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Palangyo's *Dying in The Sun* as a Solution to The Neomodernist Mind Style

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ABSTRACT

This essay studies the dialectics of modernist, postmodernist and neo-modernist mind-style as exemplified in Peter Palangyo's novel, *Dying in the Sun* (*DITS*). Set in East Africa, the novel, especially, its first half with its tragic vision replete with harrowing images of sickness, suffering, despair and death, has often been described as an example of African neo-modernist writing. But this study appropriately locates it within the context of the 'anti-modernist' temper of postmodernism. The research investigates the author's and main character's narrative mind style referred to in modernism as stream of consciousness, its historicity and landscape imagery as symbols of the defeat of despair and cynicism as well as the resurgence of hope which dominates the second half of the novel. It considers the development of the character's perception as well as the narrator's point of view from cynicism and death to hope and understanding, and concludes that Palangyo's visionary mind style in the novel is an African solution to modernist cynicism and nihilism.

***Keywords*:** Modernism, Postmodernism, Neo-modernism, Mind Style, Cynicism, Solution.

INTRODUCTION

Modernism, Postmodernism and Neo-modernism

Modernism refers to a broad spectrum of literary, artistic and cultural movements, which emerged in Europe and the United States between the late nineteenth and early twentieth century to challenge the hitherto traditional aesthetic, literary and artistic conventions in very radical ways. The term has been widely employed to characterise new and distinctive characteristic features of the subjects, forms, concepts and styles of literature as well as other art forms of the early decades of the twentieth century. Although scholars do not appear to be in complete agreement about the precise starting point of the movement – Wales (2011, p.274) puts it as 'towards the end of the nineteenth century'; Abrams and Harpham (2012, p.225) speak of 'especially after World War 1(1914-18)'; and for Jowitt (2014, p.238), it 'lasted roughly from 1905 to 1930' – they all agree that by 1930, the movement had waned, and by 1945, it had been replaced by postmodernism. Indeed, Abrams and Harpham state that some historical traditions trace its origin as far back as the 1890s.

The specific defining features of modernism often vary considerably depending on the writer or critic. A common ground among most critics, however, is that these involve deliberate and radical departure from some of the traditional practices of Western art and culture. As Lodge (1981) observes, rather than subscribing to the principle of art as imitation ('art imitates life'), for modernism, it became 'life imitates art' (Wales, 2011). Modernism was ushered in by philosophers and psychologists who had questioned the certitudes around traditional thoughts concerning society, religion, morality and humanity generally. Such thinkers included Friedrich Nietzsche, Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud, Soren Aabye Kierkegaard and James Fraser, whose twelve-volume book, *The Golden Bough*, stresses the correspondence between orthodox Christian beliefs and pagan barbaric myths and rituals.

There are several reasons for the rise of modernism. First, was the aftermath of World War 1. The catastrophic consequences of the war were profoundly felt on morality, coherence and durability of Western civilization. Traditional literary modes were found to be grossly inadequate to appropriately characterise the harsh, unsparing and discordant realities of the post-war world. In the words of Akachi Ezeigbo, 'writers started to think more about the processes of the mind and to perceive human experience as flowing in a stream or being in a

state of flux' (Ezeigbo, 1998, p.9). The major writers of this period were T.S.Eliot, James Joyce, Ezra Pound, Virginia Woolf and W.B. Yeats. Their works were characterised by innovation, experimentation and lack of linguistic transparency referred to as impressionism. For them, language could not be a transparent medium of reality, but an activity in itself.

T.S.Eliot's statement quoted in Abrams and Harpham (2012,p.226) 'that the inherited mode of ordering a literary work, which assumed a relatively coherent and stable social order, could not accord with "the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history"' best exemplifies the justification for modernist style. Modernist style was characterised by self-conscious foregrounding of a variety of techniques and devices such as symbolism, unconventional syntax, ambiguity, word play, absurdity, enigma and the stream of consciousness narrative style.

Writers like Eliot, Joyce and Pound experimented with new forms and new styles which depict contemporary disorder, often contrasting it with a lost order and unity which they claimed existed by virtue of the religious myths of the cultural past. In *The Waste Land* (1922), for instance, Eliot dissolves the conventional poetic language into 'fragmented utterances…deliberate dislocation of parts, in which very diverse components are related by connections that are left to the reader to discover, or invent' (Abrams and Harpham, 2012, p.226). Modernist fiction, like Joyce's *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* and a host of others, tended to subvert the traditions of earlier prose fiction through narrative discontinuity, unconventional characterisation, unorthodox syntax and non linear narrative by means of the stream of consciousness or interior monologue. A manifestation of modernism was what became known as *automatic writing*, which, associated with writers like Gertrude Stein, referred to writing that has been 'freed from control by the conscious, purposive mind' and consciously violated the norms of standard English syntax.

