

“WHERE MAGA FALLS, GUYMAN GO WACK”: RECOLLECTIONS OF THE IGBO TORTOISE FIGURE IN SELECTED CYBERCRIME NARRATIVES

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ABSTRACT

Where “Maga” Falls, “Guyman” Go Wack is a Nigerian cybercrime slang that metaphorises scamming a “Maga”, a potential victim. This sarcasm is often channelled towards the *maga*, whose “fall” is a “blessing” (wack) for the smart “*guyman*.” The ambivalence of “*maga falls* and *guyman wack*” dominates the internet scamming discourse where the contemporary trickster, the *guyman*, not only exhausts the entire wittiness to entrap the victim to do his bid, but also trivialises the deadly crime scheme as a game of wits in order to boost his ego towards committing more crimes. This popular modern attitude, which appears to have streamed from an overrated admirable qualities of the trickster figure explains the morale of this study. I examine deceitful strategies in two selected cybercrime narratives of Igbo authors (a novel and a short story) as well as six selected Igbo trickster (Tortoise) tales in order to reveal the shared similarities of trickery strategies of con protagonists that are worlds apart, where the tricksters’ egoism foreshadows self-imposed calamity. Using the Jungian Theory of Collective Consciousness, I reveal the belief of self-destruction as a traditional restraint measure to excessive opportunism where treachery constitutes a metaphor for brevity of life and other misfortunes.

INTRODUCTION

At first, it was difficult. Composing cock-and-bull tales, with every single word an untruth, including ‘is’ and ‘was’. Blasting SOS emails around the world hoping that someone would swallow the bait and respond. But I was probably worrying myself for nothing. They were just a bunch of email addresses with no real people at the other end anyway. Besides, who on this earth was stupid enough to fall prey to an email from a stranger in Nigeria. (Kingsley Ibe, *I do not Come to You by Chance*, 153)

Aligning the “maga fall mockery” to the excerpt above, *Maga* and *Mugu* are employed by cyber criminals to label their victims. The terminologies are the Nigerian pidgin designations for a “very big fool and extreme stupidity.” Their origins are untraceable despite their popular usage across Nigeria. Also, very

observable in Nigeria is the incorporation of such terminologies by the Nigerian music stars into their hip hop songs. Such examples are Kelly Hansome's breakout song, "Maga Don Pay" (2008) and Banky W's "Maga no Need Pay" (2010), featuring other top music stars like Omawunmi, and Cobams Asuquo. Both songs address the quick-money-narrative among the Nigerian youths. While Kelly Hansome's song has an undertone of celebrating instant wealth got from a *Maga*, Banky W. *et al.* song is an instigation to the youth to shun internet crime and embrace hard work. Among the Igbo, *Maga* and *Mugu* equate to "onukwu" and "iti boribo," which mean a dullard. "To fall *Mugu*," in Nigerian pidgin expression describes stupidly falling prey to a cunning scheme, while to be "chopped mugu" depicts clearing off someone's possession without any suspicion. "Guyman," on the other hand, connotes a smart player; in other words, a scammer and swindler. By sarcastically ascribing victims such names as "maga" (Suleiman, 2019), "mugu" (Nwubani, 161) and "lollipop" (Nwubani, 163) to victims, the internet *guyman* scammers express their paradoxical feelings of both disdain and essentiality of their victims. Such names also lead to self-admiration and adoration by the crime perpetrators as conquerors. *Scamming*, just like a baiting process, lures and encourages the target to swallow the bait. Victims are relished by the perpetrators because they "must play an active role in the process by providing personal information, sending money, keeping the activity secret, and fail to report it to the authorities" (Hanoch and Wood 2021). Victims also provide assurances "of a future, larger payoff" (Isacenkova *et al.* 2014: 1) and they ultimately willingly surrender over money, information or other valuable resources (Schaper and Weber 2012: 1). Therefore, the success of a game master in manipulating the rationality of a fellow individual to succumb to his wishes is soul uplifting and self-gratifying.

Recent scholarly works on scam have focused on classifying and exposing newer direction of cyber scams (Al-Nemrat 2010); scam strategies and the psychological characteristics of the victims and scammers victimisation (Coluccia *et al* 2020); causes and consequences of victims' gullibility (Borwell *et al.* 2021). This paper focuses on the oppressor's shenanigans in selected novels on Nigerian cybercrime as well as some selected Igbo trickster (Tortoise) tales in order to reveal the shared similarities of trickery strategies of con protagonists that are worlds apart and the impact of such strategies on the fraudsters. Also revealed from the study is the implication of the crime perpetrators' celebration of the colossal "fall" of the victim in Igboland. Lurking beneath the victorious scamming techniques, desperation for survival and ego boosting lifestyle of the criminals is the retributive punishment of "ihe onye metara o buru," "one pays for one's actions." A connection of the Tortoise trickster of the Igbo tradition and the contemporary con men also reveals this shared identity of one being the architect of one's life span on earth through one's actions. By using the Jungian Theory of collective unconscious, which emphasises inherited behavioural patterns which were hitherto embedded in the unconscious of a people, this study emphasises insensitive treachery as "dancing into the flame" (Nwaubani) among the Igbo.

WHAT IS KNOWN ABOUT THE TRICKSTER AND THE IGBO TORTOISE

Trickster studies constitute an inexhaustible discussion in scholarship where the icon is described in various ways because Vecsey (1981: 162) explains that “the environment may differ and the society’s attitude toward the tale may differ.” By identifying the trickster figure as the guile survivor of an endangered and hostile environment, the Afro Americans and the Caribbean (Rickets 1966; Macmillan: 2013) trickery discourse focuses mostly on “slave resistance, diaspora survivals, and oppression against Blacks in the New World” (M’baye 2009: 3). In other words, B’rer Rabbit, Nancy and Bro Boar figures, which are presumed adoptions from Africa (Canonici 1995: ii) by the slaves, become scholarly bases for the critique of slavery, adaptation and Western imperialism. The trickster icons identify as social levelers, who through their wits could navigate social inequality and other racial biases from oppressors.

Canonici (1994) identifies three trickster characters in the Zulu culture. He (1994: 44) explains that the Chakijana of the Zulu culture, the slender mongoose, which is similar to the hare “represents the victory of intelligence over brute force, of small over big and powerful, brain prevailing over brawn, the extrovert ever ready to take advantage of the weak points of the opponents, who are condemned as stupid and unimaginative.”

Canonici also associated the Zulu trickster figure, Hlakanyan, with “scattering with” and “sowing confusion.” He manifests the unbridled confusion proceeding from the interference of the world of veld and forest into the human world of animality into humanity, of disorder into a strictly regulated society, where any physical abnormality is viewed as a sign of witchcraft (49).

