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SYMBOLIC MANIPULATION OF CONSCIOUSNESS IN YAW ASARE'S *ANANSE IN THE LAND OF IDIOTS*.

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Abstract

This study aims to demonstrate how a symbol can construct and deconstruct human consciousness. Through the use of cultural heritage, an artist can point out the weaknesses and strengths of a community. For the study, I have used qualitative research method which consists in consulting reference books, articles, theses and internet sources for the interpretation and analysis of the collected data. The study has revealed that the African rulers are incapable of controlling the disasters that occur in their communities. It has also concluded that the African rulers are greedy and lack vision; they only work for their individual interests. To carry out with success the study, sociological criticism, which focuses on the norms and values of society and how those values are reflected in the literary works, has been applied.

Key words: symbol, Ananse, manipulation of consciousness, cultural heritage, King

Résumé

La présente étude vise à démontrer comment le symbole peut construire et déconstruire la conscience humaine. A travers l'usage de l'héritage culturel, un artiste peut montrer les forces et faiblesses d'une communauté. Pour conduire cette étude, j'ai utilisé la méthode de la recherche qualitative qui consiste à consulter les livres de référence, articles, thèses et l'internet pour permettre l'interprétation et analyse des données collectées. L'étude a révélé que les dirigeants africains sont incapables de maîtriser les désastres qui frappent leurs communautés. Elle a par ailleurs conclu que les dirigeants africains sont gourmands et manquent de vision, ils ne travaillent que pour leurs intérêts individuels et égoïstes. Pour la bonne conduite de cette étude j'ai eu recours à la sociocritique qui met l'accent sur les normes et valeurs de la société, et comment ces valeurs sont reflétées dans les travaux littéraires a été appliquée.

Mots-clés: Symbole, Ananse, Manipulation de conscience, Héritage culturel, Roi

Introduction

Human beings express their happiness and unhappiness, emotion, fear, strength ... through myths, short stories, and legends etc. They use them to educate the young generations of children by teaching them the significance of 'Good' and 'Evil'. Furthermore, the human community draws the attention of the masses to the weaknesses and strengths of the society. It becomes a good opportunity for the literary artists to hide themselves behind African oral literature recorded in written form of short stories, plays and legends to allude to the social preoccupations that construct and deconstruct mankind. So, the reading of the latter (these works) in a manner or other, incites the researcher to reflect on some of the ideologies and philosophies that the writer addresses in his or her work of art. For this research, I have decided to carry my reflection on the play *Ananse in the Land of the Idiots*, working on the topic 'Symbolic Manipulation of Consciousness in Yaw Asare's *Ananse in the Land of the Idiots*'. It is unquestionable that a work of art is the rear-view mirror through which the learned citizens are requested indirectly to react to cultural, economic and political matters within the society. In the contemporary literature, writers point out the behaviours of the individuals, denounce the ills of the society which are projected to warn the ruling leaders and the masses. In effect, the post independent Africa is affected by the greed and cult of personality from its leaders. In reading Yaw Asare's *Ananse in the Land of the Idiots* one could come across the defects that destroy the legendary social fabric and the cohesion in the African community of Dim-Nyim Lira. In this play which constitutes the corpus of the study, Asare has satirized the careless

behaviour of the traditional ruling authorities of the community and drawn human consciousness on some social evils that have names as carelessness, egoistic interests, psychological manipulation, corruption, betrayal.

These evils blind the vision of the traditional and political authorities and prevent them from standing ground before any external force that brings scourge and misfortune to the community. In the play, the playwright portrays the Old One and King Dosey like children, for they have set a deal with the strategist protagonist Ananse who offers them symbolic shoddy commodities for their own interest to the detriment of the whole community. Here, it is important to put some interrogations to inspect inner sight of these traditional and political authorities who sacrifice the happiness of the masses to quench their thirst for material. Do the authorities have, in the play, the happiness of the populations at stake? Are they authorities of good vision for their community? Wouldn't it be wiser for them to safeguard the interests of community to the detriment of their selfish ones? This attitude brings destruction and misfortune to the coming generations of Dim Nyim-Lira. In his fight for survival, the smart and cunning Ananse has skillfully and intelligently run in a symbolic way the headband, honey and the perforated gourd in his possession to pass from captive to king. With these symbolic objects he has manipulated the whole superstructure of the kingdom for his individual interest. The present research work is divided into three parts that is to say 'symbolic exploitation of objects as a weapon for self-defence', 'manipulation of human consciousness' and 'Reward from conspiracy'.

1- Symbolic Exploitation of Objects as a Weapon for Self-defence.

