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Cover Page Footnote

[1] Niyi Osundare, *Days* (Ibadan: HERB Publishers, 2007).

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Framing the Cosmopolitanism of Time

The centrality of movement to the ideals and practice of cosmopolitanism is obvious in critical scholarship in so many areas. However, the extent to which the discourse is extended to the notion of time may not have been as dispersed. Similarly, the hybridity that is forced upon the postcolonial world may have received much attention from scholars and critics, but such attention cannot be said to have engaged the idea of time with as much vigour. Perhaps this condition of sparse attention to both areas stems from the assumption that there is a contemporary global synchronization of temporality which overrides other paradigms, as they are construed to be subordinated to a perceived universal paradigm. This essay therefore reads Niyi Osundare's long poem *Days* as addressing the cultural tensions and diffusions that have resulted in the synchronization of the postcolonial temporal paradigms and those of western temporal model. It acknowledges the agency of modernity in the subordination of other temporal paradigms. For, prior to western modernity, the rendition of time as a quotidian exigency was invented and observed relative to given cultures and spaces. Invariably, the parallel paradigm of time utility finds its finest expression in the assertion that "the clocks of all men and women, of all civilizations, are not set at the same hour."¹ Modernity, that is, when construed in singularity, has thus meant the imposition of a kind of universal setting of contemporary civilizations at the same hour. The struggle to maintain this credo of universalism has meant, more often than not, the performance of hybridity in formerly colonized spaces.

For the postcolonial world in particular, the imposition of western time order centralizes the quantitative logic of the Gregorian Calendar. Invented by Christopher Clavius in the late 16th century,² the calendar relied on colonial might and its attendant teleology of the civilizing mission, to gain popularity and dispersal. Yet even in the western world, the invention of the calendar was originally received with skepticism and reluctance when it was first adopted by the Catholic Church. This eventuated in controversies which produced gradation and phases of adoption in the West and other parts of the world.³ The "ordering of difference"⁴ as typical of colonial practice, presented the Gregorian Calendar and by implication—the colonial calendar—as the temporal measure of universal civilization. It was indeed deployed against the indigenous forms of time reckoning and other similarly conceived notions of temporality. Invariably, western imposition became established and integrated into the psyche of the colonies, to the extent that there was no question about its retention after independence. This was precisely because the modernization project of colonialism was already benchmarked by and harmonized with the

time model dictated by the Gregorian Calendar.

Having abandoned African pre-colonial modes of temporal rendition to obsolescence and ruin, the tendency for many is to gloss over the resilience of such indigenous modes of temporality while celebrating the exotic in the name of the universal in the postcolonial era. Yet, if the modernity of the West—which was expressed through colonialism in Africa—prided itself on a kind of cosmopolitan credential,⁵ Africa's modernity, as will be illustrated by the Yoruba worldview in this essay, is no less cosmopolitan. Moreover, the question of western modernity was itself mediated and inspired by some kind of utopia which located movement at its core. In Couton and López's explication,⁶ although utopianism is today considered a potentially dangerous conceptual domain, such view:

overlooks the fact that, from its inception, movement has been central to the utopian tradition. The power of utopianism indeed resides in its ability to instantiate the tension between movement and place that has marked social transformations in the modern era. This tension continues in contemporary discussions of movement-based social processes, particularly international migration and related identity formations, such as open borders, transnationalism and cosmopolitanism. Understood as such, utopia remains an ongoing and powerful, albeit problematic instrument of social and political imagination.

Utopianism, moreover, is necessarily associated with pleasures which combine with imagined attraction of places to engender movement wherever it has been known to make an impact. Movement in this sense is construed as an all-round journey in which case departure and return are constitutive. In the colonial world, the dispersal of this paradigm was at once a justification for the workings of utopia. Additionally, the movement of the colonized across the British metropolis during and after colonialism also served to complement the utopian process.

What is more, by historicizing the Western temporal paradigm through a rendition of the Gregorian Calendar, it becomes even clearer that the exploitative notoriety of the modernity that framed colonialism goes back as far as the onset of the Middle Ages. According to Lynn White,

The same exploitative attitude appears slightly before A.D. 830 in western illustrated calendars. In older calendars the months were shown as passive personifications. The new Frankish calendars, which set the style for Middle Ages, are very different: they show men coercing the world around them—plowing (sic), harvesting, chopping trees, butchering pigs. Man and nature are two things, and man is master.⁷

The symbolism of discriminating between man and nature in order to exploit the latter created an absolutism of superiority. It would later inform the designation of the colonized others as exotic in order to justify the exploitation of both human and natural resources in spaces outside the western world. In Africa, the exploitation of the West started with the expression of interest in African natural resources in exchange for western goods. But what started on a rather equally "passive" note was soon to change into a re-definition of terms. Africans were sooner considered to be inferior and comparable at best to lesser human beings in order that the Western "man" could be considered "master." It is in this very sense that we come to terms with the role of the Western invented calendar in the prosecution of colonialism and imperialism both of which are best summed in exploitation.

But to assume that there was no equivalent modernity of temporality on the ground at the advent of colonialism in Africa is to deny the obvious. Chinua Achebe's cultural novels, for instance, give an indication of a clearly defined mode of temporal reckoning, in which case the market days, Orié, Nkwo,

Eke, and Afor serve both as market and week days. The foregrounding of the market days is instructive. The days are analogous to the commercial calendar of, say, the Ottoman Empire, which in spite of the patronage of the Gregorian Calendar in Turkey today, is still resiliently operational.⁸ In a similar vein, the Ogu/Gu people of Nigeria and Benin Republic stuck then and still stick to the rendition of temporality by reckoning time in terms of their market days among which are Hundo, Jegan, Petu and Soki. The Luo people of western Kenya still in their own way continue to hold tenaciously to their sense of time while allowing the western temporality to take its quotidian course. In this sense, cyclical phases and series of sequential events typify time as a relational concept.⁹

