

## The Paradox of the Self in *A Nose for Money* (2006) by Francis Nyamnjoh: Between Searched and Fractured Self

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**ABSTRACT:** Postcolonial literature has never shied away from digging into Africa's (hi)story and the multifaceted intricacies that date back to the 'past' and have been continuing to hover over its political, economic, social, and cultural realms. Hence, frenetically and devotedly have many African scholars fictionally as well as realistically delved into the paradoxical existential realities facing their contemporaneous societies. Among them stands out Cameroonian novelist Francis Nyamnjoh who dissects in *A Nose for Money* (2006) some burning topical issues such as culture, tradition, modernity, materialism, leadership, (im)morality, (in)justice, capitalism, sexuality, gender, neocolonisation, politics, psychology that stand as strangleholds on the lives of Cameroonians, in particular, and Africans, in general. Leaning on psychology, sociology, psychoanalysis, psychiatry, and postcolonialism, as theories, this article analyzes the tremendous role the self plays in the emergence and process of maturation of these societal scourges. The paper also delineates how the power of the self has forged a dilemmic state of mind, molds the thread of events; how the self is made sense of in a modern area and how this conception of the self, born from self-aggrandizement, is amplified by an (un)critical appreciation and valorization of the other that is considered to be a model of success, wealth, and identity.

**Keywords:** Africa, psychology, identity, culture, modernity, ethics, neo/colonization, capitalism.

### I. Introduction

In the course of their life span, man may encounter physically turbulent mental and psychological phenomena. The complexity and gravity of these disturbances very often escape the sole faculty of their reason to figure and sort out. Faced with this chaotic situation, man, without any immediate remedy, tends to plunge into critical nervous breakdown, thus losing all their true sense of self. These psychical imbalances mostly change the sequence of events in their life by affecting their social and interpersonal relationships. Therefore, the need of and resort to studies like psychiatry which is defined as a medical specialty that involves a diagnosis and treatment of temporary or chronic mental disorders to solve serious issues of these kinds (Sokanu, 2020 : 02). In parallel, the role of psychiatrists, which consists in assessing both the physical and mental aspects of psychological problems, is purposely linked to the intrinsic function of many African postcolonial writers in

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their respective societies. Typically, writing then in the African context(s) surpasses the confining barriers of solely fictionalizing, dramatizing, and narrating factual societal events. That is one of the reasons why some postcolonial scholars endeavor to grapple with and resolve the excruciating past, present, and future concerns challenging African societies. They work towards molding, as MelkiSedek (2014) buttresses it, the “*soul or spirit of a people resides in their innermost being, in their collective (un)conscious; that mechanism which saves them from disintegration and provides them with energy to get back on their feet in the depths of despair*” (Sedek, 2014: 99).

Besides raising the complexities of issues such as colonization, neo-colonization, capitalism, globalization, culture, eurocentrism, among others, it is a type of literature that lays emphasis on ‘existentialism’ where man becomes the central target of focus and the subject of scrutiny in society. Thus, the questions worth asking are: why man and not society? What kind(s) of man? Man in relationship to what and who? From a sociological point of view, society refers “*not to a group of people only but to the complex pattern of the norms, interaction and relationships that arise from them; society resides in the minds of individual; it is a process of living*” (quoted in Dillip Mishra, 2016:04). Ginsberb shores it up by holding that it is “*a collection of individuals united by certain relations or modes of behavior which mark them off from the others*” (quoted in Dillip Mishra, 2016:05). In fact, exploring these patterns of behaviors is what has motivated Cameroonian writer Francis Nyamnjoh to publish *A Nose for Money* (2006), a novel in which he features historically, contextually, socially, but more importantly psychologically his society with a view to understanding the root causes of the different ramifications of the plagues the citizens have been waging war against for which man is somehow to be held accountable.

In his literary text, Nyamnjoh satirically throws light on the features of a fictional contemporary bilingual Cameroonian African Mimboland, his fictitious setting, where, through the tragedy of the main character Prospere, a Mimbolander searching for the finer things in life, is graphically depicted as a society caught up in the mire of frustration and turbulence because of materialism that is favored over love taken in its various forms. The masterpiece offers then satirically a revealing narrative style supported by allegories, idiomatic languages, proverbs, sayings, tales, ambiguities, and allusions. This all together metaphorically gives substance to how Francis Nyamnjoh has ironically diagnosed both the psyche in modern politics and the extent to which people have turned out to be affected by the psychopathically materialistic ways of life.

Indeed, the unquenchable quest for wealth, all things considered, is no fortuitous in itself as it is sustained and nurtured by some people’s problematic and misleading conception of the self in a society where it is diagnosed that crippled sense of identity is the governing rule, trigger of actions and reactions. Therefore, *A Nose for Money* (2006) offers spaces for the study of individuals’ (re)interpretation, (re)interrogation, (re)consideration, especially, the paradoxicality, changeability, and seriousness of their search for a self-perceived-and-defined self through their attitudes and undertakings as they become increasingly influenced by sheer accumulation of money. This hunt for wealth as Ashley V. Whillans (2017) evidences it, “*is associated with differences in people’s self-concepts*” (Whillans, 2007: 15).

