

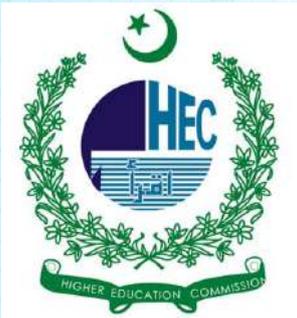
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Negotiating Identity, Hybridity, Corruption, and Power Dynamics in Soyinka's Chronicles from the Land of the Happiest People on Earth



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Abstract

This study examines identity, hybridity, corruption, and power dynamics in Soyinka's *Chronicles from the Land of the Happiest People on Earth*, reflecting on the complex realities of modern African communities through the lens of postcolonial theory. Soyinka's narrative is a piercing indictment of the sociopolitical landscape, exposing the complexities and challenges inherent in the search for identity and government. Furthermore, criticism of corruption and power relations serves as a mirror for real-world issues faced by many postcolonial nations. Soyinka subtly advocates for a cultural renaissance and awakening of cultural consciousness, which has the power to overcome moral and societal corruption. By reconnecting with their cultural roots and values, postcolonial countries may be able to overcome the issues of corruption and power inequalities. It is a portrayal of a generation that both betrays and is betrayed by the dominant ethos of moral entropy. The novel's characters struggle with their identities in a country still recovering from the aftermath of colonialism. Soyinka highlights the flaws in Nigeria's political system through figures such as Sir Goddie, a strong politician. Sir Goddie's deceitful techniques and merciless pursuit of power mirror the nation's pervasive corruption. Soyinka's critique is scathing, depicting a country where corruption is institutionalized and resistance is met with severe consequences. This portrayal is poignant commentary on the postcolonial condition, in which the promise of independence has been overwhelmed by the reality of neocolonial exploitation and internal betrayal. Characters like Papa Davina, a charismatic spiritual leader, symbolize this cultural fusion. His practices blend traditional African spirituality with elements of Christianity, creating a hybrid faith that appeals to a wide audience. However, as characters negotiate the frequently contradictory demands of their dual background, this hybridity also highlights the divisions within society. Soyinka criticizes the shallow acceptance of Westernization at the price of true cultural identity by using these cultural intersections. The story illustrates the various levels of authority that exist in society, from religious leaders to political elites, and how these individuals use their positions to maintain power. Pitan-Payne's interaction with his peers demonstrates the subtle but important ways in

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which power is negotiated and disputed. The narrative also illustrates the intersection of power and corruption, demonstrating how those in positions of power use their influence to perpetuate a cycle of oppression and disenfranchisement. This study is meaningful as it encourages readers to confront the difficult realities of the postcolonial condition, to examine colonial legacies, and to explore paths to genuine liberation and self-actualization. Soyinka's brilliant storytelling not only critiques but also encourages rethinking of a future in which the pursuit of identity, acceptance of hybridity, and struggle against corruption might lead to a more just and equal society.

Keywords: Identity, Hybridity, Corruption, Power Dynamics, Chronicles from the Land, Postcolonialism

INTRODUCTION

Wole Soyinka, Nigeria's esteemed Nobel laureate, crafts a complex tapestry of themes in his novel *Chronicles from the Land of the Happiest People on Earth* (2021). Anderson Tepper, the first Black Nobel Prize winner in Literature, gives us a "tour de force", combining elements of a murder mystery, a searing political satire and an Alice in Wonderland-like modern allegory of power and deception (Tepper, 2021, 6AM). The novel is written in a style similar to African literature from the late twentieth century. The stories focus on sociopolitical themes and the state of the nation. It is reminiscent of Achebe's *Anthills of Savannah*, *Arrow of God*, and Ngugi Wa Thiongó's *A Grain of Wheat*. The plot is rather complicated as it attempts to identify the components of the so-called human resources business and the extent to which the current ruling government and clergy class support it. The plot is presented by Soyinka as an intellectual conversation with numerous references or inferences and is challenging for someone unfamiliar with Nigerian politics or socioeconomic history to read. *Chronicles* ties itself in knots while attempting to provide adequate context for the character's motivation, but makes little to no effort to humanize or make them seem relatable to the reader. *Chronicles* is unnecessarily verbose. Wole Soyinka's *Chronicles from the Land of the Happiest People on Earth* (2021) masterfully delves into the complex and multifaceted quest for identity in postcolonial Nigeria, as well as hybridity, corruption, and power dynamics. Set in a fictional African country, the story serves as a critical lens through which Soyinka examines colonial legacies and ongoing conflicts in postcolonial societies. The novel, with its rich storyline and

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fascinating characters, investigates how historical legacies, cultural hybridity, and modern sociopolitical forces shape individual and national identities.

