

Stimulating the Law through Ubuntu and Nagomi in Three Japanese Short Stories

Gabriel Kosiso Okonkwo

Rhodes University, Grahamstown, South Africa

Critical engagement with and intersections of Japanese and African literatures are burgeoning. In pre-colonial African society, a lawful action was that action that took into consideration the common good expressed in the spirit of Ubuntu. Interestingly, Japanese literature and African literature share this universal character in common. Ubuntu intersects with the Japanese philosophy of Nagomi which emphasises harmony and balance thereby creating a nexus of transcultural hybridity. This paper examines Ubuntu and Nagomi as transcultural motifs in stories by Akutagawa Ryunosuke, Nagai Kafu, and Uno Koji in Akutagawa and Others: Three Japanese Short Stories to highlight ideological and law-oriented similarities. Carl Jung's Persona-Archetype is privileged in this study because it accounts for the recurring images of Ubuntu and Nagomi in the public life of the characters. These cultural images help them to mitigate defiant conducts which violate the fundamental human rights and life purpose of other characters. In Nagai Kafu's "Behind the Prison", the motif of physical and psychological imprisonment is eye-catching as the narrator writes His Excellency expressing his frustration at the awful state of things in his Japanese society. Uno Koji's "Closet LLB" interrogates the imperatives of choice and identity while Akutagawa Ryunosuke's "General Kim" is a story based on the history of Japan and its neighbour, Korea. In the stories, the protagonists and other characters act heroically in ways that evince the tenets of Ubuntu and Nagomi. Their heroic actions allay the fears of their vulnerable compatriots and protect their fundamental human rights.

Keywords

Ubuntu; Nagomi; Akutagawa Ryunosuke; Nagai Kafu; Uno Koji; human rights

Introduction

As a social and cultural instrument, the law derives its legitimacy from societal values, history, and mores. Most of the cherished values that are embedded in the law are ideological. The people who practise them have strong attachment to their cultural significance. Hence, they are willing to obey any law that advances the cause of such values. Ubuntu and Nagomi are cultural values that share a common interface with literature, an intricateness that is domiciled in the humanities. The humanities as a term refers to the knowledge fields that foreground human culture and nature through the examination of values and agency. The earliest interaction between what Ubuntu and Nagomi represent and literature can be found in African and Japanese orature. Tales by moonlight, masquerade, New Yam, Aomori Nebuta, Kanda Matsuri, Chichibu Yomatsuri, and Sendai Tanabata Matsuri festivals are some traditional African and Japanese festivals that exude creativity and didacticism in addition to their cultural essence. These festivals are stage-managed with impersonation, props, costumes, troupes, puppets and puppeteers, panegyric, epithalamium, dirge, lyric, characters, and settings which are designed temporarily for the festival. In the centuries before the 19th and 20th, it was common and perhaps an unwritten law to have every member of the society participate in these festivities. In doing so, they forged better and stronger patrilineal and matrilineal relationships which designated all members of the society as brothers and sisters. However, with the invention of the printing press by Johannes Gutenberg around 1436, and the incursion of Western colonialism, print literature gained agency over oral literature. Pioneering African and Japanese writers like Amos Tutuola, Joe Casely-Hayford, Cyprian Ekwensi, Kiyoshi Kasai, Haruki Murakami, Kenji Nakagami, Masahiko, and the like began to blend elements from African and Japanese orature with their Western awareness in creating their arts. This collective consciousness of the common good stemming from native knowledge and intelligence makes one and all desire to create a balance in their daily affairs.

Ubuntu is one of the cherished cultural norms that have their roots in Africa. Although Ubuntu may not be a written law of the countries that practise it, it is certainly an influential value in legal engineering and constitutional amendments. Ubuntu as an existential philosophy has been a window through which many people in Sub-Saharan Africa look at life. In the words of Eze, “the individual and the community are not radically opposed in the sense of priority but engaged in a contemporaneous formation” (386). The individual and the

society are indeed interlaced as the former depends on the latter for his/her identity while the latter is relevant because of the former. This ideological imperative, though attenuated with the legacies of Western colonialism, is still part of today's contemporary African society. While humanistic values in cultural exchanges are universal, certain ideological principles are uniquely and culturally local.

