

## **ECHOES OF POLITICAL LEADERSHIP FAILURE: A STYLISTIC READING OF OLA ROTIMI'S *HOPE OF THE LIVING DEAD***

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### **Abstract**

The study examines the thematic foci of Ola Rotimi's *Hopes of the Living Dead*. It identifies and analyses the lexico-semantic and syntactic features of the text. The study also relates the lexico-semantic and syntactic features of the text to the playwright's engagement with issues of national interest. This is done with a view to explicating the stylistic features of the text, by paying attention to its form, content and social relevance. The data for the study are drawn from Ola Rotimi's *Hopes of the Living Dead*. The text is closely read to discover its recurrent linguistic nuances and features at all levels of linguistic analysis. Certain strategic significant excerpts from text that depict the thematic foci of the text are purposively selected for analysis. The data are analysed using the principles of Stylistics by Bradford (1997). Findings show that themes, such as leadership failure, the need for purposeful leadership and ethnic solidarity/nationalism as probable practical solution to national rebirth enhance understanding of the central theme of political leadership failure in post independence Nigeria in the text. It reveals that lexico-semantic and syntactic features such as synonyms, antonyms, hyponyms, terms of address, imagery, symbolism, metaphorisation, humour, simile, alliteration, contrast, modalities, negation, sentence types and passivisation are devices that account for meaning in the selected text. The study concludes that the lexico-semantic and syntactic features of Rotimi's *Hopes of the Living Dead* underscore the potency of purposeful leadership as a practical tool required for pragmatic national development in Nigeria.

**Keywords:** Post independence/post colonial, national development, purposeful leadership, leadership failure

### **Introduction**

The post-colonial Nigerian society is characterised by several social foibles that have continually embroiled the Nigerian society. In the words of Achebe "the country is plagued with home-grown enemies: the political ineptitude, mediocrity, indiscipline, ethnic bigotry and corruption of the ruling class" (2012:243). The culture of national decadence, decline and disillusionment, all instigated by greed, selfishness, insensibility to other people's feelings, as well as leadership failure, have not only afflicted a particular period of the post-independence era, but have also continued to the present day. This crisis of nationhood, besetting the nation

has been a fundamental subject stated clearly in works produced by literary writers across the country. To this end, Achebe vividly describes this disgusting circumstance thus:

It became crystal clear that we needed to fight this new enemy with everything at our disposal. Most importantly, Nigeria needed to identify the right leader with the right kind of character, education and background. Someone who would understand what was at stake-where Africa had been and where it needed to go. We had to face the disturbing fact that Nigeria needed to liberate itself again, this time not from a foreign power but from our own corrupt, inept brothers and sisters (2012:244)

Currently in Nigeria, the political challenges before the working and poor people are more sensitive than ever before. That the capitalist political class has severally plundered the substantial potentials of our country Nigeria, while the poor go hungry is no more news. For several years of civil rule and many years of political independence, the country is still far from being developed, economically and politically. Workers have fought tooth and nail to have a better living condition but every demand of workers in this regard is met with stiff opposition from the capitalist ruling class at all levels.

University lecturers have embarked on incessant industrial actions in recent times just because of leadership failure, caused by poor attitudes of governance to education. The Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) had embarked on strike since February 14, 2022 and had wasted 4 good months on the strike, as a result of poor funding of universities, poor condition of service, victimisation of lecturers and lack of university autonomy. In many states of the federation, the demand of workers for substantial wage increment is seriously opposed by all tiers of government. Despite monetary resources that are available to the nation since independence, nothing significant has improved in the standard of living of an average Nigerian. There is seemingly absolute infrastructural collapse. Uncountable Nigerians are daily sunk into road accident. Funds budgeted for education and other sensitive sectors such as power, aviation and health, among others, are diverted to private accounts. The nation's aviation sector has gone from bad to worse, as the country records countless occurrences of plane crash within a year.

It is often conceived that medical practitioners rarely go on strike because of their immeasurable services to the nation, but reverse is the case with Nigeria. Attempts to provide security of lives and properties have often hit the rock. Unemployment is at its peak. University graduates roam the streets aimlessly as a result of joblessness. Despite a plethora of anti-corruption agencies such as Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Independent Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) and the judiciary, among others, pervasive corruption still remains the way of life of the country's leaders and politicians. All these unpleasing factors have made the country's human development an indicator among the world's lowest, as majority of the population suffers from extreme poverty (Congressional Research Service, 2008).