The modernist or neo-modernist writer is one who, having regard to the catastrophic effects of the industrial revolution, the destruction of rural life, the creation of big urban centres, and the parched, arid landscape resulting from the great upheavals of two world wars and earlier conflicts, attempts to reflect in his writing the sum total of these changes. Asein (1997, p.177) sees him as a man:

> Deliberately setting out to invent a new literature as the result of the feeling that our age is in many respects unprecedented and outside all the conventions of past literature and arts.

Yet another feature of modernism was *avant-garde* writing. Derived from a French military metaphor, 'advance-guard', the expression referred to a small, pace-setting group of writers and artists who undertook to 'make it new' by creating new forms and styles, violating acceptable literary conventions and practices through the introduction of hitherto forbidden subject matter into social discourse. As Abrams and Harpham point out, avant-garde artists represent themselves as alienated from the established order, against which they assert their own autonomy, aim to jolt the sensibilities of the conventional reader and challenge the norms and pieties of the dominant culture of the bourgeoisie.

The age of modernism was characterised by a new set of themes, a new interest in man and his survival in an age of disbelief, unbelief and phenomenal advancement in science, commerce and industry, as well as the search for a new idiom in which to express the new visions and experiences. The modernist distrusted, indeed abhorred, the word 'progress' and all its pretentious connotations. He could find nothing worth celebrating in life. On the contrary, he saw, whenever he looked, all around him, nihilism and the frightening spectre of self-deceit and delusion. The modernist believed that they inherited a world that was characterised by meaningless, monotonous routine; a world in which, according to T.S. Eliot, the inhabitants 'measure out their lives with coffee spoons'.

Apart from Eliot, Joyce, Pound, Woolf and Yeats, other European and American representatives of modernism were the novelists Franz Kafka, Marcel Proust, Thomas Mann, Dorothy Richardson and William Faulkner; the poets Stephane Mallarme, Marianne Moore and Wallace Stevens; the playwrights Eugene O'Neill and Bertolt Brecht. In fact, as Jowih suggests, these leading modernists influenced most writers of the period 'either by attraction or by repulsion'(Jowitt, 2014, p.270). In Africa, writers like Ayi Kwei Armah, Christopher Okigbo, Peter Palangyo and Wole Soyinka are often tagged with the modernist, or more appropriately, neomodernist, label on account of their recourse to stylistic impressionism and thematic cynicism, which, in their own case

occurred long after modernism is believed to have waned in Europe and the United States.

Postmodernism was a much more radical version of the movement coined in the 1960s to describe the literary progression from modernism. Like modernism, postmodernism challenged conventional literary traditions but did so in exceedingly more radical ways. It was paradoxically a continuation, often taken to extremes, of the radical experiments of modernism as well as the various attempts to break away from modernist forms, which themselves had eventually begun to be perceived as too conventional. Generally speaking, it is defined as the literature and art after World War II(1939-45) when, according to Abrams and Harpham, the effects on Western morale of World War I were exceedingly aggravated by the experience of Nazi totalitarianism and mass extermination, the threat of total destruction by the atomic bomb, the progressive devastation of the natural environment, and the ominous fact of overpopulation. With irony and sarcasm as the dominant stylistic tropes, postmodernist writing became highly self-conscious, aware of itself and the reader reading it. Writers of this period such as Jorge Luis, Borges, Samuel Beckett, Vladimir Nabokov, Roland Barthes and a host of others tended to create an admixture of literary genres and stylistic levels with a blend of the serious and the mundane, thus, making traditional classifications almost impossible.

One of the most prominent features of postmodernist literature was literature of the absurd seen in the works of writers such as Samuel Beckett. Literature or theatre of the absurd tended to violate the foundations of traditional thought and experience in order to reveal the futility of existence and the 'underlying “abyss” or “void” on which any supposed security is conceived to be precariously suspended'. Postmodernism is the equivalent of post structuralism in linguistics, which also undertakes to subvert the foundations of language in order to demonstrate the indeterminateness of language even in the face of its apparent meaningfulness and socio-cultural tyranny.

