

The Mythopoetics of Atogun's Fight Against Political Corruption in Nigeria: A Comparative Analysis of *Taduno's Song* and *Orpheus Myth*

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to examine the correlation between the *Orpheus Myth* and Atogun's novel *Taduno's song* through the lense of mythopoetics. It also aims at analysing the manner in which the eponymous hero fights against political corruption in particular in Nigeria. The study is important because it enables us discover the ways in which Atogun adapts the *Orpheus myth* and marries it to his own strategy of fighting corruption so as to address the contemporary political situation in his country, Nigeria. The primary data for this paper is the novel *Taduno's song* and the *Orpheus myth*. Secondary data in the form of works and papers on myth and mythmaking as well as on political corruption have been reviewed and used to support arguments in this paper. A close reading method has been used to analyse words, expressions, situations and contexts in the primary sources in terms of themes and style. The secondary sources have mainly been used to adduce evidence in support of arguments in the paper. The study establishes that Atogun adapts the Greek myth to the Nigerian situation in order to bring the contemporary political situation of his country to the fore. This is because the *Orpheus myth* encapsulates universal themes that allow it to be adapted to the present century. The study also concludes that evidence from the narrative indicates that in addition to stronger institutions, Africa also needs stronger, morally principled, courageous and selfless citizens who can rise against political corruption anywhere it rears its ugly head in the continent.

INTRODUCTION

Political corruption, referred to as "the abuse of public office for private gain" (Stockemer et al., 2011, p. 75) has received a lot of attention from academic research. This may be due to the fact that it is not only "as old as the history of government itself" (Chalmers, 1986, p. 22) but it is also found "in all regimes" (Drury et al., 2006, p. 122) in different degrees. It is a phenomenon that is very difficult to be fought against since "it is a multifaceted social phenomenon that penetrates horizontally and vertically" many facets of societies, including the political one (Seleim & Boutis, 2009, p. 166).

Consequently, research from environmental studies (Asongu & Odhiambo, 2021; Pellegrini & Gerlagh, 2006; Damania et al., 2003; Fredriksson & Millimet, 2001; Lopez and Mitra, 2000), economics (Rotimi et al., 2013; Rose-Akerman, 2008; Ashour, 2006; Svensson, 2005, Lipset & Lenz, 2002), political science (Di Vita, 2021; Stockemer et al., 2011; Arriola, 2009; Manzetti & Wilson, 2007; Bukovansky, 2006; Drury et al., 2006), and the media (Camaj, 2013, Hasty, 2005) has been carried out and published on political corruption. Perspectives from literature (Lewis, et al., 2008), sociology, anthropology and culture (Torselo & Venard, 2016; Seleim & Boutis, 2009; Bolden & Kirk, 2009; Shen & Williamson, 2005) as well as research from the development

and managerial perspectives (de Graft, 2007; Di John, 2010; Nyberg, 2021; Uhlenbruck et al., 2001) have all been published on corruption.

Among these different perspectives on political corruption, the one from the literary background is limited while works devoted to corruption in Africa "are short and are published in magazines, whereas long articles are few" (Onyancha, 2004, p. 86). However, as observed by Lewis et al., (2008), some works of fiction are not only "better than academic or policy research in representing central issues relating to development" but they also, most of the time, "reach a wider audience and are therefore more influential" (p. 198). The fine line between fiction and reality also presents most of these fictional works a better advantage over academic research in pushing the agenda for change when it comes to political corruption. Besides this, much of the literature on political corruption is devoted to the causes and effects of this phenomenon on the health of the economy in many countries. Some solutions to the canker are sometimes offered in some of these research works but majority of them concentrate on understanding the nature of corruption instead of proffering any solution. In the case where solutions are offered, they usually target "institutional reforms" (Shen & Williamson, 2005, p. 328) as the best solution to the problem

whereas evidence from research also indicates that democracy and institutional reforms alone are not enough in combatting political corruption (Seleim & Boutis, 2009; Shen & Williamson, 2005). The problem of political corruption therefore still persists and it remains a topical issue. What is lacking in the discourse on political corruption is the dearth of literature on the use of both strong institutions and strong incorruptible individuals in the combat against the phenomenon. After all, strong institutions with unprincipled individuals are not yielding the results now and strong, principled individuals with weak institutions will not yield the results either. It is time to consider using both the human-centred and institution-centred approaches in the combat against political corruption and this is what this paper does from a literary perspective by analysing Atogun's *Taduno's song* and the *Orpheus myth*.

