



The Metaphor of Gastrocentrism and the National Dilemma in Anglophone Cameroonian Poetry: The Examples of the Poetry of Mathew Takwi, Emmanuel Doh and Nol Alembong

Andrew T. Ngeh, Nformi Dominic Nganyu and Ignatius Nsaidzedze

^{1&3}*University of Buea, Cameroon, ²University of Burundi,*

ngehandrew@yahoo.com, ngadofor@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

The perception of the nation's wealth as "a national cake" by both the rulers and the ruled has placed many African countries in a dilemma and this poses a challenge to nation-building. The nation is conceived and perceived by both the superstructure and the base in the diadic image of a perishable cake that if not eaten, will get bad. The cake as a metaphorical symbol is reminiscent of the Lacanian concept of lack and desire. As an absent centre around which major conflictual actions are enacted, the cake, like the nation is not respected, worshipped, served or maintained, but it is delicious, fragile, edible and appetizing.

Analyzing Mathew Takwi's *People Be Not Fooled* (2004), Doh's *Not Yet Damascus* (2007) and Alembong's *Forest Echoes* (2012) using Jacques Lacan's concepts of lack and desire, this paper contends that the gastrocentric metaphor of the nation's wealth as 'cake' which dominates the three collections places the Cameroonian/African nations in a dilemma and poses a challenge to nation-building. The rulers have, and the masses who lack, desire what the rulers have. These contradictions and conflicts are poeticized in the ideological formulations which find aesthetic expression in the poetic vision of Takwi, Doh and Alembong. The paper proposes a move toward a socialist nation where the nation's wealth which encompasses socio-political and economic powers is linked to equity, nation-building and patriotism.

INTRODUCTION

The scramble for power symbolized by the 'National Cake' is rationalized in altruistical terms as one of the obligations of political representation in contemporary politics. The fundamental problem of governance in African contemporary societies is the concept of "you eat or you are eaten". That is, if one does not eat, he or she will be eaten up. This gastronomic mode of existence has resulted in lack of patriotism and faith that put the nation/state in a dilemma. This egocentric and egoistic way of life of both the rulers and the ruled has narrowed down their perception and conception of a nation or a state. While the ruling elite sees the nation/state as its plantation where it can feed fat, it is also reminded of the various promises this ruling class made during the campaign for self-government and independence. This dialectic in perception and conception of socio-political and economic power has always created conflicts and contradictions in African contemporary politics. The masses who are excluded from the mainstream of socio-political and economic powers desire these very powers they lack. Political power is in the mainstream of the "National Cake."

Gastrocentrism is a concept coined from gastronomy. According to Cambridge International Dictionary of English, gastronomy is the art and knowledge involved in preparing and eating good food (584). Within the context of this paper, eating good food is a metaphor of the possession of socio-political and economic power because political power is money, and money is power.

African leaders' conception of political power as consumables constitutes a major threat to nationhood. If the socio-political and economic power they possess is seen as a spoon that is used in "eating the nation", then this misuse of power can only create conflicts that threaten the very survival of a nation; consequently, the nation is at risk. From this assertion, the following questions arose: What is the essence of acquiring power? Can a nation be viable if there is more consumption than production? What is the role of poetry in nation-building? How can this consumption mentality be replaced with a production mentality?

HYPOTHESIS

From the above questions, this paper argues that the perception of the nation's wealth as "a national cake" by both the rulers and the ruled has placed many African countries in a dilemma. The nation is conceived and perceived by both the superstructure and the base in the dyadic image of a perishable cake that if it is not eaten it will get bad. The cake as a metaphorical symbol is reminiscent of the Lacanian concept of lack and desire. As an absent centre around which major conflictual actions are enacted, the cake, like the nation, is not respected, worshipped, served or maintained, but it is delicious, fragile, edible and appetizing.

