

A Pragmatic Analysis of Crisis-Motivated Proverbs in Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman*

Omotosho Moses MELEFA*, Thomas Michael Emeka CHUKWUMEZIE
Department of English and Literary Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsukka
*E-mail of corresponding author: melefa2003@yahoo.com

Abstract

Studies on Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman*, which have largely been literary, reveal that the play is deeply steeped in oral tradition and the culture of the Yoruba race. Of course, this is in line with the authorial note that the play is based on events which took place in Oyo Empire in 1946. The events, as dramatized in the play, resulted in a crisis situation between the people's culture and the Western perception of it. The intervention of the District Officer to save Elesin's life became an unwanted interruption of the cosmic order of Yoruba cosmology, which inevitably plunged the people into crisis. The deployment of proverbs to perform pragmatic acts within crisis situations in the play has largely remained unexplored. Therefore, this study examines pragmatic acts of proverbs within the contexts of crisis in the play. Data for the study are samples of proverbs that are used within crisis situations in the play, that is, those deployed in situations where there were confrontations and disagreement between the traditional order and the new western order in the play. These were sampled purposively, that is, selectively based on the judgment of the researcher and analysed drawing insights from Mey's (2001) theory of pragmatic acts. Drawing insights from contextual resources such as shared situational knowledge, shared cultural knowledge, inference, etc. pragmatic acts of counselling, cautioning, challenging, accusing, unveiling, etc. were performed with crisis-motivated proverbs in the play by characters to strengthen the force of dramatic action.

Keywords: Pragmatic acts, crisis-motivated proverbs, challenging, cautioning, accusing

1. Introduction

Although Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman* (*DKH* henceforth) is widely held by critics as an important dramatic piece, studies on it are mainly literary in approach (e.g. Aboyade, 1994; McLuckie, 2004; Pervez, 2008; etc.) and philosophical (e.g. Ugwuanyi, 2011). A comprehensive linguistic approach geared towards dissecting this important dramatic piece, or any aspect of it, is not common.

The fact is that it is not common to find a linguistic study that is entirely devoted to Soyinka's *DKH*. The situation is even worse with the use of proverbs in the work, which, of course, could shed interesting illumination on the deployment of proverbs in it. Studies like Aboyade (1994) have tended to be a general description of the deployment of oral tradition as the prototype for the (re)construction of a truly Yoruba world of reality without hinging it on a particular theory, nor paying a close attention to how specific aspects of the people's oral tradition have been deployed for meaning-making. Just as in Achebe's Igbo society where studies have revealed that proverbs are highly prized, making it the palm oil with which words are eaten (Achebe, 1958; Lindfors, 1968; Alabi, 2009), it also serves as the horses of speech in Soyinka's Yoruba society (Monye, 2002). Boyejo's (2011) study appears to be one of the most comprehensive studies dedicated to Soyinka's *DKH*. It investigates how Soyinka's language and style peculiarly depict his continental identity. In most of the studies on the text, the use of proverbs is merely treated as one of the imprints of oral tradition on the text. This obviously leaves much ground uncovered in a linguistic enterprise.

The construction of the complex metaphysical world of the play is aptly anchored on the deployment of metaphorical and proverbial forms in the text, which largely have remained unexplored. Therefore, there is the need to hinge the analysis of these forms on a linguistic theory for a better understanding. Unlike previous studies, in this study, therefore, crisis-motivated proverbs are isolated and analysed using insights from Mey's (2001) pragmatic acts theory. It is hoped that this study would provide, in no small measure, additional insights into the understanding of Soyinka's deployment of proverbs in the text.

The choice of *DKH* is not only informed by the insufficiency of linguistic study on the text, but by the robustness of its language, in terms of its adept translation of Yoruba proverbs. Out of the classes of proverbs in the play, only the ones that were motivated by crisis, that is, those that were used within contexts where there was disagreement between characters that represents the traditional order and the new western order in the text are selected as data for this study.

1.1 Language-in-Use, Culture, and Proverbs

According to Odeunmi (2008:74), 'there is an intricate link between language and culture'. Language is the vehicle for the conveyance of thought and culture. The worldviews of a people which are contained in their culture are transmitted through language. Language then becomes a vital vehicle for the transmission of culture. According to Jary and Jary (1991:101) cited in Odeunmi (2008), culture is the way of life for an entire society.

