REPRESENTATION OF CRIME AND PUNISHMENT IN SELECTED PLAYS IN NIGERIA

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DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to the blood my innocent soul bled at realization….

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ABSTRACT

Nigerian plays are replete with narration of crime and punishment as prime factor in socioeconomic conflict and resolution. Critical studies of these plays have so far focused on the views of the political class with little attention paid to the views of the masses, which are critical to the thematic engagement of the playwrights. Consequently, this study focuses attention on the views of the masses in order to expound the insights of crime and punishment in Nigeria.

The study adopted Freud's psychoanalytic and Sartre's existential theories. Six plays, namely, Ṣóyinká's *Death and the King's Horseman* (*DKH*) and *The Trials of Brother Jero*, (*TBJ*); Ọlá Rótìmí's *The Gods Are Not to Blame* (*GANB*) and *Kúrunmí* (*K*); and Ọ̀ṣọ́fisàn's *Moróuntódùn* (*M*) and *Red is the Freedom Road* (*RFR*) were purposely selected for their socioeconomic theme as framework in tackling issues of emotion and sensual experience. These plays were subjected to literary and critical analyses.

Four views of the masses were identified in all the selected plays. These are: propaganda, devil-advocacy, chauvinism and prejudice. While propaganda and devil-advocacy were prominently evident in *DKH*, *GANB* and *K*, chauvinism and prejudice were the focus of *TBJ*, *M* and *RFR*. In *DKH*, evidence of propaganda and devil-advocacy is seen in the representation of the political class which sets personal interests above statutory responsibilities. Propaganda and devil-advocacy evolve from *GANB* obsessive illumination and focus on the failure of the political class to follow due process in addressing issues of national security. *K*argues that, for every crime committed by the masses, there is always antecedence. The play draws attention to the abuse of power by the political class as an alternative explanation for crimes committed by the masses. With their focus on the objective and individualistic nature of behaviour, *M*, *RFR* and *TBJ* examine the existential need of the masses for self-affirmation in order to redefine their reality and existence. The plays address the need to reinforce one's subjective security, which over-arches the issue of the criminality of an action. The pivotal roles played by emotional and sensual factors of servitude and frustration in the execution of crimes are portrayed in *M* and *RFR*. They conclude that Nigerian masses are driven to crimes by accumulated hatred towards the predatory political class. *TBJ* demonstrates that there are always antecedents for any crime committed by the masses.
The array of thematic concerns and executions in Nigerian plays enhanced objective insights into the concepts of crime and punishment in Nigeria. The unbiased representation of these concepts projects Nigerian plays as the artistic catalysts of socio-political reordering.

Keywords: Crime and Punishment, Nigerian Plays, Political class, Masses.

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CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this research project was carried out by Ògúnfèyími, Adélékè Yínká in the Department of English, Faculty of Arts, University of Ìbàdàn, Ìbàdàn, Nigeria under the supervision of Professor Adémọ́lá Dasylva

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CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Contextualizing Crime and Punishment – A Dialectical Approach

Introduction

The literature of every society serves as the written document, which forms the set of political principles by which the society is governed. While critics of such literature accede to the responsibility of providing the reader with a comprehensive interpretation and appreciation of its provision, they also caution the government of the day in her administrative strategies. According to Ṣóyinká, criticism is so important because a critic's job is not merely to review an existing piece of work, but also to create an atmosphere of appreciation, of tolerance, and "to cultivate an experimental attitude not only in writers, but in the audience," (Cook, 1977: x).This dialectical study of crime and punishment, has been inspired, largely, by the sense of anomie caused by neo-colonial developments that benefit only a selected few, leaving the majority condemned to poverty and crime. The widespread corruption engendered by successive political systems in a country where a sequence of military dictatorships and subsequent civilian governments have become the norm, has become a deafening voice, which cannot be denied attention, particularly considering how this has been ascribed as a reason for the dystopia's incommensurate eruptions, and the attitude of the so-called Nigerian leaders in deliberately ignoring the notion of justice and its true definition by imposing their own definition and injecting it on the sensibility of their subjects, whose frame of mind they have deadened by poverty and other criminal acts. As Yerima observed in his *Hard Ground* (2005), nobody can grow in this way and will still remain calNm.

Everybody has a right to live. But when this right is being stolen by those who should protect it, it simply suggests that one has been committed to death. Claude McKay, in his "If We Must Die", concludes that the distinction, stateliness and, of course, resolution of such a humiliated person, infect the critic's psyche with strong indignation against the leaders in question. He writes:

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> If we must die, let it not be like hogs/Hunted and penned in an inglorious spot! … If we must die, O let us nobly die … we must meet the common foe! … And for their thousand blows deal one deathblow! … Pressed to the wall, dying, but fighting back!"(McKay, 1922: 1).

The conclusion could be reached that at this level of human experience, it is necessary to "kill … and often by any means we can lay our hands on", (Yerima, 2005: 11).Poverty stinks. Therefore, if one man holds the soap, and will not let another have it, then there is a need for the latter to nudge the former slightly and collect the soap. "For you need a good bath to become a decent perfumed human being like him,"(Yerima, 2005: 11).This is the argument of the dramatists selected for this research.

The brutish insensitivity of the leaders of any society toward their subjects, has always generated excruciating mental anguish, which in turn degenerates into a stoic, flagrant and daring disregard of the government and the principles or laws designed to regulate human behaviour. The consequence, however, is the brutal and inhuman methods employed in the name of punishment by agencies of the government to deal with the masses who simply are defending their existence. This sequence of cause and effect has been the thematic motif common to all the plays selected for this study, and this remains the compelling pressure on the title. It is aimed that this study would offer to identify and address the inequalities and injustices in the Nigerian socio-political experiences as represented in the texts under study by first attempting a comprehensive dialectics of crime and punishment, and second, attempt to sort and merge meanings that are closely related to achieve, at least, a near-common meanings of them. The selected plays are mainly revolt drama, existing to salvage a decaying society as they have succeeded in driving home salient social truths such as the political class being the cause of the criminal actions of the masses, giving deeper insights to the experience of the masses as they explore the three dimensions of revolt that are prominent in them, namely, messianic, social and existential. Doing justice to these dimensions of revolt, attempts shall be made to explore the subject of this study, crime and punishment, as a way of locating and demonstrating that, in Nigerian drama, understanding crime and punishment goes beyond the social context; it extends to the metaphysical classification. For instance, Ọlá Rótìmí, in *The Gods Are Not To Blame,* observes that, "What… Ọdẹ́wálé… has brought as duty…from the gods" is to "kill his own father and then marry his own mother!" He concludes that this decision of the gods(to send an innocent child to commit murder and incest) is criminal. However, he raises several questions: Who actually is the criminal that

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deserves to be punished? Who has that right to punish – those who make the laws or those who break them? Can the superior or the supreme be wrong? In the course of this study, attempts shall be made to provide appropriate answers to these and related questions.

Hypothesis

As criminological categories, crime and punishment appear best captured in the context of literary studies. Literature studies the human society and human behaviour, and makes recommendations for a just, fair and impartial existence. One fundamental discovery literature has made of human society is that, those who propagate criminal laws or advocate the standards for ethical conducts are the prime victims of their own pronouncements and advocacy. This observation has substantially been established by all the selected plays for this study. In this sense, this study shall endevour to articulate how, besides the fact that there is no absolute justification for the punishment of criminals in the Nigerian society as presented in the selected plays, literature is the most accessible means of communication that is predominantly active in the interpretation of criminal codes and moral principles to justify the hypothesis: the complexity of the notion of crime and punishment is the reason for the perversion of justice. To this extent, the introductory remarks are attempts to illuminate the elusiveness of the concepts, their facets and the various depictions by different schools of thought. The research further seeks to aver that the two criminological phenomena under experimentation are also, perhaps more, of literary significance and debate. It raises issues that often generate insightful inquiry into human behaviour in any society. As a follow up to this, the facets of these concepts and their implications on individual reasoning dominate a considerable part of its concern.

Scope of Study

As a research that is based on human behaviour informed by socio-economic and socio-cultural factors, this study shall be fore-grounded on the critical theories of psychoanalysis and existentialism. These theories have become parts of everyday human lives, which gives any critics the advantage of investigation into the sociological survey of the selected plays. Examining the concepts of criminology through artistic medium, some challenges of consistency may be encountered, particularly in driving home relevant points without being entirely criminological in the approach, distinguishing between the concepts of crime and other related concepts such as sin, offence and sacrilege in a text where there is no clear distinction among them,restricting the study within the scope of the texts under study. It is

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also a challenge to know what forms the basis of one's argument: is it the existing laws or moral principles of the realistic society, or the society depicted in his texts of study? These and some other questions have been the concerns of this research work. To do justice to this study, six plays, two each, have been selected from three dramatists namely, Wọlé Ṣóyinká's *Death and the King's Horseman* (*DKH*) and *The Trials of Brother Jero*, (*TBJ*); Ọlá Rótìmí's *The Gods Are Not to Blame* (*The Gods*) and *Kúrunmí* (*K*); and Fẹ́mi Ọ̀ṣọ́fisàn's *Moróuntódùn* (*M*) and *Red is the Freedom Road* (*RFR*) to serve as a miniature representation of Nigerian drama, and draw a conclusion on the overall influence of the criminological sway of the Nigerian drama on the Nigerian society. While these plays constitute the primary texts for this study, critical works of authors on these subjects form the secondary texts.