Also, by associating the trickster with culture heroism (finding of a nation and political structure), the divine and creative (Guenther 2002: 13) nature of the trickster are portrayed. Guenther noted some of the trickster gods as Loki of Nordic mythology, Odin of Teutonic pantheon and Saint Peter and the devil in tricksters of folk Christians. Trickster figure, for this group of scholars is an inventor, whose existence is sustained by ritual (Wescot 1962). Among the people of Akan, Ghana, Vecsey (1981: 162; Pelton 1989) noted that “Ananse, and Nyame (the Sky God), who are both creation gods are related by blood. Depicting Ananse as the “perverting-alter-ego of Nyame, Vecsey claims that Ananse is always in conflict with the Supreme Being as “he attacks the very foundations of Akan people. Ananse, through his wisdom is ascribed the god of wisdom and knowledge because instead of hoarding his knowledge in the wisdom gourd, he disseminates them to all. Ananse is also credited with the creation of the moon, stars and agriculture in the Akan culture. Also, Obika and Eke (2014: 251) posit that Tortoise (*Mbe*)’s paradox in Igbo mythology is a representation of *Agwu*, which is the Igbo paradoxical god of wisdom and madness. *Agwu* for these researchers has two faces at the same time, the good and the bad. The good is for the innocent and well behaved. It is called “*mma agwu*” – evoking good (health and progress). The other one is referred to as *Ajo agwu* (2014: 248). The duo believes that this representation must be true or real to the Igbo nation to have informed the choice

of Tortoise as its symbol. According to them; “a person’s behaviour is guided by what he inherits from his people’s world view and what he understands from his encounter with the world around him” (248). This conclusion, however, has little or no strong foundation in the Igbo folklore.

Significantly also, although *Eshu-Elegba* in the Yoruba culture of Nigeria is identified by some scholars as a trickster god of markets, conflict, temptation, protection and child giving (Wescott 1962: 336), Lawuyi (1990: 71), cautions on the misleading classification of the Yoruba *Esu* and Tortoise as examples of Yoruba tricksters because such classifications have no epistemological foundations in the Yoruba culture. He, however opines that as a “symbol of alter ego of the powerful” *Esu* exists “to reinforce the power of leadership rather than alter or destroy it.” He concludes therefore that *Esu* is a “representation of a wish and/or a desire. For him also, the Yoruba trickster discourse is “a metaphor for life for it embodies human potentials, the vagueness and vagaries of life and reflects the tensions inherent in the process of becoming i.e in the struggle toward upward mobility (71)”. This also coincides with Pelton (1989: 4) opinion that “the trickster depicts man as “a social enterprise” and “a sort of inspired handyman, tacking together bits and pieces of experience until they become what they are-a web of a layered being.” Canonici (49), considering Hlakayan as a higher level of metaphor also points out that inasmuch as “Hlakayan” shares some parallels with the western trickster myths, it does not share the status of a demi-god apportioned to the trickster by some scholars.

On the identification of the trickster figure with solution seeking, Golovatina-Mora (2016; Mora 2016) highlight the role of the trickster in social activism. While Golovatina-Mora (2016: 563) depicts that by “enabling an externalization of the problems accompanying the process of individual and collective Self-development, the trickster provides for both the author and reader a shelter for reflection and a possible reconsideration of Self,” Mora 2016: 519 portrays a reconstruction of the comic trickster icon as a tool for social accountability. Also, as a solution seeker, the trickster figure is associated with search for completeness against discomfort, disaster and instability, Woodward (1995). In line with social critiquing, this paper studies the Igbo trickster figure in relation to the crime of exploitation and oppression.

The Igbo are among the major ethnic groups in Nigeria. Geographically, they occupy the five Eastern States of Nigeria in West Africa. Socio-politically, they are referred as the South Easterners. The language spoken by the Igbo ethnic group is also designated as Igbo and their major occupations include farming, fishing and trading. The Igbo are so cultural sensitive that most of their activities and identities have traditional and philosophical pedigrees. In other words, for every Igbo man, survival is a personal race and not a collective one as laziness begets poverty. Thus, *Aka aja aja n’ebute onu mmanu mmanu* (a soiled hand brings an oiled mouth), *ike kete o rie* (strength sustains itself) and *onye ruo, o rie* (one who works, eats) are popular proverbs among that emphasise hard work for life time sustenance. Highlighting this Ideology in the character, Unoka, Okonkwo’s father, Achebe (1958) portrays that a carefree life style never guarantees a comfortable livelihood.

Portraying this ideology of hard work and entrepreneurship through the ubiquitous Tortoise figure, the Igbo folktale fulfills the entertainment and didactic roles of “impacting the cultural ideologies, myths and legendary history of the land” (Emenyonu 2021: 12; Nwachukwu-Agbada 1991: 19; Epuchie and Amaechi 2009, Onuko and Ezuko 2012). Igbo folktales emphasise the trickster figure as a narrative changer, an entrepreneur, a hustler and a bush clearer. Exemplifying these qualities in the stories “Tortoise and the Drum” Achebe (1977) and “*Mbe na Ndi Mmoo na Igba nri n’ofe (Tortoise, The Ghosts and the Foo-foo and Soup Drum,*” Ogbalu, 1975: 28), Tortoise embarks on a narrative changing adventure in order to reverse the gross challenges of the drought on his household and clan. In such manner, the Igbo believe in seeking change and innovations in challenge to poverty, initiating a business enterprise and clearing the bush, i.e. creating a pathway for other family members and relative. In other words, the following survival ideologies are synonymous with the Igbo: “*a naghi ano otu ebe ekiri mmonwu, one does not stand in one position to watch the masquerade,*” “*mkpughari mkpghari ka e ji ere nwa mkpi, it is only by random display that the he-goat gets sold,*” “*onye ije ka onye isi awo mma, the traveller is better than the grey haired,*” and “*nwa agu anaghi ata ahimia, a cub cannot eat grass.*” While the first three expressions centre on changing the present position and location to effect progress, the last emphasises re-tracing one’s steps when the result is ineffective. In addition, migration for greener pastures and establishment of business enterprises are so synonymous with the Igbo that a popular expression among Nigerians has it that “a country that has no Igbo man must be grossly inhabitable.” Thus, the Igbo trickster figure is most times a solution seeking migrant and an adventurer, who gambles with adaptation mechanisms. His sojourning gimmicks resonates Okpewho’s (1990: 203) description of the trickster as “what is publicly feared but secretly coveted,” an echo of René Girard’s “mimetic desire” and implicit rivalries among the youth.

In contradiction to hard work, Tortoise also represents corruption of and inability to cope with the hard work-for-survival noble scheme of the Igbo philosophy. In this abused sense, swindling and treachery become mitigating tools for survival. The symbolic role of the folktale in upholding social stability in such desperate instances is highlighted by Uzochukwu (2001: 1) thus; “the folktale invariably contains some lesson which serves as a tool for correcting anti-social behaviours.” And supporting Uzochukwu’s assertion, Emenyonu (2020: 19) opines that “the significance of a folktale is that it demonstrates the logic of a behavior, and its vital implications and consequences for life in general.” As is often the case, wickedness does not go unpunished in the moral world of the folktale. As the guilty is always punished, retribution is always a recurring theme. The implication is always a warning to people to adhere to the norms of the society or else they meet the fate of the guilty.

