

Chinua Achebe in Malawi: *Things Fall Apart* and pan-Africanism

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Introduction

Before you can teach a novel like *Things Fall Apart* you have to fight your way through a vast amount of history and sociology. This is often uphill work, but it can also be very rewarding. In discussions about concepts like “tribe”, “traditional African religion”, “orature”, “African history” or “essentialism”, you as a teacher can occasionally find yourself, if not changing lives, then at least challenging firmly-held convictions or clarifying diffuse opinions based on ignorance or plain prejudice, mostly as a result of inadequate newspaper reporting.

(Kirsten Holst Petersen: 1997)

To accomplish its goals, the Malawi Writers Group consciously embarked upon a carefully selected strategy of interventions. The group made a deliberate effort to project and promote a pan-Africanist image of the national identity. This was a strategy of some global significance, even; since the rather eclectic list of books proscribed by the politics of Banda’s aesthetics included such Malawian writers as David Rubadiri, Legson Kayira, Kanyama Chiume, Sam Mpasu, and Jack Mapanje. So, too, other African writers, like Chinua Achebe and Wole Soyinka, as well as fiction by James Baldwin, John Steinbeck, George Orwell, and Ernest Hemingway.

(Lupenga Mphande: 1996)

Although the situation depicted by Petersen above applies to the challenges of teaching African Literature in Denmark, it encapsulates in many ways, when you have rephrased/replaced the concepts that is, the challenge of teaching *Things Fall Apart* in Malawi. Instead of concepts like “tribe”, etc., curiosity about the kola-nut, palm-wine and Yam foo-foo would require some clarification/elucidation before you arrive in the classroom. Once identified as a Nigerian and a literary scholar at that, even before any classroom encounter, curiosity about these cultural signifiers often range from the philosophical to

mundane: have you brought any kola-nuts?; what exactly does Achebe mean by “he who brings kola brings life?”; how do proverbs become the palm-oil with which words are eaten? etc. etc. are a few of the prominent conjectures. However, discussions about concepts like “tribe”, “traditional African religion”, “orature”, “African history” or “essentialism”, may not present practical difficulties in the same way as Petersen has presented it above, but as a teacher you can also “occasionally find yourself, if not changing lives, then at least challenging firmly-held convictions or clarifying diffuse opinions based on ignorance or plain prejudice”, of a different sort.

Lupenga Mphande’s seminal “Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda and the Malawi Writers Group: The (un)Making of a Cultural Tradition” articulates the cultural and political contexts of the era when a pan-African outlook was not particularly in vogue in Malawi. The totalitarian regime of Dr. Banda had appropriated/un-made a whole range of cultural traditions, to paraphrase Mphande, in order to project an outlook that regulated, among other things, ‘literary productions in Malawi so as to maintain British cultural hegemony, *but to do so as part of an overall plan of and for an African autocracy* (Mphande 1996:82).¹ As if the pan-African project itself was not problematic enough, the added contexts of expropriation and un-making of cultural traditions have without doubt problematised further the Malawian outlook vis-à-vis the pan-African project. The Banda administration came to prominence at a time when autocratic regimes were mushrooming all over the continent and Achebe’s own native Nigeria was plunged into a fratricidal war of attrition, six years after it won political independence from Britain.

The primary aim of this study is to examine, in critical terms, the Pan-African project itself, and the ways Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* establishes a relationship of “signifying” between itself and the historical period, when the vast majority of African nations received political, but hardly economic independence. As a text characterised by tertiary formal revision, or a process that the African-American critic, Henry Louis Gates has described as one through which authors revise and signify upon at least, two antecedent texts, *Things Fall Apart* is caught in a web of historical and sociological *fait accompli*. The era of totalitarian rule in Malawi is one of such contexts, and the cultural and political contexts of that era are examined here against the backdrop of a pan-African outlook that is still as problematic today, as it was in the days of totalitarianism in Malawi and other parts of the African continent.

The ogbanje cycle: Chewa matrilineality and *Things Fall Apart*

Ekwefi had suffered a great deal in her life. She had borne ten children and nine of them had died in infancy, usually before the age of three. As she buried one child after another her sorrow gave way to despair and then to grim resignation. The birth of her children, which should be a woman's crowning glory, became for Ekwefi mere physical agony devoid of promise. The naming ceremony after seven market weeks became an empty ritual. Her deepening despair found expression in the names she gave her children. One of them was a pathetic cry, Onwumbiko – "Death, I implore you." But death took no notice; Onwumbiko died in his fifteenth month. The next child was a girl, Ozoemena – "May it not happen again." She died in her eleventh month, and two others after her. Ekwefi then became defiant and called her next child Onwuma – "Death may please himself." And he did.

