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**Post-independence Consciousness in the Age of Western Globalization: Indigeneity  
Reflections on a Diaspora Poetic Anthology**

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**Abstract**

The focus of this paper is the Nigerian poet's promotion of the African culture in the face of the ravaging influence of Western globalization on the continent of Africa, especially in Nigeria. The consideration of the Nigerian poet's promotion of African cultural heritage is achieved through the critiquing of the Diaspora poetic anthology *Etches on Fresh Waters* by Toyin Falola and Ronke Adesanya. This paper asserts that the poets' cultural defence in the global cultural conversation is symbolic of Africa's post-independence resistance to Westernization and globalization on the African continent, Nigeria in particular. The poems in Part A of the anthology are intentioned to advance this ideological objective. In pursuing this, the poets exalt the supremacy of the Yoruba deities, *Sango* and *Oya*, emphasizing the grip of the god and the goddess on mortals. The poets are also critical of the *oyinbo* (the white) and *igbagbo* (Christianity), but on the contrary they glorify African ancient wisdom which, they claim, must abide. The poems for this study are, therefore, a voice intended to globalize the cultural endowments of Africa in response to the infiltration of Westernization and globalization in Africa, and a clarion call to Nigerians and Africans in general to search inwards for frameworks for the development of Africa rather than depend on Western frameworks and aids.

**Keywords:** Nigerian diaspora poems, post-independence, globalization, African development, African culture

**Introduction**

The poetic anthology, *Etches on Fresh Waters*, is a collection of literary versifications by Toyin Falola and Aderonke Adesanya. The central thematic concern of the anthology is Africanity. In the context of this paper, Africanity is seen as the totality of African traditionalism which

comprises its native wisdom, cultural aesthetics, and mystical potency. This is at the base, that is, at the civil–society level. At the superstructure level, which concerns the government, African traditionalism manifests in global cultural politics such that there is advancement of the relevance of the African racio-cultural endowments. This is in a bid to register the significance of the African value system in the global community. Such a cultural engagement is often undertaken by university intellectuals, who possess the enlightenment to advance the African cause at the global level. To this end, it could be posited that the cultural contest is elitist, and this is why literary works emanating from African intellectuals, such as Toyin Falola of the University of Texas at Austin, resident in the Occidental region of the world, are of particular interest. This is because African intellectuals in the Diaspora are closer to the Europeans or Westerners in general than African intellectuals and culture advocates resident in Africa, especially because the writers whose works are being interrogated engage in intellectual endeavors in the Western world. Such a perceptive dichotomy in African cultural intellectualism finds profound justification in the thinking that African intellectuals who advance the superiority of African cultural endowments on home soil might be assumed to be motivated to defend their Africanness by default. But when this is done by an African on European or Western soil, like this instance, then, immense curiosity is evoked. The Diaspora factor as basis and motivation for this study is enhanced further when it is considered that *Etches on Fresh Waters* was written in the age of Westernized globalization. In any case, in the verses that make up Part A of this anthology, we see a romanticization of Africanity. When the romanticization of Africanity is juxtaposed with Westernized globalization, then the intention of the intellectuals becomes of a matter of curious interest and scholarly investigation. This is the crux of this study.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The conception and ideation of the paper are anchored on Hollis Chenery's tenets of the theory of Structural-Change. In its core principle, Chenery's model of the Structural Change Theory emphasizes "altering of existing structure within an underdeveloped economy" pattern of social development as the apt theory in the execution of the research conception and ideation (Ogoke 4). The pattern is considered the ideal approach to the economic development of a nation. This is further so because the Structural Change Theory in the model of Hollis Chenery maintains that many nations across the world have acquired development through diverse means such as indigenization which is emphasised in this study.

### **Methodological Approach**

The principle of qualitative research has been employed in this paper. This is as a result of the position which the author has upheld in the paper, which is motivated by rational reasoning and the justification of perspectives and positions. In addition to this, the study is qualitative as inferences and assertions in it are rational propositions and not based on statistical data. Particular emphases are paid to justification through textual evidence. This signifies that the empiricist method has also been adopted in the paper. The adoption of the rational and empiricist approaches has become necessary because in the paper the indices of Western culture and indigenous African culture were referenced and critically interrogated in comparative terms. This is in order to arrive at a conclusion that Western culture has become ingrained in the African society, Nigeria inclusive, yet this is in contravention of African consciousness which Africanity advocates. Furthermore, globalization is given centrist space in the study because it is a phenomenon which is critical in global interaction. Globalization both aids the indigenization efforts of the Nigerian society

because the externalization of local initiatives is crucial for universal values, while it at the same time contradicts the local development because the advancement in the East and the West weakens the localization goal of the government.