Ubuntu is the plural form of "muntu" which means a person or an individual. Its ideological significance is conspicuous in the Zulu expression "umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu", that is, "a person is a person through others" (Heuvel et al 70). It is such that what happens to one member of an African society happens to all. This is in line with the popular labour union mantra "[a]n injury to one is an injury to all". In the *New World Encyclopaedia*, the term, Ubuntu, refers to the "over 400 ethnic groups in Africa found in the regions spanning from Cameroon, South Africa, and Central Africa and Eastern Africa who belong to a common language family" (6). It further argues that these Bantu ethnicities "are believed to have originated from West Africa about 4000 years ago and migrated to other parts of Africa – especially towards eastern and southern parts" (9). Corroborating, Hailey asserts that "Ubuntu as a philosophy is attributable to blacks of Africa, especially sub-Saharan Africa" (87). Its African origin has had a positive effect on many nations in Africa especially the countries within the geographical ethnicities mentioned above. Ubuntu's ideological underpinning as espoused by Mbiti "I am because we are and since we are, therefore I am" (108), is ideologically opposed to the Cartesian *cogito, ergo sum* "I think therefore I am" (britannica.com). The latter is the Western version of the existential imperative which is more or less the direct opposite of Ubuntu. Bolden corroborates this in saying that "the concept of Ubuntu is an alternative to individualistic and utilitarian philosophies that tend to dominate in the West" (1).

All of these pertaining to the premise of this study only suggest the assumptions of an ideal cultural thinking and practice in Africa especially in the pre-colonial era. The twenty-first century world has become more like a globe, a trans-cultural web having a complex and momentous behavioural network such that most of the strict ideological dynamics hitherto tied to certain cultural settings are fast collapsing into the vortex of a networked global system. This is made possible with the exploits in information and communication technologies. It is in this light that this paper argues that Ubuntu has likeness within the Japanese cultural space. The Japanese philosophy of Nagomi which projects the idea of harmonious balancing of

all the imperatives of life analogously intersects with Ubuntu in its quest to forge harmonious relationships. A harmonious relationship implies a depersonalised perspective to life which enables one to factor other people and things in the process of building a personalised experience. Kenichiro Mogi in an interview with Kevin Dickinson opines that:

Nagomi is balance. It's about harmony, sustainability, and agreeableness. It's a very ancient Japanese word and heavily embedded in Japanese history. That concept of harmony, of things being in balance, is found elsewhere in the world, but in Japan, I think it has reached a level of sophistication that might be an inspiration for others. It's something unique. (<https://bigthink.com/the-learning-curve/nagomi/>)

To find a balance for all things suggests a collective consciousness which includes and builds instead of excluding. Illustrating pragmatically how Nagomi is embedded in Japanese culture and experience, Mogi further says:

For example, the Japanese imperial household is the longest-running hereditary monarchy in the world. Unlike many other nations, we didn't have a change of the royal household, and that's probably due to nagomi. Another aspect is that the Japanese people are very good at being successful but at the same time keeping a low profile. I think that's also due to nagomi. (<https://bigthink.com/the-learning-curve/nagomi/>)

To have an unbroken hereditary governance system that has lasted centuries says something impressive about the common good and collective commitment to cultural heritage. It is very unlikely that a personalised attitude in today's twenty-first century world has the capacity to perpetuate a governance system like monarchy. It takes a collective attitude that is forged with discipline to perpetuate such a structure. Similarly, living invisibly successfully is a collective attitude to life that has perpetuated the common good of the Japanese. While this is a collective attitude to life in Japan, it is also something it shares in common with the philosophy of Ubuntu. To live because others live implies a sense of self sacrifice. An Ubuntu attitude to life can make a successful person whose life is sacrificed for the common good self-effacing. Furthermore, Dickinson argues that Nagomi is "...about discovering how we can blend life's disparate elements in ways that work for us — a unifying act

that, depending on the context, can take on subtle nuances” (<https://bigthink.com/the-learning-curve/nagomi/>). The phrases “disparate elements” and “a unifying act” amplify the ideation of unity in diversity. An individual is united with others and the environment in a way that creates meaning for him or her. Interfacing with the argument of this study, some scholars believe that the idea in Ubuntu has parallels in other cultures of the world. Validating this, Richard Bolden opines that:

Whilst the origins of Ubuntu are distinctly African, parallels have been drawn with similar concepts in other societies, including the Chinese philosophy of *Jen*, the Filipino philosophy of *Loob* and the Russian concept of *Obschina*. Similar concepts are also illustrated in the writings of certain European philosophers such as Emmanuel Levinas and Paul Ricoeur although no comparable word exists in the English language. (1)

The humanism embedded within Ubuntu makes it amenable to the moral and legal values of other world-cultures. The desires of the human character especially in the area of dignity are relatively the same all over the world. Expanding this ideation of universal influence and interconnectedness, Jacob Mugumbate and Andrew Nyanguru argue that “in computer science, the Ubuntu software, a Linux based application developed in the USA, is open-source software that has been widely distributed. The software is based on the sharing tenet of Ubuntu. Western culture has not been spared the influence of Ubuntu” (87). In today’s twenty-first century world, fundamental human rights are enshrined in the constitutions of many countries and policed by state agencies and the United Nations. The spirit behind the will to uphold human rights is not unconnected with the tenets of Ubuntu and Nagomi.

