



## Full Length Review Article

### **AUTHORIAL VERDICTS AGAINST MORAL MALADIES IN SOYINKA'S SELECTED DRAMAS: A PRAGMATICS-NURTURED CRITICISM**

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#### ABSTRACT

In contemporary Africa, selfishness and megalomania are persistent and incremental social evils. Just like in a Darwinian contest for survival, roughly everybody is turning a predator striving mercilessly for preserving their individualistic interests. Thence, in the full frenzy of their racing for self assertion, people no longer mind trampling over their alter ego. Carefree from moral requirements, they indulge in corruption, embezzlement, theft, abortion, and even assassination; all of which absolutely impede the socioeconomic prosperity of any community. Though reactions against such plagues abound in the universe of literature, the dull notice goes gaining momentum. Thus, leaning on the pretence that most readers fail to grab accurately writers' goals, this article aims at setting into the fore Soyinka's contributions to the combat against social scourges. Description and interpretation of selected sequences have led us to the conclusion that Soyinka is an adamant social welfare fighter striving hard for exorcising our continent from any such maladies.

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#### INTRODUCTION

"Ism to ism for ism is ism of isms and isms on absolute-ism", so runs Soyinka's (1974:61) sloganeering chronicle ironizing the vicious circle of dictatorship and other sociopolitical behavioural malfunctions incrementally permeating Africa. In fact, the essential dream for prosperity and self-development which initially poked the impulses of Africans to ease themselves from the yoke of Western domination has visibly remained a pious figment. Not only has colonization turned psychological and enticed Africans to resent their genuine cultural identities, but the frenzy taste for modern money and grandiose material achievements has rather turned most of them sycophantic. Sadly remarkable symptoms of the humaneness deadening malady involve corruption and embezzlement of public funds, deliberate political mismanagement, voluntary assassination, betrayal contest hastening the depletion of mutual trust in social relations, human hypocrisy of multifarious sorts, to quote but a few. In striving hard to drag "victims" back from the deadly slippery slope and to heal them from the sorrowful schizophrenia, most Africa originating committed writers smartly impose various sanctions on vile characters through their productions; an alert

way to showcase their damnation over the plague. Given that "pragmatics studies how context influences our interpretation of utterances" (Dada, 2012:86), this work is essentially a critical discourse interpretation of language in use building on the very discipline.

#### Research Methodology and Theoretical Framework

The current work builds on four plays by Wole Soyinka, a Nigeria originating renowned multi-skilled writer: *The Lion and the Jewel* (L&J), *Kongi's Harvest* (KH), *The Trials of Brother Jero* (TBJ) and *Jero's Metamorphosis* (JM). It revolves around both literary intuition and critical linguistic explorations. It enshrines methodical descriptions and intuitive interpretations in order to generate logical and cogent deductions in aid of servicing social welfare while sorting out behavioural malfunctions and attached consequential sanctions envisaged by the author, Soyinka. For the methodical description, helpful toolkits are essentially pragmatics-specific and involve Presupposition, Conversational Implicature, Inference, and Politeness Principle. While presupposition is about considering something to be the case a priori, conversational Implicature and Inference are concerned with imputing and outputting typical communicative value in language at work during social interactions. Gumperz (1982: 2) refers to inference as "The ability to see beyond surface content". For Yule (1996:131), an inference is: "any additional

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information used by the listener to connect what is said to what must be meant". Meyer (2009:47) also specifies that: "What people actually intend their utterances to mean is often not spelled out in the words they speak or write". Viewed from a semantic perspective, the concept of presupposition derives from *pre-suppose* which means to take something for being the case in advance and, thence, to deem a conversational act sensible and understandable a fortiori. Yule (1996:132) refers to it as "what a speaker assumes is true or known by the hearer". According to Dekker (2008: 25), "In linguistics, presuppositions are a kind of preconditions for linguistic items (expressions) or acts (utterances) to make sense". Stockwell (2007: 232) also contends that the presupposition of a statement *P* is something which has to be true before *P* can possibly be a plausible thing to say. Consequently, he concludes on the very page that "the presupposition tenure doesn't vary". The last contention is quite well supportive of Yule's (1996) test of "Constancy under negation" (p. 132). As such, from *Soyinka writes pamphlets to Soyinka doesn't write pamphlets*, there remains a constant truth that there exists somebody named Soyinka.

As to Brown & Levinson's (1978) and Leech's (1983) Politeness Principle (*PP*), it maintains that interlocutors should behave politely to each other during conversational acts. In relation to how self-respect is instrumental to shaping interpersonal meaning, the proponents of this tenet have identified the concept of *Face* (see Leech, 1983; Yule, 1996; Stockwell, 2007, for example). In fact, the *Face* of a person concerns the image of self-prestige and dignity every human being claims to have a right to. Stockwell (2007: 223) defines it as "What you lose when you are embarrassed or humiliated in public". The concept involves two polar variants: a positive *face* and a negative *face*.