More fundamentally, postmodernist writings are attractive to stylistic analysis because of what Wales (2011) refers to as their recycling and 'bricolage' and parodies of styles, genres and text. Their special narrative and discourse architecture involving a highly singular breakdown of linearity, impressionistic and distorted interweaving of lexical items borrowed from several disparate sources and the stream of consciousness/mind style makes it especially suited to stylistic enquiry. Despite experimenting with form usually for

playful and ironical purposes, postmodernist and neo-modernist writers, as will be seen in Palangyo's novel, have recourse to history(without writing an explicitly historical novel). They employ several narrators and mix various kinds of narrative strategies and imagery, and they also alternate freely between past and present events, sometimes spanning several decades or even centuries. They also imitate past styles, and sometimes have recourse to the findings of modern technology.

Modernism and the African Novel

Although it has not been specifically acknowledged by critics of African literature, the appropriation by Chinua Achebe of the titles of two of his novels, *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and *No Longer at Ease* (1960), from the lines of modernist poetry – Yeats' 'The Second Coming' and Eliot's 'Journey of the Magi' respectively – appear to indicate Achebe's acknowledgement of the neo-modernist debt in these novels. Surely, the insistence on these themes suggests a conscious attempt by the African novelist to respond to the scenario of chaos occasioned by the changes wrought on the African cultural milieu by colonialism, modernity and postcolonial politics. For many African writers like Armah, Achebe, Palangyo, and Soyinka, these changes are similar to 'the horror', 'the nightmare of history' that modernist writers in Europe and the United States were writing about in their works.

Modernism provided the African novelists with an art that could adequately express his historical mind style. Nkosi (1981) refers to a gradual shifting of perspectives and styles in modern African writings, following in the fashion of modernism, to reflect a growing concern with the futility of existence. This trend, although alien in provenance, highlights the desire of the modern African writer to identify with the fluxes of the times, and the pessimism and nihilism it has engendered. For Nkosi also, the causes of this novel trend in African writing are similar to those of its counterpart in Western literature. These are disorder, conflicts and social instability. Writing of this tendency, Nkosi says:

> We are obliged to note that this shift in style is occurring against a background of chronic instability in African society; that the basis of a close organic relationship between the individual and the rest of the

> community is being seriously undermined by new economic and social force; that anxiety alienation and the emergence of an anguished pessimistic vision are threatening to erode the very fabric of society (Nkosi, 1981, p.55).

The research cannot but detect from Nkosi's views here the overtones of the prevalent philosophy of the absurd which found its way into Western literary thought of the modernist era, and which was now felt to be working its way into African literature, and so the neo-modernist consciousness of disorder, despair and anarchy provides the African novelist with a perfect medium for conveying, at once, his nostalgia for the past despite its litany of imperfections, and his bitterly sarcastic disenchantment with the present. He finds the existential philosophy of Kierkegaard and Jean Paul Sartre, that man is a unique and isolated individual in an indifferent or hostile universe, particularly apt in explaining certain aspects of the African condition.

For the African novelist, the idea that man is responsible for his own actions and he is free to choose his destiny became more applicable to his consciousness of the universe in Africa than elsewhere. A glance at the African landscape will reveal the harrowing images which exemplify the statements of the existentialist man such as: 'Men always have the kind of life they deserve,' 'Being free, men are responsible only to themselves, and this responsibility entails choice,' 'Life is nothing more than a game; man has to choose his own end without waiting for orders, notice or advice'. Other such statements include: 'Anyone who wishes to understand human life as a whole would do best to study the criminal world', and also that 'life is a good which is recognized by the evil it brings; a salvation which is recognized by suffering' (Hamburger, 1995, pp 38-47).

However, despite these and other acknowledgements of the neo-modernist temper in African writing, its presence has been largely ignored or repudiated by the leading critics of African literature, a good many of whom are ironically writers themselves. Achebe's criticism of Armah's *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (*The Beautyful Ones*) on the grounds that Ghana in which the novel is set is not a modernist existentialist country (McEwan, 1983, p.1) is hard to explain considering Achebe's own references to Yeats and Eliot at least in the titles of two of his novels. Even Kole Omotoso, another novelist, could still make the following statement about African writing:

> Very few African novelists, if any, have bothered to keep up in their novel writing with the technical development in the novel form in the respective language of their writing, being, as it were, satisfied with the conventional form of the European novel (Omotoso,1989, p.v).

