UNIVERSITY OF LAGOS AKOKA

NOTIONS OF POWER IN SELECTED PLAYS OF WOLE SOYINKA AND FEMI OSOFISAN

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BEING A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF PHILOSOPHY (PH.D) IN ENGLISH, DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH, FACULTY OF ARTS, UNIVERSITY OF LAGOS, AKOKA LAGOS.

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CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that the thesis: " Notions of Power in Selected plays of Wole Soyinka and Femi Osofisan"

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DEDICATION

TO Fr. Leonard Okechukwu Mbachu, my adorable kid brother, and Chief Fidelis Ndu. Mbachu, my statesmanly father, who moved on before the dream was hatched.

To Nkiru, my delectable wife, Tobechi and Omasirichi (Baby Bobo), my two precious kids, who came along to fill the void in my heart.

To Lolo Florence Mbachu, who endured the heart break of losing her husband and her son in a space of two months, this is to your resilience and perseverance.

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God works through people. In the struggle to realize this dream I was never alone. Helpful hands were never in short supply as I was privileged to have the spirited assistance of some the most reliable hands anyone in my situation would have craved.

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ABSTRACT

This study explores power in selected plays of Wole Soyinka and Femi Osofisan, focusing on its social manifestations, use, effects and characters' responses to its exercise in Soyinka's *Kongi's Harvest, Madmen and Specialists, From Zia with Love* and *The Trials of Brother Jero*, as well as in Osofisan's *Morountodun, Another Raft, Once upon Four Robbers* and *Esu and the Vagabond Minstrels*. The study reveals that in spite of ideological differences, Soyinka and Osofisan have remarkably similar conceptions of power that reflect the diverse nature and use of power in the societies portrayed in their plays.

Drawing upon the theoretical postulates of post structuralist writers like Jacques Lacan, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Louis Althusser, and Pierre Macherey, the study highlights the negative and positive attributes and deployments of power in the selected plays. Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytic tenets are used to characterize the diffusion of power in societies as it is wielded by various characters, ranging from the lowliest to the highest places, based on unconscious forces that inform their actions.

Michel Foucault's analysis of power as a strategy of interiorized discipline provides the framework for examining how the tyrannical deployment of political power by the protagonists of Soyinka's *Madmen and Specialists, Kongi's Harvest* and *From Zia with Love* precipitates the crises portrayed in the plays. To properly situate Osofisan's Marxist notion of power as economic ascendancy, Pierre

Macherey's critical methods are employed to interrogate *Morountodun* and *Once Upon Four Robbers*. The approaches interpret these texts as 'products' that differ remarkably from the ideological raw materials that went into their formulation. Louis Althusser's thoughts on ideology and ideological apparatuses help to reexamine religious power in the light of received knowledge that wielders of such power are ideologically impelled to abuse it. *Another Raft* and *The Trials of Brother Jero* while illustrating the manipulative possibilities in the exercise of religious power by characters, also make clear that such abuses need not be ideologically engrained, but may proceed instead from the personal weaknesses of the individuals at the helm of power.

Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault provide the tools that help to deconstruct power distribution in the plays. Instead of a single site of power where only the principal characters are located, several characters are spotlighted at different sites where they exercise some levels of admittedly disproportionate power, in relation to the dominant character. This explains why the minority antagonists of power in the plays are portrayed somewhat sympathetically as protagonists of resistant power, mainly because through them a different perspective or notion of power is provided to counter the abusive trend that dominates the exercise of power in the texts.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This is a study of the portrayal of power and its social manifestations, attributes, use, and effect in selected plays of Wole Soyinka and Femi Osofisan. It is an attempt to explore the ways in which various perceptions of power are played out by specific characters in the selected plays. Moreover, the manner in which power impacts on the central actions in the plays is examined in relation to the various communities that give life to the plays. The literary world of the texts studied reflects happenings in the real world, as a slice of the fictive reality that literature imaginatively reconstructs.

In its social form power makes itself manifest in a variety of ways. It appears as the authority that enables people to exercise control over others and their actions based on a given mandate. It is evident in politics, psychology, philosophy, sociology, and religion as well as in the work place and most every day group activities. The complexity often associated with power as a social element, rests largely on its multifaceted and ubiquitous nature that makes it different things to different people. Politicians, psychologists, sociologists, philosophers, and people with religious interests may perceive power mostly in ways that are consistent with their respective professional biases. This has led to numerous notions of power that are sometimes confusing. Generally, however, power entails the ability of an entity to exert control over an environment or other people. The exercise of

power, considered to be endemic to all humans, is usually vilified as evil or unjust; nevertheless, its beneficial ends, though frequently understated, cannot be denied.

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

In modern African literature, thematic considerations of power are pervasive, and Soyinka's and Osofisan's works are classified as modern. In the post-independence era, writers have devoted much creative interest in the depiction of power and the relationship between power and society. For Soyinka and Osofisan, this fascination with power runs particularly deep. Their passion for the well-being of their society informs their explorations of power against the background of unacceptable levels of economic, social, and moral degradations caused by unabating leadership failures. Commenting on this social consciousness, with regard to Soyinka, Eldred Jones has this to say:

> Soyinka's life is inseparable from his work, much of which arises from a passionate almost desperate, concern for his society. This concern is apparent in his poetry, drama and essays, but is not merely literary. It shows itself in his letters to the Nigerian papers … Indeed it is this very concern, and the speed with which he translates ideas into action that puts him so often at odds with institutions and governments (*The Writing of Wole Soyinka* 10).

The general tone of Soyinka's dramatic output is one of outrage against tyranny and the degradation of the human person. In his writings as well as in his private life, he has tried to engage this malaise with an uncommon passion. For instance, in Geneva in December of 2008, Soyinka was on the podium to talk about "The

Avoidable Trap of Cultural Relativism'' on the occasion of the second edition of the Geneva Lecture Series, where the Nobel Laureate dismissed the concept of cultural relativism as a ploy to promote tyranny and oppression rather than the freedom purported. He argued that the cherished freedom of the individual human person is compromised when the world is forced into a retreat in the face of oppression and injustice perpetrated in the name of cultural difference. Such practice he concludes is a trap that must be monitored because of its capacity to divert attention away from its insidiousness. Soyinka asserts in the lecture that

> Cultural relativism claims to imbue us with a respect for these differences. In practice however … it asks us to accept such barbarisms as 'honour killing' as justified by tradition, or dictatorship, even of the most brutal kind, as sanctified by a people's antecedent or ongoing experience, largely under duress, conveniently labeled political culture. It endorses the rights to discriminate between sexes, between races, and to accept the stratification of citizens on grounds of religious beliefs, colour of skin or gender. (4)

Similar humanist fervour oozes from Soyinka's *Climate of Fear* in which he laments the fact that the global community has virtually become an arena of fear and terror. In the book, Soyinka argues that this phenomenon predates the September 2001 terrorist attack on New York by a band of emergent "quasi states'', as he calls them. The 1989 blowing up of a passenger plane over Niger Republic, the Nobel winner submits, heralded an epoch of tyranny, terrorism, and invisible power of the quasi state that has since then engendered a global conflict between power and freedom. It is in Soyinka's words, "a prelude to the

domination of the mind and the triumph of power" and naked assault on human dignity.

This is the sum of Soyinka's artistic vision namely, to use his art to confront the power ogre menacing humanity in order to bring it down. Largely through the *Ogunnian* hero, the Soyinka protagonist undertakes to bear upon his individual head, like Ogun, the communal quest for the emancipation of humanity from the manacles of tyranny. This theme dominates Soyinka's dramatic writings, especially as reflected by the plays selected for this discussion.

Although his own brand of social crusading does not quite assume the fiery personal involvement associated with his older compatriot, Osofisan in his writings nonetheless, displays an interest in his society's well-being that is no less profound than Soyinka's. Operating on the philosophical conviction that a people are whatever they make of themselves, Osofisan emphasizes in his writings values that uphold justice, equity, compassion, industry, and the sanctity of the human life (Awodiya, *Excursions* 72). As he declares in a chat with Charles Uji, "We [writers] have to raise consciousness, to teach people that we ourselves are responsible for what our society is and we are also responsible for whatever it may become" (qtd. In *Excursions* 112).

For Osofisan, power springs from the collective efforts of the people working in concert against a common enemy. In his oeuvre, that enemy is the bourgeois

system that seeks to deny the ordinary people the economic comfort that comes from their labour. Class struggle, argues Osofisan, presents an entirely different perspective of power that confutes the common assumption that power corrupts. Explaining this reasoning in *The Athenian Sun in an African Sky*, Kevin Wetmore claims that for this Materialist dramatist, the corruption thesis applies only where social history projects a cyclical trajectory. With class struggle, on the other hand, the movement of history is linear, thereby guaranteeing a finite destination of inexorable bliss. In the words of Wetmore, paraphrasing Osofisan,

> Struggle is a process rooted in the idea of progress. Once the bonds of oppression are truly broken for all, argues Marxism at its most basic, then they will not reform, they will dissolve forever. (191).

Class struggle, then, is the defining feature of Osofisan's drama, as he sees it not just as the basic structure of the evolving human society, but also as the process leading eventually to society's socio-economic emancipation. This the common theme under girding the texts selected for discussion.

Overall, it is our own personal fascination with the subject of power, based on a conviction that every conflict in the dramatic works of Soyinka and Osofisan (and indeed any other writer) can be interpreted in terms of power relations that has motivated this study. In essence, the texts studied are used to test the assumption that the well-being of every human community depends on how prudently and humanely power in all its diverse social manifestations is appropriated by people in positions of power.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Sociology and political science are disciplines replete with studies aimed at analyzing the nature of power and its social impact on the human society. These studies exhibit two ideological polarities, in the forms of capitalism and socialism, two cultural ideas that have dominated discourse among scholars of power. This lavish scholarly attention gives the false impression that power is restricted only to those two ideological spheres. These are, no doubt, the dominant ideas at the macro levels of power, but the neglect of the micro dimensions of this concept has led to some basic misconceptions. Chief of these is the understating of the fact that power is diffused into every stratum of the social realm. Indeed, as Foucault has rightly argued, "power is everywhere…because it comes from everywhere''. (Aldrich, Robert and Wotherspoon, Gary (Eds), 2001).

Apart from this focus on limited aspects of power, political and sociological commentators have also evaluated power based on narrow grounds that hardly do justice to the complex nature of power. While some (Thrasymachus in Plato's *Republic*, Acton, in a letter to Bishop Mandell Creighton in 1887, and Tolstoy, for instance) conceive of power mostly in negative terms, others like Socrates take the opposite view. The former group appears to assess power based on the way power holders actually act. Lord Acton, for example, believes that power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely, by which he means that what to him is an endemic rot makes power implacably evil. Acton's conclusion

derives from a practical observation of the abusive conduct of most people in power. The latter group dwells on how men ought to act, the basic ideals they ought to pursue, the exemplary leadership they are expected to provide. The reality that both these schools appear to overlook is that between their two extreme views lies a third possibility. That possibility is the fact that power can be both destructive and constructive, useful as well as wasteful. It all depends on the actor and the actions involved. The concern of the study is to deploy the fictional world of the plays to examine the assumption that power is a conceptual force by interpreting the plays in relation to characters' actions and how they reflect power formations, relations and effects. The goal of the study is to use slices of the social fabric in literary works to reveal how various notions of power enable happenings within the societies portrayed in the selected plays.

Soyinka and Osofisan, in their works, portray fairly similar power configurations despite their ideological differences. Both artists view power as potentially beneficial if used properly. While it is true that they approach this question from two seemingly opposed ideological convictions, the end result of their enquiry appears to suggest shared values. Their common concern is with the health of the human community and how power can, but often fails to, bring this about. It is this humanistic factor, transcending mere economic considerations, but involving instead an array of other social and human issues that, to a large extent, determines quite directly the destiny of the human society.

1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Among the issues central to the research are the following:

1. To isolate for analysis distinct notions of power that are manifest in the texts selected for study.
2. To demonstrate with textual evidence how and why characters, representing humans, harbour innate longings for power.
3. To analyse the Marxist notions of power portrayed in Osofisan's texts within the context of economic class struggle.
4. To interrogate the religious ideology of power portrayed in the different texts studied.
5. To analyze the revolutionary notion of power in the society of the plays in study in the form of resistance.
6. To explore both the boundaries and common grounds in Soyinka's and Osofisan's perspectives of power.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following questions are of critical interest to this study.

1. Why do characters seek power in the plays studied?
2. Given his liberal ideological leanings, how does Soyinka in his drama portray political power, especially from the perspective of people in authority?

3. Can Osofisan's Marxist/Materialist ideology as reflected in his works, actually be said to coincide with social reality?
4. How valid is the view that religion is primarily a complicit ideology formulated deliberately to serve the interests of a ruling class at the expense of the masses?
5. Is power necessarily evil, and how, if so, can resistance help to contain this evil as a revolutionary response?
6. Are there any common grounds in the power philosophies of Soyinka and Osofisan?

1.5 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

a. POWER

Power may signify authority, force, influence or knowledge. This is evident in Soyinka's plays: Kongi's power and that of Wing Commander in *Kongi's Harvest* and *From Zia with Love* derive from authority as state power. They also exemplify along with the power exercised by Bero in *Madmen and Specialists* the use of force as an instrument of power. The same plays portray characters like Old Man and the Earth mothers whose powers derive from their knowledge and intellect, and the influence that these help them to exert on the people around them. In a sense even the absence of force, or action - as stoicism suggests - may entail power. Hicks and Gullet reflect on the challenge of analysis posed by a concept whose sources and forms are implacably imprecise.

> Power is not well understood, is often extremely subtle or obscure, springs from multiple sources, is highly dynamic, has multiple causes and effects, is multidimensional, and is particularly difficult-if not impossible-to quantify …(238).

Recent sociological debates on power revolve around the issue of the enabling nature of the social element. Steven Lukes, in *Power: a Radical View,* discusses power as diverse forms of constraint on human action, but also as that which makes action possible, although in a limited scope. Much of this debate is related to the works of the French philosopher Michel Foucault (1926-1984), who, following the Italian political philosopher Niccolo Machiavelli (1469-1527), regards power, as "a complex strategic situation in a given society [social setting]" (*History of Sexuality*, 1). Foucault's notion of power as enablement is counterbalanced by his dispersal of this enablement among all component bodies of the system. In other words, power emanates from everywhere since the contest for the power string is one that goes on interminably as a contest of wills, occurring as a locus of struggle, resistance, and defiance.

Foucault has located power "everywhere...because it comes from everywhere" (Aldrich, Robert and Wotherspoon, Gary. Eds. 2001). His analysis of power derives from his concept of "technologies of power", which focuses on the strategies and locations of power. For Foucault, power is exercised with intention based on what is intersubjectively accepted knowledge about how to exercise power. Power comes from enforcing action upon others' actions, an act that need

not necessarily involve the use of violence. Effective power, according to Foucault, can devise ways of making people *by themselves* to comply with the actor's wishes. Threat of violence, suggestion and marketing are instruments of power that Foucault reckons are as good as any instrument intended to alter and control people without physically constraining their freedom. The whole concept of the panopticon (as shall be addressed later) is hinged on this important subject of freedom and constraint.

Nevertheless, in a very broad social sense, power may be taken to designate ability to perform any act: fly a plane, climb a mountain, or kill a game, for instance. Power may also refer to a human faculty or capability such as vigour or intelligence. Physical and mental strengths signify kinds of power that confer on the wielder control or dominion over a sphere. The right possessed by, or granted to, a person or group of persons, a person or group with great authority or influence such as celebrities or the press are further significations of power. Still more, states with great influence (military or political) in international affairs are said to be powerful. In like manner, gods, spirits and natural forces are regarded as powerful agents because of their capacity to alter social (human) or cosmic situations. Power, in social terms then, is multidimensional as well as complex.

The complexity of power, notwithstanding, it is generally assumed, as earlier stated, that power involves the ability, authority, or capacity to accomplish an objective. Thus, social scientists, philosophers, and psychologists alike premise

their understanding of power on this one common factor: ability. From the viewpoint of social scientists, for instance, Henderson and Parsons, referencing Max Weber, another social scientist, define power as

> The probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance. (152).

Power is here conceived as the ability of the actor to 'carry out his own will despite *resistance'*

Ability to overcome resistance is also a form of power. Walter Nord states:

> The ability to influence flows of the available energy and resources towards certain goals. Power is assumed to be exercised only when these goals are at least partially in conflict with each other (675).

In a similar vein, Stephen Robbins asserts that,

> When we discuss power, we mean the ability to effect and control anything that is of value to others (263).

T.B. Bottomore's view equally lends credence to the centrality of ability. Power, he says, is the

> Ability of an individual or a social group to pursue a course of action (to make and implement decision-making) if necessary against the interests and even against the opposition of other individuals and groups (7).

As a philosopher, Bertrand Russell suggests in *Power* that power entails the ability of an agent to attain an intended goal. In Russell's opinion, an agent who is able to get someone to act in a manner inconsistent with the target's intended goal has

power. Benjamin B. Wolman, the editor of the *International Encyclopedia of Psychiatry, Psychology, Psychoanalysis and Neurology*, also anchors his perception of power on ability to exert 'Social influence' by altering a target's agenda (7).

Key elements emerging from the above conceptions of power include "ability" "interest" /"intention"/"will", "resistance" or "conflict", and "resources". To take the last feature first, resources refer to the means by which the exercise of power is made possible. These may, among others, include weaponry, wealth, property, money, knowledge, skill, physical strength, position, or moral quality. In a sense, resources, which engender power, may be material or non-material in nature. Appropriately, Anthony Giddens has categorized the resources of power according to what he calls 'Authoritative' and 'Allocative' resources. "Authoritative resources", according to this classification, designate such non-material resources as position, knowledge, skill, authority, or quality. On the other hand, "Allocative resources" refer to material facilities in the form of money, property, or weaponry (51-52).

J.K. Galbraith's summary of the types of power as consisting of "condign" (force), "compensatory" (resources), and "conditioned" (persuasion) also tallies with this tradition of analyzing power as ability. For the sources of power Galbraith delineates "personality" (individuals), "property" (material resources), and "organizational" (institutions). (Galbraith, *The Anatomy of Power*, 4,5).

To be able to exercise power, a person must have at his or her disposal one or more of such resources drawn from one or both of these categories. Without one or more of these resources in any given situation power is not possible. Power in exercise always strives toward a goal, which it either seeks to assert or otherwise, to thwart.

b. NOTION

The term "notion" refers to an idea, belief, or understanding of something, this "something" in this context being power. The study seeks to investigate how characters in the study texts understand and employ power in their social relations with others. Ideas and ideals that inform how wielders of power in the texts exercise their power constitute the concern of this study. No less germane to the study is a concern with the way in which receivers of power in the works understand and respond to power.

1.6 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK:

A. Marxism as Ideology of Power

In order to situate the concerns of this study, there is the need to clarify the significant concepts that provide the frameworks for the study of the manifestations of power in the selected works. Marxism is central to any understanding of the concept of power

As an ideology, Marxism is a theory of social change developed by Karl Marx as a reaction against what he saw as the exploitative nature of Capitalism. Its aim is to bring about change through putting to question, and thereby exposing, what are assumed to be the injustices and inequalities of the capitalist mode of economic relations. Socialism and Capitalism are two modes of power that combine economic and political paradigms for the organization and control of material and human resources.

In historical terms, Marxism seeks to interpret history in terms of the interrelations between 'material culture' and their human creators. In conjunction with their tools, humans, Marxist historicists argue, produce the changes that make history. This history is one of a mode of production whose character is to create two classes of people, one of the exploited, the other of the exploiters (Anthony Giddens 1981, 73ff). The names Marxists give these classes are the proletariat, made up of exploited workers, and the bourgeoisie (capitalists), who own the tools of production, or the forces of production, to use the Marxist phraseology. Seen in this sense, a critic's basic assumption as far as *Morountodun*, for instance, is concerned, would be that the structure of the society of the play is one formulated along the lines of the haves and the have-nots, everything determined by economic possession and the struggle that goes on between these groups for it. Economy being the underlying basis of power, all other social practices - politics, arts, religion, for instance - are of secondary consideration to a Marxist critic of this

play. According to Marx, inequality is the essential nature of capitalism, a reality that must be changed through dialectical struggle. Eventually, Marx argued, capitalism will collapse to be replaced by a more prosperous, equitable and irrevocably platitudinous mode of economic production in the form of Socialism. This development, Marx believed, would however result not necessarily from the conscious efforts of men, but from a historical process involving the gradual self-destruction of capitalism occasioned by the debilitating effects of the contradictions and tensions inherent in the system. The limitations of this view, as will presently be illustrated with Osofisan's texts, are not insignificant. For one the assumption that the basic human preoccupation is economic in nature remains debatable across the texts discussed in the study. In *Morountodun*, Titubi's interest in wealth has to come to an end when she discovers other non-material concerns of life – love, compassion – that provide her, as it were, greater satisfaction than money had ever offered her. In *Four Robbers*, another Marxist assumption, namely the ideological immunity of collectivism, is also shattered by Major's denunciation of his group allegiance with his fellow robbers. This for him is necessitated by his human impulse for private enterprise as opposed to collectivist interests as prescribed in Marxist thought.

The economic dimension of Marxism dwells on the mechanisms of capitalist economic relations, in order to show how the exploitation of the workers is perfected. Marx regards the economic situation as essentially one in which the

worker's labour is exploited in the form of the "surplus value" accruing from that labour. While, as Marx sees it, the worker is paid for his labour, he is denied nonetheless, the surplus value by his capitalist employer and owner of the forces of production, who appropriates this for himself instead. The clearest illustration of this theoretical scenario can be found in Ekuroola's power relations with his tenants and workers in *Another Raft*. The Lagos based tycoon only returns home periodically to claim the profits of the yields from the workers' toil, leaving the labourers grumbling in dissatisfaction.

Economic relations, according to Marx constitute the basic essence of power as the structure or 'base' of all social relations; everything else in society is connected to this base, as a secondary 'superstructure'. Logically, it follows as Marx argues that all cultural practices such as politics, religion, philosophy, morality, art and science, otherwise the superstructure, are invariably structured to provide support for the infrastructure, the primary force of social relations. The nature of this support is essentially ideological, given that its object is to formulate a specific cultural orientation into which the people are to be indoctrinated. *Another Raft* again aptly illustrates this proposition with the religious life of the people of Aiyedade, which according to this belief, is premeditated to condition the weaker segment of the society to accept the *status quo*.

Marx's evolutionary account of history delineates a progressive movement of reality from the least developed stage to the most advanced. The first of the five

stages of social civilization identified by Marx is the "tribal society". Successively the "Ancient World", "Feudalism" and "Capitalism" follow, culminating finally in "Socialism", the final stage of history, according to Marx (Giddens, 69-71). Socialism/Communism is the stage of history when all social changes have taken place; correctives put in place and an order of superabundance and plenitude instituted to flourish interminably. It is the end of class and struggles and divisions.

A materialist conception of history, according to Marx, is characterized by dialectic of forces and relations of production. In his "Preface" to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (in Marx and Engels, 1968), Marx offers an evolutionary scheme according to which a series of developmental changes succeed one another leading up to an eventual revolutionary transformation of society (Giddens 88). As Engels puts it,

> All past history, with the exception of its primitive stage, was the history of class struggles; that these social classes warring with each other are always the products of the relations of production and exchange-in a word, of the economic relations of their epoch; that therefore the economic structure of society always forms the real basis, from which in the last analysis, the whole superstructure of legal and political institutions as well as of the religious, philosophical and other ideas of a given historical period is to be explained (Engels 72).

Because they are evolutionary, there is a sense in which social changes, according to Marx and Engels, are inevitable and therefore require no human agency to inspire or bring them about. Again, Engels explains:

> Hence forward socialism no longer appeared as an accidental discovery by this or that intellect of genius, but as the necessary outcome of the struggle between two classes produced by history – the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. Its task was no longer to manufacture as perfect system of society as possible, but to examine the historico – economic process from which these classes and the antagonism had of necessity sprung and to discover in the economic situation thus created the means of ending the conflict. (72).

Osofisan's attempt to replay this Marxist assumption can be seen, for instance, in Titubi's transformation from an egotist bourgeois to a proletarian, despite the heroine's determination to stifle the farmers' insurrection.

Engels further insists that production and exchange of things produced constitute the basis for understanding the process of change in society. The need to satisfy economic needs he says, ensures the 'materialist' impulse to produce and distribute wealth, and divide society in classes, on the basis of which the products are distributed or exchanged (74). Accordingly, the primary causes of social change, Engels submits, are not the brains of man (the efforts of Titubi or Marshal for example); instead, change, he claims, results from changes in the modes of production and exchange found in each particular epoch.

One refuter of Marx's teleological account of history is the mathematician and philosopher Bertrand Russell. In *Power: A New Social Analysis*, (1938) he accuses Marx of exaggerating the importance of economics in social reality. Russell's view is that needs for power and glory can never be fully satisfied, unlike economic needs, which are satiable. This claim is borne out, for instance, by Titubi's ideological switch in *Morountodun,* and in Omele's self immolation in *Esu*. Therefore, Russell insists, will-to-power and glory constitutes the chief factor accounting for social change in every human society.

No less controversial is Marx's evolutionary scheme of history, according to which events tumble out of predetermined social formations oblivious to human intervention. Again, Anthony Giddens raises questions here too. In *A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism,* (1981) he argues for example that such an evolutionary concept fails to acknowledge the role that human cognition and ideas play in the determination of social processes. In a view consistent with that of the study Giddens argues that human 'knowledgeability' as he calls it, rather than mechanical or inevitable accident of history, as claimed by Marx, accounts for all social transformations (82). The plays indicate that it is men through their actions that make history. Social change is impossible without human agency because, as *Morountodun* illustrates, the heroine's audacious infiltration of the enemy camp is the single most important factor accounting for the resolution of the insurrection, the defining moment of the history of that

community. To suggest, for instance, that that moment would still have evolved even without Titubi's action is to indulge in speculation and unscientific conjecture.

The Marxist interpretation of history is relevant to us because of its centrality in the oeuvre of Osofisan whose Marxist outlook is all too evident in his works. In his texts chosen for this study, Osofisan leaves no one in doubt regarding his ideological persuasions. In these texts the pre-eminence of the material over the non-material, or matter over metaphysics, is assumed to be beyond question. Also discernable in Osofisan's works is the Marxist perception of history as one that is inevitably destined to terminate in a socialist/communist ethos. Whether this reading of social reality is sustainable within the texts constitutes the crucial question that this study has in part set out to address.

B. Capitalism as Ideology of Power

Unlike Osofisan, Soyinka interprets history from a more liberal standpoint. A firm believer in the unfettered freedom of the living man, Soyinka conceives of the human society as an arena of freedom in which the individual, though free to pursue his personal dreams, must do so nonetheless without violating the freedom of others with whom he co-exists in the community. His two lectures at Geneva and Reith earlier referred to affirm this unflinching allegiance to the cause of freedom.

Those who advocate Capitalism claim that it is an open system of sharing power in which individuals operate on their own individual skills and abilities and keep what they earn. In politics it is also touted as a democratic ideal, one in tune with the nature of man as a free being in society. Soyinka's works attempt to portray this freedom in the defiant actions of characters that refuse to submit to tyranny and dictatorship. Old Man and the Earth mothers epitomise this defiance, which also acts as tonic to the system's operation. Major's act of 'betrayal' in *Four Robbers* is at once a reflection of the natural human desire for personal freedom and an adumbration of the particular difficulty faced by the individual who desires to express himself/herself within a socialist/communist system. As Milton Friedman argues in *Capitalism and Freedom* (1962), the economic freedom inherent in capitalism translates to political freedom. By contrast, Friedman insists, centralized control of economic activity is always accompanied by political repression. A market economy, according to advocates of this view, (Adam Smith and Friedrich Hayek, for instance) together with its voluntary nature, and the wide diversity that this voluntary activity permits is a fundamental threat to repressive political leaders and coercive power. It is also a testament, Friedman further argues, to the fact that capitalism flows naturally in the human system and is vital for freedom to survive and thrive.

Thus, the debate over the nature of social reality and the way in which it must be analyzed is distinctly one drawn between two schools; one holds an econo-centric

view, the other proposes a liberal, anti-materialist perspective. The former school is exemplified by Karl Marx, Freidrich Engels of *The German Ideology*; Vladimir Lenin in *The State and the Revolution*, Mao Zedong in *On Contradiction*. The latter school is championed by the likes of Friedrich Hayek and Milton Friedman, to mention just the two. Soyinka's liberal vision is a product of conscious transcultural orientation. It is an orientation that inclines him to marry positive European ideals with his African culture in the search for social transformation. Neither 'writing back' nor romanticizing the African past, Soyinka locates the problem of his race in the present rather than in the past. "Who remembers much of the reactions now?'' he wonders. "I realise they were luxuries- the emotional responses I mean. Who cares ultimately how those stupid master races reacted to you and me. The problem now is to answer what is happening here'' (Soyinka, qtd. In Lars Eckstein, 73). Soyinka's plays featured in this discussion reflect the reality of the African experience that informs them – the dictatorships, military seizures of power, seat tight tyrants, unconscionable plundering of state treasury, criminalization of political authority, and ruthless repression of opposition.

Soyinka's heroes are liberal individuals who must rely on their personal moral scruples to uphold a humanist world-view. Old Man's defiance of the risks to his personal well-being in *Madmen*, exemplifies the one-man sacrifice that defines Soyinka's heroes. Mass movements never appeal to the playwright. What counts is the personal integrity of the individual person and how this can help him or her to

put at the disposal of the group his/her skill, knowledge and capacity in the service of humanity. This is Soyinka's notion of power. (Eckstein, 73)

Nevertheless (as can be distilled from the evidence of the texts in study) Soyinka and Osofisan share similar concerns and anxieties about their society. In other words, they differ only in terms of ideological beliefs, while their humanistic concerns remain identical.

Literature bears in its lineaments a good deal of what is provided by the social system in which it is produced. As a result it will be no surprise that the manifestations of power in literary productions provide no remarkable departures from power of the kind highlighted above. The works of Soyinka and Osofisan are no exception.

In these writers' works, power takes on a particularly realistic tenor very much consistent with the various ways in which the concept is understood in social terms. For example, in Soyinka's *Madmen and Specialists*, power is manifest as authority, or right deriving from the office that someone occupies. In this instance, Dr Bero may be understood to exercise an institutional power conferred on him as head of the intelligence unit of the state he represents. This can be designated as the institutional power of authority. Such too is the power exercised by Kongi, in *Kongi's Harvest,* Wing Commander, in *From Zia with Love*, and Superintendent, in Osofisan's *Morountodun*. These characters' powers receive

legitimacy from the laws establishing the positions or roles in which they are cast in the plays. The power exercised by the Earth Mothers (Iya Agba and Iya Mate) in *Madmen* derives from a tradition that bestows on them custodianship of a discipline regarded within the community with the utmost awe that is recondite and mystic. Unlike the power exercised by Bero also in *Madmen*, and Kongi in *Kongi's Harvest* however, the mothers' power has no legal recognition, but derives legitimacy from tradition as traditional power. To the extent that this power form has to do with expertise in a specific field of knowledge it can be designated as expert power. Similarly, Old Man's power in *Madmen* springs informally from the knowledge or wisdom he possesses (personal intellectual or knowledge power). Prophet Jero of *Trials* and Orousi of *Another Raft* exemplify custodians of religious power whose legitimacy emanates from a socio-cultural context. Economic power is reflected in Titubi and her mother Alhaja Kabirat's display of affluence in *Morountodun*. Other categories of power wielders are discernable even in the 'vulnerable' ones like the Mendicants (*Madmen*), Chume (*The Trials of Brother Jero*), Sabe Irawe (*From Zia*), the peasants in Osofisan's *Morountodun*, Oge and Waje in *Another Raft*. Common to these characters is their general lack of access to power at the political or economic level. Nonetheless, they 'wield' some measure of power in diverse aspects of endeavour involving them.

These differences in the categories of power clearly suggest that in the plays (as well as in real life) power exists in all facets of the social realm and in varying forms. Hence in sociology as well as in structuralist social theory, power is always studied in terms of balance of power on the assumption that no one in social relations is totally excluded from power.

C. The Supernatural "Power" in Soyinka and Osofisan

Supernatural power occupies a unique place in the cosmology of the societies depicted in the works of the playwrights. Ordinarily, this dimension of power should not feature in a strict discussion of power of the social kind. This however is necessitated by the peculiar character of African literature. Unlike contemporary Western literature, African literature of all ages (past and present) has consistently featured elements of the supernatural as part of its essential make-up. It is a realistic depiction of the African's cosmological worldview, one in which gods and goddesses and spirit forces are believed to be part of an unbroken cycle of life. As several critics have noted, Soyinka's oeuvre, steeped as it is in African folklore, is a reflection of the African's attempt to make sense of an earthly existence that he understands to transcend the material realm. It extends to a 'fourth stage' or a 'chthonic realm' where according to Soyinka, the fusion of the human and the spiritual takes place (*Myth, Literature and the African World*). It is a space where, according to his Cambridge lectures of 1973, man existed "within a cosmic totality, did possess a consciousness in which his own earth being, his

gravity-bound apprehension of self, was inseparable from the entire cosmic phenomenon" (10). (See also Mark Pizzato, "Soyinka's Bacchae…", 3). The chthonic realm, Soyinka further elucidates, "is the area of the really dark forces, the really dark spirits, and it also is the area of stress of the human will" (Karen L. Morell, ed., 117-118).

Joel Adedeji locates in the folkloristic dimension of Soyinka's composition a unique style of characterization in which the 'metaphysical' and the 'sociological' are fused into a seamless symmetry. Gods, spirits, spirit forces (the unborn, for instance) and the living operate in a common space in which the living play host. Metaphysical and sociological characters, explains Adedeji,

> Include gods from the Yoruba pantheon as well as spirits emanating from and operating within the universe of the living in spite of their primal existences in the universes of the dead and the unborn. The gods take on human form and attribute, the spirits take on bodily existence and the ancestors alike are all costumed and appear in disguised forms. Sociological characters include the village folks (local persona) and the stranger-elements (foreign persona) (qtd. In Adelugba 107).

In Africa, the gods epitomize power since their very existence or presence elicits deference from believers, aside from their supernatural abilities.

In the case of Soyinka, as already indicated, gods, spirits, and other supernatural elements, who are custodians of extraordinary powers, are recognized as an integral feature of the people's social life, and are reflected bodily on stage, to

show not just their social affinity with humans, their power, or the lack of it over human affairs, but, more importantly, the reality of their communion in the cycle of existence. Ogun is Soyinka's quintessence of power with all the paradox associated with this deity.

For Osofisan, the emphasis is slightly different. In the typical fashion of the Marxist ethos, Osofisan's aesthetics views gods and all supernatural elements with great suspicion, because religion in Marxist thought is implicated as an ideology of exploitation. While this is true of Osofisan's attitude to religion, a fact attested by his virtual irreverence towards the power of gods (who for him are mere aesthetic props) the rich vein of the Yoruba pantheon and folklore however remains a veritable source of creative inspiration for the dramatist.

Central to the dramatic oeuvre of Osofisan is the Orunmila motif, which serves him to reinterpret and radicalize received knowledge in the light of his perception of power. Orunmila, the Yoruba god of wisdom and divination, according to Muyiwa Awodiya, an ardent Osofisan scholar, is in traditional belief, the deity that the people must consult on important issues affecting their lives (Awodiya, *The Drama of Femi Osofisan* 68). In his drama, however, while upholding the deity's place in tradition as the custodian of wisdom and scientific enquiry, Osofisan radicalizes the role of the deity in the daily life of the people. By questioning what he sees as the misappropriation of the principle of ideal power represented by the

deity, Osofisan berates the ruling class for perverting what was originally intended to inspire the growth of society.

It needs to be pointed out, however, that the philosophy behind the Orunmila myth, as employed by Osofisan, is somewhat antithetical to the idea that informs Soyinka's interest in the Yoruba pantheon. This contrast makes itself evident in at least two respects: firstly, in the nature of the relationship among some of the gods, bordering on mutual jealousy and a penchant for partisanship in their relationship with humans. This is clearly evident in *A Dance of the Forests* in which the antagonism between Ogun, the god of iron, and Eshuoro, the god of chance and guile, is reflected in the gods' partisan filiations respectively with Demoke and Oremole, the latter whose murder by Demoke, Eshuoro is intent on avenging. Often portrayed as 'anti-revelatory', the Eshuoro antagonists are pitched against the revelatory impulses of the Ogunnian protagonists, in an attempt to thwart all attempts at revelation.

By contrast, Osofisan conceives the relationship of the gods in terms of collaboration rather than mutual distrust. According to Awodiya, the trinity of Orunmila, Esu, and Yeye Osun, the gods of wisdom, indeterminacy, and fertility, respectively is apparent in Osofisan's works (73). Moreover, the critic adds, the partnership of Orunmila and Eshu is inscribed securely, in the 'complex Ifa divination process' (73) as seen, for instance in *Esu*, in the ultimate resolution of the godly constellation in the search for justice, compassion and social progress.

The other respect in which Osofisan's and Soyinka's interpretations of the gods in relation to power differs is in the attitudes of the playwrights to the essential attributes with which the gods are associated. Ogun, noted as much for his metallurgical craftsmanship as for his ferocity and courage, is Soyinka's favourite deity, muse and emblem of power. Celebrated in ritual and myth as trailblazer, pathfinder, the creative essence and paradigm of the racial self-definition of the Yoruba people, Ogun is also conceived by Soyinka as

> The first actor for he led the others… Ogun, first suffering deity, first creative energy, the first challenger, the conqueror of transition. And his, the first art, was tragic art, … The Yoruba metaphysics of accommodation and resolution could only come after the passage of the gods through the transitional gulf, after the demonic test of the self will of Ogun, the explorer god in the creative cauldron of cosmic powers (Soyinka 103).

Ogun is therefore the embodiment of the "promethean instinct in man constantly at the service of the society for its full self-realization" (*Myth* … 30). The ritual hero is the paradigm of this instinct, 'in primal reality' as he "seeks to reflect through physical and symbolic means the archetypal struggle of the moral being against exterior forces" (43).

However, it is precisely these celebrated qualities of Ogun - his masculinity and ferociousness – that Osofisan detests, on the grounds that such an image suggests that the god is a purveyor of brutality, violence, and power lust (Awodiya. 76) According to Osofisan, present-day imperatives demand an alternative tradition of

accommodation, reconstruction and love of knowledge as opposed to the prevailing regime of strife and war mongering symbolized by Ogun. Osofisan puts it thus:

> Too much of our attention has been given to warriors to the sons and siblings of Ogun, as if it is they alone who make history. Hardly is any acknowledgement made of the doctor-herbalists, the architects and engineers, the weavers and sculptors, the philosophers. Hence our world-view is distorted, narrow, self-negating. In our ancestry, we see only destroyers and tyrants; the builders and the seers are unremembered, neglected (qtd. In Awodiya, 76).

Examined closely though, the mythic visions of Soyinka and Osofisan are not mutually exclusive. Both writers are passionately interested in a humanistic evolution of society through the creative, constructive and compassionate use of power, traces of which are apparent in the qualities of Ogun and Orunmila (Eshu), their differences in temperament notwithstanding.

1.7 LITERATURE REVIEW

The amount of work done on the works of Soyinka and Osofisan is enormous. Particularly with the former, the corpus of work is staggering, ranging from full texts to dissertations and articles. Most notable of the complete texts are Oyin Ogunba's *Movement of Transition* (1973), James Gibbs's (ed.) *Critical Perspectives on Wole Soyinka* (1980), Obi Maduako's *Wole Soyinka*: *An Introduction to His Writing*. (1991) and Adewale Maja-*Pearce's Wole Soyinka: An Appraisal* (1994). There is also the work by Ato Quayson published in 1997

with the title *Strategic Transformations in Nigerian Writing: Orality and History of Rev. Samuel Johnson, Amos Tutuola, Wole Soyinka and Ben Okri,* and more recently Biodun Jeyifo's *Wole Soyinka; Politics, Poetics, and Postcolonialism* (2004). The list of critical articles on Soyinka is simply inexhaustible, but a few would suffice here. Abiola Irele, G.D. Killam, Chinua Achebe, Femi Osofisan, Dapo Adelugba, have all, at one time or another, written essays and reviews on the works of Soyinka. Others who have had something to say about Soyinka and his works include Ernest Emenyeonu, Aderemi Bamikunle, Edde Iji, Simon Umukoro, Derek Wright, Norm R. Allen Jr., and Dale Byarn. However, it is literature that is relevant to the power theme that is of concern here.

Eldred Jones's discussion of *Madmen and Specialists* takes a panoramic view of the play's essential themes. However, Jones does stress the central theme, which according to him is "the erosion of humanity in a well-organized tightly controlled authoritarian society" (107). The various techniques by which Bero dehumanizes others are discussed. However, the essay's subject matter is not clearly focused on power.

The generalized nature of Jones's discussion of Soyinka's plays selected for this study is common to discussions of works devoted to a particular author as can again be seen in Ogunba's *Movement of Transition* or Maduako's *Wole Soyinka*. Ogunba's discussion of *Madmen and Specialists*, *Kongi's Harvest* and *The Trials of Brother Jero,* though brilliant, lacks thematic focus on power. Like Jones's,

Ogunba's study of *Madmen* stresses the inhumanity of Bero, in the way he runs his home and treats his employees: the Mendicants. It also comments on the stoicism of Old Man, and the quaintness of the Earth Mothers, all of which helps to clarify individual characterization. But the reader who is looking for a theory-based analysis would need to look beyond texts of this kind whose structure and objective are purely explicatory. *Madmen and Specialists*, written in 1970, is Soyinka's most pessimistic play. It deals with man's inhumanity and the pervasive corruption in structures of power. Soyinka's Nobel Lecture brims with his trademark humanism and afrocentrism, as the following lines underscore:

> There is a deep lesson for the world in the black races' capacity to forgive, one which, I often think, has much to do with ethical precepts which spring from their world view and authentic religions, none of which is ever totally eradicated by the accretions of foreign faiths and their implicit ethnocentrism." (from Nobel Lecture, 1986)

Soyinka's best-known essays *Myth, Literature, and the African World* were published in 1976, essentially outlining his philosophy of power. A famous critic of Senghor's negritude, Soyinka is credited with the famous scoff directed at the ,idea: "A tiger does not shout its tigritude, it acts," a statement reportedly made at a 1962 literary conference in Kampala. (See Chinweizu et al, *Toward the Decolonization of African Literature*, 1983). Not surprisingly, in his plays on power, Soyinka creates characters in action, who either use the power at their disposal - Daudu for instance - to promote the health of the community or, like Bero, Kongi, or Wing Commander, use theirs to ruin it.

The military dictatorship of Sani Abacha provided Soyinka another morbid picture of tyranny and brutality, which he portrayed in his play *King Baabu* (2001), a work parodying past and present African dictators. The title refers to Alfred Jarry's classic absurdist play, *Ubu Roi* (1896).

The body of criticism on Wole Soyinka's masterful tragedy *Death and the King's Horseman* is substantial, although it falls into fairly coherent groups: the early paraphrases, the Marxist critiques, the mythic criticism, performance analyses, and Soyinka's own commentary. The paraphrases are predominantly a loose form of close textual and thematic reading, of which Eldred Jones and D. S. Izevbaye are examples (Jones 1983, 115-18; Izevbaye 1981, 116-25; Gibbs 1986). Indeed, Jones's reading is a less sophisticated precursor to Ketu Katrak's in its focus on "Elesin's response"...

Jeyifo's recent work *Wole Soyinka; Politics, Poetics, and Postcolonialism* (2004) examines the relationship between the consummate artistry of Soyinka's writings and his radical political activism.

David Moody's "Tick of the Heretic" appropriates Foucault and Derrida to arrive at a conclusion regarding the relations of power between Bero and other significant characters in the play. He deconstructs these relations in a manner that topples the hierarchy in favour of marginalized elements like the Mendicants and the old man. Though Moody's reading of the play provides useful insights in the

application of Foucauldian and Derridian tenets, it still remains restrictive in its analysis. For we read *Madmen* not just from a deconstructionist angle, but also from a psychoanalytic perspective.

In a survey of some of Soyinka's "power plays" Onokoone Okome observes the use of parody as a potential literary weapon against political abuses of power. Okome uses *Kongi's Harvest* to illustrate the mutability of power even of the most totalitarian kind like Kongi's. In the study, *Kongi's Harvest* is analyzed for its applicability to Foucault's idea of disciplinary power. Sharing the anxiety of many of his fellow Nigerians, Hope Eghagha is worried about the failure of leadership in his country Nigeria. In *Reflections on the Portrayal of Leadership in Contemporary Nigerian Literature*, (2003) he takes a panoramic sweep of Nigerian literature and its portrayal of leadership. Although several of Soyinka's works including *Madmen and Specialists*, *Kongi's Harvest* and *The Trials of Brother Jero* are discussed, Eghagha's handling of these texts is understandably not extensive.

Osofisan's texts selected for this study have also received considerable critical attention. In *Drama and Politics in Nigeria* (1994) for example, Simon Umukoro takes a look at "The Limits of Radicalism" in Osofisan's *Morountodun* and argues that Osofisan's characters lack basic human characteristics. Because, he suggests, characters are created with preconceived ideological positions in mind, they come across as types, rather than as rounded characters. In effect, the critic is critical of

the playwright's much discussed tendency to idealize his characters in ways that suggest that proletarian characters are necessarily more virtuous than their bourgeois counterparts. Umukoro does have quite a few issues against Osofisan's dramaturgy especially as it relates to his Marxist ideology, his attitude to myth and religion, and his overstatement of the place of material abundance in his envisioned socialist state. The study will show in the fourth chapter that Osofisan's ideology is truly not quite as secure in his texts as he probably would have wished.

1.8 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

There are numerous theories of power. Among scholars and schools of thought credited with power theories are Friedrich Nietzsche who disseminated ideas on the ''will to power'', Alfred Adler, Niccolo Machiavelli, Antonio Gramsci, Steven Lukes, Alvin Toffler, Max Weber, Gilles Deleuze, Sigmund Freud, Michel Foucault, Karl Marx and Marxism, New Historicism, and of course the vast field designated as Post Structuralism. This study adopts the post structuralist exegesis, which is a broad theoretical field that accommodates several of the individual theorists as well as schools mentioned earlier. However, the study shall more specifically be appropriating the ideas of Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Jacques Lacan, Louis Althusser, and Pierre Macherey.

Post-structuralism is broadly understood as a body of distinct reactions to structuralism. In his 1976 lecture series, Michel Foucault briefly summarized the general impetus of the post-structuralist movement:

> ...For the last ten or fifteen years, the immense and proliferating criticizability of things, institutions, practices, and discourses; a sort of general feeling that the ground was crumbling beneath our feet, especially in places where it seemed most familiar, most solid, and closest to us, to our bodies, to our everyday gestures. But alongside this crumbling and the astonishing efficacy of discontinuous, particular, and local critiques, the facts were also revealing something... beneath this whole thematic, through it and even within it, we have seen what might be called the insurrection of subjugated knowledge. (Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, tr. David Macey)

Post-structural practices generally operate on some basic assumptions:

1. Post-structuralists hold that the concept of "self" as a singular and coherent entity is a fictional construct. Instead, an individual comprises conflicting tensions and knowledge claims (e.g. gender, class, profession, etc.). Therefore, to properly study a text, a reader must understand how the work is related to his or her own personal concept of self. This self-perception plays a critical role in one's interpretation of meaning. While different thinkers' views on the self (or the subject) vary, (Freud locates it in the ego; Lacan in Desire. Sarup, 16-20) it is often said to be constituted by discourse(s). Discourses are forms of power appropriated by particular disciplines. Lacan's account includes a psychoanalytic dimension, in which power motivations are analyzed as inherited traits common to all humans,

while Derrida stresses the way in which the individual figures in power relations involving him or her.

2. The author's intended meaning, as it is (for the author's identity as a stable "self" with a single, discernible "intent" is also a fictional construct), is secondary to the meaning that the reader perceives. Post-structuralism rejects the idea of a literary text having a single purpose, a single meaning, or one singular existence. Instead, every individual reader creates a new and individual purpose, meaning, and existence for a given text. To step outside of literary theory, this position is generalizable to any situation where a subject perceives a sign. Meaning (or the signified, in Saussure's scheme, which is as heavily presumed upon in post-structuralism as in structuralism) is constructed by an individual from a signifier. This is why the signified is said to 'slide' under the signifier, and explains the talk about the "primacy of the signifier."
3. A post-structuralist critic must be able to utilize a variety of perspectives to create a multifaceted interpretation of a text, even if these interpretations conflict with one another. It is particularly important to analyze how the meanings of a text shift in relation to certain variables, usually involving the identity of the reader.

