

'Locating the Voice': The Modernist (Post-colonial) Narrative Maze of Chin Ce's *The Visitor*

By Okuyade Ogaga

Literary Modernism and the African Novel

THE PUBLICATION of Ayi Kwei Armah's novel *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* may have marked the entrance of modernist tradition in African artistic canvas. Chinua Achebe whose debut novel *Things Fall Apart* published ten years earlier before Armah's, occupies an inaugural and canonical position in the history and evolution of the African novel, was unsatisfied with Armah's experimentation and had observed that the book is "sick, not with the sickness of Ghana, but with sickness of the human condition" (26). Regardless of numerous African texts with modernist permutations, critics have been reticent about this aspect of the African novel. African writers explore the consciousness of modernism which foregrounds the sense of despair, disorder and anarchy, as perfect medium for them to conveying on the one hand their nostalgia for the past, with its imperfections and limitation, and on the other hand their galling ironic indictment of the present. From this dimension, Bradbury and Macfarlan's definition of modernism become

relevant as they describe modernism as “the movement towards sophistication and mannerism, towards introspection, technical display and internal self-skepticism” (26). The above description of the concept shows that as a medium of experimentation modernism does not simply suggest the presence of sophistication, difficulty and novelty as the description above connotes. It also suggests bleakness, darkness, alienation and disintegration the modernist artist invariably becomes an artist under a specific historical strain. It becomes glaring that for the African novelist, colonialism and post-colonialism are the strain that launched him/her into the international literary scene.

Modernism flowered into artistic fruition from the West during the first quarter of the twentieth century. The twentieth century was a century of extremes which ushered in a new world order that became shocking and frightening to humanity. Virginia Woolf, a modernist in her own right, was prompted to remark that “on or about December 1910 human nature changed” (qtd. in Hewit (1). Through her hyperbolic assertion, Virginia Woolf meant to suggest that there is a frightening dislocation between the traditional and the chaotic present and that the line of history has faulted, perhaps broken, and humans now assume a parenthetical existence it became difficult to define man in clear terms (this part is not that clear...). Modernist literature suggests that human nature indeed changed, and probably a few decades before the date given by Woolf. At the dawn of the twentieth century, the world recorded a barrage of cataclysmic developments, which sent it reeling from its

fragile idyllic balance. Since Literature heavily relies on society for its expression, a review of the historical events that characterized the twentieth century will no doubt explicate the reasons for the emergence of modernism. Of all the events that characterized the twentieth century, the two World Wars remain the most devastating and major accelerators of the history of mankind.

Alan Munton defines modernism as “a radical dissatisfaction with the commonsense view of the real” (2). This radical dissatisfaction is what informs Friedman's description of the structure of the modernist novel as gradually changing “from the structure of a ladder to the structure of a cobweb”(415). Friedman further claims that “the energy of the novel shifted from a polar distribution between its centres the individual self and the social world to an unbalanced concentration of the self” (416). And David Jones describes modernist novels as the literature of “nowness” (109). Considering the cataclysmic upheavals and the anarchical ambience that revolutionized the novel at the dawn of the twentieth century and the general breakdown in agreement about continuity and order in society, Jose Ortega dubs the modernist construct as “the dehumanization of art” (213). Modernism hinges heavily on radical innovation and experimentation. Herein lies its complexity.

African literature is encapsulated in world literature; it does not exist in isolation or stand on its own. Like other Western writers who artistically documented the terrifying developments of their world, so has colonialism and the post-independence conditions of Africa become the apocalyptic

moments that have spurred African writers –especially novelists labeled within the second phase of the evolutionary process of the African novel. In Charles Nnolim’s contention, the Nigerian “(post) modernist trend may have developed independently of Europe’s influence and might have come about both from the use of fantasy and exaggerations we find as the staple elements of our folklore...” (64) Nnolim even goes further to identify Amos Tutuola as one of its major precursors in Nigeria.

The general discontent with colonial rule led to the struggle for the demand for independence or self-rule. The hope and anticipation for independence was interpreted as the panacea for the many years of colonial subjugation and brutality. However, after independence had come to most African states it became obvious that this was not the route to indigeneous bliss. What Africa needed most was socio-economic emancipation which the leaders were been unable to provide for the masses of the continent. Coupled with this harsh reality are the neo-colonial tendencies of emergent African rulership.

