

**Restless Pasts: Ghostly Truths in Oladipo Agboluaje's
*The Hounding of David Oluwale***

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Introduction

For a long time, racism, fuelled by residues of negative stereotypes of Black people that go back to 17th to 19th century trans-Atlantic slave trade and British colonialism of huge sections of Africa and Asia, remained largely underground but erupted occasionally into spasms of open violence. The riots in Bradford, Oldham and Burnley, Notting Hill in 1958 and the Brixton riots of 1981 were triggered by deep-rooted racial tensions. David Oluwale's story and fate mirror the fate of many immigrants from across the globe frequently flashed across British print and electronic media since the 1940s. Agboluaje's *The Hounding of David Oluwale* is based on Kester Aspden's non-fiction novel (2008) of the same title. Like Aspden's work, which uses original archival material to raise searching questions about Britain's imperial history and current race relations, Agboluaje's dramatization for the stage is part of a continuing quest by writers of different generations and diaspora persuasions to raise and confront questions about racial relations in the UK "that are as relevant today as they were at the end of the sixties" (Aspden, 2000b). The result is a play that signposts the historical and cultural significance of the inquiry into Oluwale's death and which blames in very subtle fashion, the policy failings and official ambivalence that characterised UK policies on race relations and immigration for a long time.

This essay looks mainly at the stylistic and theatrical techniques Agboluaje employs in his adaptation of Aspden's *The Hounding of David Oluwale* for the stage. It focuses specifically on how the playwright's combination of theatre styles and interrogation of the materiality and ambiguity of words, *facts* and *historical experiences* produces a drama/text in which Oluwale is typified, and his death is historicised and trans-

formed from personal to transcultural, trans-national tragedy. Among the several interlinked sub-themes, the essay takes a close look at the (mis) deployment of evidences and facts by different parties, one bent on subverting justice and reinforcing cultural stereotypes and racial discrimination, the other determined to find the truth and justice for the victim(s).

The Materiality and Ambiguity of Words

The play opens with a frogman and policeman inspecting Oluwale's decomposing body, followed immediately by DCS Perkins and Chief Constable arguing the moral and legal necessity and undesirability respectively, of returning a false conclusion into the official inquiry into the victim's death. The first two scenes set the tone of legal witnessing, forensic inquiry, obfuscation of facts and records, and the need to distinguish *truths* from *facts*, a search that defines the structure and style of the play. In the play David Oluwale's ghost guides DCS John Perkins's forensic inquiry that overturns the conclusion of 'death by misadventure' returned by the internal police inquiry into David's death. Nothing is supposedly meant to happen with most of the physical action arising from the characters' responses to the playwright's (and DCS Perkins) dissection and explication of *truths* and *facts* hidden in ostensibly ordinary texts and words of an internal police inquiry and those of witnesses. The play tracks a series of events and in the process provides a clearer picture of the history and times of David Oluwale, contrary to the image created of David Oluwale or Olawale of the internal police inquiry and of Aspden's novel.

The inquiry ordered by the government met with internal police machinations to scupper it but for the determination of DCS Perkins to get to the truth. With the Chief Constable massaging the facts with a plea of *esprit de corps* or pride and loyalty to his officers, Perkins' inquiry discovered the truth by a careful and methodological examination of documents and records, by dissecting the words and the reactions of those under scrutiny as this dialogue reveals:

CHIEF CONSTABLE: ...Any likelihood of more mud being slung at us won't help our case. It might mean very little to you but this city takes pride in its own. I'm asking you to do your bit as a policeman in helping us get the best outcome for this investigation.

PERKINS: I assumed that the best outcome would be getting the truth

CHIEF CONSTABLE: I'm not saying otherwise. After all it was one of ours who blew the whistle in the first place.... I brought in Scotland Yard. I didn't have to but I did.... What you will find is two bad apples. I don't need to keep pressing the matter but I need you to understand that

there is something bigger at stake here. I wonder if London would have batted an eyelid if it didn't involve a coloured man....

PERKINS: I'm not naïve. A man died. That's all that counts.

CHIEF CONSTABLE: I admire your moral certainty. I however have to look at the bigger picture. Think of the consequences, if it's really worth it for a man like David Oluwale. For all our sakes (Agboluaje, 2009: 28-29).

