# ENGLISH LITERATURE, RACE AND AFRICA: THE MYTH OF THE GLOBAL VILLAGE

## Inaugural Lecture Series

**by**

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## Introduction

The Oxford English Dictionary (OED) gives the following primary definition of inaugural: "Of or pertaining to inauguration: forming part of the ceremony of inauguration or of the formal commencement of any course or career". The same dictionary defines the verb "to inaugurate" as follows: "To admit or induct (a person) to an office or dignity by a formal ceremony; to consecrate, install, invest". An inaugural lecture therefore is a solemn and serious academic ritual which a newly appointed University professor is required to perform, first to demonstrate that he is not an intellectual heretic and secondly to justify his professorship by ample display of the range and depth of his learning. It also offers the lecturer the opportunity and occasion to propound a new theory in his discipline, or to engage his society in a worthwhile debate in an area of great importance to that society. It is the one, rare occasion when a professor may justifiably put on display what the late Kwame Nkrumah charmingly characterised as "academic arrogance and intellectual pomposity".[1]

Since I attained my professorship some seventeen years ago, I may be forgiven if I play down the pomposity and moderate the arrogance. For the same reason, I need not keep solemnly to the prescribed ritual of celebrating my admission into the privileged club of the best minds of the society. Still on what I shall not do. I shall endeavour not to cite myself unless when absolutely necessary, because for us in the Humanities, modesty has always been the hallmark of the cultured mind. But I intend, in the best tradition of inaugurals, to raise some important questions about an aspect of contemporary society as we enter the new millennium. I have therefore decided to reflect specifically on the perception of the African by those whom the Senegalese poet and statesman Leopold Sedar Senghor called the "lucky races" in a world in which the African appears to be a mere spectator in the exciting global drama of change. I shall do that by reflecting on how the European has seen the African in history and literature over the centuries. For as the Greek philosopher Socrates once observed, "the unexamined life is not worth living" (Plato, Apology 38b). And for the African of the 21st century, the need to examine his life in an ever shrinking universe is not only imperative but urgent.

I have divided the lecture into three parts: the first is a general introduction to the discipline called literature or literary studies. In the second part, I shall examine the way

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African characters and the African continent have been handled by selected English authors from William Shakespeare to Graham Greene. In the this part, I will also investigate contemporary English (and indeed, and some American) attitudes towards Africa and the African, and suggest that these attitudes are consequences of centuries of social conditioning and are likely to be with us for a long, long time yet. Further, I shall show by implication, that the continued dependence on European socio-economic and political models by Africans only serves to further reinforce and perpetuate these attitudes. In the third and final part of this lecture, I shall examine the phenomenon called the 'Global Village' and demonstrate that the concept is a convenient myth that guarantees the perpetuation of the exploitation of the less developed parts of the World by the luckier races. It is my hope that at the end of this lecture, the need to examine and re-examine the African life will be a foregone conclusion.

**What is Literature**

So what is literature? The question may sound absurd not only because students across the faculties talk confidently about "literature review" and not only because every field of knowledge has its own "literature" - that body of written information about the field or discipline - it may sound so because I know too well that most of us here are familiar with Shakespeare, Achebe, Dickens, Hardy, Soyinka, J.P. Clark and a host of other writers. We even talk of oral literature or what some dubious purists call orature: those tales which embody the wisdom of our people, and constitute our first encounter with the shared experience of the race, told by moonlight and in these days heard on radio or even re-enacted on television. In short, literature is any idea put into words in the form of a story, play or poem, written or oral, directly or indirectly, about the human condition or human experience. Directly, when human beings are the actors and characters in the tale; indirectly when animals, or even inanimate objects or abstract ideas are the chief characters. Whatever the form the story or play or poem may take, it is invariably an aspect of human experience. It is for that reason that M.H. Abrams (62) defines *fiction* as an aspect of "the factual and moral world of actual human experience".

I rather like this definition because although in a limited sense fiction is now synonymous with the novel, (Raymond Williams, 134-135) the word originally was associated with "Plot" or "Story" of a literary work, two concepts which have remained important in any literary discourse.

There are broadly speaking, two categories of literature. There is serious and there is, what for want of a better term, we may call non-serious or popular literature. The main difference is that the former deals with significant insights into the mind of man and woman in a technically structured form. Needless to say, the latter deals usually with the ordinary human experience told in a naive, superficial and cruddy structured form. "The Onitsha Market novel" is a typical example. So also are the many romances aimed at young people, especially young women. This type of literature tends to have a pre-packaged plot, which with a slight variation is replicated in book after book. Literature of this type has its own place in the literary culture of a people.

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Our concern here is with serious literature. That is, literature that expresses life: literature that probes into the innermost recesses of the human mind and unveils the complex psychical and psychological forces that propel us to our different destinies. In short, literature that encompasses the totality of human experience. And that is why we are tempted to call literature the king of all disciplines because all forms of knowledge find eloquent, realistic and adequate expression in literature. In a word, literature embraces in a unique and fundamental way, the thoughts and deeds of men and women and imposes its own reality on our perception and experience of the World.

There are many other definitions of literature naturally but at the core of all such definitions is the word *mimesis* - a Greek word used by Aristotle in his definition of tragedy in *The Poetics*. For every art is indeed an imitation of nature, to a greater or lesser degree. But it is not the vulgar imitation: rather it is the imitation of *the essence of things*. True literature imitates the core characteristics of human life and human experience and always seeks to reproduce or re-enact the serious aspects of the human drama. Indeed, literature does more than merely imitate: it generates a whole new world by the simple projection of the world we know so well. It is amazing how much of the most important scientific inventions were first conceptualised and expressed by the literary mind. The ancient Greek legend of Daedalus first demonstrated the feasibility of flight as a scientific proposition or hypothesis and Samuel Johnson in *Rasselas 1759* foresaw the destructive use to which man's mastery of flight could be put. All the noise about cloning would perhaps be more restrained if we recall that Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) provided the scientist with the material and the laboratory to create a man.

Literature brings into being new and unheard of experiences and extends man's capacity for imagination to the limit within the context of a given social and intellectual milieu. As Shakespeare puts it in his inimitable manner:

> *The Poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,*
> *Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven,*
> *And as imagination bodies forth*
> *The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen*
> *Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing,*
> *A local habitation and a name.*
> *A Midsummer Nights' Dream* (V. 1.12-18)

It is for this reason that Aristotle rated the poet (under which title is subsumed all creative artists) superior to the historian because as he put it, the historian tells of what has happened, while the poet tells of the things that might happen. In other words, literature explains the possibilities of the human mind. For this reason also, according to Aristotle, "poetry is something more philosophical and more worthy of serious attention than history: for while poetry is concerned with universal truths, history treats of particular facts" (Dorsch 44).