This paper, therefore, examines the responses of the key characters to the violation of these rights with the hope of foregrounding them as responses made in the spirit of Ubuntu and Nagomi. Carl Jung’s Persona-Archetype is used to show the amicable public attitudes that the leading characters exhibit in the spirit of Ubuntu and Nagomi. According to Jung, the Persona is a kind of mask that people wear in non-private or social contexts. This public mask is different from the private mask they wear when they are alone. The binary in the ideation of the Persona does not necessarily suggest a two-faced attitude to life. For instance, that a person is quiet in private and loud in public does not necessarily define him/her as a negative or duplicitous person. Jung’s term for this dark and terrible side of human beings is called *Shadow*. However,

Jung argues that this terrible aspect of human beings is usually repressed and muted because people are not proud of it. But then, that does not change the fact of its existence. He actually identified four key archetypes namely: The Persona, the Shadow, the Anima or the Animus, and the Self. These are cultural and biological patterns that are in the collective unconscious of a people. Of the four archetypes identified, this study is specifically interested in using the Persona to show how the characters deploy their public togas of the common good in identifying with the challenges of their societies and solving them. Stories by Akutagawa Ryunosuke, Nagai Kafu, and Uno Koji in *Akutagawa and Others: Three Japanese Short Stories* are chosen and forged through literary analysis to illustrate the trans-culturalism of the contemporary global world – a global world where hitherto nationalist identities and values have become fluid and conflated. In upholding the ideals of the common good in their public stewardship and pulling all the positive energies in their societies together to form a balance, the foregrounded characters advertently help in stimulating and maintaining the key objective of the Law which is order.

Writing and Speaking to Injustice

Nagai Kafu's "Behind the Prison" is a short story written in epistolary form. On the surface, it is a letter of complaint addressed to His Excellency, an important government official in Japan. The first sentence "Thank you for your letter. I have been back to Japan for nearly five months" (1), conveys a background that this letter is a reply to His Excellency's earlier letter. In the letter, the narrator shares his wandering years of travel to the West before his return to Japan, and his hopelessness and lack of direction in life as a jobless single at thirty. In terms of plot, nothing much happens in this story. However, what is clear from his complaint is that the story dwells on imprisonment. The use of the first-person narrative point of view on the surface may seem detached and individualistic but when placed in dialogic relations with His Excellency's earlier letter, the ideation of the common good and balance becomes obvious. That His Excellency writes him and he replies says something about the communal spirit. His Excellency is concerned about his wellbeing, and he also feels obliged to tell him the truth about his feelings. The use of the first-person narrative viewpoint also shows personal commitment and responsibility. The narrator sees the progress of his Japanese community as that part of his life which must be considered in the process of achieving a balance in life. The

contrast of pain and gain depicted by the backdrop of the narrator's father's estate and the prison shows that the discipline deployed in the spirit of love and correction also defines the essence of Ubuntu. Punishing wrongdoers as a deterrent to other citizens helps to ensure a safe and secure society for all. Similarly, the estate's freedom and the prison's pain-experience create an anti-thesis of how goodness is rewarded with freedom, and evil, with punishment – all for the common good of all in the society.

Be that as it may, it is difficult for the narrator to build a harmonious and balanced life in Japan with the reality of the unimaginable suffering of the prisoners, right in front of him – the people in this society live with the consciousness and good of their compatriots. It is just a fence that separates his estate from their prison, and chances are that he sees the prisoners whenever they are called to do labour or some other routine tasks that subtly dehumanise them. The punishment and its severe processes are part of the correctional strategies, no doubt, but the pain of fellow compatriots ordinarily touches a person with the spirit of Ubuntu. Despite the hopelessness of his private life as a young man, he is concerned about the way prisoners are treated and desperately hopes that His Excellency will arrive before the winter to address the problems. In line with his kind-hearted persona, he seems to be pleading for amnesty on behalf of the long-held prisoners by living an imprisoned life outside the cell. He sees himself in the conditions of the suffering prisoners and believes that striking a balance and giving his own life full meaning means conflating the conditions of his own life with the conditions of the suffering prisoners.

