READING PARODY IN WOLE SOYINKA'S *THE TRIALS OF BROTHER JERO*

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Abstract

Constructing meaning is central to literary studies. Still many learners find it hard to cope with it. Their task becomes even tougher when it comes to dealing with texts with particular forms such as parody whose content is hidden by its form. From Wole Soyinka's play *The Trials of Brother Jero* (1964), this paper analyzes the technical approach of this genre to ease its comprehension. Our main concern here is as follows: seeing that most social conflicts originate from misunderstandings by and large, how can we accurately tackle parody so as to drive readers out of pitfalls and lead them into grasping the meaning of the parodic text? To answer this central question, we will first and foremost show how parody stands as an obstacle to the creation of meaning. Then we will try to decode the very characteristics of this form of writing and highlight its moral and social values. We will finally show how the internalization of these values can help build a more peaceful human society.

Key-words: meaning; literary parody; values, esthetics

Introduction

Parody is an ancient art and literary form which continues to haunt learners or ordinary readers who come across it when it is interwoven in written texts. Parody is defined as "an imitative work created to mock, comment on or trivialise an original work, its subject, author, style, or some other target, by means of satiric or ironic imitation." **(**http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parody) In written literature, parody consists in altering the meaning of the sentence or passage through "a word-for-word substitution that often has comic effect." (Walter Nash, 1986, 77) As Simon Dentith states, it can also take the form of "a relatively polemical allusive imitation of another cultural production or practice."(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parody) We are here more concerned with this second parodic form owing to the nature of the text at stake. Entitled *The Trials of Brother Jero*[1], this text by Nigerian writer Wole Soyinka portrays the daily life of an African 'charlatan-preacher' who takes advantage of 'Christian superstition' to face his own fleshy and material demons. Throughout the play, the protagonist's soliloquies stand out starkly. The vivid images and the mood of Brother Jero's utterances while doing justice to the African folkloric imaginary trace out some of the verses of the Holy Bible. The funny tone of the interplay between the African (and especially Yoruba's) cosmogony and Christianity confers to the play a scent of parody. Now, the challenge facing the reader is to know how to construct meaning from such a complex literary form. The response goes through a threefold analysis. First, it sets parody as a reading obstacle.

[1] All references to the play are taken from the 1994 version (*The Jero Plays* ("*The Trials of Brother Jero")*, Spectrum Books Limited, Ibadan, 1994)

Second it suggests approaches to address it basing on practical examples taken from the play and finally, it highlights the intertwined linguistic and social values parody induces.

1-Parody as a literary interest

Mostly, parody uses a figurative language. For non native speakers or unprepared readers, this sets an obstacle to the comprehension of the text. Therefore, it becomes obviously necessary to assist these readers in their effort to decode this language and the peculiar content (generally humorous) of parody.

1.1Fields of application

The term 'parody' covers a large range of fields. It is indeed present in literature, art, music, painting, comics, photography, cinema, television, and videos (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parody). Aristotle traces parody back to the work of Hegemon of Thasos (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hegemon_of_Thasos), a Greek writer of the Old Comedy. He was in fact considered to be the "inventor of a kind of parody… By slightly altering the wording in well-known poems, he transformed the sublime into the ridiculous"[2]. The etymology of this term is yet to be found. Once more, the ancient Greek literature offers a searching perspective:

> In ancient Greek literature, a *parodia* was a narrative poem imitating the style and prosody of epics 'but treating light, satirical or mock-heroic subjects.' The apparent Greek roots of the word are *para-* (which can mean *beside*, *counter*, or *against*) and *-ode* (*song*, as in an ode). Thus, the original Greek word *parodia* has sometimes been taken to mean *counter-song*, an imitation set against the original (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parody#cite_note-3and)

Two main elements are necessary for a parody to be, namely, the existence of an original work, then its imitation, generally with a view to creating a humorous and entertaining atmosphere through a satiric, comic or ridiculous performance.

1.2 Literary parody as an interest for literary analysis

The decoding of literary parody is obviously a pretentious adventure. The varying features of parody in literature account for the complexity of its apprehension as an identifiable whole. Yet, just like the maintaining of literature in school curricula, the four fundamental reasons for which Moody pleaded (17), literary parody offers itself as an extract of text or a full text "available for interpretation, analysis, classification and evaluation with as much rigour and accountability as a sample of anonymous white powder by a chemist, or a stained micro-organism on a glass slide by a pathologist." (20) Parody being inseminated within the production of some writers, it calls for analysis in the process of constructing meaning.