Soyinka provides a profound commentary on the ongoing struggle for self-definition and authenticity in a world defined by colonial legacies and globalization pressures. Wole Soyinka's *Chronicles from the Land of the Happiest People on Earth* (2021) is a profound exploration of identity in a postcolonial setting. The novel delves into the complexities of individual and collective identity in Nigeria, a nation grappling with its colonial past and its aspirations for the future. Through its multifaceted characters and intricate narrative, Soyinka addresses themes of personal identity, national identity, and cultural hybridity. The novel also discusses the role of global powers and multinational corporations in sustaining corruption and exploitation in postcolonial states. This neocolonial dynamic is crucial for understanding the ongoing power struggles. There is a clear division between the ruling elite and the masses. The elite, portrayed as disconnected from the realities of the common people, and misuse their position of power to oppress and marginalize the common people. Soyinka's novel describes, intersection of power and gender emphasizing how patriarchal structures contribute to the perpetuation of power imbalances and corruption. Women, in many instances, bear the brunt of these power dynamics, yet they also emerge as crucial agents of change. Soyinka presents aspects of activism and resistance in spite of pervasive corruption and power imbalances. Characters who oppose the corrupt system stand for optimism and the potential for reform.

Chronicles from the Land of the Happiest People on Earth (2021) is a powerful postcolonial critique of Nigeria's neocolonial conditions. Soyinka explores the long-term impacts of colonialism, including as economic exploitation, cultural disintegration, and political instability. Postcolonial theorists such as Homi K. Bhabha define hybridity as the emergence of new transcultural forms within the contact zone created by colonization. This theme is expressed in Soyinka's work through the interplay of traditional African values and Western influences, emphasizing the constant struggle of identity in a postcolonial society. Soyinka's exploration of hybridity also serves as a postcolonial critique of colonialism's long-term impacts. The novel contends that the cultural and ideological remnants of colonial authority

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continue to shape contemporary Nigerian society. The characters' hybrid identities, as well as the societal institutions they navigate, represent colonialism's enduring impact, which manifests itself in new forms of cultural and political expression. Soyinka challenges the notion of a homogeneous national identity, by depicting the tensions and synergies between different cultural elements. Soyinka presents a more complex, layered understanding of identity that accommodates the various influences and histories that shape postcolonial societies. Soyinka's work explores how colonial legacies continue to shape modern power dynamics. The postcolonial elite use relics of colonial authority, such as bureaucratic procedures and hierarchical structures, to preserve their control. Soyinka's characters use their hybrid identities to challenge and subvert the corrupt power structures in their societies. By combining various cultural elements, they create new forms of resistance that undermine the authority of the ruling elite. This subversive hybridity is evident in the novel's depiction of grassroots movements and individual acts of defiance that draw on both traditional and modern resources. These hybrid initiatives demonstrate the third space's innovative potential to generate transformative political and social change.

Bhabha's theory of hybridity has had a considerable impact on postcolonial research, providing a more nuanced view of how cultures interact and evolve after colonization. Bhabha's work helps us understand the complexity of postcolonial experiences, as well as the possibilities for new forms of agency and resistance, by emphasizing the fluid and dynamic nature of cultural identity. In *Chronicles from the Land of the Happiest People on Earth*, Soyinka masterfully portrays the essence of this hybrid condition. His characters' struggles and achievements demonstrate the lived reality of Bhabha's theoretical frameworks, making the novel a powerful exploration of postcolonial hybridity. Bhabha challenges the notion of fixed, essential identities. Instead, he contends that identities are fluid and constantly in a state of becoming. This perspective emphasizes identity's dynamic and constructed nature rather than seeing it as something static and innate. Identity is viewed as a process that is shaped by social, cultural, and historical contexts rather than a final product.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature of Frantz Fanon, Aime Cesaire, and Albert Memmi from the mid-20th century gave rise to postcolonial theory. Studies on the cultural and psychological

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effects of colonialism began with Fanon. Fanon addresses the 'abrogation of the imperial center inside the text'. Fanon discusses some noteworthy themes from a postcolonial perspective in *Black Skin White Masks* (1952) and *Wretched of the Earth* (1961). Re-reading of English literary texts to examine their methods of representation, assumptions, and prejudices, that re-enforced imperial power relations; Analysis of the construction of colonial subjects in these writings, and the ways, in which natives resisted such contractions; Discussing the ways in which colonial subjects 'wrote back', that is, responded to, resisted and overturned imperial power relations to the empire (McLeod, 2000). Critics describe *Chronicles from the Land of the Happiest People on Earth* (2021), as a 'caustic political satire' that exposes the grotesque absurdities and moral failures of those in power. It is Soyinka's greatest novel and a 'vivid and wild romp' that reveals the depths of Nigeria's political corruption and societal issues (Ben Okri, 2021). *Chronicles from the Land of the Happiest People on Earth* (2021) is at once a savagely witty whodunit, a scathing indictment of Nigeria's political elite, and a provocative call to arms from one of the country's most relentless political activists and an international literary giant. Toni Morrison comments to Wole Soyinka "you don't see the things the same when you encounter a voice like that" (Morrison, 2018). "One of the best there is today, a poet and a thinker, who knows both how the world works and how the world should work" (Adichie, 2021). Like Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006) and Achebe's *There Was a Country* (2013), which inspired a generation to try to understand Nigeria's civil war, Soyinka's book is a hallmark of literature, *Chronicles* could inspire people to understand the last military presidency and everything it took away from Nigeria. *Chronicles* is not Soyinka's magnum opus, but it is a good example of how fiction can be used to portray genuine and often horrible stories, in this case about a human parts market facilitated by a people's government and religious beliefs. While the intellectual aspect of how the book is captured makes it hard to read, it is ultimately a labor of love by one of Nigeria's most recognized literary minds (Tolu, 2023).

