

Viral Dimensions of Apartheid: Dramatic Representation of the Undying Ghost of Human Oppression and Alienation across Spaces.

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Abstract

This paper interrogates the human drive that fuels perennial human oppression and social alienation within the theoretical backdrop of Nietzschean Irrationalism's 'Übermensch' or 'Higher-Man'; using a diachronic critique of themes from Fugard's *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*; Ngugi & Mugo's *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi*; Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*; and, GB Shaw's *St. Joan*. The critique foregrounds themes of black identity and apartheid, hegemonies of capitalism, religion, politics and female oppression. Its significance lies in its attempt to unravel the essence of this irrational drive that fires this human tendency to replicate viral modes of slavery, human suffering and social exclusivism across time-space locales; concluding that as artists, theorists, philosophers and 'politicians' who engineer human souls and social inclusiveness, rather than deploy ideas/theories to perpetuate human misery, we can use them to heal the relentless social fragmentations and alienation that stem from this misunderstood Nietzschean 'Overman' mentality.

Keywords: *Nietzschean Irrationalism. Dramatic Criticism. Apartheid Systems. Hegemony. Social Engineering. Alienation. Black History.*

Introduction

"The White man is the master in South Africa, and the White man, from the very nature of his origins, from the very nature of his birth, and from the very nature of his guardianship, will remain master in South Africa to the end."

- House of Assembly Debates, 15/3/50
col.3610); Apartheid Museum,
Johannesburg.

The institutionalization of the human will to oppress the "other" may date back to pre-history but the capitalization of African slavery and other post-colonial hegemonies may have been partly ignited by developments in maritime transportation and 17th century European

mercantilism (Konnecky & Konnecky 395); as well as the opening of trans-national trade routes. Even though domestic slavery was rife on the African continent, it drew from the pool of war captives, human exchanges for horses and arms, victims of bad indebtedness, social miscreants, denounced witches and wizards, etc. (Uya 60). In parts of the then West African kingdoms, these domestic “slaves tended to be integrated politically, socially, culturally and religiously, into state institutions and structures” in an “absorptionist” manner (Uya 59). But across the Atlantic, the Virginia Slave Code of 1705, which re-stated earlier Police Codes insisted that “no Negro, mulatto, or Indian shall presume to take upon him, act in or exercise any office, ecclesiastical, civil or military” (Uya 94). In these Southern states of the USA, the white slave owners “defended the institution, which they believed was vital to their economic interest as well as supported by *pseudoscientific evidence proving the superiority of the white race*” (Konecky & Konecky 481; emphasis added). The exhibition of this tendency (to racial/ethnic superiority as impetus to oppress) as exhibited in dramatic texts forms the crux of our discussion. Needless to say, human social interactions built on the agencies of maritime travel and later forms of connectivity. One of such discoveries that followed maritime connectedness was the lucrative trade in fellow human beings across oceans and deserts and their subsequent enslavement and colonization in furtherance of imperial goals and capitalist industries. But what would inspire the self-privileging of one’s race over the other on notions of “racial/cultural superiority” as Prospero for instance does with Caliban in Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*? (Worthen 323).

The Nietzschean “Death of God” and Ascendance of the *Overman*

In the same manner Pico della Mirandola’s *Conclusions* (c.1480), which became the Renaissance manifesto of Humanism signalled the death of Deism, Nietzschean Irrationalism pushed the *philosophes* beyond the limits. Deism is defined as a “belief in a rational God who had created the universe, but then allowed it to function without his interference according to the mechanisms of nature and a belief in rewards and punishments after death” (Craig *et al* 501). Deism was considered highly empirical, reasonable and capable of producing virtuous humanity, and seen as a major positive religious component of modernist European Enlightenment. But the scientific revolution championed by the publication of Denis Diderot’s *Encyclopaedia* (1751), wherein the *philosophes* considered the Church as the chief enemy of the improvement and happiness of mankind because it taught men to believe that human beings were sinful and needed divine grace, turned the tables. The Church was now thought to “foster[ed] intolerance and bigotry” (Craig *et al* 501). This movement overturned

the theological and religious modes of thought towards humankind and life on earth. Irrationalism was to become one of the foremost rebels of the 19th century European Enlightenment.