THEORETICAL CONSIDERATION

The analysis of this paper is guided by the Lacanian concepts of lack and desire. The concepts of lack and desire are fundamental in Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytic thinking. According to Lacan, the libido or sexual drive does not have any given pre-given persons or parts of bodies, can be the target of desire. These two concepts revolve around the theory of the Oedipus complex and is a demonstration of the reproduction of male dominance and male contempt for women. In the context of patriarchy, mothers treat boys as independent and outgoing persons. Conversely, girls are loved more narcissistically as being like the mother. Boys' separation involves identification with the father and the symbolic phallus as the domain of social status, power and independence. That is, the power of the phallus is understood to be necessary to the very existence of subjects. Here, the phallus first acts as the transcendental of the power of the symbolic order; secondly it serves to split the subject from the desire for the mother; and finally it allows the subject to experience itself as a unity by covering over a sense of lack. (Chris Barker, 194)

The centrality of the phallus to Lacan's argument renders woman an adjunct term and not even a complement. That is, in Lacanian psychoanalysis the feminine is always repressed and entry into the symbolic always ties to the father/phallus. It is from the strength of this psychoanalytic perception of the relationship between the power of the phallus and the perception of women genitals as inferior that this paper borrows a leaf. The female character in psychoanalytic discourse envies the phallus because of the power it has, which she lacks. And because she lacks it, she tends to desire it. Thus, within the context of this paper, those who are socially excluded from the mainstream of political and economic powers desire these powers which are symbolically and metaphorically referred to as the "National Cake." The National Cake in African literary discourse is a dense symbol with metaphoric possibilities. There is a strong desire to possess these powers by those who lack them. It is from this perspective that Jacques Lacan's concepts of lack and desire gain relevance in this paper.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSES

The analyses of this paper will be done under three thematic clusters: The nation as a national cake, the nation in a dilemma and the socialist realist nation.

The Nation as a National Cake

The cake as a metaphoric analogue of the state culls the Lacanian concepts of lack and desire.

Political campaigns in Africa are always characterized by promises that are difficult to fulfil. The politicians build bridges where there are no rivers; they also raise dust in a muddy environment. The masses are promised paradise on earth but upon assuming power the politicians are neither people-centred nor government-centred; they become egocentric and egoistic. They can neither serve the state properly nor fulfil their promises to the masses. Caught in this dilemma, the politicians indulge in practices that undermine the welfare of the nation and compromise the very existence of the populace. Some of these unorthodox and unethical practices include corruption and the abuse of the very power legitimized by the oppressed masses. Takwi's "Corruption" and "Wine of power", Doh's "Pretenders to the Throne" and Alembong's "Tug of War" bring out the above-mentioned two themes. The overriding consciousness that informs these four poems is critical.

In "Corruption" Takwi visits, interrogates and indicts almost all the strata of the society that should be seen in the process of nation-building but that delight in destroying the nation: from the policeman who pretends to control traffic to the politician who manipulates the Constitution to stay in power. The academia is also dragged in. The award of government contracts to fake companies and sexually transmissible marks in Higher education are also identified as banes to socio-political advancement and development. Even treasury bonds are illegally taxed by the treasury officials. The poet bemoans these unethical practices and contends that these are threats to the very survival of any nation:

*It is not the raised hand of a policeman on traffic control
To marshal default driver to court, but
Proudly squeeze out a bank note and let go.
It is not the dishing out of undue marks
To female students by lecturers,
In skilful exchange of calmed libidos. (9)*

The poet perceives the role of the policeman who collects bribes from drivers on the highway and the university lecturer who transmits sexually as synonymous. Poetry becomes a medium between the poet and his fellow female students and drivers on the highway who are molested by lecturers and the police respectively. The poet's experience is to communicate to them the road of national degeneration.

Takwi's poetic critique is also extended to matters like the misappropriation of state contracts, the illegal imposition of thirty percent on treasury bonds that are supposed to be tax free and the manipulation of the nation's constitution. In fact, the leadership in place administers with two different Constitutions to create confusion:

*It is the giving out with the right hand of state contracts
To masquerade companies by ministers and managers
While the left receives smiling swollen envelopes
Below sparkling oval tables. (9)*

The poet's use of alliteration in "...smiling swollen envelopes" (s, s) in this stanza brings out the bureaucratic ineptitude and indiscipline that characterize the civil service in contemporary Cameroon/Africa. The smiling swollen envelope is both a personification and metaphor of the tragic despoliation of the nation's wealth.

