



## **AESTHETIC DYNAMISM AND RECONSTRUCTION**



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### **ABSTRACT**

*Using the New historicist theoretical consideration, this work entitled “Aesthetic Dynamism and Reconstruction” in selected Plays of Wole Soyinka and Athol Fugard investigates the impact of culture in the postcolonial scene. The influence of history on literature and the effect that writers have on their societies is exposed. The work is guided by the following research questions; What role does history through culture play in the chosen dramaturgies of Wole Soyinka and Athol Fugard under concern?”, “Do the histories of South Africa and Nigeria have familiar representation?”, “How do the playwrights achieve their revolutionary perspectives?”, and “What is the place of history in postcolonial African settings?” Hence, this paper is informed by the hypothetical claim that the plays of Wole Soyinka and Athol Fugard under selection serve as historical elements to uncover the unpleasant*

*undertones that affect the victimized in Nigeria and South Africa, and how aesthetics on its part is used as a weapon of reconstruction. The work equally defines the approaches that are used by these playwrights so that the violated find place, and have word in these societies that are structured to dominate and oppress them. In Soyinka’s Madmen and Specialists, The Trials of Brother Jero, Jero’s Metamorphosis, Death and the King’s Horseman and Fugard’s The Island, Master Harold and the Boys, Sizwe Bansi is Death and Statements After the Arrest Under the Immorality Act, a revolutionary perspective is derived via the heightened use of elements of style. This work equally reveals that the employed motifs and the thematic frameworks upon which the work is drafted expose the playwrights as human rights activists.*

### **KEYWORDS**

*Aesthetic Dynamism, Reconstruction, human rights, culture, history*

## RESEARCH PAPER

The histories of nations influence writers' visionary perception. Writers manipulate colonial, political, economic, socio-cultural and religious histories as spring board to shape their works, and to impact the societies from where they emanate. Significantly, writers use their texts (Poetry, Drama, prose) to uphold the virtues of their societies and at the same time to debunk with high impunity the shortcomings of their settings. The Postcolonial period is an important time period in the history of authors and the authors use this as tool to disclose the constraints of the stigmatized. As a means to combat villainous practices like racial segregation, oppression, violence, marginalization, corruption and many other weird practices that affect the welfare of the governed, and to crusade for change, the authors use elements of culture elaborately. Wole Soyinka's *Madmen and Specialists*, *Dead and the King's Horseman*, *The Trials of Brother Jero* and *Jero's Metamorphosis* and Athol Fugard's *The Island*, *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*, *Master Harold and The Boys*, *Statements After An Arrest Under the Immorality Act* give a panoramic view of what in the authors' backgrounds. By examining Wole Soyinka's *Madmen and Specialists*, *The Trials of Brother Jero*, *Jero's Metamorphosis* and *Death and the King's Horseman*, and Athol Fugard's *The Island*, *Master Harold and the Boys*, *Statements After An Arrest under the Immorality Act* and *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* the role that history plays in the society. A succinct study of the plays of Wole Soyinka and Athol Fugard provides room for a wider interpretation, and gives allowance for a comparative study of both authors and their societies. Thematic frameworks such as racism, ethnicity, identity and class difference in South Africa and the barbarism and vaulting ambition of leaders in Nigeria disclose that though the historical settings of the authors are divergent, human predicament is universal. Franz Fanon opines:

*The colonized artist who writes for his people ought to use the past with the intention of opening the future, as any invitation to action and as a base for hope [...] this type of literature is literature of combat, because it moulds the national consciousness giving it form and contours and flinging open before it, new and boundless horizons assuming responsibility and demonstrating the will to liberty expressed in terms of time and space. (187)*

Fanon's view mirrors the importance, or the role that writers play in shaping their respective societies since they use the past as a weapon to advocate for freedom. The past therefore has significant effect on the society since it gives room to understand the future. In like manner, Bole Butake in "The Writer as Visionary", in *Epasa Moto* argues:

*The writer has moral lesson to steer members of his society along a course that ensures the truth and justice for all ... the writer must have a contribution to make to the moral, spiritual cultural, social, economic and political development of his society. (23)*

In other words, Butake regards writers with importance since they pilot society for change. Examining other elements in the society, it is clear that the role of writers cannot be underestimated. Significantly, Fanon and Butake stress the relevance, or the role that writers play in their various societies. Their significance in this wise, cannot be undermined as they prompt for change. Mindful of this, there is no doubt that Soyinka and Fugard intend to rewrite, or better still, to give meaning or positive design to the histories of Nigeria and South Africa respectively. By this, like Butake highlights, it is evident that our chosen playwrights are visionary in their perspectives. Via cultural elements that serve as satire, Soyinka and Fugard seek to reconstruct the fabrics of their societies and others at large.

Wole Soyinka and Athol Fugard manipulate particular textual devices to translate the horrid realities that affect their societies and beyond. It would be salient to earmark that new historicists stand on the premise that the intrinsic qualities of a text also give meaning and shape to a text. In this respect, the playwrights under concern use a particular style in their dramaturgies to depict the socio-political and economic strata that affect Nigeria, South Africa and other societies that share familiar experiences. Thus, Wole Soyinka and Athol Fugard employ elaborate use of symbolism, irony, pathos, stage direction and a host of others to underscore the predicaments of the masses and to better explain the realities of dystopia in a society. These elements of style would be discussed in an interwoven manner, not as separate entities. Adedeji Joel in “Aesthetics of Soyinka’s Theatre” in *Before Our Very Eyes* reveals:

*Structuralism as an aesthetic component of Soyinka’s theatre raises his plays from the stylistic category of the conventional (western) dramatic structure to matrix of the indigenous (African). (122)*

