

Human Comedy in Wole Soyinka's *Jero's metamorphosis*: A Pragmatic Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Falsity has turned the best-seller commodity rampantly symptomatic of interpersonal relations within/between most contemporary African nations. Roughly everybody strives adamantly for somebody to lull, betray and suckle to the bone. Combating such insidious victimization has long remained part of most African writers' concerns. Unfortunately, the latter's endeavours seem to go misfiring insomuch as the fact keeps steadily worsening. Thence comes to be spurred the rationale sustaining this article, the leading hypothesis of which is: most readers don't grab the intrinsic intent and philosophy lurking behind the allegorical language of literature. Accordingly, our objective is to accompany readers to more successfully decipher Soyinka's works so as to make his societal mission more operational. So, our work leans on the principles and methods of pragmatics to analyze an excerpt from the target play. Findings reveal that Soyinka is an alert satirist who makes fun of social maladies while indirectly urging for wiping them away from the human psyche.

Key words: contemporary Africa; tricks; religion and politics; allegorical language of literature; pragmatics.

Introduction

Introduction

Commonly admitted in yester times as the most gregarious human folk ever known to the planet, Africa has been steadily growing a fertile compost-land of frightening monstrosities. Our olden typifying moral status is pitifully fading away. Thus, such nauseating issues as embezzlement, treason, religious and political perjury are rampant leitmotifs. With lies and betrayals becoming the best dreamed-of fertilizers of social relations, only people endowed with tricky muse are better making their way out in life, the few moral-hooked ones being dropped aside. The fact has constantly been chastised by committed African writers, starting from Achebe's and Soyinka's prophesies (in relatively olden times) to the current era as is symbolized by Ogundimu (with *The Silly Season*, for example), among many others. Unfortunately, the choking notice is that things go worsening and the prevailing moral quality keeps brakelessly 'falling out of the frying pan into the fire'. With notorious mischief-makers hiding behind the tricky windbreak of religion and politics to shamelessly perpetrate their whimsical evils, good numbers of populations remain steadily both deaf and blind to the few but well-enlightened writers' yelling for awakening social conscience. Soyinka is one of such scarce social chroniclers; but unfortunately, his writings are generally reputed hermetic and discarded by many English readers.

Happily enough, unclosing the in-built meaning of language in use turns to be the life mission of two challenging linguistic trends in vogue today: the Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and, more interestingly, pragmatics. By the way, the current article reads as: Human Comedy in Soyinka's *Jero's Metamorphosis: A Pragmatic Analysis*. Indeed, the leading hypothesis of the work is that readers don't actually grab the very intent and philosophy lurking behind the allegorical language of literature. Accordingly, our objective is to contribute to deciphering with more ease Soyinka's in-built message and philosophy so as to make his societal mission more operative, the vital goal of pragmatics being to scavenge for and atomize the "Invisible meaning" (Yule, 1996:127) potential of language. For that matter, through the sieve of pragmatics, this article leans on an excerpt from the target play to unveil manifestations of Soyinka's unsaid intentions. Our foci of analysis revolve around

presupposition, inference, speech act, and conversational implicature. Findings are assessed and commented on from the perspective of their economic and socio-developmental stakes.

1- Theoretical Plinth

1-1 Pragmatics: Definition and goals

Pragmatics is a branch of modern linguistics approaching language from a mostly functional perspective. It is “the study of the relations of signs to interpreters” (Morris, 1938: 6). For Carnap (1939: 4)¹, pragmatics is “the field of all those investigations which take into consideration ... the action, state, and environment of a man who speaks or hears [a linguistic sign]” In a word, pragmatics is concerned with a context-dependent use and a utility-oriented interpretation of language. For example, Traugott & Pratt (1980: 226) claim the discipline to deal with language use. For Leech (1983: X), it is “the study of how utterances have meaning in situations”. Regarding the goal of pragmatics, it functions to set into the open what Yule (1996: 127) calls the “invisible meaning” and Horn & Ward (2006:1) also terms as the “meant-but-unsaid”.