Irrationalism, reminiscent of Greek Dionysianism stressed the irrational side of human nature; thus repudiating the Enlightenment man's capacity to think critically as the only path to human progress. (Cf. Euripedes' *The Bacchantes*, and Soyinka's adaptation *The Bacchae of Euripedes* which dramatically illustrate this phenomenon; while the reverse psychological effect of its non-recognition is visible in Racine's neo-classical play, *Phaedre*). The German philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900), and chief theorist of Irrationalism, even articulated the concept of tragedy as the product of the tension between the irrational Dionysian and rational Apollonian drives in man (Gassner & Quinn 995). Thinkers of this movement considered "blind strivings and animal instincts as the primary fact of human existence," since it became obvious that "impulses, drives, and instincts -all of them forces below the surface- determined behaviour much more than did logical consciousness" (Perry 376) or scientific thinking.

While Irrationalism pre-figured Freudian psychoanalysis as well as engendered interest in mythology, essential religion, politics, and the artist's creative process, some of its other thinkers "celebrated violence as a healthy expression of the irrational." Perry like Rene Girard was quick to note that, "*in succeeding decades, these currents of irrationalism would become ideologized and politicized by unscrupulous demagogues, who sought to mobilize and manipulate the masses*" (my emphasis, 376). Girard, who was one such critic of myth, basing his opinion on anthropological and literary evidence, concluded that myth has been used throughout history to justify mass violence and racism. He argues that even in contemporary world, "myth continues to serve as a tool for scape-goating" (Young in Cowles 73) as illustrated by Hitler's Nazism, South African Apartheid and other instances of social alienation and ethnic cleansing. Across time and space, this Nietzschean *Overman* tendency has also been expressed through open rejection of reason and the privileging of race, blood, action and brutal will; as evident in Hitler's Nazism, Musolini's Fascism, the Caste system in India and Igbo-land (Osu), Taliban repression of the female in Afghanistan; and xenophobia in South Africa (against Nigerians), Negrophobia in North America, and some parts of Europe.

Nietzsche, also it was who made the famous pronouncement of the "death of God", the Being that's generally considered as the one moral force that holds the world together. Denouncing other commonly accepted views of his time, Nietzsche saw life as so replete

with cruelty, injustice, uncertainty and absurdity, such that it was impossible to conceive that the world was governed by rational principles. Thus the alienated, existential man lived in a godless, amoral and absurd world, where the dark mysterious world of instinctual desires represented the essential forces of life. It was this perceived loss of a modernist “moral centre” that birthed similar *avant-garde* philosophies like Existentialism/Absurdism dramatically captured by its chief proponent, Albert Camus in his play, *Caligula* (1938-1945), which is considered as an “allegory of Nazism”. Camus himself describes the play as “the tragedy of the intelligence”; adding quickly that “none of the evils totalitarianism claims to remedy is worse than totalitarianism itself” (Raines 284-5). Essentially therefore, these *avant gardes* were neither immoral nor anti-human.

The proponents of Irrationalism considered Christianity “unreasonable”, made worse by its life-denying values, and like other feudalist hegemonies bridled man’s ascent to a fuller life and culture, because it “extinguished the spark of life in man” (Nietzsche 377); thereby giving man a sick soul. According to Nietzsche, man becomes powerless because, the thought of this other domineering being (God) makes man fearful, in that the being “hovers in his imagination as a punishing justice...he thinks he recognises its anger, its menace...and a presentiment of the whiplashes he will deliver as judge and executioner” (85). Man therefore, arrived at this state not through “guilt” or “sin” but “rather through a series of errors of reason” (85); because God is man’s creation. Concluding that, “a certain false psychology, a certain kind of fantasy in interpreting motives and experiences, is the necessary prerequisite for becoming a Christian and experiencing the need for redemption” (Nietzsche 87).