This broad view encompasses all aspects of human life such as codes of manners, dressing, religion, ritual norms, behaviour, belief systems and language. Culture is lived, and language, through all its manifestations, projects that living, giving it form and texture (Odeunmi, 2008).

One of the various domains that contribute to the understanding of the cultural whole is language-in-use (which takes context into account, as opposed to language in the abstract which focuses on language purely in terms of its systematic properties). Focusing on proverb-use as an instantiation of the domain of language-in-use allows us to consider proverbs as social tools that are employed to carry out particular functions in common social interaction. Not only that, but by identifying those functions we are closer to articulating why and how discourse comes to be an essential component of culture. In fact, the conception of proverbs as social tools enable one to identify in such popular and unassuming expressions, such as *make hay when the sun shines*, the tripartite combination of prosodic, the figurative, and the social, which is a more conventional rendering of the abstract phenomena which interest us: language, thought, and culture. That is, in the mental processing of proverbs we witness a minor miracle of meaning-making; we see the impressive ability of the mind to relate a number of components in order to render what appears to be an irrelevant comment into a pertinent and intelligible idea. Many proverbs are concrete instantiations of a general “truth,” they are also sensible as literally true statements (Katz and Ferretti, 2001, 2003). As espoused by Odeunmi (2008:75), proverbs are context-dependent. This ties meaning realisation in them to certain situations of use, whether it is within the real or the literary world.

Although various definitions of proverbs have been given in the paremiological literature, the interest in this study is, however, on a functional explication of proverbs. It is on this view of proverbs that the explication in this study is anchored. This functional dimension to the explication of proverbs is explicitly captured by Achebe (in Ogbaa 1981:5), cited in Odeunmi (2008:75) when he declares that:

A proverb is both a functional means of communication and also a very elegant and artistic [...]. So, when I use these forms in my novels, they both serve a utilitarian purpose; which is to re-enact the life of the people that I am describing and also delight through elegance and aptness of imagery.

The above functional view of proverbs contrasts with the conception of a proverb by Mieder (1993:5) as ‘a short, generally known sentence of the folk which contains wisdom, truth, morals, and traditional views in a metaphorical, fixed and memorisable form and which is handed down from generation to generation’. This pays particular attention to the structure of a proverb. Also, working within the Anglo-American culture, Norrick (1985:78) defines a proverb as ‘a traditional, conversational, didactic genre with general meaning, a potential free conversational turn, preferably with figurative meaning’.

Proverbs are products of oral culture, which are harvested into the creative literary form, and its pragmatic relevance energizes and amplifies the meaning frontiers of the written literature (Okunowo, 2012:1). He argues further that ‘although proverb is a second order pre-existing text, its harvest into creative composition is a second level reconfiguration that respond to the rhetoric of literature’. African writers like Chinua Achebe, Ola Rotimi, Wole Soyinka, etc. who wrote in English have explored the richness of this cultural rhetoric in their works. Raji-Oyelade (1999:74) has observed that “there is virtually no substantial controversy about the value of proverbs in culture, and the significance of proverbs in Yoruba traditional societies as repository and verbal effulgence of wisdom is indeed proverbial”. Within Yoruba socio-semiotic life for example, one’s eloquence in proverbs represents a linguistic wherewithal, astute deep knowledge and wisdom (Okunowo, 2012). Proverbs are not only figural devices especially within the context of literature, but they are powerful socio-semiotic tools that are used to capture all shades of human experiences.

Based on events that took place in 1946 in Oyo, *DKH* relates the story of the death of a prominent king in a Yoruba community. As demanded by tradition, the late king’s dog, his favourite horse and horseman is required to ‘commit death’ in order to accompany the king on his transition to the world of his ancestors. Elesin is ready, but just before his departure; he notices a beautiful girl at the market and decides to marry her before proceeding on his journey. Though the girl is engaged to Iyaloja’s son, but who dares to refuse the desire of a dying man. The District Officer, Mr Pilkings learns about the ritual suicide from his black servant, Amusa and orders him (Amusa) to arrest Elesin Oba in order to stop the ritual suicide. Amusa is resisted by the market women and their daughters from carrying out the orders handed over to him. Pilkings moves to command the operation himself. Elesin is brought in handcuffed and imprisoned. In a surprising twist, Olunde, Elesin’s son who studies medicine abroad, takes the place of his father. Elesin hears of this and in a quick move strangles himself.