The reason for studying parody in literary texts is the same for studying literature itself. Parody has its literary counterpart. As a literary form, its objectives and aims are not quite different from those of literature as a whole. They even complement and reinforce the general

[2] Ibid.

stand of literature as a contribution "to the development of the [learner] as an individual and to his or her command of the language." (Hill, 1986, 12)

Another evident role played by any parodic performance is the general appeal for good and happy humour. In fact, apart from the Russian Formalist and postmodernist conceptions which make of parody not an imitation of the original in the full meaning of term, but an autonomously different production with emphasis on the form and contextual interplays (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parody), most parodic works aim at creating fun through comedy and satire. In the light of the joy it provides while tackling the serious matters explored in the original, parody ends up setting a more pleasant atmosphere for human beings to live in. Accessing parody in the literary text can therefore be an opportunity to foster humane values. Now, the challenge facing most readers is to be able to access parody "there on the page."

2-Parody: a hindrance to the construction of meaning

Whatever the parodic form, the decoding needs prior knowledge of the original work. The challenge facing the reader when it comes to identifying parody in a literary text lies then in his awareness of the "extrinsic" information and his mastery of the "intrinsic " features, to stick to Moody's scheme of literary text analysis (1983, 23-24).

2.1 The background challenge

In distinguishing the different types of paraphrases, Walter Nash assimilates parody with "mimetic paraphrase" and asserts that it should be the privilege of the teacher, more so of the native teacher in the first place:

> Mimetic paraphrase should be the teacher's province (unless the students volunteer to attempt it). Strictly speaking it requires native competence, some gift for parody and burlesque, and a sensitivity to the humorous nuances in language: specifically, an awareness of the difference between the ordinary and the banal, the original and the bizarre. (83)

If this premise can be questioned, the truth in it relates to the delicate matter of reference or allusion. Any parody seems to be allusive one way or another. For, performing parody supposes that one first grasps the intricacies of the language (not only the verbal language but also the means, the technique and the way by which the original work itself is produced). Here, as Pushpinder Syal states it, "the role of allusion is crucial to the understanding of the creation and implication of contexts in a text." (1994, 11) And the background knowledge of a text is made possible by allusion or reference.

Yet in parody, allusion is not made directly. It is rather implicit. Indeed, such allusion, in Syal's words, "differs from source-borrowing because it requires the reader's familiarity with the original for full understanding and appreciation; also because it is fused with the new context in which it appears. (1994, 12) The implicitness of allusion in parody stands as an obstacle for the non-prepared reader in his attempt to grasp meaning. Beside this rather "extrinsic" factor that complicates the grasping of parody, the linguistic functioning of the text itself, that is, "intrinsic features," stands between the learner and comprehension.

2.2 Linguistic and stylistic obstacles

The contextual or "intrinsic" problems facing the reader of any written text are in relation with grammar, lexis and the structures of sentences. Now, a text, according to Moody, "is a verbal artefact (more or less deliberately created), with no preconditions as to social or cultural status, which is available in tangible form for study, analysis and evaluation." (1983, 19) And a text is made up of a number of sentences; the sentence itself comprising "units of expression", that is, the eight parts of the speech which are "noun, pronoun, verb, adjective, adverb, preposition, conjunction and interjection." (Walsh, 1966, 8)

Now, as Michael Short insinuates it, it is neither too easy for second-language learners to make out the combination of these words into sentences nor too simple for them to grasp their meanings because they do not know the norms governing the foreign language (1983, 72). This implies that the understanding of the literary text goes through the mastery of stylistic and linguistic norms in the English language. "This analysis occurs via grammatical analysis of linguistic norms."(73) These prerequisites are not self evident for non-native speakers. As such, the parodic form which requires native proficiency in the English language stands theoretically as an obstacle to the construction of meaning for the non-native speaker. Fortunately enough, Michael Short finds a somewhat comforting alternative to the natural handicap facing the non native speaker: "owing to the long-term exposure to linguistic terminology and analysis through the teaching of English grammar (unlike in UK) in the foreign learner's curriculum the foreign student is more "prepared to cope with the detailed technicality of stylistic description so necessary for him to increase his understanding and awareness." (73)

Fortunately as critics, and responding to these stylistic, grammatical and linguistic requirements, we must be able to decode any text of literature, be it a parody or even a poem with its "deviant language." (Widdowson, 1983, 7) *The Trilas of Brother Jero* with its figurative language, vivid images, ironic and satirical tone and pervasive humorous mood could be read as a sound material on which to venture such a probe.

