



ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF FERDINAND NGWABA'S "THIS SECOND DEATH" AND CLAUDE MCKAY'S "IF WE MUST DIE"

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ABSTRACT : This article focuses on the analysis and interpretation of the two poems: "This Second Death" by Ngwaba and "If We Must Die" by McKay. It aims at proving the parallelism between the two texts to support the idea stating that literature constitutes the very tool through which people are called to learn about human issues taking place within the universe. In fact, any deed occurring in the universe is expressed through the use of communicative events known as *discourse*. Ngwaba (2009:18) points out *that literature is an interactive discourse used for communication*. However, to decipher the meaning hidden in the text requires resorting to the use of some specific techniques, such as the analysis and interpretation of written and oral texts. Those techniques work in correlation with science as hermeneutics. Within these techniques can be drawn some sub branches, such as paraphrasing, use of context, dramatization, etc. to penetrate the inner mind of the one who has produced the text. Therefore, all the above-mentioned techniques have been used to disclose the hidden meaning intended by both authors within the two different poems whose contents corroborate the universal issues that are made to be human.

Keywords: Analysis, Second Death, Must Die, Discourse, Hermeneutics

ANALYSE ET INTERPRETATION DE "THIS SECOND DEATH" DE FERDINAND NGWABA ET DE "IF WE MUST DIE" DE CLAUDE MCKAY

RÉSUMÉ : Cet article se focalise sur l'analyse et l'interprétation des deux poèmes : "This Second Death" de Ngwaba et "If We Must Die" de McKay. Il vise à démontrer le parallélisme entre les deux textes pour soutenir l'idée selon laquelle la littérature constitue un véritable outil par lequel les gens sont appelés à s'informer sur les questions qui se posent dans l'univers. En fait, tout acte survenant dans l'univers est exprimé par l'utilisation d'événements communicatifs connus sous le nom de discours. Ngwaba (2009 :18) souligne que la littérature est un discours interactif utilisé pour la communication. Cependant, pour déchiffrer le sens caché dans le texte, il faut recourir à certaines techniques spécifiques, telles que l'analyse et l'interprétation des textes écrits et oraux. Ces techniques fonctionnent en corrélation avec la science sous le nom d'herméneutique. Ces techniques peuvent être subdivisées en plusieurs branches, telles que la paraphrase, l'utilisation du contexte, la dramatisation, etc. pour pénétrer l'esprit intérieur de celui qui a produit le texte. Par conséquent, toutes les techniques susmentionnées ont été utilisées pour révéler

le sens caché voulu par les deux auteurs dans les deux poèmes différents dont le contenu corrobore les questions universelles qui sont faites pour être humain.

Mots-clés : Analyse, Interprétation, Second Death, Must Die, Discours, Herméneutique, Paraphrase, Utilisation du contexte, Dramatisation.

Introduction

This article presents the parallelism existing between the poems produced by two different authors, Ngwaba's *This Second Death*, and McKay's *If We Must Die*. Indeed, while reading the two poems, one can discover that both poems, despite their difference in structure, and form, bear some commonalities in contents, even though both do not develop the issue in the same dimension. The former speaks of death in a spiritual way, while the latter focuses on corporal and political death.

0.1. *The Problem*

As far as this study is concerned, the problem arises in the inner mind of the two authors while writing their poems that are literarily speaking considered as communicative events being semantically dense. What is the meaning intended by the two authors though they have produced their texts in different contexts and dimensions? How do the texts corroborate the universal issues that are made to be human?

0.2. *Objective of the work*

The objective of this work is to demonstrate the parallelism existing between the poems produced by two different authors, Ngwaba's *This Second Death*, and McKay's *If We Must Die*. Indeed, in reading the two poems, one can discover that, though they are different in structure and form, bear some commonalities in contents unless both do not develop the issue in the same dimension. The former speaks of death in a spiritual way, while the latter focuses on corporal and political death.

0.3. *Hypothesis*

As far as the study is concerned, the hypothesis states that there is a parallelism between *This Second Death* and *If We Must Die* even though they are produced by two different poets and in different contexts. They both address universal issues that are made to be human.

1. Research Methodology

To deal with this work, it was found relevant to resort to some approaches that can shed light on the understanding and interpretation of the deep meaning hidden in the two artifacts. Among the approaches selected, a mention is made

of: the formalistic approach, the sociological approach, the pragmatic approach, the discourse analysis approach, the hermeneutic approach, reader's response approach, etc.

The sociological approach is chosen for the sake of wanting to know the kind of society depicted and trying to see the link existing between the latter and the material portrayed in the text, since the issue depicted in the work does not spring from the vacuum, but from a given society. Indeed, the society of the work constitutes the spot where interact the text and the other elements contributing to the understanding of the meaning of the text (Ngwaba, 2014: 65). The formalistic approach conducted to the analysis and interpretation of the clues and devices that constitute the foundation for the understanding of the message conveyed in the text while the pragmatic approach was more based on the analysis of the context in which rest the meaning of the message conveyed. However, as the two poems belong to the category of literary text, they cannot be interpreted outside the discourse or communicative events that are used to provide meaning in the text. Elements such as: cohesion, coherence, informativity, situationality, acceptability, intentionality, and intertextuality between the two texts should be taken into consideration. The reader response approach was also of great benefit, since it helped to survey elements such as, the effects generated by the text on the readers' minds. That is, the reactions of the readers after having deeply read the two texts, what did the reader develop as feeling.

