

The aesthetics of invective: reflections on the use of verbal violence in *the Suns of Independence* of Ahmadou Kourouma

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Abstract: In recent times, one major threat to peace and sustainable democratic governance in Ghana is the upsurge of the use of invective language in public discourse. Ahmadou Kourouma's novel, *The suns of independence*, which can be classified as a socio-political satire, provides a textual data for a critical analysis of this phenomenon in its aesthetic form. Considering literary products (poetry, drama and prose) as clear manifestations of social discourse, that is communication, this study seeks to examine the use and aesthetic significance of verbal violence in this novel initially published in French as "Les soleils des indépendances" in 1968.

In its quest, the study, in the first place, identifies and analyses three forms of invectives considered as verbal violence in use in the novel. In the second place, it examines the causes of their use and their aesthetic or stylistic significance to socio-political discourse in the text, leading to the formulation of critical reflections on the phenomenon as a potential source of socio-political conflict and social disintegration. The study also points out how the intransigent use of vituperation resulting from egocentric pursuits eventually leads to self destruction. In this regard, *The suns of independence* provides both historical and contemporary textual material for reflections on the realities of the use of invectives and its aesthetic significance in socio-political discourse in fiction. Combining a range of theoretical frameworks in stylistics and pragmatics in the study of discourse, this paper examines both the methods of textual composition and the strategies of interpretation for invectives in the novel.

The significance of this study is found in the general contemporary quest for the use of sanitized language in the Ghanaian socio-political discourse for sustainable democratic development and social cohesion.

Key words: aesthetics – invective – descriptive invective – attributive invective – discourse – egocentrism – pragmatics – stylistics – symbolic invective

I. INTRODUCTION

The word aesthetics is derived from the Greek term "aesthesis" which means "sensation". Aesthetics, according to Hornby, A. S. (1974:15), is the "branch of philosophy which tries to make clear the laws and principles of beauty (contrasted with morality and utility)." On its part, *Collins Dictionary & Thesaurus* (2000:21) also defines aesthetics as "the branch of philosophy concerned with the study of such concepts as beauty, taste, etc." It further defines aesthetics as "the study of the rules and principles of art". For Plato and Aristotle, first theorists of aesthetics, the conception of Beauty is inseparable from moral and politics. Aesthetics brings together rules and principles by which Beauty is defined. What is of interest to us in these definitions is the idea of beauty. This beauty is perceived through a careful appreciation of the literality of Kourouma's diction and syntax in his novel, *The Suns of independence*.

The aim of this paper is to critically analyse Kourouma's choice of words and syntactic constructions which create the forms of verbal violence in the novel, in order to bring out their aesthetic or stylistic significance. This will then lead to the formulation of critical reflections on the use of these various forms of verbal violence in the novel.

Invective refers to abusive language, violent expressions. It is a manifestation of verbal hostility which takes the form of an emotionally violent verbal denunciation or attack using strong, acerbic, abusive language. It can also be seen as an angry, critical or abusive tirade directed at someone or something. Considering the emotional and psychological effects of such language use on a person or group of persons, one cannot but classify it as a form of violence. Language use being the source of this violence, it is therefore christened 'verbal violence'. The aesthetics of invective in this paper therefore refers to all forms of abusive language use in the production of literary and thematic effects in the novel.

One fundamental determinant of diction and syntactic structure which creates the style of a writer is theme. Underlining this fact in African literature, Amadou Koné (2004) writes:

Comme chez la plupart des auteurs africains, la tradition est un thème extrêmement important dans l'œuvre d'Ahmadou Kourouma. On pourrait dire que de ce point de vue, il se rapproche du romancier et ethnologue béninois Paul Hazoumé, du romancier burkinabé Nazi Boni, ou même des chantres de la Négritude des sources