It is perhaps important to remember that *The Poetics* was in a sense a response to Plato's invectives against the poet. Those familiar with Plato's *Republic* (Book II, Book III and

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Book X) may well wonder why so much attention was given to literature. But with a little reflection we should understand Plato's predicament. It is the problem of all authorities, of all politicians, be they civilians or soldiers: they are frightened of truth; they will like to have one kind of truth and not the other. And so Plato denies the poet, the artist, a place in his new republic, unless of course the artist is willing to function as a megaphone for the latest official ideology. In Plato's view, Homer the legendary Greek Poet may be the most poetical and the first of the tragic poets, but there will be no place for him in the new republic, unless of course he is prepared to write to please the rulers of the land. And so Plato advises the guardians of the city to "be quite sure in your mind that only such specimens of poetry as are hymns to the gods or praises of good men are to be received into the city." (Book X 607).

We can see here the very germ of censorship and we may console ourselves with the rather unprofitable knowledge that the travails of the *Satanic Verses* and initial problems of *The Man Died* date back to the fourth century before Christ. In sum Plato's conditional concessions were such that it was difficult for the new republic to accommodate the poet. As he put it, "And so we may now with justice refuse to allow him [the poet] entrance to a city which is to be well governed, because he arouses and fosters and strengthens this part [the imaginative] of the soul and destroys the reasoning part". (BK X. 605).

One thing, however, is clear from Plato's discussion: literature has profound social and political implications. For as Wordsworth observed in 1798, poetry, when it is genuine, true and important, must have a worthy purpose (Preface to *The Lyrical Ballads).* It always makes a significant comment, an important observation on human nature and human society. It avoids simplistic and narrow morality but represents poignantly the many-sided nature of humanity. In the words of Wordsworth, "poetry is the first and last of all knowledge - it is as immortal as the heart of man".

Literature records the strengths and weaknesses of men and women and celebrates man's mastery over the universe. Sophocles's 'Ode to Man' in *Antigone* [*Theban plays* 135-136] is perhaps the best known panegyric on man's achievement and celebrates man's mastery over land and sea, making himself "lord of all living things", hunting wild animals and taming others, and particularly the chorus sings of

> *The use of language, the wind-swift motion of brain*
> *He learnt; found out the laws of living together*
> *In cities, building him shelter against rain*
> *And wintry weather.*
> *There is nothing beyond his power: His subtlety*
> *Meeteth all chance, all danger conquereth.*
> *For every ill he hath found its remedy*
> *Save only death.*

Shakespeare re-echoed this idea in *Hamlet* in a significantly similar imagery:

> *What a piece of work is man! How noble in reason, how infinite in*

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> *faculties, in form and moving how express and admirable, in action how like an angel, in apprehension how like a god! The beauty of the world, the paragon of animals ...*
>
> (*Hamlet* II.II. 303 - 307).

"In apprehension how like a god!: the poet has an instinctive tendency to see into the mind of things and that is why he was in old times called *Vates* or prophet. (Sidney 6) Today, Man's godlike apprehension of the nature of the universe has equipped him with resources similar to those of the gods: the limitless possibilities of the developments in genetic engineering for example, cloning, in recent times clearly proclaim man's near total grasp of the nature of life.

Literature embodies and records the strength and weakness of men and women accurately, but sympathetically. The poet understands and appreciates with an inner eye the complex mass of contradictions which constitute the very nature of man and his world. And it takes a Shakespeare to capture vividly this tangled, wiry web of the intricacies of human nature when he makes Hamlet compare the great promise of man with the reality of his own experience:

> *I have of late, but wherefore I know not, lost all my mirth, forgone all custom of exercises; and indeed it goes so heavily with my disposition that this goodly frame, the earth, seems to me a sterile promontory; this excellent canopy the air, look you, this brave o'erhanging firmament, this majestical roof fretted with golden fire why, it appeareth no other thing to me but a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours.*
> *Hamlet* 11.11 295-303.

I suggested earlier that literature imitates man in society. But I should have added that it does so through language. The poet deliberately uses words in a manner that emphasizes their literariness through metaphor and other literary devices. In the language of formalist critics, the poet *defamiliarizes* ordinary language by the way he uses it and in the process creates a new world of experience and perception. And as the formalists would say, literary language is "deliberately self conscious, self-aware (Hawkes 63). We say a piece of writing is literary when while it uses everyday language, it does so in a new and unusual way:

The following passage from Soyinka's *Kongi's Harvest* (1967) exemplifies the point.

> *But it did go well. Well, as a hurricane*
> *Blows well. As a bush-fire on dry*
> *Corn stalks burns well, and a fine*
> *Crackle of northern wind behind it.*
> *As a mat dances well when the man*
> *Is full of peppers and with last*
> *Guest departed, leaps upon*

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*The trembling bride. As I ran well*
*When I took a final look at Kongi,*
*And began a rapid dialogue with my legs (88)*

I can confidently assure you that no one speaks like his majesty Oba Danlola in a normal speech situation. Admittedly, no single lexical item in the passage is beyond the reach of even a school certificate student but the arrangement of the words, their collocation and their total effect clearly belong to the world of drama with its emphasis on action and visual and auditory responses. Then there is the underlying structure of metaphor and simile which takes the entire passage out of the normal linguistic habits of a man in conventional linguistic encounter. In a word, literature uses a wide range of devices to call attention to itself, to establish its literariness and underscore the obvious point that it is different from any other form of written or oral discourse. Indeed, in the words of Wordsworth, even when the poet employs the words actually used by men, he still manages "to throw over them a certain colouring of imagination, whereby ordinary things are presented to the mind in an unusual aspect."

In other words, it is through the manipulation of language that the poet literally transforms an everyday experience into a literary event. We all know that Ibadan is a sprawling city of contrasts but only a poet will capture the very contrasting tones of that ancient and proud city of culture in the following words:

*Ibadan,*
*running splash of rust*
*and gold - flung and scattered*
*among seven hills like broken*
*china in the sun. (J.P. CLARK)*

Or who doesn't know that every moment is an opportunity to be seized or which ought to be seized? But Shakespeare puts it metaphorically thus:

*There is a tide in the affairs of men*
*Which taken at the flood, leads on to fortune*
*Omitted, all the voyage of their life*
*Is bound in shallows and in miseries.*
(*Julius Caesar* IV. 217-ff).

In addition, literature deals with the essence of human experience, either real or vicarious. More vicarious than real. The raw materials of heaven and hell are manufactured in the world we know so well and every utopia, a Greek word which means "a good place in no place" merely presents our world without its miseries and apparently without its exciting challenges and charms. But whatever a man creates is the product of his fears, his laughter and his delusions.

