

# **Drama As Social Context And Political Process In Wole Soyinka'S *Opera Wonyosi***

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## **Abstract**

Theatre is one of the most effective tools in bringing changes to the society through its communicative and effective channels since the pre-colonial, colonial and post –colonial eras. Theatre has been one of the instruments used to declare war against unwanted regime and unpopular policies. Drama or plays were staged in various places in Nigeria to fight against policies and correct the various shortcomings of governments. Dramatists like Hubert Ogunde, Duro Ladipo, Kola Ogunmola, Wole Soyinka, J.P Clark etc. used theatre several times to preach good governance, freedom and the rights of the people as a result of which people become more conscious. This paper therefore examines the effect of drama as a social context and political process especially as being used by Wole Soyinka's *Opera Wonyosi*. Consequently, through library/archival method, the various ways in which drama (or theatre) affects politics in Nigeria with special emphasis on the case study will be analyzed. The scope of study touches on the multi-dimensional interpretations of *Opera Wonyosi* in defining Wole Soyinka as a dramatist whose work reflects politics or the political nature of his society. The shove of the paper is therefore to see how Soyinka has used the work *Opera Wonyosi* which is an adaptation of John Gays *Beggar's Opera* which itself is adapted from Bertolt Brecht's *Three penny Opera*. Soyinka's unique adaptation epitomizes the anatomy of greed and corruption in their varied ramifications.

**Key Words:** Drama, Social Context, Politics, Ideology, *Opera Wonyosi*.

## **Introduction**

With the establishments of the first medieval Universities in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, arts was not given a recognized platform as the beliefs then was more on metaphysics and religion. It was believed that arts included disciplines that would make man's life more meaningful. There were fine arts, music, literature and philosophy in their more traditional divisions. But now, the arts have been

viewed from various angles. A general view of the arts includes the visual arts, the performing arts and the applied/industrial art. There are erroneous beliefs that the art is mainly to entertain. Those having this opinion and belief argue their point by looking at the style, structure, dialogue, conflict of any piece of work and use it as a yardstick for measuring the quality of the work. The performing arts which include music, dance and drama are not left out in this regard. The 'arts for arts' sake schools of thought argue that they should be looked at from the point of view of its form and content. However, another school of thought, that is referred to as the "social reductionist" believe that arts in addition to entertainment, should draw from the society its raw material and thus be able to contribute to the development of the society. According to Dennis Sporre (2005: 26) "Art can function in many ways as entertainment, as political or social weapon, as therapy, and as artifact, one function has no more importance than the others, nor do they mutually exclude each other. A single artwork can pursue any or all of them. Nor do they form the only functions of art. Rather, they serve as indicators of how art has functioned in the past, and how it can function in the present". However this view of the latter school of thought is the premises upon which this research work is based. According to Augusto Boal (1973: 72) "All theatre is necessarily political because all the activities of man are political and theatre is one of them. Those who try to separate theatre from politics try to lead a political attitude".

### **Drama as social and political change**

The political terrain of Africa before and after independence provides a fertile material for African playwrights to expose and express themselves. The expression exposes the harm done by the colonial and African dictators. Hardly can one find an isolated country in Africa which does not have an ugly political story to tell. However, the desire to combat the evil of both colonial masters and dictators motivated the artist on the African stage to express the reality of their barbaric nature to the whole world. Some African writers are writers of necessities that are relevant to their societies in which they find themselves. They find it unavoidable to eliminate themselves from the problems of the society. Chinua Achebe (1981:17) rightly put it when he avers that "It is clear to me that an African writer who tries to avoid the big social and political issues of contemporary Africa, will end up being completely irrelevant like that absurd man in the proverb who like a rat fleeing from the flame". Furthermore, it is germane to point out here that "writers of all ages and diverse cultures are engaged

in intellectual and imaginative recollection and construction of their societies” Ngugi Wa Thiong’o (1981:24)