He also talks about the strong bond of parental affection and blood ties; the rapid ageing of his mother; his personal rebellion against all articles of faith, law and precepts, and his reluctance to take up any profession or responsibility. In his ordeals, the reader can easily see Ubuntu as a collective unconscious. Despite all the challenges he faces, he cannot get disconnected emotionally from his parents. He cannot imagine striking a balance without factoring in the wellbeing of his loved ones. He also paints a picture of a father who never gives up on people. He says:

Shamed by the extent of my father's efforts, I felt an instinctive urge to hide my face. At the same time, I was sick of parental affection. Why did my parents not simply turn their back on a son who had proved himself so unfilial? And why did that son feel so threatened by his sense of gratitude towards his parents? Why, when he tried to force himself not to feel such

gratitude, did he succeed only in filling himself with pain and dread? Nothing in this world is as oppressive and debilitating as blood ties. (3)

The parents manifest the spirit of Ubuntu in their relationship with their son. He, too, finds it difficult to let go of the emotional attachment he has to his parents. Both parents and son share the collective unconscious of Nagomi and Ubuntu. Both parents and son also feel incomplete and imbalanced without the happiness of each other. As people with fraternal and communal feelings, they deploy their public serving persona in relating with one another. While pondering on his plights in the West, the narrator also relishes the memories of great communal symphony in Tokyo with a soliloquy. In his words “perhaps I could stay there in hiding, I thought, rather than return to Tokyo where so many people knew me. At that very moment, a heartfelt cry reached my ears, the deep, strong voice of someone ascending the crowded gangplank – welcome back brother” (2–3)! Ironically, not even the character make up of his father is enough to break the unalloyed feeling that exists in the family. He further says this of his father “My father is a stern disciplinarian, a diligent man, a fierce enemy of all that is evil” (7). To describe his father as “a fierce enemy of all that is evil” says something about his father’s interest in the good of his community. Ubuntu and Nagomi as existential philosophies dispel any evil that can compromise the common good and impel every good that can project it. There are times we feel alienated from the legal circle in which we are born and ultimately feel iconoclastic and act defiantly. The narrator feels that the laws of his country have not been fair in ensuring social justice and liberty. He laments:

Never have I had it in me to surrender to those ancient articles of faith which mankind has been commanded to follow. Such precepts are too cruel, too cold. Rather than bow before them, how often have I cried out in anguish, wishing that ‘I’ and ‘the precepts’ could be united in a perfect, warm embrace! (7)

He wishes the laws were more liberal, democratic and flexible. He leaves the country out of frustration and wishes that his action will be seen as a protest. Having made all efforts to obey the law and do the right things but now feeling exhausted, he decides to violate the law. He says “But having despaired of such an easy resolution, I determined that I would confront them head-on, that I would do battle with Heaven’s retribution” (7).

He further narrates how he has been spending his days since he returned to Japan observing the environment in which he lives. He also relays his concerns for the prisoners, as well as the ill treatment that many Japanese, with the exception of a few Christians, give to animals. His father's estate behind the prison in Ichigaya has changed significantly with a touch of modernity and technology. The only things that have not changed are the prison and the prisoners. He feels their pain and wishes His Excellency would do something to alleviate their suffering. He is not happy with the fact that the countryside which used to be a very cool and quiet area of Tokyo has been polluted with the psychological dung of human suffering. Lamenting the disappearance of those beautiful memories, he says "all that is unchanged are the long prison embankment that looms over the narrow street and the life of the poor who toil here beneath it" (16). He describes the horrible conditions under which the prisoners live their everyday lives:

I would expect the wind to blow over the dilapidated fence around the jailers' compound, and, sure enough, the next morning, when the street was littered with tree branches, I would see pairs of prisoners chained together at the waist in orange jackets with numbers on their collars and wearing bamboo coolie hats. (16)

The image of agony is obvious in this excerpt. The narrator is not happy to be tormented with the image of suffering on a daily basis. It is bad for him because he wakes up every day to behold the prison. His paranoia is further worsened with his knowledge of the social impasse in his country – an unfortunate situation that has made many of his contemporaries give up on the nation. For him, the law appears not to be working effectively. He strongly believes that many of the prisoners are victims of injustice in the Japanese legal system. In protesting what he perceives as social injustice, he identifies with the prisoners in his self-imposed solitude.

Nothing escapes from his view – the weather, the garden, the architecture of the households, the shops, and even the sounds of insects. The letter ends on the note that though the narrator had been reading a book of prison verse, Verlaine's *Sagesse*, the previous day, he aches with loneliness and craves His Excellency's visit before winter. He cannot seem to achieve a harmonious balance in his life as these prisoners who are currently not at ease are also part of the components of his life. His Excellency in this context appears to be a metaphor for a supernatural intervention – some kind of *deus ex machina*.

