

## PSYCHOLOGICAL TENDENCIES EMANATING FROM DEHUMANIZATION IN *TWISTS OF FATE* BY GICHABA NYANTINO

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**ABSTRACT:** *This study interrogates how Gichaba Nyantino, in Twists of Fate represents psychological tendencies emanating from individual dehumanization in the globe, particularly within the Kenyan society. The main thesis of this paper is that the deviant behaviour of characters shows how the society has been fragmented because of dehumanization of individuals. The paper engages a theoretical framework that embraces psychoanalytic, formalism and cultural theories. The theories assisted in revealing the characters' behaviour, how the writer's writing strategies unravel the extent to which the behaviour of the various individuals affects the society as portrayed in the text. The methodology of the study involved a close literary analysis of the text. An analysis of the thoughts of the characters as presented by the author was key to understanding the extent of dehumanization. The study specifically looked into the loss of humanness in the society's people and how human beings cannot live without the need for other's support and company. The study intended to establish how literature deals with the question of why social etiquette among people has dissipated, as prominently in social institutions where persons operate. People have become strangers to each other. Besides, the primary text, works on the relevant theories as well as various sources on the subject of dehumanization were consulted. The study shows how society is teeming with dehumanized individuals and as such, there is cumulative degeneration of humanity in society.*

**KEYWORDS:** Psychological Factors, Utu, Ubuntu, Twists of Fate, Gichaba Nyantino, Dehumanization

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## INTRODUCTION

Dehumanization is the process of stripping away human qualities thus denying people individuality and self-esteem. It describes the act of viewing others as less human who do not deserve moral consideration. In addition, Malacrida (2012) avows that dehumanization involves a process of making life impersonal to a level that seems not only thoughtless, but also intentionally cruel and dehumanizing. Evidently, *Twists of Fate* graphically reflects a modern Kenyan nation (globe) that houses people whose utterances and behaviour unravel problematic human relations and the practice of humaneness that are vital for a cohesive community. Furthermore, Maiese (2003) posits that those who view each other as enemies develop adversarial attitudes and perceptions to attribute negative traits to their opponents. Consequently, enemy images that tend to resist change and serve to perpetuate and intensify the conflict. Enemy images are accentuated, according to psychologists, by the process of projection in which people project their own faults onto their opponents (Maiese, 2003).

The dehumanization of individuals causes a society to crumble. Individual objectification is a result from industrial revolution, modernity and globalization. In the African traditional set up, society was intact and people lived harmoniously. There was cohesion and the well-being of individuals was upheld. People cared for one another. There existed elements of empathy,

sympathy, care and love for one another. African unity, also called *Ubuntu* by former African leaders, was essential for cohesion and solidarity (Bob & Lundin, 2010). Nkrumah, Nyerere and Tutu have advocated for cohesion, brotherhood and good-neighbourliness. However, the rapid global changes have led to the break-up of the society. People have been detached from the sense of humanity and connection to one another, giving way to unhealthy individualism, concern for one another is minimal.

Issues of ethnic violence and killings among other crimes are a commonplace in Kenya. Objectification of people has taken its toll. There are numerous instances of insecurity, kidnapping, violent robbery, corruption, child-abandonment, egoism, unhealthy competition. These issues have crippled the well-being of society by tearing at its moral fabric. The 2007-8 post-election violence in Kenya is a good case in point. The brutalization of the individual mirrors the extent of depravity in a society. As such, by examining the psychological tendencies depicted in *Twists of Fate*, the author hoped to unravel what leads to societal wreckage, why society is filled with fear, insecurity, and infidelity anxiety, why more fiction writers are voicing issues relating to dehumanization of individuals, and how writers portray disgraced individual characters in their fictional texts.

A number of critics have raised issues on individual objectification. Fanon (1967) in *The Wretched of the Earth*, shows how colonial war results in mental disorders among the patients he handles (p. 201). To him, colonialism is a furious determination to deny the other person all attributes of humanity. The colonized people are deprived of a sense of identity so that they keep asking themselves: "In reality, who am I?" According to Fanon, colonialism dehumanizes individuals, as revealed by the several 'case studies' he carries out among various mental patients. He further urges for decolonization (p. 28) that can only be introduced by new men and with it a new language, and a new humanity that can conquer individual objectification.

