

# Exploring Juvenal's Themes in Ahmadou Kourouma's *Allah is not Obligated*

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**Abstract-** This article discusses how issues of corruption, injustices, exploitation and conflict emerge as key in the works of Ahmadou Kourouma. A reading of Kourouma's oeuvre reveals that he lampoons the general attitudes of African leaders who capitalise on their positions to exploit the masses. This study attempts a manner of using some selected Juvenal's themes as a model to a reading of Kourouma's *Allah is not Obligated*. The study shows how Kourouma's fiction echoes the Juvenalian rhetoric and its stylistic dynamism as revealed in several Juvenal's themes such as the theme of Corruption, theme of Soldiers are above the Law, theme of The Decay of Feminine Virtue, theme of People without Compassion are Worse than Animals and theme of The Vanity of Human Wishes.

**Keywords-** Ahmadou Kourouma; Allah is Not Obligated; Juvenalian Satire; Feminine Virtue; Corruption, law; Compassion.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The origin of Juvenalian satire, revolves around Decimus Junius Juvenalis, a Latin satirist Juvenal, who around the 1st century AD observed with disgust the ills or follies of the bourgeoisie in the Roman society. He believed that acts such as corruption, immorality, greed, arrogance, exploitation among the rich and powerful deserved to be exposed, hence the creation of Juvenal satires. Most English works have been categorized into Juvenalian and Horatian satires. Wollacott (2003) identifies a good example of Horatian satire in Jane Austen's novel, *Pride and Prejudice*. Samuel Johnson modeled his poem *London* on Juvenal's third satire and *The Vanity of Human Wishes* on the 10<sup>th</sup> satire. The novel, *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) established Jonathan Swift as the master of Juvenalian satire. Victoria Moul's book *Jonson, Horace and Classical Tradition* (2010) examines the allusions of Juvenalian Satires in any of Jonson's poems. Moul discusses the double standards which make adultery among the rich and fashionable as a sequel to Juvenal's eleventh satire: "Adultery is a disgrace among the middle classes: but the same behaviour/ is considered chic and amusing when it is the rich doing it" (Moul 111). For her, Jonson's epistle satirises the extent to which husbands gratify their immoral acts even in the presence of their wives. However, African writers do not consciously or unconsciously model their writings according to the types mentioned above. A reading of Kourouma's *Allah is Not Obligated* reveals an unconscious attempt at depicting the Juvenal themes. This

paper investigate how Kourouma has explored some selected Juvenal's themes in *Allah is not Obligated*.

*Allah is not Obligated* is the last novel of the renowned African writer, Ahmadou Kourouma. The novel talks about a young narrator, Birahima, who recounts his personal experiences from his childhood after the demise of his mother. Drawing upon Birahima's experience, we are confronted with issues such as corruption is endemic in Africa which is emphasised in the text; during war soldiers exploit civilians; immorality is high among women in times of war; people do not have compassion towards others at war times and the ends of important personalities are worthless.

The novel has received significant scholarly attention, brief overviews of which have been outlined below. According to Igoni Barrett, the novel is Kourouma's last completed work that chronicles civil wars and the activities of child soldiers, "the most famous celebrities of the late 20th century." (Barrett 2013). Addei examines how the narrator Birahima's entry into "war leaves him in an absurd, cyclical limbo while he resorts in frustration to validate his absurd experience through appealing to God, folk wisdom and dictionaries" (2018: 24). Kodah discusses the language of a child-soldier-narrator as the voice of truth (2013:74). John Walsh (2008) examines the roles of language(s) and education not only as central themes of an African tragedy but also as the dramatic rhetoric of Kourouma's novel (185). Bainito (2014) portrays the child narrator in Kourouma's *Allah Is Not Obligated*, as first person child narrator to give a record of experiences of the wars which engulfed Liberia in the 90's. Ogunpitan (2014)