Chronicles from the Land of the Happiest People on Earth (2021) begins with the sentence: 'Papa Davina... preferred to craft his own words of wisdom'. His well-known statement 'perspective is all'. This warns us from the beginning that we need aesthetic distance to make sense of the twists and turns, the baroque engineering, the

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intriguing structure, and paradoxically exuberant tone of this strange novel. Papa Davina is the religious guru whose sole focus is spiritual ministry; Ekumenica is a complex front for practices that are so sordid and monstrous that the mind is unable to comprehend them even after learning what they are. He is in collusion with the head of state, the cunning and pragmatic Sir Goddie, and it appears that this racket, this secret society organization, embraces the entire power structure of the country. Is this a metaphor for the terrible nature of corruption and lies that choke the life out of that potentially magnificent nation, or is the metaphor the thing itself? If the latter, the author is addressing one of the most existential issues in fiction: how to deal with the intolerable in a medium where a tale must be told and things must be discussed. How can a tale of the unspeakable be told? At the heart of *Chronicles* is the story of four friends who join a fraternity known as the Gong of Four, and how they preserve their integrity while being sucked into the storm of political life that surrounds them. In a microcosmic way, it depicts how a generation betrays and is betrayed by the prevailing ethos of moral entropy (Wilson, 2021).

Chronicles from the Land of the Happiest People on Earth (2021), is essentially a whistleblower's book. It is a novel that exposes the darkest and lethal forms of criminal racketeering that exist in an African country like Nigeria. It is a colorful and wild journey through a political landscape filled with corruption and opportunism, as well as a spiritual landscape replete with fraud and, most disturbingly, state-sanctioned murder. It is Soyinka's best novel, his revenge against the insanities of the nation's ruling class and one of the most horrifying chronicles of an African nation in the twenty-first century. *Chronicles* is written in what critics refer to as a 'late style': prolix, dilatory, and anecdotal. It does call out names and point fingers. One of the delights is Soyinka's effortless transition between registers, from lofty to ridiculous, as well as his unapologetic use of 'Nigerianisms' and Yoruba vernacular. Approximately at the end of novel, there is a long monologue in Pidgin English in which a steward, Godsown, recounts a crime he witnessed in hilarious detail. Perhaps the writer's personality takes precedence over any character he portrays, but most readers would describe that it is exactly what they expect from Soyinka: witty anecdotes, digressions, and even the legendary linguistic obfuscation and bombast. There is a restless intellectual energy here that belies the author's age, and it serves as a good model for

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what a political novel should be: fearless, disregarding formal constraints, sparing no one, leaving behind a scorched earth littered with the burned figures of corrupt politicians and military dictators, religious charlatans and social parasites, and even the masses who, in the name of religion and tribe, are made tools of the elite (Habila, 2021).

Onyeka Nwelue says *Chronicles from the Land of the Happiest People on Earth* (2021) is typical Wole Soyinka—brimming with wisdom and full of words you may never have heard, seen, or read elsewhere. It is breezy and occasionally punchy. You must use it to improve your vocabulary. This is an extremely powerful narrative approach. This masterwork truly represents his breadth of expertise from various spheres of life. Only the intellectual elite will have the pleasure of sitting through this bundle of wisdom and humour. *Chronicles* is a fast-paced story. The effort is great, but the book is overflowing with characters scarcely developed beyond caricature; as a result, it quickly becomes imbalanced and complicated. Even a key figure, such as “Papa Davina”, is missing for long passages (Nwelue, 2021). Nonetheless, the novel is propelled by a lacerating satirical sharpness, and if it occasionally feels overwritten, this is congruent with the feeling of hysteria and a country careering out of control. Finally, the tone of Soyinka's writing, as he confronts the horrific reality of his, is one of weary impotence as the ghoulish details unfold and the story comes to a close. Though the depiction of violence is not ‘pornographic’, the story depicts a demoralized society resigned to amoral authorities who are constructing a state governed by a kind of cannibalism (Grant, 2021). It is really gloomy; representations of postcolonial Nigeria do not get much darker. *Chronicles from the Land of the Happiest People on Earth* (2021) is a gloomy book written by a man who, ironically, has none of the illusions implied by the title. Soyinka's carnivalesque portrayals of venality expose hypocrisy beneath its complex masks and denounce crimes that go against "the collective notion of soul" with a caustic wit (Vásquez, 2021). Readers who are well-versed in current Nigerian politics are more likely to recognize references to figures and events that the average reader would miss. However, this novel is captivating on several levels due to the creatively sarcastic treatment of weighty subjects. *Chronicles* is both a work of fiction and social commentary. The narrative is at its best when it extends beyond history and politics and into the daily