In Africa, before the advent of the Westerners, people have various ways of solving the problems they face. They use experiences from traditional education which is very often acquired through the myths, short stories, proverbs, maxims, sayings, gestures etc. These educative media are used by certain African literary men to raise social evils that clog the cultural, political and economic emancipation of post-independent Africa. African writers attack a catalogue of social ills such as corruption, betrayal, conspiracy, cult of personality, greed, sexual immorality, envy, dishonesty and arrogance. In effect, the Ghanaian playwright Yaw Asare addresses the majority of these social defections in his play *Ananse in the Land of the Idiots*. Asare has used his artistic talent to explore the African cultural heritage to denounce the behaviours of the political leaders who have in charge the destiny of their communities or nations. The plot woven by the playwright exposes the weaknesses and the defect of the leaders of the communities and nations. The play introduces to the readers the emblematic protagonist Kweku Ananse of the African short story who has been made captive after having broken the prime taboo in Dim-Nyim Lira by eating the sacrificial egg. One witnesses the instance when Akpala, the security captain of the community exposes the case to the King Dosey. Here is what he presents;

Your Royal Highness, Abi of Dim-Nyim Lira ...I was in the forest doing my rounds, inspecting traps when I saw this strange man, this thief prowling around the crossroads where our maidens went through their final puberty rites this morning. His strange outfit and manner caused me to suspect he was up to some evil. So I hid and watch. (*Pause*) Your Highness, to my horror and disgust I saw this man removed the bowl of sacrificial food from the mound, sat down and set to eating it (Y. Asare, 2014, p. 7-8).

Though the aforementioned quotation presents a heroic act achieved by the security guard that should have saved the community from external attack and disaster, it contains the germs of cult of personality that hinder the development of the African nations. These delusions of grandeur appear clearly in the customary praises to the King 'Your Royal Highness' and 'Abi of Dim-Nyim Lira'. This means that the royal authority is considered to be the supreme

personality whose decisions are unquestionable and impact negatively or positively the whole community. According to the customary prescriptions Ananse has committed a deadly abomination by defiling the ritual feast. For this reason, king Dosey has declared that Ananse is at present a captive and has sent for the priestess the spiritual custodian of the community. The excerpt below informs:

Enough! Surely Odomankoman didn't send you to defile our ritual feast! (pause) Now listen! Whoever you claim to be; however lengthy you're your chain of praise-names, you are now a captive. You have perpetrated a gross defilement by intercepting the passage of evil destinies, among them that of my daughter, the sole princess of Dim-NyimLira. I suppose you don't know what that means...yet. (to GUARD) Hey, you.... run in and call the High Priestess of Kompi. She must tell this man the enormity of the taboo he has broken. (Y. Asare, 2014, p. 9).

After the King's declaration specifying Ananse's new status of prisoner, the latter tries to unveil his honorific titles by saying "Yes it's me...Master Craftsman in the Guild of Divine Craftsmen; Legends of Tailless Tales; One who manipulates Creation from the Fingers of a Vibrant Web; Hunter Extraordinary; Fellow of the Cult of the Cosmic Linguists; Supreme Strategist; Odomankoma's Mystery Messenger..." (Y. Asare, 2014, p. 9). Here, once again, the playwright shows that Africans stick to their titles and use them to influence decisions. Unfortunately, in the present case King Dosey ignores for the time being Ananse's glory because this is of no use and interest for him. He utters "Whoever you are, or were, matters little now. The reality is that you've broken a prime taboo and, in so doing, put the destinies of a whole generation of worthy maidens to great risk. Now here comes the Priestess (Y. Asare, 2014, p. 10). In the quotation below the gravity and consequence of the misconduct of the wanderer Ananse is stated and the Priestess pronounces the sentence in this passage:

You...you...you've ruined that sacrifice ...you've stopped the passage of sacrifice to appease evils spirits. You are an evil soul...an evil soul...an evil soul. Great King ...this man... must die... He must die ... instantly ...He must die...ai...ai...ai...ai... ai...wipe out this evil soul from the land of dying sun ...ai ...ai... ai...ai. (Y. Asare, 2014, p.10).

In the aftermath of priestess' utterance, King Dosey ordered the guard execution of the guilty in this pronouncement:

Take him guards and hang him over to the executioners! Let them take him to the very crossroads where he committed his abomination. There, they must allow him to eat all the sacrificial food –every morsel of it –to fatten him for the offended spirit. Then let his blood spill over the mound to quench the thirst of the spirits (Y. Asare, 2014, p. 11).

Once the penalty of his misconduct is clearly known to him, he starts unfolding his cunning strategies by requesting an advocacy for indulgence of the King. First of all, he asks for a reprieve to distract the King and his courts. He expresses his will as follows "Is there no reprieve Great King? Plead with the priestess on my poor behalf, Old One, you who recall my presence in times of yore ... plead on my behalf." (Y. Asare, 2014, p. 10). In the preceding extract, the strategist Ananse uses a stalling tactics to attain the psychology of gaolers. Unfortunately, this did not work properly. So on the execution process, Ananse, the now prisoner makes an alluring offer that fits the selfish interest of the king. This proposition clearly appears in "Er... one last word, Great King. I have one proposition to make...an offer you'd find of great benefit..." (Y. Asare, 2014, p. 11).

