

Intentionality of Fear and Quest for Survival in Rasaki Ojo Bakare's *Once Upon a Tower*

ADEOSUN, Olufemi, Ph.D¹, ADEWUSI Adebuseyi, Rotimi
Ph.D²

^{1,2}Department of English and Literary Studies Ekiti State University, Ado Ekiti

Abstract: *The portrayal of the dysfunctionality in public universities in Nigeria has found expression in the works of many Nigerian playwrights. This theme resonates in the extant studies on Bakare's Once Upon a Tower, where much of the critique of the play has explored it as embodying the decay in the Nigeria's ivory towers, especially as it is conceived as a metaphor for a nation whose huge potentials have been gravely eroded by prolonged years of endemic corruption and other pervasive institutional and governance debaucheries. However, this paper envisions a new mode of interpretation of the play, as it traces the crisis/conflict in it to the manifestation of a deep-seated existential fear in the consciousness of the individual characters. In order to underline this as the basis for the existential crisis in the text, the study relies on the existentialist notion of fear which, according to Friedrich Nietzsche, often defines human actions and counteractions. The paper discovers that contest for space is at the root of the dramatic schism in the play. Ultimately, it concludes that the ensuing conflict would have been averted if the individual characters, who are the "class type" in the milieu of the play, have viewed and related with the others as co-travellers, rather than competitors, on the ladder of life's purpose.*

Keywords: *Existentialism, Fear, Survival, Conflict, Bakare*

I. Introduction

Fear is inherent in human nature; it can be experiential (as it concerns an individual experiences) and; existential (when it is situated within the shared experiences of the people). However, whichever levels of the manifestation of fear in human consciousness, there is a sense of dread that is often associated with the mere suspicion that an individual poses a threat to the other, especially in a matter that pertains the issue of contest for space, the human struggle that finds validation in Nicolo Machiavelli's dictum: the end justifies the means. In essence, there is no human inhabited space that is value free and as such, in any human community where issues of interests and counter interests are at play, there is usually a constant friction among contending forces. And because of the uncertainties that are usually around this contest for space, especially that nothing is certain, there is usually the evocation of fear. The feeling, which may be real or imagined, when used in relating with the others, has the tendency to precipitate conflicts that sometimes degenerate into violent actions, particularly if the power relations between the contending forces, are disproportionate. When it is then allowed to fester into irreconcilable positions/stances, the ensuing schisms may subsequently lead to binary situations in which opposing views and actions collide. This study, therefore, conceptualises and interprets fear as an existential prompt that conditions individual actions and counteractions, precipitating dramatic conflicts that sometimes lead to tragic situations.

Ojoniyi conceives violence “as an interpretative act that is capable of leading to or motivating destructive human actions and counteractions (32). He further explains that people are prone to desperate or arbitrary actions at the point of confronting or responding to a presumed threat to their purpose and survival.

In essence, it would be difficult to adequately problematise existential fear (not the type of ‘pity and fear’ in the audience as insinuated by Owwoye), but fear in respect to conflicts generation without giving consideration to the existential drivers such as “interests” and “survival anxiety”. This is, presumably, so because these are natural human cravings that predispose people to their actions and counteractions. Olajide validates this argument when he notes that “human actions are usually mapped by motives, intentions and attitude” (3), the mental dispositions that are inherent in all human beings, irrespective of creed, race or colour. Consequently, the foundations of some of the seemingly intractable crises that have engulfed the nations of the world are presumably traceable to these issues of interests and survival anxieties. Instructively, the moment individuals uncover a threat to their interests and ambitions, they always confront it with counter responses that inevitably predispose them to violent actions. For instance, the age-long tension between Israel and the Arab nations cannot be divorced from contest for territorial space that is essentially motivated by mutual fears and distrusts. The height of the animosity led to a breakdown in the fragile peace in the region when recently, Israel launched vitriol attacks on Iran, a move that culminated in the killing of some of the high ranking military officers and scientists suspected to be behind the latter’s nuclear programme. Israel however, justified the onslaughts on Iran, claiming that they were pre-emptive operations aimed at derailing its nuclear programme, which the former considered as constituting a threat to not only its interest and survival, but also that of the entire world. Even when both sides seem to have temporarily agreed to a ceasefire, as long as they still harbour the feeling that each constitutes a threat to the survival of the other, they would continue to relate under the atmosphere of mutual suspicion. This is usually the case when people are unable to mediate their fears in relating with others.