Nietzsche insists that this (now much misunderstood) “death of God” and “all transcendental truths can mean the liberation of man” (Perry 378), which can only come about through some transformational process. This is where his concept of the *Übermensch* or “Overman” or “Superman” becomes significant. He believes that man can overcome the nihilism of the world and the “dictates of conventional morality in order to achieve a level of experience beyond the reach of the ‘common herd’” (Maimon *et al* FR-32); by adopting a new orientation that privileges the “superior man” who determines his own values and has attained self-mastery, all of which qualities, he can avail the rest of weaker humanity through leadership. This new superman, whose “will to power manifests itself in creativity, independence, and originality”, (Maimon *et al* FR-32) can undo the hegemonic forces, which have made man soft and degenerate. Nietzsche believed that the European society of his time lacked such heroic figures which made Europeans appear like sheep without a shepherd. Therefore, only a “higher man” who would not be held back by what he termed the

“egalitarian rubbish” preached by Christians, democrats, and socialists would save Europe. “A declaration of war on the masses by *higher* man is [was] needed to end the dominion of *inferior* men ... the annihilation of *suffrage universal*, i.e., the system through which the lowest natures prescribe themselves as laws for the higher” (Perry 378).

Unfortunately, Nietzschean thought like most original ideologies and philosophies, became comfortably misunderstood to have privileged the strong over the weak and the cowardly; even though his advocacy was meant to be a “healthy affirmation of life with a new purpose” (Perry 379) for ailing humanity. He is known to have detested German nationalism and what became Hitler’s credo of Aryan superiority, militarism, anti-Semitism as well as state worship and fascism. But it must be remembered that anti-Semitism predated Hitler, as perceived in pre-historic records of biblical Exodus, Spanish Inquisitions & expulsions of 1492; Shakespeare’s “racist/bigoted” representation of the Jew in *The Merchant of Venice*, etc. However, Perry rightly cites Janko Lavrin’s observation that “practically all the fascist and Nazi theories can find some support in Nietzsche’s text, provided one gives them the required twist” (379). Therefore, it can be argued that Nietzsche’s non-conformist ideas have in some ways “provided a breeding ground for violent, anti-rational, anti-liberal, and inhumane movements” (Perry 379); including pitiless despotism, the notion of master-races and survival of the strong at the expense of the weak. These mind-sets may have contributed to spawning the various forms of human oppression across time and spaces as “dramatically” represented in the themes of plays discussed here. While not asserting that all human monstrosities are informed by theoretical or philosophical postulations, the nexus between theory, literature, philosophy and social engineering cannot be overlooked.

The Overman concept presaged Freudian Psychoanalysis, Sartrean Existentialism as well as Camus’ Absurdism; it’s also important to note its link with earlier Darwinian theories of evolution and “survival of the fittest” which Adolf Hitler mythically re-interpreted when he addressed what for him [was] the burning issue of “Race and People” in his revolutionary road map, *Mein Kampf* (184-214). Hitler waxes evolutionary with Charles Darwin to support what he, Hitler calls the “iron law of nature – which compels the various species to keep within the definite forms of their own life-forms when propagating and multiplying their kind” (*Mein Kampf* 184); otherwise, “hybrids and their progeny are denied the ordinary powers of resistance to disease or the natural means of defence against outer attack” (185). Using this logic from what he observes with the Jewish insistence on racial purity, he canvasses for the necessity for a pure, undiluted Aryan race. According to Hitler, “history

furnishes us with innumerable instances that prove this law....that whenever Aryans have mingled their blood with that of an inferior race the result has been the downfall of the people who were the standard-bearers of a higher culture” (186). Citing examples across spaces, Hitler concludes that the “results of miscegenation” include “the level of the superior race becom[ing] lowered” and; “physical and mental degeneration sets in, thus leading slowly but steadily towards a progressive drying up of the vital sap” (186). Decisively, he roundly pronounces: “[t]he act which brings about such a development is a sin against the will of the Eternal creator. And as a sin this act will be avenged” (*Mein Kampf* 186).

Hitler therefore turns this vengeance against the perceived enemy: “here we meet the insolent objection, which is Jewish in its inspiration and is typical of the modern pacifist” who thinks that, “man can control even nature” (186). Glorifying the Aryan race, Hitler asserts:

Every manifestation of human culture, every product of art, science and technical skill, which we see before our eyes today, is almost exclusively the product of the Aryan creative power. This very fact justifies the conclusion that it was the Aryan alone who founded a superior type of humanity, therefore he represents the archetype (*sic*) of what we understand by the term: MAN. He is the Prometheus of mankind...’ (188).

