I. LITERATŪROS NARATYVAI IR KONTEKSTAI / NARRACJE LITERACKIE I KONTEKSTY

Karin Ilona Paasche

Jesuit Historical Institute in Africa (JHIA)
Hekima University College
P.O. Box 21215, Ngong Road 00505 Nairobi, Kenya
E-mail: karinpaasche@yahoo.de
Research interests: African Literature as reflection of evolving African identity, History and Identity in cross-cultural and inter-societal contexts, Linguistic and Discourse analysis in understanding history and identity in cross-cultural contexts

LEADERSHIP AS IDENTITY:
THE FOCUS IN AFRICAN LITERATURE

The "Panama Papers" leakage implicated several African leaders in global corruption deals. It confirmed perceptions that these leaders care little for their people. African leaders who overstay term limits are the focus of Western democratic ire. Pro-democracy movements, the overthrow of regimes characterised as undemocratic gain unquestioned media coverage and praise. African leaders are summoned to the International Criminal Court in The Hague; their societies debate whether justice can be administered from outside. Increasingly, voices question African political and developmental processes. African Literature participates in struggles defining modern Africa's search for identity and its own definition of leadership. It points to possibilities rooted in African Oral Tradition and in customs predating various colonial systems. Leadership forms that societies choose are closely linked to perceptions of identity. This paper examines the crisis of identity which has resulted in Africa's crisis of leadership and looks at approaches taken by African writers and filmmakers: Malian filmmaker Cheik Oumar Sissoko's film "La Genèse" (1999), South African writer Zakes Mda's novels "Ways of Dying" (1995), "Heart of Redness" (2000).
KEY WORDS: African leadership, Mda, Sissoko, Yvonne Vera, Akpan.

Introduction

Strivings for self-fulfilment, freedom from foreign domination characterised Africa's independence struggles. During the 1960s African leaders led their people to political independence. Lumumba, Nkrumah, Nyerere, Mandela became household names. Amidst energy and optimism surrounding Africa's freedom movements, serious attempts were made to define African socio-political identity; to create autonomous states within an overarching pan-Africanism.

In 1962, shortly after Ugandan independence, Makerere University hosted the first "African Writers' Conference" in Kampala. Writers from all over Africa attended it. Chinua Achebe (2009: 54–55) tells of the special impetus the unexpected presence of Harlem Renaissance poet Langston Hughes gave to a conference where African writers attempted to define what it meant to be African; to be African writers. Did African literature have to be written by Africans? Did it have to depict African experience? What language was appropriate? Now "fiction was not merely about a set of texts that one studied for the Cambridge Overseas exam, <…> literature was about real and familiar worlds, of culture and human experience, of politics and economics, now re-routed through a language and structure that seemed at odds with the history or geography books we were reading at the time" (Booker 2003: vii–viii).

Literature reflected the excitement and energy of independence struggles, the new hope that independent Africa would make a unique contribution to world history, where literature, no longer "merely a minor appendage in the main stream of European literature" (Wali 2003: 13), would reflect stories of the continent's societies. It remains the space where Africans attempt to define conflicts and identities.

1. Africa's Identity and Leadership Crisis

Given the post-independence euphoria, it is astounding how many African countries, incredibly rich in minerals and agriculture, have now, fifty years after *Uhuru*, compromised cultural identity in favour of uncritical incorporation of donor organisation and donor nation expectations. The latter benefit from these countries' educated labour forces which are dependent on foreign technology.

Recent leakage of the *Panama Papers* revealed African leaders' criminal collaboration with former colonisers. It points to the impunity with which those who fought passionately for the freedom of their societies steal from people who trusted them. Attempts made by African nations at the July 2015 United Nations Financing for Development conference in Addis Ababa to free their countries from international aid by persuading Western nations to close tax loopholes which allow multinationals to hide enormous profits made in Africa was short-lived. African leaders followed the lead of the United Kingdom and others not interested in reforming tax rules which enabled them to hide ill-gotten loot (Allison 2016).