These issues (interests and survival anxiety) are products of the inherent fears in mankind that have found expression in Nigerian literature, as many writers across genres, explore them within the ambience of the fractured human experiences, especially against the backdrop of the chaos of the post-colonial Nigerian state which has driven many of its citizens into the abyss. For instance, issues of existential fear and survival quest are found to be at the heart of the conflicts in Bakare’s *Drums of War*. In the text, King Onome uses his sense of insecurity driven by his inordinate ambition for territorial domination and expansion, to wage war on the neighbouring community, Abakpa. Similarly, even when many critics have traced the conflicts in Ola Rotimi’s *Kurunmi* to the reluctance of Kurumi, the generalissimo of Ijaye land to accede to change in tradition, this study contends that the underline schism can be traced to contest for space between him and Alaafin Atiba, the paramount ruler of the then Oyo Kingdom. Also this issue of existential fear is explored by Chinua Achebe in his classic novel, *Things Fall Apart*, where his central character, Okonkwo is driven into rage and violence because he wants to set a path entirely different from his father who is portrayed as weak and lazy.. The fear does only motivate him to fight his way to stardom through dint of hard work, bravery and enterprise, it but also propels him into taking an irrational action, especially that which manifests in the killing of Ikemefuna, his surrogate son. It is, therefore, his failure to mediate his existential fear that brings him to disrepute as he slides down from his height of grace, influence and power. It is against this background that the paper attempts to trace the dramatic conflicts in Bakare’s *Once Upon a Tower* to the failure of the individual characters in the play to mediate their existential fear in relating with the others. Subsequently, we shall equally show how the actions and counteractions of the contending forces in the play lead to the generation, escalation and degeneration of the crises in the play and their consequences on not only the dramatic characters, but also on the communal essence.

II. Existential Aesthetics

This study treats Bakare’s *Once Upon a Tower* as dramatic piece that prioritises survival, even in the world that is devoid of purpose and consequently subjects the text to an existentialist interpretation. At the outset, the inquisition about the nature of humankind with regard to their place in the universe, is a major concern in existential philosophy. It, however, developed into a tool of literary criticism after the two devastating world wars in Europe that resulted in destruction of lives and property at a scale never witnessed in modern history. The

disillusionment and the general feelings of uneasiness, hopelessness, isolation and estrangement that attended the devastating effects of the wars, thus became a turning point in the conception and growth of existential literature as writers, across the world began to interrogate the place of humanity in relation to the role of God amidst these natural and human-induced existential crises. Then how does existentialism manifest in literature? According to Dhanapal (100), "In literature, existentialism is a form of literary criticism which analyses the struggles of characters in literary works to define meaning and identity in the face of alienation and isolation." Paraphrasing Rickman's thought on the interplay between literature and existentialism, Dhanapal equally argues that no modern philosophical movement espouses the ideal of literature more than existentialism. He then cites two reasons for Rickman's submission. They are: (i), the fact that philosophy is mainly concerned with human life and the dilemma of existence and (ii), the idea that it is about the uniqueness of the individual.

Thus, it not hard to unknot the nexus between existentialism and literature because a number of existentialists have tended to interrogate existence in light of the dilemma confronting humanity and have also tried to portray it through characters in novels, drama and poetry. This is evident in the literary interventions of radical existentialist writers such as Jean Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Franz Kafka, Samuel Becket, and a host of other notable 20th century writers as their works reflect characters that capture the deep and grave sense of despair, meaninglessness, alienation, displacement, boredom and nothingness, arising from the post first and second world war experiences. For instance, *Crime and Punishment*, a (2001) novel written by the Russian existentialist novelist, Dostoyevsky depicts characters struggling with living with the terrors of modern society. Also, in Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* (2010) and Camus's *The Outsider (The Stranger)* (2000), we encounter characters who are caught up deep in the miry mist of existential crisis in which they are expected to prioritise existence. Perhaps, one of the greatest works that typifies the absurd nature of existence as encapsulated in Camus famous essay, *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1979), is Becket's seminal play *Waiting for Godot* (1954). In this text, Becket uses two frustrated tramps, Estragon and Vladimir, to demonstrate the pointlessness and meaninglessness of human action. The tramps, while waiting endlessly for the elusive Godot, in the garb of a supposed redeemer, resort to engaging in pointless action, mainly to pass time. This play, in its incongruity, is a parody of existence in which human beings merely exist in the world to engage in some futile activities mainly to pass the time while waiting for the inevitable. Rahn, cited by Dhanapal, underscores the significance of these existentialist thinkers in using existential literature to gain critical insight into the dark patch of human existence thus:

Since the time it came into play till now, a number of literary works have been identified as examples of existential literature. Among these would be Albert Camus, who rejecting the label, wrote novels that typically represent characters caught up in situations and systems well beyond their control, and the ways in which they cope with such seeming futility; Fyodor Dostoyevsky, whose characters and their specific dilemmas transcend cultural boundaries and speak to the shared problems of all humans living in modern times; Franz Kafka who has been associated with twentieth century existentialism; Sartre who took existentialism in a very positive direction and advocated for the downtrodden, and continually struggled for a more egalitarian society based on the worth of each individual; and also the theatre of Beckett which is truly a mirror held up to the insanity of modern existence (100).

Instructively, the idea of depicting existential themes in literary production, is, of course, not the exclusive preserve of the Western existential writers discussed above; traces of this literary engagement, have also been found in the works of Nigerian writers. For example, the literary aesthetics which began as a form of creating works that explain various myths of existence typified by Amos Tutuola and Olawale Fagunwa, has taken a radical turn as a result of the existential crises that are occasioned by the nation's post-independence realities.

At the proclamation of the cessation of control by the British and the transfer of political authority to the Nigerian political actors in 1960, there were a lot of expectations from the citizenry that the take-over of governance by the indigenous political leaders would signpost rapid socio-economic and political developments and inclusive governance. But, to date, many have argued the dream of a better living condition, which is the desire of the populace, has not only remained a mirage, but has also driven many into the edge in which they have no option than to prioritise existence. Consequently, it is this sense of hopelessness, frustration, and alienation that has found expression in the works of Nigerian writers as we encounter in the depiction of their characters, themes and dramaturgies. Works such as Wole Soyinka's *A Dance of the Forest*, John Pepper Bekederemo-Clark's *The Raft*, Femi Osofisan's *Twingle Twangle: A Twynning Tayle*, Ola Rotimi's *If...the Tragedy of the Ruled*, Ahmed Yerima's *Haze* and Bode Ojoniyi's *A visit to a Graveyard* are all representative dramatic texts that have attempted to interrogate some of these existential crises. Bakare's *Once Upon a Tower*, can be located in this category, and as the analysis, would reveal that characters in the text grapple with existential predicaments driven by fear of survival.

IV. A Brief Synopsis of *Once Upon a Tower*

In *Once Upon a Tower*, Bakare explores the existential contradictions in Nigeria's public universities to capture a nation that bleeds under the heavy yoke of corruption and its other associated misnomers. The Mariapinto, University, Nigeriana, as it is depicted in the play, is a cesspool of corruption, oppression, mediocrity, indiscipline and various other unethical conducts that have become the hallmarks of public universities in Nigeria. The play opens on a celebrative mood, as the Vice Chancellor, Prof. Chikwuka, and other top echelon of the university, are locked up in a funfair to celebrate the purported successful completion of the school convocation programme. However, in the middle of the chest-beating bravado in which each of them takes turns to express their wish for another term in office in sheer display of personal aggrandizement and hypocrisy, three heavily armed men who are on masks, ostensibly to conceal their identities, invade the venue of the meeting. They soon unveil their identities and their missions; and in the course of that, the reader discovers that the leader of the invaders is Pedro, the half-baked graduate of the medical college of the university. Consequently, through the mechanics of play-within-play technique, involving role playing in which the events in the play oscillate back and forth, a plot development technique that is largely associated with the German theorist and dramatist, Bertolt Brecht, the playwright further reveals, in the most telling manner, the chains of events, intrigues and power game that culminate in the imprisonment of Pedro, his jail break; and his return to the school to take his pound of flesh on those he feels are complicit in the event that led to his inadvertent killing of his girlfriend, Khadijat through wrong prescription of anesthesia and in particular, the ignoble role of Prof. Kurumbete, the Dean of Medical College, in undermining the true ideals of academics and the academia.