Besides this, the novel *Taduno's song* has not received much critical attention in the form of academic papers since its publication. A search through the internet would reveal a few book reviews on the novel and a passing reference that has been made to it by Grisworld (2019) in an article entitled "Across borders". Though the book reviews made reference to the theme of political corruption, none of them looked at the novel from the angle of mythopoesis, a comparative analysis between the *Orpheus myth* and *Taduno's song* and suggested solutions to the problem based on evidence from related literature.

Nigeria and many African countries have had a checkered and tumultuous history when it comes to political leadership. Most of these countries have experienced several coup d'états and elections that have been marred by violence, vote rigging and the installation of governments that have not really received the full blessing of the electorate. In some instances, constitutions have been tinkered over and over in order to perpetuate autocratic leaders in power. Certainly, political corruption is bound to be of a high incidence in such contexts due to "patron-client" relationship between the political elite and the masses.

Consequently, African artistes, writers and creative thinkers who believe in the utilitarian aspect of their works have been targeting poor leadership and political corruption in many an African country. Apart from Achebe's three novels (*No longer at ease*, 1960; *A man of the people*, 1966; *Anthills of the savannah*, 1987) which speak directly to political corruption and dictatorship in Nigeria, the recent wave of young writers in the persons of Adichie (*Purple hibiscus*, 2006), Habila (*Measuring time*, 2007; *The Chibok girls*, 2016) and Atogun (*Taduno's song*, 2016) have taken the issue of dictatorship and corruption in Nigeria to another level. This is because they have all seen that in the midst of plenty, only a few are enjoying while the rest of the population continue to wallow in poverty, squalor, diseases, famine and preventable diseases and death.

Atogun's *Taduno's song* is another echo of the voice of reason and wisdom that is calling on the populace and the government to make a collective sacrifice. They can do it by upholding the tenets of true democracy and by allowing transparency to be the missing radar in the governance

processes in African countries. In this new novel by Atogun, an old Greek myth is adapted and used to explain the urgency of the Nigerian situation. This is not the time to dwell on the pain of individual sacrifices people will have to make in order to achieve the group objective; the collective interest comes first and all Africans must be willing to sacrifice the personal for the group's interest as shown by the eponymous character in this novel. It is not only stronger institution that that are needed, but stronger and more principled individuals are also needed to stem the tide of the excesses of political corruption.

Arguments in the paper are presented through an introduction, an explication on the terms myth and mythopoetics, methodology, a comparative analysis of *Taduno's song* and the *Orpheus myth* and a conclusion. The objectives that guided arguments in the paper are three: the identification of the lacuna in the literature on the fight against political corruption in Africa and the use of this lacuna to develop analysis in the paper; the illustration of how similar or different the *Orpheus myth* and *Taduno's song* are in terms of plot, structure and moral values; and the analysis on how Atogun used *Taduno* to speak against political corruption in Nigeria and in Africa as a whole. Implications of this research and on future research in the area of political corruption are all presented in the conclusion.

METHODOLOGY

The paper uses a qualitative research method by resorting to a close textual reading and analysis of the two primary texts: *Taduno's song* and the *Orpheus myth*. The two myths have been compared to show areas of differences and similarities in terms of structure and themes. The adaptations made by Atogun in his story are also highlighted. But more importantly, the theme of political corruption as presented by Atogun and *Taduno's* fight against such an aberration are also traced in the paper. Key incidents, themes, and aspects of language in the novel have been subjected to critical analysis with the aim of unravelling relationships among them and the meaning such relationships generate. Secondary data in the form of related literature has also been reviewed in order to adduce evidence and contextualise the problem that constitutes the focus of investigation in this paper

MYTH AND MYTHOPOETICS

The term "myth" has been defined and discussed by many writers differently. Sampson and Roud interpret it as "stories about divine beings, generally arranged in a coherent system; they are revered as true and sacred; they are endorsed by rulers and priests; and closely linked to religion" (2000, p. 254). In their *A Glossary of literary terms*, Abrams and Galt uphold this idea and observe that it "signifies any story or plot, whether true or invented" (2009, p. 7). To Morford et al., myth is "a traditional tale with secondary, partial reference to something of collective importance" (2011, global.oup.com/us/companion.websites/9780195391703/student/materials/chapter1/) while others observe that myths are bearers of important messages about life in general and

life-within-society in particular (Smith et al., 2020). To Baldick, myths contain “deeper truths, expressing collective attitudes to fundamental matters of life, death, divinity and existence” (Baldick, 2001, p. 174) and Honko concludes that a “myth expresses and confirms society’s religious values and norms and provides a pattern of behaviour to be imitated” (2017, p. 49).