For the Yoruba in particular, four days originally used to make a week. As a common saying now goes, “*Bo ni se ri ola o ri be e, ni mu ki babalawo o difa ororun*” (An Ifa priest makes an every-fifth-day-divination because today does not necessarily prefigure tomorrow). The adage feeds into the ontological practice of Yoruba sense of time. The divination of life renewal every five days speaks to the understanding that a new week begins on every fifth day. It then presupposes that for the Yoruba, four days originally made a week. The invention of the Gregorian Calendar was not without its spiritual undercurrent. Similarly, the Yoruba cosmology is also steeped in the account of the sacred, as the four days did not just appear in primordial times from the blues. According to C. L. Adeoye,¹⁰ the making of the original Yoruba days involved utopianism and its attendant movement. As he explains, Orunmila had to travel to heaven upon the creation of the earth to ask Olodumare, or the Almighty, for days. But what Orunmila got was a temporal bulk called “Ose” (week) which he thereafter broke into four and shared with three other gods. The days in the said order were named after certain gods who in turn shared the days together with other smaller gods. Each day is therefore reckoned against the predominant god that possessed it:

1. Obatala—*Ojo Ose*.....Obatala Day
2. Orunmila—*Ojo Awo*.....Orunmila—Awo (Cult) Day
3. Ogun—*Ojo Ogun*.....Ogun—Ogun Day
4. Sango—*Ojo Jakuta*.....Sango—Sango Day¹¹

The four days, in the above order constitute what is known as *Ose Orun*, indicating that a week ends on the fourth day and a new one begins on every fifth day after the Sango Day.

There is a second category of weekly rendition among the Yoruba; this is the week that Ela brought with him to the world. This is why it is called *Ose Ela* (Ela Week), Ela being an equivalent of Jesus Christ in Yoruba cosmology. The week, which has seven days in it, according to Adeoye, is also called the Week of Modernity. The days are thus named:

1. *Ojo Aje*—Monday
2. *Ojo Isegun*—Tuesday
3. *Ojo’ru*—Wednesday
4. *Ojo’bo*—Thursday
5. *Ojo Eti*—Friday
6. *Ojo Abameta*—Saturday
7. *Ojo Aiku*—Sunday¹²

The reckoning of temporality in the Ela Week as against the Orun Week, Adeoye further explains, stemmed from the realization that its calculation coincided with the reckoning of time in the West. This shows how the seven-day Ela Week became more popular than the four-day Orun Week. One thing that is clear from the foregoing is that the intervention of Ela in bringing about a seven-day week may not be

unconnected with the consequences of Africa's contact with Europe. To that extent, this narrative of the fusion and reconciliation of Yoruba pre-colonial temporality with western temporality underscores what Drichel has described as the often overlooked complex relationship between the debates around hybridity and temporality.¹³ For, on the one hand, the Yoruba response to the western model of time and week enumeration, and the resolve to align an autochthonous temporal order with the exotic, illustrate the pragmatic negotiation of Otherness. However, on the other, it foregrounds the critical point about ontological priority—to echo Roux—at both levels.¹⁴ In this sense, the necessity of adopting and integrating western time model informed the cultural recognition accorded the western time paradigm among the Yoruba.

But it is perhaps in the understanding that all identities are dialogic that we are able to come to full terms with the Yoruba response to the western temporal order. In other words, there is a sense in which we may begin to find a parallel between, for instance, the Irish cultural responses to the English cultural practices at multiple levels together with their suggestive hybridity.¹⁵ In a nutshell, the transformation from a four-day week to a seven-day week by the Yoruba is a conscious attempt to key into a new modernity. The transformational antecedent is best captured in the institution of “a social order which has turned from the worship of ancestors and past authorities to the pursuit of a projected future—of goods, pleasures, freedoms, forms of control over nature, or infinities of information.”¹⁶ As seen in the narrative of the original four days, specific gods and apotheosized figures are designated as possessing the days. However, in the case of the new seven-day week, none is so named and there is invariably an aura of secularity in the designation of each of the days. However, it is my contention in this essay that in spite of the acclaimed secularity, which presupposes an aspiration towards comparison with western days, the rendition of the Yoruba/African days in practical terms can at best be described as hybrid. This explains why there may still be certain occasional, if faint echoes of the indigenous week in the Week of Modernity. In privileging the Week of Modernity, how then are we to make sense of the hybrid week that constitutes Osundare's preoccupation in *Days*?

Rendering Days in Hybridity

Privileging the Ela Week, Osundare in *Days* reflects the intimations of the dialogic, the hybrid and the complexity that arises from ontological reconciliation of an African temporal order with a western mode. The cosmopolitan import of all these also finds expression in the long poem. Osundare as one of the leading Anglophone African poets of the second generation is reputable for the sense of conceptual focus that distinguishes each of his collections. To be more explicit, Osundare's creative oeuvre is distinguished in the way it centralizes a particular concern. He explores it using all the available tropes and links the concern to other contending social imaginaries without breaking away from the core of his argument. In observation of this consistency, Dare affirms,¹⁷ for instance, that one of the thematic reflections that have found privileged articulation in Osundare's poetry is the notion of temporality and its ramification for history and the calendar. The collection, *Days*, is therefore the poet's effort to provide an update on his reflection on a postcolonial temporality in which the Yoruba ontology finds a central expression. What is more, the reflection of the text is significant in the sense that the Yoruba ontology serves as an entry point for a postcolonial reflection on time in a way that is both national and transnational at the same time, which validates the cosmopolitan concern of the text.

Debates around the continued relevance of postcolonial studies persist.¹⁸ While some argue that its relevance may have long been outlived, others contend that the “postcolonial remains.”¹⁹ Invariably it is with the staging of postcolonial hybridity as a cultural category that we come to terms with the veracity of such assumptions about the continued relevance of postcolonial theory. Postcolonial poetry, in

particular, has proven to be quite illustrative of this claim. This is in spite of the subordination of this generic category in the critical reception of world literature. Postcolonial poetry exemplifies the hybridity of postcolonial literature. Such understanding is illuminated by the notion of “belonging to multiple worlds that are transformed by their convergence [...through which] postcolonial poets indigenize the Western and anglicize the native to create exciting new possibilities for English-language poetry.”²⁰ This then appropriately captures the textual encounters in *Days*. Osundare privileges the convergence of multiple worlds in a manner that relies on the agency of his imagination to create realities at the interstice of the indigenous and the Western. Yet at other times, the liberty of creative imagination is stretched to an extent that leaves readers wondering how best to relate with the realities evoked on account of the transformative constituents that both excite and amaze readers.