Viewing the literary work as a reflection and representation of the world and human life, and the primary criterion applied to a work being the ‘truth’ of its representation, the article sets out to analytically cast light on the dichotomy between searched and fractured self in a materialism-oriented society in Nyamnjoh’s *A Nose for Money* (2006), which figuratively features a society in quest for the self in a modern area. To this end, leaning on sociology, psychoanalysis, psychology, postcolonialism, mimetic criticism, the paper analyses the interlude between hopelessness, hope, and the shaping of ideologies against the backdrop of a dichotomic view of society. It also sheds light on materialism and alienation as people grapple with the matrix of the deviationist self.

## **II. Between Hopelessness, Hope, and the Shaping of Ideologies: A Dichotomic View of Society**

African contemporary literature, given the many delicate issues the continent’s societies have been wrestling with, cannot sidestep what Irving Howe terms ‘a political novel,’ a novel in which political ideas play a dominant role or in which the political and social milieu is the prevailing setting. W. Curtis Schade (1980: 01).

Evidentially, Francis Nyamnjoh narrative *A Nose for Money* (2006) serves as a signpost of commitment along the itinerary of most African writers' literary productions and trajectories. In post-independence Africa, many societies find themselves torn between politico-social and existential challenges which, all together and essentially, bring the ever topical question of their development to the core. *A Nose for Money* (2006), beside its holisticness and thematic concerns, symbolically depicts a contemporaneous Cameroonian society that is still suffering from the poisonous seeds of post-colonial disillusionment sown by those described as 'chatterers-of-hope elite,' leaders who have proven to have pooled the wool over their people and come to legitimize Sammy Beban Chumbow's hyperbolic terms referring to them as "political mosquitoes" (Chumbow, 1995: 6).

As satirical as ironical, Nyamnjoh's literary text interweaves space, time, pretext, text (language), symbolism to typify through the story of Prospere, the main protagonist, a society where people who are guided by an instinct of survival indulge in whichever found within their reach to eke out a living. As the novel unfolds, a portrait of the average Cameroonian endeavoring to re-create his hope, reshapes his ideologies and self as he tries to break out of the prison of the predicament brought about the bites of the "*political mosquitoes*" (Nyamnjoh, 2006: 6) is painted. In the process, all his [the Cameroonian] ideas, thoughts, new paradigm shifts along with all its implications are made to rise to the surface. In fact, the first instances of the book with the ubiquitousness of countless characters called *hawkers* and children begging in every nook and cranny of the city, betray the stubborn sensation of disillusionment which haunts some Mimbolanders whose daily lives have been narrowed down to petty activities to have both hands meet. This factual situation also foretells the extent to which poverty creates spaces for ideologies, normalized instincts, and legitimized (im)morality for survival:

The hawkers who roamed the streets in an effort to make a living out of little of nothing [...] in Sawang. Every minute of every working day, children wandered and down the streets with head loads of puffballs, akara beans, bread. Others, mostly dressed in plumbing gear, electrical outfits, plastic carrier bags and other handy household utilities, roamed the streets like zombies, scarecrows creating desire and harassing indifference. Early in the morning, at lunch time and in the evening, women of all ages and sizes struggle through the streets with wheelbarrows full of hot food shouting to every passer-by to stop and fill their stomachs (Nyamnjoh, 2006:6).

Nyamnjoh's powerful use of language is glaringly indicative of the miserableness in which people live. In effect, the author has purposely portrayed them as "*consumer zombies*" (Nyamnjoh & Page 2002:27). Nyamnjoh resorts to dysphemism, an exaggerated and derogatory word, in lieu of simple euphemism to disclose a hinted accusing finger at the failed elites, those whose lifestyles are expressed through their conceited luxuries and stand in direct contract to the downtrodden, the '*wretched of the earth*' to paraphrase Frantz Fanon (1961). The narration of the story continues with the description of a city being swarmed with people selling affordable items to the poor in an area where modernity is reaping what it has sown. This is explicative of the ideology of creating a sort of valued and accepted self, and identity on the part of the *wretched* to have the "*opportunity to stimulate the ways of the rich or simply to hang on and hope*" (Nyamnjoh, 2006: 6). In the city, instead of leaders being extollingly called messiahs, hawkers are ironically carrying the burden of salvation in their ways of sparking off a sense of self that those left in the lurch by bourgeoisie-minded leaders, lack. The political elite irresponsibly condone Sawang city's being overwhelmed with sellers of mirage, self, validation of people's consistent penchant for rivaling them. The latter find comfort and relief in being wholesalers of hope, as an expression of a delusional high sense of economic safety insofar as "*the present government of Mimboland had never decided to touch the hawkers. They saw hawking as political weapon because hawkers provide food for the poor of the city*" (Nyamnjoh, 2006: 6). Therefore, hawkers become fashioners of fake identity who provide the opportunity to mimic the ways of the well-to-do of the city, which William James (1927) supports arguing that "*identities that constitute the self are, in fact, dynamically constructed in context*" (James, 1927: 4). This feeling of acquired identity is viewed as a reflexive mirror of self-(re)construction actualization. In this regard,

the reader realizes how mannerism and mimicry have become normalized and erected as standards of fashionability, respect, esteem, token, gauge of wealth, basically of the upper class level.

