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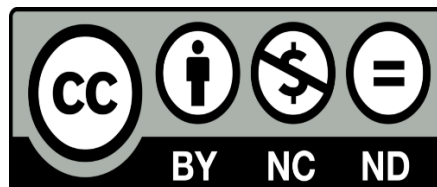
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EDITORIAL

Among the Senufos from the north of Côte d'Ivoire, the sacred grove is called "Sinzang". The first of these would date from the time of the patriarch and leader of Korhogo SORO Zouakagnon (1840-1894). It is the tutelary space of the initiatory institute of the secret society: the Poro. These sacred forests exist in all the villages of the region and are highly protected and managed. The proof is that in their midst, adolescents perform the rite of passage leading them to the age of maturity. The "Sinzang" is also the centre of intergenerational knowledge transmission. Thus, the teaching of ancestral knowledge, ontology and cosmogony-contributing to the future spiritual, moral and social formation of the Senufo elite-is associated with this pantheon.

In line with this pedagogical and academic logic, the SINZANG Journal aims to promote African and Western humanities in Literature, Language, Communication and Education Sciences. To do this, it is part of a process of promoting the reflections and studies conducted by Teachers-Researchers and Researchers for the sustainable development of society.

As distinctive signs of "Sinzang", Jacqueline DELANGE, in *Arts et peuple Sénoufo de l'Afrique noire*, identifies among others the huts, earth cones and statues (masks). The visual identity of this magazine presents two masks, one symbolizing ancestral knowledge and the other Western science. The two facing the entrance of a sacred hut express the encounter of diverse knowledge put at the service of humanity. *In fine*, they export to other horizons, hence the idea of huts in perspective.

SINZANG is a pluridisciplinary and biannual peer-reviewed scientific journal. It is published in English and French but also accepts work written in German and Spanish. Moreover, depending on the requests made at the discretion of its review committee, it may issue special thematic publications and conference proceedings.

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Postal Address: BP 1328 Korhogo, Côte d'Ivoire

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ÉDITORIAL

Chez les Sénoufos du nord de la Côte d'Ivoire, le bosquet sacré est communément appelé « Sinzang ». Les premiers du genre dateraient de l'époque du patriarche et chef de Korhogo SORO Zouakagnon (1840-1894). C'est l'espace tutélaire de l'institut initiatique de la société secrète : le Poro. Lieux fortement protégés et aménagés à l'envi, ces forêts sacrées existent dans tous les villages de la région. La preuve en est qu'en leur sein, les adolescents effectuent le rite de passage les amenant à l'âge de la maturité. Le « Sinzang » est aussi le haut lieu de la transmission de la connaissance intergénérationnelle. Ainsi, l'enseignement du savoir ancestral, de l'ontologie et la cosmogonie- contribuant à la formation spirituelle, morale et sociale de l'élite Sénoufo de demain-est associé à ce panthéon.

S'inscrivant dans cette logique pédagogique et académique, la Revue SINZANG ambitionne de faire la promotion des humanités tant africaine qu'occidentale dans le domaine de la Littérature, des Sciences du Langage, de la Communication et de l'Éducation. Pour ce faire, elle s'inscrit dans une démarche de vulgarisation des réflexions et des études menées par les Enseignants-Chercheurs et des Chercheurs pour le développement durable de la société.

Comme signes distinctifs du « Sinzang », Jacqueline DELANGE, dans *Arts et peuple Sénoufo de l'Afrique noire*, identifie entre autres les cases, les cônes en terre et les statues (masques). L'identité visuelle de cette revue présentant deux masques, l'un symbolisant le savoir ancestral et l'autre la science occidentale. Les deux se faisant face à l'entrée d'une case sacrée expriment la rencontre de connaissances diverses mis au service de l'humanité. In fine, elles s'exportent vers d'autres horizons ; d'où l'idée des cases en perspective.

SINZANG est une revue pluridisciplinaire à comité de lecture et scientifique. Elle est bilingue : éditée en anglais et en français. Mais elle accepte également les travaux écrits en allemand et en espagnol. C'est une revue semestrielle, tenant deux parutions l'an. Au demeurant, elle peut

procéder, selon les demandes ou les sollicitations formulées à l'appréciation de son comité de lecture, à des parutions spéciales thématiques et à la diffusion d'actes de colloque.

CONTACTS

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STYLE IN SOME SELECTED POEMS BY ATUKWEI JOHN OKAI AND WYSTAN HUGH AUDEN

Sansan SIB

Institut National Polytechnique Houphouët-Boigny,
Yamoussoukro (Côte d'Ivoire)
Email: sibsansan01@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This paper purposes to situate the extent to which modern African poetry since its emergence has been alienated or influenced by western poetry in the broader sense. The paper adopts for this sake a stylistic analysis to compare some selected poems by W. H. Auden and Atukwei Okai. A keen analysis is therefore done through the exploration of the stylistic tools such as sound, lexis, semantics, discourse, context and syntax⁴ to accede the depth of the linguistic forms and the poetic discourses of the two poets. The study of the stylistic background underlying the two poets' works has thus proven that though Okai's poems share some key features with Auden's poetic experience, his poetry derives its potency essentially from the African poetic lore. It is thus maintained throughout the survey that what may appear as an alienation can be attributable to the common values shared by poetry worldwide. In fact, though conveying his thoughts through a borrowed western language, the Ghanaian poet has succeeded to anchor his poetic experience within the African poetic background through the successful appropriation of oral and traditional poetic devices.