Most studies on the Igbo trickster align themselves to this basic role of correcting “anti-social behaviours” Uzochukwu (2001: 1); hence, among the Igbo, trickery, which translates as *aghugho*, has a dyadic conception based on the intent

of the trickster. While the one that has a positive outcome is acclaimed as “cleverness”, the other that is regressive or highly insensitive to human nature is rebuked. The preeminence of sensitivity to human nature over every other reasoning is portrayed in the popular story of Tortoise, Lion and Monkey among the Igbo. Lion falls into a pit and beckons on a passing monkey to save him. Monkey lets down its tail and draws up Lion to the surface, only for the Lion to jump on Monkey with the intention of devouring it. Tortoise, passing by, overhears Monkey’s cry and asks to mediate on the matter. After Tortoise heard each side of the story, he asks Lion to demonstrate how he fell. In a bid to show how he initially fell, Lion falls back into the pit again and Tortoise advises Monkey to flee. Thus; ingratitude is rewarded with a reversal to the previous distasteful experience.

On the other hand, Tortoise signifies *aghugho*, a corruption of cleverness and nobility, which tends towards selfishness, egocentrism and inconsideration towards human nature. Accordingly, Ogbalu (2018: 14) notes that the Tortoise trickster asides his cleverness and positive survival instincts is “a rogue, a deceit and callous in justice.” Portraying further the negative character traits, Ogbalu, studying the Igbo folktale opines that the trickster is a “representative of injustice, greed and wickedness in society (14).” In such cases, it attracts such condemnations as “*onye aghugho nwuo, onye aghugho elie ya (A prankster is buried by a prankster), onye aghugho na-ala n’aghugho (A prankster is ruined by pranks) and Nkata na-ekpudo onye aghugho (A trickster will be covered by a basket)*. Significantly, *aghugho* (cunning) among the Igbo is synonymous with self-destruction as expressions such as, “*I choro igbu onwe gi (Do you want to kill yourself?) and I choro ila ndu gi n’iyi (Do you want to ruin your life?)*” reprimand early detections of injurious trickery in a child. It is therefore under this category that the modern terminology of scam, which translates to corruption and abuse of cleverness, innovation, entrepreneurship in Igbo belongs.

Furthermore, “Tortoise illustrates the Igbo belief in “*o metara buru, whatever one sows he will reap retributive justice*” Ogbalu (2019: 110). This Igbo thought further extends to the resort to threats and banditry for livelihood out of laziness (Okodo 2011). Apparently, Igbo Tortoise, in its solution-seeking ventures, depicts the reward and punishment philosophy. It is also a symbol of peace in some parts of Igboland, where it is a major sacrificial meal offered to *Ala*, the Earth Deity for pacification in cases of desecration of land, like adultery (Madu 2016). Such explains the trickster’s paradoxical portrayal in the Igbo tale where his cleverness against enemies and other adversities is rewarded, while his selfish schemes are punished.

Although the Igbo Tortoise trickster myth may coincide with the universal archetype of law breaking, trampling on customary usages, subversion of established social conventions and social leveling, the Igbo mythology is the Igbo trickster figure just like Canonici and Lawal have pointed out constitute metaphors for communicating the Igbo social values and the futility of evil to society. In other words, positive or negative reward is earned in line with the humane discharge of such roles. In other words, repercussions come either in one’s life time or the future lineage. Thus the Igbo will say *O me mma na mma yi aga ma ome njo na njo yi aga*

(*Good deed is always accompanied by the good, while evil deed is accompanied by evil*). In this way, equilibrium is achieved in the activities of the trickster. This quality is deficient in the Yoruba mythological *Ajapa*, Tortoise, which is merely “vilified for using his trickiness to subjugate characters smaller than he (like Snail or Baby Elephant)” (Odom 2013: 57).

Furthermore, the strong message of attraction of misfortune to oneself through one’s actions as represented by the Igbo trickster distinguishes it from the universal autonomous and uncontrolled “villain, dupe, and hero” (Mwinlaaru and Nkasah 2018: 252) trickster figure.

SCAMMING IN THE CYBERCRIME WORLD AND BEYOND

Cybercrime, a technologically enhanced crime of the contemporary world, is described as capable of “inflicting massive commercial” damage (Sarre *et al.* 2018: 515) on individuals and organisations across the globe. The universality of the crime inspires interest in into the study as it involves a procurement of massive wealth and treasure from a subdued victim. Cybercrime thrives by deception and deceptive strategies known as scam.

Scamming, “a popular form of fraud in which the fraudster tricks the victim into paying a certain amount under the promise of a future, larger pay off” (Isacenkova *et al.* 2014: 1) has been explored in various ways by some scholarly critics. In Nigeria, scam is popularly known as 419, a derivation from Nigerian Constitution’s Criminal Code Section-419, which covers any form of dubious activity. By identifying “419 as Nigerian scam” (Isacenkova *et al.* 2014: 1), just like most scholars do, there is an implicit reference of the scam history to Nigeria as a result of its early role in perpetuating the global scam email letters also designated as “Nigerian letters.”

Some other critics outline scam as a platform where dubious romantic relationships are formed with the eventual aim of manipulating and extorting economic resources from victims (Coluccia *et al.* 2020: Cassiman 2019, Whitty and Buchanan 2015). Additionally, Whittaker and Button (2020: 1) disclose a specific kind of scam that deals with “the advertisement of a pet such as a dog or cat online with the purpose of enticing victims to make an advance fee deposit for pets and an array of other associated costs such as for the delivery of the animal.” In this particular case, “an offender intends to collect payments for a pet despite having no intention of delivering it to the buyer (1).”

For Nigerian literary writers (Nwaubani 2009, and Okafor 2018), scamming is a strategic narrative changer, which mitigates economical disadvantages in a country bedeviled with financial and social inequalities. Feldner (2018: 102) notes that the protagonists of these literary works are “attracted by the opportunity to make a lot of money that could relieve their families of poverty.” In the analysis of Teju Coal’s “Every day for the Thief (2007),” Ribic (2019: 1) argues in line with the Nigerian authors that “email scam offers sensational perspective from which to survey the dramatic reconfigurations of African labour in the past 40 years.” Ferguson (2012) introduces the readers to the world of internet where “lives

intersect, worlds collide, a family falls apart. And it all begins with a single email.” Emphasised in Ferguson’s book is the global and magical role of scam emails in uniting people from distances apart as well as a contributive factor in the breaching of family and friendly trust.