2. PRESENTATION OF THE POEMS

2.1. "This Second Death"

If we must die, let's not die twice;
Nor die before being born again:
This second death for the soul immortal
Is ruin forever,
And no lie, nor rest for the soul immortal.
If we must die, let's die once, wash'd and clean'd
For though, for a while, in pieces, we fall:
The breath apart, the flesh and the bones apart,
Resurrection: when the trumpet blows.
If we must die, let's not die twice
Nor die without being born again:
This other death for the soul is fire everywhere,
No single drop for the throat to refresh!
If we must die, let's die once after rebirth;
And the body, and the heart wash'd and clean'd
The face sealed in dry with this anointing oil,

For the first resurrection!
Good death is the first death after rebirth!
For though, for a while we sleep in pieces,
Our clean soul shall rest after death;
This second death is worse than the first for most soul!

By Ngwaba Ferdinand (2017: 25)

2.2. "If We Must Die"

If we must die-let it not be like hogs
Hunted and penned in an inglorious spot,
While round us bark-the mad and hungry dogs
Making their mock at our accursed lot.
If we must die-oh, let us nobly die.
So that our precious blood may not be shed
In vain; then even the monsters we defy
Shall be constrained to honor us though dead!
Oh, Kinsmen! We must meet the common foe ;
Though far outnumbered, let us show us brave,
And for their thousand blows deal one death-blow!
What though before us lies the open grave?
Like men we'll face the murderous, cowardly pack,
Pressed to the wall, dying, but fighting back!

By McKay Claude (1919: 8)

3. Analysis and interpretation of the texts

This Second Death is a twenty-one-line poem rhymed as: a,b,c,d,c ; e,c,f,g ; a,b,h,i ; j,e,k,l ; j,m,e,g. It is a blank / free verse. This structure by the poet characterizes the freedom that man has to make a choice for the salvation or perdition of his soul. It is made of stressed and followed by unstressed. It is a trochee. It is also made of lots of devices, and parts of the speech, such as: nouns, verbs, qualifying adjectives, possessive adjective, prepositions, ordinal numbers. Concerning the punctuation, the poet has made use of: semi colons, colons, comas, exclamation.

However, for what is of sense devices, the poet resorted to repetition, ellipsis, can be seen in the first and 3rd lines of the 2nd stanza. *Wash'd, and clean'd ...resurrection: when the trumpet blows*. In this ellipsis, the speaker just shows in a quick way the condition for a soul to be saved, it must be washed and cleaned. Man should die in Christ to participate to the first resurrection when the trumpet will blow as argued in the book of *Revelation (14: 12)* and in the same book (14 :13) it is stated "happy are people who die in Christ," they rest in their work and the latter follow them everywhere to testify the engagement they

displayed for Christ during our pilgrimage in the earth. In *1 Peter (1-14)* it is said that as obedient children, we should avoid conforming ourselves to the earthly pleasures. This brings to doom. Ambiguity is seen in the soul immortal, as stated immortal should appear before soul, but to demonstrate the danger that is running the soul which obeys to the flesh's pleasures, this soul is target of perdition, since it receives the beast seal. This constitutes an obstacle for such a soul to inherit God's Kingdom. It is a soul booked for the everlasting torments. *Revelation (14:11)*, and it will perish and suffer forever. Metonymy is defined by the use of throat as part of the body which incarnates the suffering of the whole body which is going to suffer for not having obey to God's tenets, as asserted in the 3rd and 4th lines of the 3rd stanza. The speaker has also made a paradox between *soul immortal* in the first stanza and *clean soul* in the 3rd line of the last stanza, which soul has respected and obeyed all God's instructions. Unlike the soul immortal, this soul is going to rest in peace and when the trumpet is going to blow, it is going to raise from the dead not for being condemned but being rewarded, stated in the book of *Revelation (14:4)*.

Metaphor is read in ruin forever in the 4th line of the 1st stanza. *Single drop* in the 4th line of the 3rd stanza is also another instance of metaphor, since in this indescribable suffering that the immortal soul is going to endure, single drop which is seen as palliative to the pains is itself unable to dwindle the latter. This second death is compared to something which is going to be destroyed forever. While living, man should fight to find the way to Christ. This way is not found by all the people, only by those who accept sacrifice to die with Christ. It is a hidden treasure revealed only to those who fight day and night to find and keep it carefully. *Matthew (13:44-50)*

Hyperbole, apart from being used as metaphor, *No single drop* is also depicted in an exaggerated way to show the gravity of the situation that the soul immortal is going to face. For that, the poet is calling people to avoid being taken by this devil's traps. People should accept sacrifice, that is to mortify their bodies and their needs for gaining the precious treasure booked for those who will win. This precious treasure is to be clothed with the **white dress**, which is the symbol of the crown testifying the outcoming of all the efforts made by Christians who have accepted to endure sufferings for Jesus Christ. Variation is expressed in the way the speaker tries to change the structure to mean the same thing. This can be read in the first lines of the four first stanzas, and the clarification made in the 2nd lines of the same stanzas. The use of adjectives was also well selected. They fit with the issue developed in the text. Immortal, normally should be used before soul, but here the speaker has inverted the place to show the immortal is used in the sense of the hardships that is going to undergo this soul which is not going to respect God's instructions. This soul is not going to rest in peace but torment

and perish forever, as it can be read in the 3rd and 4th lines of the 1st stanza, and in the 3rd and 4th lines of the 3rd stanza.