Michel Foucault (1996) also defines dehumanization using the idea of 'objectification'. He looks at dehumanization as a process of turning a person into an object. For example, he says that prisons are institutions that isolate people physically. He portrays prison as an institution that fails to offer the reform they claim. Foucault argues that criminals represent the bottom of the social order while the judges and accusers come from the top of the social order. wa Thiong'o (1980) in his novels, especially *Devil on the Cross*, shows how, after independence, the new leaders continue with the trend of ill-treatment and exploitation of the poor and workers. The disillusionment that results from this dehumanization galvanises the authors to deliver works that call for societal change in Africa and the Diaspora. In *Decolonizing the Mind*, wa Thiong'o (1986) argues that Africans have been diverted from their normal state of being and can only reverse their alienation by re-immersing themselves thoroughly in their indigenous languages and the core values encoded in those languages.

## METHODOLOGY

The primary data for the study was obtained by a close reading of the main text under study, *Twists of Fate* by Gichaba Nyantino. The study focused on the psychological tendencies emanating from dehumanization by analysing the behaviours of individuals in relation to others, themselves and their environment. The characters are examined as portrayed by the writer showing these psychological tendencies at their workplaces, in families, public scenes

among other environments. The psychological tendencies emanating from dehumanization were elaborated by the way characters interacted in the story as revealed by the writer.

## PSYCHOLOGICAL TENDENCIES EMANATING FROM DEHUMANIZATION

A tendency is an inclination towards a certain action or behaviour. Psychological tendencies that emanate from dehumanization involve aggression, avoidance behaviour, withdrawal, rationalization and so on (Freud, 1996). The paper interrogates unhealthy human relationships and individual behaviour. According to Freud, people are primarily hostile towards one another because a civilised society is constantly threatened by the cultural disintegration, manifested by social discontentment, violence and strife. It is for self-preservation, therefore, that a civilised individual constructs cultural and social barriers to channel his/her aggressive instincts.

Gerald Gutek (2004) emphasises Freud's sentiment when he says that the pervasive anxiety that Freud saw in the twentieth century civilisation has been caused in part by social controls that have increasingly limited the areas of individual impulses. He continues to argue that as civilising tendencies increase, so do the degree of individual and social discontent. According to Freud (1996), the rise of a technological society has increased man's domination over nature, failing to increase human happiness. The author of *Twists of Fate*, Nyantino, portrays characters whose psychological tendencies emanate from dehumanization as they interact in different socio-environments. The characters, particularly the protagonist and the antagonist, do not show genuine relationships. Other characters in the text also show unhealthy individual behaviour.

There is verbal aggression and emotional abuse among the characters as revealed by the writer. Verbal aggression is also referred to as verbal abuse (Stosny, 2008). Nyantino shows how some of the characters, Yuna and Maria, due to verbal abuse, isolate themselves to avoid unpleasant circumstances they encounter. The protagonist in the fiction withdraws from her family and decides to live in the city, Nairobi. Other characters, like Fiona who deserts her mother and Jimo who also storms out of his mother's house when he fails to trace his father's whereabouts from his mother, reflect the withdrawal behaviour. Maria and Yuna develop unhealthy relationships when conflict arises between them due to jealousy.

### Relationship between Yuna and Maria

The writer presents Yuna and Maria as the antagonist and protagonist in *Twists of Fate*. The animosity that springs up from their interaction paves way for a conflict that leads to the ultimate disruption of the family set up. Yuna, the protagonist in the story, is rejected by Maria. Yuna suffers emotional pain after the abusive utterances Maria hurls at her:

“Girl! Is that why you are idling there sitting on your backside all day staring at me though you haven't something better to do?... I'm not your mother now nor have I ever been one! If you want to find your real mother then the right place to go is Nakuru North cemetery! (p. 14).

The writer draws the reader's attention to this episode to show the verbal aggression as an expression of Maria's psychological instability. This behaviour, as displayed shows the frustration that Maria has been repressing when she discovers that Yuna's beauty prevents her (Maria) from the attention she desires from the men who visit her house. The writer thus

shows verbal aggression as a psychological problem how this destabilizes society. Indeed, as a result of the verbal exchange, the two family members succumb to rivalry and immense hatred for each other.

