The Displacement of the Father-figure in Kaine's Yellow-Yellow and Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*

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Kaine Agary's Yellow-Yellow is a work that falls, chronologically within the segment of Nigerian literary tradition otherwise known as the 21st century literature like Wale Okediran's Dreams Die at Twilight (2001), Ezeigbo's Trafficked (2008), Abani's Becoming Abigail (2007), Bisi Ojediran's A Daughter for sale (2006), and Jude Dibia's Unbridled (2007). In this subset of the entire tradition is found the heated polity making up the discursive formation that forms the platform, and not the root, for the delineation of the behaviour of the principal characters. The remark presently being levelled at these works of this later turn of tradition due to their "almost extreme stylistic linguistic and structural sensibilities" is that they carried their epistemic disruptions even further by demythologizing the tradition in an endeavour to accommodate experimentation (Onukaogu and Onyerionwu 115).

Along with what has been termed "the creative distancing" doctrine pervading this segment of the tradition, "emphasis has shifted from the society to the individual" instancing repeated "explorations of individual figures as they struggle to find existential fulfilment in life" (121). We notice that the representation of individuals whose confrontation with forces, environments, sub-human leanings and conflicts of identity has proved to be the hallmark of this particularly historic stratum of the Nigerian tradition. They display "the sanctity of the story" which can "never be sacrificed on the altar of extreme sociopolitical rationalizations" whose singular objective in the previous era of arid humanism is "to conscientize and sensitize (in common parlance) about the miserable fate of human beings in the society, and possibly challenge them into taking up arms against real and perceived oppressors" (111-112). In a manner, political critics find these set of works challenging and tasking. Yet Yellow-Yellow has not been so recognised as it is still seen as a work that resulted from the despoliation of Nigeria's Niger Delta. This is supported by the fact that it won the ANA/Chevron Prize for Environmental Writing and the Nigerian Liquefied and Natural Gas Prize for Literature in 2007 and 2008 respectively.

The atmosphere in Yellow-Yellow is political, cultural, biological and environmental. And it is not only found in Yellow-Yellow but also in The Color Purple. It is this atmosphere that is commonly mistaken, especially in the instance of Yellow-Yellow, for the violence and violations that push the characters to the edge of desperation and behaviours that one could term as the roots of extreme disorder.

Zilayefa's mother's farm has been despoiled by oil that emitted from a vandalized pipeline covering hectares of land. Amidst the uproar that greats the catastrophe throughout Zilayefa's community, she runs to her mother's farm to have a first-hand view of the carnage which she relates to us thus:

> It was the first time I saw what crude oil looked like. I watched as the thick liquid spread out, covering more land and drowning small animals in its path. It just kept spreading and wondered if it would stop, when it would stop, how far it would spread. Then there was the smell. I can't describe it but it was strong –so strong it made my head hurt and turned my stomach. I bent over, and retched so hard I became dizzy. It felt like everything had turned to black and was spinning around me. There was so much oil, and we could do nothing with it – viscous oil that would dry out, black oil that was knee-deep. I stayed there, in a daze, until someone shouted at, "You no go commot for there? You dey look like say na beta tin'! Come on, leave dat place!" (Agary 4).

This loss of her mother's "main source of sustenance" opens a new chapter of lack, deprivation and impoverishment (4). But contrary to critical assertions, this is not the reason for the warped fate she thereafter leads. Her mother who has foisted on her the dream ambition of going to the University, though there was the incident of oil despoliation, does not know that in her heart, as she says, "I knew that I was not very keen on attending university" (25). This lack of interest therefore, would not have been as a result of the spillage. Whatever she calls her "colourless existence" (21) is doubtful and would never mean to be taken seriously as having been caused by the corporate oil exploiters. It does appear that there is no way that her escape, that is, her yearning for escape from the village would not have been averted if the spill had been nonexistent. It therefore goes to illustrate that there is something other than the scraping existence that she utterly detested. And this 'something' is latent in the psyche explainable only with the help of Freud and Jung at same time; and which the environment, given the appropriate circumstances, would elicit. Again this 'something' is, mythically speaking, like "the double-colored cape of Esu, the sower of eternal conflicts" (Adekoya 154).