Methodology

In this study, an investigation of social justice and identity classifications form the interests to underscore the thematic preoccupation. This will involve practical criticism, which entails a practical application of some existing literary theories on texts. In this instance, the mechanics of the multi-faceted crime and punishments drama approach will be applied on the selected texts. Each play is analysed along these concepts. In doing so, the dimensions of sociological crime and punishment present in each play are identified; the defining features of the different perspectives are isolated, and they are demonstrated to show how each playwright has been able to project crime and punishment through the events in his selected plays. This research is library-based. It also involves the use of the web and discussions with literary scholars and some legal luminaries. The libraries of the University of Ìbàdàn, the University of Lagos and the British Council are consulted for appropriate materials. Departmental and personal libraries of some lecturers have also be consulted. Efforts are made to restrict the study to literary investigations, which reconcile with criminology. The purpose is to justify the argument that drama addresses societal vices, establish the influence of criminology on Nigerian drama, justify the assertion that crime is a symptom of societal distress, demonstrate how sociological understanding of crime consists of a series of paradoxes, and finally, institute the fact that the deviant in question often determines the criminality of an act. *Psychoanalysis* and *existentialist* literary theories, informed by an inclination of temperament to justice, are employed as the theoretical frameworks to argue the justice of the four views of the masses identified in all the selected plays, namely, propaganda, devil-advocacy, chauvinism and prejudice.

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Theoretical Framework

Psychoanalysis

This is a critical theory that focuses attention on human behaviour. In other words, psychoanalysis helps in the better understanding of human behaviour. Since literary texts are about human behaviour, this sociological thought will certainly capture them and make enquiries into the behaviour that brings about criminal acts. The goal of psychoanalysis is to help the individuals resolve their psychological problems often called "disorders or dysfunctions", which focus on "patterns of behaviour that are destructive in some ways," (Tyson, 1999: 28-29).The behaviour of a criminal or a defiant, which is always destructive, is an indication that there is the existence of some unavoidable psychological difficulty that has probably been influencing him for some time unconsciously. According to Sigmund Freud, it is the lack of the knowledge of a problem, or even if one has knowledge of it but does not realize when it influences his behaviour, that gives it so much control over him. There is always a stage or a moment in man's life when the unconscious manifests. The unconscious comes into being at the early stage through repression. This is the extreme control or the process and effect of keeping particular thoughts and desires out of one's conscious mind in order to defend or protect it. Experiments and experiences have proved, however, that repression does not eliminate the painful experiences and emotions that one suffers. Rather, it lubricates them by making them the organisers of later experiences. For example, Títùbí or Mọ́rémí admits over-ambition as her problem, but she does not want to ascribe it to the influence her beauty, success, and glamour in the past have over her. Instead, she asks:

> But what is all that to me when, one fine day, in the midst of most splendid rejoicing, with the choicest meat in my teeth, without warning at all the Igbos can arrive suddenly, locusts in the air and eat everything up? (Ọ̀ṣọ́fisàn, 1982: 33)

What Títùbí seems to be saying here is that, as a beautiful, successful and glamourous lady, she unconsciously nurses some terrible fear of the unexpected, "…the Igbos can arrive suddenly, locusts in the air and eat everything up," (Ọ̀ṣọ́fisàn, 1982: 33). This fear of the unknown diminishes her admiration for her potential. Therefore, although not overwhelmingly, she does not see anything good in all her potential, since the fear of the unknown renders them useless. However, in spite of her fear, she still appreciates being glamourous and beautiful. These qualities propel her to long "desperately to touch the … stars", and be "…jealous of the gods". Everything boils down to her unconscious self that presides over her actions: the desire to remain beautiful, successful, and glamorous in the

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midst of the fear of the unknown. The unconscious fear does not recognise or change her behaviour. She has formed identity around her desire. It is served by her defence.

Existentialism

Existentialism is a term applied to the works of certain late 19th- and 20th-century philosophers who, despite profound doctrinal differences, shared the belief that philosophical thinking begins with the human subject-not merely the thinking subject, but the acting, feeling, living human individual, (Solomon, 1974: pp.1-2). Soren Kierkegaard is generally considered to have been the first existentialist philosopher, though he did not use the term, existentialism. He proposed that each individual-not society or religion-is solely responsible for giving meaning to life and living it passionately and sincerely, "authentically". Existentialism became popular in the years following World War II, and strongly influenced many disciplines besides philosophy, including theology, drama, art, literature, and psychology. In existentialism, the individual's starting point is characterized by what has been called "the existential attitude" or a sense of disorientation and confusion in the face of an apparently meaningless or absurd world (Solomon, 1974, pp. 1–2). The existentialists stress the basic elements in man, including the irrationality of the unconscious and subconscious acts. They consider life as dynamic, in a constant state of flux – a human life is not an abstraction, but a series of consecutive moments. And they focus more on the concrete instead of the abstract, on existence itself rather than the idea of existence. Since existentialism is a point of view about life rather than about literature, it has no particular style or literary form associated with it; hence it is really a philosophical school which has conditioned some highly effective literary works. This necessitates its relevance to this study.

Brief Biographies of the Selected Authors

Wọlé Ṣóyinká

Wọlé Ṣóyinká, the first African to win the prestigious Nobel Prize for Literature, is a renowned and universally celebrated professor of literature who is very vast in many academic fields, and whose wealth of experience and academic excellence have placed above board. Born in 1934, in Abẹ́òkúta, Ògún State, Ṣóyinká received a largely Western-style education before entering the University College in Ìbàdàn. After two years, he transferred to Leeds University in England where he studied Western Literature and also took a course in world drama. While in England, he worked for the Royal Court Theatre as a script reader and participated in dramatic improvisations. Some of his early plays were written during this

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time, notably *The Swamp Dwellers*, staged at the University of London Drama Festival in 1958, and *The Lion and The Jewel* in 1959. Ṣóyinká returned to Nigeria in 1960 and rapidly emerged as the driving force of the modern Nigeria theatre while he held various university teaching posts. In his unmatched influence in the modern Nigerian drama, he established two theatre companies, the 1960 Masks and the Orísun Theatre, to promote his own and other African plays, thereby vitalizing English-language theatre in the continent of Africa and beyond. His vast dramatic output since the late 1950s has included such social series as *The Trials of Brother Jero* (1960), *Opera Wonyosi* (1977) and *A Play of Giants* (1984), however, his prolificacy is better demonstrated in his predominantly tragic ritual dramas such as *A Dance of the Forests* (1960), *Kongi's Harvest* (1964), *The Road* (1965) and *Death and the King's Horseman* (1975). Wọlé Ṣóyinká has always been an active participant in Nigerian social and political life, a regular commentator in the Nigerian media and an outspoken critic of political tyranny. In 1967, during the civil war, he was imprisoned on political grounds for 26 months, much of which was spent in solitary confinement. Some works emerged from this experience among which were *Madmen and the Specialists* (1971), the poems of *A Shuttle in the Crypt* (1973), the novel, *Season of Anomy* (1973) and the prison notes *The Man Died* (1972). This concise résumé can only begin to suggest the remarkable variety of Ṣóyinká's works. As well as being Africa's most successful playwright, he has a considerable reputation as a poet and novelist, and has explored other media such as radio, television, records and film for the dissemination of his ideas. He is also highly respected for his critical and philosophical analyses of African culture, having published two major books of essays in this field, *Myth, Literature and the African World* (1976) and *Art, Dialogue and Outrage* (1988). Ṣóyinká's creative writings in all genres draw upon both Western and Nigerian traditions, and his theatre works can be seen as a synthesis of Yoruba and European performance idioms and philosophical concepts. Many of his most compelling tragedies explore the connection between ritual theatres in a postcolonial context and pre-colonial milieu.

Ọlá Rótìmí

The youngest of three children, Ọláwálé, known as Ola, was born on April 13, 1938. His father, Samuel Ẹnitàn Rótìmí was a steam-launch engineer, and his mother, Dorcas Oruene, was an Izon woman from Nembe in River State. Ọlá Rótìmí was married to Hazel Mae Gaudreau, a Canadian woman. The marriage produced four children: Ẹnitàn, Oruene (daughter), Bíọ́dún, and Kọ́lé. Ọlá Rótìmí had his post-primary education in Methodist Boys' High School, Lagos, from 1952 to 1957. He proceeded to the USA two years later for

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undergraduate studies in drama at Boston University. After graduation in 1963, he obtained a Rockefeller Foundation award, which enabled him to undergo further training at Yale University, where he obtained a Master's degree. Ọlá Rótìmí's formal education, both in Nigeria and in the USA, equipped him with knowledge of the arts of the theatre as well as critical ability and exposed him to the world of literature and the arts in general. All this training and exposure later yielded artistic fruit in his numerous plays and productions. Ọlá Rótìmí returned to Nigeria in 1966 as a senior research fellow at the Institute of African Studies of the University of Ifẹ̀. It was during his sojourn in Ifẹ̀ that he had the opportunity to develop his art as a playwright. The serenity of his position as a fellow at the university also gave him ample time for research and publication. He wrote his two most popular critical essays during this period: "The Drama in African Ritual Display" was published in 1968; "Traditional Nigerian Drama" followed in 1971. The dramatic works of Ọlá Rótìmí are known throughout Africa, and have made him one of the most significant playwrights on the continent. His dramatic works have been performed in Europe and Africa and are the focus of study in Europe and in American universities with African studies programmes. He has also published short stories and critical articles on African theatre. An accomplished play director, Ọlá Rótìmí has taken many works directly to the people with the University of Ifẹ̀ Theatre, a repertory company that performs works in the Yoruba language, Nigerian pidgin, and English. The Rótìmís were interested in the arts. For instance, Ọlá Rótìmí's mother excelled in traditional dance and managed her own dance group called "A Masquerade" from 1945 to 1949. His father often wrote and recited poem, and he organized the community theatre in Port Harcourt where he (Ọlá Rótìmí) grew up. His uncle, Chief Robert Dede, was the lead performer in a traditional dance troupe. Dede and his dancers, dressed in elaborate costumes, danced, sang, and acted in what was one of the most spectacular of such troupes in Rivers State. Ọlá Rótìmí's first appearance on stage was at age four in a play directed and produced by his father.

