

THE CONVERGENCE OF STYLES: A STUDY OF JONSON'S *VOLPONE* AND SOYINKA'S *THE LION AND THE JEWEL*

Nii Okain Teiko¹

Abstract

The relationship between earlier creative writers and later ones in terms of their treatment of theme(s) and poetic style has been examined in literary criticism to reflect varied shades of influence, imitation, mimicry, and/or originality of the writers' skills. This essay discusses the relationship between Ben Jonson, a 16th century dramatist, and Wole Soyinka, a 20th century dramatist, with close attention to their artistic choices and stylistic modes, drawing interpretive insight from Bloom's (1997) poetics to explore how their craft in *Volpone* (1605) and *The lion and the Jewel* (1963) manifests semblances and echoes to make a case for the convergence of aesthetic skills. The paper concludes that although Soyinka's dramatic skills echo Jonson's, the former's skills express originality in the artistic choices he makes. Furthermore, it considers how these choices are manipulated to reflect his views on the ridiculous posturing of humans.

Keywords: Gull-knave pattern, legacy-hunting, archetype, trickster, semblances, echoes

1. Introduction

The issue of writers of a particular century imitating the poetic style and mannerisms of the Ancients (or their elders) has attracted the attention of scholars over the centuries. Critics such as Taylor (1963) and Harrison (1965), following in the Platonic mimetic debates, describe this relationship existing between writers as pure imitation, while White (1965) refers to the relationship as 'influence' to suggest a stylistic sense of replicating Classical models to express a writer's genius during the Renaissance period. However, White suggests that such an influence, as received from the Ancients, should not replace genius in the writer. Eliot (1932) provides a comprehensive interpretation of the relationship that exists between writers of different centuries and periods of literary creativity. He refers to it as the manifestation of the timeless tradition which unites the skills of predecessors to the craft of modern writers.

These varied manifestations, within the context of European literature, describe the complex relationships that exist between writers of a particular century, whose works manifest semblances or echoes of similar poetic skills of previous writers (or those beyond them). In all these manifestations, a kind of lineage or ancestry develops from these relationships to create a synergy which invariably links the writers as belonging to the same tradition.

However, the issue of twentieth century African writers whose works reflect the artistic choices and poetic style of their European counterparts

¹ University of Professional Studies, Accra, Ghana. Email: nii.teiko@upsamail.edu.gh

has been a subject of debate and concern to African scholars (e.g., Izevbaye (1971), Achebe (1975), Irele (1981), Ngara (1982), Gates (1985), Nnolim (1986), Ngara (1987)), who contest the canonical influence of European hegemony over the African literary tradition and criticism. Perhaps, this is the error of judgement of the self-styled “Bolekaja” critics (Chinweizu, Jemie, and Madubuike, 1980) who denigrate the craft of some African writers by imposing Western literary analysis to the works of these African writers whose works bear some semblances to the craft of their European counterparts. These critics examine the dominant trends in contemporary African literature and literary criticism and argue that among the three major tendencies discernible in African literature is the influence of Eurocentric voices and practices on African literature. Such an influence, in their opinion, results in the creation of what they refer to as “euro modernists who have assiduously aped the practices” of 16th century and 19th century British writers (p. 163).

In their analysis of African poetry (and poets, who they describe as “the Ibadan–Nsukka poets”) they point out the characteristics, origins, motivation, wrong-headedness, and neo-colonialist sensibility of this euro modernist tendency as manifested in the works of Soyinka, Clark, Echeruo and the early writings of Okigbo, whose language has been described as “archaic” and their arts characterized by “Hopkinsian syntactic jugglery, Poundian allusiveness and sprinkling of foreign phrases, and Eliotesque suppression of narrative and other logical linkages of the sort that creates obscurity” (p. 173). According to the critics, “The Ibadan-Nsukka poets are for the most part ineffectual imitators. When they imitate the European tradition, they too often botch it; and when they consciously attempt to write in the African manner, they also botch it” (p. 172).

These views are quite critical and severely uncharitable to Soyinka and his compatriot writers, as well as all other African writers whose works have been accused of suffering from “The Hopkins Disease”. To assume and conclude that once a critic can identify some “traces” of an earlier writer’s work or style in a modern writer’s work as proof of ineffectual imitation portrays a misunderstanding of the inter-relationships that exist among writers in the literary tradition. Such a view points to the fact that modern writers are just mere echoes of their predecessors, devoid of any identity as authentic creators of art. It betrays a distorted and stifling image of literary creativity and criticism confined only to the works of the Ancients.

One of the central issues this essay seeks to interrogate is what kind of relationship a critic could assign to writers when traces or resemblances or echoes from one writer are identified in another writer’s work? Is it originality, imitation, mimicry, or what the Bolekaja critics describe as “the Hopkins Disease”? In responding to the above query, this essay examines the relationship between Ben Jonson, a sixteenth century dramatist, and Wole Soyinka, a twentieth century writer, in terms of their artistic choices, thematology, and dramatic skills; and also to find out the echoes, parallels,

and semblances the latter receives from the former in their plays *Volpone* (1605) and *The Lion and the Jewel* (1963) respectively. This study contributes to the discourse on the inter-relationships that exist between earlier creative writers and their modern counterparts. It advocates a convergence of aesthetic skills rather than a foregone conclusion that the manifest echoes or semblances of one writer's craft as seen in another's creative work is evidence of imitation or influence.

A careful reading of Jonson's *Volpone* and Soyinka's *The Lion and the Jewel*, and an analysis of their themes and dramatic structures reveals a certain pattern which suggests a convergence of aesthetic skills. Both dramatists' skills exhibit the gull-knave structure as the dominating quality in the pattern of their plays. This structure provides a system in which a group of characters (or an individual) act in concert as a knave to deceive and defraud an individual or group of individuals who invariably are portrayed as unthinking dupes or dunderheads. The capacity of the knave through wit, subtlety, and flattery to outwit the gulls is the essential quality of the comedy in portraying human predatoriness and folly. The skills of the dramatists create the impression that humans readily degenerate into beasts and irredeemably lose their distinctive humanness or virtue.

Closely connected to the gull-knave structure are the antics of the witty parasites whose fortunes are inextricably tied to the knaves. The reader is amused not only at the gloating exchanges between the knaves and the parasites but also at the display of wit, dexterity, and pretentious behaviours of these "parasites" whose presence in the plot provides mirth and complicates the schemes designed to exploit the gulls. Another pattern that emerges in the dramatic skills of both dramatists is the deliberate ploy to satirise professional men or personalities whom society reveres and accords great respect and benevolence. These professionals apparently are the same gulls upon whom the knaves inflict their knavery and thievery, primarily because the gulls, according to the design, go hunting for the treasures of the knaves.