Freud has had an eminent elucidation on the concept of the repression of memories in The Interpretation of Dreams. He details how the forbidden is made to be submerged by the superego leaving a small tip like an iceberg, lost to the casual observer. It is not until his major apostle, Jacques Lacan that this theory of his was grounded on language and the structure that it is made up of. Lacan believes that Freud has

essentially led him to "promulgate as necessary to any articulation of analytic phenomenon the notion of signifier, as opposed to that of the signified" (284). Freud's discovery, he further claims, gives the signifier an active function in determining certain effects in which the signifiable appears as submitting to its mark, by becoming through that passion that passion of the signified (284). In this case the object or person present is the provocative agent for signification so long as it generates some passion. It is this agent, or as the signified, that we can reduce in this paper to be the father-figure. But then, the signifying capability of the subject signifying is not a peculiar possession of the subject signifying in that many members of this subject's species also possess this capability. What then makes him to be able to signify and act accordingly? It is aligned to other capabilities of his. A subject's capability of signifying is also his capability of loving, cherishing, desiring sex and security, and the supernatural being, at least, this is what Jung makes us believe. They all emanate from some universal cauldron that belongs to all, the collective unconscious. Possibly, this was what Lacan means when he says that the "passion of the signifier now becomes a new dimension of the human condition in that it is not only man who speaks, but that in man and through man it speaks, that his nature is woven by effects in which is to be found the structure of language"(284). The it is the unconscious about which Jung explains further:

> While consciousness is intensive and concentrated, it is transient and is directed upon the immediate present and the immediate field of attention . . . . But matters stand very differently with the unconscious. It is not concentrated and intensive, but shades off into obscurity; it is highly extensive and can juxtapose the most heterogeneous elements in the most paradoxical way. More than this, it contains, besides an indeterminable number of subliminal perceptions, an immense fund of accumulated inheritance. . . . But the truth is that the unconscious is always there beforehand as a potential system of psychic functioning handed down by generations of man. Consciousness is a late-born descendant of the unconscious psyche. It would certainly show perversity if we tried to explain the lives of our ancestors in terms of their late descendants; and it is just as wrong, in my opinion, to regard the unconscious as a derivative of consciousness. We are nearer the truth if we put it the other way round (Jung 12,13).

In juxtaposing unconsciousness and consciousness, he does same to Freud and his theory. We are not choosing which is more correct. We are only going to see the lives of the major characters in these two works and references to other from both ways and see how they fare. Jungian principle of the archetypes, for example, would help us to account for

why no one is excluded from pleasure chase in one form or the other in Yellow-Yellow.

In discussing Yellow-Yellow, a fact commonly glossed over is the absence of parental model for Zilayefa's mother before her escape, during her stay in Port Harcourt, and her eventual return home to face shame as an unwed mother of a somewhat 'queer' child. At least, there is no mention of them which indicates their nonexistence, and practically non-influence on the eighteen-year-old mother of Zilayefa at the time. It is this cave in her psyche, grossly disrupted with a lack of template for positive orientation that Zilayefa incidentally inherits. She is the one to whom the baton of wantonness is handed over to.

As a fruit of a Greek father and an Ijaw mother, a father who absconded without the knowledge of his burgeoning seed in the girl that has warmed his bed throughout his short stay in Port Harcourt, the absence of her grandparents, the authority it constituted and invoked, ought to invoke and problematise the absence of her father. Her mother's own silence – an escapist silence over the matter hoping that in so doing she would not topple the lid that have sealed her emotions all these years does little not to invigorate the power that her father's absence created. It is a father-figure that loomed large in absence as much as it would have been if he were present. In mother which was never mentioned throughout this work. She, at eighteen had passed her papers school certificate examinations like her daughter does, goes in search of the bounties of city-life like her daughter.

At a point, Zilayefa's primary reason for deserting the village is not because of the devastating oil spill, it has something to do with a repressed yearning for pleasure and an inchoate distaste for pain. In a respect, it is sexual – something Barthes says has a role in the "configuration of characters" (8). For her mother, she says that for "the few weeks that he (her estranged father) was in Port Harcourt, she was in heaven. She believed that she had found her life partner and that this man would take care of her" (7). As a "young and naive eighteen-year-old" she has come to the city from the village "with visions of instant prosperity" (7). There is now the problem of reconciling "naivety', "school-leaving certificate". These are verily irreconcilable and it is where they have become irreconcilable that they steadfastly and continually indicate that the Freudian pleasure principle is at work.

She may have learnt her own experience but experience is not easily passed on to the other generation as easily as a baton is passed on to the other in a relay race. She has thought that in "saving her child, "she hoped to save herself" (9). And this cannot be successful until there has been the presence of the father-figure which was to bring along with it either salvation or love, or both. This figure, to some extent opens up another vista of knowledge, that is, lurking behind this father-figure is

an Electra complex of the famed Agamemnon myth Sophocle's Electra. Aegisthus has killed Agamemnon with the connivance of the latter's wife, Clytemnestra immediately he returned from the Trojan War. Her two children: Orestes and Electra flee to Phocis to hatch a plan of avenging the death of their father. Electra, more than the other, mourns her father. She bemoans him thus:

> My father, who didst die
>
> A cruel death of piteous agony.
>
> But ne'er will I
>
> Cease form crying and sad agonizing lay,
>
> While I behold the sky . . .
>
> Here at my father's door my voice shall sound (Sophocles, lines 101-105,109).