The author's narrative instinct and acuteness are denotative as they bring home through the wandering lenses of the protagonist and such provocative garrulously skilled sellers, the effects of people's views of themselves and others. According to Neil Hibbert (2016), the falling back on to this mindset has to do with a lack of social justice he defines as "*being a set of stronger egalitarian norms and human rights functioning as baseline protections against common threats posed by states to the general interests of persons subjected to them*" (Hibbert, 2016: 01). Actually, Prospere's [as a romantic and caring husband] haggling about prices as he tries to buy some beautiful items for his wife with whom he "*wished he could be more often than was possible with his job as a distributor*" (Nyamnjoh, 2006: 11) denotes how poverty shapes ideologies. This showcases that the paradox that is visible in the modern city is that "*you found truck-pushers or manual laborers in suits and sometimes millionaires went about in shirtsleeves and blue jeans*" (Nyamnjoh, 2006: 11). This contradictionism is to be accounted for by a [fallacious] contrastive conception of self which is shared by both the rich and the poor folks living in the city, thus referring to the 'antinomies of pure reason' of Emmanuel Kant (1781). Through this oppositional representation, the narrator embarks the reader on a dialectical movement in which a true proposition finds its own internal limit and is therefore overcome into a larger truth which will undergo the same process as the contradiction is not empty insofar as it always adds something positive to the development. The main purpose being to show that we [people] are surrounded by contradictions in the sense that everything is in the process of movement, being, and becoming. By the same token, Mark R. Leary and June Price (2012) assert that "*reflecting on oneself is both a common activity and a mental feat. It requires that there is an "I" that can consider an object that is "me."*" The term self includes both the actor who thinks ("*I am thinking*") and the object of thinking [about me]" (Price, 2012:5).

Additionally, Prospere, the main character does not seem to escape from the nets of disillusionment that hold Mimbolanders hostage in the ways they battle day in day out against the demons of poverty that are steadfastly fed by their leaders who worship the privileges of elitism. It dawns on him at times that he wants to give up on his current job as a distributor for a high-paying one. To all intents and purposes, decision-making is mainly at the mercy of circumstances and this Prospere senses it with regard to his wife who takes pains to see or live with her husband accordingly. As a result, to fill the gaps, in a tragic, disloyal, and an undignified way, she cheats on him with a soldier before being caught in the act. The very climax witnessed in their marriage life is all the more allegorical and telling as it uncovers how some people, in the midst of chaotic and undesired situations, see the waxing and waning of their sense of self, their *ego*.

Connectedly to psychoanalysis, Freud's general approach to the study of personality is said to be psychodynamic in that it assumes that personality is a field of forces that are sometimes in opposition is given credit by Nyamnjoh. The latter exemplifies the idea with the energy of the *id* he reflects in his narrative that is often opposed to the energy of the *superego*. As described the *id* that refers to the psychological expression of the biological drives may say, "*I want it all and I want it now.*" The *superego*, in turn, may say, "*Don't. That's not right, or you will be sorry*" (quoted in Arthur Asa Berger, 2010:139). In the same vein, Nyamnjoh also resorts to Aristotle's rhetoric of *pathos* (sufferings and experiences), *logos* (controversial arguments), and *ethos* (call for the intellect, reason, and ethics) as he seeks to persuade his reader about the danger of the situation. In his persuasion move, he leans on the psychoanalyst approach that holds that there is an "*ego defense mechanism referred to as repression that populates the unconscious domain with forbidden wishes*" (quoted in Arthur Asa Berger, 2010:139).

However, noticeably, people like Prospere's wife, Rose, are made to lose any sense of repression when they are forced by a system to live in a country where the search for livelihood or wealth is the mainstream activity. They have lost any leverage on their choices, an idea backed up by Zat Rena (2018) who puts forward that "*decisions are not made independently by the strength of our consciousness, as we commonly think*" (Rena, 2018:4). This is

unquestionably a tragic blow that people like Rose have received, thereby remorsefully witnessing the depravation of a morality-sustainer and the catalyzer of misleading ideologies that leads them astray.

More to the point, in painting the Mimboland society in so derogatory a way the author casts a moral judgment upon the leaders who have not lived up to their people's expectations and have turned out to be the proud plowers of the capitalist countries, thus preferring to be death-and-dumb to the misery of their masses. Indeed, the laxity which prevails in Prospere's city with regard to good governance and social justice is representative of the alienated elites who are enmeshed in their contemporary ideologies of "*modernizing their Africanity*" (Nyamnjoh, 2006:14). Obviously, when modernity takes root some Africanity underpinnings crumble under the sway of neo-colonial pawns and their 'masters', advocates of "*lackluster leadership*" (Chumbow, 1995:6). This type of leadership is linked to how capitalism gains and stands firm on its ground through the controlling of African countries' economies as it is symbolically epitomized by the presence of Western enterprises such as 'Banque Francaise d'Outre Mer' (BFOM) and of some people like Monsieur Gaston Abanda, who embody the city's elites. This is significantly an unfailing indicator of some of the alienating factors of the capitalist ideology in African societies which Nkrumah has warned against and buttressed by contending that "*it is the worse form of imperialism: for those who practice it, it means power without responsibility and for those who suffer from it; it means exploitation without redress*" (Nkrumah, 1965:5).