In his testimony to DCS Perkins, Nurse Allen was to prove that people in authority – in the police force and health sector – were more interested in institutional reputation and overlooked abuses committed by their subordinates than the welfare of the weak. This was the norm, not the exception. His racist comments, stereotyping and description of Oluwale summarise the opinions of many police and healthcare officers and the public's indifference to his plight:

ALLEN: We keep patients to a regime for their own good. He behaved like he was still back in the jungle... He was a handful... Coloureds can't cope with our way of life. They don't respond to modern treatment because they can't... I've been following the case in the papers and it's a sad day when the police turn on their own. I know what it's like having to deal with dregs every day. ...Loads of decent people have been denied justice. And you're bringing down two of your own for an animal like him. (Agboluaje, 2009: 66-67)

In his judgment, the judge excuses the actions of Sergeant Ken Kitching and Inspector Geoffrey Ellerker. He avoids censuring and apportioning collective culpability and responsibility for the tragedy to the police as an institution. His action gave credence to the *othering* and stereotyping that made it possible for the two officers to hound David to death. In the end, Perkins' quest for justice falls short of expectation and produces a pyrrhic victory – soured by the judge's condemnation of David's behaviour as "beyond the pale of civilised society" (Agboluaje, 2009: 109). This judgement effectively excuses the actions of the police officers whilst blaming David for causing his own death because of his difference from the norm as defined by the judge and the police. Although more of a moral victory than legal justice, the judgement is sufficient for Oluwale who argues with Perkins: "Half bread is better than none.... They are going to prison. They will have time to repent of their sins" (Agboluaje, 2009: 110) while the latter struggles to understand the Judge's decision to direct the jury to return a verdict of 'not guilty' for the charge of manslaughter and for finding Ellerker and Kitching guilty of assault but not

of bodily harm: "There must be something I missed. Some piece of evidence I overlooked" (Agboluaje, 2009: 110).

In the end and in true classic fashion the judgement is ambiguous; the judge mitigates the weight of the law by apportioning blame to both parties. This judgement fails to highlight the role racism played in the tragedy without really addressing the root causes of past and present acts of racism and marginalization. What Agboluaje and Aspden before him do effectively is link the various assaults on David and his hounding by the two police officers, the Chief Constable's attempt to obscure the truth and the benign judgement into an unbroken sequence of historical race-related injustices. However, by unearthing and charting the murky depths of subtle and overt racism and public silence, Perkins and David's ghost highlight the ontological links between action/inaction and consequence and the *cause and effect* relationships that underpin racial tensions and the intolerance of *difference*.

When Facts Falter: Equivocality of Documents, Records and Human Memory

The Hounding of David Oluwale is an exercise in cultural geopolitics in which Agboluaje paints a broad picture of the factors behind the systematic – or even systemic- racism and history of discrimination that led to David's tragedy. His approach is, therefore, not simply to interpret and present his opinions from the vast array of textual and documentary material available to him, it was equally important that these materials were sensitised and objectified, viewed through multiple lenses and then filtered to separate fact from fiction. The forensic approach he adopted exposed the collusion of history and racism in cultural stereotyping and in all manner of discriminations against immigrants of African descent in Britain. In his introduction to the play, Agboluaje discusses the danger in hiding the truth in plain sight and whitewashing historical facts under the guise of official report and institutional propriety as Leeds City Police did before John Perkins' investigation. By premising the internal and public inquiries on the same facts, *players* and conditions, he not only creates a different parallax from which to observe the actions of those involved. More significantly, his introduction of David's ghost as a go-between across different time zones and periods is a critical factor in filtering dialogue and human gestures for their truths.

He contextualises each strand and source of information, then integrates them into a broad canvas in which each stroke plays an important role in de-entangling the huge amount of information he and Aspden before him, had to in their respective quests to unearth the truth about Da-

vid from a miasma of lies, fabrication, fiction, obfuscation, negative stereotyping and dodgy official record. In his words:

Discovering David was a tough task... There were interviews by Kester with people who knew him. They gave conflicting reports of his character and of what happened to him... Then there were records of the two-week trial that ended in the conviction of Inspector Geoff Ellerker and Sergeant Ken Kitching of Leeds City Police for assault on David Oluwale... the case is significant. It is the only case in the history of Great Britain that policemen have been tried for the death of a man of African descent. (2009: Introduction).