The narrator seems to be pleading for amnesty on behalf of the long-held prisoners by living an imprisoned life outside the cell. In his pleading, we see the functionality of Ubuntu as an existential and communal archetype. He hides his own suffering so as to foreground the sufferings of his compatriots – many of whom must have been awaiting trial for many years. In coming back to Japan, the narrator shows his love for his geographical roots despite all the social challenges that are bedevilling it. It is that particular awareness of the collective humanity he shares with his compatriots that drives his efforts – efforts designed to ensure a just society. If his were an individual consciousness, he would not be so bothered about the social and political crises in his country.

It is interesting to see the motifs of harmony and the public good resonating in the collective unconscious of the people of this society. The spirit of the law itself is made manifest in the deliberate desire of a people for whom the law is made to ensure peace and harmony in their society. It is people that drive or move this essence of the law and not the law itself. This is because laws are made for humans and not humans for the law. If for any reason some people decide not to obey the laws instituted to guide their daily affairs, the result will be chaos and pandemonium. For the narrator, there is so much suffering in the land because the legal system has not been engineered by its drivers who, of course, are human beings to engender equity and justice. What this also points to is the fact that the components of the common good – love, peace, justice, human dignity – are all in the collective unconscious of the people but these are unfortunately often compromised by the microscopic privileged few of the society. They manipulate the principle of the common good because they do not want to have their existential space threatened by the collective progress of the human spirit. They create more problems for the society and do little to solve the problems they create.

Thus, it is interesting to see that the paranoia the narrator suffers from is a complex mix of so many irregularities and inequalities in his society. Despite his initial evanescence and sense of total despair, the narrator is constrained by his love for his fatherland. There is that patriotic idea that keeps bouncing around in his mind every time. It is the reassuring idea of the possibility of a better future for his society. Even though we see a more complex and ordered society in terms of external cultural influence, it is obvious that the idea behind the concept of Ubuntu is very strong in the minds of the people especially the hoi polloi, the much-marginalised victims of the society. Their affection for the disordered society stems from their experience of the sufferings of humanity.

The narrator could not cope with this tortuous reality, hence his resolve to go back to his country and lend his voice to the amalgam of solutions being put in place by his compatriots to make his disordered society an ordered one. One interesting way he does this is by having a passionate heart-to-heart talk in written form with His Excellency, the very metaphor of a solution to the present impasse. The kind of peace and harmony he desires can only be achieved when his society strives for justice. He engendered the rule of law through his patriotic actions that are born out of the spirit of the common good.

A Swinging Identity

Uno Koji's "Closet LLB" centres on the ridiculous lifestyle of Otsukotsu Sansaku. In this story, it is quite ironic that a degree in Law which is supposed to be used for public service is said to be a closet degree – that is, a private degree. It has become private because it has not been part of the identity cravings of the narrator. It is private because he is unable to get a good job with it and his attitudinal disposition has reduced its value and honour. His attitude to his law degree is analogous and akin to the reckless and eccentric behaviour of some depraved but privileged members of society who act with impunity disregarding the honour in the legal knowledge they have whether as lawyers, legislators, ministers, or even ordinary members of society. The knowledge of law is supposed to help one become a law-abiding and better member of society, but Sansaku's attitude says the opposite. This kind of attitude makes people contravene the law and have little or no respect for it. Sansaku has the knowledge of law but does not value the knowledge he has.

One thing is common to all three stories and that one thing is disappointment. Again, we see a character who has so wished to study a course of his passion and predilection being reduced to a mere shadow. Despite the fact that he graduates second from the bottom in his university, he proceeds to receive his Bachelor of Laws and becomes known as Otsukotsu Sansaku, LLB. Yet, he has no job. Though with best intentions, the career choice made for Sansaku by his loved ones like Oike ends up ruining his happiness. As he becomes incapacitated and unable to perform his statutory duties like sending money home for the upkeep of his mother, his relatives come to his aid in the spirit of Ubuntu. This is a tragic tale of a young man that is held hostage by unfortunate

memories of his past which put a limit on all he could achieve in the present and the future. His father is a rich man until his death. He dies leaving behind a very big financial estate for his family. In her naivety, the mother thinks that leaving the estate in the hands of a relative is a good choice, but she is wrong. That is done in the spirit of her persona. The narrator says:

His father died when Sansaku was three, leaving Sansaku and his mother enough money to live on for the rest of their lives. His mother took the extra precaution of entrusting the property to an influential relative, but this had the reverse effect of plunging them into misfortune when, unexpectedly, the relative went bankrupt, losing not only his property but theirs as well. (27)

After his father's death, his father's cousin and business magnate, Oike, agrees to sponsor his education but not without the condition that he has to study a course that is business-oriented. Sansaku has always insisted that his future lies in literature, but he is persuaded to study Law, if not a business-related course. He does study Law, and graduates about the time when Oike dies. With the death of Oike, the financial assistance coming to him ends, and he begins to struggle, living from hand to mouth while trying to feed his mother. The very act of helping to push the narrator through the university system irrespective of the course involved is an expression done in the spirit of Ubuntu. His willingness to help notwithstanding, the insistence on the particular course he wanted for Sansaku says something deep about his persona. Ubuntu and harmony as archetypes are also seen in Sansaku's willpower to continue caring for his mother despite his awful condition. The burden makes him lose hope in life and drives him to abject poverty. Yet, he knows that the balance he needs in life includes his loved ones. He soon stops sending money to his mother and reading her letters, too. However, out of sight is not out of mind for him. By chance, he checks one of the letters and finds out that relatives are now assisting his mother. He feels relieved. He feels relieved because he is able to see the emotions of Ubuntu and Nagomi resonating in his relatives. They do not abandon his mother in her time of need even though it appears as if he, Sansaku, has forgotten her. Ubuntu is in the collective unconscious of his people. The narrator recreates the communal image:

He opened and read immediately – 'fortunately' because it brought him excellent news. Since he had so often been late sending money to hear

of her difficulties, and several of them who, like Oike, had been aided by Sansaku's late father and had since done especially well for themselves, had got together and collected ten thousand yen, enabling her to open a small but dependable shop. (31)

Hardly has he begun to fulfil his ambition to be a novelist when he suddenly grows lazy. He would rather watch passers-by, dream while sleeping, and recall distant memories. His pessimism provokes a usual question he poses to people: How much fun are you getting out of life? This is the life Sansaku continues to lead until the story comes to an end. It is a tragic tale of a young man that is held hostage by unfortunate memories of his past which put a limit on all that he can achieve in the present and the future. He becomes disillusioned not because there is no social support system like Ubuntu and Nagomi but because he feels the effect of an empty vacuum in his life, a lack of balance and harmony, and that effect has won for him an identity of quandary. This quandary may not be divorced from his disappointment in the behaviour of his callow mother. Growing up to find out that his late father had left so much wealth behind for the good of the family and that the same wealth is plundered by a supposed relative the mother has entrusted with the hope of the family makes Sansaku particularly paranoid. It is interesting to note the portraiture of the communal life in the story. Despite the fact that Sansaku's family experiences such huge economic misfortune as a result of the ingenuousness of his mother, they are not left alone in their precarious condition.

The humane attitude of his father's cousin, Mr. Oike towards palliating their condition shows that hospitality is essentially a universal collective unconscious. Mr. Oike sees in Sansaku's family's pitiable conditions the collective suffering of the human spirit. He essentially pictures himself in their conditions and only hopes to achieve a balance by associating with their conditions. He imagines that what is happening to the Sansakus could equally happen to him and his family. Apart from the societal value of hospitality immanent in this society, it is also important to assume that the favours the Sansakus enjoy from their late father's brother could be as a result of the goodness of their late father. It is possible that their late father dealt fairly with his brothers, sisters, friends, and business associates while he was alive. Of course, it is a natural instinct in humans to want to be good to people who are/were good to them.

In addition, Sansaku's mother's behaviour which has essentially been

described as inexperienced in this paper could also be an expression of the reality of Ubuntu in this society. As a collective unconscious, it is possible that Sansaku's mother's trust in the relative to whom she entrusts the wealth of the home is born out of the spirit of Ubuntu. In her behaviour too, we equally see the subtle effects of out-and-out patriarchy on the psyche of the women of her society. Her belief that she cannot or perhaps lacks the rational and economic expertise to keep the wealth of her family obviously stems from the societal conscious and unconscious attitude which appears to privilege men as the existential and economic think-tanks of the society. This, however, does not change the fact that she possibly acts out of a pure and genuine sense of self-will and dignity instead of societal social idiosyncrasies. It is also possible that the relative does not mean to cause harm to Sansaku's family. His losing all he has including that of the Sansakus may only suggest nothing but the vulnerability of humans in the hands of fate and chance. A huge mistake can cost a person all that he/she has laboured for in life. That, of course, is an existential truth. People in real life experience the good and ugly sides of life. Either of the two could come at any time depending on one's exposure to the dynamics of life. What happens after a tragedy is what matters in determining a person's unalloyed predilection for Ubuntu and Nagomi. After the tragedies that befall his family starting from the death of his father to the misfortune his uncle has with his business, Otsukotsu Sansaku is not abandoned by his society. However, he just could not get over the pain of the misfortunes of the past.