An important feature that runs through these definitions is that, there is a correlation between myth and the culture of a people. Myths are the embodiment of “ethnic ideas” or “popular ideas” of a society (Campbell, 1949, p. 60). In other words, myths give meaning to the actions of individuals and members of a community. Therefore, they can be adapted and created to suit a particular situation through mythopoesis. Mythopoesis or myth making is a creative process through which a renewed emphasis is placed on an old subject or story, with the aim of restructuring the story in question so it addresses a particular contemporary situation. To Kumar, mythopoesis is a “mythical, literary and artistic cross fertilization” (2017, p. 125). So there is myth, there is literature and there is art in mythopoesis. All the three elements are blended into one in mythopoesis. This is what Atogun has done with his novel *Taduno’s song*. The novel is resonant of the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice which is a powerful story of love, sacrifice, and courage. Atogun has used the myth as an essential visual language to render a better understanding of the “political, vital problems and social collisions” of his country (Barova, 2015, p. 1031).

The *Orpheus myth* transcends many different movements and still upholds its functionality and beauty as a narrative. Lanoue (1991), Leah Schwebel (2005), Verres (2016) and Liveley, G. (2017), have written about the *Orpheus Myth*. Lanoue (1991) explores several correspondences between the Greek Orpheus and the North American Indian version of the descent into the underworld. He argues that the ease of access to the netherworld is related to the particular type of political and social organisation that characterises the people of northwestern North America. Schwebel (2005) traces the implicit and explicit references to the multifaceted figure of Orpheus in Dante’s *Divine comedy*. She contends that Dante only names Orpheus once in his *Divine comedy* and that the function of the Orpheus figure in the *Divine comedy*, similar to his overall function in literature, is that of a chimera. Verres (2016) examines the presence of meaning of the *Orpheus myth* in the novel *The master of Petersburg* (J. M. Coetzee, 1994) and Rilke’s poem *Orpheus, Eurydice, Memes* (Rilke 1904). She explains that Orpheus and Eurydice contrasting behaviour can be looked at as a manifestation of failure of love for its violence and the other for its neglect and thus the presence of the myth in *The master of Petersburg* is meaningful in what it says about the theme of inter-subjectivity. Liveley (2017), seeks to put together some of the scattered fragments of the *Orpheus myth* from different dates since its reception, concentrating not upon its great many orthodox retellings and harmonious translations but instead, focusing upon moments of schism, of mutilation and sparagmos (characterising the moments of anger, resistance and pain in the myth’s reception). He argues that Orpheus is most

appropriately remembered for his ‘dismembering’ and that it is those who resist the legendary charms of his song, like the women who tear the poet apart and scatter pieces of his corpus abroad, who keep the head and lyre of Orpheus singing still.

Other publications on myths include Morales’s (2013) article on the co-implication between logos and mythos as essential to understanding social communication and mediated culture and that of. Bhanegaonkar and Ali Alhaidari (2015), who discussed the origin, the different meanings and the various uses of myth. This paper takes the discussion further by examining the structural and semantic relationship between the *Orpheus Myth* and *Taduno’s song* and how Atogun uses his narrative to preach the gospel of personal sacrifice, collective sacrifice and the need for not only stronger institutions but also stronger and more principled personalities in the fight against political corruption in Nigeria and other African countries.

ANALYSIS

According to the *Orpheus myth* (Virgil 29 BCE), Zeus and Titan bore nine goddesses called Muses, and each muse presided over a different art or science. Calliope, one of these sisters, is the inspiration of poets and musicians and the mother of Orpheus. She gives to her son Orpheus a remarkable talent for music. Orpheus falls in love and marries a young woman named Eurydice but soon after, a poisonous snake bites Eurydice and she dies. Orpheus decides to follow her to the underworld. He manages to reach the underworld despite the obstacles thanks to his sweet music. He is then given his wife back to return to earth on one condition: that he does not look back. Eventually he and the wife get to the cave through which Orpheus had descended the underworld. Orpheus looks back to make sure that Eurydice is still following him. He catches one last glimpse of her with her arms stretched out to him and then she disappears, swallowed up by darkness. He wanders the earth alone singing his sad songs to the rocks and the trees and longed for the time when he, too, would die and be reunited with his beloved Eurydice in the underworld. One day, a pack of wild women called the Maenads tore him apart and threw his head in a river.