qui ont décrit la culture africaine précoloniale. Cependant, Kourouma, écrivant environ un demi-siècle après ces auteurs, a mieux décrit la tradition africaine dans la crise où la colonisation l'a brutalement précipitée. Cette réussite semble s'expliquer par deux raisons au moins. Tout d'abord l'écrivain ivoirien est un « griot de l'indicible », un « guerrier griot », à la fois poète érudit, historien, ethnologue, sociologue et juriste des temps anciens. La seconde raison de sa réussite est liée à l'originalité de sa perspective : son but n'est pas d'enseigner la tradition aux Africains comme le voulait Nazi Boni, ni, contrairement à Hazoumé, de justifier les pratiques traditionnelles africaines aux yeux des Occidentaux. Ahmadou Kourouma décrit des personnages pour lesquels l'influence de la tradition devient un fardeau, des personnages qui exploitent la tradition pour assouvir leurs ambitions ou résoudre des situations problématiques. (p. 39)

According to Amadou Koné in the above quotation:

Like with most African writers, tradition is an extremely important theme in Kourouma's novel. One could say in this regard that he is close to the Beninois novelist and ethnologist Paul Hazoumé, to the Burkinabe novelist Nazi Boni, or even to eulogists of roots Negritude who have described pre-colonial African culture. However, writing about half a century after these writers, Kourouma has described better the African culture in the crisis into which colonialism has brutally precipitated it. This success can be attributable to two reasons at least. In the first place, the Ivorian writer is a "griot of the unspeakable", a "warrior-griot", at the same time an erudite poet, a historian, an ethnologist, a sociologist and a jurist of ancient times. In the second place, this success is linked to the originality of his perspective: his aim is not to teach tradition to Africans as Nazi Boni wanted it, nor to justify, contrary to Hazoumé, African traditional practices in the eyes of Westerners. Ahmadou Kourouma describes characters for whom the influence of tradition becomes a burden, characters who exploit tradition to satisfy their ambitions or address problematic situations.

It is in this perspective that the use of invective language becomes an indispensable arm or tool in the mouth of these characters committed, in their individual capacities, to defending their egocentric and irrational posturing in the name of tradition in Kourouma's novel. Key among these characters is Fama, the protagonist, whose aversion for Independence, for French colonialists and for his own Malinke tribesmen under the cursed suns of Independence, is luridly expressed in his excessive use of invective language throughout the novel.

The use of invective cuts across characters and setting in the *Suns of Independence*. It is used by the narrator as well as other characters. Key among its users is Fama, the main character who is obsessed by socio-political and economic transformations at variance with his personal expectations in the Independent Republic of the Ebony Coast. Adrian Adams (1981, 1982), profiling Fama in the blurb of his translated version, writes: Fama is the last of the Dumbuya, the ruling dynasty of Horodugu. The colonial era deprived him of chiefdom; the 'suns of independence' have reduced him to living on alms, and the toil of his much-enduring wife Salimata, in the teeming capital city of the Ebony Coast. When he travels north to Horodugu, he finds that the beloved world of his youth has vanished beyond recall. And when, on his return to the city, he yields to the lure of politics, he himself soon vanishes into the timeless world of detention; from this he surfaces, his former anger and vainglory resolved into a tragic awareness of things as they are for a final journey home.

The description of the character, Fama, in the above lines points to his disappointment, disillusionment, anger and bitterness. This state of mind provides fertile grounds for his use of invective language throughout the novel.

The use of invective language therefore results from the frustration of the characters. It serves as a psychological window for the airing of their disappointments and annoyances. It also serves as a defensive mechanism against attempts on one's personality or credibility. Verbal violence can equally result from a sudden mental incapacitation leading to the inability to articulate oneself rationally and cogently in the face of extreme provocation or challenge to one's ego. For the narrator in *The Suns of Independence*, the use of verbal violence is indicative of a denunciation of the point of view expressed by a character or characters. It helps the narrator to distance himself or herself from collateral damages likely to result from these views.

Our objective in this paper is to examine the forms of invective and their use by Kourouma as a literary technique in order to underline their aesthetic or stylistic significance in the novel. This will enable the formulation of critical reflections on its pragmatic effect as verbal violence in socio-political discourse.