While this intense scrutiny of records and words used by people would seem like the refraction of first and second inquiries into different processes, the result is far more important; firstly for producing different outcomes for David, and secondly, for underscoring the limitations of the first and socio-political significance of the second inquiry.

The resulting stagecraft is firstly richer in content and texture than if the text was framed solely by one dramatic style. Secondly, it is the playwright's ability to draw on aspects of historical and documentary drama and from verbatim theatres in order to address his subject matter in a style that allows police reports, hospital and enquiry notes and newspaper articles about David to speak clearly and equivocally without succumbing to cultural, political and ideological posturing. This means that while questioning the authenticity and relative reliance of each source of information or character, Agboluaje plays simultaneously to the need for an inclusive dramaturgical approach that uses the vast range of materials, a facility that enables him to utilise aspects of the disavowed verbatim theatre as he clearly does when he uses David's words and WPC Meg Harris testimony to bear 'witness to the facts' (Ukaegbu, 2015) about how official failings paved the way for the racist brutality and of the police officers that hounded David to death.

MEG: I never saw a man shed so many tears. It were unbearable to see him treated that way. Normally he'd swear at them. He was always defiant which would rile them up some more. But that day he gave up. Like there were nothing left in him (Agboluaje, 2009: 95-96).

Aware of the materiality and ambiguity of factual and historical documents, Agboluaje steers away from *fixed* meanings and the oppositional binaries that the subject matter of the play throws up but subjects written and spoken *texts/words*, human actions and relationship to a *polysemous*

reading. The actions of Oluwale and the police officers are thus, not necessarily cast in binary relationship or misinterpreted as homonymous or accidentally similar to each other; each is different and predicated on a well-defined system of historical interactions. The schema enables Agboluaje to subject every action and utterance simultaneously to normative, cultural, historical and ideological readings from which human mistakes made by the various parties are distinguishable from actions founded on deliberate stereotyping and discrimination. Among them are the police officers, despite their initial mistakes, refusing to understand and call David by his real names, opting instead to denigrate his surname, culture and history. It is this ability to distinguish, as well as to link *cause and effect* to the materiality of text/word and actions and their interdependencies and subjectivities that enables Agboluaje's adaptation to reach out to the wider theatrical and geopolitical berths that facilitate David's agency to speak for himself and to respond to other people's critique of his actions and experiences.

Inclusive Theatrical Style

(i) The Many Faces of Truth

Arguably, the rich vein of information and records available to the playwright on David are not without their own drawbacks. Agboluaje understands and questions the supremacy and versatility of documents (textual and pictorial) as purveyors of sole truth in human intervention, in narrating another person's experience and in storytelling. He argues that verbatim theatre's mimetic action alone - as there would be in the 'silent' ghost of David or the character being voiced as a dis-embodied *other* - would not produce the vicarious experience he envisions for his readers and audiences or even be an effective theatrical frame for a piece of such cultural and historical magnitude. He is quite clear about this insufficiency, arguing that he "didn't want to go the way of verbatim theatre. Apart from not being a fan of the form, what is known of David is gleaned mainly from his records; court appearances, his stays in mental institutions and in hospital, his charge sheets and periods of incarceration" (ibid). His attitude questions the sufficiency and effectiveness of text, sound, and other people's words, to capture the range of cultural signs and idioms that shape the human interactions between the two main cultural and ideological blocs in the play.

In some respect, the content and context of the play lend themselves logically to polemics and to historical and documentary performance styles. Having rejected verbatim for its stated shortcoming, Agboluaje

deploys an integrative dramaturgy and theatricality that values all forms of presentation and representation. With each strand or storyline and theatre style being part of the bigger picture, people are able to draw their own conclusions by getting to meet the real David, distinct from the one painted by police reports and public documents. However, Agboluaje is not content to wheel David onto the stage as a ghostly presence as in good historical pieces. Stylistically, he deploys a mixed-mode theatrical schema consisting of historical, documentary, verbatim, storytelling, elements of flashbacks in order to give the protagonist the space to reflect on his own experiences as well as to interrogate the actions of other characters. The result, for both David and the other characters, is a far more complex picture and a more compelling evidence for the reader/audience that David's death was not from *understandable* misadventure as the judge insinuated; he was a victim of police assault. By combining various theatrical forms Agboluaje's adaptation takes Aspden's novel another step further and provides a visual complement in which the narration carefully presented in the novel is reworked as factual forensic evidence for a witnessing drama of human choices and consequences. Thus, the stage version is not only enriched by its privileging of material evidence, it also uses an arsenal of visual imagery, historical details and a polyphony of voices to de-stabilise the authority that Ellerker and Kitching relied on in their actions and defence.