### **Filiopietistic Attitudes of the Poets in the Anthology**

Peter McCaffery and Ben Marsden have opined that literate culture helps a people to preserve the wisdom and the cultural life of the same people. The interpretations of this opinion are that the ingrained skill of literacy can be useful in the preservation of the culture of the people concerned. The apt opinion applies to the primary essence for writing the cultural poems in the anthology, *Etches on Fresh Waters*. The first item of African cultural attitude and heritage in the anthology is filiopietism—excessive regard for divinities or deities. The poets dedicate the entire poetic collection to the Yoruba god, *Sango* and the goddess, *Oya*, and this emphasises the awe for the Yoruba deities. The poets pay tributes to the deities as could be gleaned in the following lines:

Sango and Oya  
Fire and water  
Wedlock of the gods...  
Sango Olukoso! Oba Itiolu!  
The sky, your universe  
Oya Oriri!  
She who paddles calming waters  
The earth you impregnate  
With your noble waters. (iii)

From the foregoing, it could be deduced that the poets have presented the divinities as absolute in the influence they command from the African pantheon on traditional Yoruba humanity and the terrestrial features such as water bodies. That is why *Sango*, as the poets claim, owns the sky while *Oya* owns the water bodies. These claims are to the effect that agents of the African pantheon are powerful entities, who have a lot to offer the global humanity such as mystical protection and enablement. The filiopietistic reverence establishes basis in Soyinka's creative fascination with *Ogun*- the Yoruba iron deity, and this, Soyinka (2006) confesses, is undeniable. The reference by the poets to *Sango* and *Oya* signifies their reverence for the deity. The reverence consists further in some other capabilities of *Oya* contained in the excerpt. The first additional mettle is the paddling skills, as in her paddling of calming waters. Paddling here is symbolic of control. The phrase, *calm waters*, in the context of this line in the poem is a reference to the world of humanity. This becomes express in the word *earth* in the following line where the poets claim that *Oya* impregnates the earth. In this claim, furthermore, there is a matrix of power in the act of impregnation, which is the major instrument of power in the patriarchal circle against women. The assertion that the waters are noble, that is the waters are potent, points to the greatness of these deities in the Yoruba pantheon. These revelations and claims about these gods and goddess signify the promotion of African metaphysics, which is a cultural resource, in the age of modernist civilization and Western globalization. This is however topical. That is, it is curious that the poets are glorifying the Yoruba cultural capabilities and endowments in the era of Western ascendancy in technology and science, including the supremacy of Western apothecary. The justification for this is that these claims are the poets' reminder to the aborigines of the African nativity to not be lost in the consciousness of the West and the East, but that they should indeed maximise the merits of globalization in promoting the cultural endowments of the continent which include mystical

healing, protection and enablement This is especially applicable to the Yoruba culture in the context of this study. They also maintain that the continent of Africa has the potential to take the world by surprise. This is where reference to globalization comes to the reckoning. It would be relevant to state the core heuristic essence of globalization is that it makes productive nations relevant to the rest of the world to the extent of making the consuming nations dependent on consuming the commodity in reference. This means that globalization has economic values. Indeed, Cameron Hashemi-Pour and Ben Lutkevich have explained that globalization is useful in the context transnational economic transactions which inevitably signify integrated economies that are marked by free-trade practices characterized by the free flow of capital resources among the countries involved. They assert that this process guarantees easy access to foreign endowments, which include labor markets, maximizing returns and benefits for the general economic good of the global community. These core benefits are of major essence to Nigeria through the externalization of its cultural endowments. This is because the development of Nigerian cultural resources without externalization for the consumption of the rest of the world would be clannish and limited.

The poets also establish the invaluable worth of the African epistemological endowment, such as aboriginal intelligence of Africa. This inference is made from the poet-persona's quest for the resolution of a poser as seen in the poem "Mother's Wisdom" (55). The persona wants to know "Who travelled to the jungle to be a monkey?" In order to resolve this puzzle, the persona reveals further, "I travelled to the city to solve the puzzle" but "The city had no answer for me". This scenario is taken metaphorically, as the poets intend it to be. The puzzle is African's quest for solution to her myriad complexities. The city is metaphor for Western technology and value systems or the mechanised lifestyle of Europe and the United States. As a result of this non-receipt of answer to their puzzle in the city, such means that Western civilization is incapable of resolving Africa's conundrum. The persona feels "disgraced" and he declares "...I travelled back to the village" where he has cause to welcome calm after a storm. The village in this context is a metaphor for the African root. In the last line of the poem, the persona relates that he finds calm (solution) after the storm (frustration of the city). The poets' dark view of the city in this poem is a contravention of the assertion that "cities exist because human technology has created system of production..." (O'Sullivan 3). The productiveness of technology as O'Sullivan observes here is repudiated, however, by Falola and Adesanya in this poem because it excludes the epistemological resources that solve Africa's native complexities. Therefore, it could be asserted that the poets are of the view that the development of Africa consists in her own endowment.