3- *The Trials of Brother Jero*: a parodic play

It is worth precising that *The Trials of Brother Jero* does not overtly reveal ordinary features of parody. As such, it does not rewrite an original. However, it owes its parodic form only to what appears as ironic and humorous paraphrases of some passages of the Bible, but above all to the written transcription of folk representations of local divinities. The central story of the play is a construction which borrows from a combination of two different spiritual perceptions. Seen under this angle, this parody is more a pastiche or hodgepodge, that is, "it is *cobbled together* in imitation of several original works." (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pastiche) The writing technique associated with this particular form of parody emerges from the postmodernist theory which makes of intertextuality a central term. *The Trials of Brother Jero* has a complex framework purposely camouflaged by the playwright; and the double-origin construction contributes to that stylistic ability. Yet in the case of Soyinka's play, intertextuality is far from being a "word-to-word substitution" of a former text. It is rather a subtle satire of the economic, political and spiritual manipulation in postcolonial Africa operated through the borrowing of Christian superstition by a corrupt African charlatan. Parody here occurs at three levels: the playwright parodies in fact the condition, the function and the mission of a minister of God in post-independent Nigeria. The reader must indeed distinguish between the physical, the

verbal and the behavioral parody enacted by the mock prophet. The identification as well the decoding of these parodic aspects of the play is made through linguistic and stylistic approaches.

3-1 The intertextual background of *The Trials of Brother Jero*

The construction of parody in *The Trials of Brother Jero* is mainly performed through the technique of allusion or reference, also designated as "intertextuality" by poststructuralist Julia Kristeva in 1966. Intertexuality in fact "is the shaping of texts' meanings by other texts. It can include an author's borrowing and transformation of a prior text or to a reader's referencing of one text in reading another." (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intertextuality) For *The Trials of Brother Jero* to be a parody there needs to be an intertextual aspect, that is, a "borrowed" text supposed to have inspired, influenced or evolved into the new textual reality. Now, to work out that somewhat outside element which is basic to parody, a contextual analysis of the grammatical, linguistic and stylistic interplays in the text proves important.

3.1.1 The biblical basis of *The Trials of Brother Jero*

The first feature in any text that provides a hint to its hub remains its title, when any. Soyinka's play has a title indeed. Now a title is "a descriptive heading" that "give[s] a brief summary of the matters it deals with." (http://www.thefreedictionary.com/title) A skimming of the play through its title relates it to both justice and religion when one considers the lexis. To further the investigation in a view to identifying the actual subject-matter of the play, and thereby establish its setting as a whole, some more extracts should be raised from the text. Here, the autodiegetic introduction – "I am a prophet." (9) – of the protagonist is expressive enough. And the key-word – prophet – in this sentence further highlights the reader's first impression in regard to religion. To sustain this viewpoint, other passages of the play having to do only with religion, and especially Christianity, can be helpful. Thus, the protagonist's listing of the competing Christian creeds over beach-lands and converts provides more details about the religious setting of the play: "The Brotherhood of Jehu, the Cherubims and Seraphims, the Sisters of Judgement Day, the heavenly Cow-boys, not to mention the Jehovah's Witnesses." (10) The religious setting of Soyinka's play established, the concern is now to show its intertextual connection with the original text.

If lexical items and names typical to Christianity enable to identify an overall religious basis for the play, they do not do justice to its original source in a parodic point of view. It is here that figures of speech take over from mere lexical probes, or rather set a bond between vocabulary items "there on the page" and "extrinsic" features that gave life to the play itself. A stylistic analysis of some of the early utterances of the soliloquies of the protagonist reveals a cluster of imageries. Anaphoric comparisons, metaphors, ironies[3], all moulded in a humorous, and at time sarcastic tone, trace back to sayings, verses or deeds of religious figures in the Holy Bible. In this light, one can claim an overall biblical background to *The Trials of Brother Jero*. There remains that Soyinka's work being more a pastiche in its construction and its content, the status of its protagonist needs to be clarified.