V. Existential Fear as in *Once Upon a Tower*

In *Once Upon a Tower*, Bakare explores the tension between the dean of the College of Medicine, Prof. Kurumbete (henceforth Kurumbete), Pedro, his student, and Dr. Akitikori, his colleague to foreground the issue of fear as a possible prompt that often predisposes individual characters to their actions and counteractions, leading to existential conflict that does not only consume them, but also that which threatens commoner existence. The interpretation Kurumbete's relationship with Pedro, in particular, can adequately be contextualised against the backdrop of Nietzsche's existential position that men usually interpreted the world through their fears (Schacht 1983). Pedro is a medical student at the Department of Gynecology, one of the Departments in the College of Medicine where Kurumbete serves as a provost. He is a bright, smart and academically sound young man with early signs that he would develop into a world class medical practitioner. Kurumbete, on the other hand, is aware of this special gifting in him and would stop at nothing to truncate his progress. He, perhaps, fears that Pedro's rise in the profession may eventually undermine his touted ego as a renowned gynecologist. Consequently, rather than seeing him as a young man whose talents he is expected to nurture into greatness, he betrays his callings as a lecturer by contriving various destructive subterfuges to cut down his dream. His actions towards Pedro negate the Yoruba popular saying that: *Oju Orun to eye fo, lai fi apa gba ara won*, which literally translates to: "the sky

is spacious enough to accommodate flying birds without colliding feathers”. The conversation between Kurumbete and Dr. Ugolo who is also a lecturer in the same department underscore his deep resentment towards Pedro.

Ugolo: Remember the extra-ordinarily brilliant part 4 student, Omowaye Pedro whose genius we hope Akitikori will help to specially develop. Yemi will definitely not be able to offer the kind of stuff a brain like Omowaye needs to blossom

Kurumbete: There you go again. Who tells you I even support the idea of a well-enriched special training program for Omowaye Pedro? That wizard? Even without any special training, he is already competing with part six students. People like him should be intellectually disempowered if we must own the future. And don't call me evil, I see nothing evil in what I am saying. Self-preservation, they say, is the first human instinct. (32).

From the above excerpt, we can see how Kurumbete uses his fear to define his relationship with Pedro. In particular, a thorough interrogation of Kurumbete's words: "people like him (Pedro) should be intellectually disempowered if we must own the future" certainly raises certain fundamental questions. First, at what stage does another person's God-given intellectual endowment constitute a threat to the other(s)? Second, does mankind in his finitude, have power over tomorrow? In essence, Kurumbete, in his externalisation of his morbid fear about securing his tomorrow, tomorrow that is not certain, marks Pedro for extermination emotionally and psychologically. This predisposition towards the others arguably contravenes the tenet of intersubjectivity, and its African variant, Ubuntu which underscore the uniqueness of the individuals to pursue self-growth and development within the framework of a community of others with different goals and aspirations (Adeosun 2025). This philosophical position is a cautionary note to mankind that when an individual prioritises survival, such an individual must equally consider the interest of others. Perhaps, if Kurumbete has allowed the tenet of this philosophy to guide him in relating with Pedro, the violence that Pedro later unleashes on the university community, would have been averted.