At the Methodist Boys High School in Lagos, he earned the nicknames "Shakespeare incarnate" and "the Poet" for his writings. Some of his works were broadcast on Nigerian radio and published in institutional magazines. On a scholarship from the Nigerian government, Ọlá Rótìmí studied theatre at Boston University, and from 1963 to 1966 he earned a Master of Fine Arts degree in playwriting and dramatic literature at Yale University on a Rockefeller Foundation Fellowship. His socio-political comedy *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again* was chosen Yale's student play of the year in 1966. Since then Ọlá Rótìmí has become a household name among the educated elites of Nigeria. The driving force of his

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artistic endeavour is to achieve what he calls total theatre. Ọlá Rótìmí extends the boundaries of traditional Western theatre by embracing dance, mime, music, and song, as well as the ritual aspects of traditional African life. Because he believes that theatre should be a medium of the people, Ọlá Rótìmí elicits audience participation, targeting as his audience the literate minority who speak English, those who determine the social course of the nation.

Fẹ́mi Ọ̀ṣọ́fisàn

Fẹ́mi Ọ̀ṣọ́fisàn is a prolific Marxist writer. He was born in 1946 in Ìlotò, Ògún State, and grew up in an environment in which the traditional beliefs and practices were still normative factors of communal life. His father died when he was very young, so he never got to know him and instead he was brought up by his uncle under extremely trying conditions. This biographical detail, to which he makes a significant reference in his play *No More the Wasted Breed*, has an immediate interest for any appraisal of his work. For one thing, his early circumstances fostered in him recognition of the humane potential of the communal ethos, as exemplified in his case by the bonds of the extended family, the basis of the structure of solidarities that have functioned as the only means of social security in contemporary Africa. Moreover, the hardships he endured as a child may be considered to have predisposed him for the sharp social consciousness that underlies his plays, the deep concern for and understanding of the underprivileged that stands as the affective core of all his dramatic output. These two factors account for the fact that, although a disenchantment with the traditional worldview pervades his work, his essential inspiration flows from a grounded faith in the common people.

Ọ̀ṣọ́fisàn went on as a scholarship student to Government College, Ìbàdàn, an elite school located at the other end of the same city as Nigeria's premier university, which Wọlé Ṣóyinká had also attended. He credits his early interest in drama to the fact that theatrical productions were the most important extracurricular activity at the school, largely because of the enthusiasm of the English headmaster, Derek Bullock. This interest was reinforced by the proximity of Ìbàdàn University's Arts Theatre, a modest but well-equipped facility that had been built in late fifties, and had come fully into its own in the early sixties as a lively centre of cultural activities, not only for those directly connected with the academic, cultural, and intellectual life of the campus but also for the social elite of the city. Ọ̀ṣọ́fisàn has recalled the profound impression made on him by one of the early productions to which his class had been taken at the university's Arts Theatre of Ṣóyinká's *Kongi's Harvest*, an experience that

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proved to be an early intimation of the enduring, albeit ambiguous, relationship he later developed with Ṣóyinká.

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CHAPTER TWO

Crime and Punishment – A Symbiotic Assessment

Introduction

Crime and punishment, acts of wrong doing and the penalty prescribed for the acts by authorities, have been a prominent theme in Nigerian plays. Representing the views of both the political class and the masses on them, Nigerian plays draw attention to the notion of cause and effect. Previous studies on this representation, however, have concentrated on the views of the political class, with the views of ordinary Nigerians, which are central to the thematic engagements of the dramatists, not given adequate attention. This study, therefore, identified the thematic concerns in the representation of crime and punishment in the selected plays with a view to demonstrating the writers' quest for justice. A close and careful look at these concepts further provides significant insights to the notion of justice in Nigeria. These concepts are taken in the juridical/legal and in the religious senses. The latter is in one way closely related to the former particularly in the ways they are being represented in the selected plays. Efforts shall be put in place in this chapter to investigate the meaning of both to achieve a crystal conception of the concern of this thesis. The combination of crime and punishment in a strictly judicial/legal sense raises questions. For instance, the clear-cut distinction between criminal and civil offences of modern times is not present (or defined) in the pre-colonial Nigerian society jurisprudence represented in some of the plays under study. Every offence was committed, in the first place, against a certain person or community, and the only way to put the wrong right was to compensate the injured or the wronged. The question is asked, for instance, of the events in *The Gods Are Not To Blame:* Who compensates who between the gods and Ọdẹ́wálé? To answer this question from an unbiased mind, there are reasons to look at the title from syntax-semantics objectivity as, with the title alone, Ọlá Rótìmí seems to imply that the gods do not have the moral justification to punish Ọdẹ́wálé. To achieve this, therefore, the need may arise to re-phrase the title as, say, "The gods are not to be blamed" as opposed to *The Gods Are Not To Blame* particularly considering the observation of I. H. Marshall et al (1996) that the gods "sanctioned the laws of a community" (p. 243). This is evident in the prologue to *The Gods Are Not To Blame*. "It is their first baby, so they bring him for blessing to the shrine of Ògún…as is the custom". Here, Ògún is portrayed as the symbol of authority and justice. In every special sense, this is also true of the ancient Nigerian society. The promulgation of laws was closely connected with the forming of the covenant. This can now be paralleled by certain treaties like the treaty between Ẹlẹ́sin, the Aláàfin himself and the people of the land in Ṣóyinká's *Death and the*

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King's Horseman where a covenant is made, with certain mutual obligations couched in the typical form of cultural jurisprudence. For the specific purpose of this study, therefore, it is preferable to discuss crime and punishment independently.

Crime – Text and Context

There is a close affinity between crime, guilt and punishment. This is evident in the Hebrew word *awon*, which, according to the *New Bible Dictionary* (1996), was translated in Hebrew,"55 times as offence or crime, 159 times as guilt and 7 times as punishment," (Marshall *et al* 1996:243); or the Yoruba word, *àwọn*, which, metaphorically means the same thing as the Hebrew's, (noose). According to the *New Bible Dictionary* (1996), the basic meaning of crime is to act in a consciously crooked or wrong way, (p. 243). Crime is a violation of laws; it is an act that violates the basic values and beliefs of a society. These values and beliefs are manifested as laws, custom or conventions that the society agrees upon. These laws, custom or conventions exist to regulate the behaviour of the people in a society. Thus, for any crime to be committed, there must be a violation of the conventions. There are two types of laws: natural laws, which are rooted in core values shared by many cultures protecting against harm to persons (e.g. murder, rape, assault) or property (theft, larceny, robbery), and form the basis of common law systems; statute are enacted by legislatures and reflect current cultural mores. The substance, exigencies and content of both types are willfully or instinctively discerned by commonsense – the ability to form opinions which reflect practical experience. Commonsense affirms that the law clearly defines illegality, injustice and immorality; that people charged with and sentenced for criminal and immoral offences are criminals; that particular behaviour are deviant and the people who do them are deviants. However, if one asks a critical thinker to list three types of behaviour he identifies as criminal he really may not answer with certainty because of the complexity of its nature. Get some together and ask them to draw up an equally secure list in order of seriousness, and one can be sure of an argument. Strangely, this is a phenomenon one often feels able to identify clearly as represented by previous research works. It is also a pointer to the fact that, nobody can say with absolute or even with little sense of firmness, which behaviour or act is criminal because there is hardly anything such can apply as indices to substantially support his opinion, more so when one, in the context of this study, considers crime as an intentional commission of an act, and a violation of conscience. How, for instance, does one judge the act of Ọdẹ́wálé in the killing of Adétusà in Ọlá Rótìmí's *The Gods Are Not To Blame,* bearing in mind that it is his (Ọdẹ́wálé's) destiny to "…kill his own father and marry his own

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mother"? Hence critics argue that the definition of a particular behaviour must be interpreted in the light of many principles so as not to commit judicial or even interpretation error.

An alternative view of crime is derived from the theory of natural law. In this view, crime is the violation of individual natural rights. Since rights are considered as natural, rather than man-made, what constitutes a crime is also natural, in contrast to man-made laws. Adam Smith illustrates this view saying, a smuggler would be an excellent citizen, "had not the laws of his country made that a crime which nature never meant to be so", (Smith, 1968: 125). Natural law theory distinguishes between criminality and illegality. The former is derived from human nature, while the latter is derived from the interests of those in power. The two concepts are sometimes expressed with the phrases *malum in se*(criminality of an action)and *malum prohibitum* (illegality of an action). This view leads to a seeming paradox, that an act can be illegal, that is no crime. On the other hand, a criminal act could be perfectly legal. In other words, a crime can be the action of violating or breaking a law or not doing so. According to Western jurisprudence, there must be a simultaneous concurrence of both "guilty action" and "guilty mind" for a crime to have been committed… except in crimes of strict liability, (*Oxford Dictionary of Law*). In order for prosecution, some laws require proof of causality, relating the defendant's actions to the criminal event in question. In addition, some laws require that criminal circumstances have occurred, in order for a crime to have occurred. Also, in order for a crime to be prosecuted, proof of a crime must be established. It may also be a crime to conspire in order to commit other crimes, or helping others to commit crimes (which makes one an accomplice). For instance, the action of Gbonka in wanting to prevent crime by giving Ọdẹ́wálé to another person is also a crime itself: aiding and abetting. His refusal to "kill the boy" is a form of conspiracy against the gods, which aids Ọdẹ́wálé in committing crimes.