The legacy hunting motif which Jonson exploited in his play draws inspiration from the satirists of Greece and Rome (especially in the works of Lucian and Horace). It is a practice in which greed and avarice propels some humans to offer both solicited and unsolicited "gifts" to an invalid rich man with an intent of enticing him to name them as successors to his wealth. This practice became a favoured theme of the Greek New Comedy, and the later Roman satirists such as Horace and Petronius also employed it in their works. Jonson's use of this favoured theme portrays the extravagance of Renaissance Europe. It manifests their hypocrisy, greed, and lust for wealth, which apparently Jacobean moralists severely criticised.

In Soyinka's play, the dramatist designs a form of this legacy-hunting motif in the male characters' bid – Baroka, Lakunle, and the unnamed Stranger (in the mime scene) – to win Sidi's hand in marriage. This motif is manipulated to serve Soyinka's aim of criticising the unsavoury ways of the

semi-educated Africans who look down on their culture with disdain and to highlight the uncritically, non-effeminate brutish attitudes of the chieftaincy institution in Africa.

A reflection on this kind of literary affiliation between the dramatists emphasizes the unconscious references or echoes that a critic can point out in the works of Soyinka as earlier portrayed in the craft of Jonson. This study, therefore, ultimately focuses on finding out whether the relationship is a mere coincidence, or the dramatists created their works from a universal dramatic structure.

2. Theoretical Framework

Bloom's (1997) poetics provides a lamppost to guide the discussion on the relationship between Jonson, a sixteenth century dramatist, and Soyinka, a twentieth century writer. Bloom discusses the relations between writers and their predecessors and argues that great poets are always imitated or copied, for their voices come alive not by mere imitation of their craft, but by what he refers to as "the agonistic misprision performed upon powerful forerunners by only the most gifted of their successors" (p. xxiv). The implication is that successors of great writers must be talented and possess the capacity to craft their own identities after a conscious revision of the earlier models. Bloom sets a discourse between the great writers and their dominance on the literary scene, on the one hand, and "modern" post-Enlightenment writers, on the other hand, using the metaphor of "Laius and Oedipus at the crossroads in a battle between strong equals, father and son as mighty opposites" (p. 11). He argues that there is always an anxiety of "modern" writers defining their identities as they strive to create imaginative spaces for themselves, apparently, distinct from their predecessors. It is this anxiety of influence that makes originality more difficult to achieve than mere imitation.

Bloom (1997) suggests that influence is an irresistible anxiety "embedded in the agonistic basis of all imaginative literature" wherein the precursors refuse to be buried or replaced by what he succinctly refers to as "post-Enlightenment writers" who struggle to carve their personal idiosyncrasies (p. xxiv). This view of influence therefore makes room for originality wherein the modern writer exhibits his/her skills by emphasising on the tradition of the predecessors and making better a new craft out of the old. Influence, according to Bloom, must be seen as a metaphor implicating "a matrix of relationships- imagistic, temporal, spiritual, psychological- all of them ultimately defensive in their nature" arising from a strong idiosyncratic misreading of earlier writers (p. xxii).

By virtue of Bloom's poetics, we can argue that a modern writer's originality is best elicited through the influence he/she receives from the Ancients (or the elders) and the modern writer's ability to create his/her own work to reflect the culture of the period. It is probable therefore to locate semblances rather than real influence in either a filial relationship like father and son (as exemplified in Western literature in Homer and his 'sons'

or Jonson and his ‘sons’) or an analogical study which uncovers echoes, parallels, and resemblances in two works or writers through a juxtaposition of what is common to them. This is similar to parallel study or intertextuality; that is discussing one work in the light of a previous one drawing in issues like intentionality of the author, broad background knowledge, historically factual events, artistic choices, and skills, etc. These views throw light on the argument of this paper which seeks to situate Jonson in the comic tradition initiated by the Greeks and later the Romans, and popularised by the entire Western literary tradition, and to examine how Soyinka’s artistic choices and skills manifest some echoes and semblances to reflect the entire comic tradition. There emerge two kinds of relationships here: the intertextuality that comes from sharing a common tradition, and the influence that comes from a later writer adopting the poetic skills of their elders – consciously or not. This is the realm of Bloom.

What is of importance, therefore, according to Bloom’s poetics, is for criticism to point out echoes, traces, parallels, and resemblances in the “Laius and Oedipus at the crossroads” relationship (p. 11). Consequently, Jonson will be positioned as a genius among the ancients of the Renaissance and his relationship with Soyinka will be explored to demonstrate the ‘resurrected’ presence (to borrow Bloom’s phrase) of the earlier artist’s craft in the latter one.

In fact, Soyinka himself “knows that there is a limit to originality and that the way material is used is more important than its source”; for, he uses his “art to assess the world around him and to influence it” with the intent of reflecting the social and political realities of modern Africa (Soyinka & Jeyifo, 2001, p.169). Soyinka’s artistic vision in his comic works provides an understanding of humanity in general manifesting what he refers to as “the vortex of archetypes and kiln of primal images” (p. 36). His poetics ties in with the central argument from Harold Bloom’s view that a critic can define the originality of modern writers by examining their relationships with their predecessors. How a modern writer like Soyinka, whose thematology and stylistic modes in *The Lion and the Jewel* bear a semblance to Jonson’s handling of themes and dramatic skills in *Volpone*, and how he refashions them to serve specific artistic ends within the socio-cultural matrix of his society will be the focus of this paper. Ultimately, the paper aims at establishing Soyinka’s distinctive quality and originality in acquiring lessons from the Ancients and applying them with independence domesticated to serve his artistic ends.

3. Analysis

Jonson and Soyinka select the fox archetype as the mythological sub-structure for the construction of their plays. Jonson’s dramatic skills in *Volpone* demonstrate his resourcefulness in exploiting some popular motifs and archetypes drawn from the models of Aristophanes to reflect the realities of the greed in Renaissance Europe. The Aristophanes images of the “alazon”

and “bomolochos”, which portray the character traits of an “imposter” and a “buffoon” respectively, provide a basis to establish a link between Jonson’s dramatic skills in *Volpone* in which the characters exhibit varying degrees of an imposter, a buffoon, and a daft personality. The manifestation of the patterns of Aristophanes images in Jonson’s play suggests what Davison (1963, p.152) describes as Jonson’s use of “mythic or fantastic incidents,” in which persons of ridiculous predispositions interact in the play.