explores the technique used by Kourouma to make the reader a collaborator with him and with the characters in creating a conception of the Civil War in Allah is not Obligated. Nabutanyi, (2013) identifies the complexity of the speaking voice of Kourouma's narrator as first person or omniscient narrator in his text Allah is not Oblige. Tiefenbrun (2007) asserts that Kourouma presents to his readers the most humane members of society who have somehow lost their values and are capable of committing unspeakable atrocities which include the brutality of a child soldier's life experience that can make even innocent young children become professional killers. Even though these scholars present interesting and intriguing analysis of the novel, their attention has not been drawn to the satiric nature of the novel and this is what this paper presents as a way of adding to the scholarship of the novel. In the section that follows, we discuss the elements of Juvenal's themes in the novel.

## 2. CORRUPTION

Understanding the tenets of corruption is essential in African society. Corruption is a major theme of Juvenal satire. According to Morris (1991), corruption is the illegal use of public power for the advantage of a personal interest. Senior (2006) also defines corruption as an act to secretly provide a good or a service to a third party so that he or she can influence certain actions which benefit the corrupt, a third party, or both in which the corrupt agent has authority. Simply put, each partner has something the other wants or needs and the relationship is mostly understood as an expression of consideration. In legal terms, corruption is simply referred to as "the breakage of law". However, an act can only be termed as corrupt when it is stated by the constitution of the country as corrupt. In other words, the "corrupt acts" and "not corrupt acts" must be clearly spelt out to be used as a measure for branding corruption. "If an official's act is prohibited by the laws established by the government, it is corrupt; if it is not prohibited, it is not corrupt even if it is abusive or unethical" (Gardiner, 2002: 29). Alcazar and Andrade (2001) outline the various scales on which corruption occurs. These include petty corruption, grand corruption and systemic corruption. Petty corruption occurs on a smaller scale and involves small favours between a small number of people. The use of personal connections to obtain favours is an example of petty corruption. According to them, most people are involved in petty corruption on a daily basis, in their encounters with public administration or service providers like hospitals, schools, police, etc. Grand corruption is another form of corruption which occurs at the highest levels of government where policies or rules are formulated, and are mostly found in countries with authoritarian or dictatorial governments. Systemic corruption (endemic corruption) which is also a type of corruption occurs as a result of organisational weaknesses. This weakness can also be attributed to the individual officials or agents who engage in corrupt acts

within the system. Low pay, lack of transparency and monopolistic powers are some of the factors that encourage this form of corruption. Some specific acts of corruption include bribery, extortion and embezzlement. Kourouma satirises corruption in *Allah is not Obligated*. He ridicules the system of government as a "banana republic" through the eyes of the narrator, Birahima which he explains in parenthesis as "it looks democratic, but really it's all corruption and vested interest" (p.2). This type of corruption is termed by Alcazar and Andrade (2001) as Grand corruption. In *Allah is not Obligated*, Birahima drops out of school because education is worthless and the system of government does not augur well for those who complete to be employed. This is because the system is corrupt and government does not see to the welfare of the citizenry. Birahima narrates:

*Education isn't worth a grandmother's fart anymore, because nowadays even you get a degree you've got no hope of becoming a nurse or a teacher in some fucked —up French-speaking banana republic (Banana republic means it looks democratic, but really it's all corruption and vested interest), (2)*

In effect, the corruption in the system renders education valueless to the extent that one's level of education does not guarantee employment. Metaphorically, the country which is described as "banana republic" practices a form of democracy rooted in corruption. Rose-Ackerman's "Democracy and 'grand' Corruption" (1996) describes corrupt societies as "a newly emerging democracy where corruption can be a sign of progress" (365). For her, as citizens pay bribes to public officials in return for favours then "citizens and government functionaries recognize that there are norms of fair dealing and competent administration, and that they can be violated" (365). She identifies the effects of corruption as "inefficiency and unfairness" introduced by the payment of bribes (366). In Birahima's society, civil servants do not render good services to citizens unless they are paid bribes and the narrator describes such unfortunate attitude of Africans towards work as "the custom of Africa":