According to western history of crime, the first known written codes were written by the ancient Sumerians, and it was probably their king Ur-Nammu (reigning on Ur in the 21st century BC) the first legislator of which this generation received a formal system in 32 articles; it has to be recalled that this is not among the eldest laws, since not all the ancient laws are penal rules. In the antiquity, in fact, codes mostly contained both civil and penal rules together. Sumerians, however, later issued other codes as the one known as "code of Lipit-Istar" (last king of the 3rd dynasty of Ur, Isin - 20th century BC), (Kelly, 2010: 10). This code contains some 50 articles and has been reconstructed by the comparison among several sources. In Babylon, the code of Esnunna and the code of Hammurabi were used, and they reflected society's belief that, law was derived from the will of the gods. Similarly, some

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codes of conduct of religious origins or reference have been included in penal codes, forbidden behaviours resulting in real crimes in the states ruled by theocracy even in more recent times. According to *The Journal of Legal Studies* (1998), there was a time in India, in 1871, when the British listed 150 tribes criminals. Though this was repealed in 1952, the criminal stigma still surrounds these groups, and they are usually rounded up on suspicion of crime. This is just to argue how the ruling few determine what makes a crime or who is a criminal without putting the social conditions and psychological state of mind of the concerned individuals into consideration. Matters related to criminal behaviour in a society are studied in the field of sociology in the sub-field of criminology. The mental state and acuity of criminals is assessed by psychologists, especially in cases wherein the insanity defence is being utilised. The study of crime, in general, across a number of functional disciplines is often known as "Crime Science". This draws on statistics, environmental design, forensics, policing, sociology and other sciences to analyse the crimes, rather than applying commonsense which sees only the offenders, and provides ways and means to prevent, detect and solve crimes. Commonsense affirms what is right and wrong, who is a criminal, or who is not. Commonsense sustains, for man, a world which is meaningful and with which he is familiar. Commonsense knowledge about crime should be affirmed and yet questioned by social critics, hence sometimes, research works such as this can go a long way to serve as reference. They are refined to take a more holistic cross-examination of the concepts and, of course, individual perceptions of them. This is not suggesting that this research work is a parameter or indices to ascertain any behaviour in the society as being malicious or otherwise. It is rather a critical reading of literary authors who have sufficient knowledge of their society, its institution and its activities, and whose critical judgments are reliable and dependable as to influence both the individual and government in the appreciation of this term. This is the reason this thesis: (**i**) is interested in what people ordinarily define as criminal and in their disagreements about it; (**ii**) aims to ask if the commonsense boundaries surrounding a definition of this term are clear; (**iii**) wishes to know if the evidence used to support a particular explanation is at all reliable; (**iv**) seeks to ask whether there is any evidence at all; and (**v**) requesting whether the implicit theory employed is logically right. Once these and other related questions are asked, a framework of enquiry will be constructed, which extends beyond commonsense and which, indeed, radically questions what people regard as secure knowledge. This, once again, is not to suggest that absolute truths are hidden in this view. Every academic work is criticism and skepticism friendly for clarification and pedagogical interpretation.

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Sociological understanding of crime consists of a series of paradoxes. It is broadly comprehensive, yet exists in discrete developments, which have not been integrated with one another. Perhaps this excuses its vagueness. While concepts and empirical works have been well developed, the subject has not grown cumulatively: lessons from one generation may not be relevant in the next. More so, there is not a set of theories configured round key issues, as is perhaps the case with social class or modernisation, but a range of varied theories and concepts. These paradoxes occur because the study of crime is distinguished by two sets of factors: academic development and special features of the issue itself. Thus, the study of crime has been a multidisciplinary enterprise – almost everyone has approached it at some time or other. This research is exploring it from the perception of drama, because the concept itself has become a contested area, with contests between proponents of particular perspectives, rather than within a discipline. Frances Heidensohn says:

> The main problem in studying crime for the interested student, concerned professional or anyone else lies in its distinctiveness as an issue and the consequent difficulties of studying it. (Heidensohn, 1978:3)

Speaking from the same point of view, Simon Holdaway, in his *Crime and Deviance* (1988), says, researchers who are beginning a course about the sociology of crime usually expect a "voyeuristic peep into an invitingly seedy aspect of society", (p. 4). The human society is a composition of two major groups whose interest, opportunities and attitudes interact in complex ways in accordance with their relative power at different points. There are dominant ideologies, which tend to legiTimíse some attitudes and disqualify or suppress others. For instance, in Moróuntódun, Ọ̀ṣófisàn represents a society in which the economically and the politically-privileged heap indignities on the masses or the less-privileged, and make them believe that it is for the betterment of the society. But when the masses realise that they have been subjected to servitude, they make efforts to resist the privileged. This resistance is what the political class view as crimes. This is why some sociologists view crimes as wholly social category: people become criminal because they are recreated by the society to be criminal. In other words, criminals are not intrinsically different from non-criminals. This study, therefore, seeks to focus on the processes which lead to certain acts being defined as criminal. Most authors who have defined crime have done so with an explicit or implicit definition of it in mind. If one is alert to the definitional framework within which they work, one should find it easier to understand why some evidence to support a case is given priority over other evidence. A capacity to search for sensitive and a susceptible understanding to this issue

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appears central to intellectual investigation in the social sciences. As much as one might like to be a peeping tom, one must also learn to be the detective of the definitions employed. An appreciation of the definitions engaged by sociologists can, on occasion, expose the moral judgments one makes when defining this subject, and therefore their implicit prescriptions for changing society.

In his book, *Crime and Society* (1978), Frances, Heidensohn argues that, it may appear simple enough to define crime as "the sum of all those actions deemed as violation of the criminal law" to equate crime with law-breaking. Crime is different from the act of braking law(s). The act of making or adhering to the broken law(s) could also amount to criminality. Ẹlẹsin Ọba in *Death and the King's Horseman,* adds value to this position when he claims that the District Officer who, in the defence of his actions and law, asserts, "It is still a good bargain if the world should lose one night's sleep as the price of saving a man's life", does not save his "life" but "destroyed it" (p. 62). By implication, the act of preventing crime has become the crime committed. This is an indication that there is no universally accepted definition of crime because criminal laws are not fixed or permanent in any society. Even a growing body of research has shown that, at various times in history, "class and power have influenced the scope of the criminal laws" (Heidensohn, 1978:4). This suggests that, the behaviour classified criminal in a political dispensation may change once power has shifted because it is not that behaviour *per se* that constitutes crime, but the attribution of "criminal label to it by people in position of power" (Heidensohn, 1978:4). Section 34 sub section 1 of the *1999 Constitution* of the country, states as follows:

> Every individual is entitled to respect for the dignity of his person and accordingly –
> (a) 'no person shall be subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment'.

A reasonable mind may want to know what those who made these laws meant by this section of the constitution, seeing what operates in all parts of this country the lack of security, clean water, accommodation, qualitative education, employment, good roads, etc. A rational mind knows what this inhuman treatment of a people could degenerate into. When a bad government who usually enjoys the power to crack down on criminals have no enough criminals, it creates them by declaring so many things, particularly actions in resistance of its wickedness, as criminal, and incorporating such into the constitution as criminal laws. It becomes impossible for the oppressed to live without breaking such laws because they want to survive.

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The formal limits of criminal law can be shifted by many different social pressures. However, what appears indispensable here is that, there are crimes where and when there are enactments against certain conducts in the society. The question, however, is, which comes first between crime and criminal laws? In his attempt to answer this question, Sutherland (1983) proposed that an action that causes an injury and incurs a penalty should be added to the legal definitions of crime. One could conclude that criminal law precedes criminal acts. This, obviously, is a notion of legal infringement and infraction because before some people find some conducts harmful, some have tolerated or even enjoyed them. Perhaps, this is why sociologists focus on deviant rather than criminal behaviour, taking social reaction as the key to the concept. Becker (1963), defines deviance as, "whatever a society at any time labeled as deviant". One may argue here that even Becker agrees with Sutherland that criminal laws come before crime. But the central issue can be summed up by the observation that the processing and recording of crime should be as much as a socially constructed event as the definition of crime. Yet, sociologists agree that the definition of crime is a complex and problematic one. The thrust of most of their works on crime has not been to explain and solve its problem of complexity and complication, but rather to picture and to understand it. Suffice one to argue then that understanding crime is to see what, why, who and to whom an act is described as criminal. This conclusion is as a result of the doubt that, perhaps one should cast blame on the indistinctness and vagueness of the laws which create the crime, because without law there is no crime. This is an underscore of the realisation that man, as a rational being, has the perceptive power to view things in various ways. As some have seen crime as the abrogation of the laws, some see them as crime, while others see their refusal to break the laws as the crime itself. Cesare Beccaria, in an essay on "Crimes and Punishment", writes:

> Would you prevent crimes? Let the laws be clear and simple, let the entire force of the nation be united in their defence, let them be intended rather to favour every individual than any particular classes of men; let the laws be feared, and the laws only. The fear of the laws is salutary, but the fear of men is a fruitful and fatal source of crimes, (Beccaria, 1819).