This section of the work examines both playwrights as masters of culture whose structure gives a picture of Africa. The playwrights go further to use symbolism to depict deep and profound issues than just their physical projection. James Picker and Jeffrey Hoepfer in *Literature* define symbolism as, “something that stands for or suggests something else by reason of relationship, association, convention, or accidental resemblance..., a visible sign of something invisible” (57). The importance of symbolism cannot be ignored since it gives a wider interpretation of a work of art. In this wise, Soyinka’s *Madmen and Specialists* showcases anomalies that occur in our contemporary world. The playwright highlights these abnormalities through the theme of madness. As already elaborated in the above chapters, the madness of the repressed results from Dr. Bero’s government strategies to keep the paupers under continuous strain. Such a government is representative of governments in the postcolonial era that are out to maim the masses. Soyinka therefore explores the theme of madness as portrayed in the title to lampoon the ills of the Nigerian society. By this act, the artist presents the state of the Nigerian veterans as a result of the Biafran war which occurred between 1966 and 1971. Here, we notice that New historicism is indispensable in understanding the text and the society from where the author emanates. Soyinka manipulates textual evidence to question the mishaps in Nigeria at the time. The acquisition of independence becomes cardinal since the realities of

Nigeria and other societies that experience the same bottlenecks are brought to light. Through the symbolic representation of the title, there is every trace that Soyinka is affected by the theme of madness. This reminds us of Tatah H. Mbuy's article entitled "The Moral Responsibility of the Writer in a Pluralist Society: The Case of the Cameroon Anglophone Writer" in *Anglophone Cameroon Writing* where he documents:

*Every good writer is something of a prophet, a seer and soothsayer in the society. He pricks the consciences of all and tries to correct faults where these are to be found. To do this effectively, the writer must see his duty as being over and above personal consideration and preferences. In a pluralist society such as ours, he must look beyond mere partisan politics and tribal concerns. (88)*

The importance of writers is revealed above as they have as objective to correct the faults in society by going against the norms. *Madmen and Specialists* can then be interpreted from Mbuy's standpoint since Soyinka is out to deride the fiendish behaviour of political leaders who behave conscienceless. Not only does Wole Soyinka use titles with salient effect, but other postcolonial writers do same. John Nkemngong Nkengasong's *Black Caps and Red Feathers* equally portrays a warring society where by the quest and monger for power is the order of the day. The image of the 'Black Cap' and the 'red feathers' suggest the theme of vaulting ambition that is popular in postcolonial settings. The cap and the feathers are symbols of power and authority in African settings.

In similar vein, *Death and the King's Horseman* exposes the contemporary events that affect postcolonial societies of which Nigeria is a part. The ironic twist through which the title is revealed suggests on the one hand, celebration of culture, and on the other hand, clash of culture. By close examination of the title, the theme of clash of culture is x-rayed since Pilkings as a neo colonialist is sent to 'culture' the blacks and conscientise them on the effects of brutal killings which to the later is an act of dystopia. He does not understand how a human being can be buried alive with a dead person. The event told of by Wole Soyinka coincides with the event that occurred in Oyo in 1946. Simon Gikandi in *A Norton Critical Edition Wole Soyinka's Death and the King's Horseman* relates, "For some, it is obvious that the knowledge or interest in the events that took place in Oyo in 1946 were limited" (18). This is clear evidence that the history of Nigeria is weaved in *Death and the King's Horseman*. *We can then infer that it is from this historical presiding that the author is influenced. The respect for culture is underlined when one of the custodians of the land; Iyaloja explains in details:*

*It is the death of war that kills the valiant,  
Death of water is how the swimmer goes  
It is the death that kills the trader  
And death of indecision takes the idle away  
The trade of the cutlass blunts its edge  
And the beautiful die the death of beauty.  
It takes an Elesin to die the death of death. (35)*

The importance of death is emphasised through the repetitive use of the word ‘death’. This imagery ‘(death)’ from a cultural perspective depicts the fact that there is beauty and satisfaction when someone dies in the course of fulfilling this ritual. This barbaric action reminds us of the pre colonial period when all was primitive. There is that strong link between the living and the dead. In some cultures in Africa, it is very clear that there is a link between the living and the dead as opined by Birago Diop who reveals in his poem entitled “Breath” in Poems of Black Africa:

*Those who are dead have never gone  
They in the shadows darkening around,  
They are the shadows shading into day  
The dead are not under the ground.  
They are in the traces that quiver,  
They are in the woods that weep,  
They are in the waters of the rivers,  
They are in the waters that sleep.(44)*

The above poem attests the fact that Birago presents the presence of the dead, though considered dead. In some cultures, the dead are rather given special consideration. The fact that the poet says that they are in “the waters”, “woods” certify their presence. What operates in *Dead and the King’s Horseman* is contrary to what should be. If Pilkings; a colonial representative should oppose this, it therefore means that there is clash of culture. The study of dystopia steps in to question these acts of vandalism that go above human rights. Therefore, some aspects of culture should be reconciled.

Moreso, Soyinka makes illustrious use of symbolism in *The Trials of Brother Jero*. In this thought provoking play that depicts religious hypocrisy, the protagonist experiences many temptations that make him finally fall. All the experiences that come his way are similar to those that are traversed by charlatans who join the body of clergies just because they vault to make fast money. Ironically, Jero’s comportment in the mist of his trials is what is paramount in comprehending postcolonial societies. Thus, what Soyinka reveals is catchy since most African countries face similar trajectories. To support the fact that Soyinka satirises charlatans, Jero’s mind is x-rayed:

*Charlatans! If only I had this beach to myself.... But how does one maintain his dignity when the daughter of Eve forces him to leave his own house through the window? God curses that woman! I never thought she would dare affront the presence of a man of God. One pound eight for this little cap. It is sheer robbery. (19)*

Soyinka does not only use Jeroboam as a Clergy, but he equally goes beyond to look at him as a representation of leadership through his character traits.