Whenever family wrangles arise, it is the innocent who suffer most. Yuna is presented as an embodiment of innocence in the family in the text. Maria's abuses devastate her as she discovers that Maria is not her real mother. All the while she had known that Maria was her mother and even addressed her as Mama: "Mama" she said abruptly, "You look so sad. Is something bothering you?" she asked with a slight touch of impatience (p. 14). The dehumanisation that Maria has undergone has repercussions on Yuna's life. Their filial love fades away and their protracted enmity is seen as the writer focuses on the dream that Yuna has after this scenario:

She literally woke up from sleep started that her breath was final and registered fear more akin to surprise. She blankly stared around her bedroom. Her heart, after the first painful kick of fear, settled down to an erratic frightened pumping. She took deep breaths to help control herself. By and by her breathing slowed and she grew calmer. For a moment, she sat on the bed still her eyes fixed up in darkness grateful that this terror had only been a dream as she thought and yet paralyzed by the sharp vividness with which it had struck her (p. 17).

The writer uses Yuna's dream to highlight what is going on in Yuna's life. The thoughts on her mind are revealed through the dream, reflecting the psychological impact that Maria's abuses have had on her. Nyantino draws the attention of his readers to this dream to suggest how utterances that are not fully contemplated can ruin a society. People who have been deeply hurt have resorted to unhealthy change of behaviour that upsets the social order resulting in further degeneration and instability. What Yuna undergoes is symbolic of what most people are experiencing in families, workplaces and other social set ups that inspires the writer to depict them in *Twists of Fate*.

The writer portrays Yuna as a person undergoing a mental torture, revealing what is in the unconscious part of the mind. Her trauma is revealed through the dream that depicts a cruel and terrorising moment in her life. The writer reveals how the misbehaviour of individuals contributes to the breakdown of society. Most people are undergoing frustrating experiences that push them to adopt deviant behaviour. Yuna is used to represent the lot of people that are belittled in society. The psychological damage that this belittling has had on her shows how social discrimination contributes to social disintegration.

The chronic depression that Yuna experiences reflect a change in behaviour. She no longer values Maria's love and company. The animosity between the family members as revealed by the writer keeps mounting:

With supreme will power, Yuna rose from her chair and pulled a drawer of the large dark brown unit that imposingly stood in front of a wide cream wall. She frantically searched for something and when she brought her hands out of the draw; they held a pen and a piece of paper. She quickly sat on the chair next and scribbled some few lines: "On consideration, I don't wish to continue interfering with your private life if I care for you. I therefore withdraw my irritating presence from your house – and for good" (p. 22).

The writer shows that from what is going on in Yuna's life, she no longer cares for her family relationships. She deserts Maria, evading her irritating presence. Initially, Maria objectified her and as such Yuna views her as an enemy creating an 'enemy image'. The writer shows that dehumanization occurs through a gradual process. The dehumanized individual objectifies other persons through projection of their own disgraced condition. In this case, Maria projects her frustration on Yuna. Yuna reciprocates by deserting Maria for good. Later in the fiction, Yuna realises that Maria took care of her not out of love but as an obligation she was given to raise her up. Yuna learns of this issue when she finds Maria's letter in Jimo's house:

Jimo's house. The content of the letter reveals that Yuna was handed over to Maria when she was young and she had promised to do her best in caring for her. She is only playing the role of a guardian.

The writer uses the letter to reveal why the love between the two characters diminishes rapidly. Blood is thicker than water; even though Maria and Yuna are related by blood, their relationship depicts the extent of destruction in family relationships. Maria does not understand motherly love. As such, she brutalises Yuna as a way of depriving the latter the same. The writer shows the plight of orphans who suffer dehumanization in the hands of relatives. The maltreatment of orphans by relatives also destabilises society as these victimised members experience isolation and alienation.

Maria's harsh treatment of Yuna leaves a deep and permanent scar on Yuna. Throughout her life, she keeps recalling the abuses:

Shut up! rolling of her head... corrections one again! I'm not your mother! Silly girl! How many times am going to drum this fact into your thick skull and if you continue! (p. 15).