*...Back then, if you wanted a civil servant to treat you properly, you had to bring them a chicken. That is the custom of Africa. Maman gave chickens to five different civil servants and they treated maman properly and took good care of her...(17)*

Kourouma ridicules this form of corruption described by Alcazar and Andrade (2001) as petty corruption. We see that bribery and corruption seem a tradition or the norm of several African workers, especially the Custom officers. Custom officers accept bribes from victims as a normal practice in Africa. Instead of getting the offenders arrested, they rather exploit and extort money from the offenders

and allow them to have their way. Thus, instead of helping to reduce the rate of illegality in the country, they rather promote it. Birahima cites African countries which indulge in this type of corruption. He mocks this act by repeating the expression “wetting beards of people (that means bribing people, also known as paying baksheesh)”:

*By wetting beards of people (that means bribing people, also known as paying baksheesh), by wetting beards of custom officers, Yacouba's cola nuts got on the boat in Abidjan and off the boat in Darkar without paying penny in taxes and duties. (32)*

*In Ghana, there was lots of merchandise, and everything was a lot cheaper than it was in Abidjan. By wetting the beards of the custom officers at the border, Yacouba shipped the merchandise into Cote d'Ivoire without paying taxes and sold all the stuff to the highest bidder... (34)*

Birahima also makes mockery of the misuse or the abuse of power by the police. This type of corruption is described by Alcazar and Andrade (2001) as systemic or endemic corruption which is also a type of corruption which occurs as a result of organisational weaknesses. The police are known to be peace makers, protectors and law enforcers; however, they employ exploitation in their activities. They are bribable and this prevents them from being fair. Instead of them to take their time to investigate issues to know who is guilty or not before inflicting punishment on the victim, they rather shoot the victim to death first and later investigate the issue, but it is awful so Birahima narrates it this way: “In Abidjan, when the police see a bad guy with a gun in his hand, they don't stop and chat, they shoot him quick like a deer or rabbit and ask questions later. One day, the police shot three bad guys...” (36).

The portrayal of the police by the narrator buttresses similar creations of corruption in other literary works. Olowu et al (2014) ridicule the Nigerian police force by analysing selected cartoons of TELL newsmagazines. The outcome of their work reveals that TELL newsmagazine in their column “carton extra” makes satirical representations of all the vices associated with the NPF (Nigeria Police Force). Of these therefore, corruption is the chief, and it is thus made a subject of satire in the cartoons. In *Allah is not Obligated*, the police force is supposed to maintain law and order in the society; however, according to Birahima, the “cops” in Abidjan only punish citizens without going into the intricacies of the victims' cases.

Corruption has also entered the fabrics of religious practitioners to the extent that the so-called righteous leaders also cheat the system and Allah is ‘pleased’ with them because according to Birahima, they perform befitting sacrifices. Birahima gives an instance of this in the extract below:

*Yacouba performs five daily prayers every day and was always slitting the*

*throats of sacrifices Allah made him better because his sacrifices were fitting. (Among the Black African Native, if you say ‘the sacrifices were fitting’ it means you got lucky.) ... When he got out of the CHU hospital in Yopougon, Yacouba-alias- Tiecoura sold his car and all his other fast cars and set himself up as a marabout money multiplier maker of grigris and inventor of sayings prayers to help people find out what sacrifices to make so they can defend themselves against evil spells (p. 35).*

Clearly, Kourouma satirises the activities of the marabouts and their religious practice. Most people enter the religion profession in search of economic gains and according to Birahima, Tacouba and his friend, Sekou became marabouts because they lost their original jobs. These marabouts use deceit in the performance of their activities by pretending to be multiplying people's wealth. This attracts a lot of people such as ministers, “deputies civil servants”, the rich as well as armed robbers. Ideally, religion is supposed to be used as a corrective measure and the leaders are to lead lives worthy of emulation, but this is rather the contrary.