In the same vein, the tide of events in Nyamnjoh's narrative keeps the reader in the loop as to the dehumanizing nature of neo-colonialist ideology. It mischievously inflates the *ego* and creates in the authentic person a double *ego* that acts on their psyche to kill any mechanism of self-critical conscience. This seems to be what has raised the hackles of the broadcaster in the novel to portray Monsieur Gaston as "*a good example of imbecility to which excessive greed was likely to lead most of the wealthy [the leaders] in the society?*" (Nyamnjoh, 2006:55). He also raises the legitimate question: "*why had such a wealthy been cursed with such a filthy mind?*" (Nyamnjoh, 2006:55). Answering the latter's question, Paul T.P. Wong (2005) reminds that to study a person as a whole and gain a complete understanding of human existence, we need to include three levels or regions of the conscious experience: the first level *Umwelt* (the biological world), he defined as the person's sensations about their body and the physical world around them such as pain and pleasure. The second region is what he referred to as *mitwelt* otherwise understood as the social world, their relations, community, culture, including how they feel and think about others. The third level being *eigenwelt* seen as the psychological world, the subjective, phenomenological world of the personal meaning, such as their awareness of the special meaning something holds and their understanding of the experience itself. Therefore, analyzed from Paul's approaches, one can argue that what stands noticeable on the surface pertaining to the elites' personalities in *A Nose for Money* (2006) is that that Mimboland's corrupt leaders' *umwelt* has been affected by their ruthless sense and approval of that 'Jungle Law' which according to NgugiwaThiong'O embodies the philosophy that says "*you eat somebody or you are eaten. You sit on somebody or somebody sits on you*" (Ngugi, 1987: 291). This ideology accounts for how tragically pernicious their *mitwelt* has been poisoned by a fallacious conception and fabrication of a self that guides their exploitative instincts of "*political mosquitoes*" (Chumbow, 1995:6). Most dramatically, leaders in *A Nose for Money* (2006) are stripped of their *eigenwelt* as a result of mental oppression and are yet to be reconciled with their lost self and agency "*which is capacity of thought and critique, and thus is also capable of choice and action*" (Childers & Henry, 1995: 6). Agency would allow them to act autonomously in their psychological world for the sake of their community's wellbeing. Consequently, psychological turmoil is then what keeps haunting the post-colonial leaders who have not found themselves captured in a dilemma because they have simply willingly decided to be under the remote control of Western powers.

Indeed, the political dominance, in return, empowers leaders with regard to their masses and impacts their social and economic life. For Walt Rodney (1972) it is "*a crowing vice*" (1972:13). This mischievous vice further lengthens the relational margin of power between rulers and oppressed, which is seemingly the reason why "*leaders may be motivated to maintain or increase the power gap between themselves and followers, thereby protecting their privileged position*" (Marnier & Mead, 2010:03). Prospere and Marie Claire in Nyamnjoh's *A Nose*

for *Money* (2006) have gone through bitter oppression on the part of those types of leaders like Matiba who single themselves out as pure symbols of irresponsible and authoritarian elites addicted to their instinctive lust for blind power. In fact, the precarious conditions people are living in and struggling against have a lot to do with the notion of legitimation theorized in Dione and Diop's "The Rhetoric of Irony in Ngugiwa Thiong'O's *Devil on the Cross* (1987) and *Matigari* (1980)". As for them, the politics of legitimation seeks from the governed, the masses to normalize and consent to the laws [of subjugation] enforced by leaders. Submission to the unjust is required of their people (Dione & Diop, 2019:10). In actuality, the elites in *A Nose for Money* (2006) adopt the same political tactics in that they expect people to accept their fate, formalizers of their woeful conditions.

Likewise, Emmanuel in *Souls Forgotten* (2008) by Francis Nyamnjoh appears to fall prey to the same predators of a system that shatters the hopes and influences the worldview and ideologies of young people migrating from their home village to the city and considered by their parents to be "the apple of his village parents' eye whose hopes and social progression and riches are pinned on his academic achievements" (Macdonald, 2018: 2). Emmanuel is the epitome of those countless youths in *A Nose for Money* (2006) who head to capital cities like Mimboland to seek fortune and bring back to their home villages. They believe in promises of the urbanization relentless pace noticed across the African continent. But they ironically find themselves in the inescapable trap of frustration and desperation on account of the illusory dreams of cities of gold they have been sold to. As hyperbolically put by Macdonald, they find themselves collided into "the guillotine of exams results" (Macdonald, 2018: 2). These results, as typified in *A Nose for Money* (2006), characterize the haves and the have-nots, the upper class and the lower class. Similar to this young man's misadventure, hopelessness runs the tales of so many other characters in the book whose outlook and selves have been ill-fatedly reshaped by unexpected precarious living conditions and shattered dreams.

