

ECO-UBUNTU AND SLOW VIOLENCE IN ANALYSING BIRAGO DIOP'S "SOUFFLES" AND MALICK FALL'S "ECOLIERS"

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ABSTRACT

"Souffles" (Breaths) and "Ecoliers" (Schoolboys) by two Senegalese writers namely, Birago Diop and Malick Fall respectively, serve as study texts in the present research. Its objective is to analyze in details the said poems using eco-critical concepts of "eco-ubuntu" and "slow violence". The findings show that in "Breaths", Birago Diop establishes the interconnectedness of African ancestral worshippers in particular and Africans in general to living and non-living things, living and dead ancestors and gods in the ecosystem while in "Schoolboys", Malick Fall expands the interconnectedness of Africans giving it an international dimension thanks to the historical and political phenomenon of colonization, specifically colonial education; and their attendant long-term effects by way of slow violence. It is established that Birago Diop and Malick Fall are both eco-poets and adherents of eco-ubuntu. Both poets through the intermediary of their poems "Souffles" and "Ecoliers" advocate the interconnectedness of Africans and Westerners and by implication, others in various parts of the ecosystem. Africans are, however, warned by Malick Fall never to jettison their roots, their customs, and traditions; in short their cultures while in the process of global interconnectivity.

KEYWORDS: *Expands the Interconnectedness, Historical And Political Phenomenon Of Colonization, Positive Impact Of Western Education*

INTRODUCTION

More and more interest is being shown, even in the present age, in the study of ecology or environment in literature what is called green literature. William Rueckert invented the term ecocriticism (Barry 40). He wrote an essay published in Iowa Review in 1978, which was entitled: "Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism". There, he demonstrated the application of ecology and ecological concepts to the study of literature. In *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* (1996: xviii) a book edited by Glotfelty and Fromm, the former proposed an operational definition of ecocriticism as follows: "Ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment". Just as the feminist critic examines language and literature using a perspective conscious of gender... just as the Marxist critic brings into his/her reading of texts the relationship between classes and modes of production, the ecocritic bases his/her literary studies on an approach which centers on the Earth (cité par Bouvet 3).

Gomides (2006: 16) defines ecocriticism as: “The field of enquiry that analyses and promotes works of art which raise moral questions about human interactions with nature while also motivating audiences to live within a limit that will be binding over generations”. Estok (2005: 16-17) comes up with a definition of ecocriticism which I find more encompassing. According to him, ecocriticism is more than simply the study of nature and natural things in literature. It is rather every theory that sets to effect a change while analyzing the function – thematic, artistic, social, historical, ideological, theoretical and others – of the natural environment or of its aspects represented in the works (literary or others) which contribute to the material practices in the material world. Onyemelukwe (2015b : 55), for her part, defines ecocriticism as:

La critique que fait l'écrivain, dans son œuvre littéraire, de l'environnement d'où sort son œuvre créatrice. C'est soit l'admiration que fait l'écrivain de la nature dans son écriture, soit la dénonciation des agents prônant la dégradation de l'environnement (eau, forêts, etc.) Autre chose à remarquer c'est sa tentative de sensibiliser son public à la bonne gestion, au contrôle efficace et à la sauvegarde de son milieu naturel ou de son environnement.

The critique that the writer makes, in his/her literary work, of the environment which gave birth to his/her creative work. It is either the writer is admiring nature in his/her writing or denouncing the agents promoting environmental degradation (water, forest, etc.). Another thing to note is his/her attempt to sensitize his/her public to good management, efficient control, and preservation of his/her natural milieu or environment.

Onyemelukwe (2015b : 54) has observed that the writer does not fail to talk of some elements of nature in his/her work regardless of the literary genre, the time and its place of production. Thus even though ecocriticism originated in the West, it is still a valid instrument for analyzing African literary works. One is not ignorant of the fact that some ecocritical concepts have emerged in relation to African ecological philosophy; an example is eco-ubuntu.

The present research has for objective the application of two ecocritical concepts namely eco-ubuntu and slow violence to the analysis of two poems “Souffles” (Breaths) and “Ecoliers” (Schoolboys) by Francophone African poets, Birago Diop, and Malick Fall respectively. Both writers are Senegalese and both rank among Negritude writers.

The present study will first make an attempt to define the key concepts – eco-ubuntu and slow violence before embarking on an in-depth analysis of the two poems “Souffles” and “Ecoliers”.