There are also some fundamental concepts of life which need to be considered in the sociological definition of crime. These are: freewill and determinism, necessity, love and justice. These concepts consciously or unconsciously influence human conduct or decision in that the deviant may justify his criminal action by any or all of them. Of freewill and determinism, for instance, it is said that every human being has *will* which, coupled with

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decision and acknowledgement of truth, consists of desire that is, for most practical purposes, subject to rational judgment. Thus, when one is considering a course of action, the *will* is first attracted or repelled as the various elements and alternatives are seen to be good or bad in isolation. These are the antecedent volitions; then these initial apprehensions are combined to produce a single consequent volition which results in the performance of the eventual act. Man acts at *will* when his desires cease to be ruled by his rational judgment, but this is after he must have carefully made his choice. That is, prior to his action his desires are subservient to practical discretion of the intellect. But, at the point where determination reinforces volition, he is left under the influence of inclinations, which are the result of previous experiences. In most cases, he is not aware, but usually has precise intents upon the mind, where they determine all actions that are not the result of conscious deliberation. It is said of necessity that, conceptualism offers an account that accurately describes moral motivation as experienced by many. It can account for diversity of moral reasons and for the diverse roles that moral motivation plays in man's practical thought. It is this concept which substantiates it that in certain conditions when certain things are not right to do, yet one will do them due to their pressing demands. The significance of such things has certified it right even while it is legally and morally wrong. This is located in all the plays under study. For instance, in *Death and the King's Horseman*, Olúndé commits the crime of suicide because such crime is necessary. It is a crime to prevent a bigger crime of carnage. Of love and justice, critics say, in the course of man's existence, usually, he does things that enhance the happiness of others, and derive considerable pleasure not only in doing them but also in contemplating the happiness thus produced. But disseminated mental judgment may impress upon one's reason the preference of calling this "active benevolence" rather than "love", save for it is nevertheless a recognizable feature of human emotional lives, and one that has particular significance for the practice of morality. Given the importance of observation, one may argue that love is that invisible agent which can only be defined by the definition it gives of its victim(s). In other words, love reveals the nature of his victim. You know who loves by what love makes him do and not by what he does by love. The question one is forced to ask here is that, how does one describe an action taken out of love but against legal will of a given society? Answers for this question are provided in the concept of justice. In his remark on justice, John Hostler says:

> Since, therefore, justice demands that the good of others be sought for its own sake, and since to seek the good of others in this fashion is to love them, it follows that love is part of the very nature of

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> justice. And justice will be the habit of loving other… as far as this can be done in accord with wisdom, (Hostler, 1975: 61).

Giving this remark a deep thought, Hostler formulated the idea of justice in its final and concise definition as the "caritas sapientis" – the "charity" or love exercised by the wise man. It is distinguished from the notion of friendship by the fact that charity is essentially universal – benevolence directed towards all men. The "wise man" is usually prudent, and when his prudence is connected to love, he becomes a just man whose acts are often morally right, but who may not be just and right in his judgment that is reached based on the evidence before him. Leibniz asserts that "justice" comprises the whole of right conduct; it includes "all virtuous conduct towards others", and comprises not only all virtuous conduct towards others but also "the internal virtues of the soul" (Hostler, 1975: 61).

Punishment: Text and Contest

The concept of punishment, its definition in terms of practical application and justification, have shown a marked drift away from efforts to reform and rehabilitate offenders in favour of retribution and incarceration. Punishment in its very conception, is now acknowledged to be an inherently retributive practice, whatever may be the further role of retribution as a (or the) justification or goal of punishment. A liberal justification of punishment would proceed by demonstrating that society needs the threat and the practice of punishment, because the goal of social order cannot be achieved otherwise and because it is unfair to expect victims of criminal aggression to bear the cost of their vicTìmízation. Punishment is pain or any other penalty inflicted on a person for a crime or offence by an authority to which the offender is subject. By implication, punishment is a penalty imposed for the transgression of the existing or man-made statute; or any pain or detriment suffered in corollary of an immoral act. Punishment, in this context, is human, that is, it is administered by the official organ of the state made up of figures that are usually from the largest assemblage of those who make the laws. It becomes consequence when it is divine, that is, when what natural or divine law says will be suffered by anyone who commits an immoral act is what is suffered. Human punishment could be escaped by an offender either by influence or by absconding, but divine punishment or consequence could not. This is what is explicitly defined in the Hindu ideology of the Law of Karma as the supernaturally designed effect of an immoral act. Helmer Ringgren, in his essay on "Judgment of the Dead," says:

> Here no god or personal being seems to be involved in the decision. In the other … however, a court scene is presupposed with… semi divine judges passing on the offender. (*The Encyclopedia of Religion*, 2003: 205).

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Punishment is the intentional imposition of penalty on an offender as a result of an offence committed, while consequence must come to a person in return for something he or she has done usually in contravention of some rule or practice, which, in itself, is morally justifiable. Under the Nigerian legal consideration, punishment may not be morally justifiable, rather legally justifiable, particularly because the concept of punishment, its definition, and its practical application and justification, have shown a marked drift away from efforts to reform and rehabilitate offenders in favour of retribution and incarceration. The reason is that, the political class dictates the laws and determines the legality or the illegality of actions. In other words, some methods adopted in punishing offenders may even be acts that deserve punishment. For the reason that the infliction of punishment is normally intended to cause, and usually does cause, some form of deprivation for the person being punished, the infliction of punishment provides unparalleled opportunity for abuse of power. To distinguish such abuses both from the legitimate deprivations that are essential to punishment and from the excesses of punitive sentences that embody cruel and inhuman punishments, one must rely on the way the former are connected to (and the latter disconnected from) whatever constitutes the sentence as such and whatever justifies it, (Kelly, 2010: 9). This especially is true where punishment through the legal system is concerned, since the punishments at the system's disposal – as well as the abuses – are typically so severe.

Conclusion

The general form of any possible justification of punishment involves several steps. They start with realising that punishing people is not intelligibly done entirely or solely for its own sake. Some critics who have history on their side, may want to dispute this claim on the thought that human nature is such that people do get intrinsic even if disguised satisfactions out of inflicting authorised harm on others, as punishment necessarily does. Others will regard this satisfaction, such as it is, as a perversity of human nature on the conclusion that people retain the practice of punishment because it enables them to achieve desired goals or result. Defining the concepts of crime and punishment must be kept distinct from justifying them. Definitions are, or ought to be value-natural, at least to the extent of not incorporating any norms or principles that surreptitiously tend to justify whatever falls under the definitions themselves. To put this in another context, crime and punishment are not supposed to be justified, or even partly justified by packaging their definitions in a manner that virtually guarantees that whatever counts as crime and punishment are automatically justified. In other words, their definitions ought not to preclude their justifications. Therefore, justifying the practice or institution of crime and punishment must be kept distinct from justifying any

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given act of them. Justification of any act of crime and punishment is supposed to be done by reference to the norms (rules, standards, principles and existing realities) defining the institutional practice – such as what is described in the popular saying that, *nulla poena sine leges and nulla poena sine crimen* (no punishments outside the law, no punishment except for a crime) – a crime that is justified. Justification, however, necessarily has reference to every different consideration – social purposes, values, or goals of the society in which the practices are rooted.

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CHAPTER THREE

Issues in Literary Discourse of the Selected Plays of Ṣóyinká

Literature and humanity co-exist generally within the culture. The culture is ennobled and validated by them, and yet in the vision of culture inculcated by professional humanists and literary critics, the approved practice of high culture is marginal to the serious political concerns of a given society. As Edward, Said (1983: iv) observes, there is no way to get past texts in order to apprehend reality directly. This appears as though to strengthen the interest in the events and the circumstances entailed by and expressed in the texts themselves. However, it is more to enhance human understanding of the society as whatever is represented in art is taken from the society to mirror it and influence it positively. Based on real events that took place in Ọyọ́, the ancient Yoruba city in 1946, *Death and the King's Horseman* details how a colonial District Officer, intervenes to prevent the ritual suicide of the Yoruba chief, Ẹlẹ́sin – a sacrificial suicide demanded by the death of the king (but more by the harmony, existence and survival of a race). However, in this confrontation of African characters with European, Ṣóyinká appears to be concerned with more than just a clash of cultures. Rather, he seems to be more concerned about the investigation, definition and classification of the actuality of primitivism and Western civilization. He evokes the mystery and ritual of the Yoruba life, a world of the living, the dead and the unborn, and places it on the same scales of cultures (Yoruba and English), with that of the West to defend the equality of cultural values. This is first introduced in the question asked by the Ẹlẹ́sin's Praise-Singer in the plays:

> There is only one home to the life of a river mussel; there is only one home to the life of a tortoise; there is only one shell to the soul of man; there is only one world to the spirit of our race. If that world leaves its course and smashes on the boulders of the great void, whose world will give us shelter? (Ṣóyinká 1975:11)

Allegory is a literary device in which the literal elements (characters, settings and actions) consistently point to a parallel sequence of ideas, values, realities, virtues, or other recognisable things. Allegory is often used to dramatise moral principles, historical events, religious systems, or political issues, often for didactic or satiric purposes. An allegory has two levels of meaning: a literal level that tells a surface story and a symbolic level in which the abstractions unfold. The only requirement for an allegory is that two or more levels of meaning be sustained consistently, and that the abstract meaning be, more or less, conventional. The names of characters often hint at their allegorical meaning, and the

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characters' behaviours bear them out. For instance, the King's Horseman is called Ẹlẹ́sin, which, in the dialect of the Ọ̀yọ́ or Ìbàdàn Yoruba, could also be pronounced, in the context of the scornful actions of Ẹlẹ́sin in the play, as Ẹlẹ́sin (ridiculer or a man of ridicule) – a deliberate lexical manipulation. The King has died. As the King's Horseman who is supposed to serve the King in the land of the dead, as tradition demands, Ẹlẹ́sin chooses to get a new wife and be master of his own fate. This action, as stated in the play, can throw the entire society into a colossal calamity. This event has very strong correlations to the present Nigerian society, where leaders abandon their primary and parliamentary responsibilities to make themselves masters of their own fates.Ṣóyinká has presented it as a reminder or a caution to the present Nigerian political class. Thus, Ṣóyinká becomes the Ẹlẹ́sin's Praise-singer who urges his master, the political class, to accede to the oath taken at election or appointment for the same purpose. They should not let the *world"* leave its course and smash on the boulders of the great void," because with the population of this *world* being the fastest growing one in Africa, no *world* will give us shelter. This is a pointer to the Chapter 1 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, (1999) reads:

> We the people of the Federal Republic of Nigeria…firmly and solemnly resolve to live in unity and harmony as one indivisible and indissoluble sovereign nation under God…for the purpose of promoting the good governance and welfare of all persons in our country on the principle of Freedom, Equality and Justice, and for the purpose of consolidating the Unity of our people… (p.1).