On the other hand, according to Atogun, his novel is a tribute to Fela Kuti, a musician of repute whose art changed a country and inspired the world. The novel opens with Taduno in exile because his music angered his country’s dictator president. After receiving a letter from his girlfriend, Lela, telling him about the desperate state of affairs in Lagos, Taduno decides to return from exile though Lela begs him not to. On his arrival, however, the plot takes an unexpected turn. Taduno finds that the president’s efforts to erase all traces of him (Taduno) has been so successful that he has been entirely forgotten. His producer, TK’s music shop is razed to the ground, Taduno lost his famous voice as a result of the excessive beating he receives from the president’s soldiers and worst of all, Lela is abducted by the dictator to force Taduno to return and surrender himself to the government. Taduno is eventually faced with a dilemma: either to make a hit record in praise of the corrupt regime, betray the masses

to whom he was a hero and gain the release of Lela or refuse the dictator's demand and guarantee the death of Lela. The day of the Great Concert comes and Taduno chooses to sing against the autocrat, and betrays his lover. Taduno is then shot dead on stage by a government agent.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

In his adaptation of the myth, Atogun exploits the symbolic resources of the *Orpheus Myth* by modifying it to suit the Nigerian situation. *Taduno's song* resonates folklore in the sense that Taduno must regain his identity through music in order to free his beloved from the hands of the dictator President. Nonetheless, it is an allegorical novel with a touch of magic realism based on the 12th June, 1993 presidential elections in Nigeria, whose results were annulled by the government in power, leading to a military coup. The *Orpheus myth*, on the contrary, is basically a love story but its themes of love, courage, perseverance and death run through *Taduno's song*.

In both stories, the heroes demonstrate the in-depth love for their women. Indeed, both Orpheus and Taduno, have to pass through what Campbell refers to as the journey of the hero to become real heroes. In the case of the *Orpheus myth*, Orpheus and Eurydice are happily wedded couple. The snake robs innocent Eurydice of her life, reminding us symbolically of the transient nature of life, disrupting the couple's happy lives and calling Orpheus to 'adventure.' When Eurydice dies; the thought that Orpheus should go down to Hades and rescue her does not occur to him. For a while, Orpheus wanders around Thrace, playing his lyre and crying for Eurydice. He is not "refusing" a call because none has been explicitly issued as in the case of Taduno but eventually he takes steps towards making his adventure happen. Orpheus believes in his love for Eurydice and the relevance of such a love in his life.

Unlike the *Orpheus myth*, Taduno and Lela are not married but lovers. The story begins with the musician, Taduno, in exile. The exile is as a result of the atrocities and brutalities of the government that he challenges with his music. It is the content of a letter that calls Taduno to 'adventure'. In delivering the letter to Taduno, Atogun uses hybrid style of fantasy and magic realism. Taduno receives a letter from Lela without an address or a courier that mysteriously finds him. The letter is about the situation in Nigeria but Lela warns him not to return. The content of the letter is as poisonous as the snake that bites Eurydice: "The morning the letter arrived he was like a man in a shell, deaf to the voices in his head from a distant place, calling him, imploring him with old promises" (Atogun, 2016, p. 10). Lela writes:

In time to come, should you yield to the pull of your roots, you may be returning home to unpleasant surprises. Since you left, very strange things have been happening in Nigeria, and Lagos particularly has changed in a way I cannot describe in words. I must confess, ... Lagos is not the same as we used to know it (Atogun, 2016, p. 45).