Ogbeidi (2012) argues pointedly that the political leadership class in Nigeria cannot exonerate itself from the current travails of socio-economic underdevelopment in the country. He notes that:

The phenomenon of corruption has ravaged the country and destroyed most of what is held as cherished national values. Unfortunately, the political class saddled with the responsibility of directing the affairs of the country has been the major culprit in perpetrating this act. Regrettably, since independence, a notable surviving legacy of the successive political leaderships, both civilian and military that have managed the affairs of the country at different times has been the institutionalization of corruption in all agencies of the public service, which like a deadly virus, has subsequently spread to the private sector of the country. (2012:2)

He submits that the logic of the Nigerian political class has been that of self-service as some of the leaders are mired in the pursuit of selfish and personal goals at the expense of broader national interests. Osofisan in his own perspective, observes that Nigeria as a country has suffered pervasive obstacles and challenges in terms of change towards a sustainable development. He feels that the country has refused to grow in spite of the huge human and capital resources at its disposal and notes that corruption has become ingrained that the masses can't find the true solution. He further repellently posits that:

It is an unfortunate thing but that is the kind of leadership we have developed; the one that has become a pest, a disease, a cancer...on the flesh of our people (2001:83).

In a much similar manner, Ribadu (2007:4) is of the opinion that it has become a paradox that Nigeria, the world's eighth largest exporter of crude oil, still has more than 70 percent of its population living below the poverty line, as a result of corruption and economic mismanagement. He asserts disgustingly that:

The unpardonable failure of the political leadership class, managing the affairs and wealth of the country had inevitably brought severe misery to many voiceless and helpless Nigerians. Nigeria's post-independence political bureaucratic and military elites had terribly pillaged the nation's common wealth and national patrimony with impunity, thereby denying Nigerians access to economic prosperity and quality living condition. The development assistance fund of about \$400 billion that flowed into the country for socio-economic development between independence and the collapse of military dictatorship in 1999 was atrociously squandered by the political leaders of the period. (2007:4)

According to Fagbeyinbo (2011:1-8), "the country Nigeria is faced with many social problems like fraud, embezzlement of public funds, ethnicity and nepotism; serious crimes such as bribery, smuggling and blinkering". While these crises may not seem too difficult to control, the formation of the entity known as Nigeria and the harmony of interest and commitment of Nigerians to addressing national issues are suspect.

Hence, with exceptional reference to fixing the conundrum of purposeful leadership required for national renaissance, we regard Rotimi's *Hopes of the Living Dead* as a literary response which explains these puzzling national issues in a most critical manner that deserve serious consideration. The study aims at explicating the text through attention to its form,

content and social relevance. More specifically, the study will examine the thematic foci of the text, identify the lexico-semantic as well as the syntactic features of the text, and relate the lexico-semantic and syntactic features of the texts to the playwright's engagement with issues of national interest.

### **Methodology**

The data for the study are drawn from Rotimi's *Hopes of the Living Dead*. The study involves a close reading of the text in order to identify the thematic issues projected in the text. The drama text is chosen because of its recency in terms of its thematic engagement. A linguistic reading of the text is done to discover recurrent linguistic nuances and features of the text at all levels of linguistic analysis. Data are analysed using the principles of Stylistics by Widdowson (1992). The theory is adopted because it is fundamental to the communicative function of language in a specific sociopolitical and cultural context. Significant strategic excerpts that depict the thematic foci of the text are purposively selected for analysis.

### **Review of Related Literature**

Overtime, the concept of stylistics and meaning production in literature has attracted the attention of scholars who focus largely on European literature and literature of other continents. Stylisticians' interest and their search for meaning in literary texts have made the field of stylistics a fascinating one. Over the years, various theories of meaning have been propounded by different scholars to explicate the place of meaning in language, particularly in literary circles. This fact underscores the crucial position of meaning in language, which stylistics attempts to explain. As a result, several scholarly works had earlier been carried out in this field of stylistics to show how stylistic tools enhance meaning making in literary texts. The theory is gradually becoming an indispensable phenomenon in literary circles.

