

Ideological Intersections in Luigi Pirandello's *Right You Are!* and Wole Soyinka's *The Strong Breed*

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Abstract

Ideological reflection in a play-text has often served as the hallmark of a playwright's identity (Akoh, 2006a). In fact, the dramatization of ideology has continued to hold sway in the African and Western literary traditions, and this has made it difficult to interpret a play-text outside of the ideological frame of its author. For example, the play-texts of Luigi Pirandello, Bertolt Brecht, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Wole Soyinka, Athol Fugard, Zulu Sofola, Femi Osofisan and so on, are better understood when the ideologies of these playwrights are contextualised. The fact remains that not much attention has been paid to the comparison of the plays of Luigi Pirandello and Wole Soyinka who are substantially ideological in their writings but ironically reject being pegged to (m)any ideology(ies). In other words, ideologies of individualism and collectivism in the plays of Luigi Pirandello and Wole Soyinka as well as the transition of these two Nobel Laureates from one ideological enclave to the other has not received much juxtaposition to our notice. This study, therefore, compares the diverse shades of ideologies in Luigi Pirandello's *Right You Are!* which is fully titled, *Right You Are! (If You Think So)* and Wole Soyinka's *The Strong Breed*. The study hinges on the theoretical premise of Seymour Lipset's (1972) concept of Ideo-aesthetics as modified by Dennis Akoh

(2015) complemented with the textual analysis method of research. The study uncovers certain areas of convergence in both playwrights' ideologies such as the handling of the fourth wall, dialectics and the superiority of the human mind/will, and the embrace of messianic imperatives.

Introduction

The timelessness of ideological reflection in play-texts and indeed, other literary arts, has made ideology to become "the moving spirit in all literature" (Akoh, 2015, p. 36). In fact, the "workings" of ideology, according to Akoh (2015, p. 36), helps to "dictate the direction of every literature." The truth remains that the artistic world of a play-text often bellies one or more ideological dimensions, and this actuality has largely coalesced into the ever-increasing debate on whether a playwright should be ideologically committed or not. Quite naturally, this debate has also continued to be a subject for intellectual reflection within the praxes of Western and African literary traditions, and it has made critics such as Brustein (1964), Adelugba (1975), Adeoye (2015 and 2019), Akoh (2006 and 2015), and Clark (2018) to assess the akin relationship between a playwright's ideology or chain of ideologies and his or her play-texts. It is worthy of note, however that as a distinguishing factor, ideology occurs within a playwright's identity.

Certainly, the quest to measure up with the dynamics of human cultures and environments has made dramatists to construct or deconstruct the ideologies in their plays. Typical examples of this ideological infusion in drama include: Absurdist Aesthetics (Samuel Beckett), Existential Aesthetics (Jean Paul Sartre, Albert Camus and so on), Revolution and Recidivism (Ngugi wa Thiong'o), Satire and Social Adjudication (Hubert Ogunde),

Folkloric Aesthetics (D. O. Fagunwa), the Popularisation of Traditional and Multicultural Aesthetics (Ola Rotimi), Literature of the Masses (Femi Osofisan), Theatre Sociology (Ayo Akinwale), Social Re-engineering through the “Neo-alienation Theatre” (AbdulRasheed A. Adeoye), to mention a few (Adeoye, 2019). These ideologies are located within the creative and regenerative boards of the above-mentioned dramatists, and this is also applicable to other dramatists across Western and African borders.

Ironically, both Luigi Pirandello and Wole Soyinka whose selected plays are analysed in this study have warned against being tagged to one ideology, which is the dominant link shared by the two playwrights. Jones (1983, p, 11) submits that, “Soyinka constantly insists that he is not a ‘committed’ writer ... (and) that he is not committed to any ideology.” Brustein (1964, p. 282) also states that Pirandello, “often complains about being misunderstood and unappreciated . . . [because] his Romantic ego is split wide open by its own contradictions.” The parallel movement of ideology and of course, the nodal point is however, explicated by Lipset (1972, pp. 17-22) who argues (in line with Bertolt Brecht’s apotheosis) that, “the end of one ideology actually means the beginning of another.” Drawing from the above, this study, through the textual analysis research method, gives focal attention to the manner in which Luigi Pirandello and Wole Soyinka have reflected their concepts of individual and communal ideologies, in the process of which they have also infused other multiple artistic shades of sub-ideologies using Pirandello’s *Right You Are! (If You Think So)* and Soyinka’s *The Strong Breed*.