Keywords: alienation, modern African poetry, style, stylistics, western poetry.

ANALYSE STYLISTIQUE DE QUELQUES POÈMES DE A. OKAI ET W. H. AUDEN

RÉSUMÉ

Cet article a pour but de situer dans quelle mesure la poésie africaine moderne, depuis sa naissance, a été aliénée ou influencée par la poésie occidentale dans un sens plus large. L'article adopte, à cet effet, une analyse stylistique pour comparer quelques poèmes sélectionnés de W. H. Auden et Atukwei Okai. Une analyse approfondie est donc menée à travers l'exploration des outils stylistiques tels que le son, le lexique, la sémantique, le discours, le contexte et la syntaxe afin de saisir la profondeur des formes linguistiques et des discours poétiques des deux poètes. L'étude du contexte stylistique sous-jacent aux œuvres des deux poètes a ainsi démontré que, bien que les poèmes d'Okai partagent certaines caractéristiques essentielles avec l'expérience poétique d'Auden, sa poésie puise essentiellement sa force dans la tradition poétique africaine. Il est ainsi soutenu tout au long de cette étude que ce qui peut apparaître comme une aliénation peut en réalité être attribuée aux valeurs communes partagées

⁴ These tools are explored from the perspective given by Partha Sarathi Misra in his *An Introduction to Stylistics, Theory and Practice* (2009).

par la poésie à travers le monde. En effet, bien qu'exprimant ses pensées à travers une langue occidentale empruntée, le poète ghanéen est parvenu à ancrer son expérience poétique dans un contexte africain en s'appropriant avec succès des procédés poétiques oraux et traditionnels.

Mots-clés : aliénation, poésie africaine moderne, style, stylistique, poésie occidentale.

INTRODUCTION

There is consistent awareness by critics that early modern African poets have appropriated western aesthetics as they delved onto the modern African poetic scene. When it comes to assess modern written African poetry, to negate the huge tribute it pays to western poetry will certainly mean to miss its essence.

Many critical works have been devoted to the huge tribute modern African poetry, in its written form, pays to western aesthetics. Some of these critical appraisals include *Towards the Decolonization of African Literature* (1980) by Chinweizu, Madubuike and Jemie, "From simplicity to Performance: The Place of Second Generation Anglophone African Poets" (2008) by Olaoluwa, and "Modernist Aesthetics in Modern African Poetry" (2022) by Okon and Ohwawworhua.

In their critical book, the troika Chinweizu, Madubuike and Jemie (1980, p.183) argue for instance that the fact that the works produced by successive generations of modern African poetry are "based on alien sensitivity that is rather too formalist ambiguity for ambiguity's sake, sprung rhythm for sprung rhythm's sake, etc." has diverted the African people's interest to this literary genre in its early days.

This argument is relapsed more or less by Olaoluwa in his essay. Like Chinweizu and his friends, he maintains that the first-generation of modern African poets have been significantly influenced by Western poetry. Indeed, the poets of this generation, as he argues, were especially fascinated by romantic and modernist poets. Likewise, in their article Okon and Ohwawworhua contend that modern African poetry in its early phase was modelled under the works of European modernists like T. S. Eliot Ezra Pound, W. B. Yeats, W.H. Auden, and E. E. Cummings.

Modern African poetry owes this western influence to the fact that it has emerged from the western inroad in the continent, especially from the colonial period onwards. The

poets who contributed to its emergence have indeed essentially been intellectually nurtured by colonial education. Their poetic experiences are therefore the heritage of western literary tradition including romanticism, modernism and postmodernism. The following statement by Okunoye (2017, p.33) is quite meaningful for the foregoing:

Western education played a major role in the development of modern African poetry in English, as in the other European languages. Even though many of the earliest African poets in English were aware of the rich traditions of poetry in their immediate cultural environments, they imitated the works of English poets to demonstrate their capacity to create poems comparable to those they read as part of their colonial education.

Whether they were aware of it or not, the African poets who committed themselves to the poetic adventure have been for most of them influenced by Western aesthetics. If some have been totally swallowed by Western poetics and led to produce works that are mere imitation of their Western counterparts; others, though influenced at a certain degree, have expressed their awareness by endowing their works with local aesthetics. The wide range of poetry produced during colonial period and even in post-colonial era (except a few who dared to produce their works in local languages such as Okot pBitek and Ngugi Wa Thiongo check the name) have been through the language of the former colonial masters.

Though the influence of modern African poetry by its Western counterpart is undeniable, it is also worthy to acknowledge that this impact is considerably decreasing from the first generation of modern African poets to the contemporary generations. It is argued in the present paper that as a revolutionary poet, Okai's poetry marks the beginning, or even the point of rupture between modern African poetry and Western poetry.