He proceeds to divide mankind into three categories: “founders of culture, bearers of culture and destroyers of culture”, with the Aryan taking the first category; and the Jews falling into the third class. Note Hitler’s appeal to Greek and Jungian mythology in his use of “archetype” and “Prometheus”.

It was with this Aryan racial-superiority mind-set that he set himself against the Jews whom he conceived as “the most striking contrast to the Aryan...who have so developed the instinct of self-preservation as the so-called ‘chosen’ people....[with] an infinitely tenacious will-to-live, to preserve one’s kind...!” (*Mein Kampf* 195). Hitler also enumerates in subsequent passages in rather unprintable terms the peculiar character of the Jews which pitched them against his German state (cf.195-214). Therefore, blaming all the German national problems on the Jews, with the ultimate mind-set that “the star of David steadily ascended as the will to [German] national self-preservation declined”, Hitler became “convinced that only by recognizing such truths could we stop the national decline in Germany and lay a granite foundation...an organism created from the soul of the people themselves” (215), to launch a German nation. One clearly sees in Hitler’s ideological positioning, a mix of myth-making, scape-goating and ethnic-cleansing, a privileging of the

Aryan race as the Prometheus of the “other lower” races of the world, his hatred for weakness and pacifism and socialist mass ideology; and the need to create an Overman to redeem/drive his German nation and the world. This theoretical mind-set may not be too different from the fuels that have driven the dominating passions of the Overman in other spaces wherever man inflicted inhumanity on the “other man”.

The Overman Mentality & Human Oppression across Spaces.

Hitler’s Nazism serves to exemplify the ideologization of Nietzschean Overman thinking; and as Hitler’s political career illustrates, the superior-race and Overman mentality can be found across most *déjà vu* appearances of human oppression in different spaces and times. The authoritarian disposition of the Church in this era may also have provided and validated a model of behaviour for Aryan colonialists in the manner they dealt with colonized peoples wherever they found them in the world. Even though Anti-Semitism dates from biblical times, but as early as the 1480, the Catholic Inquisition, the Crusades and witch-burning had all taken place in Europe (as dramatically captured in Shaw’s *St Joan* below). History records that these crusades were “led by Dominican friars, and their main targets were *conversos*, Jewish people who had been forced to convert to Christianity,” and who were later charged for being false Christians; [and were] burnt at the stake, with about 150,000 forced to leave Spain in just four months (Konecky & Konecky 272).

A diachronic look at themes from drama texts: Athol Fugard’s *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*; Ngugi wa Thiong’o & Micere Githae Mugo’s *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi*; and other texts outside the Black continent like, Lorraine Hansberry’s *A Raisin in the Sun*; and, George Bernard Shaw’s *St. Joan*, exemplify social issues such as Black identity/alienation, the hegemonies of corporate capitalism, religion/politics ever present at post-colonies’ bridge-heads; and, female/black oppression. These are foregrounded here as central to the recurrent social fragmentations and alienation of our post-colonial world. Other themes include the Mau-Mau Revolt and colonial experience in Kenya as captured in *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi*; and, the ultra-white racist attacks on African-Americans in the United States as painted in *A Raisin in the Sun*. These texts reflect different variants of Euro-American perceived Aryan-superiority-engineered erstwhile occupation of South Africa and the official institution of Apartheid by the Nationalist Party since 1948 as reflected in *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*.

Apartheid, Black Identity & Oppression: Patrick Wilmot conceives Apartheid as a signification of many things to many people- [...] an object of blind outrage...a system of economic exploitation...a system of racial segregation...a political organization of a

European minority to deny the liberty, rights and dignity of the African majority[...and an] organized official violence on an immense scale and as a deliberate terrorization of the African population (xi).

Without rehashing the details of the sociology of erstwhile Apartheid system, it suffices here to remember that the settler communities in South Africa were the Afrikaaner or Boer which were made up of the Dutch, French Huguenot or German descent and later; and the English. Quoting Gwendolen Carter's *Politics of Inequality*, Wilmot narrates that the Afrikaaner-founded secret society known as Broederbond by 1922, maintained an ideology that was based on the dominance of Afrikaaner nationalism. The organization's constitution made it clear that this elite organization was "born out of a deep conviction that the *Afrikaaner nation was put in this land by God* and is destined to continue in existence as a nation with its own nature and calling" and that its highest aim is "honorable service to Afrikaanerdome" (emphasis mine, 73). All key members of the Nationalist party government were drawn from this society which was considered as "totalitarian in concept and fascist in principle and organization" (Wilmot 75).