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Matthew Arnold, a great classical scholar and school master was so moved by the comprehensiveness of the world of literature that he once declared: "The future of poetry is immense, because in poetry, where it is worthy of its high destinies our race, as time goes on, will find an ever surer and surer stay". [Kermode et al 11.1019] I do not intend to make such claims for literature, because literature at its best is its own justification. It is anchored on our very humanity and therefore remains the custodian of the eternal verities by which mankind assesses its own progress or lack of it. For in the words of Joseph Conrad "art itself may be defined as a single minded attempt to render the highest kind of justice to the visible universe, by bringing to light the truth, manifold and one, underlying its every aspect". (Preface, *The Nigger of 'the Narcissus'* 1897). That has always been the business of literature: to "survey mankind from China and Peru" as Samuel Johnson put it and make appropriate comments. The following passage must strike us as very ordinary, for its ring is all too familiar; yet it was written a long time ago:

> *They* are the people, I see it well enough
> *Who have bribed their instruments to do this thing.*
> *Money! Money's the curse of man, none greater.*
> *That's what wrecks cities, banishes men from home,*
> *Tempts and deludes the most well-meaning soul*
> *Pointing out the way to infamy and shame.*
> (*The Theban plays* p. 134)

The passage is from Sophocles' *Antigone*. It was written in about 441 BC, that is, well over two thousand years ago and one can find passages in contemporary literature with the same burden. I have chosen the passage to underpin the fact that there is a sense in which literature draws its substance from the very nature of man which from our limited experience has hardly changed since the creation of Adam, because human nature itself has remained essentially untouched by the passage of time. And because literature is about the drama of life, about relationship and inter-relationships within the human community, all literature is *ipso facto* relevant. In the passage from *Antigone*, Sophocles was addressing a Theban audience of the fifth century BC, but no modern human where ever he may be will find the message strange. As the Roman African Publius Terence put it, "Homo sum: humani nil a me alienum puto": "I am a man and I believe nothing human is strange to me", a sentiment which comes readily to an outsider or an under privileged person. We repeat, every literary work represents an aspect of human life, of human experience, of human society. It can be realistic, it may even be a caricature, but we will never fail to recognize in it "the still sad music of humanity". (Wordsworth; Lines...) In life as in literature, "Joy has a slender body" (Ola Rotimi). For man's portion of pain is immeasurably endless. Which is another way of echoing Johnson's Resselas: Human life is everywhere a state in which much is to be endured and little to be enjoyed" (31).

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From the foregoing, we can conclude that literature dispenses, as it were, endless doses of "sweetness and light" a phrase made famous by Matthew Arnold but first used by Jonathan Swift (151); for even in the most tragic scene, or the most profane representation of human bestiality, or the most sublime dramatisation of the nobility of man, the writer teaches a sound human lesson about the finer qualities of life and by the sheer ugliness of vice reaffirms our confidence in the nobility of the human spirit and the beauty of those humane values that constitute the very touchstone of our humanity. It is for these reasons that literature has remained in the words of Matthew Arnold "a criticism of life".(1021) But literature is also culture-bound and embodies the prejudices and preferences of the culture that produces it. The point will the amply illustrated in the following sections of this lecture.

**The African in English Literature**

Although the Greeks were clearly aware of the existence of the African Continent and the Romans had Colonies on the northern coast of Africa, (Barton:76; J.A. Ilevbare, xv-xvi) it was not until the Renaissance period that the African appeared as a major character in European literature. This was possible because the great voyages of discovery of the Portuguese and the Spaniards during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries had opened up a new world for Europe. English adventurers and pirates took advantage of the new discoveries and made contacts with a world of different manners and different colours. It was no longer uncommon to see Africans in major European cities and even artists captured the African on canvas.

For the English the nature and extent of these contacts are contained in an influential publication which was, for a long time, to define English attitude towards the New World generally and Africa specifically. I refer to Richard Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations* (1589), a compendium of English voyages during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. It is unashamedly nationalistic and celebrates the courage of English adventurers in the age of discovery. Obviously carried away by burgeoning nationalism and the magic of novelty, Hackluyt was unable to discriminate between fact and fiction or between personal observations and mere hear-say. Thus, he put side by side the fantastic tales of the wonders of the Ancients with the real experience of contemporary travellers. When in the account of John Lok's travels to Guinea in 1554 we have the following portrait of Africans, it is clear that the traveller has abandoned the facts for the more sensational appeal of fables. Observe the confident and declaratory tone of the following passage:

> *It is to be understood that the people which now inhabit the regions of the coast of Guinea ... were in old times called Aethiopes and Nigritae, which we now call Moores, Moorens, or negroes, a people of beastly living, without a God, laws, religion or common wealth, and so scorched and vexed by the Sunne,*

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*that in many places, they curse it when it riseth. (VI. 167).*

Quite clearly, the narrator is referring to a whole range of myths which the ignorance of Africa on the part of Europeans had generated. We can also hear an echo of the persona in Songs of Solomon in the above passage. For as you may recall, the fifth verse of the first chapter of Songs of Solomon opens with the diffident affirmation "I am black but comely O ye daughters of Jerusalem". But this hesitant declaration becomes a plaintive cry in the sixth verse where the persona pleads: "Look not upon me, because I am black; because the sun has looked upon me". The English poet, James Thomson was probably using both the Hackluyt and biblical sources when he wrote of Africa thus:

*The parent sun himself*
*Seems o'ever this World of Slaves to tyramize;*
*And with oppressive ray, the roseate bloom*
*Of beauty blasting, gives the gloomy hue*
*And features gross or, worse, to ruthless deeds.*
*Summer*, 1744, ll 884-888.

Thomson has earlier, in incremental build up of doubly negative images presented an unflattering picture of Africa, a continent whose shores he never visited.

*What all that Africa's golden rivers roll,*
*Her odorous woods and shining ivory stores?*
*Ill-fated race! the softening arts of peace,*
*Whate'er the humanizing muses teach,*
*The godlike wisdom of the tempered breast,*
*Progressive truth, the patient force of thought,*
*Investigation calm whose silent powers*
*Command the world, the light that leads to heaven,*
*Kind equal rule, the government of laws*
*And all-protecting freedom which alone*
*SUstains the name and dignity of man*
*These are not theirs [ll 873-884]*

James Thomson was merely summing up in the above passage the contemporary opinion of the African continent among the well informed circle of eighteenth century English society. [2]

Indeed, these passages provide another English poet William Blake with the material for his charming poem, "The Little Black Boy" (1789). The Poem which epitomizes a whole range of European assumptions about the African begins thus:

*My mother bore me in the Southern wild*

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| *And I am black, but O! my soul is white;*<br>*White as an angel is the English child*<br>*But I am black, as if bereft of light...* |
|---|

At the end of the poem, the little black boy betrays a wish to be white, to serve and be like the English boy; for as he concludes, "And then I'll stand, and stroke his silver hair/And be like him and he will then love me."

This should not surprise us: the socially deprived black child in a white community is psychologically conditioned and naturally identifies the idea of the beautiful with being white.

