the socio-political crimes they have committed against the people.

Agoraphobia and Alienation

As opposed to claustrophobia which means the fear for a limited and restricted social space, agoraphobia is the fear for open space. The paradox is that the rulers who have appropriated this social space for themselves are afraid to use it, but the masses who need this space continue in their claustrophobic existence. Doh in “Fear-fear King” and Osundare in “Prisoners of Conscience” articulate these motifs. Placed against the backdrop of both the Cameroonian and Nigerian contemporary societies which the poets paint as full of cynical brutality devoid of any altruistic feelings and totally given to self-seeking politicians, Doh and Osundare make the reader perceive good leadership as the basis for human development, and the appropriation of social space to all as focal and fundamental to this development.

“Fear-fear King” is a satire on the unpredictability of a contemporary African leader. Lies-telling, rumors and manipulation constitute his administrative *modus operandi*. No statement from this king is dependable. Paulo Freire in *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* argues that,

Human existence cannot be silent, nor can it be nourished by false words, but only by true words, with which men and women transform the world. To exist, humanly, is to name the world, to

change it. Once named, the world in its turn reappears to the namers as a problem and requires of them a new naming. (69)

Greed and evil, lust and deceit resulting in a depraved human society where the strong dominate the weak with rumor and lies-telling constitute the administrative menu. These four stanza poem brings out the perilous mountains scarred by deep ravine and gulches and the rampaging rivers of human life. Faith is subverted by distrust, deceit and delusion. According to the poet/persona the lies are told at the whims and caprices of the leadership in order to manipulate people's consciousness:

At dawn, at mid-day, at dusk
From Babatoura's ouster to Paulism. (9)

All these lies are attempts by the leadership to create confusion and leave the people in suspense within the limited social space it occupies. The poet quips:

Rumors of upcoming elections
Rumors about the Queen's death-manner
Rumors about Nyos-how, what?
Rumors about where you are
Rumors of a new Queen. (9)

This is a country whose people do not know when elections will take place as everything is rumor. Even the Lake Nyos gas disaster of 21 of August 1986 that claimed more than two thousand lives is still a rumor as Cameroonians are yet to be told what happened. Cameroonians do not know the whereabouts of their president. The President's health is a rumor; his successor is a rumor; his siphoned wealth abroad is a rumor; his investments abroad are rumors; the death of his wife is a rumor. In this confused state of affairs, people become disoriented in life and transmit their inner confusion to their daily activities as they are never sure of the happenings in their society. The leader has never told the truth:

Never a day like a true leader
With a purpose
To stand and tell your people the truth,
If not rumors, then lies
You fear-fear king. (9)

The poet debunks the fact that human relationship and development are based on falsehood and rumors. The leadership's claustrophobic and agoraphobic existence is emphasized by the repetition of the word "rumor" that is used sixteen times in this four stanza poem. The

repetition of this word is a feature of African oral poetry. It increases the emotional impact when this poem is read aloud to audiences sympathetic to the predicament and plight of those whose space to information is limited. The portrayal of the leader is an apt instance of the antithesis of the situation emphasizing once more the social criticism and the quest for social space by the masses, a space the leadership in place has deprived them of.

The poem's optimistic end wishes that the president should not end his tenure of office before he reaches Damascus. This biblical allusion is effective. He wishes that the President will be converted like Saul was converted so that Cameroonians can have peace and start enjoying the beauty of truth. Coincidentally, the name of Cameroon president is Paul.

Here at last it comes-the end,
And pray not before Damascus.
What shall you rumor this time?
You never died
Fear-fear King. (9)

Some years back Paul Biya even feigned his own death only to appear on State Television to say that he is a phantom and promised Cameroonians twenty more years as their President. The poet re-echoes this thus: "You never died/Fear-fear King". (9) The speaker however asserts that the King is only a chosen umpire of the ruling predatory class that uses falsehood to survive. This poem is based on the premise of a situation in which the administrative machinery is sustained by falsehood, rumor, lies-telling and the manipulation of people's consciousness. Every life-stream is stained by rumors and lies-telling. Osundare in "Prisoners of Conscience" continues with the same motif.