A critical evaluation of *Death and the King's Horseman* is a reminder that the Nigerian political class has jettisoned the provisions of the constitution. The Nigerian society is now likened to the scenario represented in Orwell's *Animal Farm* (1982). In the novel, Benjamin feels a nose nestling at his shoulder. He looks round. It is Clover. "Her old eyes looked dimmer than ever". Without saying anything, she tugged gently at his mane and led him round to the place where the constitution is written. For a minute or two "they stood gazing at the tarred wall with its white lettering."

> 'My sight is failing', she said faintly. 'Even when I was young I could not have read what was written there. But it appears to me that that wall looks different. Are the Seven Commandments the same as they used to be, Benjamin? For once Benjamin consented to break his rule, and he read out to her what was written on the wall. There was nothing there now except a single Commandment. It ran: 'ALL ANIMALS ARE EQUAL BUT SOME ANIMALS ARE

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> MORE EQUAL THAN OTHERS'. He does not see it clearly, (Orwell, 1982:92).

He has to employ the service of someone who sees more clearly to read what has been added so as to be sure.

> After that it did not seem strange when next day the pigs who were supervising the work of the farm all carried whips in their trotters. It did not seem strange to learn that the pigs had bought themselves wireless set, and were arranging to install a telephone, and had taken out subscription to John Bull, Tit-Bits and the Daily Mirror. It did not seem strange when Napoleon was seen strolling in the farmhouse garden with a pipe in his mouth–no, not even when the pigs took Mr. Jones's clothes out of the wardrobes and put them on, Napoleon himself appearing in a black coat, rat-catcher breeches, and leather leggings, while his favourite sow appeared in the watered silk dress which Mrs. Jones had been used to wear on Sundays, (Orwell, 1982: 92-3).

The characterisation of Ẹlẹ́sin suggests that the leaders of this nation have rewritten the constitution of the country. They have become so blind, myopic and perverse in their mindsets, and so are committing "death" instead of the ritual suicide – the oath they all take. Ṣóyinká seems to be calling his reader's attention to something very fundamental, that the political class has altered the constitution in their favour. Thus, the above cited portion of the constitution could be reworded as follows, "We" the political class of "the Federal Republic of Nigeria…firmly and solemnly resolve to live in unity and harmony as one indivisible and indissoluble sovereign nation under [Satan]…for the purpose of promoting the good governance and welfare" of the political class in our country "on the principle of Freedom, Equality and Justice, and for the purpose of consolidating the Unity of our[selves]…" (The Nigerian Constitution, 1999: 1). This alteration has been noticed in their failure to fulfill their electoral promises to the people. Instead, they have influenced the constitution to aid their gullibility. However, because Ṣóyinká knows the implication and the consequence of this alteration, he asks in anticipation: "If that world leaves its course and smashes on the boulders the great void, whose world will give us shelter?" (Ṣóyinká, 1975: 11)This question initiates a good reader into the topography of forecast to foretaste that a shelter is about to be shattered – a punishment but not in retribution. An injunction is about to be violated; a life, a soul, a spirit is about to be removed forcefully from its body, dragging it to the violent torrents. Ṣóyinká, who senses the consequences of this, employs metaphors to capture the reality of the Nigerian power system. Tóyìn Fálọlá, in his foreword to Dasylva's *Song of*

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Adamolugbe (2007: iv) says, "Parables no longer derive from the imagination, but from the daily reality of a straightened existence. A torrent of anguish…we travel": "…whose world will give us shelter?" This question threatens marriages and child bearing in this country. It threatens religions, education, employment, etc. Ambassador Chief Sẹ́gun Olúsọlá sees the multifaceted answer to the question when he narrated one of his memorable experiences as the Nigerian Ambassador to Ethiopia.

> During the period I traveled to places like Somalia, Algeria, South Africa…on the subject of refugees. I lived in Southern Algeria on one occasion. I was dealing with the Sahrawi refugees and all the able-bodied men had gone to war. The women and the children were the ones left in the refugee camp. (*Saturday Punch*, 2009:5).

The experience recorded here gives deeper insights to the question asked by the Praise-Singer. Nigeria has over one hundred and fifty million people. Now, "If that world leaves its course and smashes on the boulders of the great void, whose world will give us shelter?"(Ṣóyinká 1975: 11). The Praise-Singer speaks further, Ẹlẹ́sin's riddles are: "…not merely the nut in the kernel that breaks human teeth, he also buries the kernel in hot embers and dares a man's fingers to draw it out", (p.11). But the play has been able to convince its reader that Ṣóyinká is using the account in the play to expose the craftiness of the Nigerian political class who he has represented as having little or no respect for the lives of the masses. With this attitude of the political class, he concludes that they will "commit death". His conclusion evokes several layers of response – a cumulative achievement with a lasting resonance on several levels. His question lays the dais, exposing the concoction of dangerous leadership, the love potion consumed with the delicious meal that destroys their sensibility and sensitivity. The Praise-singer, who is the first person to see this, observes: "Ẹlẹ́sin's riddles are not merely the nut in the kernel that breaks human teeth; he also buries the kernel in hot embers and dares a man's fingers to draw it out" (p.11). Not only for the training he has had or his discipline, but also for submitting himself to the power that created the world, the Praise-singer has the ability, a greater power and readiness to express what he feels. He joyfully makes proof the truth a constant companion because he operates in the realm of the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge – poetry – the first and final of all knowledge. There is a sanctity and truth about his descriptions and prophecies, which it would be sacrilege to try to trick out of with transitory accidental ornaments. His sense as a craftsman is anathema. He is chiefly distinguished from other men by a greater promptness to think and feel without immediate external excitement, and a greater power in expressing such thoughts and feelings

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as are produced in him in that manner. These passions, thoughts and feelings are the general attributes of man. But with the Praise-singer, they appear eccentrically as they are connected with the causes, which excite them with the operations of the elements, and the appearances of the visible universe; "with storm and sunshine, with the revolution of the seasons, with cold and heat, with loss of friends and kindred, with injuries and resentments, gratitude and hope, with fear and sorrow", (Dasylva, 2006:6).

In his "Ira", Dasylva reechoes the tension of the scenario in Ẹlẹ́sin's refusal to die for his people. He says "dead letters have potency", (Dasylva, 2006:6). Yet, Ẹlẹ́sin's response to the question asked by his Praise-singer that, "Ẹlẹ́sin Ọba, do you hear me?" is, "I hear your voice…." This is the height of deliberate wickedness. Ẹlẹ́sin does not hear his Praise-singer. It is his voice he hears. To hear someone in the context of this play is to understand what the person is saying, while to hear someone's voice is to just listen to the person without knowing what the person is saying. The fertile soul sees such cruelty as transient – a welcome betrayal of the significant political madness and administrative incompetence and diabolism manifesting in the use of hegemonic violence as a source of "death" and destruction. It is within such understanding that the Dasylva describes them as: "home-grown tyrants, political mercenaries…murderers of our motherland; agents causative…suffocating children(s) trapped on bare backs of mammy mothers…" (Dasylva, 2006:6).Their credulities manifest in their crude politics of oil, roads, rail and air-ways. Their quests and sinister motives to stockpile wealth, attain political power with a passion not to relinquish it, yet not for the just purpose of having them, reflect in inflation and inflated budgets, contracts, "causing curses of mangled bodies, ghastly victims of daily carnage…home-grown tyrants, all!" (Dasylva, 2006:26-7). The question spills from the groaning heart: Who is a criminal? Answering this question, Dostoevsky, in his book, *Crime and Punishment*, (2000) provides an analogy:

> The action is contemporary, this year. A young man, expelled from the university, petit-bourgeois by social origin, and living in extreme poverty, after yielding to certain strange 'unfinished' ideas floating in the air, has resolved, out of light-mindedness and out of the instability of his ideas, to get out of his foul situation at one go. He has resolved to murder an old woman…who lends money at interest. The old woman is stupid, deaf, sick, greedy, charges Jewish interest, is malicious… tormenting her younger sister, whom she keeps as a servant. She is worthless, (p. VI).

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Some critics have argued that crime and conflict result from a conscious desire to avoid pain. However, pain in the context of this study is relative. While some acquire it as a result of selfishness and greed, others acquire it as a result of bad leadership.

In his *Prevention and Management of Conflict*, (2006), Akpenpuun Dzurgba, identifies two major causes of crime in any human society from the perspectives of two theorists: Max Weber and Karl Marx. According to him, the proponents of structural functionalism draw largely on Max Weber and Karl Marx to construct their arguments. They place different emphases on crime/conflict about power and economy. Their conclusion is that crime/conflict can best be explained in terms of power and economy, (Dzurgba, 2006: 1). Conflict theorists, Stuart Henry and Mark Lanier, add their voice to support this position when they say, power is a "main source of conflict" in societies because, in its capacity to reward complaints, persuade recalcitrant, coerce intransigents and punish offenders, it is "the ability to control the behaviour of other people, even against their will", (Henry and Lanier, 1998: 70). Thus, power decides and chooses who gains and who loses in any given situation. It is in view of this that the law is transgressed by those who enact it in order to palliate their desires for pleasures that encompass the physical, social, moral, economic and psychological. Stuart Henry and Mark Lanier's remark is apposite here:

> …people broke the law because they desired to gain money, sex, excitement, or revenge.... Bentham saw law's purpose as increasing the total happiness of the community… excluding 'mischief' and promoting pleasure and security, (Henry and Lanier, 1998: 70).