The study aims therefore to explore from a stylistic perspective some selected poems by Wystan Hugh Auden, an English-American modernist poet; and Atukwei Okai, a second-generation modern African poet. It is mainly a comparative study that explores stylistic tools such as sound, semantics, discourse, context, and syntax to appraise the extent to which the Ghanaian poet might have been influenced or alienated by the English-American war poet. The choice of these two poets is justified by the fact that not only they are not so distanced in terms of timeline, but more importantly, because they represent two poets who go against the poetic trend of their respective generations.

The study essentially maintains that though some aspects of modern African poetry prove that it has been and continues to be influenced by western aesthetics, others belong to the common values shared by poetry universally. This postulate is discussed through a tri-relative sequencing. The first and the second parts analyse the stylistic features of some selected poems by Okai and Auden; while the last part brings the two poets in a comparison terrain to assess the extent to which the Ghanaian poet has been influenced by the English-American poet.

1. STYLISTIC STUDY OF SELECTED POEMS BY ATUKWEI OKAI

Atukwei Okai is a name that echoes significantly on the modern African poetic scene. Born as John Okai in 1941 in Accra, the capital city of the first sub-Saharan independent country, the Ghanaian author stands as one of Africa's outstanding poetic voices. Educated from a literary background in Ghana and later in Russia, Okai's emergence on the modern African poetic scene with his first collection of poems *Flowerfall* (1969) has definitely revolutionized poetry on the continent. Indeed, drawing from his Russian experience, Okai has made of performance a prominent notion in his poetic experience. His efforts to transfer African poetry from the prison of the book to the liveliness of the stage has revived the oral performance of traditional poetry.

Despite the tremendous achievement accountable to the Ghanaian poet, he has been anthologised most of the time as belonging to the modernist phase of modern African poetry, a generation that is known for the huge tribute it pays to Western poetry. Known to have shaped the poetic experience of poets like Soyinka, Awoonor, Kunene, Okigbo and Okai himself, this phase represents in the words of K. E. Senanu and T. Vincent (1988, p.11) the modern African poet's "awareness, under the impact of early twentieth-century metropolitan practices, that poetry need not come in conventional nineteenth-century garb of regular metre and rhyme." Though this perception may be right in many regards, it should still be nuanced. A stylistic analysis of some poems appears in this regard relevant to apprehend the depth of his poetic experience. The poems subject of the study includes "Rosimaya", "Freedom Symphony" and "Sunset Sonata".

A particular feature of poetry that distinguishes it from other literary genres is its special use of language and words. Poets, as Christopher Ogunyemi (2011, p.227) observes, have the capacity due to the space allowing this genre to use “powerful words to x-ray deep thoughts about man and society”. Such a freedom offered to poets in their use of words and language confers to the poetic text, as Terry Eagleton (1996, p.88) admits, to be “semantically saturated”. It becomes therefore quite obvious that to be able to apprehend fully a poetic text, due consideration must be paid to the poet’s use of linguistic features to convey his thoughts.

What is quite striking at the first glance of the selected poems under study is Okai’s use of free verses and prose as a poetic style to convey his poetic imagination. The Ghanaian poet does not pay attention to the regular metrical construction that characterises Western poetry as a general rule. However, far from representing a mistake, the appropriation of free verses to shape his poetic experience reflects rather Okai’s wilful desire to produce a poetry that does not fit Western poetic conventions.

This freedom in the versification has permitted him to elaborate fluid syntaxes reinforcing the musicality of the poems for the sake of anchoring his poetic experience within the oral tradition of his people. In fact, the African writers who delved onto the modern African literary scene at the early days faced a number of challenges including the choice of the language. The fact that many works produced by successive generations of modern African poets failed to capture the African masses interest can be attributable to the poets’ appropriation of English and Western poetic conventions in general.

Okai has therefore produced his poetry with the keen awareness that though he is conveying his thoughts through a borrowed Western language, it is quite relevant to ingrain them within the poetic tradition of his people. He shares, in this regard, the point of view of his compatriot Kofi Anyidoho (1986, p. 13) who contends that the “dichotomy that equates oral literature with ‘traditional’ and written literature with ‘modern’” is simply untenable. Okai and the preceding generations of modern African poets maintain indeed that the modernity assuming modern written poetry does not have to supplant the oral poetic tradition of the African people. Though poetry is part

and parcel of the daily life of people in Africa, the emergence of modern African poetry has not benefited from a total allegiance of the masses on the continent.