[3] This will be developed at length in the next two sessions

3.1.2. The syncretic portrait of Brother Jero

Readers unfamiliar with the representation of religious figures, especially religious divines, could find it hard to make out the physical features with which Jeroboam tries to identify himself. A comparison of the "historical description of Jesus by Publius Lentulus, governor of Judea, addressed to Tiberius Caesar, emperor of Rome" (http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-chat/1367127/posts) with extracts from *The Trials of Brother Jero* provide indications. The following extracts show the physical resemblances between the two religious champions.

> There lives, at this time, in Judea, a man of singular virtue whose name is Jesus Christ…He is a tall man, and well shaped, of an amiable and reverend aspect; his hair is of a color that can hardly be matched, the color of chestnut full ripe, falling in waves about his shoulders… his beard thick and of a color suitable to his hair, reaching below his chin ("A Call To Joy" by Matthew Kelly, 71-72) [4]

> A spotlight reveals the prophet, a heavily but neatly bearded man; his hair is thick and high, but well combed, unlike that of most prophets. Suave is the word for him." (Stage presentation of scene one)…I was born a prophet. I think my parents found that I was born with rather thick and long hair. It was said to come right down to my eyes and down to my neck. For them, this was a certain sign that I was born a natural prophet. (*The Trials of Brother Jero*, 9)

Yet, any hasty assimilation of Brother Jero to Christ is risky. For, the portrait of Brother Jero is also consistent with the representation that most African folks make of divines or holy caricatures. And it is not surprising to see that a playwright like Wole Soyinka draws from his own cultural images and considerations to create a syncretic spiritual character, just like that other African-Caribbean-Christian religion known as Santeria[5] in Latin America. The special care for his physical appearance, especially for his hair and overall bearing, also recalls the haughtiness of another black divine, Father Divine (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Father_Divine) – self-proclaimed Reverend Major Jealous Divine – who set his own religious doctrine in the United States from early 1900s to 1965. Just like Father Divine, Brother Jero borrows his religious status from the Bible. Yet, unlike his divine peer who actually "preached as God"[6] across the USA, Brother Jero's amusing tone in his self-introduction trivializes his prior pretentious premise and opens ways to a comic performance.

4-The comic mood of *The Trials of Brother Jero*

As we already stated, one of the most distinguishing traits of the earliest forms of parody in Ancient Greek lay in its capacity to generate humour through ridicule. How through is *The Trials of Brother Jero* humour expressed then? Only an analysis of textual interplays could

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[4] Ibid.
[5] "Santeria is a system of beliefs that merges the Yoruba religion (which was brought to the New World by enslaved West Africans sent to the Caribbean to work on sugar plantations) with Roman Catholic and Native American traditions." http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Santer%C3%ADa
[6] Ibid.

reveal the comic mood hidden behind literary devices. So, readers should pay a special attention to light-hearted passages likely to spawn smiling or outburst laughing from the audience. At that level, it seems important for the reader to inquire about the words, phrases or sentences that confer a light mood to Brother Jero's utterances, starting by his self-introduction. Indeed, his homodiegetic claim as a natural prophet stands out stark in this stance: "I am a prophet. A prophet by birth and by inclination." (9)

The precision that Jero hastily attempts in the second proposition with the phrases "by birth and by inclination" removes any seriousness to his premise as a prophet. The reader catches the amusing tone of his introduction and a smile illuminates his/her face at once. He or she ever since prepares for a comic play.

The explanatory sentences which go from "You have probably…" to "…this was a certain sign that I was born a natural prophet" (9) all bear a scent of humour. Thus, the metaphor "there are eggs and there are eggs" (9) – while standing as a paraphrasal passage of the Bible – creates a derisive atmosphere. It is in fact the sudden awkwardness in this metaphoric paraphrase that arouses laughter.