2. Mey’s Pragmatic Acts Theory

Mey’s (2001) pragmatic acts theory is an action theory that is ‘necessitated by the puncture made in the speech act theory’ (Odeunmi, 2008:76). Recent insights into how language works in discourse has exposed the speech acts theory as not situated (Mey, 2001:219), and its atomistic/individualistic approach to language (Fairclough, 2001:7). This explains why the speech act theory is not suitable for the kind of situated study that is the concern of this paper. Proverbs function largely as situated texts, especially within a dramatic piece, and can only be

appreciated through a theory of action (Odebunmi, 2006:157). Therefore, the choice of pragmatic acts theory is justified.

Pragmatic acts theory is an action theory that is anchored on the pragmatic view of language as it is used by people for their own purposes and within their own respective limitations and affordances. It sees people's use of language as the performance of certain pragmatic acts. It holds that users of language are never alone in their use of language; rather they belong to a world of usage and use their language (taking clues from linguistic and paralinguistic resources) as members of a speech community to reflect the conditions of the community at large. This comprehensive pragmatic view of language contrasts with the claims of the speech act theory that concentrates on what people do with spoken aspect of language from its structural properties.

The theory approaches language from a socio-contextual perspective. As explained by Mey (2001: 221), the theory focuses on "the environment in which both speaker and hearer find their affordances, such that the entire situation is brought to bear on what can be said in the situation, as well as what is actually being said". This perspective is captured as a pragememe, a generalized pragmatic act regarded as the only force associated with making utterances. As argued by Mey (2001), a pragmatic act is instantiated through an ipra or a pract, which realizes a pragememe. "Every pract is at the same time an allopract, that is to say a concrete instantiation of a particular pragememe" (Mey, 2001: 221). What determines a pract is solely participants' knowledge of interactional situation and the potential effect of a pract in a particular context. Thus, practicing resolves the problem of telling illocutionary force from perlocutionary force (Odebunmi, 2008).

The organisation of this theory is captured on the scheme below:

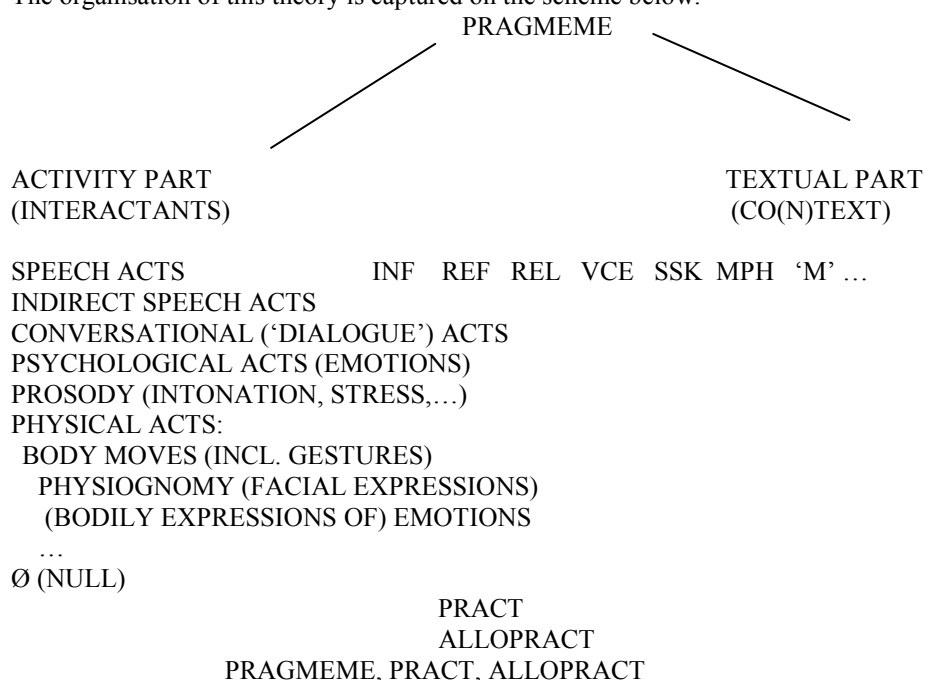


Figure 1: A scheme of Pragmatic acts theory (Mey, 2001:222)