Jonson utilizes the legend of the death-feigning fox from the Aesopian fable and the didactics of the medieval beast fables to construct the mythical structure of the play. The age-long legend associated with the fox presents him as a predator who takes advantage of baser creatures whose lack of indiscretion makes them gullible (Chadwick, 1994). Jonson’s *Volpone*, therefore, dramatises the fox’s predatoriness to represent a trickster figure used to attack various institutions in Renaissance Europe. The character of Volpone, the hero, represents the wily and greedy aristocrat who like the fox devises ways of fleecing the voracious birds of prey characterized by the artist in the personalities of the four legatees. The dramatist exploits the analogy between the trickster figure of the fox (in the personality of Volpone) who maintains itself by cunning (and deceit), and the ancient Roman practice of legacy hunting motif in which the aristocrat feigned disability as a ploy to attract gifts and pretentious friendship from expectant successors. The dramatist’s vision in the play therefore is to portray various manifestations of the socio-economic discrepancy in Renaissance Europe manipulated by various trickster figures and gulls who exhibit traits such as self-centredness, buffoonery, daftness, mischief, gullibility, and fraud.

The fox then serves as a suitable semblance for a trickster hero which the dramatist depicts in the play. Jonson’s Volpone exhibits a lifestyle of playing tricks on the capitalist privileged people and his constricted world in which roguery is carried out as the dominant image in the play. This skill is not so new to Renaissance dramatists who following in the dramatic tradition of Ancients – Aristophanes, Plautus, and Terence – portrayed the figure of the trickster as a romantic hero. However, Jonson presents him as a masterful trickster who manifests a new order of greed.

Similarly, Soyinka employs the archetype of the fox in the portrayal of Baroka in his play, *The Lion and the Jewel*, to simulate the cunning and predatoriness of Jonson’s fox counterpart, Volpone. Soyinka’s portraiture of Baroka draws upon certain universal mythic and archetypal elements in the presentation of a trickster hero, relevant to the West African situation especially his Yoruba descent, to reflect the universal human experience. He admits in an interview that “when I use myth, it is necessary for me to bend it to my own requirements. I don’t believe in carbon-copies in any art form. You have to select what you want from traditional sources and distort it if necessary” (Wilmer, 1966, p. 16). His admission points to the fact that, as an artist, in selecting images, ideas, and tropes from sources – either classical or elsewhere – for the literary enterprise, one must be guided by the principle

of avoiding direct imitation (what he refers to as “carbon copies”). The artist consciously (or unconsciously) also must have the capacity to distort the borrowed ‘*image*’ to reflect what Bloom (1997, p. 28) describes as “the larger phenomenon of intellectual revisionism” for purposes of helping the artist to achieve specific ends in the work.

Soyinka utilises the fox figure in *The Lion and the Jewel* drawing inspiration from beast fables, epics, and analogies in his Yoruba society to reflect the wily, clever, and predatory nature of humans, on the one hand, and the witty humorous rogue, on the other hand. Both characteristics of the fox-figure are exploited by Soyinka and Jonson to express the universal theme of voracious greed with intent of examining to what extent humans exhibit the fox’s cunning and wily traits, and to find out how such a character either positively or negatively reflects the ethos of a particular given society. The fox has been a central character in many folk narratives and its image reflects an archetype buried in the minds of all human beings, foreshadowing an ingenious being, one who is exceptionally clever in imagination and exhibits cunning, one who gulls stronger creatures (and even weaker beings), and one who knows a clever way out of delicate and often risky situations.

The fox image of Baroka, as Soyinka conceived him, reflects the beast fable among the Yoruba who view it as an elusive and slippery creature. Soyinka’s deep immersion in his socio-cultural environment and his willingness to adapt the Western theatrical modes available to him in the knowledge that they can be meaningfully domesticated to reflect the African experience manifest his contribution to the collective literary tradition of exploiting the fox archetype in a literary work. His dramaturgy in the play employs tropes and ideas from his Yoruba tradition, but the way he manipulates the fox figure in the character of Baroka bears a semblance to the Jonsonian skill, and by implication reflects a universal paradigm in the portraiture of the archetypal trickster hero.

Soyinka’s artistry in the portrayal of Baroka may superficially have nothing in common with Jonson’s portrayal of Volpone, but this essay argues that the dramatists’ choice of the similar trope – the image of the fox – to portray the trickster hero provides a pointer to examine their aesthetic skills in their handling of the trope. Soyinka’s stylistic choice and technique employed to discuss the fox image echo his sixteenth century predecessor’s skill with some surprising affinities which raise the question of whether Soyinka’s work has “borrowed” anything from Jonson’s.

Both dramatists exploit the fox image to discuss the theme of greed as expressed in the trickster hero’s propensity to deceive and live by cunning. The heroes, in both plays, manifest the compelling acquisitive human tendencies for the satisfaction of a biological, physiological, psychological, or a kind of self-actualisation drive. The impulsive drives manifest in the form of gaining wealth, fame, and material possessions or satisfying a psychosomatic need. Almost all the characters presented by both dramatists in their plays demonstrate certain patterns of behaviour in their cravings, and in the

process (either consciously or unconsciously) disregard the moral codes that regulate society. In developing the behavioural patterns of the characters, both dramatists devise that the foxy characters (the tricksters) take advantage of this evil propensity in humans to cozen their fellow humans who then become the symbolic character-types mostly described as the gulls, and by such portrayal, they become emblematic images of the ridiculous. However, each dramatist is conscious about the socio-cultural relevance of their art to society, and they appropriately reconstruct the realities of their societies in the selected plays.

Jonson and Soyinka's choice of the fox image reflects the realities of their distinct socio-cultural environments which provide fertile environments for the dramatists to artistically create trickster heroes who effectively prey on society's misdemeanours. Jonson's greatest success in *Volpone* is how he manipulates the fox as a trickster hero to reflect the realities of the English society. The hero's fate in the play also reflects the conditions of contemporary England. Curtis and Hale (1981) provide an elaborate background of the socio-cultural and economic realities in England, which has a bearing on Jonson's artistic creation in *Volpone*. They point out that by the end of the sixteenth century, the optimism of the Renaissance temper together with individual accomplishments waned, creating a kind of pessimism and a rather harsh outlook on life manifested in themes which suggest what Baskerville (1977, p. 21) describes of "England developing too fast for stability, that she had allowed the same zestful ferment in economic and civic affairs as in international pursuits and was now being forced to take reckoning". The English society, prior to the death of Queen Elizabeth I, had become extremely materialistic and bred varied forms of behaviours such as greed, hypocrisy, lies, deceit, and gulling.