Equally, Soyinka's *The Road* reflects such experiences when Professor has a problem with the church funds, he is kept in custody. This is made known in the dialogue between Samson and Salubi:

Samson: *Where are you born that you don't know Professor?*

Salubi: *I only know there was the matter of church funds. Did he go to prison?*  
(62)

This dialogue points to the fact that corruption, mismanagement and misappropriation of funds which are known to exist in the society have crept into the fabrics of the church. By implication, the use of satire enables us to question the vile practices that occur in the place. Again, Professor is obsessed with the idea of the essence of death, while the nation demands urgent solutions to the problem of unemployment, road accidents and thuggery. Wole Soyinka's *Jero's Metamorphosis* exposes the transformation that affects a people who align with fraudulent acts. Jeroboam's end in this play sounds a brutal warning to those that still exploit the masses. Through the elaborate use of stage direction, the playwright derides:

*Brother Jero's office. It is no longer his rent-troubled shack of The Trials but a modest white-washed room, quite comfortable. A 'surplus-store' steel cabinet is tucked in a corner. On a cloth-covered table is an ancient beat-up typewriter of the oldest imaginable model but functioning... Jero's diocese is no longer governed by his old friends the civilian politicians. (47)*

The sudden transformation or metamorphosis that is exposed by Jero stresses on the theme of hypocrisy. The evocative use of vivid description as intimated by a "modest white-washed room, quite comfortable" no doubt shows that the playwright lambasts the hypocritical nature of religious figures and political leaders whose aim is to exploit the fidels and masses and leave them in a near tragic state. Jero's new state best describes the shameless state of many postcolonial leaders whose objective is to exploit. The ironic twist above defends the tittle 'Jero's Metamorphosis'. Thus, the highly symbolic nature of the play fits into the contemporary realities of the society from where the author and most postcolonial writers originate. Edgar Wright in *Critical Procedures and the Evaluation of African Literature* underscores:

*Nigerian writers were to face some difficult choices about the presentation of reality, whether they wished to examine their past or their present, and some legally difficult choices about leadership and the audience they wanted to 'overlap' with. (15)*

As opposed to what Edgar feels about Nigerian writers who find it complex to paint reality as realistically, Wole Soyinka's *Jero's Metamorphosis* tailors truth not only about postcolonial Nigeria, but about other societies that share the same sordid realities in a blunt manner. The play is thus, an externalisation of the author's fears, nightmares and fantasies, successful attempt to depict reality as apprehended by him and his own individual sense. *Jero's Metamorphosis* is a depiction of truth and history as compared to Sankie Maimo in an interview in *Anthology of Cameroon Literature in English* who

relates “The fact is that the past is with us and helps us to fully understand the present, so I think it is necessary in my work. I also give link if I regard a past historical point essential in my social commentary of the present times.” (p 99) The author recognises the place of past information in works of art without which, there is no social element to discuss. Like Sankie Maimo states, *Jero's Metamorphosis* betrays traces of the past which facilitate our understanding of the author's fears. To further highlight the past, the high use of symbolism, through Jero's dramatic monologue reveals:

*And now dear brother shepherds of the flock let us waste no more time. We are mostly known to one another so I shall not waste your time on introductions. The subject is progress. Progress has cut up with us. Like the ocean tide it is battering on our shore-line, the doorstep of our tabernacle projects every where! Fun fairs! Gambling! Casinos! The servants of mammon have had their heads turned with those foreign flesh pots. (76)*

The description of the activities of charlatans is made lucid in the above excerpt. The concept of religion is now seen as a game that brings about personal gain. It is rather ironic as showcased by the spear head, brother Jeroboam whose fiendish action of exploitation is made evident. The hypocritical elements in Soyinka's play are powerful and skillful so as to expound the social ills that govern not only the playwright's works and the society, but others as a whole. The playwright's valiant use of images such as “Funfairs” ‘Gambling’, casinos and ‘mammon’ appeal to our senses since we visualise a completely worldly setting whereby everyone is geared towards self satisfaction. By implication, the action of clergies is of high signification since they indicate the practice of dystopia in the church. Soyinka in his dramaturgy vaults for a utopia society where the above vices are absent. Soyinka's view of a utopia society can be compared to Sir Thomas More's prospective of a utopia environment as opined in his book entitled *Utopia* (book II):

*The Island of utopia is in the middle two hundred miles broad, and holds almost at the same breadth over a great part of it, but it grows narrower towards both ends. Its figure is not unlike a crescent: between its horns, the sea comes in eleven miles broad, and spreads itself into a great bay, which is environed with land to the compass of about five hundred miles, and is well secured from winds. In this bay there is no great current, the whole coast is as it were, one continued harbour which give all that live in the Island great convenience. (28)*

The above passage reveals Thomas More's definition of an ideal society where all who live therein should live in serenity and security. In Soyinka's struggle to picture the society the way he does, one may suggest the difficulties involved in postulating the idealness of his school of thought. Reading through Soyinka's plays, the tonal question that one asks is, “is it actually possible to live in a utopian society within postcolonial era?”

Moreover, the elaborate use of symbolism is revealed through consequential literary elements such as character and setting. First, *Madmen*

*and Specialists* reiterates the theme of dystopia through the high use of names such as Dr. Bero, the Mendicants, Blind man, Iya mate and a host of others. These characters define the political, social, economic, cultural and religious settings from where Soyinka springs. Just from name calling like Blind man, it indicates that the veterans returned from the war each with physical defects beyond human comprehension. Dr. Bero's name is highly symbolic since the treatment this doctor gives is contrary to his profession. This ironic twist reveals the theme of torture and reversal of value. The realities raised in *Madmen and Specialists* are similar to those discussed in other countries such as Cameroon, Kenya and a host of others. The experiences spoken of in the Nigerian civil war cut across the plot in *Madmen and Specialists*. This play therefore historicises happenings such as the Biafran war. This war had far-reaching effects on its victims and as way out, Soyinka symbolically presents the old women like Iya mate as custodians who always mediate on behalf of the oppressed and the stigmatised. The old women are aware of the mishaps that characterise their setting. In this course, by making an evocative use of character, Soyinka reenacts the theme of prejudice which is evident in a dystopian world. In *Rereading America Cultural Contexts for Critical Thinking and Writing* in "Created Equal" The Myths of the Melting Pot', Vincent N. Parrillo propounds:

*There appears to be no single cause of prejudice but rather many causes that are frequently interrelated. Because fear and suspicion of out groups are so widespread, scholars and scientists once believed that prejudice was a natural or biological human attribute. (376-377)*

Parrillo in the above extract associates the root cause of prejudice to interrelated causes such as fear and suspicion. In *Madmen and Specialists*, Soyinka seems to portray prejudice against the Mendecants because of their physical defects. They are bound to undergo victimisation by the minority regardless of the fact that according to history, they are the very persons that fought for their fatherland and pathetically were left in such conditions.