Expressing scamming schemes in comparison with “legitimate product marketing strategies,” Office of Fair Trading annual Report, United Kingdom (OFT, 2009, 12) makes a close reference to the manipulative expertise needed in convincing a buyer to settle for a product.

From the areas explored above, it is glaring that scamming, is a treacherous crime of dispossession that undermines the noble course of hard work. Therefore, scamming, in relation to the oppressor’s self- destruction has been given little or no attention. This is the research gap that this paper intends to breach by studying the scamming strategies in relation with the Igbo Tortoise Trickster tales through the lens of Jungian theory of Collective Unconsciousness.

METHOD OF ENQUIRY AND THEORETICAL FRAME WORK

This study is a content analysis and library based research. The data is sourced from three primary narrative texts, namely: *Mbediogu: Ako bu Dike* (a collection of Igbo Tortoise tales) by F.C. Ogbalu (1975), *I do not Come to You by Chance*, a novel by Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani (2017), and “All our Lives” (2014), a short story by Tochukwu Okafor. The former deals with Advance Fee Fraud, while the latter, Okafor’s “All our Lives” (2014), portrays romance scam dating. Some of the data, especially the ones on the Igbo Trickster drawn from *Mbediogu: Ako bu Dike* (a collection of Igbo Tortoise tales), were rendered in Igbo and will be transliterated for the analysis. Secondary critical works, journals are also employed for the close examination of the core texts. The information collected is subjected to further synthesis in order to buttress the argument of the study. The trickster motif of solution-seeking and search for completeness is the common focus of the texts and that necessitated their choices for exploration and evaluation. Also, the reverberation of self-damage as a punitive measure to egoistic opportunism in texts that are generations apart necessitated the adoption of the Archetypal Literary Criticism with emphasis on the Carl Jungian theoretical approach of Collective Unconsciousness (19).

Archetypal Literary Criticism analysis focuses on the repeated myths and Archetypes in the narrative symbols, images and character types in literary works. Jungian’s archetype derives from the Latin noun *archetypum*, which is an adaptation of the Greek word *archétypon*, which in the adjective form is *archétypos*. The word is formed from the verb *archein* (beginning, origin) and the noun *typos* (model, form). In ordinary language, the term means “the original form” Braga (2016: 220). Archetypes are universal, inborn models of people, behaviours or personalities that play a role in influencing human behavior Cherry, (Kendra 2020). Concisely, Akporobaro (2004: 470) describes archetypes as “basic units or building blocks from which stories are generated by the process of selection and recombination.” “Basic units,” as elaborated further by Akporobaro,

explains that “a murder is a murder but each one is unique because of the characters involved, the time of the murder, weapon, motive or circumstances of its committal” (470). In other words, the basic units of the trickster myth, which are deception, treachery, rule breaking and disguise could be deployed in accordance with a certain cultural belief. Such various social elements explain the distinctiveness of societies in relation to the trickster heroes.

CORRUPTION OF NOBILITY IN THE IGBO TALES AND CYBER CRIME NARRATIVES

In line with struggle for survival and completeness, tricksters devise deceptive strategies of subsistence against scarcity and adversity. These deceptive schemes ensure existence for both the folkloric and the modern tricksters. Identifying similar scamming strategies between the ancient and modern culture of the Igbo is the major focus of this section. While the ancient culture is represented by the Tortoise tales, the cybercrime novels represent the modern culture. Although the subject matter of the two novels, cyber fraud, falls under the same penile code, section 419, in the Nigerian constitution, Nwaubani’s *I do not Come to You by Chance* (2017) highlights Advance Fee Fraud, whereas Okafor’s *All our Lives* (2014) portrays romance scam dating. In the recurring motif of opportunist-victim relationship, which is the basic stereotype of the trickster schemes of both traditions; “two tongues” (lies), “sweet tongue” (persuasion), and masking the original archetype cut across the narratives.

“Two tonguing”

To be “two tongued” in Igbo describes *ónyé ókwú ásí* (a liar). It talks about one who tells an untrue story in order to present a positive image of oneself for the utmost purpose of winning favour, treasure and admiration of the listener. “Lying,” in this sense is equivalent to irony in the Western thought, portrays a discrepancy between thought and actions. This thought is in line with (Rudolph *et al.*’s (2005) claim that lie is usually adopted because “humans have a basic desire to be approved of by others or groups.” Of particularly great importance in gaining the needed approval from people (Hewit *et al.* 2003) notes, is the skill of self-presentation. Most times, in order to present oneself positively and achieve set-up goals, lies are used to mask intention. Two tonguing is deployed by Tortoise in the story of “*Mbe na Ududo, Tortoise and Spider*” (Ogbalu 1975: 52-53) for a greedy intention.

Tortoise approaches *Ududo* (Spider) for friendship. On the course of the friendship, Spider sets a trap near Tortoise’s house so that the trapped animal will be collected easily for him by Tortoise as lives close to the trap site. In reward for the friendly request made to *Mbe*, *Ududo* instructs *Mbe* to take only the captured small animals and give him the big ones. *Mbe* agrees to *Ududo*’s plans but out of greed he opts for the reverse of the instructions as highlighted in the excerpt:

O rue n’echi ya, onya ahu wee jide anu uku a na-akpo ocha. Mbe wee hu anu uku ahu tigbue ya wee kpokue Ududo si ya na onya ya e jide anu. Ududo jua ya si “O jidere gini?” Mbe si ya n’obu nwa anu nta. Ududo si ya wee rie (52).

The following day, the trap caught a big animal, called, Ocha (an egret). Mbe saw the big animal and called up Ududo telling him that his trap has caught an animal. Ududo asked him, "What did it catch?" Tortoise told him that it was a very small animal. Ududo told him to eat it (52).

As the first plan works out for Tortoise, he continues collecting the large animals up until a prophesy bird reveals Tortoise's cunning practices to *Ududo*. The revelation of Mbe's cheatings to *Ududo* by the seer bird prompted *Ududo* to report the matter to a monster called *Ihilihi* and they together plan vengeance on Tortoise. *Ihilihi* entraps himself in *Ududo*'s trap and Tortoise, finding him there shakes with fear. He calls on *Ududo* for the first to collect a big animal. *Ududo*, who already knows the plan, refuses and asks him to deal with it as usual: "*Mgbe Mbe biara, egwu turu ya; o tikue Ududo si ya na onya ya mara anu uku. O si o nwebeghi mgbe o bula ya huru anu ukwu di otu a.*" When Tortoise came, fear overcame him: he called *Ududo* and told him that his trap caught a big animal. He reported that he had never seen such a huge animal before (53)." *Ududo* insisted that Tortoise to do to it what he had done to others.