Jonson exploits these socio-economic realities to create a rich personality and an egocentric rogue who is driven by passion to satisfy his appetite and greed. From the opening scenes of the play to the end, *Volpone* is portrayed as a self-centred rogue whose ingenuity, schemes, and clever impersonation of the foxy traits over-run the reader to an ecstatic point of comic bliss that we rejoice at the hero's successes rather than condemn him. The revelling exchanges between his parasite, Mosca, and him, and his assistants – Nano (Dwarf), Castrone (Eunuch), and Androgyno (Hermaphrodite) – portray the hero's capacity to deceive the birds of prey "letting the cherry knock against their lips/ And, draw it, by their mouths, and back again" (*Volpone*, 1.i. 89-90). *Volpone* is impertinent of his victims' pitiful plight, or the gullibility of the entire society represented in the role of the dupes. Here is a man who glories "more in the cunning purchase of [his] wealth, /Than in the glad possession"; since he gains by tearing "forth the fathers of poor families/ Out of their beds, and coffin them alive/ In some kind, clasp[ing] prison, where their bones/ May be forth-coming, when the flesh is rotten". He also loathes "the widow's or the orphan's tears ... or their piteous cries" (*Volpone*, 1.i. 44-47).

The imagery employed by the dramatist, coupled with the metaphor of fleeing, portrays Volpone as a hero whose moral codes have been turned upside down. He seems liberated from all the legal and moral restrictions that society imposes on humanity's conscience. The dramatist invests a binary nature into the hero's freedom to make him both a predator and a hunted prey, for as Beecher (1985, p.46) describes him, he is "a marauder and a mocker, who shames his victims into conformity". He maintains a posture similar to that of a merciless tyrant who glories in the pathetic plight of his victims. These manifestations reflect the nature of Jonson's hero.

The inspiration behind Soyinka's creation of his hero, Baroka, demonstrates his rich artistic skill in selecting images and motifs from the folk material of his Yoruba descent to express his version of the fox archetype. In an interview, Soyinka provides an account of the origins of his conception of Baroka from the story of Charlie Chaplin, a man of nearly sixty who takes to wife, a seventeen-year-old, Oona O'Neil. He admits that "... from Charlie Chaplin, and again thinking of the Old man I knew in my society who at 70 plus, 80, would still take some new young wives - and always seemed perfectly capable of coping with the onerous tasks which such activity demanded on them! I just sat down and that's how Baroka came into existence" (Gibbs, 2001, p.82). Baroka then becomes an archetypal creation of the concept of greed and the ridiculous yearnings in humans who seek limitless opportunities to satisfy their personal egoistic desires. The image of Baroka also suggests how the aged rich and affluent devise ways of taking advantage of the weak and innocent for their benefit. Within the socio-cultural orientation of his Yoruba background coupled with his artistic vision, Soyinka portrays Baroka as a manifestation of an accepted practice in which a category of humans takes advantage of (or preys on) a lesser breed of humans with the intent of boosting their self-confidence, ego, and pride. Baroka in this context could be seen as a metaphor of greed and self-conceit similar to Jonson's Volpone whose continuous existence depends largely on the availability of gulls and supposed daft individuals.

Soyinka's conception and portrayal of the hero, Baroka, as the "Fox of the Undergrowth" and "The Lion of Ilujinle" (as hinted earlier) spring from his deep knowledge of the Yoruba folklore, rituals, and traditional ceremonies. His artistic aim in selecting Baroka to exhibit both the traits of a *fox* and a *lion* portrays a hero vested with the traits of a wily, and cunning human who exerts a conquering victory over all other humans. To an extent, Baroka becomes a deification of the human psyche; as Soyinka describes him, "the living god among men [...]" (*The Lion and the Jewel*, 1963, p.11). Soyinka's portraiture of Baroka as a powerful overlord echoes Jonson's Volpone, whose cunning drives him the more to seek the greater satisfaction of attaining his fundamental egoistic desires. Similarly, Baroka's cunning knows no bounds in seeking to satisfy his instinctual and sexual desires. He is presented as the overlord of the village, "the Lion of Ilujinle" and the "Fox of the undergrowth". These metaphors confer absolute power on the personality of Baroka, as an

African chieftain, who both exercises and utilises his power within the socio-cultural environment in Ilujinle.

In traditional Yoruba societies and even in Africa, the chief wielded the legislative, executive, and judicial powers over his subjects, and he was expected to exercise these functions in consonance with the laws, customs, and traditions of his people. He invariably 'owned' everything; he was revered and accorded all the due respect, but he was ultimately accountable to his people whom he was expected to dispense justice and due benevolence to all. However, in Baroka's Ilujinle, he denies the village the benefits of a railway project and bars the gates of other developmental projects. All he cares for is to secure his "[...] dogs, and his horses, his wives and all his/ Concubines ... ah, yes ... all these concubines" to the detriment of pursuing "trade, / Progress, adventure, success, civilization" that will benefit his people (p.24/25). Soyinka's Baroka satisfies his cravings for excessive pleasure, fame, and sex instead of serving the interests of the people, similar to Jonson's Volpone who glories "more in the cunning purchase of [his] wealth, / Than in the possession" and also, he detests 'the widow's or the orphan's tears [...] or their piteous cries' (I.i. 31-32, 44- 47). Baroka's portrayal captures the idea of a self-centred and pleasure-seeking virile chief whose subjects, wives, and concubines, even "the strongest of them all/ Still wearies long before the lion does!" (p.28).

One of Soyinka's visions in the play is to portray various indexes of the socio-cultural imbalance in Africa regulated by despotic and uncaring leaders whose self-seeking and pleasure-loving avarice create a new manifestation of greed in society. Baroka then becomes a metaphor of the African leader whose sole purpose, as he confesses later to Sidi, is to protect the "Virgin Plots of lives, rich decay/ And the tang of vapour rising from/ Forgotten heaps of compost, lying/ Undisturbed" (p. 52). The character of Baroka represents the greedy aristocrat chiefs in Africa, (who like the lion and the fox) scheme ways of both preserving their hold on their victims and devise new ways of amassing more wealth, fame, and satisfying their libido.

Baroka's cunning and determined will to keep the "virgin plots of lives [...] undisturbed" for his selfish gains compel him to take a new wife with such a rapacious speed of "five months' intervals" (p.18) as he dispenses them into his harem. He is like Jonson's Volpone who greedily devours the wealth of the gulls in such rapid succession that the reader is amazed at the dexterity and wit displayed by the heroes. Soyinka's Baroka echoes Jonson's Volpone who spends his entire life seeking pleasure in foods, songs, dances, and deriving satisfaction by following sensational subjects. Both Soyinka and Jonson demonstrate a skill of introducing heroes whose lives are dominated by pleasure-hunting activities. Volpone, for example, has "[...] filled his vaults/ With Romagna, and rich Canadian wines, / [...] and feeds on sumptuous hangings, and soft beds. / [He] know[s] the use of riches" (I. i. 57-62). Baroka also enjoys music, dance, "staring at the flock of women in flight" and gazing admiringly at beauty queen(s) on the front cover of magazine(s)

with a declarative statement, “[...] Yes, yes ... it is five full months since last/ I took a wife... five full months” (p.18).