Theoretical Framework

The study adopts Seymour Lipset’s (1972) concept of Ideo-aesthetics as modified by Dennis Akoh (2015) as its theoretical framework. The term, “Ideo-aesthetics” generically refers to the identification of the symbiotic and systemic relationship(s) that exist between ideology and aesthetics. Although, the evolution of the concept of “ideo-aesthetics” is timeless, Plato’s *The Republic* remains an evergreen document for ideo-aesthetic reflection from which we can take cue. Plato muses, “what about the artist? He represents what the carpenter/painter makes . . . then you say that the artist’s representation stands third removed from reality” (Plato cited in Lee, 1987, pp. 424-425).

Literatures across time and space have often been interpreted within the backdrop of the ideological leanings of their authors or writers. In the words of Becorvitch (1986):

there is no escape from ideology ... so long as human beings remain political animals ... so long they are symbol-making animals they will always seek in some way to persuade themselves (and others) that their symbology is the last, best hope of mankind (p. 636).

In light of the above, scholars such as Brustein (1964), Adelugba (1975), Banham (2004), Akoh (2006a, 2006b and 2015), and so on, have examined the unavoidable relationship between aesthetics and ideology. These and many others are a record of a continuing criticism of ideo-aesthetics within the Western and African literary spheres. Uji (1989, p. 477), a disciple of the tenets of ideo-aesthetics, validates the relevance of ideo-aesthetics by confessing that “as far as I am concerned,

the aesthetics of the arts is as important as the ideology of the writer.”

Subsequently, one cannot contextualise the place of ideo-aesthetics in African drama without referring to the tradition of dramatic adaptation and its accompanying artistic imperatives. The truth remains that the endeavour of playwrights that fall under this category is, “paradoxical, given the multiple theoretical and ideological implications arising from the colonised author rewriting the master narratives of the colonisers or former colonisers” (Isidore, 2014, p. 194). More so, Igweonu (2014) expands on the views of Banham (2004) by mapping out the canons of indigenous aesthetics and ideology that have often pre-occupied most African plays. He concludes that African plays offer “ample representations of contemporary African – in this case Nigerian – drama ... that can be socially functional as the indigenous African model while retaining relevance in the westernised world” (Igweonu, 2014, p. 291). Flowing from the above, this study adopts the theory of ideo-aesthetics because it identifies ideology and aesthetics as symbiotic structures in drama creation. Secondly, it reinforces the multidimensionality of ideological perspectives in literary works. Also, it permits the examination of ideological variables within the dynamics of human societies, and it frowns at the dislodgement of the author-function in a literary work.

Review of Related Literature

The term, “ideology” has been appraised from numerous perspectives, and this pluralism has led to critical discourses from scholars such as Eagleton (1988), Williams (1996), Wilmot (1999), Homer-Dixon (2013), and so on. Ideology, according to Wilmot (1999, p. 17) is, “the systemisation of the false consciousness and

beliefs of a particular group or class in society.” Williams (1996, p. 56) expands this view by adding that ideology is, “the production, systemisation and propagation of beliefs generally.” From these two submissions, ideology can be conceived as a collection of normative beliefs and values that is held by an individual or group.

It is noteworthy that scholars differ in their relative emphasis of individual characteristics or communal interactions as key determinants of ideology. However, the fact that most African playwrights share similar communal ideologies cannot be overemphasised. For example, ideological insinuations that are communally geared permeate the plays of Africa’s widely celebrated and undoubtedly cerebral Writer, Wole Soyinka. In context, the word “communal” largely refers to a collective social process, whereby something is being used, held or shared by everyone in a group or when something happens in order to take a general cause on everyone. Soyinka indeed, enamours himself with lone, individual subjectivities (characters) who impose communal will upon themselves, who embody history, and who give due recourse to the mass of the people. It is, thus, not surprising that Soyinka’s works have “always drawn on existing materials in both the Yoruba and European traditions” (Gibbs, 1986, p. 29). Indeed, Wole Soyinka’s artistic and ideological identities are influenced through Western and Christian education, communal rites, rituals and festivals, romance and fraternity with Yoruba travelling theatre troupes and Ogun, the Yoruba god of iron, which are springboards for his satires, comedies and tragedies (Musa, 2006, p. 220).