Tortoise's actions in the story suggest covetousness bred from laziness. Unable to work hard and institute something on his own, Tortoise probably targets Spider, who has a progressive occupation as hunter. Tortoise implicitly uses the friendship as a decoy to get closer to Spider for a selfish purpose. This action is in line with Toma *et al* (2008)'s opinion that "individuals sometimes can select information about an image strategically and then positively describe their own image." With the pre-information on Spider's occupation, Tortoise's true personality is masked with falsehood in alliance with Spider's tastes, which earns him Spider's trust. However, Tortoise's white lies on the type of animal caught by the trap further reveals his real intention for the friendship, which is a selfish one. *Ududo*'s rejection of the trapped animal humiliates Tortoise and makes him face the tortures of *Ihilihi*. The monster, being outstandingly heavy, compels Tortoise to carry him back home as a punishment for his treacherous actions against *Ududo*.

In another story, "*Mbe na Ngwere Tortoise and Lizard*" (Ogbalu 1975: 5-6), Tortoise features paradoxically features as the victim. There was salt scarcity in the animal kingdom and *Mbe* was nominated to go and purchase it from a distant land. When *Mbe* bought the salt, and was drawing it home, Lizard came from the bush and cut off the bag of salt from the long rope. *Mbe* reported the matter to conflict resolvers and Lizard claimed that "*n'obu akpa nnu O huru n'uzo maka na Mbe e bughi ya n'isi kama na o na-adokpu ya adokpu the bag of salt was found by him at the roadside*" because Tortoise was not carrying the bag on his head but dragging it on the ground." The case was discharged in favour of Lizard, who was acquitted because of Tortoise's inability to establish a case of ownership. Another day it was raining and *Mbe* saw Lizard hiding his head inside a hole in the ground to shield himself from the rain and at the same time exposing his tail. *Mbe* went and cut it off. Lizard took the matter to the judges and *Mbe* also claimed that it was a tail he saw on the road. *Mbe* was set free because he was not found guilty.

In this second story, Lizard uses two tonguing which is deceitful and convincingly enough to win himself an unmerited favour. Lizard's actions also aligns with (Schneider 1981; Leary and Kowalski 1990)s' claim, that “Impression management is not only about controlling and manipulating information about oneself disclosed to others but also the process of managing one's own impressions of what others perceive.” Lizard, symbolising inability to sustain oneself productively, resorts to robbery for livelihood. He uses lies to cover up his crime and solicit the approval of his people, which he actually gets. Mbe, unable to secure justice from his people, intuitively uses retaliation to ensure that *Ngwere* gets a commensurate punishment for his offences.

In “All Our Lives,” the multiple personas foretell their two tongued nature by stating their major intention for enlisting into the dating sites: “Do not think we are searching for love. Love does not exist in this city. We are men of the night. Our reward is money (18).” In other words, it is obvious that whatever they will tell their lady and male lovers are all lies. As observed by (Fieldman *et al* 2002) in a study on dating, “that people are likely to engage in lying behaviors to appear competent or desirable when first meeting a likable partner.” Also, in online dating environments, lying behaviors to partners convince individuals that they are getting into a more positive situation than they actually are (Hanock 2007). An example of such lies that portray personas as desirable females to their male victims is depicted in the excerpt:

“We tell these old men that we wish to come to the States, to Paris, to London. We beg them. We say we will be their slaves. We say we will let them have us any way they know how to. We say we are dying to bring their children into the world (20).”

Also worthy of mention as two tonguing in *I do not Come to You by Chance*, is Kingsley Ibe's over-used personalised introductory notes of, “Dear Friend” and “I do not come to you by chance,” in all his 419-scams letters of stashed looted fund (Nwaubani 153-154). People with a high level of need for approval paint themselves in a positive light (Scheider and Turkat 1975). Apart from coinciding with the title of the novel, the introduction has the intention of bridging the gap of strangeness between the scammer and the victim. Similarly, the ridiculous names such letters bear, for instance “OSONDIOWENDI (157),” which means “pleasing some and annoying others” in Igbo Language and clear pointers of fakeness to the victims, are overlooked.

A display of two tonguing is also employed by Cash Daddy in his telephone conversation with Mr. Moore, a foreign investor, regarding the progress of the sham oil licence deal with the Nigerian minister of petroleum (102). In order to sustain Mr. Moore's interest in the transaction, Cash Daddy deceitfully details Mr. Moore about a conversation he never had with the minister. In other words, “lying in order to sway individuals to agree with one's opinion, which is different from others' in order to win others' goodwill” (Freidman *et al* 2002). He also uses a real case of the minister's medical trip to Germany to treat his dislocated ankle to trick Mr. Moore into believing him as the reason for the postponement of a scheduled meeting with him. A strong assurance to securing the petroleum licence

made to Mr. Moore by Cash Daddy, strengthens his commitment towards sending money as requested by the con men. Also, Ben, a member of the syndicate sends out letters claiming that he was the head of a committee that tendered for and recently completed some construction work on the Port Harcourt Refinery (Nwubani 162).

Sweet Tonguing and “Head washing”

Sweet tongue (*iré usọ*) among the Igbo signifies the art of persuasion. Someone who has a sweet tongue is powerful because of the unique capability of re-shaping other people’s thought patterns through deceit. “Head washing” on the other hand is ability to convince and manipulate a victim to an oppressor’s advantage. Manipulation is further defined by Buss, *et al*, (1987: 1219) “as one means by which environments are altered to correspond to characteristics of individuals.” Also, Bereczkei (2017) links manipulation to Machiavellian behavior, “where the oppressors strive to be the winner of the situation and aim at gaining the largest profit possible.” Their goal-oriented behaviour is mostly motivated by external factors such as money, power and influence. Machiavellians only enter deception against others when the circumstances make cheating and manipulation profitable. By exploiting the opportunity of telling people what they want hear, sweet tonguing, oppressor manipulate their victims into agreement with their views. In the narratives under study, “sweet tonguing and head washing” are depicted thus.

In the story of *Mbe na Ehi Eze*, Tortoise and King’s Cow (Ogbalu 1975: 47), Tortoise, through head washing ropes Lizard (*Ngwere*) into the crime of killing of the King’s cow. Tortoise, unable to control his taste for the meat, directs his son to slay the King’s cow. Afterwards, Tortoise instructs the son to scream from the cow’s stomach that the meat belongs to Tortoise alone. The child does as instructed and Tortoise feigns ignorance of the whole plan. He is later asked to carry the dead cow’s meat alone in order to forestall evil. *Ngwere*, on the discovery of Tortoise’s cunning as the son creeps out of the dead cow’s anus, screams with great astonishment in awareness of Tortoise’s evil plan. Tortoise calmly invites Lizard to joining to devouring of the meat. As they eat together, Tortoise sweet talks *Ngwere* thus:

Enyi m Ngwere, o bughi nani di na nwunye na-enyerita ibe ha nri n’onu; ka anyi nyerita onwe anyi anu n’ihi na enyi anyi mere ugbu a abughi kwa ihe e ji akpa amu. Ihunanya anyi epenarighi nke di na nwunye. My friend Lizard, it is not only husband and wife that feed each other; let us feed this meat to each other because this friendship we have now is not a joke. Our love is not less than that of husband and wife.

