

African Short Story Writers and Intrapersonal Conflicts: A Critical Perspective on a Selected Short Story

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The article examines the concept of intrapersonal conflict, the ravaging wars within oneself, that which is truly deeper than indecisiveness, what is responsible for inner conflict, its origin, the consequences, and how to avoid it. It employs Dul Johnsons' "In the Jaws of Love" in his *Why Women Won't Make It to Heaven*. The theory for the investigation is sociological theory which articulates the inevitable relationship between literature and society. The inquiry unearths that an individuals' attempt to satisfy the needs of one's environment at the expense of sound reasoning, the individual's inability to find a balance between the individual's head and heart, and being religious are detrimental to one's wellbeing. It creates intrapersonal conflict which is indeed destructive. The paper resolves that people should be able to tell themselves the truth, recognise and accept same, even if it comes from one with whom they disagree. It also explicates that people should not depend on religious and secular leader or people to take decisions for them, and that living in fear is devastating among other things.

Keywords: intrapersonal conflict, ravaging wars within, inevitable relationship, unearths, decisions

Introduction

Life is indeed a tempest and people in their attempts to find meaning in their existence allow the "self" to overwhelm them in their choices and decisions. The effects of these decisions both at the personal and collective levels have often times been agonies personified. These agonies are resultant effects of the people's choice or decisions at any given time. The ability or inability to make a valid choice or decision takes place in the human mind. It is akin to a man in a battle field and its inherent actions and inactions. It is an intrapersonal conflict.

Lee G. Bolma and Terrence E. Deal (1997) posited that "Conflict is view as a problem that interferes with the accomplishments of purposes" (p. 17). Siti Riza Ariyani (2018) posited that "Intrapersonal conflict is a conflict that arises as a result of two or more motives or goals to be achieved at a time" (p. 829). Ariyani (2018) further argued that:

Intrapersonal conflict can be regarded as a dispute that occurs when interests, goals or values of different individuals or groups are incompatible with each other. This results into a situation whereby they frustrate each other in an attempt to achieve their objectives. Conflict arises in groups because of scarcity of freedom, position, and resources. People who value independence tend to resist the need for interdependence and, to some extent, conformity within group. People who seek power therefore, struggle with each other for position or status within the group. (p. 826)

Mergalyas Kashapor, Svetiana Tomchuk, and Tatiana Ogorodova (2015) in defining the concept of our discussion aver that: “Intrapersonal conflict is a condition characterized by a presence of a person and mutually contradictory motives, values and goals, the state of internal structure of the personality, characterised by antagonism of its elements” (p. 187). They further state that “Such conflicts are characterised by confrontation between the two which start in the human soul, they are perceived with decision, experienced emotionally and required resolving and overcoming” (p. 187).

Ariyani and Mergalyas et al in their extracts above explicate that intrapersonal conflicts are products of man’s inability to take the right decisions. The battlefield of the mind is the fiercest for most people who allow their emotions to overwhelm their sense of reason and embark on self-destructs. Human beings are free to make choices. Freedom to make a choice remains indeed next to life itself. We are all products of the choices we make, hence the need for valid decisions. Though our genetic makeup and environment (Nature-Nurture) may influence our choices and decisions, they do not determine them. Hence, Stephen R. Covey’s (2004) postulation is: “The power of choice means that we are not merely product of our past or of our genes. We are not a product of how other people treat us. They unquestionably influence us, but they do not determine us” (p. 42). Cover (2004) in an attempt to bring the discussion to a logical conclusion does ask: “If we have given away our present to the past, do we need to give away our future also?” (p. 42). The answer is outright “No”. This calls for wisdom for according to Frances Hutcheson as cited by Covey (2004), “Wisdom denotes the pursuing of the best and by the best means” (p. 81).