Maria's abuses portray her as a disillusioned person. She is the representation of a degraded individual in society. What she utters reveals her disgraced nature that affects the other family members because hurting people hurts other people. Yuna is unable to stay in the same home anymore. The writer shows how unhealthy relationships accelerate a society's disintegration.

The animosity between the two family members becomes worse when Yuna discovers that she cannot forget what Maria said to her. Nyantino reveals that Yuna has also become unforgiving. She keeps on reminding Maria that she is the cause of all the twists of fate she encounters. In a letter, she expresses her resentment of Maria. It is evident from this episode that the writer shows how healthy and mutual relationships form an integral part of a societal cohesion. People's relationships become insincere when elements of betrayal and grudges are accepted as the order of life. Yuna writes a letter to Maria showing that she is still sees her as an enemy:

I have once again decided to write to you. I'm sure you still ponder a great deal what became of me. This is a product of some comprehensive soul searching. There are many things I would like to talk to you about but they don't seem to fit into the letter. I have tried a number of times to put them down and when I read it over, I find it's actually nothing close to what I think. The minute you try to put certain things on paper, they get all fogged over like a glass that is breathed upon - but I will try. I have looked at myself, at my past, at my present, at my future - I



still can't place myself properly. My personality is paranoid because you impaired it. My identity is not clear because you distorted it. My present is precarious because you wished it so. My future is blurred because you never bequeathed me any vision. I'm just like a wandering stranger knowing not whence I come and whence I go. I'm like a child lost in a mysterious wonderland. I came across some very incriminating dossier that made me believe you were not serious about my life. Were you just pretending all that time? I have in mind the note you wrote to your boyfriend cancelling some date on the ground that you were to visit your daughter! Remember you warned me not to call you mama that fateful evening! I have gone round all cemeteries in town, I still can't find her. Night over night, I've wrestled with the same old question "who am I". And night after night, it has backed me into a corner, pressing for an answer. In that note, you also talked of being my guardian - were you two in one? And who handed me over to you? Was it when my mother went to sleep in the cemetery? Who is my father? What about those pictures? Maria you surprised me. You shocked me and for good measure! I have walked the roughest path courtesy of your insensitivity. Like a pawn in the chessboard of destiny, I have bathed uncharted waters. My thoughts have wandered a thousand square miles searching and looking for my origins but all I encounter are questions and more questions. The man from whose closet I got the letters and the pictures that I have sent to you is the father of my twin babies.

Thank you,

Yuna (p. 147-148).

Yuna's letter shows that she (Yuna) still sees Maria as an enemy. In this letter, she reveals her sense of inferiority and low self-esteem which Maria's violent abuses prompted and that now form part of her personality. She believes that her personality is paranoid because Maria impaired it and that her identity is not clear since Maria distorted it. Yuna further asks rhetorical questions like, "Were you pretending all that time? In that note, you also talked of being my guardian - were you two in one? And who handed me over to you? Was it when my mother went to sleep in the cemetery? Who is my father? ..." (p. 147). The writer, through these rhetorical questions reveals the trauma that Yuna is experiencing after departing from her home. Nyantino uses this storyline to unravel what frustrated people undergo as they try to reconcile themselves with the painful challenges they encounter in life.

Yuna's thoughts and resolutions are clearly illustrated by the content of the letter. She asserts that Maria is insensitive as she expresses her being bathed in uncharted waters due to the twists of fate she is sailing through. The writer draws attention to this letter to show how individuals harbour bitter feelings from past disagreements and break-ups of relationships. This is what the author's society is characterised with. Individual objectification or dehumanization due to frustration and disillusionment destabilises society. Maria and Yuna view each other as 'objects' and this deteriorates their relationship, as reconciliation is inevitable between them. The contemporary society is rife with people who encounter relationship break-ups and nothing is done to reconcile and heal them. Yuna is portrayed by the writer as an already disgraced individual since she keeps reminding Maria of her past mistakes. Yuna's letter leaves Maria a broken person due to the revelations in the letter. Soon Maria dies and Yuna only attends her funeral:

As Yuna scanned that day's newspaper a picture on the obituary pages gave her a jolt that was shocking. It was a funeral announcement for MARIA DALI. Her remains were to be laid to rest at the NAKURU NORTH CEMETERY the following day (p. 126).