In the same vein, Wole Soyinka, (1981:51) while declaring part of the roles of the artist in African context is of the opinion that “the artist has always functioned in African society as the voice of the people” In South Africa for instance, drama was used to condemn the apartheid policy and other suppressive measures of the white man. Plays like Nkosi’s *Rhythm of violence* highlighted the danger of apartheid and the need for the people to be free. Also some of Wole Soyinka’s plays satirizes corrupt leaders and goes against the suppression of the common man, while preaching the need for freedom. In *The Trials of Brother Jero*, Soyinka satirizes the hypocrisy among religious worshippers and the gullibility of the people who are always looking for miracles where none really exists. In *Opera Wonyosi*, the dictatorial tendencies of African rulers are mercilessly exposed. His criticism in the play is based on the quest for a new political atmosphere. Drama has for long been a prominent medium of political awareness. The term “political struggle” invariably means an effort to get freed from the constraint of the ruling class in the society. Political awareness is inevitable, particularly in a society full of despotic and selfish leadership where the ruling class engages in total disregard of the rights of the ruled. In this kind of situation, political struggle therefore becomes a quest for good governance. Since the whole society cannot speak at once, the artists (dramatist) stand out as their mouthpiece. Lanre Bamidele (2000:37) stresses it from another angle “All problem of humanity have become so political that there cannot be a unilateral Marxist way of solving these problems”.

Still viewing other Scholars points of view, Bamidele claims that our societal problems are political, thus heaping the blames on the government. Bertolt Brecht and other theatre activists viewed the societal problems as governmental force. This might have influenced some Nigerian theatre artists in using their best known media (drama) to express their political and ideological positions. The late Hubert Ogunde, the foremost Nigerian professional dramatist during his time used drama to disseminate political messages and fight the colonialists. Ogunde was noted to have written purely political plays between the years 1945-1950. These periods marked the height of the nationalist in Nigeria and the theatre was used in fighting the political battle for independence. It is on record that one of his plays “bread and bullet” earned him jail term because of its scathing and biting criticism of the colonial government.

In this vein, it is clear that one of the basic responsibilities of Ogunde was to comment on the issue of his time, and as he visions, he can go further to suggest or predict through the power of the pen certain panacea to the problems he is

trying to identify. More playwrights have used their plays in this manner. They include Wale Ogunyemi's *Langbodo*, Duro Ladipo's *Oba Koso*, Kola Ogunmola with his travelling theatre, Zulu Sofola's *King Emene* and Femi Osofisan's *Aringindin and the night watchman* as their plays have made tremendous positive impact on the society. The artists many at times have revealed what is hidden from the eyes of the people into the open. In every society, the works of the artists always speaks for the poor and the deprived, these are those that Franon's graphical phrase constitute "the wretched of the earth". In trying to obtain political or social stability and good governance in the society, a dramatist who is faithful to the original essence cannot escape the course of commitment. Osofisan (1993:14) rightly submits "therefore, because all true openly or surreptitiously, carries the knife or subversion, the artist is always a target, and the creative spirit angered when terror mounts the saddle of state".

Although some people still think that drama is not serious works, Ogunba (1975:11) shows strong objection to this. He regarded drama to have a serious positive effect on the public. He continues "Drama is not a matter of laughter and uproarious jest whereas it is a medium admirably suited for making deep, psychological results into the consciousness of a community".

Politics as a suitable theme stems from the desire to change the society as leader/politicians use policies to achieve their personal desires. Zulu Sofola (1994:27) opines that every dramatist should have the intended effect in the society. From her own point of view, dramatists through the use of their works should be able to "heal and restore the life of a sick and battered humanity, create a new vision for growth, renewal, regeneration or defecation of man for a wholesome life and a better community, mobilize a collective conscience for a particular desired objective"

Yemi Akorede (1993:57) seems to be in strong agreement with Sofola when she states that:

The theatre as a reflection of the society poses a challenge to the dramatist who really has to prove his metrics by portraying the social realities of his time. The idea here is therefore for him to expose the ills of the society, as well as the virtues. Therein, with a view to condemn the vices and encouraging the virtues.

