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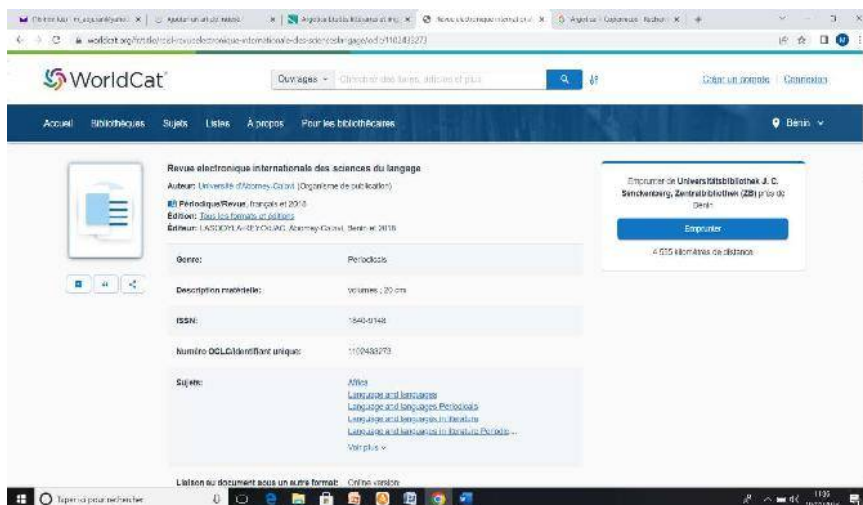
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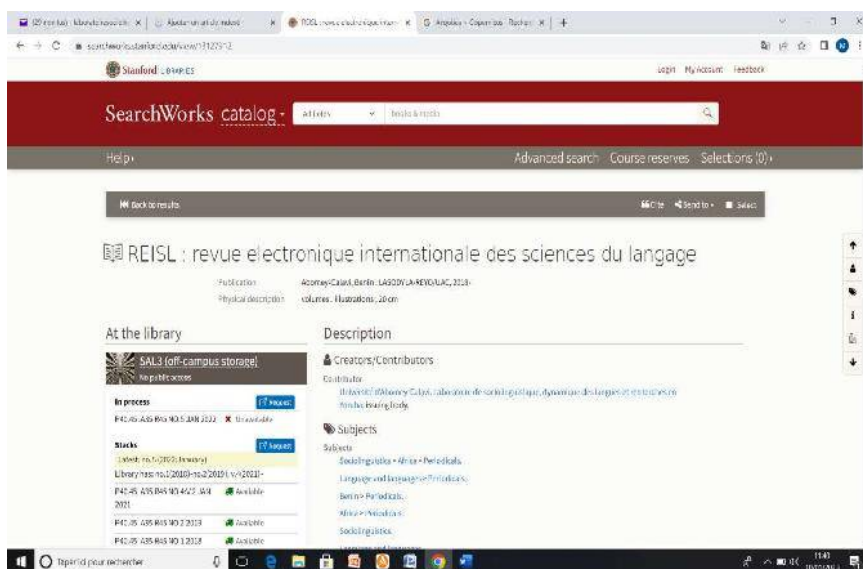
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EXPLORING POWER AND DESIRES: A STUDY OF WOLE SOYINKA'S *A DANCE OF THE FORESTS*, AND TIMM'S *MORENGA*

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Abstract

This research paper explores the issue of power and desires with human beings and more specifically on authorities in charge of nations' management. It mainly focuses on Wole Soyinka and Uwe Timm's literary productions respectively entitled *A Dance of the Forests*, and *Morenga*. It basically purports to demonstrate that once endowed with power, human beings give free rein to instincts and desires, and likewise turn tyrannical regardless to race or skin color. In a critical postcolonial approach, this study highlights correlation, complementarity and huge discordances which power and desires instigate human beings while nourishing negatively their minds in their positions of national management. Ego and wisdom couple in an untamed atmosphere of good sense of welfare and ill-winded behaviors from leaders toward their peoples.