The writer focuses on Yuna's reaction to the news of Maria's death. She only gets emotionally moved when she sees her withered body that symbolized pain and torture. The writer reveals that Yuna's messages to Maria and her constant reminder of what she felt accelerated the latter's death. In this incident, Nyantino points out how people live in a society that is broken by the hatred and misunderstanding and unwillingness to forgive and let go of the past.

### **The Relationship between Nelly, Kate and Yuna**

Nelly, Kate and Yuna are co-workers at the Nairobi's modelling and Fashions College. Yuna is extra-ordinarily beautiful compared to the two young women. According to them, she is a brat of a girl, a fact that is disorienting them at the place of work, and as such, they want her head. The two characters are portrayed by the writer as being dangerous:

Kate and Nelly of course worked for the Nairobi Modelling and Fashions College but on some nights, they scouted for under hand deals, fatal and dangerous endeavours in cahoots with dangerous criminals. They lived together in an apartment in up market Nairobi. They agreed to meet at the same venue to put final touches to their plan (p. 63).

The two characters maliciously scheme to kill Yuna to eliminate competition in their beauty business. Out of jealousy for Yuna, they are determined to go to the lengths of killing her. In their sinister motives, they involve Jimo to carry out the murder (p. 63). The writer, by focusing on the inhuman act of these characters, shows how individuals in contemporary workplace plot and betray one another for personal aggrandizement, a characteristic that destabilizes harmony and the well-being of members. Nelly and Kate pretend to be caring and invite Yuna to have a drink with them (p. 64).

Nyantino, through what Jimo narrates to Yuna about Nelly and Kate, manages to reveal the extent to which the hatred among the characters has amounted to (p. 77-78). Jimo reveals to Yuna what the two ladies feel about her: he unravels that they have blind malice that overrides all feelings of humanity because they are galled to murderous heights. The writer depicts the inhumane activities people scheme for others, and how this destabilizes the entire society. Besides their being malicious, these ladies are alcoholics (p. 62). They drink a lot and utter gut-wrenching remarks, , like referring to a lady as 'bitch'.

They have completely lost their human attachment to Yuna, and to themselves. They are willing to pay Jimo, a hardened criminal to commit murder on their behalf. In this way, Jimo is also dehumanised. They are portrayed as murderers who no longer value human life. They objectify Yuna as a competitor and subsequently want to eliminate the competition by murdering her. The writer reveals how the society has lost the sense of humanity as it encourages prosperity that is based on superficial things like physical beauty.

The writer also addresses the issue of the role of women in society. Women are normally associated with motherly instincts of care, nurturing and tenderness. However, in *Twists of Fate*, the two women, Nelly and Kate, plan to killing one of their friends. According to Imbo

(2002), women are depicted as causing the downfall of humanity as in the Luo story of the hero *Lwanda Magere*. The betrayal of Magere by his seductive, alien, wife concerning his secret power in war supports what the writer reveals about the dehumanized Kate and Nelly who betray Yuna, by plotting murder.

The writer presents Nelly and Kate as individuals whose speech is characterised by loss of human feelings and morality. They use abusive words when referring to Yuna whom they scheme to kill:

Oh gosh! Was forgetting! This stuff is almost snuffing out a fair chunk of us, Kate lazily said. It was obvious listening to the slow way she mentioned that she was high. She took a lingering drink of Scotch Whisky, wiped her lips and set it down. Typical of her, she spiritedly launched straight to the point. "This is it; there is this bitch that is waiting to roll over us at our workplace. She is the latest inclusion in the modelling and fashion team. Believe you me, it's like she has got it all wrapped up! We have no say about anything as far as college operations are concerned. She treads even where angels fear! While we stealthily walk into the Director's office, the bastard simply swaggers in and out as if she were some co-director! She is a good girl though, immensely caring and loving. But she is threatening our career!" Kate exploded. Her jolly exterior had by now slipped exposing the real sadist lurking behind its cold, mean eyes lit up with a weird fire (p. 62).