The poem closes with the politician's attempt to manipulate the constitution so that he can stay in power for as long as he wants since he is not yet satisfied with the consumption of the national cake:

*It is not the artful display of twin constitutions
For same country, and the picking out of only
Articles that fence ruler's misdemeanour at*

Opportune moments;

But rather, this virulent endeavour to tickle it out! (10)

Takwi is able to use his poetry to explore the question of guilt in the national tragedy within a framework informed by class consciousness and analysis. His poetry is characterized by a contemplative tone which is painstaking and shrew in its attempt not to compromise the organic proximity between the poet and the oppressed masses. One country has two Constitutions and the leaders manipulate them at their whims and caprices. This is absurd and bizarre.

In "Wine of Power" Takwi perceives power as an alcoholic wine that drunken those who possess it. Once these rulers acquire these powers, they are deaf, dumb and numb to truths:

You infuse and overflow like the Nile in high season

*Rendering the injected drunk, dumb, deaf and numb
to truths*

till national hurricane of vox populi streams in lightning speed

chasing out claspers like mouse;

*as in East of Euro, tapping down Milosevic's
shoulders*

or in Abidjan to find out if Guei is a power gay. (20)

The poet-persona personifies wine which is synonymous with power by addressing it 'You' to capture the devastating and destructive effects its abuse has on the nation and its people. Using poetry as a historical necessity, the poet warns these leaders by alluding to the wind of change and Eastern Europe and the social revolution that brought down General Guei from power in Ivory Coast in 2002.

In the very first stanza of this poem, the poet indicates that like wine, power is sweet; this means power is not meant to serve the nation, but the individuals concerned: "Sweet wine of mystery/ Fever that grips the greedy/ Glides into grey matters of uncultured beings/Letting loose the fickle little meanness of mankind/They cling to acme of control, / Wangling like crab on fish tail in quiet sea". (20) The alliteration 'grips the greedy' (g, g) is pivotal and focal as it brings out the essence of the acquisition of power in contemporary African politics.

Doh in "Pretenders to the Throne" writes with the same orientation. In this poem, Doh equates education with administration. What particularly shocks the poet is that after many years of intellectual drilling some of these African intellectuals who have become politicians behave as if they did not go to school. He sees them as a threat to good governance because they are neither concerned with the people nor with the state they pretend to serve. The poet laments:

And in the heat of this hour

I look at all the ado gone sour

I wonder at humankind's sense of priority

A bizarre notion of true value,

How warped our sense of worth!

I see pretenders to scholarly thrones

lagoon in their effort politicians to turn,

I see those the "ignorant" to nurture

Themselves worse than any plague,

Yet parading as masters of the hour. (63)

Doh speaks/writes with the voice/pen of a revolutionary who is concerned with events in the history of post-independent Cameroon. His poetry is a reaction to the pitfalls of national consciousness and it speaks with an assertive firmness and aggressiveness. Here the ruling class manoeuvres situations, distorts facts and plots against the people because of the nation's wealth. In the fifth stanza of this poem, the poet-persona indicates that power in African politics is not acquired for the construction of the society, but for its own destruction.

Hear the poet:

*As in your rant you destroy
In the guise of cultivating
A true Beelzebub, Lucifer's number One.
In that reeking philanthropy
But time, time! (63)*

The poet sees the philanthropy of the ruling class as a camouflage, and he reiterates that time is the ultimate judge. One of such philanthropic acts is the Chantal Biya's Foundation that prevents mother-child infection from HIV. This Foundation is owned by President Paul Biya's wife, Chantal Biya. In the optimism of the socialist realist tradition, Doh concludes:

*Forever darkness may seem to rule
With shadow conjuring apparent wholesome shapes
Time alone will usher in dawn
And open this can of worms. (63)*

Doh is a committed revolutionary who has strong patriotic feelings and is bitterly disappointed by the betrayals of the ruling class that has held the nation to ransom; the nation is a plantation that is being exploited without being nurtured.