In developing the theme of greed in the play, Soyinka presents the hero as a master trickster who is in love with power, prestige, fame, and sheer devilry of satisfying his carnal pleasure by annexing “loveliness beyond the jewels of a throne” as Sidi captures it (p.20). His greed knows no bounds and since his credo is to preserve all the “virgin plots of lives” for his use, the dramatist manipulates the character of Sidi to simulate a metaphor of the gleam, fame, prestige, and the lovely jewel that must be hunted. This skill is similar to how Jonson portrays Renaissance England’s legacy-hunting motif depicted in the incessant quest for gold, fame, and wealth by the legatees. Sidi’s unparalleled beauty in the socio-cultural environs of Ilujinle and how that beauty makes her famous in the capital, bestowing honour and fame “beyond the dreams of a goddess” (p.10) made concrete with the publication of her portraits in the pages of the magazine symbolise the image of somatic passions in humans. This portrayal of Sidi as a metaphor of the gleam shares a similarity with Jonson’s portrayal of the cherished ‘gold’ in Renaissance England. Volpone’s celebration of his gold, what he refers to as his “saint” and the “world’s soul” coupled with his adoration of the “sacred treasure” which the “wise poets” described as “the best of things; and far transcending” (I.i.14-15) mirrors Sidi’s incomparable beauty. Just as Volpone’s gold attracts the legacy-hunters so does Sidi’s beauty invite hungry hunters to seek her.

Jonson and Soyinka, in developing the theme of greed within the structural composition of their plays, devise a pattern which forms the basis of their artistic success. The pattern manifests in the gull-knave configuration in which a group of characters (or an individual) act the role of imposters to take advantage of the dunce posturing of other characters who act the roles of buffoons and gulls. Jonson’s craftsmanship in portraying this gull-knave pattern is predominantly revealed in his choice of the character names in *Volpone*. The characters are skilfully selected to reflect the action in the main plot, thereby providing a dual perspective in the plot line of the hero, who succeeds in gulling his legacy-hunters. The character names evoke the beast fable of the sly fox, Volpone, who feigned death to attract the carrion birds - Voltore (vulture), Corbaccio (raven) and Corvino (crow) - through deception. The actions of these birds are portrayed as voracious not for flesh but for the fortune of Volpone. These abnormal individuals are presented within the scope of natural behaviour because the legacy hunters’ visits to Volpone are similar to the carrion birds’ feeding on the carcass of Volpone’s wealth. These character types are used by Jonson to expose the moral distortion, the debased state of humans, and their avaricious attitudes. All the characters, therefore, in Jonson’s play seem to be vested with animal imagery which obviously reflects both the knavery and gulling mode of society.

In *The Lion and the Jewel*, Soyinka’s skill creates the gull-knave pattern in the complex inter-relationships that evolve between the men characters who seek to attract Sidi’s attention and win her love, on the one hand, and

the converse roles of Baroka (aided by Sadiku) acting as the knave to gull both Sidi and Lakunle, on the other hand. Sidi, at the beginning of the plot structure, is presented as a metaphor of a knave while the men are portrayed as the gulls. The dramatist creates a competitive spirit among the men in their pursuit and conquest of the feminine beauty in Sidi's personality, portrayed as the gleam. This portrayal is similar to Jonson's skill in the dramatization of the competitive spirit the gold image creates among the four legatees whose undercutting activities excite the reader. Though the competition is fierce and intense in Soyinka's play, he regulates and mediates it within the artistic construct of the comedic genre to initiate the ridiculous posturing of humans who are unable to restrain their cravings (of incessant greed) within corrective reasoning. In the play, Lakunle, Baroka, and "The Stranger" are presented as the men who hunt for Sidi. Each of the three displays a sneering disgust for their rivals with a cunningly devised strategy that excites mischief and the ridiculous. One finds a comparison in the Jonsonian dramatic skill (as presented in *Volpone*) in which the four legatees devise cunning ways and offer expensive gifts to attract Volpone's benevolence to name one of them as his successor.

The unnamed "Stranger" in Soyinka's play, who is described as "the man from the outside world" [himself a symbol of European masculine modernism], employs some articles of European civilization – the motorbike, the camera, and the wonders of print technology – to 'woo' Sidi (p.10). The Stranger's wooing strategy is perhaps one of the most prolific methodologies which compel men to use materialism and other articles of worldly acquisitions to entice women.

Soyinka's portrayal of the Stranger's hunt for Sidi also metaphorically suggests Europe's rape and plunder of Africa during the 16th and 17th centuries and later colonial conquests in their bid to cunningly 'civilize' the supposed 'dark continent'. The Stranger's strategy, however, works perfectly to make Sidi disdainfully look down on Baroka and Lakunle. Despite the 'successes' of the Stranger's strategy to denigrate Baroka and Lakunle, the dramatist's skill as demonstrated in the elaborate stage direction in the miming scene ensures that the Stranger does not win the love of Sidi. He is denied the privilege to win Sidi's love like the gulls in Jonson's *Volpone* who do not satiate their greed. The Stranger is dismissed as a miserable clown (and a drunk) into the abyss of the village river.

The dramatist's portrayal of the second 'hunter', Lakunle, manifests his criticism of the semi-literate supposed middle class personalities whose pretence and bigotry in love affairs emphasize their stupidity and quaint daftness in the Western culture they believe they are experts in. The elaborate stage directions devoted to Lakunle's physical appearance suggests the dramatist's intent of making him a contradiction of what he espouses as his strength to woo Sidi. He prides himself in the knowledge that he is an educated modern man but "he is dressed in an old-style English suit, threadbare but not ragged, clean but not ironed, obviously a size or two too small" and wearing a

white tennis shoe (p.1). This portrait of Lakunle makes him more of a clown and a court jester rather than a respectable schoolteacher. In addition, his views and mannerism in wooing Sidi as expressed in his supposed cultured and chivalrous ways of the Europeans only expose him as a buffoon as he heaps empty words upon words, empty phrases upon phrases and useless ideas upon ideas.

Lakunle's fanciful ideas about wooing Sidi in high sounding melodramatic language make him rather a joke and a crazy buffoon who selects meaningless phrases from books he does not understand himself. Soyinka's portrayal of Lakunle's use of language shares a semblance to Jonson's portrayal of the lawyer, Voltore (in *Volpone*), and Ananias and Tribulation's use of the Hebrew and Greek languages in another play, *The alchemist*. Both dramatists imbue their dupes with high sounding language that makes them ridiculous. Lakunle's language is infested with bombastic nonsense and meaningless verbiage which make him a stranger in his own socio-cultural environment. His portraiture, therefore, reflects the ridiculous posturing of the semi-educated middle-class, similar to Jonson's middle-class gulls, whose jumble of oddity in the use of language to communicate their socio-cultural experiences reveals their absurdity. These portraits of the Stranger and Lakunle's interactions with Sidi in *The Lion and the Jewel* illustrate the gull-knave pattern and the grotesque reversal of roles the dramatist later assigns to Baroka to gull the major characters in the play.