The poststructuralist praxis counters traditional Western philosophical thought of the kind evident in Marxist totalizing, essentialist and foundationalist conception of power. Post structuralism questions very vigorously the validity of Marx's

conception of power as a stable structure. Osofisan's *Morountodun* and *Four Robbers*, for instance illustrate the instability of power relations, the lack of absolutisms, and the centrality of differences and specificities in the dynamics of power.

A set of theoretical positions, post structuralism, according to Lye, has at its core a self-reflexive discourse, which states that meaning is tentative. It is marked by a rejection of totalizing, essentialist, foundationalist concepts. A totalizing concept subsumes all phenomena under one explanatory concept while an essentialist concept views reality as existing independent of, beneath or beyond, language and ideology (1).

Post structuralism views 'reality' as fragmented, diverse, tenuous, and culture-specific. Consequently, it pays much attention to specific histories, to the details and local conceptualization of concrete issues. It gives greater attention to the specifics of discourse and cultural practice than it accords universalities. The role of language and texuality in the way reality and identity are constructed is central to poststructuralist poetics. As a theory of differences derived from Derrida's deconstruction, post structuralism rejects any concept of structure as a stable system. It proposes a methodological shift from the structuralist approach, a move away from explanation by origin, dichotomy between referent and sign, fixed or closed signification and the notion of a unified system.

Post structuralism derives, in part, from a sense that men live in a linguistic universe and rejects the traditional aesthetic, phenomenalist assumption that language is a 'transparent' medium which hands over experience whole and free of complications. In a linguistic universe, 'reality' is mediated reality, and what it mediates is governed by a number of factors that include the way language works, the world of discourse, which governs knowledge, and the way of speaking about the subject under discussion. People imagine what they can symbolize, speak about what they have language for and speak in the way rules of discourse permit. Tropes influence the way reality is conceived especially when the 'master tropes' of metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche and irony are applied (Lye 2).

Other factors determining how reality is mediated may include the structure of ideology, which attempts to 'naturalize' power relations and the way people's sense of the world is configured. People accept whatever they are used to as normal. All human beings are victims of this tendency mainly because language with its 'structured' rules defines what should be and what should not be. Reality is also conceptualized by the idea that cultural constructions of meaning privilege some meanings or experiences and marginalize others. Yet traces of the marginalized or suppressed meaning of subject remain visible through the cracks, silences and discontinuities, which ideology cannot totally remove from discourse.

According to Lye of the Brock University, post structuralism is not a school, but a group of approaches based on a set of theoretical positions, which have as their

central thesis a self-reflexive discourse sensitive to the tentative, slippery, ambiguous, and complex interrelation of texts and meanings (1). This view unites all poststructuralists including the ones whose specific approaches have been adopted in this study.

The study is based on the poststructuralist tenets of Jacques Lacan, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Pierre Macherey and Louis Althusser. Lacan's psychoanalytic tools are deployed in the examination of characters' motives for seeking power. Applied to *Madmen* and to *Morountodun,* the unconscious power motives that drive the main characters of Dr Bero and Titubi are uncovered. Derrida's deconstructive techniques help to analyze the distribution of power in the socio-political landscape of the plays in a way that reveals that power is not the exclusive preserve of a few individuals like Bero in *Madmen,* Kongi in *Kongi's Harvest,* Wing Commander in *From Zia*. Instead, power is shown to permeate the social sphere making itself available to virtually every member of the system though in varying measures. Foucault reveals the basic strategies of power used by characters like Kongi, Bero and other power wielders in the relevant plays. Macherey provides the tools that help the critic to defend a position not directly acknowledged by the text or its author. For example, they help to expose the ideological inconsistencies in some of Osofisan's works in the study. To understand how power functions as ideology, the views of Althusser have been

deployed in the reading of *The Trials* and *Another Raft* to show how religious power operates in the texts.

Psychoanalysis deals with motives, especially hidden or disguised motives; and as such helps to clarify literature on two levels: the level of the writing itself, and the level of character and action within the text. Lacan's tenets derive from and extend Freudian concepts and are similarly concerned with interpreting the motives that ground characters' actions. Lacan's psychoanalysis relies on symbols, which to him are fundamental to the workings of the psyche. Freud had used symbols particularly in his work on the interpretation of dreams, but generally Freud's symbols appear to have literal significations. For example, his concepts of 'Father' and 'Penis" convey a literal interpretation. By contrast, in Lacan, those words assume symbolic interpretations in the wider context of the Law and power. They became attributes of power neither of which is restricted to men or women. Lacan's central thesis is that human beings inherited a fractured psyche, which all through their lives they seek to harmonize or reintegrate once again. Being born into language already is a fracturing experience for the individual who is constituted by the rules of speaking and the names of signs. In *Madmen*, Bero, by the cultural prescriptions of his community, is not just expected to acknowledge Old man as father. He is also taught to submit to the old man's authority, the Law. This is the position of power that Bero is out to contest, regardless of what the cultural expectations may be. To the extent that Lacan

interprets father as law, every character in the works is potentially a deviant subject of the law.

All human actions are motivated by unconscious desires. Although this reality may express itself in the conscious mind, by looking at patterns and structures in a text, psychoanalysis can expose the real motive behind the action. Repetitions, gaps and closures may serve as interstices in which texts try to hide their inherent contradictions and lack of semantic stability. A careful reading can prise open those interstices to reveal what they are trying to withhold. Prophet Jero's fraudulence for instance, despite his efforts at concealing them through pious posturing, are revealed largely through slips and gaps in his statements, which give away his mercantilist motivations in his proselytizing activities.

Desire springs from a combination of cultural practices and the individual's interpretation of those practices. The "Law of the Father" symbolizes the larger familial and social structure laid down for the individual by the practices of the society into which he or she is born. His/her response to these ideals, either through imbibing, modifying, or repudiating them altogether, is what instigates the play of desires within which motives can be located. Applied to the texts, Lacan's approach reveals that all characters are essentially motivated by a desire for power, being already constituted as such, in the struggle between what is demanded of the individual by his society and what he primarily demands of himself. The very fact that Titubi has an opinion different from her mother's

already sets her against the law of her community. Yet such differences are inevitable because of people's individuality and hence the struggle for power that is endemic to humanity.

Foucault analyzes the 'discursive practices' or serious speech acts that lay claim to revealing knowledge. Rather than analyze these discursive practices in terms of their truth, he interrogates their history or genesis, a process he calls an 'archaeology' of knowledge, to show the history of truth claims. Power holders impose their truths upon subjects as a normalizing procedure. Were Bero to have succeeded in *Madmen* in appropriating from Old Man and the mothers their respective discursive powers, the possibility of a Bero constructed 'truth' and notion of power would have been a distinct reality. Similarly, Kongi's Isma is defined according to President Kongi's discursive whims. However, these terms of definition will always be contested by the likes of Daudu and Segi in an unending contest of wills that accords with Foucault's notion of power.

Leaning on Nietzsche for his 'genealogical' approach and on Marx for his analyses of ideology, Foucault shows how the development of knowledge is intertwined with the mechanisms of (political) power. Unlike Marx, Foucault objects to the existence of a deep underlying truth or structure: there was no objective viewpoint from which one could analyze discourse or society. Knowledge, or discourse, as Foucault often refers to it, is at the base of power relations in several of the texts in study. In *Madmen*, the Earth mothers are able to challenge Bero because like him,

or even more than he, they are skilled physicians. Similarly, in *Kongi's Harvest,* a glimpse of how power engenders inventiveness can be obtained by reflecting on Daudu and Segi's scheme of attack on Kongi's government. Even in its negative form, power can produce knowledge, not just in the form of the repressive instruments it puts at the disposal of the party in power, but also in the form of the strategies that may be deployed by subjects to counter their oppressor. All this adds to the common knowledge about the discursive registers that produce multiple sites of power, ensuring thereby that the revolving-door mechanism of power often stressed by Foucault is ever in place.

Foucault focused on the way that knowledge and the increase of the power of the state over the individual has developed in the modern era. In his 'History of Sexuality' he argued that the rise of medical and psychiatric science has created a discourse of sexuality as deep, instinctual and mysterious. This discourse became accepted as the dominant explanation, and its assumptions began to seep into the discourse of the everyday. In this way the human subject's experience of their own sexuality is shaped and controlled by the discourses that purport to explain it. The search for knowledge does not simply uncover pre-existing 'objects'; it actively shapes and creates them.

Foucault does not offer any all-embracing theory of human nature. He was critical of 'meta-theory': beliefs that claimed to give an exclusive objective explanation of reality. For Foucault there is no ultimate answer waiting to be uncovered. The

'discursive practices' of knowledge are not independent of the objects that are studied, and must be understood in their social and political context.

Foucault's conception of power (or one aspect of it) derives from his interpretation of Jeremy Bentham's architectural design called the 'Panopticon'. In analyzing this eighteenth century design, Foucault finds parallels between it and the disciplinary power of the modern society, Foucault's point being to establish the distinctions between power in a modern state and power in the preceding feudal, monarchical state. His conclusion is that while power in the monarchical state was essentially seen as discipline directed against the physical body of the transgressor, in the modern state, a psychological form of discipline is emphasized. This latter form of discipline is captured in Foucault's analysis of the panopticon.

In a prison built with modern architecture that allows guards to see continuously inside each cell, the 'panopticon' is the central observing tower even though the prisoners cannot see that they are being observed. The multiple cells of the panopticon which are under the constant gaze of the supervisor at the central watch tower are likened to the many people within a totalitarian system (Kongi's Ismaland or Bero's unnamed land, for instance) who are subject to an absolute ruler. Compelled by the unceasing monitoring, subjects of a dictatorial regime, like inmates of the panopticon, begin to develop a sense of self-subjection, or to use Foucault's own phraseology, 'a stifling anguish of responsibility'. In this frame of mind that is induced by fear and terror, the subject appears to relinquish

his own freedom through self-policing. Power of this kind, as can be seen in Soyinka's works especially, relies in good measure on psychological subjection (the gaze) to control the subject. The inmates in *From Zia* are not just prisoners behind physical walls. They also emblematize the sense of eternal visibility that denies the individual personal freedom in a totalitarian state. The loud speakers in their cells are a constant reminder of the ubiquitous gaze, the sense that every subject is being observed.

The imagery of the gaze thus symbolizes the nature of modern disciplinary power, especially in the West, in marked contrast (as will be shown) to subjectivity in the third world society portrayed in the texts, whose form still remains considerably physical. Nearly all the plays in focus evoke an atmosphere similar to that described by Foucault. Fear and self-repression characterize subjects' responses to a governmental process that is characterized by terror and offers very little room for self-expression. The condition of the Aweri in *Kongi's Harvest* for instance, clearly illustrates the degree of emasculation experienced by subjects within a totalitarian enclave. Rendered powerless by Kongi's terror apparatus, his so-called advisers, too scared even to acknowledge or express openly their own biological needs, are forced to deny themselves food in perfunctory, vicarious deference to Kongi. Acting differently is to risk Kongi's music of death.

Notwithstanding, Foucault warns that power must not be seen as an exclusively negative force that is crassly 'negative, oppressing, defining what is not to be

done'. In *The History of Sexuality* in which he argues that power is woven into social relations, Foucault maintains that power, since the eighteenth century, has become increasingly positive or productive as a tool for the careful construction of new capacities rather than the repression or removal of pre-existing ones. Therefore as a tool which 'produces reality' power, Foucault suggests, 'produces domains of objects and rituals of truth' (98). To Foucault the view that 'power makes mad' fails to consider the fact that the exercise of power itself creates and causes to emerge new objects of knowledge.

In a sense, these new capacities suggest that Foucault reads into power a moral blueprint of enablement. Events in the texts suggest that a generalized vilification of power betrays an error of over simplification. If anything, the counterbalances provided in terms of the counter ideologies of Earth Mothers, in *Madmen*, Daudu, in *Kongi's Harvest*, Omele, in *Esu*,and Titubi in *Morountodun*, suggests alternative modes of power that are remarkable improvements to what is foisted by the likes of Kongi and Bero, and Wing Commander.

Finally, Foucault confutes the Marxist unitary conception of power, arguing instead that power is diffused in multiple and complex domains of discourse. Thus, for the French philosopher, power circulates in all directions in a 'never-ending proliferation of exchange', as Lois Tyson puts it (281). Through material-goods (production of commerce), and through the exchange of ideas, power and the effects of power are taken to and through all segments of the social realm

(281). The implication of this is that no individual or group is left without some measure of power, including the Mendicants in *Madmen*, or the peasant farmers in *Morountodun*, two groups representing the lowliest of the low, and epitomizing social vulnerability in the texts of study. For the Mendicants, who apart from their erstwhile military power as discharged combatants, their present role as Bero's spies invests them with some power, a measure of which is evident in their 'superior' attitude towards their inmate, Old Man. In this role, they exercise the kind of power that Bero does not have, since he cannot render that service himself.

Derrida's deconstruction is a useful tool in the explication of power distribution in the plays. Being a critique of representation, it repudiates the notion of a one-to-one correspondence between a particular object and what represents it, or between power and its human signifiers. For Derrida, language or 'texts' are not a natural reflection of the world, but a social construct by which the individual's perception of reality is shaped. As Roger Jones explains in *Introduction to Philosophy since the Enlightenment*, Derrida's opposition to the history of western thought is based on his opposition to the binary, hence hierarchical conception of reality by which the second term is seen as a corruption of the first. T he terms are not equal opposites. To see power in binaries would suggest for instance that relations of power in the plays are absolute, and that only Bero, Kongi, or Titubi have power. Deconstruction enables the critic to disprove this by revealing the wider

implication of terms in language through recognizing the inherent inclusiveness of signs and signifiers.

Since Derrida believes that all texts are infected by logocentric suppositions, any text can be read with the view to dismantle this hierarchy. Derrida does not think that we can reach an end point of interpretation, a truth. For Derrida all texts exhibit '*differance*': they allow multiple interpretations, none of which can claim to be more authentic than the others, simply because meaning is diffuse and unsettled. In the words of the philosopher Roger Jones, "Textuality always gives us a surplus of possibilities, yet we cannot stand outside of textuality in an attempt to find objectivity." ("Philosophy since the Enlightenment", www.philosopher.org.uk/poststr.htm) One consequence of deconstruction is that certainty in textual analyses is unattainable. There are no undeniable truths, only a multiplicity of interpretations.

Logocentrism and *differance* constitute the theoretical locus of Derrida's deconstruction. Logocentrism, at once a totalizing and 'othering' way of perceiving reality, describes all forms of thought based on some external point of reference, such as the notion of truth. It is a view derived from the Western philosophy presupposing that language is subservient to some idea, intention or referent that lies outside it. Thus, it totalizes by its assumption of structure and stability of meaning and '*others*' by its supposition of binarism. *Differance* is used by Derrida to counter these logocentic presuppositions. The word is of

Derrida's own coinage and is deliberately made ambiguous. It derives from the French *differer*, which means to defer, postpone, delay, as well as to differ or be different (Jefferson 114). Derrida's *differance* counters the unified structure imposed on language by Saussure's structuralism.

Against this background, the degree of Bero's power over the Mendicants in *Madmen* must be assessed not just from the perspective of Bero and his actions. *Differance* suggests that the Mendicants too have a perspective and domain of power without which the idea of Bero's power is virtually non-existent. Every social exchange makes imperative the presence of at least two parties either of which could be the 'other' depending on the scale or subject of reference. The mutual nature of the relationship implies that neither party enjoys subjectivity in total exclusion of the other. For this reason Derrida cautions that every conclusion as to subjectivity in relation to power must remain provisional, suspended, and reversible. By putting judgment or term, 'under erasure', the poststructuralist critic is able to privilege the inferior term, in order to emphasize its pertinence to the discourse in question. In other words, privileging the Mendicants does not suggest a total denial of Bero's power over them; only that that power can only be viewed in partial, limited, non-absolute terms.

Althusser's conception of ideology is used to interrogate the notion of religion as an ideology of domination. According to this view, religion serves the needs of a dominant group who created it in the first place just for that purpose. The study

examines this proposition in the light of the reality of the texts examined, and finds it suspect. Althusser's ideology and ideological state apparatus serve as defining terms for distinguishing between coercive power and persuasive power, the latter which is the predominant tool of operation in the exercise of religious power.

Finally, Macherey's tenet is relevant here because it resonates with the poststructuralist insistence that all texts are inherently illogical, incoherent and unstable in assertion of truth. Macherey's strategy derives from a method of reading popularized by Louis Althusser, his mentor, designated 'symptomatic reading.' Such reading assumes that a writer is not often able to record what lies outside his field of reference. In other words, the critic is able to locate power where the author is unable to. Although he can see all the elements of reality about which he writes, he cannot always make the right connections between them.

In *A Theory of Literary Production*, explains Neil Badmington of Cardiff University, Macherey argues that no author possesses a meaning which it is only the duty of a text to reproduce. Traditional criticism, he notes, has a "tendency to slide into the natural fallacy of empiricism, to treat the work (the object of the enterprise of criticism) as factually given, and spontaneously isolated for inspection. The work thus exists only to be received, described, and assimilated through the procedures of criticism (p.13). Rather Macherey insists that reading is a form of production, whose end product is meaning.

Texts harbour an infinite amount of meanings: "what can be said of the work" and "what the work itself is saying" (p.7). This gap means that "between the writer and the critic, an irreducible difference must be posited right from the beginning: not the difference between two points of view on the same object, but the exclusion separating two forms of discourse that have nothing in common. The work that the author wrote is not precisely the work that is explicated by the critic" (p.7).

The result is that reality in texts is presented partially. By exploiting the 'gaps' within the text, the critic is then able to impose his own interpretations whether to counter or to affirm, the author's original meaning. As Macherey puts it, "what is important in the work is what it does not say" (qtd. In Forgacs 181).

1.9 METHODOLOGY

The poststructuralist mode will guide discourse all through the study. The study is based on the poststructuralist tenets of Jacques Lacan, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Pierre Macherey and Louis Althusser. Lacan's analytic tools are deployed in the examination of character's motives for seeking power, while Derrida's deconstruction helps to analyze the distribution of power in the socio-political landscape of the plays. For the analysis of the actual operation of power by characters, the study relies mainly on Foucault's tenets for the interpretation of social history. Macherey's production model of Marxist criticism, which however is considerably poststructuralist in appeal, is used particularly in the interpretation of Osofisan's texts, because of their Marxist texture. Finally, Althusser's views on

ideology are used to interrogate religion as ideology because of its tendency to naturalize ideological practices for purposes of domination. Being a theoretical tool with which different objectives can be accomplished, post structuralism provides ample room for the kind of interests that inform this study.

The first concern of the work is to investigate characters' motives for seeking power. For this the psychoanalytic principles of Jacques Lacan would be employed. The assumption of discourse here is that love of power is innate to every human person irrespective of position, rank or age. Moreover, psychoanalysis probes the inner recesses of the minds of characters for the unconscious impulses that drive their power-seeking actions. In the two texts examined in this chapter, namely Soyinka's *Madmen and Specialists* and Osofisan's *Morountodun*, the eccentric and egotistic patterns of behaviour identified respectively in the protagonists of these plays trace their unusual behaviour to fundamental disruptions within the family set-up.

In chapter three *Madmen, Kongi's Harvest* and *From Zia* are discussed with Michel Foucault's tenets as guide. From a negative viewpoint power is seen as a repressive instrument with which people in political positions of power violate the freedom, dignity, and rights of subjects. Applying Foucault's thoughts on the constraining nature of disciplinary power, we are able to locate parallels and discontinuities in the way power is theorized by Foucault and the way it is utilized in the texts.

In chapter four the focus, for balance, is exclusively on texts by Osofisan namely, *Morountodun* and *Once upon Four Robbers*. This time, the enquiry is on the playwright's Marxist-Materialist position in the texts. Using Pierre Macherey's production model of Marxist criticism, a critical model much influenced by both Lacan's psychoanalysis and Louis Althusser's 'Symptomatic Reading' technique, we identify the textual symptoms that challenge the validity of some of the ideological positions adopted in the texts. The overall goal is to disprove the teleological and materialist account of power engraved in the texts as economic determinism.

Chapter five examines Soyinka's *The Trials of Brother Jero* and Osofisan's *Another Raft* in the light of how they depict power as a religious ideology. Here we rely mainly on Althusser's thoughts on ideology to place the events in the texts in the context of religious ideologies and how they seem to be products of dominant groups.

Chapter six, using mainly Soyinka's *From Zia with Love*, Osofisan's *Esu and the Vagabond Minstrels*, explores resistance as a form of power, which can yield beneficial ends. Discourse here is guided by Derrida's deconstructionist tenets as well as by Foucault's essay on the subject and power. Chapter seven presents the findings of the study.

1.10 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This is a study of power relations from a literary perspective, focusing mainly on selected dramatic works by two of Nigeria's foremost playwrights Wole Soyinka and Femi Osofisan. It is based on an examination of the following eight plays: Soyinka's *Madmen and Specialists, Kongi's Harvest, The Trials of Brother Jero,* and *From Zia with Love*. Other texts are Osofisan's *Morountodun*, *Another Raft, Once Upon Four Robbers* and *Esu and the Vagabond Minstrels*. The choice of these texts is premised on the following considerations.

1. At least a text is selected to represent a phase in each author's dramatic career. Soyinka's *The Trials of Brother Jero* for instance, represents the earliest phase of his career, or what Ogunba has called 'his pre-1960 writings' (2). On the other hand, *Kongi and Madmen* are part of the corpus that makes up Soyinka's 'mature plays '(3). To represent his post-80's works, we have chosen *From Zia with Love*. *Morountodun* is one of Osofisan's earliest works as a playwright. *Once upon Four Robbers* and *Another Raft* represent his mid-career plays, while *Esu and the Vagabond Minstrels* is taken from his more recent efforts. Selection of texts based on such developmental criterion equally helps to track the trajectory of artistic development of the writer.
2. The choice is also determined by thematic factors. Each text appears to have a dominant theme appropriate to a particular mode of power different from the others in a specific writer's corpus. For example, in *The Trials,*

Soyinka's attention is on the religious mode of power; in *Madmen* and in *Kongi*, it is on political power, and focus in *From Zia*, is on a combination of political and economic subjects. Virtually, all the four plays of Osofisan focus on these issues too. Thus, the selection affords the study a fairly panoramic view of some key dimensions of power.

CHAPTER TWO

POWER AS OEDIPAL DYSFUNCTION: *MADMEN AND SPECIALISTS* AND *MOROUNTODUN*

Introduction

In many ways, Soyinka's *Madmen and Specialists* and Osofisan's *Morountodun* lend themselves to discussions of power, especially in terms of subjects' motivation for, or love of, power. The two plays in different ways objectify the human hunger for power, ascendancy, and domination that springs from the unconscious. For example, Bero's inexplicable behavioural tendencies in *Madmen* appear to stem from his unconscious sense of deprivation, fuelled by his lack of maternal ardour in a family run by an extremely dominant father. Old Man's commanding stature appears to intimidate his son and possibly also helps to exacerbate the Oedipal conflict that under-girds the volatile father-son relationship. With his attitude towards his father being defined by envy and mistrust, it is hardly surprising that Bero eventually murders his father in order to usurp his place. A parent-child confrontation is similarly at the roots of the conflict in *Morountodun* where Titubi's hunger for phallic powers puts her at odds with her mother Kabirat. The heroine without necessarily being intent on eliminating the mother displays such strong rebellious tendencies that unconscious animosity can easily be read into her motives. Bero and Titubi clearly exhibit the 'parent-killing' impulses espoused by Freud as a kind of power- envy. Such impulses are expressions of power cravings that take their roots from the domestic domain

either as parent-child or sibling, squabbles. In *Madmen* and in *Morountodun*, the protagonists - Bero and Titubi - are driven by strong needs that seek compensation for power lost domestically from a family member that they unconsciously hold responsible for their plight.

The Oedipus Complex, in psychoanalytic theory, is a group of largely unconscious (dynamically repressed) ideas and feelings which centre around the desire to possess the parent of the opposite sex and eliminate the parent of the same sex. Named after the Greek mythical character Oedipus, who (albeit unknowingly) kills his father and marries his mother, the Oedipus complex, according to Sigmund Freud, is a universal phenomenon. A phylogenetically built-in trait, it is responsible for much of men's unconscious guilt. Speaking of the mythical Oedipus, Freud put it in these terms:

> His destiny moves us only because it might have been ours – because the oracle laid the same curse upon us before our birth as upon him. It is the fate of all of us, perhaps, to direct our first sexual impulse towards our mother and our first hatred and our first murderous wish against our father. Our dreams convince us that this is so. (Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, 296)

Within the family circle, Freud suggests, is an engrained struggle for love among certain members. Love is actually a symbolic expression of the will-to-power that Neitzche attributes to all humans. In Freudian terms, the tussle between the male child and the father for the love of the woman between them is one that can be interpreted in terms of power struggle. What this actually suggests is that at the

heart of every human action is an impulse to 'love' or 'desire' power in all its forms: power for political, as much as for economic or other social reasons. The endemic nature of this phenomenon had led Freud to re-focus a myth with which to explain it. He suggests that the relationship between the head of the primeval family of Homo sapiens and his male offspring is one built on mutual distrust and antagonism. The father intent on protecting his wives drives his grown-up sons away. The sons respond by plotting the death of their father (Money-Kyrle, 1930). Father killing thus becomes the taboo of social living that in the wider social context translates into power contests of diverse kinds. Within families and societies conflicts based on contestations of space in politics, economics, religion, and other social activities are a common occurrence that highlights the centrality of power in all human affairs. The literary field helps to deepen understanding of this fascinating phenomenon. The texts chosen for this discussion illustrate the grip that power has on their protagonists. More importantly, they highlight the dangerous and destructive dimension that love of power can assume if not moderated.

This chapter argues that certain power-seeking tendencies exhibited by the protagonists of *Madmen* and *Morountodun* suggest that they are both victims of psychological influences whose roots lie in their respective family history. In both cases this history is in the form of a missing key family member - a 'Lack', as Lacan would characterize it - whose absence may have impacted the protagonist's

psyche negatively. In *Madmen*, the absence of a mother in the life of Dr Bero appears to create a void in his life that is evident in his eccentric behaviour. In *Morountodun*, the heroine's life without a father is defined by a pattern of aggressive behaviours that are especially directed towards men. All this is because as psychologists have cautioned, the role of parents in the formation of the selfhood of the individual person is profoundly crucial.

As such how a parent plays this role is a major determinant of the type of personality a child exhibits upon maturity. There is also the belief that the boy child typically gravitates emotionally towards the mother, as the reverse is the case with the girl child who tends to bond more with the father than the mother. Although different terminologies are normally applied to these two distinct tendencies in men and women – Oedipus complex and Electra complex respectively – for the purposes of this discussion however, the masculine terminology shall serve as a catch-all phrase for the phenomenon in both sexes - as Freud himself had done.

The term dysfunction in psychoanalysis is used to designate abnormal behaviour in subjects, in the sense of someone deviating from the norm in a given milieu. Typically, the term would apply to those individuals that Freud regards as being either mother or father "fixated" that is individuals who fail to resolve their innate Oedipal crisis. One person may be able to respond in ways considered by his society to be less damaging than the other person may be able to do. Bero and

Titubi exemplify two behavioural possibilities, with the latter clearly the less threatening of the two.

All the characters in the plays, whether or not they are aware of it, are basically motivated by a strong will-to-power, arising from their inherited Oedipal problems. In its dysfunctional form the power impulse appears in disguises/defences for which psychologists have a host of terms, such as 'selective perception', 'selective memory', 'avoidance', 'denial', 'displacement' or 'projection', among others (Tyson 18). The power drive is a function of the inherent Oedipal crisis that these characters have to deal with in their lives. Thus, this natural impulse of the psyche (or fight for love) reflects all struggles that in the view of Foucault are expressions of power or projections of the instinctive love of power. Every struggle, it must be stated with Foucault in mind, is an expression of power, power to control others. (Foucault, *Discipline/Punish*).

For Titubi of *Morountodun* for instance, it is this hunger for power and control that drives her into putting her life at risk attempting to confront the insurgent farmers as a government spy. By the same token, and for the thrill, domination and possibly knowledge, Dr. Bero in *Madmen and Specialists* commits himself to a life of unrelenting assault on humanity. Bero's shooting of his father and Titubi's conscious rebellion against her mother are symptomatic of Oedipal dysfunction. In this sense, both characters fit into Lacan's notion of Desire, an alternate term adopted by the French man to refer to power rather than just emotional feelings.

2.1 Lacan: the Self and Power

According to Lacan, dysfunctional behaviour is a consequence of the repressive forces that the individual has to contend with in a social community that abominates certain acts. These taboos which in themselves constitute a register of language of their own in the unconscious create, when they erupt into the conscious stage, disquiet because they conflict with the culture of the society. Bero's parricide and, to a lesser extent, Titubi's rebellion and class switch exemplify subconsciously-motivated acts that are at odds with the culture of the respective societies of the protagonists of *Madmen* and *Morountodun*. Their actions reflect the idea that human beings are culturally determined and their actions culturally orchestrated. As what is repressed is taboo, what is taboo is culturally formulated, and the forces of repression similarly entrenched in culture. As Anika Lemaire points out, Lacan is keenly aware of this tyranny of culture:

> Birth into language and the utilization of the symbol produce a disjunction between the lived experience and the sign which replaces it. This disjunction will become greater over the years, language being above all the origin of communication and of reflection upon a lived experience which it is often not able to go beyond. Always seeking to "rationalize", to "repress" the lived experience, reflection will eventually become profoundly divergent from that lived experience. In this sense, we can say with Lacan that the appearance of language is simultaneous with the primal repression which constitutes the unconscious (53).

The French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, whose approach is preferred in this discussion, actually shares Freud's view that the psyche is driven essentially by

power impulses. However, Lacan prefers to stretch this tendency beyond its Freudian biological frame of reference. Instead of love Lacan uses the term Desire, which to him has a wider social implication for power. Bero's and Titubi's Desires to acquire power over and above their parents are rooted in their unconscious. Through their actions (speeches, in particular) people reveal themselves, their motives, and intents. Thus, by analyzing characters' words and actions (including inactions, because what is omitted may sometimes serve to reveal actual intent) a critic may arrive at (or at the very least, guess) underlying motives for action. The actions and utterances of the protagonists of the plays in focus provide a veritable clue to the source as well as nature of the psychological problems that account for their desires. The fact that neither Bero nor Titubi shows any sign of restraint in their defiant attitude towards their parents points to the possibility of underlying oedipal causality. Each desires the sort of ascendancy that stands in stark contradiction to the values upheld by the parent.

By virtue therefore of this inescapable immersion in the discourse of language the subject's selfhood is fractured and caught in an eternal impasse involving the two selves: the conscious and the unconscious. Always a victim of repression, the unconscious reveals its traces of dysfunction through dreams, jokes, puns, slips of the tongue, and the like, symptoms the critic must interpret in order to get to the root of the subject's psychological injury.

As already noted above, unconscious wounds have their roots in the family as incidents of developmental experience of the individual. In the texts for analysis, the situation, understandably, is not different since literary characters are plausible representations of human persons in society. Protagonists in both texts are driven in significant ways unknown to them by domestic experiences that have left lasting impressions on them. In *Morountodun* for example, the driving force appears to be the desire of the heroine for unfulfilled love and affection, an impulse disguised as phallophobia. In *Madmen*, there is a strong suspicion of a similar streak masking itself in the eccentric behaviour of the protagonist. Common to both texts though is the Oedipal trajectory of the motives evident in the parent-child confrontation. In a word, the abnormalities observed in Bero's unrelenting quest for transcendental knowledge, and the desperation, almost in comparable measure, shown by Titubi in her desire for a union with a male-figure, are both driven by a current of unconscious impulses aimed at gaining control or power over their parents.

These oedipal conflicts are also symptomatic of these characters' power impulses, beyond the domestic realm. At issue, is the way in which these domestic parent-child clashes reflect, in metonymic terms, the wider question of power, motivations for power, and how the nature of these motivations help to define not just interpersonal relationships but also the personalities of the characters involved.

2.2 *Madmen and Specialists*: Father Killing as Dysfunctional Power

That the dominant psychology in *Madmen* is that of usurpation of power can be clearly seen in the inexplicable urge in Bero to eliminate his father Old Man. The hero's father killing impulses express themselves in a recognizable pattern of destructive behavior involving him all through the play. The patterns reveal a single dominant goal by the son to topple the father. Whether that goal entails sequestering the old man, spying on him, certifying him mad, or physically abusing him, counts for nothing as far as Bero is concerned. Embracing cannibalism with its anti-human ideology, or the Godlessness of 'AS', or resolving to dislodge the Earth mothers, is all part of the grand design to achieve an unusual goal that is mainly driven by a desire to supersede his own sire. By overpowering his father Bero can hope to establish himself as supremo. The trajectory of significant actions in the play points to only one destination - the elimination of Old Man - and thus logically makes a psychological examination of the family history imperative. This would reveal the unconscious drives that inform the behaviour of Bero.

Aware of the unacceptable nature of his actions, Bero is hard put to justifying his father's ordeal in his hands. According to him, Old Man is guilty of transgressing the junta's epistemological code, which as he explains to Si Bero, his sister, involves trying to mentor the Mendicants.

> Father's assignment was to help the wounded readjust to the pieces and remnants of their bodies. Physically.

> Teach them to make baskets if they still had fingers. To use their mouths to ply needles if they had one, or use it to sing if their vocal chords had not been shot away. Teach them to amuse themselves, make something of themselves. Instead he began to teach them to think, think, THINK! Can you picture a more treacherous deed than to place a working mind in a mangled body? (242)

This shows first of all that the son acknowledges that his father is a custodian of knowledge. Ability to think is an unmistakable quality of leadership and a preserve of a leader. At issue therefore is what can be termed knowledge envy. The second implication of Bero's objection to Old Man's intellectual liaison with the Mendicants is that he fears that a free dissemination of knowledge would cost him the monopoly of knowledge he craves. He wants absolute monopoly of knowledge, especially of the extraordinary kind of knowledge that Old Man is reputed to possess. Obtaining this knowledge in combination with his medical and military powers would put him in absolute awe of everyone. Such power would be all the more enchanting in the absence of Old Man – the one man capable of rivalling him - hence the need to eliminate him.

A significant aspect of the hero's dysfunctional psychology can be seen in his role in the cannibalistic feast organized for Bero and his colleagues in the junta by Old Man. At the feast in which Bero and his friends were tricked into eating human flesh, only Bero, when the trick is discovered, accepts the meal without offence.

> What is one flesh from another? So I tried it again, just to be sure of myself. It was the first step to power you understand. Power in its purest sense. The end of inhibitions. The conquest of the weakness of your too too human flesh with all its sentiment. So again, all to myself I said Amen to his grace (241).

Although he admits that the nature of the meal suits his idea of power, it is surprising that he still cites the incident as a reason why he has his father incarcerated. Keeping his father in private custody, Bero claims, is his heroic masterstroke for saving Old Man from his colleagues who want him dead for tricking them. (245). If this were the case, it might be asked, why then does Bero himself subject the old man to torture and abuse in detention, far from the reach of the so-called people that are after him? One possible explanation for this is that smuggling old man out of the reach of the junta is a way to keep them away from the source of the power of knowledge that he is after, and wants all to himself.

Bero gives the impression that but for his merciful intervention, Old Man's fate might have been worse than mere incarceration. However, if there is any credence to Bero's claim it needs to be explained why even while in the son's custody Old Man still has to be subjected to so much indignity, deprivation, and brutality. If Bero's intention is to protect his father from his alleged pursuers, why does Bero himself have to be the one to execute his own father?

Bero's love of power assumes its most bizarre dimension in his anti-human sensibilities epitomized by his profession of cannibalism as the essence of power.

The nature of his quest suggests that he is after something unusual. The import of Bero's cannibalism is not necessarily the mere act of eating human flesh, gory as the act may appear. Cannibalism, more significantly, is a concept that expresses his absolute contempt for anything human, his wish to annihilate humanity, his aspiration to dissolve his own humanity and turn himself into something extra human, and finally his unconscionable denial of his own humanity coldly expressed in the murder of his own father. Transcending humanity by expressions of extreme measures is Bero's idea of ascent to the pinnacle of power.

No one knows better than the father that his own life has become an obstacle to his son's delusional sense of power. "I am the last proof of the human in you. The last shadow. Shadows are tough things to be rid of. How does one prove he was never born of man?" (253). How the son's insistence to get rid of the father can enhance his power is a puzzle that the old man is trying to come to terms with in the following remarks. They are poignant words that do more than merely deride the son. More importantly, Old Man's words highlight his own superior understanding of what true power is all about unlike the son who is groping ignorantly in search of non existent powers.

> Shall I teach you what to say? Choice! Particularity! What redundant self-deceptive notions! More? More? Insistence on a floppy old coat, a rickety old chair, a moth-eaten hat which no certified lunatic would ever consider wearing, a car which breaks down twenty times in twenty minutes, an old idea riddled with the pellets of incidence … A perfect waterproof coat is

> rejected for a patched-up heirloom that gives the silly wearer rheumatism (252).

Bero's motivation for murder in the name of power is evident in the letter he wrote to his father from the war front. That letter, written ostensibly to brief the old man about happenings in the war, was actually intended to lure the man to the war theatre as a way of furthering Bero's power aspirations. Bent on destroying his father, Bero has to deploy every scheme at his disposal to get at his target's Achilles heel. For example, knowing his father to be a man of considerable sensitivity, Bero orchestrates incidents that he knows might outrage the old man and prompt him into predictable outbursts. Unsurprisingly, it would seem, Old Man's immediate reaction is to rush to the war front to register his objection, in the peculiar fashion only a man of his humanistic disposition can devise, to the situation out there. By so doing, he plays into the son's hands, exactly as the letter had intended. His physical appearance presents Bero the opportunity to unleash directly the punitive rage he has unconsciously stored up for his father. But it is also a visit that provides the old man the chance to make his most telling pro life statement ironically by hosting his detractors to a bizarre feast of human flesh.

Bero's abandonment of his medical profession is another of his designs to wrankle the father. Knowing his father would not approve might have in some way encouraged him to switch from his medical trade to secret service. For a man of such pro-life disposition, the son's substitution of his humane profession for one that is obviously almost its antithesis must be a big disappointment. It can only be

assumed that the old man may have invested a lot of resources in getting his offspring into the medical profession, coupled with the labour and time, at least, put into stacking the surgery with potent herbs. It is, in his view, a wrong choice that exposes the foolishness of his son, alluded to in the old man's imagery of the waterproof coat quoted above. On his part however, Bero thinks that his switch is to a higher gear of power, more so when, as he tells Si Bero, he hopes to still retain some of his former trade. This time however, the objective would no longer be the same. Instead of using it to heal, he diverts it to destructive ends.

> Practice? Yes, I intend to maintain that side of my practice. A laboratory is important. Everything helps. Control, sister, control. Power comes from bending Nature to your will. The specialist they called me, and a specialist is-well- a specialist. Your analyze, you diagnose, you- prescribe (237).

The obsessive manner in which Bero haunts his father for the AS ideology leaves little doubt that the protagonist of *Madmen* is propelled by destructive influences. AS is the irreligious ideology invented by Old Man merely as a bitter response to the inhumanity of the regime. Ironically however, the old man's joke is misconstrued by the son to represent an inspired enunciation of the ultimate power ideology. So unrelenting is Bero's pursuit of what he thinks is the metaphysical essence of the AS credo that the son has to kill the father in frustration after not being able to wrest it from the father. AS is the ideological expression of Bero's notion of power – power that is absolute and infinite, much like the power of the Christian God. Bero wants to live in transcendence, exercise power that is

irreproachable, and exert control that is unbridgeable. However, Old Man's personal idea of power is the exact opposite. AS is only his sarcastic way of ridiculing his son's unmeasured abuse of power

Bero's envy of his father's intellectual prowess is self-evident. Coexistent with his envy is the son's tendency to copy nearly everything initiated by the father: his ideology, his ideas, his intellect, his position, his powers. Bero's lack of originality in fact makes his father's superiority more apparent, accounting for why, at the conscious level both men are in conflict. Old Man is aware of the son's envy of his superiority: "You want to borrow my magic key", taunts the old Man. "Yours opens only one door at a time" (263).

Bero's power by comparison is inferior because it is limited to the use of coercive state apparatuses only for destructive ends. Although he has his medical training, Bero is no longer inclined to use it to promote life. Instead, his plan is to convert the potent instruments of that trade to tools of destruction. On the other hand, Old Man possesses an assortment of material as well as non-material resources that he could deploy in a wide range of constructive ends that include assisting underprivileged ones like the Mendicants. His pro-life ideals can be seen in his objection to wars and the needless loss of lives that is the consequence. It is these values that are negated by Bero's desire to supplant the father as the dominant force of the prevailing order.

The extraordinary intensity of the conflict between father and son evokes a foreboding of impending disaster. In this inexplicable power tussle neither party is prepared to make any concessions and so, invariably, tragedy beckons. The son's desire to destroy the father is so strong that even a meaningless pursuit of the abstraction named AS becomes a veritable foundering rock against which to smash blood ties. Bero insists on obtaining from the father the masterkey of power that he believes the latter has locked in AS, the nihilistic ideology floated by the old man to mock the inhumanity of the junta in power. In his desperate bid to break into this ideology - in a sense, an inordinate bid to topple traditional authority of which Old Man is the custodian - Bero subjects his father to torture and denials in captivity. Kept in seclusion and denied access to society and loved ones, Old Man is battered and abused even by his pupils who are detailed to supervise him. But when neither entreaty nor cajoling nor force could compel Old Man to surrender his power of knowledge, Bero in frustration shoots his father. However, Old Man's physical demise is only an objectification of a tragic fate for which he seems inescapably destined, being by fate a Lacanian object of desire. As Lacan suggests, every desire seeks the liquidation of another desire; Bero's desire for the father's knowledge presupposes the ultimate destruction, symbolically, of his father, the source of that knowledge power in question.

But the question again returns: "why does Bero choose his own father for destruction for love of power?" This choice is by no means a coincidence,

because events suggest that he was designed to cross paths with Bero. Being in possession of the knowledge after which the son hankers, Old Man becomes a premeditated target, or at the very least an unconscious one. The unconscious link is evident in the recurrent nature of the protagonist's strange behavior, the pattern of which discourse thus far has attempted to delineate.

What singles Old Man out as the target of the son's attack lies in his symbolic role as the traditional authority figure. This is the role prefigured in his Oedipal role as the castrating sire who threatens the male offspring with castration for his sexual desire of the mother during the pre symbolic stage of the child's development. In essence the power that the father has over the son as established by tradition is being repudiated in the wider context of the social life of the play. Thus, the conflict between Bero and the father is a metaphor for the frequent power tussle common in the wider society. Any system becomes therefore a kind of 'oedipal' arena in which to experience the power impulses that shape ascendancy within it. The oedipal dimension is especially manifest in situations whereby persons otherwise ineligible for particular positions attempt to force the hand of tradition by seeking to upturn it to suit their design.

As has been suggested, what lends credence to the oedipal nature of the conflict is the inexplicable intensity of the ruthlessness that characterizes the treatment that Bero metes out to his father. In a normal relationship a child would not dare abuse the father. Perhaps love and respect and culture would restrain an offspring from

waging war against a parent. But a relationship that has a strong current of unconscious motivations may not always conform to this norm. Such is the nature of Bero's relationship with his family, a family into which he has imported his military powers and is using them to terrorize members. Cripple seems to ask the question on everyone's mind. In his bafflement he wonders: "Why is he [Bero] doing it? His own family too, what's he up to?" (222). The most plausible answer to this puzzle is that Dr. Bero is being driven by a current of repressed feelings of which he is probably unaware. His father is a stand –in upon which he is letting out the frustrations of his oedipal lack of maternal ardour, and doing so in a dysfunctional way.

Although no explicit textual evidence points to such a conclusion, it is not improbable that this oedipal crisis may have its roots in Bero's unconscious sense of maternal deprivation, caused possibly by death or marital crisis involving both parents. Old Man's parental role as father had placed him from the start at the strategic junction in the formation of the subjectivity of his son. In ensuring that the son's libidinal drives are properly channelled, psychoanalysts instruct, the father is forced to interpose himself between mother and her son. The loss of the mother's breast becomes a symbolic loss of power, the child's first experience of lack that would remain buried in his unconscious all through life. Bero's experience of this loss, coupled with the probable absence of the personal

involvement of a mother in his mature development may have further widened the gulf between him and his father.

In psychoanalysis, the role of the mother in the formation of the child's subjectivity is central. For Lacan, this role has both psychosexual and cultural significance. The loss of the mother's breast, voice and gaze symbolizes a primordial life-long phallic deprivation, which will reflect unconsciously on the child's response later in life to the self and the society around him. Significantly, in Lacanian psychoanalysis, the father is the symbol of that severance suffered by the child as well as a symbol of cultural laws or taboo. Moreover, the absence of a mother in the house-whether on account of death or marital crisis – is something for which the son might unconsciously hold the father accountable. The absence of the stabilizing role of the mother may therefore account not just for the loveless relationship between Bero and his father, but it might as well explain at least in part Bero's eccentric behaviour in adulthood. Had he had a mother around him, it is possible that Bero might have emotionally been more stable. In fact, growing up under a father with such strong intellectual stature may have exacerbated Bero's sense of alienation and antipathy toward his father, which he feels can only be assuaged by getting rid of him and assuming his place.

In contrast to the loveless father-son relationship, it is instructive to notice the remarkable sibling ardour that seems to radiate between Bero and his sister, Si Bero. She thus stands in for the absent mother, one that affords Bero a semblance

of the breast power that he lost in his mother. At least up until Bero's unexpected metamorphosis, Si Bero had played the role of surrogate or substitute mother to her brother. "I have the power of a mother with him", Si Bero tells the Earth mothers, anxious at a critical stage for her brother's safety in the hands of the women whom he has offended. During Bero's absence from home on war duties, Si Bero had quite dutifully devoted herself to replenishing her brother's stock of herbs. She even engaged the priceless assistance of the mothers in this regard, as well as obtained their occultic intervention to preserve his life at the war front, pledging by proxy his loyalty and gratitude. Her manifest joy upon Bero's safe return from the war, coupled with her enthusiastic desire to perform on his behalf the traditional ritual of purification, to ward off possible harmful forces trailing him home, is further evidence of Si Bero's love for her brother.

Thus, it is a profoundly alarmed woman who helplessly demands to know what has become of her once humane brother: "What are you trying to be, Bero – evil?" (241). By this unexpected transformation, Bero breaches the power pact between him and his sister as well as that between him and the Earth mothers. This pact appears to be based on respect for human life and dignity through a humane use of the herbal powers that they shared. Instead of respecting this pact, Bero turns against his allies seeking to subordinate them and subvert the very terms of the agreement that brought them together.

In some sense, Bero does somewhat convey the impression that his desire to orchestrate his father's elimination is almost an obsession in nearly equal degree to his quest for celestial omnipotence. As a result, Bero sometimes deliberately exaggerates his abnormality to a degree in which it becomes frightening to people around him. In this way, he is able to grind his anti-paternal agenda through in a community whose rigid moral code he realizes well enough could constitute a hinderance to his aspiration. Only by acting weird, in the fashion of Hamlet, can Bero hope to browbeat the community into submission. For a while, his strategy appears to work. Rather than try to restrain him, most members of the community like the priest and Si Bero for instance, are scared of him. The mad man thus appears to enjoy a free reign of terror, at least until he is finally checked by the Mothers. The idea, it must be stressed, is not to deny, or even to underplay the deranged state of Bero's mind, but to point out what appears to be his strategic ploy to make the most of that condition.

Furthermore, though his language and appearance are consistent with the classic image of the mad, evidence of contrivance in Bero's mannerism is not entirely remote. His over-elaborate military gear (unusual for a secret agent), his propensity to wield his gun at the slightest ruffle (even at feeble old women), and his violent assaults on the Mendicants, all portray Bero as someone who is willfully inclined to over play his power. Add to this, the protagonist's penchant for violent and morbid imagery in his speech. He describes his patients as

‘corpses’ (234); his father “does not exist” (256); he speaks of ‘something more potent than’ wine (234) (blood, presumably); he glorifies cannibalism; proscribes and banishes (260). Bero’s conversation with the priest as well as his choice of words in dialogues involving him and Si Bero, shows a calculated intent to shock, but they are also symptomatic of his unsettled personality as well as his dysfunctional love of power.