In the first part of the 3-part poem, Osundare does a representation of the seven days of the week in a style that testifies to their contemporary understanding as a seamless blend of both African and western ontology. But this is not to say that the representation is not without instances of the tensions associated with intercultural encounters. For instance, the *Ela Week* in the Yoruba rendition tends to be presented as beginning on Monday, a temporal template adopted by Osundare in this collection. This is unlike the Western rendition that places Sunday before all other days. Yet, there is a sense in which this tension is resolved in the rendition of the day. Whether represented in African or Western mode, it retains the recognition of the first working day. Osundare’s evocation of the day takes into account all the significance it holds for Yoruba and Nigerians generally in the contemporary drift—from the mythical to the quotidian. Thus the rhythm of Monday is perhaps best expressed in the lines below:

A new day is quivering on its mark
 Time for the sun to un-silence its whistle
 Behold roads aloud with feet
 Costumed corporate clans

Hordes of the Sweat Brigade
 Machetes out of their scabbards
 Pens out of their pockets
 Tongues out of their mouths ²¹

Knowing that “Imagery is a universally central dimension in poetic meaning production” precisely because it “is manifestly a basic and omnipresent constituent of the mental life of human beings,”²² it is important to examine how this consciousness of the senses plays out in the lines above. The coalescence of two different worlds within the internal dynamics of the Nigerian modern life plays out in a way that validates Garuba’s notion of “coeval normativity.”²³ That is, a socio-cultural template that allows for the expression of parallel ways of life in society, where one is not projected to eclipse the other. From this local angle, it is evident that modernization may have brought about the popularity of white collar jobs in the urban areas and other city centres. Nevertheless, rustic manual farming activities as an extant subsistent and economic category in the rural spaces also run their parallel course. To that extent, a rendition of commercial activities in the everyday life of the nation can only be holistically articulated in the aggregate of the diverse activities that reference the confluence of the traditional and the modern. This is why the opening poem paints a picture of the national rendition of Monday as a day defined by business activities. Its ramifications are to be found in the elite circle that constitutes the “Costumed corporate world clans.” They are also visible in activities of the “Sweat Brigade” that includes farmers with their “machetes,” students with “pens out of their pockets” as well as a million other categories that the meta-

phor conjures. In this case, the differential concepts of modernity and tradition are depicted as regulated by the same temporal paradigm. This allows for a simultaneous performance of parallel activities within the context of labour. Inevitably, “machetes” and “pens” are concurrently engaged.

Obviously, the metaphor of activities on Monday is suggestive of the dynamics of a recent and postcolonial ontology which is loud in its articulation of hybridity. There is nevertheless a simultaneous evocation of the mythical angle to the day, especially as conceived in the paradigm of *Ela Week*, the Yoruba Week of Modernity. According to Tiryakian’s,²⁴ human beings most often do not realize the unity of human and natural time until there is a temporal rupture. However, Osundare’s awareness of the unity is evident in the way he accounts for the rendition of Monday, in which case, the constellation of activities that results in Durkheim’s notion of “collective effervescence” is inclusively rendered.²⁵ This rendition is both mythical and quotidian:

Monday morning
The week’s bell has gone
Birds shake in the trees
Fishes stride across the waters

The above lines exude the nuances of hyperbole and are aligned with the magical trope in African literary oeuvre. They provide a prefatory insight into the subsequent mythical rendition for which Monday is known and the popular understanding that this registers in the Nigerian popular culture. As the persona puts it, “Monday” is “Spell-bag of myth and mantra.” Because conceived in the popular imagination as a no-nonsense commerce day, the persona feeds into the popular notion of Monday as *Ojo Aje* (Aje Day). Aje is a god/goddess of wealth that in the reckoning of the Yoruba is next to Esu in mischief.²⁶ Yet, for all her mischief, Aje is desired and wooed in supplication by all. This is the import of the italicized content that unfurls in a dramatic insertion. It explains why the “akara” seller cannot brook purchase on credit at her shop because it is Monday. It is for the same reason that Alogbo vehemently rejects the sight of a man in rags on Monday morning.²⁷ All these point to the seriousness with which business activities are conducted all over the world on Monday as the first day of the week days. Yet, we cannot but admit that by ascribing Monday to the goddess Aje in the Yoruba rendition, there is a conscious effort to reinforce the economic significance of the day. This is informed by a hybrid modernity that demands seriousness from dwellers in both urban and rural areas. By the same token, it also allows for a non-conflicted interaction of modernity and tradition. Rather than interrogating the business-like understanding of the day in Western tradition, the mythical ascription of the day to Aje only serves to foreground the uniqueness of the day in the economic conceptualization of days. The sacred thus complements the secular in an otherwise impossible alliance mediated by the hybridity of different worlds.

From this point on, Monday as Aje Day is rendered in ambiguity that is commensurate with concepts such as vicissitudes, instability, uncertainty, migrancy. The day thus takes on a life of its own and an incarnation that chimes with its mythical understanding of the goddess of mischief. This is why, for instance, Aje is both, “he” and “she,” and “master” and “mistress” in the poem. Monday thus becomes the “Rare guest,” the “Vice-royal of vicissitudes,” “the Wandering One” that “lives at the crossroads,” the ultimate “Crossroads Prince,” and “luminous shadow in the threshold/Of the migrant moon.” However, unlike in the pre-colonial past when such understanding was couched in linearity, it has in the present assumed a sort of complexity. The original meaning is allowed flexibility to fuse with the parallel temporal and economic notion of Monday as a Western heritage. Inevitably, this becomes one sure way in which the ambivalence of postcolonial poetry is validated,²⁸ seeing that while embracing the structure of Monday as an “imported” time gauge, it has to fuse into local folk understanding to make sense. Thus,

Aje as an unpredictable yet sought after god/goddess in the Yoruba cosmology becomes a symbol of post-colonial cash economy. Being conscious of the history of cash economy as beginning with cowries in the wake of batter trade, the persona invokes the memory of its evolution in order to align the historical with the contemporaneous. Therefore:

Monday's road is long
 Its feet come with many toes
 Day of the cowrie
 Day of the coin

Day of the crispy notes quarrelling for space
 In the pocket of the strong-armed...²⁹

The evolution also takes into account the tension and crisis that attend contemporary economic system in which case “Golden silences hover/Above the blast of crashing prices,” an observation which speaks both in reflection and anticipation of major national and global economic crisis, including the 2008 economic meltdown during which neo-liberal globalization was adjudged inadequate. To that extent, the representation of Monday by the persona illustrates what Georganta perceives as engaging the necessary “clashes, and syntheses between civilizations.”³⁰ In all this, our understanding of the day is illuminated by the trope of personification which leaves our imagination to the various epochs invoked. Invariably, Monday assumes a life of its own, appropriating the mischief of Aje, while mutating on its own “road” with “feet” that “come with many toes” in subservience to the exigencies of time and history. This is one way in which we cannot but agree with Plotnik that “the personification of unexpected things can energize a story.”³¹

The evocation and rendition of the other days of the week in the collection get across as a combination of personal, mythic and popular imagination. In this case, the persona validates, subverts and invents meanings and significance relative to the days. He shows at the same time the dialogic entanglement between cultures and textures of temporal delineations in global ramifications. More critically, his rendition of the days of the week chimes with the notion of *chronopolitanism*. As a concept, *chronopolitanism* does not espouse a globalization of time. It instead sensitizes us to the socio-political and moral burden of such espousal, especially where some spaces of the world tend to impose temporal tyranny on others. *Chronopolitanism*, as conceptualized by Cwerner is:

the deepening of the cosmopolitan community in time. The chronopolitan ideal is then analysed in terms of the opening of new futures, pasts, and presents, which have fundamental implications for political thought and practice. This redimensionalization of the cosmopolitan ideal also reveals the limits of political, economic, and cultural practices more commonly associated with the process of globalization.³²

In this way, Osundare relates the African past to the present and the African temporality to western temporality. In the process, he also reflects on the contradictions in which the global present is enmeshed and the extent to which the contradictions are framed by historical, cultural and ideological impositions to which indigenous and exotic cultures alike are compelled to respond.

Tuesday, for instance, assumes meanings that take cognisance of the local reckoning of the day as Ela Day of Victory (*Isegun*). But in the process of affirming this recognition, there is an arbitrary blend of the traditional meaning of the day with imagery and metaphors of the Triumphal Entry:

Palm fronds in the sky
 Palm fronds in the sky
 This day is Victory's day
 Palm fronds in the sky³³

Modern African writers are products of Euromodernism and there is an instantiation of the literary hybridization tendency which Euromodernism promotes in the lines above, as in other stances in the poem. For, certainly, palm fronds are not emblematic of victory in the Yoruba culture, because as far as popular imagination is concerned, palm fronds symbolize mourning and death. In a sense, Osundare has succeeded in evoking this contradictory trope that comes across as hybridization of African and Western Christian myths. Yet this leaves us with posers regarding the extent to which his postcolonial mytho-poesis can be taken seriously. For, neither does Tuesday designate victory in western rendition. Nevertheless, far from being considered an isolated and tyrannical creative imposition, the poet must be seen as having acted within the liberty that the notion of Euromodernism provides. It is characteristic of postcolonial writers and more particularly poets to reinvent and subvert existing cultural and mythical sites of modernism. Indeed such postcolonial poetic liberty provides us with:

instances in which post-colonial poets name, rename, and even de-name the signature sites of modernism and relocate the imagination to a “a free-floating noumen,” a space that is neither global nor local but somewhere in between. According to the author, Euromodernism crucially enabled a range for non-Western poets after World War II to explore their hybrid cultures and post colonial experience. Among the hybridizing literary strategies of post-colonial poetry that can be traced in part to Euromodernist bricolage are translocalism, mythical syncretism, heteroglossia, and apocalypticism.³⁴

While the above appropriately describes the tendencies of Euromodernism, it is necessary to intimate that just as postcolonial poets subvert icons of modernist sites, they also invent meanings which are in conflict with traditional sites. For, just as Tuesday does not symbolize victory in Western temporal rendition, so also does the notion of victory not resonate with palm fronds symbolism in the Yoruba understanding.

The rendition of other days is replete with further instances of the mytho-poetic tendencies which do not subscribe to the local and original meanings which the days bear. The rendition of Wednesday as “Ojo Ru” (Confusion Day) is subverted. The subversion is evident in the emphasis on the other suggestive meanings of “*ru*” which are “sprout” and “ashes.” It thus allows a free rein of metaphors of sprouting and plenitude on the one hand, and of ashes as the successor to a fiery fire, on the other. In the original understanding of this day among the Yoruba, it is best described as the day of negativity. It is considered to bring with it difficulties, to the extent that people in the olden days were discouraged from embarking on projects on the day.³⁵ Osundare’s Euromodernist tendencies are also evident in his proclamation of every Wednesday as ashen on account of the annual Christian observance of Ash Wednesday: “This Day of Ashes/Grey and grim/The soft, silent song/Which epilogues the drama of the blaze.” The multiple meanings that “sprout” out of “*ru*” underscore the value of ambiguity. They subvert the tyranny of singularity of meaning which used to be ascribed to the word in order to privilege other possibilities to the day in the postcolonial present. This ensures that the absolutism of negativism gives way to multiple symbolisms in which negativism and positivism are implicated. What is more, it is also an indication that the absolute negativism of Wednesday as “Ojo Ru” no longer holds water in a postcolonial present that relies less on oracular projections for human activities. The other possibilities foregrounded in the day

illustrate how ambiguity “can be seen as an affect of desire,”³⁶ which in this case meets the expectation of both author and readers.