However, as important as the theory is to literature in particular and the body of knowledge at large, its discourse and meaning production in literary texts still occupies an unstable place in scholarship, not merely because this concept has remained largely contentious and misconceived, especially as the argument on its ontology is ongoing, but more because it has become increasingly difficult to nail it down to a specific definition. Little wonder Buffard-Moret says "definitions of stylistics are divergent" (2005:185). With this orientation, scholars view the concept from different perspectives and scholarly articles also tend towards the perspectives in which the concept has been variously defined. Nevertheless, regardless of the different perspectives with which scholars or stylisticians have conceived the concept of stylistic analysis, scholarly works in this field remain invaluable to our present study, as those works will provide the required basis for the study.

To this end, Mekusi (2007:82-96) examines how Rotimi envisions social fusion and sustainable progress in a multi-lingual setting as reflected in *If...A Tragedy of the Ruled* and *Hopes of the Living Dead*. He opines that the characters in Rotimi's texts are reflective of people in multilingual societies whose diversity is exploited by corrupt leaders to perpetuate their nefarious activities in power. Mekusi posits that the attempt by Rotimi is to bridge the linguistic divide so as to attain a utopian society by experimenting with multilingualism on the stage. The researcher argues that the study shows the complimentary role the English language

plays in a multilingual society where it is viewed as a vestige of imperialism. The paper avers that language has offered itself as an instrument through which the periphery reflects on its sociopolitical precarious situation, often exploited by corrupt leaders. The researcher submits that by experimenting with multilingualism on stage with the use of an interpreter, all shades of people that constitute the audience are well reached and informed.

Anyokwu (2012) re-evaluates Rotimi's tragic texts and opines that the term 'tragedy' is not native or indigenous to Africa and the developing world. He limits its scope to four of his mature dramatic parables which seem to demonstrate a greater sense of 'the tragic' than the remaining ones: *The Gods Are Not to Blame*, *Ovonramwen Nogbaisi*, *Kurumi* and *If...A Tragedy of the Ruled*. The paper submits that Rotimi's tragedies are tragedies of character, based on individual heroism.

In a similar manner, Agbasiere (2013) examines how social justice, development, and national security could be advanced through drama from the perspective of Rotimi's *If...A Tragedy of the Ruled*. He adopts qualitative analysis in determining the suitability of drama in the actualisation of Nigeria's objectives in relation to development and national security. He asserts that drama is deployed as an instrument of consciousness to the people and makes them aware of their responsibilities to the nation to ensure the sustenance of their communal survival. The researcher remarks that the entire community of Rotimi's *If...A Tragedy of the Ruled* is encouraged to work together in solidarity to achieve progress and self-reliance so as to free themselves from their oppressors. He pointedly avers that individual heroism is discouraged as being incapable of solving Nigeria's problems while communal heroism is desirable as it ensures development and guarantees collective security.

The review substantiates the argument that African drama has become a critical tool of protest and education in the hands of playwrights, with which they correct the ills of the postcolonial African society. The review shows a palpable picture of how language conveys the writers' ideology and underscores the world-view of the society under scrutiny. The present study is an extension of the outcries of scholars to postcolonial realities in Nigeria.

## Synopsis

### *Hopes of the Living Dead*- Ola Rotimi

The play begins with a passionate chorus, calling for peace, help and divine protection from the Almighty God, depicting a scenario of helplessness, pandemonium and disillusionment:

Showers of peace, come down in full. Wind of peace, blow through in full.  
O'erspread the earth with your presence. Protect your child. Protect your  
child. I've done no wrong Lord. Protect your child (1985:3).

The song is harmoniously balanced and rich. It wraps up the entire audience in a full-bodied suffusion. It is sung by hospital patients of the leprous ward of Port Harcourt General Hospital. The setting is a ward of the hospital. Some of the patients are sitting on beds, some preferring to stand; a few more settle for bare floor; some appear in varying positions of meditative relaxation; some engage one another in a game of draught, while two or three others

idle about as spectators. The singing is on a fresh round when the chorus leader, Okoli Harcourt Whyte, gestures with impetuous suddenness to bring the voices to a straggly stop on a phrase. The leprous patients consist of people from different tribes and tongues across the country. Their terrible state of health is nothing to write home about. The hospital is messy with little or no medical care from the hospital management. Hannah, one of the inmates delineates their conditions thus:

We are like children without father or mother. When you don't take a bath, they tell you, you smell, and they beat you. The day you take a bath, they beat you still and say you are wasting water (1985:10).