Asking the Erinyes for help, she quakes aloud: "Avenge our father's murder on his foe!/Aid us, and send my brother to my side;" (Lines 117-118). It is the image of her father that thereafter goads her action and her brother's. They kill their mother, Clytemnestra. At the point when she was being kill, she, Clytemnestra asked Orestes to have pity: "O son, have pity/ Pity the womb that bare thee"; To which Electra replies: "thou hadst none/For him, nor his father, in that day" (177-181). Again, she says at the time her mother was receiving gashes of death, "Give a second stroke/If thou has power" (190-191). With this as father-jealousy or envy, we see the extent to which the image of the after can prod one, though to a different action – that of matricide. The absence of the father figure that pushes Electra in committing matricide is the same figure operating in Yellow's reflexes in paternalizing Sergio in Yellow-Yellow and Celie's Pa in Walker's The Color Purple. Both Pa and Sergio are displaced personalities that ignite the repressed and give it a harrowing tug for long.

Sergio and Pa are like swishing interfaces, the images of that which totally absent but has also been fulsomely present – say represented, or heirlooms of the past as they of the instant. They also represent the ideal, the somewhat unknowable like Celie's God which could only be appreciated by the exercise of imagination, thinking in layers, with the past submerged beyond recognition the continual dropping of time and history. The very first insubstantiable and unreachable figment of the past which cannot now be reducible to the object now present is very similar to Jung's archetype to whose image that which is present must not only be held up against, but must be appreciated alongside. It is this image that therefore resonates on all their actions – the general character and congenial tendency to feel about for the father when he is absent,

taking occasion of the present object or human – a case of any straw for a grasp.

The latent desire for pleasure is exemplified in Y. by the "Gbein mo episode' and tune that Yellow dances to in company of other teenage girls of her age. The tune instructed them to "throw our backsides and the boys to pick them up" (Agary 15). It is an activity that gave them "so much fun" (15), she had said. With this, there is therefore no talk of her innocence. She has long lost it psychically before Admiral tore into her on her first night with a man. The throw-your-backside dance is not a dance of innocence. And unable to explain the cause when her mother remonstrated her she says, "how stupid I had been for 'forgetting myself'" (16) because she has "gbein mo" her "backside like a jobless girl" (16). It is a rebuke that enabled her to repress pleasurable desires as she has said: "to be on the safe side, I went straight to my room and stayed there until I fell asleep. From then until the day I left my village, I tried to occupy my time with activities that my mother approved of. Dancing in public was certainly not one of them" (17).

The repressed would later have occasion to flower, and it is not to be until the three years later when Chief Tariye's funeral ceremony was to take place, in the person of Sergio, the expatriate furniture dealer from Spain who has come to Nigeria to investigate some business propositions with Tarilabo. Sergio is to become the presence of the absence; the image of the absent which is now present and the past which correlates with the picture of the remote unrememberable past and absence. She narrates the overwhelming feeling that sends shivers through her:

> While I was talking, I noticed a man across the room. I don't know how I missed him before, because his complexion stood out just as mine did in that room. His skin was colour of ripe plantain peel. His hair was black and had the same big waves as my own. I had been staring at him for much longer than was comfortable, so he smiled at me and I smiled back. I wondered if he was Greek. The similarities in our physical attributes reminded me how different I was from everyone else in the village.
>
> I cannot say that I ever really longed for my father; in fact, I barely thought of him at all. My mother hardly spoke about him. I had learnt not to ask questions, because each time I did, she very tactfully dodged them, changed the subject, or she would ask . . . I did not care for him one way or another, but seeing this man brought me thoughts of my father. Where was he? Did he ever come back to Nigeria? Did he ever thing of my mother? Would I know him if I saw him? I had no clue what my father looked like. My mother had no

> pictures of him, and it did not help that, aside from my complexion, I looked just like her, right down to the little birthmark below her left eye (19-21).

But with this strange quest and desire going through her before and after this chance meeting, one would have no qualms believing that she has love as her only goal. To this, she has troubles answering in the affirmative, for she says: "love was not my desire – I simply wanted a way out of the village, and if love came with escape, it would be a bonus" (23). If one is to probe further, from what would she be escaping from? Freud gives us a hint concerning that:

> Life, as we find it, is too hard for us; it brings us too many pains, disappointments and impossible tasks. In order to bear it we cannot dispense with palliative measures. We cannot do without auxiliary constructions', as Theodor Fontane tells us. . . . We must look further afield (Freud, Civilization 22).