The *Panama Papers* illustrate that after the physical end of colonialism, those whose idealism led their people to freedom proved inadequate as leaders. Today political rulers seek re-election on platforms of bygone liberation struggles rather than in arenas addressing current issues. Propped up by foreign regimes, they forget the people whose freedom they sought. The International Criminal Court in The Hague becomes the place of justice. Bishop Tutu's wrath has blazed against the South African National Congress whose cause he espoused during *apartheid's* freedom struggle when concern for the people was paramount. Once in power, they joined what he called "the gravy train" (Carlin 1994). Throughout the continent African philosophy, languages, culture, values have been backgrounded in the national consciousness as leaders enrich themselves at the people's expense.

1.1. Leadership after the wind of change

In 1961, British premier Harold Macmillan (2011: 31) visited South Africa. As in Accra, Ghana, he spoke of accepting as "political fact" the "awakening of national consciousness in peoples who have for centuries lived in dependence upon some other power." For him "the wind of change" blowing across Africa was an achievement of Western civilisation. Britain's support was understood in the context of Cold War politics.

Yet for African writers, freedom struggles and the birth of independent nations was a different reality. In *Devil on the Cross*, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1980) points to the "satan of capitalism": workers once exploited by colonisers who stole their land are now abused by leaders who once fought for freedom. The colonisers' expulsion does not return the land to traditional owners. In *Matigari* (1987), he affirms that only the skin colour, not the landowner's behaviour has changed. Frantz Fanon (2004) in *The Wretched of the Earth* confirms that for Africa's new ruling elite, "nationalization signifies <…> the transfer into indigenous hands of privileges inherited from the colonial period," as "a small-time racketeer mentality" dominates governments in countries whose leaders in the post-colonial era depend on armies, an "indispensable tool for systematic repression" (Fanon 2004: 100, 118).

Abdulrazak Gurnah (2005: 128) in *Desertion* tells that during British rule "everything was run like a school for monkeys". After independence, the colonisers returned "to their own unmanageable corruptions and the monkeys took over." He recounts how "the narratives" of their ineptness and the superiority of the Europeans left an indelible mark on the psyche of people who believed they were now free (Gurnah 2005: 215–221). Soon each African country faced the tragedy of failed independence. In Gurnah's *By the Sea* (2001: 18), we read of identity loss when the narrator comments: "In their books I read the unflattering accounts of my history, they seemed truer than the stories we told ourselves. <…> It was as if they had remade us, and in ways that we no longer had any recourse but to accept."

Chinua Achebe (2009: 54–56) ascribes struggles for identity to Africans' inability to "spell their proper names". They have internalised names given them as slaves or as savages and no longer know either who they are or where they come from. Nor do they know the enemy's name. Only by "recover[ing] what belongs to them – their story – and tell[ing] it themselves" will Africans regain their identity and make real the dream of decolonisation. Literary artists must move beyond the mimetic and offer possibilities of understanding loss of identity and of personal and societal transformation. Artists whose work will be looked at are Zakes Mda, Abdulrazak Gurnah, Yvonne Vera, Uwem Akpan and Cheik Oumar Sissoko.

1.2. Defining community; seeking own identity in literature

The emasculation of Black African men and the Crisis of Leadership

The emasculation of black African men is a root cause of Africa's leadership crisis. Colonialism robbed Black African men of their manhood. It took away their right to protect their wives, the objects of white men's lusts; took away possibilities for them to earn and so provide for wives and families; took away opportunities for political participation. These

men subsequently "proved" their manhood by projecting their humiliation on to wives and families through brutal dominance, alcoholism and exaggerated claims regarding ownership of women's bodies. The violence through which men today still attempt to assert their manhood, their alcoholism, their inability and unwillingness to care for children they have fathered speak of wounds which contribute to Africa's leadership crisis more than fifty years after the end of colonialism. Thus, not long ago amidst terror attacks and desperate poverty Kenya's government debated for days whether a man is obliged to inform his first wife should he wish to take another.

