

**Postcolonial Alterity in Fiction:
Towards a Definition of Alobwed'Epie's
The Death Certificate
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Although Western intellectuals such as Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin and Hannah Arendt have explored the connections between the intellectual production of the colonial world and its growing global domination (Williams and Chrisman 1994:71), it is Frantz Fanon, described by his comrade and critic, Albert Memmi, “as a prophet of the Third World, a romantic hero of decolonization” (1973:39) who has emphasized the dehumanizing aspects of colonialism, thus pushing its analysis into the realm of the psyche and the subjectivity of colonized peoples, as well as their imperial masters. Fanon demonstrates how the oppressed could not “cope” with what was happening because colonialism eroded his very being, his very subjectivity, it annihilates the colonized sense of self seals him into a crushing objecthood (quoted in Ania Loomba, 2001). Since his works are then discussed in the multiple contexts of gender, sexuality, nationalism and hybridity in *Black Skins, White Masks*, for example, Fanon defines colonized people as not simply those labour whose has been appropriated but those “in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its cultural originality” (1967:18). No where is this thesis more germane than in Alobwed’Epie’s *The Death Certificate*.

Though nationalism as cultural construct enables Cameroonians to posit their difference from colonial masters (in this instance France and Britain), *The Death Certificate* explores the difference between the rhetoric and the reality of the nation state. With its cauterizing metaphor of conflagration on the schizophrenic state of affairs in a given period of Cameroon history, Alobwed’Epie’s novel adumbrates how native hysteria moulded from atavistic brain structures distort and dislocate the clannish psyche thus giving way to a medieval mode of governance which, according to Gilles Delauze and Felix Guiattari “would be colonialism pursued by other means” (1977:170).

In the context of the fictional Ewawa, economic plunder, the production of knowledge and strategies of representation (as will be discussed below) depend heavily upon one another. Specific ways of seeing and representing tribal, cultural and regional difference were essential to “The Council of the First Province’s institutions of control, and they also transform every aspect of society. The elites of the privileged provinces have therefore achieved domination through creating partial consent, or involving

members of the “other” provinces, in creating the political, economic and social structures which oppress them. “Regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each”, states Benedict Anderson, “the nation is always concerned as a deep, horizontal comradeship” (1991:6,7). This equation is foreign to the nation-state concept of Alobwed’Epie’s fictional Ewawa.

The “First and Second Province” évolu  attempts to uphold his ethnic superiority by adopting a French mask that will somehow make the fact of his Camerooniansness vanish. Alobwed’Epie’s plot, I suggest, then, is based on the Gramscian contours that subjectivity and ideology are absolutely central to the process of domination. The Gramscian context is not just reflected in the language and imagery of the fiction, it is not just a backdrop or context of which Ewawa’s farcical dramas are enacted, but a central trope of what the novelist has to say about ethnocentrism in the postcolony.

Antonio Gramsci [*Prison Notebooks*, written in 1929 and 1935 (1971)] had suggested, you will recall, that ideas can mould material reality. Hegemony is achieved not only by direct manipulation and indoctrination, but by playing upon the common sense of people, upon what Raymond Williams calls their “lived systems of meanings and values” (1977:110) Marx and Engels put it, “the ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas” (1976:59). Tribal hegemony is psychopathological, a disease that distorts human relations and renders everyone in it sick. *The Death Certificate* opens up innovative ways of analyzing tribal oligarchies in a postcolony since it also confirms Arnoldian scholarship that harsh coercion work “in tandem with a consent that was part voluntary, part contrived” (Arnold 1994:133). The novel then transcribes the Fanonian hypothesis that when you examine at close quarters the postcolonial context, it is evident that what parcels out the nation is to begin with the fact of belonging or not belonging to a given province, a given colonial language. In Ewawa the economic substructure is also a superstructure. The cause is the consequence; you are powerful and rich because you come from the “First and Second Provinces”, you are from “The First and Second Provinces” because you are powerful and rich. Certain sections of the country were thus ethnically identified as the natural working classes. The reality of Ewawa has been brought into line with such representation in order to ensure that material objective of production (Miles 199:105). Force is systematically used on a political level to ensure