Indeed in these circumstances the psychological conditioning is further strengthened by two important traditions: the authority of the ancients and the authority of the bible. Unfortunately, both the bible and the ancients seem to have been vindicated by the relative inferior life style of black people all over the world when compared with the Europeans. What J.O. Hunwick said of black communities in India is true of all black communities where ever they are found: "in general they are a depressed class" when compared with non-black communities. (20-40)

According to Bob Dixon, studies in England and America have shown that English and American children's books generally present the African or the black character negatively [3]. In an article appropriately entitled "All Things White and Beautiful", Dixon gives a catalogue of children's books dating from the 19th century and right up to the 1970s with racist tendencies. He could actually have gone further back in time: the seventeenth century ballad, "The Blackamoor in the Woods" has obvious racist implications. Worse still, when black dolls were eventually introduced in England and America, little or no care was taken about their looks. First they were crudely made and second, supposedly negroid characteristics were exaggerated so that the lips were ponderously thick and the huge flat nose was adorned with wide, gaping nostrils; and in children's stories the gollywogs and the sambos were models neither of beauty nor of virtue. Naturally, they were not welcome among caucasian dolls. It is little wonder then that the incidence of identity rejection is high among black children in America and England (142-144). Dixon actually reports a case of a little West Indian girl who covered herself with chalk and proudly announced "I'm a little white girl now" (142). She is yet another unfortunate example of the progeny of Blake's "Little Black Boy".

Perhaps because the usual status of the black person in Europe was that of the slave, the domestic servant or the itenerant beggar, Europeans naturally tended to suspect the intellectual capabilities of the African. All sorts of theories were propounded, including what was known as phrenology, a quasi-scientific idea that sought to relate the size and shape of the skull to the level of intelligence among the races. Needless to say, the Europeans concluded that the rather low

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position of the black man's forehead was a clear evidence of defective intellect. The belief was very well known in the eighteenth century and William Blake was clearly referring to this racist invention when he wrote "O African! black African! (go, winged thought, widen his forehead)" (A Song of Liberty: *Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (c.1790-93). [4]

However, the most outrageous opinion on the subject of black intelligence, because expressed by an otherwise famous and respected philosopher, came from David Hume. In a clearly racist foot note in his *Philosophical Essays* (1758), Hume wrote:

> *I am apt to suspect that the Negro, and in general other species of men (for there are four or five different kinds) to be naturally inferior to whites. There was never a civilized nation of any other complexion than white, nor even any individual eminent either in action or in speculation. No ingenious manufactures among them, no arts, no sciences ... such a uniform and constant difference [between blacks and whites] could not happen, in so many countries and ages, if nature had not made an original distinction between these breeds of men.*
> *[Works, 1875. 111.252fn]*

Towards the end of the footnote Hume acknowledged the topical but shortlived reputation of one Francis Williams, a Jamaican black man who wrote some verse in Latin: "In Jamaica, indeed, they talk of one negroe as a man of parts and learning, but, it is likely he is admired for very slender accomplishments, like a parrot who speaks few words plainly".

An equally famous pronouncement on the moral and intellectual faculties of the black man came from no less a personage than Thomas Jefferson, one of the better known founding fathers of the United States of America. In chapters fourteen and eighteen of his *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1787), Jefferson who was the governor of the State of Virginia and later became the President of the United States and himself a slave owner examined the whole system of slavery and put down his observations on the African slaves. His conclusions, surprising as they are because from a man of generally liberal views, further strengthened the foundation of racism in America. He was somewhat hesitant in pressing home his opinion because, as he said, the black and red races of America "have never yet been viewed by us as subjects of natural history". Apparently for laboratory or zoological analysis. Even so, Jefferson declared:

> *I advance it therefore as a suspicion only, that the blacks, whether originally a distinct race, or made distinct by time and circumstances, are inferior to the whites in the endowments both of body and mind. It is not against experience to suppose, that different species of the same genus, or varieties of the same species, may possess different qualification (192).*

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But on the question of the liberation of the slaves, Jefferson was in a fix. He thought slavery was cruel enough but at the same time, he could not imagine an American society with a population of free black people.

However, Jefferson was white and by his proud confession, imaginative and intellectually alert. So he came up with this brilliant solution to what was and still is a real problem. [5]

> *This unfortunate difference of colour and perhaps of faculty, is a powerful obstacle to the emancipation of these people. Among the Romans the emancipation required but one effort. The slave, when free, can mix with, without staining the blood of his master. But with us, a second is necessary, unknown to history. When freed, he is to be removed beyond the reach of mixture (193).*

This was an idea which the English adopted and led to the establishment of the black colony of Freetown in 1798. The Americans, made a belated attempt to translate Jefferson's vision into reality and it was not until 1870 that the Republic of Liberia was founded for free negro slaves. It is one of those human ironies that in spite of his fear of miscegenation Jefferson left a brood of mulatoes, who were only recently accorded recognition as his descendants.

The above examples constitute the intellectual context of English racism and provid the background for the obvious racist attitudes in English literature. As James Walvin (165-167) has demonstrated, the example of Hume and Jefferson was followed in the 19th century by Thomas Carlyle and Anthony Trollope. Of course there were writers who were sympathetic towards blacks but Hume's final judgement on Francis Williams and Jefferson's pronouncements on Philis Wheatley and Ignatius Sancho, two of the earlier black writers in English, seemed to have consigned them to oblivion and as the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* asserted in 1884,

> *No full-blooded Negro has ever been distinguished as a man of science, a poet or an artist, and the fundamental equality claimed for him by ignorant philanthropists is belied by the whole history of the race throughout the historic period.*

We may think that such overt racism belonged to the past; yet in spite of the considerable achievement of the black people in the last fifty years, the spirit of Hume and Carlyle still dominates European attitudes towards Africans. The point to emphasize is that this attitude has been bred and nurtured by two very important agents of cultural conditioning: religion and education. These primary agents for the transmission of cultural preferences equip the typical white man with what, for want of better term, we may call subliminal racism: a phenomenon that makes every white man believe not only that he is different from but almost

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certainly superior to a black man. We are thinking here of perfectly normal people but not men and women on the lunatic fringe like, for instance, Adolf Hilter (*Mein Kampf,* 624) or Enoch Powell (T.E. Utley; 179-190).

We have already mentioned how modern contact between Africa and Europe dates back to the age of discovery. In literature, the contact with Africa was manifested in two ways. There were the mythical and fabulous tales popularised by Mandeville and his contemporaries which produced famous characters like Prester John and the Unicorn, the one human, the other animal. For as the first century Latin poet put it, "Ex Africa Semper aliquid novi" (Pliny). That is, "Something new [and strange] always comes out of Africa". The myths were further propagated by the credulity of early European geographers and cartographers who peopled the African continent with a parade of monsters, a practice which occasioned Jonathan Swift's satirical lines: (*poems* 1733:526).