This burning desire to anchor his poetic experience within the cultural roots of his people is the reason why Okai has made a successful exploitation of the African cultural and oral elements. The space allowing the use of free verse and prose elements for word mannerism justifies for instance the pervasiveness of oral features such as alliteration and assonance in the poems. They are generally used in a repetitive mode to recreate traditional oral poetry. The following passage from the poem “Rosimaya” is quite evocating of the foregoing:

A deep paralysing pain
Erodes away
The still-wet walls of
Our strong castles
Built in my dreams.
The terrible truth
Is now like the sun - (Okai, 1988, p. 7)

These lines are sufficient enough to show the extent to which the poet relies on alliteration to recreate the traditional poetic flavour of his people. Through the lines “A deep paralysing truth”, “the still-wet walls of”, and “The terrible truth”, it is possible to notice subsequently the alliteration of “p”, “w” and “t” sounds. Through the rhythmic and the sonic texture provided by this poetic device, the persona is able to put an emphasis on not only the fragility and the emotional intensity dominating him; but also, to reveal the harshness and the intensity of the reality being described.

This emotional and musicality characterising the African people’s traditional poetry is enhanced by the Ghanaian poet in the poem “Freedom Symphony” through the repetition of vowel sounds in close proximity. Assonance is thus used from various perspective to reflect the cultural dimension as well as the musical and rhythmic effects reflecting the symphony that the title of the poem evokes. The excerpt below is quite meaningful in this regard:

While yet I breathe!
While yet I breathe –
Through the pores in my skin,
Through the joints in my knees,
Why not leave me to sing:
Of the stillness of the stone
And the gangling of the gourd,
Of the shadow of the star
And the greatness of the grain,

Of the singing of the storm
And the greenness of the grass,
Of the sinking of the seed
And the wobbling of the worm,
Of the shaking of the shade
And the wildness of the wasp,
Of the slowness of the snail
And the weakness of the weed; (Okai, 1988, p. 13)

The passage is very rich with assonance contributing significantly to create the musical and the rhythmic effects of the poem. The device is also used by amplifying certain sounds and rhythms as a desire to put a specific emphasis on some emotional intensities. The lyrical dimension of the poem is reinforced by the repetition of vowel sounds like “ee”, “o” and “a” to substantiate the tone of the symphony that the poem evokes. The repetition of the “ee” sounds in words like “breathe” and “knee” participates importantly to the rhythmic elaboration. The repetition of the “o” sounds in “stone” and “gourd” contributes to create a resonant quality. By creating a soft echo, the presence of the “a” sounds in words such as “shadow”, “star” and “grain” brings connection and harmony between these natural elements.

Beyond the linear lyrical flow generated by harmonious sounds, assonance helps also sometimes to obtain rhythm variability as noticed in the lines “Of the sinking of the seed / And the wobbling of the worm”. In these lines, there is an interplay of the sound “I” in the words “sinking” and “seed”; and the sound “o” with the words “wobbling” and “worm”. This variation of sound patterns creates rhythm variation. It is therefore quite evident that Okai has also used the fluid syntax providing free verses to assert and demonstrate that in the African poetic tradition the line between poetry and song or music is blurred.

The use of the repetition device goes beyond repeated sounds through alliteration and consonance to represent a tangible marker from which to apprehend Okai’s craftsmanship. He has made a pervasive deployment of repetitions, sometimes in the form of refrain, to promote African poetry and African identity. To assess effectively oral features in a literary work as Olufumbi (2014, p. 19) observes, due consideration must be given “to the way it would be spoken” Therefore, the widespread of repetitions in Okai’s works suggests the intricate relationship the poet shares with the oral poetic lore of his people.

The relevance of this device in traditional poetry is determined by the fact that it essentially belongs to the performance realm. In such a performing environment, repetition plays a crucial role. A key role of the device is that it serves as a mnemonic catalyst participating to fix the performer's message in the mind of the audience. In an oral performance, as Albert Lord (1987, p. 57) contends that it is a reminder to "what has been said". Kodjo Senanu and Theo Vincent (1988, p. 264) argue that it is a choice purposely done by Okai for his work is destined "towards a popular audience" Thus, by successfully exploring the repetition device in his poetry, Okai demonstrates the integration of cultural artefacts that serves as mnemonic markers revealing his most important thematic preoccupations.

In the poem "Sunset Sonata" for example, the repetition device represents a feature that contributes significantly to enhance the emotional impact and the rhythmic quality of Okai's poetic expression. Dedicated to the famous Nigerian writer Wole Soyinka, the poem represents one of the major works by the poet that benefited from an extensive critical appraisal. It is an elegy that praises the literary commitment of the writer to the welfare of his people. As the poet magnifies his literary achievement, he also celebrates his capacity to stand against oppressive forces. The following lines that introduce Okai's elegiac address to Soyinka are quite meaningful:

... let the greying day grow,
... let the evening horns blow,
... let the melting mountains go,
... but let the sundown so (Okai, 1988, p. 18)

These opening lines are used in the form of a refrain repeated three times in the poem, sometimes with word variability. It serves as a structural anchor in the poem that helps to create cohesion across different sections. It contributes significantly to reinforce the musicality of the poem and also its performance nature. In a performance for instance the repeated lines are likely to be repeatedly sung in the form a choir by the audience as the performer unveils his poetic craft through word mannerism. This dialogism makes of the audience a key participant in the traditional poetic performance.