So, this deal between Ananse and Dosey is also addressed in the thesis by Kwakye-Opong to show the irresponsible flexibility that brings scourge to the north Ghanaian imaginary town of Dim-Nyim Lira. Here is what happens:

Ananse the trickster is travelling and makes a stop at Dim-Nyim-Lira the land of idiots. Meanwhile somewhere in the forest, a ritual ceremony is being performed for King Dosey's daughter, the princess Sodziisa and her peers. Ananse watches on unnoticed. After the rituals he comes out from his hideout and begins to feast on the sacrifice meant to appease the gods, but Ananse is caught by Akpala the hunter. Akpala tells Ananse of the consequences of his act, and Ananse is finally brought before King Dosey, the Chief of Dim-Nyim-Lira. Ananse is sentenced to death but just before he is sent away he pleads with, the King and promises to weave the most beautiful cloth that anyone has with, the King and promises to weave the most beautiful cloth that anyo.ie has ever seen when his life is spared (R. Kwakye-Opong, 2001, p. 19).

Since Dosey finds now his egoistic interest at stake, he reconsiders the decision of the kingdom, jeopardizing the future of the whole community. More light is shed on his deviating attitude through this utterance "Alright...bring him back for a moment...remember, only for a moment. Now what is this proposition you speak of?" (Y. Asare, 2014, p. 11). And then he shows the King the headband he has with him. This headband is a symbol of beauty that has allured the King and court except the priestess. For clear understanding of this part it is indispensable to coin the meaning of symbolism and symbol to quench the readers' thirst in this research work. According to *Oxford Advanced Learne* (R. Kwakye-opong, 2001) *r's Dictionary*, symbolism is "the use of symbols to represent things, especially in art, and literature; the symbols used in this way" (J. Crowther, *et al.*, 1996, p. 1112). For a deeper comprehension, *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, defines symbolism as

the art or the practice of using symbols especially, investing things with a symbolic meaning or by expressing the invisible or intangible by means of visible or sensuous representations: as a: artistic imitation or invention that is a method of revealing or suggesting immaterial, ideal, or otherwise intangible truth or state. b: the use of conventional or traditional signs in the representation of divine beings or spirits. (M. Webster, 2011, p. 1266).

From the above definition it appears that symbolism is the fact of giving meaning to an object or a sign to represent an ideal, truth, and knowledge etc., In this regard, Ananse has smartly used the objects at his disposition and their symbolic meanings have changed the destiny of a whole community of people. In exploring the literature of some existing research works in the use of objects as symbols to communicate message, appear in Henry Kam Kah's paper "Feminist Activism, Economic Carte Blanche, Political Control, Symbol and Symbolism: A Historical Interpretation of the Kelu Women Revolution in Bu-Cameroon, 1957-59", the revolutionary women, in fight against patriarchal economic and political domination, have used some objects as weapon self-defense to communicate their message that are unknown to the British colonial administration and threaten them. This passage clearly describes their disagreement:

In the course of the women uprising of 1957-59, they used different symbols to communicate serious messages to men regarding their actions. Among the symbols and symbolic actions were the wearing of specific regalia, dry banana leaves, creeping plants, shirts and trousers. Besides, humorists among them painted their faces with wood ash and charcoal and other women sang weird songs and blew whistles. The use of symbols and other bodily practices as a weapon of attack was not limited to the Kelu women of Bu. This was very common among the Kom, Babanki, and Mankon women during the colonial

and post- independence periods (W. G. Nkwi, 2003, p. 159 ; S. Diduk, 2004, p. 32-35). In Kom, the Anlu women used different symbols like dresses, body adornment and other instruments to wade off men from subjugating them (H. Kam Kah, 2009, p. 13).

From this demonstrative paragraph, it is underscored the pivotal role of objects used as symbol in the communication and resolution of social disagreements.

In a similar vein, in 1929, during the Aba women's revolt against the British in Nigeria, women used palm- leaves to express their anger and rebellion. British people ignored the symbolic meaning of the palm leaf among the Igbo.

Coming back to the analysis through the corpus under reflection, actually, as said previously, at the very beginning of this part, from then on the bargain for business is set up between the two parties with no consideration for the common interest. The immediate result from this fictional business is the provisional release on bail of the weaver despite the opposition of the Priestess so that he could design and weave the most beautiful wedding clothes nobody has ever worn for the princess Sodziisa and prince Pootagyiri for their wedding ceremony to glorify the royal family. At this point, it is important to note that, the king not only is materialistic but also greedy. This psychological weakness leads to bad governance of the kingdom and endangers the life of the citizens. Taking advantage of the King's carelessness, the trickster quickly invents cunningings that stink thoroughly the community Dim-Nyim lira. His rhetoric quality overpasses the understanding and the awareness of the community. So, he easily gains terrain and sets conditions before achieving his artistic feat "...Great King, with all humility ... I wish to make three modest requests." (Y. Asare, 2014, p. 14), Blinded by this shoddy token offered by Ananse, Dosey no more consults his counsel before accepting all the requests the weaver has made. Even, he pressures on the craftsman to display his requests "Go on. Name theme." (Y. Asare, 2014, p. 14). After the presentation of the requests, the king simply capitulates and immediately orders that Ananse is supplied with the three requests. His capitulation crystal clearly appears in this statement where foolishly he said