Thursday which in the Yoruba rendition is “Ojo’bo” is regarded as the day Ela made an outstanding success of his attempt to tie the cord connecting the different spaces of the earth.³⁷ It is little surprise then that in Osundare’s interpretation, the day becomes one of loss and recovery/redemption, as the “day which has soared to the skies/ has dropped to the waiting earth.” Friday as another day of negativity in the Yoruba rendition however takes on meanings that are more sympathetic to cotemporary understanding. The persona foregrounds its being the last working day, serving as an anticipation of the consumerism and vanities of the weekend. The elegant fusion of pun, alliteration, apostrophe and rhetorical questions plays a significant role in foregrounding the position of the persona about this day:

Fryday fry-day, how many headless fishes
dance in the dread ful oil of your evening, the
firewood of hours glowing red and rude beneath
your pot? How many blended backs sizzle black
and blighted in the vineyard of your vice? How
whispers die between the lip and the lyric?³⁸

But Osundare returns to the original meaning of the day in the Yoruba rendition when he subscribes to the difficulty associated with it through a projective mediation of the imagery of a fallen elephant across the road: “No easy day, this day, no easy day: elephant across the road.”³⁹ The initial rendition of Friday as prefatory to the vanities of weekend partying can be read in a sense as the culmination of “colonial annexation, settlement and control.”⁴⁰ It has brought about new meanings about how we make sense of each of the days. Nevertheless, Osundare’s return to the original meaning of Friday as “Ojo Eti” (Day of Eti), especially when “*eti*” is read as difficulty, instantiates the various possibilities to the conceptualization of postcolonial hybridity. For, not only do postcolonial writers engage in collusion with Western modernity to play up its assumptions. By virtue of their writing, they also stage resistance to such assumptions in order to retain extant indigenous significance borne in cultural symbols.⁴¹

In Saturday’s rendition, we come to terms with the reinvention of meanings and significance. It is represented as a day originally feared and possibly abhorred for its confusion. For this reason, Yoruba people in the olden days would not embark on any venture, as an instance of negativity in the process would be trebled.⁴² This is why it is designated “Ojo Abameta” (a day of multiple propositions) which has now become the day of great ceremonies and partying:

Dancing day
Summit of songs
Roofs rock
Treetops sway like masquerades
In a state of trance
Laughters soar in the high heavens

Rainbow wardrobes usurp the streets
Flighty trends drape wild dissipations
In frantic fabrics (40-41)⁴³

Conceded to by other days in contemporary rendition as the day for informal venture and light moods,

the day is seen as coming with a baggage of possibilities, bringing into the present an echo of its meaning in the past centuries. This is why “A trinity of propositions complicates/ The narrative of a crowded day.” Yet, all this makes “This short day very long.” With Sunday, there is a conscious reconciliation of its significance as the day of resurrection in Christian/Western rendition and the Yoruba cosmology, being the day Ela hands over the glory of his success to humanity.⁴⁴ This is the import of the day as “Ojo Aiku” (A Day of No-Death). Osundare feeds into this postcolonial hybridization sentiment when he writes:

Death dies today
Ash-coloured claws, relent your grip

Death died today
Wilted leaves, let go of the branch

Death died today
Lurking ailments, depart the shadows

Death died today
Heads, stands tall on your shoulders

Death died today
Oh sun, reclaim the patrimony of the sky.⁴⁵

It is important to remark that much as this is a veritable instantiation of postcolonial hybridity, the tone and manner of composition are largely indebted to the incantatory poetic tradition of the Yoruba. It is often deployed in spiritual contexts to seek victory over adversities and adversaries. Conceiving Sunday in this sense dramatizes how the native is “anglicized” while the Western is “indigenized” in postcolonial poetry.⁴⁶ Through this poetic device which clearly mediates between oral practices and “imported literary forms,”⁴⁷ we witness the transformative possibilities associated with the discourse of modernity.⁴⁸ In this particular instance, the transformation has privileged transposition of tropes which begins with the expression and ascription of incantatory values to Sunday. It creates a situation that both amazes and defamiliarizes precisely because of the way it transforms the otherwise normative notion of Sunday in the Western milieu. The grand irony that emerges in the representation of an incantatory Sunday consists in knowing that incantation in Christian worship especially in colonial context is labelled pagan practice. But here now is a Sunday that affirms Christian victory over death while privileging tropes of incantation. This goes to show how postcolonial writers often find “a potent linguistic correlative for their biculturalism” through hybridization of contradictory cultural categories.⁴⁹

Personifying Temporality in the Critique of Global Relations

In “Some Days,” a section in 23 parts, days assume a life of their own, with dispositions and tendencies that speak to those of humans, nations, and issues bordering on cosmopolitan pains and pleasures on a global level. In this instance, personification is predominantly deployed and sustained to underscore the symbolism of days. This approach to the unfurling of the poems in this section should be understandable as personification, fusing with allegory, is reputable for generating secondary meanings.⁵⁰ Osundare’s deployment of the trope is unlike certain instances for which critics express reservations about some writers’ use of the device because of what they consider the writers’ lack of skill among others.⁵¹

Neither can his privileging of personification in this section of the poem be described as an overkill which could make it “less a trope than simply as instance of tropological abuse.”⁵² Knowing that narratives are sustained when “personifications retain a certain degree of complexity and elusiveness,”⁵³ the boredom that should have arisen from the preponderance of personification in this poem is precluded. Instead, we encounter new possibilities with intimations of enthralling ambiguities to the deployment of the trope in this work. This leaves readers with many faces of allegorical personifications in the poem.

Central to all this is temporality. In I, time is construed around the mobility of age and ageing and the transition of female beauty into wrinkle. This way, “The rosy cheek with Eden of dimples/Has become a swathe of sour pimples.” In VI, there is a juxtaposition of the weak and the strong, the powerful and powerless among nations, pointing to the contradictions and injustices that punctuate the making of each categorization. This is precisely because “Some days know what it means/ To have/ And not to hold”; and “Masked Days/ Sip the juice of passing moments!” Invariably the intimations in the poems speak to the dynamics of global relations which pit weaker nations against stronger ones. It further shows how the concept of development does not necessarily translate into transcendence of poverty on account of the opening up of markets and compliance with the other tenets of neo-liberalism in the weaker nations. For that matter, there is a strong sense in which the pretensions of “Masked Days” constitute a commentary on the paradox of development in weaker countries. In such places, the supposed interventions of poverty alleviation from advanced nations are mostly counter-productive in the way they exacerbate descent into poverty and dispossession.⁵⁴ It is in this way that the deeper import of the imagery of sipping “juice of passing moments” begins to crystallize. The interaction of days is thus invested with human agency in order to foreground the seriousness of the issues in the poem. For that matter, the exploitative imagery of the sipping of the “juice of passing moments” is indexical of the initiatives of economic advancement which the powerful nations of the world offer to the weaker nations. Often, such initiatives end up benefitting the powerful while rendering the weak even weaker. The memory of the structural adjustment programmes implemented in a number of Third World countries in the last quarter of the 20th century is a proof of this assertion.