Keywords: power, desires, human beings, ego, wisdom.

Zusammenfassung

Diese Studie untersucht die Frage von Macht und Begehren bei Menschen und insbesondere bei Autoritäten, die für die Verwaltung der Gesellschaft zuständig sind. Sie konzentriert sich auf die literarischen Werke "A Dance of the Forests" von Wole Soyinka und "Morenga" von Uwe Timm. Sie will vor allem zeigen, dass Menschen, die einmal an der Macht sind, ihren Instinkten und Wünschen freien Lauf lassen und darüber hinaus leicht zu Tyrannen werden, ohne dass es auf Rasse oder Hautfarbe ankommt. In einem kritischen postkolonialen Ansatz hat sich diese Forschungsstudie bemüht, die Korrelation, Komplementarität und die großen Diskrepanzen aufzuklären, die Macht und Begierden in den Menschen auf negative Weise bei der Verwaltung der Angelegenheiten der Nation hervorrufen. Ego und Weisheit koexistieren in einer Atmosphäre des gesunden Menschenverstandes für das Wohlergehen und der skurrilen Verhaltensweisen der Führer gegenüber dem Volk, dessen Schicksal man in den Händen hält.

Schlüsselwörter: Macht, Begierden, Menschen, Ego, Weisheit

Résumé

Cette étude explore la question du pouvoir et des désirs chez les êtres humains et plus précisément chez les autorités en charge de la gestion de la cité. Elle se concentre sur les œuvres littéraires de Wole Soyinka, *A Dance of the Forests*, et sur *Morenga* de Uwe Timm. Elle vise essentiellement à montrer qu'une fois au pouvoir les êtres humains donnent libre cours à leurs instincts et désirs et par surcroît deviennent facilement des tyranniques sans origine de race et couleur de la peau. Dans une approche postcoloniale critique, cette étude de recherches s'est évertuée à élucider la corrélation, la complémentarité et les grandes discordances que le pouvoir et les désirs animent les humains d'une manière négative dans la gestion des affaires de la nation. L'égo et la sagesse cohabitent dans une atmosphère de bon sens du bien-être et des comportements farfelus des leaders envers le peuple dont on a la destinée.

Mots-clés : pouvoir, désirs, êtres humains, ego, sagesse.

INTRODUCTION

In the early 1950s, African colonized countries started being fed up in varied ways with colonial rules, witnessing the later ones diminishing and quite well creating great havocs in in along their existence. Consequently, they began claiming their independence from the white man yoke which in real terms failed to put coins and voices together but specifically meant to meet specific and selfish interests. Supposedly, many of those countries got their independence, from the early 1960s under particular arrangements or secrets not disclosed to the general public. Thus, there was in one way or the other, niggers under woodpiles which book early on uncertainty about concerns among which are self-political, economic and social management, the issues of power and related fallouts. To some extent due to direct consequences, the African writing intrinsically based on home matters in light of natural talents and realities, was set free from colonial claws. Consequently, African writers then gave free rein to their pens backed up by their sense of fertile imagination and genuine intentions to denounce, denote and decode social-economic plagues and project for political way outs. Through creative writings, they frame out, formulate and bring to light the African elite's awareness of dignity, and accordingly the right of African culture and society for a new beginning in face or the drive of the world run move for information. Within this stream of thoughts, a lot of novelists blame white men for what they did, and even better continue to do to their former colonies. For, Abrahams' works in general perspective, Nelson Mandela's *No Easy Walk to Freedom* and Alex La Guma's *And a Threefold Cord* (1964) represent with no doubt a grim presentation of the degradation of human liberty under apartheid and any other related issues which jeopardize the development of the African continent. James Ngugi, wrote about the traumatic experiences of Africans under white men's domination in all respects but essentially directed to their proper well-being. Elsewhere, literary productions like *Weep not Child* (1964), and *The River Between* (1965) dwell on the social and psychological problems caused by the conflict between European and African cultures at a give time in the collaborative ties that history happened to make cross. Still, Achebe's *No Longer at Ease*, Ekwensi's *Jagua Nana* (1961) and John Munonye's *Obi* (1969) are vivid examples of such creative works which cast much lighter on particular issues tightly linked to African realities and other specific issues.