Note for instance the callous way in which Bero on two separate occasions sets out to shock the sister and over awe her with his strange behaviour and words. First, he uses the Mendicants to mesmerize Si Bero just to convince her of their father’s alleged insanity. This ploy works because it achieves its design to cause Si Bero to flee, even abandoning her wish to see the father in his cell (245). On the second occasion, Bero alarms the sister with news of his abandonment of his medical profession, words that make her really scared of her brother. (237).

Perhaps more than any other symptom so far highlighted, it is Bero’s obsession with cannibalism and AS that seems to confirm his dysfunctional understanding of power as well as authenticates the unconscious origins of his paterphobia. Both cannibalism and AS are simply Old Man’s cynical attempt to protest what he sees around him as a growing propensity to devalue human life. The cannibalistic feast with the junta objectifies this tendency, while As is the intellectual expression of it. It is indeed a measure both of Bero’s insanity and his malicious design against his father that Bero opts to adopt both ideas against the original purpose intended

by their author. In a word, by turning his father's inventions against him, Bero aims to further his war on his father and thus further complicate their relationship. Eating human flesh becomes another counter-ideology to the dominant ideology with which Old Man is associated.

If the oedipal configuration is widened to include the larger community of the play, it is possible to see how other minor characters in the play fit into the pattern of eccentric behaviour that runs through the play. Besides Dr. Bero, the play harbours other characters whose mannerisms can also be rightly described as puzzling. The most outstanding of such characters are Old Man and the duo of Iya Agba and Iya Mate, otherwise called the Earth Mothers. Old Man shares many of his son's eccentricities, as Moody has rightly suggested in his "Tick of a Heretic". But it is doubtful as to whether Old Man is responsible as Moody proposes, for the son's excesses. What is beyond question though is that Old Man represents a counterpoint, in terms of rhetoric, to the son's more practical abnormal deeds.

But he is not just 'such an argumentative man', as the priest characterizes him, but also someone with a remarkable penchant for impulsive behaviour. His sudden decision to join the army, prompted by the contents of a letter from his son, is consistent with his volatile temperament.

Similarly, Old Man's pet ideas of cannibalism and AS are as enigmatic as his personality. As counter ideologies to the dominant ideology within his

community, these ideas prove somewhat in the end to be an over kill. They not only simply end up dwarfing the prevailing ideology; they precipitate very sinister and odious alternatives thereafter having been seized upon by unscrupulous minds like Bero. Yet, this reality is a dialectical distortion of what the old man had actually intended. Such is the irony of which Old Man's personality is the perfect example. His obsession for Swiftian satire tends to be counter-productive, it seems, at least from the standpoint of a reformist that he arguably is. Proposing the Swiftian logic that wastefulness is incongruous with intelligence, he cynically urges that people should kill only for food. And as a practical joke he tricks some military officers into consuming the flesh of some of their victims at war. Ironically, the joke misfires, and ends up instituting itself both literally and symbolically as reality in the consciousness of the same people it was intended to deter. Thus is objectified the cannibalistic dimension expressed in AS. Nevertheless, Old Man remains faithful to his Freudian role as guardian of culture.

As his pupils, the Mendicants reflect Old Man and his ideas in a thoroughly exemplary manner. The once docile street beggars are so totally radicalized and transformed that they become the very embodiment of Old Man's heresy. Even the Mendicants themselves are no longer certain as to their own sanity: "Lord, he mixed us up", laments Aafaa at a point. However, the Mendicants represent in their social transformation as knowledgeable beings an antithesis, thanks to Old Man, to the ignorant mass of bodies the regime would want the citizens to be.

Moreover, though lowly positioned in relation to other characters, the Mendicants too do have their own aspirations. They dream of a circus tour with Old Man as a way by which to obtain economic power and escape their present precarious condition.

Finally, the Mothers too are located within the vengeful pattern of the plot of *Madmen*, especially as seen in their relationship with Bero. Indeed, for a society such as the one inhabited by Bero, and one that is steadily losing its touch with humanity, thanks to Bero, the mothers' intervention couldn't have been timelier. Otherwise good-natured and richly endowed with wisdom, these elderly matriarchs are however more than able to exact pain if provoked. The intractable intransigence and impunity displayed by the misguided protagonist proves to be enough justification for the Mother's vengeance.

Always on the side of humanity, being by both personal inclination and duty attached to the earth, the Earth Mothers have a propensity to side only with persons or forces similarly inclined. This explains why Si Bero appears to catch their eye. In the absence of her brother, Si Bero has elected to devote herself to replenishing the brother's surgery in the hope of preserving his healing trade. In doing so, she is motivated primarily, as the mothers would testify, by a concern for humanity. As Iya Agba remarks,

> She proved herself, there's no denying it. She proved herself. If she'd wanted it easy or simply out of greed

> I would have guided her feet into quicksands and left her there (236).

For this reason alone has she been considered worthy to be admitted into the mothers' tutelage in the mysteries of herbal healing over which the mothers preside.

It is thus understandable why these women regard whoever contradicts the values (of charity, service and regeneration) of the land they preserve as enemy. On the basis therefore of their zero tolerance for anti-human tendencies, the mothers justifiably see Dr. Bero as foe deserving no pity. Demands Iya Agba, rather rhetorically, "Abuse! Abuse! What do we do? Close our eyes and see nothing?" (267)

Being by orientation averse to the negation of values of good and humanity, Iya Agba, again, speaking on behalf of her partner, Iya Mate, declares:

> I'll not be a tool in their hands [evil ones like Bero, that is], not in this ripe state - No! Too much has fallen in their hands already; it's time to take it back. They spat on my hands when I held them out bearing gifts (267).

From the Earth Mother's perspective, human life is so sacrosanct that the only recompense for its violation is the life of the offender. This explains why Si Bero must pledge her own life or that of a dear one, in exchange for her induction into the fold (as an 'aje') whose members are vested with the power of life and death over others. "I warned you", Iya Agba reminds Si Bero, "when we took you in the

fold… I said this gift is not one you gather in one hand. If your other hand is fouled the first withers also" (274). So dire must the consequence of violation of humanity be in the estimation of these guardians of Earth that it is understandable, given the gravity of his transgressions, why Bero's punishment has to be absolute.

Consider for example the following list of chilling deeds perpetrated by the morbid-minded Bero: the inhumanities in his torture chambers, his parricide, his cannibalistic tendencies, his vile celestial ambition, and above all, his malevolent ideology of As. Hence, he must pay with "everything" including his very life and his surgery with all its potent herbs, which potentially he could equally abuse. Fortunately, in part for being herself a victim of Bero's resentment and also on account of her own individual merit, Si Bero is spared the fury of the avenging matriarchs: "I think only of her", declares Iya Mate, and Iya Agba concurs to their pupil's exemplary character: "she's a good woman and her heart is strong. And it is that kind who tire suddenly in their sleep and pass on to join their ancestors" (268).

In fact, the mothers are characterized as the avenging karmic spirit of providence. "We put back what we take, in one form or another … or more than we take. It's the only law" (260). According to Ogunba, the mothers appear to parallel in their role a category of women in Yoruba tradition referred to as 'aje',

> Who are acknowledged to be close to the ultimate source of human life and can influence individual lives for good or ill (qtd. In Maduako 233).

It is instructive to indicate the nature of vice to which and why, the mothers must respond as viciously as they do in the play. As has been noted, they are first of all up against the evil so ogre-like personified by Bero. Secondly, they see it as their providentially assigned duty to counter evil. Thirdly, they accept this role in the interest of humanity in danger of annihilating itself in the absence of a restraining superior force. Finally, the mothers also have the task to preserve nature through the circulation of healthy knowledge of its powers and potentialities, all for the good of human kind.

Importantly, though conscious of their uncommon powers, the mothers nevertheless remain equally conscious of a humanity to which they know they must, for the good of humankind and selves, submit rather than seek to transcend. It is especially in this light that the mothers are sharply contrasted with Bero who not only abhors humanity, but seeks to transcend it.

Furthermore, the mothers are depicted as enigmatic personalities whose origins as well as destination are as remote and mysterious as the knowledge they possess. Apart from being too old to be traceable (the text gives no indication of their ancestry) they appear to habit the fringes of society – living in a nondescript hut somewhere – but at the same time, they are undoubtedly in full control of their territorial domain. For this reason, they seem to be part human, part spirit, and therefore difficult to analyze psychologically. Totally without material ambitions,

they are content to serve out their earthly terms, which they acknowledge to be nigh. Nevertheless, while they still sojourn on earth, they have a duty to their superiors (inhabiting the other world, it seems) that must not be shirked. That duty is one which demands vengeance for acts that tend to undermine nature or humanity. It is for this singular reason that these matriarchs fit into the psychoanalytic pattern of vengefulness ascribed to the plot of the texts examined here.

2.3 *Morountodun*: Power of Love

Love plays an important part in the scheme of this lively play, amorous love as well as love of power. The heroine's experience of love (or the lack of it) and her love of material comfort appear to act as the catalysts that set her out on the way to self discovery. Out of desperation to protect her economic power, she discovers love that hands her power of the kind closer to her unconscious dreams than she could have imagined. Nevertheless, the motivation for her conquest takes roots in a family history that appears to deny her that sense of power and fulfillment that is responsible for her manifest aggressive tendencies.

As in *Madmen*, the oedipal feud in *Morountodun* is between parent and child, between Alhaja Kabirat and her daughter Titubi. Like the son in Soyinka's play, the daughter in Osofisan's text appears to be motivated by a subconscious grudge needing to be assuaged. Consistent with unconscious drives, the target is always the dominant culture sometimes emblematized by a family member or some other

scapegoat. In *Morountodun* the scapegoat or stand-in is Alhaja Kabirat, the heroine's mother, who appears to be the biggest victim of her daughter's rebellious behavior.

For example, although she claims to love the mother, Titubi by her actions does not justify that claim. Consistently, the heroine's actions and decisions come into conflict with the values and ideals held dear by her mother. The recurrent pattern of this tendency betrays a strong suspicion of oedipal crisis in the daughter's subconscious.

The only child and daughter of a single wealthy businesswoman, Titubi can rightly be described as an economically privileged child indeed. Although the text makes no explicit reference to her husband, it may be assumed that Alhaja Kabirat might never at all have been married, or may be separated from her husband, or might have lost him in some other way, through death for instance. Whatever the reason, the absence of a father must have left a lasting impression on the psychology of the young Titubi as she was growing up. Besides, growing up under a single mother as the dominant influence in her early character formation must have left its own mark too. Thus, the maternal ardour evident in Kabirat's attitude toward her girl is understandable, so too Titubi's tendency to act the spoilt brat. Although she has all the maternal love and all the material comfort that she can wish for, the one fundamental thing missing in Titubi's life is the influence of a father-figure.

Evidently, this lack explains some of the peculiar behavioural tendencies observed in the heroine. Symptomatically, the absence of a father-figure is reflected in the aggressive mannerisms of Titubi, as especially seen in her attitude towards men. In her relationship with her mother, however, this assumes a more subtle but no less worrisome dimension as will soon be seen.Her life is a compound of restlessness, rebelliousness, aggressiveness, and tender passion. In a word, Titubi's life is dominated by a crisis the roots of which lie in her oedipal psychology.

Titubi's yearning for a stand-in father is actually a search for power. A father figure would provide her the platform to exercise power in all kinds of way over all kinds of people. Kabirat is one of those individuals upon whom Titubi's acquisition of power is bound to have a profound effect. Her aggressive attitude towards men is only the objectification of an unconscious grudge towards the object of her psychological hurt in the form of an unknown father playing out himself in the men she can see around her. Thus her aggression imbues her with a sense of power over men whom she substitutes for her absent father. But it also extends to Kabirat for her role in the denial that the heroine suffers in not having a father. Gaining power over these individuals is a consoling balm to her bruised psyche, an unconscious therapy that eventuates in the guise of a desire for an amorous relationship with a man.

Titubi's rebellious attitude towards her mother indicates a (n) (un)conscious belief that in some way Kabirat is responsible for her daughter's fatherless status. This explains in large part why there is a consistent conflict between the heroine's every action and Kabirat's wishes. Take for example her decision to spy on the insurgent farmers, which despite her mother's objections, she insists on going ahead with. Other examples are her renouncement of her social class, and her marriage to Marshal, the farmers' war commander. Both of these key decisions never met with Alhaja Kabirat's approval. All of these defiant and deviant moves accord with the stubborn temperament of the heroine.

But they also find their explanation in the heroine's unconscious that stores a lot of painful memories that predispose her to vengefulness towards the mother. Titubi's actions can thus be interpreted as being chiefly her unconscious response to her feelings of inadequacy and hurt occasioned by the psychological void of being a fatherless child. In a sense, only a certain measure of power over her mother can atone for the hurt that she feels Kabirat has caused her. Her very first chance to attempt to outshine her mother and assert some economic might of her own comes when she organizes a mob of fellow women to break up a play. On this occasion, Titubi gives a hint of her love of power and display by tossing some money in the air and inviting the director of the play to help himself to it. All this is in contempt not just of the class that the director represents, but also in derision of men generally. Men are the stand in for her father. But progressively the heroine does

aspire to other forms of power. She attains phallic power by winning the love of Marshall. She also attains a level of humanitarianism that earns her the power of compassion when she begins to respond sensitively to the plight of the less privileged. Remarkably, the more of these powers she attains the wider the emotional gap between her and the mother.

As psychoanalysis proposes, patterns or repetitions of destructive behaviour usually symptomise unconscious psychological disorder, possibly unknown to the victim (Tyson 14). Although to characterize Titubi's behaviour as patently destructive might somewhat overstretch the point; her actions still fit into the paradigm that Tyson explains as a defensive mechanism that victims of unconscious disorder adopt to cope with their condition. She identifies some of such neutralizing defences to include among others aggressiveness, excitability, silence, avoidance, or denial. With Titubi, several of these attributes coalesce. For instance, her attitude towards men though clearly aggressive, has some ambiguity to it. Her attack on men is intended to deny her need for them, but in truth it is the absence of the male figure that is responsible for the vacuum in her life. This is why the absence of explicit symptoms (as in the two texts in focus) should not necessarily foreclose the possibility of a suspected affliction. In fact, the greater the evasion or silence, the stronger the suspicion of the connection between the affliction and the subject being avoided.

Indeed, parental influence in the formation of character is too fundamental a role to underplay in the life of a person. Where parental impact is negative, for example as in the case of denial of parental obligation through unavailability, the psychological consequences are sometimes no less deleterious than in the case of an abusive parent. Such is the scenario in *Morountodun*.

Reasonable grounds exist to suggest that Kabirat is a victim of her daughter's unconscious psychological fury for reasons not unconnected with her single parenthood. As earlier stated, the reasons for Kabirat's unmarried status as single parent are not indicated, or even acknowledged in the text. However, rather than being reassuring, this silence tends to reinforce the suspicion of the profoundness of its impact on the protagonist. A key indicator of this link is the ever growing discord between Kabirat and her daughter, which conflicts with the outward affection that both women show towards each other. A psychological examination provides insights that suggest that Titubi is driven by unconscious forces that prompt her into frequent conflicts with the mother. Three instances stand out to suggest that those influences are impulses of power.

The first is Titubi's revolt against her mother's class loyalties which, at the initial stages appears unintended, but progressively crystallizes. It occurs when the young girl offers to spy on the farmers ostensibly to help to quicken the capitulation of the insurgent peasant farmers. This she hopes would restore her bourgeois class to its state of dominance in her community. For an incurably class-

conscious woman like Kabirat not to accept her daughter's mission as worthwhile and give her enthusiastic approval is surprising. Instead, she sees her daughter's plan as not just being crazy but an affront on her social status to boot. As the powerful leader of the influential union of market women, Kabirat feels that her daughter's mere physical presence in the squalid conditions of the police station where this scheme is being hatched constitutes an intolerable personal embarrassment (19). Even more unacceptable to Kabirat is what she considers as the impertinence of Superintendent who insists on cajoling her daughter into his "crazy plan" (25). Thus, even with her disapproval, Kabirat's class consciousness remains evident. Being stood up to is not a familiar experience to this woman of means, who believes that her wealth confers on her power and control over every situation. At this moment however, that power is being subverted to her embarrassment by her own child at the instance of an ordinary policeman.

But for the heroine, the dimension of her mission is totally of a different complexion from her mother's. This conflict and her espionage would serve to signal to her mother Titubi's emergence as a significant female figure, one that even dwarves the older woman's merit by comparison. Whereas all along Kabirat has merely lived in dread of the farmers, on her part, Titubi would overcome the insurgents, reclaim dominance for her class, and finally take her place in history among the truly great. By her feat she would push her mother into insignificance.

Titubi's next assault on her mother, which occurs upon her return from the mission, is ideological in nature. Profoundly transformed by her experience, Titubi returns home to denounce her social ideology and class in favour of a proletarian conviction she has all her life been cultured to despise. Her decision, she tells the astounded mother, is informed by a new sensitivity and consciousness fostered by her experience among the peasant farmers. By this move, Titubi brings the ideological world of her mother crashing, thus more than symbolically severing a vital link between them, in a manner ostensibly heroic, but callous, in fact, on close examination.

> That was when I began to ask questions. Questions. I saw myself growing up, knowing no such sufferings as these. With always so much to eat, even servants feed their dogs… Yet here, farmers cannot eat their own products, for they need the money from the market ... It could not be just.
>
> ... In our house, mama, we wake to the chorus of jingling coins. And when we sleep, coiled springs, soft foam and felt receive our bodies gently. But I have lived in the forest among simple folk sharing their pain and anguish … and I chose … (66).

Titubi's triumph is her mother's humiliation, power gained at the cost of a mother's love. Her rejection of her class implies too a rejection of her own mother who is the embodiment of those values flayed by the heroine. Thus, for the second time, she strikes another decisive blow on her mother by denouncing her along with the capitalist ideology she stands for. Her new proletarian power becomes a sword driven by her into her mother's heart.

For a number of reasons, Titubi's third strike can with some justification be regarded as the most telling in the sequence of oedipal blows unleashed on her mother. The heroine's choice of marriage partner from the proletarian class represents a final statement on her rejection of her mother and all that she stands for. First, her marriage to Marshal, the head of the military arm of the proletarian movement, is the culmination of the oedipal predisposition of a daughter to hurt the mother for the sake of power. Specifically, it climaxes Alhaja Kabirat's social humiliation. The idea of having for son-in-law a lowly peasant farmer is absolutely absurd to a woman of Kabirat's ultra-classicist sensibilities. The marriage also represents a mutual alienation that effectively puts two erstwhile allies on bitterly opposed sides of the ideological spectrum.

What however is striking in all this is the way in which love and desire for power play a crucial role in Titubi's self definition. As the apple of her mother's eye, Titubi, in a manner of speaking, is enveloped in maternal love. Besides, she enjoys the social and economic privileges that her bourgeois class confers on her. The depth and dimension of her love for economic power is evident in her offer to embark on a suicidal clandestine mission that seeks just to perpetuate that power. Yet, in the cause of seeking to preserve this power, she finds another that is even greater — the phallic power that enables her to express her sexuality and absorb the patriarchal fervour she always craved. Thus, for Titubi, the love of a mother, however effusively expressed, compares quite unfavourably with her strong urge

to assuage her feelings of deprivation of paternal power. The psychological consequence of this sense of lack, as has been suggested, is the restless, aggressive, and rebellious tendency exhibited by the protagonist in the course of the play.

Titubi's bellicosity is an impulse of power that operates in two directions that impact on the one hand Alhaja Kabirat, and on the other the generality of the men folk. Each of these distinct targets is perceived to have a hand in the conspiracy (so to speak) to deny her the phallic power due to her in the form of a father. Each therefore represents a stand-in upon which to vent her feelings of frustration and indignation for her lack of a father figure in her life. By antagonizing these targets the heroine hopes she can relive in order to relieve the hurt she feels. Kabirat is targeted because she is perceived to have failed to hold on to her man. Men generally come under fire for emblematizing the very source of the wound. Towards men, Titubi's attitude, it appears, smacks of ambivalence. On the one hand she resents men because they personify the callousness and weakness of a man who abandons his wife and child. On the other hand, she is attracted to them because they serve as substitute for that missing part of her.

However, this attraction towards men makes itself manifest in the form of phallophobia, an unconscious defensive strategy indicating a psychological disquiet in the heroine. In simple terms, Titubi's outward expression of dislike for men is merely a casuistic attempt to mask her innermost yearning for a father-

figure, a symbol of power. Hence, the trajectory of her psychological anxiety points towards phallocentric causality. As textual evidence suggests, a preponderance of the interpersonal confrontations involving Titubi has to do with men. This is because men figure in Titubi's eyes as images of her father - the simultaneous cause of her pain and object of her desire. This contradictory perception of men is at once responsible for her ambivalent impulses of hostility and attraction towards men. She is hostile to men like Director and Superintendent whose lack of self-esteem as well as their subservience represents some of the attributes she appears to despise most in men. By contrast, men like Marshal (as events later show) enthral her with their unquestionable masculinity, their bravery, authoritativeness and forthrightness. Being initially aggressive towards a man is a selection strategy that enables her to determine a man's suitability for her purpose.

By this account, Director cuts a pathetic figure. The self-demeaning show he puts up before Titubi and her taunting cash is inconsistent with Titubi's idea of a real man. Superintendent is another specimen of Titubi's disdain. Like her mother Titubi appears to dislike police men like Superintendent intensely. The following remarks in the early scenes of the play indicate the level of disdain towards Superintendent and the entire police force.

> You'll see tomorrow when you get to the office. You hear? Your superiors crawl to my dog kennel. Not even ten of you can arrest me (12).

This statement which echoes Alhaja Kabirat's words in a later dialogue still with Superintendent, suggests that the daughter's phallophobic tendency feeds directly from the mother's identical predisposition: "Even if you're a dozen Salamis together, you wouldn't thrust your fingers in fire" (23). By virtue of this compulsive (dis)inclination towards men, Titubi's decision to undertake a surreptitious invasion of the mysterious war marshal comes as no surprise.

For Titubi, a possible confrontation with Marshal would constitute much more than just a confrontation of social classes. It would more importantly assume a sexist (if not sexual) dimension, ultimately aimed at foregrounding the superiority of the female gender. Additionally, it would provide a platform for a symbolic chastisement of a deserting father of which Marshal as male is a symbol. Furthermore, the conquest of Marshal would imply the demystification, in a remarkable sort of way, of masculinity, in a manner directly proportional to its magnification of the power of the women folk. In a word, Titubi's success would shame the men folk who constitute the bulk of the police force by projecting their common incompetence and ineptitude in comparison to the feat of a mere woman who epitomizes the sterling qualities that are typical of the generality of women. It is against this backdrop that Titubi's stress on the connection between the capture of Marshal and the end of the war becomes significant. "It's their leader", she reminds Salami, "you've not been able to capture, isn't it? "That's why the war drags on?" (14).

Nevertheless, beyond this, Marshal's capture presents an enthralling prospect for another reason besides its potential to resolve the conflict. The prospect of an encounter with a man reputed for his mystique and aura provides an overwhelming motive far outweighing the desire to bring the war to an end. The larger-than-life image of Marshal coupled with his reputed invincibility combines to invest him with a personality too strong for any sensuous woman to resist. Since this image of masculinity accords with the image of a man that Titubi has in her head, the capture of Marshal would thus mean the fulfillment of her unconscious desire for a male object.

The foregoing argument suggests another dimension in Titubi's personality besides her aggressive or adventurous tendencies. Titubi's remark just cited above underlines a narcissistic streak in her. This egocentric side of her character begins to come to the fore from the moment the idea to capture Marshal begins to take shape in her head. From this moment on every other preoccupation of Titubi's appears to narrow down to this singular objective, diminishing thereby all other considerations, including her mother's feelings, or the fact that she has to rely on a risky espionage to accomplish that goal. Nor does it bother the heroine that she has to treat foes as friends, the same people she has been brought up all her life to despise and denigrate.

At the farmer's camp, where she is taken after her stage-managed rescue from 'detention', Titubi is thus provided a platform upon which to play for power as

well as to put her thespian skills on display. She assumes the role of nurse, a subterfuge enabling her to win the love and trust of the unsuspecting farmers. It is also the platform that provides her access to her object of desire Marshal, the veracity of whose much-vaunted reputation she is thus able to establish for herself. Marshal, she discovers, is not just the enigmatic warrior that he is reputed to be; he is also gifted with uncommon intuitive and perceptive ability; in ways sometimes rather troubling for Titubi. For example, Marshal's intuition is on display when he expresses his personal scepticism towards Titubi's mission as against the credulous acceptance granted her by the rest of his colleagues in the camp. This episode rather than alienate her from Marshal, as might have been expected, instead, helped to enhance his charm for the enamoured woman. Consequently, hatred turned to admiration.

Titubi's narcissism appears to climax in the heroine's marriage to Marshal, though, of course, traces of the trait are evident in several other aspects of her personality. Titubi is someone with an uncanny ability to draw attention to herself. The play opens for example with this aspect of her character on display during her encounter with the director. Here she is portrayed as a mobster, the leader of a mob of unruly women whose primary goal is to display their affluence or influence. Another such showy display can be read into her motive in the offer to spy for the state. Indeed, Titubi's resort to espionage is in tandem with this penchant for the dramatic. Her activities in camp portray her as a lover of drama

and an attention-seeker. She plays the friend and nurse and is able to fool everyone about her actual motives. A natural stage person, Titubi proves to Superintendent her thespian talent with the consummate ease with which she masters her role during rehearsals for her mission. "Very, very good", declares Superintendent at the end of the session, "Even I was impressed" (36). The heroine's love for histrionics again shows in the manner she chooses to denounce her class, the manner she declaims her feat ("I went, and I returned, triumphant. Like a legend. You didn't believe me, did you? But mother, I did it" (60)); and finally, in the dramatic manner in which she hands her gun to Marshal, (rather than to Salami) in the full glare of her mother, Kabirat. Narcissism is a trait of power craving suggesting Titubi's desire to be noticed, and to dominate. Doubtless, Titubi is adept at masking her intent. However, her attempt to disguise her love for Marshal does not succeed because her fellow women in camp can see through her. Although she strenuously tries to deny it, she eventually has to admit it overwhelmed by the taunting and cajoling from the other women (69).

The point is that Titubi has the ability to pursue a personal agenda without appearing to be selfish; she is endowed with that uncanny ability to socialize her personal aspirations such that they can pass off as being in the public interest. Marshall is the objectification of the essence of the male power that Titubi yearns for, which all along she has made to pass off as male hating or phallophobia. Because of the critical nature of this objective desire to her psychological well

being, Titubi has to be ruthless. It is her ascent to ultimate power to be in a position of power over a man she can call her own, a final resolution of her core crisis. Therefore, the heroine's disposition towards her unconscious targets, including her mother and the class she represents is quite logically uncompromising. But in the pursuit of this single-minded personal agenda, Titubi can be ruthless. If renouncing mother and class is the price she has to pay to marry Marshal, it is only a small price for a life long dream of attaining phallic dominance and significance in a society that places premium on marriage.

It is important to stress however that what Titubi desires is a male-figure that can provide her phallic power, and not necessarily a lover. It is Marshal's qualities rather than Marshal or his sexuality that fascinates her. This in part explains why she would accept to marry a man she knows to be "too brutal", "too cruel", and a man whose "face often fills her with fright" (73). Besides, Titubi realizes well enough that marrying a military commander in a time of war necessarily would limit the amount of time the two could spend together as a couple, thus foreclosing the likelihood of reasonable romantic attachment to her spouse. It is safe therefore to conclude that Titubi probably has a psychological fear of romantic intimacy. In psychoanalytic terms as Lois Tyson explains, fear of intimacy may indicate an avoidance strategy by which a psychologically wounded person tries to avoid a re-enactment of aspects of his/her identity the person would not want to deal with or even know about (36). But since the psychological wound often demands a

stage upon which to re-enact, in disguised form, the original wounding experience, the need for a romantic relationship – an ideal stage for such experience – becomes compelling. In Titubi's case, what is foremost is merely the sense of conquest and power that the experience of Marshall affords her. The fact that she would have to share her husband with his military duties suits Titubi perfectly and makes her feel safer. Since all that she desires is the experience of a tough, strong, and authoritative male-figure to make up for her original lack of that experience at home, Marshal's inevitable frequent absence would for Titubi not be anything to rue.

As previously noted, Lacanian psychoanalysis speaks of the Real as a notion referring to a reality beyond signification. Seen in metaphorical terms, the Real approximates a person's object of desire which in the final analysis is discovered not to actually meet that desire after all. What one eventually obtains never matches what one thinks one desires, since according to psychoanalysis, what one unconsciously desires is actually a primordial union with one's mother (or father)– an impossible prospect. In Lacanian terms this union with the mother – the unconscious – is conceived in terms of language as the failure of words to fulfill their promise of satisfaction, resulting in the mis-match between language and desire. Titubi's capture of Marshall does not entirely resolve her sense of loss of her primal phallic essence in the father.

Thus, the unconscious, from Lacan's point of view, is the true discourse; it is the force behind the object's desires, the force which shapes and directs desire. What is conceived at the conscious level of discourse is seen merely as the imaginary discourse which is the prey of the unconscious, the true discourse. The ability of the true discourse to undermine the imaginary discourse is the reason why a subject's use of words will always be open to shifts and equivocation. Hence, language is always figurative. Whereas Freud sees this phenomenon in terms of condensation and displacement, Lacan views it from a linguistic perspective, as metonymy and metaphor. Like displacement, metonymy associates items in terms of their contiguity, while metaphor and condensation are characterized by similarity. In metonymy, there is always a chain of connections and associations with regard to the words used by the subject of which he is not usually aware.

For example, the word 'specialist' used by Dr. Bero in *Madmen* to refer to himself, carries several other meanings unintended by its user. Apart from its intended import as someone having knowledge power, the word can also suggest its user's unconscious desire for absolute power. Similarly, Titubi's offer of her service to 'capture' (19) Marshal mirrors her unconscious desire for a male object of power. To capture Marshal suggests simultaneously Titubi's conscious desire to see the farmers' uprising crushed, as well as her unexpressed wish to repossess her primordial 'lack': a father-figure. It could imply also an acceptance by Titubi of the culture of patriarchy, which Marshal represents. This way of associating

words or terms with layers of related meanings beyond what might be intended by the users of such words or terms is referred to as over-determination. Over-determination empowers the reader's discourse. Because in Lacanian psychoanalysis, 'words are not the property of those who use them', as Elizabeth Wright asserts, the author's meaning may not always correspond to the reader's meaning (161). Therefore, the search for meaning, the real discourse, is an open enterprise which no signifier is ever able to satisfy fully. This endless chain of signifiers aiming in vain for a 'real' and absolute satisfaction is what Lacan calls 'lack'. The unconscious lack which the protagonists of the plays in focus struggle to satisfy can find only a partial completion. Bero's abandonment of his medical trade, his military powers, his parricide are not enough to secure him the plenitude of power he craves. In a similar vein, neither Titubi's marriage, nor her ideological switch can help her resolve conclusively her core psychological crisis.

On its part, metaphor reveals itself as a mere symptom of the subject's unconscious desire or the surface meaning of the repressed meaning. This often is made manifest in Freudian slips in the form of dreams, slips of the tongue or jokes, which signal the subject's unconscious desire.

How does all this apply to the texts? The mismatch between the subject's conscious desire and his 'real', unconscious desire implies that the 'real' desire is simply unattainable. This explains why the subject has to move from desire to

desire because even when a particular desire is met, the desired plenitude remains elusive.

These shifts in desire, or what Lacan calls 'interferences and pulsations' of desire, are reflected in *Morountodun*, in the several alterations seen in Titubi's pursuits. Starting off with the zeal to defend her economic class interests, Titubi later abandons that pursuit in search of the economic well-being of the oppressed farmers. Finally, she also abandons this in search of a union with Marshal. Indeed, it is the last of these quests – a union with Marshal – foreshadowed when she volunteers to spy on the insurgents, which quite clearly mirrors her unconscious quest for phallic plenitude. Titubi's 'fatherlessness', as has been argued, is an unsettling state of mind for the heroine, one requiring a substitute male figure assuage.

2.4 Futility of Power

The subject's sense of void is a primordial psychological wound, which cannot heal no matter how hard the subject tries. This is the 'Real', the central concept in psychoanalysis and poststructuralism in general, which neither language nor the world's ideals of justice can adequately capture. Lacan demonstrates how this works in his 'Seminar on the Purloined Letter'. Applying psychoanalytic tenets to his reading of Poe's "The Purloined Letter", Lacan stresses the view that human desire is unstable and impossible to satisfy, accounting for the apparent restlessness of the human person. Desire for power, Lacan maintains, is directed

towards ideal representations – 'The Real' – which are beyond the reach of the subject.

In Poe's story, an incriminating letter is dropped carelessly by the queen as a desperate way of hiding it from the king who suddenly comes into the royal boudoir as she is about to read the letter. A minister who appears on the scene reads the situation and openly picks the letter and replaces it with another. Helpless in that awkward situation on account of the king's presence, the queen can only later ask the prefect of police to find the letter for a handsome fee. The prefect being unable himself to retrieve the letter despite his spirited effort, commissions Dupin, a detective reputed for his sharp intuitive ability, to help him out. Having deduced that the minister, like the queen, could leave the letter unconcealed as the smartest way of hiding it, Dupin locates the letter where it is casually stuck in a card-rack on a mantelpiece in Minister's Department. He steals it and leaves in its place one that looks alike.

What is of interest to Lacan, as Elizabeth Wright has pointed out, is not the theft per se, but the way in which the letter is moved about, and as such can serve as trope for anything in the world. Specifically, Lacan puns on the word 'letter' (correspondence), metaphorically to signify any item in the world, power for example. The letter thus becomes, as Wright sees it, a metaphor for the unconscious, a signifier of unconscious desire for power, moving in the story as human desires move in reality. Thus, a discernable parallel is observed between

the people in the story and the way they pass the letter, on the one hand and, on the other, people in real life who say things that suggest their desire without their being aware of it.

These principles apply in *Morountodun*. Evidently much of the heroine's actions, unknown to her, are fuelled by her subconscious need to assuage her phallic desire for a male figure that represents her idea of power in her life. As a matter of fact, her inexplicable offer to spy for the state is a measure of the strength of this unconscious impulse to satisfy this desire. It is while working under cover in the farmers' camp that Titubi undergoes a transformation that provides her a new vista of life. First, she renounces her economic class only to embrace the farmers whose lives and ideology she had set out in the first place to crush. Even more important, the once restless heroine discovers the roots of her core issue (or so she thinks) – her oedipal crisis – by falling in love. Falling in love with Marshal, the war general, the 'macho man', the authoritative and paternalistic figure, seems to provide Titubi with a semblance of primordial contentment: it is a union with her absent father, the acme of her power. Her sense of fulfilment and triumph is underscored by her rather boastful proclamation: 'I said I would do it', didn't I?' (60), addressed to Superintendent upon her return from the mission. Finally, handing her gun to Marshal – the supposed captive – is Titubi's demonstration of her perceived resolution of her oedipal crisis: 'Take the gun ", she triumphantly declares, "Let a new life begin"(71).

Unfortunately, it appears, the protagonist celebrates too soon. Her hopes of settling down to a normal married life with her new husband are dashed when Marshal, in defiance of the truce agreed with the state, returns to the trenches never again to return. Marshal's disappearance is analogous to the elusive 'Real', the unattainable plenitude in real life. Titubi's loss of Marshal illustrates what Shoshana Felman the 'symbolic perspective,' of reality that is the knowledge that nothing is quite what it appears to be in life.

The insights gained from Lacan's reading of Poe's story can equally apply in Soyinka's *Madmen and* Specialists, to reflect the unstable nature of human desires. Dr. Bero's object of desire can be narrowed down to a desire for absolute knowledge objectively and symbolically represented by the herbs stored in his surgery and the ideology of 'As'. Since like a signifier, every desire progressively spawns other desires, Bero's phallic desire, it is observed, is a culmination of some prior desires. Originally a physician, Bero abandon's that trade in order to become a military intelligence agent, a position, he hopes, would serve to provide him access to his ultimate goal to acquire celestial omnipotence as a 'specialist' who knows it all. Such progressive movement from desire to desire as illustrated by Bero, is provoked by a futile search by humans for a non-existent plenitude in life, a 'greedy emptiness' as Madan Sarup describes it: "Desire is directed towards another desire, another greedy emptiness, another 'i'" (21).

Bero's quest for transcendental knowledge exemplifies this 'greedy emptiness'. His inability despite his insistent demand ("Why As?") to compel Old Man to capitulate echoes the futility of his ambition, as well as his dementia. While the son believes that his father is keeping from him something vital to the son's ambition, the father is in no doubt as to his son's insanity: 'A perfect waterproof coat is rejected for a patched-up heirloom that gives the silly wearer rheumatism' (252). The allusion is to Bero's rejection of his perfectly secure humane trade as medical doctor for a needless adventure into the volatile world of secret service. Perhaps this inexplicable career switch gives enough indication of Bero's insanity. But should any doubts still linger regarding the protagonist's unhealthy state of mind, his killing of his father conclusively dispels such doubts. Moreover, aside from affirming the son's mental malady, Bero's parricide effectively puts paid to his desire to extract from his father the old man's withheld secret. Bero's murder of his father does not just further diminish the chances of his ever getting to know what his father 'knows'. It is ironically, his own way of acknowledging the impossibility of his aspiration to become something of the subject-who-knows.

By way of conclusion, what the texts examined clearly suggest is that much as the power impulse is a common inheritance of all humans, distinctions do however exist as to how it makes itself manifest in individual persons. The intensity of this psychological condition varies from person to person. It is considered a negative condition in large part because people are led by it to (un)conscious extremes of

behaviour as they strive to satisfy the urge. It is a counter-impetus against a dominant culture. All humans, psychoanalysts insist, are driven by a sense of 'love', which nonetheless, is complicated by its ambivalent nature as a love/hate phenomenon. The narcissistic tendencies of humans incline them to a somewhat carnivorous appetite for external objects of desire whose destruction is the inevitable consequence. In the process, however the self is ironically also destroyed by its own greedy assault on societal norms.

Thus, it is the manner in which an individual allows himself or herself to express this primordial urge or interest that determines the extent to which the person may be said to exhibit symptoms of afflictions requiring psychological intervention Undoubtedly, Dr. Bero exhibits enough of these symptoms in ways damaging to both himself and his community. On the other hand, although Titubi appears much less afflicted than Bero, her restless phallophobic tendencies are not exactly comforting either.

CHAPTER THREE

POWER AS LEGITIMIZED POLITICAL TERROR IN SOYINKA'S *MADMEN AND SPECIALISTS, KONGI'S HARVEST,* AND *FROM ZIA WITH LOVE*

Introduction

> Civilization is based on a clearly defined and widely accepted yet often unarticulated hierarchy. Violence done by those higher on the hierarchy to those lower is nearly always invisible, that is, unnoticed. When it is noticed, it is fully rationalized. (Jensen 2006, ix)

In many respects Derrick Jensen's sentiments in his *Endgame: Resistance,* capture the concerns of Soyinka in many of his works, especially the dramatic ones. Soyinka's obsession with the subject of political leadership in Africa stems from his deep concern about the way people in official positions incessantly abuse their office and the people placed under them. It is this scenario that provides him the canvass for his literary art, an art which he devotes to the exposure and condemnation of the excesses of power. Political authority is power exercised legitimately. It normally entails such extensive power that can easily be abused by its wielders. In a dictatorship this sometimes includes power of life and death over subjects, a license to control state resources, and the liberty to legislate as fancy dictates. This is the scenario described in this chapter as legitimized political terror.

The plays discussed in this chapter help to situate the concept of terror in a context that confutes the notion that it entails organized violence directed against a state by

external enemies. What *Kongi's Harvest*, *Madmen and Specialists*, and *From Zia with Love* illustrate is the fact that a state can terrorize its own citizens in many different ways. The experiences of victims of state violence in these plays suggest therefore that Agwonorobo Eruvbetine's argument in repudiation of the state-as-victim notion of terror, or terrorism, is quite persuasive. Unlike state paraded definitions that tend to highlight agency, Eruvbetine's notion of terror foregrounds the act instead by insisting, like Michael Stohl that "the state has been and remains a more likely employer of terrorism within the international system than insurgents".[1] Insurgency has been the fashionable villain of terrorism, so much so that state-sponsored terror that is either directed at an external enemy, or within at a state's own citizens, is overlooked and not regarded as an act of terror.

Eruvbetine insists that any practice that employs violence and fear as a means of furthering its aim, regardless of the status of the perpetrator, is an act of terror. (Olukoju and Falaiye, Eds….*Terrorism,* 2). He states:

> Dread-purveying force, manoeuvred to compel capitulation, in social terms constitutes the core element of terrorism. In its basic manifestation, terrorism refers to any tactical deployment of intense–fear-instigating-violence as a control mechanism. The devastation and disorientation inflicted by the force factor foists on human beings and locations shockwaves that compel death/surrender from victims.

Soyinka's plays reflect the reality that the ordeal experienced by victims in the hands of wielders of political power cannot be characterized in any less harsh terms. Yet, Soyinka's portrayal of the abuse of political power is not limited to the

physical expression of violence that is central to the conception of terror as laid out above. The psychological and no less the moral dimensions of terror are integral to the experience of the victims of the misdeeds of the state in these three dramatic works in focus. For example, the Mendicants in *Madmen*, apart from being victims of physical violence, are also victims of psychological and economic abuses. Even Old Man suffers in ways that typify Foucault's notion of disciplinary power and its totalitarian connotations. Similarly, situations in *Kong's Harvest* as well as in *From Zia*, lend further credence to the Foucauldian view that state violence can take subtle forms that are no less damaging than physical violence.

The texts under examination illustrate clearly that for Soyinka subjectivity is construed in terms not just of physical, but also of psychological and economic constraints. To that extent the various acts of physical violence like torture, incarceration, executions, and non-physical ones like economic deprivations, and official corruption are manifestations of misuse of power in Soyinka's portrayals. These depictions of the political version of power illustrate aspects of Foucault's analysis of the experience of the inmates in his political Panopticon.

The panopticon is a ubiquitous power structure that involves the use of monitoring techniques to compel the obedience and submission of subjects. Within the Panopticon all that is needed to get anyone to work tirelessly, relentlessly, and quietly is the 'gaze' of an invisible director. This, according to Foucault, helps "to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the

automatic functioning of power" (Bruce Lawrence and Aisha Karim, *On Violence*, 456). Knowing himself to be possibly permanently in the gaze of the observer, the inmate is compelled to regulate his behaviour in ways that are consistent with the observer's expectations of him. It is the omnipresent and automatic functioning of power, the pervasive and infinite possibilities of control that bind people with the heaviest manacles. In other words, the critical element of panoptic power is not the gaze in itself, but the effect of the gaze on the target. The subject's mere awareness of the gaze binds him to conformity and self-regulation.

To look at Soyinka's works from the perspective of the Foucauldian Panopticon is to appreciate the degree of the sordidness and grimness of the inhumanity of the system that he portrays and the reason he abhors it so intensely. It is to have a glimpse of the horror that defines the socio-political landscape of Africa, as reflected by Nigeria's unending history of dictatorships and pseudo dictatorships. Like the panopticon, the subsisting governmental strategy of control in all of Soyinka's power plays is that of terror, intimidation, victimization, and fear.

In relation to Soyinka, subjectivity is conceived in terms of both physical and psychological confinement. Wielders of power tend to project themselves in the image of omniscience that not only circumscribes freedom and capacities, but also denies the humanity of their subjects. The god-man relationship rids the subject of power of self-belief that compels him to relinquish his/her personal rights and privileges, The texts reveal that for Soyinka the relations of power are never

consensual; but are construed in terms of a hijack of roles in which the more powerful elements assume the role of the god of the rest.

Typically, Soyinka's attitude towards this kind of scenario is that of mockery and derision that is the hallmark of satire. According to Hugh Holman, satire blends a "critical attitude with humour and wit to the end that human institutions or humanity may be improved'' (Holman 1976, 473). Soyinka's mode of satire seeks an "inseparable corrective purpose, expressed through a critical mode which ridicules or otherwise attacks those conditions needing reformation in the opinion of the satirist'' (Robert Harris ''The Purpose and Method of Satire''). Soyinka habitually addresses himself to that essence conceived by Ana Lopez as a "new discursive formation to the transformation of the discourse of an age" (Quoted in Okome, 1993).

A discursive formation, suggests Foucault, refers to a complex series of relations involving institutions, economic and social processes, behavioural patterns, systems of norms and modes of characterization (Foucault 1972, 45). In other words, a discursive formation prescribes the values that guide specific practices within an age, values that can only be violated at a price to the culprit.

As Onookome Okome has noted in a review of what he characterizes as Soyinka's ''power plays'', Soyinka's satire transcends merely an attempt to reprove the violators of the political discourse of his target society. Nor is his purpose limited

only to ensuring that the transgressors receive their just dessert for their infamy. More than these, Soyinka is driven by the nationalistic as well as humanistic zeal to see that the political discourse of his age is transformed. In Okome's words, every parodic act, Soyinka's not excluded, makes attempts to make an ideological statement because the

> Textual practice of parody is itself a political act serious and leading not only to the laying bare of social events of significance, but also towards creating a new political credo. The new political credo is defined within the parodic practice itself (Okome, 8).

These transformative concerns of course, have moral implications for Soyinka, as Martin Benham has rightly noted.

> The values that Soyinka relates to are basic values where tradition and the natural order of things are not to be derided or undervalued, except where they are corrupted from within and thus abused. Simple human values of right and wrong, good and evil are remorselessly scrutinized (Benham 1976, 25).

The mission of the satirist therefore is often salvavic in nature. He seeks, even at the risk of personal peril, to rescue endangered values in order to reinstate them in their primordial purity, after all necessary rituals of rectification must have been satisfied. Or he may seek to formulate new ones altogether where the existing values are considered to have become atrophied or vitiated.

3.2 BERO: Specialist Power Maniac on the Loose

Perhaps, nowhere is this concern for the moral health of the society more in evidence than in *Madmen and Specialists,* a play in which Soyinka portrays abuse

of power of an unnatural kind. The playwright is worried in this play that in his clime the moral and political fibre is in tatters, because people in power are no longer content with their humanity but are straining to outstrip it. In the process a vicious assault has been launched against society and all that it holds dear. At the epicentre of these infractions is the Faustian protagonist Dr Bero who epitomizes all the evil afflicting the moral, social and political life of the present age.

Oyin Ogunba has remarked that the soullessness of the society portrayed in the play is a reflection of what he describes as Soyinka's ''final statement'' on the ''disgust, anguish, and venom so much loaded into this play'' (Ogunba 227). In evidence in this play, it is important to note, is the fact that disciplinary power as Foucault conceives it, is complicated by the fact that the disciplinary methods employed are not strictly psychological. Instead, the protagonist has perfected a system of melding the psychological and the physical into a most efficient assault weapon. Bero does not attack just the minds of his victims; he goes after their bodies as well.

As a result, terror and gloom reverberate throughout *Madmen and Specialists,* as much on the physical as on the psychological levels of the social world of the play. The central theme of the play appears to be located in the symbol of 'AS', the mysterious ideological philosophy contrived and christened by Old Man to mirror the junta in power in the play. 'AS' is perhaps the worst form of totalitarianism conceivable, little wonder the attempt to codify it by the Mendicants is fruitless.

> A. AS is Acceptance, Adjustment. Adjustment of ego to the Acceptance of AS…B. Blindness in As. I say this unto you. As is all-seeing. All shall see in As who render themselves blind to all else….D. Divinity…Destiny too. In fact Destiny first, then Divinity- Destiny is the duty of Divinity D-D-D- in 3-Dimention. We the Divinity shall guide the flock along the path of destiny (246).

The unsuccessful attempt to bring the exercise to a successful conclusion reflects the enigmatic nature of an ideology that is unfathomable. (Aafa and his mates are unable to go beyond the letter ''I'' and have to give up). Added to this is the fact that not even Bero, the personification of the junta, quite understands what the idea is all about, though he fancies it. He therefore undertakes to get to the root of it with the intent to formally appropriating it. This turns into an obsession and a further excuse to tyrannize Old Man, the architect of the ideology. Elusive or not however, the idea that the old man's symbol is trying to mirror is everywhere self evident in the play. It is an attempt to capture not just the inhumanity of the existing system, its clueless policies, and its futile attempt at playing God. It is more importantly, as reflected by the problematic and inconclusive codifying, a pointer to the futility of that aspiration.

What Bero and his cohorts fail to realize however is that AS is only a philosophical parody of the inhuman system they have installed. Edde Iji describes the phenomenon as a

> parody of the self-enslavement and utter surrender to a schizophrenia of a hopeless religion or philosophical

> stance - a psychological self-enslavement (Iji 1991, 86).