The gull-knave structure as Jonson and Soyinka devise it allows the knaves – Volpone and Mosca (in *Volpone*), and Baroka and Sadiku (in *The Lion and the Jewel*) – to triumph over the gulls because of their superior know-how. In Jonson's play, the knaves are presented as the teaser of the inadequacies and idiocies of the gulls, and even of the crimes, that the society would have tolerated or overlooked. Jonson's scheme presents society itself as being fooled, metaphorically portrayed in the scenes where the public acclaim Volpone's buffoonery while acting as the fake mountebank (II. ii.) and as an official body in the court scenes where the Avocatori is duped by a roguish display of mock reverence and liberal moral resentment (IV. iv, v, vi). In these scenes, the dramatist portrays the rot in the justice system and conveys a picture of the ills during the Renaissance period; a time wherein humans place value on the importance of wealth and riches to the detriment of traditional acceptable values of honesty and truthfulness, which are the hallmarks of a true justice system.

In the play, Jonson's gulls are so determined in becoming Volpone's heir that they really abandon all sense of honour and dignity. The dramatist wedges the *carpe-diem* motif into the main plot to reflect this insatiable desire among the gulls who are in a hurry to outdo one another, similar to how Soyinka's gulls' scheme to outsmart one another in their pursuit of Sidi. This motif in *Volpone* is contrived to link the various episodes and scenes in the trickster comedy structured to reflect a parody of a tragedy. Events and actions seem to move with a dizzying speed towards a denouement as

the gulls are finally duped through the wit, subtlety, cunning, and blazoning boldness of Mosca's knavish tricks. He convinces Corvino to accept making his wife, Celia, Volpone's mistress. Corbaccio also is coerced to bring a bag of pearls in place of an opiate, and he is deceived to disinherit the son, Bonario, without considering both the legal and moral implications. Voltore is deceived by Mosca to prostitute his profession and education without exhibiting a restraining order on his legal brains. Mosca cozens Lady Would-Be to be a false witness against her own husband (himself a buffoon), and Celia and Bonario. She is also defrauded to defile her marital vows to Sir Politic.

Mosca's roguish contribution to the satiric exposure of the gulls serves the artist's interest of expressing the moral imperatives in the play and ultimately demeaning the statuses of the middle-class characters. The dramatist is aware of his position as a Renaissance playwright interpreting the craft of the Ancients to a sixteenth century society that believes that literature must both amuse and instruct, and that the fact that comedy is a portraiture of characters of inferior status does not suggest that comedy should portray only the ridiculous and funny aspects of humans. In Jonson's view as expressed in *Discoveries*, "jests that are true and naturall, seldom raise laughter [...] for that is right and proper". However, the further these pranks and laughter "run from reason, [...] the better it is" for the artist (1641, 1891, p.29). Jonson achieves realism in the play by blending the instruction aspect of poetry with the pleasurable aspect. He is portraying the mad craze for wealth and materialism in his society and how societal admirable values in human relationships are trampled upon. The relationships between father and son, and husband and wife are sacred and almost every society considers them sacred. But once Corbaccio and Corvino are mesmerised to believe that the surest means they can become heir to Volpone is to disinherit a biological son and to prostitute a legal wife respectively, Jonson, by implication, is criticising the upside-down values of society.

These gull characters are willing to give up such sacred values in human interactions in exchange for wealth and materialism. Primarily for these reasons does Jonson's skill manipulates the knaves to execute the moral judgement on the gulls. This is probable not because of their loftier knowledge of the moral punitive code but for the fact that the delights of the trickster play and the nature of the dramatist's vision "owe much to the wit and understanding displayed by Mosca and Volpone as it were on Jonson's behalf" (Brockbank, 1968, p.x). The moral imperatives in the play are "a by-product of the tricksters' own pursuit of wealth, pleasure, and above all, the joys of artful intrigue in which we admire the knaves in spite of the lingering moral reservations" (Beecher, 1985, p.46).

In *The Lion and the Jewel*, Soyinka is conscious of his role as the plotter of the structural composition of the play in which both the rogues and the gulls interact to execute the wit and mischief inherent in the gull-knave pattern. He exploits the knavery and invectiveness exhibited by Baroka (assisted by Sadiku) in contriving cunning ways of hunting for the jewel and

clamping down on the other gulls who exhibit various manifestations of the disfigured human relations to portray the oppositional disguises between the gulls and the knaves. Ultimately, the dramatist vests the knaves with a higher moral authority, similar to Jonson's skill in *Volpone*, to exact the gulling as well as the corrective judgements imposed on the dunce characters whose demeaning and deflationary portrayal manifests the ethical aims in the play.

We have seen how in *Volpone*, Jonson's dexterity reduces the gulls (Voltore, Corvino, Corbaccio, Lady Would-Be) to debased statuses. Soyinka's skill also effects a reduction in the gull characters. He inverts the socio-cultural dynamics of the foundations of African culture in which gender roles grotesquely reverse to create the demeaning posturing. In the first two acts, Sidi is selected as the knave with a high moral authority to gull both the Stranger and Lakunle. At the opening of Act II, we encounter Lakunle from behind "carrying a bundle of firewood which Sidi has set out to obtain" while she elegantly walks ahead "happily engrossed in the pictures of herself in the magazine" (p.18). Lakunle believes he is being a modern European lover (or wooer) but he forgets that within the mores of the African society he is carrying himself as a man without dignity. He acts as a slave consigned to the role of a paid hireling. In fact, Sidi does not respect him as a man, and her reference to him as a lesser breed of a man (a eunuch) deepens the demeaning posturing of Lakunle made concrete by Sidi's reproaches and rebuff of him during the scene where he kneels in front of Sidi, covering her hands with kisses and muttering useless and meaninglessly clumsy Biblical names to express his idea of Westernised romance which he hopes will win the heart of Sidi.

In the third act, Soyinka inverts the knavery role of Sidi to exhibit an oppositional reversal as a gull primarily because she demonstrates a disconcerting temper which is in dissonance with the philosophical foundations of society's mores. Humans are expected, especially within the African society, to exhibit traits such as respect, humility, love, and warmth in their interactions with one another. However, Sidi's infatuation and coquettishness associated with her beauty make her look down on all the men who come hunting for her. Soyinka's choice of Baroka as the wily fox to affect the reduction in Sidi's personality, at the end of the play, enacted in the "rape scene" manifests a skill of the dramatist empowering a more potent knavery character with a higher and loftier moral authority to express the artistic vision in consonance with the trickster in comic plays.