As a gifted writer, Nyamnjoh's narrative style is such riveting since it somehow leaves the reader spellbound as the story follows its stream of blending the characters' lives, and of creating interactions between 'upper class leaders' and 'lower class citizens' to better shine a light on the degree to which the mixture is informative with regard to their attitudes. As a matter of fact, Marie Claire's love affair with Matiba as a member of the state is very revealing as it betrays how over-powerful ministers and politicians are to the point of doing whatever they wish without anybody being able to stop them. Prosper being at some point the woman's sexual partner happens to come to grips with certain secrets. According to him, "the ministers were all powerful individuals, and he did not need to have realized that ministers could make or mar as they pleased. Only a fool jumps into a river on a rainy day without stopping to think" (Nyamnjoh, 2006:120). The piece of information he shares with the reader substantiates the negative psychosocial relationship of power that is noticed with most African post-independence leaders. Most crucially, the ways power is mishandled in *A Nose for Money* (2006) has shrunk all rooms for social justice and ideals of equalitarianism, thereby creating impulses of survival in a chaotic context of poverty, undermining morality and ethics, and imprisoning Mimboland in a dark pit of absolute social ruin.

### **III. Between Materialism and Alienation: Unfolding the Matrix of the Deviationist Self**

When one sets out to navigate the ship of committed and deconstructionist writing through the channel of postcolonial literature, among the thematic issues at stake are that of 'decadence.' As defined in M. H. Abrams's *Literary Terms Book* (1999), it is related to "deviancy from standard norms of behavior, and sexual experimentation, in the attempt to achieve (in a phrase echoed from the French poet Arthur Rimbaud) the systematic derangement of all the senses" (Abrams, 1999:55). Indeed, in exploring Francis Nyamnjoh's *A Nose for Money* (2006), the reader's eyes are opened to how ironically the society the artist depicts, haggles with the forces and evils of decadence. The prevailing social disorder in the city of Mimboland is not accidental in itself as it is inherently associated with the many pledges and promises capital cities and urban areas make to their migrants, to the opportunity and job seekers coming to be re-united with their fantasized and hypothesized selves. This stems from the unsuspected mirage of modernity which people's 'biological identity' suffers from. In so doing, they nurture new sets of mind that lead to debauchery, corruption, and fraud, among other vices.

Therefore, desire becomes what controls their lives, manipulates, and corrupts their self-concept initially influenced by an uprooted 'fabricated identity.' How citizens view themselves is also instrumental in (re)creating and (re)shaping their selves which psychologists like Daphna Oyserman and al. (2012) confirm, arguing that "self, self-concept, and identity can be considered as nested elements, with aspects of the "me" forming self-concepts and identities being part of self-concepts. Yet scholars often use the terms self and identity as if they were synonyms (Swann & Bosson, 2010). Sometimes the terms are used in reference to the process of making sense of the world in terms of what matters to "me" or to the consequences of social contexts on a variety of beliefs and perceptions about the self (Daphna Oyserman and al., 2012: 18).

Indeed, to better unravel the scale of *alienationism* and deviationism, along with the slippery line that exists between searched and fractured self, it is vital to see this through the binoculars of how Nyamnjoh embellishes the power of characterization in *A Nose for Money* (2006). In the literary text, the characters are fashioned in a way that some remain stable or unchanged in outlook and disposition, from the beginning to the end of the work. This fickleness witnessed is distinctly spotlighted by what are the flat and round characters in the narrative that contribute in unearthing the pretext of the writer. Thus, decadence is glaringly delineated through the lustful swarming of places of immorality that infect the soul of Mimboland city. As such, Prospere, the main character, as the story unfolds, ends up adopting so negative a personality that he interacts with whores. This is evidenced by some 'immoral' female characters like Mary-Claire who become 'objectified' by men like Prospere who consider them to be mere 'sex toys' to be manipulated scornfully. This is reminiscent of how their mentality has been fouled by the "*synthetic and fraudulent way of life*" (Sokoloff, 2018:2) that holds its horrendous grip on the city, thus blindfolding them to question its peripheral credit on money and materiality.

The fractured self is fundamentally justified in people's self-created image of the 'other' as the symbol of success, wealth, and fulfillment. The idea is substantiated by Raleigh M. Gardiner (2014) who points out that "*the self has no meaning without its relationship to the other*" (Gardiner, 2004:44). Paradoxically enough, in probing into the psychology of the ideology of people clustered inescapably in the mud of Mimboland, city of wealth over morality and unconditional love, what becomes perceptible is that the corrupt individuals develop ideas that run counter to Mama Rosa's disinterest in money, taken as sanctuary of good values. When discussing with Prospere, she happens to remind him of the unworldly aspect of the life she embodies, saying that "*money is not everything you naughty boy*" (Nyamnjoh, 2006: 92). From an idealist and deconstructionist standpoint, Nyamnjoh alters in the novel some of his characters' feelings, personalities, and beliefs. These literary tactics aim at allusively indicating that there is at least one layer of hope for a transitional phase into society that serves as shelter of and home to sacred and unbreakable morality and ethics. As a soil character, the type that embodies the opposite traits of another one, Mama Rosa takes it on her as a mission to burn the 'grass of alienation' before it sprouts into a forest that may subsequently fall victim to terrific bushfire and assassinate its dwellers. Conversely, in Nyamnjoh's fictitious society that is adducted by the forces of capitalism and alienation, it goes against the grain for people to become aware of the ills that keep them aloof with their human and salvationist selves.