Single drop, an adjective modifying drop expresses the degree of suffering that are going to undergo those who do refuse to participate in God's affairs. That day, they are going to look for even a single drop of water to dwindle their pains, but it will be late. That is to say, make profit of your sojourn on the earth to obey all God's recommendations for avoiding being cursed by God and thrown in the hell the day of doom (*SOPHONIA 2:1-3*) and *1 Peter 1-21*). *Clean soul*, as aforementioned, the speaker opposes clean soul to soul immortal. Grammatically speaking, clean occupies the required place showing that unlike immortal soul, clean will rest since as it has obeyed to God's tenets, as it can be read in *TITE 2:11-15*. We should make our flesh die of all those things that can lead us to miss the glory Colossians (*3:1-9*).

Worse in the last line of the last stanza, is the comparative of bad. In this context, the speaker tells the implied readers to avoid passing by second death, the death of the soul. The soul is created for salvation. Repetition is read from the first four stanzas of the poem: 1st lines of the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th stanza. This frequent repetition of "if we must die ..." testifies the seriousness that the speaker is giving to the salvation of the soul. Indeed, this repetition constitutes a call to all human beings, mostly Christians of not joking with this precious treasure that God has put in man. In fact, it is this part which is really man. The body/flesh will return on the earth from where it was drawn, but the soul should return to God, but not in any way. *Romans (8:10-13)*. Prophet Branham, in many of his sermons demonstrates, in *Giving up All* of 1963, *The Holy Spirit* of 1963, in *The Filter of a Man who Thinks* of 1963. It should be prepared when man lives, how by receiving God words, believing in it, is putting all the recommendation of the bible in practice, giving up all those things that can impede man to be saved. (*Exodus 20*) In other terms, while living, man should die with all the evil things (sins) and be born in Jesus Christ, after having been baptized not only of water, but also spiritually by reading and listening frequently to God's precepts in the bit of being justified, and sanctified by the word of the bible, and then be sealed of the holy spirit, a guarantee for being adopted in God's Kingdom as his/her son /daughter.

Man must take a strong decision to give up sins. All this must be done during man's sojourn on the earth. *Romans 13-end*. The soul though living in partnership with the flesh should not accept to obey the flesh's desires. Indeed, for that it is jealous of the soul because the latter is booked a theophanic body which is going to inherit the glory of God in the wedding of God and his spouse. This is well argued in Prophet Branham's *la Demeure future de l'Epoux Celeste et de l'Epouse Terrestre* of (1963).

Indeed, we are called to fight and win the sins while living for being crowned indeed, knowing that it is not to participate in glorious feast of the spouse and his wife, the body pushed man to satisfy flesh desires to lose this reward which is « the everlasting life ». Missing this opportunity, our soul will be lost forever, then we were not created for that end, but for inheriting the eternal life, and Jesus is telling us to be ready, and to wash our dresses, that is our flesh by the gospel water to have access to the life tree, tree which gives the opportunity to enter the gate of the town, which is the heavenly city. *Revelation (22:14)*.

All the nouns selected are associated either with death or the everlasting life. In the 1st stanza, on lines 3 and 5, the second death, the soul immortal, no life. These entail the loss of the eternal life and the consequence that this encompasses. In the 2nd stanza, 2nd line, *in piece*; in 3rd *the breath apart, the flesh and the bones apart*; and in the 4th line: *resurrection and the trumpet*, here the speaker demonstrates the things that will happen if man has not prepared himself for this expected rendez-vous, the Judgment Day. He will die in piece, all the parts making his person will be set apart. The breath, which is the soul will go to meet its creator, if and only if lived according to God's requirements as excerpted in the book of *Revelation 14 :13*). While the flesh and bones, which are the visible parts will be destroyed, since they are not concerned with that ceremony. In the 3rd stanza, it is shown that *the fire* is the reward that expects the sinner's soul. It will lack peace and rest. His throat, which represents his whole person, is going to endure everlasting suffering. The drop here just means nothing that can be provided to dwindle this suffering. Remember the story of the rich and the poor in the Bible, Exodus. Prophet Branham, in one of his sermons entitled: *Without the Holy Spirit, Man is Lost* taught in 1954, asserts that the Holy spirit is a sign that God marks those who respect and obeys all his recommendations. God tells the angels of destruction, not to touch them, as pointed in *Revelation 9:4*

However, for those who refused to obey, the devil seals them with his sign, which is the mark of the beast. In the day of last judgment, they will be thrown in the fire for the perenial destruction. For that sake, every man should prepare himself while living to be kept in the town of refuge, which is Jesus Christ, our Savior. This is the only spot where we can find salvation. this salvation is obtained by listening permanently to the sound of the trumpet, the word of God, the only way for him to be washed and cleaned, as quoted in Ngwaba's *If We Must Live, in the 2nd stanza, Upon Going Back Naked and Bare Hands*, in 4th Stanza. In the 4th stanza, nouns such as *rebirth*, entails the endeavor which must be performed by Christians to gain the heaven. They must accept to die while living, give up all the sins and any kind of things that can impede them to reach their objective, and die in the flesh. This sine quo non condition to enter God's