Jonsonian justice system captures notions of both divinity (as expressed by Bonario) wherein "Heaven could not long, let such gross crimes be hid" (*Volpone*, V. xii. 98) and his superior intellectual and imaginative dynamics which create the tricksters to experience shame and disgrace. Jonson is aware of the Horatian view which prescribes a condition under which divine intervention is permissible in the creative craft ("let no god intervene, unless a knot come worthy of such a deliverer" (Jonson, 1641,1891, p.19); so, he muffles Bonario and Celia's belief in the divine as a resolution to

the demoralising serious issues in the play. The dramatist is conscious that Renaissance thinking rejects the element of the divine in resolving conflicts in literary creativity, and he is also aware that dependence on morality (working through the agency of the law) in dealing with the “crimes” of Volpone and Mosca is very weak. Consequently, he devises a scheme in which the knaves consume each other with the very vitalities and whims that animated them to dupe the gulls. Jonson’s technique recaptures a kind of deception in which betrayal and treachery are demonstrated in a seeming loyal servant and master relationships to reverse the fortunes of the knaves.

Jonson develops a new stratagem in the plot in which both master and servant fiercely compete for supremacy in outdoing each other. The fierceness of the combat involves self-confidence, deceit, usurping Volpone’s wealth and overreaching one’s limit. The battle of wit, buffoonery, and the thrill of courting unnecessary risks that culminate in the final courtroom scene precipitate the final catastrophe in which Volpone prefers to unmask himself rather than accept humiliation at the hands of his servant. The dramatist pursues the logic of the action to its just conclusion wherein there is no sense of triumph of virtue, but vice is manifested as its own destructive force. Volpone retains his pride but receives a fitting punishment, and the irony of his final speech, “This is called mortifying of a fox” (V. xii. 125), brings to the fore the recompense justice system Jonson devises for his trickster hero who has been liberated from the conventional roles of just amusing the audience and made to institute a different model which artistically enables the artist to criticise the idiocies of greed and inordinate ambition.

Jonsonian justice system initiates a public chastisement of vice in which the knaves are not only punished for their follies but experience a reversal of fortune which satisfies both the legal and societal moral codes. The Avocatore’s commitment of Volpone’s ill-gotten wealth and property to the poor serves as a metaphorical reminder to the consequences of society’s inordinate acquisitive tendencies. Volpone’s imprisonment is specifically designed by the artist to provide him the opportunity not only to experience in reality the diseases – lame, gout, palsy, deaf, dumb, etc. – he had feigned to possess and stratagems employed to gull society, but also to experience what he describes as the “mortifying of a fox” in which he will be “cramped with irons” until he truly becomes “lame indeed” (V. xii. 122-124). For Mosca, the dramatist devises a physical torture and a life sentence in prison; while Voltore and Corbaccio are to be isolated from human habitation like the abnormal types they have proved to be and learn “to die well”. For Corvino, his disrespect to the matrimonial institution will be purged by being made the object of public scorn after restoring the dignity of his wife’s fidelity. Jonsonian justice system exposes the atrocity of vice which ultimately suffers both retribution and cleansing.

Soyinkan justice system deviates from the Jonsonian pattern. The former’s justice system does not overtly punish the knaves for their roguery as does the latter’s skill. Soyinka enunciates a justice system crafted on

the philosophical foundations of the African society which encourages reformation. Baroka's victory at the end of play, therefore, must be interpreted as a regenerative energy producing good values out of a distorted underworld of existence. Consequently, we need to see Baroka as a signification of the character of a trickster hero clothed with potency to initiate change in society by creating 'life' out of 'death' in consonance with the dramatist's artistic credo.

Soyinka's philosophical idealism of the concepts of destruction and recreation in his artistic works has been credited to his close affinities to his patron god, Ogun, which expresses a seemingly mysterious contradiction as both a destroyer and a creator. In his famous essay, Soyinka explains the contradiction and affirms that it is also a natural complement; for

Ogun is embodiment of Will and the Will is the paradoxical truth of destructiveness and creativeness in acting man. Only one who has himself undergone the experience of disintegration, whose spirit has been tested and psychic resources laid under stress by the most inimical forces to individual assertion, only he can understand and be the force of fusion between the two contradictions. The resulting sensitivity is also the sensitivity of the artist, and he is a profound artist only to the degree to which he comprehends and expresses the principle of destruction and recreation (1969, p.126).

Part of Soyinka's artistic vision in *The Lion and the Jewel* is not to satirise the social evils of greed and perverse buffoonery which may appear destructive, but his commitment to recreating a new social order grounded on the solid maintenance of the traditions of society generates a process of recreation. This is Soyinka's moral responsibility as an artist who shares in the moral burdens of his sixteenth century dramatist, Jonson, in fashioning out comedies that "mix profit with [...] pleasure" (Jonson, 1605,1968, Line 8).

His deep commitment to his role as an African artist compels him to consider all the gaucheness and chaotic social behaviour of Baroka's trickery of Sadiku and his seduction of Sidi (which obviously destroy culture) to contribute significantly to the birth and evolution of culture despite the hero's exhibitions of greed, selfishness, cleverness, and buffoonery. The birthing of the new culture considers, especially, Lakunle's unpreparedness to pay the bride-price of Sidi and his persistence in following the Western mode of development to the detriment of his African values. The dramatist's skill in recreating culture and regenerating society in the final scene of the play where we witness Sidi fully adorned in her bride's attire and kneeling at Sadiku's feet asking for her blessing for the expected child in a fully pervasive festive atmosphere inaugurates the spirited society which will have to be ready to embrace the change.

The dramatist's deliberate choice of Sadiku to perform the rituals associated with the wedding of Sidi and Baroka coupled with the celebratory

atmosphere of songs, music and dance portrays the regenerative process of society which must continue through successive generations. Her metaphorical role as the “faithful lizard” of Baroka’s harem confers on her the position of a kind of a chief priest officiating the destruction of the social evils of society (as manifested in Sidi’s pride and coquettishness, Baroka’s cunning and devious nature and her own garrulous and unbridled tongue) and ushering in a new dispensation of hope for future generations. Thus, it is in her metaphorical performativity role of the ecdysiast in society that she declares to Sidi:

I invoke the fertile gods. They will stay with
you. May the time come soon. When you shall
be a round-bellied as a full Moon in a low sky
(p.64).