Furthermore, disapproving of the line of thoughts and ideologies of 'money-doublers' like Gaston Abanda, along with his tycoons, political mosquitoes, and prostitutes, the narrator speaks out with a moralist voice against the cherishers of irrationality and makers of sleazy money. His indignation is worrisome insofar as "*it's amazing how often some people tend to ignore the voice of reason in them, particularly when they think that the going is good*" (Nyamnjoh, 2006:90). Consequently analyzed from Lacan's theory of cognitive transition '*between two distinct orders of beings*' as the formative moment where the notions of 'Self' and 'Other' diverge within the human psyche (quoted in Gardiner, 2014: 8), one unambiguously grasps how the alienated reason impacts the behaviors and (mis)deeds of city people. According to Lacan, an infant first experiences the world around it from the imaginary order marked by the fluid cohesion of internal and external worlds. A child in the imaginary perceives itself to exist within and between the objects and persons in its environment, and it develops an amalgamous sense of identity (quoted in Gardiner, 2014: 8). Allegorically, characters like Jean-Claude, Jean-Marie, and Monsieur Gaston Abanda in *A Nose for Money* (2006), analogous to infant Lacan

typifies, are torn between two realms of existence, that of objects, explicitly of materialism, and of people, the other.' The latter is no one else but the one who embodies 'the modern man', whose reflexive image, lifestyles, and mentality are represented as societal norms to abide by. Therefore, [Western cultural] modernity dictates its laws to people and locks them away in an "imaginary order" (quoted in Gardiner, 2014: 9) where they lose sense of what they are at present, who they used to be in the past, and who they are irremediably being driven to be in the future. This imaginary world then, which edicts a chronotope to make sense of this temporality (past, present, future) within a universe of illusion, deludes people in the Mimboland into shaping an identity that detaches them from their authentic selves. As a result, they become victims of the tricks of modernity in the way they confuse fiction and reality since "in helping us slip back into the imaginary order, our fantasies allow us to renegotiate the terms of our realities identity" (quoted in Gardiner, 2014: 10). This is manifestly the reason why it is affirmed in the novel that "both leaders and the led shared these attitudes; but what was known for sure was the overriding commitment to[...]modernization that characterized them all" (Nyamnjoh, 2006: 65).

Along the lines, Paul T. P Wong (2005) in his work about existential and humanistic theories argues that "our capacity to choose how we exist determines what kind of people we will become. Thus, existence precedes essence" (Wong, 2005:6). Thus, the extent to which people's essence is tied with their existing mode in the cities of Sawang and Mimboland that bear the brunt of materialism and capitalism is justified in how psychologically stringent individuals are with regard to their moral and ethical principles and values. The way people choose to live can be explained by their status of victims of a vicious leadership and governance system that fails to create equal opportunities for all, thereby changing their perception of themselves and dictating, and influencing their actions. The aftermath of this type of life is that people hide behind their being juggled between hopelessness and joblessness to frame an outlook that is at odds with good behaviors. Actually, this status quo is what befalls so many girls in the city, whose values have been deviated as a result of the search for survival at all costs. Their values bear abstract meanings based on their lived experiences, an idea strengthened by Frankl (1967, 1986) who believes that "these values can guide our search for meaning and simplify decision-making" (Frankl, 1967 & 1986:12). People then rationalize their attitudes since virtually everyone complies with what they view as normality. These chains of behaviors and philosophy of being, be-coming, and be-longing (Dione, 2018) are sustained by Zat Rana when clarifying that "at its core, rationality is about identifying this chain of cause and effect. To do that, we have to accept that the sources or foundation can't be some abstract thought, but rather, it is how we model our very survival as an organism" (Zat Rana, 2020:2).

Again, the idea of fractured self in *A Nose for Money* (2006) is further exemplified by the Monique's case. As a student, if she wished, she could have decided against all odds to turn down Prosper's proposal of marriage and focused on her studies. Unfortunately, she has to put up with the brainwashed mind of her parents, whose eyes, hearts, and ears have been won over, persuaded by the whispers of materialism. As evidenced in the novel, Monique "would have saved her breath if only she had stopped to think that her opinion did not count for much" (Nyamnjoh, 2006:162). Allegedly, the custom of her people [Mbangang] would not heed her consent. Such a patriarchal bias against women is embedded in the materialistic and alienated spirit that has gained ground in their community. Suffice it to say that Prosper's overnight-acquired wealth makes them take the bait. Therefore, she is innocently appalled at how "her parents had pounced on the idea in the manner of a starving dog on a piece of bone" (Nyamnjoh, 2006: 162). Their reaction is symbolically illustrative of the culture of valuing wealth over love that tightens its grip on them and on many post-colonial African societies that are handcuffed by the evils of modernity. More than a cultural practice, it has turned into a [normal] system which Grant E. Donnelly and al (2016) have pinpointed that materialism is most commonly measured as a value system of subscales reflecting three components. First, *acquisition centrality* that refers to the consumer's belief that having material items is important; second, the *pursuit of happiness through acquisition* that reflects a belief those possessions can increase life satisfaction and well-being; third, *possession-defined success* that gauges a person's tendency to judge accomplishments [the self's and others'] by the number and prestige of accumulated possessions (Donnelly and al., 2016:27). Crucially, these authors' view of materialism is conceptualized as a value that predisposes individuals to favor a consumption-based strategy for escaping aversive self-awareness