Wole Soyinka in *The Trials of Brother Jero* and *Jero's Metamorphosis* postulates the theme of dystopia through the rich and evocative use of characterisation. A name such as the daughter of Eve appeals to our senses since it reminds us of biblical figures and the paradox in their communicative pattern put their comportment to question. Brother Jeroboam's association with others like Member of Parliament serves as mockery to political figures that have turned preponderant in their quest for power. Again, via the character of the Member of Parliament who attends church at odd times just for selfish reasons, we are reminded of the vaulting ambition that characterise political leaders. Thus, Soyinka's literary prowess reveals the odds in the contemporary Nigerian society. In *Madmen and Specialists* the playwright describes signals of dystopia through the conduct of the old women (Iya mate and Iya Agba). They represent the custodian repertoire that brings peace, order, security and protection not only to the people but also to the society as a whole. The old women guide, train and advice Si bero on details concerning herbs. Soyinka at this point upholds traditional values. The old women symbolise the spiritual reality, which is stronger and powerful than the physical represented by Bero.

It is thanks to their spiritual protection as they hand over their lives to Dr. Bero that he finally returns home. This explains why Dr. Bero questions the name of their cult, “And any cult one can destroy we move as the earth moves, nothing more, we age as the earth ages” These old women are duty conscious and responsible since they remind Dr. Bero that he has to bring his father so that they can have him treated. Sibero equally symbolises a traditional herbal healer who pays more importance to the traditional and cultural aspects of life. The importance of herbs can equally be illustrated in Nkemngong’s *Across the Mongolo* when Ngwe gets to Kamagola, specifically in the university of Besaadi after his madness. There is ardent need for him to get back to Attah to get healed from this ordeal. The significance of elements of nature isn’t highlighted as he gets healed from his madness. Joel Adedeji in “Aesthetics of Soyinka’s Theatre reveals, “Soyinka’s theatre presents a woman, her acts of pouring wine on the floor symbolise her attachment to the ancestors who serve as source of enlightenment and inspiration.

Moreover, Soyinka makes great use of symbolism through the high use of animal imagery especially that of the vulture. A vulture is a wild bird that feeds on bad flesh (both animals and humans). A vulture symbolises oppression, violence, power and authority, subjugation, cruelty, lack of compassion and even death. The government or those in power act as a vulture through their insatiable hunger for power. The image of the vulture defines Soyinka’s world as one that feeds on human flesh. The theme of dystopia is sustained by the themes of cannibalism and savagery. It is ironic that a human being should eat another human being. These human beings in the political world represent postcolonial dictators, world wide. Today there are hallmarks of these abysmal practices as testified by the Boko Haram group. In *The Lion and the Jewel* for instance, Soyinka exemplifies the negative parts of leaders when Baroka, the Bale of Ilujinle, is not only egocentric, he is antithetical to progress. As a blockage to progress in the old age, he is no example for effective and efficient leadership. For more description of crude treatment by leaders, Sidi, the jewel of Ilujinle is ‘seized’ by Baroka, the ‘god’s deputy’ when a pearl is given to the lion, it gets destroyed. This situation at stake shows that the traditional ruler cannot be a good example of a leader because, like most postcolonial leaders, he indulges in corrupt practices. Also, the gruesome involvements of leaders can be pictured in an online article entitled “Nobel Prize Winning author Wole Soyinka Warns of Religion’s Roll Call of Death”, when Ian Johnston comments:

*Atrocities carried out by fanatics such as Nigeria’s Boko Haram show the dangers of religious belief with the “scroll of faith... in distinguishable from the roll call of death”, according to the Nobel prize-winning author Wole Soyinka. In a video address to the world Humanist congress, at which he will be presented with its main award today, Soyinka will argue that even moderate religious leaders may be “vicariously liable” for sectarian hatred if they have failed to argue against it. (1)*

Contemporary happenings such as Boko Haram share similar realities with what obtains in Soyinka’s plays. As presented by Ian Johnston, the

practices of the Boko Haram reveal the sectarian designs and vaulting ambition that perpetrate the postcolonial scene. Soyinka goes ahead to show that even 'religious bodies are practitioners of such acts. The question that this work seeks to answer is to know whether or not we are safe in our very societies. Apart from all such vicious plans as mentioned above, what should be done to remedy the situation? Wole Soyinka in *The Trials of Brother Jero* according to Meena, Rani Taiz in *The Trials of Brother Jero* relates, "... A freedom fighter and unscrupulous, dashing unequivocal and vociferous creative writer, Wole Soyinka carved and honourable position in the modern world by means of his scintillation fearless and realistic writings"(1). In his endeavour, he strikes a thought-provoking subject matter "freedom". The quest for freedom becomes premedical in understanding Soyinka's plays. Meena in the same article expounds:

*In his treatment of harsh realism theme, Soyinka reminds us of popular German-dramatist- Bertolt Brecht and French dramatist Moliere, the renowned classicist comedy writer Ben Jonson and social dramatist like G.B Shaw. The Trials of Brother Jero is fierce satire, a farce on the profanity, hypocrisy and moral bankruptcy, prevalent in the contemporary Nigerian society. ( 2)*

By comparing Soyinka to the above mentioned writers, Meena implies that Soyinka does not write in vacuum. Rather, he is satirical through religious hypocrisy which is a common, but hardly spoken theme amongst postcolonial writers.