the continued supremacy of the Mongo Mekas, the Jacqueline Diwonas and foreign partners like Roger Girard. The truncated ideology of ethnic hegemony translated easily implies that members of the other eight provinces must forever remain cheap labour and plebeians. This analysis is extremely useful in understanding why “the social order has become one in which there is the inculcation in the minds of both exploiters and exploited of a belief in the superiority of the exploiter” (John Rex 1980:13). The question of the tribal *omerta* in the postcolony demands rethinking, Alobwed’Epie’s, in *The Death Certificate* suggests, since the impact of tribal hegemonies on national integration and Re-Unification in Cameroon, is ultimately tied up with its economic processes and the relationships between them cannot be understood- unless cultural processes are theorized as fully and deeply as economic ones. Neil Lazarus would be validating this author’s meaning and vision when he argues that “the specific role of postcolony intellectuals is to construct a standpoint – nationalitarian, liberationist, internationalist- from which it is possible to assume the burden of speaking for all humanity” (1994:220).

Meaning in the novel can only be deciphered if it is analysed as a revelation of the reaction of members of the “other” provinces though the narrative voices of Mula, Musa, and Ntchinda against the practical complexities of the strange and bizarre style of politics which keeps them marginalized and perpetually down-trodden. The significance of *The Death Certificate* then lies in its quest for a forceful change from the government of ethnocentric aggrandizement to that which will aid every member of the Cameroonian state in the process of self actualization. Fiction, in this context, both reflects and creates ways of seeing and modes of articulation that are central to discourse analysis which, as Ania Loomba astutely suggests, “involves examining the social and historical conditions within which specific representations are generated” (2001:96,97).

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Frantz Fanon had concluded his indictment of colonialism by pronouncing that it was Europe that “is literally the creation of the Third World” in the sense that it is the material wealth and the labour from the colonies, ‘the sweat and the dead bodies of

Negroes, Arabs, Indians and the yellow races' that have fueled the "opulence" of Europe (1963:76-81). With slight modifications, Fanon's trenchant critique is applicable to the unraveling of Alobwed'Epie's plot in *The Death Certificate* where fiction is an important means of appropriating and inscribing aspects of the "other" culture, creating new genres, ideas and identities in the process.

The Death Certificate emphasizes that under tribal hegemony, as in the postcolony, money and commodities begin to stand in for human relations and for human beings, objectifying them and robbing them of their human essence. As we will discuss below, the plot explores how money and commodities increasingly, stand in for, and are mistaken for human values. Money has the power to distort even invert reality. History does not just provide a background to the study of the story line but forms an essential part of textual meaning; conversely representations in the novel have to be seen as fundamental to the creation of history and culture.

The lines between "fact" and "fiction" were becoming blurred, or at least were subject to intense scrutiny. A novel, according to Philip Stevick (*The Theory of the Novel*. 1967) must have a coherent, unified, fictitious prose narrative, with a beginning a middle and an end, "with the materials deployed in such a way as to give the image of coherence, continuity, and wholeness, and with certain tensions and anticipations regarding the central characters carried through the entire length of the work, to be resolved only at the end" (1967:47).

The Death Certificate exposes its characters to several situations and episodes exploring each in depth and making use of a great deal of dialogue. In the attempt to satisfy our curiosities and even deepen our knowledge of the social, political and historical issues that contemporary society seems to be so preoccupied with the novel deals realistically with human relationships, with man and society and thus differs from the short story in being much more discursive and leisurely. *The Death Certificate* revolves around the iniquitous biography of Mongo Meka, the son of Mek'Atanga, son of Atanga'Vondo, Treasurer General, and Acting Director General of the Central Bank of Ewawa, Billionaire, but whose death certificate puts an end to his legal and physical personality, thereby hoisting Antoinette Yvonne, his wife, the daughter of a French coal-miner (born with nine toes: four toes on the right foot), *hèritière*.

Mongo Meka, is a paradigmatic and prototypical case of the Zoetelle elite of the First and Second Provinces of Alobwed'Epie's fictional Ewawa. He has embezzled 550 billion francs cfa from the Central Treasury in Dande, Zoetelle; invested 100 billion francs cfa in Kabon and Ewawa, and subsequently looted and deposited 350 billion francs cfa into Antoinette's account in Lyons, Paris. This, Mongo Meka did with the belief that should the Ewawa government catch up with him, the money would be safe in his French wife's account. Until, in a replay of Meka's strategy to escape justice, Antoinette, after getting married to Roger Girard, son of the French Ambassador in Ewawa, dies in a cyclone off the Australian coast. Alobwed'Epie's deliberately restructures the court trial scene(s), in Paris, with masterly ironic touch.