In literature, Peter Abrahams's *Mine Boy* (1946: 167) depicts women as strong, proud, competent counterparts to emasculated men who cannot protect wives against the excesses of whites; cannot be breadwinners; have no political power, and after total loss of personal and public dignity turn to drinking and violence to assert their manhood. "Xuma from the north" who consciously rejects servility is contrasted to weak black men who after coming to the city become shadows of themselves. In Ezekiel Mphahlele's (1959: 28) *Down Second Avenue,* Ezekiel's mother attempts to force her alcoholic husband to take responsibility for their children. His violent response hospitalises her after he pours hot stew she is cooking over her. In both works women are forced to be strong and take responsibility for children and men.

This crisis in leadership is similarly apparent in African leaders' cloning of themselves to be like colonial predecessors. Losing touch with the people whose freedom they once sought, they become irrelevant. Few African leaders heeded Frantz Fanon's (2004: 128-129) call to political leaders who took over from colonial governments to "flee the capital like the plague"; to decentralise government, to give "the interior, the back country" priority; to "never lose contact with the people who fought for their independence and a better life." Instead they ensconced themselves in palaces from which former oppressors ruled. Literature proposes scenarios which make Fanon's vision possible.

In *The Heart of Redness* by Zakes Mda (2000: 310), the "unimportant" village Qolora-by-Sea is the scene of new development and leadership. Leaders in the new Pretoria government, clones of the defunct white *apartheid* government, are too far away to make a difference to people's lives. Like their predecessors, they see development as placing gambling cities which threaten the community's social integrity in rural areas. It is left to the community to re-define their identity after *apartheid's* demise.

Apartheid is not an issue as the villagers in *the Heart of Redness* face internal societal conflicts rooted in struggles pre-dating *apartheid*. These conflicts were repressed as South Africans dealt with immediate political racial crises. Now Mda's communities seek to redefine themselves in terms of their history and debate the authenticity of understandings of this history. Once at the mercy of colonial imperialistic whims, they learn to accept they were not helpless victims: they did not formulate norms acceptable to the society as a whole. Now they also carry responsibility for the disaster which befell them when Nongqawuse, the 19th century child-prophetess convinced them to kill their cattle and burn their crops. In their search for identity they agree to accept and celebrate the past no longer mired in the

nostalgia prevalent during the colonial era when everything that happened prior to then was seen as being free from any blemish of imperfection. They declare the site of their tragic defeat, the village where Nongqawuse lived, a national heritage site (Mda 2000: 311) and learn to come to grips with conflicts engendered by a history never worked through when struggles against colonial and *apartheid* oppression became paramount. Camagu, one of the main characters, educated outside South Africa during the freedom struggle, abandons his dream of being part of the new Pretoria government and helps villagers ensure their economic survival as they define their identity within the context of history for which they now take responsibility.

Women and leadership

Because of black men's emasculation during both colonial and *apartheid* rule, African women have been forced into leadership roles which correspond neither with traditional understandings of themselves, nor to definitions of feminism. They face the consequences of their men's emasculation even as they seek to define their own identity as modern leaders. In Mphahlele's (1959) *Down Second Avenue,* women, to feed their children for whom often abusive fathers refuse to take responsibility, take on menial and humiliating jobs or participate in illegal activities which endanger their children's wellbeing.

Mda (1995) in *Ways of Dying* reflects on women's roles as after *apartheid's* demise Noria embodies the feminism born out of history, conflicts and opportunities of post-*apartheid* South Africa. Though political situations changed, people's physical living conditions have not. Her role as community leader is not political. Instead, this woman from the slums spends much of her life helping men who no longer exhibit the traits of manhood to become men again. In singing for Jwara, the village blacksmith who is unable to gain either his wife or the other villagers' respect, she helps him bring to life the ancestors' manifestations of themselves in statues he creates. Her bid for love and freedom from traditional constraints results in tremendous suffering. Betrayed by her husband, living in abject poverty, she exercises her agency as woman and breadwinner: she learns "the art of entertaining white men who came from across the seas" (Mda 1995: 89) and so sends her son to a good school. Noria's willingness to openly practice her trade, by deciding she has "no need to preserve a respectable front", is very different from understandings of female agency in western feminist ethics where prostitution is not necessarily morally reprehensible, as it would be in current African societies (Mda 1995: 166). Western feminist ethics focus on women's humiliation as buyable sex objects. Yet, Mda asks whether in a country where "women who have unwanted babies dump them" it is more immoral to let the child "go to sleep on an empty stomach", than to become a prostitute so as to feed and educate a child who Noria hopes one day will "understand that his mother loved him very much, and that she was doing all this for him." Like other black mothers she tries to force her own father as well as her child's father to accept responsibility for her son. This ends in disaster when her father sexually harasses the woman she hired to care for her son (Mda 1995:88) and when her son's father leaves their child chained to a "pole under the bridge" to die and be