Furthermore, Athol Fugard also depicts melancholic realities of South Africa through the high use of symbolism. In *The Island*, the playwright makes a symbolic representation of the title to situate apartheid as one that affects the victimised blacks with far-reaching repercussions. From the definition of an Island, it is a piece of isolated land surrounding by water. *The Island* reveals how blacks were imprisoned because of the discrimination that was exercised therein. The title therefore suggests that the character is confined. By presenting *The Island* as a fictional representation of South Africa, Fugard depicts a society that marginalises the black populace. The fact that characters like Winston, John and old Hary work without rest, the themes of oppression, racial segregation and victimisation are mirrored. The prisoners are exploited politically, socially, economically and other wise. *The Island* corroborates these inequalities in John's outrages:

*Those bastards will do anything to break you if the wheelbarrow and the quarry don't do it, they'll try every thing else. Remember that visit when they lined up all the men on the other side... Take a good look and say good bye! Back to the cell! (65)*

The experience of the quarry, which is a political weapon to imprison black, is vividly exemplified as John unmasks above. The black experience in the quarry reflects prison as history has it that Nelson Mandela, the freedom fighter was incarcerated therein. The black race undergoes social difference and these differences impact Fugard in his creative writing. Ngugi Wa

Thiong'o in *Something Torn and New: An African Renaissance* in 'Remembering Visions' opines:

*Creative imagination is one of the greatest of remembering practices. The relationship of writers to their social memory is central to their quest and mission. Memory is the link between the past and the present, between space and time, and it is the base of our dreams. Writers and the intellectuals in these movements are aware that without a reconnection with African memory, there is no wholeness. (39)*

The South African apartheid experience is no doubt exposed through social memory. Like Ngugi states above, writers play a pivotal role as they draw the connection between the past and the present. *The Island* signals Athol Fugard as a creative writer since he makes use of symbolism to lambast racial segregation. John's resentment in the quarry reflects the unpleasant surprises that prisoners receive while working at the quarry. The black prisoners are not only physically traumatised, but psychologically battered as well. They suffer internally because even when their relatives come for visits, they are not allowed to chat with them. John articulates, "take a good look and say good bye! Back to your cells". This recalls the discrimination that obtained in South Africa. The experience in *The Island* elaborately relates the tortures in South Africa. To attest that the apartheid system of government fuels Fugard's *The Island*, Nancy Clark and Williams H. Worger in *South Africa The Rise and fall of Apartheid* in "Growing Contradictions" have this to advance:

*Apartheid had been implemented inside South Africa through an intricate series of laws and regulations carefully constructed to separate the race into a hierarchy of power with all groups subservient to white rule. Throughout the 1950s, the South African government that enacted legislation that controlled every aspect of its citizens' lives based on race. (62)*

Racial difference seems to be the key words that are used to describe the living conditions of races in South Africa during the apartheid period. The symbolic representation of the text's title gives a summary of South Africa's acts of racial segregation. Moreover, the importance of symbolism is clearly exemplified in Fugard's *Sizwe Bansi is Death*. The title reflects death; probably the death of the blacks. For the protagonist to be able to live, he has to take upon himself the identification of Mr. Robert Zwelinzima, in order to earn a living with a death man's passbook. This action is very symbolic since the idea of the passbook comes into scene. Without this book, the black's life is insignificant. The book is out to define the state of the blacks in South Africa; blacks are 'paupers', 'stigmatised', 'voiceless' and a host of other words could be used to negate them. Again, the Man reveals:

*I will tell you in English where he says. My passbook talks good English too... big words that Sizwe can't read and doesn't understand. Sizwe wants to stay here in New Brighton and find a job, passbook says No! Report back. Sizwe wants to feed his wife and children: passbook says "No. Endorsed out." (33)*

The relevance of the passbook is well defined in the above articulation since man exposes what it does in the lives of blacks. It conditions the blacks on access to job and access to live in the city. Without the passbook, blacks are socio-politically and economically kept under custody and in a near tragic state. It is quite pathetic to see that blacks are not treated as people worthy of life. Wole Soyinka in this stance ridicules social inequality that results from colour stigma. This work is better understood using new historicism as an approach since the above articulation makes mention towns such as New Brighton. Historically, this town exists in South Africa and the author makes great use of history to expose the happenings at the time. Ngugi Wa Thiong'o in *Something Torn and New In African Resistance* 'From Colour to Social consciousness' states:

*The minority Europeans tried to create a South Africa after their own image, which they, too, saw as representative of Western civilisation. But South Africa would also embody the resistance against negative consequences of that modernity; indeed, in its history we see clashes and interactions of race, class, gender ethnicity and religion-social forces that bedevil the world today. (107)*

Issues well spoken of in the postcolonial era are aforementioned. The complexities in South Africa that affect writers and their societies include race, class, gender ethnicity and religion. Fugard exemplifies these themes; especially race in *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* to expose the high level of dystopia in South Africa. Historically, with the apartheid system in South Africa, the black race suffered under fiendish treatment. Historical icons like a Nelson Mandela equally fell prey to such. In *Literature Timeless Voices Timeless Themes: The American Experience*, it is revealed:

*From 1964 to 1990, Nelson Madela was imprisoned for opposing South Africa's white minority government. Instead of disappearing from view, Mandela became a martyr worldwide symbol of resistance to racism. In 1993, Mandela and the president who released him F.W. de Klerk shared the Nobel Peace Prize. In 1994 Mandela was elected the country's president. (1182)*