The first relates to context whereby one maintains and demonstrates membership in a social group. Reversely, one's *face* is negative when one develops or displays individualism and a sense of independence from other social fellows. Regarding how social interactions can bear on people's *Face*, the scholars have differentiated between favourable and disfavoured deeds; which gives way to such sub-concepts as *face-saving acts* (ie; acts/behaviours protecting or catering for a person's social image) and *face threatening acts* (acts hurting the social prestige of one's vis-à-vis, such as rebuking, defaming, denigrating and any other kinds belittling a person's personality). In a much further attempt, Leech (1983) itemizes his *PP* into such sub-aspects as maxims of agreement, of generosity, approbation, modesty, sympathy, and tact; all of which are purported to display face-saving acts or to avoid frustrating a speech addressee. Nevertheless, the validity of this principle is also to be 'relativized'; the issue of politeness not being a standard fact, but rather a culturally swinging conception.

#### **Classificatory Presentation and Utterance Specification of Key Statements and Suspicion of Some In-borne Moral Maladies**

Data presented in the table below involve a trans-textual synoptic presentation enshrining sequences from all four plays under scrutiny.

Abbreviations and reading key: N°/ SI = N° of speech Involvement; KH= Kongi's Harvest;

TBJ= The Trials of Borthier Jero; JM= Jero's Metamorphosis

#### **Pragmatic Diagnosis and Appraisal on Suspected Diseases basing of Some Empirical Social Symptoms, and Salutary Suggestions**

Endemic socio-developmental drawbacks of the above-suspected ills are visualized and discussed in the coming development.

#### **Narcissism, Behavioural Fancies, and Social Prestige**

These are three major correlating concepts enacted through the plays to symbolize ontological manifestations of human-animal essence within African social vicinity. They are concerned with how, as self-admirers, some people praise themselves extravagantly to the point of outraging common barriers of realism. Hence, excessive and fanciful pride causes such people to freely transcend their natural features and indulge into self-deification, even bordering on insolence, sadism, and masochism at times. Several substantiating epitomes of such people may be identified through the plays under scrutiny. Testimonial examples involve Sidi, Lakunle, Kongi, Jero, and Amope. The ill of self-bragging and conjuring dominates the characters' behaviours and doesn't spare any gender or age-related considerations either. Through U1-U7 derived from L&J for example, Lakunle is revealed to be an alienated African for radically repelling his native cultural practice, by strictly refusing to comply with Sidi's demand for bride price. His deliberate fancies for western lifestyle not only permeates his involvements from U1 through U6, but his western-settled mind turns him more overtly snobbish and wantonly ostentatious in U7 as he declares: "I wouldn't demean myself to bandy words with a woman of the bush." By the way, the evil of self-bragging and conjuring dominates most characters' behaviours and stands as well irrespective of any gender or age-related considerations. The very haughty sense boils well and truly in Sidi, as can testify her contributions in U8 through U19. Some testimonial cases read as: "Known as I am to the whole wide world, I would demean my worth to marry a mere village school teacher" (U8-U9) and "Out of my way, book-nourished shrimp" (U19), both statements being quite lacerating abuses fired against Lakunle, a young suitor hereby deemed light-wallet holder, unsuitable and bluntly discarded.

Into the bargain, Sidi alleges herself superseding every member of Ilujinle as she presumes herself overriding the leading king, Baroka, by far. In fancying herself as "the Jewel of Ilujinle" and "whose fame has spread beyond the seas" (U11), she contends that she is 'incomparable', implying that she has no match on earth. Indeed, extravagant valuation of her beauty attributes causes her to deliberately mistake herself for a Himalayan lophophore. Further evidence supportive of this contention may be found in the quite challenging claim borne by U27-U28: "Tell your lord that I can read his mind, that I will none of him." Unfortunately for her, the dazzling bright of any such colourful bird is nothing conversant with actual human social life. In order to fit in human gregarious vicinity, everybody has to prove less proud of their differential advances over the other social pars. Indeed, narcissism brings no helpful contribution to consolidating social harmony, peace, and bliss. It rather fertilizes pride, haughtiness, and borders on animosities as it fetters the growth of humility and humaneness.

Table 1. A Fused Classificatory Presentation and Utterance Specification of some key statements from all four plays under study