The Aryan Overman superiority mind-set and appeal to mythology re-surfaces here. According to Meredith, "popular ... myths that endured for generations were used by nationalist politicians and intellectuals to gain popular support. Afrikaaners were portrayed as members of an exclusive *volk* created by the hand of God to fulfil a special mission in South Africa (71). The same mythic notion of being "God-chosen people", the mixture of nationalist politics with Calvinist ideas which became known as Christian Nationalism drove the Broederbond's apartheid ideology. This was captured by Nationalist Party separatist slogans which translated to: "[t]he kaffir in his place" and "the coolies out of the country" (Meredith 76). A house resolution of the Apartheid South African parliament cited in the epigram above stated this in very clear terms that "the white man is the master in South Africa...and will remain master in South Africa to the end" (Apartheid Museum, Johannesburg). The "coolies" represented foreign economic interests and hegemonies in South Africa like the Henry Fords of Ford Motors in *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*.

In these capitalist establishments, the Blacks work under dehumanizing conditions and their welfare becomes significant only to the extent to which they can please "the big-shot c... from America" (Fugard 6). The central character and narrator Styles, remembers Mr Bradley's injunction that the workers "must try to impress Mr Henry Ford that they are better than those monkeys in his own country, those niggers in Harlem who know nothing but strike, strike" (7). After the Ford visit, the Black workforce is made to "double speed on the

line!” to “make up for production lost!” (9). Like many capitalist outfits, Styles understood early enough that working at the Ford plant, “Your life doesn’t belong to you. You’ve sold it. For what? [...] gold wrist watch in twenty-five years’ time, when they sign you off because you’re too old for anything anymore” (9). It is this wisdom that had informed Styles’ voluntary disengagement from the plant in preference for self-employment as creative manager of Styles Photographic Studio where he now recreates dreams for a people whose lives have been battered by a segregationist apartheid system. Mr Styles understands this predicament perfectly well and makes this dictum the basis of his business: “This world and its laws allow us nothing except ourselves. There is nothing we can leave behind when we die, except the memory of ourselves” (16).

But this is not the case for a majority of other Black South Africans who, like Outa Jacob or Sizwe Bansi, must die to live at the whim of a “superior Overman”. The ubiquitous symbolic presence of the Overman is the “pass” or “book” which the under-privileged and socially-excluded Black man has to carry about in order to be socially included: “wherever you go...it’s that bloody book” (35). For the Black man, whether in Hansberry’s Chicago’s Southside or in the Kenyan Mountains of Ngugi’s Mau Mau, it appears, as Sizwe Bansi believes: “our skin is trouble” (43). This “book” or “pass”, like the Orwellian “Big Brother” or our post-modern day global “wired system”, tracks its owner and perpetually watches the subject. The demise of the South African apartheid system do not signify the death of these spying systems which are subliminally and basically designed to keep in place the segregationist polices of the “haves” and the “haves not”, the digitally empowered and the dis-empowered, and the maintenance of the widening divide between the global North and the South; the Aryan race and the rest of the world.

The ghost and technologies of apartheid transmute and change shape in different spaces and times even when the very concept has ostensibly been consigned to antiquity in the South African Apartheid Museum. Global corporate capitalism, religion & politics re-emerge as forms of “apartheid” in Ngugi & Mugo’s *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi*. In their preface to the play, they observe that “America’s immense wealth was gained through the impoverishment and misery of millions” (i). These black populations are invariably nondescript; looking back at centuries of enslavement and colonization throughout Africa. Like the South African apartheid model where “South Africa’s white population steadily reinforced the institutions of its racial order, subjecting the black majority of South Africans to forced labor, land dispossession, and political disenfranchisement” (Winant 178), the Kenyan population had also earlier been subjected to a similar experience as dramatically

captured in this play. The strategic response of South African blacks was through the use of “strikes, urban demonstrations, and boycotts” (Winant 180).