kingdom, as stated in *Jean (3:3)*, which is the one of meeting the savior, our Lord Jesus Christ. For that they must display some attitudes as taking the decision to leave the world with all its things that lead to sins. This is not an easy task, man is called to be determined to fight strongly for succeeding to win the struggle for being saved, this is the only thing that can wash and clean man's flesh and heart is the conversion in Christ. Man should be in close contact with God's word, put them in practice, and make it his permanent tool to consult whenever he faces obstacles, for not falling in devil's trap. Indeed, living as aforementioned, he will be sanctified and anointed of the Holy Spirit. This will give him the chance to be raised from the dead. The first death is the one of flesh. This is experienced when man is living. That is, the body must die of all those things that do not give glory to God. That is the use of Oxymoron in the 1st line of the 4th and 5th stanzas. Nouns used in the last stanza: death, rebirth, the speaker has played with the musicality: death and rebirth (1st line) assonance. Alliteration in the 2nd line: while we sleep, in the 3rd our clean soul shall rest, and in the fourth line: this second death...than the first for...souls! Indeed, the nouns used here with such rhythm just show that the speaker is giving a paramount place to the first death which is the one of flesh in the bit of the saving the soul, the most important part of man created for not being perished but saved and kept for the eternal life.

Most verbs are in conditional, gerund, simple present, past participle. The condition is used with a strong obligation for awakening people's mind about what is going to happen to those who will reject God's call. The poet is calling people to die once, that is, to die in flesh, but be reborn in the soul which is going to be crowned with the God's glory. Gerund is used after the preposition before or after. As in the 2nd line of the 1st stanza, in the 1st line of the 2nd stanza, in the 2nd line of the 3rd stanza, etc. by using those preposition in the different lines of the poem, the poet is just saying the same thing, meaning that we have to die once, just after rebirth. He wants just to say, we have to die with body and all its feeling that push us to commit sins. Though, living, we should consider ourselves as dead in Christ for being rewarded the expected glory, the eternal life.

Unlike, Ngwaba's *This Second Death*, McKay's *If We Must Die* is a fourteen-line poem, including only one stanza. It is not a sonnet though its number of lines. It rhymes as: aba,b ; cdcd ;efef ; gg. It is an iambic pentameter. In fact, though made of fourteen lines, it is not a sonnet, simply because it is not split into two stanzas. The first of eight lines and the second of six lines like in Shakespearian or Edmund Spencer sonnets. But however, it is a conventional poem, because it respects the rhyming scheme. The poet has used nouns, qualifying adjectives, verbs, gerund, past participle, verbs, adverbs. Nouns are hogs, spot, dogs, mock, blood, monster, kinsmen, foe, blows, grave, men, wall. All these lexemes are selected portray the condition under which lived African Americans during racial discrimination period in the USA.

Hogs for instance in the 1st line the oppressors compared Blacks to pigs, that is people having no value, and that can be killed like they use to do with animals. The speaker is calling his fellows not to accept to be ranked in the level. They should stand up and fight for their personality and dignity. **Spot** bears here two meanings. It is the place that epitomizes **Harlem**, which represents all other areas where Blacks live in America. This place incarnates sufferings, violence, and shedding of African American blood. Like Soweto in South Africa during the Apartheid system, Harlem is spotted of blood of Blacks who were always subjects of arrest and killing on behalf of American oppressors mostly the KU KLUXKLAN 2nd line of the poem.

Dogs which are question here are the animals that White Americans used to fear the oppressed so that they could not draw near them. Those dogs for the poet embody the American oppressors' wickedness towards Blacks that they regarded as their hangers-on. They used them as to show that those dogs were more important than Blacks, as it is excerpted in 3rd and 4th lines. For that, the speaker who is the poet is making a call to his fellows by reminding them that they are human beings in the same way as those oppressors, their blood is also so precious that it should not shed in vain. They should face the oppressors until to recover their dignity and personality. This entails that they should not accept to die like animals, but they had to react so that their blood should not shed in vain. They should confront physically the oppressors this could make them be crowned as heroes, like Matthews in San Francisco, Malcom X in Harlem, Luther King in Atlanta, Steve Biko, and Nelson Mandela's compatriots, in South Africa, Dedan KIMATHI in Kenya, and others in different parts of the world. They fought and are today celebrated as the emblematic figures of freedom fight. Frantz FANON in his *Wreath of the Earth* (1966), argues that the oppressed must resort to violence, since this remains the only language and tool understood by the oppressors, and that can free him.

"**Monsters**" is the image that the poet makes of white oppressors. They are portrayed as people having no heart, no consideration for other races, mostly the Black one. With their Aryanism theories developed by Herodotus, Antoine de Gobineau, Nitsczhe, Malan, etc. White men, mostly those from Anglo-Saxon origin think that they have the imperium of everything on other races mostly the Black one. The poet calls the Blacks to boycott their orders. Indeed, calling them monsters, this wanted to cost death to Claude Mckay. The use of this lexeme demonstrates the strong hatred that he developed against oppression and its practitioners (White people), Wargner (1973 :3). Hatred gave him the opportunity to tell Black Americans in particular, and the oppressed in general to multiply their endeavors to fight oppression in the same way it was practiced by White people. Physical confrontation had become an antidote to reply to the oppressors' attitude towards Blacks. Malcom X in one of Speeches held in Harlem

against racial discrimination pointed out: « Soul force, soul brute ». This showed his determination and ethiopianism (a messianic leader who trusted in physical confrontation, as a weapon to win the struggle against oppression). It is for that he was killed by the KU KLUX KLAN in 1967. Malcom X was among the African-Americans who militated strongly for the sake of Black people in the USA. Like Robbinhood of the Nottingham forest in medieval period, he devoted to some violent actions such as killing, robbing white people to express his discontentment against the treatments they were reserved by the oppressed. Malcom X implemented McKay's request in his life. He was not afraid to face the White men. He was killed by the oppressors, but today, the same oppressors recognize him as a hero in the US. They have even dedicated the date of his death, as a national date. He and other black militants who fell as Dr. Martin Luther King are given honor due to heroes. As foretold in the 7th and 8th lines of McKay's *If We Must Die*.