Attempt at Definition and Explanation of Key Terms

Eco-ubuntu

Desmond Tutu who developed this concept of eco-ubuntu draws it from the African ecological philosophy which translates the interdependence of members of the planet. In Tutu's view:

This suggests a need for a change in our relation to the web of life, for a new gentleness and appreciation. ... We are totally dependent on the ecosystem which supports us, so to see those ecosystems as “us”, as a system that we are embedded in, as an extension of our being is pragmatic and accurate. As in the traditional practice of Ubuntu (www.enviropaedia.com/topic/default.php?topic_id-336).

Some pertinent questions arise as the circle of Ubuntu expands to encompass all people, and as ubuntu is taken up as a guiding ethic by people of all cultures: "How wide does the circle go and how deep? Does it include animals? Does it include plants, earthworms, soil?.. As we grow in awareness we see how we are linked to all living beings by the flow of matter and energy" (www.enviropaedia.com/topic/default.php?topic_id-336). In the course of my analysis today, one will see the width and depth of the circle of Ubuntu (that is eco-ubuntu).

Slow Violence

The notion of slow violence is propounded by Rob Nixon. There is the general tendency to conceive violence as immediate and explosive, instant and visible, for example, physical violence unleashed on a child at home or in the school, wife battery, husband beating, child soldier, volcanic eruption, burning towers, tornadoes etc. Structural violence emanating from abject poverty, joblessness, unemployment, squandermania, and corruption (Onyemelukwe, 2009; Onyemelukwe 2015a: 104) is less explosive, instant and visible and yet perceptible. But what of ecological events like deforestation, climate change, thawing cryosphere, toxic drift, oil spills, acidifying oceans, radioactive aftermaths of wars etc, the pervasive but elusive effects of what Rob Nixon terms "slow violence"? (www.chronicle).

Rob Nixon, a Professor of English at the University of Wisconsin at Madison contends that there is a need to revisit the conventional conception of violence and consider the relative invisibility of "slow violence". By "slow violence" Rob Nixon means: "A violence that is neither spectacular nor instantaneous but instead incremental, whose calamitous repercussions are postponed for years or decades or centuries" (www.chronicle).

Rob Nixon's most recent book entitled *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* published by Harvard University Press treats at length the concept of slow violence. The Human Rights activist Kevin Bales calls "disposable people" those humans vulnerable to displacement caused by ecological problems e.g. dams have driven more than over a million poor Brazilians off their land. Bello Monte will further displace an estimated 40,000 mostly indigenous people while flooding 200 square miles of the forests land clearings on which they have depended. It is against such conjoined ecological and human disposability that as observed by Rob Nixon, the world has witnessed, again and again, resurgent environmentalism of the poor.

Analysis of "Souffles" and "Ecoliers"

I proceed here to analyze the poems in question "Souffles" and "Ecoliers". Both poems have been translated by Onyemelukwe as "Breaths" and "Schoolboys". (See Appendices 1 & 2). These English versions of the poems will be used for the analysis.

The poem "Breaths", used for negritude combat by Birago Diop, one of the pioneers of the Negritude movement has 7 stanzas of different lengths: 7, 10, 7, 10, 7, 19, 7. In this poem, the eco-poet Birago Diop in line with the traditional African religion brings out clearly the interconnectedness of Beings and Things in the ecosystem. He talks of the living beings and the dead ones. He posits that the dead ones are not really dead and phased out of the environment in which the living beings are but are over there manifesting their presence in various elements of nature (fire, water, wind, bush, tree, wood, herbs, rock,

forest, river) and natural phenomena (breath, life, and death). The lines below attest to this reality painted by Diop:

Listen more often to
 Things and the Beings
 The Voice of Fire is heard,
 Hear the Voice of Water.
 Listen in the Wind to
 The Bush in Sobs:
 That's the Breath of the dead Ancestors.
 (Stanza 3).

As evident in this 3rd stanza of the poem, Birago Diop is praising nature to the point of personifying the elements of nature such as fire, water, bush. He assigns human attributes to these inanimate objects: "The Voice of Fire," "The Voice of Water," "The Bush in sobs."

Onyemelukwe had actually cited Diop's "Souffles" as an example of the 2nd out of the six types of ecocriticism she established in Francophone African Literature. She termed it: "L'écocritique sous forme de louanges de la nature" (Ecocriticism in form of praising or eulogizing nature) Onyemelukwe, 2015b: 61, 63-64; Onyemelukwe, 2015a: 126).