Characters	N°/ SI	Dictions and Sources	Sources	Suspected Maladies
Lakunle	1	(U1)Ignorant girl, can you not understand? To pay the price would be to buy a heifer off the market stall. (U2). You'd be my chattel, my mere property. (U3). No, Sidi! (U4). When we are wed, you shall not walk or sit tethered, as it were, to my dirtied heels (U5). Together, we shall sit at table - Not on the floor (U6) – and eat, not with fingers, but with knives and forks, and breakable plates like civilized beings.	L&J, P. 9	Cultural Uprootedness/ alienation & Snobism
Lakunle	2	(U7)I wouldn't demean myself to bandy words with a woman of the bush.	L&J, p.33	Haughtiness,
Sidi	3	(U8)Known as I am to the whole wide world, (U9) I would demean my worth to wed a mere village school teacher.	L&J, P.12	Disrespect,
	4	(U10) Ha ha. Sadiku of the honey. Sadiku, head of the lion's wives. You'll make no prey of Sidi with your wooing tongue. (U11) Not this Sidi whose fame has spread to Lagos and beyond the seas.	L&J, p.20	Insolence
	5	(U12)Well, don't you know? (U13)Sidi is more important than the Bale. (U14)He is beneath me now.	L&J p.21	
	6	(U15)Compare my image and your lord's – (U16)An age of difference! (U17)See how the water glistens on my face like the dew-moistened leaves on the Harmattan morning. (U18)But he – his face is like a leather piece torn rudely from the saddle of his horse.	L&J, P.22	
	7	(U19)Out of my way, book-nourished shrimp.	L&J, P.57	
Baroka	8	18(U20)I change my wrestlers when I have learnt to throw them. (U21)I also change my wife when I have learnt to tire them.	L&J p.39	Elderly
	9	(U22)Yes, Yes... it is five full months since I last took a wife... (U23) five full months.	L&J p.18	irresponsibility
Sidi	10	(U21)Because he sees my worth increased and multiplied beyond his own; (U24)because he can already hear the ballad-makers and their songs in praise of Sidi, the incomparable, (U25) while the Lion is forgotten.	L&J p.21	Money addiction, Megalomania and Narcissism
	11	(U26)He (Baroka)seeks to have new fame as the one who possessed the the Jewel of Illuginle.		
	12	(U27)Tell your Lord that I can read his mind, (U28) that I will none of him.	L&J.p. 33	Moral degeneration and depletion
Kongi	13	(U29)I trust no one	KH, p.91	
Secreatry	14	(U30)Comrades, our not-so-comrade comrades have their bottoms ready greased for singeing... (U31)Hey... that is one new face, a very mouse among wildcats.	KH, p.116	Paranoia
Jero	15	(U32)Well, we have to be careful of our brother prophets.	JM, p.175	
	16	(U33)We could do with the elevation to eternity of some of our dearly beloved prophets on this beach.	JM, p.175	Hypocrisy, Cowardice naïve laudation & compliance & conjuring
	17	(U34)There are eggs and there are eggs.		
	18	(U35)My leader, my magnanimous leader	KH, p.94	
Secretary	19	(U36) My leader, your promise!... (U37)Your promise, my leader! (U38)The word of Kongi.	KH, p.100	
	20	(U39)I'm done for, I know it. (U40)I am heading for the border while there is time. (U41) Oh there is going to be a cramp-down after this.	KH, p.132	
	21	(U42)Whatever you say, Brother Jero... (U43)Nothing could give you a bad name, Brother Jero. (U44)You stand apart from others. (U45)Nothing can tarnish your image.	JM, p.175	Cretinity, naïve compliance
	22	(U46)You won't ever have to do without me, Brother Jero. (U47) As long as you need me, I'll be here.	M, p.176	
	23	(U48)Oh Brother Jero; you say such wise things.	JM, p.176	
Rebecca	24	(U49)I trust you. (U50)I follow you wherever you lead me, Brother Jeroboam.	JM, p.177	
	25	(U51)I am the spirit of Harvest	KH, p.91	Power Addiction and human shrewdness
		(U51)Get out! (U52)Go and bring them back. (U53)And hear this! (U54)The amnesty is off(U55)! (U56)The reprieve is off! (U57)The other hang tomorrow...	KH, p.100	
	26	(U58)No amnesty! (U59)No reprieve! (U60)Hang every one of them! hang them!		
		(U61)The Spirit of Harvest..., the Justice of Earth..., the Spirit of resurgence..., the Spirit of Planting, the Spirit of Harvest, the Spirit of Inevitable History and Victory, all of which I am.	KH, pp.129-130	
Kongi	27	(U62)Kongi is every Ismite. (63)Ismite (is Kongi)	KH, p.130	
	28	(U64)I am a prophet. (U65)A prophet by birth and by inclination.	TBJ, p.145	Megalomania, pride,
	30	(U66)There are eggs and there are eggs	TBJ, p.145	Fancy and religious perjury
	31	(U67)The call of prophecy is in my blood	TBJ, p.146	
		(U68) They will look at my velvet cape (U69)and they will think of my goodness, (U70)they must begin to call me...the velvet-hearted Jeroboam, Immaculate Jero,		
Jero	32	Articulate Hero of Christ's Crusade.	TBJ, p.153	
	33	(U71)Only trouble is, it might give the rest of us a bad name	TBJ, p.175	
Amope	34	(U72)Thank God I am not the kind of woman who... (gossips)	TBJ, p.149	
"	35	(U73)Am I to go to my grave as the wife of a Chief Messenger?	TBJ, p.149	
	36	(U74)I am glad I got there before any customers. –(U75) I mean worshipers – (U76) well, customers if you like.(U77)I always get that feeling every morning that I am a shopkeeper waiting for customers. (U78)The regular ones come at definite times. (U79)Strange, dissatisfied people. (U80) I know they are dissatisfied because I keep them dissatisfied. (U81)Once they are full, they won't come again.	TBJ, p.153	Money addiction Human foxiness or Shrewdness
	37	(U82)You are indeed king, Sister Rebecca. (U83) I don't know what I would do without you.	JM, p.176	
	38	(U84)The more miserable they are, (U85)the more touchy and proud you'll find them.(U86)The monster of pride feeds upon vermin, Rister Rebecca. (U87) The whole in a poor man's garment is soon filled with the patchwork of pride, (U88) so resolutely does nature abhor a vacuum.	JM, p.176	
	39	(U89)To survive, we need full-bodied tactics	JM, p.177	
Jero	40	(U90)A land of milk and honey.	JM, p.179	
Ananaias	41	(U91)I mean to say, Brother Jero, you are pretty hard on a man. (U92)You know yourself business is slow...(U94)A man must eat.(U95)The congregation have shrunk to nothing (U96)and even them as comes, (U97)all I get is the story of their family troubles. (U98)They no longer pay thieves.	JM, p.181	