(Things Fall Apart)

I am not going just to listen to some fools of the O.A.U. who do not know what they are talking about. No! No! I am not. And even at the United Nations itself, some of the things, resolutions, passed there are just childish. Childish!...Other Africans, other Prime Ministers, or even other Presidents follow whatever is said by their friends without thinking for themselves simply because they are ignorant...That is the trouble in Africa today – too many ignorant people who do not know anything about history and if they do know anything about it they do not know how to interpret and apply it. That is why Africa is in a mess...This is the tragedy of Africa: too many ignorant people in a position of power and responsibility.

(Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda, Addressing the Malawian Parliament shortly after the formation of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in 1966.)

Ekwefi's (Mother Africa?) odyssey – like Banda's expropriations, especially the contamination of Chewa matrilineality which, according to Mphande, elicited the Malawian poet, Frank Chipasula's haunting question: "if we destroy our own culture and custom (...) aren't we harvesting 'a stinging maternal curse?'" – epitomises the precarious state of Mother Africa at the dawn of political independence all over the continent. It could be said that like Ekwefi,

several of the children Mother Africa “had borne had died in infancy, usually before the age of three”.

The Ogbanje cycle is a prominent theme in *Things Fall Apart*. It reiterates a context that could best be described as stubborn continuity. In his introduction to the 1990 edition of *The Heinemann Book of African Poetry in English*, the editor, Adewale Maja-Pearce observes that “in terms of the continent’s dictatorships, Malawi is only an extreme manifestation of the collective experience since independence in the early 1960s.” Maja-Pearce ed. 1990:xiv). John Lwanda (1993) is a book length study of what it calls Banda’s use of “both Western and African traditional, specifically Chewa, and quasi-Chewa methods and symbolism”² to achieve a lasting supremacy. But it is Caroline Alexander’s “An Ideal State: A Personal History” that supplies the ways this potpourri of Western and African traditional methods were realised at the epistemological levels. Alexander’s lengthy account was published in the December 1991 edition of *The New Yorker*, some five years after she left Malawi – having helped to establish the Department of Classics at Malawi’s premier Chancellor College. If Alexander could not conceal her disdain for what she describes as “a two-year contract – not only to teach Latin but, more improbably, to establish a Department of Classics at the University”, the context of her disdain and the improbability of her Herculean (to use a Classic terminology) task could be said to have been created by the Presidential fiat that declares: “ALL EDUCATED PEOPLE MUST LEARN LATIN” – a pronouncement then explicated by thoughtful editorials’. Alexander was acutely aware that Latin has been taught for many years throughout Africa and “the Universities of Lagos, Ibadan and Zimbabwe have Classics Departments”. But among the papers sent to Alexander prior to her arrival in Malawi was the booklet entitled “Classical Studies in Malawi” written by Professor Robert Ogilvie, a distinguished Roman historian from the University of St. Andrews in Scotland, which establishes the peculiar context of the introduction of Latin in Malawi’s premier institution:

In the introduction to the booklet was a curious sentence, which I noted at the time with only mild interest. “The original inspiration for the promotion of Classical Studies was given by His Excellency the Life President, Ngwazi Dr. H. Kamuzu Banda,” Professor Ogilvie had written. I attributed this acknowledgement to his desire to conform to a tradition (or necessity) of crediting any innovation at all to the head of state. *This was Africa, after all; doubtless such homage derived from ancient tribal custom.* (Alexander 1991:54 emphasis mine.)

Alexander's "this was Africa, after all" recalls in an uncanny way the manner in which the District Commissioner's countenance at the tail end of *Things Fall Apart* changed instantaneously as "the resolute administrator in him gave way to the student of primitive custom" (p.146). But Alexander's American/ness merely reinforces the cultural context even further, as she confesses:

The reaction to my arrival on the campus was one of wary welcome. Contrary to my expectation, it was not my Malawian colleagues who evinced the most scepticism about my assignment but the British. Their attitude, it soon became clear, arose not from a concern for the integrity of Malawian culture, which might be threatened by the importation of a traditionally Western subject, but from a cultural possessiveness of their own (*manifested at the national level by the elevation of Homer above all other poets at the Albert Memorial in London.*) (Alexander 1991:56.)