Like Takwi and Doh, Alembong's ideological orientation and consciousness in "Tug of War", is a powerful expression of hope and faith in nation-building. In this poem, the poet brings out the dialectical relationship that exists between the ruling class and the ruled and its impact on the nation. Both parties take very rigid positions in defence of their interests. In this dialogic and dramatic poetic piece, Alembong's focus is on the many voices that express societal concerns. He allows both the rulers and the ruled express their worries freely, actually placing them on the same plane. The uncompromising and the rhetoric of violence articulated by each group demonstrate their scramble for the nation's wealth:

*Government: You are a plague of rats
That ruins the nation the way
Rats sack a barn of grain.
Your 'ghost towns' crusade has
Made the nation a colony of rats
In church ceilings.
Heed the call of Zacchaeus:
Pay your taxes, so we may stay in business.*

*People: You are the crocodile
That swallows its own eggs.
The honey bee is wise:
It sucks nectar but
Leaves back pollen on the flower,
Our wages run for months unpaid
Because you're the crocodile, not the bee.
Pay us, so we may pay our taxes. (32)*

It is clear from this particular poem that change involves a dialectical relationship between destruction and construction of the status quo: destruction of the old order and the building of a new system that is not even evident because of the greedy attitude of each party. The poem is an eloquent expression and assertion of the will of the Cameroonian/African people to achieve their dreams. The government does not want to pay its workers and yet expects them to pay taxes. This poem represents an advanced or regressive development in the economic basis. There are two issues at stake which are related to economic determinism; that is the link between ideological superstructure and economic base. These two stanza poem is charged with emotions for both the oppressors and the oppressed. None of them is willing to give in. These rigid positions are defined by the social consciousness of each which is determined by

their world-views. The positions taken by the two parties cannot develop or advance a nation since each group wants to have a share of the national cake.

In terms of linguistic expression, there is neither complicated stylization nor artificial adornments. The poet's sense of patriotism finds expression through the archetypal animal imagery/metaphor he explores to convey his ideology. He makes effective use of animal imagery to reinforce his thematic concerns. The masses are described as "a plague of rats/that ruins the nation the way/Rats sack a barn of grain". And the government attributes this to the ghost town of 1992 after the flawed Presidential elections. The people on the other hand insist that they be paid before they can pay their taxes. The government is perceived as "...the crocodile/that swallows its own eggs". This is a frightful image that echoes the despoliation of the nation's wealth. The people's stand is antithetical to that of the government. The stand of the people is a declaration of intent, an explicit confirmation of the necessity to confront neo-colonialism and challenge the bourgeois ideology that has compromised their very existence.

The title of the poem "Tug of War" is incorporated into the poem itself which creates a feeling of being in the midst of the action as the two classes seem to engage in a tug of war over the "National Cake". The theme of life as change and the sub-theme or motif as of the continuity of a continually changing social reality is attested in the different world-views expressed in the poem. The conciseness of his images and the anger in his tone highlight the disappointments of the political systems put in place in the Cameroonian society. Each party uses grotesque animal images to describe the other. While the masses are rats that eat just anything, the national cake inclusive, the government is crocodile that swallows its own eggs. The image of the crocodile swallowing its own egg is a frightful symbol that depicts the degenerative process and the lack of continuity in the Cameroonian socio-economic life. Only in a language so fundamentally suited to poetry as English can one find such verses charged with poetic meaning. More than that, Alempong's poetry is rooted in his studies in the oral traditions of his people. This explains why he utilizes such images in his poetry. When one of these researchers interviewed Alempong on the 8th of February 2010, the poet admitted that his poetry, from the standpoint of style is influenced by his studies in Oral Literature. Essentially, the language of oral narrative is simple and accessible. The poet contends:

[...] from the point of view of style, yes my poetry is in line with the mainstream African poetry. And also you must have realized that my style is influenced by my studies in oral traditions. So there is a lot of orality that comes in when you look at my style. (Interviewed on 8th February, 2010)

That explains why his flora and fauna are drawn from his immediate cultural environment. His diction attests to this. For instance, words like: flowers, rats, bee, nectar and crocodile are some of the fauna and flora that show that Alempong was inspired by his cultural environment.