The dire economic hardship and the political instability that characterize many African post-colonial nations expose more than before the intolerable gap between the rich and the poor and the permeating corruption. Precisely because of the politics and social afflictions that tend to characterize numerous African countries, many writers of the continent are often classified as engaged writers, as instruments of change whose job is to expose, in one way or another, the evils of society. As Tanure Ojaide puts it: “a certain notion

had begun to gain ground among young writers and critics that ...African writers have to be an instrument of change”, especially “in periods when the generality of the populace had become economically and politically marginalized” (6). Similarly, Chin Ce himself opines that the new generation of African writers, poets in particular, have “become the chronicler of yester pillage by modern political brigands, or the recorder of the pitiful howling of fallen roofs” (Emezue ARI).

***The Visitor* as (Post) Modernist Narrative**

Without necessarily having to label Chin Ce a modernist, it is clear that *The Visitor* possesses narrative techniques that are very much in agreement with those used by modernist literature in general. Chin Ce can be situated within the third generation of Nigerian novelists, who may have contributed to a renewed efflorescence of the novel in Nigeria. Throughout his oeuvres, Ce mediates on various aspects of the human condition: love, solitude, pain, death, faith. In treating these themes, he moves seamlessly between philosophical reflection and the description of intimate details of everyday life. His lyrical voice continues to foreground the underpinning of his art; his ability to continually explore new literary forms and his passionate and earnest personal vision create an ambience that is spiritual without being sentimental.

Although the thrust of this discourse concentrates on the discussion of the narrative strategies employed by Ce in *The Visitor*, it is imperative to enumerate some modernist

narrative devices. Modernism exhibits a miscellany of narrative experiments and innovations such as multiple voices and viewpoint, stream of consciousness, the disruptions of logical or temporal sequence, juxtapositions, repetitions, elaborate speculations on the powers and limits of language (meta-narrative and meta-linguistic concerns) and sophisticated rhetorical complexities.

Structurally modern fiction hardly emphasizes logical arrangement, since the world which it seeks to reflect lacks any logical or stable meaning. The formlessness of the modernist novel is consequently a reflection of the writer's vision of the world. There is an emphasis on literary experimentation and each writer is expected to explore and adopt whichever techniques he/she feels best express and convey his/her thoughts and state of mind. Thematically, modern fiction is concerned with problems of isolation, frustration and hopelessness. It also questions the existence of evil in man and the futility of human life. Moreover, modernist fiction displays less interest in character portrayal. What matters is the individual in relation to the world: characters can no longer be assumed, as in the past, to be fixed and synthetic entities with a set of traits available through notations of conduct and report of psychic condition. There is a shift from type to individual characters: the personas that we encounter in the modernist novel do fit a set type, throwing us out of the familiar terrain of facile reconnaissance.

Being paradigmatic of the modernist novel, *The Visitor* also displays a fissured character portrayal: characters are not

regarded as coherent and easily definable entities. Character portrayal becomes a complicated affair, a sort of psychic battlefield, an insoluble puzzle or the occasion for a flow of perception and sensations. Modernists seek to explore ideas which perplex their mind in the process of attempting to understand their world. Novels are characterized by an achronological ordering of events: events are scattered and seemingly unconnected, yet they are fused together in their own unique way. Such events are presented as if like different pictures, which reflect the different states of mind of people in the society.

At first glance we immediately notice the fragmenting nature of narration in *The Visitor*. As the different characters tell their stories the plot of the novel develops rapidly. However, the manner in which events and incidents are presented in the novel may leave the reader confused. For example, the novel begins in the prologue with Mensa's confession which is not recorded in the city of Aja and yet the confession seems to be preserved in Erin land. And after the prologue, in page one we meet Erie in the land Erin, battling to recall something about his identity, and especially his past. In the epilogue we meet another character, Deego, who is half awake; this character is caught between the realities of the worlds: the physical world and the 'hallucinatory' world. Yet as one reads further, it becomes obvious that these characters are the same entity –just one individual. The entire narrative is realized through memory. One realizes that one is in the midst of a bizarre psychological struggle that could turn absurd and strange for the reader because at the concluding

chapter, the epilogue, Mensa and Erie dissolve into Deego's mind and thus all three become one single entity. Thus Amanda Grants notes that *The Visitor* is a story in which three dimensions of existence affecting three principal players Erie, Mensa and Deego interrelate continuously to create an unbreakable thread and posit a statement on the continuation of individual responsibility over and above mere existential needs (“Memory” 24).