Something strange is happening, so says Lela. Something not quite identifiable but deeply felt by everyone. It is

certainly not the loss of a loved one as it is with Orpheus. It is perhaps political corruption, violence and political instability in Nigeria that nobody is willing to challenge at the time that is being alluded to. This paragraph of the letter is a metaphor which extends beyond itself, seeming to speak out to Taduno's fellow nationals exiled the world over to return and fight for the right course. Taduno defies Lela's warning and returns to Nigeria. Taduno, like Orpheus, is so heartbroken that he travels back to Nigeria to save his country and countrymen from the hands of the dictator. This lends credence to the theme of love. Taduno loves both his country and Lela and this heightens the drama when it comes to the critical point of who to choose between the two; but of course he prefers the country to the woman. It shows the courage he demonstrates by sacrificing his individual interest for the communal one. Taduno's return to Nigeria is comparable to Orpheus journey to the underworld. Orpheus goes there with one objective in mind: to save his love and Taduno makes his journey in order to save his loved one. Taduno's issue is complicated because he loves not only his woman but also his country. Saving both of them becomes impossible and he has to choose between the two. In this case, Orpheus task is easier as he is not confronted with the problem of who to choose over who or what to choose over what. His sole aim is just to save Eurydice and return to earth with her by honouring one condition: not to look back to ascertain whether Eurydice is with him or not.

Having been confronted with a problem, Taduno has to overcome some obstacles in an attempt to solve the problem. For Orpheus, he goes through enduring moments to get to Hades. In Taduno's case, he goes through psychological trauma. On his return to Nigeria after three months in exile, he realises that he is swallowed into the unknown, and appears to have died (Campbell, 1949). The environment in the country is totally dystopian. Amnesia has prevented people from remembering anything of importance, including Taduno's identity and his previous role in their lives. The setting evokes the gloomy atmosphere in the society. Having taken Lela hostage, the President announces that they will release her only upon finding the recalcitrant musician who can only be identified by his voice and forcing him to perform a concert in praise of the regime. Ironically, they are unable to recognise Taduno, even though he continues to go about town, because the President and all his military men are likewise stricken with this condition of strange amnesia. His voice is his identity because according to Sergeant Bello "He has the most wonderful voice in the world. No other human being sings like him." (Atogun, 2016, p. 78). In essence, Taduno's capacity to sing becomes his only mark of identity, an apt metaphor for the artist. In the *Orpheus myth*, Orpheus uses his sweet voice to facilitate his access to Eurydice. The melodious voice is not a threat to his adventure in any way. In the case of Taduno, the voice is both an advantage and a threat to his objectives. It is the voice that is used to identify him, and it is the voice that is being exploited by the political elite to blackmail Taduno so he performs in praise of the regime in order to free his love. Again, the dilemma faced by Taduno here is more complicated as compared to Orpheus.

Sadly, the name Taduno means nothing even to his closest neighbour, Aroli:

‘Aroli, it’s me,’ he whispered. ‘I returned last night.’ ‘You who?’ ‘Me, Taduno,’ he said,... ‘I don’t know you! Who are you?’ His voice was a fearful snarl. Taduno sighed with frustration, certain Aroli was merely trying to pull a prank. ...And then Aroli raised an alarm that brought out the entire street. (Atogun, 2016, p. 23).

It is quite absurd that the citizens forget atrocities that happened in the recent past or are currently happening. This loss of memory, a dramatic shift in the narration, symbolizes more of a collective inner loss of the citizenry, a sort of alienation both physically and emotionally. This absurdity could be read as a symbol of despair and lethargy that the citizenry has slipped into under an oppressive military rule. In a scene that truly displays connection of the artist to his work, Taduno explains the loss of his music and his voice:

I guess that was when every record of me was erased from all your memories. I no longer existed because there was no way I could continue to exist without my music. My music was me, and they took it away from me. That was when I gave up the struggle and went into exile. (Atogun, 2016, p. 97).

Putting this into perspective, the novel may be read as an allegory whose metaphor is in Taduno’s lack of identity because symbolically, by taking the music from him they have killed every creative efforts as well as his emotional and spiritual being.

Not knowing what to do or who to turn to, Taduno returns to his house, “which they said belonged to a dead man” (Atogun, 2016, p. 70). “Who am I?” he muttered to himself and began to wander numbly through the house in search of clues (Atogun, 2016, p. 43). Trying to overcome the hurdle, Taduno locks himself away from the world for seven days and seven nights. He hopes that like Jonah’s hero journey into the belly of the whale where he gets new energy (Campbell, 1949), by the time he re-emerges something would have changed about the city in a way that people would begin to remember him but there was no change. The task therefore, is for him to salvage his identity in order to redeem his country and girlfriend.