*So geographers in Afric maps*
*With savage pictures fill the gaps;*
*And o'er uninhabitable downs*
*Place elephants for want of towns*

For a long time these pseudo-facts about Africa and Africans continued to dominate the English imagination and to a large extent, influenced the English man's perception not only of the entire black race but of individual black characters.

We take the example of Shakespeare's Othello because here we have the first full-length study of an African character in English Literature. We must, however, quickly add that Othello is presented as an African caught between the World of myths and legends and the world of Renaissance Italy still basking in the glorious sun of the new humanism. Herein lies the complexity of the play and its tragic outcome. The attempt to fuse and blend what appeared to the European imagination as the raw and primitive energy of the African with the mellow and delicate sensibilities of a Renaissance Italian society ignored practical obstacles and the gulf between Africa and Europe and was consequently, for that very reason, doomed to fail. And Othello emerges, a miserable wretch, ruined in mind and body. Or as Thomas Rymer quite rightly observed, a farcical character in a farce of blood and lust (164).

We need not retell the story of Othello here except to stress that the love between Desdemona and Othello was built on false, or rather weak foundations. And Shakespeare has deliberately sought to widen the gulf between Othello and Desdemona by stressing the fundamental difference between the two. The unnamed Moor in Cinthio's narrative (the Italian source of Shakespeare's *Othello*) is "handsome and valiant and highly thought of by the signory of Venice" but Shakespeare's Moor, though valiant, is definitely not handsome or young. Thus to the obvious dilemma of being black and foreign, Shakespeare has added the greater disadvantage of old age and thus provides Iago with the instrument

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for the destruction of the peace and happiness of Othello. In short Shakespeare has erected a fine structure on a very weak foundation with the ultimate purpose of ensuring the collapse of the entire edifice. Anyone can see through it all, as Iago indeed assures us:

> *Her eye must be fed, and what delight shall she have*
> *to look on the devil? When the blood is made dull*
> *with the act of sport, there should be again to*
> *inflame it and give satiety a fresh appetite,*
> *loveliness in favour, sympathy in years, manners*
> *and beauties; all which the Moor is defective in.*
> *(II.I.225-229)*

It is a commonplace observation that disparity in age between a couple creates a fertile soil for jealousy. To use a metaphor from the European seasons, the union between May and December, between spring and winter is unnatural, i.e. contrary to nature and therefore symptomatic of unhealthy appetites. Iago's portrait of Othello spells doom for the marriage: Othello may have been a successful soldier, but he is old, graceless and unclubbable. (Leslie Fiddler `23)

Yet Othello represents the brighter side of a continent better known for its monsters and monstrosities than its human beings. Incidentally, it is the wonders of Africa that appealed to the romantic spirit of Desdemona and Othello confirms the reputation of Africa as the continent of marvels as he spins his yarn:

> *Wherein of antres vast, deserts idle*
> *Rough quarries, rocks, and hills, whose, heads touch heaven,*
> *It was my hint to speak - such was the process:*
> *Of the cannibals that each other eat,*
> *and men whose heads*
> *Do grow beneath their shoulders (I.III.139-144).*

Such were the tales that won the heart of Desdemona for Othello and led to the most tragic marriage in literature. This was not the marriage of true hearts as Shakespeare would have reasoned but then, he was writing a play to warn all young ladies about the consequence of marrying "an extravagant and Wheeling stranger". (1.1.136)

Throughout the play Othello is the butt of racial jokes from almost all other characters. Indeed, the play begins with an excessively racially abusive passage:

> *... For shame put on your gown,*
> *Your heart is burst, you have lost half our soul:*
> *Even now, very now, an old black ram*
> *Is tupping your white ewe; arise, arise,*
> *Awake the snorting citizens with the bell,*

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*Or else the devil will make a grandsire of you. (I.I.86-91).*

The play abounds in the vocabulary of abuse, larded with strong racial overtones. Othello is an "old black ram"; he is the "devil", he is "a barbary horse", "a lascivious moor", "a foul thief", "an abuser of the world", "a practiser of arts inhibited". Brabantio, Desdemona's father, is absolutely convinced that without the use of charms his daughter could not have fallen in love "with such a thing as thou" or "with what she fear'd to look on."

And within the play, there is an implicit comparison between black and white and between youth and old age. For Shakespeare and his audience, Othello is the veritable symbol of evil - he is naturally associated with the devil and at other times, with animals. For instance, when Iago imagines Desdemona in the embrace of black Othello he can only see "the beast with two backs".

The prevalence of the images of evil and metaphors of bestiality confirms the view politely played down by Anglo-American critics that a recognition of the overwhelming significance of the racial factor is the key to *Othello*. Of course, Othello is jealous but his jealousy is rooted in the feeling of racial insecurity engendered by the unspoken but universal revulsion which the idea of a marriage between Othello and Desdomona evokes. It is a point of fact that Shakespeare in all references to the African, uniformly applies negative images - that is, images and symbols that immediately suggest, according to James Walvin (1973:24) something or somebody "deeply stained with dirt, soiled, dirty, foul; having dark or deadly purposes; malignant; pertaining to or involving death; deadly; baneful, disastrous, sinister, iniquitous, atrocious, horribly wicked." Thus the range of nuances which the word *black* or *Ethiope* suggests is markedly evil and generally unpleasant. And Shakespeare's use of the term in other contexts suggests that he was conscious of the negative connotation of the word. e.g. *Midsummer Night Dream* III.III.25; *As You Like It* IV.II.35-36; *Romeo and Juliet* I.V. 44 *Merchant of Venice* 11.1.1-3 and 11.111.65-77.

These instances of negative references to the African in both topical and non-topical contexts lead to the conclusion that the practice was not fortuitous. As I have shown elsewhere, (Ogude, 1997) there were political and economic reasons, apart from racial prejudice, for a demonic xenophobia in the last years of Elizabeth I.

In the final analysis, Shakespeare presents Othello and by extension, the African, like some fatal affliction, infecting the very health of Venetian society. The consequences of the marriage between Othello and Desdemona are unacceptable. The fear of `the beast with two backs', of barbary horses, of coursers and genets turns this rather vulgar joke into something sinister and diabolical. Behind these fears we can hear the regretful cry of Shakespeare's Caliban:

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*Oho Oho, would it had been done!*
*Thou didst prevent me; I had peopled else*
*This isle with Calibans.*

(*The Tempest* 1.2.351-353.)

The fear of miscegenation and worse still, the myth of black sexuality, have remained the greatest source of white racism. It is a deep-seated fear which the very first scenes of *Othello* played on and which no less a personality than Thomas Jefferson offered for racial discrimination in America (172).

We have paid so much attention to Shakespeare because his Othello remains the best known black character in English Literature and because he also reflects in his many references to the African character and even the concept of blackness with all its associations, the image of the African in Renaissance England.