II. FORMS OF INVECTIVE IN USE IN KOUROUMA'S NOVEL

Invectives are characteristic features of intolerance, selfishness and pride. They are mostly loud verbal outburst which are injurious to the personal reputation and character of persons on whom they are poured. Consequently, their use can lead to violent physical confrontation and socio-political strife. Invectives are varied in form and structure in the novel. They are either implicit or explicit. Aesthetically, they are used in some cases as metaphors, ironies, humours, explicit comparisons or symbols. As such, their meaning can only be established following a meticulous reading and appreciation of the entire text.

For the purpose of this study, we have identified three forms of invectives which illustrate the aesthetics of invective in the novel. These are: descriptive invective; attributive invective and symbolic

invective. The combined use of these three forms of invectives produces the aesthetics of invective in Kourouma's work. They therefore serve as analytical tools for our reflections on the topic.

1. 1 - Descriptive invective as verbal violence in the novel

A descriptive invective refers to all forms of abusive pictorial language use which provokes emotional outburst that can lead to physical confrontation. It is associated with disparaging and scornful descriptions which can cause emotional, psychological and physical harm to an individual or a group of persons. According to Powell, J.G.F. (...), descriptive invective "includes direct personal attack among its primary purposes, and could even be taken as a declaration of open enmity." For instance, the narrator scornfully frowns upon Fama's behaviour as a fallen prince, who now feeds on funeral donations, when he says: "Fama was going to be late for the seventh-day funeral rites of Ibrahima Kone. Faster and faster he walked, as if seized with diarrhoea." (pp. 4 - 5) Fama is here compared to someone who has diarrhoea and is in an indecent hurry to attend to nature's call. The picture evoked by this adverbial phrase of comparison does not fit a prince. Kourouma therefore creates an ironical situation through the awkward association of Fama to a person seized with diarrhoea. The irony is expanded through the use of an artistic contrastive description by Kourouma to evoke the past of the characters and link it to their present so as to let the reader appreciate their contemporary predicaments better. In this regard, Fama's aristocratic lineage which is at variance with his contemporary lumpenproletariat status is contrastively brought to the fore as follows:

Fama Dumbuya! A true Dumbuya, of Dumbuya father and Dumbuya mother, the last legitimate descendant of the Dumbuya princes of Horodugu, whose totem was the panther – Fama was a 'vulture'. A Dumbuya prince! A panther totem in a hyena pack. Ah! the suns of Independence! (p. 4)

The denunciatory irony that results from this contrastive description paints Fama as a disdainful and laughable character. The irony is further emphasised in the following words of the narrator: "It was an immense disgrace and shame, as great as that of the old panther caught fighting with hyenas over carrion, for Fama to be chasing after funerals in this way." (p. 5). The irony is further expanded through another contrastive description in which the narrator evokes once more the aristocratic lineage of Fama who is now "chasing funerals in this way": He, Fama, born to gold, food in plenty, honour and women! Bred to prefer one gold to another, to choose between many dishes, to bed his favourite of a hundred wives! What was he now? A scavenger ... A hyena in a hurry. (p. 5)

The dehumanization of Fama which started with the narrator comparing him to a person "seized with diarrhoea" is achieved with him being finally called "A scavenger ... A hyena in a hurry". Clearly, these attributes are insulting to the human dignity and royal lineage of Fama as the last legitimate prince of the Dumbuya dynasty. They therefore constitute a form of verbal violence which naturally provokes him (Fama) to react in equal measures to save and preserve his self-esteem and aristocratic dignity in the face of these extreme provocations. Descriptive invective aims at depreciative realism through a conscious combination of carefully chosen linguistic tools and syntactic constructions to evoke perceptible imagery in a derogatory form. It is one of the remarkable sources of aesthetics in Kourouma's writing.