Tortoise succeeds in his wicked plot of cutting Lizard’s tongue with a sharp blade when it was his turn to feed Lizard so that he does not tell what he saw. This act attracts his banishment from the land.

Furthermore, in “*Mbe na Nkita, Jere Mgba*, Tortoise and Dog attend a Wrestling Match” (Ogbalu 1975 62-68), there is a great famine in the land and Dog always had some meat in his house. He also looks plump and clean. Tortoise inquires from Dog the secret behind the good look and Dog introduces him to a wrestling match, where the winner keeps the loser hostage. Once Tortoise gets

there, he picks a big he-goat to wrestle with because he needs a very fat one that will be good for his body “*Ngwa ngwa Mbe wee wuputa wunara otu nnuku mkpi n’ihi na o na-acho nke mara abuba rinne ga-adi ya onu mma. Swiftly, Tortoise jumps on a huge he-goat because of his desire for a fatty and tasty meat* (65).” Tortoise’s “big eyes” blind folds him to weak strength. The ease at which Dog conquer and captivate his opponent makes Tortoise think the wrestling was a walk-over. Greed blinds him to his size and he was conquered several times before Dog intervenes to fight extra for his bail-out. Tortoise’s greed starts growing and gives to his lusting for Dog’s acquired goats. On their way home, Tortoise cut one of the ears of his goat, ate one and gave Dog to eat too. Dog, Knowing Tortoise very well refuses to chew the meat. He simply left in one side inside his mouth. Dog’s presentation of the meat each time Tortoise asks for it annoys Tortoise because his scheme seems to be failing. As they get to the river to have a bath, Tortoise initiates the idea of feeding each other with water. During Tortoise’s turn, he forcefully pours the water into Dog’s mouth and the meat washes down his throat. Tortoise starts demanding his meat again and Dog fails to produce it. Tortoise mounts pressure on Dog, who in order to let peace reign, lets him have all the goats he won as compensation. Through the perpetrator’s persuasive skills, victim’s trust is bought and pounced upon at the right time. Tortoise feels proud and accomplished at himself after he had collected all of Dog’s goats after the wrestling match. Dog, sad and crestfallen, narrates his ordeal to a *dibia* (native doctor), who advises him on what to do. Dog is advised by the *Dibia* to mould a sticky man with foo-foo and place inside Tortoise’s house. Tortoise goes home and feels insulted by the statue’s “arrogance” of ignoring his greetings. He starts beating, slapping and kicking the statue. But each of his part of the body parts used in hitting the image gets stuck. Dog creeps out from his hiding place and collects back all his goats. Tortoise, after he has rested from his disgrace retaliates what Dog did by moulding an image of a man, which he keeps in Dog’s house. Once dog sees it, he invites his wife to prepare a very delicious soup, which they used to devour the foo-foo image. Tortoise, unable to contain his humiliation begs Dog for bits of the foo-foo. But Dog refuses telling him that: “*me m boro abughi ajo ihe, vengeance is not a crime*” (68).

Scammers’ sweet tonguing talent also known as “*mugu* packaging” in Nwabuani, () is such a powerful talent that it is popularly attributed to supernatural *juju* (charm) hypnotisation of the victim by the prankster.

In *All our Lives*, the multiple personas portray sweet-tonguing by accepting all the proposals made by their lonely-lady-victims. Appeals to “bring along their parents” and “younger siblings who have been sent off as apprentices” (19) on their visits to the “rich” countries were accepted. The victims were also promised a fulfillment of all their fantastical cravings by the swindlers, whom are believed to be caring and compassionate. They ask:

If they can bring their favourite aunts and uncles. *Do they make masala chai in Texas? Can a decent meal of bobotie be bought in the streets of London? Baby, I hear there are tall tall buildings and many Rocky Mountains and the weather is always freezing cold in Canada, will there be gardens at least to plant ukazi?* We tell them, *Yes, yes, yes* (19).

Such sweet tonguing is portrayed in *Chance* when Cash Daddy brain washes Kingsley to join his 419 syndicate. By flattering Kingsley's smartness and downplaying the crime of 419 as a lesser crime to murder and adultery; Cash Daddy strokes Kingsley's ego towards becoming a member of the crime syndicate. Also through rubbing Kingsley's poverty stricken family on his face, Cash Daddy indoctrinates Kingsley into the reality that his own "poverty is a choice" which he "has made for himself." (132) For Cash Daddy, education is a waste if it does not do its supposed duty of getting rid of poverty in one's household. Kingsley's eventual decision to join the fraudsters depicts a successful head wash from Cash Daddy.

Also, under the guise of the Minister of Aviation of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Cash Daddy "washes" Wintabottom's head (a foreign investor victim) with the "Igbo marginalization" (203) injustice perpetuated by the government against the South Eastern Nigeria. He sweet talks Wintabottom into thinking himself as part of the epoch-making event of achieving equity for the Igbo through the construction of an airport for them. By emphasising Wintabottom's ties with Africa and his neutrality from Britain and Germany, Cash Daddy guarantees Wintabottom of his suitability for the role. In addition, Cash Daddy mentions his "Northern pedigree" as his dispassionate proof of equity struggle. Being a con artist, his imposter role was performed to the admiration of his cohorts.

Kingsley's letter to Mr Hooverson (a foreign client) impersonating Shehu, the son of the Late Nigerian Head of State, Gen sani Abacha, portrays a sweet tonguing demand to Hooverson's emotions. The letter requests Hooverson's assistance to act as a beneficiary to "Shehu's sister's money, which is stashed in a European bank. He is to withdraw the money in cash and pay it into a new account then subsequently send it in tranches to other of his accounts in his home country. Twenty percent of the total sum of money will be his share after the transaction.

Kingsley's suggestion of a greeting code "Aluta continua" (177) is welcomed by Hooverson as it serves as "a bond of trust and comradeship" between them. It also reassures Hooverson of the "honesty" of the business deal because he feels carefully selected for the role. Kingsley adequately emphasizes to him; "that it is owing to frustrations and betrayals from people very close to my family that we are throwing caution to the wind and trusting you despite the fact that we have never met (178)."

Identity Masking

Identity masking describes the distortion of the original body for selfish gains. This tactic is used by Tortoise in the story of *Mbe na Osa*, Tortoise and Squirrel (Ogbalu 1977: 70-73). In order to solve the problem of famine, all the animals agree to Tortoise's suggestion of killing the aged mothers to feed the young. Squirrel hides his mother in heaven and he visits her often to be fed by the mother. As a result of the regular feeding, squirrel always looks fresh in spite of the striking hunger in the land. Tortoise cunningly extracts from Squirrel the information his mother is still alive and talks Squirrel into accompanying him to pay the mother a visit. As they go to pay Squirrel's mother, "*Mbe wee gee nti nke*

oma, wee riba okwu nile nke ahu ama. Tortoise listened carefully and learnt the song code” (72) for opening the door of heaven. They are well entertained and taken good care of by Squirrel’s mother.