Meanwhile, each of these lepers once had a story to tell. Hannah comes from an important family in the Eastern part of the country (Owerri), trained as a teacher in a Covenant, and taught for five years before she caught up with the leprous sickness. Mallam was a paymaster at the native administration in the Northern part of the country (Kano) for many years before he contacted the illness. Catechist was a chief interpreter for Royal Niger Company before he took ill. Editor was sub-editor for the Lagos spectator in the Southern part of the country before the disease was transmitted to him. Court Clerk retired as Court Clerk in Yola, before he got the disease. The disease seems to be a symbol of the socio-political and economic problem every less privileged person encounters in the country.

There are no medical cares, no food, and no encouragement from the hospital authorities, particularly the White man Dr Fergusson and his entourage. This hard condition prompts the lepers to resort to singing, where Okoli Whyte emerges as the choir leader. The song is an indirect way of voicing out their disappointments. Interestingly, their sufferings have no practical solution until the White man, Dr Fergusson, decides to return to his native land. The lepers are at the mercy of the hospital authorities. With Fergusson's departure, the lepers heave a sigh of relief, hoping that they would witness a new dawn of rehabilitation, defined by adequate medical cares, and abundant provision of essential needs, in the hands of the newly emerging Nigerian successors to the White man. Instead, they turn out to be more heartless and inhuman than their white predecessors.

Just six weeks after the departure of the white physician, a general state of listlessness has pervaded the setting. The lepers have been ostracised completely by the new hospital authorities. As a result, some of the lepers have started gathering into groups with people of their own kind. It particularly takes the effort of Hannah and Harcourt Whyte to get them back to their initial harmonious relationships. The lepers now eat from hand to mouth, with some rejecting the once-in-a-while-meal offered by the hospital authorities. Things have started falling apart when Harcourt Whyte charges the lepers to petition the hospital authorities on the one hand and be independent of the hospital management by fending for themselves on the other hand. He brings up the idea of farming, which eventually generates something positive, as they are able to fend temporarily for themselves. Their petition reads:

From: the inmates of the leprous wards, General Hospital, Port Harcourt.  
August 16, 1928.To: The Chief Medical Superintendent, Department of Health, Lagos. Through: The Senior Medical Officer, General Hospital, Port Harcourt.

DISCONTINUATION OF MEDICAL CARE: PETITION AGAINST

Dear sir, we your humble patients in wards G and H again beg to submit this letter for your kind attention. It is now six weeks since Dr Fergusson left this hospital to return to England. We wish to state that since Dr. Fergusson left, there has been no medical care for us your humble patients in wards G and H. It is possible that the cause of the delay in resuming treatment for us is financial; All the same, we again beseech your good self to bring our problem to the attention of the authorities in Lagos. We trust that a favourable and urgent action will be taken. We remain your helpless patients. Signed: Julius Wadimi Biagboza. For and behalf of the affected patients (Rotimi, 1985:24)

Instead of yielding positive result, the petition generates more troubles. The hospital authorities decide to evacuate all patients in wards G and H. They instruct the lepers through the superintendent of police to vacate the hospital premises and the entire Port Harcourt environment within 24 hours of the notice. This decision intensifies the rift between the hospital authorities and the lepers, as the latter arrogantly rebel against this order; leading to a cold war between the lepers and the police. Okoli Whyte and Court Clerk are arrested while Corporal is shot in the leg. Attempts to evacuate the lepers eventually prove abortive, making the hospital authorities to think of yet another careful means of addressing the issue.

First, it is being proposed that the lepers move into the buildings of former Infectious Disease Hospital (IDH) temporarily before a lasting arrangement is made for them. It is said that some acres of land have been acquired by the government in Uzuakoli on which to build a permanent hospital solely for lepers. The new proposed hospital shall be seen as an extension of the hospital in Port Harcourt. The other proposal is to bribe Okoli Whyte with a full gratuity, a house of his own in his home town as well as a monthly pension for life, in order to desist from speaking for the lepers, but the second proposal fails as Okoli Whyte amazingly decides to stand for his people.

At last, the lepers win their freedom; an approval is released from His Majesty Service that the lepers should move to Uzuakoli Hospital, in which Nweke on her visit to the site describes as a promised land.