Kourouma again exposes the activities of immigration officers who extract huge sums of money from importers before clearing their goods. They pretend to the outside world that they are fairly and effectively performing their duties, and that it is easy for one to get goods from all entry points but it is otherwise. This act of theirs makes investors shy away from African countries because after the investors lose their goods, they withdraw completely from engaging in business in Africa. This retards development in Africa countries. This is exhibited in the activity of Papa Le Bon in the novel:

*...everyone in the convoy gets out and goes into the colonel Papa Le Bon's hut. They unpack everything, weigh everything measure everything on account of the taxes and duties are based on how much all the stuff is worth...the colonel organizes an ecumenical mass...there's a lot of blessing and stuff. Then he goes his way and you go your way... (47).*

The extract lambastes religious leaders like Papa Le Bon who resort to other forms of protection like guns and smaller gods besides the God they worship. Papa Le Bon, though a Catholic priest, possesses an AK 47. The AK-47 also represents lawlessness on the part of the religious leaders in our societies. Religious leaders are supposed to maintain peace in the society instead some incite other people to be boisterous and this affects the development of the society:

*...colonel papa le bon was wearing a cardinal's miter. Colonel Papa le Bon was leaning on a pope's staff, a staff*



*with a crucifix at the top. Colonel Papa le Bon was carrying a bible in his left hand. To top it all, colonel Papa le Bon was wearing AK-47 slung over his shoulder. The AK-47 and colonel Papa le Bon were inseparable. He carried it around with him night and day... (52).*

The portrayal of Prince Johnson is a replica of the follies of some religious leaders. Prince Johnson is depicted as a man of the Church, who gets involved in tribal wars at God's command. "God had commanded that he, Prince Johnson, wage tribal war. Wage tribal war to kill the devil's men. The devil's men who had so gravely wronged the people of Liberia" (131). Johnson commits numerous gruesome acts in the name of Christianity, likewise Mother Superior Marie Beatrice another religious figure. She is a saint "who made love like every woman in the universe" (134); "a saint with a cornet and an AK-47!" (137). Clearly, we see the representations of hypocritical life styles of those who wield power in the African society, and the fact that their egotistic interest gives them away as people who are not compassionate, for they exploit innocent citizens to acquire affluence.

### **3. PEOPLE WITHOUT COMPASSION ARE WORSE THAN ANIMALS**

Compassion is a feeling of deep sympathy and sorrow for one who is stricken by misfortune accompanied by strong desire to alleviate the suffering. In a society where there is war, some people tend to put up behaviours which can be compassionate or incompassionate.

Another theme that is prevalent in *Allah is not Obligated* is Juvenal Satire fifteen (15) 'People without Compassion are Worse than Animals'. This satire tells of a riot in Egypt during which a man was torn into pieces and eaten: a proof that men are crueler than animals. This theme has a link with the Subaltern theory which describes the lower classes and the social groups who are at the margins of a society (Bressler, 1994). Feminist discourse has also been interrogated by Kourouma since he recounts the plight of women and children who are obviously venerable. Women and children suffer in times of war and this clearly indicates that human beings do not have sympathy for their fellow human beings. Birahima recounts the role President-Dictator Samuel Doe plays in the colonies in Liberia where he instigates the killing of women and children in the city. According to him, Doe was unsympathetic to the people to the extent that he ordered that "they massacred the wives and children of the men they'd shot and had huge carnival with lots of hullabaloo, outrageousness, drunkenness, etc..." (93). While some women are brutally maltreated by their male counterparts, other women use their authority to exploit others. A case in point is General Baclay, a female war-lord who "shot men and women just the same, she shot thieves and it didn't matter if they stole a needle or a cow... she was impartial" (100).