The reference to psychological self-enslavement immediately evokes memories of Foucault's panoptical regime of discipline whose ultimate goal is to induce the subject into a relinquishing of his freedom. The world Bero and his cohorts have managed to create in the play approximates the panoptical moment when the subject has totally surrendered both will and freedom to the whims of the oppressive system. Objectifying this reality are the Mendicants who represent the masses within the play's community.

They emblematize the mass of humanity entrapped within the panoptic mesh created by Bero. They are neither free nor bonded; yet are both at once. They are Bero's spies, or his gaze upon a mass of captive subjects exemplified by Old Man, Si Bero, and the Earth Mothers. Theirs is the task of individualizing and globalizing their subjectivity, a subjectivity they are a significant part of. A degenerate life that they lead, it is one of despair and self-disgust, emblematized by Goyi's senseless loss of his limbs to gambling. Here Soyinka is portraying a humanity that has been ruined as much by an obnoxious political system as by an acquiescent, docile population. As Ogunba has noted, ''AS'' is a legitimization of government by terror, an obfuscation of the human capacity for purposeful ideas, as well as an abrogation of positive change. In Ogunba's words,

> AS is the force of tradition supported by loyalists and ardent theorists who fabricate a reason to justify the

> ‘’status quo’’ and preach the necessity or inevitability of evils in human society. This philosophy of despair interprets history in terms of cyclic movement in which true progress is impossible (Ogunba 1975, 203).

His conclusion that the play is Soyinka’s “final, brutal statement on a soulless society”, is a damning verdict on a community that has ‘become lunatic and [in which] the spirit of death has settled down inexorably” (226-227). It is systems such as Bero’s that produce humanity in the shape of the Mendicants, a mangled, brutalized, and discarded humanity. The opening spectacle of the Mendicants makes evident their pathetic state in the scheme of things within the Bero regime.

> By the roadside is a group of Mendicants Cripple, Goyi, Blindman and Aafaa. Aafaa’s St. Vitus spasms are designed to rid the wayfarer of his last pennies in a desperate bid to be rid of the sight. Goyi is stiffly in a stooping posture by a contraption which is just visible above his collar. The Cripple drags on his knees. They pass the time throwing dice from a gourd rattle (217).

The imagistic nature of the names of these characters is not without significance. The names reflect the limiting features of a system that is lame (Cripple), stiff (Goyi), blind (Blindman), and unstable (Aafaa). Similarly, the disquieting condition of the characters is meant to wring the conscience of the people who plunged the country into a totally avoidable civil war, a war that provides the back drop to the play. It is also clear that the consequences of that war have mocked the managerial skills of these fellows, who have inevitably of course had to share in the repercussions in the form of the insufferable condition of the Mendicants. This

is the legacy of the war portrayed by Soyinka as the common scourge that no one within that community can escape.

Like inmates of the cells of the panopticon, subjects of this system are programmed to play possum to the anomalies in the system. In a way somewhat akin to a loss of power and will of expression, they have surrendered to the physical and psychological battering of the system, and have resigned themselves to hugging the margins of the society, as victims of the state's panoptic strategy of individualization, seclusion and globalization.

This Bero has achieved through making harmony an impossible thing to attain among the populace as illustrated by the relations between Old man for instance and the Mendicants. By placing the Mendicants as spies on the wise old man, Bero attempts to optimize the panoptic strategy of omniscience through surveillance. Thus he is able to keep the masses apart in the time tested *us/them* fashion employed by dictators to disorganize the opposition. By using the people against themselves the ultimate end of self policing is attained through interiorized discipline. Evidence of the effectiveness of this strategy can further be gleaned in the total erosion of self confidence displayed by Old Man in the scene in which he violently tries to operate on Cripple. A result of his frustration at being unable to organize the rabble that his former pupils have become, this may have provided Bero a ready excuse for the patricide that follows.

The use of physical torture is a common strategy of power in Soyinka's works. In *Madmen and Specialists* this is portrayed in parodies enacted by the Mendicants. In one particular instance, torture is employed to extract information from a victim as played by Goyi. When he revives from a barrage of physical assaults to which he is subjected by his torturers, Goyi has sufficiently softened to accept his place as defined by the powers that be:

Goyi: Where am I?

Cripple: Within the moment of truth, dear friend [223].

One is reminded here, by Dreyfus and Rabinow, of what Foucault has to say regarding the role of confession in the discourse of subjectivity. In Christianity as well as in psychoanalysis, confession, according to Foucault, refers to a certain kind of talk-therapy whereby people are made to believe that their liberation requires them to "tell the truth." The truth, it is taught, confessed to someone who is more powerful, will mitigate their guilt. [Dreyfus and Rabinow, 141] Truth, Foucault insists, like discourse of which it is an inseparable part, is determined by institutional convention and rules guiding particular institutional practices. As discursive practices, these rules are impersonal and all practices and practitioners are interpelleted, or guided by them. Only individuals invested with a specific discourse possess truth, as eligibility depends primarily on possession of discursively articulated norms specific to the particular institution to which the individual belongs. Truth is power, and matters of truth and reality, like power, are never stable, but always constructed to suit whatever "gaze" that the 'specialist'

prescribes. The net result is the history of ‘’truth’’ that has come to be associated with the modern art of political governance.

In light of the above, the cruelty associated with the quest for ‘truth’ as suggested in the Mendicants’ parody is consistent with the discursive practice of perfunctory conformity, whose archetypal victim is the traditional ‘other’. Having himself in the past been the ‘other’ during his initiation into his present cult of the powerful [228-229], Bero might feel justified to exact other ‘outsiders’. To qualify for membership into this cult Bero had endured a gruelling physical and mental test to determine his toughness and presumably had excelled. Bero’s credentials rest not just on the fact that he excelled at the initiation, nor on his countless inhumane deeds. His abdication of his medical practice is perhaps the strongest proof of his eligibility for an elevated stool of the chief priest of the cult of the Devil. The difference between his old trade and the present one is simply one between the humane and the devilish. Not surprisingly, the dominant culture in *Madmen* is one of death and morbidity, and presiding over it, by popular acclaim, is the Prince of Death himself - Bero.

> Bero: The Big Braids agreed I was born into it. Not that that was any recommendation. They are all submental apes [237].

Epitomized by cannibalism, this culture relishes blood and cadaver (recall that Bero prefers to address his patients as ‘corpses’). Inflicting pain on those it perceives as ‘other’ is the culture’s mainstay. The inhuman and macabre

orientation having petrified into a culture, members of the cult have totally lost touch with humanity and aptly operate at a submental level as Bero himself admits. Thus, cannibalism becomes for Bero an ideal mark of true power, as he explains to Si Bero:

> Bero: He told us. [Pause. He laughs suddenly] But why not? Afterwards l said why not? What is one flesh from another? So l tried it again, just to be sure of myself. It was the first step to power you understand. Power in its purest sense. The end of inhibitions. The conquest of the weakness of your too human flesh with all its sentiment. So again, all to myself I said Amen to his grace. [241].

To underscore the fact that he no longer shares his community's ethos and values, upon his return from the war, Bero abjures the ritual of libation demanded of him by the tradition of his community as a war returnee. Pouring libation to his ancestors is a returnee's way of acknowledging his forebears' role in his safe return, as well as an affirmation of his oneness with the community of his roots. However, Bero's rejection of this ritual reveals his contempt for his roots and the very Nature (as symbolized by palm wine) that gave him life. In place of the temperate and tranquil life-giving force of wine the transformed returnee transposes the violence of blood and bullet imbibed from war.

Mocking his more tradition-oriented sibling for keeping ''these little habits'', which have now been supplanted by a more potent culture of blood and bullet, Bero declares, 'we've wetted your good earth with something more potent than that [palm wine], you know'' [234]. In a sense, Bero is trying to reconfigure the

society in a manner that makes it no longer recognizable or conducive for its traditional inhabitants. For example, he has his father in detention, an abominable act by all standards; his sister at a point had to flee from him in horror, and the matriarchs of the land he has declared *personae non grata*. This is as close as any strategy of individualization can get as a strategy of disciplinary power.

Soyinka also has another way of compelling his audience to share his revulsion at the evil he portrays about abuse of political power. By presenting shocking spectacles on stage, Soyinka is able to bring to the fore the bestiality and inhumanity of people in authority. Such deliberate amplification of horror and revulsion is aimed at not just drawing attention to them per se, but at awakening the mind to other realities of greater immediacy for the survival of the system. In a definite sort of way, Soyinka has himself indicated what those realities in question are when he responded to some of the somewhat tired criticism of the alleged metaphysical obsessions of his oeuvre. About his intent in his controversial prison memoir *The Man Died*, Soyinka had this to say:

> I have been very gratified by the shock reaction…it was actually my intention to create feelings of revulsion, of disappointment, of bewilderment… I know very well they will have a therapeutic effect and will completely revolutionize the ways of their thinking, of perceiving and therefore of participating in whatever sort of programme is envisaged for society. (1975 interview with John Agetua, … p.38)

Edde lji has drawn a comparison between Soyinka's deliberate display of grisly scenes and Artaud's 'Theatre of Cruelty', known for its pathological passion for

spectacular violence on stage. For example, the scene in which the Mendicants are seen wolfing down huge chunks of what possibly is human flesh, Iji observes, is reminiscent of the scene in Artaud's *The Jet of Blood* in which some of the characters are seen eating parts of their own bodies. Essentially, physical manifestation of cruelty, as seen for instance in Aafaa's direct physical torture of Goyi, however, represents what Artaud regards as the 'minor aspect of the question' as opposed to the more significant aspect of the question, which is psychical and metaphysical in nature [Iji, 80]. The spectacular violence on Soyinka's stage is an adumbration of a more sinister reality that that spectacle is intended to bring the reader to an awareness of, something less physical but nonetheless profound. In this sense, Soyinka appears to validate Foucault's claim that internalized discipline is a far more effective method than physical violence for crushing and 'stifling' the subject's self identity.

The penchant for abusing the judicial process by totalitarian governments equally comes under Soyinka's artistic scrutiny in this remarkably revolutionary play. Again, it is through the Mendicant's instructive clowning that the audience is let into yet another sordid exemplum of the ways in which tyrants trivialize the judicial process. Once again, Goyi is the victim in the parody of cruelty in which his other colleagues play his torturers.

Aafaa: Did we try him?
Cripple: Resurrect, you fool .Nobody tried you yet.
Aafaa: You are accused

Blindman : Satisfied?
Cripple: Fair enough.
Blindman: Bang!
(Goyi slumps)
Aafaa: [Rinsing his hands]: Nothing to do with me.
Blindman: Fair trial, No?
Aafaa: Decidedly yes.
Blindman: What does he say himself?
Goyi: Very fair, gentlemen. l have no complaints.[220]

Ogunba captures the charade parodied here in the following words:

> The Mendicants are parodying the judicial process in their community, a system which imposes death without trial or after only a mock trial. They mean that this is the kind of power Bero represents …[Ogunba 1975, 209]

Observe pertinently that raw details of Bero's atrocities are kept off the stage, and are only related to the audience indirectly through parody. This indirect medium of relating violence helps the playwright to accomplish more than one thing at the same time. First, he is able to portray the bestial side of the protagonist that the audience should know about, and yet avoid hurting their sensibilities as much as a more direct portrayal might have done. Secondly, through parody, the author empowers the otherwise powerless Mendicants against their more powerful oppressor, Bero. Though engaged as spies for Bero, the Mendicants through parody are able to get one better on an employer who has been anything but fair to them. These mock acting performances thus become a power tool, a medium by which the secrets of Bero's torture chambers can be exposed, a means by which the Mendicants can exact some power of their own on their unkind employer. With these inhumanities out in the open, Bero can no longer consider himself

absolutely safe in a modern age eager to humanize the world by checking the excesses of tyrannical regimes. The parodies also indicate that the Mendicants are not entirely on Bero's side, and that they would side with his enemies to destroy him should the opportunity chance. Perhaps, these parodies are potentially more damaging than even Old Man's strategies, which being more open and direct might never catch Bero unprepared.

The psychological dimension of subjectivity in *Madmen* is equally interesting. As Foucault makes clear, the whole essence of the Panopticon is to cut down on the physical side of punishment in favour of the psychological, because of the economic and political advantage it offers. One factor often used to great effect in that direction is language, about which Linda Hutcheon has the following to say:

> Discourse constitutes more than just a repository of meaning: it involves both the potential for manipulation - through rhetoric or through the power of language and the vision that it creates - and also the possibility of evasion of responsibility through silence (1983, 41).

In brief, language is a powerful social instrument capable of a vast array of possibilities that include the good and the bad. As utterance, language can be used to manipulate reality; when silence is preferred, language is still at work for other strategic ends. The silence in question here is of two kinds. First, there is silence of the kind that Old Man has in mind in the following remark:

> The pious pronouncements. Manifestoes. Charades. At the bottom of it all humanity choking in silence. (265).

Silence here is of the kind compelled on subjects by a terror regime through the use of brute force, or the kind imposed by way of deceitful and empty promises made by politicians. The second type of silence, about which Hutcheon speaks, is even more sinister. It refers to the silencing of the subject through for example policies that deny his rights to education or information for purposes of keeping him out of the mainstream of discourse. It is a cynical attempt to make a Man Friday of the subject - a mute, powerless, and docile individual - the type that Bero plans to make of the Mendicants, as his remark below would suggest:

> Father's assignment was to help the wounded readjust to the pieces and remnants of their bodies. Physically. Instead he began to teach them to think, think, THINK! Can you picture a more treacherous deed than to place a working mind in a mangled body (242).

The essential Foucauldian sense of subjectivity is particularly reflected in this play in the role of the Mendicants as spies. In this they symbolize the Panoptic 'gaze' of Bero trained on the subjects of the system he runs. Through the Mendicants, Bero is availed information on every detail of his captive subjects here epitomized by the incarcerated Old Man. In this role, the Mendicants also objectify the auto policing in subjectivity that a panoptical system is designed to engender in subjects. It is a psychological reality that turns the individual on the self, thereby, in some bizarre way, imposing on the self the responsibility of monitoring that in reality should be that of the jailer. The economic and political benefits of such ingenious tweak in the operation of power have been stressed by Foucault; and

apply in this play for example in Bero's evasion of his responsibility to feed and remunerate the Mendicants for their services.

However, Iji is perhaps correct in his assessment of this aspect of the Mendicants' role as the most demeaning of their tasks, especially when seen in the context of Bero's sardonic bossiness that involves the physical bullying of his minions even for complaining of hunger. It is akin to a government denying its workers their salaries, or arresting them for going on a strike to protest poor conditions of work.

3.3 KONGI: President, Monarch, and Pastor of Totalism

Like Bero, Kongi runs a government that is structured as a repressive machine the primary goal of which is to use terror and violence to coerce loyalty from the people. The most obvious difference between two regimes that are otherwise alike in most respects is the fact that while Bero comes across as a shadowy representation of the Absolute Subject 'out there', Kongi is the absolute Subject itself, invested with all the attributes of the traditional Monarch, President, General, and Pastor, all in one.

He is president by virtue of his political headship of Isma, monarch, having usurped Danlola's title of oba, general by his command of the coercive apparatuses of Isma, and pastor because he has invested himself with the spiritual tag of 'Spirit of Harvest'. In a sense, Kongi conceives himself as a being invested with 'celestial omnipotence' and destined for inevitable apotheosis.

The play is loaded with all the tension and anxiety seen in *Madmen and Specialists*. When the curtain lifts, Kongi's ascendancy is virtually a *fait accompli*, with Oba Danlola already incarcerated in Kongi's jail. Danlola's office together with all of its appurtenances is the last step to what Kongi thinks would lead to his eventual sanctification. Of course this suggests that prior to this stage of the political crisis in Isma, all other voices of dissent had been silenced. As a result, many Ismites are either in detention, exiled or killed. For instance, Segi's father is in jail and Segi herself along with Daudu is living somewhat like an exile at some remote precinct of the community where her night club is located.

Evidently, even at this stage it is clear that the old system as run by Danlola is in dire need of social re-engineering and invigoration. And though he does not write it off altogether, Soyinka makes no secret of his disenchantment with the state of the traditional institution. However, he is even more distrustful of neo-revolutionaries like Kongi whose agenda is totally misguided and at variance with the needs of the land. While indeed there is need for change, the change Kongi represents is an absolute travesty that can neither bring social nor spiritual renaissance to Isma. Instead what it spawns in the land is sterility, sorrow and death. By contrast, for all its imperfections, the traditional system is at least humanistic. The oba remains a bastion of the well being of tradition, the father figure for his people to look up to, a messiah figure that dies his people's death on

their behalf. These are the attributes of the traditional system eulogized in the words of the song below:

> They complained because
> The first of the new yams
> Melted first in an Oba's mouth
> But the dead will witness
> We drew the poison from the root (60).

While there is privilege and possibly prestige in the deference accorded the oba as first to taste the yam, he has the responsibility of being the first to step forward in times of trouble, the poison of the roots of the yam. By contrast, Kongi on his part yearns only for the gains but not the responsibility of power, which he is wont to try to evade.

About the centrality of the language question in *Kongi's Harvest* Adrian Roscoe has commented that,

> the difference between the era which Danlola represents and kongi's new dispensation is seen in the play as largely one of language.[1971, 236]

Kongi appears to be well aware of the closeness of the link between language and power. This is evident in the urgency of his language project in Isma. He makes no secret of his disdain for the language of the Isma of the Danlola dispensation, and as a matter of priority wants it reformed. Part of the project is first to reconstitute the council of elders inherited from Danlola with a New Aweri, with the brief to reform the Isma language. Conceiving themselves as the authentic custodians of knowledge as against the "so-called wise ones" of the old regime, the New Aweri

prefer a language laced with "only ideograms in algebraic quantums", rather than the ''long-winded proverbs and senile pronouncements" of the preceding regime (238). Unfortunately, the language they propose as alternative is no better than the one they vilify. For all its inadequacies, the old language at least derived from a traditional background that ensured intelligibility among the people. By contrast, Kongi's language is a ludicrous assemblage of meaningless words chosen merely to give an impression of being knowledgeable. Phrases like 'positive stamp', 'scientific image', positive scientificism' and several such only confuse and keep the regular people out of the scheme of things. Stilted, artificial and almost without purpose, Kongi's language is the subject of this satirical song by Ismites.

> Ism to ism from ism is ism
> of isms and isms on absolute ism.
> They say, oh how
> They say it all on silent skulls
> But who cares? Who but a lunatic
> will bandy words with boxes…[61]

The emptiness of the meaningless phrases parallels the emptiness of the people's stomachs, their lack of portable water, stable electricity, jobs and regular living wages. If these phrases achieve anything at all, it is merely to shield the inadequacies of those at the helm of affairs, and their rabid corruption and irresponsibility, and their mindless inhumanity toward their subjects. It is even more disturbing still that the inventors of this new language are evidently at odds with their pet invention.

Sixth Aweri's question ''what image exactly is positive scientificism?'' is interesting because it shows how unfamiliar the Aweri are with their own language. Third Aweri's reply is even more interesting for exposing a regime that values change for its own sake.

> Third: Whatever it is, it is not long-winded proverbs and senile pronouncements. In fact, we could say a step has already been taken in that direction, If you've read our leader's last publication. [72]

For Kongi and his cohorts governance is a comical circus show where ignoramuses come to amuse themselves at the expense of the community. Motion without movement is an apt phrase to capture the underlying philosophy at work here, a philosophy that places premium on action for its own sake – a ''step'' merely - rather than its consequences.

George Orwell is famous for his dislike for a dubious brand of language popular with politicians. "Doublespeak", which is typified by its penchant for cancelling itself out, comments Orwell, consists ''less and less of words chosen for their meaning and more and more of phrases tacked together like the sections of a prefabricated hen-house" [Orwell 1967 ed: 145]. Kongi's language for Isma thrives only on pomposity and thinness of meaning the sole purpose of which is to exclude and mislead the regular folk. Carefully programmed for propaganda, the language serves as vehicle for the propagation of falsehood, blackmail, slander, and the like for a dictatorship that seeks to monopolize the media as the sole author of Truth. This is lamented in *Kongi's Harvest* in the song:

Who but a lunatic
will bandy words with boxes,
with government rediffusion sets,
which talk and talk and never
Take a word in reply.
I cannot bandy words, oh
I cannot bandy words with
A rediffusion set,
My ears are sore
But my mouth is 'agbayun'
For I do not bandy words,
No I do not bandy words
with a government loudspeaker [61]

Under such circumstances the citizens of Ismа are as much prisoners in Kongi's jails as they are to his words, and in the most repressive sense of the Foucauldian technic of disciplinary power. Silenced in every sense by terror, the only realistic option left Ismites is to flee or face the consequences of dissention like Segi's father. However, it is not so much the inevitable annihilation of the opposition by Kongi that petrifies as the satanic mindset that feeds Kongi's murderous propensities. Being himself a pathologically morbid-minded ogre, Kongi surrounds himself, not surprisingly, with assistants of similar pathologies like the Aweri and Secretary.

Fifth Aweri exemplifies the regime's twisted imagination. His idea as to how Kongi can vanquish Danlola in the battle of supremacy between them is nothing short of devilish. To actualize the celestial mutation of Kongi, Fifth Aweri suggests that the leader make a show of his prerogative of mercy by way of announcing amnesty for detainees. However, the goal is never really to grant the

prisoners release, but to use the gesture as a ruse to get the oba to surrender the symbolic New Yam. Thereafter the executions would still be carried out, Kongi having withdrawn his amnesty.

> But tell him he can kill them later in detention. Have them shot trying to escape or something. But first demonstrate his power over life and death by granting them a last-minute reprieve. That's it, work on that aspect of it, the drama of a last-minute reprieve. If I know my Kongi, that should appeal to his flair for gestures [86].

The sarcastic tone of the last sentence may suggest that the speaker is of a different ideological league from Kongi. But the fact that Fifth Aweri accepted in the first place to serve in Kongi's government makes such possibility doubtful.

> But look here, we must make it a last minute reprieve. It will look better that way don't you think? Kongi's act of clemency remains a confidential decision until a quarter of an hour before the hanging-no, five minutes. That's enough of a safety margin, isn't it? It had better be!

If there is but a hint of the beast in this episode, Kongi's response to the news midway through the festival of the escape of one of the detainees confirms the fact that a beast is on the rampage in Ismaland. His immediate reaction is first to withdraw his glib promise of clemency, and follow it with an order for the immediate execution of the other four still in detention, and the recapture of the escapee, one way or another.

> I want him back- alive of possible. If not, ANY OTHER WAY! But I want him back. (100)

Kongi's rage appears to stem less from the escape of his political enemy than from his missed chance to put on display his love for gesture and exemplary discipline against his captives. Ogunba, who has identified a historical parallel to this episode in the 1964 pronouncement by Malawi's Kamuzi Banda that an escaping detainee be recaptured, has this also to say of Soyinka's attitude to Kongi and rulers like him. In Ogunba's view,

> The playwright's concern here is that Kongi's lust for power and absolute control has become so consuming that he can break into epileptic fits because one of his prisoners has escaped. Thus Kongi betrays that fact that he is not just a ruler of lsma, but a wild beast ready to devour his subjects, a kind of voracious tiger.[Ogunba 1975,191].

Aside from the evil counsel of the Aweri, there is also the ubiquitous and stifling surveillance by the serpentine Secretary who likes to see himself as one of the two ears of the system, Kongi being the other one [73]. It should be recalled that Foucault has stressed that the spying technique of discipline can impact with the force of an incubus on the subject's mind, so much so that he is forced to police himself. Soyinka's plays in focus in this work appear to make a motif of the theme of spying. In *Madmen,* the Mendicants are the spies upon whom Bero's regime relies for intelligence. Secretary plays a similar role in *Kongi's Harvest*. The pattern is also true for *From Zia* as suggested by the strategically located loudspeakers in the cells intended to evoke the implacable presence of the panoptic overseer.

In *Kongi's Harvest*, Secretary's frequent personal calls on Segi's night club provide him intelligence on activities there, "just to see what you were up to …" [79]. The night club is a kind of haven for oppressed and dissident lsmites seeking to escape the physical as well as psychological tyranny within Kongi's Ismaland. Thus it stands in sharp contrast to the atmosphere in mainland lsma, where in place of the music, camaraderie, and sense of freedom around the club, Kongi has substituted hunger, sorrow and death. It can be argued that a good part of Secretary's visits is actually in search of that ambience of life within the club, since no one including the Secretary is immune to the harmful atmosphere at Isma. It is here that Secretary and his agents can find the freedom that eludes them under Kongi's dictatorship. A different world entirely from the one Kongi has created in Isma, the club provides music and an environment totally governed on terms that are diametrically at variance with what Secretary and his agents are used to. Here people are open, expressive, relaxed, and above all, they look out for one another. To attempt to replicate the Isma atmosphere at the club, as Secretary imagines he could do, is to court trouble. On one of his visits, Secretary rudely refers to Daodu as "son of Sarumi by his wife number six" adding that "I have come to tell you that your uncle is a damned stubborn goat, an obstructive, cantankerous creature and a bloody pain in my neck" [72-73].

Calling Daodu names is all part of a design to get under his skin by an agent who imagines himself to possess discourse in the scheme of things in Isma, as opposed

to the outsiders that people the club. The following dialogue between Secretary and Daodu makes clear the limitations of the attempt by the former at imposing his jurisdiction on a club run on an entirely different ideological disposition.

Secretary: l hope at least I can buy drinks formy assistants. Where are they, anyway?
Daodu: Inside on duty
Secretary: What is that supposed to mean?
Daodu: keeping their ears open-isn't that what they're paid for? By the way, tell them not to stick their ears out too long or they might get slashed off. People are rather touchy here. [76].

While the Aweris are Kongi's 'advisers' and the Secretary his spy, the job of physical discipline belongs to the Carpenters Brigade, Kongi's hit squad about which he has this to say:

> They complement my sleepy Aweris here. These ones look after my intellectual needs, the Brigade take care of the occasional physical requirements.[91]

Their task is to murder and torture whoever is perceived to be the General's enemy. It is also their duty to flaunt the capacity of the regime for punitive violence. The following remarks by Secretary make evident the premium placed by the regime on violence as its principal tool of operation.

> It's all part of one and the same harmonious idea my Leader. A leader's Temptation… Agony on the Mountain…The Loneliness of the Pure…The Uneasy Head…The Face of Benevolence… The Giver of life…who knows how many other titles will accompany such pictures round the world. And then my Leader, this is the Year of Kongi's Harvest! The Presiding Spirit as a life-giving spirit –we could project that image into every heart and head, no matter how stubborn [93].

It is important however to put in perspective the passionate servility displayed by Secretary, one which stems from a plethora of factors. First is his apparent mastery of his master's psychology, which like the Aweris, he understands to be highly susceptible to flattery. Second is his sense of helplessness from being a captive functionary in an authoritarian government he is fully aware it would be foolish to contradict openly. Lastly, there is also the economic motivation that ought not to be overlooked. (In Africa, serving in government is thought by many to be the quickest route to wealth). However, it is Secretary's sense of helplessness that appears to account the most for his seeming slavish devotion to his duty, as the following words of his rather philosophically suggest: "You'll learn Kabiyesi", he tells the deposed monarch when the two meet as fugitives fleeing a strife-torn lsma. "You'll learn. Survival turns the least adaptable of us to night chameleons" [137]

Secretary is suggesting that his actions as Kongi's secretary were motivated as much by lucre as by self preservation. It is a similar consideration that compels caution on the Aweri even when their personal judgment might ordinarily conflict with their boss's. First Aweri is perfectly aware of this and has to caution a colleague:

> Hey, go easy man. You're asking for P.D. if you go on
> in that tone [82]

This clearly suggests that Kongi's lsma is dominated by a sense of terror and trepidation against which not even state functionaries are insulated. There is

therefore a sense in which this can show that Kongi's regime, like all totalitarian regimes, is a self destruct machine that undermines itself through its own acts of extreme violence. Although the failure of Daudu's revolution to unseat Kongi might suggest the regime's tenacity or its capacity to weather storm, the attempt in itself helps to expose the undeniable vulnerability of a regime sustained by terror and violence.

3.4 Wing Commander: Criminalizing the art of Governance

The themes of incarceration, torture, savage blood thirstiness, legislative casuistry and what is worse, official criminality dominate the plot of *From Zia with Love*. Soyinka's concern is to show how the technology of the prison, torture, executions, and legislation are abused by people in power. It also portrays a system of abuse of governmental privileges such as diplomatic licence. Ultimately, Soyinka's goal is to highlight, as always, what he sees as the deleterious consequences of these abusive practices by people in power.

The entire action of the play revolves around the prison motif as all roles in the play are played by prisoners, symbolizing Soyinka's perception of the entire human society as a virtual prison yard. Society is here portrayed as a prodigious cell in which everyone is a prisoner in every sense of the word.

However, in the play, the physical cell is compartmentalized on the basis of hierarchy of the inmates. There is a 'General cell' which symbolically houses the

cream of the society emblematized by the Commandant Hyacinth, his deputy, ministers and in a certain sense, the student and the sick man who represent the rest of the ‘’free’ but lesser mortals of the general society. Cell ‘C’ houses society’s dissidents and transgressors represented by the trio of Miguel Domingo. Detiba and Emuke- the drug convicts and exemplary guinea pigs of the system’s flawed morality.

The play exemplifies the savagery of the brand of physical discipline operative in the system, the like of which most of the civilized world has outlawed, but which tenaciously continues to thrive on the African political landscape. As far back as the eighteenth century, claims Foucault, exemplary physical discipline had started to lose its appeal in the western world in favour of a new approach found to be more economically and politically rewarding than physical punishment. The new method of psychological discipline, Foucault points out however, only has an appearance of being humane, but in reality is far more damaging than the physical method.

In Africa on the other hand, as Soyinka shows in his plays, physical punishment has remained the favourite method of discipline, increasingly nonetheless, incorporating the psychological variant. This has led in many third world political systems to the emergence of a brand of disciplinary power with the least concern for the human person. Several of Soyinka’s plays including *From Zia with Love*

illustrate the blood chilling physical cruelty and crippling psychological anguish that characterize such political systems.

As well as symbolically giving a general picture of things in contemporary military dictatorship in the Nigerian society, *From Zia with Love* also reflects the inhuman conditions that prevail in Nigerian prisons. The unhealthy and unsanitary conditions of the prisons, the poor dietary regimen to which the prisoners are subjected, and no less the dehumanizing physical abuse that inmates have to endure in the hands of prison officials and fellow inmates, reflect the grim reality of totalitarianism.

But the prisons are only a reflection of the reality of the larger society, which itself is rotten and debased in its entirety. Disconnected from the people it is supposed to cater for, the system that the prisons emblematize is in reality the larger society. This is the basis for the role- playing aesthetics preferred by Soyinka in this play. It is the playwright's way of portraying the collective culpability of a society that is decadent and in dire need of renovation.

To that extent, almost every thing in the play serves as a symbol or emblem. For example, the prison becomes a symbol for the general taint and decay of the larger society; the inmates a symbol of the pathetic condition of a citizenry that is sinning and being sinned against. The prison hierarchy parallels the high level of

corruption and inhumanity common to people in power, just as the water hyacinths represent the sterility and cerebral vacuity that appear to stifle the society.

In this intensely symbolic play Soyinka is at his satirical and combative best as he confronts the animality and hypocrisy of military dictatorships in third world politics. Like all dictatorships, military regimes all over Africa and the rest of the third world are inclined to perpetrate all manner of heinous practices while posturing as saints. Military regimes in Nigeria such as those of Buhari, Babangida and Abacha are particularly implicated along with kindred evil regimes in other climes such as Nicaragua and lraq where Pinochet and Hussein respectively reigned so infamously. It is the tendency by such regimes to act with impunity that is condemned in *From Zia*.

Operating on a well established pattern, these juntas topple an incumbent government on accusation of corruption and incompetence. They then promise to root out corruption and restore to the people the good life denied them by the previous regime. But this promise is never kept, as having secured power, they swiftly return to conducting business as usual. Even with greater recklessness, the treasury is plundered, morality debased, the citizens' welfare abandoned and humanity abused. This is usually possible because the landscape has become even more favourable than ever, thanks to the prevailing public confidence that guarantees limited public censure of government functionaries. While this lasts all manner of deceptive contrivances are employed to fool the people into placing

their trust in a regime that in reality is out to undo them. Part of the strategy is to assume a posture of zero tolerance of corruption, and a willingness to spare no offender. But typically, the saintly posturing only serves as cover for the nefarious activities of the people in control of state power.

The corruption- discipline pattern may be familiar in the discourse of military dictatorship. However, a strange new phenomenon exposed by Soyinka in this play numbs the mind. On display is the insidious complicity of state officials in the criminalization of governance through state-sponsored criminal activities. This involves evil alliance between government and the underworld. Governmental criminalization is an absolute redefinition of corruption. In the play, corruption is no longer merely the self enrichment of public servants at public expense. It becomes a vast network involving plunderers that include that dreadful segment of society that traditionally is regarded as irreconcilable public enemy. The underworld has always existed at the extremity of discourse because of the threat they constitute to the larger society.

In this play however Soyinka depicts a society in which this traditional boundary has been breached because of the inordinate activities of individuals within the corridors of power. Foucault has written concerning how 'governmentality' involves the production and use of knowledge for the construction of auto-regulated and auto-correcting selves. An integral part of the panoptic regime,

governmentality works in myriad ways and domains to satisfy its intended objective.

This technique of control can be seen at work in *Madmen and Specialists* where surveillance is applied to regulate the activities of Old Man for instance. Secretary in *Kongi's Harvest* equally relies on a similar discursive blueprint in his attempt to control his domain. In *From Zia* however the regime of governmentality takes a different dimension.

It assumes the form that according to Mitchell Dean involves "how we think about governing others and ourselves in a wide variety of contexts…"*Governmentality*, 212). In a sense the business of government entails more than just the political structure of the activities of the modern state. More importantly, it includes the way in which the conduct of individuals and groups - within and outside the government - may be conducted and analyzed. As Dean sees it, to analyze government is to analyze those mechanisms that influence and affect the individual in relation to his conduct, choices, desires, aspirations, needs, lifestyle and work (12).

Dean's emphasis on 'mentality' as an important aspect of the governmental process strikes an interesting chord. It is the attitude brought into government by the individual that determines how that person is regarded by others outside or within the government. He explains,

> On the one hand, we govern others and ourselves according to what we take to be true about who we are, what aspects of our existence should be worked upon, how, with what means and to what ends. On the other hand, the ways in which we govern and conduct ourselves give rise to different ways of producing truth (18).

These demands upon personal conduct define the nature of government. Where the consciousness exists, people in government would normally act in ways that reflect the choices they make, choices which invariably reflect their very personality. The individuals that populate the government satirized in *From Zia* operate with a mentality that negates the positive norms of governmentality. Their control of the system and the people within it is tailored toward producing truth of the kind that is destructive of the very system they operate. The junta's control mechanism appears to thrive on the use of brute force to beat subjects into a retreat. The execution of the three drug convicts, against all pleas for clemency, is an act of aggression meant to warn of the ruthlessness of the regime. As a technique of control it is effective to the extent that the government is able to achieve its goal of cowing the populace into submission. To the extent however of imposing a rein upon their own conduct, the control fails largely because individuals within the government abuse and become reckless with the governmental privileges at their disposal.

Wing Commander's alliance with Sebe Irawe, a dreaded criminal, illustrates the final demise of the State. It is not clear though whether Soyinka by this theme is

assimilating Nietzsche's well known dislike for the notion of State. But what appears self evident is the author's total loss of confidence in the system and the individuals running it.

In the play government is criminalized and its moral pedestal severely compromised by its activities. Commander's alliance with members of the underworld completely robs the state of its traditional mystique as bastion of social and cultural control of the system. No longer can the state claim to be on the side of the people, having let them down in such inconceivable manner.

The play indicates that the traditional boundary assumed to exist between the State and the underworld has been breached in a single tragic strike. No longer is it possible in the play to distinguish between the governmental process and the activities of the underworld as both have blended seamlessly in sync. The philosophy of power thus shifts radically from preoccupation with the celestial pursuits of Kongi in *Kongi's Harvest* or the essentialist aspirations of Bero in *Madmen and Specialists, to* something whose foremost goal is crassly material in nature.

As already indicated, use of terror power is common to all military dictatorships, primarily as a ploy for masking official corruption, or for striking fear into the populace. This is the philosophy that ensures that most military dictatorships are more tyrannical and decadent than the legitimate governments they overthrow. In

a bid to strike a posture of piety, a succeeding regime tends to be expansively ruthless. The play's models of evil are Wing Commander, a member of the Eternal Ruling Council of the Junta, and Sebe Irawe, chief of the underworld, through whom Commander's trade in narcotics is executed. This romance as revealed in the 'Song of the Social Prophylactic'- one of the many satirical songs that propel the action of the play – is one that shatters all the myth of sanctity or credibility traditionally associated with government as an institution:

> Rulers are deemed by you and me
> Meritorious.
> They do their job for a safe republic
> Man must work (44)

Contemporary consciousness, with its premium on material value, has led to a problemitization of old values that were hitherto premised on morals. Says the song:

> The question to be or not to be
> Is precarious
> Leave all morals to the cleric –
> Man must wack (44)

It is this consciousness that provides the impetus for the junta's Machiavellian philosophy that is reflected in the claim that power is a resource that 'takes all kinds, both cool and manic' (44)

What is even more disturbing is the fact that the criminal dalliance illustrates the fact that governance has been hijacked by questionable characters. Wing Commander is no less a criminal than his associate Sebe Irawe. The military

officer is a clue to what has become a common phenomenon in governments of the day around Africa, which have virtually turned into a haven for all manner of criminals masquerading as politicians. For these people government serves as a legitimizing shield behind which they can carry out whatever criminal activity that catches their fancy. In other words, government sanctifies vice and makes saints of sinners. People are not likely to bother much if they were left in the illusion that the government and its bureaucrats can be trusted. It is however the knowledge that their government was after all not innocent as made evident by the unwholesome romance with the underworld that is particularly rankling.

From Zia with Love is Soyinka's contemptuous appraisal of the junta which in 1984 swept its way to power in a military coup that toppled the government of Nigeria's Second Republic. Famous for its somewhat maniacal pursuit of discipline in public life, as well as its zealous anti corruption pronouncements, the junta led by General Buhari tried to use a strong hand to achieve its goals. The general perception of the government however was that it was not entirely as pious as it tried to make Nigerians believe. The spectacular executions of three men (Bartholomew Owoh, Bernard Ogedengbe and Lawal Ojulope) convicted for drug offences proved to be the junta's Achilles heel.

The play is about a military officer serving in government who returns home from abroad to discover that his consignment of narcotics has gone missing. Wing Commander flies into the country from abroad where he has been attending a three

month course. His immediate assignment upon his return is to sneak into a disreputable hovel occupied by a tough criminal named Sebe Irawe, where he learns to his dismay that the fifty kilogramme consignment of cocaine he left in the care of Sebe can no longer be traced. The search for the missing contraband provides the backdrop to the sordid details that make this play a classic portrayal of the juntas of the Nigerian political system.

The play reveals the conspiracies and international rackets that make the drug business more than what the junta wants the people to believe. Rather than the small time dealers that the government sets its mind and might upon, the business is driven by powerfully connected people the people never get to know about. Many, like Wing Commander, are in government and take advantage of their positions to facilitate their multi-million ignoble trade. Meanwhile, their diplomatic licence gives them unfettered movement across international borders and ensures that they never get into trouble.

Wing Commander relates how he was able to get the Pakistani leader Zia to approve a 'fraternal gift of a thousand bags of fertilizers' (51), as a 'special Presidential Consignment'. He boasts of a 'privileged cargo' that attracted 'no question, no inspection…Easy' (51).

It is not just government functionaries that benefit from this racket. Friends and cronies equally have their hands in the pie. Worse still, even known criminals are

beneficiaries. The reader learns of how Commander was able to help Sebe to facilitate the latter's business transaction in Milan, using the commander's diplomatic links. What is revealed thus far is that the drug trade appears to flourish for military personnel in government who are privileged not just with diplomatic backing but have in addition the means of coercion to silence whoever is perceived as enemy.

> Sebe: Commander, I must hand it to you. When it comes to the big league, we civilians are simply outclassed. Fifty kilograms at one stroke. (52)

The military as well as being greedy for the big money equally operates on a ruthless business philosophy, thanks to its monopoly of government apparatus of coercion. Thus, a criminally minded military officer would employ whatever means at his disposal to save his skin or his business. Sebe recalls how an embassy official was killed in London by military strategists desperate to beat Scotland Yard. He also recalls how a public building (an allusion to the torching of the NET Building in Lagos some decades ago) was razed down for a similar reason. (55)

The Song of the Diplomatic satirizes this anomalous tendency typical of the military in government:

> For a diplomatic bag
> Is a most elastic bag
> It can stretch to hold an elephant
> Or a full electric plant
> Plenipotentiary pack
> It will cover every track
> And for any busybody wag
> It'll serve as a body bag.

What is being caricatured here is the penchant by those privileged with diplomatic cover to abuse it by diverting it to ends other than they are intended. It becomes a cover for the shady practices of beneficiaries, a license for their illicit cravings that tend to violate the sacred offices they occupy. At the end of it all it is the image of the country that suffers.

> For a diplomatic bag
> Is a copious magic bag
> It's free from drug free guarantee
> Its mouths is open wide
> To swallow nation pride
> For through it stinks in a foreign state
> The bag is a sovereign state (57)

Meanwhile, in the customary fashion of all hypocrites, the public image put up by these vandals in military garb is but a deodorized decadent personality, intended to fool the undiscerning public. Nationalistic slogans urging patriotism and civil responsibility (even of prison inmates) are mere empty words that carry very little conviction. Even the prisons are not spared the hypocritical sloganeering as they are endlessly bombarded electronically through loud speakers mounted within the cells, very much like monitoring devices that speak as well as record events, in the typical style of the Orwellean Big Brother. Laws are made draconian and retroactive to give the impression of sternness and pious resolve to combat vice.

> The campaign of cause. The Law, the Decree, the penalties. It will show we mean business. And any way, that's our style. That's how people recognize who's in charge. That's the difference between you and us. Civilians can only operate in linear time. We go backwards and forwards at will. (78)

It is such arrogance that engenders the impunity with which the military in these shores have come to be associated ever since they made their entry into politics in Nigeria, for example. The decision by the junta to mete out exemplary execution to the three drug convicts is inflexibly conceived to permit no room for clemency whatever the situation. Miguel, one of the victims, is not impressed by what he sees as a public pandering to the whims of the junta:

> That is the kind of language that flatters the bestial egos of such a breed of rulers. It makes them feel that the world and
>
> every living thing within it is their largesse, from which they dole out crumbs when they are sated. Clemency! Even a retarded child must know that the issue is one of justice. (93)

Miguel and his colleagues in the end are executed anyway against public outrage. They are made fodder for the rapacious junta to whom their tragic fate is but a minor part of the game of power. Laments Emuke, another victim of the hypocrisy of the state:

> All I know is dat dis na wicked country to do something like this. We know some country wey if you steal they cut off your hand. But everybody knows that in advance. Every crime get in proper punishment. But if you wait until man commit crime, then you come change the punishment, that one na foul. Na proper foul. I no know any other country wey that kin' ting dey happen.(29).

However, the veneer of righteousness is not altogether foolproof. The actual economic motivation is captured in the 'Rap of the Military Time Machine'.

> I got you in a trap

on the time-machine
If you don't take the rap
I cannot preen
Myself as Mr clean
Now that makes me mean
Too long you've been
On the money scene
……..
Who says I ain't keen
On pastures green?

The song satirizes the fact that the coupists are not in the least interested in the social or moral reconstruction of the state as they claim. Envious of civilians in power, the junta is only interested in getting its hand on the national pie. The 'meritorious' image of government is flagrantly dented, and it is welcome to the era of open criminality of government in pursuit of the self interests of individual elements within it. Rather than combat crime, government is seen hallowing it in the most despicable fashion conceivable.

The conclusion that can be reached reading the plays examined in this chapter is that political power is all about using force in different strategic ways to push decisions through. In some cases psychological coercion is required to break the spirit of targets. However, in Africa, the reliance by the state on brute force has not been influenced much by the changes that Foucault observed taking roots there since the eighteenth century. But what appears to account for this unwillingness to civilize disciplinary power is part cultural and part pragmatic. Africans tend to rely more on brawn than the rigour of the intellect. The fact that this tendency is a product more of the people's self interest and self preservation rather than

intellectual deficiency is really little consolation. Inability to recognize the limits of unbridled self interest is itself an indication of limited intelligence.

Yet it is noteworthy that the history of humanity is a perpetual history of domination. According to Foucault, this perpetuity of domination derives from men's impulse to assert discourse as determined by individual subjects regardless of disparities in degrees of control. Thus Foucault confutes the assumption by Marx that civilizational transformation occurs in linear progression from a state of antagonism to one of universal homogeneity, or consensus in the form of a Socialist civilization.

> Humanity does not gradually progress from combat to combat until it arrives at universal reciprocity where the rule of law finally replaces warfare; humanity installs each of its violences in a system of rules and thus proceeds from domination to domination. (1977, 151)

The works discussed above illustrate the fact that political power always operates in tandem with repression. Used in moderation however force can yield positive ends, as Hannah Arendt has remarked. Arendt resents the idea of violence for its own sake but reasons that certain revolutionary aims may make violence permissible.[2] The human society cannot be conceived in isolation of force, but the force must be such that is measured to avoid being extreme. Unmitigated force like the one utilized by Kongi, Bero, and Wing Commander only lead to an overheating of the system, not forgetting that violence tends ultimately to invite reaction from the party on the receiving end; people tend to fight back if pushed against the wall.

NOTES

[1] Stohl, Michael. Paper presented at the Annual meeting of the International Studies Association, Atlanta. March 27-April 1, 1984.

[2] In her 1969 work *On Violence*, Arendt espouses her conception of violence against the background of the upheavals in Europe of the 1960s that were marked by riots, rebellions, insurrections and revolutions and revolutions. Her aim in the book was to establish a terminological distinction between the two notions of power and violence.

CHAPTER FOUR

POWER AS ECONOMIC EXPLOITATION: *MOROUNTODUN* AND *ONCE UPON FOUR ROBBERS*

Introduction

> The production of the immediate material means of subsistence and consequently the degree of economic development attained by a given epoch form the foundation upon which the state institution, the legal conceptions, art and even the ideas of religion, of the people concerned have been evolved and in the light of which they must, therefore, be explained instead of vice versa (Marx and Engels 429).

Osofisan's two plays studied in this chapter are constructed along the materialist lines that Marx had assumed delineate the social structure of every human community. The plays try to re-enact the dialectical conflict engendered by class struggle in an attempt to persuade readers to accept that the unjustness of the capitalist system articulated by Marx is incontrovertible. This chapter interrogates this assumption by arguing that *Morountodun* and *Once upon Four Robbers* provide grounds to question the validity of Osofisan's Marxist presuppositions as contained in both plays. What instead appears evident is that self-interest is an endemic trait of the human person, which no ideological posturing can hide. If then this trait, often manifest in the plays as private ownership of property, is assumed to by the hallmark of capitalism, it more than suggests that capitalism is here to stay.

Morountodun, a play written in response to an actual event in the historical Western Nigeria of 1969 (when a conflict of interests between state and a group of peasant farmers led to an uprising) bears in its lineaments all the trappings of a revolutionary play as some Marxists conceive of it. First, the play is unequivocally ideologically committed as is perhaps clear enough in the following remarks by Director in the play:

> Director: We decided not to be silent. We decided to go and rouse people up by doing a play on the subject … We decided to do a play about it, and take it around to all open places… We thought we were contributing towards the process of finding a solution … (*Morountodun* 6).

The author's ideological preferences are obvious enough even though he makes his character appear to assume a posture of ideological neutrality in the context of the historicity of his subject. Nevertheless, as Ajayi has suggested, the Director's decision to take his play "to all open places" belies any claim of ideological neutrality, considering the expressed intent to conscientize (Awodiya, *Essays* 89ff).

The second factor that situates the play within the Marxist ethos is its conception of history in evolutionary terms. Marx insists that the socialist destination of history was unabridgeable whatever the circumstance. The same point echoes in Director's words when he reassures his audience that 'History, or what some of you call Chance or Fortune' 'will play itself out', willy-nilly (16). In a sense, the

Director is saying that Titubi's bid to interfere with history is doomed to fail because, unwittingly, she is bound to be the agent of that history.