Bakare also heightens the existential conflict in the play by depicting Kurumbete as an agent of intimidation in the manner he relates with Dr. Akitikori. Individuals may resort to an act of intimidation, especially when they identify a threat (real or imagined) to their survival and interests. It is within this context that we locate the actions and counteractions of Kurumbete towards Dr. Akitikori. For instance, in his unbridled quest to maintain his revelling ego, he carves out a self-image of a bully who has mastered art of treachery and notoriously deployed same to effective use in wielding his prey into submission and obeisance. He is so consumed by the fear of losing his touted dominance that he experiences a sense of self-alienation, a form of emotional and psychological turmoil which makes him to assume a God-like image in his own right. He is also so blinded to his own limitation as an existential being that he thinks, behaves and acts in a way that suggests that no one can ever be as intellectually endowed as he is or attained the level of professional height as he does. In one of his meetings with the members of staff of the college, Dr. Akitikori challenges this chest-beating bravado:

Akitikori: And you, Prof. if you have rats and cockroaches as staff members, I am definitely not one of them. And what is your qualms with people who are opinionated in the department? Is it a crime to hold opinions? This is a university. It is meant for people who have opinions. Not empty dumbs with robotic disposition. If you hate people who have opinions, then you will be doing your health some good if you leave this place and become a headmaster in a Primary School (19).

Kurumbete further confirms this megalomaniac predisposition:

Prof. Kurumbete: Even in America, nobody...nobody I say, will dare look me in the eyes. Because they know that in the field of academic gymnastic, I am

Primus Interparis. Even in Europe, they know that I am an institution, and that everything about me is institutionally instituted. Oh oo my God...see what the eyes of a renowned scholar is seeing in common Africa. Impunity insubordination.... The indiscipline in this place stinks to a suffocating proportion, when small boys and girls engage their professor in a freewheeling act of fire for fire (19-20).

By the virtue of his academic position, professional pedigree, reach and exposure, Kurumbete is expected to symbolise the best academic ideals; the ideals that are birthed in new innovations, ground-breaking discoveries and sound academic programmes that would not only help in deepening the knowledge base and expanding the frontier of intellectual discourse, but also, that which speaks to the urgency of human need and societal development. This is even more when it is a field that has direct correlation with human life such as medical profession. Sadly, this is the Department that symbolises the level of decay in Mariapinto, University, Nigeriana.

After several failed attempts to compromise, coerce and cajole Dr. Akitikori with a bid to recruit him into his evil and ignoble agenda, Kurumbete also contrives a plot to replace him with his puppet, Dr. Yemi, notwithstanding whether he lacks basic qualification and professional expertise to teach at the medical department. Prof. Kurumbete wants to foist him on the department as a form of reward for his consistent obeisance to him since he has once served the department as a laboratory attendant. Dr. Akitikori, on the other hand, is one of the best brains in the department: dutiful, courageous and competent. But these competencies and virtues are not enough to endear him to the heart of his boss, Kurumbete because, according to him, he constitutes a threat to his ambition of ever remaining an undisputable gynecologist in Africa. Consequently, unable to tolerate his effrontery, he sets him up with his girlfriend, Julie for a sack. The conversation below attests to the above argument

Kurumbete: ...How is the troublemaker in your department?

Ugolo: You mean Akitikori

Kurumbete: Who else?

Ugolo: Em...prof, between you and me, he is not a troublemaker. Just that he is a downright non-conformist. He is too bold and vocal, can die for justice and never wants to be cowed. But the young man knows his job.

Kurumbete: You are only confirming the fact that he is dangerous. When a bold, justice-loving non-conformist also has the advantage of intelligence and professional relevance, then he is so dangerous. Look, that boy is dangerous to my future. He is in my area of specialization, well positioned to break my monopoly. He is also dangerous to your future. Brilliant and active, he is a threat to your long stay as the head of department. We have to get him out of the system fast!

Ugolo: True Prof. but who takes over from him? He is too good in his area. If we get him out, the system will suffer, our students will suffer.

Kurumbete: To hell with the system suffering. I hope you are not fooling yourself thinking that you can help the system? Can't you see nobody cares about the system? Everybody is a hanger-on just looking for how to survive via the system. Those who are in position to make fat monetary rip offs from the system do so. It is a merchandise. The system is not only suffering already but bleeding. So, what difference will another kick make? The system has seen nine hundred and ninety-nine to hell with a millennium.

Ugolo: Sorry Prof... I understand

Kurumbete: And talking about who will take over his courses. Yemi will finish his housemanship sometimes next year. Akitikori is even his main consultant so we get Akitikori out and Yemi takes over his courses.

Ugolo: Ha... prof... Yemi is too weak academically. He is not a material to replace Akitikori.