But the reality is that the African novelist indeed makes conscious effort at experimentation, a good deal of which remains unappreciated by critics who are preoccupied essentially with endless quarrels over the approaches to African literary criticism. African novelists participate fully in what Ker (1997) refers to as mature, path-breathing movements such as modernism by 'appropriating the most innovative techniques of modernist fiction, the ones we associate with James, Conrad, Woolf, Joyce and Faulkner' (p.3), and they do so by contributing to the modern novel through their special way of handling point of view and mind style.

The tendency of modernist writers to subvert all literary conventions is especially attractive to the African novelist, who is at the interstice of the apocalyptic moment of transition into the new. For the African novelist such as Palangyo, colonialism, materialism, social dislocation and poor governance become the African equivalents of the European and American demands of a brave new world, which a few decades earlier, had spurred the modernist and postmodernist traditions. The response to chaos needed to address the African conditions is observed in novels such as Armah's *The Beautyful Ones* and *Fragments*; Palangyo's *Dying in the Sun*; and Soyinka's *The Interpreters* and *Season of Anomy.* Thus, for the African writers, modernism and its allied concepts are far from exhausted especially in the context of post-colonial and neo-colonial social decay, stagnation, dislocation and death. As these have dominated the concerns of African writing, Nkosi (1981) writes of its discovering and endorsing a new mood of disillusionment running through many segments of the African society.

The major narrative device of modernist and neo-modernist tradition which occurs in African writing is the mind style referred to as the stream of consciousness technique. It is necessary to explain this in some detail since it forms a major plank of the paper's consideration of Palangyo's vision.

Stream of Consciousness/Mind Style

A crucial device of modernist, postmodernist and neo-modernist literature, stream of consciousness is a psychological term first employed by Williams James, Henry James' brother, in his *Principles of Psychology* (1890) to describe the free association or unbroken flow of thoughts, perceptions, memories, feelings and impressions in a person's mind at any given moment. It has been appropriated to describe a narrative mode in modernist fiction. Ker(1997) refers to it as 'the inward perceptive'(p.6). It is defined as long passages of introspection in which the narrator records in detail what passes through a character's awareness, and for Abrams and Harpham, it is:

> the name applied specifically to a mode of narration that undertakes to reproduce the full spectrum and continuous flow of a character's mental process, in which sense perceptions mingle with conscious and half-conscious thoughts, memories, expectations, feelings, and random associations (p.380).

It has been suggested that the technique resulted from a growing interest in the subconscious mind as pioneered by the work of Carl Jung and Sigmund Freud. Modernist novelists began to foreground the subconscious in their works and by so doing developed new techniques for rendering the flow of thoughts which were only partly expressed. Stream of consciousness, thus, came to characterise the species of modernist narrative technique found in novels written by Dorothy Richardson, Virginia Woolf, James Joyce and William Faulkner, and also later to larger chunks of the narrative of Soyinka's *The Interpreters* and Palangyo's *Dying in the Sun.*

Stream of consciousness is often used interchangeably with another closely related term, 'interior monologue', but some scholars believe that there is a clear distinction between the terms. Wales (2011) argues that the former works specifically by free associations and random ordering whereas the latter does so by ordinary syntax often elliptical. Quoting from Robert Humphrey(1954), Wales avers that stream of consciousness applied to the general representation of thought processes by a variety of means including free direct and indirect thought, leitmotifs and imagery or to the genre to which novels

like *Ulysses* belong, which, though quite different in their overall textures, are preoccupied with the psychology of their characters. Interior monologue, then, is reserved for one kind of the technique which is dominated by a sustained free direct thought in which there is very little authorial intervention. On their part, Abrams and Harpham (2012) distinguish the terms by suggesting that stream of consciousness is an inclusive term denoting all the 'diverse means employed by authors to communicate the total state and process of consciousness in a character' whereas interior monologue is reserved for that species of stream of consciousness which 'undertakes to present to the reader the course and rhythm of consciousness precisely as it occurs in a character's mind'.

Fundamentally, then, in interior monologue, the author does not intervene at all, or does so minimally as a guide, describer or commentator. He does not rearrange the vagaries of the mental process into logical or coherent grammatical constructions as we find in stream of consciousness. The interior monologue is also often described as the exact presentation of the mental processes, but because these sense perceptions, mental images, feelings and certain aspects of thoughts are non verbal, it is imperative for the author to convert them into their verbal equivalent.