A third point to note about the Marxist ingredients of this play, one which like the ones above, makes itself manifest in the opening scenes of the play, has to do with the role of ideology in the formation of consciousness. As a product of a capitalist ideology, Titubi has been programmed by the values of that system, so the text suggests. As a result, she is projected as someone who is totally and innocently defensive of values whose actual implications she is barely aware of. Therefore, to the heroine, it is within her right and that of her group to deploy their individual ruggedness and enterprise in the pursuit of personal comfort and success.

> So in what way are we responsible for the farmer's uprising? Ehn? What does our being rich have to do with it? Or is it only when we wear rags that we qualify to breathe the air. Tell me, Mr. Director!… You mount these stupid plays, calling everybody a thief, simply because we work and sweat and use our brain. You want to say you don't like money, abi? (9).

Loaded in this brief remark are the values of classism, individualism, and consumerism, which Marxists condemn in capitalism. Osofisan tries to present his heroine as an embodiment of those objectionable insensitive and decadent values that are intrinsic to capitalism.

While Titubi and her group, (a group of course to which Alhaja Kabirat, Titubi's wealthy mother belongs), represent the oppressive class. On the other side of the divide are Director and the peasant farmers, who are portrayed as victims of the

excesses of the dominant group. The following exchanges between Superintendent and Alhaja help to put the dialectical issues involved in perspective.

Superintendent:	You should know, Alhaja. After all, these rebels are of your own creation, you who are used to feeding on others.
Alhaja:	Look here –
Superintendent:	I'll tell you. The peasants are strong and seemingly invincible, because they are solidly united by the greatest force in the world: hunger. They are hungry, their children die of kwashiorkor, and they have risen to say no, no more!
Alhaja:	It's a lie! No one has ever died of hunger in this country! I am surprised at you, a police officer, carrying this kind of baseless propaganda…
Superintendent:	They claim that you and your politicians have been taking off the profits of their farms to feed your cities, to feed your own throats and buy more jewels and flippery. And so, at last, they are coming for the reckoning (24).

At issue, as made evident in the dialogue, are several of the ills allegedly inherent in capitalism and about which questions are raised by Marxism. First, there is, on the one hand, the question of the insensitive exploitation of the labour of the under privileged class, represented here by the peasant farmers. A corollary of this relationship is the extreme impoverishment of this segment of the society. By contrast, the exploiting class enjoys stupendous wealth and comfort made possible by the disproportionate profits they draw from the labour of the workers. The extreme wealth allows this group to indulge themselves in a hedonistic lifestyle of opulence far beyond the wildest dreams of the exploited poor. What this scenario tries to present therefore is a logical justification for the grudge and indignation

fuelled in the poor by the perceived injustice and inequality of the system of which they are victims. A situation such as this, suggests the superintendent, can only radicalise the masses against their perceived tormentors.

The depiction of the rich as the monstrous face of capitalism is further accentuated in the eleventh scene of the play in Mama Kayode's mimickery of the governor's visit. Recounting (for the benefit of the now converted Titubi), Baba, the farmers' leader's response to the governor's solicitation for truce, the woman mimics their leader's gallant and vivid account of the farmer's ordeal in the hands of their governor and his army of exploiters whom she describes as 'bloodsuckers'. In his speech, Baba had painted the pathetic picture of a people being sucked dry by a swarm of vampires led by a governor who flies in a helicopter to avoid roads begging for his attention. There are also public officials like councillors, sanitary inspectors, and members of the Marketing Board, all of whom feed fat from the misery of the farmers through bribe-taking, excessive taxation, and under-valuation of the farmers' produce. To compound their misery, the farmers are also hounded relentlessly by prowling police officers detailed to stifle any dissent (65).

A similar trajectory of Marxist perspective describes Osofisan's ideological standpoint in *Once upon Four Robbers*. Like *Morountodun, Robbers* demonises capitalism for allegedly being complicit in the upsurge in social vice of which armed robbery is not just an example or plain poetic justice. It also appears to be

handed a *carte blanch* evident in the author's view of armed robbery in his "Programme Notes". As Osofisan remarks in the said notes:

> It is obvious that as long as a single daring nocturnal trip with a gun or machete can yield the equivalent of one man's annual income, we shall continue to manufacture our own potential assassins. For armed robberies, on the scale we are witnessing, are the product of our unjust society (viii)

This no doubt is a contentious viewpoint. What however makes the prologue of crucial relevance to discourse is the way in which it situates the play's thematic concerns within the very crux of Marxist dialectics. As a consequence, it is compelling enough to quote the author at length:

> I believe that it is time we took a second look. The legalised slaughtering of the erring members of our society for whatever offence will certainly not bring the restoration of our society to its primordial sanity. Take a look at our salary structures, at the minimum wage level, count the sparse number of lucky ones who even earn it … and then take a look at the squalid spending habits of our egregious 'contractors', land speculators, middle men of all sorts, importers, exporters, etc. Or take a look at our sprawling slums and ghettoes, our congested hospitals, and crowded schools, our impossible markets… and then take another look at the fast proliferation of motor-cars, insurance agencies, supermarkets, chemist shops, boutiques, discotheques, etc. The callous contradictions of our oil-doomed fantasies of rapid modernization (viii).

Thus, in typically Marxist fashion, Osofisan suggests that the country's ruptured sanity is a function of a combination of structural, infrastructural, social and ethical imperfections fostered primarily by a capitalist system that promotes

inequity. And given that no justifiable ground can be found for making scapegoats of a particular group out of several shades of identifiable transgressors, it would seem logical enough to regard armed robbers as victims rather than offenders. Thus, Osofisan is able to problematize what normally might be assumed to be a straightforward moral issue namely, the evilness of armed robbery. As Fatoba puts it in "The State as Terrorist",

> The crux of the play therefore, is whether legal right has precedence over moral right. Does the state have legal right to execute armed robbers while shirking the moral responsibility of eradicating the social conditions which breed armed robbers? (Essays 1 83)

The play is an attempt at advancing an argument in this respect in favour of armed robbers by portraying them as products and victims of a flawed social system they did not create. In a sense, because it has failed, despite the enormous resources at its disposal, to create the necessary condition that discourages social vices like armed robbery, the state should be held accountable for the dysfunction evident in the system. As Major's plea suggests, "it's hunger that drives us" (14).

What however is being challenged, as already noted, is the selectiveness of justice as depicted in the play. Equally commanding attention in the play is the collective victimhood of the vulnerable group, represented by the robbers, who are excluded from the mainstream of discourse and power. In Marxist terms however, this power is conceived primarily in terms of economic means or access to material possession. Aafa's words to his robber clients attest to this: "I'll put a power in

your hands that will take you out of the gutters into the most glittering places" (18).

However, examined from a deconstructive perspective these plays reveal a number of implicit textual inconsistencies, which subvert the Marxist ideology they seek to project. What seems to constitute the chief source of ideological discrepancy in Osofisan's texts is the orthodoxy of his doctrine. For orthodox Marxism (also called vulgar Marxism) according to Forgacs, pursues the determinist view that the base produces the superstructure and is reflected by it. The weakness of this brand of Marxism lies in its failure to acknowledge the complexity of the process of causation, a fact which, claims Forgacs, even Engels had admitted in 1890 neither he nor Marx had ever intended to dismiss (169). For the interaction of base and superstructure in the production of change is undeniable as even Osofisan's texts do conclude, albeit unintentionally.

In many ways, Marx's conception of history as an evolutionary linear progression towards an ultimate endpoint in human civilisation, which is driven solely by economic forces, remains contentious. The contrary view positing a reality dictated by a complex network of multifaceted processes of causation, although always compelling, appears, according to Forgacs, since the 1900s to have become even more so still in modern western thought. An ever increasing number of western Marxists, Forgacs suggests, have come to admit that other factors, politics for instance, can influence and accelerate changes (169). For Marxists of this

persuasion, a one-way determinist view of change has obvious negative implications for literature, which, as is well known, is classified by Marx as part of the superstructure. Brecht particularly has good reason to abhor literature of the kind that chooses to mask the complex nature of the reality it seeks to convey, when he declares as follows:

> The theatre of the scientific age is in a position to make dialectics into a source of enjoyment. The unexpectedness of logically progressive or zigzag development, the instability of every circumstance, the joke of contradiction … all these are ways of enjoying the liveliness of men, things and processes, and they heighten both our capacity and our love for pleasure in it. (qtd. In Dukore and Geroud 504).

As any study of his works would reveal, Osofisan has deep Marxist convictions, which he readily brings into his works. The two plays in focus in the present chapter are no exception. However, the purpose is to read the texts against the grain of the Marxist sentiments which inform them, in order to reveal the gaps and inconsistencies which undermine not just Osofisan's own personal interpretation of Marx, but Marxism itself as a theory of power and change.

Specifically Osofisan's ideology as reflected in the two texts in study is undermined by a number of factors including the following. First, given the orthodoxy of their construction, the texts implicitly betray several of the weaknesses associated with Marx's account of history as a progressive sequence of events culminating in socialism. Second, several of the artistic devices deployed by the author to justify the above position, prove to be inadequate and flawed. A

third undermining factor has to do with character and characterization. Both plays in several ways contradict Marx's evolutionary account of history and help to posit instead a history driven by human beings in action. Importantly also, the plays reveal that the men and women who shape history are first of all individuals before they are groups, and would if need be, defy any programmatic design in order to retain their individuality or freedom. The conclusion therefore is that a perspective of a history that is driven solely by economic imperatives and destined ultimately for socialist collectivism is too narrow to describe social experience as it affects humans.

Morountodun: The Limits of Economic Power and Collectivism

For a start, it may help to consider a few of the ways in which Osofisan's ideology is 'hollowed' or undermined by the character and characterization of some of the author's individual characters. Titubi and Marshal, two of the most significant characters in *Morountodun,* provide good examples of this. Marshal and Titubi serve the author as proofs and agents of a process of history that is inescapably bound towards a socialist culmination. However, a close examination of events in the play reveals gaps that suggest the contrary. In the first place, a trait common to both characters – their resoluteness of will- which the author seeks to exploit to situate his conclusion actually appears to unsettle that conclusion.

In her case for instance, Titubi is located in a paradoxical historical context as someone exemplifying the way in which history constitutes the individual, rather

than the other way round. She is someone who in the process of resisting change unwittingly brings that change about. In a word, the author wishes to suggest that history will always be able to negotiate its own destined course, irrespective of human mediation. Titubi's eventual denouncement of her capitalist orientation, against the background of the resoluteness and passion with which she had once defended it, is assumed therefore to emblematize the inevitable capitulation of capitalism to a superior and unassailable socialist economy. The key point here is the heroine's transformation and what possibly brings it about. According to the text, more than any other factor, this transformation is the result of the heroine's traits of rebelliousness and courage. First, her rebellious assertiveness leads her into the farmers' camp on a mission which makes it possible for her to experience first-hand the plight of the farmers. Then, her moral courage allows her to admit to the horror of a system she now must repudiate.

> That was when (alluding of course to her audacious voyage) I began to ask questions… I saw myself growing up, knowing no such sufferings as these… But I have lived in the forest among simple folk, sharing their pain and anguish … and I chose … (Morountodun 66.)

At issue here is a demonstration of that irrepressible urge within the individual for freedom needed to be able to negotiate or re-negotiate a position based on choice, reason, or desire, as the case may be. Here the 'language game' is played under a humanistic atmosphere of freedom uncircumcised by tyrannical interventions intended to circumvent the process. Where such freedom prevails, a player's

move can be anyone's guess. For example, Tibubi's ideological volta face is fascinating in large part because of the contrasting fortunes it brings to the opposed ideological camps. The scenario aptly reflects the sentiments expressed in the following words of Lyotard's regarding the nature of social relations:

> To speak is to fight, in the sense of playing, and speech acts fall within the domain of a general agonistics. This does not necessarily mean that one plays in order to win. A move can be made for the sheer pleasure of invention … Great joy is had in the endless invention of turns of phrases, of words and meanings, the process behind the evolution of language on the level of parole. But undoubtedly even this pleasure depends on a feeling of success won at the expense of an adversary – at least one adversary, and a formidable one: the accepted language or connotation (10).

It is important to keep in mind that 'the language game' is a trope for a whole variety of social phenomena. As such, it applies as well in the ideological manoeuvres in question here. Consequently, the 'general agonistics', or simply, the unpredictable turns and twists of phenomena, paradoxically also constitute the foundering rock against which all euphoria of ideological victory explodes. As aporia therefore, Tibubi's conversion (freely determined) to a different ideological frame of reference, also signposts the potential for movement in the reverse direction. Even for the protagonist, the end of ideology is not in sight or envisaged ever to be, because the processes of metamorphoses are endless. In future she might on the promptings of desire, fancy, reason, or choice, move yet in another direction.

Evidently, to take another illustration, the conversion of the duo of Alhaji Buraimoh and Lawyer Isaac in the same play can be traced to a similar impulse. Based on the same paradigm of freedom that justifies Titubi's switch, Buraimoh and Isaac's decision to jettison their erstwhile proletarian convictions borders on the exercise of individual freedom to alter decisions. Therefore like Titubi's conversion, theirs is not in breach of the rule but in tune with it. Critics may label them traitors or black legs, but really there is no logical reason why a different type of justice should be served them from the one applied to the heroine. Such assessment overlooks the similarity of their decisions. Moving to the other side is simply a way by which Buraimoh and Isaac consciously choose to express their individuality in a way once again illustrative of the untenability of Marxist doctrine of totality. The two men simply see no cause why they should be beholden to the group by sacrificing their own personal desires and aspirations.

Once upon Four Robbers: Collectivism and the Crisis of Sharing

If Titubi's conversion, (thanks in large part to her strong will) validates, contrary to popular belief, the inadmissibility of Marxist totalization, no less is the robbers' volatile relationship an indication of the tentativeness of social relationships. Symptomizing an inherent crack in social relations, this disharmonious relationship within the robbers' fold, problematizes for instance, Marxist confidence in the solidarity of the oppressed class. As well as this, it also underlines the possibility that individual interest, can diverge suddenly, thus

warning against hasty homogenization of dogmas, especially in matters related to how booty is shared. Specifically, Major's rebellion cautions against underestimating the power of the individuality of the subject. In simple terms, the robbers' fractious relationship foregrounds and exposes the limitations of Marxist vision of irrevocable proletarian solidarity upon which is premised the promise of plenitude under communism. In more ways than one, Major's rebellion reveals worrisome trends, which make this optimism suspect.

As an expression of his individuality, Major's decision to dispossess his colleagues is a reflection of his greed and selfishness, tendencies which of course he shares with the rest of humanity. Major therefore, merely exemplifies a moral blemish, which is not exclusive to him and one which it would be naïve to imagine would disappear simply by individuals or groups identifying with a particular ideological label. The Ghanaian novelist Armah, seems to acknowledge the fact that the problem is less ideological than it is human:

> The precise location of the mistake is in the assumption that human beings are capable of sharing the fruits of abundance but incapable of sharing the sacrifices made necessary by scarcity. There really is no reason why abundance should make human sharing any easier than scarcity. If anything, the threat to human survival posed by conditions of scarcity reinforces the human capacity to share in a disciplined manner with an environmentally imposed necessity to share or disintegrate (46).

Again, Major by his move or treachery, helps to highlight the wrong headedness inherent in homogenizing phenomena against overwhelming evidence to the

contrary. In character, drive, or consciousness, human beings differ from person to person, irrespective of groups or label. Major highlights the fact that people's actions and reactions may not always be uniform even when they belong to the same group. To expect such uniform response from individuals or groups is to overstretch optimism as well as to betray naivety about the nature of the human person and leads to simplistic characterization which assumes that class necessarily reflects moral disposition; the bourgeoisie are evil, the proletariat virtuous. In reality no such dichotomies exist because evil or vice is class blind. Virtue or vice is a function of how much the individual is able to master the base instincts, which like the lofty ones constitute every human person.

The musicians in *Eshu*, the robbers in *Four Robbers*, and no less so Alhaji Buraimoh and Lawyer Isaac in *Morountodun*, all strongly attest to the inadmissibility of class determined hegemony of morality. Indeed, if the bourgeoisie are accused of parasitic tendencies, the workers must be censured for being self-destruct. By turning in on themselves as the oppressed class often tend to do, they merely perpetuate their own vulnerability as Omofolabo Ajayi has rightly suggested in "Gender and Class" in Osofisan's works.

> Obviously without the active connivance of these various agents and sub-events the upper class cannot maintain itself, but rather than unite against a common enemy, the majority of the exploited turn against each other and accept pitiable droppings from the bountiful table. They get caught in the contradictions of power relationships between the two sections of the upper class – the propertied and the ruling arms, neither of

> which they control or can access easily ("Gender and Class", Awodiya 94).

What however must be stressed is the contingent as opposed to elastic nature of the envisaged solidarity assumed to be a desideratum for the workers' emancipation.

A further implication of Major's action lies in the way in which it helps to shatter the illusion and myth that the proletarian force can be relied upon to drive as well as to sustain (assuming it were at all possible) the emergent socialist epoch. It is difficult to imagine how a decisive termination of the history of human greed and suffering, decadence and economic inequality can be possible under a dispensation managed by humans (whose moral and technical lapses are so clearly) emblematized by a gang of confused and fractious robbers. Naturally, we ought to be suspicious of a group purporting to be able, through such curious and extreme phenomenon as armed robbery, to reform society. Our mistrust hardens when we observe that even basic principles like trust and loyalty so crucial for such undertakings are alien to the group. Worst still is the manifest inability of the group to manage success, even one facilitated by contrivance of magic. In light of these manifest weaknesses, (suggesting though, as has been agreed, that blemish is not specific to any one social group or individuals, but a shared human trait) the hope for proletarian success is ill-founded. Major appears therefore, to strike a fatal blow at the heart of socialist dreams when he tries to rationalize his action on the basis of the following salient sentiments, which on account of their direct

pertinence to discourse, we feel compelled to quote at length. "You are little men", he chides his colleagues. Continuing he declares:

> Our leader, your husband Alhaja, he was a great man. But his death taught you nothing. Nothing! When the man walking in front stumbles into a pit, what should those behind do? Loyality? Affection? Love? Should they because of these passions follow him into the pit? The grass-cutter of the forest, what must he do to claim the elephant's legend? Dress himself in ivory tusks? Listen, we were all brought up in the church (including Alhaja) and what did you learn there apart from how to break the Ten Commandments. There was a messiah, once, and one was enough! For all the centuries! One great monumental mistake and nobody since has been in a hurry to repeat it. They crawl to the cross, they fall on their faces … but no worshipper asks to mount it and leave his life there. No! The nails, and blood, the crown of thorns, all is a charade, kept for the tourist value … Afterwards are the buntings and panics to affirm the reality of living, a survival. And it's privilege, living … Every man for himself. And all the rest 'rob the rich, feed the poor! They're all part of the furniture. You hear? Each man for himself! (38).

Major is not, as textual or authorial slant might suggest, one isolated case of a misguided comrade fallen by the way side. On the contrary, he exemplifies a general human tendency for self-preservation. More importantly still, Major's remarks represent a realistic appraisal of the condition against which any socialist euphoria will stand vitiated.

What thus has been suggested as indication on the part of Major of contradiction of authorial or textual ideology, must not however becloud or detract from the artistic merit implicit in the way in which, (in this particular instance) character has been depicted by the author. In a single deft move Osofisan is able to

demonstrate a capacity rare in doctrinaire Marxist literature to delineate realistically the complexity of the human character, uncluttered by ideological prejudices. The author's words spoken through his character Major, testify to a keen awareness on the author's part, of the narcissistic nature of the human person more likely to be found in works by Betold Brecht. By this technique in characterization Osofisan is (momentarily) elevated to the genius which sets Brecht apart from works of his fellow Marxist writers. Notice for example how Brecht's ideological objectivity reflects in Mauler's pessimistic view of the human person in *Saint Joan of the Stockyards*.

> On oven I have pity, man is evil. Mankind's not ripe for what you (Joan) have in mind. Before the world can change, humanity must change its nature (qtd. In Dukore 153).

The above remark as Edde Iji has commented resonates with Brechtain ambivalence towards his Marxism. This (the quotation above) in Iji's words,

> Sounds very much like Brecht speaking for Brecht and then reneging his own thesis, suggesting that the best alternative for man is to turn Marxist or communist enmasse, and on second thought recanting that suggestion since man is not yet mature enough for this change (23).

Like Mauler, Major recognizes the shortcomings that make the socialist dream unrealizable, or, at the very least, indefinitely deferred.

Another way in which ideological incoherence is betrayed in Osofisan's characterization can be located in *Morountodun* in an episode-involving Marshal.

In a bid to portray the struggle as a relentless one, Osofisan imbues the warlord, Marshal, with a stubborn, steely streak. Ironically, it turns out that the author, without intending it, ends up 'hollowing' his optimistic belief in the workers' ability to reach a problem-free resolution of their crisis through consensus. Marshal's stubbornness ensures that there is a divergence of opinion between him and his colleagues as to whether the truce agreed with the state should be respected. By defying the truce against the opinion of the group Marshal proves once again that consensus among individuals of whatever ideological persuasion as prerequisite for emancipation should not be taken as a foregone conclusion. It would seem therefore reasonable to object with Lyotard to the possibility of a totalizing Habermasian idea of consensus as 'an agreement between men, defined as knowing intellects and free wills …obtained through dialogue' (qtd. In Bertens 127). On the contrary, what Marshal's act of defiance reemphasizes is the fact that emancipation proceeds from a continuous processing of disagreements and disparities, with a view not to the possibility of an ultimate resolution, but a movement toward provisional resolution as chance may permit. This is what Lyotard describes as 'heterogeneity of language games' or 'multiplicity of justices', or simply an endless flow of fresh ideas.

Challenge of Aesthetics

Consistent with the Marxist notion of literature as a normative construct, Osofisan's oeuvre seeks on the other hand to delineate reality along doctrinaire

ideals of what power ought to be as against what it is. One of the ways in which Osofisan tries to mirror such reality is through a conscious repudiation of established institutions, lore, myths, legends, all of which are allegedly in Marxist terms, complicit with the ideologies of a bourgeois capitalist system. Although Osofisan's search for authenticity of African literature compels a reliance on African lore, the ideological motivation for this is obvious. He adopts these aesthetics in order to rework them to suit the normative demands of his Marxist ideology. What this means is that in the end, these lores come to represent for the playwright something different from or even antithetical to, their original signification.

However, not all of these aesthetic manipulations and contrivances turn out to work in the artist's favour. Several in fact appear to contradict the author's ideological propositions about power. Myth-bashing for example, is a favourite device of Osofisan's by which he seeks to refashion and to rethink inherited ideas of power, perceived in his Marxist mindset to be no longer adequate for contemporary needs. For example, remarks Awodiya,

> He [Osofisan] uses traditional materials like myths, history and ritual from the subversive materialist perspective, not from the traditional, superstitious, metaphysical or subservient attitude. Therefore, he "borrows ancient forms specifically to unmask them" by using theatrical magic to undermine the magic of superstition and metaphysics, the gods and their pretended inviolability. Osofisan's use of magic and religion on the stage is merely as theatrical devices and

> in the process, the belief in them is undermined (Excursions 140).

Myths, which for Osofisan serve as interpretive devices for comprehending reality, represent as well for him a paradigm for redefining power as an ideology. Sometimes however, countering myth for ideological reasons may backfire.

Perhaps, the most striking function of myth consists in its epistemological role as a powerful vehicle for the transmission of knowledge across time and space. As "a system of hereditary stories", myths, according to M.H. Abrams, "serve to explain … why the world is as it is and things happen as they do" (111). Myths are therefore instruments of power much like language, for conveying stocks of collective knowledge (collective unconscious) in the form of archetypal recurrence of received knowledge or history, thought sometimes to be subject to modifications in accordance with individual perspectives. Like language, myths have a fairly established import members of the community as a group. To alter this import would amount to an act of arbitrariness that detracts from a sense of community. As Abrams further explains, cultural patterns of observances and sanctions of social conduct are articulated for a people. Northrop Frye also insists that myths are repetitive constructs which impose themselves tenaciously on every literary generation in varying guises. In his words, "The typical forms of myth become the conventions and genres of literature" (qtd. in Abrams 112).

If every human society or culture is (as implied by the foregoing) inescapably beholden to myth, it would amount therefore to self-contradiction to ever try to

deny myth. The universalizing role of myth as collective episteme situates it appropriately within a Marxist praxis given to a promotion of collectivism. Yet, Marxism, speaking broadly, shows much antipathy towards narrative tradition constituted by such elements as myths, fables, legends, religion, folklore characterizing it as "savage, primitive, underdeveloped, backward, alienated, composed of opinions, customs, authority, prejudice, ignorance, ideology" (Sarup 122). Narrative is associated with the rejected. The contradiction lies implicitly in seeking to undermine that which constitutes the very fabric of society, indeed the collectivist essence that holds a people together; the very power fabric that explains the people's reality.

This is exactly what Osofisan is attempting to foster in *Morountodun* as an episode in the play illustrates. In a surrealistic encounter between the heroine and her avatar in Moremi, the heroine is made to repudiate the legendary princess who is the Yoruba paradigm of individual (in particular, feminist) assertion, bravery and patriotism. At a critical moment of self-doubt, on the eve of her espionage, Titubi has to evoke the legend of the woman who, according to myth, had single-handedly liberated her race from colonial bondage.

Buoyed by the Moremi spirit, Titubi is able to undertake successfully a potentially hazardous mission intended to break down the farmers' resistance against the state. Curiously, at the end of her mission, the heroine turns round, rather on spurious ideological grounds, to discredit the selfsame source of her strength. The

important point however is that Titubi's recourse to the Moremi legend in her moment of weakness is a testimony to the preeminence of myth in social life. Her action thus negates the Marxist positivist (scientific) claim that downgrades myth.

Significantly also, Titubi's renouncement of Moremi comes across as a needless, unconvincing over radicalization of history. The fact that 'Moremi served the state' should not detract from the extraordinary nationalistic zeal that she so ably demonstrates. Nor should the legend's royal antecedents necessarily make her feat any less deserving of praise. As Titubi herself is ample proof, the role of the legend as a model of patriotic fervour within the community is neither to be denied nor is it one that speaks to any one specific ideological camp. Like Titubi, any other member of the community can evoke the Moremi spirit for inspiration should the need arise, regardless of that person's ideological persuasion. That is the essence of the legend, and it holds true for all ideologies or myths.

The protagonist's condemnation of the State or Establishment illustrates yet another contradiction in the exposition of ideology in the text. The fissure becomes apparent especially considering the high premium placed by Marx on the state as the epicentre of power in socialist collectivism. By making his protagonist resentful of the state, the author gets himself trapped in a sort of ideological contradiction, given that in Marxist thought, the state is supposed to serve as hub for the socialist project. The individual having lost significance, in line with the collectivist principle associated with the revolution, only the state (into which the

individuals dissolve) retains identity. Indeed, the central control of economic resources by the state means that the state is the most important constituent part of a socialist system upon which the survival of other units depends. Therefore to denounce the state as Titubi does suggests that she mistrusts the idea of centralization. It might be argued though that Titubi is more dismayed by the spirit of the system (represented by the royalty to which Moremi belonged) rather than by the notion of state *per se*. Nevertheless, it will still remain to be shown how that same order of hierarchy with all the inequity and corruption it breeds and which can be found in all systems of leadership, can be managed under communism with a different result. As has been illustrated in the case of the robbers, in *Four Robbers*, mere ideological posturing provides no insulation against corruption or vice. Ethical and moral discipline, which in every situation is what actually defines the quality of character, equally defines leadership, whatever the ideology involved.

There is further in *Morountodun*, a worrisome symptom of patriarchal exclusionism that undermines the author's ideological confidence. The subservient role assigned to women appears to problematize the whole question of social equity and balance so crucial to the socialist ethos. As if to underscore the seeming intractability of gender bias in favour of men, Titubi herself is brow-beaten into conformity in spite of her revolutionary antecedents. Given the temperament with which she arrives the camp, the ease with which the protagonist

succumbs to the prevailing patriarchal order is perplexing. All her strong feminist attributes seem to disappear. Even if it is argued that Titubi's assimilation is a function of her personal ideological inclination towards traditional submissiveness expected of her gender in the system, as opposed to radical western feminism, it is still left to be explained how the exclusion or under-privileging of women is consistent with that vision.

As Ajayi has noted, the exclusion of the women by the men after "the economic aim of the revolution has been fought (and won?)", bodes ill for the entire process (in Awodiya *Essays I* 101). Titubi epitomizes the collective plight of women under patriarchy in the way in which she is silenced by Marshal who himself is the quintessence of the masculinist order. "Marshal, the charismatic leader", Ajayi observes,

> is the same man who seems to undermine the salient concept of social resolution of liberation. He, who seeks a voice for a collectivity even at the cost of his life, now appropriates the voice of another group (101).

No doubt, the gender question is crucial in the dynamics of social relations and must not be underestimated. It is facile to assume victory when a critical segment of the population is still in bondage.

Consistent with the orthodoxy of his materialist beliefs, Osofisan is suspicious of traditional practices on account of what Marxists allege to be their implicit ideological bias in favour of the privileged class. It is on these grounds that such

practices as myths, folklores, religion, rituals, that are associated with the traditional society are denigrated. However, most practices otherwise referred to as 'narrative', are in postmodernist terms, the body of knowledge which provides every human civilization a primal framework for the understanding of the realities of existence and how to deal with them. The eventual emergence of scientific knowledge with its materialization of knowledge or phenomena on basis of empiricism, has led to a tendency by the scientific age to denigrate the narrative tradition as a needless mystical anachronism. This is the belief that guides Osofisan's mythopoesis.

As with myths so with other cultural practices, the carrier ritual, for example. According to Osofisan, the carrier tradition is, like myth, an ideological underhand for manipulating power by the ruling class seeking to perpetuate their hold on power. He claims that the history of communal search for emancipation is unacceptably replete with proletarian martyrdom from which the rich are shielded. In *No More the Wasted Breed*, therefore, Bioku is made to shirk his culturally assigned responsibility as carrier, and Agunri in *Another Raft,* has to contrive to swap places with his sister in defiance of a tradition that specifically assigns that role to her.

However, Osofisan's claim that only the vulnerable class exclusively bears the brunt of communal martyrdom remains contentious. Umukoro, for example has cited the authority of Frantz Fanon and Amilcar Cabral, to emphasize the

centrality of personal sacrifice, especially that of the elite, to the revolutionary cause (33-34). According to the critic the two renowned revolutionary thinkers believe that personal sacrifice, especially of the elite, is ineluctably a precondition for the success of a revolution (Cabral 45, 1.1). Indeed, the cases of Titubi and her legendary ancestor Moremi, stand as exemplary refutation of Osofisan's claim of elitist indifference in the communal struggle. Although it might be argued that unlike Bioku or the maiden in *Another Raft*, both Titubi and Moremi are willing volunteers. Nevertheless, the very fact that they come from the privileged class fatally flaws Osofisan's attempt to simplistically delineate social roles along class lines.

The problem appears to be that Osofisan neglects Macherey's caution regarding the limitations of the author in relation to the amount of control that he can exercise over his text. As a 'product', a writer's work, claims Macherey, is liable to a plurality of interpretations that are sometimes way beyond what an author may have intended. He rejects for example, the totalised view that reality is ineluctably determined and the processes shaping this reality necessarily stable. His idea of literature as production posits a reworking of reality in ways similar to the way in which an artisan produces an artefact, by skilfully putting together different elements until the final product emerges. As Forgacs explains, a literary work, by analogy, is produced by a similar fashion. As nothing which goes into the artisan's making of a product remains the same as it was prior to production,

so do the 'pre-existing literary genres, conventions, language and ideology', re-emerge transformed on the other side of the finished work of art (177). Put simply, Macherey sees texts as necessarily incomplete, because the reader, and not the text or the author, is privileged with ideology. That is to say that the reader brings his/her own theoretical knowledge into the text thereby transforming it. According to Forgacs, Macherey's model is in good measure distinguished from other Marxist models in two respects. The first as stated above is that texts are considered to be incomplete and contradictory. The second assumption is that all texts are ideologically inclined (178).

For Macherey, reading, contrary to popular belief, involves more than just interpretation. Reading actually involves 'theorising', which he claims only the reader possesses. Macherey's idea developed, as Forgacs explains, from Althusser's 'symptomatic reading', a strategy used by the French philosopher to interrogate the gaps and silences believed to be implicit in every text. Althusser's idea, explains Forgacs, is that no writer is able to anticipate all the possible contradictions inherent in or associated with, the elements of the reality he presents. As a result, the text contains contradictions and disconnections, which an informed reader will be able to decipher, and which in consequence will negate the writer's original meaning. This strategy of reading proceeds in much the same way as Lacan's psychoanalytic procedure, which the critic claims influenced it. The text is regarded as being elliptical and incomplete, symptomizing its

theoretical incoherence. Like a psychoanalyst, the reader can, by interrogating these symptoms, explain the lapses and gaps through superimposing a coherent theoretical postulation on the gaps existing in the text.

These ideas have informed the reading of Osofisan's text in this chapter. They have helped to unearth the incoherence in Osofisan's writings that play themselves out so vividly in *Morountodun* and *Once Upon Four Robbers*. However, this should not necessarily be taken as indicative of artistic flaw, because these inconsistencies, if Macherey is to be believed, are common to all literary productions.

Basically, the ideological leaning of Osofisan's texts towards Marxist totalization and foundationalism invites incredulity in so far as they fail to provide adequate explanation of the nature of power relations. If anything, what the texts suggest, though unintentionally, is that power is too complex a social force to be adequately pigeonholed within a single theoretical perspective that holds true for all cases and for all times. Importantly also, neither text commands conviction in its attempt to envision a socialist dispensation that is actually or potentially free of social blemish or economic lack. In essence what the texts illustrate is the availability of power in every facet of the social realm, the satiability of material needs, and the instability of power locations.

CHAPTER FIVE

RELIGION AS A REPRESSIVE POWER IDEOLOGY: *ANOTHER RAFT* AND *THE TRIALS OF BROTHER JERO*

Introduction

This chapter examines the manipulative capacities of religion as reflected in Soyinka's *The Trials of Brother Jero* and Osofisan's *Another Raft*. Though Soyinka's hilarious handling of his protagonist clearly contrasts with Osofisan's 'serious' depiction of Orousi, both characters without a doubt are villains. Karl Marx is famous for his resentment of religion because of its potentials for abuse. These two plays do little to disprove his views. However, the central argument in this chapter is that abuses do not arise in religion necessarily because they are endemic to it. Instead, they occur as the handiwork of manipulative operators who are adept at exploiting the unintended weaknesses of the system. These are the priests, priestesses, and oligarchs of the religious world who feed fat on the innocence and naivety of their flock and give a bad name to an otherwise potentially beneficial activity. Jero in Soyinka's play is a good example of this category of people. The self-styled prophet is a wretched con artist who aspires to improve his precarious economic and social standing by manipulating his followers. Osofisan's Orousi is another example. He occupies a very powerful position in his community as Ifa priest, but unfortunately elects to abuse it by deceiving and lying to his people.

Religion is defined as belief in the existence of God or gods and supernatural forces[1]. Ancestors, or any kind of sacred reality with which people may feel a connection also sometimes may be adopted as a sacred point of spiritual reference. Usually great reverence and care are exercised in people's interaction with such sacred presences. This is called religion, a word that derives from the Latin noun *religio,* in reference to an earnest observance of a ritual obligation with a deep sense of inward conviction.

A practice that pervades all human culture, religion is a complex human experience without fixed boundaries. It sometimes intersects, incorporates, or transcends other aspects of life and society. Unlike Christianity for example, many traditional religions incorporate diverse aspects of public and private life of the societies in which they are practised. As Osofisan's *Another Raft* illustrates, a people's religious life can hardly be separated from activities in other facets of their life, including politics and economics.

Thus as a complex mix of social experience, religion becomes irreducible to a single aspect of human activity. It assumes the nature both of an individual experience and a group one, a pattern of behaviour as well as a pattern of language and of thought. Religious life reflects an individual's attempt to live in accordance with the precepts of a religious tradition. It also reflects the variety of cultural expressions in general. The ways individuals and communities express their religious feelings can involve varying emotional modes ranging from the formal to

the spontaneous, from the solemn to the festive, from the submissive to the liberational. Emotions can also be devotional or contemplative, fearful or joyous. In many cases, as the texts of study exemplify, it can encourage reliance on powers outside oneself or on personal responsibility. The Christian religion which Soyinka depicts in *The Trials* for example, ascribes all power to the Almighty God and Jesus Christ. Followers of Brother Jero who so believe take the prophet's words seriously and consequently become easy victims of his manipulation. Submissiveness is also central to *Anther Raft*, which deals with traditional religion. Here, the figure of reverence is a deity of the land, Yemosa whose power to control the flow of rivers is accepted as a reality by the people of the community of the play's setting. Reliance on personal responsibility as an aspect of religious life, as discourse will soon reveal, constitutes an integral part of the ideology that shapes Osofisan's dramaturgy. This can be seen in the playwright's insistence on the materiality, as opposed to the supernaturality of reality, an ideology that derives from the author's assimilation of the Marxist notion of a god-free reality.

Another Raft: The Elite and Exploitative Power of Religion

In this play in which Osofisan enters into an intertextual dialogue with J.P. Clark's earlier work by the title *The Raft*, the younger playwright brings into the discourse his Marxist orientation through which he both challenges and extends the views of his older compatriot. While interrogating the apparent essentialist metaphysical

predisposition of *The Raft, Another Raft* appears to ground itself on the thematic subject of the nation's socio-political disorientation with which the earlier play preoccupies itself. The following comments read by Yemosa One from the Play's Programme Notes help to put the matter in perspective:

> In 1964, the Nigerian playwright, J.P. Clark, now known as Clark Bekederemo, wrote his play, *The Raft*, which came to symbolize the troubled situation of our newly independent country. So many events have occurred since then to take the nation many times just on the brink of sinking, but miraculously, we have kept afloat. Nevertheless … the storms have not ceased … More and more obvious, as the 80s roll to a close, the need seems to have become truly desperate for … *Another Raft* (5).

Central to the plot of Osofisan's play is the role of religion in the exploitation of the people by the privileged class. Osofisan conceives of religion as an ideological tool of oppression in the hands of the privileged few whose primary concern is no more than personal gratification. In a sense, the masses are portrayed as mere pawns on the chessboard of a dishonest, manipulating clique of ideological cheats.

The play is about a reverine community called Aiyedade, which finds itself in the throes of devastating floods and pestilence, and is desperate for some metaphysical deliverance. The oracle having so decreed, a delegation of nine men is put on a raft with the charge to locate the long abandoned shrine of an angry river goddess Yemosa, who must be appeased with the sacrifice of a maiden. Yemosa who is believed to have unleashed the present destructive flooding being experienced by

the community, is angry with the people of Aiyedade because they have neglected their religious obligations to her. Unfortunately, the mission turns out to be a very costly experience. Not only is the mission entirely disastrous, as it turns out, it is also discovered that it is a ruse contrived by the Ifa priest to cover his own complicity in a racquet involving other prominent members of the community. In league with the prince of the community the Ifa priest contrives to deceive the people into believing that the floods are Yemosa's vengeance upon them for neglecting her for so long, whereas the floods in fact are a direct consequence of the misappropriation of the funds intended for a canal.

In Marxist terms, these happenings are interpreted as economic exploitation involving a privileged class and a vulnerable people. Here, using religion as an ideological pedestal, Lanusen is able to manipulate the system to the disadvantage of the masses, in a way consistent with the bourgeois agenda to perpetuate the status quo. Reore, the farmer of the year, in the following statements, articulates the nature of the dialectics involved.

> We toil and toil, nursing Eledumare's precious earth, tenderly. And then one man we never see, who wines and dines in the soft fairyland of that Lagos city we hear so much about, he just sends his agents down to collect our harvest, leaving us the chaff …(27)

Ekeuroola is a Lagos-based business tycoon. By custom, as the Abore, or head of rituals, a title once held by his father, he is expected to be resident at home. The Abore heads the community's ritual rites, and enjoys the appurtenances attached to

that position. However since his residency abroad has rendered him ineligible for the office, Ekuroola has to bribe his way to the title. The Abore is entitled to the richest lands in the community, a great privilege in the agrarian society of Aiyedade. From a Marxist perspective therefore, Ekuroola is one of the privileged few in Aiyedade whose position is sustained by a religious ideology that makes massive privileges available to the title holder.

The play is also grounded on the Marxist assumption that religion as an ideology 'interpellates', meaning that it exacts such an irresistible influence on the people that their allegiance to the values it upholds is assumed to be obvious or 'natural' (Althusser, 172). Among the people of Aiyedade such interpellation is evident in a number of instances. For example, the people's allegiance to Yemosa is one that is absolute. They believe in the deity's powers, and most importantly, in her ability to unleash floods. Lanusen, the council chairman, and Orousi, the Ifa priest below, highlight the communal ideological mindset associated with the Yemosa cult:

Lanusen: It's the truth, my friend! Not Lanusen's interpretation. Every single male back home in Aiyedade will recite it to you Yemosa is angry because for years we neglected her. Because people like you ran away to Lagos, grew rich, and forgot (12).

And corroborating, Orousi adds:

> The prince is right Chief. We've had such troubled times! Accidents on the highway. Fires in the market. A cholera outbreak, followed by yellow fever! And now, even before we have fully recovered from those disasters, the flood. Ah, the goddess, how her stomach humbles! (13)

These remarks reflect the ideological practices commented upon by Althusser in the following quotation:

> Like all obviousnesses, including those that make a word "name a thing" or "have a meaning" (therefore including the obviousness or the "transparency" of language), the "obviousness" that you and I are subjects and that that does not cause any problem – is an ideological effect, the elementary ideological effect. It is indeed a peculiarity of ideology that it imposes (without appearing to do so, since these are "obviousnesses") obviousness as obviousness, which we cannot fail to recognize and before which we have the inevitable and natural reaction of crying out (aloud or in the "still small voice of conscience"): "that is obvious! That's right! That's true!" (172)

Given what is revealed later about the shady alliance between these two men, their common ground on the subject in question can hardly be considered to be objective. It is therefore not illogical to brand them agents of ideological deceit, a good reason to distrust ideology and religion, as Marx does.

Yet, the sentiments these men express are by no means different from the belief of their community. Hence for this people, the verdict of guilt returned against them by the Ifa oracle is indisputable. They must therefore heed the oracle's injunction to appease the goddess as a matter of urgency. (5).

In a sense, the text portrays the people of Aiyedade as being totally enslaved to an ideological order that impedes their reasoning, and makes them see their leaders as well as tradition as being irreproachable. Also beyond question is the propitiation

rite involving the blood of a virgin maiden carrier, which the Ifa has ordered as part of the imperatives for their survival as demanded by Yemosa. As Orousi puts it, the atonement is required:

> so that we can have peace at last. So the fruit trees can shed the cramp in their waist, the barren earth take seed again, the forlorn farms quicken with the laughter of fresh crops. Yes, so that our people can resume our history, without the terror of flood or fire … (13)

Furthermore, the nature of the challenges encountered by the mission suggests that it is an ill-advised adventure. First, the mission takes off under atrocious weather conditions characterized by a huge, unsettling storm. Second, the men discover at dawn that someone had set them adrift over the night by cutting the raft's moorings. This development orchestrates a string of calamitous incidents that befall the delegates on the mission. For example, several of them are swept away by the currents to be devoured by sharks, and Omitoogun, the old priest and guide, is murdered by his son, Gbebe. While dealing with these challenges, it comes to light that the whole mission has been a charade masterminded by a few ambitious individuals in their midst. The idea of the mission was contrived by Lanusen, the council chairman, representing the political elite. His goal is to conceal the fact that he had misappropriated funds meant for drainage to deal with the floods. Allied with Lanusen is Agunrin, the soldier, representing the military elite, who is hired to murder Ekuroola, Lanusen's bitter rival. Agunrin, who is not originally a part of the mission, is paid to sneak into the raft in place of his sister, the virgin

maiden designated as the sacrificial carrier. His goal ostensibly is to save his sister and put an end to what he sees as an unjust tradition of carrier ritual.

Matters come to a head at the critical moment when Gbebe abominably murders his father by stabbing him in a strange bout of emotional agitation. Outraged by this abomination, the rest of the delegation seizes the culprit, intent on throwing him overboard, to wash their hands of guilt and salvage the mission. At that moment Agunrin steps in from his hiding, using the military power of his gun to thwart the intended retaliatory murder. The soldier's intervention also forces confessional statements from Lanusen and Orousi, the two men behind the present pointless and dangerous voyage.

Osofisan's point is that Aiyedade would not find itself in such predicament had not the community enslaved itself to a potentially enervating religious practice that saps their will to act. As Gbebe declares, in defence of his parricide:

> He was dead before I was born! What do you know about it? He died the day he swore his life to a powerless cult. Let his goddess rescue him now. He gave his life, but that was not enough! They wanted my life too into the bargain, he and his goddess! Please… understand! I've conquered the goddess, haven't I! I've killed her dead at last! (32)

Gbebe's irreverent attitude to Yamosa the goddess, accords with the author's belief that religion is a repressive ideology. What it represses is not just the empowerment of the masses thanks to the exploitative, manipulative tendencies of

the privileged class, but it also represses reason and capacities by 'disappearing' truths that are considered inconvenient to the people wielding religious power.

As Althusser suggests, religion as ideology has the capacity to manipulate things in favour of the priest:

> The reproduction of labour power requires … a reproduction of its submission to the rules of the established order, i.e. a reproduction of submission to the ruling ideology for the workers and a reproduction of the ability to manipulate the ruling ideology correctly for the agents of exploitation and repression… In other words, the school (but also other state institutions like the church, or other apparatuses like the Army) teaches "know-how", but in forms which ensure subjection to the ruling ideology or the mastery of it s "practice" (132).

For example, by investing Yemosa with omnipotency, religion obscures the people's own inherent ability to shape their own destiny, a power they instead cede to the goddess to their own detriment. Thus blinded from this truth, the masses become easy prey to a predatory bourgeois class, who by contrast, from a Marxist standpoint, has access to the truth. This explains why Lanusen and Orousi are able to deceive their kinsmen by manipulating the oracle. In a word, religion is seen as an ally to an exploitative bourgeois class, a repressive ideology consciously designed to serve the needs of the powerful few.

Thus, gods are represented symbolically as disabling hyacinths that clog mental processes when allowed to flourish. In order to make this point more potent, the playwright puts some of his strongest irreverent and iconoclastic sentiments in the

mouths of the characters playing Yemosa. Consider for example the following remarks by the three Yemosas as they introduce themselves to the audience in that direct 'alienating' fashion that is typical of Brechtian theatre.

Yemosa Three:	Greetings. I am Yemosa, the sea Goddess.
Yemosa Two:	And I too.
Yemosa One:	And all of us.
Yemosa Three:	Or maybe you've guessed already.
Yemosa One:	We're like this, as you can see Because we don't exist.
Yemosa Two:	We're merely the figures of fantasy
Yemosa Three:	Actors made up, dream images
Yemosa One:	Made real only in the minds of these men on the raft.
Yemosa Two:	And in all the minds. Where such things as goddesses still exist (35) consider as well the following subversive words of the gods towards the end of the play.
Yemosa One:	Gods and goddesses breed in the minds of men as Hyacinth in fertile water.
Yemosa Two:	And when we flower, we embellish the landscape of your imagining so colourfully, that men invest us with all kinds of extraordinary powers.
Yemosa Three:	But all such powers as we have are made only by your will Our force is your fear for, like hyacinths, we are capable of endless benefits for the use of man, but only as long as you yourselves give the command! (83)

These quotations have been taken at considerable length because of the implications of some of the sentiments expressed in them for the ideological forces at work in the play. Apparently, there is much that is both ambivalent and equivocational in the quotation above, regarding Osofisan's precise position on the subject of religion or the existence of God or gods. Reading this play, it is not clear whether the author's attitude should be taken as being totally dismissive of the idea of religion and god, or whether it is that of a doubtful agnostic who is not

sure as to whether or not God exists. Indeed, Yemosa Three's words (among others), comparing gods to hyacinths that are potentially useful, tend to complicate the author's idea of supernatural power, which the words "we don't exist", spoken earlier by Yemosa One, appeared somewhat to have fairly clearly resolved.