The regenerative process of society through pregnancy and birth is the metaphorical underpinnings of the Ogun philosophy in which life disintegrates and recreates itself. Soyinka’s art recognizes the moral sensibilities of his immediate society. However, he does not create his characters deliberately to carry his moral burden or to reflect his psychological outlook but his skill in manipulating the trickster story of the fox as critiques of the social evils in society as well as initiate a regenerative process of dealing with the social disorder becomes a metaphor in reaffirming the belief systems of society, that good can come out from evil. Perhaps, it is this resultant affirmation of a kind of positivism that the contradiction in Soyinka’s Ogun philosophical idealism as dramatised in the play mediates the balance in society.

Unlike the Jonsonian pattern which initiates a justice system based on the legal code through the public punishment of vice in the formal court system where the knaves suffer for the chaos and ills they have committed against societal mores, the Soyinkan model seeks to reform society by implicating both the knaves and the gulls in follies of greed and over-arching ambitions of pride that offend the moral sensibilities of society and liberating them through the regenerative process of the patron god, Ogun. Both dramatists, however, are committed moralists whose artistic aims in the comedic genre seek to entertain and to make society a better one.

4. Conclusion

This paper examined the relations between Jonson and Soyinka. The two dramatists have demonstrated their commitment to the written comic tradition in the portraiture of the ridiculous posturing of humans to express the realities of their socio-cultural environments as dramatised in their selected works for study. The interpretive insights drawn from Harold Bloom’s *Poetics* served as the basis of the discussion to examine the extent to which Soyinka’s artistic skills and choices manifest some echoes, semblances, and parallels from the Jonsonian model. The implication of the study suggests that a modern writer (such as Soyinka) should create his works to simulate the timeless tradition, with all the literature of previous centuries as a guide,

while simultaneously expressing his contemporary environment. By this process, a kind of dialogue is established among writers of different centuries and periods to create a convergence of ideas and talents. The quest, therefore, for loyalty towards the existing tradition while at the same time expressing the individual talents of modern writers has been the basis to examine the relationship between Jonson and Soyinka. Each writer's artistic creation does not take place in a vacuum for there is an existing literary tradition to which each writer contributes substantially in consonance to the differing needs of their societies. There is an indication of a synergy in the two dramatists' artistic choices and stylistic modes which unite the artists rather than isolate them based on one being classified as an elder and the other a progeny, or one influencing the other. The various echoes and semblances from Jonson's play as demonstrated in Soyinka's play should not be seen as evidence of Jonson influencing Soyinka. Rather, they should be seen as concerted artistic modes deployed to reflect a continuum in the ridiculous portraiture of humans in general, and, therefore, indicate a merger in the aesthetic energies of the two.

Both dramatists share a common poetic sensibility, and they may be considered equals in the metaphor of the Jonson versus Soyinka at the crossroads. Each writer is uniquely original. Though they both write from different socio-cultural contexts, their aesthetic energies converge to establish the continuum in the tradition. However, Soyinka exhibits his originality and distinct quality as a genius in the new role he assigns the trickster as both a destroyer and preserver of life as against his sixteenth century predecessor who presents the trickster as an initiator of roguery but ultimately punished through the legal system.

Works Cited

- Achebe, C. (1975). Colonialist criticism. In *Morning, yet on creation day*. London, England: Heinemann. 10-11.
- Adewoyo, O. (1977) *The judicial system in southern Nigeria, 1854 – 1954*. London, England: Longman.
- Balogun, M. J. (1976). Inertia and reform in the Nigerian public service. *Journal of General Management*. 3 (3), 41-51.
- Baskerville, C. R. (1977). *English elements in Jonson's early comedy*. Austin, Texas: The University of Texas Press.
- Beecher, D. (1985). The progress of the trickster in Ben Jonson's *Volpone*. *Cahiers Elisabethans*. 27, 43-51.
- Bloom, H. (1997). *The anxiety of influence*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.
- Brockbank, P. (1968). (Ed). Introduction. *Volpone*. London, England: Ernest Benn Publishers.
- Chadwick, J. V. (1994). The fox: A medieval view, and its legacy in modern children's Literature. *Between the Species*. Winter & Spring, 71-75.
- Chinweizu, Jemie, O. & Madubuike I. (1981). *Towards the decolonization of*

- African literature*. Ibadan, Nigeria: Fourth Dimension Publisher.
- Curtis, T.C. & Hale, F.M. (1981). English thinking about crime, 1530-1620. In L. A. Knafla (Ed.), *Crime and criminal justice in Europe and Canada*. (pp. 102-123). Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press.
- Davidson, P. H. (1963). Volpone and the old comedy. *Modern Language Quarterly*. 24, 151-157.
- Eliot, T.S. (1932). Tradition and the individual talent. *Sacred wood: Essay on poetry and criticism*. (3rd ed.). London, England: Heinemann.
- Gibbs, J. (2001). Soyinka in Zimbabwe: A question and answer session. In J. Gibbs (Ed.), *Conversation with Wole Soyinka* (pp.72-115). Mississippi, USA: University of Mississippi Press.
- Harrison, J. S. (1965). *Platonism in English poetry of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries*. New York, N.Y.: Russel and Russel.
- Holman, C. H. & Harmon, W. (1986). *A handbook to literature*. (5th ed.). New York, N.Y.: Macmillan Publishing.
- Idowu, B. (1962). *Olodumare: God in Yoruba belief*. London, England: Longman Group.
- Johnson, S. (1921). *History of the Yorubas*. Lagos, Nigeria: C.S.S.
- Jonson, B. (1641, 1891). *Discoveries*. Athara, N.Y.: Cornell University Library.
- Jonson, B. (1605, 1968). *Volpone*. London, England: Ernest Benn Publishers.
- Jonson, B. (1610, 1966). *The alchemist*. London, England: Ernest Benn Publishers.
- Lomax, J. A. (1913, Jan.-Mar.). The rabbit and the fox. Stories of an African prince: Yoruba Tales. *The Journal of American Folklore*. 26 (99), 1-12.
- Soyinka, W. (1963). *The lion and the jewel*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.
- Soyinka, W. (1969). The fourth stage through the mysteries of Ogun to the origin of Yoruba tragedy. In D.W. Jefferson (Ed.), *The morality of art*, (pp. 119-134). London, England: Routledge.
- Soyinka, W. & Biodun, J. (2001). *Conversations with Wole Soyinka*. Jackson, Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi.
- Taylor, A. E. (1963). *Platonic and its influence*. New York, NY: Cooper Square Publishing.
- Wilmer, V. (1966). Wole Soyinka talks to *Flamingo*. *Flamingo*, 5 (6), 14-17.
- White, H. O. (1965). *Plagiarism and imitation during the English renaissance*. Harvard, USA: Harvard University Press.