"Well...that is a simple request indeed and modest too. Idiots abound in our land, and you will have one readily. (*pause*) Now Ananse I have granted your three requests" (Y. Asare, 2014, p. 15). The playwright through his artistic universe has ridiculed this irresponsible and despotic behaviour which shows that the royal authority lacks of vision for his community. This deviated behaviour is termed as greed. According to *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* greed is "a selfish and excessive desire for more of something (as money) than is needed. (M. Webster, 2011, p. 548). Thus, greed is a central element in human existence. It is also frequently mentioned as a factor in many recent organizational and financial scandals. Altogether, in the speech given by the lead movie character Gordon Gekko, "Greed ... is good. Greed is right. Greed works. Greed clarifies, cuts through, and captures the essence of the evolutionary spirit. Greed, in all of its forms; greed for life, for money, for love, knowledge, has marked the upward surge of mankind." (D. Dorling, 2017, p. 12) from the preceding quote it appears that greed becomes the pivotal element that constructs and deconstruct mankind. In the present study carried on the play it is revealed that Ananse uses the headband from his handiwork to liberate himself from captivity. This means that he runs the weaving art and its outcome to defend himself against the disaster he gets into. On the other hand, Dosey is deconstructed since his lust for this new material distances him from his custodian responsibility. He entirely falls into Ananse's trap. Curiously enough, the King becomes confident in Ananse and urges him to start his work. The King can no longer hide his enthusiasm and joy and pronounces "Good, now you may go...we must allow you to begin your task. (*rise to go, and pauses*) Aa! These beautiful headbands, what should we do with..." (Y. Asare, 2014, p. 15).

The monarch is gradually bartering the destiny of his monarchy for a token of headbands. He even thanks a lot the trickster for this gift. Dosey said happily “Thank you Ananse. Thank you very much.” (Y. ASARE, 2014, p. 15) forgetting that the one he is acknowledging with gratitude is the captive of the monarchy. Where is then the kingly responsibility? Owing to the strategical and cunning exploitation of the objects at his disposal he is freeing himself from planned death.

Confident that he is out of danger, he unfolds his next project that is the building of his expected happiness in this land of the idiots. Here are the ambitions that he nourishes:

I need to work out something fast that can earn my stay and perhaps a title. Something like “Personal Advisor to the King.” Yes... something as elevating as that. Then I will marry two or three of these pretty maidens and settle down. Hmm! If that buffoon of king thinks I will finish this task and walk off with my bundle between my thighs, he must be thinking from his underside (Y. Asare, 2014, p. 21).

In this perspective, Ananse has trapped the security captain Akpala and his acolyte Odudu by alluring them with the token objects of honey and by the use of perforated gourds in order to divert his gaolers from essential objective. In this respect, the important prisoner tests their knowledge about honey and discovers that both of them are ignorant and neophyte in this new bargain. This reality appears in these consecutive quotes from the captive, the security guard and the idiot on the verge of becoming accessories. “Aa! How tired I am! Now this is refreshing. (*pause*) Have you two ever tasted honey?” (Y. Asare, 2014, p. 28). Required the impostor Ananse. Automatically and naively Akpala puts some interrogations “What is that? Honey? Never heard of it.” (Y. Asare, 2014, p. 28). And Odudu replies “Nor I” (Y. Asare, 2014, p. 28) Akpala continues “What is it? A fruit juice? (Y. Asare, 2014, p. 28) Now Ananse wants to check more their understanding “You mean there is no honey in these parts? No bees?” (Y. Asare, 2014, p. 28). The two fools reinforce their alienation by uttering “We know nothing of the sort in these parts” (Y. Asare, 2014, p. 28). As a matter of fact, the dynamic protagonist of the play, after his lion, mystifies his accomplices and affects them psychologically through this excerpt from the play. He pronounces pitifully “Poor you! The gods passed your land over when they distributed the greatest pleasure to mankind. Here, stretch your palms. Go on Taste the mystery sweetness of the gods. [...] I just told you, didn’t I? From the Gods. When you are in consort with the gods they lead you into their secret pleasure. Here, take just a drop... no more” (Y. Asare, 2014, p. 28-29). The sweetness of this substance has interested much the two acolytes. Ananse exploits this opportunity to disarm the security guard and his companion. In consequence, the former captive of the story of Ananse in the land of idiots empowers the situation and establishes the scheme which confers him the apotheosis later. In fact, Asare puts into relief allegorically the disastrous encounter between the Africans, their chiefs and the Europeans. Meeting during which the foreigners offered the African chiefs shoddy goods to commodify their being and affect their psychology. In this weak state of mind, the African chiefs, kings, caretakers and community leaders etc., sacrificed the masses to safeguard their selfish interests. In line of this point of view:

David Simon agrees and claims that the 1980s and 1990s were “a period in which the individual focus was on self-concern, personal survival, and greed. This personal focus was aided and abetted by a conservative, probusiness administration that somehow made greed seem moral and corruption an everyday fact of political life”(D. Dorling, 2017, p. 12).