To return to the point about the clogging effects of belief in supernatural powers as reflected in the play, the characters are portrayed as victims of ideologically induced cognitive inertia. For example, this is evident in the failure of the people to find a logical connection between the flooding and the riverine topography in which the community is situated. Would it not, it might be inferred, in all probability be expected that, especially in a season of rains such as is the present case, a coastal community might experience floods? Similarly, would a failure to provide suitable drainage systems by whatever body charged with that responsibility, not provoke flooding at such times? Can the Ifa priest be completely trusted to be above board? Textual ideological slant makes these possibilities to suggest that the people are an uncritical bunch of victims of ideological manipulation by the powers that be. In a sense they are victims of what Althusser has identified as the religious version of power and domination – ideological state apparatus (ISA). This is the non-violent alternative to control, which in the final analysis is no less an effective method of control than force. Indeed, the ISAs, it might be argued, may sometimes prove more effective than force as a means of subjugation since it works on the mind rather than on the

body. Religious oligarchs are adept at deploying this type of strategy, which Althusser distinguishes from its other form in the following words:

> To advance the theory of the State it is indispensable to take into account not only the distinction between State power and state apparatus, but also another reality which is clearly on the side of the (repressive) State apparatus, but must not be confused with it. I shall call this by its concept: the ideological state apparatuses (142)

Significantly, Althusser also characterizes these two ideological apparatuses in terms of their contrasting operational modes:

> The (Repressive) State Apparatus functions massively and predominantly by repression (including physical repression), while functioning secondarily by ideology… Ideological State Apparatuses function massively and predominantly by ideology, but they also function secondarily by repression (145).

Only if the people are able to resist religious ISAs and their ideological indoctrination, Osofisan suggests, would their present state of blindness, lassitude, and false sense of security be overcome to permit reason, true progress and egalitarianism to flourish.

> But if you abandon yourselves recklessly to our caprice as most of you insist on doing we have no power anymore except to drift with the currents of your cowardly surrendering and choke up the fresh springs, and the waterways of your lives (83).

Clearly, Omitoogun and Waje, to some extent, are portrayed as classic victims of a religious Aiyedade community because of their uncritical absorption of the religious ideology in place. A firm believer in the sanctity of Aiyedade's religious tradition, the old priest is so dismayed by the spate of impiety he sees all around

him that, out of self-disgust and spiritual anguish, he has to invoke malediction on the entire community for what he believes is a collective blame: "May you be cursed over and over again for all the things you've said about Yemosa!. May the goddess wreak her vengeance on you all to the bitterest end" (29). In the old man's fatalistic acceptance of a tragic but just fate made inescapable by an alleged collective failing, Aiyedade's just desserts as he sees it, can only be a cataclysmic experience. Waje, the sailor, on his part, appears to be pathologically apologetic and defensive of the excesses of his more privileged kinsmen, whose privileges, in his thoroughly ideologized mind, are divinely ordained, and so cannot be questioned by the likes of him. He admonishes his colleague: "Drop it, Oge! It's the prince and the Abore, can't you see? You can't strike them! It's an abomination!" (31). He is satisfied with tradition as it is and is critical of opposition, which he sees as disruptive. Waje and Omitoogun then illustrate the slavish and despondent mentality fostered by religious power. And only by repudiating religion and situating human destiny squarely in the domain of human will, is social advancement possible in the context of a radically altered status quo.

In all, it can be argued that Osofisan's central message in this highly subversive play is summed up in these words of Yemosa Two:

> Gods are a nuisance to men who abandon their will, but are always eager and fruitful servants to those who with determination, harness their hyacinths with science, which is the supreme will of man (84).

Osofisan's work is plotted to persuade the audience about the oppressive and exploitative intents and purposes of wielders of religious power. The Marxist trajectory of the text suggests that the repressive contents of religion were the invention of a bourgeois cult intent on dominating the working class. Foucault has contested this view by arguing that the deployment of all apparatus of repression was accidental rather than premeditated. Foucault's view, paraphrased below by Madan Sarup, explains how this comes about:

> He [Foucault] rejects analyses which locate the source of origin of power within a structure or an institution at a centre or summit. Foucault's view calls into question the Marxist notion of conflict between a ruling class and a subordinate class. Foucault states that the mechanisms, techniques and procedures of power were not invented by the bourgeoisie, were not the creation of a class seeking to exercise effective forms of domination; rather they were deployed from the moment that they revealed their political and economic utility for the bourgeoisie (82).

John Lye shares Foucault's view on the accidental origins of repressive ideology. Confuting the repressive hypothesis, he remarks that ideology "is not a matter of groups *deliberately* planning to oppress people or alter their consciousness (although this can happen), but rather a matter of how the dominant institutions in society work through values, conceptions of the world and symbol systems, in order to legitimize the current order" ("ideology" 1). This does not however preclude the possibility of deliberate distortions or corruption of an otherwise well-intentioned ideology by individuals of dubious integrity. All that Jero in *The Trials* or Orousi, in *Another Raft* have to do is to 'discover' the loopholes in the

belief system of their victims. Jero for instance takes advantage of the fragile confidence of both Chume and the parliamentarian, two men whose minds are already conditioned to the possibility of miracle for those who believe as solution to human problems. Orousi does not invent Yemosa or the Ifa oracle. He merely exploits the people's belief in and fear of the power of these elements of the religious tradition. In effect these men are mere opportunists, not inventors of deceptive power in religious practices.

Events in *Another Raft* suggest that Lanusen's devious manipulation of the Ifa oracle does not arise from an inventive genius on his part. Without a doubt, the Ifa tradition along with its presiding priests has long been in existence before the present generation to which Lanusen and Orousi belong. And there is no indication that Lanusen's plot is unprecedented, as some other person or persons belonging to a completely different generation in the past, might have employed much similar tactics in pursuit of personal interests. There is similarly no indication that from the very outset, the founders of religious Aiyedade deliberately meant to institute a repressive system by which their personal interests alone could be served. On the contrary, what appears evident is that Aiyedade is very likely to have been served well in the past by its religious values. On the evidence of Orousi's nostalgic recollections, Aiyedade's past has not always been dire under the Yemosa legacy. The priest who appears to have himself been part

of a more illustrious Aiyedade would want a return to the glory days of metaphysical harmony and economic boom:

> So that we can have peace at last. So the fruit trees can shed the cramp in their waist, the barren earth take seed *again*, the forlorn farm quicken with the laughter of fresh crops. Yes, so that our people can *resume* our history.

The italicised expressions emphasise the fact that the priest knows a glorious past a return of which he craves. Though it might be argued that this past might have been the achievement of an industrious people and not that of a benevolent deity, it remains clear that that past too is one in which the people took their religious obligations seriously.

In a word, the unsettled present dispensation is a consequence of several unsavoury possibilities. Chief among these is the emergence of a generation of dishonest, self-serving leaders in the community of Aiyedade who happen to have discovered how to use their positions to defraud the system. For example, it is not unlikely that some Abores before Ekuroola might have held that office quite responsibly, diligently performing their statutory duties, while enjoying unbegrudged the accompanying privileges, possibly with a sense of discretion and justice quite alien to the present Abore. Lanusen and Orousi further exemplify the opportunistic generation of power abusers, who treacherously manipulate the unintended loopholes in the religious tradition of their community.

Omitoogun personifies the innocence and conviction of the old order before the present derelict and degenerate one. His seeming despondency derives from genuine anguish at the loss of Aiyedade's innocence and spiritual moorings, once probably previously anchored on a supportive deity like Yemosa.

Omitoogun: Your sins, damn you! Your sins brought you here, not the priest of Yemosa. (29)

This is a man who, having like Orousi, witnessed a more prosperous Aiyedade, is justifiably distressed by the perversion he sees all around him, as a result of which social conditions have alarmingly deteriorated and happenings vile and unimaginable in the past have become rife. Hence the old priest is fully aware that the plight of his community is man-made, the result of individual as well as collective moral and ethical lapses. The fault is not that of the goddess Yemosa, another way of saying that the fault is not that of religion. By exonerating Yemosa and religion, Omitoogun is clearly indicting the present generation of Aiyedade of having deviated from the values which had served previous generations so well.

Three social groups appear particularly guilty of Aiyedade's descent into social and spiritual atrophy namely, the politicians, the military, and the intellectuals. Together they constitute the opportunistic generation of self-seekers eating away at the soul of a potentially virile system. Lanusen represents the corrupt political class systematically destroying the society through flagrant mismanagement of the commonwealth. By embezzling the funds meant to give his community a badly-

needed drainage canal, he exposes the community to completely avoidable coastal floodings with their attendant human and material losses. Worst still is his corrupting influence on the system. He can afford to use his ill-gotten wealth to pervert a sacred system, taking advantage of a weak presiding priest(hood). Furthermore, the politician is a blood-letting ogre, who would kill to achieve his nefarious goal. His plot to kill his rival and kinsman Ekuroola, underscores Lanusen's soullessness.

Like the politician, the soldier (Agunrin) is portrayed as having a negative influence on the polity with his military power. Two specific actions of Agunrin's symbolically betray the penchant in the military class that he represents, for unsettling the polity under the pretext of corrective intervention. The first is his ill-advised and potentially calamitous severance of the raft's moorings, which he surreptitiously carries out under the cover of darkness. The drifting raft thus symbolises a nation rendered helpless by a cabal of inept coupists who are totally bereft of ideas as to how to move the system along. The other act of the soldier's indicative of his disruptive influence can be seen in the way he tries to subvert tradition by stealing into the raft in place of his sister, the sacrificial virgin carrier. Though his action may be justified as a revolutionary confrontation of what arguably is an obnoxious practice, the implication is far-reaching.

The tradition of carrier springs from a redemptive impulse needed in every society to guarantee communal sustenance. It is a religious ritual found in many religious

traditions including Christianity. Perhaps this is the import of Durkheim's insistence on the social utility of ritual, as explained by Bryan Turner in *Religion and Social Theory*. In his words, Turner understands Durkheim to believe that

> Every society has to possess certain collective beliefs and general values which come to have normative significance for individuals through the agency of certain powerful rituals (48).

The carrier tradition represents messianic power, the significance of which is exemplified by the Christ's sacrifice of his life in demonstration of his redemptive power. There are other ways however, by which a society can be liberated through sacrifice. There must be men or women willing to devote themselves in service to their community in one form or another, devoid of selfish consideration. At critical moments in a people's history, when the collective destiny is at stake, a selfless man or woman of courage is needed to step forward to undertake the burden of the group. Aiyedade seems to lack such personnel.

The 'carrier' tradition is Aiyedade's effort to invent such a possibility for itself when disaster threatens. How this redemptive ritual is undertaken is usually the collective decision of the people to make. Aiyedade having evolved its own peculiar tradition of deciding who exercises this redemptive power, the action of Agurin represents the disruptive effect of military power within the Aiyedade society.

The third debilitating influence in modern Aiyedade is constituted by the lame-duck intellectual epitomised by Gbebe. Gbebe provides an example of intellectual

power. He is the post-colonial articulate intellectual who appears to know what all the nation's problems are, but is unable to proffer the solution. He dissipates much energy on rhetorics but very little on the actual answers to the problems he condemns. He remains at best a cynic, frustrated more by his own inertia than even by the ills he finds around him. It is this frustration that induces in him the parricidal and suicidal impulses that see him killing his father and taking his own life. Gbebe also cuts the image of the modern day ideological fanatic, bomb-thrower, and suicide bomber whose rigid ideological stance prevents him from being willing to accommodate dissenting views. Killing his father is an expression of that ideological intolerance. It is debatable whether Osofisan is cognizant of this flaw in this vociferous critic of the traditional order.

The real problem facing Aiyedade is that the community has failed to move on, mainly because of the failure of the new generation of its power holders in various fields of life to translate the promise of its legacies to beneficial ends, consistent with the needs of the modern age. As has been argued, pre-colonial Aiyedade appears to have fared well enough under Yemosa. By contrast, post-colonial Aiyedade has been unable to adapt to the changing times, driven as it is by a totally different mechanism – science and technology. The fault certainly is not that of the Omitoogun's, or even of the Orousi's. The fault rests squarely with the new generation of power wielders in the various fields of politics, the military, academia, and technology.

Rather than a religious orientation being the cause of Aiyedade's calamities, it is instead the community's apparent irreligiosity that is implicated, its lack of men and women of conscience and nationalistic fervour. Instead of men of integrity Aiyedade is spawning corrupt people in almost all facets of its life. No longer guided by the tenets of their ancestral values, the people have drifted into an alien culture of unconscionable appetite for abusive power that is disruptive of social order.

For all its existential bleakness, *Another Raft* yet provides a few consolations, not least because of Osofisan's well-known penchant for optimistic vision of society. Three points in this regard are particularly noteworthy for their symbolic significance. The first and perhaps most obvious is the optimistic note on which the play ends, when the surviving trio of Orousi, Oge, and Reore successfully row the raft away from the dangerous Olobiripo currents, exhibiting by so doing the importance of group or collective power. Significantly, the men are able to achieve this heroic feat by the sheer energy of their collective will to row having come to the realisation that their survival at that critical point in time would depend on their collective effort. Having come to this realisation, the men are able to shake off their despondency, lethargy, and lack of self-belief and thus are able to save their lives by salvaging the beleaguered raft on which they sail, their emblematic nation. The supernatural, they discover significantly, only work *with* and not *for* men.

The second point of consolation comes paradoxically by way of what might be counted as a benefit of the flood itself. Against the devastating power of nature coming in the form of floods, the human will, intellect and morality are stretched to the limits. Destructive as the floods are, they symbolise nevertheless, a cleansing experience by which the social, moral and spiritual dirts and debris of the decadent Aiyedade community are exposed for condemnation, retribution, and rectification. The ills and corruption so evidently eating away at the heart of the community, as personified by Lanusen's corrupt and murderous political power, Ekuroola's exploitative economic power, Agunrin's disruptive military power and Gbebe's ineffective intellectual power, are brought to light and punished by the deserved deaths of these characters. On the other hand, the deaths of Omitoogun and Waje serve a liberating purpose as sacrificial offering for the atonement of the community's transgressions. On his part, Orousi survives to provide the generational link needed to provide the succeeding generation an orientational platform by way of the invaluable experience of someone who has been chastened by experience and guilt. As Orousi characterises his experience, "It's a hard lesson, and I am the first to learn. I only hope it's not too late" (84). The younger generation will learn from the experience of the Ifa priest the importance of being circumspect with public office, as well as learn that retribution is inescapable. The final solace is offered by the apparent heroism of Waje. The tragic sailor represents almost all that appears to be lacking in the present generation of Aiyedadeans. His forthrightness, bravery, industry and above all, selflessness are

qualities, which succeeding generations must imbibe if the dream of restoring Aiyedade's primordial social and spiritual balance is to materialise. Waje not only embodies, along with the farmer Reore, the vision of a dynamic, work – minded generation of citizens needed to provide economic stability with the "paddles" and "steering poles" in a shipwreck (45). Waje also betokens the possibility of Aiyedade producing men and women large-hearted, selfless, and therefore nationalistic enough to lay down their lives in defence of their fatherland. This is the moral and humanistic dimension of power illustrated for instance by Waje's sacrifice of his life in his fatal bid to rescue Lanusen and Ekuroola, two men with whom he does not have a particularly warm relationship. The bravery, moral courage and humane sensibility displayed by Waje in his self-sacrifice provide solid grounds for optimism as well as sign-post him as a tragic legend from which golden legends may be raised in the new Aiyedade, in the absence of religious and political treachery and bigotry.

Jero the Prophet of Deceit and Manipulation

In contrast to *Another Raft* in which the author's focus is on traditional African religion, Soyinka's *The Trials of Brother Jero* preoccupies itself with Christianity, a religion with a colonial legacy. In saying this, and by way of a quick aside, one should not overlook a tiny curious detail in Osofisan's work, which appears in a stage direction on page 14 of the text. There the author appears to suggest that the Ifa priest Orousi and Lanusen the prince are both Christians and that chief of

rituals, the Abore Ekuroola, is Muslim! This though can easily be explained as the kind of syncretic practice possible in a society like Aiyedade in the throes of spiritual asphyxiation. But nothing in the text suggests that this is conscious.

By comparison, no such complexity exists in *The Trials*, a play in which the author's focus is unmistakably on a character purportedly engaged in Christian evangelism of the revivalist type.[2] In this play Soyinka portrays a roguish, self-styled prophet, who in a moment of uncommon candour, elects to reveal himself (to the audience) for what he truly is. In a sense, the play is offered as a confessional expose of the central character's operational strategies, challenges, and prospects in his self-assigned vocation as prophet. Eldred Jones has instructively commented on the play's special appeal, which according to him lies in its exuberant humour (68).

Beyond humour however, there is the salient question of power, manifesting here not as political or economic power, but one whose nature is much subtler than what can be associated with either political or economic power. In its religious manifestation, power is characterised as ideology because of the seeming absence of overt coercion in its application. Yet, as shown in this play, it would be naïve to deny the repressive potentials of religious power, especially as exercised by charlatans whose motives are other than sincere. Therefore, for the reader who is not insouciant towards the social health of society, Prophet Jero's action would be viewed with much dismay, despite the hilarious ambience of the play.

Oyin Ogunba can see through the comical dressing of the play. He sees evident in the play "not only the cunning, sometimes bordering on crime, of this 'divine' leader, but also the sick, materialistic nature of contemporary Nigeria" (55). In effect, the criticism is not just against a crook masquerading as a holy man, but also against a permissive society whose crass hedonistic propensities are largely responsible for the proliferation of such prophets. Thus, while Soyinka intends to stimulate his audience to mirth at the power pranks of his central character, importantly, he would also wish that the audience take particular note of the unsavoury criminal tendencies of this character, the idiocy of his victims, as well as the harm that these portend for the society at large.

Evidently, the hilarious mood of *The Trials* contrasts with the more poignant and tragic atmosphere surrounding *Another Raft*. Nonetheless, the dissimilarity in theatrical mood does not totally eclipse the fact that both plays are preoccupied with subjects of identical social significance. The search for power of self-awareness which constitutes the thematic nexus of Osofisan's play is replicated in Soyinka's work in the form of a satirical deprecation of yet another form of deceitful power as epitomised by Jero. There is though a significant difference in the way each writer handles characterization. Because of his ideological leanings towards the left, and the class structure of society that this implies, Osofisan tends to conceive his fictional world in terms of a dominant oppressive group and an exploited innocent group. Soyinka on the other hand has no such class fixations

because for him there is no coercive correlation between class and character. In brief, social class does not determine behaviour or character, and no one is immune to vice or virtue solely on the basis of the social class to which he or she belongs. Therefore, *The Trials* is more about character (in terms of personal conduct) than social standing. It is also about the nature of social mobility in a free market environment in which the rich and poor alike are preys and predators, depending on each individual's drive or ambition, guile, or intelligence, or morality.

In the play, Jero is portrayed as the quintessential trickster and opportunist who has chosen, entirely on his own terms, to exploit the weaknesses of the religious beliefs of his people in order to acquire social and economic power. His humble background, his success (?) and the nature of the general composition of his victims as depicted in the play, highlight the difficulty associated with ascribing bourgeois origins to ideological practices and why such notions are never persuasive enough. Jero's introduction of himself is instructive not just for what it reveals about his background, but also for what it says about the nature of ideological formation.

> I am a Prophet. A prophet by birth and by inclination. You have probably seen many of us on the streets, many with their own churches, many inland, many on the coast, many leading processions, many looking for processions to lead, many curing the deaf, many raising the dead. In fact, there are eggs and there are eggs. Same thing with prophets. I was born a Prophet. I think my parents found that I was born with rather

> thick and long hair. It was said to come right down to my eyes and down to my neck. For them, this was a certain sign that I was born a natural prophet (145).

Clearly, Jero is a man of modest means who sees the prophetic 'trade' as a means to economic ascendancy. Importantly, the ecclesiastical status he claims as prophet, the platform upon which this trade is based, is one without any institutional recognition. Instead, it is a purely arbitrary claim, based quite ironically, on some ideological perceptions that at best could be characterized as mere shibboleth. Simply, Jero has latched on to his community's tradition of associating particular physical attributes with particular vocations. Thus, Jero's long hair comes to betoken a call to prophetic duties. Simplistic, tenuous and even ludicrous as this wisdom might appear, Jero finds that he can claim it to assert a prophetic career for himself: "And I grew to love the trade".

For Jero this however means an economic empire as opposed to the spiritual concerns that would have been expected. The reader is therefore confronted with a man who is fiercely mercantilist in his approach to what is supposed to be a religious duty. However, he has to masquerade as a pious evangelist.

In a business so laden with like crooks, competition is fierce, and all manner of strategies are employed to the bargain. Jero's task in this play is to let the audience into the tricks and strategies he had to employ in order to outwit his rival evangelists. Take for example how the protagonist won the competition for scarce land on the beach setting of the play. Intimates Jero,

> … in the last few years, the beach has become fashionable, and the struggle for land has turned the profession into a thing of ridicule. Some prophets I could name gained their present breaches by getting women penitents to shake their bosoms in spiritual ecstasy. This prejudiced the councillors who came to divide the beach among us (145).

Victims of this kind of competition may sulk and curse, but that earns no reprieve. The first proof of Jero's coming of age in the business of manipulative power comes by way of a domestic coup against his master, Old Prophet, whom he effectively throws out of business by means that are less than honest. He cheated his master out of his land "with a campaign led by six dancing girls from the French territory, all dressed as Jehovah's Witnesses" (145). Jero's treachery earns him the bitter outrage of his erstwhile mentor:

> Ungrateful wretch! Is this how you repay the long years of training I have given you? To drive me, your old Tutor, off my piece of land… telling me I have lived beyond my time. Ha! May you be rewarded in the same manner.

Old Prophet knowing his pupil to be a man of uncontrollable passion for women, targets this Achille's heel:

> Ingrate! Monster! I curse you with the curse of the Daughters of discord. May they be your downfall. May the daughters of Eve bring ruin down on your head! (146).

What all this shows is that for the prophets in the clime portrayed here, profanation of the sacred tenets of the Christian religion is the rule rather than the exception. Jero is a product of a system that has the penchant to mentor and

produce quacks and charlatans like the Old Prophet himself. Ultimately their goal is to secure their self interest while pretending to be doing the work of God.

Jero is keen to consolidate his prophetic business, but remains keenly mindful of the old prophet's curses and his own personal weakness for women. To maintain his position as supremo among rival beach prophets, Jero sets out for himself a range of carefully-worked out operational strategies, cardinal among which include an elaborate image-building campaign and a vigorous recruitment drive for congregation. The image-facelift is aimed at strengthening a facade of credibility without which a business such as his would not survive. He explains:

> It would not have been necessary if one were not forced to distinguish himself more and more from these scum who degrade the calling of the prophet. It becomes important to stand out, to be distinctive. I have set my heart after a particular name. They will look at my velvet cape and they will think of my goodness. Inevitably they must begin to call me … the Velvet-hearted Jeroboam. Immaculate Jero, Articulate Hero of Christ's crusade … (1952-3).

It is pertinent to point out that despite Jero's self-acknowledged duplicity, he does sometimes actually consider himself as the authentic model of a prophet, at least in comparison to his beach counterparts. Importantly too, Jero's reminiscences about a glorious past in the business might serve to distinguish the genuineness of that era and the 'scum' of the present one of which Jero is, despite his pretences.

As Ogunba has remarked, Jero's image-building project rests essentially on the prophet's considerable knowledge of human psychology, one which as it applies

to his victims, involves judging things on mere appearance. Thus, Ogunba observes, Jero knows that carefully-chosen apparel and a string of enchanting epithets can make a huge impression on the minds of the ordinary folks among whom he operates (57). In a word, Jero's business is founded on his ability to manipulate the system and the religious zeal of his followers.

Ironically, the apparel upon which the prophet depends for his envisaged transformation is a subject of controversy. He has been unable, or more accurately speaking, unwilling to pay for it three months after he promised to do so. This morning, he comes very close to being undone by Amope, the itinerant trader from whom he bought the article. He is forced to escape through a window, an undignified escape (for a man of God), and thanks to Amope's notoriety for petty quarrels. Her distraction, picking a quarrel with a passerby, at a moment when absolute concentration is needed, provides Jero a chance to sneak away unseen. Even as he celebrates his escape, it is clear that Jero has no intention to redeem his debt.

> I don't know how she found out my house. When I bought the goods off her, she did not even ask any questions. My calling was enough to guarantee payment. It is not as if this was a well-paid job. And it is not what I would call a luxury, this velvet cape which I bought from her (152).

It is also clear that Prophet Jero is the kind of man who is wont to make material capital out of the charismatic powers that it is customary to associate religious leaders with.

> God curse that woman! I never thought she would dare affront the presence of a man of God. One pound eight for this little cape. It is sheer robbery (153).

Suggestion is a kind of mind power that constitutes an important strategy in religious activities. Jero appears to have perfected this approach in his dealings with people. As a mind game, suggestion, according to Robert Thouless, is aimed primarily at shaping the opinion of the target subject. In *An Introduction to the Psychology of Religion*, Thouless expresses the view that people differ in the ways they respond to suggested ideas, a situation to which psychologists apply the term suggestibility. People with a high degree of suggestibility, Thouless explains, are easier to sway by suggestion than those whose suggestibility is lower. Although suggestion is a practice which applies more technically in hypnotism than elsewhere, Thouless claims that it can also serve well in other situations, especially with religious preachers. Importantly, he also remarks that people's levels of suggestibility are accounted for by natural/genetic, social or experiential factors. Some people are born gullible, others acquire the tendency, while still others, having once suffered hypnotism, subsequently tend to accept suggested ideas readily, Thouless argues (21).

Chume and Member are the two characters in this play with the highest level of suggestibility. Apart from the general ideological atmosphere that they share with others as members of a religious society, Chume and Member appear to have in addition an acquired temperament characterised by greed and a penchant for

unrealistic ambition. Chume's desire for a lofty post in his job is not matched by his output, just as Member's taste for a senior cabinet role in government, despite his obvious deficiencies, flies in the face of reason.

Indeed, ideological exploitation, particularly of the religious type, thrives on the manipulatory power of the exploiter. He works on the victim's beliefs and expectations. Jero understands this well enough. In fact, his career reveals a greater propensity to condition his members as individuals rather than as a group. He prefers to isolate his victims as individuals by targeting their individual personal insecurities, rather than holding them as a group. As usual, Jero shares his trade tricks with the audience.

> Strange, dissatisfied people. I know they are dissatisfied because I keep them dissatisfied. Once hey are full, they won't come again. Like my good apprentice, Brother Chume. He wants to beat his wife, but I won't let him. If I do, he will be contented, and then that's another of my flock gone forever. As long as he doesn't beat her, he comes here feeling helpless and so there is no chance of his rebelling against me. Everything in fact, is planned (153).

About other victims, elsewhere, he further discloses:

> They begin to arrive. As usual in the same order. T his one who always comes earliest, I have prophesied that he will be made a chief in his hometown. That is a very safe prophecy. As safe as our most popular prophecy, that a man will live to be eighty. If it doesn't come true, that man doesn't find out until he's on the other side. So everybody is quite happy. One of my most faithful adherents … firmly believes that he is going to be the Prime Minister of the new Mid-North-East State – when it is created. That was a risky

> prophecy of mine, but I badly needed more worshippers around that time (157).

The prophet's tactic is to build his ministry around a core of individual worshippers whose attachment to mundane desires is strong enough to goad them into perpetual loyalty. Then deploying his well-honed mind power, he uses each victim's desires to heighten expectations on the illusion of a possible realization of those desires. Classic examples of such desires include the desire for children, for wealth, for promotion at work, as well as for titles, husbands, wives and the like. By suggesting or prophesying that such dreams would materialize, the prophet is able to swindle the credulous among the worshippers.

Jero's biggest dupe is Chume, whom he has manipulated into a sheepish adulation of him. Member is not radically different either. The latter's induction helps to highlight some of the personal attributes that make Jero a remarkable personality in his trade, the most outstanding of which is his rhetorical prowess. Jero is conscious of his rhetorical skills, and also knows when, like a skilled preacher, he can put it to the best use:

> I could teach him a trick or two about speech-making. He's a member of the Federal House, a back-bencher but with one eye on a ministerial post. Comes here everyday to rehearse his speeches. But he never makes them. Too scared. Poor fish.

Knowing where and how to drop the bait is the hallmark of a great fisherman. Thus, having accurately analysed the situation, he sees immense prospects in a

possible dalliance with the MP, and can even afford to approach his present task with a justified sense of fait accompli:

> Now he … he is already a member of my flock. He does not know it of course, but he is a follower. All I need do is claim him. Call him and say to him, My dear Member of the House, your place awaits you … or do you doubt it? (168).

One thing must be emphasised though. For all his oratory and ability to read minds, Jero would still be unable to 'claim' this fellow in the absence of Member's high-level suggestibility. Evidence of Member's suggestibility as well as that of the unreasonable ambition which feeds it can be seen in the following statement of Jero's during this encounter in question. Note also how the prophet tries to use his customary charismatic trick to good effect in order to induct the parliamentarian.

> The Lord knows best, but he has empowered his lieutenants on earth to intercede where necessary. We can reach him by fasting and by prayers … we can make recommendations … Brother, are you of God or are you ranged among his enemies …? (169)

True indeed, as claimed by Marx and his disciples, membership of a religious ideological group which accepts as 'obvious' the existence of an omnipotent God may compromise the individual. This appears to be the case with the member whose defences, under the circumstance in which he finds himself appear significantly weakened. Yet his so-called interpellation would not, under this particular circumstance, have been so successful, had he not allowed inordinate hunger for power to overwhelm him. The point is that behind every instance of

successful ideological manipulation or suggestion is a strong likelihood that the victim is not without blame for his woes. It may be pure greed, fear, or desperation on his part that makes him to fall easy prey. In his case, it is the member's desire to become a minister, much more than his religious zeal that compromises him.

Dupes don't come any bigger than Brother Chume, by some distance a bigger catch than even Member, considering Chume's strategic importance to Prophet Jeroboam. What Chume concedes to Member in terms of raw objective relevance to Jero, being a man of modest means, he more than makes up for with his strategic location as the ideal prop for the prophet's power aspirations. His lack of intelligence makes him the ideal assistant, since it correspondingly virtually guarantees the absence of ambition of the kind that could possibly threaten the master. Thus in relation to Jero, Chume exists merely as psychological fodder for the prophet's sense of superiority and importance. In a certain sense Chume is the cornerstone of Jero's ministry, one which is erected on the simple-mindedness of worshippers. The archetypal blind believer, Chume is therefore the template of ideal discipleship in a scheme meant to serve only the interests of one man - Prophet Jero.

It is a measure of Chume's simplicity of mind that what provides the ground for his enslavement to the prophet is the ludicrous question as to whether or not he should beat his wife. By taking his petty domestic worries to prophet Jero, Chume merely helps to provide the scoundrel of a prophet the perfect string to lead him

by. Thus Chume presents himself as a pathetic moron who can only run his home on the dictates of an external influence. A Man-Friday with neither heart nor mind of his own, Chume is the receptacle of the prophet's ideas all of which he is expected to carry out as would a robot. So comprehensive is the prophet's control, as the following exchange between master and servant shows, that even the credit for Chume's modest progress on his job is also ascribed to the prophet.

Jero: Brother Chume, what were you before you came to me?
Chume: Prophet…
Jero [sternly]: What were you before the Grace of God?
Chume: A labourer, Prophet. A common labourer.
Jero: And did I not prophesy you would become an office boy?
Chume: You do am, brother. Na so.
Jero: And then a messenger?
Chume: Na you do am, brother. Na you.
Jero: An then quick promotion? Did I not prophesy it?
Chume: Na true, prophet. Na true.
Jero: And what are you now? What are you?
Chume: Chief messenger.
Jero: By the grace of God! And by the grace of God, have I not seen you at the table of the Chief Clerk? And you behind the desk, giving orders?
Chume: Yes, Prophet … (155-6)

It is through such systematic conditioning that Chume has been reduced to his present condition in which he sees the prophet as an infallible saint, upon whom all his dreams depend. It is a process that has rid Chume of all self-belief, situating him as an embodiment of servility and dependency.

Chume's relationship with Jero is important as much for what it reveals about the moronic dependency of Chume as it is for what it says about another aspect of Jero's personality namely, his viciousness. This sinister part of the prophet's

profile is revealed in the ruthless and unjust manner he gets Chume incarcerated. It is interesting to see how Soyinka chooses to make the point about Jero's potential danger to the society. The author does this by showing in the ability of Jero to traverse the political realm, the elastic and dangerous nature of the reach of a perverted false prophet. The alliance between Jero and Member which makes possible the incarceration of Chume on grounds of alleged insanity, illustrates the fate of the common man in a society in which might is right. It also illustrates the permissiveness of a society in which the use of repressive state apparatus (SA) against defenceless people is rife. The alliance also adumbrates what eventually culminates in *From Zia with Love* as the criminalization of state power, in the form of the semi-official induction of known criminals into the running of the affairs of state. Jero and Member thus become the ancestors of Sabe Irawe and Wing Commander.

Soyinka's deft triangular exposition (as shown above) of the various faces of oppression and victimhood as represented respectively by Prophet Jero and Member on the one hand, and citizen Chume on the other, does throw up something else of significance. It highlights the role that chance plays in the enunciation of history, as illustrated by an episode involving the three characters Jero, Chume and Member.

Jero is in the middle of his carefully rehearsed attempt to trick the politician into his net, when the prophet is suddenly forced to flee by a cutlass-wielding Chume,

enraged by his recent intelligence that his wife might have been cheating on him with the prophet. Unaware that the prophet had fled from an assailant while he had his eyes shut, the member, upon opening his eyes a moment later, thinks he has witnessed a miracle— the miraculous disappearance of Jero. And for him this is proof of the prophet's genuineness.

> Vanished. Transported. Utterly transmuted. I knew it. I knew I stood in the presence of God… (170)

This episode highlights the role that chance plays in the formation of truth or history in relations of power. Purely by chance, a legend of power is invented about a false man of God, simply because the Member finds himself auspiciously located in the enunciating position of history; the history of Jero's 'miraculous' transmutation. In future, those to whom this history as related by him may be made available, would either authenticate or denounce its 'truth', but always in ways determined largely by their location (in terms of relationship) from the enunciating subject. Those positioned around the Member, the enunciating body, may, simply on account of his privileged location at the centre of discourse, and as federal legislator, accord belief to his perspective of the account. This explains why Jero can gloat at his good fortune at being vindicated as a powerful prophet by no less a personality than a federal legislator:

> You heard him. With your own ears you heard him. By tomorrow, the whole town will have heard about the miraculous disappearance of Brother Jeroboam testified to and witnessed by no less a person than one of the elected Rulers of the country (171).

On the other hand, others at a further distance from the enunciating body, say for instance, those with a positivist-rationalist orientation, might contest this 'truth' with considerable incredulity

It is pertinent to note the significance of Soyinka's narrative style to this process of history making. The author has chosen a narrative style in which the reader is made a complicit participant in the production (and manipulation) of truth in respect of the locus of power, a position he/she shares of course with Jero, who is inscribed within the text as actor-narrator. On the other hand, Member and the rest of the cast are located in a different realm of reality. Unlike the reader who knows what the actor-narrator knows, the rest of the cast are in the dark regarding quite a whole lot of issues in the narrative. Thus, both parties are situated on different sides of reality. Jero and the audience know better therefore than to regard Member with any degree of seriousness, knowing his truth to proceed from his (mis)reading of a reality beyond his cognitive range at the moment of its 'production'. Yet, as 'eye-witness', Member would insist on the reality of his truth, a scenario that lends credence to Foucault's claim that history exists only in fractures and discontinuities (see particularly Foucault's *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972) and his essay, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" (1977)). Importantly, in all this drama of the nature of truth or power as counter-memory, Jero, it would appear, is the only real beneficiary. Unfolding events in the text

indicate that the wily prophet's house of cards once again survives demolition, and would probably for a while longer continue to enjoy its precarious existence.

Nevertheless, it is not in all cases that Jero's ideological apparatus of ecclesiastical power is successful. In Amope, the cantankerous wife of Chume, the prophet appears to meet his match, indicating how the power of individuals is really a function of how much latitude is allowed them by the people affected by the power on display. Indeed, in a play as unheroic as *The Trials*, Amope comes across as the only character with any semblance of heroic attributes. She is the perfect foil to a husband whose obtuseness is a direct contrast to her own quick-wittedness. Where Chume is disconcertingly credulous, Amope is the quintessential skeptic and cynic. Expereince appears to have taught her never to take the likes of Jero seriously. In fact, her early morning siege on Jero is informed by this knowledge of the prophet as someone who cannot be trusted, despite his pious posturing. At issue between Amope and Jero is the fact that the prophet has reneged on his promise to pay for an article he bought off her three months previously. Amope's tone of voice in the following exchange makes her distrust of the prophet apparent:

Amope: One pound, eight shillings, and nine pence for three months. And he calls himself a man of God.
Jero: I – er – I hope you have not come to stand in the way of Christ and his work.
Amope: If Christ doesn't stand in the way of me and my work.
Jero: Beware of pride, sister. That was a sinful way to talk.
Amope: Listen, you bearded debtor. You owe me one pound, eight and nine. You promised you would pay me three months ago but of course

> you have been too busy doing the work of God. Well, let me tell you that you are not going anywhere until you do a bit of my own work (150).

Unlike her simple-minded husband Amope is not the type to be easily taken in or intimidated by someone's appearance, because she can see through the disguises. Unlike Chume who confuses the two, Amope knows that religious obligations have to be separated from her secular duties as a woman who has a family to provide for. Therefore, she fiercely resists the prophet's gimmick to disarm her. To his claim to have his money lodged in a post office account, Amope responds with the cynicism of a streetwise woman. "You'll have to think of something else before you call me a fool". She knows that every word that proceeds from Jero's mouth is the closest anyone can get to a lie. Her frequent recourse to uncomplimentary terms for the prophet – terms such as 'thief', 'rogue', 'and he calls himself a man of God' – is a reflection of her frustration at the incongruous mismatch between Jero's ecclesiastical posturing and his actions. This attitude also suggests that not only is Amope capable of distinguishing false from genuine prophets, but also that she knows that that distinction lies not so much in words or outward appearance as in character.

Amope also contrasts with her husband in attitude to work. Unlike her trifling husband who would rather than attend to his job prefer to spend office hours consorting with a thieving prophet, Amope on her part, attends to her trade with single-minded assiduity. She is cognizant of the fact that the survival of her

business rests on her ability to recover her money from debtors like Jero, who wouldn't pay without being hassled. Besides, she realises too that more than other better privileged women, it behoves her to strive with particular diligence because of the type of husband she has. Hence, Chume's attempt to force her to abandon her siege on her debtor is resisted with vigour.

> I hope you have ropes to tie me on the bicycle, because I don't intend to leave this place unless I am carried out. One pound eight shillings is no child's play. And it is my money not yours.

And in case he has forgotten, she reminds her husband:

> A messenger's pay isn't that much you know – just in case you've forgotten you're not drawing a ministers pay. So you better think again if you think I am letting my hard-earned money stay in the hands of that good-for-nothing (164).

It is equally a measure of the superiority of Amope's intelligence, that while she knows where Jero lives, her husband - Jero's so-called apostle - does not. And the fact that Chume believes that the prophet is some kind of holy beach hermit rather than elevate him in his master's estimation, instead, adds to Jero's low opinion of him: "My disciple believes that I sleep on the beach, that is if he thinks I sleep at all" (155). It is only when by accident his wife reveals the identity of her mysterious debtor that Chume is brought to the knowledge of his master's duplicity. Now, he comes to understand why the prophet had only just recently granted him the long-sought permission to beat his troublesome wife. Even though for once, in fairness to Chume, he is able to interpret the prophet's change

of heart as entirely motivated by selfish consideration, typically, the locus of this conclusion is mistaken.

Chume's ascription of Jero's reconsideration to a possible illicit affair between his wife and the prophet is hardly surprising. For a man of his negligible intelligence, it is the easiest way to explain something so intricate. How else would his wife know the prophet's home, except the prophet told her? And why would the prophet do so while on the other hand choosing to keep it from him, Chume, the prophet's own assistant? In a sense, the possibility that the discovery is entirely the result of Amope's own personal effort is not to be contemplated for a man of Chume's chauvinistic disposition. For him just being able to raise a 'huge' fist at his wife suggests superiority. In effect, Chume's anger at the prophet stems more from his sense of embarrassment at being subordinated to his wife in the prophet's frame of reference, than from his suspicion of a possible adultery by his wife. ('Here is a man who takes me for a fool and at the same time finds my wife pleasurable') This prophet must be silenced once and for all, Chume must have vowed to himself as he storms out in search of the degenerate prophet.

At this moment when the unmasking might be thought to be approaching the finale, it all goes wrong, again. Thanks to Chume's maladroit handling of things, the prophet once again manages to escape. All the good work by Amope, the sole promethean character able to stand up to the vile creature in the community, comes unravelling due to the ungainly handling by Chume of the crucial

intelligence at his disposal. As a consequence, the prophet's many victims are denied the joy of seeing an end to their tormentor's roguish brand of Christianity.

There is yet another crucial point thrown up by this highly entertaining short play. The common victimhood of characters across the economic divide as portrayed in the text that clearly problematizes the Marxist thesis suggesting that religion seeks to victimize only the ordinary folks. According to Marx,

> Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of a spiritless situation. It is the opium of the people (42).

Just as Osofisan's *Another Raft* exemplifies with Ekuroola, the Lagos tycoon, that anyone including the rich can be conned, *The Trials* portrays in Member, a bourgeois politician, that political power offers no refuge from tricksters like Jero. What this shows is that the rich/poor dichotomy by which Marx tries to explain ideological practices proves untenable. In relations of power, not least of the kind reflected by ideology, class compartments provide no immunity against exploitation. Similarly, the class to which someone belongs does not necessarily exclude them from power. In *The Trials*, as has been shown, Jero, who does not fit into the bourgeois class, is still able to trick his way to the hierarchy of religious hegemony without conventional requisite credentials. He is also able at the same time to exploit individuals from more privileged economic stations. What is clear is that ideological practices are not a closed system from which the poor are

excluded. Whoever is able to master the guile and conscience to desecrate ideology would always manage to break into that realm of power.

This point makes apparent the difficulty, as pointed out by Turner, regarding the contradictions inherent in Marx's theory of religion as mass opium. If this were so, Turner argues, it becomes difficult to explain the existence of conflict in a society in which the narcotic effect of religion applies as much to the rich as the poor. Finding the opium thesis no less analytically problematic than Durkheim's thesis of social cement, Turner observes:

> Despite their very different assumption and approaches, the idea that, through ritual, religion integrates the social group by reaffirming common values has the same analytical status as the idea that religious ideologies unite divergent social classes behind the garment of religious institutions and beliefs. Both types of theory are faced with the perennial difficulty of explaining the existence of conflict, opposition and revolt within societies which apparently have dominant ideologies (78).

Turner's point is that ideologies lack a unifying centre, one strong enough to dissolve differencies and permanently eliminate conflicts. Ideology is not determined on the basis of class. In a sense, it is differences that make conflict inevitable even among people on the same ideological divide. In the same breath, Turner also expresses dissatisfaction with Marx's linking of ideological and economic types of domination, saying that it complicates the dominant ideology thesis by contradicting the primacy that Marx is known to accord production in social relations. Turner writes:

> There is the additional difficulty in Marxism of reconciling the dominant ideology thesis with the economic argument that the principal condition for the subordination of the worker in capitalism is the separation of the worker from the means of production. The worker's acceptance of his situation within capitalism, at least in the early stages of capitalist development, is produced by the fact that he has to work to eat; in theory, ideological subordination is secondary to the economic compulsion which follows from the worker's dependence on market demand for labour (78).

In effect, according to Turner, the obverse is the case; that is, ideology rather than production, as reality makes evident, is the primary force behind social change. The conditioned mind which results from ideological indoctrination, first must be overcome (probably through conscientization) before the people are able to challenge their situation. It is that conditioning that first of all accounts for the people's impoverishment. Power over the mind is an extremely effective way of domination without violence. Like every other form of power mind power has its positive and negative sides. People like Jero and Lanusen, among several other characters in the plays of study, exemplify the negative side of mind power, or ISA.

In summary, the foregoing discourse has attempted to demonstrate the ideological status of religion as a mode of exploitative power. While admitting the possibility of a complicitous involvement of religious practices in ideological repression, discourse objects to a blanket characterisation of religion as a repressive ideology. In this regard, Marx's dichotomous theory of religion as a repressive instrument in

the hands of an exploitative bourgeois class, while valid in many respects, against the evidence of the texts appears overstated. *Another Raft* suggests that religious practices were not originally conceived simply for the exploitation of the weak by the strong. Rather, what alters modern Aiyedade so much, making it so much different from earlier generations, is the emergence of individuals like Lanusen, Ekuroola and Orousi, whose idea of power is largely self-centered rather than egalitarian. As such, whatever repressive tendencies that were subsequently imputed to religion (or ideology) were/are manifestations of the unintended weaknesses inherent in an otherwise well-intentioned idea. Similarly, *The Trials* makes evident that Jero's power derives from his ability to manipulate people for his own selfish ends. Like characters in Osofisan's play, Jero illustrates the possibility that even a well-intended idea can be corrupted by opportunists if their excesses are left unchecked.

In *Another Raft*, there is ample evidence that the present decadent order is but a rude punctuation of a preceding order which by comparison was prosperous and fulfilled, despite its adherence to a religious regime under Yemosa. Unfortunately, this glorious dispensation is supplanted by an avaricious and decadent generation dominated by opportunists like Lanusen, Ekuroola, Agunrin and Gbebe. As a consequence, Aiyedade's innocence is lost, and its glory eroded (as symbolised by the floods) by the activities of its own misguided sons. In a sense, the generation to which Omitogun for instance belongs, appears to have achieved the cohesion

and prosperity of its time simply by its adherence to a common core of values epitomised, in religious terms, by Yemosa, the sea goddess. This thus tends to vindicate Durkheim's claim that the society, even more than the totem or god, is the motive force of religion. Quoting Bryan Turner, Durkheim believes that the society "possesses the supra-individualistic authority, continuity and externality to impress awe and obedience on the solitary individual" (47). This notion of religion as mere social practice finds corroboration in the Igbo proverb to wit: An arrogant deity runs the risk of being shown (by the people) the wood out of which it was carved.

However, there is danger in extreme secularisation of religion. While the social utility of religion cannot be disregarded, to deny religion metaphysical relevance bodes ill for the human society. A godless society inevitably engenders anarchy and nihilism. Dr. Bero and Kongi are good examples of what men tend to become in the total absence or consciousness of the restitutive force of a transcendental, suprahuman reality. These two characters illustrate what a humanity that arrogates to itself unmediated autonomy and self-sufficiency is always likely to turn into. All evil stems from a sense of godlessness. But on the other hand, men feel moral restraint when they fear that somehow, even if they were able to overpower humanity, they would be called to account at some point beyond the human realm. This is probably why even Derrida speaks of a mystical transcendental presence, a locus of power and meaning, which though existing always in flux, is inevitable.[3]

CHAPTER SIX

RESISTANCE AS POWER: *MADMEN AND SPECIALISTS, KONGI'S HARVEST, FROM ZIA WITH LOVE* AND *ESU AND THE VAGABOND MINSTRELS*

Introduction

Many of the plays of Soyinka and Osofisan examined in this chapter lend themselves to a discussion of subjectivity. Subjectivity, in this sense, refers to the way people define themselves in power relations. It foregrounds the antagonistic nature of power relations in the contest of competing individual interests and perspectives evident in every relation of power. In the plays in focus this relationship appears to be formulated in terms of Derrida's and Foucault's discussion of the subject in relation to power. Subjectivity is conceived by both men as a non-unitary, polysemous, fluid, and reversible interplay of related social elements. The plays emphasize the fact that people define their subjectivity - that is their place in social relations - in terms of their individuality, the uniqueness of their being, and the authenticity of their own perspective of life.

A reading of *Madmen, Kongi's Harvest, From Zia,* and Osofisan's *Esu and the Vagabond Minstrels* makes apparent that subjectivity and relations of power in the plays are formulated in light of differences and resistance. This is so because individuals, whether or not they are in authority, are never inclined to yield every element of their resource to the 'Other' without a fight. Just as there are

differences between the modes of power represented for instance by Dr. Bero and the mothers in *Madmen*, or between those of Kongi and Daodu in *Kongi's Harvest*, the connection between those differing modes of power can only be defined in terms of resistance and struggle. *Esu* presents a slightly different kind of power conflict. Although a greater portion of the action is devoted to the individual attempts by the minstrels to acquire the magic power they crave, it is important to keep in mind that their present penurious condition arose in the first place from a ban on their trade by the state. Thus, forced out of the community by unfavourable state policies, their basic goal is to overcome their poverty by whatever means possible. Their resistance is directed both at the state and at their personal situations, which in every respect are unacceptable. The relations of power in which the musicians find themselves are however rather complicated. Aside from the state, they are also involved in power relations with the old man who is the source of their magical power, and who also incidentally is a deity masquerading as a mortal. The singers are also in power struggle within themselves as well as with one another. In the end, each one exercising his/her own power, these wandering bards help to validate the post modernist claim that every relation of power involves struggle and resistance.