In this second type of ecocriticism, according to Onyemelukwe (2015a: 126), "The writers praise nature in simple recognition and admiration of the beauty of God, The Creator, and sometimes in veneration of their dead ancestors". The theme of the veneration or cult of Africans' ancestors (the dead Ancestors) is fully developed in this poem entitled "Breaths". Why Breaths? Two types of breaths are implicated in the beautifully written poem spiced with beautiful imagery. They are "the breath of the dead ancestors" and "the stronger breaths" which, to our mind, refer to breaths of their gods who are believed by worshippers of traditional African religion to "have taken the breath of their dead who are not dead" (stanza 6). In some other religions like Christianity, it is believed that it is God Who gives life and Who takes it. Once God takes the last breath from a person, that person dies.

It should be pointed out here that traditional African religion is not alone in the worship of many gods. When we talk about polytheism, that is, the belief in many gods, attention should be drawn to traditional religions of indigenous tribes of continents be they the red race as with the Red Indians of North America (the resident Native Americans) decimated by European settlers under Christopher Columbus; be they the yellow race as per Chinese; be they the Black race like Black Africans with their traditional African religion and Black Americans with their voodoo religion in the Caribbean, a religion imported into North America by their African ancestors through slave trade. Notice that Polytheism is practised in India, in Australia in Papua New Guinea, Europe, and South America among the indigenous tribes.

It would seem therefore, that with the exception of adherents of atheism (having no belief in God, for example, intellectualism, communism, Marxism, freethinkers, secularism (belief that religion should not play a role in government, education, or other public parts of society or affairs of state; agnosticism (belief that the nature and existence of a god or gods is unknown and inherently unknowable); existentialism (philosophical theory emphasising the existence of the individual as a free and responsible agent determining his own development through the acts of the will); humanism (a system of values

and beliefs that is beset on the idea that people are basically good and that problems can be solved in which human interests, values, and dignity predominate, with human fulfillment); and Satanism (belief in and the worship of Satan); many people in different parts of the universe are connected to gods for polytheists and to one God for monotheists such as Christians and Moslems who believe in one God. It goes without saying that existentialists and humanists are connected to man as a propelling force, the various forms of atheists are connected to one thing or the other that is their guiding principle while Satanists are connected to Satan. No man is an island. Man must be connected to one Being or Thing in the interconnectedness in the natural and supernatural world.

The pertinent question that arises here throws into relief the mystery embedded in this link between the dead and the living: How can the dead breathe to the point that their breath and presence are made manifest in living and non-living things in the natural environment?

Those who are dead are never gone:

They are in the Breast of the Woman,

They are in the Child that wails.

And in the Brand which is inflamed

The Dead are not under the Earth:

They are in the Fire which is dying out,

They are in the Tree which rustles,

They are in the Herbs which are crying,,

They are in the Rock which moans,

They are in the Forest, they are in the Abode,

The dead are not dead (stanza 4).

Niangbo, a character in *Le respect des morts* by Amadou Koné (1980: 45), an elder adept in veneration of the ancestors, stresses his belief in the link between the living and the dead as he voices out: "Les morts ne sont pas morts. Ils existent. Je leur parle, moi. Ils existent partout et veillent sur nous. Ils nous aident à aller fort. Ils nous aident à résoudre nos problèmes, à vaincre » (The dead are not dead. They exist. I talk to them, myself. They exist everywhere and watch over us. They help us to be strong. They help us to solve our problems, to win).

This is antithetical to the Christian religious philosophy. For the Christians, the living has nothing to do with the dead; the dead are dead except those who died in Jesus Christ who even though they were dead yet shall live. In Jesus' words: "Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die" (John 11: 26).

Talking about two types of breaths: stronger breaths of the gods and breath of the dead ancestors that are not dead is simply looking at the surface value of the word breath. In the context of this philosophical poem of Birago Diop, one needs to consider the deeper structure of the word breath. In all traditions, spirit means breath or wind (www.1000petals.wordpress.com/2008/07/26). The word spirit is derived from the Latin "Spiritus" meaning breath. In Greek, Spirit is called "Pneuma" meaning breath. The Hebrew word "Ruah" refers to the wind. Yahweh emanates from the root HWY signifying wind.