Mind style is the linguistic and stylistic variant of stream of consciousness. As a term coined by Fowler (1977) to describe the linguistic presentation of an individual mental self of a character, narrator or implied author, mind style refers to the ways in which the presentation of the thought idiolects of characters are exemplified in stream of consciousness and interior monologue novels. It occurs, for instance, in a blend of first person fictional narrative between the character and the narrator. As Leech and Short (2007) point out, any conceptualisation of a world presupposes both a world to refer to, and a mind through which that world is reflected. Mind style is, therefore, the way in which 'a writer's style reveals that particular writer's habitual way of experiencing and interpreting things', according to Leech and Short (2007, p.151). That is, it is a realisation of narrative point of view associated with internal stylistic effects, for example, in the description of a character's mind in relation to the landscape or changes in the landscape, as we see in Palangyo's novel.

Although mind style more appropriately reveals itself over a range of cumulative stylistic choices, even a single sentence can often be said to illustrate a mind style. In an apparently neutral or normal writing, it is still the case that writers often lead their readers towards 'a particular

"mental set"' by means of a preponderance of the lexical and rhetorical choices they make. This makes it indeed almost impossible to describe any kind of writing as perfectly 'neutral and objective'. In other words, mind style being individualised authorial conceptualisation of events, however marked or apparently neutral, implies that no fictional language can ever be, in the words of Wales, a transparent window onto reality. Mind style in fiction reflects the fact that perceptions of reality are different, and are largely influenced by our linguistic determinants. Put differently, it thrives on the basic assumption that people are different and, thus, see things differently. In the next sections, the study examines Palangyo's text in the light of these theoretical notions.

The Text as a Solution to Neo-modernism

It is profoundly tempting to ascribe the modernist temper to large portions of Palangyo's novel, *Dying in the Sun* (*DITS*), particularly the first half of it, which is invariably more profound than the second half. The story begins with the main character, Ntanya, heading home to his village from where news of his father's grave illness and impending death has reached him. He is returning to reconcile with the old man. His grandmother who had cared for him and his siblings after his mother's death is happy to see him back, and so are the children. Ntanya roams about the village meeting old acquaintances like James who, he recalls, was much better in school, and is now working for the government despite the controversies his work creates among the village elders. He visits a brothel with his friend Mugia, and there he meets Teresa for the first time. Teresa, at this point, is supposed to be the mistress of an old man hiding his past in rumours.

Teresa and Ntanya presently fall in love with each other but as long as Ntanya's father lies in his hut dying, nothing can be done. Ntanya's father is not exactly a favourite of most of the villagers, and Ntanya does not wish to exacerbate their animosities further. But the onset of the rains makes that impossible. In a typically neo-modernist manner, the author delves deep into Ntanya's mind through an evocative rendering in which the reader is invited, by vivid and poignant description, to share, to participate and to empathise with his sorrow and anguish. We are invited to imaginatively enter into the gloomy world of Ntanya, who had apparently been doomed from childhood to lead a life of frustration bordering on tragedy. The description here of the character's broken and haphazard psychology is stark and harrowing, and of this, Roscoe (1997) says:

> Palangyo's strength seems to lie essentially in his tragic vision. Nothing makes him write so well as the tragedy of life…. Death, and man's struggle against it, draws out Palangyo's strengths especially his pity, anger, and astonishing powers of empathy (p.208).

The author achieves this pity, anger and astonishing powers of empathy by having recourse to language which is suffused with appropriately harrowing imagery, which is selected, arranged and presented with great felicity despite the fact that the recollections induced by these images appear to throng Ntanya's consciousness in apparently haphazard ways. The route on which he treads in his anguished musings is described as 'the zigzag valley'. At five o'clock in the evening, the weather is still 'so hot' as the sun bites down with its 'tropical violence'. His recollections are abruptly transported to his childhood during which he had been variously characterised by assorted, not so edifying, *cognomens*: 'clam', 'snail' and 'barrel head' by family members and friends on account of his being 'bowlegged and clumsy'. These recollections reveal the turmoil of a broken man.