The texts illustrate the fact that no one can exercise absolute power. However extensive the scope of power exercised, no character in the plays is able to completely dominate every sphere of another's freedom without encountering

resistance in one form or another. Oba Danlola, in *Kongi's Harvest*, though in theory much less powerful than Kongi, refuses to surrender his traditional stool to his adversary, only doing so, on Daodu's prompting, to give Kongi a false sense of triumph. In a sense, Danlola though keenly aware of Kongi's overwhelming coercive advantage, insists on preserving his own domain of power. Old Man, the Earth Mothers, and the Mendicants all resist the attempt by Bero to deny their subjectivity as individual entities who have their own respective sites of power, an encroachment that violates their right to being.

As Foucault has instructively remarked, resistance as a custom has to be provoked. It is not directed against the abstract and concrete body of the subjecting structure, but rather on the immediate effects of the structure's power.

> The aim of these struggles is the power effects as such. For the medical profession is not criticized primarily because it is a profit making concern but because it exercises an uncontrolled power over people's bodies, their health, and their life and death. (780)

The struggles are against the effects of power on the subjected body, because as Foucault insists, they are

> struggles which question the status of the individual: on the one hand, they assert the right to be different, and they underline everything which makes individuals truly individual. On the other hand, they attack everything which separates the individual, breaks his links with others, splits up community life, forces the individual back on himself, and ties him to his own identity in a constraining way. These struggles are not exactly for or against the "government of individual" but rather they are

> struggles against the "government of individualization (781).

Foucault might have been speaking with Dr Bero of *Madmen* in mind. Bero's perception of the power of his medical profession in terms of a dread-inducing apparatus is clearly provocative. The 'control' that he has over the body of his patients, which under normal circumstances is already quite extensive, compares poorly with the idea of power that Bero has in his head. His relationship with several members of his community- Old Man and the Earth mothers, for instance— suggests that his goal is to alienate and fragment the community in a way that keeps individuals disconnected from one another. By keeping people apart, that is individualizing them, Bero can hope to attain unbridled power of the kind hinted by him in the following remarks:

"Control sister, control. Power comes from bending Nature to your will. The specialist they called me, and a specialist is-well-a specialist. You control, you diagnose, you-prescribe." (237). In a sense, the absolute control that Bero exercises over the body of his patients as a physician, becomes for him the template of power, which he would wish to replicate in the socio-political realm of life.

It is such attitude of omnipotence that defines the mindset of most people in positions of power, and it is this that engenders conflicts. Those who resist this kind of power do so from point of view of its effect on them rather simply to undermine the individual in power. The plays that engage attention in this chapter

help to validate this assertion. But they also illustrate that intriguing point about power that has led Foucault to insist that power is a socially diffused force that avails every space and subject a slice of itself.

Madmen and Specialists: A Triangle of Resistance

In *Madmen and Specialists*, the mothers are arguably the biggest threat to Bero's omnipotent ambitions. However, their resistance to Bero's domination is not motivated by a mere malicious wish to undo Bero's structures. They bear him no real malice given the professional acclaim that Bero enjoys as a physician and their role in that enterpirise. They were, and continue to be, of assistance in the fortification of Bero's stock of herbs upon which he depends for his medical practice. Further proof of their goodwill towards Bero can be gleaned from their joy at the prospects of Bero's return from the war, and their enthusiasm to assist Si Bero prepare for her brother's expected return. Iya Agba's soothing words to an anxious Si Bero are pertinent:

> These hands are not yet ready to wind shrouds. We shall drink palm wine soon, very soon when someone returns.

The stage direction accompanying these statements indicates that the matriarch actually permits herself a little gleeful jig with Si Bero. (226)

The mothers' resistance is to that which they find constraining to their well-being, to the well-being of their community, and to what they stand for within that community. As custodians of the bounties of Mother Nature, they stand for the

creative essence of the community that upholds the sacrosanctity of all forms of life including the lives of humans, flora and fauna. In the words of Iya Agba addressed to the hostile Dr. Bero, theirs is an eternal, ineluctable responsibility: "Not any cult you can destroy. We move as the Earth moves, nothing more. We age as Earth ages" (259)

> Don't look for the sign of broken bodies or wandering souls. Don't look for the sound of fear or the smell of hate. Don'ttake a bloodhound with you; we don't mutilate bodies (260)…You want the name? But how much would it tell you, young man? We put back what we take, in one form or another. Or more than we take. It's the only law. What laws do you obey? (260)

Prior to his war experience, Dr. Bero had been a renowned and diligent physician, helped to that station, in no small way, by the duo of Iya Agba and Iya Mate, the two 'aje' matriarchs. They do this by putting their immense herbal power at his disposal by expertly guiding Si Bero to sort Bero's herbs. Consequently, Bero's reputation as a physician, even in his absence, is sky high. Considered irreplaceable, Bero has a larger-than-life image among his patients. It helps to keep in mind that the mothers exercise their healing power with a communal mandate that recognizes their special role in the socio-religious life of the community. Their involvement with Bero's practice invariably brings with it the communal sanction and approbation enjoyed by the mothers for the benefit of Bero's practice.

When therefore Bero returns with his new anti-humanistic predispositions, it is not merely an act of ingratitude to the individual persons of the Earth mothers. It is more disturbingly an affront on the communal ethos of his people. Not only has he forsworn his medical career, he has also begun to exhibit the most dreadful tendencies of antipathy towards humanity: he has his own father in custody, threatens to kill the Earth mothers, and morbidly refers to his patients as 'corpses'. Worst of all, he has turned a cannibal. It is these noxious tendencies more than Bero's person or his regime as such, that the mothers are up in arms against, because they offend their humanistic sensibilities, thwart the community spirit of the land, and totally violate the natural order of things as the matriarchs understand it. The effects of Bero's new ideology on the mothers are therefore clearly subversive and disruptive. Thus the power struggle here is that of resistance against anti-human and anti-communal application of community-given powers.

Similarly, Old Man has nothing personal against Bero, who after all is his own son. But he objects to his son's abuse of his powers as a physician and the anti-humanistic tendencies he lately has imbibed. "What hasn't been abused?" he wonders (266). Old Man objects to wars because they lead to needless loss of human lives, to practices that dehumanize the human person, to constraining regulations that deny individuals their rights to knowledge, and to totalizing discourses that refuse the individual to be him/herself. Power of this kind that

seeks to break up community life, insists the old one, must be resisted to save society from disintegration.

Resistance in *Kongi's Harvest* likewise is not motivated by malice toward the person of Kongi. Rather, it is a reaction to the constraining effects of his obnoxious regime, which seeks to reform Isma along unpopular lines, to destroy all of its traditional values, and to apotheosize Kongi. The murderous effects of the regime are epitomized in the arrogant posturing of Kongi, and it is to these that Daodu and the rest of the humanist Isma are opposed as the following militant words of Daodu's clearly suggest:

> So let him, the Jesus of Isma, let him, who has assumed the mantle of a Messiah, accept from my farming settlement this gift of soil and remember that a human life once buried cannot, like this yam, sprout anew. Let him take from the palm only its wine not crucify lives upon it. (128).

In the extremely perverted world of *From Zia* in which barefaced criminals have seized the reins of power, the voice of dissent is muffled and indistinct. Since by the very nature of characterization, all the characters are portrayed as products of the same systemic rot, they are therefore already implicated in the general taint being depicted. As a result, heroism is almost non existent in the play. Therefore, no moral virtues can be ascribed to any, and no character is qualified to be held up as model. The most that can be said is that some of them exhibit courage in at least being honest enough to admit to their individual weaknesses, as can be read from the self-parody involved in the cynical role-playing that dominates the play.

They acknowledge the rot in the system's education, in its health, information, agriculture, and the legal systems, and unabashedly subject themselves to criticism in their mock roles' "Ours are the lilies of murky waters unsinkable flotsam of rancid gutters…" (18). They realize too that political instability in Africa is an ill wind that bodes ill for the continent. Detiba, a drug peddler, declares:

> coup to day, casualties right and left, execution tomorrow. Then another attempt the day after. And then sometimes, you don't even know who is really guilty of something or whether someone is just trying to settle old scores. That Ghana bloodbath for instance, till today many people say that one general was simply shot out of revenge. He wasn't found guilty of anything (61).

The obvious target of this indictment is the military in Africa with its penchant for unwarranted intervention in the political system. Sebe, the under-world kingpin in another instance, has only harsh words for a legal system that is prone to self-denigration and corruption in shameless complicity with capricious powers that be. In a memorable passage the wily criminal puns on the self-contradiction inherent in a justice system that thrives on injustice as "kótópó-kòtòpò-kótópó". As he declares, 'it's not fair. It lacks stability and without stability you can't do business' (50).

However valid these perceptions may be, no heroes can be made of these characters. The reader may be consoled only by the fact that the rest of the free world is similarly disturbed. It reflects the communal impulse to challenge the

despotic excesses of totalitarian regimes like Kongi's. The voice of the community can be heard in the newspapers report that the Bar association, civil rights groups, and the church have all condemned the anomalies currently blighting the legal system epitomized by retroactive decrees. These new-fangled legislations provide that offences committed prior to the coming into effect of laws can still be punished on terms stipulated in decrees. As Foucault has suggested, oppositions in power relations are "struggles which question the status of the individual". They are struggles, he says, which "assert the right to be different". A community by its very nature has a unique life of its own that must not be violated by governmental whimsicalities, which is precisely what Kongi's retroactive decrees seek to accomplish. For a normal community, punishment by retroaction is repugnant to natural law. Foucault's remarks above touch on the right of the individual or community to have an existence independent of the world determined by the people in power. The demand by the community on behalf of the drug offenders and other potential victims of retroactive justice is one that questions a denial of their right to be treated as natural rights dictate, and not to be singled out by a governmental policy of individualization that severs them from the norm. Foucault's remark that these resistances against authority attack everything which separates the individual and breaks his/her links with others, suggests that the individual resists that which threatens not just his/her individuality but also his/her sense of community.

A person's sense of community is an important aspect of his/her psychological make-up, because the community takes a determining role in how the individual is identified. For example, a woman is identified in an infinite number of subject positions as mother, wife, worker, friend, and so forth. But the opposition of women to the power of men over them, while not denying these various appellations, "forces the individual back on (her) self, and ties (her) to (her) own identity in a constraining way", that is to her identity specifically as a 'woman'. This, of course, is not to say that she finds her position as a woman constraining, but rather that she is forced by the power of the man over her to assert her identity as woman ever more forcefully, if only to assert her right to be different. These sentiments of course apply not just to women but to all subjects of power whose spaces and locations within a power matrix are influenced by the actions of power wielders. These relations inevitably engender resistance, as well as restrict and constrain how the subject identifies herself within that particular struggle. Thus the struggle questions the individual's status, and resists the "government of individualization", which seeks to control and restrict the individual to a particular identity.

The antagonism between Bero and the Earth mothers in *Madmen*, illustrates subjectivity in the form of "government of individualization". With its repressive ideology, Bero's regime exemplifies a "government of individualization" spearheaded by a self-styled 'specialist', who assumes the super-ordinate Subject

over and above subjects in his community. It is a position that invests him with the power of 'control' over not only humans, but nature, as well.

> Control sister, control. Power comes from bending Nature to your will. The specialist they called me, and a specialist is-well-a specialist. You control, you diagnose, you-prescribe. (237).

By arrogating to himself the sole power to determine the status and locations of everyone else in the community, he establishes what is a clearly an oppressive 'government of individualization'. Bero's threat to expel the mothers amounts to an attempt to deny them their sense of community. It is this move that the mothers resist. In resisting, they not merely assert their individuality, that is, their right to retain their allegiance to earth, but also the right to belong to the community they know and believe they have the right to belong to.

Iya Agba's assertion, "We move as the Earth moves, nothing more. We age as Earth ages" (259) evokes a sense of the collective power they exercise, one that derives from a communal sanction.

So strong is this power and so solid their confidence in its indestructibility that the old women can only mock Bero's threats as empty:

> What can that mean? You'll proscribe Earth itself?
> How does one do that? (260)

The mothers have much axe to grind with Dr Bero. Apart from resisting the ex-physician's attempt to uproot then from their community, the mothers are also opposed to Bero's vaguely expressed desire to invade the sacred grove to tap the

mystical secrets of healing by force. By refusing to disclose the name of the cult as demanded by Bero, the mothers are resisting Bero's attempt to impose on them a constraining identity. They resist an intrusion into their power base especially by someone whose motives are palpably evil. It is also a resistance to an attempt to deny them their communal identity. These resistances question the status of the individual by refusing to accept an externally-formulated identity, but insisting instead on a self-formulated status. By so doing, the individual, the mothers in this instance, constrain themselves to their own earth-rooted particular as well as communal identity while at the same time rejecting Bero's 'government of individualization', which seeks to constrain them to a Bero-given, and thus, singular identity.

The struggles within the power relations between Bero and Old Man are similarly defined, and located in the moment of Old Man's refusal to submit to Bero's restrictive identity. His son's prisoner, Old Man is in addition subjected to a range of denials: his personal belongings such as wristwatch, eye glasses, pipe, and money have been forcibly removed from him. As a consequence he is unable to tell the time, read, or buy his needs. He is secluded from the rest of the world with Bero's agents, the mendicants, as his only companions and guards; he is fed only whatever Bero determines fit for him, and is generally expected to conform to Bero's ideals.

Old Man's incarceration follows a verdict of insanity passed on him by the ruling junta to which Bero belongs. Significantly however, it is a verdict that carries within it an ironic constraining logic because it provides an alibi for the negation of Bero's goal. Seizing on the verdict, Old Man mocks his captor:

> Are you going to reopen the files? The case is closed. Insane, the verdict, thanks to you (253).

What Old Man is saying is that by passing a verdict of insanity on him, Bero has forfeited his chance of getting anything sensible out of the old man. After all, a mad man cannot be expected to make much sense. Thus, Bero's constraining and dividing identity imposed on Old Man provides the ground for dimunition of his assumed power. Old Man is willing to accept Bero's branded identity of insanity, but only on his own terms, terms which provide for him the right to withhold information, assert his identity as himself and a member of a community, and the right to be different— insane. These are the terms of old man's self-constructed identity, which would be defended with the last drop of his blood:

> I am the last proof of the human in you. The last shadow. Shadows are tough things to be rid of (He chuckles) How does one prove he was never born of woman? Of course, you could kill me… (253).

These defiant words indicate Old Man's resolve not to relinquish his subject position within the power domain habited by Bero and himself. It is a refusal to be part of a frame of reference determined by Bero, an upturning of the logocentric centre, in a manner reminiscent of Derrida's subsumation of all phenomena under his notion of *differance*.

Power relations in *Kongi's Harvest* are similarly defined in terms of struggle. In the play, "the government of individualization" is foisted by Kongi on Ismites. Under Kongi's rulership, Isma becomes an enclave under the siege of a despot who has created a massive gulf between himself and the subjects. Arrogating to himself self-mastery, Kongi unleashes an unbridled personal ambition to attain through sheer terror celestial apotheosis. However, not withstanding a systematic regime of terror characterized by a rash of arrests, detentions and executions, he is unable to compel absolute conformity on the people.

The resistance of the opposition is made manifest in a number of ways: in Danlola's refusal to surrender his traditional role to Kongi; in the Reformed Aweri's muffled resentment and discontent; in Segi's father's foiled escape from prison; in Segi's termination of her amorous relationship with Kongi. All of these groups and individuals represent the collective will against Kongi's government of individualization that seeks to isolate, restrain, constrain, and fragment community life in order to dominate it. However, it is Daodu's coallision with Segi that provides Kongi his stiffest resistance.

Daodu's retreat (along with Segi and his band of admirers) to Segi's night club is also an act of resistance in itself. The night club provides an oasis away from Kongi's stifling world, symbolizes the life denied Ismites by Kongi as well as the sanity and freedom, no longer possible to come by in Kongi's repressive Isma. By

removing to the fringe world of the club, Daodu and his group are able to assert their right not to conform to Kongi's determined identity, their right to be different and their right to express their resentment of Kongi's obnoxious regime. Yet, this retreat is not a cowardly escapist option. Rather, it is a strategic move by which Daodu is provided an atmosphere conducive enough for the profound strategizing demanded by the prodigious challenge that lies ahead.

It is at Segi's club that Daodu prepares the revolutionary speech he eventually delivers at the Harvest ceremony. It is also the club that provides sanctuary for Daodu and Segi to perfect the strategies that knock into the speech the sting and bite appropriate to the occasion. As Ogunba rightly observes, the speech which indicates that there is an alternative to Kongism (190), provides the platform for one messiah to confront another. One messiah carries the power expressed as the collective will of the people to live decently, feed properly, and have the liberty to celebrate as much of what life can offer as possible. The other, in contrast, wields the constraining power that seeks to demean life by unleashing death, starvation, sterility, and repression on the people. Declares Daodu, the apostle of life:

> This trip, I have elected to sample the joys of life, not its sorrows, to feast on the pounded yam, not on the rind of yam, to drink the wine myself, not leave it to my ministers for frugal sacraments, to love the women, not merely wash their feet at the well. In pursuit of which, let this yam,… and smoked fish release the goodness of the seas; that the Reformed Aweri Fraternity may belch soundly instead of merely salivating, that we may hereby repudiate all prophets of Agony, unless it be recognized that pain may be

> endured only in the pursuit of ending pain and fighting terror. (127)

Thus, Daodu, the farmer, stands for life and freedom, while Kongi, the prophet of Agony, represents death and denials. Daodu's rejection of the kind of life provided by Kongi is total, since his idea of life is at variance with Kongi's death-suffused ideology. His idea of power is in conformity with the egalitarian ethos of his community that favours communal bond, respect for life and the unfettered freedom of the individual person.

Daodu's principal ally is Segi, who also is his lover. Together they represent the grief and disillusion of Ismites. But Segi is no ordinary woman. She has suffered personally in the hands of Kongi as an aggrieved ex-mistress and victim of Kongi's constraining chauvinistic interest in her only in her sexuality. She has also endured life as the daughter of a man in Kongi's death row. These personal factors combine with the disenchantment and gloom she shares with the rest of Ismites over Kongi's misrule, to accentuate her resentment towards Kongi and all that he represents.

Segi's beauty and personality carry a combative significance of their own and help to define her own peculiar brand of power within Isma. She commands a mysterious aura that appears to unnerve and unsettle even the high and mighty. The words of a song about her allude to expansive sweep of her power the reach and inpact of which is absolute:

> Fame is a flippant lover
> But Segi you made him a slave
> And no poet now can rival
> His devotedness (75).

An 'agbadu' (a black, glistening snake), Segi possesses lethal poison beneath all the exterior exquisiteness that surrounds her profile. So the musicians warn that people like Kongi who cross her part should beware. There is little surprise for those who know her well enough when on the festival she contrives to serve Kongi the head of one of his victims – that of her father in place of the yam being expected by the tyrant.

The commotion and stampede that ensure thereafter herald Kongi's alienation in Isma as well as emblematize the rejection of his rule by the people of the land. Kongi's alienation is of course the logical culmination of his brutal rule, a manifestation of the inherent contradictions of rule by terror.

Like the other plays examined, *From Zia* depicts a bold struggle against a 'government of individualization', a government that seeks to repress, deny, and exploit the individual. The prison setting of the play provides a metaphor for the oppressive force against which the individual is stacked. Although the bleakness of the world of the prison might suggest an unlimited degree of subjugation, there is ample evidence that this is not exactly the case. In the inmates' parodic role-playing, in the numerous satirical songs that ring the play, in Wing Commander's nervousness, and even more significantly, in Sebe's guile and eventual murder of

Wing Commander, are to be found incontrovertible proof that power relations truly are defined in terms of resistance.

From Zia is an exposé of the criminality of the military in contemporary third word politics. In the play, Soyinka is at his most trenchant. Relying in large part on symbols and parody he exposes the decadence and treachery of so-called leaders in a totally devastating fashion. It is typical of Soyinka to descend ruthlessly on dictators by portraying them in the most deplorable and undignified light possible. In this play he excels himself. That Wing Commander's ally is also his worst tormentor is damning enough, but that this ally is a notorious criminal gives vent to Soyinka's image of the military in politics. A self-confessed under-world maestro, Sebe lrawe becomes the image of the military complete with the decadence and profanity they bring into governance while masquerading as reformers. Wing Commander's fraternization with Sebe is not just demeaning but unprecedented as well. Being himself conscious of this, the army officer is understandably surreptitious and nervous in his dealings with the criminal Sebe Irawe. Remonstrating with Sebe for his lack of discretion with the eaves-dropping youth, commander remarks:

> Chief, I am more concerned with what he may have overheard since we started talking.

And the obvious incitement to murder in his next statement underlines his desperation, ruthlessness, and criminality: But will you find him soon enough, before he does any damage? (54)

Significantly, what these statements indicate is that notwithstanding his power and position in government, Commander knows too well that he cannot afford to take anyone for granted – not even a mere street boy — because he too has some power of his own. But it is in his relationship with Sebe that Commander's vulnerability comes increasingly to the fore. Commander's military background does not at all intimidate Sebe. On the contrary, it is the officer that appears a little scared of the criminal, as suggested by the soldier's hesitancy to accuse his accomplice of being responsible for the missing consignment.

Sebe: (Quiet menace) You don't believe me, Commander?

W. Comm: (Hastily) Not you. Don't take everything so personally. I'm talking about your boys. Your scouts. Either they are incompetent or they are dishonest. Such a heavy consignment cannot simply have vanished into thin air (46)

Shortly afterwards, the commander finds himself frantically trying to mollify Sebe who is offended by a hint earlier that he is being suspected by the soldier.

W. Comm: (Nervous smile) Oh come on, I've told you, you're too touchy. That was meant to be a compliment. As a schemer, you can teach even us a trick or two. I know you Sebe, don't forget I know you. (47)

There is no doubt that the commander is having difficulty dealing with his under-world accomplice. Sebe's resistance is a little more than the covert and obsequious resistance typical of underdogs. This is so for the simple reason that

the moral, social, and legal authority of Commander has been massively eroded by the soldier's criminal profile.

Further evidence of Commander's loss of his moral authority may be found in the manner in which the military officer allows himself to share 'trade secrets' (as it were) with a common criminal.

W. Comm: (Smiles) Nothing to it. I said to Zia – why not send us a fraternal gift of a thousand bags of fertilizers – you know, as a gesture of friendship. A contribution to our Operation Feed-the Nation. Of course he agreed. The rest was easy-special Presidential consignment. Privileged cargo, no question, no inspection. The generals took care of their end. Easy. I was supposed to do the same with ours. (51)

This is Soyinka at his satirical best. He reduces the corrupt military officer to rubbles so that Sebe, a common rogue, can trample on him:

Sebe: God punish those pirates!
Sebe: Chief, you'd be surprised. We'll find it. We'll track it down but, you'd be surprised. An elephant could go to ground in Lagos. It could vanish between Idumota and Iganmu, in full view of everyone, and no one would have seen it happen because one could be sitting on it in Alaba market, or using it for a pillow…(52)

All through the scene, Sebe Irawe is seen enjoying himself at the commander's expense using flattery to tease the garrulous soldier into revealing more and more of his regime's indiscretions. While thus revealing himself as being no better by any means than a criminal, Commander is made to play into the hands of the devious self-confessed criminal. In all these encounters, Soyinka is trying to expose the decadence of an exceptionally corrupt military dictatorship, as well as providing a commentary on the nature of power relations. He makes the point that

generally speaking no relations of power are stable, including those relationships in which the ISA'S appear disproportionately distributed. As Sebe proves, the most ferocious tyrant can sometimes be humbled by the most humble adversary.

The power relations between Wing Commander and Sebe Irawe emblematize not just the power of State in relation to its subjects, it also reflects the nature of power relations between individuals. Wing Commander illustrates the overwhelming power of the state over its individual subjects with all the state apparatus at his disposal, none of which is available to the ordinary person. He wields the executive power of resource control, of coercion, and of legislation. At the individual level, the army officer enjoys commanding advantage of political and economic power over his ally. Consequently, at both the state and individual levels the commander appears to call the shots. Yet, Sebe Irawe is not totally without some power of his own. In the business pact between the two men for instance, Sebe is in a position to determine in a remarkable way how the business is conducted. He creates and accepts the identity of criminality that makes him Commander's preferred ally in the latter's nefarious drug business. He is therefore the master in that field and Commander must defer to him regardless of gulf in their status.

Sebe: My friend, do as I say. Come with me. What are we trying to do if not seal up all the roads so this juicy mouse does not escape? We are dealing with the crossroads, so… yes, tell me, doesn't the Bible itself say – render unto Caesar what is Caesar's and unto God what is God's? it's the same thing. In any case what is wrong with a little insurance? Commander, look at me! Just look at me! Moslem,

> Christian, Animist, Buddhist, Aborisha – now that combination is what you call – practical measures. Insurance policies. May be if you had thought of involving Olokun, Guardian of the seas, the pirates would have been drowned while attempting the hijack. (80).

The foregoing statements are Sebe's way of persuading Wing Commander to subscribe to the criminal's reconfiguration of the power matrix. In effect, what Sebe is trying to do is to neutralize Commander's (repressive) state apparatuses (RSA) with his (Sebe's) modest religious ideological state apparatus (ISA). While Commander defines Sebe's subjectivity in terms of Sebe's criminality, Sebe, while not denying that identity, is intent on showing the commander the similarity in the identity of the both of them. Refusing to limit his identity to the single one constrictively defined by Wing Commander, Sebe reveals his other platforms of power in realms of religion, piracy and debauchery.

Within the framework of this play, the conflict is clearly between commander's repressive state apparatus, which he could potentially deploy, and Sebe's ideological apparatus essentially couched in the tricks and wiles afforded him by his considerable street wisdom. In the end it is the latter that triumphs over the presumably more powerful repressive state apparatus. Commander is successfully lured by Sebe to the crossroads where under the guise of seeking a religious solution to their collective problem via Esu, the trickster god of the crossroads, the military commander is murdered by his partner. Sebe's successful murder of his ally illustrates the point that power relations never exist in absolute terms.

This reversibility of roles in power relations has been seen at play in *Madmen* in respect of the relations between Bero and Old Man on the one hand, and between Bero and the mothers on the other. A few more comments on these relations would suffice to establish the centrality of this phenomenon in the discourse of power relations in the play. Although Dr. Bero with his gun, spies, and authority appears to enjoy a disproportionate advantage of power over Old Man, whom he has in captivity, it is important to note that Bero is nonetheless unable to extract from Old Man the latter's withheld information.

Old man's uncompromising refusal to yield is not only frustrating for Bero, his words are patently derisive:

> Old Man: Prod. Prod. Probe. Probe. Don't you know what I am? (Dramatic whisper) Octopus. Plenty of reach but nothing to seize on. I re-create my tentacles, so cut away (262).

Even when frustration coupled with indignation forces him to take the extreme measure of shooting his father, Bero remains unable to get what he wants and thus continues to remain outside Old Man's frame of reference. As a matter of fact by killing his father he forecloses the chance of ever satisfying that need; at least from the Old Man.

The mothers represent even a more redoubtable opposition to Bero's terror regime. They appear to have behind them a mysterious and supernatural force which makes them operate without the slightest fear for Bero. They defy his order to quit

and derisively see him as no more then a puny brat with an overblown notion of his own powers.

Iya Agba: What can that mean? You'll proscribe Earth itself? How does one do that? (260)

The mothers' point is not merely that Bero lacks the capacity to harm them personally. The reference to Earth has a wider application. It suggests that like Earth, the society and its human inhabitants will outlast Bero and other tyrants like him, and as such are immeasurably more powerful than he. But to demonstrate the practical value of their own power the mothers take the battle to Bero by setting fire to his surgery, to bring Bero with his bestial reign to the knowledge of the limits of his power.

With the mendicants, the phenomenon of role reversibility assumes a markedly different form. While being less direct or violent than is Old Man or the Earth mothers, the mendicants are nonetheless no less defiant, if not somewhat more subversive. Moody identifies potentials for subversion in "their (mendicants') satirical songs and puns, and finally, the insistent recurring under-streams of their chant which fatally challenges (sic) Bero's efforts to 'proscribe' and 'prescribe' knowledge and language "(Tick of Heretic" 120). He suggests further that Bero's biggest undoing lies in his inability to control the 'heretics' he had helped to institute in the mendicants.

> Bero is at his most frustrated when he cannot 'shut up' the surplus of his own ideology: the maddening 'ticking' of his heretics. (120)

If their chants and performative acting help to undo Bero, the mendicants are also shown to have gained something from their service to their master, Bero. Working as Bero's spies has enabled them to stumble on "official secrets" potentially enriching their understanding of governmental processes. But significantly, official secrets' might also suggest access, in the course of their duty, to facts about family secrets about which Bero probable is ignorant.

Blindman: I can only tell what I felt – in that room which I stood with her. There is more love in there than you'll find in the arms of a hundred women. I don't know what unhappiness you intend for her but… (231)

The mendicants further gain from their relationship with Old Man. Old Man helps to make them aware not only of the inhumanity of Bero's ideological world of reference but also the complexities of the world in general and their own as well a latent individual capabilities.

As Cripple testifies before Bero, "your old man did come up with some ripe ideas…" (233). How profoundly Old Man's impact registers can be gauged from Blindman's remark: 'once I even thought I could see him' (242).

In learning to overcome their physical disabilities, and not to accept things without question, the mendicants learn to 'overcome' themselves in the Hegelian sense of being able to attain mastery through service. By working as subordinates they are able to educate themselves, transform things while at the same time transforming

themselves. In becoming a master of Nature by work, Hegel suggests, a servant or slave frees himself from Nature, from his own nature and from his master. This Hegelian philosophy is evident in the relationship between the mendicants and their two masters, Bero and Old Man.

A similar type of relationship can also be seen in Dende, Danlola's palace slave in *Kongi's Harvest*, who like the mendicants, through service is able to acquire wisdom and social relevance. At the end of the play, Dende has become not only Kongi's secretary's creditor, but also a remarkable philosopher that approaches genius. (119). Old Man's defiant insistence on conscientizing the mendicants, as well as Dende's inauguration (through service) into the privileged discourse of court philosophy, echoes Foucault's belief that knowledge is a precious gem in power relations worth fighting for. These struggles, he says,

> are an opposition to the effects of power which are linked with knowledge, competence, and qualification: struggles against the privileges of knowledge. But they are also an opposition against secrecy, deformation, and mystifying representations imposed on people… What is questioned is the way in which knowledge circulates and functions, its relations to power… (781).

By resisting Bero's attempt to exclude the mendicants from 'the privileges of knowledge' Old Man situates himself within the Ogunnain paradigm as defender of the weak and pathfinder, the primordial role played by Ogun as documented by Bolaji Idowu:

> (Ogun) a number of the divinities set out to possess the earth and take up their allocated offices. But they had to come to halt at a place of "no road". Orisanla tried to cut a way through but his matchet got bent because it was of lead. Of all the divinities, it was only Ogun who possessed the implement which was adequate for the task. Ogun therefore undertook to make a way… In no time, Ogun had cut a way by which the divinities arrived earth (85-86).

The gutsy and humanistic aspect of the wise old man is often overlooked by critics who choose to interpret him as a freak because of his unorthodox approach to issues. However, Old Man's equally uncommon ability to brave odds and hazards, a trait which invites comparison with Ogun's persona, should earn him some credit. His resolute stance, at great risk to his personal well being, against the regime's inhumanity, does not at all portray him, as David Moody appears to suggest, as being in the same league as Dr. Bero. Writes Moody,

> The battle between father and son blinds as to their essential identity: they both see knowledge as being a matter for individual transcendence and freedom. In other words, the father had bred the son: in the individualistic, idealistic search for truth of the father is the will to power of the son; in the Christ-like specialty of the hero-artist-redemmer-professional is the megalomaniac 'madness' of the son.

The battle between father and son really centres more appropriately on the limits of human knowledge. While the son egotistically insists on transcending the frontiers of human knowledge, the father's restraining voice is unmistakable. He warns.

> Once you begin there is no stopping. You say, ah, this is the last step, the highest step, but there is always one further step. (253).

As the sage that he is, in contrast to his megalomaniac son, Old Man is wise enough to acknowledge his human limitations, and is able to make reasoned discernments. By contrast his son is that misguided fool alluded to in the father's remark, who out of his poor sense of discernment rejects "a perfect water proof coat… for a patched-up heirloom that gives the silly wearer rheumatism" (252). Obi Maduakor is therefore correct when he compares the old man to the sage Appollonius in Keat's poem:

> He (Old Man) has the penetrating gaze of a sage and can pierce through all disguises and all barriers into the very quintessence of personality itself like the sage Appollonius in Keat's poem Lamia" (233).

It is no less unfair and remiss to ignore Old Man's sensitive disposition, notwithstanding the bizarre manner in which that propensity is expressed by him. His acceptance of the assignment at the rehab centre where he meets the mendicants is a testimony to the patriarch's humanism.

Leaving aside other minor manifestations of this tendency – denying himself his cigarette for the benefit of the mendicants, for example- it is perhaps his mentorship of the discharged combatants as well as his stance against wastage of human lives that best exemplifies old man's sensitivity to the plight of humanity. If therefore any comparisons must be made between Dr. Bero and Old Man, it has

to be in the negative sense that the son is a distortion of the father, a misrepresentation and counterfeit of the original.

This of course by no means should suggest that Old Man is a perfect exemplum of Soyinka's idea of a messiah-figure. Far from it, Old Man merely figures as a counterpoint to Bero's misguided pursuits and megalomania. Essentially, the father is a man of ideas and noble disposition. But he also is someone who sadly falls well short of the capacity and strategy needed to translate his ideas to utilitarian ends. If anything, he mystifies rather than clarifies knowledge. As a consequence, his ideas and personality tend to invite controversy. The messiah envisioned by Soyinka by contrast must not only be someone of remarkable courage and intelligence like Old Man. He must in addition be able to articulate his ideas and visions in a way lucid enough to allow for the furtherance of discourse.

In this regard, the Earth mothers come across as foil to Old Man especially with regard to their different attitude to knowledge. Whereas Old Man's preference for ironic Swiftian symbols of resistance – 'As' and cannibalism for example – lend themselves too much to ambiguity and impreciseness, the mothers' reliance on familiar earth symbols in the form of herbs and poison makes for easier comprehension. While though undoubtedly intellectually profound, Old Man remains largely remote and obscure even to Bero himself. The obverse is the case with the mothers to whose pedagogical friendliness Si Bero, their pupil, is a good

testimony. This can be seen especially in their ability to make the all important distinction between wholesome and poisonous berries. And although he shares with the mothers the belief that knowledge must circulate freely within the community, Old Man differs in his individualistic approach as opposed to the more collective approach of the mothers. Moody is therefore right in this regard to remark that the mothers have a more collective humble vision of a knowledge linked to the earth and its rhythm (118).

In his own limited way too Daodu in *Kongi's Harvest*, can be said to exhibit the promethean spirit of a messiah figure. His approach to power stands in sharp contrast to Kongi's totalitarian approach, which verges on the manic. Daodu's humanistic philosophy of power draws to him the young and the vulnerable mass of the community of Isma. In the words of Ogunba, he is "a rallying point for dissidents who are beginning to see in him a foil to the totalitarian excess of the Kongi regime" (187). By contrast, Kongi is an alienated individual condemned to a life of isolation in the mountain recesses of Ismaland, a symbolic expression of the sterility his reign.

Daodu is a farmer, an occupation by which he is enabled to express his closeness to his roots, despite his exposure to Western culture. But farming is also more than just a symbolic affirmation of Daodu's commitment to life and fertility. As the main stay of Ismaland, farming provides the people their material sustenance, signifies their fecundity, and connects them to the life-force, Earth. It is therefore

not for nothing that after his sojourn abroad, Daodu opts to become a farmer, thus identifying with mother earth in a way consistent with his ancestral tradition. That this decision to reunite with his roots sits well with his people as well as the gods of the land can be attested by the prize for farmer-of-the year awarded him for excellence. Daodu's excellence as Eldred Jones has perceptively commented is more than mere occupational tokenism:

> After his wide experience he has gone back to the earth and to his traditional role. In this lies his potential strength. He has retained the links with humanity and with the source of life while opening himself to other influences (97).

It must however not be assumed that Daodu's self – induced reabsorption into his ancestral roots implies a complete acceptance on his part of all and every practice of his indigenous culture. His violence against the royal drum is a symbolic negation of such a supposition. As Ogunba has rightly commented, Daodu's action signifies his rejection of the effete ceremonial contraption that the Danlola regime has become.

> But in reality his action is a rejection of the system the kings represent. He finds Danlola's traditional royalty moribund and seeks a potent alternative to it… (174).

If there is at all any point of agreement between Daodu and Kongi it is in this regard: that Danlola's style of governance has outlived its usefulness and needs replacing or reenergizing. However, the alternative that Kongi seeks to institute is not just another misfit, it is a palpable disaster.

Meanwhile, nothing can please Daodu more than an expeditious and violent termination of Kongi's tyrannical regime. But it is doubtful whether Daodu has the resources to match his passion with action against a ferocious adversary like Kongi. More than anyone else Segi realizes that Daodu can ill-afford a frontal confrontation with Kongi. A more subtle approach will be a more viable strategy, as Segi appears to suggest in the following exchanges between the two lovers.

Segi: It will be enough that you erect a pulpit against him, even for one moment.
Daodu: Let me preach hatred Segi. If I preached hatred I could match his barren marathon, hour for hour, torrent for torrent…
Segi: Preach life Daodu, only life…
Daodu: Imprecation then, curse on all inventors of agonies, on all Messiahs of pain and false burdens…
Segi: Only life is worth preaching my prince (99).

Segi's emphasis on life and disapproval of violence is of course consistent with the vision of Isma she shares with Daodu as symbolically captured in their occupation as farmers, or sustainers of the life-force of Isma. In other words, by trying to match Kongi's morbidity, they allow themselves to slip into self-contradiction, to the ruin of the community they seek to salvage. What Isma needs most is precisely what Kongi is incapable of offering: life. If Daodu is ever therefore to offer Isma the alternative it desires, he must consistently be unlike Kongi. If his passionate anti-Kongi stance below is anything to go by, Daodu looks like viable alternative to Kongi's moribund and arid regime:

> Curses … on all who fashion chains, on farmers of terror, on builders of walls, on all who guard against the night but breed darkness by day, on all whose feet are heavy and yet stand upon the world… (99).

There appears to be a strong suggestion by Soyinka that the future of Ismaland (Nigeria/Africa) delineates a hybrid of political cultures. The very fact that Daodu epitomizes this possibility further strengthens his profile and credentials as an authentic alternative to Kongi. There is little indication of any strain between Daodu's Western orientation and the traditional Isma culture of his roots. The protagonist's apparent unproblematic dualism of cultures portrays him as the very quintessence of the fusion of cultures, required in the new millennium as a pragmatic option in the search for a new resurgent postcolonial Africa. This perhaps explains why Daodu is considered by the women as the authentic spirit of Harvest, the alternative to the discredited ancient regime of Danlola and the decadent regime of the arrogant pretender called Kongi. His being draped (towards the end of the first part of the play) with the ceremonial robe of prince of Isma is a fitting symbolic affirmation of that status by the progressive-minded people of Ismaland.

In Segi, Daodu has an ally who complements his love for life and his patriotic zeal. Her robust sexuality is an indication of a full bloom of life as well as an expression of the freedom desired by every living person. It is also an expression of the potentiality for a guarantee of the continuity of life and the Isma nation. This is indicated in her amorous invitation to Daodu as preparation hots up for the approaching Harvest, and the news breaks of Segi's father's escape from prison: "I must rejoice, and you with me. I am opened tonight. I am soil from the final

rains" (98). But Segi is more than just a mistress; she is also Daodu's dependable political ally. Kongi is their common enemy but more for his sins against Isma than for his personal differences with Segi who happens to be his ex-lover. And this is no less true for Segi than it is for Daodu, irrespective of the latter's cautionary words against parochialism. "I did not work for this merely for your father, Sagi. At least so I tell myself" (126). On her part notwithstanding her momentary lapse into blind clannishness following her father's escape from prison, Segi remains implacably faithful, (side by side with Daodu) to her antagonism toward Kongi's evil regime. Finally, it is Segi who enacts what proves to be the most telling assault on the seemingly insensate president of Isma. She is able to achieve this by sensationally serving the president a human head – that of her father lately murdered on the orders of Kongi – in a copper salver, in place of the ceremonial New Yam.

The moment that Kongi realizes what has hit him; he is for once visibly fazed, even if for a brief moment. It proves nonetheless to be a critical moment of rude awakening for the tyrant, the climax, as Ogunba suggests, of his alienation and rejection. It may well be that Kongi's survival of Daodu's coup de'tat could lead the tyrant into intensifying his terroristic grip on Ismites. However, in the words of Ogunba, Kongi having "already started to over-reach himself" must have become more than ever before, conscious of his own vulnerability against a people so long oppressed (192).

Rather than the Spirit of Harvest which he so desperately seeks to usurp, Kongi is more appropriately the quintessential Spirit of Evil and Death. He is the universal personification of misrule and tyranny, replicating in different forms all around the modern world. His conclusive demise could prove an eternal challenge in a world ruled by unbridled passion, greed, and ambition. For this reason, any hope that the conflict – the conflict between the forces of tyranny and evil and those on the side of freedom and humanism – will ever finally be resolved, is misplaced. At best, all that can be expected is an endless confrontation in the course of which victory would sporadically be shared by both contenders.

Soyinka in this play is appears to be more interested Daodu's potentials for leadership rather than in his actual attainment of those potentials. Apart from the reasons offered by Oyin Ogunba, one other factor which may account for the shortcomings of Daodu is the existential imperative of his imperfect humanity. Soyinka's idea is not to create a superman, but a character that is fully human, fallible and plausible. Importantly, Daodu's failure in all probability is meant to keep the discourse open, as a reminder of the fact that discourse and interrogation is an unending feature of social reality. Thus, it is not for Soyinka simply a matter of the individual being able to use power conscientiously. It is also important that power should serve to challenge exploitation and tyranny.

If the remarks just made above accurately capture Soyinka's ideal notion of power, they should equally apply to Osofisan. For like Soyinka, Osofisan

conceives of power as an engagement that should warrant a constant interrogation of options, for the sole goal of evolving a just society. In two different interviews, with Muyiwa Awodiya in 1987, and in 1988, with Charles Uji, the dramatist enunciated his vision as excerpted below. First, he told Awodiya.

> Revolts must come in order to have progress which is why questioning must continue. That's the principle that Eshu represents, constant questioning, constant challenge to authority, to orthodoxy. The restless iconoclastic spirit. But then the resolution of that comes out of the Ifa principle. The synthesis, the gathering of everything together, then, that's revolution in the Ifa principle in the union of Eshu and Orunmila. (*Excursions* 81).

Then speaking to Uji, he said:

> Basically, I think, all I seek to do is just tell the truth. To tell the truth as I see it. I mean I don't have to invent, poverty is not an invention of my own imagination, nor oppression or exploitation. These things exist. So what we just do, what I do, is merely to talk about them. You know, to reveal what is happening, to emphasize the need to do something about this, fight against the inequalities and injustices in our society. (qtd. In Awodiya, *Excursions* 111).

Against this background, Osofisan's protagonists are people who are motivated by a hunger for justice and equity, and are committed to fighting for positive change. Though these concerns constitute the dominant theme in nearly all works of the playwright, *Esu and the Vagabond Minstrels* appears to be the epitome of that philosophy. In this play Osofisan's humanistic passions ring out loud.

Esu and the Vagabond Minstrels: **Compassion as Power**

The play seems to offer in a nutshell what appears to be the author's blueprint for the humanistic reconstruction of the human society ravaged by a deluge of ills. That blueprint is simply, compassion.

Absent for once is the recurring theme of class struggle with which the author has come to be associated. In place of this is the theme of the humanness of man, the human person operating as himself, free, reasonably, of all ideological commitments, excepting perhaps those he owes to himself and his personal moral persuations. Conscious of the fundamental error evident in contemporary tendency to overstate the role of econo-political ideologies in the reformation of society, Osofisan, in writing this play, seeks primarily to return discourse to the basic issues of morality. He tells Olu Obafemi:

> Now, I felt that the moral question has become very crucial in this moment of pervasive violence. Even some of the comrades are shouting violence, violence, violence all the time, and I'm disturbed. It's as if violence is the end rather than the means (Excursions 99).

There is ample evidence, as shown earlier in *Moronutodun* and *Four Robbers*, that the assumption by some that the socialist ideology by itself can renovate society is all a myth. In *Esu*, Osofisan seeks to problematize this assumption by situating the human person at the core of discourse, in order to highlight the critical role played by the human factor in the changes that occur in society. However, for a society accustomed to an incurable taste for sensationalism, this play might come across

as disappointing; for the simple reason that it appears to simplify the human condition without playing to the gallery. For as the author remarks in his prefatory note to the play, "compassion" "in today's Macho world" is "considered a sign of weakness or "effeminacy" (vi). Ironically, it is this kind of attitude, Osofisan appears to be saying, that has led to the present culture of violence, greed, and evasion of the truth that pervades the world. What society needs to attain a reasonable level of social and economic advancement is simply for the people in it to be charitable to one another. A culture of charity properly understood, from Osofisan's standpoint, eliminates strife, greed, abject lack, facilitating thereby meaningful progress for the people.

What *Esu* makes evident is that the forces that must be confronted by a people seeking self-realization are not only those related simply to the state and its administration. Perhaps, even of greater importance is the internal struggle related to how the individuals operating within a community attempt, or fail to attempt, to exorcise the demon of greed within them. At the heart of all social problems including strife, misrule, abuse of public office, nepotism, gerrymandering, is to be found a noxious greedy tendency to marginalize others. Until this tendency is acknowledged by every individual within a community as the principal public enemy, all attempts at evolving an egalitarian society would remain futile. This is what Osofisan appears to be saying when he contends that discourse must shift to

the domain of morality, because he recognizes the moral question (as opposed to external factors, ideology, for instance) to be key to social transformation.

Esu is meant to provide a test case for this hypothesis. Five tramping and indigent musicians are placed in what might be described as an ideologically neutral setting, with only their individual consciences to work with. A cross-roads symbolizes this neutrality because it can lead to anywhere, depending on the traveller's mission. However, in addition to the power to make moral judgment, each musician is armed with a magical power that he or she can dispense as each deems fit. To situate it in a material context, this magical power, though by its nature, a lot wider in implication, can be reduced to its minutiae to approximate a position of political authority thrust upon each of the musicians. The test, explains the mysterious Old Man, involves how each musician would, relying solely on his or her motivational inclinations, choose to dispense the enormous power at his or her disposal, in anticipation of a reward.

> I am going to give you a power… It's a power, and it's also a test. Take these seeds, one for each of you. Eat it. Swallow it… Now,let each one find a suffering man, someone unhappy, and sing to him… And make him dance with you. That's all… As you sing and dance, whatever his pain, whatever his suffering, it will end!… Afterwards, ask for anything … His gratitude. Will make you rich, or make you poor. (18-19)

But the Old Man also adds a caveat:

> So, now it depends on you. Choose your targets carefully, according to your personal wishes. Choose

> those truly capable of gratitude. And you will be well repaid!… But if you have gained nothing, if you have misused the power, chosen the wrong targets. You will be severely punished.

What constitutes the right or the wrong target depends entirely, as the play reveals, on the motivation informing the choice made. And notwithstanding the Old Man's explicit emphasis on charity, most of the musicians make their choices based on the material gains they expect to make from their clients. Worse still, they have to insist on extracting a promise of their rewards before undertaking to heal the patient in need, thus completely violating the humanistic essence of the test and power. So indiscriminate is their moral judgment, so uncharitable the cause, that often the truly needy persons are turned down in favour of manifestly undeserving fellow, but who in the estimation of the particular musician has the economic means to pay for the remedy.

Of the five musicians, made up of three men and two women, only one man Omele, is able to put selfish considerations aside in his judgement as to who deserves his cure. Placing charity above other considerations, he picks his targets notwithstanding their apparent economic handicap, his sole consolation being according to him, the feelings of contentment he gets from seeing a suffering person happy again.