Nyantino focuses on this episode to show how criminality creates insecurity and distrust in society. Unhealthy competition usually develops within a workplace as members brutalise others due to jealousy and envy, caused by their own failure to accept their limitations. The chain of aggression that the two characters portray is used by the writer to reveal that they are a representation of disgruntled workers in the workplace of a society. Their lack of love and concern show that people are losing the human affection and care for others in society that African leaders have in the past referred to as 'ubuntu'. The ideal society is no longer visible as selfishness has set in, disrupting the sense of communal care.

## Yuna

Yuna is the protagonist in *Twists of Fate*. The writer uses Yuna's character to show the process of dehumanization. Firstly, she develops an unhealthy relationship with Jimo, the hardened criminal, deserting her job at the Nairobi Modelling and Fashions College. She even forgets to go to Paris France, where she is supposed to represent Africa in the Miss World Beauty pageant. Dr. Valentino keeps calling and sending texts to her about the impending vital event. Nyantino shows how Yuna's character deteriorates as she becomes blind to essential opportunities for success in her life as she clings to Jimo. She is used to represent the youthful destructive over-indulgence that hinders their progress in life. Indeed, Yuna later regrets her choices:

She had now fully settled with Jimo. Six months later everything seemed to have fallen into place and she also seemed at peace with herself. The thought of missing out in Miss World beauty pageant came back to haunt her. Why did I actually fail to go to Paris? she asked herself. She thought of the people she had terribly wronged. She thought of Rita, thought of Dr. Valentino, thought of her legion of fans especially in Nairobi. She had really wronged a host of people. She felt sorry, extremely sorry for what she had done. Things had gone from bad to



worse, completely irreversible and there wasn't much she could do about it (p. 110).

The saying, "Pride comes before a fall", can best illustrate the hurtful repercussions people suffer after making rash decisions as Yuna does. On an empathetic note, she represents the misguided youth in a society where adults are absent because of a multiplicity of reasons. She eventually reflects on how she unreasonably misses Miss World beauty pageant and she thinks of the people she has terribly wronged like Rita, Dr. Valentino and her legion of fans especially in Nairobi (p. 110).

It is evident from the text that Yuna is very successful at Nairobi Modelling and Fashion College. It is unfortunate that her life gets thwarted as she gets entangled in an uncertain relationship with a criminal. She is portrayed as being irrational and unassertive in prioritising on what is valuable in her life. This is further illustrated by her choice to live in a street tunnel for two months, a consequence of her misplaced choices and reduced sense of self-esteem and humanity. Later, she abandons her children at hotel Savannah and disappears:

My little angels. My little twins. I love you but I can't manage to take care of you. A Good Samaritan will come your way I know. May whoever picks you please keep this piece of paper. We may need it in future. Bye Tony, Bye Riana. Mum (p. 152).

This incident allows the reader to enter the mind of Yuna. By drawing the reader's attention to this episode, the writer reveals how children are at the receiving end of a society in which adults have been dehumanized. Yuna is shown as an individual who has lost her motherly love and care for her children. She shows avoidance behaviour that reflects her emotional detachment from her children. Traditionally, it was seen as a taboo for a mother to abandon her children for a stranger to pick them. The contemporary society, especially the Kenyan society is rampant with issues of child abandonment. These practices as the writer shows weaken the society's cohesion and integration. Nyantino shows that the African societal beliefs, customs and norms are getting threatened, as disintegration sets in. The writer seems to emphasise that one of the evils of the so-called modern culture is with child-abuse, which is often visible in Kenya.

## **Jimo**

Jimo is portrayed by the writer as a dangerous criminal. He resorts into crime after failing to trace his father's whereabouts. Nelly and Kate involve him in their scheme to kill Yuna. He fails to kill her after discovering that he is passionately infatuated with. Initially, he had been paid fifty thousand shillings to kill Yuna:

Kate reached for her leopard skin handbag which was strapped on the chair she was sitting on. She searched it for a while and in a moment pulled out a sizeable white envelop. It bulged with bounty. Jimo already went for it like he knew what it contained. He normally knew what such hastily convened meetings had in store. They gave him time to study the contents and of course ascertain the amount. As they had expected, Jimo's eyes became greedily interested... Now what do you want me to do and how do you want me to do it? (p. 62, 63).