(Donnelly and al. 2016:27). The idea of self-awareness, negation of oneself and of self-degradation, valorization is associated with both cultural subjugation and alienation that blind Mimbolanders to develop a sense of inferiority from the ways they think and how they act by ideologically valuing Western lifestyles at the expense of theirs. Indeed, Nyamnjo seems to have comprehended Edward Said's statement that "*the task for the scholar is not to separate the material struggle over territory from the other-worldly struggle over meanings but to connect them*" (quoted in Nyamnjo & Page, 2002: 2). They depict in as satirical as ironical a way how the notion of meaning is appreciated, interpreted, and credited from the lenses of whiteness, of the West which serves as a model of reference to Cameroonians. For the latter, the West stands as the "*bearer of the gaze and the maker of meaning, whilst the 'Orient', the African or the 'Other' is left as the passive object of western curiosity*" (Nyamnjo & Page, 2002:3). What the author describes as social construction of whiteness is given credence by Cameroonians "*because reflected in the practices of power and also the character of their identity*" (Nyamnjo & Page, 2002:3). Comparatively, in *A Nose for Money* (2006), some characters adopt whiteness and its representations. Still worse, conception of beauty is westernized; women in the modern cities take it for granted that to be attractive, they must dress like Europeans, be slim and sleek, and dressed in miniskirts. Even Prospere is astounded at how they drown themselves in such ostentatious toilets, at how much eager they are to invest their monthly salaries to buy a brand new pair of Italian shoes. Some of them bleach their hair blonde to mimic dancers and film starlets of the Western entertainment industry (Nyamnjo, 2006:141). In the work by Gbenoba & Fidelis and al.), Homi Bhabha seeing this pattern of thought as the leitmotif being, argues that it is an expression of "*an exaggerated copying of language, culture, manners, ideas; [...] supported by the desire to emerge as authentic through mimicry- through a process of repetition*" (quoted in Gbenoba & Fidelis and al.:45). As matter of fact, this is what characterizes women in the city of Mimboland, as they consciously force it upon them to cultivate attitudes of an 'unauthentic self' so as to appear sophisticated as they deem expected of them. Their striving to attain 'false identities' has more to do with their mental representation of 'self' than the situation they are faced with. This is the reason why Saliou Dione (2018) points out that "*the struggle for identity is more pressing within the 'self' than within other social circumstances*" (Dione, 2018:24). Indeed, when one's sense of oneself is determined by and from an outsider, the other, taken as 'the center of the world', the victims envision the relationships with themselves from a broken mirror; that reflects back a 'betrayed self' which, ultimately, nurtures deviationist inclinations which deviate them. As a result, the side-effects of this 'borrowed self' hail from the creation of what is termed "*competing alter ego*" (Nyamnjo & Page, 2002:03), that is how some uprooted Cameroonians hanker after being like their fabricated source of self-representation, Western women. Therefore, for Nyamnjo, "*their self is maintained through the production of the white as the other*" (Nyamnjo, 2006:3). This cultural breaking point facing people in the city has given rise to the surging libertinism stemming from the reverence of money, the cult of which is seen as stairs leading up to the highest floors of wealth, of prosperity.

In actual fact, from the unflagging search for meaning and distrust of self-awareness are born some telltale signs. In delineating how noxious this cultural alienation is, Nyamnjo brings it to its climax as those who migrate to the modern cities become unwilling to return to their home villages. They refuse to break out of the cage of modernity to find refuge in the sanctuary of tradition. The merciless clash of the two turns out to be worsened as evidenced by characters like Charlotte and Chantal. The former was raised in the village before moving to the city unlike the latter who was born and bred in what Nyamnjo symbolically ionizes as the spring of "*la civilization modern*" - modern civilization (Nyamnjo, 2006:161), introduced by *les blancs de l'au-dela* - "the white people in Heaven". Even Charlotte's parents "*had cultivated a passionate dislike of the village life and traditional values*" (Nyamnjo, 2006: 163). They claim to be the fashionable women of the city and are puffed with joy when compared to "*African-American women or better still to white women whose world view, tastes and values were daily brought to them via movies, the radio, television, magazines, catalogues and the best-selling thrillers*" (Nyamnjo, 2006: 153). This cultural dismantlement contributes in shaping their selves. They symbolize the African people who think highly of themselves as different from the others, thus creating an *us* versus *them* binary divide resting on a spatial differentiation between people of the urban areas and people of the rural areas in their process of becoming people like Chantal who still keep some roots of the village but are

still dreaming of being likened to a white woman. They find themselves in a dilemma, the negativity of the double bind situation of which, if analyzed, leads to Frantz Fanon's arguing that "*he continues to struggle against him. He was torn between what he was and what he wanted to be, and now he is torn between what he wanted to be and what he is making of himself*" (Fanon, 1986:186). It is then the embodiment of Whiteness and Western ways of life seen as a gateway to material abundance that has corrupted their senses of their selves that Nyamnoh is unearthing. From then on, the internalization of ideologies of inferiority becomes the root cause of the tightrope and of the alienation of traditional values they are (un)consciously suffering from.