If We Must Die had demonstrated McKay's determination, pragmatism, and realism against oppression. The work had been exploited as a weapon of struggle by all the world's oppressed. Even the white who were against oppression resorted to it as an answer to the injustice they were victims on behalf of other people. For instance, The title of the work was found written on the back of a Young White American soldier who fell during the 2nd World War (Op cit : 1973 :138). This poem makes McKay, the spokesman of the world's oppressed. It had contributed efficiently to the ban of racial discrimination in America. **Common foe:** The common foe is the common enemy. That is, for the poet, White oppressors are not their friends, but rather their enemies. People did not want their welfare and salvation. For that, they should be prudent to fight them before they do. Though, they are not many, they should display brave attitude so that they could also kill white. In fact, the killing of even one white oppressor is symbolic; this means the killing of racial discrimination. This is to be compared with the philosophy of *Robbinhood realism* propounded by South African by Black writers. In each work produced by anti-apartheid system, the hero, who was either Black man or Colored ended by killing the White oppressor, who epitomized the defenders of Apartheid in the story. This action symbolized great thing to Blacks. It meant the end or killing of the apartheid system. This can be read in La GUMA's *A Walk in the Night*, *The Stone Country*, and *At the Time of Butcherbirds*.

Being a marxist socialist writer, Claude McKay resorted to Robbinhood realism, another version of Marxist Socialist revolution, and ethiopianism, as another aspect of messianism stressing on physical confrontation as the very tool and efficient method to fight and win the struggle against oppression. He used it in Literature for awakening the African American oppressed from their lethargy. Indeed, he wanted them to stand up and defeat their common detractor,

the White oppressors, as is quoted on the 9th line. Indeed, Black Americans should not fear the oppressors, though many of their fellows fell, but they should come across them in the bit of struggling them in front, and why not killing even one of them. This is counted as an act of bravery, as is shown through nouns thousand *blows*, *one death-blow* on line 11; *open grave* on line 12; *like men ... the murderous* on line 13; to the wall on line 14. *The "monsters"* is the connotation attributed to the white oppressors. This is the way for McKay to describe the degree of animosity displayed by the oppressors towards African-Americans. This feeling has also developed hate and antipathy on behalf of blacks too. The speaker calls his fellows not to accept their blood to be shed in vain, but they have to something in revenge that may prompt the white men to honor and recognize them as heroes. Indeed, calling White oppressors "*monsters*" just shows that they reciprocate by the same treatment. The context in which are used these nouns demonstrate that Black oppressed must not give up the fight, they should be determined to go ahead until the recognition of their personality and dignity by the killers, as it can be read last line of the poem: *Pressed to the wall, dying, but fighting back!*

Apart from nouns, the poet made mention of a number of qualifying adjectives to depict each category of people portrayed in this poetic text. For each group of race is characterized by specific traits defining them. White oppressors are caricatured as *mad and hungry dogs*, that is people having no respect, sympathy, and consideration for Blacks (line 3). Common as an adjective modifying foe is used to qualify Black American enemy who is the Whiteman. *The open grave*, here is not the one of Blacks, but of Whiteman. This is possible if Black put aside fear, they will also open the grave for White men (line 12). In fact, positive qualifying adjectives are used to portray Black oppressed. This is a vindication of the recognition of their values as human beings. Instances can be seen in line 5: *precious blood*; line 10, *let us show brave*. While for White oppressors, the poet used negative adjective such as inglorious spot (line 2).

This is Harlem that the oppressors had rendered inglorious by the consecutive shedding of blood of Blacks. Not only that but also, this Harlem is portrayed as jail or hell for blacks, since the police was wandering there day and night in search of the beast to catch, those beast were Black Americans. As depicted on 2nd line: *Hunted and penned in inglorious spot*. This place is to be compared to District X in South Africa in LA GUMA's *A Walk in the Night* and *The Stone Country*. Where Black people were considered as animals to be shot at any time by the White constables, Blacks were not given the opportunity to live in decent way. They were confined like sardines in the box. The place smelt of blood of martyrs killed without any sake. It is not only inglorious because of blood of the oppressed, but also because the blood had left its spots which cannot be forgotten by Blacks. It had become a mythical area. Whenever people make

mention of it, they remember of those African-Americans who lost their lives in that place. Illustration can be seen with the killing of imminent Black personalities such as MALCOM X, the father of Black Panthers. This place is also taken as the sample of other places in the US where Blacks were killed, such as: San Francisco, Atlanta, the area where killed Luther King, Detroit, Chicago, etc Mercey Cook (1971:71). Punctuation used are for most: commas, on lines 2 and 3 indicate the enumeration of different techniques used by White oppressors to catch and ridicule Black oppressors. In line 5, the speaker used the comma, to show the way Black people die. In line 10 and 13, the commas are used there to explain the Blacks they have not to fear, they should adopt the same strategies as the ones of the oppressors. They should attack them as they used to do for them, even when being about to die, they should display their strength and bravery, as stated in the last line.