By the way, examples mentioned above testify that none of the characters involved is meant to service positive social relations. Thus, the unenviable climate featured by the social relation holding between Sidi and her suitor Lakunle, between Amope and her Chume-husband, and between Jero or Ananaias and their congregational folk at large serves cogent evidence to the case. Since they bestow godly worth on themselves (U31-32; U62-69), each of them proves presumptuously and ostentatiously impressionistic in striving to show that they deserve much more than they actually are. They deem themselves earthly deities requiring everybody's groveling to the honour of their fanciful and narcissistic sense of human prestige. For example, when Jero says that "there are eggs and there are eggs" (U34), this is another self-celebrating formula of George Orwell's contention that if all the animals on a farm look equal, some are actually 'more equal than others' by essence. (See Orwell's *Animal Farm*). Indeed, this statement subsumes Jero to feel himself an earthly chattered assistant to God. Other suchlike ill-smelling and naughty statements permeate Jero's involvements from U73 through U90 whereby he views his church site as a "land of milk and honey" (U90) and, when present there every morning, considers himself "a shopkeeper waiting for clients" (U77).

Definitely, narcissism and fancies can pay no good service to building a prestigious and enviable moral edifice in aid of consolidating a gregarious mind and achieving communal welfare. Rather, haughty demonstrations of suchlike sorts are plain moral ills causing their victims to feel like grown into absolute epicentres of the earth and, consequently, worshipping fetishes to their human fellows. A major socially worthy tuition to infer from these fiction-borne cases is that humans have to cultivate humility. In that lies the easiest and most operational ways and means to reach building, maintaining and servicing humaneness as humility caters for promoting honesty, probity and every other virtue instrumental to social harmony and communal thriving. At large, humaneness is largely tributary to humility and Africa does need this for her genuine salvation from the grip of mal-governance, corruption, embezzlement, civil wars and other suchlike savageries being perpetrated all over the continent. Actually, narcissism and fancies render no good service to social prestige and human well-being. For our own good and for the smooth running of social interactions, there is a necessity to foster and lubricate human sense of humility. We must be aware that haughtiness serves a powerful fertilizer to naughtiness, which is the most dreadful poison to the promotion of a lovely social climate and a fertilizer to institutional malfunctions. For the realization of any genuine developmental challenge, there is an absolute requirement of participative management, which calls for a frank and democratized cooperation.

### **Megalomania and Absolute Power-Addiction as Poisons to Humility, Humanism, and Intellectual Probity**

These are offshoot drawbacks or consequential symptoms of human narcissism and fancies. Megalomania, by essence, is a folly-bordering addiction for havings and honours, the crazy feeling of growing a beyond-par grandee. This stands for a mental malady which imposes permanent insatiability on its victims. The latter lose control over their own human sense whenever there arises an opportunity to amass the maximum of anything they deem glorifying – be it material or not – with a view to servicing their extravagant sense of honour and

prestige. For such people, morality makes no concern at all. The cases of Sidi (U24-U28), Kongi (U51-U62), Jero (U64-U71), and Amope (U72-73) in the sequences under scrutiny afford testimonial evidence to the allegation. For instance, Sidi's megalomaniac narcissism comes to havoc and wipeout her natural moral sense for beauty addiction. She is no more able to respect anybody. Humility-devoid and haughtiness swollen as she has grown, it befalls her to believe that nobody is superior to her on earth; let alone, there is no par to her. In fact, while featuring her as the unique and unchallengeable "jewel of Iluginle" (U26), Soyinka hilariously alludes to highlighting her self-felt but hallucinatory preciousness as well as the fakeness of the derived pride.

A blunt disclosure of her moral voidance reads as follows: "Compare my image and your Lord's – an age of difference! See how water glitters on my face like the dew-moistened leaves on a Harmattan morning. But he – his face is like a leather piece torn rudely from the saddle of his horse" (Soyinka, 1974:22). This scornful and abusive statement by a presumptuous little girl against a ruling traditional king sounds quite infelicitous and stands for Soyinka's contrivance pointing an accusatory finger to the depletion of the authentic and typifying morality known to traditional Africa. It serves to mean that moral virtues are severing from rising generations in Africa or, that it is a sorrow that rising generations suffer an insidious but highly pungent moral degeneration. The same notice shows up again in Amope who, for her status as a wife to Chume, strives hard through mannerish deeds to confine the man under her boots. Indeed, she contrives fallacies to have Chume crawl and grovel to her as a loyal hired houseboy. At the level of Baroka, Kongi and Jero, megalomaniac manifestations are rather political-power-fed or authority-spurred. The first one epitomizes moral sores pending from absolute political power. Indeed, aside from Baroka's traditional crushing regimentation and stinking irresponsibility (U19-22), albeit democratically elected republican president, Kongi harshly stifles both his immediate neighbourhood and common populace in the strict and fierce fashion of a merciless falcon. In stretching imposing and oppressive wings over individual citizens, the single freedom he affords is to offer plain complacency in return to every decision fancied by his own whimsically changing caprices, as is symbolized by all cowardly involvements authored by the Secretary for instance: U34-39.