Falola and Adesanya are more overt in expressing and asserting their conviction that African natural endowments are potent antidotes to the retardation of the Continent on the global stage. This position is motivated by the poets' lampooning of *Oyinbo* (the white) and *Igbagbo* (Christianity) but the glorification of the knowledge of the African metaphysical roots in the poem "Native Wisdom" (57). In this poem, the reader is told: "The duo saw nothing. They told me nothing." whereas the poet-persona has all along made *oyinbo* and Christianity his guide. This is emphasizing the futility of the Western cultural value. We see his orientation and cultural recommendation towards the end of the poem when the persona pleads that the native water of knowledge should not leave his recess, that is, his concavity. There is more overt presentation of this line of thought in the final quatrain of the poem:

Water of knowledge  
Leave not my groove

I have internalised ancient wisdom  
Abide it must! (57)

In this quatrain, the reference to *groove* and *ancient wisdom* is a pointer to the irrevocability of the poets' fervent belief in the metaphysical and epistemological potential of the aboriginal Africa.

Falola and Adesanya return to the filiopietistic regard for the forebears as a means of attaining enablement in the poem "Kengbe Oro" (59), in which the poet-persona in the poem expresses contempt for the infiltration of Western forces in African affairs, thereby blowing ill-wind, calling them "Careless looters" who "make hapless citizens" die unnecessarily for flying rickety aircraft. There is also the ridicule of "ignominious politicians" whose politics of oil "ignores humanity". We see the angst of the poets over the depreciation in the appreciation of African culture when they tell the reader that the ethical personality, symbolically, of Africans has depreciated in the name of civilized transformation, which is strictly condemnable. To validate the condemnation, the poet-persona asserts, "The elders deride your transformation." He goes further to assert "Oodua is ashamed of you." *Oodua* is the widely-believed primitive sacred progenitor of the Yoruba race, according to Sina Ojoade (1). Agai Jock, having interpreted Samuel Johnson's pontification on Ooduduwa, conveys Johnson's conclusions describing Ooduduwa as the original ancestors of the Yoruba people who originated from the Coptic Christians (2). If he is said to be ashamed of the transformation (civilization), it could then be averred that the poets hold a dark view of the general Western acculturation by Africans in both the Diaspora and at home. The poets indicate that the acculturation of the Western or Eastern culture accounts for the pollution of the pristine state of African culture in the contemporary time and will be perpetuated in the future. The recourse to the mystic realm of the African life echoes the influence the divinities wield over the African mortals. For instance, Goddess Isis has claimed "the whole round earth venerates me" (Ndubekwu 1). Again, it has been observed that many contemporary people in Africa remain with their problems because little or no attention is paid to the spiritual security of men and nations" (Nwolise 1). "Kengbe Oro" is, therefore, a flagellation through which the poets raise the consciousness of co-compatriots to return to the cultural metaphysics of the African aborigines so as to be equipped for global competitiveness.

The mutual exclusiveness, hence, independence of the nations of the world is underscored in the poem "Two for One" (67). This is executed through the metaphor of the elephant and the monkey as illustrated in the antidote of the elephant deriding the monkey "as if the monkey begs for food" ostensibly, from the elephant. The anthropomorphic representation of these animals is signalled in the capability of the elephant because of its mass and energy. The monkey through the same process is assumed incapable because it is insignificant in body mass compared to that of the elephant. But then, the monkey does not depend on the elephant for survival. Again, "When last did the family of the elephant climb trees and branches with the agility of the monkey?" To this end, the elephant lacks what the monkey possesses and vice versa. The elephant, in this study, is the advanced nations of the world while the monkey represents the African nations who are believed to lack strong diplomatic stature in world politics as determined by economy, technology as well as diplomacy. However, the poet-persona maintains that the advanced nations of the world do not have it all, and this is motivation for the black race to prove their mettle. The poet accuses the white race oligarchy of lack of understanding saying, "Judge us: this is all that you know. Condemn us: the passion of your Spirit." Therefore, "Two for One" is a covert confrontation of the superiority complex of the colonialists and the contemporary imperialists.