Thus, it is against the backdrop of a leader whose 'ability not only to straddle but to master two cultures which accounted in great part for his initial undeniably immense charismatic appeal' that the Presidential fiat that led to the inauguration of Classical Studies in Malawi should be understood. In person, Dr. Banda, according to Alexander, "is a small, unprepossessing figure, standing barely five feet tall. Nature's curtailment of fair proportion, however, is compensated for by a sartorial elegance, and Banda retains the habit he formed while practicing medicine in England of dressing like an English gentleman, in Savile Row suits and an ever-present homburg. *An ostentatious fly whisk is the only African element of his invariable costume.*" (Alexander 1991:60 emphasis mine.)

The concrete event that led to the inauguration of "Classical Studies" in Malawi is now part and parcel of post-Banda Malawi's oral/remembered as well as written history. Again, (Alexander 1991:58) is a faithful recorder:

The President's strong feeling on the subject of things classical apparently received their most unambiguous expression on the occasion of the university's commencement (sic) ceremony in the fall of 1982, shortly before my arrival. Oblivious of the dry-season sun blazing down on the college courtyard, the President, in his capacity as chancellor of the university, held his audience captive for over an hour while delivering the customary address; but instead of offering his congratulations to the young men and women on their graduation and reflecting and advising them on their prospects, he had, in the presence

of the assembled parents and university faculty, launched with no ado into the issue foremost on his mind. "How can you people call yourselves a real university if you don't have a Department of Classics?" he demanded. Just a university without a Classics Department was not really a university, Banda held...It was impossible to understand the mind of the West – "our conquerors" – without knowledge of the West's psychological and historical heritage. Africans would forever be alienated from the mainstream, and thus powerless, unless they cultivated this essential background knowledge.

In the stampede that followed this Presidential tirade, the university rushed to establish, without recourse to Professor Ogilvie's recommendation that a modest programme be started, preferably by someone with a background in "Classics, Philosophy and Theology."

The epistemological implications of these critical oversights are at the heart of what I have termed 'this potpourri of Western and African traditional methods' above. What Malawi, like any other African nation, requires is not a group of elites speaking/versed in Latin and Greek but one that would be capable of utilizing/recognizing, at a comparative level, the similarities and dis-similarities with the African socio-cultural and political situation, contemporaneous with their age, in comparison with the political and cultural legacies of ancient Greece and Rome. There was a crucial need, for example, to integrate the Classics programme with the other subjects in the Humanities, for example. Again, Alexander (1991:72) has recorded faithfully how the basis for comparison could be broached:

Oral traditions (Homeric and African), Roman Imperialism (cultural and otherwise), empire building, the sociology of slavery, epic, praise poetry (Pindaric and Zulu), sacrificial rites, ancestor worship – all represented topics in which there was a genuine resonance between the classical tradition and that of contemporary and historical Africa.

But, like its numerous counterparts on the African continent, there is a vast body of writing on the sociology of the Banda regime to warrant any further elaboration here. As far back as 1967, the Ghanaian writer, Ayi Kwei Armah had written his seminal essay, "African Socialism – Utopian or Scientific?" (Armah 1967:6-30) to alert the continent to the fact that African leaders were hiding behind all manners of modes of Africanisation of the political system to obfuscate and confuse the populace. In Malawi: 'The enlightened guide o

Malawi's democracy has developed into a despot; moreover, his proclaimed deference to African traditions is a smoke screen, for the model of his peculiar form of government is in fact anciently Western. (Alexander 1991:64). *In the Footsteps of Mr. Kurtz: Living on the Brink of Disaster in Mobutu's Congo*, is the euphemistic title of British journalist, Michela Wrong's best seller on yet another of Africa's post-independence regimes and one that lasted for thirty-two years of unparalleled profligacy even by African standards. According to Wrong:

The post-independence era had seen a flourishing of African sensibility. From Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah's vision of black consciousness and pan-Africanism had spread across the continent. In Tanzania, Julius Nyerere had launched his doctrine of socialism and self-reliance. In Senegal, Leopold Senghor had preached the doctrine of "Negritude". As the leader of the third largest African nation, with the awareness of all those incredible mineral riches at the back of his mind, Mobutu felt greatness was rightfully his. His country would play the leading role in the non-aligned movement, become the West's preferred African interlocutor and act as a catalyst for change on the continent and beyond, he decided. His head ringing with the praises of his entourage, the self-taught former army sergeant launched himself into a campaign he was signally ill-equipped to see through. (Wrong 2001:94.)