(ii) Historical and Documentary Drama: A Fact and a Moment in Time

Agboluaje draws on all the main features of Historical drama described by Bair (2014) - complex plot, relatable protagonist, focus on narrative, evocative *mise-en-scene*, focus on events and dates, serious representation of life, authentic and believable detail. In the process, he re-creates David's journey from a self-assured hopeful immigrant to the dignified victim of police racism and brutality. Part of the play's overture to history is to traverse different time periods from the discovery of David Oluwale's decomposing body in the River Aire in May 1969 in Act One, Scene 1 to Scene 3 in the cargo hold of the Temple Bar in August 1949 when David and his two friends, Ade and Chike, stowed away on the ship to Britain. The resulting time disruption enables Agboluaje to signpost significant dates and incidents in David's 20-year sojourn and rejection in the UK. That the playwright uses flashbacks to trace and document different years and specific events in order to build up the cultural landscape and history that underline Oluwale's experience, is not the play's only claim to history, Agboluaje's historicization of the victim's experience raises far bigger multi-layered questions about Britain and her former colonies and

the place of immigrants and Black people in the UK.

Drawing on his well-established creativity and imagination to follow any strand of story or character, Agboluaje highlights the need for historical accuracy. His situating of Oluwale as the central and most important source and purveyor of the truth and witness to the facts of his lived experiences gives the character the personal and collective *loculi* and agency essential for typifying, objectifying and historicising his experiences. To address this feature of the character and his role in the play, Agboluaje tracks David's journey and experiences as well as his and other immigrant characters' lived histories as a continuous chain of suffering broken periodically by far worse. David is thus presented as a historical and cultural *type*, his isolation from friends to his several mental break-downs, hospitalisations, homelessness, and eventual death are presented as a key-hole view of what happens when the forces of racism, stereotyping, bigotry and discrimination collude with official apathy and societal silence.

Agboluaje, in writing the play, is faced by the need to collate and interpret the vast amount of information on David and his death in a way that reveals without necessarily revising the character's personality and behaviour as models of norm for any society, African or European. This is a mechanism used in the past by first generation African postcolonial writers to explain Africa to foreigners (see Okagbue, 2007; Ukaegbu, 2013). The playwright merges the feature of historical and documentary dramas in order to create a play that can be viewed as an ideological riposte to both inquiries' versions of history and interpretations of documents and human actions, but which far more significantly doubles as a historical document and a commentary on history. Here I draw on Derek Paget's description of 'Documentary drama', pioneered in the 1920s in Erwin Piscator's non-naturalistic epic theatre style as a play "with a close relationship to their factual base... where the factual basis" of the subject matter and dramatic actions "gives the action its credibility" and in which "documents themselves are projected into text and performance... [a] theatre with "a declared purpose and an evident factual base" designed "to present oppositional critiques of dominant ideologies" (Paget, 2002: 214). Agboluaje achieves the "four major functions [of documentary theatre] – to reassess national/local histories; to celebrate communities/marginalized groups and their histories; to investigate important events and issues past and present; and to be openly didactic in its use of information" (Paget, 2002: 214). Far more than that, his recourse to public information on David Oluwale signposts and reinforces the outcry for justice as in other incidents such as the London Metropolitan Police's failings in Stephen Lawrence's murder (1993) and Jean Charles de Menezes

death in a police shooting (2007). Oluwale's case predates the other two incidents as time-markers in the history and analysis of race relations in Britain. In true documentary drama style, Agboluaje deploys the voices of all the characters to objective commentary, using the "quotations from source documents" to reinforce the "representation (rather than impersonation) of historical figures" (Paget, 2002: 214).