From the reading of the four poems above, it is clear that the two poems are densely argued, well thought out, and very engaged with socio-political and economic experiences of the Cameroonian people. There are also indications of unusual nightmarish descriptions of the experiences of the masses. The four poems question both natural and socio-political tragedies within the framework that is informed by class consciousness and dialectical world-view. The three poets believe that one of the contributing factors that has led to the postcolonial tension and conflict in the Cameroonian/African societies is the tendency among those who find themselves in positions of power to see those positions as their birth right; consequently, the consumption mentality continues to take precedence over the production mentality. The final part of this paper examines the nation in a dilemma as result of the scramble for its wealth.

The Nation in a Dilemma

With the increasing attitude of the consumption mentality in African socio-political and

economic life, life becomes a bewildering dilemma and a vexing enigma. Neuroses, hypertension, fear and paralyzing pessimism dominate much of human existence. The second part of this paper sets out to analyse some of the poems that clearly articulate this thematic concern. Takwi's "Redress", Doh's "The Trail" and Alembong's "The Plague" preoccupy themselves with these themes.

Takwi's "Redress" constitutes a catalogue of problems that must be presented to the President if the poet-persona must meet him. The list of problems in the poem can demoralize a nation and diminish its potentials. This seven stanza poem is ideologically loaded. The poet's hypothetical statements are repeated in the poem seven times with the use of the word 'if' to emphasize the difficulties and challenges that are involved in meeting an African Head of State:

*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. (4)*

The image of hollow pocket is a metaphorical representation of the poverty-stricken society where the people live below bread line level. And because of this poverty his people "shiver in groans." In this labyrinth of human disillusionment, despair seems to be the only hope for the wretched of the earth; people without shelter: "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. (4) It is the greed and lust of the ruling elite that have resulted in this depraved society where others live in leaked thatched roof while others live in "marbled palace" and "Enjoy filtered air void of mosquitoes." (4) The beautiful use of contrast here is a poetic device par excellence. The poet carefully but artistically compares and contrasts the sordid existence of the wretched masses and flamboyant and affluence of the ruling elite to the wretched masses. The poet thinks that the compartmentalization of the Cameroonian society as reflected in this poem only places her in a dilemma.

In the last stanza, the poet-persona, appalled by the injustice done to the people is angry. In fact there is some degree of violence in his voice and he is determined to meet the President. Now, it is no longer a matter of "if I were to meet the president" but:

*Now, I stride to meet the President
And now 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 life of the masses
While their hardship embrace your messes. (5)*

The poet-persona's tone in this last stanza is defiant; he is ready for the worst. The poem is a reflection of the collective consciousness of the Cameroonian people. While the bulk of the population lives below the bread line level, the ruling class swims in the cesspool of ill-gotten wealth.

Doh in "The Trail" also articulates the same ideology. The poet-persona asserts that in a society like Cameroon people must toil and moil before they can eat. A trail is the smell or series of marks left by a person, animal or thing as it moves. In the Cameroonian context the ugly marks left by the imperialists are being extended to the neo-imperialist period. The poet conceptualizes the African predicament as a tortuous odyssey wherein only the strong can survive. He concludes by saying that the present leadership in Africa that swims in ill-gotten

wealth is taking the people to an unknown destination; this means that there is no political compass that guides this leadership. The poet perceives life as a tedious journey contrary to the promises made to the people by the politician:

*This journey so tedious,
Of plains stretching as far as the eyes can see
Of hills so high into the sky
Yet valleys deep into the belly of the sea
And on mankind must toil... (39)*

Because of the difficulties and challenges that accompany life in a neo-colonial dispensation, people become snared by negativism and live with a sense of frustration. Doh has always tried to avoid the bleakness of life and paint the positive of life. "The Trail" expresses the dissatisfaction behind many of the problems that characterize the neo-colonial period: from oppression to the plundering and pilfering of the nation's wealth. The poet insinuates that material privation, destitution and indigence demoralize humanity in the midst of a world of abundance.