The thrust of this paper, therefore, is the exploration of what intrapersonal conflict entails, its devastating effects when not well managed, and how to resolve it at its embryonic stage in order to avoid the likes of the World Wars we experienced as a people. It is aimed at enabling man to appreciate that man’s state is usually circumstantial, hence the relevance of character development. This done, one will be able to manage an inner tugging of one’s heart which when not well resolved replicates the Hitlers of the world whose inordinate ambition among other things caused the world a world war.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework adopted for this study is sociological criticism propounded by Kenneth Burke, a 20th century literary and critical theorist. Specifically speaking, this theory analyses the symbolic relationship between literature and society. It indeed explicates how society and literature function within each other. Its emphasis is to comprehend literature within its larger social context. Sociological critics see arts as a manifestation of society. It indeed gives readers a deeper understanding of what is taking place in the society. Clement Chukwuka Idegwu (2021) citing M. A. Abrams posits that: Sociological critics treat a work of literature as inescapably conditioned in the choice of its subject matter, the ways of thinking it incorporates, its evaluations of the modes of life it renders, and even in its formal qualities—by social, political, and economic organization and forces of its age (p. 85).

Sociological criticism expounds on how literature candidly presents a true life accounts of societal happenings fictively. This helps in a very great measure to acquaint one with a true picture of oneself. In an unbiased manner, it helps one know the deepest truth concerning oneself. Joseph Carroll (2014) giving credence to the above postulations avers that:

Fictional stories create virtual worlds and enable people to explore possible forms of experience. Authors of stories and plays typically have exceptional insights into the sources of human behaviour and the qualities of experience. Usually, readers are invited to share vicariously in the experience of characters and to respond emotionally to the characters. (p. 33)

Umar Saye (2016, p. 220 as cited in Inuwa & Nabulisi, 2021) gave credence to the inevitable relationship between the literary artist, his works, and the society. He explains the symbiotic nature and the artist's commitment to creating an ideal society. Thus, the artist does this by a critical appraisal of the characters and activities of the members of a particular society. He explicates their ills, how to correct their wrongs, and how to sustain the ideals achieved. This, Dul Johnson, for instance, tries to do in "The Jaws of Love". Hence, his works are insightful into the genesis of human actions and their consequences. According to Mahmud and Bala' Saye (2021),

Literature has always been to the writer the first medium of expression either of pains or happiness through the process of creativity using language as a medium. It expresses these feelings in relation to the author's immediate society cutting across all sphere of life—love, hatred, politics, family, belief, leadership, ecology: These feelings are either hidden or apparent. (p. 102)

Saye's assertion above accounts for the moralistic and developmental functions of literature which have been attested to worldwide. It is also very imperative to quote Wellek and Warren's (1956, p. 102) argument as cited by Mohmud et al. The argument is that "the writer is not only influenced by society: he influences it. Art not merely reproduces life, but also shapes it. People may model their lives upon the pattern of fictional heroes and heroines" (p. 102).

Sociological criticism encompasses literature and the social context of the author. It illuminates the fact that the social context in which a work of art is produced remains part of its interpretative process. This accounts for this paper's perception that sociological criticism will give a detailed explanation on intrapersonal conflict, the struggles or tugging within an individual in his attempt to make a valid choice, the causes of the struggles within, and the consequences of the choice made and how to avoid such errors of life.

Review of Literature

This section of this research takes care of related literature on intra-personal conflict or conflict within an individual, the battle of the mind which most scholars see as the worst battle field in human history.

Johnson Olaosebikan Aremu (2010) citing L. A. Coser views "Conflict as a struggle over values and claims to scarce status, power and resources ..." (pp. 550-551). Ajayi Adeyinka Theresa and Buhari Lateef Oluwafemi (2014) citing Otitie Onigu and I. O. Albert aver to Coser's postulation that conflict could be defined as "a struggle over values and claims which the aim of the opponents is to neutralize or injure or eliminate rivals" (p. 139). Coser, Onigu, and Albert's arguments above explicate that conflict is indeed a strive or tussle over which value to uphold in critical situations which more often than not leads people into eliminating or injuring opponents. In a situation where this battle occurs within an individual, these values struggle the individuals, fighting for supremacy. The struggle may take a long time as the case may be, but at the end, one of these, may assume the order of action by the individual concerned.