Osundare's "Prisoners of Conscience" expresses the same ideological vision. This poem is dedicated to one of African's prolific writers, Ngugi wa Thiong'o who had experienced untold miseries in the hands of the comprador bourgeoisie class in Kenya. From Jomo Kenyatta to Daniel Arap Moi, Ngugi has experienced very painful times; and his problem is the expression of his opinions on socio-political affairs in Kenya.

"Prisoner of Conscience" is a poem that describes the way truth is twisted for the ruling class 'ends. The rulers dread the truth, but the poet thinks that the truth is like a rat mole that has a way of coming out. Those who tell the truth become the enemies of the rulers. The poet/persona states:

Another mind is cast against
Bare walls of fortified mind-slaughter
By gagsmiths with steel muzzles
On the mouth of conscience. (59)

The above stanza is pregnant with figurative expressions designed to highlight the helplessness of those who are prepared to die for the truth in a capitalist oriented society. These oppressors are metaphorically described as “mind-slaughter,” and “gagsmiths”. These rulers maneuver situations, distort facts and plot negative thoughts in the minds of ignorant people. The truth according to the poet dazzles the eyes and burns the throats of oppressors:

Truth dazzles their eyes
Like sunrays of a tropical midday
Burns their throats
Like a witch’s hot iron
Scared of dawn’s return
They seek to clog the throat
That foresings the day song. (59)

Evidence in this poem is the fact that despite the flood of contemporary entertainment, boredom plagues the world of these leaders because of the numerous socio-political crimes they have committed. The paradox is that in spite of the vast social space they have created for themselves, they still live a claustrophobic existence. They spend their time in their palaces where they sponsor state miseries and foment universal silence. They are in league with western imperialists who are metaphorically described by the poet as “foreign vultures”. Hear the poet:

Encysted in turreted palaces
They turn foment universal silence
Dreading voices above the hush
In palaces they feast, the din
Of clinking glasses submerging
The swansong of children
On mothers’ laps contorted
Like a question mark
In palaces they feast
In the colony of foreign vultures. (59)

Hyperbole, simile, animal imagery and irony are the poetic and artistic devices the poet uses to convey his ideological posture. The poet uses gross exaggeration to compare the clinking of glasses filled with foreign imported wine with the swansong of the malnourished children on their mothers’ laps assuming the structure of a question mark. Again, the western imperialists who encourage this state-sponsored misery are stigmatized as vultures that have come to devour the nation’s wealth. This animal imagery is very frightful. Finally, the children ironically and naively celebrate this state-sponsored misery in their swansongs. This swansong is a search for purpose and meaning in life as all hope is not lost. There is some degree of optimism in the poem; the children are

not singing a dirge but a swansong, a song of celebration for a better future ahead because despair is for the defeated.

From the appreciation of Doh’s “Fear-fear King” and Osundare’s “Prisoners of Conscience”, it is evident that the rulers who have created enough social space for themselves still live a claustrophobic existence because of agoraphobia. The leaders are in “turreted palaces”, and the word ‘turret’ means a small circular tower which is part of a castle or a large building. This is the paradox of the life of an oppressive leader. To feel cast, excluded, ostracized and without purpose can be very demoralizing and even destructive. He is afraid of the very space he has appropriated for himself.

The last part of this paper sets out to examine the facts that undergird a fulfilling society; a society devoid of claustrophobia and agoraphobia; a society that provides equal social space for all for the development of the society. This can bring a new exhilaration and socio-political and cultural stamina in both the rulers and the ruled since the sense of inadequacy discourages and stifles initiative and engenders an inferiority complex in human beings. All these negatives constitute a bane to socio-political and economic development of the two nations under reference.

Toward a Search for Equal Social Space: A Socialist Vision

For both Cameroonians and Nigerian societies to advance and move forward, both the ruled and the rulers should be appropriated adequate space because even the rulers who have enough social space do not make use of that space because of fear. The masses who need the space are not given that space. This dialectic in social space can be resolved if everyone is given adequate social space. Doh’s “Champagnat’s Model” (*For Rev. Brother Norbert Simms*) and Osundare’s “Homecoming” are poems that produce foreboding harvest in human existence as the exhilaration and new stamina in both the ruled and the rulers can move society forward.