From the late seventeenth century to the end of the eighteenth century more black characters made significant appearances in English literary works. But in spite of the huge rise in black population and corresponding increase in fictional representation, the role and image of the African in England remained unchanged. The imperial ambitions of England during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had secured for England sizeable colonial possessions in America and the West and East Indies. British adventurers were also actively involved in the slave trade, providing slaves for the South American market and also for the British colonies of America and the Indies. It also meant that the English were in close contact with a large population of Africans and English writers who set their plots in the colonies invariably found a part for the slave, i.e. the African,in their works. This is particularly true of the adventure stories of the period, which were set either in a far away but vaguely defined African country or in the equally distant colonies.

A very good example is Aphra Behn's *History of Oroonoko, or the Royal Slave* (1688), a long short story, quite often regarded as the first English novel. Aphra Behn claimed to have been in Surinam where much of the action takes place and to have actually witnessed the drama narrated in the novel. The truth of her assertion has not been established beyond doubt. For our purpose what is of great interest is the representation of the African in this very first fiction in English with African characters as hero and heroine. The story begins in Cormantin, a coastal town in modern day Ghana. The hero, Oroonoko, later to be renamed Caesar in accordance with the practice of the colonies, was tricked into slavery by an English Sea Captain who had invited him and his men to a feast on board his ship. Here they were drugged and carried away and then sold as slaves in Surinam. Unknown to Oroonoko, Imoinda his wife who had earlier been sold into slavery by his (Oroonoko's) grandfather is now in the same Island and plantation and in the tradition of such romances a reunion takes place and there is happiness all round.

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But not for long. Oroonoko, fed up with unfulfilled promises of freedom and worried that his wife, now pregnant, will be delivered of a slave, leads a rebellion which is quickly put down. To prevent a worse fate of a lingering death at the hands of the colonists and the probable violation of his wife, now renamed Clemene, he kills her and rips open his own bowels and dies in a high heroic fashion.

The great thing about the story is that it contains all the arguments against the slave trade and states with conviction all the arguments in favour of abolition. It is the moral strength of the argument that turned the novel in its dramatised and more popular version, into an anti-slavery piece at the height of the abolition movement.

But with all her sympathy for the African slave Aphra Behn shared the general European antipathy towards the African because he is black. She therefore presented her African hero and heroine as a perfect Apollo and a voluptuous Venus and toned down their black characteristics. So Oroonoko becomes

> *pretty tall, but of a shape the most exact that can be fancy'd: the most famous statuary [i.e. sculptor] could not form a figure of man more admirably turned from Head to Foot. His face was not of the brown rusty Black which most of that nation are, but a perfect Ebony or polished Jet... His nose was rising and Roman, instead of African and flat: His mouth the finest shape that could be seen, far from those turn'd lips, which are so natural to the rest of the Negroes. (Henderson, 154)*

Mrs. Behn therefore concluded that "bating his colour, there could be nothing in nature more beautiful, agreeable and handsome" than Oroonoko. As for Imoinda, Oroonoko's paramour, "she was the female to the noble male, the beautiful black Venus to our young Mars; as charming in person as he and of delicate virtues".

When Thomas Southerne turned the story into play in 1695/96 he retained the black Apollo image of Oroonoko but made Imoinda a white girl brought up in Africa by an adventurous English father. The change was not without a good reason: a white man, an Englishman and a governor, violently lusting after a black girl (as the governor does in the play) would be unthinkable in the first place and worse still, would be flying in the face of tradition in the second place. The universal abhorrence of the colour black among the English is demonstrated in Henry Neville's *The Isle of Pines* (1668). George Pine the narrator survives a shipwreck and finds himself alone on a remote Island with four white women and a black slave girl. He makes wife of each of the white women but of the black girl, he tells us that after a long time, "... I lay with her which was in the night and not else. My stomach would not serve me although she was one of the handsomest blacks I had seen". And against all rules of genetics, the black girl gave birth to "a fine white girl" (233).

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There were other plays like *Inkle and Yarico. The West Indian* and *Castle Spectre*. They all dramatise the African as a product of the slave culture. But none of them could be compared to *Oroonoko* in its anti-slavery posture, especially in the later versions of the play or in the development of the character.

Except perhaps the anonymous *Inkle and Yarico* (1742). Like *Oroonoko, Inkle and Yarico* has its origins in a prose account of Barbadoes. In 1657, Richard Ligon published his *True and Exact History of the Island of Barbadoes*. It is one of the best known travel books of the seventeenth century and contains the germ of the story of Inkle and Yarico. According to Ligon an English ship in desperate need of supplies, had put to shore on a coast of hostile Indians. The Indians attacked and killed many of the sailors. But a young Indian Princess, named Yarrco saw and protected one of them, a young man until a ship came and rescued both the man and the tender hearted princess. But as soon as the young English man felt safe, he sold Yarico, for a slave and forgot the poor maid that had ventured her life for his own safety.

The Yarico story was popularised by Richard Steele in his *Spectator* No.11 of March 13, 1711. In this essay Steele provides Yarico's man with a name, Inkle, who on leaving the Island, sold the maid who has protected him into slavery. And when Yarico in tears tells him that she was carrying his child, his only response was to raise the price of Yarico. For our purpose, the really fascinating thing about this story is the racial transformation which took place between the first version of 1657 and the subsequent versions. Yarico began her amorous but unfortunate life as an Indian maid, an inhabitant of South America. By the time the anonymous play appeared in 1742, Yarico has metamorphosed into an African Princess betrothed to an African Prince with the unlikely name of Santamamo. And when Coleman produced his version in 1787 he confirmed her African ancestry. The slave and the African in European thinking had by this time become one and the same person.

Perhaps one of the enduring consequences of centuries of slavery and humiliation is the acceptance by blacks everywhere of the inferior position assigned them by the whites. We have been conditioned by the material reality of our social experience and the concatenation of an overwhelming, social, political, scientific, technological and economic influence that we unconsciously defer to white preferences, choices and options. You may recall that Renaissance European Kings propounded the theory that "the religion of the prince is the religion of the people". A similar doctrine was adopted in Africa by the colonising powers during the 19th century with the tragic result that the African people have become spiritually alienated from their own religious roots. Thus in the gradual erosion of our faith in our traditional institutions, lies the unqualified success of colonization in Africa. And so there is absolutely nothing wrong if the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria welcomes a tired American President with a litany of woes and wishes and apparently, seriously expects to receive some relief. [6] And it is perfectly in order, for the Speaker of the House of

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Representatives in his vote of thanks, to report the Nigerian president to their common god, the American President.