In one other instance, the narrator sarcastically defames the Malinke praise-singers and elderly Malinke in a subtle way as he refers to them as "Real professionals!" who "work the burials and funeral rites." He states: Since every funeral ceremony pays, one can readily understand why Malinke praise-singers and elderly Malinke, those whose trading activities were ruined by Independence (and God alone knows how many old traders ruined by Independence there are in the capital city!) all 'work' the burial and funeral rites. Real professionals! (p. 4)

Even though the narrator seems to appreciate the fact that Independence has ruined Malinke traders, he appears uncharitable to them in their new-found 'profession' in burials and funeral rites in the capital. He therefore denounces their zeal and alacrity in this regard as follows: "Morning, noon and night they keep on the move from one neighbourhood to another, in order to attend all the ceremonies. The Malinke most unkindly refer to them as 'the vultures' or 'that pack of hyenas'" (p. 4). The reference to these people as 'vultures' or 'pack of hyenas' is dehumanizing enough to be considered a verbal violence. The narrator is very much aware of the debilitating effects of the use of these references which evoke scavenging, carcasses and debasement. He therefore distances himself from these insults through the use of a reported speech attributed to 'The Malinke' who 'most unkindly' use these derogatory references against some of their own ruined by the advent of Independence. This aesthetic detour has a satirical significance which reveals the narrator's abhorrence of the state of pauperisation of the Malinke elderly, including Fama, in the Ebony Coast under the 'suns of independence'.

The narrator's awareness and dissociation from these unpalatable descriptions is further revealed in the use of the adverbial phrase "most unkindly" to modify the Malinke's penchant to refer to some of their compatriots as 'vultures' and 'pack of hyenas'. The narrator is simply being sarcastic and humorous through this

stylistic detour in order to subtly heighten the aesthetic impact of these invectives. The use of these references sets the tone for the use of explicit verbal violence in the novel. They are mostly associated to Fama.

The very first time Fama's name is mentioned in the story, the narrator evokes his aristocratic lineage which is now in sharp contrast with his contemporary circumstances. He says:

Fama Dumbuya! A true Dumbuya, of Dumbuya father and Dumbuya mother, the last legitimate descendant of the Dumbuya princes of Horodugu, whose totem was the panther – Fama was a 'vulture'. A Dumbuya prince! A panther totem in a hyena pack. Ah! the suns of Independence! (p. 4)

The above quotation is more or less a concise biography of Fama in the novel. The narrative is just an attempt to expatiate it through series of dramatic situations that reveal the character of Fama vis-à-vis other characters, who together with him, help develop the various themes in the story. His aggrieved and choleric character begins to show as he decries his predicaments and lateness in the following terms: "Hell and damnation! **Nyamokode!**" (p. 5). The narrator shortly gives credence to this observation as follows:

Everything conspired to exasperate him. The sun! the sun! The cursed sun of Independence filled half the sky, scorching the universe so as to justify the unhealthy late-afternoon storms. At the people in the street! The bastards lounging about in the middle of the pavement as if it were their old man's backyard. (p. 5)

The last legitimate prince of Horodugu, naturally cannot countenance this messy and chaotic situation in the capital, hence his initial outburst: "Hell and damnation! **Nyamokode!**". As if this is not enough, Fama is yet to meet the worst following his late arrival for the seventh-day funeral rites of Ibrahima Kone, in spite of having walked "faster and faster ..., as if seized with diarrhoea". The narrator makes a premonitory submission as to what is to follow as he states:

After crossing a square, he turned up the central avenue of the government employees' quarter. Praise be to God! It was here, all right. But Fama was late, all the same. That was unfortunate; it meant he was going to have flung in his face, and in public, the kind of insulting reproof that's like having a snake in the folds of your trousers: unbearable whether you're standing, sitting, walking or lying down. (pp. 5 – 6)

Indeed, Fama is not spared "the kind of insulting reproof that's like having a snake in the folds of your trousers" on arrival. Fama's late arrival is loudly announced to the gathering as he "gathered up the folds of his robe and lowered his tall frame on to the corner of a mat" (p. 6). Doing so, "The wizened old praise-singer who was calling out announcements and comments, replied: 'The prince of Horodugu, the last legitimate Dumbuya, has condescended to join us ... a bit late.'" (p. 6). This statement does not sit well with Fama who understands too well innuendoes and subtle verbal attacks as carried in "... has condescended to join us ... a bit late" used by the wizened old praise-singer. It is not true that Fama joined the gathering out humility. The use of the verbal phrase "condescended" is ambiguous in that it presents more than one interpretations. According to Hornby et al. (ibid: 176):

Condescend (in a good sense) means to 'do something, accept a position, etc. that one's rank, merits, abilities, etc. do not require one to do'. (In a bad sense), it means to 'stop, lower oneself.' It also means to 'behave graciously, but in a way that shows one's feeling of superiority.