As interpreted by Odebunmi (2008), Figure 1 above shows that there are two parts to a pragememe: activity part, which is used by interactants and textual part, which refers to the context within which the pragememe operates. To communicate, the interactants draw on such speech act types as indirect speech acts, conversational ('dialogue') acts, psychological acts, prosodic acts and physical acts. These are engaged in contexts, which include INF representing "inference"; REF, "relevance"; VCE, "voice"; SSK, "shared situation knowledge"; MPH, "metaphor"; and M "metapragmatic joker". The interaction between activity part and textual part results in a pract or an allopract.

The metapragmatic joker points to particular metapragmatic activities. Central to it is "indexicality" which, at the pragmatic level, demands good knowledge of the context of the utterance made. Mey (2001) illustrates the metapragmatic nature of indexicality by exploring structural repetitions such as Biblical Pilate's "What I do, I do" (John 19: 22) and Bakhtin's (1994: 108), "Sentences are repeatable. Sentences are repeatable", whose meanings do not depend on the repetitions made, but rather on the indexical context. They point to particular persons who utter them and the conditions that necessitate their utterance. The indexicality here is implicit "and has to be brought out by an analysis of the discourse in which the utterance takes place" (Mey 2001: 199). He further observes that the "implicit properties of the utterance reflect on the utterance itself, by indexing its user relation: that is to say, they tell us something about how the utterance is produced, respectively received". He asserts that the metapragmatic indexicality plays

a very vital role in understanding how pragmatic acts develop discourse. Since the activity part thrives on the transaction between interactants in a discourse situation, this foregrounds the significant role of conversational acts. Therefore, in this study, reference will be made to Drew and Holt's (1995, 1998) conversational approach to figurative language, which sees the use of figurative expressions and other formulaic expressions such as proverbs, oxymora, 'syntactic idioms' etc. as conversational devices for summarising the topic of a conversation. This will strengthen the conversational force of the proverbs for analysis.

3. Pragmatic acts of Crisis-Motivated Proverbs in *Death and the King's Horseman*

Figure 2 below, which is a modified scheme of pragmatic acts theory given by Mey (2001), is adopted for the analysis of crisis-motivated proverbs in DKH.

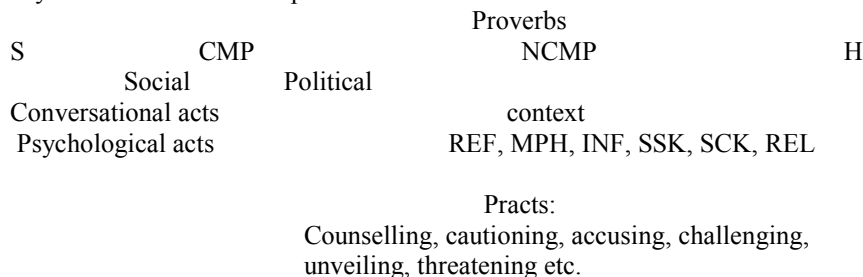


Figure 2: A modified scheme of pragmatic acts for the analysis of CMPs in *Death and the King's Horseman*

Figure 2 above indicates that the use of proverbs in *DKH* is between a speaker and a hearer(s). Proverbs in the text can broadly be divided into two; the first is crisis-motivated proverbs (CMPs) and the second is non-crisis motivated proverbs (NCMPs). NCMPs are not the focus of this study; such proverbs are used in the banter between Elesin and his Praise Singer at the opening scene of the play (p. 9-13), between Elesin and the women of the market led by Iyaloja (p.14-22), scene three where Elesin consummates his love affair with his newly chosen wife (p. 34), etc.