Likewise, it aims to hammer again and again the thematic preoccupation underlying the poem. The repetition of words such as "sky-censored", "bulwark-bone", "steel", "soil-sanctioned" is quite relevant. These words belong to the same lexicon field

referring all to the strong-minded and resistant figure to whom the poem is dedicated. The comment made by Kodjo Senanu and Theo Vincent (1988, p. 267) on this poem provides a brief summary to the foregoing. The poem, they argue, "... is a lyrical tribute to the spirit of protest against oppressive authority in any form. [and] ... also illustrates Okai's remarkable control over sounds in that alliteration, assonance, end and internal rhyme all become a precise means of creating new lexical meanings from familiar words". This statement is quite representative of the poetry of Atukwei Okai in the broader sense. It provides indeed a good and brief summary of his poetic experience. Besides, it is also meaningful regarding his poetry in general as the analysis of the selected poems have shown it.

2. STYLISTIC SURVEY OF SELECTED POEMS BY W. H. AUDEN

Wystan Hugh Auden is a name that echoes relentlessly in western poetry. He stands undeniably as one of the major poetic voices of the twentieth century. He lived between 1907 and 1973, and left a tremendous poetic heritage which captures successfully his personal life and the prevailing atmosphere of his time. He has produced timeless works that continue to impact present generations. Though he was born from a physician father and a nurse mother, he has developed as a full-grown adult a keen interest to literature and especially poetry. The emergence of his poetry in the 1930s reflects and refracts the political and social tensions of the time dominated by constant warfare. The thirties from which Auden's poetry emerged is described as follows:

It was a period of conflicts everywhere in the whole wide world. It started with the beginning of the Depression in the United States of America in (1929) and the Slump in the United Kingdom in (1930). It witnessed Hitler's coming to power in Germany in (1933) and the spread of Nazis. It saw the Civil Wars in China and Spain. In (1935) Mussolini, the Italian Fascist, invaded Ethiopia. The sparkle of World War II started by Hitler's invasion of Poland on September 1, 1939. England and France, as allies with Poland, declared war on Germany, which was in alliance with the Soviet Union, Italy and Japan on September 3, 1939. Poland was defeated and divided between Germany and the Soviet Union. At the beginning the United States of America was not participating in war; it was attempting to remain neutral. But later on, it became involved also. (El-Gindy, 2019, p. 156)

The period described in the above comment stands obviously as one of the most tumultuous that mankind has ever known. This is also the reason why Auden's poetry is rightly considered by a wide range of critics to belong to war poetry. His major poetic experiences cover a period of turmoil dominated by an unprecedented pre-war, war and post-war atmosphere. However, being a war poet does not mean that his works

summon people for the battlefield. They are rather permeated by an anti-war philosophy conveying the poet's commitment against war and its side effects.

Auden represents a poetic figure that is quite evocative of western poetry in the broader sense. In his poetry resonates the echoes different western ideological standpoints and geographical spaces that have shaped his poetic experience. Born as a British citizen, he moved to America just before the outbreak of World War II where he became an American citizen in 1946. In addition to the fact that he has navigated between the American and the European worlds, Auden is a poet in the crossroads of major western ideological standpoints. If his early poetry was dominated by Marxism and Freudian perspective, his later works have been rooted in the Judeo-Christian world view.

The poems under study for the survey include "The Love Letter", "In Fathers' Footsteps" and "In Memory of W. B. Yeats". The thematic preoccupations and the formal elements underlying these poems clearly demonstrate that Auden's poetry is dominated by the turbulent atmosphere from which they have emerged. It is a poetry located between the tradition of western poetry and the need for change embodied by the modernist trend. His poetry is chiefly characterized by what he names the 'the light verse'. The light verse in the words of Auden refers to "verse written for a general audience in common speech, it can be read aloud and it has 'for its subject-matter the everyday social life of its period or the experiences of the poet as an ordinary human being" (Pollnitz, 2008, p. 76)

In the implementation of this poetic vision Christopher Pollnitz (2008, pp. 78-79) remarks that Auden has developed two typical styles of verse. Thus, while the first style "borrowed his forms and formulae from popular poetry" the second "is serious in tone, and treats topics of wide public concern in terms of the intellectual fashions of the day" (C. Pollnitz, 2008, pp. 78-80). A stylistic analysis of Auden's poems under study reveals the persistence of these two trends. Various features concur to shed light on the popular dimension of his poetry. In the poem "In Fathers' Footsteps" for instance, and even in the two other poems the analysis involves, the diction is quite evocative of the poet's desire to address a general audience in common speech. The following

stanza from the poem provides a dense poetic form and thematic depth to be considered:

Our hunting fathers told the story
Of the sadness of the creatures,
Pitied the limits and the lack
Set in their finished features;
Saw in the lion's intolerant look,
Behind the quarry's dying glare,
Love raging for the personal glory
That reason's gift would add,
The liberal appetite and power,
The rightness of a god. (Auden, 1945, p. 95)

These verses attest Auden's drop to modernism. Indeed, many popular forms and formulae characterizing modernism are at work here. In addition to the fact that the poem is conveyed through the free verse model, the persona assumes also the collective voice of the people speaking on behalf of them with the use of the first plural possessive adjective "Our". Typical to modernist poetry, the poem is not respectful of a regular meter or rhyme scheme. Thus, the freedom from which the poet seems to benefit, allows him to use free verses to convey a message that is quite accessible and popular.