## **Data presentation and discussion**

### **Political Leadership Failure in Post-Independence Nigeria**

Rotimi's *Hopes of the Living Dead* (hereafter *Hopes...*) essentially concentrates on the discourse of leadership failure in post-independence Nigeria. The political system of the nation is becoming totally eroded with corruption in high places (Akinwale, 2001:26). In *Hopes...*, it is no more news that a new crop of leaders emerged as successors to the white colonial masters, ably represented in the play by Dr Fergusson. The resultant effect was a dismal situation in which the society was stratified into the super rich or affluent, the middle class which mainly consists of workers and of course the inherently poor masses. The lepers represent the masses of the Nigerian society who are subjugated to the lowest ebb. The lepers' predicaments have gone from bad to worse, as the hospital authorities (represented by the Nigerian political leaders) remain deaf to all their entreaties. The question of leprosy as used in the play denotes "suffering", "wretchedness", and "problems of different kinds". In a conciliatory tone, Court Clerk, one of the lepers, explains the plight of the lepers to Matron, a head nurse in the hospital.

Every leper has a “past” and a “but” as reflected by Court Clerk in his conversation with Matron in the following lines:

“He was a mighty man in valour.” Naaman was a mighty man in valour, but- ‘B-u-t’ ... in that single three-letter word, madam, lies our tragedy. All you know about us is what we are today. But the canoe you find today broken, rotten and rejected, half-sunk at the riverbank...once had an owner, you know. It also had people who once loved it, cared for it. Sister Hannah, here, for instance comes from an important family in Owerri. Daughter of a chief. She was a teacher, trained in a Convent and all. Taught for-what, five years! Then came her but (1985:11).

In the extract, Rotimi compares the current disgusting state of the country’s socio-political and economic realities to its past (which seemed to be more reasonable) and describes Nigeria through the eyes of the complementaries: “rotten”, “broken”, “rejected” and “half-sunk”. In theorizing the phenomenon of political leadership failure in Nigeria, he romances the theme of social disintegration. Thus, such co-hyponyms as “broken”, “rotten”, “rejected” and “half-sunk” are found in the content of the text. All these linguistic cues serve to bring into prominence the crucial theme of social disintegration, premised on leadership failure, which must have been the major motivation for the writing of the text. The deployment of the adversative conjunction “but”, which introduces a word in contrast or contradiction with the preceding negative clause is a symbolic signification of the different challenges every common man faces in the post colonial Nigerian nation, which includes unemployment, starvation, marginalization, poverty, social injustice and discrimination, among many others. For instance, Hannah was well trained in a Convent and taught for five years before she contacted the “but” while Catechist was a chief interpreter at Royal Niger Company before he got his own “but”.

The marked difference between the Land of Canaan, flowing with milk and honey and Nigeria, flowing with bribery and corruption further explains the sickening political situation of the country. When the lepers are instructed to vacate the hospital premises, Harcourt Whyte, their leader, pleads with the hospital management to give the lepers a place they can call their own; where they can keep themselves together, feed themselves and work for themselves. In response to this plea, the Superintendent of Police who is the spokesman for the hospital management posits sharply:

I see, But have you weighed the economic implications of the dream? My dear fellows, the Land of Canaan in modern times doesn’t flow with milk. I dare say, it doesn’t give off honey either. It takes money. Cash. And where d’you propose to get that? Not from government I suppose. Good intentions aside, no government ever budgets for dreams of Canaan Land these days (1985:47).

So, while the Land of Canaan emerges as a concrete representation of a “perfect land/promised land”, described in Numbers 33:51 and Joshua 22:9, Nigeria circumscribes to the “bad land” category, represented by depravity, rottenness, corruption, worthlessness, among other undesirable social ills. This stark contrast between ‘Nigeria’ and ‘Canaan’ evokes a feeling of rottenness, characterized by a lack of honesty and moral principles. The impression one gets of Nigeria from these lines above is that her present socio-political and economic



predicament is chaotic, and as a result, her future is uncertain. The text depicts a perverse generation, in which the attitudes of the post independence Nigerian political leaders (the capitalist, the businessmen and those at the helms of affairs) are absolutely irrational. With regard to the plight of the lepers, the government gives its verdict, through the Superintendent of Police. The Senior Medical Officer of the hospital and the lepers' representatives (Harcourt Whyte and Nweke) are all present at the venue of the meeting where the Superintendent makes known the government's decision. Instead of proffering reasonable solutions to the problems of the masses, the superintendent of police rather declares:

The position of the government in this matter is clear. Needless to say, also, that that position is *irrevocable*. As superintendent of police, enforcement of the laws of the land devolves upon my office. These responsibilities cannot be compromised. The *order* from the Department of Health that all patients in wards G & H vacate the hospital premises by 5. P.m. tomorrow is in the interest of public health. And that *order* is *final*...All the same, we trust you will understand that personal sentiment has no place in the exigencies of service to the people. That is all. You can go (1985:45).