Next day, as Squirrel goes into the forest to eat palm nut, Tortoise gathers all the animals together and divulges the secret of Squirrel’s mother being alive to them. They all follow him to the forest and Tortoise assumes Squirrel’s self by imitating the song and the voice to perfection. Mother Squirrel thinks it is his son and throws down a rope, as usual for him to climb up. Tortoise and all the animals clutch at the rope and were already climbing very fast when Squirrel, who had been notified of the goings-on by the “Prophesy Bird”, appears. Squirrel screams to his mother with a very loud voice and tells her to cut the rope as he is not the one on the rope. Mother Squirrel cuts the rope and all fall from heaven and died.

Squirrel’s voice is copied by Tortoise to gain entrance into Mother Squirrel’s house in heaven with the rest of the animals. Although Mother Squirrel was already deceived into letting them in, Squirrel’s timely presence prevented the materialization of the scheme. Tortoise’s imposter representations in the stories are comparable to the “mystery lovers” in Okafor’s *All our Lives* and the mystery prince/princess, who is stuck with ill-gotten-wealth in Nwabunani’s *I do not come to You by Chance*.

In Okafor’s story of becoming “All our Lives” (2007, 17) the multiple personas from the Southeastern Nigeria migrate to the city in search of “a better life.” Their continuous stay in their various villages seems hopeless because of heightened frustrations, joblessness and unfulfilled childhood dreams. In order to identify with the new life style, they take new names:

We can be Matt, Jason, Alex, Garth, Arthur. We can be twenty, twenty-one, twenty-two. We can come from London, New York, Paris, or any other exotic place our fingers can never locate on a map. We can be tall, athletic, broad, sinewy, thick. Our hair is auburn, rooty blond, steel grey. We can speak American English, garnishing our sentences with “wanna” and “gonna”; flecks of “fuck,” “holy fuck,” “shit,” “damn” or “nigger”. We act like we own stretches and stretches of land, stately homes, estates, penthouses (17).

Personifying the fake bodies downloaded from the internet, the young migrants who have become internet scammers parade themselves as rich men in order to woo rich lonely women on line. Plans to swindle money from such women are set once the relationship is established. By telling the lovers fake stories of how they are unable to withdraw a huge amount of money from their banks at the moment, they expect to be loaned some money by the female lovers. The relationship, however, ends if nothing promising comes out of it or the site account is shut down once the loan is received. The target of the young men personas is shifted to “old white men, with streaks of greying hair and lined skin” (Okafor: 20), as they change into women seeking love from the lonely aged men. Much later in the novel, the bodies of the young men are reconstructed as gays in pursuit of homosexual victims. It is through this medium of fake bodies, that the scammers are able to manipulate the victims’ emotions, earn their trust before pouncing on the targeted treasure.

Also in, *I do not Come to You by Chance*, Kingsley Ibe, a promising graduate of Chemical Engineering fails to secure a job after his university education. His family, already impoverished by the Nigerian hyper-inflation economy and a sickly father is left with nothing after the death of the bread winner. He joins a 419 scam syndicate in order to cater for his family's basic needs. The fraudulent organization deploys the stolen body strategy in different manners. In one among the scams – the type Chiluiwa (2009) refers to as “deceptive fortunes bequeathing information,” a victim's help is needed to retrieve a dumped Millions of dollars trapped in an international bank. In this scam type, the victim is promised a good percentage of the money upon the retrieval of the fund. In the novel, Kingsley goes to borrow money from his “Uncle Boniface” (a childhood house-help in their house) in order to offset his sickly father's hospital bills.

On one of such borrowing visits to Uncle Boniface, popularly known as “Cash Daddy”, Kingsley becomes aware of Boniface's occupation-419. Kingsley's eyes catch a purported letter of request for assistance written by the “Cash Daddy's group” in the disguise of one “Professor Ignatius Soyinka, the Astronautics Project Manager of National Space Research and Development Agency (NASRDA) (108).” In the letter, “Soyinka” claims that a colleague of his, “Marshall Nnamdi Ojukwu (AVM Ojukwu), the first ever African to go into space,” was trapped up there. He also claims that Ojukwu could not return with his crew members because of racial discrimination - he is a black man and his space is given a cargo, which is considered more important to the Soviet military space station. “Professor Soyinka” then solicits the help of the receiver to access AVM Ojukwu's accumulated flight benefits of “almost \$35,000,000 (USD) that was being held in trust at the Lagos National Savings and Trust Association” (108).

Masked scheme is further portrayed in Kingsley's first scam email (153), which reveals a concocted story that emanates from a “widow” of the ex-Nigerian Head of State, Gen Sani Abacha. Kingsley, impersonating Hajia Mariam Abacha, seeks the sympathy of the victim by narrating the ordeal meted on her family by the present Head of State. “She” also solicits help in recovering hidden money in a foreign account. Upon the recovery of the money, the victim will receive a certain percentage of the money after playing the role of next of kin to the deposited fund.

Also, in the same novel, Wizard-a male character and member of Cash Daddy's scam conglomerate – engages himself in online relationships with “randy foreigners he met in chat rooms (163).” In one of his escapades, his disguise as “Suzie” attracts a marriage proposal from a man in Salt Lake City, Utah whom he promises to pay a visit from East Windsor, New Jersey. In one of such appointed visits, “she” suddenly informs him that she was just on her way to Nigeria on a business trip as a make-up artist. Obviously, Wizard, a full-fledged man sits comfortably in a small office in Umuahia, Nigeria, punching profusely on his laptop!

In the imposter body of a “lady” on a “business trip,” Wizard is able to swindle the man. He cooks up a story about his passport being stolen at the airport and how he is left with nothing. With wizard's false American accent, pretentious dilemma and a push on the lover to show him true love, he is able to manipulate

the victim into sending him \$4000. Despite the fact that the American victim-lover nothing had nothing in his cheque account at the moment, he gets some from his credit card to replace it once he has cashed the cheques (163).

Implications of Treachery and Exploitation in Igboland

***Mbute ike* (harvest of power)**

In line with Jungian’s Collective Unconscious theory, which implies that archetypes are everywhere wearing the different clothes of the culture they are found in, it is observable that apart from the trickster figure of the Igbo being associated with desperation for survival it also exhibits traits of *Mbute ike* (harvest of power). Power harvest signifies sudden social strength and power driven by excessive crave for instant change in terms of wealth, power, glamorous lifestyle over other conditions of life. (Jordan 2001; Ellis; Tade and Aliyu 2011). These desires are obviously connected with insensitivity and egocentrism as represented in their “two tonging”, “sweet tonguing” and “masking of reality” strategies. In other words, there is an obvious shift from the noble purpose of coping to coveting. Commenting on the consequence of such activities, Ogbalu (2018:20) claims that:

The activities of these tricksters in our Nigerian society are temporal. For the tricksters’ life is always in great danger. They never live long. Their minds are never at rest for they continue to live in fear of being caught by law enforcement agency. In some cases, they die mysteriously (20).