To salvage his identity, first, Taduno has to continually recount his story in different forms to his friends and neighbors. This flashback technique guides the readers and we come to know the protagonist alongside the members of his community. Even though we feel Taduno’s acute frustration on his anonymity, we continue to experience him as a stranger who becomes less and less strange as the story unfolds. Second, he has to recover his voice which has been beaten out of him in order to sing for the government and get his lover back or to sing for his people and lose her. The entire story then becomes an epic battle for Taduno’s music and he has to reclaim his voice to fight this epic battle.

Contrary to Orpheus who has his voice before descending to Hades, Taduno starts training to regain his voice in order to find his identity. He is arrested for making music in public at a time when any association through music had been banned and this begins his journey to the ‘Underworld’.

In a nationwide broadcast, the President had explains that he has decided to ban any association through music so anyone who flouts the curfew would be shot like a goat. Taduno defies the order and he is arrested. The function of music is evident at this stage. While Orpheus uses music to tame the wild, Atogun uses it to tame the dictator and to hunt the unjust. Orpheus has a lyre, a small stringed musical instrument made from a tortoise shell. He is basically a one-man band who tames all of the potential threats with music. For Taduno, it is his guitar which becomes an epitome of his innate conviction after his arrest. Due to the gravity of his offence, he is put in solitary confinement in an underground cell which sunlight cannot penetrate. The cell has a single weak bulb which his guards turn on from the corridor each time they come to see him. In addition to signifying depression and gloom, the absence of light and the difficulty in getting it corresponds to the absence of happiness. Ironically, Taduno makes himself happy by playing music. He uses music first to express himself and second, to alter people’s moods, actions, and ideas. This heroic act, Atogun seems to suggest, teaches us to learn to say yes to life and embrace its challenges when fighting against tyranny. Taduno is imbued with this ideology and therefore, uses music to convince, to calm, and to protest. That he achieves this purpose is evident in the processes leading to his arrest and the aftermath:

The soldiers soon showed up, causing many to take to their heels. They came with guns and tear gas and grenades, but Taduno’s music softened their hearts and they lowered their guns and opened their mouths in amazement. Momentarily transformed by the music they were hearing, the soldiers took off their helmets... And so, they pushed through the crowd and arrested Taduno. (Atogun, 2016, p. 97).

In the cell, the soldiers are all afraid of his guitar and refuse to touch it or take it away from him. They hear him “playing soft music that threatened to melt their hard souls” (Atogun, 2016, p. 78). The soldiers begin to gather at the door of his cell to listen. As they listen they:

...began to perceive their own foul odour. They began to see their own faces, as in a mirror; the faces of the servants of an evil tyrant. They saw how dirty their uniforms were. They saw the hopelessness that was their lot and that of their children and grandchildren and great grandchildren. They began to understand that the reason they wore torn boots and smelly uniforms was because their master wanted their lives to remain in tatters... The soldiers looked baffled. They could not understand..... what manner of man he was. (Atogun, 2016, pp. 89-90)

This context compared to another instance when Taduno visits TK’s former residence is quite compelling. Taduno plays a sad song that told the story of a man who loved his people so dearly he lived his life for them, shared their pains with them and gave them the joys and riches that abounded in his life. And then the people betrayed him and drove him away from their midst to roam the ruins of the city. His music:

pierced the souls of all that heard it, like spears. They retreated from him, their palms over their ears in agony,

but nothing could stop the music from stirring their conscience. Some ran into their homes and locked their doors. But still the music found its way in. They lamented in loud voices like lunatics... They knew that they had committed mortal wickedness against a man who had showed them nothing but compassion. ...By the time he ended his music, only one of the residents of that street remained – Baba Ajo, the man who had warned the rest of his neighbours to no avail not to pay TK evil for all the good he had done them. ...My name is Baba Ajo. (Atogun, 2016, p. 70).

The soldiers and the people's action pinpoints to one thing. They have repressed ego, the operating system of the personality, which is the manager of the separate self as well as the major block to ultimate connection with the Higher Self. (Carl Jung. Quoted by Donald M. Mihaloew, 2009, p. 14). Some of them are dissatisfied with the status quo, and are yearning for change and growth, but are aware that they are living in a holding pattern, literally held by the dictator president; they are fearlessly committed to safeguarding the system. Perhaps, Taduno's music is the potential hero's call which comes through some extraordinary experience, encounter, or epiphany. Taduno appears to be a messenger announcing the "herald" or the call to adventure (Campbell, 1949, p. 51) to the soldiers and the people to wake up and to fight for justice. Too often, however, people shrink away from a call received because it is challenging and appears to be difficult and this is attested to by the withdrawal of the soldiers and the people from the music. The action of the people highlights the theme of betrayal to the fight against injustice, political corruption and dictatorship. It again highlights the plight of the people: they are helpless since they are somehow imprisoned. The road to liberation is a collective and an individual one, Atogun seems to suggest.