In exploring the sustained metaphor of global relations through the cosmopolitan interaction of days, it is not difficult to perceive that the greatest challenge to the realization of the cosmopolitan ideals is the intransigence of racism. In the process, there is the tendency of certain races and hues of pigmentation to regard themselves as superior to others. In the process, a riveting analogy of interaction in condescension plays out at a metaphoric level. It leaves us with an intriguing imagery of varied and panoramic encounters between humans and days. The mediation of personification in the encounters is of particular significance here:

Some days
Lock you up

In the prison
Of your skin

Lynch you
For Your looks

Stab your voice
For its strange accent
Dim-sighted

They cannot see

Beyond the surface
Mud-eared

They are for ever deaf to
The summons of the deep

Some days live for ever
In the carapace of colour⁵⁵

That racism stands in the way of achieving true cosmopolitanism is clear in the above poem, as the attitude of some days negates the notion of feeling “at home everywhere in the world.” The imagery of “stabbing” another person’s “voice” for betraying a “strange accent” speaks to this negation. It also touches on the fate of black people, especially in their various travels and movements across the Western space where they suffer all manner of rejection on account of their colour.

All this results in the preservation of privileges on the basis of colour. It prevents the practice of social equity among races, even in an age that continually espouses movement across spaces through the invention of attractively progressive concepts of mobility and intercultural exchanges. These concepts continue to mutate from one designation to another. Each instance of failure in practice results in the invention of another; yet the question of race remains constant. The situation is the same whether in the reflection on and review of multiculturalism, or cosmopolitanism, whose conceptualization and practices continue to gain ascension as successor to globalization.⁵⁶ When “some days” thus “live for ever/ In the carapace of colour,” it becomes hard to accept the notion that cosmopolitanism is a panacea for racism. The investment of days with agency in human inter-racial relations is further underscored by Osundare’s ingenuity at transcending the conceptual boundary in the utilization of image metaphors. According to Gibbs and Bogdonovich,⁵⁷ image metaphors insist on the mapping of concrete images from a source domain to a target domain. In this way, the abstraction of days does not impede our understanding of the seriousness of the obstacles to human progress that is constituted by the institution of racism. Yet the world is increasingly propelled by the dynamics of movement through the various institutions and structures that are put in place. Thus, the relevance of any nation is often projected by the level of movement of people on a global scale flowing into and out of it. Therefore, the intensity of efforts at ensuring this level of mobility is framed and justified by the prospects and ability of cosmopolitan practice to mediate a transformative positive attitude against the parochialism of racism.⁵⁸

Feeding subsequently into the strand of hospitality within the broad-based discourse of cosmopolitanism, Osundare takes us through an anticipation of the ideals in which the attitudes of some other days are beautiful altogether:

Some days know
The secret leaning of the heart

Their auricles are acres of clay
Watered by the kindest dew

Their music the beat of every pulse
Smiles grow in the garden of their lips

There is grace in their greeting
Bliss in their blessing

A merciful moon sits in their night
In the centre of their night

Their hours ripen
In the shadows of a dangerous sun

When they pass
Houses throw open their doors

Flowers drape them
In their rarest fragrance

For them tenderness is no treason
Compassion is no constraint

Some days
Are not allergic to softness

Some days
Are not afraid of being human⁵⁹

Rather than extolling racial essentialism which stands in the way of cosmopolitan hospitality, what is instead advocated is a de-emphasis of identity. The essence is the humanity of individuals, be they strangers or citizens of a particular space. With this kind of tendency, cosmopolitanism stands a chance of making sense to all. As Baker contends,⁶⁰ this attitude has the capacity of engendering an ethics of hospitality. It transcends the morality of identity and difference on the one hand, and the flawed liberal consciousness that frames the notion of ethical relations to strangers, on the other. Therefore, the intimations of the days in XXIII are aligned with an evolutionary process of cosmopolitanism. They anticipate a time when altruistic compassion and understanding will inform the broad-mindedness of people and nations in the position to render assistance to the needy precisely because they “know the secret leaning of the heart.” In the same vein, for such individuals and nations, tenderness to others will not be refracted by prejudices of colour or identity, as they will not see “tenderness” as “treason.” The bottom-line here is that when humanity is fully evolved into progressive practices, “some days” will “not be afraid of being human,” as identity dissolves into the more compelling espousal to be humane. When efficiently deployed, personifications have a way of negating the dualism of the body and the mind as both the concrete and the abstract melt into each other.⁶¹ This much is what we witness in this section of the poem when days are not only invested with human agency, but are also invested with interactional qualities through which they become sites of various metaphoric performances. This is why “A merciful moon sits in their night.” It also explains why Hamilton further contends that “it is fruitful to consider personification as both a product of thought and a product of speech.”⁶²

Espousing Cosmopolitan Ethics in Temporality

In the third and last section of the poem, Osundare advances the exploration of migrant metaphors, consciously privileging ambiguity in the deployment of diction. Inevitably, as is characteristic of ambiguity as a trope that leaves us with gaps,⁶³ Osundare provides us with typically enthralling lines that allow our critical minds to wander in various directions. In this section, readers grapple with the fusion of the indigenous and the Western in the articulation of temporal relativism. In consequence, even where a poem is apparently imbued with intimations of folkloric time, evoking memories of antiquity, it leaves room for the possibility of making statements on the present. For instance, in “Day of the Crossroads,” temporality sets out as intractable precisely because it cannot be said to be amenable to what is known as “the ‘clock time’ worldview.” Where there seems to be an indication of temporal certitude with respect to minutes and hours, the understanding is best limned as holding a magically mythic significance. On account of this,

What time of day it is
We do not know:

It has the misty intimations of dawn
Though it is already past the twilight zone

Its rainbow is one long quarrel
Between the sun and the lingering rain

At times when you behold its sun
You think it is the moon eating its dinner

The minutes are longer
Than the hours⁶⁴

But once we move beyond the lines that tell of a narrative in which “minutes are longer/ Than the hours” the preceding confusion yields to the possibility of tracking the itinerary of days as metaphors of postcolonial cosmopolitanism. Again, with this kind of suggestion, days also exhibit a form of human incarnation, where the challenges of constant movement provoke thoughts that are both desirable and forbidding. For, in “Going West, facing East/ This day hits the market in shifting colours.” But thereafter, for the cosmopolite whose location is best placed in Africa, the leading compass “fingers” for the journey “betray a riot of routes” (104). In the shocking discovery that ensues, we are faced with the ideological battle that obtains from the dichotomization of the world. This in spite of the unifying ideals of globalization, which remain so only at the level of imagination, and for that matter, tantalizing. Therefore, the excitement that “this day” exudes on setting out is soon to give way to despair and confusion precisely because:

North rides South
West wrestles East

The wanderer faces the puzzle
Wondering where to go⁶⁵

The overall imagery of oppression that stares us in the face is that of two spatial categories that ordinarily should be equal partners. They are however constructed in inequity because one sees the other as a horse it must ride. The import of the imagery is reinforced in the way it evokes the past and the uses into which horses were put by humans, a graphic symbolism of domination of human beings over beast. At another level, this could be read as the culmination of ideological battles between the North and the South. These ideological battles which are religiously and economically ontological, have continued to determine the fate of many cosmopolites around the world. Their ordeals, most often, are ascribed to their religious persuasions together with the capitalist tendencies and structures which exclude them as strangers from the envisaged gains of the cosmopolitan experience. Put differently, their original location as citizens of the global South or North have a way of affecting their reception in other climes outside their domains. In a similar vein, in spite of the espousals of multiculturalism, the religious affiliation of cosmopolites as, say, Christian or Moslem, still goes a long way in determining their reception by their hosts. That this continues to be so should not be surprising. As Witte explains,⁶⁶ individuals have been known to engage in a transposition of notions of the theocratic and the political. In the same way, international relations continue to rely on historical experiences of religious affiliations in the determination of economic and social relations.⁶⁷

In “April 23, 1564,” the date believed to be Shakespeare’s birthday, Osundare reflects on the antecedent of racism as the bane of cosmopolitanism. As an inveterate antecedent, the fate of Othello is once again brought to the fore, not so much for its historicity as much as for the implications it still has for the black race in contemporary times. Many a critic has warned against comparing the condition of Othello with that of the colonial and postcolonial world,⁶⁸ and one must add, especially Africa. There is nonetheless a sense in which the representation of Othello in Shakespeare’s play of the same title prefigures “the ordering of difference” which came to define western colonialism and by implication cosmopolitan practice in Africa and the rest of the world where colour dissimilarity was an issue. What is more, the postcolonial condition together with its cosmopolitan credentials, is still analogous to Othello’s condition. This must then have informed the persona’s observation that:

Othello, Moor or less,
Still more noble than nifty...

Those airy nothings still seed our spheres
Endowing every pulse with

*A local habitation
And a name*⁶⁹

It is the “ordering of difference” that still accounts for the dichotomization of the world in a way that mocks the designation of the globe as a global village. The economic ramifications have left a section of the earth, especially the global South, in a perpetual search for survival in other climes in the part arbitrarily mapped as the global North. To that extent, the conceptualization of cosmopolitanism as voluntary movement becomes particularly flawed and tricky for citizens of the global South. The dichotomization, when explored further, reveals the ugly racial angle to it. In this case, poverty or wealth is not only a function of location in the global equation and geography, but also a function of skin pigmentation. In “Rich Day, Poor Day,” Osundare addresses this condition as both geographically and racially construed:

Rich day

Poor day
 Where are your empires
 Where are your conquests
 How many skulls
 Pave the ground
 On which
 Your castle stands
 Poor day
 Rich day
 Show me your pogroms
 Show me your branded hours
 Ocean floors white
 With black bones
 Scars so long
 They stretch from
 South
 To North ⁷⁰

The ambiguity of the “stretch from/ the South to the North” allows us the liberty to argue that the “stretch” provides the ground for discussing the peculiar nature of the cosmopolitanism of citizens of the South as that which is primarily motivated by poverty. The argument is validated by the knowledge that earlier in this section of the poem, we have read that in some places of the earth that must be appropriately located in the South “mornings break no fast/ [and] evening go to bed/ with straws/ between their teeth; yet, in a land beyond the seas/dogs feast from golden plates/ the cat’s dinner/consumes a handsome fortune” (122). The imagination and imagery in the lines prove Ramazani’s assertion that postcolonial poetry is hybrid not only in language but also in form;⁷¹ what with the amazing twist to the active agency of “mornings” in breaking “fast.” The idea radicalizes the normative cognition and collocation of morning and breakfast in English expression.

What then are the possible ways in which the challenges to the realization of the cosmopolitan espousals can be tackled? While there is no one answer with mathematical precision to this poser, Osundare nevertheless deftly engages this question to demonstrate the place of nature in redirecting humanity to the ideal with respect to true cosmopolitan practice. This he does through the evocation of a collage of natural activities which ordinarily should result in clashes and commotion especially in view of the suggestive mobility of the interactive activities. But instead, these activities result in blissful scenery. The predominant deployment of imagery is significant in this evocation that identifies love as the elixir for cosmopolitanism, as we read “Love Days”:

Light the fire
 Stoke the flame
 This day is the day
 That love has chosen

The pigeon eyes the dove beneath the eaves
 The buck tilts its ears towards the doe
 Trees lock leaves with trees
 In their green dance above the roofs

Hours embrace their minutes
 Weeks wax strong on the passion
 Of endless seasons. Drops of desire
 Bloom into stirring seas

This is the day

Of purple sighs and care-less laughters
 Of long-missed songs and throbbing winds
 There is a sparkle in the eye of the sun
 The moon's cheek is a paradise of dimples⁷²