Fighting the Hegemon

Akutagawa Ryunosuke's "General Kim" is a fantastic story that is based on the history of Japan and its neighbour, Korea. It is a story that is narrated from the third person viewpoint portraying the relationship between Japan and Korea which has become strained by opposing diplomatic interests. The Japanese are bent on exerting military control over the apprehensive Korea that is less sophisticated military-wise to face them. Two powerful Japanese generals, Kato Kiyomasa and Konishi Yukinaga, disguise as monks to spy the Korean territory. "The two trod the paths among the green paddy fields, observing their surroundings" (44), as part of their spy efforts. Kato Kiyomasa and Konishi Yukinaga are guilty of criminal espionage. Their major aim of studying the southern province of Korea is for a possible invasion. In one of

their espionage adventures, “[t]hey came upon the sleeping figure of what appeared to be a farm boy, his head pillowed on a round stone. Kiyomasa studied the youth from beneath the low-hanging brim of his hat” (44). They encounter the would-be saviour of Korea, Kim Eung-seo and notice something unusual about him. So, “the tiger-whiskered Demon General continued to look back at the boy from time to time” (45). They keep surveying and monitoring the area as well the brave boy. Eventually, “thirty years later, the men who had been disguised as monks back then, Kiyomasa and Yukinaga, invaded the eight provinces of Korea with a gigantic army. The people of the eight provinces, their houses set afire by the warriors from Wa (the ‘Dwarf kingdom’ as they called Japan)” (45). Their invasion is terribly vicious that it does so much havoc on Korea. The invasion leaves the Koreans really frightened and in wait of redemption.

Driven by a disposition to Ubuntu and Nagomi, the boy, Kim, who is now more mature in age and wisdom enters the presence of Seonjo, King of Korea, to surrender himself to the mission of saving Korea. In doing this, he portrays his persona of love and courage which embodies the attributes he would like his fellow Koreans to see in him. This is one way he hopes to achieve harmony and balance in life. The king asks him to bring the head of a Wa General (“‘Wa’ is also known as the ‘Dwarf Kingdom’, as they called Japan”) (45). Kim faithfully embarks on this mission as he sees the mission as a fight for the soul of Korea. He leaves with the belief that an injury to one is an injury to all. Some Koreans have been negatively impacted by cross-border crime and he cannot sit down and watch injustice prevail. In acting, he seeks justice for the many Korean citizens that have lost their lives in the deadly attacks, and also hopes to achieve true fulfilment in life by being in harmony and striking a balance with the pains of his people. Territorial sovereignty is a right that is enshrined in the constitution of the United Nations and enforced. This territorial right is what the Japanese war lords have contravened. Kim’s mission is basically to restore the glory and dignity of Korea that is lost in the dastardly acts of terrorism by the Japanese war lords. For Kim, there is the collective unconsciousness of patriotism in the minds of every Korean. While many Koreans may lack the mental and physical courage to activate this archetype in the present perilous situation, the reality does not necessarily imply lack of patriotism, Kim summons the courage to protect the much-valued cultural imperative of the Koreans – patriotism.

He travels to the Hall of Konishi Yukinaga, a General of the Wa kingdom, and puts on the appearance of the brother of a maiden who is a captive (or

Kisaeng). Magical realism is used as a style in the story to contextualise its legendary essence and character. Kye Wol-Hyang, whose matchless beauty allows her to serve Yukinaga in his palace, in solidarity with Kim's mission of justice, poisons Yukinaga's drink with a sleeping potion. She "kept pressing Yukinaga to drink, lavishing her charms on him with special warmth, for in the sake she had secreted a sleeping potion" (47). Suddenly, he starts drinking the poisoned potion and, "once Yukinaga had drunk himself to sleep, Kye Wol Hyang and her brother tiptoed out of the room. Yukinaga slept on in utter oblivion" (47). As soon as he ascertains that Yukinaga has slept off, Kim, following his king's orders, wields a long-handled Chinese green-dragon sword on his way to behead Yukinaga. However, in an enigmatic twist, Yukinaga's magic sword leaps from its scabbard and targets Kim. He smears the sword with his saliva, and the sword loses its magical powers. Kim then lops off Yukinaga's head with his green-dragon sword. Suddenly, Yukinaga's headless body gropes for the magical sword, picks it up and hurls it at Kim. Although Kim dodges it by lifting Kye and jumping up to a roof beam, the sword slices off his little toe. Kim recalls while bearing Kye in the air that she is pregnant with Yukinaga's child, and he kills her before ripping the child from her belly. The child cries like a full-grown human being and protests that he would have avenged his father's death should Kim have waited only another three months. This is how the death of the Japanese General, Konishi Yukinaga, is recorded and handed down to Koreans. The short story is thus an abridged version of a historical legend about the heroic deeds of General Kim, who slew Yukinaga to save Korea. He helps to defeat the Japanese invaders, General Kato Kiyomasa and General Konishi Yukinaga, who earlier launch an attack on Korea. This is not too different from the legends of Moremi and Queen Amina of Zaria.