Jones (1983, pp. 1-10) further establishes that the influences that have framed Wole Soyinka’s ideology also include, “his roots in Yoruba culture; Gods,

spirits and ancestors; Yoruba occupations and festivals; Christian influences; Universities of Ibadan and Leeds; and the Royal Court Theatre.” The god whose ritual, Soyinka offers as the model for this organic restoration is Ogun, who risks his own life to bridge the abysses that separate the three stages of Yoruba existence - the world of the ancestors, the world of the living, and the world of the unborn. Etherton (1982, p. 252) buttresses this fact by asserting that Soyinka, “consciously embraces the contradiction of destruction and creativity in the figure which is central to his philosophy – Ogun, the god of iron.” Ogun, as Soyinka reads the myth, is unique among ethnic deities because he is at home in none of these three structured states of experience. Rather, his realm is the chaotic region of transition between them, which Soyinka calls the “fourth stage” of the Yoruba universe, where opposites collide without resolution. Summarily, Gibbs (1986, p. 24) reiterates that “indications of the ways in which Soyinka transformed the raw material of the life which surrounded him during his youth into his plays are provided by almost all his works.”

The model of social revolution in Soyinka’s plays is essentially a simulacrum of recurring crisis, where novel and alien forces are regularly mastered and integrated into the matrix of tradition and custom. Scholars such as Onwueme (1991, p. 58) are of the view that Wole Soyinka falls to the camp of mythological crusaders due to the “mythopoetic and the revolutionary imperative” in his works. Indeed, the politics, poetics and postcoloniality of Wole Soyinka’s works define this dichotomy and the subservient characteristics in most of his plays, which Etherton (1982, p. 292) refers as, “protest plays.” More so, the complexity and ambiguity in placing Soyinka in one single ideological camp has been very controversial. Jeyifo (2004, p. xiv)

postulates that “Soyinka was often ideologically irresolute or ambiguous in that his works and activities seemed to promote a sort of “bourgeois” radicalism in representing the lower social orders.” Other critics like Gibbs (1986), Jones (1983) and even Jeyifo (2004) have also observed that another source of influence on Soyinka’s literary ideology stems from the literary community that he met after returning to Nigeria in 1960.

Similarly, the transition of Luigi Pirandello within his insoluble theatre of individual retrospection has attracted so much criticism. Hinchman (1990, p. 760) holds the view that “individuality evokes the notion of personal identity constituted both through reflective re-examination of the givens of life.” Pirandello was primarily interested in exploring the nature of human personality, the inability of people to understand or cope with the truth about themselves, as well as their need to rationalise everything. According to Petra (2003, p. 25), Luigi Pirandello’s plays are, “often about madness, time, masks, aging, acting, the relationship of the human personality, the relationship between the individual and society, and the blurring line between illusion and reality.”

With plays such as *Right You Are! (If You Think So)*, *Henry IV* and *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, Pirandello suggests that “truth” is necessarily personal and subjective. In *Henry IV*, for instance, the images, words, and their referents, which originated in a so-called reality, are the essential and existential problem. Pirandello cited in Dukore (1974, p. 749) argues that “life is a continuous flow which we continually try to stop, to fix in established and determinate forms outside and inside of ourselves because we are already fixed forms.” Lee (1993, p.818) also observes that “Pirandello’s influence in modern theatre

resulted from his experimentation with the concept of realism.” However, this researcher has observed that most of Pirandello’s modern plays begin significantly as a comedy of errors and end ultimately in a tragedy. It follows a certain linear development and is fairly conventional in the sense of temporality. Enough for the lover of the theatre is the fact that Pirandello “derives the most interesting dramatic possibilities from it. Sometimes . . . it is the “reality” which a man sees in himself that is thwarted by the reality which actually controls him” (Pirandello, 1934, pp. vi-vii).

Noteworthy is the fact that Caputi (1988, p. 97) points out that Pirandello’s *Henry IV* chooses precisely, “that period in Henry’s life when the conflict with Pope Gregory VII was at its height. Pirandello used these traits in the historical Henry to sharpen the image of modern anxiety in his scapegoat hero.” This means that Pirandello’s plays choose exactly the moment in which the dilemma of historical figures or heroes are at their peak. Predictably, Pirandello cited in Brustein (1964, p. 283) summarises that he belongs to the category of “philosophical writers [. . .] who feel a more profound spiritual need on whose account they admit only figures, affairs, landscapes which have been soaked, so as to speak, in a particular sense of life and acquire from it a universal value.”

Synopses of Wole Soyinka’s *The Strong Breed* and Luigi Pirandello’s *Right You Are! (If You Think So)*

The play *The Strong Breed* tells the story of Eman, who lives in a strange village and who comes from the line of strong breeds that are used as “carriers” of the burdens of the community. Sunma, who is in love with Eman tries to convince him to leave the village before the New Year

Festival begins, but Eman refuses to heed her warnings. Meanwhile, Eman had left his village for twelve years in search of a new identity but has to go back because he cannot flee from his destiny. In the new village, he is a teacher and a healer, but the villagers do not appreciate what he does, since he is a stranger. He tries to rehabilitate Ifada, a young boy who suffers from an incurable disease. Ifada is also a stranger and the villagers attempt to use him as the carrier but Eman chooses to take his place instead. Eman flees from the village elders as he is going to be sacrificed and has to be chased around the village for most part of the night.