Depicting post-independence Nigeria, the contemporary urban habitat of Aja is the border country between poverty, corruption and crime. The novel gives account of the physical and psychological state of the country's socio-political and economic situation on the individual citizen, thereby eloquently bringing to bear a mired nation made filthy by the economic miasma created by the depraved rulers. Thus the narrative is scattered and fragmented. Chin Ce employs the first person narrative, and the omniscient narrative techniques respectively. The beginning of the prologue is rendered from the first person point of view; however, this voice is ambivalent. It is not only anonymous, but amorphous because it is not attached to a physical entity. It becomes clear that this voice is only trapped in the wind. It is now left for the reader to trace this voice to a body or an identity. The tracing of the voice becomes the conduit through which the plot of the novel is propagated.

The second perspective is realized from the omniscient point of view. This is highlighted by the presence of the voices of Mensa, Sena, Jaci, Omo, Erie, Uzi, and Grandad. The first person narrative which is used in the epilogue

complicates the omniscient viewpoint of the subsequent narrative. These narrative strategies are both triangular, and at the same time have an onion bulb shape which shall be further explained diagrammatically in the course of this discussion. The voice of Mensa which is recounted through memory, and the voices of Sena, Jaci, Erie, Uzi and Ade's are encapsulated or coated in Deego's voice, which seems to be the most tangible of all the voices. These three narrative strategies seem to form three different layers. Each layer seems to be in a world of its own yet they are organically connected by the outermost layer. Each layer when opened—especially the second account in the omniscient perspective—discloses smaller, and subtler layers than the first. As David Ker contends, “pluralization of world view is a common feature of modernism” (8). Chin Ce's novel shows a modernist obsession with pluralization and repetition. This device makes conception less exacting since the multi-voiced consciousness leads to continuous disruption in the narrative process.

The scattered wholeness of *The Visitor* is fore-grounded in the narratological devices. Charles Altieri, trying to explain the diffused connectedness of modernist art, remarks that writers of the time clearly “articulate a grammar or stylistic possibilities... in a variety of combination” (23) while Susan Lenser asserts that “point of view is the stylistic philosophic center of a novel” (60). Ce's narratology permits a diversification or miscellany of consciousness to reflect on the main concerns of his novel and this gives the reader the responsibility of putting the pieces together. Warren Beck

gives a blueprint of the modernist narrative strategy:

There is an absolute, no eternal pure white radiance in such presentation but rather the strain of many colours, refracted and shifting in kaleidoscopic suspension, about the center of man's enigmatic behaviour and fate, within the drastic orbit or mortality. (153)

In *The Visitor*, modernist tenets of both disjointedness and shifting points-of-view will no doubt stun the reader. The narrative thrives on three different narrative perspectives: the third person omniscient point of view, the “I –witness and confessant” and the “I –protagonist” points of view. These points of view are further relumed through the relaying of the thought of some of the characters like Erie, Jaci, Sena and Ade. With these three narrative perspectives employed in the novel, the story is distorted and guarantees the reader the opportunity to perceive the story from different dimensions. Panthea Reid describes this technique as “an incremental faceting device of shifting, spreading, and filling, patterned after the artists' breaking and bending and reassembling planes on their canvasses”(101-102).

In order to accommodate his numerous narrators, Ce employs a filmic cum photographic device by which he unifies voices and thoughts. At the first narrative level the “I witness cum confessant” is used by Mensa to recount his confession:

I am one of the staunch youths of Ironi. I have done jobs for chief, carried guns, smuggled things used to rig elections like police uniforms, ammunication, and all. I also took part

in some operations at Seme border. We do our job, we get paid. Until this one, chief refused to pay me. Why? Something is there. Something that shouldn't concern him. Therefore I planned to get my money by all means ... (7)

This voice (actually an extract of Mensa's confession now moved up to the beginning prologue) is unconnected with the voices that follow immediately and seems anonymous at first reading. Coupled with its untraceable quality, the voice ends abruptly with an ellipsis. Graphologically, the search for this voice becomes the major burden of the reader. Although this voice reoccurs (170), it is still anonymous, especially because Mensa and Erie seem to be the same entity.