The wisdom in the lines above speaks to the position that “representation of past, present and future humanity [...are] unchangingly diverse.”⁷³ Therefore, contemporary humanity stands to be better served when practices of cosmopolitanism break away with the attitudes of spatial and racial essentialism that stand in the way of peaceful coexistence between strangers and indigenes/citizens alike. In this way, while staying true to the difference in space and colour, humanity stands to gain a lot from the quotidian practices of natural time. This learning is demonstrated in each day running its course without encroaching upon the functions of the preceding or succeeding day. Taking us back specifically to the seven days of the week, Osundare in the last poem “I Envy the Days,” calls our attention to the cosmopolitan model of days of the week. The model deplores predatory cosmopolitan practices of some human beings and nations that result, for instance, in interference and colonization on account of superior arsenal prowess. Quoting the entire piece will be as well:

I envy the days
 For the civility of their order

I have never heard Monday
 Speak ill of Sunday

Have never heard Thursday grudge
 Wednesday for its urn of ashes

Sunday never blames Saturday
 For the wildness of its ways

Nor does Friday ever ridicule Tuesday
 For being in the middle of nowhere

Each day has its own range
 Knows its limits

No day has ever tried
 To extend its hours
 None has ever planted its flag

In its neighbour's garden

No day ever hassles the world
With the myth of a jealous god ⁷⁴

We are ultimately returned to the discourse on the relevance of postcolonial studies, which in spite of oppositional criticism, “continues to offer the promise of combining analysis, diagnosis, disclosures and critique in a manner that is implicitly, and often explicitly, both political and ethical.”⁷⁵ Osundare's *Days* lives up to this billing in the very sense in which it utilizes the metaphor of temporality to explore issues relating to questions of global relations and ethics as they intersect with cosmopolitanism. What is more, as observed by Anyokwu,⁷⁶ Osundare's poetry relies on the sound imagery and symbolism of the Yoruba language to convey meaning in his poetry.” Admittedly, this has accounted for the uniqueness of hybridization that finds expression in *Days*.

Conclusion

In the end, what we have encountered in this collection is the interactive wisdom of days and the significance it holds for the conception and practice of cosmopolitanism. From a postcolonial perspective, there is need to state on a last note that the understanding that frames Osundare's exploration of temporality in this collection exhibits the cultural hybridity that is at the core of postcolonial discourse. To that extent, the understanding of the weeks plays out as a brilliant combination of indigenously pre-colonial ontology and an exotically, if integrated western ontological articulation. Lastly, it is pertinent to observe that Osundare has been silent in the poem on the original four-day-week which was operational among the Yoruba prior to colonialism. This can be explained both in terms of the preference for the seven-day-week in modern times. It could also be understood in terms of the reckoning of the “*longue duree*” which “provides an indispensable framework for the preservation of long-term historical memories.”⁷⁷ Nonetheless, all this remains particularly relative because of the varying degrees of relevance a preferred time template holds for different social groups and individuals. The subsisting metaphor about days and the coherence in the expression of natural time is instructive for the practice of cosmopolitanism. The obvious differences attributed to the constellation of days does not precipitate chaos or discrimination as suggested/affirmed in the long poem. There is thus a sense in which the discourse of contemporary movement across space can yield itself to the ethics of equality and tolerance. This way, the ethos of hospitality in cosmopolitanism will not be a forced caveat. Otherwise, hospitality remains a contrived content whose implementation in cosmopolitan practice is short-lived, especially when it translates into citizens of the global North trying to accommodate the vulnerable citizens of the global South. Yet, citizens of the global North do not find themselves in such helpless situations upon journeying southward. Ultimately, in the natural rendition of days, global social justice stands to be improved when cosmopolitanism facilitates in reality an equal feeling of being at home everywhere in the world for all.

Notes

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3. Jennifer Powell McNutt, “Hesitant Steps: Acceptance of the Gregorian Calendar in Eigh-

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 11. Ibid.
 12. Adeoye, 90.
 13. Simone Drichel, “The Time of Hybridity,” *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 34, no. 6 (2008): 587-615.
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 19. Robert Young, “Postcolonial Remains,” *New Literary History* 43, no. 1 (2012): 19.
 20. Jahan Ramazani, *The Hybrid Muse: Postcolonial Poetry in English* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001), 2.
 21. *Days*, 6-7.
 22. Line Brandt, and Per Aage Brandt, “Cognitive Poetics and Imagery,” *European Journal of English Studies* 9, no. 2 (2005): 117.
 23. Garuba, Harry. Keynote address at the Chinua Achebe Residential Research Group Meeting—University of Pretoria, South Africa—November 20 to 21, 2013.
 24. Edward Tiryakian, “Time to Change the Calendar? Sacred and Secular Problems of Crossing the Millennium,” *International Review of Sociology—Revue Internationale de Sociologie* 11, no 3 (2001): 419.
 25. Ibid.
 26. Esu is the trickster god among the Yoruba
 27. Fela Anikulapo, the Nigerian Afro-beat legend in one of his tracks reinforces this notion of Monday as a no-nonsense day with the lyrics, “Ojo Monday Eko o le gba gbakugba” (On Monday Lagos does not tolerate non-sense). It implies that it considered the most important week day and during which everybody is expected to comport themselves accordingly.
 28. Raazani, 5.
 29. *Days*, 10-11.

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34. Jahan Ramazani, "Modernist Bricolage, Postcolonial Hybridity," *Modernism/Modernity* 13, no.3 (2006): 445-463.
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36. David Brooks, "Ambiguity, the Literary, and Close Reading," *Comparative Literature and Culture* 12, no.4 (2010): 1.
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38. *Days*, 34.
39. *Days*, 36.
40. Patke, *Modern Literature and Postcolonial Studies*, 12.
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43. *Days*, 40-41.
44. Adeoye, *Igbagbo ati Esin Yoruba*, 43.
45. *Days*, 53.
46. Ramazani, *The Hybrid Muse*, 2.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid.
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 62. Hamilton, "Mapping the Mind and the Body," 409.
 63. Karolien Vermeulen, "Mind the Gap: Ambiguity in the Story of Cain and Abel," *JBL* 133, no. 1 (2014): 29.
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