From what Freud tells us, we get the clue that her escape is borne, secondarily though, out of an abhorrence of pain. With this illumination on parrying pains, could it now be said that it ignited a secret desire for pleasure which have been harshly repressed since the gbein mo incidence by the mother? In the same vein, we also identify, in Jungian terms, the archetypal urge for sexual pleasure at the commencement of puberty which every teenager experiences, Zilayefa's mother not excluded? The undercurrent stimulus falls either way of both theoretical methods, especially as it is provoked by the presence of Sergio. This urge has been present many years – say six years earlier – during her elementary school days. One gets to know this when one hears what the echoes Sergio's kiss brings to her mind:

> It wasn't the same as when one of my classmates had kissed me in primary school. A group of us had been playing during break, and the boys started a game where they would pick a girl and kiss her. The boy who kissed me was a nice boy, but it was a horrible kiss, and we never talked about it afterwards (26-27).

A lot has been said in that extract. The words nice, and never talked about it afterwards bear echoes of a provoked latent desire for pleasure that is already carving out a lee-way despite some lingering restraints by the time Sergio kissed her. Yet the agency of this present surge of feelings is Sergio.

But it is exactly these that Celie lacks with Mr.__ having allowed her emotion to fall into disuse with Pa during his constant visitations of violations in The Color Purple. She has been in some sort of psychological break-down – a state where she has been finding it difficult

to reconcile the action perpetrated by Pa as a sexual mate, and the image there from to the image of a parent. It is this quagmire that results in sexual numbness and utter insensitivity when she eventually marries Mr.__. There is therefore the presence of two conflictual images in one presence where the image taken to be present is purely a displacement of the real, unknowable and unfelt. She confesses: "Pa is not our pa" and "Pa not pa" (Walker 182, 183), therefore, there is no God. God either standing behind Pa and his activities or Pa is his agent. It is a conceptual image which one can hardly visualize but one may have an idea of, that is, "God". Shug acknowledges this to Celie, "Man corrupt everything . . . . He on your box of grits, in your head, and all over the radio. He try to make you think he everywhere. Soon as you think he everywhere, you think he God. But he ain't" (204). It is found in the salutations of Celie's letters and subsequent discussions between Shug Avery and Celie. It is one singular image that forms a network of imagery with the others. From religious discourse, 'God' is a being that created and saves humans – a good father-figure. This is the religious image set up by Celie's salutations: "Dear God", Nettie's prayers to God, Samuels and Corrine's belief and trust in him for sending their children. But this image is later deflated in Celie's letter when she tells her mother that her missing children got by incestuous intimacy with Pa is stolen by God: "She ast me bout the first one. Whose it is? I say God's. I don't know no other man or what else to say. I say God took it. He took it. He took it while I was sleeping. Kilt it out there in the woods. Kill this one too if he can" (Walker 3). This is the image of a God who fathers illegitimate children and steals them. But she does not mention 'Pa", her step-father. As God, Celie believes, Pa is devious, such that when Nettie leaves home and fears for her and her troubles, Celie consoles her by saying: "Never mine, never mine, long as I can spell G-o-d I got somebody" (18). The above image of a companion is further given extension in meaning by Nettie in one of her letters as she tries to give representation to, in a rather clumsy manner, a God who receives letters:

> I remember one time you said your life made you feel so ashamed you couldn't even talk about it to God, you had to write it, bad as you thought your writing was. Well, now I know what you meant. And whether God will read letters or no, I know you will go on writing them; which is guidance enough for me (136).

But there is also a relation between writing to God and talking to God as a petition (prayers), the medium used notwithstanding. Nettie says, "Anyway, when I don't write to you I feel as bad as I do when I don't pray, locked up in myself and choking in my own heart" (136). So it is possible that the letters Celie writes are images of petitions to no one despite the salutation "Dear God" because, already, there is doubt

whether God could read them. This is correctly accented to when Nettie says how she feels with the displaced father-figure as hindsight.