The second narrative technique is the 'omniscient' point of view, where the reader meets the main characters of the novel. This narrative perspective is one of the most complex because it oscillates between Aja and Erin lands. It begins right from the prologue, where we meet some young men who are smugglers in an operation, tagged 'Buff'. Mensa is a member of this gang. He hopes to get a million naira from the deal, if everything goes well. The mission was accomplished and immediately the scene switches to Erie in Erin land. From this dimension Erie seems to be the omniscient observer. The narrative switches back to Aja, where we meet Omo and Mensa warming up for an onslaught or an attack with their riotous and righteous might. From this level it becomes evident that Mensa was not given his share of the raid in the prologue.

The third narrative strategy is employed in relaying Deego's state of mind which is like a long protracted moment of awaking the surreal moment between sleep and waking up, as if in a permanent state of wakefulness, on the threshold between the conscious and the unconscious. It is the third perspective that bequeaths the garb and accoutrement of reality to the entire narrative because at a point, Deego dimly wakes up: "In the instant I was wide awake. My eyes darted furtively around the house, alert, not feeling drowsy in any degree. It took one minute to take in my surroundings again" (195). It becomes glaring that Deego was initially watching a movie which runs into his psychological networking.

Chin Ce calcifies these narrative devices by moving his narrative from the linearity of the traditional plot into the psychological network of his characters thereby exposing their thoughts and intentions. This modernist technique, often tagged stream-of-consciousness narrative, relies solely on internal description and the reader must deduce external plot or action from the thoughts of the characters. Ce utilizes this narrative technique in different ways. He tends to keep the narrative within the thoughts of a particular character for a long period of time. *The Visitor* is almost completely, composed of the internal thoughts and realities of its protagonist, Mensa - Erie - Deego, only occasionally turning to the internal realities of another character.

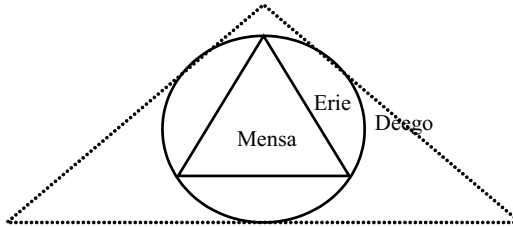
On the other hand, Ce presents a collage of internal realities, moving rapidly from one character to the next. On other occasions, this technique functions as flash back. For example, it is through the flashback technique that the reader

understands how Sena and Mensa meet the very first time in the office of the youth chair, Alhaji Ismini Jaguda. Ce also uses this means to recount Jaci's first meeting with Sena and to relay Ade's thought, especially his opinion of the police force, junior officers and his superiors. This technique allows the reader to compare the widely differing versions of reality presented by the different characters. By employing such strategy, the novelist illustrates how a subjective and internal reality is more important than any sort of external or societal forces.

Most importantly, our narrator uses the stream-of-consciousness narrative to achieve an extremely detached relationship to his novel. By allowing every thought which passes through the minds of his characters, he never emphasizes which thoughts are inconsequential and which are not. Such evaluation is left for the reader to decide. Accordingly, the author's judgments or specific thoughts, ideas, and themes are often silent and not easily discernible.

Ce also makes use of a new perspective: the cinematic flow and cutting from scene to scene. This technique is well explored in the incident where Mensa flees his home because of the double homicide he has committed and the scene where the vigilante corps members chase him through, until Jaci's car runs off the road. We see Mensa (150-151) incapacitated in the scene of the accident, and all of a sudden the narrative shifts to Jaci and later (155) Mensa's encounter with the Corps members reoccurs. We again encounter the same scene (170) and finally the corps members decide Mensa's fate (173).

The fragmented narrative style used in *The Visitor* could be diagrammatically represented thus:



From the outside Deego bridges the gulf between the world of fantasy and the real world. Without his world the whole story will become a mere fantasy. He gives the entire story a tinge of credibility. Deego's world is not wholly tangible but surrealistic. This world is the existential borderline between 'awakeness' and dream hence his world is dotted. Invariably the reader perceives the story from his dream 'eyes'. However, Mensa's world is the innermost world and is triangular because it is realized through memory. It is Erie's world that makes Mensa's world *mean*. Erie's world is amorphous.