In Luigi Pirandello’s *Right You Are! (If You Think So)*, Mr. Ponza and his mother-in-law, Lady Frola, escape to a quiet provincial town after a terrible earthquake in Marsica. It is rumoured that Ponza is married, but no one has ever seen Mrs. Ponza. The Ponzas stay on the top floor on a nearby block, while Lady Frola, his mother-in-law, lives in a stylish apartment. Due to their suspicious way of life, the trio are the subject of many rumours in the neighbourhood. Mr. Ponza’s boss, Councillor Agazzi, goes to the prefect to bring out the truth and clarify the matter but Lamberto Laudisi defends the new arrivals by stating the impossibility of knowing each other and, more generally, the absolute truth. The play progresses with the investigation on the life of the Mr. Ponza, during which he declares the insanity of his mother-in-law. He explains that Lady Frola went insane after the death of her daughter, Lina (his first wife), and he convinced Lady Frola that Giulia (his second wife) is actually her daughter and is still alive. Lady Frola soon learns of Mr. Ponza’s story and claims that he is crazy. Everyone is stunned, not knowing what to think. After a vain search for evidence among the survivors of the

earthquake, they seek out the first wife of Mr. Ponza at Agazzi asylum. They find a woman with her face covered by a black veil, who claims to be the daughter of Mrs. Frola and the second wife of Mr. Ponza.

Ideologies of Individualism and Collectivism in Luigi Pirandello's *Right You Are! (If you Think So)* and Wole Soyinka's *The Strong Breed*

The analysis of individual ideology in Luigi Pirandello's experimental play begins from the title of the play. Undoubtedly, the metaphoric contraption of the title of the play which is *Right You Are! (If You Think So)*, and which can be interpreted as "You are right if you think or are convinced that you are right" divulges Pirandello's ideology of individual objectivity and/or subjectivity. The opening of the play in which Pirandello gives a stringent prescription of the movement on stage as well as the physical looks of the characters takes us to another ideological paradigm, where the reader is expected to be faithful to the playwright's conception. The playwright describes Laudisi, one of the major characters thus:

Laudisi is a man nearing the forties, quick and energetic in his movements. He is smartly dressed, in good taste. At this moment he is wearing a semi-formal street suit, a sack coat, of a violet cast, with black lapels, and with black braid around the edges; trousers of a light but different colour, Laudisi has a keen, analytical mind, but is impatient and irritable in argument. Nevertheless, however angry he gets momentarily, his good humour soon comes to prevail. Then he laughs and lets people have their way, enjoying, meanwhile, the spectacle of the

stupidity and gullibility of others (pp. 151-152).

Pirandello's painstaking description of his characters as seen in the above excerpt, and indeed, throughout the play, defines his extremist ideology. This also accounts for the reason why critics such as Bloom (2002) have argued that Pirandello's theatre is extreme and pessimistic. Laudisi sums up the purely ideological situation in the play, which stems from the opening of the play, and it:

Laudisi: And why not, pray? He was looking for an apartment; the apartment was for rent, so he leased it—for his mother-in-law. You mean to say that a mother-in-law is in duty bound to make advances to the wife and daughter of the man who happens to be her son-in-law's superior on his job? (p. 152).

Laudisi's speech above sets the play in motion. Mr. Ponza has recently moved into the same apartment with Laudisi and everything about Mr. Ponza stirs an air of suspicion. Meanwhile, Amalia and her daughter, Dina had called Mr. Ponza's mother-in-law in order to welcome her into the neighbourhood, claiming that they want to "make her feel at home" (p. 152). Dina's blunt nature however, reveals that they had gone there out of curiosity.

Pirandello argues about the main cause of suspicion surrounding a son-in-law and a mother-in-law who have decided to live apart because the former prevents the latter from seeing her daughter. Amalia believes that the mother-in-law perhaps talks to her unseen daughter by some ludicrous or infinite means. A thirst for the absolute truth, Signoria, Signora Sirelli and Signora Cinicome to Laudisi's house. The futile

argument amongst them succinctly captures Pirandello's ideology of the futility or absurdity of human reasoning. Again, Pirandello's vision is clearly articulated in Laudisi's words:

Laudisi: Defending him? No! I am not defending anybody. All I'm saying, if you ladies will excuse me, is that all this gossip is not worthy of you. More than that, you are just wasting your breath; because, so far as I can see, you're not getting anywhere at all (p. 158).