The poem is likely characterized by a solemn tone as the seriousness of the matter addressed could require it. Thus, the relevance of the thematic preoccupation enlivening the poet is the reason why he uses precise and academic lexical elements such as "Our hunting fathers", "the lion's intolerant look", "personal glory", "reason's gift" and "liberal appetite". These phrases underscore the religious atmosphere of the time preoccupying the poet. The common religious environment becomes thus a rich poetic mine for him to protest against the contemporary plights dominating the western world.

Auden has therefore invested himself, as a committed poet for whom poetry does not mean only art for art's sake. It represents also a powerful weapon for him to challenge the delusions of civilized violence and the moral blindness of power by calling for the need for authentic love as advocated by the Christian religion. Auden shows through the poem, as Mohan G. Ramanan (2013, p. 119) admits, "how a new kind of love motivates people in our bad times." In fact, contrary to the fraternal love advocated by Christianity, the poet and his fellows notice rather the people's love for power and

“personal glory”. Protesting against oppression and selfishness, the poet calls for the reappropriation of Christian values.

Though he may be considered as a forerunner of the modernist poetry as some of his poems rightly attest, Auden’s poetry is broadly dominated by the huge tribute it pays to western poetic conventions. His early poetry is mainly characterized by the use of rigorous structures and verses. If his modernist influence suffers no doubt, the great deal of his poetry has nonetheless been essentially modelled according to the western poetic rules. He has conveyed his poetic imagination through well-elaborated poetic conventions such as sonnet and quatrain which requires regular metrical and rhyme construction.

The poems under study portray various stylistic features that prove Auden’s commitment to the western poetic tradition. They are for most of them characterized by rigorous structures and verses drawn from western poetic conventions. The poem “The Love Letter” that is part of Auden’s earliest poetic experience, is quite evocative of the poet’s continuation with the western poetic tradition. The poem is quite striking through its well-elaborated structure. It is essentially remarkable in the words of Mohan G. Ramanan (2013, p. 118) “for its strict syllabic metre, rhymed couplets of nine syllables in each line of the first stanza, and eight syllables in each line of the second” Such a rigour in the form of the poem materialises the poet’s desire to comply with the rules and the requirements of western poetry.

Though the title of the poem evokes a letter, its layout does not fit a conventional formal or informal letter. The poem’s letter format is made evident by its content which brings closer the speaker’s conversational voice to the reader revealing by the same token the intimacy and privacy of his feelings. As the reader goes through the poem, s/he is able to notice that it is a love poem written as a letter that the persona addresses to his beloved. The emotional intensity permeating the poem is thus enhanced through a well-organized syntax and verses which participates significantly to the poem’s clarity and beauty.

The poem owes likely its musicality to its regular form and verse organization. It is indeed made of seven quatrains which participates to shape its remarkable structure and rhythm. Such a regular disposition of verses in the quatrain model concurs to the

elaboration of sound and melody. The following lines are quite meaningful in this regard:

From the very first coming down **(A)**
Into a new valley with a frown **(A)**
Because of the sun and a lost way. **(B)**
You certainly remain: to-day **(B)**
I, crouching behind a sheep-pen, heard **(C)**
Travel across a sudden bird, **(C)**
Cry out against the storm, and found **(D)**
The year's arc a completed round **(D)**
And love's worn circuit re-begun, **(E)**
Endless with no dissenting turn. **(E)**
Shall see, shall pass, as we have seen **(F)**

The swallow on the tile, spring's green **(F)** (Auden, 1945, p. 44)

This introductory stanza to Auden's poetic letter confirms the poem's normative format. Though the poem may allude to a narrative poem as its length testify, the study of verse organization portrays a poem written in the form of four-line stanzas. Subsequent quatrains are thus tightly interconnected contributing to shape the narrative of a letter through which Auden addresses universal thematic preoccupations such as love and separation as well as communication and miscommunication between people.

Like the structure, the poem showcases a regular rhyme scheme that shapes its rhythmic elaboration and its musicality as well. Throughout the poem, as the passage above shows, there is a consistent couplet rhyme scheme **(AABBCCDDEEFF)**. The consistency in the rhyming as it is possible to notice helps thus to create cohesion and musical flow. This skilful use of rhymed couplets is carefully orchestrated by the poet to serve both the formal and the expressive purposes.

The themes of memory and love underlying the poem is also conveyed through common imagery. Indeed, the poet's keen awareness of imagery in a poetic text explains the pervasive use of ordinary rhetoric figures to shape his poetic imagination. The common figures of speech that enrich his works includes metaphor, personification and symbolism among others. As a key feature of Auden's poetry in general, the passage above attests the poet's deployment of regular imagery to substantiate the emotional depth of his works and also alleviate the thematic complexity that the reader may encounter.