Kim risks his life and indeed everything just so that he is able to protect the territorial sovereignty and integrity of his country which has been violated by the Japanese warmongers. The propelling motivations behind Kim's heroic deeds stem from Ubuntu and Nagomi. He puts the interests of his country ahead of his own personal interests and believes that his personal interests will align well when they are balanced out with those of his society. In the polemics of Ubuntu, it is said that an injury to one is an injury to all. Kim sees the assaults that the Japanese warmongers have visited on the vulnerable Koreans as a flagrant assault not just on the territorial integrity of Korea alone but also on the individual human rights of all Koreans. It is also the spirit of this collective unconscious that inspires the King of Korea to sanction Kim's

dangerous but patriotic mission. In this mythical narrative, the King of Korea understands the fact that Korea is in desperate need of political emancipation. While he is courageous in the spirit and believes in the sovereignty of his nation, he earnestly craves, like the biblical Jews, a saviour who will come and save Korea from the hands of its enemies. Understandably, when the saviour eventually shows up in the person of young Kim, he is quick to embrace his courage. He sanctions the mission and gives it all the support it needs. It is only communal thinking that privileges the sanctity of the common good that will readily sacrifice so much to ensure that everyone in a given society is kept out of harm's way. Kim symbolises the enduring spirit of the Koreans which has been keeping them safe from the snares of their enemies from time immemorial.

It is also interesting to see an analogy between the tensions and frictions narrated in this short story and those of present-day Korea. Even though today's Korea is partitioned into North and South, we still see a resurgence of this terror archetype, now on the side of the North Koreans, and the protectionist or defensive archetype, on the side of the South Koreans. While it is a collective unconscious for the North Korea of today to bully and terrorise its neighbours while maintaining its nationalistic interests, it is foremost in the collective unconscious of the South Koreans to protect the territorial integrity of their country through nationalistic and patriotic efforts as well as international alliances with some strong world powers like the United States, United Kingdom, Germany, France, and the ilk. This goes to show that friction is a common human experience. What is important, however, is the attitude or response that is given to these frictions when they occur. It is the nature of this response that determines whether a people have positive collective unconscious or negative collective unconscious. They project and live in harmony with their collective unconscious.

Conclusion

This study has been able to examine and identify the occurrence of Ubuntu and Nagomi as motifs and archetypes in the three stories. Rare actions are carried out by the protagonists and other characters to maintain law and order; justice and peace; and ultimately, the rule of law. The unusual actions by the protagonists which come from the collective unconscious of their societies are propelled by patriotism and love for country. Their heroic actions help the

reader to appreciate the power of collective thinking which always propels the ideals of the common good. Ubuntu and Nagomi as ideologies put the human person before the law as laws are made for human beings and not human beings for the law. Hence, putting humanism first is a moral motif that foregrounds the many ways ideological values such as Ubuntu and Nagomi help in shaping the law to reflect not just the rule of law but also the dignity of the human person.

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GABRIEL OKONKWO holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in English and Literature from the University of Benin, a Postgraduate Diploma in Education from the National Teachers' Institute, Kaduna; a Master's degree (Literature), and Ph.D. (African Literature) from the University of Ibadan. His research interests are Law and Literature, Medical Humanities, Auto/Biographies, and Growth Literature. He is lecturer at Chrisland University, Abeokuta. He is

currently on postdoctoral fellowship at Rhodes University, Grahamstown, Makhanda, South Africa. He is the author of *Bleeding Thoughts*, *Frantic Vultures*, *Testament to Throes*, and *Fighting the Mulish Monsters*. He has attended quite a number of academic conferences and has many critical publications in reputable local and international journals.

Gabriel.Okonkwo@ru.ac.za

gabrielkosisookonkwo@gmail.com