Kourouma again satirises the use of power by political leaders which has taken a direct root because we see that even a prince, Prince Johnson, a seer, visionary and a person from the church gets involved in the wars of a particular country and inflicts pains on his subordinates. Kourouma parodies the attitude of the prince who is so honoured and dignified because he believes in God; however, he becomes a warlord and a rebel and lords it over innocent ones. This is to unveil the hypocritical attitudes that people who are well respected in our communities indulge in and these include stooping so low to be warlords, and committing all sorts of crimes. Consider the maltreatment of Samuel Doe by Prince Johnson:

*He took Doe by the ear and sat him down. He cut off his ears the right ear after the left. 'You want to negotiate with me. This is how I negotiate with the devil's minions' the more the blood flowed the more Johnson laughed, the more delirious he became. Prince Johnson ordered that Samuel Doe's fingers be cut off, one by one, and with his torture victim squealing like a suckling calf, he had his tongue cut out. Through the torrent of blood, Johnson hacked at the arms, one after the other. When he tried to hack off the left arm, the victim had had enough: he gave up the ghost ('give up the ghost' means 'die') (132-133)*

Kourouma interrogates human violence against fellow human beings. Prince Johnson makes mockery of the killing of Doe which presents an imagery of torture with the use of the simile "torture victim squealing like a suckling calf" which expresses the painful experience Doe goes through before his death.

Birahima recounts the plight of the children who happened to be in school when the tribal war occurs in their village. According to him, all the children had to run for cover "when they heard the first bursts of gunfire, the children ran into the forest ... It was only the next morning when there was no more noise that the children dared to go back to their family huts" (90). One of the children, Kik, becomes homeless because of the fact that all of his family members have been wiped out, "his father's throat cut, his brother's throat cut, his mother and sister raped and their heads bashed in" (90). He therefore has no option than to become a child-soldier.

The theme of 'People without Compassion are Worse than Animals' is further deepened by the portrayal of child soldiers in the novel. Birahima catalogues the activities of the child soldiers or the small soldiers in Liberia as people who are without compassion in the sense that they do not have pity on their own people. Birahima recounts that:

*The small soldiers, don't get paid. They just kill people and steal everything worth stealing. In tribal wars and even*

*in Liberia the soldiers don't get paid. They massacre the people and keep everything worth keeping. So as they have enough to eat ... (44).*

He further narrates how child soldiers line up at Captain Kid's funeral and fire their kalashes: "That is all they're good at. Firing guns (59) and later "[t]hat's all the child soldiers do, they just shoot and shoot" (106).

#### 4. SOLDIERS ARE ABOVE THE LAW

Soldiers in every country are tasked with upholding the constitution and protecting the freedom of the citizens from any external aggression either by land, air or sea.

In the Juvenal's satire sixteen (16) "Soldiers are above the Law", Juvenal surveys the privileges of professional soldiers and comes to the conclusion that soldiers are above the law. Kourouma exemplifies this theme in his novel. He portrays the soldiers as lawless citizens who refuse to abide by the laws of the country. This is as a result of the system of government that was operational at that time in most African countries. In Liberia, for instance, the military system favoured the soldiers who controlled the masses. Most people preferred to work as soldiers because of the recognition they were given at that time. The narrator, Birahima, is excited about being a child-soldier because of the privileges or side attractions he is likely to get from that profession. In his excitement, he outlines a number of things the child-soldier is entitled to and wishes at the very moment to become one of them:

*Wonderful things. He said they had tribal wars in Liberia, and street kids like me could be child soldiers... Small - soldiers had every-fucking-thing. They had AK-47s. AK-47s are Kalashnikov guns invented by the Russians so you can shoot and keep shooting and never stop. With the AK-47s the small - soldiers got every-fucking-thing. They had money, they even had dollars. They had shoes and stripes and radio and helmets and even cars that they call four-by-fours... (37)*

Even after Birahima has been recruited as a child-soldier, he confesses that Colonel le Bon elevated him to the rank of a lieutenant in spite of the fact that he has not been trained as a professional soldier and he was taught how to use the gun. "They gave child-soldiers ranks so we would be proud. You could be captain, a commander, colonel; the lowest rank was lieutenant" (66).

