

NEGRITUDE AND TIGRITUDE: AN ANALYSIS OF LANGUAGE CONTENTS FOR DEVELOPMENT PURPOSES.

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Introduction

Whether as the “gathering of the tribes” or “assizes under the palaver tree” both, tigritude and negritude expressions respectively, show that Africa has known parliamentary behavior before the advent of colonialism. Africans, either in compounds or public squares, have always gathered as kith and kins to discuss the way forward. Though, initially, Soyinka disagreed with the negritude approach in asserting Africanness as he euphemistically proposes tigritude. The francophone African writers within Africa, and in the Diaspora, who were percussors of negritude, found in his proposal a challenge that has kept negritude upgrading its tempo. Hence, from the initial language of lamentation, to the later assertive language, negritude has proved a force to be reckoned with in the francophone world notwithstanding the demise of its original percussors – Leopold Sedar Senghor, Leon Damas and Aimé Césaire. In this paper some expressions and language use of both approaches are presented, analysed and commented on, so as to posit their unfolding developmental purposes as Africa strives to be part of the globalization process.

Negritude and its Language Contents

Negritude is originally African Francophones initiatives hence we intend to reproduce a simple maquette of language content that has blossomed, as of today, into progressive negritude. The translation of the content in English is ours and, it is specific to the objective of this paper.

Femme Noire

(...)

Femme nue, femme obscure

Huile que ne ride nul souffle, huile calme aux flancs de l’athlète, aux flancs des princes du Mali

Gazelle aux attaches célestes, les perles sont étoiles sur la nuit de ta peau

Délices des jeux de l’esprit, les reflets de l’or rouge sur ta peau qui se moire

À l’ombre de ta chevelure, s’éclaire mon angoisse aux soleils prochains de tes yeux.

Femme nue, femme noire

Je chante ta beauté qui passe, forme que je fixe dans l’Éternel

Avant que le Destin jaloux ne te réduise en cendres pour nourrir les racines de la vie.

(Naked woman, opaque woman

So oily opaqued that no wind can ruin, calmly reaching out to the ailes for athletic performrance,
for envigorating princes in Mali

Body dotted like Gazalle's, making star-like pearls on your night-body

Delights of spiritual works,

The reflects of red gold on your shimmering-rippled surface

Sheltered by your hair, my worries get clearer as your eyes display suns in their proximity.

Naked woman, African woman

I hail your beauty as it moves, beauty that I place like the Eternal

Before jelous Destiny reduces it to ashes for feeds of life anew.)

In this poetic outburst, Senghor strategically posits a development pattern that is holistic and as solid as firmament in the universe. Using the endowment of Africa as a continent, he posits an Africa that is a sub-set of Eternity that serves as crust to the whole earth or, at worse, a mirror upon which sustainability is measured. The key words are "beyond ruin" Oily opaque, Spiritual works, Eternal and Destiny. In effect, Eternal and Destiny are in opposition here. However, Destiny encounters ruin while Eternal turns ruins to feeds for renewal.

An Neuf

Les hommes ont taillé dans leurs tourments une fleur

qu'ils ont juchée sur les hauts plateaux de leur face

la faim leur fait un dais

une image se dissout dans leur dernière larme

ils ont bu jusqu'à l'horreur féroce

les monstres rythmes par les écumes

En ce temps-là

il y eut une

inoublable

métamorphose

les chevaux ruaient un peu de rêve sur leurs sabots

de gros nuages d'incendie s'arrondirent en champignon

sur toutes les places publiques

ce fut une peste merveilleuse
sur le trottoir les moindres réverbères tournaient leur
tête de phare
quant à l'avenir anophèle vapeur brulante il sifflait dans
les jardins
En ce temps-là
le mot ondée
et le mot sol meuble
le mot aube
et le mot copeaux
conspirèrent pour la première fois
Des forêts naquirent aux borinages
et des péniches sur les canaux de l'air
et du salpêtre rouge des blessés sur le pavé
il naquit des arums au-delà des fillettes.
Ce fut l'année où les germes de l'homme se choisirent dans
l'homme le tendre pas d'un cœur nouveau.

(LIFE/FRESH ANEW

In their troubles men carve out flower
A flower they placed for all to see in common
Hunger presents them the flower bowl.

At the drop of their last tear an image disappeared, ferocious fear to their marrow, chain reaction
of monsters in foam-like lava ripples, an unforgettable metamorphose showed up.

(...)

Then the word tsunami and the word marbled-ground, the word dawn and the word burning-
woods were coterminous for the first time.