Alongside the above doubt about God as a father who cares, when no earthly father does, is the deflation of his abilities to do many wonderful things or miracles. An instance is when Samuel and Corrine could not have children before they left for Africa for their missionary expedition, a friend of Samuel when he was still in the world of sin brings two children for them to adopt. And "then, they say, 'God' sent them Olivia and Adam" (139). Why the quotation marks over God? It is but the orthographic indication of doubt. We hear Nettie later saying,

> I wanted to say, "God" has sent you their sister and aunt, but I didn't. Yes, their children sent by "God" are your children, Celie. And they are being brought up in love, Christian charity and awareness of God. And now "God" has sent me to watch over them, to protect them. To lavish all the love I feel for you on them. It is a miracle, isn't it? And no doubt impossible for you to believe (139).

Nettie's assertion that it is a miracle is self-mockery and self-explosion when one considers her earlier remark that she finds it difficult to say that "God" sent her to the children. The image of God set up by this text appears to have limited powers, alluring coincidences and human machinations to render an action successful. Having been brought up in the North where there is mild racism, the Samuels' belief in God as a caring father-figure is hallowed. What they believe, they impart, since Adam and Olivia "are being brought up in love, Christian charity and awareness of" – that same God.

A fresh vista opens as they land on Africa as missionaries amongst the Olinkas of Liberia. Hence, we are confronted with the roofleaf as the image of a savior. A chief's greed for more land renders the roofleaf extinct. So when a storm removes the roofs in the village, the result that:

> For six months the heavens and the winds abused the people of Olinka. Rain came down in spears, stabbing away the mud of their walls. The wind was so fierce it blew the rocks out of the walls. . . . Soon the villagers began to die . . . .
>
> The people prayed to their gods. . . . it was five years before the roof leaf became plentiful again. During those five years, many more in the village died . . . . On the day when all the huts had roofs again from the roof leaf, the villagers celebrated by singing and dancing and telling the story of the roof leaf. The roof leaf became the very thing they worship (150-160).

The white missionary that comes before Samuel and Corrine stop the ceremony, terming it as heathen could not have been successful in stopping the Olinkas worship of the roof leaf. Yet with the duo's success, Samuel for one, has no answers when Joseph asks him, "We know a roof leaf is not Jesus Christ, but in its own humble way, is it not God?' (160). The same God that provides children and changes Corrine's status of being a barren woman makes the roof leaf grow. And if they say he judges and punishes, is he not the one the preachers believe Shug disobeys and is afflicted with the "nasty women's disease" as a punishment? (57). Celie is disillusioned with God seeing her hopelessness and helplessness of a helpful father-figure. What God has been for the Olinkas and the Samuels, he has not been for Shug and to Celie. She tells us at the time her pent emotion of helplessness burst to overflowing, "I don't write to God no more, I write to you" (199). She continues, and asks Shug, "What God do for me?" (199). To which her auditor replies,

> . . . he gave you life, good health, and a good woman that love you to death. Yea, I say, and he gave me a lynched daddy, a crazy mama, a lowdown dog of a step pa and a sister I probably won't ever see again. Anyhow, I say, the God I been praying and writing to is a man. And act just like all the other mens I know. Trifling, forgitful and lowdown" (199).

In saying God is trifling and forgetful, she summarises the characteristics of God as she again equates him with the lowdown step-father, Pa and the generality of men like Ngozi would also express in her fight as the consequence of James, the dupe's dealing with her in Dibia's Unbridled.

From here, it is apparent that that which only the mind can conceive will not be conceived except it is equated to that which is concrete and sensible, "mens", which all along must have the metaphor of colour brought to bear in giving this undercurrent motivations a shape as well as pushing this shape into the mould of a father-figure. This is why when Shug asks: "Tell me what your God look like" (201). They reach a conclusion from the description of Celie that: "this old white man" is the same God she used to see when she prays "Cause that's the one that's in the whitefolks' white bible" (201). And contrary to the Olinka's God, the roofleaf, who answers when prayed to, Celie has this to affirm: "when I found out (that God is white) I thought God was white, and a man, I lost interest. You mad cause he don't seem to listen to your prayers. Humph! Do the mayor listen to anything the colored say?" (202). This means that the God she knows answers no petition.

The hard-heartedness of the mayor toward the plights of the coloured people in the text shows he is like God as Pa, Harpo, Mr.__, Grady and others, are like him. That which is abstract is made concrete

by these comparisons. Going by this negative attribute, there is a natural inclination to seek for alternatives. Hence, Shug says that "God is inside you and inside everybody else. You come into the world with God" (202). As evidenced by Celie's letters, an examination of the lives of religious people like Samuel and Nettie would reveal that their God does not ultimately answer prayers. Samuel's and other missionaries' goal is "helping people" (242). But the construction of the road en route Olinka to the hinterland deals a great blow to their mission. The road is an image of impoverishment through an external agent since it dislocates the natives' system of worship and truncates the missionaries' mission of helping people.