Those who make the laws, particularly in this part of the world, always influence it. Classical criminological theorists, Lea and Young (1984), view the offender as merely the product of such desire. This view is still reflected in social legislation and governmental policy today in Nigeria, thus, making crimeas "one form of egoistic response to deprivation. Its roots are in justice but its growth often perpetrates injustice," (p.72). However, the philosophy of life requires that to whom much is given much is required and expected. Ẹlẹ́sin, like any of these so-called Nigerian leaders, has taken an oath to salvage his people whenever the needs arise. He enjoys all the privileges of the leader of a people. He feeds on their sweat, tears, milk, tea and their starved soul. It is a universal truth that there is time for everything: a time to get from the people and a time to give back to the people; a time to live and a time to die. When these fundamental cosmological principles suffer zealous adherence, tragedy is imminent – a colossal bereavement is about to plague a people. Such are Ẹlẹ́sin's riddles, which are not

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merely the nut in the kernel "that breaks human teeth". They also "bury the kernel in hot embers and dare a man's fingers to draw it out" but Ámúsà who observes that:

> …the Ẹlẹ́sin Ọba, is to commit death… as a result of native custom. Because this is a criminal offence I await further instruction…. (Ṣóyinká, 1975:26)

At this point, one is initiated into the admiration of the simplicity in and of Ṣóyinká's complexity, concealed in his deployment of the English Language to divulge obscure scenarios to lucidity: "the Ẹlẹ́sin Ọba, is to commit death…" Language is an unstable medium, with the meaning of statements ambiguous and wavering because of the working context and metaphor. The same word in one text means one thing, in another yet another thing. Literal meanings are always being twisted into figurative meanings and alternate connotations. Language is also a system of differences, not identities. The meaning and value of words are not due to an inherent quality they bear, but to their differences from other words. The altercation in the play is essentially metaphysical, entrenched in the human medium, Ẹlẹ́sin, and the universe of the Yoruba mind – the world of the living, the dead and the unborn, and the numinous passage which links all: "transition". The phrase, commit death as used in the plays, generates a deeper meaning in Yoruba language: *bẹ ikú ní ọwẹ́*, meaning, entrust death with some responsibilities. The imminent calamity to plague a people evokes in Ẹlẹ́sin intrigues:

> Death came calling.
> Who does not know his rasp of reeds?
> A twilight whisper in the leaves before
> The great Àràbà falls? Did you not hear it?
> Not I! swears the farmer. He snaps
> His fingers round his head, abandons
> A bard worn harvest and begins
> A rapid dialogue with his legs.(Ṣóyinká, 1975: 11).

Ámúsà knows or has the capacity to anticipate the hidden agenda of Ẹlẹ́sin. At the first move of Ẹlẹ́sin, Ámúsà, a custodian of the existing African (Yoruba) customs and tradition, suspects that Ẹlẹ́sin is not going to commit suicide but death. He knows the implication if death and not suicide is committed: many will die. To prevent the carnage, he reports to the white man in the most understandable translation of the Yoruba language for effective understanding of Ẹlẹ́sin's intent: Ẹlẹ́sin *fe be iku ni owe;* Ẹlẹ́sin is to "commit death". Yet, Pilkings and his wife, in their insensitivity and absurdity, fail to understand him equally in the context of the prevailing situation. "Did I hear you say commit death?" Jane asks. And the District Officer representing the queen of the English language, displays his linguistic

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ineptitude even of his own tongue and answers: “Obviously he means murder,” (Ṣóyinká, 1975:26). Ámúsà knows that “There is only one home to the life of a river-mussel”; he knows “there is only one home to the life of a tortoise”; he knows there is only one shell to the “soul of man”; he knows there is only one world to the spirit of his “race”. Yet, he knows Ẹlẹ́sin – “a tortoise, a coward, a conniving slippery maggot” (Rótìmí 1975: 34). This is why he warns against the imminent danger that Ẹlẹ́sin’s claim of being the master of his own fate in a communal faith, can bring death to the people. Ẹlẹ́sin Ọba is the man on whose dying lies the living of a people, and on whose living lies the dying of the same people. This challenges a discriminate reader to take a linguistic reflection of the word “commit” observing the respect Ámúsà has for what binds the people together, the sacred “egúngún”, (Ṣóyinká, 1975:25).

Following S.A. Dada(2007), language transfers constitute the language behaviour of “Yoruba-English” bilinguals. Such transfers should be perceived as going beyond a natural development of bilingualism, that is, induced by bilingualism since in reality they are more of features “occasioned by the communicative domain of interlocutors”,(Dada, 2007: 85-113). This implies that the English language has been adapted and tamed, in this context, at a philosophical level, to suit the Nigerian environment. In other words, the English language is no longer alien to Ámúsà or Ṣóyinká (so to speak), for he has effectively appropriated it. This is the domestication many Nigerian language scholars speak of the English language at the lexical, idiomatic, pragmatic, cultural and semantic levels. Commit, in the context of its usage here is synonymous with entrust: to give someone or, in this case, death, the duty for which he is responsible; to play a trust upon. For example, “Ẹlẹ́sin Ọba is to commit death” means, “Ẹlẹ́sin Ọba” is to entrust “death” with or entrust the task of killing a people to “death”. This is what prompts the question that, “If that world leaves its course and smashes on boulders of the great void, whose world will give us shelter?” (Ṣóyinká, 1975:11) Perhaps Eghagha’s question in his *Death Not A Redeemer*, (1998), should be reechoed here, “…can death bring life?” (Eghagha 1998: xi). Ṣóyinká admits that death cannot bring life, but dying can bring life, and living can take life. He hinges his argument on the concept of belief – an accepted opinion particularly by a people who share common principles. The people represented in *Death and the King’s Horseman* have been initiated into a common passion and convention. It is a communal expression and reaffirmation of shared beliefs and traditions, which strengthens the confidence of the people, asserts the continuity with the past and reinforces its confidence in dealing with the present to secure the future. This is a culture where every aspect of the people’s life is linked to the supernatural environment of which they believe to

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be an integral part. In Africa, there is this relationship between the dead and the living. Every African feels that he is dependent on his ancestors. From them he has received his life and… his inheritance. He looks up to them to care for his well-being….On his ancestors he can depend. The other side is the belief that his ancestors watch over his conduct, and that if he fails in his duties, they will not only cease to send him blessings, but they will also visit him with sickness or some other misfortune. He cannot stand alone and depend only on his efforts; on his ancestors he must depend. Any rebellion against this belief attracts severe penalties. Therefore, for fear of the perceived severe penalties, the women in *Death and the King's Horseman* led by Ìyálọ́jà, go extra miles to encourage Ẹlẹ́sin to salvage the situation: "Richly, richly," they cry,

> … robe him richly
> The cloth of honour is àlárì
> Sányán is the band of friendship
> Boa-skin makes slippers of esteem, (p.56).

Instead of embracing this honour and commit himself to the salvation of his race, Ẹlẹ́sin commits death with the implication of erasing his own race, unwittingly. He, a tortoise, a coward, a conniving slippery maggot, asks in his diabolism,

> How can that be? In all my life
> …the juiciest
> Fruit on every tree was mine, I saw,
> I touched, I wooed, rarely was the answer No
> The honour of my place, the veneration I
> Received in the eye of man or woman…

All this he takes from his people because he owes them life; he is to offer himself a sacrifice of a communal existence; he is to commit a ritual suicide on behalf of his society first to ease the passage of the departed soul of the Aláàfin and second, for the survival and existence of the society and its people. Instead, he, like a typical Nigerian politician, chooses to "commit death" and plunge the entire nation into a torrent of anguish just to save his personal life – genocide of unimaginable magnitude. As Olúndé,in his sensitivity, later observes, this tricks and antics of Ẹlẹ́sin will only desecrate the land, "incur the enmity of his people…over nothing and bring a terrible calamity… to the entire people." (Ṣóyinká, 1975:67)Therefore, there is a need for a hero – a saviour who, unlike Ẹlẹ́sin, will see his living as dying and his dying as living. Olúndé, for this purpose, comes even from the West to enthrone primitivism for the salvation of his people. He walks through the road Ẹlẹ́sin ran – he dies for his people to immortalise himself in the hearts of his people. If Ẹlẹ́sin had died as tradition demands, there would not have been any need for Olúndé to die. But because he refuses to die the

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tradition way, and there is nothing that can be offered in place of the honour and veneration of his own people, since his father has decided to be master of his own "fate" in the sense that he chooses to detach his own destiny from the culture that give birth to him, nurtures him to maturity, and hangs his fate on the Aláàfin as the King's Horseman, and re-write it. Olúndé offers himself a sacrifice to the hungry "death" charged with the responsibility to wipe a race off by his father, to commit the community to eternal existence, and not the extinction schemed by his father. Dutifully and in new found joy for dying to save his people, the son asserts, "I didn't want to do anything wrong, sometime which might jeopardize the welfare of my people" (Ṣóyinká, 1975:74). Application of the law is premised upon the reasonableness of the mind. In spite of all persuasions and threat of criminality of his action by the white man and his wife, the learned young man gladly and courageously concludes, "…I appreciate what you tried to do. I want you to believe that I can only tell you it would have been a terrible calamity if you'd succeeded", (Ṣóyinká 1975: 74). To his father he confesses: "I have no father, eater of left-overs" as he walks "slowly" down the very "way" his father had "run" (Ṣóyinká 1975: 74). Lights fade on Ẹlẹ́sin regretting and accusing the white man: "You did not save my life, District Officer. You destroyed it",(Ṣóyinká 1975: 76).What Ẹlẹ́sin seems to be saying here is that, he has lost his respect, which means he will never be relevant among his people. His son that is supposed to inherit him and sustain the linage, has died, too. In Yoruba, if a man has no son to succeed him, he is destroyed already because children are seen as the memory of the Yoruba man. This conclusion appears that Ṣóyinká has deliberately spoken through the character of Ẹlẹ́sin to create a responsible leader out of the Nigerian political class in that he wants them to use their wealth of political experience to fix this nation. But, if they will not appreciate his yearning for benevolence, he seems to be saying, too, that regret will be their last confession.