Resultantly, any dissenting impetuses are sharply rudely stifled, mortally sanctioned. People holding diverging opinions are perceived as renegades, sworn foes and propounded for sacrificial death: "I want him back – alive if possible. If not, any other way! The amnesty is off! The reprieve is off! The others hang tomorrow...No amnesty! No reprieve! Hang everyone of them! Hang them." (Soyinka, 1974:100). This naughty governance fashion is spurred by power-craziness. Anyway, it does victimize the mischievous leaders handling it before impacting the common populace. In deeming themselves omnipotent and wickedly manhandling their populace as though they were playing toys, despot leaders come to let their natural humaneness insidiously die away. Thence dehumanized by their own practices, they grow into paradoxical ghostlike scarecrows. Anti-social beings as they become, such people grow paranoiac, suffering permanent fright and inner-felt discomfort since they have nobody to trust or confide, as the case stands with Kongi and his Secretary, and with Jero as well: "I trust no one" (Kongi, U29),

“Comrades, our not-so-comrade comrades have their bottoms ready greased for singeing” (Secretary, U30) and “Well, we have to be careful with our brother prophets” (Jero, U32). They are obsessed and blinded with the fake feeling of being in permanent insecurity and go conceiving of everybody as potential foes; just say, they go looking for furs on eggs as paranoiac caution causes them to lack trust in everybody. Testimonial dictions in the case of Kongi involve the following: “I trust no one” and “I am the Spirit of Harvest...” (U61). The first example subsumes the compulsory twofold consequence on him to never feel comfortable as to his own safety and to grow a pitiful kind of jack-of-all-trade factotum dashing lonely and vainly through heaps of duties to face, given that lack of, and incapacity to trust his vicinity members fetter in him any inclination to collaborative or participative management. Quite refrettably, his solitary toiling and perspiration could yield no laudable fruition. For, no glorious achievement is the offshoot of one-man endeavour.

As to the second example, it is a pungent demonstration of extravagant pride. With the term “spirit” being the vital force supporting any living entities and the harvest concerning the yielding of foodstuffs, the whole involvement functions to insinuate that without Kongi, the populace is doomed to inevitable starvation. Besides, the man considers himself to be the concentrated summative version of all individual citizens and the unfailing force of the whole nation: “Kongi is every Ismite, and Ismite... (is kongi)” (U62-63). As far as Jero is concerned, he is the religion-harboured epitome of Kongi willed by Soyinka, or of Honourable Chief Nanga contrived by Achebe’s muse (in *A Man of the People*). In dubbing himself “immaculate Jero” and “Articulate Hero of Christ’s Crusade” (U66-71), the character not only pretends himself a sinless devotee, as being bleach-washed from all behavioural deviances; but also as Chattered Assistant to Jesus Christ; rather say, to God himself while actually, no such sinful Jero can possibly be cleansed into Immaculate and Holy Jesus. Much more daringly, Jero even states quite boastfully: “the call of prophecy is in my blood” (p. 146). Anyway, the blatantly theatrical and hilarious contradiction in Jero comes to be echoed by himself as follows when talking about his naïve disciples: “They will look at my velvet cape and think of my goodness. Inevitably, they must begin to call me the Velvet-hearted Jeroboam”(U70).

This is an overt disclosure of the chocking gap between the man’s luring lip services and ontological essence. He is none of an actual devotee, but a witty, wily and wicked swindler using his biblical verses as provocative advertising media; rather say, a hypnotic and mind-deadening potion. One the very page, one can also read about his shameless mercantile and ungodly goal through this diction by him in relation to his congregational site: “I am glad I got there before my customers – I mean worshippers... I always get that feeling every morning that I am a shopkeeper waiting for customers”. This statement is a self-revelation of the genuine nature of his church as a pitiless frenzy profit-hooked business stock. Other suchlike repelling dictions involve: “the land of milk and honey” (referring to his church site), “Man must eat”, and “to survive, we need full-bodied tactics”; all of which are readable in Soyinka’s *Collected Plays N°2*, respectively on pages 179, 180, and 177. Overall, there is no intellectual probity in Jero, as is the case with Kongi in the political field. Both are shameless conjurers. The only difference opposing them is that the kongistic fashion is force-supported while Jero’s is lip-

service-leaned as he contrives witty ways to blur and blackout people’s vigilance, numbing and deadening their mind in order to guarantee their flawlessly complacent acquiescence to his whimsical caprices and mischiefs. In one way or another, Jero’s and Kongi’s behaviours substantiate the contention about power exertion that: “Every system of authority attempts to establish and cultivate the belief in its legitimacy”<sup>1</sup>. Anyway, a retaliatory anonymous participant – just dubbed a member – is contrived by Soyinka to repel Jero’s rogueries as follows: “Go and practice your fraudulences on another person of greater gullibility” (Soyinka, 1974:168). This repelling claim subsumes some clairvoyance rising in the character and him to have grown somewhat struck awake.