eaten by "scavenging dogs" while he goes drinking (Mda 1995: 166,138). Despite South Africa's new political freedom, emasculated male dominance is the same as when she grew up during *apartheid.*

Later her second son is brutally murdered, necklaced by the Young Tigers, a group with roots in South Africa Children's War which brought down the *apartheid* government but is now a source of terror in tribal fighting following white rule. Despite her suffering, Noria's leadership in her slum-community means living by the norms of African socialism which believes in restorative as opposed to retributive justice. She teaches herself to forgive and refuses to punish the mother of Danisa, the little girl who the Young Tigers ordered to set alight the petrol-filled tire hung around her son's neck. Noria continues her work amongst women in her "grassroots community", helps rebuild individual lives; teaches Toloki new "ways of living". Learning the same from him, she helps reverse the effects male emasculation has had on her and on African communities. She helps Toloki regain his manhood; accept his own vulnerability (Mda 1995: 191); not be ashamed of his attraction to her: his is not the lust of emasculated men, but of one willing to take his place at her side as her equal. He in turn sees her as "this beautiful Noria with the soles of her feet all cracked"; lovingly shares his Swiss role garnished with spring onions; gifts her with flowers he "furtively picks <…> along the sidewalks" (Mda 1995: 100–115). When Jwara's statues are brought to their slum shack, the community's children gather around. Noria even accepts Danisa who struck the match which set her son alight. The girl now likewise finds joy in the ancestors' arrival. And so in a South African slum shack African feminism which unlike Western feminism is all-inclusive rather than confrontational, the "meaningful union between black women and black men and black children" becomes real (Ogunyemi 1988: 65).

Women in Sissoko's (1999) film *La Genèse* take their political place in the assembly of men. During the genocide of Hamor's tribe, which according to the film Jacob's sons partly carry out to prove to their mother they are "men" as their grieving father was not, Hamor's wife hides her husband under her voluminous skirts and saves his life. The women restore Hamor's position as head of the tribe: they give him their sons and so fulfil the traditional tribal requirement of many African societies that only someone with sons is permitted to lead the nation. Through their actions women demonstrate that relatively minor tribal customs are not important enough to hold back political reconciliatory processes on which Hamor has embarked. The women's leadership transcends the tribal traditions within whose structures they take place.

So the story of Dina's alleged rape by Shechem, son of Hamor, becomes a central narrative challenging values apparent in the Old Testament Biblical account (The Bible, Genesis 34–36) where Dina is mentioned only in relation to the rape her brothers say dishonoured them. By contrast, in the film she is active, determines her life course even in the face of genocidal cruelty, is a significant figure whose fate challenges society as she willingly embraces African understandings of reconciliatory justice.

Tired of her father's abuse, aware that Jacob in mourning his lost son Joseph is abdicating family responsibility, she takes the initiative and makes her attraction known to Shechem in

whose father's land Jacob had sought settler rights. When Shechem carries her home and in the presence of the whole village consummates their relationship, the "rape" becomes a marriage ritual. After Hamor's tribe is circumcised, the condition Jacob's sons placed on their consenting to Dina's marriage, they are brutally murdered in a re-enactment of ruthless genocides prevalent throughout modern Africa. In the Scriptures, we hear no more either of Dina or of this incident. Dina is never asked about her feelings for Shechem; has no life outside her male relatives' perception of their – not her – honour. It does not matter that the man who wants to marry her is a prince "more highly respected than anyone else in his clan" (The Bible, Genesis 34:19); that their marriage could secure peaceful co-existence in Canaan. Yet in Sissoko's film Dina speaks of mourning and loss. Now a member of Hamor's tribe by marriage, she plays an active role in the socio-political life of both societies. Finally, when the ancestors intervene it is she, not God, who bestows the name of Israel on her father Jacob.