Alex Boulter, C. W. Von Berger, Mark J. Miller, and Donwell (1995) in advancing the discussion state that

in life, conflict is unavoidable. It occurs between two people, between groups, and even within an individual. Conflict is everywhere; in schools, organizations, marriages, and a plethora of other places. How the conflict is handled, whether positively, or negatively, is the main concern regarding the outcome of the particular conflict. (p. 93)

They further stressed that "conflict within an individual or between group of persons, as long as one is breathing will be experienced. How that conflict is resolved can makes the difference" (p. 97).

Robert C. Bordone, Tobias C. Berkman, and Sara E. del Nido (2014) in their study, the “Negotiation within ...”, explicate that:

The “negotiation within” is, of course, a metaphor. We believe it is a useful one: it suggests that within each individual, multiple identities or selves may exist simultaneously. By “Identity” or “selves” we mean those stories that individual tell themselves—either, but implicitly—about who they are. An identity might center on a particular adjective or quality of a person, like “competent,” “ambitious” or “generous”. It might also center on a particular role, like “caring father” or “admired entrepreneur”. It goes without saying that every individual tells a variety of different stories about him or herself. Within each person, some of those stories or identities may be mostly consistent with the others, but these multiple selves may wane and wax, but for a variety of reasons that we articulate later certain negotiations may bring them into high relief causing internal conflict. (pp. 179-180)

Sani and Bature (2021) discussed conflict and its peculiarity cite Sznajderman and Atkins as positing that:

conflicts arise from differences both large and small. Its differences appear trivial, but when conflict triggers strong feelings, a deep personal need is often at the core of the problem. These needs can be the urge to feel contented and secured and to feel respected and valued in a society or a need for greater closeness and intimacy with a group or society, (p. 17)

or within an individual as the case might be. This assertion aligns with Rober C. Bordone, Tobias C. Berkman and Sara E. del Nido above who stress that conflict within arises due to multiple identities or selves.

Rober C. Bordone et al. (2014) further argued that

Internal conflict arises because every potential outcome in the across the negotiation seems to force the negotiator to choose or embody only one or some of the aspirational identities, while betraying the others. Faced with the prospect of abandoning or failing to honour one or more of her aspirational “selves”, the person may experience tensions, anxiety, or discomfort. Sometimes such feelings manifest as indecisiveness or paralysis the negotiation table. (p. 180)

It might be expedient to state that whether these negotiations or attempts to choose from these myriads opinions, interest, values, aims, and objectives occur within the mind of an individual—intrapersonal conflict, which is the thrust of this paper, or between groups and society, the fact remains that there is always a moment of betraying the others or selves. This usually causes anxiety or discomfort which at the end paralyses the ability of the self to act well without regrets and feelings of guilt among other things.

Manimangai Mani (2018) corroborated the above position by stressing that

Internal conflict occurs between the character and the forces within him such as divided loyalties or the need to act against certain principles. In short, it is the stress or delimita sprouting from the ability of the soul to find solemnity and peace with itself. Therefore, self-conflict can be defined “as the struggle that takes place in an individual with his own opposing self”. (p. 280)

Ramsbotham, Woodhouse, and Miao (2014) gave credence to the argument above, buttressing that conflict “is an expression of the heterogeneity of interest, values and beliefs that arise as new formations generated by social change come up against inherited constraints”. By asserting that conflict is “an intrinsic” and inevitable aspect of social change; and that

the way we deal with conflict is a matter of habit and choice, they seem to imply that understanding conflict resolution requires by passing approaches relying on rational choice that privilege state actors, and instead focusing only on competing material interests and hard power. (p. 9)

From the studies reviewed, it has been established that conflict is inevitable and that self-conflict or intrapersonal conflict remains an individual’s inability to take rational decisions when overwhelmed by his

desires and aspirations which collide with each other seeking supremacy. This review also expressed the relevance of managing intrapersonal conflict appropriately for if allowed to degenerate, it creates conflict between individuals and organizations which could destroy societies. The review further indicates that one should not contest one's values or believes for options that are less important.