In the olden days, it is recounted that drama served a very important function in the Dionysian Festival, a religious ritual that united the Greeks in the worship of Dionysus, their god of wine and fertility. The plays written in those days and for the festivals reflected the nature of the god Dionysus, and most importantly,

the regards the people had for the god. The plays of Sophocles and Euripides respect the people and their culture in those days and the gods they worship. Some reveal how man became puns in the hands of the gods. What is being portrayed here are that, plays could be said to be good reflections of the society. Aristotle's poetics no doubt was influenced by the situation of things then, when the lowly and slaves were not given any regard. Being greatly influenced by this philosophy, William Shakespeare wrote plays that gave everything to monarchs and nothing to the slaves and servants. Example of the theatre's reflection of the society abound.

In the situation where the people, especially the common people are in dire need for improved living conditions, drama has always been handy as that major instrument addressing the issues. This is because it has the power to reach large number of people and enlighten them at the same time. People who come to the theatre to be entertained often end up going home with serious messages. Dramatists have realized this fact and therefore often take advantage of this to reach out to people with the intention of effecting change. John Millington, the Irish dramatists used his plays also to reflect his society. He uses *Riders to the Sea* and *Playboy of the Western World* especially to respect the religious and cultural realities of his time. Also Henrik Ibsen used his plays to condemn the high level of corruption in the Norway of his time. His plays, *Enemy of the people* (1882) and *Ghost* (1975) greatly reflects this notion.

In Africa, Playwrights like Ngugi Wa Thiong in his play *The Trials of Dedan Kimathi* (1977) shows his commitment to the political and social struggle of their people through drama. In South Africa, Lewis Nkosi has used his work to condemn class segregation and apartheid. His works contain so much political undertones and addresses such burning issues as education, irregularity and apartheid. From the arrays of analogies cited above, it can be seen that the relevance of a dramatist is determined by the useful role he plays in the portrayed of the social realities of his time.

### **Satire in Socio-Political Process**

Satire shows the ills in any giving society. Man is a satirist being. Man has succeeded in making himself prominent by affecting positive changes in the society he lives in and by satirizing the ills he observes in it. The point being raised here is given more credence by Eddie Iji, (1992: 17) when he states that:

Perhaps most important and challenging of all is the urgent demand that the artist (satirist) should not only picture human

follies so as to provoke both positive and negative responses towards meaning change in human condition.

In consonance with this assertion, Soyinka has written lots of satires that do not only expose human follies, but also aim at provoking positive changes in them. The degree of change produced will depend on the artist and the audience. Speaking further, Eddie postulates that “In various instances, however, the ability to arouse such response and appropriate changes in humanity may be as much as a reflection of the failure of artist as it is of the audience”.

The point here is that if and when the artists are unable to drive the messages home effectively, then they have failed. Satirist always writes to picture human follies, but do not fail to picture it in a comical manner. Barnett et al (1958:62) contend that “If it is the job of the comic artist to picture our follies, it is also his job to picture them in such a way that it entertains us”. Ola Rotimi’s “*Our Husband has Gone Mad Again*” (1996), satirizes the military. He places the thematic pre-occupation of the play on the ordeal of Major Lejoka-Brown on the domestic and political fronts. His disorganized endeavours to manage his falling domestic and political affairs make him the main target of the satire. In a breath-taking comic manner, Lejoka – Brown endeavours to meet with the challenges posed by the unplanned coming of her erstwhile American wife.

Similarly, Femi Osofisan’s *Who is Afraid of Solarin* (1978) Satirizes the political leader as well. It is a successful comical ridiculing of the corrupt council officials who are panic-stricken on hearing of the intended visit of public complaint commissioner, consequent upon which they erroneously bribe an imposter as in the case of the latter.

In the definition of satire, it does not stop at ridiculing the foolishness/wickedness it sees in a society, but rather extends it (the ridiculing) to the individual misconduct and immorality, which seems to the satirist, in human and so contrary to ethical beliefs, rules and regulations of such society or at any rate a certain part of it. The point being made here is that the satirist always attempts to reform the bad society.