In another scene that seems to lend credence to absurdist existentialism, Taduno convinces his guard that they are imprisoned together:

"Why must they punish you by punishing me?". "They are not punishing me, they are punishing you.". "But you are sharing this grave, this underground space with me." my duty is to ensure you undergo your punishment.' 'But your punishment is worse than mine.' 'What do you mean?' 'We are sharing this grave together. He wished he could become a prisoner and own a guitar no one could ever take from him. (Atogun, 2016, p. 97).

Taduno's actions equally teach that the quality of life you live is not necessarily measured by the amount of comfort you enjoy. It further exemplifies the fact that a life lived with honour and courage in a dungeon is more fruitful than one lived in denial in an ivory tower. It also lends credence to the theme of inward rather than outward happiness.

For the president, however, music cannot tame him like it did for Hades and Persephone. Taduno, like Fela, wields a musical instrument as if it were a weapon of mass destruction. Therefore, like Fela, Taduno's music is 'highly flammable' for the government. In a scene that looks like the final showdown in a Hollywood movie, Atogun describes how Taduno's weapon is more powerful than the president's.

Each time the President attempted to close in, Taduno waved his guitar in his face, causing him to step back quickly. 'Do you know what I can do to you?' the President asked, breathing unevenly. 'Do you know what I can do to you with my music?' he responded. 'Do you know what I can do to you with this guitar?' 'I can get my men to take your guitar away from you.' 'No, you cannot. ...Drained of a great amount of energy, they stopped their slow circular movement and straightened up. And they stood there facing each other, panting for breath (Atogun, 2016, p. 123).

Atogun also displays some brilliance regarding the portrayal of characters. For example, this exchange, between Taduno and the president is interesting:

Now, let's get this straight,' 'you said your name is Taduno.' 'Yes,' he nodded. 'I understand you were caught making music in public against my order.' 'Yes.' 'Why did you disobey my order?' Because I believe your order was unjustified.' 'You believe my order was unjustified?' 'Yes. It violates my right to make public music.' 'You do not have rights... understand why anybody wanted rights under a military regime. (Atogun, 2016, p. 124)

The interplay between conscience, bravery and power is evident here. This scene, apart from projecting the president's corrupt and authoritarian side, rather loudly encourages citizens to emulate Taduno's courageous character in the fight against dictatorship and political corruption.

It is the fear of the ability of music to cause mass upheaval that makes the president put fear in the citizenry, resulting in them betraying their leaders. They explain to Taduno earlier when he enquires about one of their leaders, TK:

Go away before we report you to gofment!' somebody shouted. 'TK and Oga Musisan were making trouble with gofment, and gofment came and beat everyone and arrested many of us, claiming that we were supporters of TK. They tortured us, and some people died in jail.... 'And he promised us a big reward of money if we supplied useful information about TK. (Atogun, 2016, p. 67)

The effect of political corruption and dictatorship is felt strongly here. It breeds fear in the citizenry. This fear has set in place confrontation among the citizenry for the persecution of their fellow man; when they should have presented a united front in order to fight effectively against injustice in their country. More importantly, the fear has incredible power, though silent, to reinforce injustice in society. By failing to fight against dictatorship the people would become like the bent old man who: "stepped forward. He was bent not because of age but because of the years of suffering the city had heaped upon him" (Atogun, 2016, p. 78).

Having regained his voice and by extension his identity, Taduno, unlike Orpheus, who has to sing for his love, has to either sing for his love or sing for his country. Atogun's disgust at political corruption and injustice is patent in the following dialogue between two of the president's accomplices Professor Black and Professor Ajao and Taduno.

Mr President wants to make you an offer,' Professor Black said. 'An offer? Why does he want to make me

an offer?’ ...He is offering to make you a very rich man if you agree to praise his government with your music. ‘The zeros are too many,’ Taduno replied. ‘I cannot pronounce the exact figure.’ ‘Very good!’ ‘That’s how rich Mr President wants to make you. My task is done. Think about it. (Atogun, 2016, p. 122).