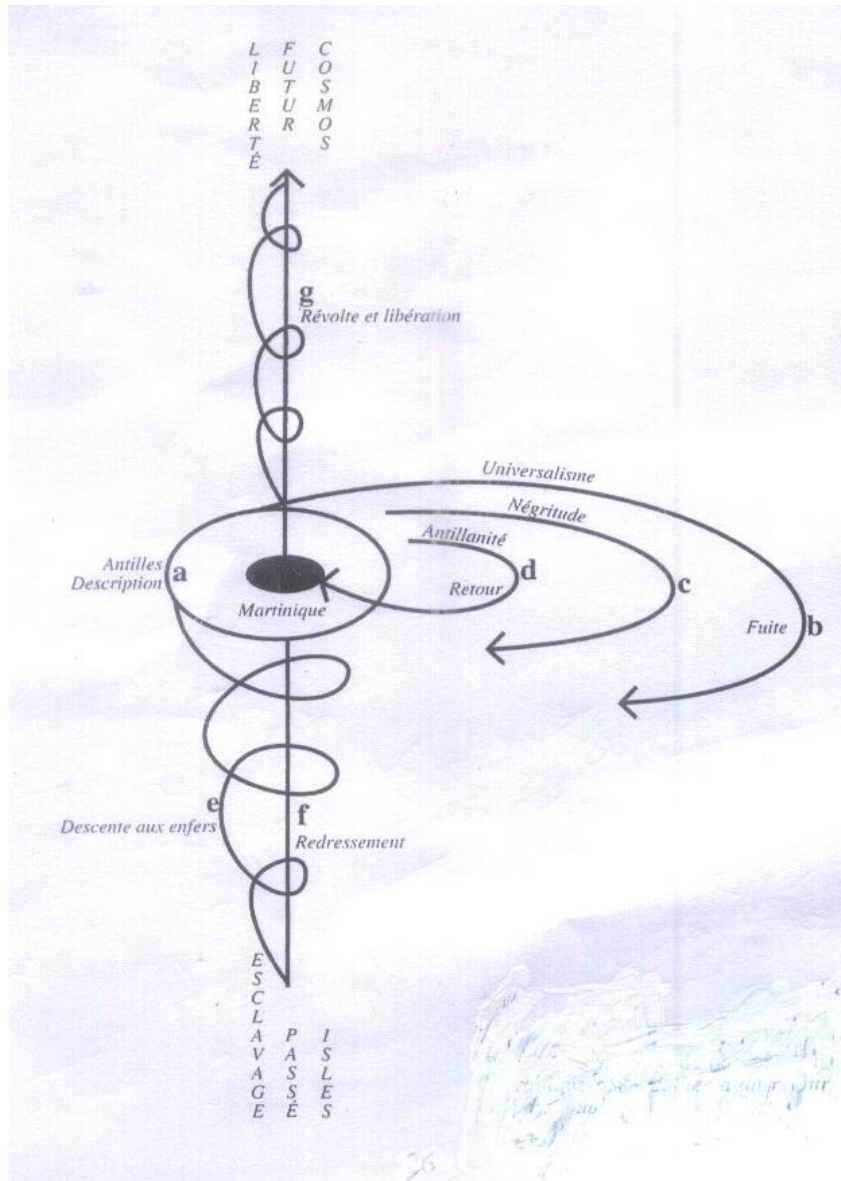
Forests grew out of barren space, charted ways were seen in the air, blood-cloth of the wounded on the ways. So also sprout full blown lilies.

That was the year in which all that were implanted in man took it upon themselves to bring out man's tender redemptive pace that ushered in renewed heart.)

Aimé Césaire in this poem relived the lamentation period of the African man through to affecting the lamentation on the rest of the races before, eventually, causing a renewal. He foresaw a renewal in the pursuit of common goal as hunger reminds humanity what unites it and as the hearts/souls tend also to be unified in craving for celestial beauty or a new beginning that frowns at what will ever cause afresh ferocious fears. Here, development pattern against the Chernobyl, Hiroshima or recent nuclear plants eruptions in Japan needed to be avoided. It is, infact, environment friendly development.

We feel that developmental patterns that lacks inbuilt balancing-effects leads to zero-sum game as against win-win game. Here is where tigritude aligns with the West.

According to Kestelot and Kotchy (1993: 26), the schema below depicts a universal approach to development that should be mindful of the possible descent to hell or possible ascent to freedom which will not falter the crust or the "naked woman" as presented by Senghor. There had always been a launching pad, Africa. The valency of the launching pad must be taken into consideration whenever a developmental pattern is envisaged so as to balance ascent and descent movements. At any time a valent, that is, the launching pad attains a weighty projection, like a beam carrying overload, it must be reinforced to avoid perdition. However, as Senghor puts it, there must be "ashes" available to feed its roots for a renewal, avoiding human beings to serve as the ashes due to hunger should instruct development patterns. More Africans have died of hunger and unnecessary wars instigated by the West – imitating Western democracy inclusive – than the number in first and second world wars.



(The crust is either Africa as a continent or its diaspora projections, Martinique, one of them depicted as black spots in this diagram is one of them. An ascent movement is freedom and a descent movement is hell).