The white man, cunning enough and struggling for survival, expands his hegemony beyond the boundaries of his country, a bit like African kings who fought to expand their kingdoms, and to increase their wealth, some decades ago may be for not necessarily the same purposes. The white man brilliantly succeeds in taking control of any world board of decision, and accordingly a total dominion over the black

African continent equipped with sophisticated strategies and field-guided methods for the already fixed targets. With the benefit of hindsight, when we look into the matter, we could realize that seeking power over one's fellow beings is part of human nature mainly associated to manifest one's own desires but not uniquely restrictive to the white man. The methodology which is used in this research work is the qualitative one dutifully emphasized on recorded historiography in such a field of empirical study. This work research work is carried out basing on orientalism or otherness, constructionism, and historicism as adequate scientific pillars to help gras insightful findings.

1. Man and Power: Complexity or Complementarity in Perspective?

All over the world, there is a common notice regarding human behaviours whether in community or generally in face of challenges to fulfil, interests to protect or a plan to proffer for a precise objective. Such a remark is plain to be witnessed when circumstances happen to expose conflicts of interests or any case of divergence. Within a group of people living in a given area, there are always some individuals who seek authority over others since order through laws and local conflicts instances still place roles of regulators. Furthermore, there is still urgent need for people of the same community, country or nation to live under certain number of ruling principles for the well-being and betterment for everyone. Yet, seeking to get control of others, people very often give free reign to inhuman treatments towards men and women in certain circumstances whether social, economic or political as related to life among men and women. This accounts not only for movements against power-usurpations but also for activists meant for the defence and promotion of some concepts such as equity, equality, gender etc. The issue of power, its exercise and regulation have always been a hard nut to crack. As the saying goes that charity begins at home, the problem of power essentially takes roots in the very insights or depths of home manners. The normal course of human family life as well as in the kingdom of animals of 'law of the fittest survival' the idea of power control remains valid. In his well-read novel entitled *A Dance of the Forests*, Wole Soyinka make the soothsayer clearly express that vital need and even evidence about power. He diligently contends that: "It's in the nature of human beings to seek power over the lives of others" Soyinka (1963).

According to Oxford Advanced Learners dictionary 9th Edition, power is seen as the ability to control people or things, the ability or opportunity to do something or furthermore, the right or opportunity of a person or a group to do something. This implies in one way or the other, the ability to direct or influence the behavior of others or the

course of events. Such a drive of thought inspires Shakespeare in many ways in apprehending power in its diverse or multiple senses or contours. In Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, the character Macbeth willingly murders his King not on false pretenses but rather on good purpose. Comments and interpretations on the part of scholars regarding this act from Macbeth go on unsuspected fields of intellectual analysis. In the same perspective while deciphering Macbeth's Machiavelli's behaviour, H.S. Séguédémè and K.J. Towa-Sélló (2017) inquisitively affirm:

We could interpret Shakespeare's play as a moral lesson. Macbeth murders his king. To murder any man is a crime, but those who lived at the time of Shakespeare thought that the murder of king was the greatest of all crimes. Kings were appointed by God, to rule as His Deputies: rebellion against true king was rebellion against God (H.S. Séguédémè & K.J. Towa-Sélló, p.179).