In Kenya, the Africans resorted to guerrilla resistance in the form of Mau Mau to fight these “forces of exploitation and domination”; which according to Ngugi, dates “back to 15th and 16th centuries when Kenyans and other East African people took up arms against the European colonial power –the Portuguese forces of conquest, murder and plunder” (ii). Set against the background of many years of enslavement, the play spotlights the “peoples” contribution to the liberation of Kenya through the leadership of legendary Dedan Kimathi. Kimathi preaches the gospel of the “eternal law of the oppressed/of the humiliated, of the injured, the insulted! /Fight/ Struggle/ Change”, against the mantra of the “jungle of colonialism, of exploitation... of creatures of prey feeding on the blood and bodies of those who toil: those who make the earth yield. Us. Those who make the factories roar...” (Ngugi & Mugo 26-27).

Incidentally, ranged against these freedom fighters are the colonialists and settlers with their state instruments of oppression; and, their African surrogates at the bridge-head of the colony: foreign businessmen represented here by the Indian, and other characters like the Priest, Business Executive, Politician and trans-national Bankers. These colonial surrogates and hegemonies are in some league to shape and perpetuate the fortunes of the colonialist settlers at the bridge-head of the colony, even where the colonialists have physically withdrawn. Henderson, who represents the settler-colonialist, defends his position with Kimathi thus: “Look, between the two of us, we don’t need to pretend. Nations live by strength and self-interest. You challenged our interests: we had to defend them” (34). Kimathi replies that even though there must be horses and riders, he, Kimathi will rather be Balaam’s Ass: “Yes, the one who rejected the rider” (34). Kimathi upturns the well-worn arguments of the hegemonies in his several trials and even tells his Kenyan brothers who fight on the side of the imperialist: “It’s always the same story. Poor men sent to die so that parasites might live in paradise with ill-gotten wealth. Know that we are not fighting against the British people. We are fighting against British colonialism and imperialist robbers of our land, our factories, our wealth” (64); concluding that in the “Court of Imperialism/There has never and will never be/ Justice for the people/Under Imperialism/Justice is created /through a revolutionary struggle...” (82).

And the eternal question remains: what drives the desires of the colonialists/settlers against the interests of the owners of the land in these narratives? Beyond base capitalist interest, we see the hovering ghost of the Promethean *Übermensch* imposing a dominant will

on a supposed weaker/inferior man. In Lorraine Hansberry's less known opera: *Toussaint*, Lucie, the wife of Bayon the slave driver protagonist, asks her husband if he is indeed a freeman; which the latter answers in affirmative. "Then why haven't you left Santo Domingo long ago? [...] What is it that keeps a free man where he does not wish to be? Tell me – what is freedom?" (Hansberry 143b). In other words, what is it that drives another man/woman to impose "his/her" will over the unwilling "others" beyond the "will to dominate" that dwells within the mentality of the Overman?

We see further, Black/female suppression [and xenophobia] in Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*. Lorraine, in an earlier letter to the Editor of the *New York Times* in April 23, 1964, leaves us in no doubt that the later drama in *A Raisin in the Sun* is part of her personal life story. The letter is in "reference to civil disobedience and the congress of Racial Equality stall-in", in which she narrates *inter alia* her father's fights for equality:

That fight also required that our family occupy disputed property in a hellishly hostile 'white neighborhood' in which, literally, howling mobs surrounded our house. One of the missiles almost took the life of the then eight- year old signer of this letter. My memory of this 'correct' way of fighting white supremacy in America include being spat at, cursed and pummelled in the daily trek to and from school. And I also remember my desperate and courageous mother, patrolling our house all night with a loaded German luger, doggedly guarding her four children ... (51b).

This letter is of course signed off with Langston Hughes' poem: "A Dream Deferred", from which Hansberry later derives the title of her play: *A Raisin in the Sun*.

Even though my reference to Hansberry's play may be tangential, it's diachronically relevant to the viral nature of differing ghosts of apartheid. It is significant to note that the evolution of the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) in the 1890s in the United States of America was an ultra-white reaction to the post-enslavement/Civil War constitutional reforms designed to extend some rights to the black in the Southern States. According to Winant, the "Red Summer" riots of post-World War 1919 continued to perpetuate the "Jim Crow" racial etiquette which was enforced by the KKK:

Night riding mobs of hooded white terrorists... required Blacks to remove their hats in the presence of whites, to step off the sidewalks...into the muddy streets at the passage of a white and

to wait in such shops as would serve blacks until all whites have been served no matter who had arrived first; [adding that] a thousand other rules of this type were in place (155).