CMPs in the play, which is the concern of this paper, are explored from two main instances where confrontations manifest among the two main forces in the play, that is, the traditional order and the new western order. One of these is seen in an attempt by Amusa (an agent of the new western order) to arrest Elesin, as ordered by the District Officer, which met with stern resistance from the women of the market and their girls (agents of the traditional order in the play), and this degenerated into crisis. The second dimension of crisis situation in the play from which proverbs were studied is seen in the events that follow after Elesin was eventually arrested by the District Officer, Mr Pilkings and detained. These events capture the political undertones of the crisis in the play. The result of Elesin's incarceration is that he is kept within the world of the living while the King awaits him to accompany him (the king) to the world of the dead. In the words of Elesin, this amounts to shattering the piece of the world. Let us consider the conversation that ensued:

Pilkings: You seem fascinated by the moon

Elesin (after a pause): Yes, ghostly one your twin-brother up there engages my thoughts

Pilkings: The lights on the leaves, the peace of the night...

Elesin: The night is not at peace, District Officer.

Pilkings: No? I would have said it was. You know, quiet...

Elesin: And does quiet mean peace for you?

Pilkings: Well, nearly the same thing...

Elesin: The night is not at peace ghostly one. The world is not at peace. **You have shattered the peace of the world for ever** (emphasis mine). There is no sleep in the world tonight. (p. 61-62)

What is captured succinctly from the conversation that ensued above is the crisis that resulted from the intervention of Mr Pilkings. Therefore, it is within this context that the second dimension of crisis is situated for this study. Elesin's detention is construed by agents of the new western order as life-saving operation, while the same is seen traditionally as shattering the peace of the world.

CMPs in the play are divided into social crisis-motivated proverbs (CMP: soc) and political crisis-motivated proverbs (CMP: pol). It has been argued that crisis, which often manifests in conversations, as could be seen in the text under study, tasks the psyche, so, all instances of CMPs soc and CMP pol are treated as conversational and psychological acts which interact with contextual features such as REF (reference), MPH (metaphor), INF (inference), SSK (shared situational knowledge), SCK (shared cultural knowledge), which was operationally introduced by Odebunmi (2006:159) to be able to adequately account for the cultural factor in the use of proverbs and REL (relevance) to yield the following practs: counselling, cautioning, accusing, challenging, admitting, etc. The pragmatic acts that are instantiated with crisis-motivated proverbs are discussed as they relate to the two situations of confrontation as identified above in the play.

3.1 CMPs within the context of confrontation between Amusa and Women of the market

This context relates to the social life of the characters in the play. The events here unfold within the context of

the market, a domain that is seen as exclusively the enclave of women. It involves Elesin's supposed transitional union with his new bride. On the orders of the District Officer, Amusa tries to arrest Elesin, an action seen by the Women of the market as unwanted interference in another man's wedding, which therefore must be resisted. For Amusa, it was an attempt to stop a man from committing suicide and not an interference in another man's wedding night. So, for the women, it was the case of one trying to interrupt another man's night of joy, right within his own domain. Proverbs used within this context derive their metaphorical vehicles from the fauna and the flora resources of Yoruba universe.

The situation described above propels characters to use *CMPs*: *soc* to pract caution and to counsel. In a dialogue between Iyaloja, the women of the market and Amusa in act three (p. 40), the exchange below ensued:

Iyaloja: Well, our elders have said it: *Dada may be weak, but he has a younger sibling who is truly fearless*

Woman: the next time the white man shows his face in this market I will set Wuraola on his tail.