Which of these meanings fits a prince turned a beggar under the abominable 'suns of independence?' Under the current circumstances, it is obvious that the bad sense of this verb fits Fama. This is revealed in the narrator's immediate comments on the reactions of the gathering and his own conclusions. He states: "People looked up with sarcastic smiles. Let's face it: a prince who's practically a beggar is a grotesque figure under any sun." (p. 6). He goes ahead to take up the fight on Fama behalf as says: "Fama didn't waste his anger insulting those sneering bastards, those sons of dogs." (p. 6). However, Fama takes up his own fight in a fit of anger when it becomes obvious that 'the wizened old praise-singer' is determined to continually disgrace Fama through aspersions and innuendoes resulting from the bastardization of customs and traditions. According to the narrator:

The praise-singer continued: 'That he is late, does not matter: the customary rights of noble families have been respected; the Dumbuya have not been forgotten. The princes of Horodugu have been put with the Keita.' (p. 6) Traditionally, the Dumbuya and the Keita have nothing in common. Whereas the latter have the hippopotamus as their totem, the former's totem is the panther. It is therefore degrading and dishonouring to lump them together in the way the wizened old praise-singer does on this occasion. Indeed, the narrator echoes the abusive import of this statement in the following words as Fama dares the wizened old praise-singer to repeat the insulting aberrations in vain:

The man hesitated. Those who are not Malinke may not know it: in the circumstances this was a deliberate insult, enough to make your eyeballs explode with rage. Who had lumped Dumbuya and Keita together? The latter are kings of Wasulu, and their totem is the hippopotamus, not the panther. (p. 6). Reluctant to withdraw his innuendoes, the old praise-singer rather resorts to self-justification to the chagrin of Fama, as he intimates further:

The man launched into a flood of self-justification: symbolic, everything was symbolic in these ceremonies, and people should content with that; it was a shame, a great shame for custom and religion that some old men in this city had to live off what was handed out at funeral rites ... (p. 6)

Fama feels more provoked and prepares to react appropriately in defence of his battered dignity. At that material moment, as if to add insult to Fama's injury, Bamba, another insolent character, disdainfully orders Fama, the last legitimate prince of Horodugu to be silent. He rudely shouts at him from the throng: "Sit your arse down and shut your mouth! Our ears are tired of hearing you." (p. 8) Denouncing the disdainful and irreverent disposition of Bamba towards the last legitimate prince of Horodugu, the narrator humorously unveils his profile in the following description:

The man who had spoken was short and squat as the stump of a tree, with a stony face and the neck, arms, fists and shoulders of a wrestler. He was trembling with excitement like a cornered cricket, and stood on tiptoe to try and match Fama's height. (p. 8).

The narrator, through this description, brings to light the insolent and daring character of Bamba, who in spite of his defective height, age and social status, challenges Fama publicly. This situation represents one of the most injurious explicit attacks on Fama's personality as the last legitimate prince of Horodugu who deserves respect and honour from all his Malinke subjects.

As if the initial attacks on the person of Fama are not enough, Bamba adds: "You know no shame, and shame is what counts above all," he added with a snort." (p. 8) In the face of this grievous affront to tradition and customs, Fama, according to the narrator, [...] remained preoccupied with how degenerate the Malinke had become, how depraved their customs. The dead man's shade would inform the ancestors that under the suns of Independence, Malinke insulted their prince and even went so far as to strike him. [...] Truly it was time, high time to mourn the sorry fate of the last legitimate Dumbuya! (p. 8 – 9)

The concerns raised in the above quotation are echoes of the intimate thoughts of Fama as he bemoans his fate. This event also marks the peak of the bastardization of traditions and customs which puts Fama in a very awkward position to justify his anger and outbursts in every public gathering in the capital city. He cries out his heart as he insults the Malinke and laments over his predicaments: "Damn all the bastards! He! Fama, the descendant of the Dumbuya! had been scorned, provoked, insulted, and by whom? The son of a slave." (p. 9). Ironically, Fama's own degeneration and bastardization is also laid bare by the unapologetic 'wizened old praise-singer.' He proceeds with further innuendoes and aspersions at Fama:

[...] descendants of great warriors (that was Fama!) were living off lies and beggary (that was still Fama), authentic descendants of great chiefs (Fama again) had traded their dignity for a vulture's plumage, and were forever scenting out new events, a birth, a marriage, a death, so as to hop from one ceremony to another. (p. 9) For 'a son of a dog', 'a bastard of a praise-singer' to refer to a legitimate prince as 'a liar', 'a beggar' who has traded his dignity for a vulture's plumage is indeed a great abomination which cannot be forgiven. Hence, Fama has to stoop so low to fight the 'son of a dog Bamba' and the 'bastard of a praise-singer', the wizened old praise-singer. By engaging himself in this fight, Fama ironically confirms his own bastardization under the cursed suns of independence.

In a similar faction, denouncing the French colonial administration which has contributed to Fama's present predicaments, the narrator insultingly presents the European administrator who denied Fama the opportunity to succeed his late father as 'chief of all Horodugu' in the following words: "In the first place, a little boy, a rascally little European administrator always dressed in dirty shorts, restless and rude as a billy-goat's beard, was put in charge of Horodugu." (p. 13.) A semantic analysis of all the adjectives used in all the noun phrases profiling this European administrator in the preceding quotation points to an attempt to give a depreciative outlook to this European administrator as a way of decrying his acts as reprehensible and unjust. This is another instance of an insult to traditions and customs which re-echoes the theme of a generalized bastardization which depicts the failure and disillusionment of African Independences in the Novel. The depreciative description of this European administrator, given out as an epitome of all the evils of colonialism, is a way to attract sympathy for Fama and the 'damned Malinke bastards'. At the same, it attracts hatred for the European administrator and the entire colonial enterprise.

Besides the direct descriptive invectives, verbal violence is also aesthetically realized through explicit comparative description. This type of verbal violence results from likening a person or his behaviour to that of animals or things. The aesthetic effect of comparative descriptions is found in the incongruity of the product of the attributive association it generates. For instance, the narrator likens Fama and his Malinke brothers' behaviour to that of animals in the following words: "[...] like a pack of rutting dogs" (p. 10); "[...] the ceremony had degenerated into a pack of baboons at play" (p. 10); "[...] worth no more than a vulture's droppings" (p.13); "Fama [...] as illiterate as a donkey's tail" (p. 14); "[...] like little monkeys" (p. 17); "[...] howl like a demon" (p. 17); "[...] grunting like a boar and lay like a fallen tree-trunk [...]" (p. 20). These comparative descriptions are hyperbolic constructions which are deliberate exaggerations meant to slam the characters involved. They expose the shameful and degenerated status of these characters. Verbal violence resulting from comparative

descriptions are a real source of humour and aesthetic delectation taking cognizance of the dichotomy between nature of the parties being compared.

I. 2 - Attributive invective

In addition to descriptive invective, verbal violence is also realized through Kourouma’s use of attributive invective. An attributive invective refers to all instances of syntactic construction in which adjectives or participles functioning as adjectives pre-modify nouns, and become an inherent part of those nouns, in an attempt to achieve amplifying effect or to emphasize specific aspects of the nouns. It is characterized by the use of disparaging attributive adjectival phrases and prepositional phrases. This results from the use of adjectival phrases in a direct pre-modifying position with a noun phrase.

According to Quirk and Greenbaum (1973: 115), “Adjectives are attributive when they premodify nouns, ie: appear between the determiner and the head of the noun phrase.” The attributive invective is either an adjective or participle (either a present or past participle form of a verb, used as a pre-modifier. The kind of attributive adjectives and participles which are considered as invectives are those used in sneering at people and situations.