Besides, the major sorrowful impact of dictatorial governance on the populace is freedom deprivation. No dissidence is allowed. Just as the Secretary’s *yes-my-leader* fashion in relation to Kongi, citizens are mostly turned coward, ghoulis, and submissive out of resignation; given that a uni-directional trend of thought is imposed on everybody to serve a one-man logic. The despot’s whimsical fallacies are then made every citizen’s obligations to comply with. Unfortunately, this forcible conformism of thoughts, beliefs, and actions is definitely poisonous to the thriving of African nations. It is rather a dwarfing vice and nothing conversant with the worldwide established norms and principles meant to secure human freedom, dignity, and integrity. In all regards, the following claim by Awolowo (1977: 50) offers a synthetic synopsis of my concerns in this subsection: “One of the tragedies of independent Africa is the widespread deprivation of the fundamental human rights enshrined in the UN’s Universal Declaration of Human Rights”. In real, a drastic and regenerating change is required to retrieve the continent from sinking into non-manageable abyss of crude animosity. For, though located in a tropical forest, Africa is reckoned to be the cradle of humanity and a land of gregarious mind and sense of hospitality par excellence. There is no good reason to turn her into a frightening and threatening jungle of merciless wild beasts just for egotistic human bestialities. In cases where people get fed up with bearing the yoke of their subjugated status, there generally arise social riots and insurrections. In that regard, Soyinka (1972/ 2011: xxiii) warns that: “Those who make peaceful change impossible make violent change inevitable”. By the way, it must permeate every individual mind the conviction that reciprocal humility is the most important and sine qua non condition to foster social justice, enhance people’s sense of communal membership and spur their genuine commitment to building peace and development.

### **Religion-Harboured Perjury, Conjuring and Human Shrewdness**

Wanton fancy fallacies and witty malice permeating the selected sequences as to the religious field originate exclusively from Jero and Ananias. Both fake prophets go steadily window-displaying a prima facie immaculate goodness, while their ontological moral essence stands rather stinking, quite repelling. By the way, in U62 through U69, Jero profusely struts himself to be the most faithful and beyond-match Holy Soul God has ever sent to the earth. He showcases himself as a tightly committed and most loyal servant to God. Indeed, a claim like “The call for prophecy is

<sup>1</sup> - Leeuwen, T. (2008 : 105), quoting indeed Max Weber (1977 : 325)

in my blood" (U65) for example sounds a quite testifying evidence that the man should be blessed with some typifying assets. Oddly enough, one's stance as to his cleanliness or holiness starts shaking when coming across U66-U69. With "they will look at my velvet cape" (U66) serving the defining condition to "they will think of my goodness" (U67) and "implicating" a compulsion featuring result as "they must begin to call me the velvet-heated Jeroboam, Immaculate Jero...", (U68) there are good grounds to wonder whether spiritual holiness owes anything to the smoothness of a velvet cape. Thence starts coming into the open the man's wily and bamboozling essence. Further revelations as to his crude cruelty rather show up in U71-U89. The most overtly chocking of his utterances involves (U74), U80-U81, U84-86 and U88-U89 reading respectively as follows: "I am glad I got there before any customers" (U74); "I know they are dissatisfied because I keep them dissatisfied" (U80); "Once they are full, they won't come again" (U81); "the more miserable they are, the more touchy and proud you'll find them((U84-U85); "the monster of pride feeds upon vermin, Sister Rebecca" (U86); "the whole in a poor man's garment is soon filled with the patchwork of pride" (U87), "so resolutely does nature abhor a vacuum" (U88), and "to survive, we need full-bodied tactics" (U89).

As far as Ananias is concerned, he proves to be a loyal associate of Jero's mercantile and swindle-based religious set-up. By the way, he bluntly declares to Jero "you know yourself business is slow (92); "A man must eat" (93); "the congregation have shrunk to nothing and even them as comes, all I receive from them is the story of their family troubles. They no longer pay tithes (94-97). This series of cumulative quotes functions to herd multifarious manifestations of the fake prophet's vile essence. While they all are purported to showcase the man's opportunistic essence, U95-U96 are utterly revealing of his devilish materialistic sense. His religious setting stands for an open-sky money siphoning venture whereby no little room is booked for pity or piety. More specifically, U96 subsumes that the fake prophet conceives of his disciples' "family troubles" as a cumbersome burden causing him unbearable tedium. This specification is typically all the more infelicitous since bothering as it emanates from a so-called man of God, a religious opinion leader; a title which ontologically implicates high altruism, a steady inclination to keep oneself a loyal servant to one's neighbours. Altogether, both Jero and Ananias are religion-aided witty bamboozlers, essentially vile riff-raffs and committed vampires ready to suckle their naïve followers to death.