But, the level of the European triumph in Africa is even more amazing when you consider that only a handful of Europeans actually administered the continent, perhaps with the exception of South Africa. Even Europeans have wondered at their own success in Africa and as early as 1759, Dr. Samuel Johnson raised and answered the question in *The History of Rasselas, Prince of Abisinia*, a moral tale set in Abyssinia, now Ethiopia. After listening to the Philosopher Imlac reel out a catalogue of European successes in Asia and Africa, Rasselas with a sense of patriotism was provoked to ask the obvious question:

> *By what means, said the Prince, are the Europeans thus powerful? Or why, since they can easily visit Asia and Africa for trade or conquest, cannot the Asiaticks and Africans invade their coasts, plant colonies in their ports and give laws to their natural princes? The wind that carries them back would bring us thither (28)*

These are questions every thinking African must have asked himself at one time or the other. Perhaps they have been so often asked that no one now bothers for an answer. But Imlac, the wise philosopher and teacher of Rasselas has little difficulty in providing an answer which hit at the very heart of the dilemma:

> *They are more powerful, Sir, than we, answered Imlac, because they are wiser; knowledge will always predominate over ignorance, as man governs the animals. But why their knowledge is more than ours, I know not what reason can be given, but the unsearchable will of the supreme being (pp.28-29).*

Exactly a century later, the same questions were being asked, this time by Charles Darwin in his famous *The Origin of Species.* Although the question was perhaps more delicately put, its full implications were not lost on the discerning mind. Yet Darwin was no wiser than Dr. Johnson as the following statement, with its sense of frustration and finality clearly suggests:

> *A definite answer to the question [why apes have not acquired the intellectual powers of man?] ought not to be expected seeing that no one can solve the complex problem why of two races of savages, one has risen higher in the sale of civilisation than the other, and this apparently implies increased brain power (206).*

Later, in the same book, (242) Charles Darwin describes an extraordinary phenomenon; the discovery of a species of ants which are instinctively slave-makers and another species which are slaves by nature. Darwin stopped short of

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drawing any conclusions except the rather innocuous information that the slave ants (*Formica Fusca*) "are black and not above half the size of their red masters, so that the contrast in their appearance is great". I do not intend to make any deductions from Darwin's observations. Except to point out that the physical difference between the African and other races has made it much easier for other races to regard the African with suspicion and in some cases with down right antagonism and contempt.

I would also like to draw attention to the rather disturbing fact that although slavery is as old as the history of human society, Africans have never been known to have enslaved people of other races as a matter of policy. On the other hand, almost every race, from Arabs to the Europeans and Indians have made slaves of the African people at one time or the other and more importantly on a massive scale. Indeed it is possible to conclude from European history that the caucasian race is instinctively a predator race. Further it is also possible to assume that the mass enslavement of the African people over a period of five centuries was predicated on two important factors: the difference in colour of the African people and their low technological development. We may add to this the economic imperative which has made Africa the reservoir of raw materials for Europe.

The economic exploitation of the African and his continent has been the theme of English writing set in African during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It may truly be said that the writer as it were followed the imperial flag, and completed the emerging picture of the African continent with insights into the cultural practices and economic condition of the African people. In most cases, the typical English literary piece provides the background for the study of the white character under pressure but more importantly, it preserves the master/servant, superior/inferior paradigm of relationships between white and black. This is clearly the case in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1902) and Graham Greene's *The Heart of the Matter* (1948), *A Burnt Out Case* (1961) and *In Search of a Character* (1963). In all these novels, the major characters are white while the Africans remain either the object of their exploitation or the object of their compassion. In *Heart of Darkness* and *The Heart of the Matter* the real conflict is generated by the intrigues among the European ivory traders in the Congo and the English colonials in Sierra Leone. But however, much they disagreed among themselves, they were all perfectly at one in the expropriation of the labour of the African, the exploitation of diamond in Sierra Leone and the absolute control of the ivory trade in the Congo.

Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* best illustrates the European attitude towards their African colonies and the African population. Even right here on the African continent and after the `abolition' of the slave trade, Conrad tells us that for the European adventurer, Africans were good only as beast of burden and they were treated worse than beast. Throughout the novel, the African presence is

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everywhere felt but nowhere seen; unless of course as overworked and underfed forced labourers. For Conrad, colonisation is synonymous with violence:

> *They [the colonizers] grabbed what they could get for the sake of what was to be got. It was first robbery with violence, aggravated murder on a great scale... The conquest of the earth, which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look out too much (10).*

*Heart of Darkness* is perhaps the most telling account of the rape of Africa by the white man. So complete is the destruction of this portion of the continent that the only Africans represented in the novel are realised as shadows, mere shadows which are often felt merging with the immensity of the dark impenetrable, tropical forest.

In many of the novels set in Africa or with African characters, the African is presented as a person to whom the white man can only extend, in the words of Charles Lamb "an imperfect sympathy" [7].

Quite often, he is seen as the object of pity and ridicule. Mr. James Waite, the `Nigger' in Conrad's *The Nigger of "the Narcissus"* compels both our sympathy and our contempt. And Wordsworth in Graham Greene's *Travels With My Aunt* (1969) was created for pure ridicule.

This tendency to present black characters as objects of ridicule and contempt defined the tone of the African novels of Joyce Cary. In *Aissa Saved* (1932) and *Mister Johnson* (1939) both set in Nigeria, caricature dominates the characterisation and appears to be the sole purpose of the fiction. Thus what Echeruo said of *Aissa Saved* is true of all the African novels of Joyce Cary:

> *... the novel's major concern, the study of the religious imagination, assumes the character of a revelation of a local 'African mentality'. Scene after scene depicts the unthinking, childlike stupidity of the clearly purposeless action, their fervent devotion to the white masters and their complete incapacity for sustained concentration of either mind or body to any task in hand. Conveniently, too, the characters are so chosen that they are necessarily incapable of either thought or circumspection, and in particular, are saved from all adult responsibility either to themselves or to their community (37)*

Indeed, in all his African novels Joyce Cary sustains the myth of the Child races of the world, a myth nurtured by Victorian paternalism and utilised by Graham Greene, somewhat in a less arrogant manner, in the depiction of his African characters. (S.E. Ogude, 1975, 1976).

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## The Myth of the Global Village

As a matter of fact, the foundation of the global village was laid in the fifteenth century when John Cabot and Christopher Columbus sailed the seas to new lands and opened up a brave new world to an ignorant and insular Europe. Richard Steele was clearly thinking like them when in 1711 he created the ubiquitous Captain Andrew Freeport in whose name is subsumed the very concept of free trade (*The Spectator*, 69). With them the possibility of one world became a reality; a reality made manifest and concrete by the phenomenal advances in communication technology in the 20th century. Let us remember just in passing that the only role played by the African in the first phase of the evolution of the global village was that of the slave; the colonized and the exploited. And that was so because whatever else the African might have been in the past, he was ill prepared and ill-equipped to relate on equal terms to the successors of John Cabot and Christopher Columbus: the bow and the arrow belonged to the dying age; the gun and the bullet to the new. In real terms this paradigm of unequal relationship has become more sharply defined as we move into the 21st century

It is the recognition of this unequal relationship that has impelled those who propagate and orchestrate the doctrine of the global village to enact draconian immigration laws aimed specifically at the poorer and most exploited members of the world and have continued to erect fresh barriers to keep them permanently away. It is my humble but considered view that for the African and his continent, the 21st century and indeed, the 3rd millennium will be another wasted epoch unless he is prepared to generate and nurture his own model of society, a society solidly built on the traditions and realities of the African continent. For there can be nothing great in belonging to a village, global or miniscule, in which one is merely tolerated. And as Lawino assures us, even in the best of villages, everyone must have his own homestead (41). But as things now stand, the African can hardly be said to perch, even precariously, on the periphery of the global village. We agree with John Donne that no man is an island unto himself but John Donne would have agreed with us that every man has his own homestead. Unfortunately, the African appears too ready to desert his homestead at the least provocation.