In the *Suns of Independence*, the narrator’s reference to the praise-singer who announces the late arrival of Fama as “the wizened old praise-singer” (p. 6) is an instance of attributive invective. The combined effect of the two qualifiers “wizened” and “old” between the definite determiner “The” and the head of the noun phrase “praise-singer” forcefully brings out the debilitating effect of deprivation and old-age on the praise-singer, who is nonetheless compelled to continue to praise-sing for survival. The narrator is obviously sneering at this old man who has virtually become an apology of worthy Malinke praise-singers of yester years in the great Horodugu. He decries the discredited status of contemporary Malinke praise-singers who have virtually become professional paupers and show no respect for customs and traditions. He states: “Bastard of a praise-singer! There were no real praise-singers left; the real ones died with the great masters of war, before the European conquest.” (p. 6)

The table below shows few examples of attributive invectives made up of an adjective or a participle plus a noun as used in the novel to realize the aesthetics of invectives:

Syntactic structure		Aesthetic significance
adjective + noun	“scrawny praise-singer” (p. 8) “stocky little Bamba” (p. 8) “shameless kind” (p. 9) “degenerate bastards” (p. 11) “filthy city!” (p. 12) “empty carcass” (p. 18) “nasty creature” (p. 20) “unkind creatures offspring” (p. 38)	All the descriptive adjectives used in the noun phrases are depreciative in nature. They attract distain and scorn for the noun they premodify.
-ing + noun	“sneering bastards” (p. 6) “seething, glinting mass” (p. 12) “a truly frightening creature” (p. 24) “[...] mocking hyena howls” (p. 41)	The use of –ing premodifiers gives an incomplete and progressive nature the nouns. The –ing attributives are the sources of ambiguity.
-ed + noun	“Damned praise-singer” (p.) “... soiled (...) sky” (p. 15) “... damned adulteress” (p. 27) “armed and maddened by jealousy” (p. 30)	The –ed attributives give perfective nature to the nouns they premodified. They depict verdict.

It is significant to emphasize that attributive invectives are concise and pugnacious because of their contracted and concentrated nature. Indeed, syntactically, they are noun phrases. As such they include direct name calling grafted on Malinke linguistic thought process and syntactic constructions. Notable among these are the constructions such as: “bastard of a praise-singer” (p. 6); “those sons of dogs” (p. 6); “that son of a dog Bamba” (p. 8); “the son of a slave” (p. 9); “that son of a dog” (p. 9); “that son of a donkey” (p. 9); “the son of a savage” (p. 69), “all the bastard sons of dogs and slaves” (p. 132). They reflect the high degree of intolerance and the fervent desire to pour out one’s frustrations and disappointments. These kinds of invectives quickly diminish syntactically to become metaphorical structures constituting symbolic invectives. These are one, shorter, concise but loaded with venom and hatred noun phrases.

1. 3 - Symbolic invective

This form of invective in the novel refers to abusive language use marked by a metaphoric replacement of characters by animals or things. This technique helps the writer to deprive characters of their human virtues, and replace them with animal qualities. As a result, the affected characters are exposed to public ridicule and contempt. For instance, the title of the opening chapter reads: “The mastiff and his shameless way of sitting” (p. 3). The development of events in this chapter of the novel points to the fact that this title is a derogatory verdict passed on the behaviour of Fama, the main character of the story.

A mastiff is a “large, strong dog with drooping ears, much used as a watchdog.” Fama, the last authentic Prince of the Dumbuya dynasty of the Horodugu, is the one referred to in this chapter heading as a “mastiff”. Fama is not presented just as a “mastiff”, but a shameless one as such, whose behaviour in public under the ill-fated suns of independence is always almost predictable. He is intolerant, vindictive, violent verbally and physically, lawless, insulting and pugilistic in all his dealings, in pursuant of his inordinate ambition.