Reacting one day, Ntanya recalls, he had struck out viciously at his favourite sister for this name calling, fatally injuring her. Thereafter, he seemed destined to be the perfect butt of all crude and cruel jokes, as well as mishaps, until in desperation he had fled his home and attempted to commit suicide, was found half dead, rescued and censured. One of the main aims and, indeed, the effects of the stream of consciousness technique is the desire to establish the relationship between present behaviour of the character and past experience. Palangyo is able to situate Ntanya's present ordeal in the larger context of his sad childhood. His father is dying, but there had always been little love lost between them anyway. His mother is dead having been killed by a drunken bullying father, and his grandmother too is in her death throes.

The tragedy of his family is exacerbated by the fact that it is not known what precisely ails his father and whether Ntanya is simply inheriting a curse. Even his copy of *The Gospel of St John* in Swahili which had been given to him by his mother has been stolen, suggesting the failure of Christianity to provide him the much needed protection and succour. Again, this appears to be in consonance with the existentialist philosophy of progressive atheism – 'There is no God', or, 'if He exists, he is remote from, and insignificant to, man's affairs'.

Ntanya, in search of an understanding of his present condition, drifts to a local pub which also serves as a brothel. The brothel is itself significant because it is symptomatic of a diseased social fabric. It consists of a repository of social rejects like him. It is here that he makes an acquaintance of Teresa, as hinted earlier, whose eventual involvement with his family radically alters the pervading gloom, and replaces it with a resurgence of new life and optimism.

Palangyo's stock of imagery at this point is particularly persuasive and pungent in the existentialist tradition. The manipulation of natural phenomena reflects the author's concern for pictorial representation. Prior to Nterenya's (his father) death, there is a general blight on the land occasioned by drought. The streams are dry and the plants are withered, and there is famine and hardship everywhere. Even the early morning birds are no long chirping, reinforcing, it would seem, the notion that the East African community merely exists in a world without order, control or even hope.

The first part of the novel recounts only harrowing tales of despair through images of sickness, disease, suffering and death. The notion of death recurs throughout this section. It is such a concern to the author that between pages one and twenty of the novel mention is made of the word 'death' thirty nine times, and always accompanied by the first person pronouns: *I, me, we* and *us.* Indeed, on pages seven, eight and twenty the word occurs four, six and thirteen times respectively. This mind style is obviously meant to persuade the conscious reader that he is witnessing deathlike characters in the land of the dead. The persistent death motif in this first part of the novel is symbolic in a number of ways. One of them is suggested by Cochrane (2010, p.65) as follows:

> The various meanings which can be drawn from the title of [the novel] indicate not only the different kinds of death made manifest in the novel but also the possibility that, by holding fast to supportive and sustaining values, the living can take the sting out of the death's inevitable destructiveness.

Cochrane proceeds to distinguish between 'dying in the sun with its connotations of light and warmth', on the one hand, and 'dying in the darkness with its associations of blindness and ignorance', on the other, and concludes that:

> By extension, the associations of light and warmth can be seen as figuratively standing for awareness, right thinking, pondered values, love and caring -- for all those attributes and values which are likely to promote a fulfilled existence as opposed to an existence which is crabbed and benighted.

Another significance of dying in the sun for the people of East Africa seems to be the death of traditional Africa with its antiquated but cherished forms of living as well as the deathly existence to which the masses have been condemned to lead by a selfish and incompetent ruling elite.

The novel at this point highlights how human life with its sadness, passions and joys is inextricably tied to the land. In East African literature, we have often been told by Ngugi, land is a dominant issue. It is, he says, evoked with loving care and tenderness even on the rare occasion when it is not the point at issue (Ngugi, 1980). We see the peasants losing their temper with James in his capacity as a government official when he suggests that they vacate the land in order to enable the government to appropriate it for developmental purposes. That is also why, as we shall see in second part of the novel, Ntanya is temporarily relieved of his turmoil when he lies down on the land during his journey back home later in the novel. Thus in this first part of the novel, Palangyo raises a number of questions about existence, suffering and death, but unlike other modernist writers, he provides a resolution of these questions in the second half of the work.

Hope is Restored

The second half of the novel contains happier events, as well as happier people, who fall in love, marry and 'live happily ever after', echoing the archetypal plot of folktales. This is when Teresa arrives. With her arrival, the landscape turns a fertile green, an outward sign of the inner changes occurring in the individuals and in the village generally. The streams are flowing again, the birds are chirping again and there is a bumper harvest. The worst is over. This change is expressed by James thus:

> I have just met on my tax-collecting rounds today an old woman, a widow with her legs swollen with elephantiasis and her one eye completely blind. She invited me to share her maize and groundnuts for lunch. You know I've never seen more life before. She was bubbling with happiness about how simply grand it was to be living, and she could not even move. She opened my eyes to the life and joy in me which has been wasted so much….There is much, so much to live for (p.122).