Similarly, allusion to the most serious curing power of Jesus Christ – "the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them" (Matthew 9:5)[7] – is rendered light and thus turned into a humorous situation. Indeed, the anaphoric nomenclature of prophets conducted by Brother Jero – "*many* with their own churches, *many* inland, *many* on the coast, *many* leading processions, *many* looking for processions to lead" [italics mine] – aims only for a humorous representation of Christ's warning regarding false prophets. The biblical text goes as follows: "For false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall shew signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect." (Mark 13:22) Besides, the ridicule about the multiplicity of prophets implied in this anaphora confers a comic effect to Brother Jero's grotesque comparison with Jesus Christ through his allusion to the former's curative gift: "*man*y curing the deaf, *many* raising the dead." (9) Here, Brother haughtily claims equality, and perhaps identification with "The Son of God" in their prophetic missions, setting himself side by side on the same list with Jesus Christ in his classification of prophets. The next step in the parodic explanation of Brother Jero's stand lies in his very acts. Readers are thus brought to ponder on the likenesses between Soyinka's hero and some of the crucial facets of Jesus Christ's mission whom he somewhat identified with. A simple question in regard to Brother Jero's relationship with his old mentor could "ring a bell": "What parallel can you figure out from that treacherous relationship between disciple and master?" The most likely answer could relate to Jesus Christ's betrayal by one of his disciple, Judas Iscariot.

The interaction between Brother Jero and his old mentor can be viewed as a parodic representation of Judas Iscariot's betrayed of Jesus Christ. In fact, Judas betrayed Jesus by kissing him before the envoys of the Jewish chief priests: "And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, master; and kissed him." (Matthew 26:49) Equally, Brother Jero did not haw to cheat his own trainer from the plot of beach-land the latter committed him to fight for. The parodic nature of this passage derives primarily from the humorous tone of the interaction it displays, then from the comic implication of the curse the mentor pronounced on his disciple, and finally from the supercilious satisfaction Brother Jero draws from his own physical as well as moral

[7] All the Biblical passages are from King James Version of The Holy Bible. An online version at *www.bibler.org/*

features. It comes to Brother Jero himself to inform on the weight of his treacherous attitude towards his mentor:

> My Master, the same one who brought me up in prophetic ways staked a claim and won a grant of land…I helped him, with a campaign led by six dancing girls from the French territory, all dressed as Jehovah's Witnesses. What my old Master did not realize was that I was helping myself. (9-10)

Helpless before such an act of treason, everything the old prophet could do was to pronounce a curse on his erstwhile apprentice. Here also, it is the hilarious mood of the mentor's utterances that justifies the parodic texture of the passage: "'Ungrateful wretch!' (10) Ingrate! Monster! I curse you with the curse of the Daughters of Discord. May they be your downfall. May the Daughters of Eve bring ruin down on your head!" (11)

Although the organisation of the words in this curse is meant to induce laughter, it is the haughty response of Brother Jero that intensifies it. In fact, acknowledging the serious impact of his master's words on his future prophetic existence, Brother Jero nevertheless cannot help feeling complacent about his own physical appearance: "Actually that was a very cheap curse. He knew very well that I have one weakness – women. Not my fault, mind you. You must admit that I am rather good-looking…no, don't be misled, I am not at all vain." (11)

Funny as this conflicting situation may sound, it is nonetheless not different in implication from the doom Jesus Christ predicted to the one who should betray him: "The Son of man goeth as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! It had been good for that man if he had not been born. (Matthew 26:24)

Through its humorous mood, the treacherous relationship between Brother Jero and his old master is tantamount to the betrayal Jesus Christ suffered from one of his close disciples. In fact, Soyinka's heroes parody the biblical reality as a token of the soundness and the truthfulness of their prophetic endowment. Now that Brother Jero has succeeded in creating a parallel between Jesus Christ's mission and his own prophetic trade, one is curious to know how he uses his spiritually-inspired authority in his everyday life.