The breath of God refers to the spirit of God. In India, the Breath of God is called Brahmachaitanya. Furthermore, in India, the Spirit is associated with “Prana”, a term which in Sanskrit indicates breath. The Russian word “duh” refers to spirit and breath. The German word for breathing is “atmen”. In Arabic, Rouh means Spirit or soul and Reeh means wind; nafas means breath (www.1000petals.wordpress.com/2008/07/26). In summary, breath and wind can refer to Spirit. Thus the stronger breaths in Diop’s poem refer to the Spirits of the gods while the breath of the dead ancestors means the spirit of the dead ancestors. In short, the poem can be entitled “Spirits”. The Spirit of the dead ancestors is not dead but alive hovering around, manifesting its presence in trees, water, fire etc; protecting the living. There is interconnectedness between the Africans that are living and the spirit of dead ancestors that are not dead and the Spirits of their gods; from the natural (the world of the visible) to the supernatural (the world of the invisible which comprises, among others, powers, spirits of the genies, the living and dead shrines, gods and ancestors).

The eco-poet uses repetition of the last lines to stress the connectedness of the dead and the living in the African environment: “That’s the Breath of the ancestors” (stanza 1), “The dead is not dead” (stanza 2); “That’s the Breath of the dead Ancestors” (stanza 3); “The Dead are not dead” (stanza 4); “That’s the Breath of the Ancestors” (stanza 5); “The Dead which is not under the earth” (stanza 6); “That’s the Breath of the Ancestors” (stanza 7). The breath of the ancestors is felt in both living and non-living things in the natural environment and so they are not dead but are vividly interacting with the living and influencing things and happenings in the milieu.

It (the Breath of the Ancestors) repeats each day the pact,
The great Pact which links,
Which links to the Law our Lot,
To the Acts of the stronger breaths
The Lot of our Dead who are not dead,
The heavy Pact which links us to Life (stanza 6).

The dead ancestors breathe over the living African traditional worshipers reminding them constantly of the Pact which links, which links (an an adiplose) their lot or destiny to the Acts of the gods as well as lot of the dead ones who are not dead, and finally links them all to life. One may ask: what is life? Life calls to mind not only humans but also all living things and even non-living things that support life in Africa and other parts of the world, for example, things like earth, water, rock, wind, as reflected in “Breaths”. Thus Birago Diop, in line with Desmond Tutu’s eco-ubuntu, is surreptitiously talking of the interconnectedness of all members of the planet (non-living things, humans - living and the dead, those at the point of death -, gods). The Algerian Diasporic or Migrant and humanist writer Fadéla Hebbadj agree somewhat with Birago Diop given that she considers herself as an umbilical cord connected to her ancestors. In her second novel, autobiographical in nature, entitled *Les ensorcelés*, the child protagonist Fadéla admits that : « Les liens ancestraux organisent la vie de chaque individu selon des rythmes qui s'égalent. Je n'étais qu'un cordon ombilical, tenu encore à cette terre » (Hebbadj, 2010 : 50-51) (Ancestral links organise each individual’s life in accordance with appropriate rhythms. I am only an umbilical cord still in link with this earth). This novelistic heroine is only a reflection of the author Fadéla Hebbadj and so gives us an authorial view. Furthermore, Hebbadj (2010: 51) through the mouth of her spokesperson Fadéla expresses a somewhat similar view: « Je me

sentais liée aux cistes, agrippés aux rochers.J'eus l'impression de faire partie intégrante de la terre » (I felt connected to shrubs ... clutched on to rocks..... I had the impression of being an integral part of the earth).

Following the interconnectedness of Africans to their dead ancestors, one can easily understand the resistance of the inhabitants of an anonymous village, in Amadou Koné's *Le respect des morts*, (Respect of the Dead) to move to a new location in accommodations set up for them by the government so as to enable the white occupants build a dam for the purpose of hydro-electricity. The villagers felt that being dispossessed of their land where they had a connection with their dead ancestors who, of course in their own view, are not dead but are interacting with them, will be an outright show of disrespect to them. Finally, despite the sacrifice to their gods of N'Douba's son and N'Douba playing the pharmakos, they eventually relocate and the dam is constructed making way for development and progress in the village. The eco playwright Koné, while recognizing the interconnectedness of Africans to their dead ancestors and the earth somewhat like Hebbadj, he, however, distances himself from their myopic view and limits placed on the geographical space for this interaction following ignorance and lack of exposure to western education. Hence he exposes them to ridicule in the drama. Koné, as clearly depicted in his surrogate N'Douba, educated like he the author, understands clearly that relocating these villagers will not stop their interconnectedness with their dead ancestors; instead, it will open a door of progress and communication within and outside the village thanks to the erection of a dam across the river to generate hydroelectricity. In short, Koné, like a futuristic developmentalist creates for the inhabitants of this remote village an avenue for interconnectedness with other members of the planet earth.