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intrigues of its principal characters. As one would expect from a master novelist, *Chronicles* contains multiple interconnected layers and subtext. On one level, it is a withering indictment of the way political and social corruption normalized via indifference. On the other hand, it's a story of brotherhood among a quartet of Nigeria's best and brightest who reached adulthood when the country gained independence. They go abroad to be educated and with the solemnity and idealism of youth, make a pact to return and contribute to their new nation.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Post colonialism seeks to address the ways in which non-European nations and culture have been marginalized as an effect of colonial rule and to find the modes of resistance, retrieval, and reversal of their own pre-colonial past. "A degree of agency or a programmer of resistance, against cultural domination, signals the particular historical legacya stage in a culture's transition into a modern nation state" (Gilbert, 1960, p.69). Post colonialism seeks to understand how oppression, resistance, and adaptation occurred during colonial rule. Colonialism is an alleged policy of exploitation of backward or weak people by large power. Colonialism cannot be seen merely as a political or economic condition in fact it was a cultural and epistemological conquest of the native populations. For Western territories, the native races were primitive, childlike, irrational, irreligious, criminal, and unreliable. Because the native race is incapable of self-care, the European must provide for it. Michel Foucault in *History of Sexuality* (1976) talks about the theory of power and resistance. According to him, power always brings resistance and resistance is the source which heightens the power more. "When there is power there is resistance..." (Foucault, 1976, p.55). According to Frantz Fanon, two phenomena occur in the colonial world: replacement occurs during both colonization and decolonization, and because settlers do not see natives as the same species, despite the fact that they are not animals, natives develop a sense of rebellion.

Hybridity is the intermingling of two different cultures. It is a key concept in postcolonial literature. Hybridity encompasses transcultural manifestations. Hoogvelt (1997). Robert Young (1995) and Bakhtin (1981) describes hybridity in terms of the mixture. Homi K. Bhabha relates hybridity to cultural amalgamation. He describes this in-between as "it is the inter cutting edge of translation and negotiation that

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carries the burden of the meaning of culture” (Bhabha, 1994, p.38). In the situation of in-betweenness, a person stands between two cultures. It is the association of two different cultures, as a result of continuous interaction. Bhabha called it the "Third Space", and asserts that; world is always flexible and transformable not transparent (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin: 2004, p.118). Bhabha stresses that hybridity results from different practices of colonization and this hybridity leads to cultural contacts. In other words, hybridity represents multiracial people in the postcolonial world and includes several records of mixing. Hybridity, or interaction of different cultures leads to conflicts while also opening up new ways of thinking and forming identities. Rasheed Araeen responds to Bhabha's in-between space. So he contends that Bhabha's concept of hybridity has created a line of separation between whites and non-whites. As a result, white people can adopt any culture of their choice and they do not need any sign of cultural identity. Nonwhites, on the other hand, must demonstrate their cultural identity in order to enter the superior culture (Araeen, 2000).

Identity refers to one's personal style of representing oneself. Identity is an overwhelming and powerful force for the characters or any human, and it drives every action of the characters. Identity can be cultural, societal, or emotional. Culture and identity are explored in postcolonial studies. Every individual or character suffers from a lack of direction in their life. Essentially, these persons or characters suffer from an identity crisis, which occurs in the absence of traditional culture. This identity reflects some rehearsals from a distant past that the characters cannot recall. Cultural identity “belongs to the future as much as to the past” so it “undergoes constant transformation” (Hall, 2003.p336). Postcolonialism also refers to the effort to separate a palace from a colonial-formed society, which is the goal of all postcolonial characters. Essentially, it is the desire for separation and freedom from the constraints of postcolonial social structures. Frantz Fanon derives the concept of ‘Recognition by Other’ from the work of Hegel, arguing that a sense of one’s self is produced how they are perceived by others. This implies that identities are always produced through interaction and relationship between different social positions. Fanon says, Blacks do not naturally feel inferior instead their sense of inferiority is produced by racist societies. Every effort is made to bring the colonized person to admit the inferiority of his culture. Cultural hegemony is the rule of a culturally diverse society by the ruling

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class, which shapes the society's beliefs and explanations, perceptions, values, and mores so that the ruling class's worldview becomes the accepted cultural norm. Rather than portraying the social, political, and economic status quo as artificial social constructs that primarily favor the ruling class, the ruling-class worldview, as the global dominating ideology, misrepresents these conditions as natural, inevitable, and perpetual social conditions that benefit every social class.