1-2 Context and common ground

The context of a linguistic text is a set of both cultural and situational conditions guaranteeing the texture of the latter. These conditions can also be modulated at will on the basis of a common agreement between discourse participants; hence, the notion of common ground (Stalnaker, 1998) [See Potts, 2014: 2]. Indeed, discourse context is vital to meaning negotiation and encompasses both material and immaterial facets. For Stalnaker (1998)²: “The common ground of an utterance *C* is the set of all the propositions that the discourse participants of *C* mutually and publicly agree to treat as true for the purposes of the talk exchange”. Also, Potts (2014:2) conceives of the concept as “world knowledge, more immediate information characterizing where we are and what goal we have, our beliefs about each other, our beliefs about those beliefs”. Definitely, the common ground of every act of communication is a matter of gentlemen’s agreement enacted through modulating the ordinarily expectable impacts of context on language use.

1-3 Presupposition, conversational implicature, and inference

The concept of presupposition derives from *pre-suppose* which means to take something for being the case a priori. It refers to “what a speaker assumes is true or known by the hearer” (Yule, 1996:132). For Dekker (2008: 25), “...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. As to conversational implicature, it is the meaning that can be indirectly figured out from what is overtly said. Yule (1996: 134) claims that it is the indirect or implicit meaning of an utterance as is derived from the speech context and which is absent from its conventional use. Concerning the concept of inference, it is an addressee-centred type of meaning negotiation and deals with what the latter happens to understand by what is said to him/her. Gumperz (1982: 2) refers to it as “The ability to see beyond surface content”. To recapitulate, let’s say that effective communication occurs only when the presupposition-implicature-inference tandem operates a functionally harmonious trade and allow mutually attuned negotiation.

¹ These are two co-founders are referred to in Akmajian, A et al. (2001:361).

1-4 Speech Acts and Felicity Conditions

For Traugott & Pratt (1980: 229), the spearhead-works relating to the Speech-Act Theory are Austin (1962) and Searle (1969). Kryk- Kastovsky (2006: 534) claims that Speech Acts are utterances whereby by saying something the speaker performs certain acts classifiable into performatives and constatives. This means that people use language to do something real. This quote also calls for the claim that “saying is doing, and utterances are acts capable of producing enormous and far-reaching consequences” (Traugott & Pratt, 1980: 228). The latter still maintain that all utterances bear some “social weight” (idem) which can be overtly stated or implied through deterred or implicit speech style. Besides, Austin and Searle have itemized the Speech Act theory into three continua: the locutionary act (the mere act of saying something or making a pronouncement), the illocutionary act (the verbal act’s in-built intention) and the perlocutionary act (its manifest impact). They respectively hold some forces qualified as locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary with reference to their individual in-built goals. We can comprehend that the first two variants are speaker-centred while the third one is addressee-oriented. Thence, it is a logical conclusion that communication is established only when there is a good match between illocutionary and perlocutionary forces.

Going into further details, Searle (1969) has atomized the sub-concept of the illocutionary force into five different variants to which are attached individual missions as involving:

Illocutionary forces	Ontological missions
Representatives	to represent a state of affairs, or to mean that something is the case. Examples: stating, claiming, hypothesizing, describing, predicting, suggesting, insisting, or swearing.
Expressives	to express the speaker’s state of mind or psychological attitude towards a given situation. Examples: congratulating, thanking, deploring, condoling, welcoming, greeting, etc.
Directives	to get the addressee to do something. Examples: requesting, commanding, pleading, inviting, questioning, urging, or suggesting someone to do something.
Commissives	to commit the speaker to doing something. Examples: promising, threatening, vowing.
Declarations	to bring about the state of affair they refer to. Examples: blessing, firing, baptizing, bidding, passing a verdict, arresting, or marrying.

Table 1: Illocutionary forces and ontological missions

Besides, for a speech act to prove operational, it needs to satisfy a series of conditions which constitute a necessary and supportive appendage bestowing truth value on a verbalization. The truth value of an utterance is what proves it sensible. It definitely builds on Felicity or Appropriateness Conditions. The sense lurking in this is that for whichever utterance to prove operational, it has to fit in its context of occurrence in terms of actors involved, time and setting of occurrence, as well as the subject matter being talked about. As such, for an act of blessing to bear truth value, it has to be pronounced by a rightful religious personality, in a religious setting, and on the convenient occasion.