Exclamation marks used on line 8, 11 and 14 define the recognition of Black's personality and dignity. This is possible if Blacks display acts of courage that can make them be respected by White oppressors. Question mark on lines 8 is a rhetorical question. This question is put to say there was no problem for the speaker, if Black oppressed could in the same way kill White oppressors as a feedback or reply to the treatment they received on their behalf. This could serve as a testimony of Black Americans' determinism and bravery. For the poet, this is an act of encouragement. It needed to be congratulated.

Possessive adjectives are used to indicate African-American values and sense of humanism as shown on lines 6, our *precious blood*, while on line 4, *their mock at us*, and on line 11, *their thousand blow deal one death-blow* just confirm the White oppressors sense of animosity and lack of consideration for other races, especially, for the Black one. Using those two possessive adjectives, their and our, the speaker wanted just to show the way the antagonism generated by white oppressors had negative stigmata in the minds of the oppressed.

However, for what is of sense devices, the poet had made mention of a lot of them. Namely: repetition, simile, metaphor, ellipsis, images, ambiguity, etc. repetition is observed on lines 1 and 5 where is repeated: *If we must die*. This is stated for awakening the African American oppressed of the way they had to die. They should fight to die like respected and respectful people. They should be pragmatic and self-determined. Simile is used in the 1st and 13th lines. *If we must die, let it be not like hogs... like men we'll face the murderous*, indeed, for the poet, black American should not be compared to hogs, which is even in the category of beast ranked in the group of dirty, and which has no direction to take for their destiny.

Metaphor is seen in the use of inglorious spot (line 2) compared to any congregation of Black people areas in the USA (Harlem, etc.), *mad ad hungry dogs* compared to White oppressors (line 3). *Monsters we defy*, the image of White

oppressors (line 7). *Thousand blows... one dead blow*, the image of persons who fell during the racial discrimination in the USA. Ellipsis is read on line 2: *hunted and penned* and on line 10: *though far outnumbered*.

Humor is expressed on line 7: *the monsters we defy... shall be constrained to honor us though dead*. And on line 8: *Oh, kinsmen! We must meet the common foe*.

Ambiguity is exploited in the 2nd line: *hunted and penned in inglorious spot*. Indeed, the inglorious spot can mean Harlem, the place where Black oppressed were hunted like animals, not considered as human beings, i.e. a place where they were always pursued as animals to be killed. Yet, the other deep meaning entails the place spotted of blood of Black which fell during the racial discrimination. This made the place unbearable to live. Allegory / personification is also used in the way animals in the first line: *hogs*, third line: *mad and hungry dogs*, line 7: *monsters*. Those animals are portrayed in the way to picture each category of people representing the racial community depicted in the work, and the way the use to consider each other. The poet insists just on hogs in the first line, because he did not want Black Americans be compared to this cursed and coward animal, the hogs, which is seen as symbol of sins and dirt. Black should be like tiger as proclaimed by Soyinka, in his tigritude movement. Black should be active, pragmatic, and self-determined to fight and ban oppression in America and in the world.

Images are read on lines 1: *let it not be like hogs*. Hogs (image of worthless people, that is, Black people according to the white oppressors. Line 2: *inglorious spot*, expresses the image of hell, jail, and hardship. Line 7: *monsters*, image of those who find pleasure in making others suffer. Supporters of KU KLUX KLAN and of Aryanism theories are ranked in this category. Here, it incarnates the white oppressors in the USA, who are portrayed as monsters.

Alliteration is the language device which consists in repeating the same sound at the beginning of words of a phrase or sentence. In McKay *If We Must Die*, alliteration is used in line 9 (*we must meet the common foe*) & line 13 (*like men...face the murderous*). The choice of these lexemes in that context is twofold. First it justifies the envy that urged to speaker to voice his discontent against the oppression that they were subject to, and then create a musicality that could attract the implied readers get involved in the problem. Poem be the poet to present. Always in the purpose of making this poem be considered as such, he also used assonance, which a device is consisting in repeated the same sound at the end of words in a sentence. The illustration can be read in the 2nd line of the poem: *hunted and penned in an inglorious spot* and in the last line of the poem: *pressed to the wall, dying, but fighting back*.

Most verbs are conjugated in simple present: *must die*, *we defy*, *must meet*, *show*, *deal*, *lies*: the poet makes a description of the way they should

proceed to put an end to this fascist and odious ill-treatment that they were subject on behalf of the oppressors. He prompts to reaction. Past participles are used describe the condition under which lived the Black oppressed in the USA; this is to compared to the Ghettos where lived Black South Africans during the apartheid system. Simple future is used as to show the oppressed determination to go ahead in their fight until to gain the struggle, and reach their goal, which was the one being recognized as the members of the American community in the same way as White people. As far as the elements of the scenario are concerned, the following tables provide synthesis.