Armah, Achebe, and Ngugi’s novels display an excessive description of greed and consumption. That is what Armah calls “conspicuous consumption” This is also a hallmark of capitalism.

In real life this attitude is equally very often observed from African political leaders who use their political position to safeguard their interests and sacrifice the ones of the masses.

Consequently the crack and defects noted in the ruling system overtly leads to the manipulation of the whole superstructure of Dim-Nyim Lira.

2- Manipulation of Human Consciousness.

From the inception of humanity the greatest worry of human beings is that of manipulation of consciousness. And this happened in the conventional story of the conflation Adam, Eve, Serpent and the Garden of Eden in which the serpent has manipulated Eve as so much as she disobeys God and violates His regulations. This deceitful and manipulative mission achieved by the serpent is read in Genesis 2: 3-7:

Of course you will not die!”, it pro- claimed. God knows that. And He also “knows that as soon as you eat it, you will be like gods, knowing both good and evil.” Eve thought about what the snake had said. Then she turned to the tree. The fruit actually looked pretty good. It was pleasing to the eye, and tempting to contemplate. She relented, took some, and ate it. Then she gave some to Adam, and he ate it too (S. W. A. Dekker, 2007, p. 6).

Here, the quote shows that Eve, the representative of the womankind, is both ambitious and pretentious. On the score she wants to differentiate good from evil as she has been told by the serpent. Having the knowledge of the good and evil means therefore that she will become God’s alter ego. Unfortunately, she has been fooled and the consequence is the weight of everlasting sin for humanity. If manipulation has been so destructive for mankind then it is necessary to clarify its meaning. So in the theoretical framework of this research definitions of pivotal key concepts such as ‘manipulation’, ‘consciousness must be clarified. According to *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*; ‘to manipulate’ is “to control or play upon by artful, unfair or insidious means esp. to one’s own advantage” (M. Webster, 2011, p. 756). On the same ground in their paper (T. Auvinen *et al.*, 20013, p. 9-10) give some working clarifications of manipulation as follows Manipulation can be defined as a way of exerting influence in which the target does not know that she or he has been influenced. Manipulation is usually considered unethical of leadership. The same dictionary defines consciousness as “the quality or state of being aware esp. of something within oneself; the state or fact of being conscious of an external object, state or fact.” *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary* (2011, p. 265). So, manipulation of human consciousness is the deceitful and unethical manner in which someone is psychological exploited by a third person without being aware of it. It is equally also important to assert that no entity in the world determines the consciousness of human beings rather than their experiences with the external world. Somsak Kaewnuch in the analysis of the research topic “Kant’s Transcendence Marx’s false Consciousness, and the Impasse in education” quotes (C. E. Bressler, 2003, p. 162-163) who describes Marxism as follows:

“Marxism offered to humanity a social, political, economic, and cultural understanding of the nature of reality, society, and the individual. ... [C]onsciousness does not determine life, but life determines consciousness. ... [A] person’s consciousness is not shaped by any spiritual entity or means; through daily living and interacting with each other, humans define themselves. ... [O]ur ideas and concepts about ourselves are fashioned in everyday interactions.” (E. Bressler, 2003, p. 162-163).

In this regard, Asare has perfectly imagined and created a character who knows the way to play with the human consciousness. As it is pointed out in the previous part of this research, Ananse has hypnotized the awareness of the leading authorities of Dim-Nyim Lira rational exploiting the symbolic materials in his possession. In line with his scheme, Ananse has set deal with

Akpala in which terms he requires the help of the latter. It is clear that Ananse is convinced that Akpala is from now on in need of this sweet stuff that it is the mysterious honey. The playwright underscores it in this statement “Now how did you get that stuff, Ananse? If you show me, I shall relax my vigilance over you” (Y. Asare, 2014, p. 29). Completely reassured, Ananse invites Akpala to the imaginary table of business negotiation by stressing reciprocity in the new partnership. This is noticed in the following utterance “Now you’re talking business, man let’s sit down and talk. This is a world of modern business...of reciprocity ...of mutual bargaining, eh” (Y. Asare, 2014, p. 30). On that ground, he unveils the content of the new plan to his accessory by declaring in a short and unequivocal tone “Listen, I want the princess for myself” (Y. Asare, 2014, p. 30). At each level of the project, he brings a pungent ingredient that confuses his partner. Hearing this megalomaniac ambition Akpala is surprised and confused at the same time and declares “You are surely out of your senses, Ananse. The princess is betrothed to the ferocious Pootagyiri, the most ruthless warrior and wrestler in our time.” (Y. Asare, 2014, p. 30). From this quotation, the partner informs the impostor that he incurs an enormous risk. But the strategist ignores and trivializes the threat and encourages him to take an active part in the prospect project. “Forget about what he is. Look, pretty princesses are won by brain not brawn. Are you ready to help? Then the secret of the honey will be yours... for good” (Y. Asare, 2014, p. 30). Now that the ground is cleared and collusion sealed, Akpala makes an exhaustive account to Ananse of the riches that awaits prince Pootagyiri just after their wedlock. Here Akpala displays:

Well, but the very thought of it. Pootagyiri is the prince of an esteemed clan. Immediately after their marriage tomorrow morning, the King is going to offer him a whole chieftain, the island of Boyile, beyond Kpeyi River- a chieftain complete with palace, cattle, an army, food barns, everything and you think... (Y. Asare, 2014, p. 30).