"Perhaps I can be happy…? I know I will be happy!" he tells his uncharitable colleagues who believe him to have wasted his power on a target with no means to

reward him (42). He adds, "Yes, but even amidst it all, even as I pack my load, I'll remember and say: "one woman came to me in great pain, and she left smiling". Even when Omele errs, (by using his power twice much against instruction) he chooses to err on the side of compassion. Moved by compassion toward a leprous couple, and against the objection of his companions, the humane Omele goes ahead to rid the couple of their affliction by embracing them. For his trouble, it appears, all he gets is a consequent exchange of conditions with his beneficiaries. Significantly, even after the reality of his charitable propensity finally hits him, Omele astonishingly refuses to be entreated to have the couple undo the damage by reclaiming their affliction. His reason for objecting to a return to the *status quo ante* is instructive.

> I have always lived in want, as a vagabond. Oh yes, my life itself has been like a leprosy. So I amused to it, I can live like this for the rest of my wretched life. But look at them, aren't they handsome as they are? They have a name, a career, they have kids they have money in the bank, an insurance policy no doubt, their life is a hymn to the future. Society needs them, not dregs like me I'll keep the disease! (66).

Overlook Omele's sense of self-disgust, and focus for a moment, on the bigger picture writ large with his selfless concern for society's needs. It would then be appreciated what a noble soul resides in this fellow, and why the likes of him should be the paradigm for ideal citizenship. A society hoping to excel must have citizens, who like Omele, are not afraid to take responsibility when things go wrong. Omele had earlier demonstrated his nobility in another way when he

admits to being personally responsible for the presence of the minstrels at Esu's sacred arena. In similar circumstances most would find it more convenient to save their skin. On this occasion, Omele accepts responsibility and submits himself vicariously to any possible punishment their sacrilegious conduct might win the group, from the old priest of Esu, the god of the violated crossroads.

What needs to be emphasized here is the fact that every human person has a moral blueprint according to which his or her actions are determined. In a word, society's progress or the lack of it, is a direct function of the choice that people make when on the crossroads of their responsibility toward their society. Importantly, these choices are products of the individual's convictions as to what constitutes true progress for the individual or the group. It also has to do with judgment as to what is fair or unfair, just or unjust, right or wrong, good or evil. Admittedly, these judgements are never so easy to arrive at, any more than they are, in strict philosophical terms, discretely classifiable. Nevertheless, the individual can be reasonably guided by the Biblical injunction to wit: "Do unto others as you would wish be done unto you". Or for a philosopher's advice he/she might consider Kant's, the great 18th century moral philosopher of German descent, whose doctrine of universal law is basically a restatement of the Biblical tenet of selflessness. As explained by Omoregbe, a professor in the Department of Philosophy, University Lagos, Kant's distinction between "acting for the sake of

duty" and "acting according to duty" accords primacy to 'good will', above all other moral ends. Writes Omoregbe:

> If we are simply following our natural inclinations in our actions or if we act only because we hope to derive some material benefits from such actions, our actions have no moral value. The moral value of an action does not depend on the result of the action, but on the fact that it was performed strictly for the sake of duty… "the necessity of acting out of reverence for the moral law" (220-21)

It seems evident that Omele's virtual act of self-immolation derives from this Kantian principle of "good will". It is a demonstration of moral power, one that mirrors omele's selflessness and self restraint.

Aside from the moral battle that dominates the play, *Esu* also reflects the deconstructionist contest of opposition of wills, involving in this case the state and the musicians. Forced out of their trade and place in their community by a government ban on their music, the five entertainers find themselves struggling for means of livelihood outside their familiar base. It is while wandering aimlessly and scavenging for food that they run into the old man who offers them a lifeline in the form of a magical healing power through music. A combination of magic power and musical power suddenly provides these discarded members of a community an opportunity of resistance against both the state and their impoverished conditions. It becomes their response to the state's government of individualization that seeks to expunge them from the annals of their community. Their very refusal to lie down and die as it were, after being proscribed by the

state, is a statement of resistance, one made even more resounding by a magic power that provides opportunity for spectacular success.

The musicians' struggle against the threat of being uprooted from community is one that inevitably must proceed on the basis of individual struggle as against a group one. Forced to act on the basis of individual moral choices by the magic boon, the group is forced into individualization of a different kind though. While the state government of individualization seeks to weaken the individual against the oppressive forces of the state, the individualization that confronts the musicians now seeks to test their moral growth as individuals. Though rewards and punishment remain the ultimate end point, decisions are never forced on the individual by an external force. Therefore, the freedom that is an essential component of the power 'play' is never compromised in the play. Each musician is at liberty to make his or her own choices. Thus from being forced out of community by external forces of the state, in their fight back, the itinerant minstrels must seek either to regain their place in community or to lose it, all on their own terms. This is a decision they require their moral power to make. The four of them who fail the test are victims of their own abuse of power, a pointer to their inappropriateness as potential social messiahs. On the other hand, Omele proves himself as being capable of making rational and humane moral decisions at critical moments, and therefore potentially a messiah of his community.

The point Osofisan appears to be making is that society needs men like Omele in all works of life to progress. Often times, people erroneously believe that society's survival depends only on the way that people in position of political power act. Far from it, the quality of character and action of the ordinary person in the streets does also help to determine how well a society fares. This, it might be assumed, explains Osofisan's choice of the central characters in this play, a cast of ordinary folks of both sexes. What emerges is the fact that moral character is not biologically determined. Greed and insensitivity are moral blemishes not exclusive to a particular gender group, but are character flaws which men and women would be able to confront only on the basis of moral strength. As musicians these characters have the power of their musical trade to provide healing and succour to others. But even with something very much at their disposal, these characters are unwilling to offer that much needed help, leaving one to wonder how such persons might act if placed in higher stations. Omele is the only exception, a consoling reminder of the capacity of the human person to do good.

The play ends with Omele being appropriately rewarded for his selfless moral power. Speaking here is Ogunmila, the Yoruba god of creativity, disguised as male leper in the play.

> My son, this is no time for speeches… Esu Laaroye [another god] lord of the crossroads, Trickster, he set you a test, to see whether between compassion and greed, you would know the road to take; Between

> hollow material wealth, so ephemeral, And the unseen riches of tenderness, you alone passed the test, you alone pitied the woman we sent along Even in spite of her wretchedness. So we said, let's test him again, just to be sure, and we came down ourselves. Me and Yeye Osun disguised in the frightful skin of Obaluaye (god of Leprosy) as Lepers. But again you did not let us down! Again you let your humanity yield to unusual compassion. (68-69)

It is important to remark that the use of gods in this play is consistent with Osofisan's dramaturgical manipulation of them solely for metaphorical ends rather them as a reflection of his belief in their existence. What the deities help to highlight are the latent possibilities domiciled in human beings, which they tend to be unaware of, or simply neglect. These possibilities are the gods in men, which urge them one way or another at the crossroads of life. Decisions made at such moments help to shape individual as well as group destinies.

Finally, Osofisan's optimistic vision must not be overlooked. Omele stands as proof of the human capacity to produce its own messiahs. In terms of sheer numbers they may not amount to much. But the influence the few human-centered individuals are capable of exerting on society and individuals through their redemptive sacrifice, coupled with the consolation that their legacies bring to the future, makes number inconsequential. As Osofisan himself realizes only too well, a perfect system is impossible; what counts is the assurance that society would continue to find, as occasion might demand, the right personnel for a given assignment.

> You have to create the right men to have the right society and of course you've got to create a community of such men. even for men to live in community, to act in harmonious concert, it is not every kind of man, but the kind who believes that selfishness, greed, avarice, thieving, and so on are not the necessary qualification to achieve his own life. (Excursion 42)

Power properly exercised is one that is exercised in trust and on behalf of community and stakeholders. Violators of this principle of collective or communal power represent a common enemy of the system that must be confronted. Individuals or groups that resist such power not only help to promote community life, which essential for social growth. They also defend their own self-determined identity and the sense of joy and freedom that accompanies it.

Power then can be thought of in many of the same terms used to explain *differance*, not as a thing, but as a location of relationship, not as a surrender of will, but as interplay of wills. Power, remarks Foucault,

> In itself… is not a renunciation of freedom, a transference of rights, the power of each and all delegated to a few (which does not prevent the possibility that consent may be a condition for the existence or the maintenance of power)... In effect, what defines a relationship of power is that it is a mode of action which does not act directly and immediately on others. Instead, it acts upon their actions: an action upon an action, on existing actions or on those which may arise in the present or the future (788-89).

In many respects, as has been demonstrated, the characters discussed above illustrate adequately this position in the objective (as against subjective) response to their situations. For the most part action is directed not against the acting person

per se, but against the effects of the action taken by him or her: Old Man's action and that of the Earth mothers against Bero's action; Daodu and Segi counteracting Kongi's action; Sebe Irawe contesting Wing Commander's action, and Omele striving to neutralize the effects of his colleagues' actions.

Foucault's emphasis on difference parallels Derrida's view on the differentiating role of the sign. According to Derrida,

> The first consequence to be drawn [from structuralism) is that the signified concept is never present in and of itself, in a sufficient presence that would refer only to itself. Essentially, (that is, of its being) and lawfully, every concept is inscribed in a chain or in a system within which it refers to the other, to other concepts, by means of the systematic play of differences.

'Play' designates an interconnection of 'players'. Play is trope for power, the social force that necessarily involves interplay of persons. But this interlinkage exists within a climate of freedom that makes movement, interaction, and opposition possible. Just as opposition is central in the play of signs that is language, since signifiers necessarily cohere in each other, each bearing in its lineaments the trace of the other, each actor in the power play harbours a trace of the other(s) in their relations. These are invariably traces of opposites to the subjecting or constituting body, meaning that as a body is constituting, itself is being constituted by the bodies constituted. Dr Bero has power only in relation to the other characters in the play with whom he interacts. As he acts on them they too act on him in a multiplicity of opposing actions. Without 'others', it is

impossible to ascribe power to the protagonist. The same scenario applies to other characters in the plays examined, in which the interrelations of characters make possible a discussion of the power relations in those works in the form of action and counter action. As Derrida again writes:

> Thus one could reconsider all of the pairs of opposites on which philosophy is constructed and on which our discourse lives, not in order to see opposition erase itself but to see what indicates that each of the terms must appear as the difference of the other, as the other different and deferred in the economy of the same…

Importantly, Foucault makes a distinction between power and violence. The one admits of difference, the other forecloses difference, because, in the words of Marshall, "it forces,… bends, … breaks on the wheel,… destroys,… closes the door on all possibilities" (115). A power relationship, insists Foucault, indispensably provides first that 'the other' be recognized and maintained as an acting body, and second, provides a whole field of responses, reactions, results, differences. A power relationship in which violence dominates amounts to no more than mere 'capacity'.

However, as the plays illustrate, even 'capacity' hardly 'closes the door on all possibilities'. On the contrary, it tends to incense and incite resistance. This is why Foucault says that every relationship of power may also be discussed as a strategy of struggle:

> Every strategy of confrontation dreams of becoming a relationship of power, and every relationship of power leans toward the idea that, if it follows its own line of

> development and comes up against direct confrontation, it may become the winning strategy. (794)

In other words, no relationship of power may ever be spoken of in terms of absolutes, because it takes place in movement. The texts illustrate the fact that absolute power is unattainable in all instances of power. Neither Bero, with all his audacious and militant swagger, nor Kongi with his mallet-wielding Carpenters Brigade could keep their subjects permanently quiet. Each of these power behemoths had to contend with opposition, sometimes – the Mendicants for instance – even from the lowliest of subjects. Power is an interaction of movements also for the reason that it involves a multiplicity of sites or locations of movements which are never limited to a particular centre os centres. The sites of power in *Kongi's Harvest* for instance, other than Kongi include Daodu, Segi, the farmers and even the incarcerated members of the opposition.

The element of 'play' sits at the heart of relationships of powers. As Foucault puts it, "between a relationship of power and strategy of struggle there is a reciprocal appeal, a perpetual linking and a perpetual reversal". (794).

Subjectivity then has no stable boundaries, even in situations of disproportionate power distribution as exist in the plays examined in this study. Bero, Kongi, or Wing Commander doubtless, commands 'greater' power than the mendicants, Danlola or Sebe for instance. But these latter characters are never totally without "points of insubordination which, by definition, are means of escape' (794). Yet

the struggle that power entails is not limited to the macro-struggles over authority and domains of leadership. The struggle also involves the unending battle within the individual to make moral choices between competing alternatives. Omele and his fellow musicians in *Esu* all act in accordance with their individual convictions, to produce the effects of power discussed in this play. In a sense, both the contemplation and the act are manifestations of power that invite critical attention. Since these decisions always necessarily predate action, they have to be considered as being no less crucial than the manifest action in the power game that determines the course of social history. In the end, the following words of Foucault's may serve as an accurate summation of the argument of the foregoing discourse. Says the Frenchman, writing in *Power, Truth, Strategy*:

> If power were never anything but repressive; if it never did anything but say no, do you really think we should manage to obey it? What gives power its hold; what makes it accepted is quite simply the fact that it does not just weigh like a force which says no, but that it runs through and it produces things, it induces pleasure, it forms knowledge, it produces discourse; it must be considered as a productive network which runs through the entire social body much more than a negative instance whose function is repression (qtd. In Power/Knowledge 133)

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

This study has examined the notions of power portrayed by two of Nigeria's foremost playwrights Wole Soyinka and Femi Osofisan in some of their plays. A total of eight plays studied include Soyinka's *Kongi's Harvest*, *Madmen and Specialists*, *The Trials of Brother Jero*, and *From Zia with Love*. Others are Osofisan's *Morountodun*, *Another Raft*, *Once upon Four Robbers*, and *Esu and the Vagabond Minstrels*.

The study of power in these plays is predicated on the view that as a social element power entails an ability to act and produce an effect. In these plays the effects that characterize the actions of the various characters can be categorized into two broad types either as positive or negative. As a social force power is the instrument for controlling and organizing people and materials along lines predetermined either by a group or a dominating body. Thus, it is the operational agenda that determines how such a power works, what effects it produces, and how ultimately it might be evaluated. Effects of power are considered positive when they are largely beneficial to the receiving party. On the other hand, power is detrimental when a vast majority of its recipients are negatively impacted by its effects.

The study has identified the various shades of power usage in the eight plays along the lines of the impact they have on the receivers and the way subjects respond to

those effects. It is these various uses that constitute the notions of power examined in the study. To this extent, power is exercised in the plays in the following spheres of social life all of which claim varying shades of philosophical foundation. For example, the political dimension of power evident in *Kongi's Harvest, Madmen and Specialists, From Zia with Love* and *Morountodun* varies in terms of the ideals, interests, and philosophical persuasions of the various power holding groups or individuals. The celestial goals that preoccupy Bero, in *Madmen* and Kongi, in *Kongi's Harvest* vary remarkably from the crass materialism of Wing Commander in *From Zia*.

Although economic power is evident in these plays as well, as can be clearly seen in *From Zia*, it is in *Morountodun* and *Once upon Four Robbers* however that this mode of power assumes centre stage. *Another Raft* and *The Trials of Brother Jero* illustrate the exercise of power from the religious realm. Again, as in the political front, characters who exercise religious power do so from varied motivational stand points that range from the sincere to the dubious.

Because of its sparse occurrence, the constructive engagement of power in the texts can quite easily be overlooked. In the plays it is clear that the manifestation of the beneficial end of power is largely evident as a struggle rather than a norm. For this reason a category of power characterized as resistance power seems appropriate, both in reference to the act and as a philosophical delineation of the concept of power. Slices of resistance run through the entire texts, but it is in *Esu*,

Madmen, and *Kongi's Harvest* especially that resistance yields the kinds of result that can with some justification be described as beneficial.

Other sub categories of power in for instance, medicine, healing, music, magic, and armed robbery are played out too in the plays. In all, the mix of power types in the plays is complex and no less so the interplay of power between the characters that exercise power. A single character – Bero in *Madmen* for instance who wields a multiple mix of power as physician, secret agent, soldier, and even politician – may combine several capacities of power in his role. Such situation would doubtlessly present analytical challenge of some kind especially in terms of determining a specific category or notion of power to which to assign him. Relying mainly on scope of portrayal, the study assigns characters to categories based on the aspect of their role that receives the most attention in the text, while taking care to recognize as occasion might demand, aspects of other power forms that do from time to time show themselves. For instance, with regard to Old Man, his power stretches from his parental power as father to Bero and Si Bero, to his power as sage, humanist, and philosopher. Of these, the last is the one most on display in *Madmen*. In *Morountodun,* the protagonist possesses a range of power that highlights her economic, feminist, spy, and feminist interests. Furthermore, Titubi's relationship with Kabirat as an offpring spotlights her in another category of power relations as subject of domestic authority of which her mother is the custodian.

Another aspect of power that presents analytical challenges is in the area of evaluation. As what is considered to be negative by one may be positive for another, great caution is required in assessing the actions of power holders in the texts, since tastes and values vary from individual to individual. Perpetrators of actions that bring suffering to others may rationalize such action as a necessary step to some agenda perceived by them to be useful. Bero's dreams of omnipotency for example may not strike him with any qualms of moral perturbation, nor might his intent to dislodge the Earth mothers import to him the same negative ideas with which his targets view it. Besides, the post structuralist praxis that provides the analytical platform for the study operates on the basis of recognizing the subtleties and differences that define singularities as opposed to universalities. Yet, without romanticizing the claim of a centreless reality, it is still possible to spotlight actions in the plays that unambiguously proclaim how they could be evaluated on the positive/negative schema, judging for instance from the perspective of characters in subject positions. It is on the basis of such framework that evaluational statements made in the study in respect of the exercise of power in the various texts have been conceived.

On the other hand, the same character can be the source of completely different effects, highlighting yet another interesting point about the paradoxical nature of power. Take the Earth mothers for example. Acknowledged purveyors of healing powers, these women are also the agents of the destruction of the herbs in Bero's

custody, the same life-giving properties that sustain their power as healers. Their justification for setting this resource on fire is compelling if indeed potentially it could be turned into a destructive tool in negation of its traditional use. The earth mothers' emblematic character mirrors the enigmatic nature of power as a social force. But even more importantly, it reflects Soyinka's notion of power as symbolized by the author's equally perplexing muse Ogun who is at once a builder as well as destroyer.

SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS

It might help at this stage to highlight some of the significant findings yielded by the research.

1) This has to do with characters' power motivations. Different characters have different reasons for desiring power, most of which spring from psychological dispositions that the character in question is probably unaware of. These dispositions, according to Sigmund Freud, are shaped by domestic experiences. From this Freudian perspective, the study analysed the unconscious drives that propel the actions of some principal characters like Bero in *Madmen* and Titubi in *Morountodun*. Using psychoanalytic principles, the study discovered that certain unpleasant family experiences shaped the personality of these characters and explain why they act the way they do.

Parenting plays a crucial role in these plays in terms of character formation. The absence of the parental influence of a parent in either character's development is

seen to have upset the balance in the psychological make up of these characters. This reinforces the Freudian view that domestic (oedipal) factors constitute the foundation of human behaviour, one which in its extreme may constitute a cause for psychological concern. The conflict between Bero and his father in *Madmen* bears eloquent testimony to the ascendancy crisis that characterizes an oedipal situation in which the son enviously strives to usurp the father's position. A similar scenario plays out in *Morountodun,* where the daughter's rebellion symptomizes an unconscious attack on the mother for a perceived hurt occasioned by the latter, one that is identifiable only through a psychoanalytical enquiry. The plays also reveal that while the actions of principal characters like Bero and Titubi may be analysed in terms of how they spring from these characters' love of power, the same can be said for other characters as well, though their power longings may not be so overt. The likes of the Earth mothers and the Mendicants, in *Madmen*, or Superintendent and the peasant farmers, in *Morountodun* readily come to mind. Based on these discoveries, the study comes to the conclusion that love of power is a common trait of all literary creations in the firm of the human person.

2) Political authority provides another background to the assessment of power as a social force. The first striking finding is the fact that most political power tends to be construed by its holders primarily as an instrument of terror, force, repression, and victimization of the subject. Rarely is political power employed as a tool of service by which the subject and the conditions of his/her

existence can be improved. Chapter three examined the nature of political authority in Soyinka's plays and discovered that it is replete with abuses. Soyinka's primary goal is to expose the ills of governmental processes that proceed from corrupt and inept leadership, a phenomenon that characterizes the political climate of his literary settings. With Foucault's tenets of control mechanisms of power in mind, the texts are examined with a view to highlighting the strategies of control deployed by characters in positions of power. Some of these include the following.

a) Political power is often in the form of authority vested by law or a group upon a person or persons. This includes military governments that may sweep into power through coups and the like, or rulers who arbitrarily prolong their stay in office in disregard of the rules of engagement that installed them. Kongi in *Kongi's Harvest* is a typical example of such a ruler. His grip on power in Ismaland is so strong, and his desire for more power so consuming that he has to depose Danlola to usurp the latter's traditional office. Dr Bero is portrayed as a military dictator, albeit one whose domain of power is narrowed down to the minuscule domestic front. At a symbolic level however, Bero can be seen as the archetypal sovereign ruler of a dictatorship complete with all the trappings of power that promote tyranny. Like Kongi, and most wielders of political authority, Bero is obsessed with power with the tendency to perpetuate his stay in office.

b) Key to the exercise of political power is force. Soyinka's plays show an unnatural reliance on coercion by the characters in power. Kongi can only feel relevant with his repressive control of Isma as objectified by the hit squad he maintains in the name of the Carpenters Brigade. This is the terror squad that carries out Kongi's killings, tortures, and brutalizations of perceived foes. As a special armed group, as distinct from a regular military force, the Brigade as Soyinka depicts it comes across as an extra-judicial contraption invented for the sole purpose of doing Kongi's dirty jobs, a strategy of power common in many Third World countries. A similar love of brute force is evident in *Madmen and Specialists*. Bero's free use of his ever-present gun evokes a sense of terror that stalks the subject of power like one's shadow. It reflects a regime that has scant regard for the rule of law or the individual person's liberties. Shorn of his gun, or without the monopoly he appears to enjoy over force, Bero would not be as 'powerful' as he imagines he is. Thus, force is an essential attribute of political power in Soyinka's plays.

c) Strikingly, the centrality of force in these works departs from Foucault's notion of disciplinary power in the Panoptic dispensation of power in the Western world. According to Foucault, the Panoptic regime is a shift away from the physical brutalities of pre-eighteenth century Europe to a regime of discipline that targeted the mind rather than the body of the subject. Consequently, control strategies of power in civilized societies tend to de-emphasize force and violence,

while nonetheless remaining no less repressive than was previously possible. In fact, Foucault has claimed that interiorized discipline has proved to be more damaging and effective than physical discipline. Soyinka's texts however, depict an interesting in which political power wielders while retaining the violent mode of discipline never overlook the psychological dimensions of disciplinary power in their operations. The result is the extreme physical and mental harm their actions bring on most of the subjects of power portrayed in these texts, such as Old Man, or the Mendicants, in *Madmen*, and Segi's father in *Kongi's Harvest*.

d) Soyinka's strategy of confronting these misdeeds is the weapon of satire, which enables him to expose offenders in the most negative light possible. The portrayal of Kongi as a confused and tyrannical leader is intended to reduce him to bestial levels that call his basic humanity to question. Bero is treated no better. His humiliation in the hands of the Earth mothers is a pointer to the finiteness of his powers.

e) Another point to note about political power is its seemingly all-encompassing nature that guarantees that its holders do not just exercise political power but economic power as well. Political power more often than not affords those who exercise it control of enormous economic resources. This access to the commonwealth complements the holder's absolute control of state coercive apparatus thereby providing a semblance of absolute power. More importantly, it is perhaps the biggest factor in the corruption taint that seems to be endemic to

political power across the globe. In *Madmen*, Bero's control of the economic resources of state is reflected for instance in his denial of food and money to his subjects as emblematized by Old Man and the Mendicants. Commander in *From Zia* takes official corruption to an entirely different realm. Not only is it ever likely that he does not help himself to the resources of state under his care, he goes a step further to engage himself in criminal drug trade, and to boot, doing so in partnership with a well-known criminal. This criminalization of officialdom signifies the great depths moral morass to which emergent power lovers have dragged the seat of political power.

3. Another significant finding has to do with the way economic power makes itself manifest in the texts. Although evidence of this mode of power is everywhere in all the plays studied (as both *Madmen* and *Kongi's Harvest* illustrate) Osofisan's works appear to dwell primarily on this mode of power based on the ideological convictions that produced them. Being an admirer of Karl Marx's views on power as being fundamentally materially entrenched, Osofisan creates characters and situations that tend to project a Marxist world view. This is a world view that halos capital as the fundamental root of all social reality; the primary mover of social life that defines history. For Osofisan the Marxist ideology is the recipe for social change and harmony, since, it is assumed, a socialist blueprint guarantees economic equality and endless prosperity. An

examination of this belief in Chapter Four of the study reveals a reality that confutes this claim.

a) It is discovered that economic power is not the fundamental basis of social reality. Titubi's abandonment of her privileged class for a proletarian status is indicative of her loss of faith in the life of opulence that comes from economic power. It suggests that there is greater power in love than in economic success.

b) Titubi's ideological switch which mirrors the movement in the opposite direction by Lawyer Isaac and Alhaji Buraimo is a clear pointer to the fluid nature of social reality that contrasts with Marx's idealization of socialist solidarity. Social positions and situations are not cast in steel since everything exists in flux. Nowhere is this more evident than in *Four Robbers,* where the robbers' ideological uniformity fails to keep them together.

c) The break-up of the robbers suggests yet another point that shatters Marx's confidence in the plenitude of a socialist dispensation. Major's attempt to cheat his fellow robbers out of their collective loot is consistent with the human person's urge for self-definition. It is the natural urge to express the freedom of the self to acquire property and build one's own personal stock. Where collectivism prevails, it appears to survive only on a coercive repression of individual freedom. In a word, individuals rather than ideologies make history.

4. A further discovery suggests that religion is not implicitly or necessarily evil as Marx again, appears to suggest. While it remains distinctly possible for religion to be abused, to characterize this mode of power as a repressive ideology is to overstate the point. Osofisan's *Another Raft* helps to clarify this view. The play provides two backgrounds to the religious tradition of Aiyedade, the assailed setting of the play whose history speaks in favour of a beneficial religious tradition. According to the testimonies of Omitoogun and the Ifa priest Orousi, Aiyedade's past had not always been bleak under their religious devotion to Yemosa, the sea goddess. The rosier past when people respected their religious obligations contrasts with the present that is riddled with breach of faith and charlatanism. The result, they assert, is the pestilence- ridden world in which they live now in Aiyedade. The likes of Lanusen, the council chairman, Orousi, the Ifa priest, and Ekuroola, the merchant, have corrupted the system, using religion as a platform.

Soyinka's *The Trials of Brother Jero* also highlights the untenability of the view that religion is *ipso facto* a repressive ideology. Jero's rise from obscurity to prominence by manipulation and impersonation of a religious identity makes some interesting points. First it reveals that religion may be an innocent victim of ambitious individuals who deploy it for their nefarious activities. Again, it is not religion per se, but the caliber of people who practice religion that taint it by masquerading as pious practitioners of religion. Secondly, Jero's exploits make it

clear that religious power can be acquired by any member of the social community irrespective of their social standing or class. An insignificant entity from a humble background, Jero is still able to con people from higher social stations than he. Member is a good example. Jero's ability to hoodwink such socially superior individuals shows that no social group can claim exclusive ownership of this power mode.

Finally, it has to be said of religion that there is no inherent ill enough to earn the tag of a destructive social practice. As a mode of power religion has a paradoxical capacity to aid the building of a just, peaceful and egalitarian system, where the fear of God motivates people to shun evil. At the same time, religious power can be used to destroy a system if people are only interested in using it to deceive and serve selfish interest.

5. Resistance provides a distinct mode of power of its own. The texts show that people with opposing notions and ideologies of power provide the only perspective of power with any iota of social integrity to it. Through resistance characters like Old Man, and the Earth mothers in *Madmen* help to delineate the view that it is possible to understand power on totally different terms from those suggested by Bero's actions. From these characters the idea emerges that power can serve beneficial ends other than the inhumane ones that Bero propagates. Similarly, Titubi's transformation from a bourgeois brute to a genial personality offers the rare hope that the emergence of egalitarianism is possible if the right

caliber of people can find their way to power. Note however that these examples of virtuous power exist only on the theoretical level, because its agents are actually people that are outside the realm of power. What they might actually do with power if they had it remains in the realm of speculation. The only possible exception to the common trend of characters abusing the power at their disposal is the case of Omele in *Esu*. Omele's compassionate discharge of his power even at the detriment of his personal well-being is a great departure from the tradition of egocentrism that afflicts most power holders whether in literature or in real life. Yet, this euphoria is tempered by the fact that Osofisan presents the Omele scenario as a magic reality rather than as a reflection of a life world situation animated by real human individuals.

6. A major point common to Soyinka's and Osofisan's perception of power is the rejection of a deterministic characterization of power as evil. Neither artist endorses the dogma that power necessarily corrupts. The plays illustrate the fact that power is whatever the characters who exercise it make of it. Dr Bero's transmutation into a power maniac from a previous disposition of humaneness as a physician is a pointer to the constructive capacity of power. While his power as a medical practitioner was channelled towards the humanitarian goal of saving lives, Bero's political position as a state agent pursues the opposite goal of destroying lives. Having acquired fire arm power, emblematically power beyond human power, Bero must have reckoned himself a deity in the league of God

himself. His desire for transcendental power, which is epitomized by his craving for his father's intellectual powers, is an indication of Bero's ultra ambition.

Kongi is another example of the human factor in the exercise of power. His accession to power in Ismaland redefines life within that community in a way never previously experienced by the people. From the language to the food, Ismites were exposed to ever stranger meanings of once familiar experiences. In the end nothing ever made sense anymore; including life and living all of which depended on the whims of Kongi, the tyrant. Another example of perverted use of power is illustrated by the actions of Wing Commander in *From Zia with Love*. The junta's notion of power contradicts the traditional perception that authority is the enemy of criminality, since criminals only answer to authority. In this case however, criminals and drug dealers like Wing Commander hold the reins of power, as partners in crime, thereby systematically desecrating authority power and whatever it stands for.

But all this could have been different as Omele illustrates in *Esu and the Vagabond Minstrels*. Omele's refusal to interpret power purely from a selfish perspective, distinguishes him from the other musicians who prefer to operate on the notion that power is only for self enrichment. Although Omele's example is uncommon, it is a welcome illustration of the capacity of power to serve positive ends.

Now, these findings address the questions asked of the study at the introductory stage of the discourse. First, in answer to the question as to why characters in the plays seek power, the study maintains that it has a psychological explanation. This it illustrates with the examples of Bero in *Madmen* and Titubi in *Morountodun*. In both cases the characters are influenced by unconscious domestic experiences to seek power, and unfortunately in their case, in ways that are damaging especially with regard to Dr. Bero.

The second question about Soyinka's notion of political power is addressed by the actions of Bero, Kongi, and Wing Commander in *Madmen*, *Kongi's Harvest*, and *From Zia*, respectively. Because of their gross disregard for the liberal ideals he so strongly advocates, wielders of political power in Soyinka's plays are relentlessly condemned by the playwright. It is no secret that Soyinka's interest in power is largely in the context of its political application. These plays vindicate his view that a denial of the freedom of the individual person under whatever guise is unacceptable.

While Soyinka's interest appears to dwell on the freedom of the individual within a political framework, Osofisan tends to concentrate on the material needs of the individual. After Marx, Osofisan believes that economic necessities are the basic needs that drive history. However, the realities portrayed in his plays studied contradict this view. Several of his principal characters like Titubi and Omele see that greater power lies in showing love and sensitivity towards people in need.

The study also addresses the vexed question of the role of religion in human affairs as reflected in the text examined. The conclusion reached is that religion in itself is not evil. It is the people who exercise religious power in the plays that use their power to negative ends, whereas the opposite might well be the case.

As to whether power is necessarily evil as some like Lord Acton have claimed, the study finds nothing in the plays to support such a position. Although most power wielders abuse their office, resources and talents, examples of positive application of power are not unavailable, indicating that power can also serve useful ends. In a word, power is a tool whose end is determined by its user.

7. Finally, the question comes to what the similarities or differences might be in the ways that Soyinka and Osofisan regard power.

a) The first point to note then must be their shared notion of power as a humanistic social element whose end, properly speaking, should be to serve the needs of humanity. This is not just the first, but the pre-eminent point against which every other consideration of power is weighed by these writers, despite their much-vaunted ideological differences. Soyinka's liberal ideology, characterized as it is by a fierce individualist impulse, visualizes an uncompromisingly 'free' society in which nonetheless, the health of the society is paramount. There is a consistent insistence in all the plays examined on the need for power holders to realize that the health of the society they govern is dependent

entirely on how just and fair they are in the discharge of their responsibility to the people. In fact, Soyinka's bitterest strictures are reserved for people who violate this cardinal principle by acting in ways inimical to the interests of humanity.

On his part, Osofisan is no less passionate about the health of society, except that his ideas as to how this can be actualized are different from his older compatriot's. Osofisan's Marxist perspective, hence anti-capitalist vision, means that a collectivist social agenda takes precedence over individual enterprise. Yet, at the heart of this vision is that concern for the well-being of humanity. From *Morountodun* through other texts, culminating in *Esu*, Osofisan's principal aim is to provoke in men a profound consciousness of the connection between the survival of the human society and the way that power is exercised by its operators. *Esu*, as a matter of fact, provides, in its emphasis on compassion, what might be regarded as Osofisan's blue print for the overall survival of humanity.

b) For Soyinka as for Osofisan, the actualization of an acceptable social order rests with the evolution of men and women with the right character and moral discernment. These attributes, for both artists, are as imperative for change as they are difficult to cultivate. Their assimilation heralds the dawn of self-realization needed to renovate the human condition. For Soyinka, the template for this will is Ogun, the first example of self-dissolution in the service of community, as well as the epitome of the restorative energy of the human spirit.

> Ogun stands for transcendental, human but rigidly restorative justice…Ogun (is) the creative urge and instinct, the essence of creativity (1988).

It must be pointed out however that neither Ogun's inflexible commitment to justice nor his divinity precludes him from occasional blunders. Legend recounts his slaughter of his own men in a moment of inebriation. In simple terms, the Ogunnian principle is a humanized code involving an acknowledgment that the human person is by nature fallible and imperfect. Nevertheless, the human spirit is imbued with the capacity to challenge its primeval weaknesses in order to enthrone virtue rather than evil. This capacity for self- improvement implies that morality is central to human development. The Ogunnian hero therefore is someone whose actions are guided by selfless and constructive propensities even as he or she seeks to emulate the messianic traits of Ogun.

And although the mythopoeic tack is different, Osofisan's idea of the hero is not radically dissimilar to Soyinka's. Like his older compatriot, Osofisan draws his heroic principles mythically from the pantheon of his Yoruba ancestry. While the implicit moral underpinnings of those principles remain consistent with Soyinka's, Osofisan differs slightly in the way in which he conceives of heroism in terms of synergies rather than individualism. His union of Esu and Orunmila reflects in broad terms his belief that what is needed to correct the system is the collective action of the people as opposed to the heroism of a single man. The synthesis of

knowledge as represented by Orunmila and the revolutionary-mindedness epitomized by Esu, reasons Osofisan, is the key to the desired change.

> The synthesis, the gathering of everything together then, that's resolved in the Ifa principle in the union of Eshu and Orunmila (*Excursions* 81)

As has however been argued elsewhere in the study, Osofisan's collectivist vision is constantly ruptured by the logic of his own texts. The logic of these texts contradicts the author's confidence in the certainty or even possibility of consensus implied in collectivism. On the other hand, what the texts suggest is that social reality is the consequence of a multiplicity of experiences and subjectivities. As Chantal Mouffe asserts,

> Within every society, every social agent is inscribed in a multiplicity of social relations not only social relations of production but also the social relation, among others of sex, race, nationality, and vicinity. All these social relations determine positionalities or subject positions, and every social agent is therefore the locus of many subject positions and cannot be reduced to only one (89-90).

c) At the same time, the fact that human behaviour is characterized by variations in individual psychology does not imply a total exclusion of the possibility of convergences of opinion or systems. More than Osofisan, Soyinka acknowledges this reality as testified by the collaborative approach seen in the way the mothers on the one hand, and Daudu and Segi, on the other operate in *Madmen* and *Kongi's Harvest*. In the real world, the post-Soviet era has helped to establish the truism that opinions and systems can only be conceived in terms of

rigidities to the detriment of the system. That China and several former Soviet republics including Russia today enjoy greater social freedom for the individual person and an accompanying unprecedented economic boom is a vindication of this position. There is no doubt that this new wave of socio-economic prosperity has a direct link with the greater political and economic openness of power management in the erstwhile communist nations.

d) Osofisan appears, as his views below suggest, to have begun to appreciate the limitations of doctrinaire Marxism as it relates to the role of the individual in social transformation. In his words,

> (It) does not mean that the individual is useless. The individual is usually a good catalyst-an advance guard-somebody that triggers off things. But in the end he is not the one who is going to do the work, who will single-handedly take up the work of organization. (43).

By whatever consideration, the individualist impulse in social behaviour and relations is not something that can be legislated out of existence, as it is ineradicably a part of human nature. It is this that accounts for the tension in Osofisan's texts examined in this study. Frequently, the collectivist agenda fails to hold ground against the background of the intense need of the individual character to do things his/her own way, in defiance of the group. Such is the case in *Four Robbers*, in *Morountodun*, and in *Esu*.

e) Sometimes however the relationship is not necessarily antagonistic. Social relations do sometimes accommodate coexistence of seemingly opposed impulses.

This is the phenomenon, one which has become increasingly evident in contemporary reality that according to Bertens, has led Anthony Giddens to characterize modernity as being "enigmatic at its core" (242). For this reason, Hans Bertens himself has observed what he sees as a plague of self-contradiction that seems to bedevil modernity. According to Bertens, the 'expansionist, transcendent, and omni representational' mode, on the one hand, and the 'self-reflexive, inward spiralling and anti-representational' mode, on the other, have "constantly (led) us into the temptation of wanting it both ways and thus into self-contradiction" (242). However, given these 'precarious stabilities' seen by Bertens as a phenomenon involving the social history of a modernity that "in practice, oscillate(s) between universalist and particularist positions, in a dialectic…" (242), humanity eternally finds itself trapped in the enigmatic condition described by Giddens as a process "of uneven development that fragments as it coordinates" (Bertens 242). As a consequence, the global response, says Barry Smart, has become one of "global diffusion of modern Western economic, political, and cultural forms of life [precipitating] complex accommodations, adoptions, contests, and conflicts between the "same" and the "different" (qtd. In Bertens 246).

f) At the heart of Soyinka's as well as Osofisan's oeuvre is the notion that the climate of uncertainty by which the human society is bedevilled is the inevitable consequence of the actions of men who inhabit society. In contrast to the

implicated humanity that is clearly portrayed as being directly complicit in the overall destiny of society, power and ideology are conceived entirely as mere social tools at the disposal of men to use one way or the other, to serve virtue or evil. In effect, the playwrights, by exonerating power or ideology, implicate human beings themselves as being responsible for the decay of society. In a sense, whether the effects on society of the interplay between human beings and power are deleterious or beneficial depends on the moral inclination of the human agent. Seen from the perspective of Osofisan whose Marxist beliefs are well known, this strikes with a bit of surprise. Marx's teleological delineation of history as a deterministic process of culmination, effectively, at least from a certain point in the historical process, effaces the relevance of the agent, because Marx believes that subsequently, the sheer momentum of history would suffice to bring about the El Dorado envisioned in communism. It is therefore both a measure of the ideological inconsistency of Osofisan's dramaturgy, and the untenability of the Marxist ideal that Osofisan's plays consistently reflect a contrary reality in which man is ineluctably the handmaiden and vehicle of history.

g) The great difference between one society and another is a difference in terms of the personnel at work. It is, strictly speaking, the moral choices made by the different characters in the plays that account for the polarity between say Bero and the Earth mothers, Kongi and Daudu, Omele and his fellow minstrels, Titubi and Alhaja Kabirat. Stalin, Musolini, or Hitler was not evil because of

communism, or Fascism, or Nazism. These men chose to be evil, a conscious personal choice they made in favour of hate rather than love, cruelty rather than compassion, death rather than life. In a word, man is the cause rather than the effect of evil in the world.

Fiction portrays an alarming preponderance of power excesses. Most people perceive power solely as a means to actualizing self interest. Thus, the literary world is dominated by characters who are insufferably inebriated with power and who seek nothing other than the enthronement of personal pleasures at the expense of others. Such is the level of depravity and moral turpitude that tends to perpetuate strife and turmoil in most parts of the globe. The sole consolation for the afflicted humanity comes in the form of the poetic justice that has remained implacably on the side of the oppressed, wreaking vengeance, in diverse ways, on perpetrators of evil. As the study shows, in particular with the examples of Kongi, Bero, and Wing Commander, the likelihood that unmeasured abuse and cruelty of power would escape justice is almost non-existent. Textual evidence suggests that the greater the degree of repression, the greater the likelihood that insurrection and social strife would follow. In a word, resistance is a form of poetic justice.

Machiavelli, despite his dubious reputation as an apostle of tyranny, considers extreme and indiscriminate brutality aberrant for a stable polity. A leader, he cautions, who seeks to secure his office, must consciously work to avoid alienating the people by being sensitive to their needs. In other words, Machiavelli's

notion of power disavows cruelty for its own sake, other than as may be required to secure the stability and advancement of the state. Thus, properly speaking, there is a basic moral under-current to Machiavelli's philosophy of power, despite all the outward appearances to the contrary in *The Prince*.

h) As the possibility for humane dispensation of power is not in any coercive manner precluded by either biological or socio-cultural considerations, it appears fairly obvious that for Soyinka as for Osofisan, the role of ideology, strictly speaking, in the constitution and evaluation of power is merely tangential. Both writers evidently are of the view that power is as good as its wielder, and in this the wielder is guided more by moral choices than by ideological beliefs. It is therefore the effects of these moral choices that both define and shape the kind of responses a leader gets from subjects or critics. The role of ideology in all this is always limited.

This perhaps explains why for Foucault, it is the effects rather than the body of power that constitute the core of discourse of power relations. When people assess a leader they do so in relation to the effects or impact of his actions and policies. They do not judge simply by the mere identity of the person in power, but by what that person is able or unable to accomplish.

Finally, the notion of nested opposition is equally of significance in the study, especially in relation to the metaphysics of binarism of power. The

poststructuralist perspective of the study of course stands in rebuttal of the extreme dichotomous binarism associated with traditional Western thought. The reality of the social world of the texts examined faithfully mirrors a life-world in which seemingly antagonistic phenomena are seen in reality, to be mutually dependent on one another. It is a social world in which, using Lyotardian terms, 'metanarratives' and (small) 'narratives', inevitably collapse into each other in mutual interdependency. Only a system of mutual dependence of contraries can sustain the world. By the same token, only those who are able to come to this knowledge, and are able to apply power in private or public life to help to transform the earth.

Agwonorobo Eruvbetine in his inaugural of 2002 espoused what he described as the imperative for 'poetic existence' in a world that is inescapably characterized by contrarieties. Eruvebitine not only acknowledges the truism that things exist in opposites, including the notion of power and the application of power. Moreover, he believes that the only way by which humanity can survive the simultaneous centripetal and centrifugal pulls arising from this reality, is for individuals to acknowledge the relevance and interconnectivity of both forces, and strive to work in harmony with them. The touchstone for poetic elevation, (or if you like, power appreciation) he says, consists in the recognition by the individual that

> These mature experiences of contraries provide valuable insights that lead to the final stage in which the seeker perceives and partakes of the interconnectivity of all elements in human life and the

> world. And so, the poetical individual is born, fully equipped with the aesthetic ideal that naturally or intrinsically configures him for a poetic existence that is marked by balanced insights, ennobling actions, life-enhancing creations and worthwhile endeavours. (20-21).

Understand that the poetical life about which Eruvbetine speaks is not restricted to lyrical poets, but applies to all men and women in their every day exercise of power in their life endeavours. Poetic existence entails a life in which the individual subscribes to a worldview that is accommodating, humane, sensitive, creative, transformative and ever conscious of a humanity that is full of imperfections. In Eruvbetine's own words,

> Poetic existence humanizes the individual and society, not necessarily by making them perfect, but by giving them significance through immersing them in intense experiences that touch on our core humanity. By making us part of the creation and re-enactment of incidents, situations, characters and environments that bring into sharp focus the enduring themes in human life-themes like the transience of life, the joys of companionship, the pains of death, the vanity of human actions and the ennobling effects of suffering – poetic existence compels us and our societies to be more thoughtful, tolerant and civilized (21).

Nevertheless, full maturity does not arrive, according to Eruvbetine, until the third and final stage of poetic existence, the stage of 'integrative mystique'.* This stage makes possible the attainment of ultimate knowledge, which is that in life, positive and negative terms (things) coalesce. It is the stage in which reality is contextualized rather than universalized, and standards of morality are localized according to the needs and values specific to the culture in question. Because his

sentiments on this subject are profoundly pertinent to the aggregate position of this research on the subject of power, an exhaustive quotation of Eruvbetine once again is imperative. According to him,

> When this kind of advancement in knowledge is achieved poetic justice will inform the determination of all matters. Relativity and multivalence, when applied to situations would key moral issues to culture, revealing how culture determines morality. As diverse as cultures are, so diverse would their ethical standards be. Whenever good is associated with pleasure and evil with pain, the possibility of the opposite being valid, in different contexts, is never ruled out. Judgments become cognizant of the mutual relations of opposite. What constitutes good or pleasure for an individual or community may well be evil and pain for another. The world as a battleground of rivalries is transformed into a plateau of interlaced contraries that conjointly define existence. This is the knowledge that poetic individuals are armed with in all their activities and this serves as a guarantee for purposeful existence (31).

In his enunciation of poetic justice, relativity of culture and morality; in his accent on the gossamer-thin nature of the propinquity of opposites, and finally in his implicit recognition of the indispensability of the human person in the overall question of the notion of power or poetic existence, Eruvbetine offers what this study holds as the recipe for a viable new world order. In a word, Eruvbetine's poetic existence also expresses an idea that is consistent with what in this study has been discovered to be explicitly and implicitly consistent with Soyinka's as well as Osofisan's notion(s) of power, the idea that power can be both constructive and destructive, depending on the manner and intent of its application.

Contribution to Knowledge

1. The study provides a useful literary document for the study of power in some of the significant ways in which power is manifest as a social element in the fictional worlds of the playwrights discussed.
2. It provides a radical reading of Soyinka's *Madmen and Specialists* and Osofisan's *Morountodun* from a psychoanalytic perspective, in a way that has not been attempted previously. This kind of critical approach to the study of power could become an interesting addition to extant corpus of work on the subject.
3. The work radicalizes the traditional thinking by tyrants that force alone can sustain their stay in power. On the contrary however, the work finds that tyrants often unwittingly supervise their own downfall through unreasonable use of excessive force. In a sense, the study provides an insight into the superiority of temperance over unmitigated force in leadership, by highlighting in some of the works studied the way in which force can awaken stiff resistance from subjects who otherwise might have remained passive.
4. The study also offers a fresh way of discussing religion as an instrument of power. Often perceived especially by Marxists as a premeditated repressive ideology, religion has been vilified sometimes in ways that question its relevance to the human society. The argument of the study however is that religion is only a social tool, and like any such tool, can only serve

whatever purpose towards which it is directed by the operator. Consequently, what is seen as the misdeeds of religion are no more than the brain child of manipulative charlatans, con artists, and nefarious individuals who choose to distort what was originally intended to benefit mankind. In a word, properly understood and practised, religion can help to rectify rather than demean society.

5. By arguing that resistance is a productive philosophy of power, the study provides yet another dimension to the discourse of power that may be a useful contribution to knowledge. Traditionally, resistance is understood as an act of negation of a prevailing ideology. This remains valid but only in so far as the alternative ideology theoretically satisfies the greater number of people within the particular ideological frame of reference. In this way then, such resistance may be considered a productive notion of power. Quite relevant to this notion of productive resistance, one which in the view of this writer is worthy of further scholarly attention, is the way in which resistance is read into the very act of seeking to improve the well-being of people within one's power domain. Even to discharge the responsibilities of power in normal situations demands a certain level of discipline and struggle. But to do so against possible opposition from detractors is truly a heroic act.

NOTES

*The first stage of poetic existence which Eruvbetine uses the phrase "participation mystique" to identify entails, as he sees it, an involvement by the individual in the "wonders of the world". It is an idyllic state of undifferentiated absorption of reality that is characterized also by a sense of euphoric bewilderment. The second phase of "Demystified mystique" marks the inauguration in the individual of a sense of selfhood as distinct from other (Eruvbetine 21-29).

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