Textual Analysis

Dul Johnson is a seasoned film scriptwriter and director. He has many screens to his credit. He worked with Nigerian Television Authority where he won many awards as a telemovie director. He is a teacher of creative writing, film, and literature. He lectured at the National Film Institute, Jos. He currently teaches at Bingham University, Karu, Nasarawa State, Nigeria. He has two collections of short stories to his credit: *Shadows and Ashes* and *Why Women Won't Make It to Heaven*.

In this paper attempt is made at Johnson's "In the Jaws of Love", a story in *Why Women Won't Make It to Heaven*, to perfectly explicate the psychological struggle within the mind of an individual. In the short story, the reader sees Nanfa wrestle with his conscience, decides between right and wrong, and finds himself unable to act appropriately until what looks like an eternity before they "struck together like grafted branches—both lost, almost to eternity" (2010, p. 67). This is the state humans find themselves, thereby acting improbably, and more often than not acting or trying to act appropriately when everything seems late or irredeemable.

Kofi Annan cited by T. D. Jakes (2018) posited that: "To live is to choose. But to choose well, you must know who you are and what you stand for, where you want to go and why you want to get there" (p. 179). Jakes' assertion is very relevant in our attempts to insightfully analyse Johnson's "In the Jaws of Love", laying bare the fundamentals of intrapersonal conflict and its devastating consequences. Our explication will acquaint readers with the fact that to fulfill destiny, one must choose to live and to rightly choose, one must understand whom one is, what one indeed stands for, where one intends to be, and the reason for wanting such a future. To appropriately articulate this is to be free from self-conflict. Johnson, our chosen author speaks of Nanfa, his main character thus:

Nanfa was already forty-five, though he was blessed with a wonderful body that had continuously given him that look of a thirty-five-year-old, still with a good prospect for marriage. But of course, for a man who had been around town for quite some time, his name and story had made quite some rounds. Besides, his athletic figure could not take care of everything. There were already a few strands of grey scattered all over his head which he chose to maintained at a not-too-low level. (2010, pp. 41-42)

The description of Nanta above indeed explicates how intrapersonal conflict retards progress, growth, and development. At 45 Nannfa was yet to get married. This is due to his inability to overcome the conflict within, man against self. Nanfa's desire to remain attached to ideologies and beliefs which he cannot vouch for its authenticity and which fails to align with the realities of the moment is the genesis of his problems. He sees religion as an impediment to his chosen wife, Safiya, a Muslim while he is a Christian. He failed to see beyond religion. This is indeed bad, very bad in a 21st century.

Here, one sees Nanfa being stupidly shaped by the state of his mind. He is ruled by the circumstances around him. The bursting inward, Yehuda SILVERMAN (2020) called intrapersonal conflict, "goes beyond the mind and takes the entirety of a person into consideration" (p. 18). This kept him away from taking the right decision. The extract above also talks about Nanfa's age, an age he is expected to take responsibilities for his actions and inactions. He is supposed to be married with children at 45. Nanfa loves Safiya. They were both journalist. While

Safiya works for the Independent New Voice, Nanfa works for the State Radio Station. It will be important to stress that Nanfa sees his first encounter with Safiya as “God’s answer to his years of prayer” (Johnson, 2010).