In Malawi, as we have seen, the political system attempted to incarnate all the Utopian Ideals of the Ideal Republic that Plato recognised and outlined in the *Republic*.

In June 1997 when I arrived in Malawi to take up a lectureship at Chancellor College as the first Nigerian academic to ever do that I had had my job cut out for me. It was the ousting of the old dictator that made my appointment possible in the first place, and as a teacher of Literary Theory as well as African and Black literatures, I did not just occasionally find myself, to quote Petersen once again, "if not changing lives, then at least challenging firmly-held convictions or clarifying diffuse opinions based on ignorance or plain prejudice," mostly as a result of the parlous state of the Pan-African project on the one hand, and the ideological precursors discussed above, on the other. Unlike Caroline Alexander, I came from the "Other" side of the political and economic divide to find a community of students, administrators and fellow academics to whom the concept of an expatriate meant a White European or

his/her White American counterpart. The expatriate community was still predominantly British, and all the cultural possessiveness that Alexander described above still manifested itself fully. The idea of a paradigm shift at a global, continental or national level if acknowledged did not appear to move or urge anyone to take another look at the curriculum, and at the "Faith and Knowledge Seminar" series where I first presented a paper on what I called "Blackness: Faith, Culture, Ideology and Discourse, (Abodunrin 1999) a European member of the expatriate community accused me openly of importing radical Black scholarship into Malawi. However, before I draw further conclusions on this pattern of experience, it is important to situate *Things Fall Apart* and the Pan-African project, not just in Malawi but also in other parts of the continent, in another context: how does Achebe's mythic depiction of pre-colonial reality in Igboland compare or contrast with Plato's equally mythic version of Idealism?

The allegory of the cave: *Things Fall Apart* and pan-Africanism

However, it is a little surprising that the *Republic*, given its centrality in Plato's theory of knowledge and in particular the allegory of the cave, given its images in chains, has not received as much attention in imaginative literature. As far as I know, only in Ayi Kwei Armah's narrative *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, published in 1968, does the allegory figure prominently in the interpretation of the post-colonial condition in Africa.

(Ngugi wa Thiong'o: 1998:2)

Only once in his life was Plato given the opportunity of seeing his political theories put into practice: when he was in his early sixties, he was invited by Dionysius of Syracuse to construct in the tyrant's kingdom the Ideal State outlined in "The Republic." The result of this collaboration was a dismal failure – in part because of the young tyrant's ego and in part, no doubt, because of the nature of the Ideal State itself. Plato had foreseen that the actualisation of the blueprint he carried in his head might have to wait for another age and another place.

(Caroline Alexander 1991)

Things Fall Apart, as observed above, is a text characterised by tertiary formal revision, or a process that the African-American critic, Henry Louis Gates Jr.,

has described as one through which authors revise and signify upon at least, two antecedent texts.

In “The Definition of African Literature Revisited”, S.A. Dseagu (1995:35) has described the continent’s literary experience as unique partly because it is (...) in Africa alone that the literatures of the diverse linguistic, racial, cultural, social, and political groups, some of which are large and complex enough to have been regarded as nation-states should they have been elsewhere, are all classified together into a single continent-wide basket as African literature. This anomaly was caused by the historical factors of the Atlantic slave trade and colonialism which engendered an idea in Europe that Africans were inferior and were lacking in complex institutions. Hegel has often been cited as the most systematic exponent of that negative view of the continent.

Ngugi wa Thiong’o’s (2001) paper and his seminal collection of essays *Penpoints, Gunpoints, and Dreams: Towards a Critical Theory of the Arts and the State in Africa* (1998) in particular, revisit the language question in African literature, describing language as “a product of a community in its economic, political and cultural evolution in time and space”. While the former is the Ashby Lecture given at Clare Hall, Cambridge in May 1999, the latter are the Clarendon Lectures in English Literature organized by the Oxford University English Faculty. The four lectures in *Penpoints* are among the clearest and probably the most historicist of Ngugi’s endeavours on the language issue that has consumed so much of his critical and creative energy for more than three decades now. In the Ashby Lecture, Ngugi describes the creative and critical issues at stake as follows: “In most of my publications, principally in *Decolonizing the Mind, Penpoints, Gunpoints and Dreams, and Writers in Politics*, I have tried to argue that the language question is so crucial because language occupies a significant position in the entire hierarchy of the organization of wealth, power and values in a society.” That no African society can become fully aware of itself as an entity, combined with the fact that “language is what most helps in the movement of a community from the state of being for itself when it becomes aware of itself as an entity”, and the ways in which this self-consciousness gives the community its spiritual strength to keep on reproducing its being as it continually renews itself in culture, in its power relations and in its negotiation with its environment, has been at the centre of Ngugi’s argument on the language question. The complicity of the postcolonial states, and Ngugi doubts “if there is a single country in our continent which is