Also, soldiers exercise a lot of power and authority to the extent that they ransack innocent people's properties after killing them and they create loot and share in the process. Birahima sums it up:

*In tribal wars and even in Liberia, the child soldiers, the small-soldiers, don't get paid. They just kill people and steal*

*everything worth stealing...the child-soldiers and the real-soldiers sell off everything they steal really cheap.... Cheap gold, cheap diamond, cheap TVs, cheap four-by-fours, cheap guns... (44)*

The repetition of "cheap" emphasises the extent to which the soldiers exploit the system and the nation as a whole. The child soldiers capitalise on their positions to kill and steal.

The character of Colonel Papa le Bon is constructed, both in appearance and speech style, as powerful, authoritarian and repressive type of man because he is the spokesperson of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), yet he is made to seem absurd. Colonel Papa le Bon hides behind his corrupt practices and cheats his workers after which he organises ecumenical mass which according to the narrator means the existence of "Jesus Christ and Mohammed and Buddha":

*Colonel Papa le Bon had power of life and death over everyone who lived in the Zorzor. He was chief of the town and of the district and above all he was cock of the weak... (66)...one morning, Jonson arrived at the plantation in person. In his convoy, in a four-by-four, were two African foremen. They were naked but they weren't in one piece: their hands and their ears were missing; their hands and their ears had been amputated. There was also one labourer but he wasn't in one piece: his entire body had been amputated... (154)*

The soldiers in the novel pride themselves with titles, for almost all of them use their titles to extort and abuse innocent people just to satisfy their egoist interests. We see a display of insensitivity, arrogance and lose of human virtue.

#### 5. THE DECAY OF FEMININE VIRTUE

The decay of feminine virtue simply means the positive traits or quality deemed to be morally upright but have been corrupted by women. Juvenal Satire VI (6) talks about the decay of feminine virtue. The discussion of the theme in the study corresponds with the feminist theory in which Woolf (1882-1941) states clearly as the position of a woman in *A Room of One's Own*. She defines a female as one who is controlled by a male in the areas of politics, economics as well as literary works. A woman therefore has no mind of her own to engage in those activities. The correlation between the portrayal of women in the text under study and the theory lies in the fact that some women in the text are sidelined in their society.

Birahima recounts the plight of women in the text and cites his aunt, Mahan, who elopes with her second husband to Liberia as a result of the treatment given by the first husband, the master huntsman "who yelled at her and cursed her and threatened her with knives and guns. He

was what they call a bully” (26). Through Birahima, Kourouma highlights the extent of marginalisation of women and satirises it. Birahima narrates: “Everywhere in the world a woman isn’t supposed to leave her husband’s bed even if that husband curses her and punches her and threatens her. The woman is always wrong. That’s what they call women’s rights.” (26). This generalisation of how women should be treated in Birahima’s view goes a long way to confirm the feminist theory which presumes that women are devalued, devalued, disregarded etc.

The custom and tradition of people also contribute to the devaluing and devaluing of African women. This is described by Toure et al as Popular feminism which appeals to African women who consider their culture vital to their identity. ([http://www.codesria.org/Links/Publications/bulletin/Toure\\_et\\_al.pdf](http://www.codesria.org/Links/Publications/bulletin/Toure_et_al.pdf)).