Age was very much on her side and had a very good look too, plus her wonderful slim Fulani structure and features. If anything Nanfa thought, nay, knew that that was God’s answer to his long years of prayer. He had felt a man misunderstood until he met Safaya. (p. 42)

The author talks about Nanfa’s “long years of waiting”, years characterised by agonies and lamentations, moments of questioning the reliability of God, and the vulnerability of man among other things. The author craftily explicates the burden of wasted years, and resultant effects of indecision, intrapersonal conflict.

This is an indication of Nanfa’s predicament. Intrapersonal conflict occurs within an individual when such a person is indeed uncertain about what is expected or wanted. It can cause restlessness, depression and uneasiness, and wasted years among other things.

It is expedient to state that stress and depression remain the effects of intrapersonal conflict. Dul Johnson in weaving his character’s disposition states that:

It was his turn to be choked with emotion. It is true that he had come to say goodbye when he left home, there was no doubt in his mind that the task ahead of him was not an easy one. Just the whole night before, he had prayed almost the whole night. (2010, p. 39)

The narrator talking about Nanfa further states that

Before he retired from the long prayer session, during which he could never convince himself of the morality or the spirituality or even the wisdom of the step he was about to take, his pastor had counselled, in fact lectured him about the Bible’s position on this matter and had prayed with him; a prayer which he thought was never going to end. (p. 39)

The Pastor’s deception epitomises Nigerians and religion and “the battles of the mind”, apology to Joyce Mayer. Nanfa’s inability to understand that he has to do his thinking himself and not his pastor for him remains his greatest challenge. The author explicates that when the pastor prayed with Nanfa, “the pastor had rambled and fumbled through his entire life history—through everything he had been able to tell the pastor about his life—and in the end the pastor had just stopped short of condemning him” (p. 39). At this stage, one expects Nanfa to be rational enough and see the deception written all over his pastor by his mood and the content of his prayer. U. Saye (2016) inundates us that “literary writers invariably examine the extent to which certain phenomena have permeated a social setting and their detrimental consequences on the corporate existence of the society or nation” (p. 178). Due to how inimical intrapersonal conflict is to individuals and the society, literary artists are daily writing to educate the people on how to minimize its occurrence, and how to resolve it when it occurs in order to save the society from utter destruction. This is a common scenario in every nook and cranny of our society. Hence, Umar Saye citing Inuwa Mahmud and Bala Nabulisi (2021) averred that:

Literature has always been to the writer the first medium of expression either of pains or happiness through the process of creativity using language as a medium. It expresses these feelings in relation to the author’s immediate society cutting across all spheres of life—love, hatred, politics, family, belief, leadership, ecology. These feelings are either hidden or apparent. (p. 102)

The above buttresses how literature helps to resolve intrapersonal conflicts. Nanfa like most members of the society fails to take rational decisions. They waste time waiting on self-centered religious leaders to think and act for them. According to the narrative personnel in our primary text, “They had met at the biannual conference

of Muslims and Christians held at the Kent Academy in Miango. They were journalists covering the event for their respective media organizations” (Johnson, 2010, p. 42). Nanfa, as a journalist, failed to be unbiased. The fact that he had come to cover a biannual conference of Muslims and Christians ought to have educated him of the need for religious tolerance. Nigeria being a secular society like most nations of the world is secular in nature. The fact that the conference is held biannually between Muslims and Christians remains an act for reintegration.

Nanfa’s problem is indeed intrapersonal conflict. He sees his pastor as one who must approve whatever he intends to do before it could be done. Too bad. Hear him talk:

Only I’ve been too afraid to admit to myself that this end was going to come one day, and soon...

“I’m sorry, Safiya. But I maintained that there is a place my heart for you.”

“No, thanks. Give it all to your new love, since she’s everything you want that I’m not. She deserves it.”