(iii) "Whodunit?": A Combination of Forensic, Role-Play and Witnessing Drama

In the play, Agboluaje deploys a well-established witnessing theatre format (Ukaegbu, 2015), re-contextualises and historicises the sad obfuscation of truth surrounding the death of David Oluwale and the white-washed internal enquiry as a specific moment in a historical pattern of discrimination, *us-them* cultural discourse and sectional nationalisms that divide rather than forge a truly multicultural Britain. In order to achieve a greater level of interrogation that alters as well as provides a multiple perspective from which audiences can encounter, re-imagine and analyse the roles of the various players in Oluwale's hounding and later death, Agboluaje counters the limitations of the solo narration and reportorial style of Kester Aspden's novel. He does this through a dramaturgical strategy that draws on the benefits of different performance styles that includes 'whodunit', role play, reminiscence, play-back, to elements of the verbatim form he avowedly resisted and rejected and detective murder mystery as the overarching frame.

As in any good forensic inquiry, the ghost of Oluwale role-plays himself as well as interacting with the other characters. This literarily transposes him into a canvas for the audience to observe, feel and experience by vicarious association, the physical, emotional and psychological violence he suffered. Thus, whilst effectively distinguishing the officially reported persona of David from his lived experience, the playwright uses DCS Perkins' investigations to question the personal motives behind the actions of the guilty police officers. A lot of the victim's lived experiences which Aspden's novel leaves to individual conjectures and imagination is exposed and although painful, is interrogated as an uncomfortable but historically accurate aspect of a specific moment and incident in the long and tortured history of racial discrimination in the UK. Together with the testimonies of witnesses delivered under legal caution in the court of public opinion and history, David's presence and contribution to the drama foreground Agboluaje's three primary concerns and purposes in adapting the story. First is the desire to situate the incident culturally and historically, as a cautionary tale in UK's contemporary lived history. Se-

cond is his concern with history repeating itself, a warning against such incidents occurring again (which has since happened with Stephen Lawrence (1993) and Jean Charles de Menezes. (2007) The third and by no means the least, is the playwright's desire as declared in his introduction to the drama script, to exhume and give David the befitting burial and legal closure he deserves. The combination of 'whodunit', role play, play-back, witnessing and elements of verbatim achieves four distinct but related objectives. The first is the creation of a dramatic frame from which Agboluaje is not only able to shine a critical spotlight on the roles played by discrimination, public apathy and police brutality in the death of Oluwale, he is able to give voice and critical mileage to a wide range of information, people and materials that were silent and marginalised in the internal inquiry. Secondly, his approach effectively changes the narrative frame from one that privileges binaries and hierarchies to one that emphasises the multidimensionality of *fact and truth*. The result is an emphasis on the multiplicity of perspectives regarding why it was possible for the police officers' abuse of Oluwale to go unchecked. Agboluaje does this by exposing and tackling the subtle links between the various historical forces that shape human, race and social relations in the play. The revelation of links between human motives and actions does not only give undoubted texture to the failings that led to Oluwale's death, it also highlights the fact that the choices made by the guilty police officers were not isolated acts. They were part of a pattern of complicity driven by the combination of racist intolerance, class and cultural discriminations. Thirdly, the multi-layered, polyphonic narration and the combination of theatre styles, directly and indirectly, provide a helpful frame for exploring diachronic changes in public race discourse as we see in the language and actions of the various parties involved (or silent) in Oluwale's tragedy. The fourth objective that Agboluaje's dramatization achieves, and this is without trying very hard, is to steer his analysis of relations between Oluwale and the police officers through a post-colonial lens. This particular facility distinguishes personal responsibility and culpability from official apathy and collective amnesia and contests the reasons Sergeant Ken Kitching, Sergeant Harwood, and Inspector Geoffrey Ellerker give for their actions. All three police officers are significant players in a historical pattern of abuse and racism. Their actions are more than a matter of their own personal failings, a fact the internal inquiry glossed over, and which institutional collusion tried to obfuscate. Agboluaje exposes the officers as driven by racism and discrimination rather than present their actions as an unfortunate aberration in the quest to maintain public order. By setting them apart and as nothing like new recruit, PC Jones and WPC Meg Harris, both of who identified and reported the racist overtones in the ac-

tions of the guilty police officers' treatment of Oluwale, Agboluaje side-steps the need to tar the police force as institutionally racist for one that is guilty of failing to monitor the actions of its representatives.