Although primary concerned with the exposure of vices and folly, the satirist has usually sought to imply the possibility of reform. Thus Dryden maintained that “the true end of satire is the amendment of vices”, therefore the end of satire is rein-formation (Keith Dickson)

The artist's (satirist) role as a reformer is also given support in the word of Bamidele (2000:44) when he posits that "As Prometheus, he becomes a rebel of the establishment value. He is at war with society. He holds a strong belief that something could be done to rescue the collapse of social affairs" It will suffice therefore to say here that satire which is an instrument to check and balance is a good weapon for launching attacks on the ills or situations that are capable of causing version or even disguise in the society.

Satire is a form that desires refection. Although a few utopian satirist are noted for construction rather than destruction, their materials are often criticized as insubstantial. Most often, the interior of satire is messy, cluttered and smelly as well. The task and discrimination of satirist are questionable and their work thus compound their offence. (Brain 1995: 162)

Femi Osofisan, in his preface in *understanding Brecht and Soyinka*, noted of the fact that theatre and drama serve as both weapon of entertainment and also ridicules when he asserts:

The desire to use the theatre as a means not only of entertainment, but also of instruction as is the practice in our folktales. And the lessons Brecht sought to teach were not just the moral and ethical injunction of our raconteurs but, even more significantly socio-political lessons meant to dissolve the injustice and exploitation inherent in the capitalist system.

In the consonance with this, Arthor Pollard (1970:54) believes that the satirists' aim is to "criticize and condemn and he will seek to do by moving them to various motions ranging from laughter through ridicule, contempt and anger to hate" This comes to show that the satirists is a social antic, while his satire is a good weapon used by radical writers for protecting the less privileged. Osofisan (2001: 27): states :

Thus, for the radical playwrights who identified willingly with these struggles, and wished to speak on behalf of the lowly and the down-trodden, the example of Brecht could only become sweetly contaminating. His humanist dimension, the relentless demonstration that man is the "centre of the universe" capable

of altering his unjust world by his own resources instead of waiting meekly for divine intervention was seen as precisely the kind of attitude we need to begin from, in order to solve our problems on the continent...

Some of the old and new generation playwrights are known for their exclusive and successful use of satire in their works. While referring to the old playwrights, the name that quickly comes to mind is Wole Soyinka. Soyinka needs no introduction to the literary world. In the words of Ihechukwu Madubuike (2007:196) "The man in the street who has been following contemporary political and social events have recognized the name" He is a great satirist. This he has displayed in most of his works ranging from *The trials of brother Jero* where he ridicules the Pentecostal church and the false prophets to *Opera Wonyosi*, where he satirizes the Nigerian economic, and socio-cultural features. Eddie Iji speaking of *Opera Wonyosi*, states that "most notable of all, it is however a scathing or blistering satire on the various levels of economic, political and other socio-cultural aspect of the budding new capitalism or materialism in Nigeria in particular and vaulting ambitions in Africa in general".

The plays and works of Soyinka especially his satires are still very much of relevance today as they were first written. *The Trials of Brother Jero* is a typical example where Soyinka satirized corrupt and insincere religious leaders. These issues are what Femi Osofisan revisited in *Who's Afriad of Solarin* and *Midnight Hotel*, though with a different approach.

Society may be wise to suspect the satirist whether he is an enchanter wielding the ambiguous power of magic or a mere poet, his relationship with the society as his art is grounded in his experience as a social man. But he must be part of the society as he struggles to achieve aesthetic distance. His practice is often aimed at bringing sanity to bear on the society, as it proclaims, but it may be revolutionary in ways that the society cannot possibly approve and in ways that may not be dear even to the satirist himself. The satirist could be called "God sent" to the society; because they would not take the truth said about them in a sober manner, but will rather label the satirist as a devil.

### **Opera Wonyosi as a Political Drama**

Soyinka has consistently shown his unrepentant conviction and stance against the tyranny of dictators. Since his release from detention in 1969 by his detainer, General Gowon his antagonism to African dictators both military and civilian has become more pungent and vehement. This antagonism has been launched through the media of creativity, journalist writings, theatrical activism, strategic



public protest, and attack through public lectures, seminars and discussions as well as the formation of political pressure groups.