Table 1. *This Second Death*

Speaker	Addressee	Relation	Network	Tone
The poet talks in the name of the community in which he is himself involved. For that sake he uses "we"	People of the universe in general and Christians and pagans in particular.	Christianism. Relation between man and the creator	The church in the Universe. The Church, Body of Christ, which is sustained by Christianism.	Empathic, Exhortative, and Narrative

Table 2. *If We Must Die*

Speaker	Addressee	Relation	Network	Tone
Like in the poem, here too the talks in the name of the community in which he is himself involved. for that reason, he also uses "we"	People of the universe in general and Christians and pagans in particular.	General audience, the oppressed of the world, Black Americans oppressed, represented here by the hogs for which the speaker does not want to be compared to, and the mad and hungry dogs, the onsther, common	With the Blacks, they are all victims of the same system, which is racial discrimination in Harlem, and other part of America, and in the world. That is, the network is America and the universe.	Satirical, Metaphorical, and Propagandist.

		foe, and murderous epitomizing the White oppressors. The Relation between man and the creator		
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The central theme or focal idea in *This Second Death* is the way people should live to avoid the second death, since the second death is horrible. The poet begs the audience to fight for being rewarded of the glory booked to Christ' soldiers. Those who have accepted to endure earthly sufferings to gain the heaven, as quoted in the 3rd lines of the 4th and 5th stanzas. However, in *If We Must Die*, it revolves around violence, hardships and psychosis lived by African-Americans during racial discrimination in the USA, as stated in the 1st line of the poem where the speaker calls his fellows not to accept dying like hogs, which is an animal recognized as coward. As for the sub-themes, *This Second Death* depicts death, pains, glory, resurrection, etc. The death which is question here is the spiritual one that death of sins in the living flesh, so that the soul be freed of pains foretold in the Bible. As portrayed in all the 1st lies of the poem.

Pain is also among the sub-theme in this text. It depicts the sufferings that are to endure those who have chosen devil's way, way of pleasure (3rd line of the 3rd stanza). Glory is the reward that expects the winners, that is those who chose to be ill-treated for God's sake. They have accepted to renounce to sins for following the Lord's path. They will be crowned when the trumpet will blow. As said in 2nd, 4th and 5th stanzas. Resurrection is another sub-theme evoked in this text. This is the crown which is expecting those who live in Christ; they are going to be raised from death for inheriting God's Kingdom, as shown in the last lines of the 2nd and 4th stanzas. However, in *If We Must Die*, the sub-themes are: death, solidarity, anger, injustice, etc. The death taken into account is physical. The death resulted in the injustice that White people displayed towards Blacks because of not having the same skin complexion. Because of this difference of

skins, White people, developed hatred, and worked in the way to eradicate the Black people in America, as excerpted in lines 2, 3, 7, 11.

Solidarity is seen through the way the speaker is using the discourse, when he states in line 10, *Oh, Kinsmen. We must meet the common foe!* Anger is shown in line 13, where it is asserted: *Like men we will face the murderous, cowardly pack.* Both poems developed some feelings, notably courage, determination to die like heroes and not like cowards. Man in general in *This Second Death*, and in particular in *If We Must Die* is called to confront death like a hero. He should fight even if he is in a weak position. He should show that he has the power of dominating over the evil, and of winning temptations or sins, as described in *This Second Death*, in all the first lines of this poem. Likewise, in *If We Must Die*, the same thing is requested to the oppressed of the world, especially those from America to wake up and be clothed of courage and determination to physically fight the oppression that they were subjects to by the White tyrants in America and in the world, as claimed in 1st, 5th,14th lines. The feelings developed in McKay's poem are hatred, violence, xenophobia, psychosis while in NGWABA's one are fear, faith, phobia of sins, violence against sins, and hatred of sins.

4. Parallelism between both poems

4.1. Similar points

- Both texts are poems, one by a Congolese writer and scholar, another by Jamaican poet naturalized American.
- Both poems are interrelated. They talk of death, but not in the same way. Ngwaba's stresses on spiritual death, death of soul, while McKay's on physical one. In sum, both show the way people should die. People should die with honor in McKay's. In Ngwaba's, people should die with hope of being raised from death when the trumpet will blow. To die so, people, (Christians, and any other people should do something. They should be pragmatic, determined, and active in the way they conduct their fight.
- Both are calls for fight. Indeed, in *This Second Death*, the fight consists in freeing the flesh from sins. But in *If We Must Die*, the fight turns around the salvation of the soul from evil things. The Bible in *Matthew* (11 :12) and *Luke* (16 :16) states that God's Kingdom belongs to violent, only those who accept sacrifice, that is, to suffer even physically for God's cause, will inherit the glory of the first born in that Kingdom.
- Those who devote themselves in earthly gains will be packed and thrown in the Hell. For that, the speaker is making a call to all human beings to fight strongly to gain the expected result *1 John (1:14-18)*. Only those who work hard and are engaged in God's service can inherit the glorious city prepared

by God for the holy. For they let their bodies suffer for God's sake to obtain the reward at the end of the fight. Indeed, it is the body which is supposed to fight hard for giving opportunity to the soul to be saved.