Corruption is a complex issue that is difficult to address in any country, and it is a global problem that exists in both developed and developing countries (Ndubisi & Owoseni, 2020). Following Nigeria's 1960 independence from British colonial rule, corruption has been a major problem for the nation and is widespread at practically every level of government (Adekunle, 2015). Unfortunately, pervasive corruption in Nigeria is generally identified as the principal reason impeding the country's progress, with Transparency International placing Nigeria as one of the most corrupt countries in the world (Transparency International, 2021). It is worth noting that for a long time, developed countries have been indifferent to the problem of corruption in developing countries, even ignoring the role of foreign officials who gave bribes and public officials who laundered corrupt proceeds in foreign financial institutions. Nigeria faces challenges in addressing corruption due to institutional weaknesses, poor governance, lack of accountability, and societal norms that promote corruption. Corruption affects various sectors and levels of Nigerian society, deterring investment and contributing to the country's economic underdevelopment (Aiyede, 2016). Corruption in local government councils is perceived as an organized crime committed by neglected individuals in the local areas rather than corruption among political and bureaucratic elites. In Nigeria, government contracts are frequently inflated as a result of corrupt practices, such as kickbacks handed to public officials prior to contract completion (Akpan & Isikhuemen, 2019). Corruption in the court system impedes its proper operation since there is a widespread notion that judges may be easily paid or settled. This has led to judicial officials requesting modest bribes to expedite cases, and some are even charged with fraud and money laundering (Owolabi, 2018). Legislators at both national and state levels have been accused of taking bribes and favors from the executive branch to facilitate the passage of bills beneficial to them (Akinwotu, 2018). One of the causes of corruption in Nigeria can

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be traced to its colonial history. During the period of British colonialism, the country was governed by a small elite in collaboration with the British authorities. This system of governance led to the concentration of wealth and power in the hands of a few, which created an unequal distribution of resources and opportunities. This created a culture of greed and impunity that persists to this day. Furthermore, Nigeria has experienced political instability since independence, which has been related to a high level of corruption. Several military coups have taken place in the country, disrupting administration and resulting in embezzlement of public funds. Military governments were also infamous for disregarding the rule of law and enforcing corrupt behaviors (Adeleke et al., 2015). Transparency and accountability are critical components of effective governance. The absence of these essential characteristics allows corruption to thrive. For example, public officials are not compelled to declare their assets and liabilities, and no effective systems exist to monitor their activities. This creates a system where corrupt officials can pilfer public monies without fear of repercussions (Lambsdorff et al., 2017). Furthermore, the Nigerian legal system is riddled with bureaucratic impediments, making it difficult to prosecute corrupt officials. There is no proper framework for whistleblowers, and those who expose corruption are frequently subjected to harassment and intimidation. Corruption in Nigeria is fueled by a variety of socioeconomic causes. Poverty is a crucial element associated with corruption. Nigeria's high level of poverty has forced many residents to rely on government assistance to survive. In addition, Nigeria is a country that is rich in natural resources, such as oil and gas. The exploitation of these resources has been linked to the prevalence of corruption. Officials frequently mismanage and steal the revenue generated from these resources. This has been exacerbated by the inadequate regulatory framework, which allows officials to exploit loopholes or engage in corrupt practices (Mehrotra et al., 2012). There are eleven factors responsible for pervasive corruption in the country. These include selfishness, greed, and an ostentatious lifestyle, pressure from the home front, pressure from society as a whole, fear of poverty, a lack of adequate social welfare system, extreme ethnicity and unpatriotism, the availability of safe havens, a lack of political will, apathy on the part of most citizens, and an invisible factor (evil spirit) (Ulu, 2009). On the other hand, Nwaze identified five reasons why corruption has become an endemic

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social problem in Nigeria which include; weak institutional enforcement framework, commanders without army (disconnect between leaders and followers in Nigeria), lack of ethical standards in governance, poor reward system and extended family (Nwaze, 2012).