From the above dialogue, it can be deduced that Pirandello strikes a gong of objectivity and subjectivity at moments when Laudisi, who performs the author-function, is initiating critical discussions.

Another pivotal ideology that is reflected in the play is the ideology of play-within-a-family which examines the extreme differences, perspectives and experiences existing amongst the various members of the family. This ideological innuendo is seen in Amalia's introduction of her family members to Signora Flora in order to begin the "first interview":

Amalia: Come right in, Signora Frola! (*She takes the old lady's hand and begins the introductions*). Mrs. Sirelli, a good friend of mine; Signora Cini; my husband; Mr. Sirelli, and this is my daughter, Dina; my brother Lamberto Laudisi. Please take a chair, Signora! (p. 166).

More so, Pirandello's ideology of the play-within-a-play is seen in the role-play between Laudisi and Sirelli, during the former's attempt at justifying individual objectivity (pp. 159-160). It is worthy of note that disillusionment/angst caused by the

Post-World War II maladies is another theme in Pirandello's ideological wheel of individual ethos. This is seen in the excerpt below:

Amalia: You went through the earthquake, didn't you?

Signora Sirelli: And you lost all your relatives?

Signora Frola: Every one of them! All our family — yes, madam. And our village was left just a miserable ruin, a pile of bricks and stones and mortar.

Sirelli: A massacre! (p. 167).

Pirandello uses the metaphor of "the earthquake" to capture the aftermath of the First World War (1914-1918) and Second World War (1939-1945), while also addressing the varieties of sociological insinuations that characterized human thought during the period. Meanwhile, Mr. Ponza had revealed that he has decided to leave with the truth that his wife is still alive to his mother-in-law, while his second wife is expected to play the part of her dead daughter. When the confusion seems to have no end, Agazzi summons all the parties involved, including Mr. Ponza, his mother-in-law and his Second Wife. Interestingly, the Commissioner makes a new discovery about the entire noose from Mr. Ponza's old neighbours. The play ends with the final words of Laudisi below:

Laudisi: Well, and there, my friends, you have the truth! But are you satisfied? Hah! hah! hah! hah! hah! hah! hah!" (p. 233).

Revolting against the traditional notion of truth, Pirandello closes the play with his ideology of the theatre of revolt.

On the other hand, the analysis of the ideological underpinnings that permeate

Soyinka's *The Strong Breed* takes cue from the background information provided by Gibbs (1986, p. 73) that "the play is based on two purification rituals – that observed in Jaguna's village, and that observed in Eman's home-town – which Soyinka interlocks skillfully." Eman is portrayed as a doctor whose responsibility is to "repair" the land, and it is not surprising that Soyinka opens the play on, "what looks like a modest clinic" (p. 1). Due to his strong sense of an impending communal "assignment", Eman decides to remain in the village for the New Year, something that Sunma seriously agitates against. Meanwhile, Eman has a special liking for Ifada, a sick child, but Sunma's hatred for Ifada, the so-called village urchin, has suddenly grown. At this point, one begins to sense the interconnection between Ifada and the New Year, and the likelihood of an intervention of some sort by Eman.

The belief in the cleansing, sanctification, or purging of the community through the death of the tragic hero, which is another main component of Soyinka's ideological frame is conspicuous in the Yoruba society that Soyinka presents in the play. The tradition of "dragging" effigies on the floor with the hope that it takes away every malicious and unwanted element from the individual who carries it is typified in the way that Girl protects her effigy from Ifada. The metaphor of the "carrier" represented by the "effigy" is very symbolic in the play and indeed, to Soyinka's ideology of messianism, scapegoatism and the metaphysics of sacrifice. Sunma tries to convince Eman see the reason why leaving him all alone might be catastrophic:

Sunma: By yourself you can do nothing here. Have you not noticed how tightly we shut out strangers?

Even if you lived here for a lifetime, you would remain a stranger.

Eman: Perhaps that is what I like. There is peace in being a stranger (p. 11).

The word, "peace" has been emphasised by Eman in his defense of his decision not to leave the village. On a larger sub-textual plain, this translates to the latter "peace" that Eman's death would bring to the entire community which is something that Sunma has not yet comprehended. With this, Soyinka's poetics of catharsis and communal renewal/re-birth comes to the fore. Despite Sunma's request that they both should remain indoors till the New Year festivities are over, Eman confesses that he does not want to be left out of the rejoicing, although, his concept of "rejoicing" is not understood by her.

From this point, Eman's statements become elevated, insightful and cryptic, and this makes Sunma conclude that he is sometimes "inhuman" (p. 15). When the time comes for the ritual process for the New Year, the community seeks Ifada. He comes banging at the door of Sunma and Eman:

Sunma: (*Pulling his hands*) It is only a trick they are playing on you. Don't take any notice Eman.