Kurumbete: Who cares? Is he going to teach your child? Look my dear, make no mistake about allowing your child to study in this country. If you don't have enough money to send your children to Europe, for university education, then send them to Ghana... (30-33).

We have taken our time with this conversation to enable us underscore the level of debility that Mariapinto, University, Nigeriana has sunk into. As typified by the character of Kurumbete and Dr. Ugolo, the university can collapse, the lives of the people can be traded off as long as it satiates their selfish desire and reveling egos. Beyond this, it seems that the playwright is using it as a metaphor for the nation's public universities which have been left to rot due to long years of abandonment. It is interesting to note that successive administrations in Nigeria have paid scant attention to public universities in terms of funding and in creating a conducive learning atmosphere, the neglect that has seen many qualified professionals across various fields of human endeavours, who would have lent their expertise to the socio-political and economic development of the nation, move out in droves to Europe and other countries of the world in search of better remunerations and good conditions of service.

Even the little funds that are provided get into private pockets as we witness in Mariapinto, University, Nigeriana, where the little money released for the procurement of reagents for practical at the Department of Gynecology, is embezzled by the Chairman House Committee on Education, Senator, AbdulRaham Ikeanobi in connivance with other top principal staff of the university. Of course, this is part of the reasons Pedro could not get quality education; part of the reasons he inadvertently killed his girlfriend, Khadija through wrong administration of anesthesia. Also, just as Okonkwo, the protagonist in Chinua Achebe's classic novel, *Things Fall Apart* murders his adopted son, Ikemefuna out of the fear of being called a weakling, Pedro's decision to terminate Khadijat's pregnancy is also presumably predicated on fear of survival and fear of failure. While he feels that he is not financially stable to assume fatherly responsibility and be a good husband to his wife, Khadijat, he is also out to prove a point to his future father-in-law, that he can also be successful in his own sphere of professional practice. He says to Khadijat: "...I...I... want to carry your baby...and be a loving husband to you.... I am not a baby killer. We can't start having babes yet. Let's sort things out first. Let's sort things out with your father... with my people... with our financial standing..." (53).

The inability of individuals to meet their expectations, realise their dreams and manifest their potentials can constitute a source of alienation for them. Also, when individuals are aggrieved, and at the same time, denied the agency to seek redress, they are likely to be predisposed to taking violent actions. This appears a justifiable reason for the violent disposition of Pedro in the play. He feels those who are placed in the position of authority to nurture his talent to attain greater heights in life have failed him. He is also angry at the system that elevates mediocrity above competence. When he was a student at the medical school, the university community maintained criminal silence when Kurumbete did everything to frustrate his ambition, stagnate his growth and abort his dream of becoming a gynaecologist of note. It is within this context that we locate Pedro's counteraction in invading the venue of the meeting of the principal officers of the university and the subsequent killing of Dr. Yemi. This anger is expressed during a confrontation with Senator Abdul Rahamon and Kurumbete

Pedro:Mr. senator. I need no psychiatrist. You were not my teacher, but you constrained my teacher from teaching me properly. Tell me, what do you know about contract? What do you know about chemicals...? What do you know about laboratory equipment that you cornered a contract meant for being supplied to this university? Of course, you diverted the money into your bank account and supplied nothing. After graduation, I was still a stranger to

some facilities I should have been familiar with even as a student. Do you know that was partly responsible for my using the wrong stuff to sedate your daughter and she died in the process? The reason for which I was sent to seven years imprisonment.... And you Professor Kurumbete you became paranoid with ambition and engineered dangerous scheming to ensure the young does not grow. Have you forgotten what the adage said? Let each become what he or she was created, capable of being” But no. No, you contradict the natural principle of creation and regeneration just because you wanted to be the unrivalled Provost for life (63-64).

Pedro’s charge against his former lecturer, Kurumbete is particularly insightful as it helps to properly contextualise the existential nature of the conflict and crisis in the play. The natural rule of human existence is that while prioritising survival, individuals must recognise the fact that they are “Beings-with-others” who also have the rights to the pursuance of their own goals and aspirations. Sadly, neither the institution’s administrators, led by the VC nor Prof. Kurumbete, takes this tenet of “live and let live” to bear in relating with Pedro and this is arguably responsible for the crisis in the play.