This is where God as absence and as presence – all in images that represent the absent – come together as an inseparable but indivisible entity. God here is an image that flourishes in every protean ambiguity in The Color Purple, by far superior to the Father-figure that Zilayefa misses and is eternally drawn to without knowing in Yellow-Yellow.

The pleasure that goads Zilayefa, repulses Celie. The same goes for the Ijaw youths who capitalizing on the negligence of the communities by the oil companies, foment trouble by kidnapping their workers and breaking open pipelines to tap crude illegally for personal proceeds. They have evolved into "youth groups" that have "become well oiled extortion machines all in the name of the struggle. They stole, blackmailed, and vandalized for the progress and development of the Ijaw Nation, the Niger Delta" (Agary 158). The same pleasures that goad these youths into the above sinister ventures also lead Admiral Kenneth Alaowei Amalayefa to seek to have carnal knowledge of Yellow. And everybody has rejected Zilayefa's behaviour, the outright knowledge of someone like admiral notwithstanding;

There is the feeling of rejection by all, in varying degrees of awareness from ignorance, suspicion to outright knowledge of the despicable situation they all find themselves. Imagine a section of the country serving as leeches on others. The stage of abortion is the stage of isolation which is the culmination of her castration, knowing too late that the freedom she thinks she has is not much different from that which the goat has with its tethers.

Taking Admiral's treatment of Laye as a premise, one would reason that there is no point pretending to be a helper of the Ijaw Nation and at the centre of the struggle for its extrication from the tight grip of the oil profiteers because he stands out as the most dangerous enemy of the struggle with his destiny-aborting mission towards Zilayefa's life. His treatment of Laye, a member and a textual representative of the group for whom the struggle is meant to help redeem is despicable. It seems to me that the determination of the extent of his culpability can qualify as another subject of investigation.

There is also an attempt to bring Emem, Zilayefa's co-receptionist in a hotel to the foreground as a cause of her predicament and therefore, a root rather than a helper of the already blossoming desires for pleasure Zilayefa is all bent to give expression to. If we situate Emem properly, we find she is a hedon-pinioned, and sagacious in worldly ways. In her, we see the manifestations of the archetypal villain and prompter toward evil by using and stimulating this residual drive for pleasure in Zilayefa to the highest. She is the sort who, though craves for pleasure as well, is always keeping her guards. Her instruction to Laye to invoke this principle in her escapades with Admiral could be kept by the worldly experienced, but not Zilayefa or her like, whose impetuosity would make her exchange virtue for vanity.

The delineation of the father-figure and the trouble it provokes is indeed a protean issue to Zilayefa. Instead of thanking her father, she "thanked God . . . for my luck" (68). In another instance, she says "I quietly begged God to include an escape from the village in my plan" (43). God has now become the distant father-figure, the one who has taken the position of her absent physical father. If God would really hear these prayers, it would never be God that would make her land in Admiral's bed, for God would never in the image of his physical father approve of that. Imagine her imagination running wild thus:

> I started to consider options that had never crossed my mind before, and from what I knew of my mother, those options would never get her approval. I could find my way to a place like Bonny, the base of expatriates working for the oil companies, and sell my body to a whitey. Some girls from my town did that in order to send money home to their families (Agary 35).

Even in Port Harcourt the search for her father albeit subconsciously resurfaced at the chance meeting of Sergio in the city. She exclaims that "my craving for information about Plato resurfaced. My mother's total devotion to me had succeeded only in suppressing, not erasing, my desire to know about my other half" (108).

The absence of Plato Papadopoulos, her Greek father has terrible effects. Her first night with admiral brings this to the fore:

> Admiral was a very handsome man, tall with no potbelly and a charming smile that made his eyes shine. He had permanent dimples and, when he smiled, the dug holes in his face. Whenever I saw him, he was dressed in traditional attire and had a little bounce when he walked. In my eyes he looks so dignified. If I had the luxury of creation a dream father, he would definitely have come out looking like Admiral (120).