The novel challenges dominant ideas of contemporary history, culture and representation, and shows how the concept of "national unity" disguises its political and cultural affiliations. The mark of the plural, Albert Memmi reminds the reader, is "a sign of the colonised depersonalization. The colonized is never characterized in an individual manner, he is entitled only to drown in an anonymous collectivity (They are this. They are all the same) (1967:88)". *The Death Certificate* shows how internal colonialism depersonalizes members of other provinces who function in an economy that rests on their labour, and then were subject to a fetisized tribal ideology which justified this exploitation. Far from being antithetical to the political sphere, then, African literature and culture are central to it as in the unraveling of the plot of this novel, thus: After auditing himself and finding that he was short of a huge sum of money, Mongo Meka has arranged with his French wife, Antoinette Yvonne, that he was going to feign death, while on a routine business trip in a neighboring country, she was then to establish a death certificate, receive his death benefits, and meet him in Kabon where they were to leave for Paris, and subsequently to Marseille where they planned to live for the rest of their lives.

In Kabon, he buys the corpse of a person of his bulk and complexion from local authorities who were going to bury corpses abandoned in the mortuary in the General Hospital. He has its face disfigured with the intent of obscuring the character's identity. He then had it dressed in his clothes; puts his documents into its pockets and his wedding ring on its finger, and had it put in his Mercedes Benz. Then he rolled the big, German

car downhill into a stationary vehicle thereby feigning a head-on collision. After that he got Radio Kabon to make an announcement of the accident and to identify the corpse as his. Meka sponsors some journalists to take photographs of the scene and then sends them to Ewawa. The ploy works.

During the state funeral, which cost over 8 billion francs cfa, Mongo Meka's sister, sole-heir, male-lady, Jacqueline Diwona, and wife of the Minister of Territorial Administration posed as *hèritière*. This role informed her performing the Ezoum rites of cessation of marriage according to the norms of the Eboni Society by fingering the French bride, Antoinette Yvonne's vagina on the bed on which the corpse lay on the temple. Several months later when Meka got wind of the impending wedding between his white, French wife and the French Ambassador's son, Roger Girard, he takes prompt action and protests to the archbishop of Dande to abort the marriage on the grounds that he was still alive. Timothy Brennan in "The National Longing for Form" suggests that the burden of one strain of fictional writing from the so-called third world has been to critique:

...the all inclusive gestures of the nation-state and to expose the excesses which the a priori state, chasing a national identity after the fact, has created at home (1990:56, 58)

Brennan therefore suggests that such writing not only appropriates and inverts the form of the well-made European novel, but nevertheless conceptualizes the novel in once-colonised countries as:

The form through which a thin, foreign-educated stratum (however sensitive or committed to domestic political interests) has communicated to metropolitan reading publics, often in translation (1990:56).

The Death Certificate is alternative fiction that anticipates, in every way, the better world of the future. It therefore entails a major shift in vision, as demonstrated in the unveiling of the plot structure through the flashback technique. In responding to a familiar, but specific historical development, the novelist has been compelled to display an

increasingly, sharper focus. The oppressed are shown to possess a dual consciousness that which is beholden to members of “The Council of the First Province” and complicit with their will, and that is which is capable of developing into resistance. *The Death Certificate* attests to this effectiveness of employing novelistic art, as an instrument of raising social awareness. The failure of the elite of the First and Second Provinces to fashion positive cultural values of well-defined social group, of every category, in which the confluence of values can be given national values, only confirms Amilcar Cabral’s testimony that “no culture is a perfect, finished whole culture like history, is an expanding and developing phenomenon” (1994:61) reminds us that nations, like other communities, are not transhistorical in their contours or appeal, but are continually being re-imagined (Ania Loomba 2001:203). This is contrary to the vision of Alobwed’Epie’s setting, thus:

“All of a sudden, the wailing and crying stopped. The dignitaries entered the compound and where led to where the Treasurer General’s wife, Mme. Antoinette Yvonne was snuggling up to the wife of the French Ambassador to Ewawa... With calm fully restored, the Minister of Territorial Administration slouched to the centre of the mourners and in a voice charged with emotion addressed his people:

.....