Trying to justify his debt towards Amope, a woman whom he bought a velvet cap from without paying for, Brother Jero ionizes with the biblical saying about clothing. To the religious saying that "clothes don't make the man," (http://www.babla.fr/francais-anglais/l-habit-ne-fait-pas-le-moine) the self-proclaimed prophet responds that "You've got to have a name that appeals to the imagination – because the imagination is a thing of the spirit – it must catch the imagination of the crowd." (19) This adopted name – "Immaculate Jero, Articulate Hero of the Christ's Crusade" (19) – which connotes a conscious desire to stand out if one is to keep up with the others in the competition for converts, and thereby for material accumulation, is a humorous version of the "Virgin birth of Jesus." (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Virgin_birth_of_Jesus) Yet, here, Brother Jero clearly concedes subservience to the "Son of God," now that he has accepted to become Christ's "Hero" or servant. From his pretentious comparison with Jesus in his autodiegetic introduction at the beginning of the play, Brother Jero has come to realize his sinful nature through his lust towards women and his helpless state as a debtor. Even so, he cannot help boasting, now that he sees himself as an "articulate" hero. Beside the riming with "immaculate," "articulate" serves a comic function in Jero's utterance. It ridicules his pretention, removing thus any seriousness to his fanciful comparison with Jesus Christ. The ridicule Soyinka covers Brother Jero with in his fanciful identification with Jesus Christ and his treacherous attitudes

with his community are expressive of a serious message camouflaged by the parodic texture of the play.

5-Beyond sarcasm, the moral pledge

A major feature of parody is the sarcastic representation of people or situations. Sarcasm, in fact is usually "conveyed through irony or understatement." (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sarcasm) Thus, the apparently out-minded demeanor of the self-proclaimed African charlatan prophet is a device contrived by Soyinka to sensitize on the evil-doing of political, social, cultural and religious manipulation in postcolonial Africa. For, all along the play, the mindset of the reader is unconsciously awaken and permanently kept alert as the first-degree approach of the text arouses humour and laughter. Any ironic statement of the mock prophet is an opportunity to castigate a moral failure and thereby "teach" its opposite value in-a-round-about way. Parody in this case acts as a tool of social examination whereby the ultimate aim is hidden behind the apparent ridiculous or ironic move it shows.

By setting the protagonist to run humorously parallel to the Christian doctrines, the playwright, far from ridiculing the scriptures, rather mocks at their distortive uses made by African divines. What works for religion works also for other fields, that is, for all the different components of African society. Brother Jero's plaintive interrogation – "But how does one maintain his dignity when the daughter of Eve forces him to leave his own house through a window?" (19) – is expressive of this indirect lesson the playwright conveys. If the protagonist feels it necessary to justify his inclination for outward appearance through the adoption of an attractive name and other artifacts – "it becomes important to stand out, to be distinctive" (19) – it is to better ridicule Africans' excuses for their own moral failures. This passage has an intertextual value: most of first postcolonial African leaders adopted nicknames of all kinds to expand their power and authority over their fellow countrymen. The example of Mobutu born Joseph-Désiré Mobutu but who called himself "*Sese Seko Kuku Ngbendu wa Za Banga"* (http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mobutu_Sese_Seko) is still vivid in the minds of Africans. As the reader understands that Brother Jero's utterance is oxymoronic to common moral and religious rejection of vanity, he becomes aware of the opposite values it implicitly conveys. As such, castigating turns to be advocating. Indeed, as Soyinka uses sarcasm, he shows ways indirectly. For, what is denounced must be replaced by its opposite value or quality.

Besides, the humorous or light tone of parody seems a useful device to tackle most critical topics which otherwise break out into brawls. Through parody, literature offers a peaceful means to calm down social, political, economic, cultural, moral and religious tensions. At a more personal level, parody is beneficial owing to the culture of tolerance and the ensuing building of citizenship it induces. Indeed, as the reader gets wont to parody and its sarcastic mood as a literary form, he develops a new mindset made up of openness to criticism. He learns how to tolerate and accept contradictory and even mocking opinions. Therefore, the implicit but ultimate aim of parody is an appeal to virtues in the last instance. In this light, the unraveling of the intricacies of the parodic language opens ways to an appropriation of moral values. This substantiates Jennifer Hill's hearsay that "the study of literature begins in delight and ends in wisdom." (7)

Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to suggest how to address the complex form of parody in the perspective of constructing meaning in the literary text. For this purpose, we based our study on a play by Wole Soyinka, a play that can be read as a "mimetic parallel" to Christian doctrines owing to its numerous allusions to biblical passages. Extracts from this play, especially those centering on the protagonist, have permitted to exemplify the general features of the literary parody. The exploration of these elements in the play has displayed the grammatical and stylistic devices parody consists of on the one hand, and the moral values it connotes on the other hand. Our last concern has been to show how the integration of these linguistic usages and citizen values can help consolidate peaceful interactions in human society.

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