From above, while the presence of a father-figure has started a chord unknowingly in Zilayefa, it repulsed Celie in The Color Purple. The same father-figure crushed Zilayefa's first-inner seal in a sexual encounter in Yellow-Yellow as the same figure has done to Celie and Ngozi in The Color Purple and Jude Dibia's Unbridled initiating them for the very first time into "the pleasures of a life time" (Agary 133). This figure, pleasurable and goading as they have been in Zilayefa's case, never portends well or good for Celie and Ngozi. Even Zilayefa owns up that "he is old enough to be my father" to which Emem replies that "when he is rubbing your body, do you think he will be thinking about how old you are? If he wants you to act like his daughter, then he will not ask you to give him things that he cannot have from his daughter" (133). This is an attempt to deflate the father-figure argument, but this is in vain because she never sees beyond the physical manifestation of the psychic motivations in Zilayefa. Zilayefa, on her first night with Admiral, rattles in thought thus: "I felt a deep sense of longing for him, not because of the comfort Emem hinted at, which was money, but because I was hoping that the relationship would give me a taste of close paternal affection that I had never had" (138). And this paternal affection can only be filled by a present father. Admiral is present and is at hand. Therefore he must fill it, for he is the present father of the absent one. Granted that a mixture of recapitulating tug pushes her towards hedonism, the childish inquisitive quest also aids her as she lands in Admiral's hands so fast that with Admiral clutching at the tiniest straw of hope and with his experiences in always getting what he wants from girls of Zilayefa's age, she yields. Her yielding can partly be due to the subduing influence of the father-figure who could not let go Zilayefa until he reached the last rung of bodily pleasure. Again, at this point, if she has never had any close paternal affection, then it is not to be doubted that she never has a grandfather, I mean maternal 'granny'. And this confirms the vacuum that his sexual behavior could be filled with and, therefore, interpreted by. She is a victim of an accidental vacuum like Celie in The Color Purple who grew up not knowing her father, or knowing the father that is not.

If Admiral is an image of a father, Ngozi's father in Dibia's Unbridled is not. He is but a biological father who goes ahead to violate his biological daughter – a sort of domestic violence and violation by one who ought to be a custodian of domesticity. Her memories since this incident, she claims, as "far back as" she could remember "had always been clouded with shame, sadness and denial" (Dibia 196). All this is due to her father's seeking pleasure in a forbidden nest, or say, lair. She narrates the preamble:

> I sat up abruptly when he entered the room but he said nothing, just kept staring at me like I was some ripe fruit or scrumptious meal waiting to be devoured.

> "Papa," I called out. "Papa can I help you with anything?"
>
> In what seemed to be a drugged voice, my father barked: "Mecha onu I – Shut your mouth. I'm not your father. You are a spirit child. You cannot be my daughter." . . .
>
> "You cannot be my daughter," my father kept saying. "No one in my family is light like you are. No one is yellow in my family neither is anyone in your mother's. We are all black. . . . You are yellow" (Dibia 200).

This argument is not to take too long, for he pounces on her, abusing her physically and sexually. We read further that the father:

> ripped off my wrapper and pinned me to the raffia mat on the floor. I screamed once. It was loud. I was piercing. It was animal. It was terror. He shoved one of his hands into my mouth to suppress my scream and I bit had, drawing blood, which tasted salty and metallic. He withdrew his bleeding hand and hit me several times across the face until I stopped screaming and was reduced to subdued sobs.
>
> I didn't know what was happening. All my senses were filled with the acrid stench of my unwashed nakedness and of his rough hands on my young forming breast mounds and the roving thick finger that played rudely with the opening of my womanhood. Was this the same man, who when I was younger would carry me on his laps and play with my fingers? His thick black fingers that tickled me once now violated me (201).

A dimension has been introduced to the erstwhile father-figure that we already have known and it appears Celie has given clues to it The Color Purple when she says God is white. It is the dimension of colour, shades of colour and difference not necessarily meaning race as a cursory critic would want to interpret Celie's assertion and especially when considering the cultural context of The Color Purple as a text containing layers of protests – that of a woman subject first of all, and then, that of black subject. With this father coming from the Igbo group in Nigeria, this act appears not to be consistent with Igbo groups "temporal and non-temporal evaluation of life and the whole complex of their beliefs and practices concerning nature and inter-relational structure of life in the universe", cosmology for short (Ezikeojiaku 37). To this father image, colour falls outside the "unified construct" of belongingness and the filial responsibilities that it demands. To him, difference is absence and nonmember, something that ordinarily ought to be seen as a non-correlate with any incidence of incest (Jeyifo 19). The cases of paedophilia as activities perpetrated by the father-figure's presence or absence with pleasure as the undercurrent motive can be

seen as a response to the circumstances created by this colour anxiety. Ngozi's case is similar that of Celie, occasioning a permanent disjointment of the victims' emotional and sexual platforms. She even owns up concerning all men as Celie has done when endeavouring, for the very first time, to defy the present violence meted out to her by James King, the memory it brings and rebut the image of masculine supremacy and feminine violation thus:

> It was not just him that I fought that night. It was all the men who had damaged me all through the years. It was my father; I finally took hold of his wretched manhood and castrated him. It was my Gerald; I finally told him off for not making any attempt to find me after our last time together. It was Thomas; I finally told him that I would never have interest in him and that parading himself naked in front of me would never change that. It was every man who had looked down on me because I was a woman; I finally looked them straight in the eyes and spat on them (Dibia 233-234).