Mandela's struggles in South Africa portray the horrid condition that the majority blacks underwent in the hands of the minority whites. The negative repercussions were not reduced until when Mandela mounted power. *The Island* and other texts under study serve as mirror or a microcosm of misrepresentation because the black race has something to offer and as such, should be given word. In order to find place, through the epistolary device, Sizwe Bansi scripts "After a week with Zola, I was in big trouble. The headman came around and after a lot of happenings which I will tell you when I see you, they put a stamp in my passbook which said I must leave Port Elizabeth at once in three days time"(p22). Pathetically, Port Elizabeth symbolises hell for blacks since, like Sizwe and others, you cannot survive there without a passbook. Sizwe is given just 3 days to quit the place. The theme of racial segregation is revealed in its fullest. New historicism informs the work since

traces of apartheid are patterned in the work. Nandy L. Clark and William Worger in *South Africa the Rise and Fall of Apartheid* argue:

*From the most basic rights of citizenship to the most personal choice of association, life in South Africa was dictated by race laws. These laws not only aimed at separating whites and blacks, they also instituted the legal principles that whites should be treated more favourably than blacks, that separate facilities need not be equal, and that the state should exercise the power deemed accessory to deals with any opposition. (45)*

Athol Fugard's plays are all but an allegory of the above-mentioned acts of restriction. In them, the black race is looked upon as misfortune. Ironically, the South African society instead traumatised the blacks than protect them. The South African society during the apartheid period drafted laws that kept blacks under imprisonment. *Statements After the Arrest under the Immorality Act* attests, "Do you think it possible that philander thought you provided him with an easy opportunity to have intercourse with a white, woman? Because as a coloured man the law forbids it" (102). To further highlight the historicity of the text, Nancy Clark and William Worger in *South Africa: The Rise and Fall of Apartheid* opine:

*With a basic system of identification and control in place the nationalist government could determine where and how Africans would live what rights they could enjoy and those they could marry and so forth. The prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act (No.55) of 1949 made marriages between whites and members of other racial groups illegal. The immorality Act [No 21] of 1950 extended an earlier ban on sexual relations between whites and Africans (the Immorality Act [No. 51 of 1927] ) to a ban on sexual Relations between whites and any non-whites. (47)*

With the series of prohibitions as recanted, there is no doubt that *Statement....* revisits history by presenting acts of inhumanity that are exercised by whites against the blacks. The text is a social satire for the respect of human rights. In the text, the different aberrations that constrain blacks, give the impression that they are a race controlled by the laws that promote the practice of apartheid. This explains why Philander in the text should not attempt to have sex with a white woman. Athol Fugard, through ironic twist, succeeds to paint the blacks as the periphery. He defines and deconstructs every negative construct because according to him black is beauty. It is clear evidence that this work is informed by the new historicist theory. In this history, whites claim to be at the 'centre' as opposed to blacks who are positioned at the 'periphery' or at the 'margin'. It then becomes important for the blacks to be aware of their identities no matter the odds. Kwame Anthony Appiah points the relevance of the consciousness of identity in *Postcolonial Discourses* when he quotes Chinua Achebe in "African Identity":

*The duration of awareness of consciousness of an identity has really very little to do with how deep it is you can suddenly become aware of*

*an identity which you have been suffering from for of a long time, without knowing. For instance take the Igbo people. In my area historically, they did not see themselves as Igbo. They saw themselves as people from this village or that village. In fact in some places "Igbo" was a word of abuse; they were the "other" people, down in the bush. And yet after the experience of the Biafra War, during a people of two years it became a very powerful consciousness. (226)*

The concept of "other" is typical of postcolonial societies as typified by the experience in Nigeria. Like South Africa which discriminates against the black race, Nigeria with the challenge of a multiplicity of ethnic groups, the issue of marginalisation is equally a call for concern. It is only through awareness that there is a way out. The theme of stigmatisation is exposed as Athol Fugard's characters are caught in between. From the experiences of the protagonist (*Philander*) and other blacks in *Statements After the Arrest under the Immorality Act*, we have the impression that the apartheid system kept the black race under perpetual trauma. As such, Fugard's works are a microcosm of the hideous experience of racial segregation. Michael Omi and Howard Winant in *Rereading America Cultural, Contexts for Critical Thinking and Writing* in "Racial Formation" pinpoint:

*Race consciousness, and its articulation in theories of race, is largely a modern phenomenon. When European explorers in the New World "discovered" people who looked different than themselves, these "natives" challenged the existing conceptions of the origins of human species, and raised disturbing questions as to whether all could be considered in the same "family of man." Religious debates, flared over the attempt to reconcile the Bible with the existence of "racially distinct" people. (357-358)*

The concepts of 'race' and 'racism' come into play with the exercise of European exploration. The questioning of the black race becomes premedial in the reading of postcolonial texts that reflect themes that cut across colonial experiences. The writers under concern exploit ideas centred on race to satirise acts of dystopia. Nyo Wakai in *Inside the Fence: Reminiscences As A Defiance* quotes Carl Sandburg's poem entitled "Leaving the Fence":

*Freedom is habit  
And a coat worn  
Some born to wear it  
Some never to know it,  
Freedom is cheap  
Or again as a garment  
Is so costly  
Men pay their lives for it.  
Freedom is baffling: men having know not they have it  
Till they have it is gone and  
They no longer have it. (61)*

Sandburg's poem exposes the theme of freedom which is imperative in a society that is characterised by imprisonment. Wakai Nyo alludes to this poem since historically he was once a victim of imprisonment in one of the central prisons in Cameroon (Kondengui). The quest for freedom becomes cardinal in the above poem. Unlike Cameroon, South Africa as depicted in the works of Fugard and others is marred by the practice of racism in its highest order.