After being aware of the jackpot, like the edenic mythic serpent, Ananse continues and reinforces the manipulation process by notifying to the security guard his supposed share of the jackpot once they achieve the apotheosis. In effect, the offer obviously appears in the excerpt “it all the better, Akpala. If you cooperate in this plan, I will share all that with you on the equal basis, in addition to giving you the secret of the gods” (Y. Asare, 2014, p. 31).

From the aforesaid quotation, above the fact that manipulation seems to quench a personal interest, it appears clearly that Ananse is fighting to lay a foundation of a comfortable and peaceful life condition for himself. On the same ground, through his analysis De Vitis observes that:

Marcuse hopes to build a political and moral radicalism which will create socially induced needs conducive to a truly rational aesthetic sensibility and a “pacified existence.” On the one hand, as social critic, he assumes that a certain indestructible core of resistance characterizes man’s instinctual biological nature (J. De Vitis, 1974, p. 4).

De Vitis thinks that Marcuse treats the human being as a mere plastic creature which can be molded and manipulated:

Once a specific morality is firmly established as a norm of social behavior, it is not only introjected-it also operates as a norm of “organic” behavior: the organism receives and reacts to certain stimuli and “ignores” and repels others in accord with the introjected morality, which is thus promoting or impeding the function of the organism as a living cell in the respective society (J De Vitis, 1974, p. 4).

With this view of conditioning at his bestowal, Marcuse proceeds a pace in his own brand of social engineering. In the process, he makes men his personal marionettes. In the same perspective, Asare the Ghanaian playwright to espouse the idea of manipulation according to the interest of the person at present has re-invented Ananse a legendary character in the African narrative who has psychologically conditioned and shaped the security captain into marionettes so as to achieve the royal prerogatives he is expecting from the success of his scheme. When the puppet Akpala is worrying about ‘how’ all this is feasible, the god-given talents talent and strategist convincingly puts:

Simple. That’s where an active brain comes handy. Are ready to accept the bargain? Think of yourself with half a chieftain –an autonomous empire with pretty maids to choose your wives from, countless cattle and food barns, loyal subjects, an army, palace... think of all these pleasures. An exciting life... away from this dull one of watchful servitude (Y. Asare, 2014, p. 31).

From the above quote, it is no doubt that the protagonist has properly and efficiently manipulated his accessory. The play under reflection epitomizes the allegory of the behaviours of the African political leaders who manipulate their subjects and the economic and political assets to their advantage in the post-independence Africa. Thus African political leaders mimic their Western masters who resort to the same stratagem to rob African people of their resources and culture. The new development of cooperation will not only be disastrous for the imprudent security guard but also catastrophic for the community of Dim-Nyim lira as it is presently for the African nations.

3- Reward from conspiracy

It is humanly admitted that ‘you reap what you sow’. And the evil that is done to other is sooner or later paid cash. As a matter of fact, Ananse and Akpala have jointly plotted against the prince Pootagyiri to deconstruct him and construct themselves. But the development of this plot has reached a climax that surpasses human understanding. This part of the study has lain emphasis on the intrigue that has empowered Ananse and disempowered Akpala. It has spotlighted the consequence awaited from the conspiracy schemed by the protagonist and his accessory in the course of their egoistic interests. Taking into account the reality announced above, the clarification of the concepts of conspiracy and reward appears pivotal to the study. First of all, conspiracy is, according to *Oxford advanced Learner’s Dictionary* “a secret plan by a group of people to do something illegal or harmful” (J. Crowther *et al.*, 1996, p. 246). This definition succinctly goes along with the mechanism that the playwright has invented to show human wickedness. The assassination plan is thought by Ananse and disclosed to Akpala in the quotation below:

Good I shall invite that prince here, to take to take his own measurement tomorrow. When he arrives, I shall make him leave his bows, arrows, amulets and necklaces here, and then stretch his arms across the cloth. You will hiding in the bush there. Then when you hear me whistle you will shot your arrow right through his heart. And that will be all, a very simple task, and you would have won yourself a chieftain and unlimited wealth pleasure... (Y. Asare, 2014, p. 32).