This is Palangyo's vision. It is his mind style, and despite the novel's gloomy beginning, it appears to be his response to the modernist cynicism. If a maimed and purblind old woman could find joy in existence, why would men who are neither physically nor intellectually disabled resign to a gloomy outlook on life? Rather than complain ceaselessly about 'trivialities' just like 'a bunch of fertile women who are reluctant to go to bed with men', man should rejoice for reasons of the life that is in him. The phrase 'a bunch of fertile women who are reluctant to go to bed with men' is especially apt. It is the paradox of Palangyo's neomodernist vision. On the one hand, it expresses the existentialist sentiment that man can progress if, and only if, he takes his own destiny in his own hands. On the other, it apparently lends credence to the anti-existentialist philosophy that there is no opportunity open to man. Ntanya himself summarises the paradox by saying:

> Life is a circle just like the middle of that pot over there….look at my finger, I start here…. I end here exactly where I started (p.128).

The above statement on the cyclical nature of existence echoes the existentialist colouration of T.S.Eliot, W.B. Yeats and Samuel Beckett, all of whom in varying degrees perceived history as being cyclical and therefore meaningless. According to Roscoe:

> The book's structure is interesting largely because the final outcome is so euphoric. Palangyo's message might be that life is not, or need not be, ultimately tragic, no matter how grim one's conditions; that there can always be a rebirth, no matter how delayed or painful (Roscoe, 1997, p.210).

After Ntanya's father's death, the hitherto barren land is rejuvenated. Palangyo's narrative strategy, then, is to exhort a shift in attitude towards adversity. The scenery in Tanzania in several respects attests to this. It is at once at the background and foreground of the entire novel. Environment and character are inextricably interwoven in the inner workings of Ntaya's mind:

> I have gone around the world like a lame ostrich picking seeds on a dry brush land. The seeds that I have picked have been bitter at the kernel, but I have lumped on quietly and alone with only the grave knowledge of my curse and a hope. A hope of one day understanding the cause of my lameness and what made my brush land dry (p.28).

The repetition of the word 'hope' is deliberate. Even at this early stage of the story with its harrowing tales of suffering and death, the author, speaking through his main character, Ntanya, presages the hope which later dominates the latter part of the novel. It is worthy of note that the word 'hope' is flanked by such words as 'knowledge' and 'understanding', for, these words interfere with a 'neutral' reading of the modernist cynicism which would have been the outcome of the novel. Add to these words the imagery of a rejuvenated landscape and it becomes impossible to be persuaded to the contrary.

The landscape's relationship with Ntanya's inner landscape is further buttressed in the following way:

> Ntanya's mind started soaring high above the ground of his past life. Like an eagle flying over a burnt grassland, he had many spots to look at, many places on which to come down….He was looking for something, a lost seed on a wilderness of burnt grass (p.49).

The Eliotan imagery obviously appropriated from *The Waste Land* is unmistakable, but it is interesting how Palangyo employs modernist imagery against the very notions of modernism. Palangyo, looking hard at the modernist 'Wasteland', finds a reason for living through Ntanya. Juxtaposed with the gloomy aspects of the early part of the novel, the mind style represented by these statements and events is refreshing. There is an air of hope and seminalism over everyone. The old lady herself prefers to embrace life now despite its inadequacies. The future should be left to sort itself out. Events move quickly for the better. Ntanya and Teresa are married and are blessed with a child whose striking resemblance to his late father causes him to name the child after the dead man.

CONCLUSION

Palangyo's novel, *Dying in the Sun*, is a neo-modernist novel which utilises the correspondence between the progression of his and the main character's mind style from anxiety, cynicism and gloom to hope, certitude and joy, and those of the changes in the landscape from a harsh, unsparing and famine-blighted one to a land of bumper harvest. Beginning with harrowing images of sickness, suffering and death in its first part, the novel progresses from the spectre of complicated series of individual, social and communal grief and gloom into a resolution and *peripeteia* of understanding, euphoria and hope in its final parts. The novel's vision is that although there are too many complexities and upheavals in the world, which appear to justify modernist existentialism, mankind need not resign to this state of hopelessness. He can and should cherish the present rather than fret himself over a promised utopia. Here lies the solution to modernist cynicism, nihilism and self destruction.

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