The symbolic invectives are much more pugnacious, provoking and revolting because of the loaded nature of their inferences as metaphors. To achieve the disparaging effect of symbolic invectives in their fullness, the writer explicitly substitutes characters he wants to slam with the name of animals that are traditionally objects of scorn among the Malinke. As a result, for any person, and above all a legitimate prince like Fama, to be called or to call anyone “a hyena”(p. 5), an “ape” (p. 10), “a vulture” (p. 10), “a dog”, “... a donkey” (p. 22), “ground-squirrel” (p. 25), etc, is indeed dishonouring and dehumanising. The narrator, and in most cases Fama, the main character, remains insulting with symbolic invectives throughout the story in the novel. The narrator refers to the ungrateful “wretched beggars, ragged rogues, men long out of work [...]” (p. 40) who attack and rob Salimata in the market after she has fed, as “a pack of mongooses” (p. 41). He calls Balla, the fetish priest of Togobala “the wily old beast, the old hyena” (p. 72); Sery, a driver’s mate decries the carefulness of his master behind the wheels as he contemptibly names him, in the presence of the passengers, “a real chameleon” (p. 58). This is tantamount to nothing but reducing those characters to the level of irrational, contemptible and ridiculous beasts. They are therefore undeserving of sympathy in their predicaments.

III. REFLECTIONS ON THE USE OF INVECTIVE AS A LITERARY DEVICE

As already indicated earlier in this paper, there are varying causes for the use of invective language among human beings. Notable among these are: frustration, disappointment, anger, bitterness, selfishness, vainglory, superiority complex, intolerance, one’s desire to destroy someone’s reputation, or to assassinate someone’s character (and make him / her look bad in the eyes of society) and vengeance. One’s recourse to invective language use can also result from one’s desire to hurt, mixed with inferiority complex).

As a literary device, invective language use is a manifestation of an expressed desire of a writer to distance himself or herself from situations, events or characters painted in his or her literary works. It serves the purpose of denigrating and discrediting situations, events and characters. Furthermore, invective language use helps in the creation of the various textual tones and imageries which determine textual or literary aesthetics. In *The Suns of Independence*, Kourouma uses invectives to generate conflicts which bring out the latent flames beneath the frosty socio-political and economic relationship among the various characters in the novel. It therefore contributes immensely to the dynamism of the plot, which Forster in *Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan* (1991:17) defines as “[...] a narrative of events, the emphasis falling on causality.”

Considered in its aesthetic use in the novel, invective serves a satirical device in the hands of Kourouma. The aesthetics of invective is therefore not an apology of verbal violence. Kourouma appears to frown upon this kind of deviant behaviour resulting from the irrationality of primarily rational beings, who are emotional driven by instinct rather than by reason in their egocentric pursuits. The use of verbal violence or insult is debasing and destructive in all respect. There is no correlation between verbal violence and democratic freedom of speech. It is therefore an aberration for anyone to give vent to his or her spleen on anybody through abusive language, all in the name of freedom of speech in socio-political discourse in any democratic dispensation. It is misleading and detrimental to the noble course of democracy as a system of governance. Verbal violence is a cancerous cell that must be uprooted with the speed of lightening from our society before we get consumed by it.

IV. CONCLUSION

According to Czech structuralism, literature is typically characterized by experiencing pleasure in displeasure. Indeed the use of insulting language in Kourouma’s text though distasteful, as it constitutes verbal violence to the characters in the novel while chocking its readers, is a great source of delight. It represents the writer’s linguistic and literary artistry at its best in a very pragmatic manner. It is out of this pleasure experienced through the displeasure of abusive language use that the aesthetics of invectives is realized in *The Suns of Independence*.

Through the combined effects of appropriate diction and syntax, Kourouma paints realistic scenes, characters and an atmosphere defying fiction by which he satirizes egocentric and irrational inclinations of Fama, his main character, on one hand, and the bastardization of the African Independence and socio-political and economic life, on the other. Out of these effects, he produces aesthetics of invectives through description, attribution and symbolism. The final demise of Fama and all that he stands for in the novel point to the unapologetic posturing of Kourouma on the use of verbal violence in social discourse. Socio-political discourse must be geared towards consensus building and problem solving required for healthy nation building. This should be the way to go.

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- [13] Senghor et la tendance de la Négritude des sources avaient comme objectif de décrire (chanter) l'Afrique traditionnelle, donc la tradition africaine.

Notes :

'Griot' : A tradition praise-singer, linguist, ethnologist, sociologist, historian and poet.