At this narrative level, everything floats in the air. It is the all knowing world. From this world Ce, through Erie's eyes, foregrounds the underpinning of the material world which the inner triangle represents. The material world reflects the materialistic drive of the individuals who people the world (110-8). Everything to them is characterized by money. So that when they transcend the material to the ancestral world, the first thing that comes to their mind is money ('Naira'). From Erie's eyes the reader is once again, as in *Children of Koloko*, exposed to the folly of the rulers and

the debility of the masses. From this perspective it becomes clear that the youth is an endangered group, because they are trapped between the greed and egocentricism of the politicians. They are not only instruments for orchestrating crisis but they are also victims. This assertion is substantiated in the text:

The transaction went smoothly: arms for the boys. The boys had become the willing trigger for all political power diggers while the arms ensured the survival of all the decadent, ruling government of the region. For Mensa, this was fair enough deal, as long as he had his cut. The politicians ruined the country directly; they, the youths only ran the errands. (9)

Further in Erin land Tuma, during the communal meeting while addressing the ancient assembly, comments: “Here again our records are incomplete... men, women in their prime of life, bombed to pieces, hanged till death, or shot by the authorities of their country...” (180). The imminent endangerment of the Nigerian youth population seems to be one of the thematic hubs in Ce's oeuvres. This concern runs through his short fiction *Children of Koloko*, *Gamji College* and most of his poetry collections.

In *The Visitor*, Chin Ce possesses the ability to create a work of fiction that allows for a pleasant reading experience without realizing a central plot. He chooses to explore the narrative possibilities of bringing several characters through one single day in time. Although the incidence in the novel, no doubt should span more than one day but since the entire

narrative is rallied through Deego's subconscious, it could pass as an event of just a day. The novel possesses terrifying hallucinatory elements but the plot structure redeems it from mere fanciful recreation of absurdities, since the system of plot development creates the future through anticipation and the past through memory. This narrative technique works well because it mainly focuses on the 'Mensa-Erie-Deego world view', his inner workings, and his exploration and sensory experience of the world surrounding him. For example, Erie notices that Mensa, “had lifted his chin, shaking his head in the process. Something about the fellow was stirring a faint chord of familiarity, a *déjà vu* of sorts, in him” (13). Through the character of Erie, who is struggling to know himself beyond his new self –the present, his residual self image, Ce compels the reader to consider possibilities beyond the material world. This narrative technique moves the action forward and simultaneously delves into the life and inner workings of Erie, bringing his soul to the reader and opening up the possibilities and realities of the spiritual world.

Uzi's transcendentalism, which he employs to make Erie know himself beyond the spiritual realm becomes very vital to the understanding of the book: “You do not conquer death; you live life” (190). Ce uses themes that connect reality with the spiritual realm in an attempt to further complicate the modernist temperament of his novel. For a novel to be modern and worth reading, it must explore that which is above the material world. Ce's main concern in the novel seems to be the inner workings of Erie, his thought processes,

and how he engages the world surrounding him. He can only engage the world surrounding him through memory, hence Jean-Paul Sartre, states that, “the past takes on a sort of super reality; its contours are hard and clear, unchangeable” (89).

This struggle to comprehend the distinction between the internal and external surroundings does not affect Erie only, but also his spiritual-genetic double Deego, because what he experiences in the subconscious seems to be real, since the dream girl in his subconscious and Sarah seem to be the same. This struggle of the perception of reality permeates the novel. In the words of Virginia Woolf: “whether we call it life or spirit, truth or reality, this, the essential thing, has moved off, or on, and refuses to be contained any longer in such ill-fitting vestments as we provide” (3). In essence, the gulf between the internal (soul) and the external (material world) is not navigable; hence, Erie, through the help of Uzi, removes the material binoculars which are responsible for his vertigo in the ancestral world. Immediately he breaks down the material barriers that bar him from knowing himself, he delves into the depths of his soul to find the spiritual, the truth. The barrier finally crumbles only through memory.