Eman: What are you saying? The boy is out of his sense with fear.

Sunma: You are a stranger here Eman. Just leave us alone and go your way. There is nothing you can do.

Eman: . . . Have you gone mad? I tell you the boy must come in.

(*Eman pushes her off, unbolts the door. Ifada rushes in, clasps Eman round the knees, dumb-moaning against his legs*) (p. 16).

Eman questions the humanity of Jaguna and Oroge, who seek Ifada, by poking them with a question on Ifada's "willingness." At this point, a pivotal statement which Soyinka's ideology of the ultimate superiority of the human will is re-echoed. Indeed, the willingness of the tragic hero is a pre-requisite to the efficacy of the sacrifice for which peace will be restored to the society. Soyinka is of the view that the tragic hero must willingly "fragment his essence from self" (1976, p. 144). Eman's angst makes him to strike back with words when he says "a village which cannot produce its own carrier contains no men" (p.19). This expression is outrightly satiric and deeply metaphoric and it reflects Soyinka's ideology of "iconoclasm", the term being the process of satirising and lampooning society without society knowing.

Although, the playwright does not indicate the moment that Eman agrees to sacrifice himself instead of Ifada, but by the time we see him "crouching against the well, tense with apprehension ... he is naked down to the waist, wears a baggy pair of trousers, calf-length, and around both feet are bangles" (p. 22), one begins to sense Soyinka's dramatization of the poetics of ritualisation and de-ritualisation. Knowing fully well that Eman would thirst, the clever pursuers await him at a stream which is a locale that serves as the metaphysical canvas for the display of Eman's impending fantasies and series of actions about his past. Eman meets his father (Old Man) who admonishes him that "a man should be at his strongest when he takes the boat" (pp. 24-25). Just like Jesus Christ, Eman asks his father if the ether of death heaping over his head can pass over him. Here then, the scene in which Eman is being tutored as a carrier suffices. Omae, who is deeply in love with

Eman tries to convince him to run away with her, but the former eventually flees, leaving instructions for Omae to stay with her father until his return. Omae had become pregnant for Eman before the duo decides to part. The central theme or perhaps, the major forte of Soyinka's ideology is his theorisation of the three worlds of existence of the Yoruba worldview, which he calls, the worlds of the living, dead and unborn. Eman discovers through Priest that Omae died during childbirth. When Eman decides to see his child who is held by Eman's father, Jaguna, Oroge and the mob pounce on him. Initially unwilling, Eman later submits himself willingly having discovered that he cannot run away from his destiny. One of the main structures of Wole Soyinka's ideology is the concept of salvation and the individual's will in which Soyinka believes that society is in constant need of salvation from itself and this can only be done as a mass act.

In an attempt to compare individual and communal ideologies in Luigi Pirandello's *Right You Are! (If You Think So)* and Wole Soyinka's *The Strong Breed*, this study identifies a number of ideological features in both plays. For example, the six circles existing within Luigi Pirandello's wheel of individual ideology include:

- i. reality and unreality manifested in the metaphysics of truth and truthfulness;
- ii. the ideology of the ultimate superiority of the human mind;
- iii. disillusion/angst caused by Post-world-war maladies;
- iv. the play-within-a-play and play-within-a-family ideology;
- v. the ideology of messianic impulses of the author; and
- vi. occasional assault of the fourth wall.

The above list captures the transition of Luigi Pirandello from one ideology to another without one overshadowing or dominating the other. On the other hand, Soyinka reflects many ideologies in his reflection of communal ideology and this study also categorises them into six icons, which are:

- i. the ideology of Ogun and his dialectical imperatives;
- ii. the ideology of the three worlds of existence;
- iii. messianism/the metaphysics of sacrifice;
- iv. the ideology of the ultimate superiority of the human will;
- v. scapegoatism and death as a means of regeneration; and
- vi. catharsis and communal renewal/re-birth.

It must be emphasised however, that the range of ideologies identified in the two plays examined in this study are drawn from the worldviews and artistic visions of both playwrights. Certainly, both playwrights share similarities in their inculcation of “messianic impulses” in their plays. The term, “messianic impulses”, as used in this study, refers to the “Omniscient presence” of the author or writer of a literary work, and this is a prominent feature of Pirandello’s plays. As buttressed by Brustein (1964, p. 283), Pirandello’s messianic impulse, “is channelled into a personal philosophical vision. If not present as a character, the author is always present as a hovering reflective intelligence – commenting, expostulating, conceptualising.” Soyinka also allows this messianic intrusion in his plays. Aside the stage descriptions and other descriptive mechanisms in the world of the play, Soyinka speaks through some of his characters, sometimes overtly and at other times, covertly. Notably however, this is

done within the ideological contraption of Soyinka’s poetics of iconoclasm.