Dam, in the present circumstance, is not that destructive as opposed to those instances where dams have driven millions of people e.g. poor Brazilians off their land forcefully with the destruction of property. The Human Rights activist Kevin Bales calls such affected population "disposable people". By that, he refers to those humans vulnerable to displacement as a result of ecological problems (www.chronicle). The villagers in Koné's playtext can equally be described as "disposable people" but in a somewhat positive sense. The conflict that ensues between the young generation that had contact with European school and civilization and the older generation that are stark illiterates culminates in the victory of the youths and the tacit wish of the old that these young ones do not forget their dead. But as N'Douba assured them a lot earlier, the villagers' relocation would not stop them from respecting their dead ancestors. Thus even in their new area of residence, they still have a connection with their dead ancestors.

Whereas the Negritude poem "Breaths" stops short of the antagonism between the two worlds in contact during the colonial era as Camara Laye's *L'enfant noir*, thus portraying Africa as a paradisiacal world where even the dead ancestors are not dead but are taking care of the living, protecting them; the poem "Schoolboys" exposes the conflict Africans experienced in their connectedness to the colonial world in the colonial era specifically in the colonial school. In the poem of five stanzas in a descending order of verses – 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, the poet starts with '1' for himself, which also represents schoolboys; in fact, school children in the first two stanzas, then goes on to "You", still talking to himself and other African school children and finally in the last stanza ends with a warning to all. He uses the imperfect tense in stanzas 1 & 2; present tense in stanzas 3 & 4 and the imperative in the last stanza.

The distribution of the tenses translates the progressive growth in the lives and experiences of African school chil-

dren. In other words, past tense indicates what they were at the onset of colonial education, present tense shows what they have evolved into in later years and imperative points at their future what they are expected to become.

Examined in the light of Desmond Tutu's eco-ubuntu, the web of connectivity of these African school children transcends from local to international levels; they are connected to the earth, the African soil and thus culture of African people by going barefooted everywhere they go to including school. They are also connected to their ancestors both living and dead through their wealth of knowledge of African Orature – folktales, legends, and other oral literary genres - learned through African traditional education imparted informally to them; through their contact with charms, totems and shrines:

I went to school barefooted but rich in head
Folktales and legends all buzzing (stanza 1).

They are equally connected to Westerners through their exposure to European/colonial school; through their initiation into the study of books, into the study of European Literature: "Homer's Company", "Edouard's poems and Perrault's tales" (stanza 4).

Unfortunately, the interconnectivity that African school children have with their ancestors and Westerners is shrouded in a conflict which triggers off some psychological problems including inferiority complex, alienation from their cultural roots etc. This can be gleaned from the following lines:

I went to school barefooted but rich in head
Folktales and legends all buzzing
Up to my ears in the resounding air
My books and my charms fought themselves
In my satchel, in my rich head (stanza 1).

The ecopoet throws into relief contrasting situations in the lives of the school children. He opposes material poverty ("barefooted") with the wealth of personal knowledge ("rich in my head, folktales and legends all buzzing"). The fact that all school children go barefoot to school at that time of colonial rule is a pointer to absolute poverty in the continent. I recall that when I was in colonial primary school, all children went to school barefooted regardless of the parents' socio-economic status. A few parents were well-to-do – doctors, businessmen – but the school authorities did not allow any child to put on shoes to come to school. This was a sad social reality. The Senegalese poet also contrasts scientific and logical knowledge that comes from a book with superstition and illogicism associated with charms. The conflict between these two types of knowledge is not only at the level of the school child's satchel but also in his head. It should be noted that his head was not a tabula rasa that means empty head where the teacher is to upload knowledge. The poet makes it clear that the African school child's head is rich with "folktales and legends," with the customs and traditions of his people with cultural norms of the land. Why did he laugh derisively at what the teacher said? It was because what the teacher was saying was running counter to what was already in his rich head. The conflict of cultures and weaknesses of colonial education are themes well developed in this poem "Ecoliers".