When Hamor calls Jacob to "assemble the nations of the earth and talk" until agreement that will lead to peace is reached, the women define the ideological differences between the Scriptural story and Sissoko's (1999) *La Genèse.* The wives of Jacob and Hamor, acting as praise singers, go ahead of tribal leaders. Through their song, Sissoko questions the imperial and religious determinism which made the Israelite children of Abraham believe that being chosen by God gave them the right to bully other nations. In questioning this interpretation of the Biblical narrative, Sissoko also calls into question the "divine mission" which justified many colonisers' excesses. Fanon (2004: 128–129) urges African leaders to "never lose contact with the people who fought for their independence and a better life". Sissoko places leadership not in the realm of the divine, but within the community: those alive now, and the living dead.

Jacob's wife Leah, referring to divine election, reminds: "Jacob, listen to the voice of the Lord your God. The ground on which you walk I shall give to you and your descendants. Jacob, the Lord your God has said: Your seed shall be as numerous as the dust on the earth. And you shall spread from East to West, from North to South, and you shall bless all the nations" (Sissoko 1999: *La Genèse* 48: 56-49:28). Hamor's wife, however, appeals not to the divine, but demands the community answer: "My brothers! My sisters! Listen to the song of Hamor! <…> Death came upon his steps and wiped them all out. Seek out why death followed the path of his life. Seek it out and tell him why!" (Sissoko 1999: *La Genèse* 52:01-52:39).

Sissoko's perception of leadership in Africa is clear: not God, but the community in conflict with itself deals with divisive issues. The community, not God names leaders and grants credibility. These leaders must remember they are inter-related and thus co-responsible. In the film, it is likewise women who insist that political community-based justice should become the norm. Thus, Dina upholds the tenets of *Ubuntu* and of reconciliatory justice: she points to possibilities for reconciliation. She refuses to punish the brothers who robbed her of the man she married; who have taken from her the possibility to have a family. When Jacob (Israel) sends his sons to *Misraim* she and Esau assure them

that there they shall find peace for their internal conflict. When they arrive, they shall find someone "as beautiful as" her Shechem and he shall give them peace as they are re-incorporated into the community they wronged.

Interestingly, the English version of *La Genèse* intones the Biblical ending of the brothers' reconciliation with Joseph and Israel's subsequent migration to Egypt. The Bambara original does no such thing. The last clip shows the community elders – Jacob flanked by Esau and Hamor – who will soon be ancestors, watch as the eleven set out on their journey. True to African Literary Tradition it is left to the audience and to current African leaders to seek their own approaches and solutions to Africa's conflicts. Reconciliation and peace are possible but depend on decisions made by communities and leaders.

Africa's children

A consequence of Africa's many wars and Crises in Leadership is the emergence of several generations of war-traumatised children. Many are members of the generation following a "missing" generation: an age-group whose immediate elders have either been killed or are missing, or whose families have been wiped out in the AIDS pandemic which since the 1980s has swept Africa. Large numbers of African children have grown up either in the homes of older family members – grandmother, or elderly persons – or belong to child-led households. Modern African writers attempt to tell Africa's story in its children's own voice. These child voices – in the present tense, without knowledge of wider socio-political and historical backgrounds – tell immediate realities. In this they accuse leaders as well as the wider society, which includes the reader, who are aware of socio-political and historical contexts of authoring events against which children are defenceless.

Already Mphahlele's (1959) *Down Second Avenue* tells *apartheid's* story through the eyes of his younger self. The little boy standing watch as his mother illegally brews beer sold to pay for his and his siblings' education speaks in the present tense (Mphahlele 1959:41). His is simultaneously the story of his community with whom he shares struggles associated with living under early *apartheid*. His is no helpless-victim-tale. It questions the effectiveness of leadership which cannot protect the community's children.