“The year’s arc a completed round” is for example a metaphor referring to the cyclical nature of time and life. This perception of life as cyclic rather than linear enables the persona to assert the perpetuation of love among human beings. Rejecting hatred and oppression, he suggests love and brotherhood as social norms in accordance with the fatherly love God expresses to the human race. Such a divine perception of love allows the persona to announce in the coming line that “love’s worn circuit re-begun,”. The metaphorical portrayal of love as a “circuit”, which is a direct allusion to the circuit of electric current, implies the notion of revitalization, energy and strength that it provides. Like the power that the electric circuit continuously brings to empower devices, love is also able in the poet’s view to provide life and perpetuate the subsistence of the human race.

Moreover, in the line “cry out against the storm, and found”, the personification of love authorises the poet to attribute to this abstract notion human attributes for the sake of externalizing the emotional depth that dominates him. The fact that the poet confers love the human capacity to “cry out” is a means to show his desperate quest for love in a society that seems to have lost such cardinal intrinsic human values. This is quite justified in that Auden has lived his entire life time within a period in which the world went through tremendous turmoil. His life time has subsequently been dominated by the Great War, World War Two and the Cold War.

Like the two previous traditional rhetoric pervading in his works, Auden has similarly made of symbolism a key poetic device in his poetry with the use of many symbols for various purposes. A symbol embodies the idea of “a concrete image expressing an emotional or abstract idea.” (K. Senanu and Vincent T., 1988, p. 319) Therefore, given the emotional depth dominating his poetic imagination, Auden has made of symbolism a relevant device to capture the depth of his feelings and emotions.

Though symbols are quite abundant in the poems under study, two examples will suffice to shed light onto the poet’s use of the traditional rhetoric. In the poem “The Love Letter” for example, the poet’s use of the verb “swallow” and the phrase “spring’s green” goes beyond their denotative involvement. Indeed, the use of the phrase “the swallow” in the context symbolises subsequently return, hope or the passage of time, and more importantly the cycling renewal of affection between human beings

supported endlessly by the divine love. As the phrase “spring’s green” is concerned, it implies likely renewal, life and emotional rebirth. The rebirth of nature in spring characterized by the greenery found everywhere is an image of the rebirth of mankind made possible through love.

Another perspective from which Auden’s poetry can be appraised is certainly his skilful juxtaposition of contrasts. Various binaries interact in his works contributing significantly to shape the stylistic effects of his poetic experience. The poem “In the Memory of W. B. Yeats offers in this regard a long tale to tell. It is an elegy written in 1939 through which Auden is committed to a poignant tribute to the Irish poet William Butler Yeats who stands undeniably as one of the major poets of the twentieth century. The elegiac tradition evoking and reflecting the poem deals essentially with the tribute the poet pays to Yeats and the atmosphere prevailing the day of his death. It mainly brings into the fore various binaries through contrasted perspectives that are quite evocative of Auden’s poetic style.

Though Auden expresses an open disagreement with Yeats during his lifetime in many regards, the poem unveils a contrasted viewpoint which tends to praise and condemn at the same time. In the words of Travis McDonald (2010, p.1), the fact that Auden has chosen elegy as a poetic genre to convey his thoughts helps him to express “the traditional commemorative purpose while simultaneously enabling Auden to critique both Yeats and politically intentioned art.” Indeed, the poem sheds light on the mixed feelings that he had about Yeats. While the first part is devoted to the depiction of the deadly atmosphere prevailing the day of his death, the last part targets the poet’s wrong choices and his blind faith to poetry mainly the romantic trend. Thus, the praise that is given to Yeats for his achievements in the society is contrasted with what Auden views to be not relevant at all. The day of his death seems to have stopped the normal evolution of life. The last line of the first stanza depicts “the day of his death” as “a dark cold day” (Auden, 1945, p. 49). This view is quite opposed to the depiction he made of him in the second part as “silly like us”.

In addition to this binary opposition that is quite obvious throughout the poem, various juxtaposition of contrasts is at work. A relevant contrasting viewpoint underlying the poem concerns the binary division of life and death. The death of the

poet is thus contrasted with the perpetuation of his work. The strong emotion striking the reader with the announcement of Yeats' death in the first line of the poem as he is informed that "He disappeared in the dead of winter" is alleviated with the optimistic mood characterizing the last stanza. Beyond the death of the poet, Auden proclaims the subsistence of his works:

In the deserts of the heart
Let the healing fountain start,
In the prison of his days
Teach the free man how to praise. (Auden, 1945, p. 51)

The death atmosphere introducing the poem reaches its climax and falls down with an optimistic mood. Committed to the mourning of the poet, the poem ends up with a praise atmosphere. Thus, beyond his death, Auden proclaims the rebirth of Yeats due to the relevant contribution of his works. By celebrating the poet's achievement, Auden also praises by the same token the living of his work despite his physical death. Though the artist is physically limited by time, his work is timeless bound. Indeed, though it may happen to the poet or the artist to die, his poetry of creative works live on. It is therefore the immortality of art in general that is celebrated here. The idea of the timeless quality characterizing the artist is thus brought into the fore in the poem through the binary opposition contrasting the death of Yeats and the immortality of his art. The persona's awareness and confirmation that "the death of the poet was kept from his poems" is a juxtaposition of the physical death of the poet that contrasts with the afterlife of his poetry.