Brothers and Sisters of the First Province, today the light of our Province has been put out by the cruel hands of death. Mongo Meka is no more. A phone call from my Kabonese counterpart confirmed that last night. His body is now lying in the Kabonese Central Hospital mortuary.... We should therefore organize ourselves to receive the mammoth crowd that is expected to pay him their last respects... The Minister of Finance took his time in getting up. He took a piece of paper from his pocket and

scrutinized it as if his figures were wrong. Then in a voice calculated to draw attention he stated:

.....

Brothers and Sisters, as the chairman has said, we have a big task before us. The burial of Mongo is not an ordinary burial. It is a test of the prowess and ability of the First Province. So we have drawn up a tentative and greatly modest list of what we need for entertainment. We shall entertain here and in the village but we can't split the list.

We need:

- 320 cows of 250,000frs each	80,000,000frs
-560 pigs of 80.000frs each	44,000,000frs
-580 sheep and goats of 60.000frs each	34,800,000frs
-500 chickens of 10,000frs each	5,500,000frs
-200 cartons of assorted fish	5,500,000frs
-1500 20 litre jogs of red wine	90,000,000frs
-500 cartons of Champaign	90,500,000frs
-500 cartons of assorted whiskeys	80,000,000frs
-500 cartons of high rate wines	110,000,000frs
-100 trucks of assorted beers	80,000,000frs
-condiments, plants, glasses	62,900,000frs
	523,700,000frs cfa

If we spend this amount in burying Meka, we cannot blame ourselves not burying him befittingly (*The Death Certificate*, 16,17,19). The Ewawa nation, contrary to Cabral's prophetic assessment, has become the private reserve of the President and his kinsmen of the First and Second Province. What is good for His Excellency, Dim Vondo, Director General of National Security (DGNS), and the Politbureau of the Ewawa People's Party for Advanced Democracy (EPPAD), constituting, the Council of the First Province is good for the nation, and you can go hang. There is therefore a precise, spatial and fixed location in Alobwed'Epie's satirical novel. Ewawa is a setting in which only

the garrulous Head of State and Father of the Nation, and his Ministers could tell the nation, what was right and what was wrong on national radio and television. But, Jack Baudrillard remarks that “the masses are the leitmotif of every discourse, they are the obsession of every social project which claims to make the oppressed speak” (1983:48-49).

(iii)

The Death Certificate has several settings: Dande, the capital of Ewawa, its environs, France, and Australia. The story starts in Dande, around the Central Post Office or Centreville, constructed, over huge tunnels that canalize a buried river tributary that drains the rot and garbage of the city. From here the setting meanders to Bagada, the off-license where the characters Mula and Nchinda hope to eat pepper soup. These are important because they iterate and symbolize the rottenness of the city. From the off-license, Alobwed’Epie’s tale effects a change of scene to Mongo Meka’s palatial home and fortress where we see the mammoth funeral feast which, the people of the First Province reserve in honour of their illustrious brother. We also see, there, the configuration of members of government and how power is shared and distributed in a postcolony.

The minister did not wait for mourners to pucker up their faces for long. He drew from his breast pocket a cheque book and wrote a 70.000.000frs. cheque donation. Wild cries of jubilation greeted the pronouncement of the figure. Women made high- pitched shrieks of appreciation. That opened the floor for a man pass man spree.

-The Hon. Minister of Armed Forces donated in cash	40,000,000frs
-The Hon. Minister of Commerce and Industry	30,000,000frs
-The Hon. Minister of Education	50,000,000frs
-The Hon. Minister of Lands and Town Planning	20,000,000frs
-The Hon. Minister of Territorial Administration	20,000,000frs
-The Secretary of State for Finance	20,000,000frs

-The Secretary of State for Mines and Power	20,000,000frs
-The Director General of Urban Transport	20,000,000frs
-The Delegate General of National Security	20,000,000frs
-The Director General of National Investment Fund	20,000,000frs
-The Director General of the Ewawa Bank	40,000,000frs
-The Director General of the Central Bank	40,500,000frs
-The Director General of the Ewa-Oil	50,000,000frs
-The Director General of the Ewa- Palm	20,500,000frs
-The Director General of Ewa-air	20,500,000frs
-The Director General of Ewarail	25,500,000frs
-The Director General of Urban Development	25,500,000frs
-The Director General of Ewa Shipment	30,500,000frs
-The Director General of EwaAlu	22,500,000frs

With this, the Minister of Territorial Administration stood up and told the recorder to move to a corner and receive on-coming donations in silence. This was perhaps a play to encourage the lowly to donate their widow's mite also. Having said that, he handed over the floor to the Minister of Finance once more..." Brothers and sisters' the Minister continued, "you are witnesses to what can come from Nazareth. The world is keeping vigil with us. I think, with what we are bale to raise tonight, I am tempted not to ask for foreign intervention. The First Province is equal to the task. And I believe that five of our brother Ministers who are not yet here will not let us down... I know them and I have confidence that they will do their utmost? (*The Death Certificate, 20,21*).