In Oxford Advanced Learners dictionary 9th Edition p 416 , desire is defined as a strong will to have or do something. Referring to what power could negatively instil in people's daily behaviours and instigate their mind to practise on men and women under management, one could easily foresee the recorded damages and upheavals uncontrolled desire may provoke. Desire as an excessive ambition which obliges or compels human beings in the shoes of authorities to be full actors of things that defy moral values, there is good reason to see power mingled up with desire in some facts and actions in human societies or communities. Still banking on Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, an illustrative example of the above-mentioned case of power abuse or impactful influences of burning desires on power management links up with the character Macbeth's attitudes comes up with an unexpected fatal conduct. The narration goes on with Macbeth as a famous soldier and close to his King who happens to kill the later one in order to get power and use it for maybe unknown purposes. Yet, it was true that Macbeth as General of the King's army, was not as powerful as his king, however, his desire and the fact that he was a military officer have cleverly contributed to murder his King and to become king.

The whole world has known varied kings, emperors and an uncountable number of presidents with specific ways of life, management styles, socio-political endeavors and mostly with negative facets of power abuse and selfish satisfaction of personal desires. Under the titles of President, Excellency, Highness or Majesty , they are highly boosted psychologically and emotionally in reaching by all means some specific but detrimental objectives which favor in no way the national development because once elected and imbibed with power, they turn somehow unhuman . The case of Adolf Hitler in Germany stands as a living example in of world of tragedy backed up or motivated by a nonpareil sense of racial supremacy which instilled in his mind and actions, savage instigations to violence of all kinds with unlimited consequences.

2. Power and Desires: Challenging antagonism or Dichotomy in Action.

Leadership in any case of reflection has always proved not easy to apprehend mostly when people in action demonstrate certain kinds of behaviors which could be qualified as detrimental to national development the for the best interests of people they duly get honor to lead. Because they mainly use power as their inflexible and untamable means to quench their desires and fight to satisfy their instincts which mostly have nothing to do with their divine duty to take care of their people. Power is generally apprehended as being a renowned gratitude of God and likewise or accordingly deserves to be used adequately to satisfy national welfare and strives for betterment of others for the sake of humanity. For the best of knowledge, everlasting blessings always fall upon whoever sees to fight for or make arrange for people's well-being when they are in position of leader or any field of responsibility where their special exercise of power serves the best interests of people rather than personal desires.

Taken apart and lensed in an isolated way, an individual is primarily made of beam of desires and instincts which profusely guide and animate his reactions in face of challenges. Basically, due to their natural status of instigating factors to prompt reactions without deeper and well-thought practices, they essentially lead not to in-depth reflections but surface actions or reactions. In such a case of challenging dichotomy, when people fail to genuinely bridge up between power and desire in terms of positive and negative effects, they mostly sink into evils with numbers of consequences which jeopardize lives of people under management, sustained by huge amounts of pervasive appreciations of duties and rights. Ideas of hegemony through power expansion, the expression of superiority via daily but awkward decisions, the wide socio-cultural and even economic gap between authorities and governed people worsen relationships and create havocs which prove obstacles to development. Territorial conquest, interest-guided decisions of different genres, enslavement of all sorts and other kinds of unsound practices favor the case of dysfunction and mismanagement.

Plenty of historical backgrounds from African as well as European and other origins help shed sufficient light on the use of power and related drawbacks. Authors of diversified origins work in such a sense with series of analysis and interpretations through proper ways and means to tackle the issue under question. In his book entitled *Chaka*, Thomas Mofolo looks at power in a particular way basing on his own cultural background. The thread of this work of art is the way Chaka who, from a courageous young boy stand has become a powerful king of the Zulu kingdom. His less cheerful days on power simply illustrate a

case of power use as a instrument of personal need satisfaction. Like rats, after a hunting party, King Chaka gets dozens of human beings impaled as slaves or subjects serving the king's causes. Wole Soyinka finds an explanation to this in his book *A Dance of the Forests* whereby his character Forest Head, hinting at the triplets, says: "*Your perversion appears when they (men) acquire power over one another, and their instincts are fulfilled a thousand-fold, a hundred thousand-fold.*" (Soyinka, 1963, p. 80). Thus, Soyinka (1963) gives a clear image about how with power, men very often loose their sense of humanity and likewise projects their whole intentions into the din of ill-mannered actions. For, he demonstrates it with the kingdom of Mata Kharibu, still in *A Dance of the Forest* where Mata Kharibu is placed as a powerful king endowed with specific attributes. His instincts being thousand-fold multiplied, he accordingly acts by snatching another chieftain's wife. The case is highlighted as follows:

Mata Kharibu thought, hoped that the dishonoured king would go to war on her account. There he was wrong. It seems her rightful husband does not consider that (the new queen) is worth a battle. But Mata Kharibu is so bent on bloodshed that he sends him a new message. Release the goods of this woman I took from you if there will be peace between us. (Soyinka, p.54)

Thus because of the trousseau of Madame Tortoise- a mere goer-Kharibu expresses the will to wage a war. Captain Mulieru, commander-in-chief of the kingdom knowingly objects to that. He wisely proves that not every situation is worth a war-waging one. He even wonders: "Is this the action of a ruler who values the peace of his subjects? Thinking in the kingdom of Mata Kharibu is a vehement expression of guilt when one relates to actions and reactions in line what power usage makes people commit as both crimes and unsound perpetrated actions. Restrictions are many and diverse even against freedom of speech. In such a vein, Mata Kharibu says: "*It was you, slave! You it was who dared to think*". Yet, the warrior, Captain Mulieru replies: "*I plead guilty to the possession of thought. I did not know that it was in me to exercise it until your Majesty's inhuman commands*" (Soyinka, 1963, p.53). Hard to imagine a world where individuals are prevented from speaking out their minds and where cons and voices have no chance to be put together for the well-being of people of a given community and likewise for a whole nation. Descartes would say: "Cogito, ergo sum", I think therefore I exist. This situation described by Soyinka is still relevant in our daily life.

When leaders come to power, they use it as a ladder to give full satisfaction to all their exposed and unsuspected desires. Instead of caring for the real interests of the people, they set down a dreadful regime, and practice a kind of politics which promotes personal interests. Some become wealthy and even more than their own countries, leaving the vast majority of masses in some dead-end

situations: poverty being their daily companion. Overwhelmed with luxury realizations at home as well as abroad as sign of full-life accomplishment. They build castles all over the world – castles they would never set foot in before their death and which in fact are physical proves of embezzlements.

The problem of power and its day-by-day usage exist everywhere with causes and consequences as one could never imagine at depths. Far from being restrictive to a given skin color, power is a worldwide problem. What varies is the way it is used. Our daily life reveals that people use to blame the kind of leader that makes the other feel uncomfortable. A personal study on those countries where people denounce the misuse of power leads us to an obvious conclusion: power reveals the real nature of man. When it goes hand in hand with desires and instincts, it changes leaders and very often takes them to turn tyrannical or despotic. And such situations pave the way to oppression, poverty, corruption, embezzlement and so forth.

3. At the Heart of Intrinsic Characteristics of Power and Desires.

Early on and basically due to colonization in all its forms, Europeans acquired power over Africans and used it as they believed it could be, depending on their will and mainly on advanced or hidden interests. As such, they gave free rein to their instincts and desires; they snatched the opportunity to loot the continent, and enslave its people. Stepping in Africa, White men were not actually caring for Africans in terms of welfare. They were led by their own interests that were nothing more than greed of wealth, and pride. Africa is, by nature, a blessed continent. Its land favors agriculture, and the underground shelters valuable natural resources. When Europeans rushed to Africa, pretending they were on a civilizing mission, it was a fallacy. Europeans were in need of African natural resources and able-bodied people. Nearly all the raw materials used in their factories come from the African soil. Their like could not stand the kind of work awaiting in the plantations. With the complicity of other Africans in position of power, many powerless Africans were sold into slavery.