Several African writers have explored in their texts, patriarchal society which reveal as male dominated society; women do not have any say in the day to day activities. Socialist feminists associate the ideas about exploitation, oppression and labour as key elements that demean the female counterpart. Barabara Ehrenreich (1976) asserts that feminists perceive unequal standing in both the workplace and the domestic sphere as part of the elements that clasps women down. For social feminists, the concept of prostitution, childcare, domestic work and marriage are ways in which women are exploited by patriarchal system that devalues women and the substantial work they do. Okome (1999) highlights that in most feminist writings, African women are portrayed as “confused, powerless and unable to determine for themselves both the changes needed in their lives and the means to construct these changes” (Okome 3). In Birahima’s custom, men are privileged to marry more than one wife once they attain the status of a hajji and travel to Mecca. Yacouba alias Tiecoura marries a lot of women because Birahima describes him as a genuine hajji: “As soon as he was good and rich he took the plane and went to Mecca so he could be a hajji, the minute he was a hajji he came back to Abidjan to marry lots of women...” (33). Also, after the death of Birahima’s father, “my mother belonged to Issa and he was supposed to marry her” (22) as custom demands. These examples buttress the fact that African women are marginalized in their society by custom.

Women are also portrayed as indecent people. The case of Saint Marie-Beatrice, a mother superior (a roman high mother) who is well versed in the doctrines of the church, engages in indiscriminate sexual encounters in spite of her status. Birahima presents her as a cheap slot for stooping as low as lying with Prince Johnson. Mother superior pretends to be who she is not because of war, and uses the name of God to do bad things. Papa le Bon also lures the nuns who operate the orphanage to warm his bed and Birahima describes them as hypocrites because of their appearance:

*The nuns wore cornets to fool the outside world (a ‘cornet’ is a starched white headdress, often cone-shaped, worn by nuns), but actually, like all the other women, they made love- they did with Colonel Papa le Bon... (74)*

The appearance of the nuns is seemingly deceptive. The “cornet” represents purity; however, these nuns behave otherwise. For Birahima, the nuns are neither chaste nor virtuous yet pretend to the outside world. Again, women in Papa le Bon’s camp are humiliated to the extent that while some are killed, others are sexually assaulted:

*The women had to undergo rituals for casting out magic. Colonel Papa le Bon Did the casting-out rituals himself, one on one, for hours and hours. Some people said during the rituals, Colonel le Bon took off his clothes and so did the women. Walahe . (65)*

This clearly portrays the devastating situation the women face. The image and virtue of women are disregarded and their rights trampled upon by soldiers. Young girls also suffer similar plights even though Le Bon built an orphanage for the little girls whose parents lose their lives through wars. The girls are raped and murdered. Birahima cites an instance of a little seven-year-old girl raped and murdered on the edge of the track that led to a river.

Women lose their dignity just to make ends meet. They engage in prostitution and the child-soldiers profession in order to survive. These ladies include Sarah a child-soldier who dies in the course of discharging her duty” “Sarah and four of her friends had been prostitutes before they joined the child-soldiers, so as not to starve to death” (86). There is a graphic representation of the prostitute figure who as a result of poverty, prostitute in order to survive. In spite of the justification of these prostitutes, the profession is seen as a debasement of the woman race since their end has always been worthless.

## 6. THE VANITY OF HUMAN WISHES

This theme is a biblical allusion in the sense that the bible repetitively uses the word “vanity” in the book of Ecclesiastes. In chapter 1 verse 14, Solomon states “I have seen everything that is done under the sun, and behold, all is vanity...” (biblehub.com). This presupposes that all human endeavours results in vanity. Kourouma explores this theme through the eyes of Birahima who recounts several experiences of men of high repute who wield excessive pride and end up as worthless or insignificant before they die. This is a development from Kourouma’s early novel, *Suns of Independence* (1968), in which he explores the greed and insensitivity of post-independent African leaders who fail to deliver the promises of the fruits of independence, and engage in the acquisition of wealth referred to as the scheme of get rich quickly where the protagonist, Fama, dies tragically out of frustration from the change of leaders. Similarly, in his novel, *Waiting*



for the vote of the *Wild Beast*, Kourouma's narrator, Bingo, recounts the despotic rule of the protagonist, Koyaga, the President of fictional Republic of Gulf Coast who rules for thirty years and faces his downfall when the "First World" decides to introduce democracy. In *Allah is Not Obligated*, Kourouma exposes the reckless lifestyles of African leaders who employ exploitation to manipulate the citizenry and end abysmally. We read similar depictions of leaders in works like Ngugi wa Thiongo's *Wizard of the Crow*, Peter Abraham's *Tell Freedom* and Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautiful Ones are Not Yet Born*.