The godhead of tribal hegemony does not allow Ewawa to flower in the direction that would make society benefit from their accumulated knowledge since the socio-political

and economic landscape is one of tyranny, exploitation, systematic muffling of the voice of resistance; the decay in the social and moral order thereby demonstrating how the national ethos has been hanging on greed, occultism and wickedness.

In the attempt to x-ray the momentous theme of marginalization and in ethnic aggrandizement, *Alobwed'Epie'*, employs African folklore style as rhetorical devices and narrative fabric to borrow from Ngugi wa Thiongo, to vivify “the abject poverty, the moral and physical degradation, and the cultural impoverishment of large masses of the population amidst plenty of luxury enjoyed by so few (1972:31). The tensions between economic and political connotations of a clannish, internal Francophile colonization also spill over into the understanding of tribal exclusion, and its relationship with other structures of oppression.

Politics of ethnic exclusion in a postcolony is therefore best understood not by trying to pin it down to a single semantic meaning but by relating its shifting meanings to historical processes, again, in this context, we recall, as this is related to the “other” oppressed francophone regions.

Scientific racism from the 18th century calcified the assumption that race is responsible for cultural formation and historical development. In arguing thus for a natural aristocracy for the Caucasian stock, the German anthropologist Theodor Waitz's, in *Introduction to Anthropology* (1859), argued, that:

Wherever the lower races prove useless for the service of the Whiteman, they must be abandoned to their savage state, it being their fate and natural destination. All wars of extermination, whenever the lower species are in the way of the Whiteman, are fully justifiable” (quoted Young 1995:7)

The Death Certificate confronts this duplication of racism through a tribal mode of governance. It refuses to see in the Eboni society's warped mode of rulership a pessimistic closure, instead the novelist it challenges the Cameroonian leadership to heed his warning of ethnic aggrandizement resulting in national combustibility and, to transform the ideal of nationhood into reality.

The Death Certificate is alternative fiction that anticipates, in every way, the better world of the future. It therefore entails a major shift in vision, as we have discussed above with reference to the unveiling of the plot structure through the flashback technique. The author has extended the range of material usually presented in the so-called “great” Leavisean, bourgeois novel. Plot, characterization and action are affected in *The Death Certificate* with terseness and economy. Alobwed’Epie’s is the middle style, neither high nor low, a vast, sprawling, almost limitless universe which exhibits throughout an organic unity of style. He therefore demonstrates the instinct of the master novelist who knows when to jog along; and when to heighten through the use of the mock, or the hyperbolic style.

Four days after burial, when all the dignitaries had left, Jacqueline Diwona assembled the women of the village and told them that though Mongo’s wife was a white, she had to mourn for her husband as a black woman, a woman of the soil would have mourned for him. This consisted in the woman rolling in mud and staying like that for seven days without bathing, being shaven clean up and down, lying on the mat on the ground for the seven days of mourning and stooping while walking with a walking stick to manifest the weight of her grief.

When the whole village said that because of the prolonged mourning, and because Yvonne was a white girl she would be exempted from our tradition, Jacqueline flared up cursing this, cursing that, and accusing people of being influenced by the Minister of Finance.

“What had the Minister of Finance to do in the matter?” I asked.

“Before then, there was a rumour that Jacqueline was suspecting that members of the sect would ask the Minister (the eldest and nearest male relative of Meka) to perform the act of breaking the marriage vow between Mongo Meka and Antoinette Yvonne,” he explained.

“Did she want to do it herself? Had she any choice in the matter?”

I inquired.

“Jacqueline Diwona? Habah! She did it herself. We were told she did it herself”, he exclaimed, clicking and clucking for emphasis.

“How was that? How did she do it?” I asked rather mechanically

“A mod,” my guide exclaimed “We were told that after the official cocktail here, the members of Eboni Society decided to perform the act, since the body was embalmed.... There was a debate on who to mount Yvonne. Because the Minister suspected Jacqueline unfavourable reaction, he stayed away from the session. So, Jacqueline sent out the members from the palace and did the act. After the act, Yvonne came out crying”, he concluded (*The Death Certificate*, 146, 147).