The analysis of Auden's statement "for poetry makes nothing happen" led many critics to assume the poet's assertion of the weakness and lack power of poetry regarding politics and society in general. However, a stylistic analysis of his works has proven that it is a poetic style that consists for the poet to juxtapose various binaries for the sake of creating stylistic effects. The juxtaposition of contrasts has offered Auden the opportunity to shed light on the enduring power of poetry and art in general beyond the transient nature of human beings.

3. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The stylistic analysis of the selected poems by Okai and Auden has permitted to bring in close relationship two poets from different historical, cultural and aesthetic backgrounds. Bringing together these two poets' poetic experiences in a comparative study is quite meaningful for their poetic experiences provide an exhaustive mine from which to assess the impact of modern African poetry by its western counterpart.

To admit that many modern African poets who delved onto the modern African poetic scene since its emergence have been influenced by western poetic experience is undeniable. It appears therefore relevant to appraise the level of this alienation in order to fully appreciate modern African poets' literary achievements. The comparative study of the poetic styles of Auden and Okai is quite meaningful in this regard. Indeed, Auden's emergence in the 1930s as one of the major poets of the twentieth century corresponds to the emergence of modern African. Modern African poets have certainly benefited from the rich poetic mine providing the British poet's experience in the process of sophistication of their literary achievement.

The stylistic analysis of the selected poems by Auden and Okai has paved the way to apprehend the extent to which the Ghanaian poet might have been influenced by his British counterpart. The survey of the selected poems reveals thus discrepancies and similarities in the two poets' styles. An important aspect sharing the two poets is certainly the location of their poetic experience at the crossroads of a dynamic process. Indeed, while Auden's poetry is situated between romanticism and modernism, Okai's poetic experience is in transition between the older and the younger generations of modern African poetry.

Though the two poets have adopted the free verse as a poetic landmark, their works display different stylistic flavours. An effort is done for instance by Okai to capture the indigenous poetic lore of his people through the appropriation of local images and oral features as his use of repetition and alliteration have proven. Privileging local and oral flavours, his poems present a dynamic rhythmic elaboration made possible by a keen disposal of verses. However, contrary to Okai, despite Auden's desire to liberate his poetry from western traditional poetic conventions, the study has provided clues that prove that he remains nonetheless attached to them in many regards. The musicality

and sound production displaying the British poet's works depend essentially on the rhyming tradition of the art for the art's sake vision that dominates western poetry. The poet relies thus on the rigorous rhyming tradition for the rhythmic elaboration of his poetry.

Despite the different poetic backgrounds from which their poetry emerged, Auden and Okai are bound together by their poetic experiences. Like the British poet, the Ghanaian poet's poetic imagination is nurtured by an unconditional commitment to the social problems threatening his people and a strong desire to innovate poetic forms. Thus, in their works, both authors privilege the celebration of self and identity assuming by the same occasion public and political voice. Okai has for example ingrained his poetic experience upon the post-colonial experience of the African people offering himself as one of the major spokesmen to speak on behalf of the masses to improve their leaving conditions. His elegy to Soyinka is the proof that like the Nigerian Nobel Prize winner, his art is devoted to the improvement of the post-colonial African predicament. As Auden is concerned, his poetry captures the existential crises of the twentieth century western society dominated by tensions, warfare and the need to reappropriate cardinal Christian values such as love, morality and solidarity.

CONCLUSION

The comparative survey of the poetic styles of the selected poems by Auden and Okai has provided sufficient clues to apprehend some aspects of the influence of the so-called alienation of modern African poetry by Western poetry. The analysis of the stylistic features including sound, lexis, semantics, discourse, context and syntax allows to assert that though the Ghanaian poet might rightly be viewed to have been influenced by his British counterpart as some key stylistic elements have proven, the impact remains nonetheless quite trivial. It is essentially an influence that is attributable to the language dilemma that modern African writers in general have met and are still being confronted to.

The African writers conveying their literary imagination through the borrowed Western languages have been confronted for most of them to such kind of influence. However, as Okai's poetry offers to notice, the use of English does not bias the true identity of his poetry that takes its roots in the depth of the African tradition. What

may appear as similarities between the two poets belong in fact to the universal realm of poetry. All the world over, poetry is known for its commitment to the well-being of society. Throughout ages it is a literary genre that has valuably been in the frontline of humanity's struggle for better living conditions. This utilitarian role of poetry has made it a universal art crossing borders, generations and races.

As a people's literary tradition is as old as the people itself, it is not therefore relevant saying that Africans have not learnt for the first time the art of poetry since the western inroad on the continent. Of all the literary forms in Africa, poetry is even most of the time considered the most indigenous so much it is ingrained within the various cultural expressiveness that nurture the people's daily life. Thus, though conveying his poetic imagination through English, the study has permitted to reveal Okai's successful appropriation of the African people's traditional poetic heritage.

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