Juvenal Satire X (10) which talks about "The Vanity of Human Wishes" is also seen in Kourouma's *Allah is not Obligated* in which Kourouma satirises the end of important people in the society. A typical example is Sani Abacha who exercises a lot of power and authority over his people and in the end, was ostracized by heads of state after the assassination of representatives of Ogoru people, "an ostracized Sani Abacha who needs to feel his virginity again" (194). The narrator makes mockery of Sani Abacha by calling him ostracized who needs to get his virginity back meaning he had done evil things and needed to correct them.

The death of Papa le Bon also emphasises the theme of Vanity of Human Wishes. La Bon had excessive power and authority to the extent that his orders were always obeyed by his subordinates. He had access to everything he wishes for. In spite of the luscious and extravagant life style of Le Bon and also having surrounded and fortified himself with charms amulets and soldier, "he was assassinated, gunned down, he was dead" 'with all grigris, he gave up the ghost" (77).

Another instance is the death of Samuel Doe who is killed the same way he wiped out other innocent people. Samuel Doe and his friends were against the injustices in Liberia and plotted a coup with his compatriots. This coup was a success after which he declared himself as the president of the democratic republic of Liberia in 1860. His end was horrible, Prince Johnson ordered that:

Samuel Doe's fingers be cut off, one by one, and, with his torture victim squealing like a suckling calf, he had his tongue cut out. Through the torrent of blood, Johnson hacked at the arms, one after the other. When he tried to hack off the left arm, the victim had had enough: he gave up the ghost (133)

The dictator, Houphouet-Boigny, also dies at the end of all the atrocities he commits. He instigates the kidnapping of Foday and pretends as if he knew nothing about it. In spite of the fact that Abacha's countrymen were dying in Sierra Leone, it was Houphouet-Boigny who had recognition from the international press as "the wise man from African" (169). He eventually dies "leaving to his heirs and successors one of the most colossal fortunes in black Africa, more than three thousand five-hundred billion CFA francs" (170).

The almighty Prince Johnson's reign also came to an end. He had power and wealth and always keen in amassing wealth. He exploited the American Rubber Company which had the largest plantation in Africa, covering nearly a hundred square kilometers. This company owed the country royalties and these royalties were shared among Samuel Doe and Taylor. Johnson used his influence to demand that the royalties be shared among the three of them. When he realized that the managers of the company were reluctant, he kidnapped two foremen of the plantations and "threatened that if he did not get a share of the royalties in twenty-four hours, he would send two men with the two heads of the white bosses on two stakes. Without fail! Without fail! And everyone knew that Johnson the seer was capable of everything..." (150). Prince Johnson disappeared when the ECOMOG peacekeeping forces seized the plantation. (156). We see that there is an end to power and authority.

## 7. CONCLUSION

In this article, we have established that in *Allah is not Obligated*, Kourouma employs various forms of Juvenal's themes to ridicule the African society. He targets government institutions as corrupt by citing several instances of their corrupt practices. There is the depiction of the attitude of all soldiers and child-soldier as lawless. Kourouma presents the maltreatment and humiliation melted out to human beings in a very horrific manner to the extent of people being massacred. Characters in the text are not compassionate towards their fellows to the extent that the innocent people have to sacrifice their lives for the survival of others. The effects of war on women result in acts such as indecency, immorality, etc. Also, the craving for wealth, power and authority are proved to be an exercise in futility.

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