With its elements of murder mystery, the play reinforces Agboluaje's emphasis on an inclusive multilateral and polyphonic reading of the evidences as prelude to unearthing the truth and negating charges of police and official cover-up. While DCS Perkins' role in the second enquiry responds to the need for alternative voices and approach, Perkins' methodological forensic approach relies on the hitherto silenced voice of the ghost of the victim to provide telling clues to the reasons behind the deliberate obstruction of truth. Kester Aspden's novel of the same title links Perkins' integrity and determination with the outcome of the public inquiry, but this reading is essentially partial and subject to individual perspectives. This is because other than not revealing much of the victim beyond the information provided, nobody challenged such information. In fact, those who knew him gave very contrasting and often contradictory testimonies of Oluwale while those with knowledge and accessory to the truth and could have made a difference, remained silent. Without denying the importance and diverse nature of documentary evidences available to the audiences, Agboluaje goes further and draws on the power of dialogue and the collaboration between Perkins and the ghost of Oluwale.

Agboluaje contests various official claims and reveals hitherto unknown information about the conducts of the police officers, of PC Jones, Kitchings and Ellerker. His dialogue draws on properties of verbatim, witnessing and *play-back* of past statements from DCS Perkins and the answers from various respondents. Features of the three theatre forms can be seen in the collaboration between Perkins and Oluwale's ghost on the one hand and that between the former and Chief Constable, Superintendent and Psychiatrist, Sergeant Harewood, PC Jones, WPC Meg Harris, Nurse Allen etc. Through the power and incisive quality of the dialogues alone, the consequences of individual failings in action and motive, are not only revealed, their roles in the tragedy of Oluwale are condemned and exposed as the excuses they are.

(iv) Centring Oluwale: the Creation, the Ghost and the Person

Dramaturgically speaking, Agboluaje places Oluwale in a centrifugal relationship to the historical, cultural forces and human agents implicated in his hounding and death. This centrifugal framing situates, historicises and distinguishes the lived experiences of the real Oluwale from the reported fictionalised persona of the "unwanted" David of the errant offic-

ers' imagination and the simulated character painted of him in police files and report. The playwright's dramaturgy deconstructs the second-hand accounts of other people that Aspden's work leverages in his characterisation of Oluwale and reveals in the process, a complex character whose very presence and behaviour challenged racist stereotypes of the passive, withdrawn immigrant. Although the two forms of the character share some common traits and work well theatrically as alter ego to each other, Agboluaje unearths the real David Oluwale, who despite his blemishes was mentally unhinged and required treatment and rehabilitation rather than the hounding and marginalisation he received from the police and other institutions that should have supported him. In questioning the official version of events, Agboluaje exposes the actions of those in authority that deny David human dignity, self-hood and racial identity at every step. He places the accounts of government agents against David's own words and reveals the official lapses and discrimination that underpinned David's lived experiences in Leeds and Millgarth:

FROGMAN: You know him. Coloured dossier used to hang around city centre. Regular customer when I were at Millgarth.

POLICEMAN: By God. It is. Poor old Uggy.

FROGMAN: I always called him George.

POLICEMAN: What was his real name?

FROGMAN: David. David Allywally, Allywalla... (Agboluaje, 2009: 23)

[...]

DAVID: I shared a pauper's grave, my misspelt name on the tombstone.... (Agboluaje, 2009: 102)

[...]

KITCHING: You think I pushed him in. I touched that animal only if I 'ad to.... You could smell 'im a mile away.... You think I wanted to spend me shift running after 'im? I 'ad better things to do. I saved a man. Pulled him out of that same river at risk to me own life. I got a medal for it. That's the kind of officer I am. (Agboluaje, 2009: 105)

The theatrical effect Agboluaje achieves in his characterisation and distinction of the real David from the ugly misnomer invented by Ellerker and Kitching is imaginative and different from everything the police reports, internal inquiry and Aspden made of Oluwale for many reasons. First of all, while Oluwale is presented as a flat troubled character in the account of police officers determined to "erase" and consign him to the back-waters of history, Agboluaje highlights his humanity and personality in interaction with the custodians of law in a historical time marked by racial and cultural tensions. Secondly, although Aspden's bold attempt to

re-situate Oluwale from the *margins* to the *centre* is ideological and part of his critique of race relations in Britain from colonial to post-colonial periods up to the 1980s and 1990s, Agboluaje historicises David's story and links his tragic end with the wider race relations discourse whose roots are still lodged in resistant colonial images of other races, especially of peoples, societies and civilisations outside of Europe. Thirdly, Agboluaje's characterisation draws on David's personal and cultural histories and in the process fully rehabilitates him as a human being. He combines information from police reports and the internal inquiry, David's words and those of other characters into a *fabula* – or a chronological order of events - in which the inter-dependency of *cause and effect* are made obvious. In the process flashbacks are used to connect incidents and fill gaps in narration; the details help to build up a composite collage of the character's journey from Nigeria to Britain.