What she did not know of course was that she was sticking a red-hot dagger into his heart. He meant every word when he said there was space still in his heart for her. If only she knew what he was going through as he made that statement. If only she knew the weight of the guilt feeling that descended on him as he uttered those words. (Johnson, 2010, pp. 46-47)

That is the dilemma of those trapped in the jaws of intrapersonal conflict. The author tries to expound that in our society, like every other, life is very precarious. He explicates the hazards and uncertainty of human life which are products of societal and natural factors. Daily humans find themselves on the edge of the precipice of life. Here most leaders, religious or otherwise, make their followers look incapable of taking decisions on issues affecting them in order to eternally make them dependent on them as their leaders. Muhammad Ahmad Mhagoub, a Sudanese literary writer and critic as cited by Afis Ayinde Oladosu (2018) argued that literature “assist (the people) on revolution and change in life and in thought and in awakening the minds and propelling it on to the current of progress and development” (p. 146). Hence, the author states:

But then he was now determined that he would sin to the end, if loving her was a sin. All that he needed now was an accomplice. If only she would plead just a little more, or even shed a little more tears! She certainly would have melted the ice that the pastor had dropped on his heart. He wished desperately that she knew what he was going through. Maybe he should enlist her help; ask her to go and tell the pastor that he lied ... (Johnson, 2010, p. 47)

Here, the author explains the degree of deception, and the struggles within an individual’s mind. Nanfa is aware that the pastor lied, that to love one who is not of the same religion with one is not bad, and that he does not need Safiya to talk it over with his pastor. He does not need an accomplice to tell the pastor the truth and marry Safiya, the love of his life. It is very glaring that Nanfa’s problem is his inability to take decision as at and when due. He shy’s away from reality. “He had abandoned the church because it was not giving him what he needed” (Johnson, 2010, p. 50). He only returned “when sister, Susan turned up ... to share the gospel with him” (p. 50). He did explain his commitment thus: “I believe completely in God and in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. But I’m very uncomfortable with the formal church organization” (pp. 51-52). His abandoning his former church for sister Susan’s church did not give him the peace he is in search of. He continues to be confused because he needs a shot of truth, the truth he recognises but fails to accept. Hence, the great emotional and mental stress has become his daily companion. Inyanla Vanzant (1999) argued that: “The truth is always what it is. Love, truth’s first-born, allows us to acknowledge and accept our truth without fear. It also enables us to hear another’s truth without being devastated” (p. 120).

Nanfa needs this truth that he shy’s away from. He is indeed a miserable man that must be truthful to himself in order to be happy. Nanfa further explains his state, thus:

“I am a miserable man, Safiya.”

“I can see that Nanfa, and I sympathize with you. But your misery is self-inflicted. You want something, but you are such a coward and ___”

“Stop it!” His feeling of helplessness and hopelessness became complete.”

“Don’t pretend, Nanfa. You need my company, and desperately too. You need it now more than ever before. And it is available to you, but the coward in you is taking cover in religion to deny your life. Nanfa, isn’t that what you returned to the church for? Or were you lying to me?” (Johnson, 2010, p. 50)

Nanfa is truly in love with Safiya. She is indeed the companion; Nanfa needs to be fulfilled and accomplished in life, especially now that he is at the edge, about to be crushed. The pathetic state is that even at this stage of his life, and the availability of the healing he needs—Safiya’s love,—to be made whole, he still shies away from it. This is why Ime Ikiddeh as cited by Chike Okoye (2018) explains Nanfa’s predicament thus: “Human life is precarious everywhere through natural and societal causes, but for several centuries in Africa, human life, has stayed on the edge of the precipice and quite often down the rugged, deadly slope, through unusually cruel human agency” (p. 94).

...Then with his back to her he said, Safiya, I love you—Good—goodbye ...

Her voice rang after him as stepped out into the bright hot sun.

“You lie, Nanfa. You’re a liar. You never really loved me.”