Like Sizwe Bansi, Harry, Winston, Sam and others are victims of racism. Racism in itself reveals the need for a utopia society as highlighted by Sir, Thomas Moore. In the preface to Lewis R. Gordon's *Bad Faith and Anti Black Racism*, he reveals that, a great deal of the effort to study racism is marred by the core problem of self-evasion. This is partly because the study of racism is dirty business. It unveils things about ourselves that we may prefer not to know. If racism emerges out of an evasive spirit it is hardly the case that it would stand still and permit itself be unmasked" (10). It is at this backdrop that Athol Fugard in his selected plays postulates a society that has lost all moral values. Who then is at the center or at the margin? The characters' situations and settings as presented by Athol Fugard are a microcosm of South Africa. Mohandas Ghandi discloses the pain of prejudice as a result of colour and the necessity to quench it as he intimates, The hardship to which I was subjected was superficial,[,] only a symptom of the deep disease of colour prejudice. I should try, if possible, to rootout the disease and suffer hardships in the process.Redness for wrongs I should seek only to the extent that it would be necessary for the removal of the colour prejudice"(10).

Wole Soyinka in his attempt to present the muddle that governed the Nigerian society during the Nigerian civil war, the stage direction outlines:

*Sibero approaches, carrying a small boy form, which protrudes same twigs with, leaves and belies.The mendicants, begin their performance as soon as they sense her approach. Blind man in Alms collector, Goyi repeats a single aerobatics trick, AAFAA is the 'dance' Blind man shakes the rattles while the cripple drums with his crutches and is lead singer. Blind man collects alms in the rattles. (8)*

This stage direction is highly symbolic since it exposes the different traumas exposed by the Mendicants. From a new historicism viewpoint, the Biafran civil war caused a number of casualties which left it victims deficient in one way or the other. A utopia society as opined by sir Thomas More is yet to be born. Again, through the use of stage direction, the activities of the Mendicants are x-rayed, "They watch her pass. She goes into the old WOMEN'S hut and AAFAA sneaks near a moment latter far try and eavesdrop. The others pass the time throwing dice in the old women's hut" (16). The activities of the Mendicants and Sibero are clearly seen above as the old Women's hut serves as meeting point. This hut is a symbolic representation of the unanimous struggles to fight against forces of darkness that characterise Soyinka's World. This is a clear indication that Soyinka makes use of elements of tradition to expand on the theme of dystopia. It is worth mentioning that it is in the hut that the old women live and thus carry out revolutionary activities. As such, the building reveals the theme of resistance. For changes to occur there is absolute need for a revolutionary team spirit. The character trait of the

old women is highly significant since they act as upholders of the land. Iya mate and Iya Agba symbolise peace, order, security and protection not only to the people, but also to the society as a whole. They guide, train and advice Sibero on details concerning herbs. They also symbolise the authentic and ideals of traditional value. They equally stand for spiritual reality, which is stronger and powerful than, the physical as represented by Dr. Bero. Sibero constitutes the traditional herbal healer who pays more importance to traditional and cultural aspects of life. In a setting that is typically male chauvinistic, Soyinka in his attempt to rewrite about the importance of women like Buchi Emecheta who pictures such images in her text entitled *Second Class Citizen*. In this text, like old women in *Death and the King's Horseman*, Ada, the protagonist goes beyond what society lays down for women. She proves that she can debunk this whole notion of male chauvinism which in the context of this study is an aspect of dystopia since women are deprived of their rights. A similar situation holds in Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* where Tambu the protagonist should not school simply because she is a female. At the end of the text, she finally sets at the mission school. In *Nervous Conditions*, the author castigates male chauvinism. There is no doubt that like Tsitsi Dangarembga, Wole Soyinka equally gives the female character value

In similar vein, If *Madmen and Specialists* represents African societies, there is every signal that the Nigerian postcolonial experience specifically after the civil war was far from being a bed of roses. The play is consequently an allegorical representation of the dystopia that operates in such societies. For more insight into understanding the wickedness of human beings, Nyo Wakai's *Inside the Fence* is vital as he quotes Jacques Delerue in *The Gestapo: A History of Horror*:

*The crimes of Nazism are not the crimes of one nation. Cruelty, a taste for violence, the religion of force, ferocious racism, are not the prerogative of a period or of a people. They are of all ages and of all countries. .... The human being is a dangerous wild animal. In normal periods his evil instincts remain in the background, held in check by the conventions, habits, and criteria of civilisation, but let a regime come which not only liberates these terrible impulses. (14)*

As Delarue points out, human cruelty is a characteristic of most communities. Drawing from this view, it is symbiotic that the way a writer like Wole Soyinka presents his characters, there is no doubt that they are a microcosm of what operates in postcolonial nations where leaders inflict the ruled with harsh treatments beyond imagination. In similar vein, Wole Soyinka ridicules human wickedness via the use of stage Direction:

*A wide iron-barred gate stretches almost the whole width of the cell in which Elesin is imprisoned. His wrists are encased in thick iron bracelets, chained together; he stands against the bars, looking out... Figures of the two guards can be seen deeper inside the cell, alert to every movement. Elesin makes PILKINGS now in a police officer's uniform, enters noiselessly, observes him a while. (50)*

A vivid description of prison confine in which Elesin is caged is described. In all, this is a place of pain and longing, a place that keeps one enslaved to some aspects of tradition that should not be celebrated. It becomes ironic that one dies in the place of another. It is at this juncture that, the Elesin is regarded as the sacrificial lamb and Wole Soyinka no doubt downgrades some aspects of tradition which to him, are reflected as actions of dystopia. If the Elesin has to die, the question we ask is whether such a death is ever rewarding. Wole Soyinka in *Death and the King's Horseman* upholds traditional values and at the same time he satirizes its ills. Like in 'Ancestral Faces' the whole notion of tradition is celebrated. In this poem, the dead ancestors are believed to be alive. Life to some people as mentioned in the poem is meaningless because without it, the present cannot be defined.