### **A Pervasive Comment, Interpretation and Assessment of the Findings**

Overall, selfishness, megalomania, narcissism and self-ostracizing ostentation are some of the maladies whose symptomatic demonstrations permeate all four plays at stake in this study. Happily, the author has proved all the more ingenious since in any case, he contrives smart sanctions to counter and chastise the evil. In L&J for instance, while cultural alienation couple with haughtiness to cause Lakunle's failure to gain his marriage to Sidi, insolence poking narcissism adds up to naïve curiosity to get Sidi wantonly ensnared as she oddly loses her virginity to olden Baroka for free, without receiving any so adamantly claimed prior bride price. Besides, the critical exploration of sequences derived

from Kongi's Harvest reveals that dissenting impetuses are sharply and rudely stifled and repressed, even mortally sanctioned. People holding diverging stances from Kongi's mainstream opinions are perceived as renegades, sworn foes and propounded for sacrificial death: "I want him back – alive if possible. If not, any other way! The amnesty is off! The reprieve is off! The others hang tomorrow...No amnesty! No reprieve! Hang everyone of them! Hang them." (Soyinka, 1974: 100). Happily enough, an audacious though lonely participant meant to wave down Kongi's crushing hegemony is Segi. Such symbolically retaliating diction from her involve: "Yes, let it all end tonight. I am tired of being the mouse in his cat-and-mouse game"(p.129). the vindictive load born by this sequence showcases how much fed up the character has got with bearing the mischievous leader's scheming.

### **Conclusion and Overall Suggestions of the Study**

In all regards, findings in the work testify that through literary artefacts, humanity is generally involved and that writers are as well alert chronicling guardians of human welfare. By way of evidence, in the plays I have analyzed one can well realize Wole Soyinka's commitment to exorcize socio-political and religious evils in order to get plenitude of bliss bestowed on and celebrated for genuine humanity. By the way, with reference to the solid interdependence existing between literature and contextual features, Ngara (1982: 8) concludes that: African literature issues from and reflects conditions which are particular to Africa. The critic should therefore endeavour to understand these conditions and know Africa and her people well – if his pronouncements on African literature are to be genuine and free from European prejudices about Africa and African art. Definitely, the findings of this study are living testimonies of the topsy-turvy and inside-out kind of socio-political life affecting, not only Nigeria but Africa as a whole. With insanities and follies of various types running their free course, punching and knocking morality down from erosion to corrosion, we can rightfully side with Ahmad's (2004: 6) well-thought contention about the sorrowful fate of Africa that:

heart of our decadent society. Every charlatan is a man of the people. We gasp for breath: apologies to Chinua Achebe and apology to our generation and its leaders.

More interestingly, the very title of Ahmad's production involving this quotation is a warning package raised against the rampant moral depletion underway in most African lands: "The degeneration of the generation". Moreover, this contention moonlights the scholar's earnest worry for human freedom privation and morality scarification on some ostentatious altar of sociopolitical regimentation. The fact is deadly sorrowful all the more since a community where the plenitude of liars and truants are oddly growing dreadful lions blessed with glorious crown while roughly all truth-tellers are good candidates to implacable guillotine – with hardly no room booked for moral virtues – is pretty well worth weeping for. True to tell, a human jungle is nothing humane, but rather an animal realm. Overall, the prevailing social trade in Africa grows sorrowfully substantiative of a merciless Darwinian contest proving legitimate the following claim that Soyinka (1974: 177) ironically and antithetically gets echoed by his woe-sowing character, Jero: "To survive, we need full-bodied tactics". Definitely, radical change is a burning urgency if current generations of Africans are not determined to drive

their posterity into an unmanageable abyss. Resultantly, my final foci as regards the empirical stakes of this work are twofold. Its merits are both scholarly socio-pedagogical and linguistically worthy.

As far as the first stratum of merit is concerned, while believing everybody in their religious congregation to be born perfectly and irreversibly nincompoop, both Jero and Ananias end up revealing their own silliest side. Just as every living soul is hotly eager to be blessed with heaven while not a single one is actually ready to die first, hypocrisy is causing Africans to bar their own way to development. The fact showcases the queer scenario of a driver or a motorcyclist stepping laboriously on the gas and fiercely braking up in one time while wanting his/her engine to run fast ahead. Definitely, there is no true gain at all when a venomous wild and witty snake has to bite its own tail. Both scum and clumsy religion-or-politis-harboured swindlers and hardened stupid followers are members of the same “beach”, the destiny of which is ineluctably dependent on their being able to frankly trust one another. No religion, indeed, is genuinely purported to be a trading stock where the cunnings have a good chance to line up their pockets. The prevailing dull reality is just the surest way of fabricating cantankerous community members and preparing the land for social discrepancies possibly leading to war.

True to tell, African morality is visibly and dangerously in the wane, steadily falling from erosion to corrosion. Something requires doing in terms of scanning psychosurgical therapy for the salutary metamorphosis of our generation so as to prepare a worthy legacy for African posterity. It is urging to start changing the trend so as to spare Nkumah’s (1963) dream that ‘Africa Must Unite’ from being doomed to remain a pious and barren fantasy merely because of interpersonal mistrust or distrust. The absolute necessity of togetherness is also well pointed to by Sassen (1999:6) and Baynham (2011) through their concept of “Mitigation”, which term Baynham defines as follows: “Mitigations are acts of settlement and of habitation in a world where the divide between origin and destination is no longer of otherness, a world in which borders no longer separate human realities” [See Mike Baynham (2011: 413), ‘Language and Mitigation’, in James Simpson (2011) (Ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Applied Linguistics*. USA and Canada: Routledge. The term originates from Sassen (1999: 6)].