For the sake of power and desires, Europeans have never looked at Africans as real human beings. For white men, a black African is an inferior wog, who is worth nothing good. The black African man can only dance and produce children as forwarded by many European men of letters. Amazingly enough, some universally acclaimed Africans support this point of view. Leopold Sédar Senghor loudly and proudly proclaimed : “L’émotion est nègre, comme la raison est Hellène”. [Emotion is negro, as reason is Hellenic. (Translation mine)] (1939...). This is to mean that Black people cannot think by themselves, which implies a kind of inferiority in relation to white men whose prerogative is reasoning. A subsequent deductive analysis moving from René Descartes’ cogito ergo

sum, in the seventeenth century, then denies black people their existence. The same idea can be seen through *Morenga*. Timm does not really side with this stream of thought. He blames such an idea through his novel under consideration.

Timm gives a sound and strong example of the fact that reasoning is not only white but also black. Here we go. A Hottentot from the south turns up in Bethany. He can read aloud from the Bible and recite entire passages by heart, amazingly. Knudsen, a character, realizes that he is a false prophet. For Knudsen, this native Hottentot believes in a dangerous heresy that he supports with a lot of biblical quotations. Through this prophet, Timm strives to demonstrate to the whole world that black people can think by themselves, and even better than white men. By the way, after one Sunday service, a full-blown debate arises between Knudsen and the false prophet. For the latter one, good is likely to come from evil. Knudsen roars accordingly and the false prophet's reacts as follows:

If you steal a steer from the Hereros, who have thousands of them on rich meadows, more cattles than they can ever eat themselves, cattle that die of old age, if you steal one of those steers and slaughter it and feed the children of your tribe with the meat, many of whom are dying of hunger, but who could live if they had stolen meat, then good has come from evil. But if God permits children to die just so the cattle of the rich can go on living, then Knudsen's God is the almighty God of cattle, but not the Hottentots and certainly not a good God (Timm, 2003, pp.98-99).

Though clumsy it may look, I have to advocate that this is a strong and sound reasoning. Knudsen himself is somehow impressed as this excerpt can help illustrate: "*For a moment he thought back with bitterness on his instructors at missionary school, who always said that natives couldn't think logically*". (ibid., p.99). Even the tribe he has converted to Christianity with the help of Schmelen cannot stand such a reasoning. Nearly all of them side with the false prophet as a proof of convincing power over subjects and others thought not to think or reason. The German writer Timm shows an accurate picture of how German settlers in South-West Africa treated their fellow human beings in his *Morenga*. The German Colonial Empire was a bit wide. It was made up of African countries, such as parts of present-day Burundi, Rwanda, Tanzania, Namibia, Cameroon, Gabon, Congo, Central African Republic, Chad, Nigeria, Togo, and so on. Timm's post World War II *Morenga* revolves around the German colonial period in Deutsch-Südwest Africa, present day Namibia.

In *Morenga*, natives are used as houseboys by white men on the grounds on superiority and all recorded rights they have on them. Jakobus serves as houseboy for Farmer Kaempffer. The different farms Germans set in Africa are run by natives, and most of the time, for free. When Farmer Kruse has woken up, it is to assign natives some tasks: "*Farmer Kruse steps from his farm house near Warmbad to assign daily*

chores to the natives as usual". (ibid., p. 1). The beginning of the following paragraph that we can see on the same page goes like this: "On the farm 'German Soil,' a black worker snatches the whip from Farmer Strohmeier, who uses it to make the men work faster." (ibid., pp.1-2) Worse, these natives are whipped while working either by their white masters or some selected overseers. Even Gottschalk is accustomed to what natives should serve as after their defeat in the unjust war being waged against them. Here is an unavoidable proof for justification:

Gottschalk was familiar with the debate over what should be done with the native rebels after the victory. There were suggestions to export them and their families to East Africa, where they could work on plantations. In any case they would relocate the tribes within the protectorate, and the women and men would be used for forced labour." (ibid., pp.195-196)

For white men, the Sub-Saharan characters are improved species of animals that need to be treated so. In this creative and historical work by Timm, some Germans find the same aptitudes in a horse as in a black chap. Blacks are often used as horses in *Morenga*. For the sake of argument, let us recall the arrival of the Veterinary Gottschalk. When the Gertrud Woermann transporting him and his like from Hamburg to Swakopmund anchors, black crew members have paddled the soldiers through the surf. The height is described as follows:

When the boat ran aground in shallow water, Gottschalk mounted the shoulders of one of the waiting natives. The man wore nothing but a pair of ragged trousers. Gottschalk felt the perspiring black skin, smelled the sour sweat. He felt sick. With a gentle rotation he was deposited on the beach. (ibid., p.4)

Gottschalk even falls sick just by smelling the smelling of the native carrying him over the shoulders. He talks of sour sweat as if he tastes the sweat. This becomes a natural hatred of the black. Power can alter faith or spoil it. With Christianity, we have to admit that white men choked the entire world with their deeds. For the sake of Christ, bloody and deadly wars were waged. On behalf of the religion, women are often raped. In the war opposing natives to German settlers, Timm is aware of it. Gottschalk finds in the on-going war an injustice, and thinks it is unchristian. He is psychologically tormented, to an extent that he wants to get the viewpoint of Dr. Haring, a practicing Protestant. Shamelessly, Dr. Haring provides this kind of explanation:

What a question, Haring said, whipping his bent arms back. But then, after lacing his soft goat-leather gym shoes, with the veterinarian so far out of step, and seeming odder all the time, he tried to set him straight. Who started the war? Who murdered the soldiers, missionaries, farmers, and women?". (ibid., p.196)

Seeking to satisfy their desires, some white men have turned to worse than pagans. The black Africans they are trying to convert to Christianity reluctantly take them as models. The Bible they brought talks of forgiveness. Even the Lord Jesus makes it clearer when Apostle Peter wants to know how many times we need to forgive our neighbours, in the parable of the unforgiving servant. From two fundamental origins these statements illustrate more about the point:

Then Peter came to Him and said, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven...". (Precious Moment Bible, New King James Version, (Mat 18: 21-22), p.851)

But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, Bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you. To him who strikes you on the one cheek, offer the other also. And from him who takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either. Precious Moment Bible, New King James Version. (*ibid.*, 892-893)

Basing on some specific considerations due to certain facts and actions favored by their socio-economic and political positions, Europeans always consider themselves as being superior to black Africans, and hardly consider them as human beings. Timm is a staunch defender of the sub-Saharan character in his shoes of full product of a well-known cultural background. He castigates his contemporaries who rate the Africans as mere animals. Here is clearly exposed an excerpt from the book under study:

This lack of pity, this desperate courage, yes desperate, for that was the central fact in this war, that these people, as human beings, yes he used the term deliberately, as human beings couldn't help but see that the Germans were superior to them, that hard work, knowledge, and careful preparation resulted in more and more land falling into the hands of the german settlers, even without the use of military force. (Uwe Timm. *Op.Cit.*, p.196).

CONCLUSION

This research work which develops a focus on power and desires through literary works of Soyinka's *A Dance of the Forests*, and Timm's *Morenga*, strives to apprehend human beings in their sense of primitive thoughts, actions and sticks to fleeting and selfish interests as opposed to the ones of a nation. First, the expansion of the white man's dominion is to be viewed with a lens of natural order where in terms of means, some could prove superior to others. Thus, seeking domination over others comes up to be the nature of human beings, irrespective of any background which reflects cultural origins. It is therefore high time Africans stopped blaming Europeans in such a sense of offenders, manipulators and dominators. Had Africans been in the shoes of Europeans, they might have proved worse, for instincts and desires are in each human being, and only wait for power to be expressed.

Through the lenses of apprehending man and power within the framework of complexity or complementarity and power and desires via the perspective of some intrinsic characteristics this research work provides answers to how power and its usage overwhelm people's mind with such unsound practices. No matter what could be their cultural backgrounds, Africans as well as Europeans will make use of power both under human view and with wisdom in case, they judge quite useful to do so: the sake of national well-being highly matters.

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