IV. Conclusion

In this paper, we have tried to expand the frontiers of critical discourse on Bakare’s *Once Upon a Tower* beyond what most critics make of the play. In our own analysis, we linked the dramatic conflict in the play to existential fear, especially as it relates to the individual character’s quest for survival. We argued that just as we witnessed in the play, there is no human inhabited space that is value free, submitting that as such, in any human community where issues of interests and counter interests collide, there is usually a constant tension among contending forces, particularly when the power dynamic is skewed in favour of the powerful against the weak. In essence, we further noted that because of the uncertainties that are usually associated with contest for space, especially in certain climes, where nothing is certain, and nothing is freely given, there is usually the evocation of an atmosphere of fear among diverse individuals. We noted that the actions of the top hierarchy of The Mariapinto, University, Nigeriana in bringing their fears of survival to bear on the administration of the institution are what provoke a counteraction from Pedro who considers violence as the only available existential option to affirm his rights to meaningful existence. Of course, when individuals are aggrieved and at the same time, denied the agency through which they can seek redress, they are likely to be predisposed to taking arbitrary actions. It is also against the backdrop of this imbalanced power relations that we situated the dramatic tension between Kurumbete and Pedro in one hand, Dr. Akitkori and Kurumbete, on the other. The paper consequently submitted that the existential conflict in the text would have been averted if he, Kurumbete and other top echelon of the university have respected the interest of others in line with the tenet of existentialist intersubjectivity, by not prioritising their own interests arbitrarily.

Works Cited

- [1] Achebe, C. *Things Fall Apart*. London: William Heinemann, 1958.
- [2] Adeosun, O. “Existential Anxiety as Catalyst for Dramatic Conflicts in Selected Nigerian
- [3] -----Plays.” 2025. Ekiti State University, Ekiti State, PhD dissertation.
- [4] Bakare, R. *Drums of War*. Kano: Tamaza Company Limited, 1994.
- [5] -----*Once Upon a Tower*. Uyo: Afahaide Publishing Company, 2000.
- [6] Beckett, S. *Waiting for Godot*. Trans. Beckett Samuel. New York’s Grove Press, 1954.
- [7] Camus, Albert. *The Myth of Sisyphus, and Other Essays*. Trans. Justin O’Brien. London: Hamish Hamilton, 1979.
- [8] -----The outsider (The Stranger), trans. Joseph Laredo. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2000.
- [9] Clark, J. P. *The Raft in Three Plays*. London: Oxford UP, 1964.
- [10] Dhanapal, S. “An Existentialist Reading of K.S Maniam’s “The Return.”. *Journal ofEnglish Language and Literature*, vol. 2, no.1, August 2014, pp. 100-108.
- [11] Dostoyevsky, T. *Crime and Punishment*. UK: Dover Publications, 2001.

- [12] Kafka, F. *The Metamorphosis*. New York: Tribeca Books, 2010.
- [13] Ojoniyi, O. Violence as intentionality for survival and power in two Yoruba films. *Journals of African Cinemas*, 2015, pp-31-39.
- [14] ----- *A Visit to a Graveyard*. Osogbo: The Decalogue Publishers, 2019.
- [16] Osofisan, F. *Once Upon Four Robber*. Ibadan: HEBN Publishers, 1980.
- [17] ----- *Twingle Twangle: A Twynning Tayle*. Longman: Nigeria, 1995.
- [18] Owoeye, O. K. *A Short Introduction to Literature*. Ibadan: Yoori Books. 2010.
- [19] Rotimi, O. *If: the Tragedy of the Ruled*. Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books (Nig), 1983.
- [20] Schacht, R. *Nietzsche: The Arguments of the Philosopher*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983
- [21] Soyinka, W. *A Dance of the Forest*. London: Oxford University Press, 1963.
- [22] Wale, Olajide. *In Defence of the Unborn and the Limit of Existential Options*. 47th Inaugural lecture, Ekiti State University, Ado Ekiti. Ekiti State University Press, 2017.
- [23] Yerima, A. *Haze*. Ibadan: Kraft Books Limited, 2020.