Confusion and commotion permeate and pervade this atmosphere. Life becomes a Sisyphean existence, a bewildering dilemma and a vexing enigma. The focus on the self rather than the society comes out clearly in the poem as the people do not know where to go:

*Marching across plains
Climbing and descending
To the one a journey by day
To the other one a journey by night
To yet another a journey into the unknown... (39)*
In this labyrinth of human disillusionment people turn to the Divine for solace:
*Yet to the other a divine quest
And on we must forge
Mere pilgrims along the trail
Until journey's end.
Realization! (39)*

From the appreciation of "The Trail," it is evident that a lack of ability and purpose, a self-satisfied confusion and lack of will, an inability to master the modern world and the inability of the leaders to move their countries ahead encapsulate this poem. Humanity in this poem is caught in the crossfire of life's battles for achievement and fulfilment.

Metaphor and symbolism are the artistic vehicle by which meaning is conveyed in its ideological essence in Doh's "The Trail". Life for instance is metaphorically presented as a journey. In the context of this poem, it is a journey without direction: some undertake this journey in the night; others in the day; yet others into "the unknown." The leadership in place is so self-centred that it cannot move the people forward.

Alembong's "The Plague" also expresses the same thematic concern. In this poem, the poet uses animal imagery to bring out the insidious but devastating effects of rapacious and self-centred leaders. He describes such leadership as both a social and political plague. At the literal level the poem is about the destruction caused by the millipede on the ecosystem; but at the symbolic and metaphorical level, the poem expresses the destructive effects of neo-colonial politics on Cameroonians/ Africans. The neo-colonial leadership is described as a millipede that has come to destroy:

*It came
Like a millipede from a millpond,
Crawled on our sunbeams,
Crawled,
Crawled. (24)*

The poet's use of millipede here is not by chance. The millipede is a small creature consisting of many parts having two pairs of legs. Like the millipede, most politicians have different identities; they do not mean what they say. They employ all the tactics they have learned over the years to hoodwink and cajole the populace:

*Snail-like
It felt its way
Into the womb of Mother Earth,
Nourishing her body
With slimy fluids. (24)*

While the politician who is metaphorically represented by the millipede finds himself in the "womb of the mother earth" which symbolizes the nation's wealth, the masses languish in abject poverty. They also desire this wealth because they lack it. Mother earth is a dense symbol with metaphorical possibilities in the poem. It stands for the nation's wealth which has been reduced to a cake. Again, the image of the millipede settling in the womb of Mother Earth is a frightful one because this means the end of the nation. The womb in the woman is a symbol of reproduction and procreation, and a woman without a womb is not a woman.

The neo-colonial leadership is perceived in this poem as parasites in paradise. Before the coming of this millipede/politician, Mother Earth blossomed; there was some sort of communal sharing. The poet bemoans and regrets the insidious, nefarious and devastating effects caused by the coming of this millipede. He is looking back in anger, and the repetition of the word, "Today, /today" emphasizes the regret and outrage in the poet-persona's voice:

*O, how well the flowers blossomed
In the anthills of the savannah!
How stout mistletoe stood
On the irokos of the woodland!
Today,
Today,
Taproot chambers are filled with smut
And nascent roots nipped in fallopian tracks. (24)*

The taproot chambers that symbolize the foundation of the nation is now filled with dirt and ash which are signposts of destruction. Even the other roots meant for the reinforcement of the nation/tree are metaphorically "nipped in the fallopian tracks."

Alembong's exploration and exploitation of both the fauna and flora motifs constitute the forte of both his poetic composition and imagination. He demonstrates the multi-faceted and multi-dimensional definition of the environment. The environment to him encompasses the social, political, economical and natural. Poetry is a good instrument in the interpretation of environmental concerns. The images of plants and animals bespeak a concrete destruction of the environment. Images of planting are naturally associated with those of flowering indicating the fruitfulness and the preservation of the nation's wealth as well as its ecosystem. This takes us to a socialist realist nation which this paper deems a panacea to this problem.

Towards a Socialist Realist Nation

In a socialist state that atmosphere of camaraderie reigns supreme. Here the concept of Julius Nyerere's *Jamaal* finds absolute expression. The wealth of the nation is synonymous with the state which is respected, served and not edible. The fallouts of nation-building are equally distributed. This type of communion brings a new exhilaration and spiritual and cultural stamina in the lives of both the ruled and rulers. Takwi's "Let the Seeds Grow", Doh's "Champagnat's Model" and Alembong's "Celebration" bring out this theme of social collectivism.