With the proverb, 'Dada may be weak, but he has a younger sibling who is truly fearless', Iyaloja draws on the cultural context of Yoruba wisdom to perform pragmatic acts of *cautioning* and *counselling*. She views the wisdom of the elders as a potent vehicle not only to capture the situation but to also assert its cultural foundations within the Yoruba cosmos. Deploying the framing device, 'our elders have said', she draws attention to the validity of the cultural wisdom of the people. Amusa, being a member of the culture, draws inference (INF) from the contextual resources of shared situational knowledge (SSK) and shared cultural knowledge (SCK) to process the pragmatic action that is instantiated with the performance of the proverbs. Using the framing device, 'our elders said', Iyaloja *unveils* the wisdom of the elders to Amusa to draw from. His mental pragmatic processing of the above as an adult member of the culture, which is guided by the framing device 'our elders said', places him on the alert as his intuitive response was to accept his stiff resistance from the girls as a validation of the wisdom of the elders which was made bare to him from the proverb to draw from. In line with the arguments of Drew and Holt (1998), the *CMP soc* above does not only summarise the topic of the conversation that ensued between the two forces in contention in the play, it also encapsulates the contention in the situation. It dramatizes proverbially the helplessness of Amusa, the agent of the new western order in the play, in the context of this disagreement; hence, a pragmatic response move is elicited from him as he retracts. This means that the invocation of *CMP soc* by the speaker compels a retreat from the hearer.

By investing the situation with the metaphoric vehicle, 'Dada', a symbolic name for a child who is born with curly hair, the speaker draws on contextual resources such as SSK and SCK to explore the annals of Yoruba culture. Because of the curly nature of such a child's hair, there is usually the tendency to conceive such a child as weak. It is this shared cultural knowledge, complemented by the relevance of the proverb to the situation that Iyaloja draws upon to pract *caution* and to *counsel* Amusa not to take the women for granted because of the perceived weakness based on their physiognomy. Since Amusa assumed that those he was dealing with were women, and tries to intimidate them with his manliness but was proven wrong; he is *counselled* and *cautioned* not to fall into such errors of judgment, because even if Dada is not strong but has siblings that are strong and fearless, it is taken therefore that he/she is strong. Dada's strength therefore is a function of those who will take up issues on his/her behalf.

So, the pragmatic acts of *unveiling*, *cautioning* and *counselling* that were instantiated using the *CMP* above in the context of the confrontation here were aptly deployed as a potent pragmatic tool to strengthen the force of dramatic action in the play. The proverb, Dada may be weak... reformulates the co-textual expression: 'don't take people for granted because of their perceived weakness [...]'. The clarity of the proverb to the speaker and the hearer is not in doubt, given the general social context, the co-text, SSK and SCK. The non- proverbial response move that followed, as revealed above, boasts of the success that is encapsulated in the performance of the *CMP soc*. It also celebrates the triumph of their strength over the new western order in the play.

Within this context also, pragmatic acts of *cautioning* and *challenging* were instantiated by another character using another *CMP*: *soc*. Let us examine how this works out in a conversation between a woman and Amusa. Addressing the core of the crisis in the play, the woman reveals:

Amusa: The chief who calls himself Elesin Oba

Woman: You ignorant man. It is not he who calls himself Elesin Oba, it is his blood that says it. As it called out to his father before him and will to his son after him. And that is in spite of everything your white man can do.

Woman: *Is it not the same ocean that washes this land and the white man's land?* Tell your white man he can hide our son away as long he likes. When the time comes for him, the same ocean will bring him back (p. 35).

The dialogue above, which is imbued with a carefully-orchestrated and well-thought out cultural education agenda, practs *counselling* and implicitly *challenges*. Amusa, though an adult member of the culture, arrogantly parades an unpardonable level of ignorance about the culture of his people. So, the Woman above takes up the responsibility of re-orientating and counselling a man who, in her opinion, has lost touch with his culture. The situation also provides her (Woman) with the opportunity to address a fundamental concern of the play. What