However, it is the effective conception, centring and simultaneous deployment of Oluwale's ghost as a guide to DCS Perkins and in his own right of being that in my mind, Agboluaje justifies the integration of different dramatic forms in the making of the style and structure of the play. He employs Oluwale's ghost in two important ways. Firstly, he uses the ghost, in the words of Ruitenber (2009), "to unsettle us" (297), a facility that is put to good effect to challenge the police Chief Constable's determination to close the case and to de-stabilise the internal police report's carefully and deliberately woven falsifications about Oluwale. The ghost's presence unsettled and probed the conscience of people like PC Jones and Meg Harris whose testimonies and words, rather than silence, helped to expose the racist undertones in the actions of the errant police officers. Secondly, he uses the ghost's supposed ability to transcend the limitations of temporal and supernatural terrains to draw critical spotlight to what has been described by Ruitenber as "those parts of our histories that we—or some of us—would rather not acknowledge and that, when we do, threaten to disrupt the comfort of our everyday assumptions" (2009: 297). As a narrative and expository facility, Agboluaje's ghost is a critical factor in revealing the extent to which cultural and historical systems shape Oluwale's personality and collude in the actions and policies responsible for his death and for Britain's uncomfortable colonial legacy. The ghost's presence invites probing questions; it provides other characters with the opportunity to review and to come to terms with their past actions and how such actions shape their present and futures.

An understanding of the impact of the period, viewed specifically from the perspectives of victims is an important step in finding lasting solution to racial tensions. In fact, as Nordini (2016) has argued in her

study, "Interpreting Traumatic Memory through Ghosts in Film and Literature", "the ghost demands acknowledgement. It makes itself known visibly or audibly; it is unavoidably *seen* or *heard* by someone. An unwillingness to interact with the ghost is not an effective denial of its existence: "[...] a ghost is not just a ghost, but rather a metaphor or a surrogate for the past." (9-10) Although deploying ghosts to unfinished dastardly businesses and to help bring about judicious and acceptable resolutions has been charted by dramatists throughout theatre history (see Soyinka's *A Dance of the Forest* and Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* and *Hamlet*, etc) the cultural and historical ramifications of the subject matter make this dramatic facility a *sine qua non* in Agboluaje's dramaturgy. As such, Oluwale's ghost does not only guide DCS Perkins through his – ghost's - lived experience, it provides important clues and explanations that texts and words conceal when deployed to devious ends as Ellerker's and Kitching's do. More so, such a role is important if he – the ghost of Oluwale- is to ultimately accept his fate and play his part in achieving what Nordini describes as resolving and transforming a troubled past into the present.

Altogether, Oluwale's ghost achieves what the actions of the living cannot do – that of satisfying *almost* every party in a case or unfinished business, the latter being suitably descriptive of the falsifications of truth in the internal inquiry, the search for justice, the polarisations and sectional nationalisms that foster discrimination and tragic marginalisation such as the victim experienced. According to Nordini, 'ghosts return to see their murder avenged, or to perturb their enemies, or to put an end to their "unfinished business". There is frequently some inability to accept or process what happened in life. So even when that life comes to an end, it remains unresolved – thus converting the troubled past into the experienced present, in the form of the ghost" (10). While Oluwale satisfies Nordini's prescription for ghosts as dramatic characters, his ability to traverse chronological time, to flit between the past, present and future is an important factor in Agboluaje's and in fact, in any good writer's attempt to link different periods, incidents and forces into inseparable parts of a cultural and historical condition.