ANALYSIS

The purpose of the research is to investigate the elements of post colonialism in Soyinka's *Chronicles from the Land of the Happiest People on Earth* (2021). At the heart of Soyinka's narrative lies the quest for identity, both personal and national. The characters in the novel grapple with their sense of self amidst a backdrop of political instability and cultural fragmentation. Dr. Menka, a surgeon, and Duyole Pitan-Payne, an engineer and Yoruba royal, exemplify individuals trying to reconcile their professional lives with their cultural and ethical beliefs. Dr. Menka's struggles with the corruption, he witnesses in his hospital and Duyole's confrontation with political intrigue reflect their internal conflicts and search for authenticity in a morally compromised society. These characters' journeys highlight the tension between personal integrity and societal expectations. They are symbolic of the broader struggle faced by many Nigerians who navigate a landscape marred by corruption and moral ambiguity while striving to maintain their principles and sense of self. The protagonist, Duyole Pitan-Payne, embodies this struggle as he navigates a corrupt society while maintaining his moral compass. His journey reflects a broader search for authenticity in a nation plagued by the remnants of colonialism and the pressures of globalization. As a successful engineer, Duyole is constantly navigating the treacherous waters of Nigerian society, trying to maintain his integrity. Soyinka writes, "Duyole was acutely aware of the tightrope he walked daily, balancing his principles against the ever-looming specter of compromise" (Soyinka, 2021, p. 145). It demonstrate Duyole's internal struggle to stay true to his values in an environment that often rewards unethical behavior. Duyole's identity is multifaceted, reflecting his professional achievements, personal relationships, and ethical convictions. His journey is not just about professional success but also about preserving his moral compass in a world where corruption seems ubiquitous. Through Duyole's character, Soyinka explores the tension between personal ideals and societal pressures, illustrating the challenges of sustaining one's identity in a compromised society.

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Chronicles from the Land of the Happiest People on Earth (2021), is deeply ironic, pointing to the disparity between the nation's self-image and the harsh realities faced by its citizens. Through satire and dark humor, Soyinka exposes the hypocrisy and failures of the political elites who manipulate national identity for their personal gain while neglecting the well-being of the populace. The novel depicts a society where national identity is often a façade, masking the underlying issues of corruption, poverty, and social injustice. Characters like Sir Goddie, who prefer titles like "People's Steward" instead of "Prime Minister," symbolize the superficiality and deception embedded in the national narrative (p. 150). The national identity dilemma is exacerbated by Soyinka's description of a country dubbed the *Land of the Happiest People on Earth*, a moniker that contrasts sharply with the reality of widespread unhappiness and dysfunction. This sarcastic label highlights the contradiction between the imposed identity and people's lived experiences. The irony is captured in this statement, "The façade of happiness was but a thin veneer over the cracks of disillusionment and despair" (p. 73).

Soyinka critiques the superficial narratives constructed by those in power, revealing the deep-seated issues that lie beneath the façade of national pride. Other characters in the novel also grapple with their identities, often trapped between traditional values and modern influences. This struggle can be seen in their personal dilemmas and relationships, which reflect a broader societal quest for meaning and purpose. Soyinka portrays these personal stories with depth and detail, demonstrating how experiences and choices shape and reshape identity over time. The novel critiques the ways in which national identity is used for political gain, frequently at the price of the populace's genuine well-being. The characters' personal and collective memories are integral to their sense of self and their understanding of their place in the world. Soyinka investigates how historical events, particularly the colonial past, continue to shape modern identities. This connection between the past and the present emphasizes the enduring impact of history on the quest for identity. In *Chronicles from the Land of the Happiest People on Earth* (2021), memory is both a source of identity and a point of contention. Characters rely on their memories to affirm their identities, but these memories are frequently contested, fragmented, and influenced by broader socio-political forces. The legacy of colonialism, in particular, casts a long

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shadow over the protagonists' attempts to form cohesive identities. Soyinka's emphasis on memory highlights the importance of acknowledging and grappling with history in the ongoing quest for a coherent and authentic identity. Soyinka's analysis of identity heavily relies on memory and history. Soyinka emphasizes this connection in a poignant passage: "To know who we are, we must remember where we came from. Our histories are the threads that weave the fabric of our identity" (Soyinka, p. 305).

Hybridity, a central theme in postcolonial literature, pervades Soyinka's narrative. The characters and their interactions reflect the blending and clashing of traditional African values with Western influences. This hybridity is evident in the characters' interactions, societal norms, and cultural practices. For instance, the coexistence of traditional religious practices with contemporary political structures highlights the ongoing negotiation between past and present. Characters in *Chronicles from the Land of the Happiest People on Earth* (2021) embody cultural hybridity through their actions, beliefs, and interactions. Duyole Pitan-Payne, an engineer and Yoruba royal, exemplifies the blending of traditional African roots with Western education and professional skills. His character navigates the challenges of preserving cultural identity while embracing global modernity. Dr. Menka, another major character, exemplifies hybridity. As a surgeon dealing with moral deterioration and corruption in the healthcare system, his professional approach and personal ideals are a hybrid of Western medical ethics and traditional African communal sensitivities. These characters' hybrid identities provide a nuanced portrayal of the postcolonial subject navigating a society influenced by both indigenous and foreign elements. Societal Hybridity in Soyinka's work depicts a Nigerian society in which modern urban life coexists with traditional practices, creating a landscape marked by both conflict and coalescence. This dualism is evident in the societal norms, political structures, and everyday interactions. For instance, the blending of ritualistic practices and contemporary political corruption indicates a society struggling with its multifaceted identity. The political elite, as represented by characters like Sir Goddie, frequently adopt Western titles and ideologies while engaging in activities deeply rooted in traditional power dynamics. This juxtaposition emphasizes the paradoxes inherent in a hybrid culture attempting to establish a unified national identity despite