Alterity, or a binary opposition between colonizer and colonized (in this context i.e. Anglophone/Francophone) is, according to Ania Loomba, an idea that has enormous force and power in the construction of anti-colonial narratives, by subjectivities who are themselves complex, mixed-up products of diverse colonial histories (2001:182). *The Death Certificate* reminds the reader that Re-Unification had rarely represented the interests of all the peoples in Cameroon society. After 1982, these fissures can no longer be glossed over, which is why the major plank on which the author hangs his aesthetic beacon is similar to that which, Kwame Anthony Appiah has ascribed to African novelists since the 1960s who, in their disillusionment with the results of flag independence are “no longer committed to the nation” (1996:66).

Tribalism as a political weapon, as we have seen, quickly attracted the cult-ridden psyche of “The Council of the First Province”. Alobwed’Epie’s novel is aesthetic which joins issues around the common needs which define Cameroonians as a people. It is a pioneer attempt in proffering a panoramic survey of those forces which, tend to the debasement of standards and values we should hold so dear. A sensitive, ferocious, scabrous and outrageous satire that provokes its audience to ask where they are coming from, where they are, and where they are going.

The recurring theme is that corruption is an inevitable feature of a prebendal, fascist despotism. The individualism and obsessive materialism of ethnic hegemony creates the acceptance of corruption subsidiary themes include the idea that the Cameroonian state which is an entirely fraudulent, neo-colonial, Gaullist contraption is, ultimately, responsible for corruption. Ewawa, then, is a clannish dungeon convulsing in corruption in which members of Eboni Society (read Essingan) have taken prisoners the rural and, urban folks of the other eight provinces. But the truth is that the situation has inherent contradictions, which set in motion radical perspectives that lead to its own annihilation.

(iv)

In this paper, I have argued that Alobwed'Epie's in *The Death Certificate* has produced a vital and enthralling novel of "postcoloniality" captured and recorded in a wealth of powerful and historically significant literary icons.

The novel employs humour, narrative and irony to emphasize the absurdities as well as the crimes of the prodigal debris in the cocoon of power. The misuse of state power correlates with the perversion of justice. It is the comments of the characters Mula, Nchinda, Ndjock, Marie-Claire, Rev. Fr. Jean Pierre- Engo, which establish Alobwed'Epie's moral code. The social changes that characterize his fictional Ewawa are most truly reflected, character is not sacrificed for artistic pattern, the human condition is understood dynamically, in a historical context, the pathological aspects of modern, bourgeois existence are placed in a critical perspective. In Ewawa where success is judged by ethnic origin and the accumulation of property, intellect, patriotism and hard work are not given adequate recognition. Such a society encourages the corruption of members of the Ewawa People's Party for Advanced Democracy" (EPPAD); the Emda Odus, the Mbaneko's of the First Province etc.

By contrasting the Dim Vondo's and the Jacqueline Diwona's habitat, the flamboyancy of their plumes with the poverty and misery of members of the ninth and tenth, outcast provinces, Alobwed'Epie manifests a sensitive concern with the quotidian details of day to day suffering of the Ewawa masses. The novelist expresses his

commitment to an egalitarian paradigm and the condemnation of a clannish bourgeoisie *modus operandi*, in the midst of mass abjection, hunger and squalor.

Narrative texture is a matter of the quality of the telling; it includes all those icons, which a story outline is embroidered into an accomplished fable. Alobwed'Epie' demonstrates a rigorous and successful apprenticeship, here is one who has immersed himself in the African story-telling tradition, now, as if he has graduated into a master of the verbal art!

The Death Certificate challenges the traditional Western modes of presenting time, character, setting and other aspects of reality. It celebrates neologisms or word coinages, unorthodox use of French Ewondo-Ezoum- Bulou, asymmetric and random renderings. *The Death Certificate* does not pretend to be a factual correspondence of human nature and norms. Within the aesthetic paradigm, the novelist is primarily, and unremittingly concerned with the truth of coherence; with how the parts cohere into a total, meaningful pattern.

Alobwed'Epie may not be Hemingway or Achebe, but he is a cunning writer of surpassing grace and skill, better than just any novelist with a first published novel.

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