Doh in “Champagnat’s Model” presents a white Rev. Brother who treats everyone as equal. To him everyone is equal before the eyes of God. ‘Champagne socialist’ according to *Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary* is a rich person who supports a fair society in which everyone has equal rights and the rich help the poor. (192) The word “Champagnat, etymologically is from ‘champagne socialist’. This Rev. Brother’s mode of life is characterized by simplicity; he works hard for humanity and sees everybody as equal. The word race exists only as a word:

In every life a goal is set
From the lowly in the eyes of men

To the noblest in man's esteem
Yet service was his goal
Service to mankind
Service to all and sundry.
Unlike some, he was color-blind
Race to him only a word
All are God's children
To serve and improve upon,
A veritable Champagnat's model. (32)

This poem presents an ideal social formation that can usher in growth and development. In such a society as painted by Doh in "Champagnat's Model", the pitfalls of life give way to the pathways to life, where the gall of life becomes nectar of life's portion. In this labyrinth of human disillusionment, happiness may degenerate into sadness and love into hatred. But the poet thinks that if we have the fear of God in us we can move our societies forward:

You will forever remain as I tell
My tale by day under the baobab
And by night by the fireside
Of a Marist Brother who served us
Like Champagnat would have wanted,
In the manner of the Master Himself- the Christ.
(33)

The poem is concerned with psychology, especially the anxieties of someone who has lived in a society where others use their power to dominate others and appropriate more social space for themselves while the weak suffocate in their claustrophobic existence. The poet exhorts all and sundry to emulate the humility of Jesus Christ personified by model of Champagnat.

In terms of style, symbolism is the artistic vehicle by which meaning is conveyed in its ideological essence. Champagnat is a dense symbol with metaphorical possibilities. He represents fulfillment, equal appropriation of social space, national re-birth and self-worth.

The theme of life as change and the sub-motif of the continuity of a continually appropriation of social space to all are once more re-echoed by Osundare in "Homecoming". In this poem, the poet creates an ideal society where the mountains of life are at the same level with valleys. It highlights the rhythm and harmony of people and their environment. This is a society where people develop good rapport with other people indicating equal social space. Here people are searching and probing for deeper meaning in life because of the social space they occupy:

We arrive as the sun
begins to straighten out the shadows

We arrive when east and west
are equidistant from the eye
of the sky. (66)

The east and the west with equidistance symbolize the equal appropriation of equal space the poet prescribes for a more fulfilling society. Again, homecoming is a metaphor of African communalism and socialism, the concept of Ujamaa coined by Julius Nyerere which emphasizes the equal distribution of the nation's wealth. The poet/persona also thinks that in such a society,

Mountains level up with valleys
the horizon extends beyond the eyes
rays in form of the forest
and trees sing to one another
No severing vaults can swallow
our voices, no boomerang
agitate our throats. (66)

The poet uses the horticultural images/plant imagery to reinforce the appropriation of equal social space for all. The mountains "will level up with valleys", the entire forest will have access to sunlight for the manufacturing of their own food; and the trees will sing love songs to one another. This personification is effective as it brings out the whole concept of love which can enhance the appropriation of social space. The poet concludes by saying that,

Let fence builders
break their hammer
Let their hand suffer
arthritic arrest
who mean to stir hornets
on a peaceful world. (67)

The poet promises tough times to those who spend time trying to compartmentalize the society into classes. To him the instruments used in erecting these barriers should break and even the hands handling these instruments should be affected by arthritis. Osundare like Doh advocates a socialist and communal society where the nation's wealth including social space will be equally shared to all.

CONCLUSION

To conclude this paper, it is important to restate the hypothetical contention of this study. The main thrust of the argument of this article is that the social isolation, political marginalization and economic exploitation of the masses in the Cameroonian and Nigerian societies have created an atmosphere of both claustrophobia and

agoraphobia resulting in alienation and the social exclusion of the masses from the socio-political space. Thus, given that the political sclerosis and economic imbroglia have excluded the ruled from the socio-political affairs, the masses are seen trapped and caged in a limited socio-political space. In this vein, because of the numerous socio-political crimes committed by African leaders, they are not comfortable moving freely. Consequently, this paradox of claustrophobic and agoraphobic existence applies to both the ruled and the rulers. Using the Marxist critical theory for the analysis of selected poems from Doh's *Not Yet Damascus* and Osundare's *Songs of the Marketplace* this paper recommends and proposes that only the equal appropriation of social space can move both Cameroonian and Nigerian societies forward.

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