This was in addition to other institutionalized discriminatory “apartheid” practices like separate transportation, accommodation, etc. for the blacks and the whites; and, all of which were *backed by the law of the state*. Rosa Louise McCauley Parks’ (1913-2005) defiant refusal to give up her seat to a white man on a Montgomery, Alabama City Bus on December 1st, 1955 has become legendary in that it engendered the Civil Rights Movement in the United States to greater effect (cf. www.history.com/topics/black-history/rosa-parks).

Even though Brantingham would assert that “social injustice or racial segregation...is not the major theme of the [Hansberry’s] play” (469), this social exclusion theme however, underlies the rest of the action in the play. The deferment of the family’s realization of its hopes in terms of Beneatha’s education, Walter’s business plans and the quest for a befitting house for the family are super-structural manifestations of the faulty racist base upon which the American social system was constructed. The real tipping point is when Karl Lindner, a representative of the ultra-white community at Clybourne Park, turns up to “buy up” the family from moving in to the white-dominated settlement. The family is angry about the proposal and Lindner still does not understand their feelings, he questions:

What do you think you are going to gain by moving into a neighborhood where you just aren’t wanted and where some elements –well- people can get awful worked up when they feel that their whole way of life and everything they’ve ever worked for is threatened? (*Raisin in the Sun*, Perrine 1379).

The ultimate question here is: what is in the Younger family that will threaten the entire white Clybourne neighbourhood? The centrality of racial superiority and social exclusivity based on racist feeling cannot be wholly excluded from this dominant thinking in the play.

We cannot also ignore the issue of the dominance of patriarchy especially in ideas concerning the education of the woman in the play. Walter Younger prefers to use their father’s insurance money to start a business rather than using it for Beneatha’s college medical training. Patriarchy and its logic of male dominance and superiority unfortunately draws a strong justification and basis from biblical and quranic scriptures as may also be common in many other religions. Ngugi aptly compares patriarchy to colonial racism which “not only give[s] whites wings with which to fly but finds it necessary to clip those of the blacks (*sic*) and literally tie their feet to the ground [...] Here, African maleness ... must

literally tie down the feminine to the hearth and subsistence agriculture” (Ngugi 123). Ngugi therefore articulates patriarchy as domestic colonialism. This pervasive brand of colonialism is everywhere in the Black continent and much of the world; and extends to wherever women are victimized on account of their sex like the multiple rapes and abortion of girl-children in India; Boko Haram’s derogatory attitude to women in North-eastern Nigeria; and the “religious incarceration” of Muslim women in purdah, as well as the suppression of women in Pakistan and Taliban Afghanistan, etc. Eve Ensler’s *The Vagina Monologues* poetically captures these travails of womanhood in the hands of patriarchal man across different spaces. In *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*, the Blacks are hardly educated and only good enough for mining and domestic jobs for the whites, while black women sit at home and make and care for babies and the men; a situation reminiscent of classical Greek attitude to women who were considered only better than slaves (cf. Aristophanes’ *Lysistrata*). There’s little difference in the rustic background of George Bernard Shaw’s *St. Joan* where, like the Africans in *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi*, the women are driven to the city as sex-workers while the men range the hills as guerrilla fighters. The “separate development” of the sexes which privileges the men over women becomes a form of apartheid that’s driven underground by patriarchal cultures.