In support of Ogbalu, (Okodo 2011) also argues that “Inhuman ventures are sacrilegious in the Igbo culture and no reason can suffice for callousness against humanity.” The consequence of the villainous activities is on the oppressors is represented textually as self – destruction with regard to vengeance, instant death, incarceration, low self-esteem, *onye aghugho nwuo*, “*onye aghugho elie ya a prankster is buried by a prankster*” and “*otu aka ruta mmanu a finger that touches oil*” philosophies.

Instant death and madness

Contrary to the common knowledge among the members of the 419 syndicate in *Ido not Come to You by Chance* that the instant death of Cash Daddy was as a result of food poison by his chef, Nwaubani’s deployment of the death is in alignment with the Igbo morality principle that no evil goes unpunished. The intrigue of an “invincible Cash Daddy” that could not stop his instant death depicts the Igbo saying that “*The ka nte bakwuru nte n’onu*” *what is more powerful than the frog has pursued it into its burrow.*” It is therefore implicit from the text that Cash Daddy’s death is beyond his powers and his death is structured to curtail his gubernatorial intention, glamourisation of, exploiting and indoctrinating young minds into evil. Among his damaging evils in the text is using the illness of Kingsley’s father and poverty to sweet-talk naïve Kingsley into crime. Inasmuch as it may be a favourable argument that Nwaubani’s narration is a depiction of treachery as a consequence of a system failure, which is testified by in Cash Daddy’s philanthropist use of the ill-gotten wealth, there is also a laudable

entrenchment of the Igbo belief that no gravity of adversity justifies treachery. Although, Kingsley and Wizard appear to be left out of the punishment at the moment, theirs was just a case of mere numbered days as well put in Igbo “*iko ha iju*, the filling of their cups to the brim (at the appropriate time).” In the same manner, cases of adverse mischief in the folktales are sometimes avenged by the death of the oppressor and other irreparable injuries as punitive reminders as seen in the death of Tortoise in “Tortoise and Squirrel” and the cutting of Lizard’s tail in the “Stolen salt story.”

Health wise, “Lying may be associated with indicators of emotional adjustment, such as depression, stress, and loneliness” (Engels *et al.* 2006). Likewise, this result indirectly implies that lying self-presentation requires more emotional labor, which can have a significant effect on depression. “Facebook research also identified the effects of lying behavior, which is positively related to psychological factors such as anxiety” (Wright *et al.* 2018). Thus, lying self-presentation is expected to have an impact on depression. These medical positions are relatively unconnected to the Igbo association of some cases of “madness” and “depressions” with “*the onye metere* whatever one sews, he reaps” repercussions of one’s treacherous actions.”

“*Onye aghugho nwuo onye ahgugho e lie ya, a prankster buries a prankster*”

This expression signifies out-witting the prankster and nailing the trickster figure with counter pranks. This philosophy is displayed in the cutting of Lizard’s tail by Tortoise in the folktale. Nwaubani also deploys the thought in the scambaiting pursuit where, Azuka (a member of the syndicate) becomes a victim of his Iranian *Mugu* as he disappears in Iran during his trip to strengthen his ties with his Iranian with the victim for further swindling ventures. Also the incessant incarceration of the multiple persona of “All of Our Lives” (21) points to the restlessness and discomfort that treachery attracts to itself as pointed out by Ogbalu (2018:20). An extract highlighting the social frustrations of criminals from “All Our Lives” (21) has it thus:

The city is spitting us out.it has had enough of us. The police want to take us off to cells that smell shit and never see daylight. The people are burning our hopes and demanding our heads. We are fleeing. We are placeless. The city no longer recognizes us. The skies burst open, drenching the littleness that is left of us. We leave our dreams behind. We cross the city’s border. We take up new lives.

“*Otu aka ruta mmanu a finger that touches oil*”

“When a finger touches oil, it spreads to the rest” is an Igbo expression that metaphorises the punishment of a family, pedigree or lineage by the crime of a person. Okoye (2011) explains this expression in relation to the Igbo “concept of causality in which they believe that nothing happens without a cause.” In that regard, he argues that every action of *onwe* self is influenced by mainly blood and not by *Omuma* (learning). Similarly, Obioha (2020) describes the expression as “incurring consequences not only on the individual but also the community.”

In *I do not Come to You by Chance*, Uncle Boniface, Cash Daddy, an illegitimate son of Kingsley Ibe’s grandfather, was rejected by the family in reaction to uncontrolled sexual escapade by the grandfather. Boniface is offered a home by Kingsley’s father and unfortunately the sins of his father catches up with him as his corrupt lifestyle is made manifest early despite the decency of Kingsley Ibe’s house offers him. His premature love letters to his girlfriends (66) and his mixture of water and sugar to replace drunk contents of Ginger ale in Kingsley’s mother’s shop (94) are textual testifiers of his father’s “finger that touched oil.” Also the rejection of Kingsley’s gifts by his mother in protest of Kingsley’s entanglement with Cash Daddy indicate struggles to wrestle his son off Boniface (Cash Daddy)’s 419 occupation. Her constant reminder to Kingsley to engage himself with a decent job (173) is intended to reunite him with the integrity of his pedigree in order to forestall any calamity on himself or his pedigree just like Boniface’s.

CONCLUSION

The narratives in both traditions portray the tricksters as opportunists, exploiters and manipulators of their victims for their personal gains. The victims, on the other hand, are depicted as naïve, confidential and unable to look beyond the moment. Using recurrent dishonest strategies of stolen bodies, two tonguing, head washing and give and take, the tricksters inflict perpetual pains on their innocent and unsuspecting victims. The victims’ honesty, gullibility and naivety are sometimes counter-productive as these are played upon by the adventures, who hop on the next target with the success of the previous scam. Such victories as seen in the texts are highly celebrated by the tricksters and such celebrations in the contemporary Igbo society are designated as *mbúté* and *mvotá íké* (harvest of strength), where *ike*, which transliterates as “strength” basically connotes (power) that comes from unexplainably instant accumulation of too much wealth. *Íbúté íké* is also slang among internet scammers who desire instant/sudden massive wealth and it metaphorises the ability to wield power and command life-changing power, increased social power, pride, enjoyment and the feeling of superiority. However, unknown to the oppressors is that their celebrations of conquests are implicit performances of their swansongs in the Igbo Philosophy.

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