The text shows clearly that evacuating the masses/lepers would not halt their outcry against the rulers, but would rather aggravate it. The choices of the collocative synonyms "irrevocable" in sentence 2 and "final" in sentence 6, as well as "order" in sentences 5 and 6 respectively shows that the Government of the text is so autocratic and this is the type Nigerians have experienced since independence. Meanwhile, if the degree of corruption in high places persists, if the rulers continue to rule without passion for the masses, if the economic system of the country remains under the control of the capitalists, then, evacuating the masses might be difficult. It is not so strange that critics of the neo-colonial Nigerian leaders are often silenced, imprisoned, assassinated or exiled. Antagonists of corruption in recent times in Nigeria have always been governments' greatest enemies.

The masses are victims of utter neglect. Even though they are dying, the rulers are less concerned with their plights. As the lepers push for improvement in their condition, they resort to writing a petition against the hospital management. In some of the lines of the petition, the lepers reflect thus:

And whereas we have of late been victims of utter neglect such as befits only a nation where the dignity of man has no place, and the sanctity of his soul, no value. We therefore demand in the name of humanity that you improve our condition. We remain your hopeful patients (1985:37).

In sentence 1 of the above excerpt, "dignity" and "sanctity" are synonymous. The adoption of these gradable synonyms is an indexical representation of man's inhumanity to man. In the Nigerian postcolonial context, the identity of the masses has been plundered. The testicles that make the masses humans has been removed. What remains is just the dregs of society. The lepers' sober reflections are proofs of a failed nation with failed leadership, where many things are in disarray, particularly the bankruptcy of the country's leadership in meeting the basic needs of the masses.

## The Need for Purposeful Leadership in Nigeria

In *Hopes...*, Harcourt Whyte is an obvious reflection of the type of selfless leader a multi-ethnic country like Nigeria should have. From the very first scene of the play to the last scene, Harcourt Whyte has proved beyond any doubt being an exemplary type of leader that the country needs. Without mincing words, the play begins with him being a choral leader and ends with him suggesting the way forward, shortly after the lepers have won their freedom. His common slang “each one tell one” is a fascinating indication of how committed he is to his multi-lingual community of the lepers. He is such a leader that makes every member of his community have a sense of belonging. A deliberate language/dialect interpretation is done for those who do not understand the country’s official language just to ensure that nobody is left out. He is a leader with the right attitude; someone who understands what is at stake with his community and where the community needs to go.

Shortly after the departure of the Whiteman (Dr Fergusson), his Black successors subject the lepers to a more terrible form of suffering. This leads to the atmosphere of uncertainty and apprehension. Reflectively, Harcourt Whyte has this to say:

The future, brothers. We won’t continue *like this forever*. Sometimes, I just...sit down on the ground, and I look out...over there...I see our suffering in a *heap, piled up* far behind us. Something of the past. And before our eyes a tomorrow-*green, fat, vast land*. The day when the world will start treating us *like* people. Real people. A time when we too shall prove that we are people deserving respect. The lizard likes to sit down, relaxed brothers-*like* the frog. A long tail happens to be his bad luck (1985:19).

His message in the above excerpt is that of hope for his followers that someday the country will be a better place to live in for the masses. In other words, he assures his followers that their suffering will soon become something of the past, only if they do not give up struggling for their right. The repetition of the noun “people” in the expressions “like people”, “real people”, and “are people” in sentences 7, 8, and 9 is a symbol of hope. Also, the deployment of the adverb of time “past” connotes a likelihood of breakthrough. Harcourt Whyte’s purposefulness is typical of a resilient leader, whose plan for his followers is that of hope, assurance and determination for success. In order to re-evoke the people’s consciousness to the problems embedded in the sociopolitical and economic atmosphere of Nigeria, Harcourt Whyte underscores the fact that time factor must not be handled with flippancy in matters of national life. The playwright is anxious about the ailing turn of events in the present and perhaps the future for which he seeks to sensitise the lepers and as a result mobilize them to expedite action on quitting their unfavourable condition. Harcourt Whyte’s message in the excerpt depicts him as a committed leader; someone that is ready to associate with the masses, struggle with them and go to war for their betterment.