He benefits from inhumane acts of murder. He pleasantly receives the money that the two deviant ladies unashamedly give him. Nyantino shows how greedily Jimo receives the

money. Jimo's character reveals the atrocities that youth involves themselves in to earn a living. They are manipulated to commit crimes that result in dehumanization of others in society, a practice that is crumbling the social set up.

The writer underscores the kind of life that Jimo leads. He belongs to an underworld gang that is famously known for the bank robberies that they dramatically stage in the city. He has links with an international drug cartel that operates from one den in the downtown of Nairobi. Jimo terrorises fellow human beings, killing in some cases, displaying his atrocity and ruthlessness. He is used by Nyantino to show desensitised youth who cause terror and unrest in the society.

Crime and murder are rife in the modern society. These have resulted in a culture of fear and paranoia. The society is insecure:

Yuna's pulse raced with anticipation of what she might uncover. Ouch! She had opened the Pandora's Box! She froze, aghast. Her heart thudded against her ribs and tiny explosions seemed to be igniting in her head. It was in stark disbelief and numbness when she peeped into the box and at a glance dipped into the storehouse of Jimo's lethal arsenal (p. 114).

What she sees include an AK-47 rifle that spell terror to her. This shows how Jimo as a dehumanized individual has become estranged and a sign of terror to others. What she sees sends shivers through her body. She is in dilemma over how to be in relationship with a criminal. Having already associated herself with him, separation is a challenging alternative to make (114). Nyantino also reveals how estranged individuals pose a threat to the institution of marriage. Yuna eventually deserts Jimo's residence and opts for street life, becoming destitute who finally living in the slums.

Formerly, as the writer reveals, Jimo is innocent. Failure to know who or the whereabouts of his father from his mother has turned Jimo into a dehumanized individual. He also missed a chance to get a job because he failed to fill the interview form, as his wailing mother cursed him. Yuna discovers Jimo's letter addressed to Mike, a fellow criminal. The writer shows that beneath the high spirits Jimo so pompously displays, there are permanent feelings of insecurity and restlessness in him. Jimo's possession of the harmful instrument is a sign of his frustration, which is an indication that he is insecure. Jimo is portrayed as a brutalised individual, a reflection of a society that has lost its humanity.

### **Fiona**

Fiona is the daughter of Angelina. Nyantino reveals the reasons that lead Fiona to desert her mother through the narration that Angelina makes to Sister Mary, who sympathises with the lonely aging woman. She explains to Sr. Mary that her son went berserk and deserted her in a huff several years that have passed. She also explains how her daughter Fiona suddenly abandoned papa, her grandson, and left home at the tender age of fourteen. From what Angelina unravels about her family, the reader sees what parents silently grapple with, especially the unpleasant behaviour of their children. Parents, especially mothers, grieve because of the crimes that their children indulge in. In the social set up the youth are a disaster to their families. Some become thieves, drug addicts and alcoholic, activities that destabilize the mutual and loving relationship in a family that is the foundational unit of society. A broken family is a symbol of a collapsing society. Jimo and Fiona represent the youth who bring dissatisfaction to parents in a society as revealed by the writer.

Fiona deserts her mother at the age of fourteen. Angelina spends years in dilemma not knowing the fate of her children. It is inhumane and unfeeling of Fiona to disappear for several years, leaving her mother feeling rejected. The writer portrays Fiona as a person who is estranged, as she does not remember her mother. Later in the story, the writer reveals that she is in fact a criminal who engages in child kidnapping. She even colludes with other criminals like Jimo and Juma. She unknowingly kidnaps Tony and Riana, her brother's children:

I'm prepared to give you guys a job. I need someone tough, street smart and loyal. Are you? She asked. This is the deal guys, I want you to get me two kids, a boy and a girl aged about four years. There is a tycoon from Jeddah, Saudi Arabia who urgently needs them. He has given me about two weeks to deliver the kids... gentlemen, if you deliver the two children the tycoon wants, a cool one hundred thousand shillings is yours for the taking (p. 170).