she proverbially addresses above using the CMP soc is the dust that Olunde's travel to England for medical education had raised. His travel is seen as an affront to the culture of his people. As the first male child of his father, he is culturally predestined to succeed him. He is duty-bound to perform ritual ceremonies on his dead body whenever duty calls in order to keep the welfare of his people intact. Mr Pilkings, who represents the white order, is seen as trying to truncate the cultural order of the people by assisting Olunde to travel abroad to study medicine against the wish of his father. So, she proverbially practs *cautioning* and implicitly *challenges* the western order by making reference to the issue by invoking elemental forces when she says 'is it not the same ocean that washes this land and the white man's land?' She is not merely just asserting that whatever the white man has done to prevent Olunde from taking up his ancestral responsibility would not work, but she instantiates pragmatic acts of *cautioning* and *challenging* to draw attention to the futility of the white man's efforts. Drawing cultural legitimacy from an element of nature, ocean, she tries to revalidate and reengineer the cultural belief of her people. The proverbial engagement that manifest in the conversation above is also a cultural tool that seeks to question the validity of the ontological system that the white order in the play parades. The woman subtly practs *challenging* to invalidate the wisdom of Mr Pilkings who believes that Olunde's oversea travel would forestall the attempt to make him step into the shoes of his father. The woman's reliance on the cultural belief of her people in the potency of element forces as deployed above is pragmatic in that the context of culture is utilised as a pragmatic tool for practicing. The proverb, which was anchored on the shared general context between the interactants in the play, the co-text, SCK and SSK, reformulates the co-textual cultural believe that elemental forces always fight on the side of tradition and culture whenever attempts are made to desecrate them.

3.2 CMPs within the context of Elesin's imprisonment

The crisis in the play reached a crescendo within this context. It is the context for political struggle for supremacy, hence the deployment of CMPs pol by the characters within this discourse situation to pract pragmatic acts of *unveiling*, *accusing*, *cautioning*. The theatrical effect of power and supremacy in the play is noticeably achieved within this context. Here, Elesin is put behind bars to prevent him from committing the ritual suicide which he is culturally duty-bound to perform in order to ensure the wellbeing of his people. This sets the stage for political crisis as the two forces in the play struggle for political supremacy. When viewed with the imperialist lens of the white order in the play, which Pilkings represents, his incarceration is seen as a saving act. However, a pan-cultural Africanist view of this reveals it as an interruption of the Yoruba cosmic order. The first conversational engagement within this context was between Mr Pilkings and Elesin Oba. The transactions, being mainly political, gave rise to the deployment of CMP pol to *unveil* as can be seen below:

Pilkings: Well, I did my duty as I saw it. I have no regrets.

Elesin: The regrets of life always come later [...] (p.62)

Pilkings: You don't really believe that. Anyway, if that was my intention with your son, I appear to have failed.

Elesin: You did not fail in the main thing ghostly one. *We know the roof covers the rafters, the cloth covers blemishes*; who would have known that the white skin coveted our future, preventing us from seeing the death our enemies had prepared for us. The world is set adrift and its inhabitants are lost. Around them there is nothing but emptiness. (p.63)

With the CMP pol above, the speaker draws from the socio-cultural experiences of his people to perform pragmatic act of *unveiling*. Anchored on the non-proverbial pragmatic setting up move above, it unveils the fact that the scheme of the District Officer was well-hatched and prosecuted. If the lines above are critically considered in its context, the exchange is not merely an attempt to say that Pilkings meant more than merely assisting his (Elesin's) son to travel overseas for medical education; it is imbued with a pragmatic force to *unveil* what the speaker sees as a ground plan to prevent his son from taking up his cultural duty in future. Unveiled pragmatically in the proverb is the idea that Pilkings actually meant more than assisting Olunde to acquire medical education. The speaker use the CMP pol above to unveil that what Pilkings reached out to capture was the future of the race and not medical education, as supposed. It is seen as a venture targeted at destroying the future of the people and not meant to advance their course. It is viewed as some sort of vested assistance. The proverb, relying on contextual features such as INF and REL, which were hinged on SSK and SCK, co-textually reformulates the idea that issues should not be treated based on their face values.

Another CMP pol is instantiated when Iyaloja eventually succeeded in confronting Elesin where he is imprisoned. Drawing from socio-cultural contextual features, she expressed her disappointment pragmatically in a proverbial move thus:

Iyaloja: *How boldly the lizard struts before the pigeon when it was the eagle itself he promised he would confront.*

Elesin: I don't ask you to take pity on me Iyaloja. You have message for me or you would not have come. Even if it is the courses of the world, I shall listen. (p.67)