Interestingly, Harcourt Whyte’s approach to the plight of the lepers is extremely positive. He is hopeful that someday the lepers would win their freedom. He is a leader with a big heart; a caring one indeed. At the sight of the news that the Whiteman, Dr Fergusson would be leaving for his country, the lepers become agitated of what could befall them. They keep on asking different uncertain questions which Harcourt Whyte promptly addresses:

The answer to the question you ask sister is in ourselves. Each one tell one. From now on, we are alone. We fool ourselves if we believe that the big men of this place will care for us as before (1985:21).

Whyte's sense of insistence in this excerpt is hinged on collectivity as opposed to individuality in the course of a successful struggle for survival and existence. The adoption of the first person plural pronominal "we" in sentences 3 and 4, as well as the deployment of "us" in sentence 5, shows a collective struggle in a capitalist society. This kind of unity in the words of Mbiti is the way out of the postcolonial mess in a developing country like ours. Mbiti's (1969) classic phrase, "I am because we are; and since we are, therefore I am" captures a key feature of this collaborative struggle. It embraces the idea that believing the common bond within a group is more important than any individual argument. The challenges the masses are facing are not unconnected with leadership failure in the country (that is, the big men). The leaders are deaf, dumb and blind to the masses' demands. Knowing the exact point at which the shoe pinches the masses should help them approach the said problem as soon as practicable. Harcourt Whyte is that type of leader that identifies the exact problems of his followers and hence, proffers immediate pragmatic solutions to the problems.

Leadership, from Rotimi's point of view is a call to service, or better still, servitude. In other words, it is expected to be a burden and not a forum for self centredness as in the case of Nigerian political leaders. Consequent upon the appointment of Harcourt Whyte as the lepers' leader, his reluctant acceptance speech explicitly delineates Rotimi's true notion of selfless leadership:

A mere seed in the soil. Nothing. A soft voice within, a heavy summoning comes forth. Is it easy? The people need a leader. Who am I? Good God in heaven! To bear this burden was not my meaning. But if this be Thy will, let the cup abide with me. A simple scratch...a single seed in the soil (1985:40).

From Rotimi's perspective, Harcourt Whyte is a mere seed; hence, every good leader should be a seed. Meanwhile, for such seed to produce much fruits, death is imminent (John 12:24). In this context, Jesus is the seed, the leader and the savior of the world. He was prophesying his death, burial and the resulting fruit that would spring forth from that planting. He predicts that there would be much fruits that would come from his death. The death in question is metaphoric. It is a metaphor of humility; humility in the sight of excessive power and fame, which are factors that easily corrupt absolutely. From little humble beginning can grow great and mighty things. This is a key principle to Jesus' outstanding leadership. And to corroborate the humility-principle, Ephesians chapter 2 verse 7 says "He made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, he humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death (1985:1007)." This is the kind of political statement Rotimi seems to be making of Nigerian leaders, in which he has perfectly depicted in Harcourt Whyte.

From Rotimi's viewpoint, a complete humility in all areas of governance or leadership is required of a purposeful and resilient leader in a post independence Nigerian society. Instances of this notion are widely noticed in Rotimi's extensive use of interrogative statements in the following expressions, "Who am I?", "Is it easy?" and "Good Lord in Heaven?" From these interrogations, leadership is never supposed to be a-do-or-die-affair but a natural will of the people.

Interestingly, Harcourt Whyte refuses to accept what could sell his followers, regardless of the magnitude of the bribe. Overtime, the problem with Nigerian political leaders has never been unconnected with bribery and corruption. Even the so-called “men of the people” who would mount the throne of leadership as saints and with the massive support of the people, would in a short while turn out to be something else. This has been a recurring problem in Nigeria since 1960 when the country had her first indigenous government led by Nnamdi Azikwe and Tafawa Balewa. It does not really take anyone by surprise that Achebe says the trouble with Nigeria is not the nation’s land, climate, water, air or anything else, but leadership failure (1984:1). The lack of selfless, non-corrupt and committed leader has contributed immensely to the sociopolitical and economic predicaments facing Nigeria till date. Corruption and lack of committed leadership could be traced back to the first republic (1969-1966). It is often conceived that ethnic acrimony and corruption among the founding fathers of the nation prompted the first military coup on January 15, 1966. But having tried all possible means to subdue the lepers, resulting into failed efforts, the hospital authorities think of bribing their leader. The superintendent of police’s bribery approach is delineated thus:

From the medical authorities. Let’s put it this way. Nobody grows younger, you know. Someday, even the strongest wrestler in the community comes to rest his bell, and looks for a fireside: somewhere to settle in, take stock, await the last day in peace, so to speak...So, perhaps-well, like everybody also as the years creep on- you might just want to rest. Relax. No landlord to push you about. A house- your own. A lump sum gratuity in addition perhaps. And a regular monthly pension-like any respectable, retired man with a meritorious service behind him. And make no mistake about that brother. You have tried. For your people, I mean. All those years of self sacrifice. Anyway, no matter. Nothing matters (1985:76).

Here, the superintendent does not consider the lepers’ plight a communal one, as he keeps on addressing Harcourt Whyte as if he is fighting for himself alone. The corrupt attitude of the superintendent downplays the collective interest in Harcourt Whyte’s crusade. It is so amazing that the Superintendent of Police could think that all that could call for Whyte’s struggle is on the condition that he (Whyte) might just want to rest. Things that make life enjoyable such as “a house”, “lump sum gratuity” and “monthly pension” which Harcourt Whyte does not possess, but may wish to have if opportune, connote the unfavourable condition which must have made his motive a personal type, but presume to be collective. These things are those pull factors that do change a leader’s initial collective motive to individual one. Meanwhile, reacting to the bribery proposal, Harcourt Whyte reminds us of another rare quality of purposeful leadership that the country needs. He responds in a few lines:

And what about the others: Nweke, Hannah, Court Clerk, Mallam, Editor, Catechist? No, no, (1985:77).

So, there is a shared sense of collectivity that finds expression in Harcourt Whyte’s leadership character. Rotimi seems to be positing that a purposeful leader in Nigeria must be faithfully committed to his followers at the expense of other extraneous attractions.

Eventually, the collective efforts of the lepers fetch them their freedom. This strong sense of solidarity is one of those weapons adopted by Harcourt Whyte to fight the hospital

authorities. If Nigeria would be a better place to live in, the nation's ethnic groups must be united. That is the reason behind Rotimi's adoption of different tribes with different languages. The type of leadership that would unite the nation is desperately needed.

### Conclusion

From our analysis of political leadership in Nigeria thus far, it is evident that the major problem with Nigeria is not just corruption but leadership failure. Corruption has attained an unimaginable height and is currently assuming a pandemic proportion in Nigeria, through and with the full support of the political leadership class. The lack of competent, committed, purposeful, responsible and selfless leaders with integrity, vision, high moral values has been the bane of the country. Our analysis shows a number of findings such as the preponderance of adverbials, particularly time and reason, to emphasise urgency of time to grave issues of national interest, preeminence of anaphoric and exophoric reference, generated through cohesive ties as personal pronouns, extensive deployment of synonyms to express attitudinal meaning such as a subtle indictment of political leaders and their corruptly bigoted society; frequency of antonyms to stress the contrasts within which several failed government ministries in Nigeria operate; wide use of hyponyms to generate affective meaning such as the disgusting setting of the plays, which is symbolic of the Nigerian nation, thematic intertextual relation with other African texts such as Hellon Habila's *Waiting for an Angel*, Cyprian Ekwensi's *Jagua Nana*, Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah*, Bole Butake's *The Rape of Michelle* and Ngugi Wa Thiongo'o's *Devil on the Cross*, among others, to show that leadership problems cut across Africa. The analysis further reflects ascendancy of imagery of deterioration and filthiness to explain the gravity of corruption in the country; preponderance of plural pronouns to show a deep sense of solidarity and collectivism; judicious deployment of repetition/reiteration to reflect the texturing of the texts, as well as producing aesthetic effects; and sensible use of metaphor of suffering, wretchedness, subjugation and marginalisation to show the precarious condition of the masses of the Nigerian nation. The study concludes that not only does stylistic appraisal of Rotimi's *Hopes of the Living Dead* underscore the potency of purposeful leadership as a practical tool required for pragmatic national development in Nigeria, the text helps to realise the significance of stylistic theory to the study of political satires.

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