Trigritude Language Content as Counter-Motion to Negritude

Trigritude is the term used by Wole Soyinka to express misgiving on the approaches adopted by Negritude in creating awareness about the African man's heritage and in asserting negritude. In effect it was a hasty criticism because he gave an a-priori limit to Negritude. Some of his works, especially plays, have been proved to be adaptation of Greek plays, though more sophisticated than those of the Greek. In such sophistication tigritude is asserted. Even as both Greek plays and his are mostly tragic events, he sees it, ironically, as win-win situation calling on both the

African and the European to return to sources where meanings to life level all civilizations. Somewhat, it seems a mere appeal to the West not the type of internal revolt he proposes within Africa. However, Feuser (1979: 95) feels that Soyinka could be seen as wavering for as he put it, “Soyinka who in *A Dance of the Forests* (1960) had debunked the past as a recurring cycle of violence and who in *The Interpreters* (1965), had one of his characters declare that the fabric of the past had to be ruthlessly disrupted if Africa’s global or national politics were ever to make sense, is now searching for powers of traditional to sustain the African revolution”.

Feuser sees him finding in Atooda, the Promethean traitor of the gods and Ajantala, archetype of rebel child, iconoclast, anarchic, anti-clan, anti-matriarch, virile essence in opposition to womb-domination. They are all in Yoruba myth. What is more, he finds Ogun – the Mars of the Yoruba Pantheon – who for him becomes the deity of the revolution, the goredrunk hunter who in a sweeping Pan-African gesture strikes at the Rhodesian rebel regime of then. “Shaka, roused, define his being anew in Ogun’s embrace”.

Still in the line with asserting tigritude, Yakubu (2001: 106) views Soyinka’s works as being governed by the principles of artistic [re]creation of Ogun, the Yoruba god of war. According to Yakubu, Soyinka’s placement of Ogun as humanity’s Promethean instinct is one which tacitly elevates the Yoruba to the position of a master – race. Whether Soyinka discusses *Death and The King’s Horseman*, *Kongi’s Harvest*, *Mandela’s Earth*, *Idanre*, or *Beautification of Area Boy*, his constant vision is in the capacity of Ogun for destruction and creativity in human beings, a process which seemingly produces the phenomenon of self-realisation in society.

Soyinka’s approach to asserting the African heritage and African roadmap among other races could be intimidating. It could be foolhardy trying to intimidate other races who had succeeded in taking the black race into slavery by whatever means; bizarre or barbaric. Hence, Senghor, Damas and Césaire conjugating their combined experiences had to come to term with the concept of Negritude. According to Senghor, it is an inheritance of a method of knowledge – African mode of knowing. In effect, it is important to expose and explain why the European thinks and behaves how he does and, also, why the African behaves and thinks the way he does. The African own is compounded by oppression and attempt to annihilate him/her both in and outside Africa.

The African person cannot imitate the West for his survival either on aggressive spree or standing to stop a moving train, for by so doing he makes himself an ash for the renewal of the West. He needs to play down revolt also, as he could not match the destructive capacity of the West – descent to hell as projected by Césaire. However, tigritude, initially, had felt it ought to be so. If one should carry out psychoanalytic study of Soyinka, it could be seen that sectional revolt that makes the African an ash for feed for a so-called civilised race remain the density of his language content.

Agyeman – Dauh (2008) gave such insight as he interviewed Soyinka. Hear Soyinka:

First of all, I have been absorbed in a very natural way into the Yoruba pantheon, the Yoruba worldview: its mythology, the relationship between mortals and immortals, and the concept of continuum of existence between the world of the living, the unborn and the dead. (...) as I recounted in my childhood autobiography, Ake, where women mobilised and chased out the

monarch, they chased him out with his tail between his legs ... who is an individual who wants to exercise absolutist power over a community of more than one?

In effect what Negritude sees is the absolutist of the West that ordinary revolt cannot solve as against Soyinka's possibility of revolting against a person. The holistic worldview of the African knows that it is beyond revolting against one person or one race. Absolutist power as at now, has an outlook of a global malaise with puppets planted to deem the pearls that could shine out of Africa. It took the arrival of François Mitterand in France to dismantle some of the puppets planted in African Francophone countries by absolutist capitalists ruling the West. It took also a "naïve" Obama to watch and allow the dismantling of puppets like Mubarak. Hence, it goes beyond the type of revolt tigritude envisaged.

Soyinka himself goes further to say:

There are times when I think that I am out of Sync with what is going on... Fortunately, I think there are many millions of people in Nigeria who belong in the same loony bin with me, and that keeps me going.

The development pattern eschewed by Tigritude had kept Guinea to a standstill as all guinean energy was devoted to fighting Sekou Touré's absolutist power as against Senegal gradual movement while seeking for the ultimate solution to societal wellbeing. In effect, between Guinea and Senegal the Negritude and Tigritude development paradigms could be revisited. Africa needs to revisit the strength of its crust and leverage upon it.

Conclusion

Our attempt in this paper had been to cause a change of mind in Africa's development pattern and the need to look into strategic language contents directed at Africa's autochthonous patterns in the literatures of negritude and tigritude. It is envisaged that a researched pattern, specific to Africa, be developed to usher in new era for Africa. Both Negritude and Tigritude embed such thoughts. Hence, the need to revisit their language contents and engineer a process of actualizing them. People must gather and talk for the way forward but not in the way of the West. The rain started beating Africa from the time it keyed-in fully to dysfunctional development agenda set by the West. Negritude and Tigritude seek for renewal or reinforcing the crust, Africa.

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