Ishmael Beah's (2007) *A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier* relates the story of Africa's wars increasingly fought by children high on drugs and wielding AK-47s too large and heavy for them. This memoir, a young boy's struggle for survival as a boy soldier, tells of a country torn apart, of children in the forefront of conflict. The absence of historical facts in the pre-adolescent child's narrative forces even rational adult readers to abandon all explanations and justifications regarding conflicts which destroy children ostensibly protected by the "Declaration of the Rights of the Child", a document most governments ratified.

Uwem Akpan (2008) in his essay collection *Say You're One of Them* effectively captures the voice of Africa's children telling their stories in the lingo of regions across the continent. Each story explores challenges facing African nations: poverty; AIDS; child trafficking; religious, tribal and genocidal wars; inter-religious conflict. All speak of crises of leadership; of the lack of identity which afflicts all.

In the essay *My Parents' Bedroom*, the horrors of genocide in Rwanda; the betrayal of Rwanda's children by an international community who in the United Nations walks away from their suffering, is told in the voice of a not-yet ten-year-old girl, daughter of a Hutu father and a Tutsi mother, who realises she belongs to both tribes, yet belongs to none: those who did not hesitate to murder her mother, those seeking her father's death, will neither protect, nor hesitate to murder her and her brother. The girl who in the closing scene of Akpan's short story sees vultures scavenging on the corpses of Rwanda's dead follow her toddler brother, cannot know that the callousness of UN peacekeepers with "rifles shiny in the twilight" who ignore her brother's cries speaks of international complicity in Rwanda's tragedy. She understands only that because she wants to live, doesn't want to die, she must be strong (Akpan 2008: 287–289). As with children portrayed in Akpan's other stories – seeking refuge in religion to escape poverty and conflicts prevalent in oil-rich Nigeria; resorting to prostitution to escape poverty; trafficked as child and sex slaves across African borders – her almost doomed wish to live is a damning indictment of complicity between her society and an international community that does not fulfil the basic tenets of leadership – the protection of children.

The story of Africa's women and their children finds a daring voice in Zimbabwean writer Yvonne Vera (1996). *Under the Tongue* is an incredible journey through unmapped landscapes in a child's mind in the silence incestuous rape imposes. Vera's use of African images which themselves become the story; her weaving of Oral Literary Traditions into adaptation of a stream-of-consciousness writing style, mirror both the child's subconscious and her silenced mental landscape. In the grandmother's stories and songs, these images tell of the suffering and silencing of women and their girl children. Through them Zhizha – the girl raped by her father, a self-styled hero of the freedom war against whites in the then Rhodesia, and who has been deprived of her mother's presence when the latter is jailed after killing her husband in retaliation for his crime against their daughter – is made aware of the ancestors' presence. Like her they "reach the sky with their crying [until] rain will fall and cover the earth" (Vera 1996: 122). Thus, she eventually remembers her name, is recalled to life and speech.

Under the Tongue does almost the unthinkable. Traditionally, so as not to show their shame, women would not challenge their husbands' behaviour. Yet Zizha's mother shows herself to be a more responsible leader than her husband. Because, like all "freedom fighters" he is regarded as a sacrosanct hero, independent Zimbabwe's society acts according to Western understandings of retributive justice and shows its own lack of leadership by jailing the mother after she kills the husband who violated their daughter. Despite helping to free his country from white domination, his actions show Zizha's father to be neither a man nor a leader. Those in authority are complicit in the crime: they ignore the incestuous rape that initiated the mother's action.

The leadership crisis and the return of the ancestors

African societies are incomplete without the active presence of the ancestors, the *living dead*. John Samuel Mbiti (1990: 202) points out that in their human lives some of the spirits were

the "founders or forbearers of the nation". Hence, certain offences against human beings are also offences against the living dead. They are, however, also originators of many conflicts which plague their descendants. Their decisions and actions have consequences far beyond their natural lives. As community members, they share responsibility for the current state of affairs and are expected to contribute to peace in the society of which they remain a part.