By the way, whenever a speech act grounds on appropriateness conditions, it is deemed felicitous. Otherwise, it is conceived of as infelicitous or inappropriate. Drawing on the Searlean taxonomy and handling an apology case, Meyer 2009: 53) classifies such conditions into four major types as follows:

Conditions	Functional essence
Propositional condition	The speaker expresses a regret for a past act A that he/she committed in disfavour of his/her addressee.
Preparatory condition	The speaker believes that his/her act has hurt the addressee;
Sincerity condition	The speaker frankly regrets his/her act and is not hypocritical at all
Essential condition	What the speaker says really counts as an apology and is nothing jocular.

Table2: Interfaces of the Felicity Conditions

1-5 Cooperative Principle (CP)

The concept of *CP* is coined by Grice (1975) with the leading philosophy that linguistic communication is a matter of cooperation. Indeed, cooperation involves ‘to operate together’. Thus, the tenet envisages contributions to any conversational act to keep symphonic with the prevailing discourse context. It postulates what follows: “Make your contribution as is required, when it is required, as is accepted by the conversation in which you are engaged” (Potts, 2014: 7). Thence, such a principle would permit discourse participants neither to under-tell nor over-tell their mind, but to rather size their contributions adequately in unison with the prevailing speech context. For, “Communication is a social activity requiring the coordinated efforts of two or more individuals” Gumperz (1982:1). Grice (1975) itemizes his *CP* into a set of four maxims known as maxims of conversation:

- ❖ **Maxim of quality:** Contribute only what you know to be true. Do not say false things or things for which you lack evidence. Thus, we can infer that this maxim is oriented towards imparting moral virtues onto our utterances.
- ❖ **Maxim of quantity:** Make your contribution as informative as required. Do not say more or less than is required. This maxim aims at sparing language users from both pointless raving or diversionary prolixity and untimely taciturnity.
- ❖ **Maxim of relation/relevance:** Make your contribution relevant; that is, say what is expectedly attuned with the prevailing discourse context.
- ❖ **Maxim of Manner:** Avoid linguistic obscurity, ambiguity, be brief, and orderly.

Given the details above, we just have to espouse Potts’s (2014: 8) view that: “Cooperative Principle governs information exchange. The only presumption is that the discourse participants wish to accurately recognize one another’s intended messages”. Thus, its defining maxims may be re-termed as discourse veridicality, concision, symphony and precision. Consequently, when any of these maxims happens to get violated or ‘flouted’, there arise a conversational implicature. Thence, the utterance under conveyance undergoes an interpretation which ranks beyond understanding the ‘sentential meaning’. However, considering that real life communication is nothing so much simplistic, maxim-hooked, and rigidly Cartesian, we can say that the Gricean Cooperative Principle is just an idealistic view of language functioning. In real social trade, violating or ‘flouting’ these maxims and getting conversational implicatures enacted turn to be inescapable facts inherent in the very nature of human language in use. On that ground, Allott (2007:14) is proved right by his stance when drawing some differential shades between *Cooperation* and *Coordination*.

1-6 Politeness Principle (PP)

The *PP* maintains that interlocutors should behave politely to each other in the course of a conversational act. In relation to how self-respect is instrumental to social interactions, the proponents of this tenet have identified the concept of *Face* (Brown & Levinson, 1978; Leech, 1983; Yule, 1996; Stockwell, 2007, etc). Indeed, the *Face* of a person concerns the image of 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”. Its defining interfaces and their corresponding social acts read as follows:

Face typology		Social acts	
Positive Face		Face Saving acts	
Essence:	Examples	Essence	Examples
Inclination to communal life	altruism, loveliness and sociability; brief, social extroversion	Servicing social harmony by catering for self-image	Loving, praising, congratulating, thanking, befriending.
Negative Face		Face threatening acts	
Introversion or retraction from social interactions	Individualism, egotism, selfishness	Damaging social harmony by fattening haughtiness, naughtiness, vindication, vengeance	Rebuking, hating, denigrating, belittling, bullying, downgrading

Table 3: Interfaces of the Politeness Principle

For further clarifications sake about Face saving acts, Leech (1983) identifies a set of maxims reading as: agreement, generosity, approbation, modesty, sympathy. Nevertheless, we have to reckon that the validity of the *PP* is to be ‘relativized’; the issue of politeness not being a standard fact, but rather a culturally swinging conception.