A more intriguing aspect of *The Visitor* is the fascinating concept of human interaction. Characters in the novel are being continually merged together through their own imaginations and memories. The two interesting examples are the relationship between Mensa, Erie and Deego on the one hand and that between Zeta, Sena and Sarah on the other. It would seem that Erie sees Mensa physically, but he never visually sees him; yet Mensa is the most significant part of

him. Neither does Deego encounter his other selves physically. Ce clearly merges these characters together and blurs the lines a little. The Zeta-Sena-Sarah character is also difficult to link yet we know we are dealing with the same entity. Says Virginia Woolf: “life is not a series of gig lamps symmetrically arranged; life is a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end” (4). And similarly, Hillis Miller avers: “no man or woman is limited to him or herself, but each is joined to the others, diffused like a mist among all the people and places he or she has encountered”(173). The characters in Chin Ce's novel are indeed connected on various levels and Ce shows the connection quite acutely through the eyes of Deego.

The Visitor is very similar to Joel Silver's movie *Matrix*. Its structure and thematic drive is not far from the film. In both the novel and the film, the heroes' body and mind are separated. The protagonist of the film does not only possess a double identity but also has two different names. He is known as Thomas Anderson in the software firm where he works as a programmer. However, when he orchestrates his illegal deals in the Internet and when in the ‘matrix’, he is addressed as Neo. The singular item which indisputably demonstrates the semblance of the texts is the use of the word déjà vu. It is used and applied in the same sense in both texts. Erie uses it as a sudden response to acknowledge his physical resemblance to Mensa. While Neo uses it to express his acknowledgement of two cats that are so similar. Just like Deego who can hardly draw the line between sleep and ‘awakeness,’ when he

comments that “the line between my sleep and waking states had been thin indeed” (196), so does Neo find it difficult to distinguish between reality and dream: “You ever have that feeling when you are quite not sure whether you are awake or still dreaming” (Silver *Matrix*).

Erie is assisted by Grandad and Uzi to know himself beyond what he knows of himself, since he is unable to recollect his past as result of the bullet he receives in his head before transcending into ancestral world. Neo, on the other hand, is assisted by Morpheus and the Oracle to see himself beyond his mortal limitations. However, both texts differ at the level of realism. Though both texts employ and imbue the features of science fiction, the novel seems to be more realistic in structure, especially as the protagonist oscillates between dream and '*awakeness*'. In this 'psychological geography' (the dream world) anything is possible and acceptable because the dream world defies most logical processes of nature such as linear time.

Chin Ce: Towards a Post-colonial Aesthetic

In *The Visitor*, Ce returns to a consistent repertoire of common post-colonial themes. He critiques the ubiquity of corruption and violence in contemporary Nigeria, creates a voice for the *lowdowns* and most powerless members of the African society, and explores the ongoing cultural confrontation between foreign and indigenous traditions in post-colonial Africa. Through this dimension, Ce expands the scope of post-colonial African literature by augmenting its political engagement of social realism with the kind of

aesthetic engagement found in many modernist texts. Although the ingenuity of Ce's narrative style is not in doubt, yet this is not new in African fiction. Ce particularly develops the rich imagination, complex mythical imagery, and episodic adventures that are also found in works like Amos Tutuola's *Palm-Wine Drinkard*, Gabriel Okara's *The Voice*, and D.O Fagunwa's Yoruba novels.

The effort to create literary forms modeled after the narrative strategies of the African oral traditions continues another important aspect of contemporary postcolonial African writing because it attempts to engage postcolonial aesthetic forms as well as postcolonial socio-political issues. By this sense of redirecting his experimental energy towards an exploration of African models rather than European ones, Ce has tactically prepared himself for a new stage of aesthetic development. His ability to combine the technique of realism, modernism, and African oral traditions aptly substantiates the above claim. This is the kind of postcolonial aesthetic Homi Bhabha describes as “Cultural Hybridity”, because it explores the liminal border between diverse cultural traditions:

The borderline work of culture demands an encounter with 'newness' that is not part of the continuum of past and present. It creates a sense of the new as an insurgent act of cultural translation. Such art does not merely recall the past as social cause or aesthetic precedent; it renews the past, refiguring it as a contingent 'in-between' space, that innovates and interrupts the performance of the present.
(7)