Belonging in the anti-despotic writings of Soyinka's post detention era are *The Bacchae of Euripides* (1973) *Madmen and Specialists* (1984) *A Shuttle in the Crypt* (1976) *The Man Died* (1972) *The Beautification of Area Boy*, (1986), etc. Most of these works reveal the authors' pent-up frustration, anger, bitterness and ferocity against the political order which has done injustice to the society. Satire became for Soyinka a medium for the expression of his disgust and the ultimate attainment of a psychological state of artistic release or purgation. His obstinate conviction to always remain on the other side of the wall greatly reflected in one of his responses to immediate reaction to his work *The Man Died*

I have been very gratified by the shock reaction...  
it was actually my intention to create feelings of  
revelation of disappointment of bewilderment...  
I know very well they will have a therapeutic effect  
and will completely revolutionize the ways of their  
thinking of perceiving and therefore of participating in  
whatever sort of programme is envisaged for society. (1988: 20)

The declaration from which Soyinka's perception of the social and political effect of a well stuffed satire derives, also constitutes a fundamental premise for the composition of *Opera Wonyosi*, one of his most acidic mockeries of the dictatorial zeal and social deterioration. In his forward to the play, he professes that:

Equally it is necessary that art should expose, reflect, indeed  
magnify the decadent, rot led under belly of a society that has  
lost its direction jettisoned all sense of values and is careering  
down a precipice as fast as the latest artificial boom can take it  
(1984: 298)

from the above, it is known that Wole Soyinka's *Opera Wonyosi* could be treated from the perspective of its social and political aesthetics.

#### **Appraisal of *Opera Wonyosi***

Wole Soyinka (1984:298) in his forward to the play states that *Opera Wonyosi* is an "exposition of levels of power in practice by a satirist's pen". The play is a step forward in what has been referred to earlier as Soyinka's writing on his own

country's wall in particular and Africa in general. By 1977, when it was first performed, the continent of Africa was already flooded by dictators. No sub region of the continent could boast of not harboring at least two dictators. The political scenario were hijacked and consummated by characters that could better be referred to as certified lunatics of both civilian and military species. The modern coup plotting which started in Togo in 1963 became an outrageous fever in every corner of the continent. Also most of the so-called fathers of independence in such African countries like Zambia, Uganda and Equatorial Guinea etc. refused to vacate their seats. Their ultimate ambition was definitely to die in office. The title *Opera Wonyosi* as used by Soyinka suggestible means "the fool buys". Opera in English is a musical drama in which every word are song of musical accompaniment of a large orchestra. Wonyosi was a very expensive type of lace material which there was a craze for at that time in Nigerian high society. It is convenient to say that the title of the play is satiric on its own.

In thematic preoccupation the major idea being passed across is the excesses of the ruling class and the mischief of lower class. Soyinka in this play does not leave any class 'unsatirised'. If we say the major theme is robbery in the highways we may be neglecting the direct attack on the police, the army and the civil servants. The play encompasses, in terms of theme and sub-theme, the contribution of all classes of people in the destruction of a society. From the religious leaders, as portrayed by prophet Jerubabel, military dictators, business class to the lower class. The police are also not left out.

In brief characterization, Macbeath is the leader of the notorious highway robbery gang. He is the Nigerian of African version John Gay's Macbeath. Just like Macbeath in *Beggar's Opera*. He is a robber of class. Viewing the play from Soyinka's satiric undertone one will be quick to relate Macbeath to the armed robbers in the country. It may be amazing to note that as at the time Soyinka wrote the play, highway robbery was not as prominent as now. Ironically, Soyinka does not portray Macbeth as the antagonist or as a citizen whose activity is even better compared to that of the ruling class.

Anikura with his wife De madam owns "home from for the homeless" in the Nigerian quarter in Bangui his own kind of business is for begger's union. To him this gives him a political power. He is also connected to the people at the top. Anikura represents the bourgeoisie who employ professionals into slavery. Soyinka uses the beggars to represent the ordinary people whose rights are being deprived every day. An example of people like Anikura could be seen in rich businessmen who employ people as casual workers, depriving them of the benefit of the working class. Also there is Tiger brown who is the commissioner of

police, no doubt a representation of the police force that is committed to corruption. The playwright's choice of relenting Mack and Brown together is just to show the relationship between the army and the police. They both, according to the play have a relationship that dates back to when they were both soldiers in the civil war.