3- Practical analysis of the extract under scrutiny

Our practical analysis will revolve around three major clustered points. The very first of them encompasses the manifestations of presuppositions, implicatures and inferences throughout the extract. Our next step will concern the speech acts, Cooperative and Politeness, Principles, while our last focus concerns referential functions.

3-1 Analysis and interpretation of Presuppositions, Conversational Implicatures, and Inferential functions throughout the extract

In U1, the phrase “come together” presupposes that in normally peaceful time Jero doesn’t experience a genuine togetherness with his fellows. A sensible inference from that fact as uttered by Jero himself is that it stands for a self-confessed awareness of his keeping a close-but-distant relation with his religious colleagues, while joining them out of a spontaneous and instinctive kind of get-together for merely egoistic self-preservation in case of some imminent danger. This implies that they plainly co-exist over the work of God without collaborating or cooperating genuinely in their own midst. Worse, the terms “hatchet”(U1) and “enemy” (U21) are both expectedly plain antinomies with a true religious setting. Their presence in the discourse is a revelation that the kind of brotherhood prevailing within their prophethood is just a façade comedy, a mere hypocrisy show. Other clues of this hypocrisy, for example, lie in the baffling load embodied in the phrase “common enemy”. From the

impersonal and visibly fact-linked nature of the noun to its hazy qualifier, one has to meditate hard but vainly about the entity it designates. For, no indications are provided as regards whether the enemy is a person or a fact worth condemning or despising. So, the question goes pending as to which entity the commonality of the bad feeling is shared with. Moreover, from U1 to U21, the noun has turned plural, alluding to the going of the unknown but presumed enemy from uniqueness to plurality or maniness. By the same token, the initial qualifier “common” (U1) has grown into “old” (U21) as if in the meantime some social revolution has occurred to alter the yester foes into true friends at present.

The same talent of hypocritical confusion is deployed again in U4 (“Well, we have to be careful with our brother prophets”) and U9 (“I could do with the elevation to eternity of some of our dearly beloved prophets on this beach”). The blunt contrast opposing the term “be careful” to “our brother prophets” and “dearly” is a striking testimony to the allegation that the social relation which seemingly binds Jero together into prophethood with his colleagues is simply a tricky one. Indeed, someone to be careful of is not and cannot be at the same time a true brother and, let alone, someone so praised to be “dearly beloved”.

Into the bargain, the phrases “could do with” and “elevation to eternity” co-occur incongruously to hide several aspects. First of all, being basically ambiguous, “to do with” is denotatively negative. Viewed as such, it can be equated with “to cope with something willy nilly”; that is, without any inner-felt consent. Reversely, from a connotative or affective perspective, it can also bear a positive sense like “to agree with” or “to side with” and, thence, functions to express either approval of a proposal or compliance with a decision. Resultantly, such an amalgam with blended meanings can well blur the reader’s/listener’s understanding. Besides, “to do with” can also bear a sense of “to contribute to”. Thence, the sequence “I could do with the elevation to eternity of some of our dearly beloved prophets on this beach” (U9) presumes Jero to stand for a chattered assistant to God, endowed with some magical capability of mediation to channel people’s transition to Heaven. But if ever anybody is to be that Jesus-like mediator, he/she has to be an utterly holy, fair, and impartial person. On that ground, the partitive determiner “some” proves Jero to display a merely sectarian fake holiness. For, with all living souls being admitted as creatures of God, it sounds nonsensical that a prophet work for some of them to deserve a place in the Holy and Celestial Home while dropping some others aside. Quite bluntly, everything about the matter stands a mere goal-oriented comedy inasmuch as the wittier and more falsity-rooted religious leaders prove, the better maximum of adherents their fake churches would engulf, and the maximum of the latter’s belongings would naively be poured onto their presumed holy – but rather, actually rogue, insane, and deeply insincere – leaders.