In "Let the Seeds Grow", Takwi uses the horticultural image to highlight the growth of any nation if well nurtured. He admits that the soil on which the seeds are sown is hostile but he believes that the seed that represents a young nation can grow if there is collaborative efforts in nurturing it:

*Drop, heavenly tears drop
Pour divine sprinkles, pour;
Pour to nurture Nature's seeds to germinate
For grown crops on this egoistic farm of self-deceit
Extend broad thorny leaves to nib buds of hopeful seeds
Grasping the sun's rejuvenating warm,
But the clouds with beckoning hands, only can say:
Let the seeds grow. (64)*

The poet insinuates that if the rhythm and harmony of the people and their environment will be at peace; there will be celebration:

*Tall crops on the left, broad crops on the right
Pace majestically with peacock shoulders
And jibish giggles at low lying young seeds;
Some with jerked heads, others with painful coatings
Shedding tears from gigantic smashes of elders;
But the clouds with swinging heads, only can say:
Let the seeds grow. (64)*

The poem closes with these positive words that encapsulate growth:

*Let the grow green, fresh, and sprout;
Let them grow green, fresh, sprout and bear;
Not to destroy other crops or segregate and denigrate
Nor shield younger seeds sprouting from fertile soil (64)*

Doh's "Champagnat's Model" (For Rev. Brother Norbert Simms) is a poems that also produces 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 colour-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 wealth for themselves while the weak suffocate in abject poverty. The poet exhorts all and sundry to emulate the humility of Jesus Christ personified by the 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 fulfilment, equal appropriation of social space, national re-birth and self-worth.

Alembong articulates the same motif in "The Celebration." Here the dominant imagery that is exploited and explored by the poet is animal imagery representing human beings. Even animals of prey no longer prey on others. The camaraderie that reigns in this animal kingdom symbolizes the type of society the poet recommends for his own society. If animals can live in such harmonious and friendly society, human beings can do better than this; the poet seems to be saying: Eagles and hyenas screamed in joy/ And the robin and sparrow chirped in approval/ As the pig was carted in by the horse/ To head the farm. (70)

The awareness of the co-existence of two ways of life and peace within one social stratum is once more echoed in the lines below:

*Ants filed pass, millipede too,
Grasshoppers hopped pass, wrens too,
Frogs leaped pass, rabbits too,
Serpents glided pass, seagulls too,
Owls flitted pass, parrots too,
And asses jogged pass and cats stole pass
As the pig grunted repeatedly in approval. (70)*

Apart from the musicality created by the repetition of the word "too" at the end of the first four lines of this stanza, this device also emphasizes the freedom that characterizes this culture of sharing. This poem brings out the feeling of openness, self-consciousness and freedom that the culture of sharing incarnates. There are no victims and victors or victors and vanquished; everyone is a victor and a free born. "The Celebration" is a poem to the reader which suggests more than it says, offering an aesthetic for the poem as well as a way of life to the Cameroonian/African people. Alembong insinuates that animals live a better life than human beings who have reduced the nation into a perishable cake. This is because in the human kingdom, the class which is the ruling material force is, at the same time its ruling intellectual force and this very class which has the means of material production at its disposal has control at the same time over the means of mental production. The lumpen proletariat class is considered as object that can be used and discarded. Consequently, they are not considered during the sharing of the national cake.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it is important to restate the hypothetical contention of this paper. This paper argues that the perception of the nation's wealth as "a national cake" by both the rulers and the ruled has placed many African countries in a dilemma and this poses a challenge to nation-building. The nation is conceived and perceived by both the superstructure and the base in the dyadic image of a perishable cake that if not eaten, will get bad. The cake as a metaphorical

symbol is reminiscent of the Lacanian concept of lack and desire. As an absent centre around which major conflictual actions are enacted, the cake, like the nation is not respected, worshipped, served or maintained, but it is delicious, fragile, edible and appetizing. The paper concludes by recommending a socialist state or what Julius Nyerere calls Jamaal where everyone is involved in decision-making.

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