With the proverb above, the speaker is not just merely lamenting that Elesin has failed his people; she performs the pragmatic act of *accusing*. She rides on the pragmatic inputs of shared situational knowledge (SSK) and shared cultural knowledge (SCK) to *accuse* him of being a coward. She leaves him to draw from pragmatic

resources of inference to understand this. Docked behind bars, he (Elesin) struggles to present himself as one who is unperturbed and who possesses the requisite courage to face the situation squarely. This posture is considered irritating and not expected from someone who is robed with all sense of communal royalty and support. Early in the play, he had assured his people that their common heritage would be preserved and their dignity kept intact. Drawing from the fauna resources of her environment, Iyaloja deploys the metaphorical vehicles of lizard, pigeon and the eagle to *accuse* Elesin of being a weakling. His struggles with his 'abductors' is held with disdain by the Mother of the Market and conceived as strutting 'before the pigeon when it was the eagle he had promised to confront'. He is derided for posing to be manly within the confines of the prison and lacking in the required courage to face death as customarily required of him.

To heighten the sense of guilt in Elesin, Iyaloja draws on the cultural repertoire of her people to perform another pragmatic act of *accusing* by invoking the CMP pol below:

Iyaloja: we called you leader and oh, how you fed us on, *what we have no intention of eating should not be held to nose*

Elesin: Enough Iyaloja, enough. (p.68)

She *accuses* him of failing in his responsibility. The proverb as performed in this context throws up a critical question of deception. It questions his sincerity. Taking clues from the pre-proverbial pragmatic setting up – we called you leader..., the proverbial move that follows captures loss of confidence and disappointment. The people had seen a leader in him and had consequently decked him with absolute communal royalty and respect, but he turned out to be a leader who held to the nose what he had no intention of eating. This leaves him helpless as he battles to regain the confidence of his people in a non-proverbial response move below:

Elesin: ... I need understanding. You were present at my defeat. You were part of the beginnings. You brought about the renewal of my tie to the earth; you helped in the binding of the cord.

Even though he appealed for understanding in the lines above, his appeal provoked another proverbial response move which *accuses* and reveals that the events that led to his downfall do not call for understanding, since he was forewarned:

Iyaloja: I gave you warning. *The river which fills up before our eyes does not sweep us away in its flood.* (p.73)

What the above implicates is that he allowed the river which filed before his eyes to sweep him away in its flood, that is, he allowed himself to be taken unawares. This *accuses* him of negligence and moral laxity. With the proverb, she paints the picture of one who threw caution to the wind. She draws on SSK and SCK which she shares with the hearer to *accuse* him of failing to heed caution. The proverb relies on contextual features such as SSK, SCK and flora and fauna resources to reformulate the cultural wisdom that one should pay close attention to events as they unfold in order not to be taken unawares. Based on the proverbial move above, the dramatic action in this situation is heightened and eventually culminates into a suicidal move by the hearer when he is presented with the corpse of his son, Olunde who had bravely taken up his father's communal responsibility, though he was yet living.

3.3 Conclusion

The deployment of CMPs soc and pol to perform pragmatic acts has been explored from crisis situations in the text studied. Two contexts were isolated, namely; the context of confrontation between Amusa and the women of the market and the context of Elesin's imprisonment. Within the first context, the dominant pragmatic acts are those of cautioning, counselling and unveiling. Those of accusing and challenging featured prominently within the second context. The study revealed that the proverbs deployed within these contexts were not just mere linguistic coats, but were used as powerful dramatic devices to strengthen the force of dramatic action. The deployment of proverbs – CMPs soc and pol were hinged on contextual features such as SSK, SCK, INF, etc. to perform pragmatic acts. They were co-textually reformulated to revalidate and amplify the profundity of the cultural wisdom of the people. The study draws attention to the functional dimension of proverbs in contexts of use.

It was observed that the use of some proverbs in the text was made to instantiate dramatic actions. Users of proverbs were not just merely speech-acting, rather they were pragmatically acting. The proverbs used were imbued with the flora and fauna resources of their immediate environment to perform pragmatic acts. The social structure of the characters was also reflected in the deployment of proverbs. A whole lot of pragmatic resources were utilised by actors to realise dramatic action. It is hoped that this study has offered useful insights into Soyinka's paremiological artistry.

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