The return of the ancestors resolves the Leadership Crisis. They all but disappeared in colonial and post-colonial African literature when speaking openly of them was frowned upon. Those who did believe in them were regarded as being "backward". In literature, the ancestors return to the open. Mbiti (1990) speaks of both positive and negative aspects of ancestral presence. Literature emphasises the ancestors' wish to heal communities torn by betrayals and genocide. The justice they teach is reconciliatory, not retributive: every effort is made to re-integrate offenders into the community. Bishop Tutu, when asked why he did not subject offenders from the *apartheid* era to Nuremburg-style trials, said that after Nuremburg the judges packed their suitcases and went home. In South Africa, the accuser and the accused continue to share the same geographical space and so need to find ways to coexist (Gier 2009). Traditional African understandings of identity and leadership demand harmony be restored as the ancestors take responsibility and support their descendants in their peace quest.

Thus, in Sissoko's *La Genèse* when the best efforts of the nations of the earth fail to create peace, Jacob tells Isaac and Rebecca's story (Sissoko 1999: *La Genèse* 1:14:04). The memory of the common ancestors should enable societies to remember their inter-relatedness and co-exist without conflict. Esau, who lived in the mountains and was not part of official proceedings, joins the gathering of nations and tells that present conflicts are rooted in ancestral failings. As attitudes harden and Esau decides on revenge, the ancestors do not deny co-responsibility with regard to the present hostile atmosphere, yet admonish him not to kill his brother Jacob. God does not ordain revenge and He alone can exact justice (Sissoko 1999: *La Genèse* 1:30:38). Simultaneously they remind Jacob that his people are in this situation because he reneged on his responsibilities. Jacob's subsequent wrestling with the ancestors – not as in the Bible with Jahwe's angel – is the pre-requisite for reconciliation between the brothers and so for peace in Africa (Sissoko 1999: *La Genèse* 1:31:10-1:32:37). While life events prepare possibilities for reconciliation, once the people are no longer able to deal with issues on their own, the *living dead* are instrumental in bringing peace. Leadership now demands that the older generation which has inherited and perpetuated the ancestors' conflicts create the conditions for the next generation to resolve them. Thus Jacob, Esau and Hamor send Jacob's sons to Egypt not only to seek food, but to give them the opportunity to be reconciled with the brother they wronged (Sissoko 1999: *La Genèse* 1:35:20).

In Mda's (2000) *Heart of Redness*, the ancestors' presence inspires dance and song as communities come to terms with a divisive pre-*apartheid* past (Mda 2000: 81). The *living dead* actively participate in defining new communities. The singing Camagu hears at a Johannesburg funeral (Mda 2000: 27), leads him to Qolora-by-Sea. After *Majola* snake, manifestation of the ancestors, visits him, they adopt him (Mda 2000: 112–114).

In *Ways of Dying* (Mda 1995), the community struggles to fulfil Mandela's vision of a rainbow nation. Consequently, the ancestors, the people's true leaders, involve themselves. As an ancestor, the once-scorned Jwara enforces his authority against the arrogant Nefolovhodwe who, once he became rich, despised the simple villager. Jwara requests the figurines, made under the ancestors' guidance, be brought to Toloki and Noria (Mda 1995: 205). Their return to the community promises that peace will be the fruit of their efforts (Mda 1995: 210–212.). Leadership under the ancestors' guidance becomes true leadership.

Conclusion

Africa's leaders can only resolve the crisis in which the continent finds itself due to major shortcomings in leadership by owning their identity as men and as leaders of their traditional communities. In re-establishing contact with their people, they will transform the "small-time racketeer mentality" Fanon (2004) warns against that is the nemesis of all leadership attempts and deprives those subscribing to it of their manhood. Their dependency on outside help and strong armies even in peace robs them of every vestige of self-definition and manhood.

African leadership crises cannot be resolved within the patriarchal God-given dominance structures Leah adheres to in *La Genèse*. Her image of men as violent war-mongers re-affirms identities of emasculated African men who know no other means to respond to believed insults to their honour than through genocidal massacres. Appeals by Hamor's wife to the community is the leadership style that wins out. In the midst of loss and anguish, Hamor in *La Genèse* calls for the United Nations of Africa which does not convene in Washington or in The Hague but underneath the mountain of the ancestors. Its members find their identity in the wholeness of the community that includes the *living dead* whose participation in their societies did not end with their physical demise. Such leadership becomes incorruptible when the community faces its contribution to events both past and present; makes amends; attempts to re-integrate those who have wronged it. This "outside" assistance can be counted on when the community is no longer able to handle complex issues deeply rooted in the past.