More interestingly, an application of Yule’s (1996) test of “constancy under negation” is instrumentally supportive of our contentions. By virtue of instantiation, let’s consider just one of Jero’s apparently self-committed statements towards Rebecca: “I don’t know what I would do without you” (U13). The negative version of this reads as: “I know what I would do without you” and implicates “I know what I would do with you”. With this sense and its implicature utterly departing from Jero’s visibly magnetizing assurance and confidence voucher delivered to Rebecca, there is good evidence that Yule’s rule of constancy verification is bluntly violated. And once again, the deduction is that the deviation of “the meant-but-unsaid” for the verbalized meaning is evidential of Jero’s merely finding good strategies for hypnotizing people’s psyche, with his verbal mind-numbing power overtly and ceaselessly contrasting with any genuine expectation.

One of the most shocking peaks of Jero’s rhetoric of confusion – and rather of animosity – is embedded in his talking about his colleague prophets as follows: “... but if they choose the way of the hangman’s noose or elect to take the latest short cut to heaven facing the firing squad at the Bar Beach Show³, who are we to dispute such a divine solution?” (U9b). First, from *choose* to *elect*, the speaker hasn’t yet made an inch of step ahead in terms of semantic shades. By displaying this kind of spot race, both terms are just a good substantiation of Soyinka’s (1974: 61) sloganeering contention that “Ism to ism for ism is ism”. So, both terms function to display a lyric or comic pun whereby Jero ridicules some of his colleagues who are fatalistically candidates to death. In addition, the terms “hangman’s noose” – calling for an idea of guillotine, alongside “heaven”, “firing squad” and “Bar Beach Show” (all of which are allusive of death or killing) are all shocking antinomies with a religious setting. Let alone, none of them can logically be expected to stand for people’s freely adopted preferences. Thence, one can easily sense out Jero’s insane sense as a bloody vampire.

Another hilariously savage facet dissimulated in Jero’s words is his resignation from bringing assistance to his fellow pastors. This comprehension of the facts is quite well allowable from his final question in U9b: “...who are we to dispute such a divine solution?”. Not only is such a speech segment allusive of a self-confessed incapacity of Jero to intercede for rescuing his colleagues who are possibly faced with danger, but rather, it also embodies his hidden desire to watch them perish. The sadistic features incarnated in Jero get more eye-strikingly manifested in his conceiving of the latter’s assassination as a “divine solution”, a solution to some problem he is alone to know about. Also, the hilarity in the character strikes again when one thinks of the same Jero promising in the earlier stage of the discourse to do with the elevation of some fellow prophets of his to the eternity.

Definitely, data compiled under this portion of our work and the derived interpretations are revealing that the extract is plainly a rhetorical amalgam, a witty collection of anachronisms purported to grease confusion and perpetrate mental settlement.

3-2 Analysis of Speech-acts, Cooperative and Politeness Principles, in the extracts

Through this subsection, we will first focus on the occurrence frequency of these different shades of illocutionary force before reconsidering their manifestations from the double perspective of quantitative and qualitative analysis.

3-2-1 Utterance Specification and Illocutionary Act Shades in the Extract

Reading keys: R= Representative ; D= Directive ; C= Commissive ; Dec= Declaration ; E= Expressive

N°	Utterances	Characters
1a	... in times of trouble it behoves us to come together, to forget old enmities and bury the hatchet in the head of a common enemy... (R)	Jero
1 b	no, better take that out. (D)	
2	It sounds a little unchristian, wouldn’t you say? (E)	
3	[<i>Her voice and manner are of unqualified admiration</i>]: Not (I wouldn’t say so) if you don’t think it, Brother Jeroboam. (C)	Rebecca

³ - “The Bar Beach Show” is a former place of public execution in Lagos. (See footnotes in Soyinka, 1974:175)