He stopped short in his track ... The truth in her statement could not be denied by him. Not the truth that he did not love her, but the truth that he was a liar, because of a truth he could never really have a clear conscience from that moment, hence. He felt like a traitor. Indeed, he was traitor. She knew God even though in a different way. (Johnson, 2010, p. 66)

That indeed is the crux of the matter. The fact that she knew God though in a different way does not make her ignorant of the eternal beauty of the Almighty God. Iyanla Vanzant (1999) explained people shying away from the truth hence intrapersonal conflict, the struggle within, and the inability to decide what action to take: “According to Zanzant, if you are experiencing confusion, it could be that you need a shot of truth. Failure to tell, resistance to hearing and inability to recognize the truth will cause great mental and emotional confusion” (p. 120). Literary writers are committed to constant examination of the degree to which certain issues have permeated our social lives as individuals, family, and society and their effects on our corporate existences as a people. Writers in their works express deep anxieties about their falling world and what the future holds in stock for the society. Dul Johnson, the committed writer he is, attempts in his short story “In the Jaws of Love”, to resolve the problem of ones’ thoughts and emotion trying to override what one really knows is morally right or wrong. Hence, the following resolutions:

...He turned around and saw her looking blankly in his direction, her face completely drenched. He walked up to her and offered his hands.

She led the way, and he followed like a sheep to be slaughtered; like a sacrificial lamb being led to the altar of sin. As they walked through the door which they had left ajar, a thin layer of a beautiful, delicate blue cloud glided across the scorching sun, casting upon them, within that split second, a shade that felt something they had longed for all along.

For complete sixty seconds they were looking into each other’s eye. Neither of them knew what was going on in the other’s mind. But each of them burned inside with the desire for each other. It was a desire that was pure and sincere... Then they felt the drawing power of an invisible magnet. (2010, pp. 66-67)

The author explicates that “they walked through the door which they had left aja” (Johnson, 2010, p. 66), and for a moment, they look into each, others eyes, ignorant of what was going on in each other’ mind. The beauty of it all is that “each of them burned inside with the desire for each other. It was a desire that was pure

and sincere ... Then they felt the drawing power of an invisible magnet” (p. 67). This is pure love which oscillates beyond a particular religion, and which the world needs to resolve religious wars that daily ravage our world. The author further expounds that Nanfa and Safiya

did not know how, or who, or when they were relieved of their encumbering senses and garments. What they felt then were the tremours from their sweltering skins that now stuck together like grafted branches—both lost, almost to eternity. (p. 67)

In the above extract Johnson (the author) in his characteristic manner explains the burden which the struggles within an individual and the parameters on which to make a choice could create the person involve and the society. Nanfa and Safiya are seen having been tormented by Nanfa’s procrastination and inability to accept Safiya as his spouse due to differences in religion or denomination, in spite of his love for her.

He did mention to her “Safiya, I know you have God’s spirit in you” (p. 64). That at the end of the story, Nanfa and Safiya were indeed “relieved of their encumbering senses and garments” (p. 67) which symbolically represented factors which indeed hindered Nanfa from marrying Safiya early enough. It was fine that “they felt the drawing power of an invisible magnet” (p. 67). Hence, they felt the pleasure or thrill “from their sweltering skins that now stuck together like grafted branches—both lost almost to eternity” (p. 67). Indeed, their consummation of love, a fresh and pure consummation, one born out of a genuine awareness of whom they are, what they want, and their acceptance to be “grafted” together forever in spite of their religious difference, remains an external victory over intrapersonal conflict.

Conclusion

This paper has discussed the term intrapersonal conflict, the African short stories writer’s analysis of the causes of intrapersonal conflict, its effects, and how it could be resolved. Johnsons’ explication in his “In the Jaws of Love” is indeed an awaken call for intending spouse or those in courtship, to ensure that they do not allow religion, their pastors, Godfathers or mothers, and other sentiments to becloud their sense of reason, so that they could have their wedding and live happily thereafter. It is indeed my humble submission that if the findings of this paper are strictly adhered to, individuals and our society will be saved from intrapersonal conflict and its devastating consequences. When this is done, our society will begin to experience the desired progress and our growth will be glaring.

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