By the way, at the inescapable era of globalization any misbehaviour impeding togetherness is absolutely poisonous and havocking, not only to individual members but to the African community viewed from a holistic perspective. Indeed, joint endeavours inherent in facing modern challenges require interpersonal relations to grow so much immeshed that today, “distances separate bodies, not people” [in Keorapetse Kgotsitsile’s “Mandela’s Sermon”, see *Poems of Black Africa* (Soyinka, 1975: 204)]. As a result, for the development of Africa people need and have to borderlessly trust one another in order to favour marshalling their capabilities, and husbanding their endeavours towards the achievement of the salutary goal of drawing a line on three major foes to Africa’s thriving, which keep fertilizing our poverty: laziness, envy and downward levelling. In a word, the following recommendation by Descartes (1931) is to become the life motto of any African positivist wanting the continent to attain any real prosperity: “Men, in whom the principal part is the mind, ought to make

of their principal care the search after wisdom, which is its true source of nourishment” [This quotation emanates from Descartes’s (1931: 205) *Haldene and Ross*, and is resorted to by Whitcomb in Bernecker and Pritchard, 2011: 95), *The Routledge Companion to Epistemology*]. In espousing and tropicalizing this trend of thought, Mireku-Gyimah (2013: 282) states what follows: “Africans need a drastic change of mindset to be able to free themselves from the shackles of religious mediation by charlatans”. Talking about the necessity of enhancing a virtue-fostered life within humankind, Owens (2006: 561) devotes a good deal of research endeavour to the matter in his work titled “Lying, Honesty, and Promising”. In this work, he comes up with the claim that:

We are all obliged to take due care not to lead others to form false beliefs, at least where this might be harmful to them (Scanlon, 1998: 300). This obligation means that we must not set out to deceive people by making them insincere promises or telling them things that we know to be false. But it also means that we mustn’t change our minds about what we promised we were going to do (without good reason) or make an assertion without adequate evidence. By the way, on the occasion of a nationalists’ meeting in November 1931, Mahatma Gandhi also argues in the very perspective that: “Truth transcends reason... Truth and non-violence can deliver any nation from bondage”<sup>2</sup>. Definitely, there is a burning necessity for both religious and political opinion leaders as well as ordinary citizens to mind the dangerousness of the poignant evil permeating communal psyche. Well and truly, silently and insidiously though it operates, falsity is so much suicidal, genocidal and destructive at large as the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombardment.

Overall, the manner how literature serves to combat the dull and dwarfing drawbacks of moral and behavioural ills precluding the developmental bloom of post-colonial Africa is encapsulated through a lengthy but much telling quote as follows:

African literature constantly reflects an attempt at narrating the African experience, the struggles associated with imperialism and its relics of denigration and oppression which seems to remain visible features of post-independent Africa. This accounts for African writers’ attempt at foregrounding the tension that exists within the shores of Africa, with the aim of asserting the African nation above all forms and conventions of imperialism and neo-colonialism. As it were, the African continent seems to stand at the crossroads as it negotiates self re-definition against subtle forms of imperialism while grappling with new forms of subjugation perpetuated within the nation by Africans. Regrettably, the attainment of independence has not automatically portended the realisation of the cherished dreams of freedom, responsibility of self-government, socio-political and economic satisfaction. A new reality however unfolds, maimed by anarchy, chaos, coups, disillusionment, injustice, betrayal, poverty, social unrest, hunger, oppression, corruption and war. In fact, Africa has become embroiled in wars on two fronts, one within and the other without. (Kehinde & Mbipom, 2011: 62-63). In real, a drastic and regenerating change is required to retrieve the continent from sinking into non-manageable animosity. For, though located in a tropical forest, Africa is she is reckoned to

<sup>2</sup> In Murray-Brown’s *Kenyatta* (1972 : 157), reported in Amoussou (2010 : 426)



be the cradle of humanity and a land of gregarious mind par excellence. There is no good reason to turn her into a frightening and threatening land of wild beasts just for egotistic human bestialities. In cases where people get fed up with bearing the yoke of their subjugated status, there generally arise social riots and insurrections. In that regard, Soyinka (1972/ 2011: xxiii) warns that: "Those who make peaceful change impossible make violent change inevitable". By the way, it must permeate every individual mind the conviction that reciprocal humility is the most important and sine qua non condition to foster social justice, enhance people's sense of communal membership and spur their genuine commitment to building peace and development. As to compensating generational gap in Africa, a best way to enhance social harmony is encapsulated in the following wise quotes: "The proof of wisdom is the wish to learn even from children. And the haste of youth must learn its temper from the gloss of ancient leather" (Soyinka, 1974:48) and "The old must flow into the new, not blind itself or stand foolishly apart... Old wine thrives best within a new bottle" (Soyinka, 1974:49). Overall, Africa is suffering a serious but insidious pervasive schizophrenia to which proficient psychosurgery is urging.

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