4	Well, we have to be careful about our brother prophets. (E)	Jero
5	Some of them might just take it literally. (R)	
6 a	The mere appearance of the majority of them, not just to mention their secret past and even secret present... (R)	
6 b	ah well, stop at 'bury the hatchet'. (D)	
7	(I agree with) Whatever you say, Brother Jeroboam. (E)	Rebecca:
8	(It is) Not that I would regret it. (C)	
9 a	I could do with the elevation to eternity of some of our dearly beloved on this beach, (C)	Jero
9 b	and if they choose the way of the hangman's noose or elect to take the latest short cut to heaven facing the firing squad at the Bar Beach Show, who are we to dispute such a divine solution? (E)	
10	Only trouble is, it might give the rest of us a bad name. (E)	
11	Nothing could give you a bad name, Brother Jero. (E)	Rebecca
12	You stand apart from the others. (E)	
13	Nothing can tarnish your image, (E) I Know that.	
14	You are indeed kind, Sister Rebecca. (E)	Jero
13	I don't know what I would do without you. (E)	
14	You won't ever have to do without me, Brother jero. (E)	Rebecca
15	As long as you need me, I'll be here. (E)	
16	Hm, yes, hm. [<i>The prospect makes him nervous.</i>] I thank you, Sister. (E)	Jero
17	Now we must get back to work. (E)	
18	Read me the last thing I dictated (D)	
19 a	in times of trouble it behoves us to come together, to forget old enemies and bury the hatchet in the head...(R)	Rebecca
19b	no, we stop at 'hatchet'. (R)	
20	Good. (E)	Jero
21a	I have therefore decided to summon – (E)	
21b	no, invite is better, wouldn't you say? (E)	
22	(I believe that) The more miserable they are, the more proud and touchy you'll find them. (R)	
23	The monster of pride feeds upon vermin, Sister Rebecca. (R)	
24 a	The hole in a poor man's garment is soon filled with the patchwork of pride, (R)	
24b	so resolutely does Nature abhor a vacuum. (R)	
25	Oh Brother Jero, you say such wise things. (E)	Rebecca

Table 1: Itemized overview of illocutionary-force shades
3-2-2 Detailed analysis of the findings resulting from Speech-act manifestations
3-2-2-1 A quantitative analysis of the findings
3-2-2-1-1 Statistic tabulation of data

From the start, it is worth mentioning that the passage encompasses 12 locutions evenly shared between Jero and Rebecca, and proves absolutely deprived of *Declarations*. As regards the realizable illocutionary forces, if approached from a horizontal reading mode, one can notice via the table below that there are a total set of 76 shades of illocutionary force

involving four major categories: Expressives, Representatives, Directives and Commissives. Jero authors 50 of them, say 65.78%) and 26 are incumbent to Rebecca 34%%). Visibly, Jero doubly over-scores Rebecca: a symbolic show of his precedence. By a descending reading fashion, this superiority stands unmoved for each individual illocutionary-force shade. Anyway, a pervasive insight into the manifestations and dispatching of illocutionary forces in the extract is provided in the table below:

Table N°3: Statistics of illocutionary forces

Characters	Locutionary acts Distribution	Illocutionary forces				Trans-Typological summation	Percentage
		E	R	D	C		
Jero	06	08	07	06	23	50	65.78%
Rebecca	06	07	02	00	10	26	34.21%
Typological summation	12	15	09	06	33	76	-
Percentage	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

3-2-2-1-2 Data Analysis and Interpretation

A closer analysis of the extract reveals that even though the passage displays an even share of utterances or speech turns (06 rounds for either participants), there is a blunt unbalance as regards the allotment of illocutionary forces: while Jero holds 26 out of the total size (say 69.69%), only 10 fall to Rebecca (30.30%). This implies that in the course of their conversation, Jero has grabbed the floor for more than twice as Rebecca could, a show of his utter precedence in terms of talking prolixity which is a first clue of Jero’s hegemony over Rebecca.

Furthermore, the extract is dominated with *Expressives* (E) whose vital goal is to reveal the speaker’s psychological status in relation to the discourse at stake. As such, most of the *Expressives* are indicative of such dull feelings as fright (Jero, in U4), resignation (Jero, in U9b), hypocritical laudation (Jero, in U14+U15+U22) and unfair hegemony (Jero, in U23). The ones used by Rebecca are cowardly laudatory and Jero-oriented. They all express her confessed readiness to keep on siding with Jero, serving him and welcoming all his albeit insane decisions. By virtue of instantiation, let’s consider the following moves from her:

U7: Whatever you say, Brother Jeroboam.

U13: Nothing can tarnish your image, I know that.

U25: Oh, Brother Jeroboam, you say such wise things.

All these examples are allusive of Rebecca’s feeling comfortable with Jero’s companionship. Through her calling Jero by his full name and even the use of capitalized *B* for ‘brother’ in “Brother Jeroboam”, Soyinka seems to be pointing to her deifying a mere alter ego. Also, conversely with the minuscule ‘*b*’ in “our brother prophets”, Jero’s supremacy is mirrored as ranking high above the collective or grouped value of all his colleagues, which symbolically proves him a potent religious leviathan, a rather beyond-par dreadful fetish.