free of this stigma”, once they have developed what ‘Engels calls that “special public power”’ over society that was largely introduced by colonialism to control and keep the colonized in their place, is, according to Ngugi, coterminous with “the four features of art which would illuminate the conflict and give a clue to why the creative state of art is always at war, actually or potentially, with the crafty art of the state” (Ngugi 1998:20-25).

In Malawi during the Banda era, the creative state of art was *actually* at war with the crafty art of the state. That this war was couched in terms of a struggle for legitimization of one myth over another merely reiterates another fact of the African historical experience. In his rigorously theorized book, Patrick Colm Hogan (2000) examines what he calls a distortion that is, though sometimes subtle, “so severe that it may undermine one’s entire sense of purpose, one’s entire imagination of a future life, and thus result in complete and psychologically devastating despair – as it does in the case of the main character.” The main character of Hogan’s reference is Okonkwo, whose psychological affectations incarnate what Hogan also describes as “Culture and Despair: Custom and the extinction of Hope” in the chapter on *Things Fall Apart*. According to Hogan, the schizophrenic reaction that the colonial contact and its distortion of Igbo culture in general and Igbo gender in particular, has bred in the African is coterminous with what the Greeks called *eudaimonia*:

Familiarity of place and act and expectation gives us a feeling of security. It provides one condition for what the Greeks called *eudaimonia* – living well, having a benevolent *daimon*, that element of divinity that dwells within, like God or conscience. The concept translates directly into Igbo – having a good *chi*, a beneficent spirit structuring the happenstance of life, a form of individual or “personalized providence” (Isichei, 25). Without ease of practical identity, habit, tradition, we cannot have *eudaimonia*, a benevolent *chi*. Indeed, the rapid loss of habit, the quick undoing of practical identity, produces panic, a sense of dis-equilibrium and loss, a feeling that too much is new and one cannot react. It is like a nightmare in which, suddenly, the paths have all changed their course and disappeared. The ground itself is unfamiliar. When this feeling is prolonged beyond panic, when the sense of loss persists, it breeds despair. (Hogan 2000:103)

The allegory of the cave, could be said, to be complete when one recognizes that this is why colonialism breeds despair: “It suddenly destroys the

indigenous systems of work, law, politics, ritual, and thus shatters the people's practical identities" (Ngugi 1998:105).

I have argued elsewhere that 'it is not an accident that Chinua Achebe refers to Ayi Kwei Armah's first novel, *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1968), (the first African narrative, according to Ngugi wa Thiong'o, where the allegory of the cave feature prominently in the interpretation of the postcolonial condition in Africa), "as a sick book."³ In order to explore the allegory fully in *The Beautiful Ones*, Armah signifies upon "outward" rather than "inward" looking reflections on the African experience by asking, among others, the following set of questions:

And yet these were the socialists of Africa, fat, perfumed, soft with the ancestral softness of Chiefs who have sold their people and are celestially happy with the fruit of the trade (*The Beautiful Ones*, p.131.)

He could have asked if anything was supposed to have changed after all, from the days of Chiefs selling their people for the trinkets of Europe (*The Beautiful Ones*, p.141.)

In my third year "African Novel" class I did not teach Achebe alone, but other writers from across the continent; Armah, Ngugi, Sembene Ousmane, Mariama Ba etc, just as in the fourth year "Studies in African Poetry" a variety of voices and traditions are taught. The result of giving a continental experience and outlook to the students have yielded, in my view, positive results which reflects in the range of topics tackled by the students in their long essays. In the final year Long essay (this year 2003), for example, a final year undergraduate wrote her dissertation on the use of myth in the Nigerian Femi Abodunrin's *It Would Take Time: Conversation with Living-Ancestors* and the Malawian Steve Chimombo's *Napolo Poems*.⁴

Conclusion

Throughout his career Achebe has kept pace with the times by responding to the changing preoccupations of his society. Forty years ago, when he wrote *Things Fall Apart* at the end of the colonial era, he was a reconstructionist, dedicated to creating a dignified image of the African past; today he is an angry reformer crusading against the immorality and injustices of the African present. His novels thus not

only chronicle one hundred years of Nigerian history but also reflect the dominant African intellectual concerns of the past four decades.