Despite this dexterous plot, Akpala has raised an important worry in the African tradition. It is the question of blood. It is an abomination that a kinsman kills a kinsman. And he signifies in this pronouncement “That sounds simple...but he is my kinsman and... that would be murder...” (Y. Asare, 2014, p. 32). Faithful to his strategy of persuasion, Ananse points out the difference of category between Akpala and the prince. For him the prince Pootagyiri enjoys some social privileges that confers him nobility whereas Akpala belongs to commoners and

must all his existence serve the royal cause. This brainwashing appears as a catalyzer which definitely seal the fate of prince. Here Ananse justifies the action in the following terms “Kinsman? Isn’t he a privilege prince while you’re a servile guard? And...are you not a soldier, to talk of murder when you kill an enemy and claim your booty?” (Y. Asare, 2014, p. 32). Sometimes, people conspire for the different reasons that justify their stand on the matter. In Z. Yavetz’s ‘The Failure of Catiline’s Conspiracy’ Catiline has conspired after failing twice in the consular election against his political opponents and the republic. The passage which follows justifies his behaviour:

L. Catiline failed twice in the consular elections. He conspired with the praetor Lentulus, with Cethegus and many others, in order to assassinate the consul and the senators, to oppress the Republic and set fire to the city. An army was prepared in Etruria, but thanks to Cicero's watchfulness the conspiracy was discovered (F.S Verlag & A. Geschichte, 2011, p. 2).

Like Catiline, Ananse too has some reasons to conspire against the prince. Each conspirator is always desperately in search for solving some life problems that hinder his or her emancipation. From the below strategical organized passage Ananse shows his capability to conspire at the same time against the prince and the princess and the whole kingdom. His organizational skill appears clearly here:

Yes. Now listen you dumb fool! You will tell the King and his elders that I fell while tying in the final knot up there on the rafters, and broke my neck. And that Pootagyiri and you vainly tried to save my life you will tell the King that I requested before my death that, as a mark of gratitude to my newly found friend, the prince; who had tried heroically to save my life, no elaborate funeral be accorded me, nor should the impending marriage be tainted with any signs of mourning for me. Nobody should wail or mourn until seven days after the marriage. Finally tell him that if any of these conditions are flouted, the young couple will go mad instantly, and their new cloths will vanish (Y. Asare, 2014, p. 32).

From this passage, Ananse has invented the last wills which has completely rendered the people of the kingdom and the King inactive once the misfortune occurs. Just after this elaborated plan, they kill Pootagyiri. The following parentheses informs about the murder:

(Ananse hurries off towards Down Center, whistling an incidental song. Suddenly Pootagyiri emits a loud and long wail and collapses at the base of the rafter. Ananse rushes to his side and starts examining the prostrate prince. Akpala also emerges, a fresh arrow pulled and aimed at the prince (Y. Asare, 2014, p. 32).

No doubt they have succeeded in murdering Pootagyiri and this is confirmed in the following passage “No need, friend, spare your arrow. He is cold dead.” (Y. Asare, 2014, p. 40). For the betterment of their life existence Ananse and his accessory have assassinated the prince and have changed the course of things. Ananse has successfully got married with the Princess Sodziisa and now possesses all the wealth and the prerogatives destined to the real prince Pootagyiri. The passage below illustrates the sealing of this wedlock:

Pootagyiri, son-of-Pootaguo, Whose Totem is the Prowling-Bush-Cat! Today I hold your hand in marriage to Sodziisa, sole princess of Dim-Nyim Lira. May the gods bless this marriage! May Naa Buruku bless this marriage, so that it may yield fruit and forge greater harmony between our two clans (*cheers and flourish of drums*) I bestow to you the Pootagyiri, son-of-Pootaguo and my daughter, the entire island of Boyile, beyond the Kpeyi River as custom demands I bestow to you all the people, the lands, the cattle

and food barns of that island (*more cheers*). May you live in endless happiness! (Y. Asare, 2014, p. 45).

As it is stated in their agreement, after the marriage, Ananse will reward Akpala for his active cooperation. Since the marriage is sealed and all the wealth and chieftaincy are bestowed to Ananse, his acolyte Akpala now must have his share and enjoy a moment of pleasure. Unfortunately, the flower does not bear fruit. Akpala the acolyte conspirator does not have reward as promised. To well understand this part of work it is important to clarify the meaning of the word 'reward' since in the development of this work its connotative meaning is pivotal. According to *Oxford advanced Learner's Dictionary*, reward is "a thing that is given or received in return for doing something good, working hard." (J. Crowther *et al.*, 1996, p. 1008). In this respect working on the topic of total reward Anku-Tsede quotes M. Armstrong who thinks that "the benefits of a total reward approach include a combined effect of different types of rewards makes a deeper and long-lasting impact on the motivation and commitment of employees" (O. A. Tsede & E. Kutin, 2013, p. 2). In fact, this passage shows that after a great effort one earns a reward that is the result of his or her commitment. In the case of this study Akpala awaits some prerogatives that will be the recognition of his active cooperation in Ananse's success. At some occasions Akpala expresses his expectations "All right. Let's see again -half of everything ...chieftain, cattle, food barns, land, everything, as well as the secret of the honey. (*dreamily*) And as for Pootagyiri ...aa! I haven't forgotten how the fool humiliated me during our seclusion as initiates into manhood. May be this will be my rightful revenge..." (Y. Asare, 2014, p. 33).