African literature is certain that once African leaders – men and women – acknowledge their self-definition in terms of their traditional past, they will no longer be defined by others outside the community. In acknowledging their identity within communities which include men, women, children and the *living dead;* by being faithful to African traditional values, they become effective leaders: a leadership based on the tenets of African socialism which knows no class structures; where justice is reconciliatory. Here societies adhere to all-inclusive understandings of *Ubuntu*: *Umuntu ngumuntu ngabanye abantu* (a person is a person through other people). This humanity involves the community to which individuals belong, includes ancestors and descendants; takes place on the land on which individuals live.

References

ABRAHAMS, P., 1946. *Mine Boy*. London: Faber and Faber.

ACHEBE, C., 2009. Spelling Our Proper Name. In: *The Education of a British-Protected Child: Essays*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

AKPAN, U., 2008. *Say You're One of Them.* London: Abacus.

ALLISON, S., 2016. Analysis: The Panama Papers are the Tip of a Very Dirty African Iceberg. *Daily Maverick.* April 9. Available from: http://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2016-04-05-analysis-the-panama-papers-are-the-tip-of-a-very-dirty-african -iceberg/?utm_source=Africa. com+TOP10&utm_campaign=5a20d9b8ac-Weekly_News_Apr_084_7_2016&utm_medium=email&utm_ term=0_4b5b352bca-5a20d9b8ac-28973321#.VwkvQd3ovyJ5 [Accessed 10 April 2016].

BEAH, I., 2007. *A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier.* 1st ed. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

BOOKER, K. M., 2003. *The Chinua Achebe Encyclopaedia*. Foreword by Simon Gikandi. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

CARLIN, J., 1994. ANC Boards the Gravy Train: John Carlin in Johannesburg on the Underdogs Who Have Become Fat Cats in a Few Months. *Independent:* Sunday 28 August. Available from: http://www. independent.co.uk/news/world/anc-boards-the-gravy-train-john-carlin-in-johannesburg-on-the-underdogs-who-have-become-fat-cats-in-1386101.html [Accessed 25 July 2015].

FANON, F., 2004. *The Wretched of the Earth.* Trans. R. Philcox. Commentary J. P. Sartre and H. K. Bhabha. New York: Grove Press.

GIER, N., 2009. Desmond Tutu: Giant of South African Liberation. *New West Network Topics*. 28 September. Available from: http://newwest.net/main/article/desmond_tutu_giant_of_south_african_ liberation/ [Accessed 5 January 2014].

GURNAH, A., 2001. *By the Sea.* New York: New Press.

GURNAH, A., 2005. *Desertion.* New York: Pantheon Books.

MACMILLAN, H., 2011. The Wind of Change. *African Yearbook of Rhetoric.* Vol. 2–3, 27–39.

MBITI, J. S., 1990. *African Religions and Philosophy.* Oxford: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd.

MDA, Z., 1995. *Ways of Dying*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

MDA, Z., 2000. *The Heart of Redness*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

MPHAHLELE, E., 1959. *Down Second Avenue*. London: Faber and Faber.

OGUNYEMI, C. O., 1988. Women and Nigerian Literature. In: *Perspectives on Nigerian Literature*. Lagos: Guardian Books, 60–67.

The Bible. *English Standard Version*, 2009. New York: Oxford University Press.

THIONG'O, NGŨGĨ WA, 1980. *Devil on the Cross.* Nairobi: Heinemann.

THIONG'O, NGŨGĨ WA, 1987. *Matigari*. Nairobi: Heinemann.

VERA, Y., 1996. *Under the Tongue*. Harare: Baobab Books.

WALI, O., 1963. The Dead End of African Literature? *Transition*, 10, 13–16.

Films

Genesis. [*La Genèse*], 1999. Dir. C. O. Sissoko. France, Mali: Kino International. Available from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PkGJJR__RcE [Accessed 5 December 2013].