Atogun skillfully presents the characters of these two people for us in a descriptive manner. The humour is wry and it enables us to see the uselessness of these professors who could have used their knowledge to help build their country. Despite their knowledge they are hollow. Behind the laughter are serious political and socio-economic issues that Atogun portrays. When the leaders of a country are busy sharing the scanty resources to people with opposing views to dine with them so that they can remain in power, one can easily envision the condition of the citizens and the society as a whole. Professor Black and Professor Ajao are not only political leaders but they are also members of the elite and they are a symbol of greed and political corruption. Through them, Atogun condemns the greed of both members of the elite and the political leaders. Again, the power and ability of art or creativity to threaten political power is obvious in this dialogue. The corrupt attitude of these two professors can be compared to Orpheus corrupt nature or greed. He is given explicit instruction not to look back or else he would lose his love. However, due to greed, corruption, lack of faith or the three combined, he looked back and lost Eurydice. This in a way tells us that these three weaknesses are not good in any fight; Nigeria and other African countries need to eschew them in their crusade against political corruption.

The last few pages of the novel are so sensational and evoke a feeling of anxiety and create suspense just as it is in the *Orpheus Myth*. Taduno decides to perform in praise of the government but turns down the monetary offer. Readers keep asking questions: Will Taduno succeed in freeing Lela? Will he free himself and his people? Does love survive and in what form? As the novel draws to a close, when Taduno steps onto the stage:

He looked at his audience sadly, feeling like a hopeless traitor. And as they looked back at him, they somehow understood the sacrifice he was making for them. Some began to weep. ‘Please don’t cry,’ he implored them with his guitar, ‘dry your tears, my friend TK said a miracle will come.’ And then, addressing the President, he began to sing the last lines of his short song. ‘So you see, where there is true love you can never win against love, you can never win against the people, we will not surrender to tyranny.’ He closed his eyes and begged love for forgiveness (Atogun, 2016, p.127).

Atogun succeeds in bringing the immediacy of Taduno’s plight to readers in this dialogue. His single-minded pursuit of justice and redemption for his people is admirable. He is dissatisfied with contemporary cultural “mores and taboos” of the government, then he transgresses them in an act of individualism. Ultimately, he sings for country instead of his lover. In this way, he has become the hero who assists society to discard old outworn values and beliefs which, in this case, is the fear of challenging tyranny (Rank, 2004, p. 22).

Atogun urges us not to select those to save and those to condemn to death in the fight against tyranny and political corruption. We must learn to say “no” to tyrants and political corruption no matter how much they hurt us or how appealing they look. That is the only way tyranny can be defeated. Orpheus ends up losing his wife to death a second time but Taduno sacrifices his life for his country and the general good of his people. The lesson in the *Orpheus myth* is that, although love is powerful, it is ultimately not as powerful as death but in Taduno’s case, love triumphs over tyranny and political corruption. By sacrificing his personal love for the general good of his people, Taduno wins against all the obstacles put in his way. His love is selfless; it is not limited to only the woman he loves and he can therefore triumph over tyranny and corruption. Orpheus goes through genuine problems and trials but his love is personal, selfish and not as selfless as Taduno’s.

CONCLUSION

Atogun has made a story out of the *Orpheus myth*. His use of his artistic awareness in creativity to help in the process of reconstruction of Nigeria is worth the while. He has portrayed his disgust at the failure of the political leadership in Nigeria and also his concern for the citizens who have to bear the effects of this failure. The citizens’ amnesia and indifference or their unwilling collusion in the creation of an atmosphere of fear, political corruption and dictatorship is too loud. It echoes concerns raised by both Achebe and Adichie in their creative works. Though the plot of *Taduno’s song* is different from the *Orpheus myth*, Atogun has been able to send his message out to his countrymen. Taduno is a martyr to be celebrated. The conclusion of this myth speaks to artists about the power of their work. Their legacy lives on through their art, even after death, much like Orpheus’ continuous song and Taduno’s continuous memory. This paper also contributes to the existing literature on political corruption in Africa by pointing to the different styles (including the use of old but relevant myths) that have been used by creative writers in Africa to fight political corruption in their creative works. It also contributes to existing literature by highlighting a different strategy that needs to be used in the fight against political corruption: stronger institutions are needed but so are stronger, more disciplined, selfless individuals and collective efforts in the fight against corruption. Further research on political corruption in Africa should concentrate on how we can use the combination of the human-centred and institution-centred approaches to fight corruption.

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