Even so, Nyamnoh has not witnessed the dramatic turn of events in his society without proposing a paradigm shift. To this end, the author has theorized what he refers to as "*the filter of Occidentalism*" (Nyamnoh & Page, 2002:24). As he puts it, "*the filter of Occidentalism starts by doubting the 'truthfulness' of the images of the West that are available*" (Nyamnoh & Page, 2002:24). In this respect, the author calls upon characters like Chantal, Prospere, Charlotte, and Matiba to unlearn the Western cultural achievements and its ideas of self-worth based on the cult of materialism. In other words, for Scholar the writer, the *filter of Occidentalism* allows the African, in general, and the Cameroonian, in particular, not to define the self under the influence of the 'fashioned other.' They have to police their own basis, ideas of self-representation fetched from the socio-cultural realities. For him, the cult of consumerism fed by materialism should be buried by Cameroonian elites who have become "*consumer zombies, for whom life has been reduced to feeding the western consumer machine at the expense of their disillusioned unemployed young people*" (Nyamnoh & Page, 2002:27). Also, the misleading rhetoric of materialism as alluded to by Ngugiwa Thiong'O that is at the core of the shameful status quo dwelling in the cities of Mimboland should be shredded to pieces through a process of decolonizing the mind (Ngugi, 1986). Francis Nyamnoh through the character of Mama Rosa, whose telling reminder to Prospere that "*money is not everything*" (Nyamnoh, 2006: 92) carries the idea of struggling against the colonial "*psychological violence*" (Ngugi, 1986: 09). Healing the paradox of the self as a result of fractured self takes roots then from breaking away with the ideology that distances them from their "*tools of self-definition in relationship to others*" (Ngugi, 1986:09).

In view of the *dilemmic* situation, the conception of the 'authentic self,' its acquisition, recapturing, and preservation become essential and they should be warranted by a complete conciliation and reconciliation with 'oneself' as a sanctuary of valuable and salvationist culture. To achieve this, they [alienated Mimboland people] must engage in cleansing themselves of the 'objectifying' and 'dehumanizing' rhetoric that "*accustomed them to thinking themselves as "less than," to be conditioned to view as complete and human only the dominating practices of the oppressor, so that to fully become human means to stimulate these practices*" (quoted in Farabi, 2014:6).

#### IV. Conclusion

The post-colonial disillusionment era has tremendously a lot to do with the tragedy of colonization in Africa through its production of political elites that advocate the colonizer's image. Therefore, among the challenges facing African contemporaneous societies stand out political leadership, social (in)justice, identity crisis, poverty, globalization, capitalism, neo-colonization, neo-exploitation, among others. In fact, exploring Francis Nyamnoh's *A Nose for Money* (2006) has helped [us] to see the archetype of what many African countries are tussling with under the yoke of [the Western cultural] modernity marked by some evils like materialism and individualism. Scrutinizing those issues from a psychological, sociological, psychoanalyst, psychiatric, and postcolonial perspectives has proven that the shift to modernity has also developed a cult of money and power in the psyche of the Mimbolanders in so sporadic a way that it has become normal and a curse in disguise. As the novel unfolds the reader is faced with virtually insoluble contradictions informed by some behavioral patterns and actions in relation to some characters' (mis)conception of self. That is, according to the author, how this becomes one of the driving forces that prioritize material things over human beings, abnormalcy over normalcy, Western culture over African culture for the sake of [Western] modernity.

Indeed, what has been striking in Nyamnjoh's novel is how some characters are ready to acquire wealth at all costs, whether undignified or risky. Another striking element is social identity which is longer defined by culture but by the cult of being, becoming and belonging. The analysis has shown that the self-worth of some people in Mimboland is not self-defined but dictated and oriented by the other, a state of mind that has created *anus* versus *them* binary divide that rests on spatial-belonging and ownership. It has also demonstrated how the author has cast light on the extent to which modernity has superseded and broken the traditional shield supposed to block off the threats of debauchery, immorality, corruption, fraud, money laundering, trafficking among other prevailing scourges.

As a satirical writer, Nyamnjoh has held Cameroonian elites, in particular, and African elites, in general, accountable for the disenchantment of the masses that have been compelled to nurture dreams of earning a livelihood by migrating to the city, whose promises have proved to be downright mirage. In fact, through the protagonist Prospere, the reader has traveled around the mental universe of people living in the city. As it has turned out, their search for an 'accepted self,' is nothing but a 'fabricated self' that is informed by a world of fantasy, of delusion, and alienation. Their inability to filter *Occidentalism* appears as one of the sewers of theseeds of 'fractured selves'.

The study has further shed light on the psychological battle between 'searched self' and 'fractured self' amid post-colonial dilemma which, for the author, is yet to be won as some Africans often cultivate beguiling ideology of what self-validation and actualization should look like and whose responsibility it is to validate or condone it. Faced with this *dilemmic* state, the analysis has unearthed how Nyamnjoh has impliedly called for a deconstructed approach to 'the African self' in a globalized world where psychological healing is a prerequisite to recapture what can be termed an 'authentic African self.'

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