Nevertheless, African school children suffer from slow violence, the outcome of which the poet aptly captures in stanzas 4 and 5.

You go to school full of eagerness
With a receptive mind and a cheerful heart
Ready to bear all the humiliations

The African school child in contact situation in a colonial school is confronted with certain psychological problems – deculturation (abandonment of some aspects of his native culture), acculturation (imbibing some or all of the imported culture). At this juncture, the school child goes to school “full of eagerness, with a receptive mind and a cheerful heart.” He is no more making a mockery of the sayings of the teacher. He learns and assimilates eagerly. Furthermore, he is “ready to bear all the humiliations.” Even though the poet does not cite even an example of how the African school child is humiliated in European school, there is no denying the fact that African school children suffered all sorts of humiliation in the colonial school. The teacher could call him blockhead, lazy, stupid. The worst humiliation is banning him from speaking his mother tongue, a phenomenon Onyemelukwe (2015a: 97) described as linguistic rape, structural violence, and unheroic act. Onyemelukwe (2004: 140) explicates that:

Colonial school... alienated the African child from his language roots, his culture, and traditions. School children were punished for speaking their mother tongues in school. They were authorized to speak only the colonial masters' languages – English in Anglophone countries and French in Francophone countries.

This calls to mind the critique made by Ngugi wa Thiongo in his book, *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*. Ngugi (1981:18) posits that the African child's “native languages were associated in his impressionable mind with low status, humiliation, corporal punishment, slow-footed intelligence and ability of downright stupidity, non-intelligibility and barbarism”.

Banning African children from speaking their indigenous languages and subjecting them to humiliation for any attempt at speaking any is a clear way of instilling in the colonized an inferiority complex and alienating him from his language root and culture. Language death is the long-term effect of wilful linguistic rape committed by colonizers on Africans' indigenous languages. Thus in line with Rob Nixon's postulation of slow violence, it is actually slow violence that generates language death. What does language death mean? The younger generation, for example in Nigeria, prefer speaking English to their indigenous languages, 514 of them (<http://aboutworldlanguages.com/world-languages>). In fact, the majority of them are illiterate in their mother tongues. Through slow violence, some of these indigenous Nigerian languages are running the risk of extinction from the globe decades to come “except drastic steps are taken to stop this impending language death” (Onyemelukwe, 2015a: 97).

The African school children are like completely assimilated through slow violence in the cited verses:

You go to school in the company of Homer
Edouard's poems and Perrault's tales (stanza 4)

Homer, Edouard, and Perrault are French writers. The African child in colonial school appears here to be completely attached to the syllabus and contents of European school which, of course, are European; furthermore, he faces no conflicting challenges from the contents of indigenous African education as portrayed in stanzas 1 & 2. The African child appears to have been transformed from the African, who treated what the teacher said with suspicion, scepticism, contempt and derision in

colonial school to one who has fully assimilated the European educational contents and who with time emerges as the product of unbalanced European education dubbed ironically “bekee”, Europeanised African or in Frantz Fanon’s words, “peau noire masque blanc” (black skin white mask), through what Allison Carruth (Professor of English at the University of California, Santa Barbara, USA and *Global Appetites* author) terms mutagenic violence ([www.english.ucla.edu>all-faculty](http://www.english.ucla.edu/all-faculty)).

This is why the ecopoet subtly conscious of eco-ubuntu throws the warning in the last verse:

Do not forget Kotje at the entrance of his shrine (stanza 5).

He reminds himself and all other Africans that to be an educated man, one does not have to abandon his origin, his religion, the cultural norms of his people and by extension his language such that he ends up as a Europeanised African. Onyemelukwe (2016: 24-25) has observed that in a contact situation, attainment of perfect integration by the immigrant does not entail total abandonment of the source culture. Kotje is an important personality in traditional African society. He is a figure representing the living and the dead ancestors. He is the link to the gods. Thus Malick Fall is cautioning that African school children should not allow themselves to be alienated thoroughly through slow violence orchestrated by colonization but must remain somewhat connected to their own people and things while being connected to Westerners and western way of life.