In addition, both playwrights share similarities in the area of dialectics and “the ultimate superiority of the human will.” The opposing forces in Pirandello’s philosophical theatre, for example, manifest in the blend of comedy with core tragedy. This is because, Pirandello’s modern play begins significantly as a comedy of errors and ends ultimately in a tragedy. It follows a certain linear development and is quite conventional in the sense of temporality ground for “becoming”, that is, the “realisation of one’s will to power” which is an eternal recurrence of the hero’s struggle for his self-realisation. On his own part, Soyinka’s dialectics exist within the hordes of Ogun’s frame. While Pirandello argues for the superiority of individual objectivity and subjectivity, Soyinka, in his appraisal of ritualisation and de-ritualisation, opines that the tragic hero must be willing and not compelled.

Another comparative premise of both playwrights’ infusion of their ideologies in plays lies in the adoption of “satire and sarcasm.” Pirandello’s use of satire and sarcasm can be seen as tools of revolt or systematic ways of revolt while Soyinka refers to the style as “iconoclasm.” The question, therefore, becomes: what are these two Nobel Laureates revolting against or satirising? This is the point where the contrast lies. While Pirandello revolts against reality, objectivity and even the theatre itself, Soyinka satirises the society and all forms of vices in it for the purpose of re-construction and transformation.

An important point of divergence between both playwrights’ projection of their ideologies is in the “handling of the fourth wall” in the plays. While one of the playwrights embraces the fourth wall, the other revolts against it and calls for its

demolition. Soyinka does not seek to break the fourth wall of the theatre in his plays. For example, the attributes of hubris and hamartia held by Eman are necessary to achieve purgation in the minds of Soyinka's audience and readers. These attributes are important in fuelling the ideological imperatives of Soyinka's existential and artistic visions. Luigi Pirandello on the other hand, constantly assaults the fourth wall of the theatre by questioning and faulting it with his series of philosophical ideologies.

It is worthy of note that both playwrights also differ on the location of the central conflict of their plays. Indeed, what is obtainable from this study is the metaphor of a "play-within-a-community" as against "play-within-a-family." The inherent conflicts in Pirandello's *Right You Are! (If You Think So)* are woven around Mr. Ponza's absurd family, and the locale of the action does not change. Thus, in reflecting individual ideology, Pirandello dramatizes the play-within-a-family technique to interrogate the various dimensions of his ideology. Soyinka, on his part, experiments with the play-within-a-community technique which is also characteristic of most of his plays. Eman's death is not for himself but for the entire community, and so many other elements of the play are arranged in such a way that the community occupies a centripetal position.

More so, both playwrights differ in their theorisation of "stage" and "stagelessness" in their plays. While Soyinka identifies "The Fourth Stage" as the realm of transition that can only be navigated by the tragic hero who is willing to submit himself totally for the redemption of the community in *The Strong Breed*, Pirandello contests for the elimination of such cryptic spaces and calls for the stagelessness of the human mind in *Right You Are! (If You Think So)*.

There is a tendency to eschew generalisations in the comparative category about to be mentioned, but fortunately, there are other important rudiments in this analysis. At a notable confluence point, Luigi Pirandello's distillation of the "deconstructionist/extremist" dramaturgical style of three "organic/rebellious acts" negates Soyinka's "revolutionary style of iconoclasm." It is plausible to assert that Pirandello has broken the bounds set to the old fashioned "sentimental" Latin play. Indeed, the motivations of the "old" theatre were largely ethical in character, developing spiritual crises from the conflict of impulses with a rigid framework of law and convention. Quite unlike Pirandello however, Soyinka's iconoclasm does not largely reflect in the form of his plays, but the content largely shows the level of determinism that the playwright has towards simulating a ferocious transformation, especially among Africans. The emphasis remains that Soyinka's iconoclasm manifests mainly in the symbols, dialogue, images, motifs, representational characters and other dramatic idioms used within the context of his plays.

Conclusion

In this study, the following points reflect the similarities and contrasts between Luigi Pirandello and Wole Soyinka's dramatization of the ideologies of individualism and communalism in their selected plays:

- i. messianic impulses of the Playwright;
- ii. dialectics and the ultimate superiority of the human will;
- iii. handling of the fourth wall;
- iv. satire and individual freedom and satire and social re-construction;
- v. play-within-a-family and play-within-a-community;

- vi. stage and stagelessness;
- vii. the deconstructionist/ extremist dramaturgical style of three organic/rebellious acts and the revolutionary style of iconoclasm; and
- viii. idealist/transcendental ideology and dialectical-historical ideology.