- However, in McKay's poem, the fight is based on releasing the oppressed people from racial oppression and injustice. The speaker is inviting Black Americans and other oppressed from the other part of the world, not to sleep but wake up and fight energetically the oppression till to gain the struggle. If they do not react physically, no one can do it at their place. They should fight and resist till the last energy to make themselves be recognized as human beings by those who think to have the imperium of controlling and dominating the others.
- Both poems also talk of freedom. Ngwaba resorts to the soul's freedom, since if the soul is free; it is the whole person's parts that are saved. However, the freedom that McKay's puts stress is the one of the body. Indeed, for McKay if the body is tortured, the soul and the spirit cannot work tightly, and as consequence, such a person whose mind is not in connection one another cannot develop successfully. That is, a saying: *un corps sain dans un esprit sain*. Such a body develops easily and fulfills lots of progress in life.
- Both are also talking of resurrection. In Ngwaba's, the resurrection is portrayed in the way people who are saved from sins will be crowned with a theophanic body to feast with the Lord in the wedding ceremony between him and his spouse, which is the group of those people who have respected and practiced his recommendations as stipulated in the Bible. It is the congregation of this people who are going to be resuscitated and live in the holy city known as "New Jerusalem", as claimed in *This Second Death*, in 2nd stanza, 4th line. And in 4th stanza, line 4.
- While in *If We Must Die*, the resurrection is one of the mind or ideas or philosophy defended by freedom fighters. In fact, for McKay, Black oppressed should fight physically, and not fear death of their flesh, if they are killed, the flesh will vanish, but ideas are not going to die. Other people who face oppression will inspire them to fight the oppression as they did. That is to say, their philosophy is will be incarnated in other minds to produce the same result. An illustration can be read in McKay's lines: 5, 7, 14. All what is stated here can be outlined in this: the oppressor kills the flesh, but he is unable to kill the ideas or the minds of the oppressed, since after the latter's death, his ideas are exploited by others to react in the same way, as the case of KIHKA, the protagonist of *A Grain of Wheat* by NGUGI wa Thiong'o. KIHKA, as a freedom fighter was killed by the British Colonizers during the MAU-MAU revolution in Kenya, but his ideas were implemented by other

freedom fighters to combat expression in Kenya. He died physically but he resuscitated through other people from his mind.

4.2. Dissimilar points

- *This Second Death* is a free / blank verse while *If We Must Die* a sonnet, but not in Shakespearian way. McKay has authored his sonnet in one stanza of 14 lines while Shakespearian sonnet is split into 2 stanzas. The first is an octet, 8 lines and the last is a sextet, 6 lines.

- The discourse is not based on the same lexemes. Ngwaba's discourse is more spiritual while McKay's political. There are some similarities due to the way situations are presented though.

- Ngwaba's poem is marked by the use of a great deal of lexemes in regard with the salvation and perdition while McKay's one is marked by the use of more adjectives to qualify both races' attitudes. Adjectives used for White men are destructive but those qualifying Blacks are constructive and humanistic. This is done so, just for showing the degree of hatred Black American poets had also developed against White men oppression towards them.

Conclusion

The analysis and interpretation of a work of art are one of the aspects that contribute to disclose the hidden meaning of the message conveyed in the text. It is one of the most difficult tasks to perform by a critic. As an artifact is not produced in an ordinary way, the author, regarded as the producer of the latter thinks of lots of ways the work should be presented. Therefore, he has to pay attention to all elements that can contribute to the meaning of the text. Those elements are inter alia: the language, the style, the characters, the place, the time, the tone, the mood, etc., all these elements must be in close touch with the situation of the story. That is, the notion of context is not to be neglected, because the meaning of a text is tightly bound to the context of the universe or discourse selected by the author.

Indeed, concerning the works we investigated, it was question to analyze, interpret, and decipher the hidden meaning of the two poems, one by Ngwaba: *This Second Death*, and another by McKay: *If We Must Die*. In reading those two poems, we have understood that the two works are interrelated, though the issues depicted are not of the same order. In fact, both poems talk of death, but not in the same dimension. One puts stress on spiritual death while the other on physical one. The former talks of the way people in general, and Christians in particular should die. In fact, People should bear in mind they were not created for living like animals who do not bear souls. God created them similar to him

so that they gain the paradise and the everlasting life. For that sake, they do not have to live like other creatures, but as people expected to make the balance-sheet of their lives. If they live as God recommended, they will inherit the glory. In other terms, man is called to obey God's instructions and live as a model of a good Christian so that at the end of everything he be crowned of God's reward.

The same thing is expected in McKay's poem, Black-American oppressed and those of the other parts of the world should not accept to be considered as animals by the White men who killed them like animals because of their skin complexion. Black people should stand up and refuse to be considered as animals and be inflicted the same treatments as the one booked to animals. That is, being killed at any time and place most often without any valuable reason. The poet, in writing this poem wants to put Black Americans and other oppressed of the world before their responsibility, which is the one of denouncing the injustice and releasing themselves from any kind of ill treatments they are subject to (oppression, colonialism, racial discrimination, racial segregation, dictatorship, and the like).

As literary text, both poems present some traits of similarities and differences. Similarities can be seen in the fact of putting stress on death, mainly in the way people should die. In the two poems, the speakers speak in behalf of the communities in which they belong. Ngwaba speaks in making a call to Christians in particular, and people in general, since he finds himself in that category of Christians and human beings, as well as McKay is first of a Black-American, and victim of oppression in America, speaks about the Black American oppressed in particular and other citizens who face the same problem. Both speakers are poets and involved in the situation they depict. The traits of differences abide mostly on their dimensions. As a matter of fact, both poems meet the standards of textuality. As stated, ideas in the two texts are coherently and cohesively well organized. Both revolve around situations, provide information to the audience. Because of their good organization of ideas, they are acceptable, produced with specific intention, and then interrelated.

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