From the aforementioned quotation, it appears that above these expectations, the accessory nourishes a personal challenge that is his revenge against Pootagyiri to reimburse a childhood humiliation. Unfortunately, his mishap begins contrary to all expectations. The reward he awaits from Ananse turns to be a great punishment that is fatal for him. In fact, instead of a share, the cunning strategist offers him ingratitude. In the process of transferring him the secret of the gods who will yield him permanently honey, Ananse has for good sealed the mouth of his acolyte and prevents him from disclosing his machination. To satisfy his greediness, he arranges this dreadful reward for his co-conspirator. Here is what he prepare:

Good! Swallow it again. Now open your mouth again. But this time, do not swallow. Keep your mouth open until I have smeared your lips with honey. Then I will tell what to do next, right? (...) By the powers given me by the timeless gods, I give you, Akpala this secret of honey, as a token of your untainted loyalty, help and kindness to me. Let it be with you forever. Any time you want honey, may your very spittle become honey—just on the thought.

Now, do not swallow...you hear me? Do not swallow! If you do so, it will turn to crocodile bile, and you will die this very moment. Slowly, close your mouth... good. Now press your lips tight so your mouth won't open to let off the spirit. Now open your eyes and take this good. Run back to the crossroads and there, think of honey. Tell yourself you want honey. Then open your mouth and you will see honey filling this gourd and smiling over! Ha! Now you have the secret of the gods! Go! When you return, we will work out the details of the other rewards (Y. Asare, 2014, p. 49-50).

This excerpt addresses the issue of the opacity and the complexity of human being. How can Akpala imagine that this ritual for having the secret of honey is another trick to distance him from the expected reward? After this careful sealing, he anticipates the occurrence of Akpala's mishap and prepare the King to accept his cunning. His skillful precaution to definitively crucify Akpala appears in the quotation below:

Aa!... I understand, Great King. The dead craftsman gave us his two gourds of honey as parting gifts before he died. But I suspected the sweet stuff contains an evil spell, considering what everyone knows about his ghostly ways. I told Akpala we must bury those gourds, and he agreed. A while ago I made my wife fetch me those gourds and I went to bury them in the bush I am sure Akpala hid by and thought he must have those two for himself. This is one of the gourds, and he has drunk all the stuff no doubt. Ananse warned that none should taste it on a Friday else the one would have his mouth sealed forever, and then go mad. Today is ... (Y. Asare, 2014, p. 51).

At the place of reward, Ananse offers cruelty and destruction to his partner. In this Machiavellian situation when Akpala reappears dumb and seems almost mad, Ananse warns the King and his population against the affliction “Now if you allow him to touch anybody with his mouth, that person will suffer the same affliction” (Y. Asare, 2014, p. 52) and strategically makes a dreadful suggestion through the following excerpt:

Great King, it saddens me to make this suggestion, Akpala being my best friend, companion and peer during initiation. But if this empire is to be saved from the scourge of dumbness and madness, I’m afraid he’d have to be killed immediately. For one must endure the pain of pulling out one rotten tooth, to save the rest from infection (Y. Asare, 2014, p. 52).

This aforementioned passage shows clearly the way Ananse rewards Akpala. This is the reward from conspiracy. Reward in this study is not used in its right meaning. It is to show here that when one conspires against an innocent person sooner or later he or she will have the retribution of his or her misdeed. That is case of the conspirator Akpala who has been paid wickedness, cruelty and ingratitude at the place of all that riches he expects after his active contribution and commitment in the Machiavellian scheme against Pootagyiri and the whole kingdom of Dim-Nyim Lira. He never thinks that the situation will turn to his disfavor. The reward in the context of the study is referred to as betrayal and ingratitude. The playwright denounces in the play the amoral behaviours of the authorities which are akin to those leaders of the independent Africa.

Conclusion

Throughout this paper I have pointed out how a symbol can construct and deconstruct human consciousness. The research work has examined the weaknesses and strengths of the imaginary community of Dim-Nyim Lira. The reflection has been based on symbolic manipulation of human consciousness. The study has discussed three main parts which are the symbolic exploitation of object as weapon for self-defence, manipulation of human consciousness and the reward from conspiracy. In these three parts many evils that hamper the evolution of the post-independence Africa have been addressed. These evils are termed as incapability of safeguarding the interests the masses against external influences, the greed for shoddy goods, the barter of the collective interest for egoistic needs, the manipulation of consciousness and the cult of personality, etc. The play is an allegory of bad governance of the independent African nations. The study has used the qualitative approach which consists in exploring the existing literature on the research topic. It has also used the sociocriticism for analysis. The study has revealed that the African rulers are incapable of controlling the disasters that occur to their communities. It has also concluded that the African rulers are greedy and lack vision; they only work for their individual interests. The study has metaphorically shown that it is important that Africans use the knowledge from the African realities to solve their daily difficulties. That is part of the imperative of African renaissance and is known as ASAP: African solutions to African problems, as the protagonist of the play has done.

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