The writer shows that Fiona is already a dehumanized individual. She engages herself in child kidnapping which robs society of the human dignity. Fiona is inhuman. She objectifies children as trade items. Kidnapping has become a common crime in Africa. The kidnappers demand a lot of money, something that leads to mental torture and despair for the relatives and friends of the kidnapped victims. This is an indication that the contemporary African society is disintegrating. Fiona's brutalised personality leads makes her a wanted criminal. Fiona gets imprisoned along with Jimo whom she includes in the kidnapping activity. As such, the consequence of her dehumanisation is always bad.

## **Papa**

Papa is the abandoned child of Fiona whom Angelina adopts and brings up as her grandchild. The writer uses Papa to show how children are dehumanised by being deserted by parents. The desertion by his mother has had psychological impact on his personality. He has no love, respect and child feelings towards his mother. He is also aggressive and hostile. This is noticeable from the way he visualises his abandonment and his antagonistic attitudes towards his mother. He says:

It's always pained me listening to my friends talk of their parents as I burn inside with guilt! Rejection! Trauma! Oh no, this is agonising, painful and sad! How can I even contemplate pardoning this woman's insensitivity? (p. 234).

This is a cold and abusive way of addressing one's mother, especially in an African cultural setting. It is considered abusive to address one's mother as "woman".

In a normal society, parents are respected by their children. The writer reveals that the mutual love and respect that existed, and ought to exist in society, are no longer cherished. Family disintegration filled with children with no sense of identity and parental love is commonplace in the modern global society. The biblical confession that Papa advises his mother to embrace is the writer's way of showing how serious it is for an individual to commit a vice and simply overlook it, and yet it has a devastating effect on other people and the society as a whole. Making a public confession symbolizes an individual's renewed change of heart and behaviour.

Fiona is responsible for the dehumanization of Papa. Nevertheless, Fiona, without any sense of remorse, wants to repossess him for the sake of having a child, a son. Unfortunately, Papa

is already aggressive, hostile and resentful of her; he no longer has any human connection with his mother.

### **Tony and Riana**

These are the abandoned twins that Yuna leaves at Hotel Savannah. They get to know that they are related after almost accomplishing their plan to marry. Yuna subjects these children to frustration and desperation when they learn that their plan to get married cannot come to fruition. They are dazed to discover that what they are about to involve themselves in is merely incest, a taboo in the African society. Their change in personality is revealed:

Where was the justice in it? The fairness? The human heart? Where? First abandoned! Orphaned! Distorted and robbed of their childhood, consigned to a life of hopelessness and now this ambiguity! This confusion! (p. 245).

Their mother has treated these children as objects. Yuna fails to look for them to reveal their identity as time elapses. Their bitter expression and hurt stems from a lack of knowledge that they are related. Children need to know their identity right from the beginning. Due to the advent of modernity, there is a disintegration of family relations. This is evidenced by rampant issues of child abuse in society today. The writer shows that the street persons and the destitute are a result of irresponsible parenthood that is an indication that societal disintegration is taking root. The rejected children later in life lose respect and maternal love for their so-called mothers. A society with more of such individuals is a dehumanised society.

### **CONCLUSION**

In his essay, *Writing in New Tongues*, Tom Odhiambo, on the problems of post-colonial African Nation-States and Societies (Odhiambo, 2010), argues that events in the subsequent years have bedevilled Africa with natural and man-made disasters which have established an unsettled continent. He points out that a number of issues, especially difficulties stemming from urbanisation and globalisation, have all interested African writers. Similarly, Nyantino, in *Twists of Fate*, examines the problem of dehumanization as one that is presently affecting Africa, particularly Kenya.

The psychological tendencies emanating from dehumanization seem to feature distinctly in *Twists of Fate*, which portrays a society at the brink of collapse. As such, basing on the assertions of Foucault and Malacrida, among other scholars, this paper points to the need for strategies towards establishing a humane society where there is respect for human dignity. The characters that Nyantino fictionalizes in this literary text are entangled in various problems with regard to their human relations, which mirror the current Kenyan (global) society. This is indicative of modern urban centres, which mostly do not offer the social protection, security and the *Ubuntu/Utu* (humanness) spirit that existed in the traditional African society.

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