Polly is the daughter of Anikura and De Madam, an aggressor who is bent on acquiring wealth and power by all means. One will see a characteristic trait that is synonymous with most wives of military men in power in her. Also worthy of mentioning is Emperor Boku, who represents the bestiality of dictatorship in Africa. What is being attempted in this brief characters run down is to reflect the level of satiric representation of the author of these characters because Soyinka uses them as symbols to attack what they represent in his use of codes.

This explains why it is believed that "Symbolism is readily available to Soyinka from the vast resources of his technical arsenal" Maduakor (1987:143). It is seen in *Opera Wonyosi* an anatomy of greed and corruption in their varied ramifications and particularly satirized are the abuses of power, religious greed and hypocrisy, fallacious fashion craze, foolishly ridiculous and conspicuous consumption of foreign good at the expense of domestic national economy. Other bestial acts of man are also scathingly attacked. On the social scene, there was unquantifiable suffering. The economy was rapidly dwindling in its buoyancy. The anguish of the poor masses keeps increasing. The political lords were not hiding the squandered manic passion. The disparity between the rich and the poor was fast widening. The "Wonyosi" lace became the symbol of success and the empty sophistication of the fraudulent ruling class oppressors in the most populous nation in Africa, Nigeria. It is not a matter of surprise then that a committed writer like Soyinka was provoked into a satiric exercise of parading these political and social culprits as "clowns, fools, villains, mass-murders etc. and situating them for more dramatic convenience in the very heartland of the most celebrated African dictator of the period Jean Bedel Bokassa.

In 'Nigerianising' "Bertolt Brecht's *Three penny opera*, itself adapted from John Gay's *The Beggars Opera*, Soyinka completely updates all their circumstances or situations and other theatrical or dramatic ingredients. Hence almost all the characters are Nigerians or corruptions of typically Nigerian names. Gayor Brecht's Mr and Mrs Peacheum are respectively called Anikura and De Madam, Captain Macheath and Polly remain unchanged so do Jenny, Jake and a few other characters. Brown becomes inspector brown. Other characters like professor Bamgbapo, Jerubabel and Emperor Boky were created by the authorities as a corruption of real names or an elevation of his satirical jibes. It is in the

ramification of greed corruption and other crimes in Nigeria that *Opera Wonyosi* is saturated.

Thus in the “song of Mack and the Knife” Soyinka is indicating what he regards as lying among the root causes of his country’s problems. The criminals who are as guilty as Macheath in Soyinka’s estimation include murders of all categories government officials, among whom the police is collectively most prominent as agents of corruption and collusion, aiding and abetting crimes and criminals of all kinds. Even prominent politicians and others who silence their opponents by tactical elimination through hired assassins are as bestial as their heroes or Macheath.

In “Anikura’s song”, (1984:305), Soyinka satirizes the fanaticism, deceit and hypocrisy in religion:

Christians smooth and sleek wake up Moslems in gold turbans,  
fake up now tell me you pieties is there one got bar niceties to  
choose from your cozening make up? You bankrupt your neighbour  
everyday and smoother good conciseness with pay then on  
Sundays and Fridays you deny all your fun-days and the next  
week resume your dirty play.

To Anikura, the master of psychology of charity, his plan of getting money out of people is rather like that of Moses hitting his staff on a rock with water gushing out. He asserted that “well those who have no powers of miracle must make do with psychology” Hence his actions and words clearly show that he established his beggar’s haven only for the exploitation of human psychology and vicissitude through human infirmities and physical disabilities. Anikura is therefore an approximation of religious lacks.