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multiple cultural influences. “The drumming of ancestral rhythms mingled with the blaring of political slogans, creating a dissonant yet familiar symphony” (Soyinka, p. 220). This hybridity is not without conflict; it often leads to tensions as characters struggle to reconcile their heritage with the demands of a rapidly changing world. This hybridity creates a complex environment where identities are constantly in flux, shaped by a mix of cultural elements. Soyinka’s portrayal of hybridity reflects the broader postcolonial reality, where identities are continuously negotiated and redefined in a world of intersecting cultural influences. Soyinka writes, “Duyole’s soul was a mosaic of ancestral wisdom and modern knowledge, each piece essential to the integrity of the whole” (p. 145). Duyole’s journey underscores the potential for personal growth and enrichment through the integration of diverse cultural elements. Soyinka uses the metaphor of the nation as a patchwork quilt, composed of disparate cultural patches sewn together by historical and contemporary threads. “The nation’s fabric was woven from threads of history, tradition, and modernity, each strand pulling in different directions, yet inextricably linked” (p. 305). Soyinka illustrates this potential through the collaborative efforts of characters from different cultural backgrounds. By drawing on their hybrid identities, they develop innovative solutions to societal problems. For instance, Duyole and his colleagues merge traditional knowledge with modern technology to address healthcare challenges in their community. Soyinka writes, “Their collaboration was a dance of cultures, each step informed by a unique rhythm, yet harmonizing to create something new and powerful” (Soyinka, p. 278). This statement emphasizes the positive possibilities of cultural hybridity, highlighting its role in fostering creativity and progress.

Corruption is pervasive force in *Chronicles from the Land of the Happiest People on Earth* (2021), serving as a critique of the postcolonial state's failures. Soyinka exposes the systemic corruption that infiltrates every level of society, from political leaders to religious figures. The novel portrays corruption as both a cause and symptom of the country’s deeper malaise, reflecting the moral decay that undermines social and political progress. Through vivid characterizations and satirical narratives, Soyinka highlights the absurdity and tragedy of corruption. The illicit trade of body parts, a recurring motif in the novel, symbolizes the commodification of human life and the erosion of moral ideals. This grim portrayal serves as a powerful indictment

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of the corrupt practices that pervade postcolonial societies. Soyinka's portrayal of corrupt leaders and their self-serving agendas highlights the disillusionment felt by many Nigerians who see past who see through the façade of national pride and prosperity. This critique is not only directed at the Nigerian state but also serves as a commentary on the broader postcolonial condition, where the quest for a cohesive national identity is complicated by historical and ongoing exploitation. Soyinka's novel portrays corruption as a ubiquitous force that infiltrates every aspect of Nigerian society. Political corruption in the novel depicts a bleak image of a fictional African nation where political leaders are deeply entrenched in corrupt practices. Election tampering, bribery, and misuse of public funds are rampant. Soyinka illustrates how corruption becomes systemic, almost a norm, within the political sphere. Economic exploitation emphasizes how economic systems are set up to favor a small number of people at the cost of the majority. The corruption within the economic system perpetuates inequality and poverty, undermining any semblance of social justice. The deterioration of morals and ethics in people and society is a sign of moral corruption. In the book, religious leaders are frequently portrayed as complicit in corrupt practices, exploiting their followers for personal gain. This critique extends to the broader theme of how religion can be manipulated to sustain corrupt power structures. From government officials to ordinary citizens, the culture of corruption is shown to be deeply entrenched. "Corruption had become the national pastime, a sport where everyone played, and no one truly won" (Soyinka, p. 54). This statement depicts the widespread acceptance and normalization of corrupt practices, highlighting how they have become a way of life. Soyinka depicts a government where bribery, embezzlement, and nepotism are rampant. "The corridors of power were slick with the grease of bribes, and the voices of dissent were drowned in the cacophony of self-interest" (p. 112). This vivid imagery illustrates the extent to which corruption has compromised the integrity of political institutions. The novel also explores the devastating consequences of political corruption on national development. Corrupt officials siphoned off public resources, leaving essential services underfunded and infrastructure in ruin. Soyinka highlights this in a poignant scene in which a hospital designed to serve the community, is left decaying owing to embezzled funding. "The walls of the hospital, once a symbol of hope, now stood as a testament to broken