The experience of slavery and colonialism has continued to dictate the pattern of the relationship between the African continent and the Western world at all levels and in all fields of human activity. Indeed it is possible to argue that at the intellectual and ideological levels, the impact of the colonial enterprise in Africa on the African people has been deleterious in terms of independent thought and a self-asserting, race-promoting vision. Consequently, African political, economic and even intellectual orientation, both at the performative and speculative point, is rooted in foreign soil, a fact which easily explains the slow and uncertain progress in our development effort and has produced that extraordinary situation in which the most richly endowed continent in the world harbours the poorest

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people on earth. This lack of rootedness has de-energised the vitality of the African imagination and undermined the authenticity of his creativity. Consequently, the criteria of assessment or judgement of the quality of the African achievement in the sciences and the Humanities are not only extraneous to the African creative mould shaped by the African environment and experience but have been erected under cultural and intellectual conditions which are quite alien to the African society (S.E. Ogude, 1981). But as T.S. Eliot confidently assures us, "Every nation, every race, has not only its own creative but its critical turn of mind" (47). There should be little or no doubt about the truism of the observation. When therefore Abiola Irele concludes that "the Western academy remains the unique source of validation for the African scholar", he underscores the obvious fact that one sad legacy of the European contact with Africa is the intellectual alienation which has plagued the African intellectual elite and has compelled the African to look towards Europe not only as his intellectual Mecca but also as the source of his intellectual light and inspiration (64). The full implication of his statement is that at the highest level of intellectual activity the African cannot fully function within his own cultural milieu because both the theoretical and critical tools in his field of research are located elsewhere. Abiola Irele was probably thinking along these lines when he concluded that "Everything in our situation thus conduces to the extroversion of African discourse, including that of scholarship". In a word the African has become de-rooted to the extent that he can no longer draw on the resources of his tradition to confront the challenges of modern times.

You may wonder what all this has to do with the Global Village. My answer is simple. Plenty. It does not require much reflection to realise that the global village and its alluring abstraction called globalisation are in the final analysis the logical extension of the colonial enterprise in the non-European parts of the world. Indeed, Tade Akin Aina has observed that current globalisation discourse bears striking similarities with Western economic discourses of the 1960s and 1970s. And citing Samir Amin, Stuart Hall and Roland Robertson, Aina arrives at the conclusion that ultimately globalisation is nothing but a new phase of capitalism with its traditional function of building structures of "exploitation, accumulation, inequality and polarization" (24). In its stark reality globalisation is about remaking the world in the image of the Western man. That has long been his ambition. We have already cited the example of George Pine in Henry Neville's *The Isle of Pines*. We have also cited the case of William Blake's little black boy in the poem of that title whose highest wish was to be like the white boy. And we have the recent case of the dirty black penny in Alan Drake's *The Black Penny* (1971) which was rejected by the other coins of lighter hue in a money-box only to be warmly received with great excitement and respect after it had been polished bright. Thus for the western man, the wish has always been to make all things white and wonderful, to misquote a very well known hymn.

The point was graphically expressed in the words of the anti-slavery medalion designed by William Hackwood and struck by Josiah Wedgwood in 1786: "Am I

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not a man and a brother"? Slavery of course was abolished but the nagging questions remain unanswered. The fact that Terence was, in essence, asking the same question in 163BC even while asserting that "I am a man and nothing human is strange to me" emphasises the age-long inequality of the black/white relationship. Even though the context was different, it was the kind of thought that could easily come to an alien, like he was.

It is of course convenient for those who promote the doctrine of globalisation to gloss over its ultimate political and economic agenda and stress the apparent advantages over its real intention. For behind the universal advantages of free trade symbolised by Captain Andrew Freeport and the unlimited access to some information guaranteed by globalisation lies a deep-seated, sinister and, almost obssessive craving for world domination. For certainly it is for those who possess the economic, the military and the political power to shape both the structure and direction of the global village.

For those who might consider these conclusions rather alarmist or far-fetched, there is the example of the new world information order promoted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) in the 1970s and 1980s. The third world, we may recall, had complained not only of bad press but of glaring imbalances in information flow and communication infrastructures. UNESCO promptly set up what today would have been called a 'global commission' under Sean Macbride whose report was published with the rather optimistic title, *Many Voices, One World: Communication and Society Today and Tomorrow* in 1980. The avowed aims of the commission included the provision of "a framework for the development of a new information and communication order" (254) which would presumably eliminate the distortions and disparities in information flow between the developed and the developing parts of the world. Naturally the basic assumption of the report is that the developing world will continue to procure communication and information hardware from the developed world and should be satisfied to achieve a high level of competence in the use of information and communication technologies from the developed world (253-257). We can all testify to the fact that today, twenty years after the expression of these pious intentions, the imbalances, disparities and distortions in the global information flow have become the norm and the idea which informed the new information and communication order has died globally. Today we have a situation in which we are bombarded twenty-four hours a day with information from those who manufacture our radio and television sets and the computer. In the end only the developed countries have the double harvest of ideological and economic benefit from their control of the new world information and communication order as Victoria Ezeokoli has rightly concluded (192). We may not therefore be wrong to conclude that globalisation is perhaps the final stage in the evolution of the age-long desire for the rise of the master race. That by the way is the dream of every western man but only unfortunately expressed without much delicacy or elegance by Hitler and Powell.

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Imbalances, distortions and disparities have continued to dominate the relationship between the African and the Western man. Both at the conscious and unconscious levels, the Western man is only too aware of his all-round advantage over the African and this factor has informed his perception and portrayal of the African in his literature as our investigation of English literature has shown.

On the other hand, centuries of unequal relationship have generated in the African what we would like to term the Caliban-Equiano complex: an unquestioning readiness to accept almost any idea or programme from the Western man. Transfer of technology, market forces, market economy, structural adjustment, privatisation efficient pricing, appropriate pricing, poverty alleviation, universal basic education, Nigeria universities system innovation project and even democracy are some of the catch phrases and vogue words that African presidents and intellectuals inflict on the people without giving much thought to each word or phrase and its overall implication for the African people. I have termed this mental disease the Caliban-Equiano complex from the character traits of Caliban in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (1611) and the personality of Equiano in his own book *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vasa, the African* (1789).

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