Nevertheless, there remains something questionable about whether Rebecca is actually aware of anything about the insanity of the man to whom she adamantly keeps showing so tight and flawless loyalty. For example, in trying a contrastive analysis of the adjacency pairs

9b+11 and 25+26, one has good reasons to figure out something quite naïve about Rebecca's behaviour.

Indeed, though 9b is a blunt display of Jero's roguery, Rebecca claims that nothing could soil his reputation (U11). In the same vein, Rebecca takes it for acts of wisdom when Jero makes the following claims: "The monster of pride feeds upon vermin", "The whole in a poor man's garment is soon filled with the patchwork of pride", and "...so resolutely does nature abhor the vacuum".

Absolutely, Rebecca's quick compliance seems to prove her as not having actually grabbed the Hornian "meant-but-unsaid" side of Jero's speech acts. Surely, she has just spontaneously approved of Jero's utterances without any good awareness of the forces embedded in them. Indeed, disclosing and itemizing Jero's hidden intents here require some further scavenging endeavours.

In a first round, with the vermin being known as poisonous insects, giving them to people for food is an insidiously hurting show of servanthip, a plain manner of offering some poison as a gift in golden tray through feigned good-heartedness. This would just make the beneficiary naively die of their own fake satisfaction. Thence comes to be justified how disciples are turned into lay monsters. Another hidden dimension of Jero's lulling strategies lies in the term "patchwork of pride", which implicates mirroring a misleading glamour of prestige to people and causing their own sense of grandeur to ignite and sparkle while holding some discreet and witty goal of victimizing them.

An additional utterly shocking fact about Rebecca's naivety is her adamantly keeping unmoved when Jero comes to overtly tell out his actual mind about his congregational disciples: "The more miserable they are, the more proud and touchy you'll find them" (U24). This implies that the misery of his followers stands for a good asset Jero will handle carefully and even help perpetuate. Into the bargain, the total absence of *Declarations* from the scope of this discourse is quite telling. With such typical illocutions being meant to bring about the state of affair they refer to, one can comprehend their absolute privation from this passage as Soyinka's deterred way of pointing to how Jero's religious setting as a moral-and-pity-voidance venture is utterly absent from its intrinsic mission vitally including such activities as baptizing, blessing, marrying, and quenching social tensions or managing for them not to rise at all.

On the whole, Jero's strategy of confusing rhetoric consists in paying plain lip services to his folk as if this can suffice to soothe their mind and satisfy their psychological and material needs. The true purpose lurking behind all this amalgam is simply to magnetize people, hypnotize their mind, and suckle them to the bone without any possible resistance once they are sedated, assuaged and mentally tamed.

As it could be noticed, Jero is a prototype of such many witty and parasitic vampires who keep insidiously eating up social conscience and lulling people in Africa. Thence, our milestone recommendation is that it urges that a lot be done for the sorrowful plight to change. Genuinely, prophethood is a basically devotion-leaned work and a true prophet can be none of a cunning trader, a social plague, or a warmonger to his community.

In regard of all the revelations of this study, we once again have supportive evidence maintaining that our initial leading research hypothesis that "most readers don't actually grab

the very intent and philosophy lurking behind the allegorical language of literature” has proved valid, given the multifarious detours imposed on language in the excerpt.

Summary and Conclusions

Definitely, the findings of this study are living testimonies of the topsy-turvy and inside-out kind of socio-political life affecting Africa as a whole. With insanities and follies of various types running their free course and punching morality down from erosion to corrosion, we can rightfully espouse Ahmad’s (2004: 6) well-thought contention about the sorrowful fate of current Africa that:

Our values are thrown into the trash can. Bad models serve as role models for the young and the old. Morons are barons. Thieves are chiefs. Nonentities are personalities. Psychopaths are politicians. Things fall apart and we are no longer at ease. The arrow of God seems to have plunged fatally into the 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.