This study also reveals that no playwright portrays a single ideology in his or her play(s). As seen in this study, playwrights, in their bid to reflect one ideology, often consciously or not, pick some other ideologies on the way. The fact remains that the centre and the periphery, which translate into the structures and superstructures existing within the galaxies of a playwright's ideology, converse together into a unified whole at the middle of which the playwright exists.

It has also come to the fore in the study that Pirandello's detailed presentation and analysis of the psychological frame of his characters in stage directions and other descriptive mechanisms, are characteristic of most of his plays, and this remains one of the viable tenets of his dramaturgy and reflection of individual ideology. The study establishes that other components of Pirandello's individual ideology include the arts of "internal crises", "internal circumspection" and the analysis of individual members of a family. This is characteristic of most of his plays such as, *Right You Are! (If You Think So)*, *Henry IV*, and *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, and this is, therefore, central to his ideology.

Findings also show that in *The Strong Breed*, Soyinka diffuses and contrasts the Yoruba sanctification rites with Christian ethics and doctrines. This dialectical mingling is seen in Eman's messianic and heroic role in the play. Just like Jesus Christ, the Yoruba deity, Obatala,

and as is characteristic of most passion plays, Eman pleads with his father to allow the deathly cup to pass over him. Like Jesus too, Eman's death is expected to cleanse, purify and restore order into the society. As referenced in the Bible, Jaguna, Oroge and the mob represent the Pharisees and the Sadducees who sought Jesus' death by all means. The "as-it-is-written" metaphor, therefore, spans through the play. With this, the fact that Soyinka derives inspiration from Yoruba theatre traditions and rituals as well as the Christian ethos cannot be overemphasised. As such, Soyinka's *The Strong Breed* forms the hub of his communal ideology as well as his concept of drama.

It is important to state that this study recommends that critical reflection should be made on the interface of ideology in cross-cultural dimensions to determine the universality of ideological variables and its accompanying images and attitudes in play-texts. Furthermore, more research should be done on ideological drama as a template to guide the socio-political, socio-religious, socio-economic, and socio-historical structures and superstructures, especially within the borders of African dramaturgy.

The second face value of our recommendation is drawn from the observation that the domination of globalisation and high culture has led to series of unavoidable hybridism, and this truth largely affects the rigour of African cultures and ideologies. Therefore, critical textual approaches to various ideological issues should be expanded upon play-texts that are often regarded as "local." In other words, the internal and external components of playwrights' ideologies should be examined within the backdrop of the newly developing and constantly increasing trend of "glocalisation" as a necessary demand of critical post-textual studies in postcolonial

studies. Edward Said cited in Yerima (2007, p. 8) captures this more succinctly by explaining that:

(M)any novelists, painters, and poets like Manzoni, Picasso, or Neruda, have embodied the historical experience of their people in aesthetic works, which in turn become recognised as great masterpieces. For the intellectual, the task, I believe, is explicitly to universalise the crisis, to give greater human scope to what a particular race or nation suffered, to associate that experience with the suffering of others.

Said's gyration in the contestable space of glocalisation infers that the plays of budding or "unpopular" playwrights should be contextualised in line with the ideological underpinnings of the work, and within the backdrop of universal evaluation.

The study concludes that both Luigi Pirandello and Wole Soyinka wear many ideological caps in their various dramaturgical constituencies. As a result, Luigi Pirandello and Wole Soyinka are multi-textual writers, and this accounts for the reason why they both occupy dynamic spaces in their ideological igloos. Unequivocally, the generally believed notion that no playwright writes out of the void cannot be discountenanced in dramaturgy. Within the wide matrix of dramatic materials for artistic reflection, playwrights' musing on the representation of their ideologies in their plays is, for example, characteristic of the debatably complex, but influential writings of Luigi Pirandello and Wole Soyinka.

The study also concludes that *Right You Are! (If You Think So)* is above all, a test for the actor and it is typical of

Pirandello for its rapidity, harshness and violence which are the skills with which the tense tableau is drawn out of pure dialectic and pure conversation. Moreover, the play states a fundamental pre-occupation of Pirandello in a peculiarly lucid and striking fashion. Consequently, political, social, moral, religious, ethnic and economic problems, for example, are part of the maladies that Wole Soyinka discusses in his creative works, while the notion of objectivity, reality, truth and authenticity form the framework of Pirandello's experimental theatre.

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