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promises and stolen futures” (p. 198). *Chronicles from the Land of the Happiest People on Earth* (2021) portrays a society in which merit is overshadowed by connections, and honesty is penalized while deceit is rewarded. In one instance, Soyinka describes a business deal: “The contract was sealed not by the best bid but by the heaviest envelope, a transaction where integrity had no place (p. 143). This statement demonstrates how corruption distorts fair competition and undermines trust in societal institutions. Soyinka’s characters are often caught in moral and ethical dilemmas, struggling to maintain their integrity in a corrupt environment. The protagonist, Duyole Pitan-Payne, embodies this struggle as he tries to uphold his principles while navigating a system that rewards unethical behavior. “Duyole walked a tightrope of conscience, each step a test of his resolve in a world where virtue was a liability” (p. 212). Despite the pervasive corruption, Soyinka’s narrative also highlights the resistance against it. There are characters who, despite immense pressure, refuse to succumb to corrupt practices. These individuals symbolize hope and the possibility of change. For instance, Duyole’s commitment to integrity inspires others to stand against corruption. “In Duyole’s steadfast gaze, they found the courage to dream of a nation where honesty was not an act of defiance” (p. 278). It emphasizes the transformative potential of individual integrity in challenging systemic corruption.

Power dynamics are intricately woven into the fabric of Soyinka’s narrative, revealing the complexities of governance and control in a postcolonial setting. Soyinka explores the complexities of power, including its use, contestation, and resistance. The main focus of the novel's examination of authority is the interaction between various political, religious, and social power institutions. Soyinka highlights the possibility of resistance and change while criticizing the consolidation of power in the hands of a corrupt elite. The protagonists' attempts to negotiate and disrupt these power dynamics highlight the continuous struggle for justice and equality in a postcolonial state. For example, the novel depicts political leaders using cultural symbols and narratives to maintain authority. By blending traditional African elements with modern political rhetoric, they create a hybrid discourse that legitimizes their power. Soyinka writes, “The leaders donned the masks of tradition while speaking the language of modernity, their hybrid identities a tool of control” (Soyinka, p. 112). Soyinka vividly describes this exploitation as “The vaults of the nation’s

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wealth were plundered by those sworn to protect it, their greed a ravenous beast that devoured hope” (p. 143). This metaphor underscores the gap between rhetoric and reality in the construction of national identity. Political leaders manipulate cultural symbols and narratives to maintain control, creating a superficial image of unity and progress. The novel critiques this manipulation, revealing the dissonance between the nations projected identity and the lived realities of its citizens. Traditional authority figures also play a significant role in the novel's depiction of power dynamics. The novel portrays traditional leaders as both complicit in and victims of the corrupt system. For instance, Soyinka describes a chief who, despite his moral qualms, is forced to align with corrupt politicians. “Caught in the web of modernity’s deceit, the chief’s ancient wisdom was both his weapon and his shackles” (p. 198). It describes the complex position of traditional authorities in contemporary power structures. Amidst the corruption and manipulation characters like Duyole Pitan-Payne embody the struggle for integrity and justice. “In a world darkened by deceit, Duyole’s integrity shone like a beacon, inspiring others to reclaim their power” (p. 212). This statement, emphasizes the potential for individual resistance to spark collective empowerment.

CONCLUSION

Chronicles from the Land of the Happiest People on Earth (2021) is a profound exploration of the challenges faced by postcolonial societies. Soyinka’s brilliant storytelling technique sheds light on the quest for identity, the complexities of hybridity, the scourge of corruption, and the intricacies of power dynamics. Soyinka's incisive critique not only reflects present Nigerian challenges, but also provides a broader commentary on the human condition following colonialism. This novel is a testament to the resilience and ingenuity of those who strive to create a just and equitable society amidst the legacies of the past and the uncertainties of the present. The novel delves into the personal and national dimensions of identity via its richly drawn characters and intricate narrative, mirroring the complexities and paradoxes of life in contemporary Nigeria. Soyinka's insightful critique of cultural hybridity, historical legacies, and socio-political dynamics offers a nuanced and compelling portrait of the ongoing struggle to define and assert one's identity in a world influenced by forces of colonialism and globalization. Soyinka subtly advocates for a

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cultural renaissance, or an awakening of cultural consciousness, which has the capacity to confront moral and societal corruption. By reconnecting with cultural roots and values, postcolonial societies may find pathways to overcome the challenges posed by corruption and power imbalances. Soyinka's novel encourages readers to confront the uncomfortable truths of the postcolonial condition, to question the legacies of colonialism, and to seek paths toward genuine liberation and self-actualization. Through his masterful storytelling, Soyinka not only critiques but also encourages a rethinking of a future in which the pursuit of identity, the embrace of hybridity, and the struggle against corruption may lead to a more just and equitable society.

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