Resultantly, our final remark foci as regards the stakes of this article are twofold. Its merits are both scholarly sociological 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, either character in the excerpt indirectly reveals his/her own silliest side. Indeed, just as every living soul is hotly eager to be blessed with heaven while nobody is readily eager to die, hypocrisy is causing Africans to bar their own way to development. 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 religious or political leaders and hardened stupid followers are members of the same “beach”, the destiny of which is tributary to its member citizens’ 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 while heartlessly victimizing their honest counterparts. The prevailing dull reality in Africa is just the surest way of fabricating cantankerous community members and preparing the land for social discrepancies and upheavals possibly leading to war. African morality is dangerously in the wane, going from erosion to corrosion. It does require profound servicing for our original humanity to be reset up. Absolutely, something requires doing for the salutary metamorphosis of our generation so as to prepare a worthy legacy for African posterity. We are to spare Nkumah’s dream that *Africa Must Unite* from being doomed to remain a pious and barren fantasy, a plain hallucinatory act, merely because of interpersonal mistrust.

More importantly, at the inescapable era of globalization any behaviour impeding togetherness is absolutely havocking, not only to individual members but to the African community viewed from a holistic perspective. As a result, for a real development of Africa to get triggered, people are to borderlessly trust one another in order to favour marshalling their capabilities, and husbanding their endeavours towards achieving the salutary goal of pushing back 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 sustainable 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”⁴. In espousing and ‘tropicalizing’ this trend of thought, Mireku-Gyimah, P. B. (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.”

From the linguistic perspective, findings in this article testify that pragmatics is very much operational in breaking the allegorical shell of literary language. In permitting to methodically sort out hidden meaning, it proves quite instrumental to effective discourse interpretation. Hence, a good knowledge of the founding principles and methods of pragmatics is required if we want to provide any more elaborated and further-fetched account of human language behaviour. Fro, it permits language interpretation to rank above what Horn & Warn (2006:xi) condemn as a “regimented account of language use” by providing “a fully-fledged theory of language” (Bavali & Sadighi, 2008: 18). In a nutshell, our suggestion or recommendation, thence, is that in order to prove actually operational all language interpretations should lean on a sound plinth of pragmatics.

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APPENDIX

Presentation of the extract under scrutiny (From 'Jero's Metamorphosis', in Soyinka's Collected plays N°2, pp.175-176)

Jero: ... in times of trouble it behoves us to come together,
to forget old enmities and bury the hatchet in the head of a
common enemy...no, better take that out. It sound a little
unchristian, wouldn't you say?

Rebecca [*her voice and manner are of unqualified admiration*]: Not if
you don't think it, Brother Jeroboam.

Jero: Well, we have to be careful about our brother prophets.
Some of them might just take it literally. The mere appearance
of the majority of them, not just to mention their secret past and
even secret present... ah well, stop at 'bury the hatchet'.

Rebecca: Whatever you say, Brother Jeroboam.

Jero: Not that I would regret it. I could do with the elevation
to eternity of some of our dearly beloved on
this beach, and if they choose the way of the hangman's noose
or elect to take the latest short cut to heaven facing the firing squad
at the Bar Beach Show,⁵ who are we to dispute such a divine
solution? Only trouble is, it might give the rest of us a bad name.

Rebecca: Nothing could give you a bad name, Brother Jero. You
Stand apart from the others. Nothing can tarnish your image, I
Know that.

Jero: You are indeed kind, Sister Rebecca. I don't know what
I would do without you.

Rebecca: You won't ever have to do without me, Brother jero.
As long as you need me, I'll be here.

Jero: Hm, yes, hm. [*The prospect makes him nervous.*] I thank you,
Sister. Now we must get back to work. Read me the last thing
I dictated

Rebecca: in times of trouble it behoves us to come together, to
forget old enemies and bury the hatchet in the head... no,
we stop at 'hatchet'.

Jero: Good. I have therefore decided to summon – no, invite is
better wouldn't you say? The more miserable they are, the more
proud and touchy you'll find them. The monster of pride feeds
upon vermin, Sister Rebecca. The hole in a poor man's garment
is soon filled with the patchwork of pride, so resolutely does
Nature abhor a vacuum.

Rebecca: Oh Brother Jero, you say such wise things.

⁵ - Popular expression for the fashion of public executions in Lagos, capital of Nigeria (See Collected Plays N°2, p.175, footnotes)