One might not be right to assume that Malick Fall is condemning totally European education brought about by colonization in “Ecoliers” because there is no evidence of his uncritical deference to African traditional education in that poem. Moreover, despite the long-term negative impact of western education generated by slow violence as highlighted by the ecopoet and the aversion for colonial education expressed by thorough anti-colonialists like Walter Rodney in his *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, I am not blind to the positive impact of western education on Africans and their natural environment. At least, our men are no longer moving about in loincloths. Most Africans, today, cover their nakedness either in traditional attires or, by way of syncretism, in English wears thanks to European technological development brought into Africa following her contact with Europe.

CONCLUSIONS

Eco-ubuntu and slow violence have been largely used to analyze Birago Diop’s “Souffles” (Breaths) and Malick Fall’s “Ecoliers” (Schoolboys). Whereas Birago Diop in his poem “Souffles” places emphasis on the interconnectedness of African people to their dead ancestors and gods, to living and non-living things in the natural environment, Malick Fall in “Ecoliers” expands the interconnectedness to include Africans’ connection with the Westerners via colonization and typically colonial school.

The study concludes that both Senegalese writers, Birago Diop, and Malick Fall are ecopoets and silent adherents of eco-ubuntu. The novel contribution of this study to the world of knowledge is that both poets, using the intermediary of “Souffles” (Breaths) and “Ecoliers” (Schoolboys) respectively, advocate the interconnectedness of Africans and Westerners and by implication others in other parts of the planet earth. Malick Fall, however, throws a note of caution to Africans never to abandon their origins, their roots, their customs and traditions; in short, their cultures while in the process of global interconnectivity

APPENDIX I

BREATHS

Listen more often to

The Things and the Beings

The Voice of Fire is heard,

Hear the Voice of Water.

Listen in the Wind to

The Bush in Sobs:

7 That's the Breath of the Ancestors.

Those who are dead are never gone:

They are in the Shade which illuminates

And in the Shade which thickens.

The Dead are not under the Earth: They

are in the Tree which rustles, They are in

the Wood which groans, They are in the

Water which runs, They are in the Water

which sleeps,

They are in the Hut, they are in the

crowd: 10 The dead are not dead.

Listen more often to

The Things and the Beings The Voice of

Fire is heard, Hear the Voice of Water.

Listen in the Wind to

The Bush in Sobs:

7 That's the Breath of the dead Ancestors.

Those who are dead are never gone:

They are in the Breast of the Woman,

They are in the Child that wails.

And in the Brand which is inflamed

The Dead are not under the Earth:

They are in the Fire which is dying out,

They are in the Tree which rustles,
 They are in the Herbs which are crying,,
 They are in the Rock which moans,
 They are in the Forest, they are in the Abode,
 10 The dead are not dead.
 Listen more often to
 The Things and the Beings
 The Voice of Fire is heard,
 Hear the Voice of Water.
 Listen in the Wind to
 The Bush in Sobs:
 7 That's the Breath of the Ancestors.
 It repeats each day the Pact,
 The great Pact which links,
 Which links to the Law our Lot,
 To the Acts of the stronger breaths
 The Lot of our Dead who are not dead,
 The heavy Pact which links us to Life
 The heavy Law which links us to the Acts of
 The Breaths which are dying
 In the bed and on the banks of the River
 The Breaths which are dying
 In the Rock which moans and in the Herb which cries.
 The Breaths which remain
 In the Shade that illuminates and thickens,
 In the Tree which rustles, in the Wood which groans
 In the Water which runs in the Water which sleeps,
 The stronger Breaths which have taken
 The Breath of the Dead which are not dead,
 The Dead which are not gone,
 19 The Dead which are not under the Earth
 Listen more often to
 The Things and the Beings
 The Voice of Fire is heard
 Hear the Voice of Water

Listen in the Wind to
The Bush in Sobs,
7 That's the Breath of the Ancestors
(Birago Diop. Underlining by us)

APPENDIX II

SCHOOLBOYS

I went to school barefooted but rich in head
Folktales and legends all buzzing
Up to my ears in the resounding air
My books and my charms fought themselves
In my satchel, in my rich head
I went to school propelled by my dreams
Drawn from the wake of my age-long totems
I sat the wrong way on my seat
And sneered at what the teacher said
You go to school full of eagerness
With a receptive mind and a cheerful heart
Ready to bear all the humiliations
You go to school in the company of Homer
Edouard's poems and Perrault's tales
Do not forget Kotje at the entrance of his shrine
(Malick Fall, 1964)

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