(Bernth Lindfors, *Conversation with Chinua Achebe*)

The past four decades have been momentous – some will say calamitous – ones for the African continent. When Caroline Alexander wrote and published her “Personal History” in *The New Yorker* in 1991, the totalitarian regime of Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda had reached a terminal point but was not dead yet, and Alexander concluded her essay by asking:

What will happen in Malawi when its sole Philosopher King, now aged ninety-three, passes away? Banda has not named a successor, as is traditionally the practice of a paramount chief.

Today, we know some of the answers to Alexander’s question. Chinua Achebe and all the other authors named in Lupenga Mphande’s essay above are no longer banned in Malawi, and thus, the creative state of art could be said to have moved from an *actual* to a *potential* state of war with the crafty art of the state. Also, the Department of Classics that Alexander left on ‘somewhat shaky, but still in existence’ is today in more dire straits. At least, my own attempt at Faculty level to proffer a critical opinion on the future of the Classics Department elicited a counter response from the then British head of the department. “On teaching Classics in Malawi” is Michael Chappell’s response to “people (who) are often surprised that Classics is taught in Malawi.” But Chappell has also since moved on leaving the department even in a more precarious state than what Alexander describes above.

The salient point, however, is that above all the Philosopher King has since passed away, too, and like Plato before him recognised that “it requires not one generation but several to legitimatise new myths,” and the question as to “whether the educated elite in Malawi have been sufficiently converted, in this short time, to their Philosopher King’s philosophy” can also be put to rest.

Notes

1. Examples of the expropriation of integral aspects of Chewa matrinality by the Banda regime abound, and Caroline Alexander has documented some of them as follows: ‘President Banda indeed encourages the performance of traditional songs and their accompanying dances; the songs, however, have been given new words and new functions. For example, an old song traditionally sung by women and girls as they dance the *chintali* (a dance

performed in a circle) at weddings is now also sung by women at political gatherings, or specifically to entertain the President. The bridal song

<i>Koto koto</i>	(Koto koto koto
<i>M'soziyo</i>	Behold the tears
<i>Koto koto koto</i>	Koto koto koto
<i>Kodi olikuti wamuna?</i>	Where is the husband?)
Has become	
<i>Kokolikoko</i>	(Kokolikoko
<i>Kwacha ku Malawi</i>	There is dawn in Malawi
<i>Ngwazi Kamuzu pobwera</i>	The hero Kamuzu as he came)

See Caroline Alexander, "An Ideal State: A Personal History," in *The New Yorker*, December 16 1991, pp.53-88

2. For detail see John Lwanda, *Kamuzu Banda of Malawi: A Study in Promise, Power and Paralysis – 1961 to 1993*.
3. Achebe's pronouncement almost became the standard upon which Armah's novel was judged, and having reacted to works like Joyce Cary's *Mister Johnson* and Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, perceiving them as figments of the colonialist's imagination, Achebe's realist or liberal humanist perspective stops short of a thorough cyclical critique of the African situation as a result of the romantic self-preservative reflection that informed this phase of the African experience. For detail see, Olufemi J. Abodunrin, "The Literary Links of Africa and the African Diaspora: A Discourse in Cultural and Ideological Signification," (PhD thesis, Stirling University, Stirling, Scotland, August 1992)
4. See Helen Kachala, "The Use of Myth in Femi Abodunrin's *It Would Take Time* and Steve Chimombo's *Napolo Poems*," (B Ed dissertation, Department of English, Chancellor College, 2003)
For detail see, Michael Chappell, "On Teaching Classics in Malawi", in *Journal of Humanities*, 14 (2000) 99-109. Even the most casual reader of Chappell's essay cannot escape "the elevation of Homer above all other poets" with statements such as "Derek Walcott's Caribbean epic *Omeros* (Greek for Homer) has many references to Homeric themes and characters in a story set largely on Walcott's home island of St. Lucia" and many others.

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