The deployment and effectiveness of Oluwale's ghost in tracking and interrogating different aspects and periods of UK's race relations, different from the character's real persona is not simply because it "represents multiple points in linear time while existing in a single temporal moment" (Nordini, 2016: 12). In many respects, Kenway (2008) sums up the overall dramatic function of Oluwale and the wider historical and sociocultural significance of Agboluaje's interrogation of race relations in his stage adaptation of Aspden's novel in the statement that a ghost "leaves traces of the past by conjuring those who are already dead. It invokes the

future by conjuring the presence of those who are not yet born. The ghost confuses linear time. In other words, past, present and future no longer exist as discrete and consecutive points in time" (4). Thus, through the ghost, Agboluaje also de-constructs the image of Oluwale narrated in police and hospital reports before reconfiguring the character and his lived experiences in their own authentic cultural and historical constructs. The David that emerges from the playwright's centring is a more complete and complex character whose unshaken belief in his own identity and in an inclusive humanity frustrates and enrages the officers who were zealously determined to exclude and marginalise him from social and cultural discourse in the country he called home for twenty years. The astute combination of self-narration and telling of his own tale, confession and reflection frees David as an *other* constructed by the police. He is finally able to voice his name like many similar characters – such as Caliban in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and Sarah in Brian Friel's *Translations* (1981) – who finding themselves trapped in other people's constructed narratives, images and histories declared their names – and identities- as acts of freedom.

David's struggles on various fronts had come to define his view of life, now tinged with resignation and regret as we see and hear when he takes on the role of de-facto narrator and confessor. By re-visiting and reflecting on specific periods of his life such as from 1950, 1953 and 1968, Agboluaje reconstructs David's *lived* and historical experiences up to the moment of his death, revealing the character's journey from naïve hopeful to battle-hardened campaigner for the right of being he is forced to declare in order to be heard:

(1950) DAVID: I stopped travelling around and settled down with Janet. I worked as a hod carrier.... When I could afford it we went to the movies on Saturdays... (43)

(1953) My mother was right to worry.... I could never stay in one place. The grass was always greener elsewhere. And the grass was greenest in UK. That was what we were taught in school. I was nineteen years old when I boarded the ship to seek my destiny... (49)

(1968) My name is David. David *Oluwale* (73)

The distinction that David makes of his name as a ghost is therefore doubly significant; firstly, he accepts his death but not the story surrounding the incident. Secondly, he revises and re-writes the story of his

tragedy in his own terms thus, negating the erasure of his identity and history that the internal inquiry produced. So unlike the partial, disparate image or flat character that one theatre style such as verbatim or documentary may produce, Agboluaje's centring and embodying of a powerless ghost into a significant player in the drama produces a compelling document and historiographical piece in which information and *facts* are not only scrutinized, stereotypes are questioned and exposed as pathetic excuses for racism.

Conclusion

Stylistically, Agboluaje's adaptation is more of a commentary than a simple transposition or change of medium from *factional* novel to stage play in a style that Brecht would describe as dramatic theatre. The nod to commentary allows him to make political and ideological capital out of the work. His rejection of analogy style adaptation is reasonable and logical, as that would further objectify and distance the story from its social and cultural moorings (see Cartmell and Whelehan, 1999; and Hutcheon, 2012 on types of adaptations). Keeping the narrative and story as in the novel reinforces historical accuracy and relevance while the dramaturgy consisting of historical, documentary, witnessing, verbatim, role-play, play-back and other performance frames allows for a broad interrogation of subject matter from various perspectives. Agboluaje handles his inclusive dramaturgy consisting of different performance strategies effectively. His astute integration of a seeming polarised, dialogic interaction between DCS John Perkins and Oluwale's ghost, on one hand, and between the pair and the police officers and other migrants – Kayode, Chike, Ade – on the other, contextualises Perkins' inquiry and search as the main business of the play. His approach produces a play that is forensic in style, context, and structure. The play is more than a simple search for answers established in Aspden's novel. It is also an examination of Britain's race, social, political and cultural constructs as they relate to immigrants and multiculturalism. A story told from the perspective of victims whose stories would always be open to conjecture and misinterpretation unless they voice their own stories as Oluwale's ghost does. However, it is his choice of the commentary adaptation style and his preference for a "witnessing theatre" (see Ukaegbu, 2015) which tells and shows alongside the interpretational and expositional facilities of documentary theatre, play-back and verbatim theatres that Agboluaje achieves dramaturgical excellence and the evocative power that Aspden's novel struggled to achieve. His search for answers produces a play that, although forensic in its aims and strategy, delves deeper than the broad brush of racism in order to

unveil and interrogate racism, not as a cultural prescription and construct as institutional racism suggests, but as an individual choice aided by societal and official apathy and indifference.

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