In like manner, Wole Soyinka in *Jero's Metamorphosis* makes high use of stage directions to emphasize the theme of history and dystopia. To this effect, the stage direction reads:

*A portrait of the uniformed figure, in a different pose hangs over the veranda of the house where Chume lives in rented rooms. He is practicing on a trumpet, trying, out the notes of 'what a friend we have in Jesus'. His salvation army uniform is laid out carefully on a chair stiffly starched and newly ironed. (61)*

The above stage direction attests that the scene has remarkably changed and the actions of the previous play act negatively on the victim, Chume who lives in a 'rented room'. From every indication, Chume has been brainwashed since now he has been transformed into Brother Jero's fervent servant. The revelations prophesied in *Jero's Metamorphosis* are visibly portrayed in our contemporary societies. It is ironic that after being manipulated by Brother Jero, Chume still joins his association of 'believers. This is a clear indication that even in church, acts of dystopia reign. People like Jero and the old master are considered as the 'center' since they manipulate and exercise authority on the worshipers. This pathetic scenario reminds us of colonial settings whereby the colonisers come with the bible on one hand and the gun on the other. Ngugi Wa Thiong'o in *I will marry when I Want* unravels the whole concept of colonialism since the stooges still struggle with the neo-colonialist to assert their identities. In addition, like Wole Soyinka, Athol Fugard makes great use of stage direction to emphasise the differences that effectuate among people of different races. To this effect, in *Master Harold and the Boys*, it is buttressed:

*Learning on the solitary table, his head cupped in one hand as he pages through one of the comic books is Sam. A black man in his mid-forties He wears the [...]. Behind him on his knees, mopping down the floor with a bucket of water and rag, is Willie. Also black and about the same age as Sam. He has sleeves and trousers rolled up. (4)*

The description of blacks; Sam and Willie leave the impression that they are living in a world where dystopia obtains. Their sufferings parallel those of characters in *The Island* who work endlessly in quarries with no wage. In

*Remembering America Cultural Contexts, for Critical Thinking and Writing in “Racial Formation”*, Michael Omi and Howard Winant highlight:

*Consideration of the term “black” illustrates the diversity of racial meanings which can be found among different societies and historically within a given society [...]. The meaning of race is defined and contested throughout society in both collective action and personal practice. In the process racial categories themselves are formed, transformed, destroyed and reformed. (361)*

The term ‘race’ and ‘black’ in the above quotation give credence to this work since they define society and show the different stages in these societies. This work signals that the black race is the victimised race with its vestiges. To attest to the fact that the black race is victimised, the stage direction as depicted in *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* exposes:

*(Sizwe hands over the book and waits while the policeman opens it, looks at the photograph, then Sizwe, and finally checks through its stamps and endorsements. While all this is going on Sizwe stands quietly looking down at his feet, whistling under his breath. The book is finally handed back). (42)*

The significance of the passbook is underscored since without it, the blacks as represented by Sizwe cannot have work or find place. Ngugi Wa Thiong ‘o in *Something Torn and New: An African Renaissance* has this to say:

*Colonialism tried to control the memory of the colonised; or rather, in words of Caribbean thinker Sylvia Wynter, it tried to subject the colonised to its memory, to make the colonised see themselves through the hegemonic memory of the colonising centre. Put another way the colonising presence ought to induce a historical amnesia on the colonised by mutilating the memory of the colonised. (108)*

The gap between the colonised and the colonisers is described as a torturous one since the blacks are kept in a hegemonic memory. Taking from Ngugi Wa Thiong ‘o’s stand point, blacks are controlled by a system that has been placed by the whites. Here, the center-margin concepts are portrayed as the blacks are relegated to the periphery. From the proceeding except, Sizwe’s life is defined by a mere book. This book has been drafted by the colonisers to cause the black South Africans understand their position as ‘nothingness’. The place of self consciousness is significant as Ngugi further recasts:

*Black consciousness then becomes the right of black people to draw an image of themselves that negates and transcends the image of themselves that was drawn by those who would weaken them in their fight for, and assertion of their humanity. (111)*

The need for the black populace to debunk the false identity given them just because of their colour becomes premedical. Postcolonial writers like Wole Soyinka and Athol Fugard postulate a positive image of the black folk.

The projected characters in the above texts are out to revandicate their rights and attest the fact that blacks should be given equal rights as whites. The question for a utopian society as postulated by Thomas More is cardinal. Sir Thomas More in *Utopia* buttresses:

*Some of their neighbours, who are masters of their own liberties, having long ago, by the assistance of the utopians shaken off their yoke of tyranny, and being much taken with those virtues which they observe among them. (62)*

Sir Thomas Moore is advocating for is a society that upholds freedom. What he is requesting for is opposite to what is reflected in Wole Soyinka and Athol Fugard's works. The quest for a utopian society is cardinal at this juncture. Hence, the drama pieces of these pivotal playwrights can be considered as drama of conscientisation and revolution. In *The Education of the Deprived*, Shadrach A. Ambanasom reveals:

*Conscientisation implies the education of the masses, especially the oppressed masses in such a way that they become imbued with a heightened sense of critical consciousness. When oppressed people become conscientised, they tend to know more about certain issues and situations than they did before they became more familiar with their inner structure of their society and the dynamics of the vicious system that has held them captives. (124-125)*

In examining the play entitled *Requiem for the Last Kaiser*, Shadrach A. Ambanasom defines conscientisation and exposes its advantages. Conscientisation prompts awareness and inculcates in the victims a revolutionary spirit. Reading through Soyinka and Fugard's selected plays, one notices that not only are the playwrights aware like those projected by Ambanasom, but they provoke knowledge in the audience. In this regard, the theme of history and dytopia are pictured and the need to promote utopia is of relevance.

The above analyses have succinctly proven that the chosen playwrights are homogeneous in their use of style. Reason why, so far, there is uniformity in their use of symbolism, irony, stage direction, vivid description and in a host of other elements of style. From our discussion of style, we have been able to visualize that the Nigerian and South African societies under concern and others, practise acts of dystopia.

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