In George Bernard Shaw’s chronicle play, *St. Joan*, we see a more subtle dimension of how the hegemonies try to suppress spiritual independence and prevent individual right of access to God. In his “Preface to *St. Joan*”, Shaw summarizes the biography of the heroine, Joan of Arc as: “a village girl from the Vosges, [...] born about 1412; burnt for heresy, witchcraft, and sorcery in 1431; rehabilitated after a fashion in 1456; designated Venerable in 1904; declared blessed in 1908; and finally canonized in 1920” (i). Shaw situates Joan’s eccentricity and charisma in contrastive and comparative terms with Socrates and Napoleon Bonaparte. As to whether she was guilty as charged, Shaw reminds us that St. Joan’s rehabilitation in 1456 evidenced the fact that, “Joan was not a common termagant,...harlot,...witch,...blasphemer, not any more an idolater than the Pope himself,[...][but] on the contrary..., an intact virgin, very pious...temperate...” (*Preface* 4-5). Even though Joan’s heroism was meant for the nationalist good of the Burgundian French against the English, she trespassed against the multiple interests of the contemporary political feudalists and the military and religious authorities of the time. Her offences were “against God and against the common morality of Christendom” (*Preface* 28); as Joan can be seen as the archetypal nationalist and protestant against the enshrined Christian temporal and clerical powers of the church. What they perceived as her “pretension” to direct communication with

God through the “voices” of the saints was considered an affront against the church and its clerics through which was presumed the traditional route to the comprehension of God. The fright of the church was that if anybody was allowed to be in direct contact with God, what would become of the almighty institution and power of the church and her clerics who in medieval times as indeed today shaped the thoughts and behaviour of men? Joan, like many other perceived enemies of the “Dogma of Papal Infallibility” like Giordano Bruno and Galileo Galilee, was therefore jeopardizing the heart of the church through her anti-clerical beliefs and actions; which made her the archetypal protestant, a tradition continued by Martin Luther.

The Archbishop warns Joan when she pleads obedience to the voice of God: “The voice of God on earth is the voice of the Church Militant; and all the voices that come to you are the echoes of your own wilfulness” (*St. Joan* 118). The ecclesiastical court is most irked when Joan “(with her eyes skyward)” retorts: “I have better friends and better counsel than yours” (119); and pronounces her defiant last words: “ His ways are not your ways. He wills that I go through the fire to His bosom; for I am His child, and you are not fit that I should live among you ...” (*St. Joan* 145). At the end of the trumped charges and trial and Joan’s eventual burning at the stake, the Executioner shamefully reports to Warrick that: “her heart would not burn, my lord; but everything that was left is at the bottom of the river. You have heard the last of her”. Warrick answers with a wry smile: “The last of her? Hm! I wonder!” (*St. Joan* 150). Again, the ultimate question is: What does Joan’s later canonization as saint speak to us about what the hegemonic forces of religion think about the “other’s” spiritual freedom and right of access to God?

Conclusion

What is the significant difference between the exclusive Clybourne community in the *Raisin in the Sun*, and the ecclesiastical community in *St. Joan*, the exclusivist ideals of the KKK, the Broederbond; and the colonialist agenda in Kenya, South Africa or elsewhere? What appears to be running through all of these is an essential streak of the Promethean Overman whose ideals are imposed as models on the perceived weaker or receptive “other”. In the light of the foregoing, is Nietzsche justified to assert that God as a creation of man is really dead; being seemingly disinterestedness in the affairs of man and His world; in the manner Beckett’s Lucky would lament God’s ‘divine apathia divine athambia [and] divine aphasia [who] loves us dearly with some exception for reasons unknown’ (42)? Would this phenomenon still have become viral in the absence of maritime adventures, human interactions and contemporary culture of connectivity? Aren’t there positive ways to harness

this phenomena through a trans-culturalist understanding and acceptance of difference? Why it is that in all of the above variants of human oppression, there is always an appeal to myth or invocation of God as a central directive principle?

When like Plato, the communist regimes in modernist centuries, had misgivings about the role of writers and poets in society, the reason was principally due to the hegemonic and mind-bending soft influence that literature exerted on its audiences (cf. Plato, *The Republic*; Marx & Engel's *The Marxist-Leninist Aesthetics*). This for me represents the soft power that literature, theory and philosophy exert on the minds and actions of people, especially as can be reinterpreted by ideologues and demagogues; a tendency which probably reminds cultural "engineers of human souls" such as writers, critics, philosophers and politicians whose workplace is the cultural mind of humanity, that creativity can/does contribute to shape, build or destroy different dimensions of social oppressions and fragmentations. This is because in all of the varying hues of "apartheid" discussed in the foregoing, there is also the persistence of the indomitable spirit of man and the relentless will to goodness which postmodern trans-culturalism and the ever changing human configurations promises in contemporary global cultures.

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