“Ode to Mosafejo” in the anthology is an encomium on other Yoruba divinities, such as *Orunmila* whose board is “Custodian of divinity” (69). It could also be seen as a eulogy for *Esu*—the Yoruba trickster god who is a deity that pushes the people to the brink and then saves them, according to Toyin Falola. Such an attribute is what the poets adore in the deity, which is a way of establishing it to the international community that Africa has a history, a heritage and power which the native Africans can explore to their advantage. The good nature of Africans is the thematic concern in “Traveler’s Inn.” In the poem, the hospitality of the African people is in focus. The poet-persona presents Africans as accommodating. The reader hears him saying: “Come traveler, come: come into my inn: my gates are open..... the rubbery gate, a perfect fit for your longing frame.” This is illustrative of the hospitality of the Africans’ mother earth to the Western imperialists. As a result, the poets tend to be maintaining that Africans were (and still are) too goodhearted for the exploitation that the colonialists inflicted (and inflict) on them as manifested in the slave trade, mainstream colonial administration and, today, in disproportionate trade agreements, debt burden and techno-scientific hoarding. It is an age when the stupendous wealth of the West penetrates Africa through the principles of Globalization which is to enable “access to a greater variety of goods from other countries and the growing ease of overseas travel” (Moynihan and Titley 425). But the reverse has been the case; there are matrixes of underdevelopment in Africa as a result of unfavourable economic and political negotiation terms. For instance, a substantial percentage of Nigeria’s population, approximately 76million, are without electricity in the, words of Omowumi Sadik (9), and in term of industrialization, the country remains underdeveloped and under industrialized, in the opinion of Adepoju Adeleke (4). And between 2006 and 2008, global financial crises led to progressive drop in Nigeria GDP growth (Ebi 6). The essence of the references to the hospitable nature of Africa which David Rubadiri also considers in “Stanley Meets Mutesa” is to maintain it that the African continent does not deserve the disdain it suffers currently from the West. Such ostensible disdain manifests in racial bipolarization, unfavourable trade agreements and diplomatic restrictions.

### **Plausibility of the Poets’ Culture-Promotion Agenda**

Falola and Adesanya’s goal in the versifications examined in this study is the attainment of Nigerian, and indeed African socio-cultural development through the exploration of the African cultural endowments, for which the Yoruba cultural heritage serves as a metaphor. The goal is attainable. However, a number of circumstances tend to stand in the way of attaining the cultural endowment feat. The first of all the seeming impediments is the force with which Westernization has penetrated and continues to penetrate the African cultural space. Africans appear to find this irresistible, or are incapable of resisting the Westernization force in the African social and cultural space. Paradoxically, the Nigerian (African) society also wants to or actually is making frantic efforts to globalize their products and ideas. This has introduced the moral question to the resistance to Westernization as Africanity preaches. In addition to this, the daily activities and undertakings of the Nigerian society as applicable to the entire Africa are driven by technological initiatives of the Western society. Such technological initiatives include but are not limited to Automated Teller Machines, smart phones, and automobiles. The social life in Africa is dependent on these initiatives, and it is very difficult, if possible at all, for Africans to disengage from a technology-driven daily lifestyle. This perspective on the influence of the Western lifestyle on Africa especially in Nigeria is echoed in the opinion that the modern lifestyle in Africa is consequent on the cultural contact with the West as well as the ensuing cultural inter-fusion (Abodunrin 58). Indeed, Ahmed Yerima advances cultural inter-fusion through the concept of

cultural opening (*Culture 5*). The assumption is that Yerima here has the Western culture in mind because it may be seen as strange and unknown to the culture conversation in Africa that fusion of African cultures into a bloc has been seen as instrumental to modern development. Therefore, the underpinning principle of Africanity will come to fruition if Western consciousness in Nigeria and Africa at large could be de-emphasized. Furthermore, the goal of Africanity would be realized if Nigerians in the Diaspora in all walks of life would relate more with the Nigerian consciousness or Africanity rather than see themselves as superior to resident Nigerians or Africans as a result of their contact with the West.

### Conclusion

*Etches on Fresh Waters* contains poems in which Aderonke Adesanya and Toyin Falola exalt the cultural endowments of the African (Yoruba) indigenous nationhood. The poets do this by paying glowing tributes to African deities, using the Yoruba cultural heritage as the point of symbolic reference. The poets remind the reader that systems of Western knowledge should not consume indigenes of African descent. They embrace Africa's ancient wisdom, charging African nations to raise their heads up because the West is as dependent on Africa as the latter is on the former, as well as showcasing the hospitality tendencies of the peoples of the continent to visitors, which the West abused by exploiting the welcoming hosts. This poetic voice is raised at this time in global cultural conversations in order to create post-independence awareness about the consuming impact of Westernization through globalization. The poets suggest that indigenes of African descent should explore the power of globalization and its universalizing capabilities to reach the world and create awareness of the rich natural and cultural endowments of Africa.

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