Soyinka regards Emperor Bokassa of the central African Republic Idi Amin of Uganda and Macias Nguema of Equatorial Guinea as verminous villainous odious and anti-heroic. Each of them, Bokassa, Amin and Nguema features significantly as Soyinka’s satiric targets in *Opera Wonyosi*. The points of his satiric jabs are obvious in his direct reference to Bokassa (Bokya) and Amin. In one of Bokya’s lines (1984:333), he said:

Rights so there were I, constantly embarrassed by this apishness.  
I made myself life president, he followed suit. But, I knew him,  
he had simply add another title to his court field marshal and Dr.  
Saint, Alhaji Idi Amin, DSO, VC, VD... Oh I mean... VC etc...  
Well that’s how confused the man is. Saint Alhaji like wearing

Israelis paratroop wings to confer with Arafat on Zionists aggression. Typical Aminian idiocy. Oh! He makes me blush for poor Africa that pig does.

Soyinka's satiric effect here is double edged. By trying to ridicule Amin, Boky is ridiculing himself excessively. Soyinka also uses Boky's profligate preparation for his most controversial coronation as self-styled emperor to throw satiric jabs at former general Gowon's profligate state wedding at the expense of his country's national economy and even in the midst of a civil war.

Even during your civil war in Nigeria, your chief had a wedding that was from accounts right princely. Straight out of the Arabian nights. And there were no riots! It is peacetime here so we have no excuse and it is an imperial coronation (1984: 337)

The wedding referred to would have drained the Nigerian economy had the country not been at the peak of her so-called "oil boom", which seems paradoxically her doom. How such boom was turned into an apparent doom, according to Soyinka is clear enough. It is rooted in official misappropriates of public funds and a complete disregard to the interest of the nation which is the residual interest left once the various interest of different groups in the society have been taken into consideration and each has cancelled out" (Romans Umeh (2015:51) In *Opera Wonyosi*, there is glaring attacks on middle-class morality though the butts of the satire are the highly placed government officials and their lavishly styled wasteful private parties at the public expenses of even development and fair distribution of the country's wealth.

### **Conclusion**

There is hardly any doubly that the satirist's main attempts of the play is to motivate or provoke improvement oriented revulsion among the audience. However, it is through the eyes of Anikura, the begger's advocate that Soyinka momentarily climaxes his satiric message. Anikura who has resolved to arrest Machaeth soon and have tied him and shot hopes that the grand bishops and Imam of the world's great superstitions will be present. Inspector brown has appeared with a search warrant to search Anikura's beggars home, because it is alleged that beggars are grouping to protest their rights or appear on the street on the expected coronation day. Anikura thus declares thus:

And that's letting you off lightly very lightly indeed. Busting on the humble dwelling of law abiding citizen just to do the bidding of nefarious gangsters. There are corpses lying everywhere you don't busy yourself down their killers, oh no, the streets are no longer safe for a poor man, commissioner brown. It's a rough world when even the beggar has something to fear. (1984: 341)

Criminals all over the world have been known to be big time spenders. As most of the time they do not even care whether they spend wastefully or unproductively. This is because the sources and manner through which they come across their wealth are easy. This is why the satirist (Soyinka) has provided the play with the additional titles such as "The way out Opera" and "Opera Wayo"

Criminal characters in the Opera span the ranks of beggars, soldiers, police, bandits, the cash-madams the students, the students, the trade unionist, the religious leaders and fanatics, the academics etc. The political leaders and their wasteful spending and extravagances are the high point of criminality. This is typical in emperor Boky's wasteful spending so far on his proposed imperial coronation. From the foregoing if Boky could not serve home prepared food for his guests during his coronation, we should at least expect that other article like drinks, clothes and even furniture's would not be imported. This brings into memory that the Nigerian politicians indulged in massive corrupt practices during the second republic and even till now. Soyinka continues the exposition of the numerous crimes which were concealed at this period from public knowledge. This unforgettable period which was deeply soaked in corruption and fraud on national scale was also characterised by the ordering of specially made and personally trade-marked champagne from France, the shifting of school girls and pounded yam to parties in London and the mad spraying of money in public parties by politicians. Wasteful spending on trivial and unproductive projects and over budgeting which leads largely to economic sapping of African nations is unequivocally a function of the typical African dictatorship which has provoked the satire of Wole Soyinka in "order to restore the life of a sick and battered humanity, artistic presentations like satire as the travails of life are created" (Emman-Owums Owuamalam (2007:44) and this Soyinka has aggressively portrayed in this work *Opera Wonyosi* and some of his other radical works.

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