In fact, we have stumbled on the facts which psychologists may have missed since the inception of their discipline, or so I think – the fact that an abused woman or women generally have the naturally tendency to think in images, and always making present the absent either for good or for bad; images that range from the particular to the general and images that can be erected as a defence or can be thrown down as an escape route. This is what Ngozi has made us understand. What is true of Ngozi has been true of Celie, Zilayefa and a host of other female literary figures not only in the Nigerian, but most literary traditions. For Celie, it is the image of the afore-father that she sees in every sexual encounter with Mr.__ and not the image of the forever-father, that is, God. There are mutable instances of displacements here. Yet the father she sees is not the father she thinks she knows.

Ngozi is bolder than Celie, though not different. Like Celie, she has the courage to stage a fight with the deception of a person called James – the one she has connected via the internet and has dared all odds to come to the United Kingdom to live with as man and wife. She dares, but not like Zilayefa. Though not having been subjected to such physical violence as that of Ngozi, or Erika her internet name of convenience, she is nonetheless harassed by the sexual advances of a sixty-year-old man who when he is told she is pregnant, could not look up from the newspaper he is reading, but looking "cold and distant" (Agary 160), handed her money and grunted that she goes to Island Clinic for an abortion if she really is pregnant.

In the above occasion, he tears to shreds the image of a father that Zilayefa's phantasy has built for her. And it is not the abortion cramps and pains that twined her which would enable this empty void of the

father-space to get filled. With Derrida's adumbration of Saussure's concept of presence/absence in Writing and Difference, we are able to decode the constant mention of mother in her cries. The mention of her mother and the suffering that never leaves her memory are all primary indications of the secondary void that is not there and which can never be filled. In pangs, she remembers:

> My life was out of focus, and I wished for the days when my mother planned my life, but I could not go back to what I had rejected. I needed to refocus, and this time I would have to do it myself. Everything I had had in life up until that point had been handed to me on a platter, and I had taken it all for granted. I had forgotten the coarseness of my mother's hands, which worked tirelessly so that I could achieve more than she did. . . . That evening I remembered. I saw my mother's face, and though there was very little I had done in Port Harcourt that would have made her happy, she was smiling. I cried because through her smile I could hear say that I had let her down. . . . I cried but could not feel sorry for myself because I had made the choices that got me into trouble I had allowed myself, like an empty canoe, to drift along with the flow of the river.
>
> . . . I lay curled up in the foetal position on the cold tile floor until my sweat and the blood that gushed from between my legs drenched my clothes, and I began to shiver from the cold and the pain. I begged God for forgiveness and called on all my mother spirits for comfort. Even so, I had to bite down on a towel to keep from screaming as my body pushed out blood and clumps of tissue that had been forming a little person inside me for almost three months. . . . I was enveloped in darkness and kept company only by the sounds of the night that lulled me to sleep (177-178).

It is at the above stage of reaching her limits and destination, a traumatic apex to which pleasure could goad one that she assumes in Fryean terms, a pharmakos (Frye 41). At this point, she gets tipped off as the pharmakos swimming in its realm. She calls the action leading to her pregnancy as "indiscretion" (Agary 177), but we know better – it is the father-figure in both Admiral and Sergio, none of whom she could certainly attribute the foetus to, that resulted to this calamitous situation. In the mist of the pains she receives while aborting the foetus with no known father like she has been, one sees a glimpse of the absence of the father-image up to the third generation. This situation could have been the reason why she prays to the God Celie vows she no longer prays to in The Color Purple to forgive her.

It appears that in the pharmakosian condition, it is easier to find an anchorage in the God-image while, as the pharmakos gradually integrates with the community, she reverts from that same image. It is possible that if Zilayefa calls on God and he will answer. But it is not until she has suffered the full cycle of the consequences of her action. And in fact, this rules in all literary traditions where the tragic mythos prevails if one has been very alert as it has, somehow, been confirmed in the works that form this study.

So far, we have seen the protean nature of the father-figure in these two works as it would probably be in most literatures. It has ranged from what is present to that which is absent as it has also ranged from the physical to the metaphysical, greatly motivated the behaviours of these characters, sexually or otherwise. The manifestations have just one operational principle: that of displacement. Other spheres this principle provoked may be subject to further investigations just as it is hoped that this study would illuminate not only Freudian but also Jungian studies concerning displacements of the father-image in literature.

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