The Visitor is a manifestation of Ce's mastery of realism, modernism and African mythical traditions, thereby demonstrating that these diverse cultural traditions can coexist within new hybrid forms. Although similar to the experimentation found in Ben Okri's *Astonishing the Gods* and Biyi Bandele-Thomas' *The Sympathetic Undertaker and other Dreams* in the sense of spiritual, mythical vision, *The Visitor* displays more political engagement and more experimental energy/complexity. Ce's characters are wholly developed; the narrative structure is complex yet lucid, and its mythical vision develops a high intensity because it is counterbalanced with a realistic dimension. Because of these attributes, one can establish that the book is racy, chatty and engagingly mythical with numerous filmic and photographic delights, realized through suspense, numerous flash backs and foreshadowing. Through narratology Ce does not only attain structuralcum-thematic balance, he utopianizes and reasserts the modernist injunction that fiction must be concerned with the reality of life, its inherent truth and spirituality.

If fiction is geared only towards the exploration of the material, its functionality will be limited to the service of humanity, because there is a world beyond the material that begs to be explored. In *The Visitor*, Ce explores this other world, and brings to light fascinating possibilities that lie far beyond the realms of the material. And if modernism was a paradigm shift for the West, for Chin Ce it constitutes a paradigm extension. Ce does not simply imitate existing standards. Like any good artist, he recreates the old, stamping

it with his very own artistic *label*.

Works Cited

- Achebe, Chinua. *Morning Yet on Creation Day*. London: Heineman, 1975.
- Alteri, Charles. *Painterly Abstraction in Modernist American Poetry*. New York: Cambridge UP, 1989.
- Bhabha, Homi. *The Location of Culture*. New York: Routledge, 1994
- Bradbury, Malcolm and M'Farlane, James (ed) *Modernism*. London: Penguin, 1976.
- Ce, Chin. "The Art of Younger Poets". *New Voices: A Collection of recent Poetry from Nigeria*. Ed. GMT Emezue. IRCALC 2003 15 Mar. 2007 <<http://www.africaresearch.org/NvIntro.htm>>.
- — —. *The Visitor*. Lagos: Handel Books, 2005.
- Friedman, Allan. "The Novel". *The Twentieth Century Mind: History, Ideas and Literature in Britain*. Ed. Cox C. B. and A. E. Cox, London: Oxford, UP, 1972.
- Grants, Amanda "Memory, Transition and Dialogue: The Cyclic Order of Chin Ce's Oeuvres". *Journal of African Literature and Culture*. Ed. Smith Charles, 2006. 11 29.
- Hewit, Douglas. *English Fiction of the Early Modern Period 1890 1940*. New York: Longman, 1988.
- Ker, David. *The African Novel and the Modernist Tradition*. Ibadan: Mosuro Publishers, 2003.
- Lenser, Susan. *The Narrative Act: Point of View in Prose Fiction*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981.
- Muton, Alan. *Fredric James: Fables of Aggression*. Santa Barbara:

- Black Sparrow Press, 1984.
- Miller, J. Hillis. "Repetition as Raising the Dead". *Virginia Woolf*. Ed. Harold Bloom. New York: Chelsea, 1986.
- Nnolim, Charles. "Trends in the Nigerian Novel". *Literature and National Consciousness*. Ed. Ernest Emenyonu. Calabar: Heineman, 1989.
- Ojaide, Tanure. "New Trends in Modern African Poetry". *Research in African Literatures*. Ed. Abiola Irele, Vol. 26, No. 1, 1995. 4-19.
- Ortega, Y. Gasset, Jose. "The Dehumanization of Arts". *The Idea of the Modern*. Ed. Irving Howe. New York: Horizon Press, 1967.
- Reid, Panthea. "The Scene of Writing and the Shape of Language for Faulkner When Matisse and Picasso Yet Painted". *Faulkner and the Artist*. Jackson, Miss: U of Miss P. 1986.
- Sartre, Jean Paul. "On the Sound and the Fury: Time in the Work of Faulkner". *A Collection of Critical Essays*. Ed. Robert Penn Warren Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1966. (87-93).
- Silver, Joel. dir. *Matrix*. Perf. Keanu Reeves, Laurence Fishburne and Carrie-Anne Moss, 1999. Videocassette. Warner Bros. Home Video, 1999.
- Warren, Beck. "William Faulkner's Style". *Four Decades of Criticism*. Ed. Linda Wagner. Lansing: University of Michigan, 1973.
- Woolf, Virginia. "Modern Fiction". *The Common Reader*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1925. 207-218.