When Men of God Become Gods of Men – *The Trials of Brother Jero*

In the most common sense, comedy has been seen as any work aimed at amusing an audience. In literary studies, however, the form has a more complex and controversial application, thus having influence on its definition, which changes significantly inspired by circumstances, characters and events. In Ṣóyinká's *The Trials of Brother Jero*, comedy becomes the literary piece, which incites the disgust of the audience, particularly by presenting a scenario of scorn and revulsion. Consequently, it is important to discuss the significance or the essence of comedy in relation to the main topic of this dissertation considering how Ṣóyinká has employed it to address criminality. Written to satirise human

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nature and social norms, and also to simply indulge a taste for the ridiculous and vulgar, Ṣóyinká's *The Trials of Brother Jero* (1986) is one of the two short plays that ridicule the stupidity of the discipleship of the Nigerian Christians, and the selfishness and gullibility of the so-called men of God who have turned themselves to Gods of men. The challenge, therefore, is how one can make criminal intent or scenes and the punishment for such in a play that appears purely comedic. Scholars, however, have argued that given the presence of comedy in all cultures, there is need for one to search for comedy outside literary contexts in cross-cultural behaviours, social settings and psyche. Hence, anthropologists, psychologists and literary scholars have formed theories about comedy that it is a part of a general understanding of human nature. Adélùgbà, for instance, submits that "the African comedic spirit is very expressive. And I think our natural medium is comedy. I think we want to get it out of our systems, even at the most tragic moments…" (Adélùgbà, cf. Dasylva, 2007: 111).

Ṣóyinká begins with a profit-minded prophet, Brother Jeroboam – a charlatan preacher, burdened by a cross, "daughter of Eve". He has been destined to be a prophet from birth. The most obvious reason are his thick hairs which must not be cut. Because of his profit mindedness, he defrauds people with prophetic ingenuity, which he inherits from birth. Of his victims are brother Chume and his wife, Àmọ̀pé, who believe so much in his perceived supernatural power of prophet-hood. These people are, originally, not ignorant but innocent. Their innocence enthrones the psychological feeling that they have a captain to lead them. It is the nature of man to always feel the need for someone to lead while he follows. That is belief –the social concept which describes a people who think like one, speak like one, share a common awareness and act like one. Chume blindly accepts every instruction of the Prophet Jero at the expense of his own marriage, health, finance, matrimonial dignity and peace of mind. He knows it is an abomination for a wife to disrespect her husband. He knows that the African society does not encourage a man to take or absorb insults from her wife if he must maintain his position as the head of the family. Yet, he has been incapacitated by the trust and belief he has in the prophet to take any action. His wife, Àmọ̀pé, takes it as a pride and culture to abuse and insult him, constantly. But because he strongly believes in the words of Prophet Jero, restraining him from beating her, Chume does not take any sanction against his wife. When he appeals to the prophet to save him from madness of accepting strange doctrine, the prophet simply tells him: "… only if you obey me". To convince him, he confuses him with past prophesies:

> Jero: (sternly). What were you before the grace of God?
> Chume: A labourer, prophet. A common labourer.

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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: And 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… but…
Jero: With a telephone and a table bell for calling the messenger?
Chume: Very true, prophet, but…
Jero: But? But? Kneel! (pointing to the ground). Kneel!
Chume: (Wringing his hand). Prophet!
Jero: Kneel, sinner, kneel. Hardener of heart, harbourer of Ashtoreth, protector of Baal, kneel, kneel, (Ṣóyinká 1986:12).

In demonstration of his trust for the Prophet, Chume falls on his knees. In actual sense, Prophet Jero knows within himself that he does not have the spiritual capacity to supply the needs of Chume. He has only acceded to the responsibilities of a prophet to defraud his acclaimed devotee, Chume. There are so many Christian denominations in Nigeria who use the name of Jesus Christ to exploit people. From the nothingness of most of their members, who constantly pay their tithes and offerings, these churches establish schools: primary, secondary and universities. The tragedy, however, is that, the children of the poor whose money are used to establish these schools, cannot afford the fees. Yet, these people keep paying their tithes and offerings even from their empty purses. Their pastors tell them of the promises of God for them: promises to be financially empowered. These promises do not come to pass. Or those that come to pass can only be traced to individuals' efforts, which sometime are fraudulent. Those pastors who have the opportunity to help the children of the poor to attend these schools by paying their fees, will not do so because of the selfish nature of the Nigerian man. Many of these poor people die in poverty; many of their homes are broken for lack of financial strength. Yet, like Chume, they keep vouching their loyalty to these men of God, hoping for the promises of God. Ṣóyinká represents the Nigerian Christian society to draw attention to the decadents that are ravaging the leadership of the Nigerian society. In Nigeria, it is a common truth that people (Nigerians) believe more in the supernatural beings, particularly, God. This scenario has often been represented in many Nigerian plays. The theme common to most of these representations, is the height of corruption where the masses in the name of the people of God, who always rely on men of

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God for solutions to their problems, are being defrauded by the same men of God. For instance, one major reason Chume comes to inform Prophet Jeroboam of the terrible behaviour of his wife, Àmọ̀pé, is because he believes the prophet's intervention could be of immense help to check the excesses of the woman. But, because of the fraudulent intention of the prophet, he does not listen to what the man has to say; he does not have respect for Chume's opinion. Instead, he orders him to kneel – calling him terrible names such as, a "sinner, hardener of heart, harbourer of Ashtoreth, protector of Baal." (Ṣóyinká 1986:12). The disease or sickness of leadership of the body politic has affected every aspect of the nation that the so-called men of God have imbibed the culture of ruler-ship prevalent in the nation to treat their members. The concern of the prophet is not to identify and provide solution to the problem of his subject, but to protect his own interest. Prophet Jero ignores Chume because he thinks whatever solution he devices to the challenges of Chume, will not benefit him (Jero) or satisfy his interest. If Chume succeeds in beating his wife, it means he has been able to exercise his matrimonial influence over his house, and by so doing, he would have succeeded in taking over the leadership of the home from the prophet. This is what the prophet is trying to prevent:

> He wants to beat his wife, but I won't let him. If I do, he will become 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, (Ṣóyinká 1986:12).

Ṣóyinká represents this scenario to show how the Nigerian leaders plunge this nation into eternal doom because of personal interest. The prophet does not want to lose one of his members not because he has so much concern for their lust souls, but because losing any is losing some juicy benefits.The play draws attention to the ritual of misrule and abuse of power by the political class as an alternative explanation for crimes committed by the masses.When the prophet, eventually, suffers downfall in the hands of the woman on whose behalf he had always pleaded, he finds reason in Christ to unleash punishment. "After all, Christ himself was not averse to using the whip when occasion demanded it", (Ṣóyinká 1986:25). Christ, the tool to save the people has become the tool employed by men of God to kill the people of God.

There has always been consistencies in Ṣóyinká's representation of character in his plays that revolt against injustice in Nigeria. In *Death and the King's Horseman*, for instance, Pilkings thinks he is serving to save the people, but his actions are working against the people. Thus, when Ẹlẹ́sin realises that all the District Officer or in the case of *The Trials of Brother Jero*,

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the prophet has been doing is to satisfy his own sinister motives, he confronts him accordingly:

> Ẹlẹsin: You did not save my life District Officer. You destroyed it.
> Pilkings: Now come on…
> Ẹlẹsin: And not merely my life but the lives of many. The end of the might's work is not over. Neither this year nor the next will see it. If I wished you well, I would pray that you do not stay long enough on our land to see the disaster you have brought upon us.
> Pilkings: Well, I did my duty as I saw it. I have no regret
> Ẹlẹsin: No. the regrets of life always come later.

The Trial of Brother Jero examines the existential need of the masses for self-affirmation in order to redefine their reality and existence. The play addresses the need to reinforce one's subjective security, which over-arches the issue of the criminality of an action, for self-salvation, dwelling on the pivotal roles played by emotional and sensual factors of servitude and frustration in the execution of crimes. Chume realises how stupid he had been to have subjected his own reason to the cheap teaching of the prophet when he realises that all Jero is concerned about is not the welfare of his members, but his own convenience. What follows is that the ever-absorbing, obedient and law abiding Chume runs around in pursuit of the Prophet, brandishing cutlass, "murder-bent". The question is asked again, who indeed is a criminal?

Conclusion

It has been argued that Ṣóyinká is a complex writer. The study of *The Trials of Brother Jero* (1986) has, to some extent, justified this assertion, thus, proving that to do a critical study on Ṣóyinká, one must be insinuating and submit himself to deep thinking. Ṣóyinká is such a writer whose simplicity is entrenched in his complexity. The two plays studied in this chapter have substantially demonstrated the authenticity of this assertion as both yield themselves to tragedy and comedy if related to the chaotic state of Nigeria, and the wickedness of the so-called Nigerian leaders who, for selfish motives, will not want a peaceful and serene society as this will discourage their gullibility and corruptions. The analyses of these texts have been made to take objective stand. But, as the discussion progresses in the realistic cannon of the Nigerian society, one would not deny it that it assumes subjectivity, eventually. This, of course, is informed by the clearer understanding of the concepts of crime and punishment. Crime is defined as: any violation of law, either the divine or human; an omission of a duty commanded, or the commission of an act forbidden by the law. Section 34 sub section 1, article (a) of the operating constitution in Nigeria says, "no person shall be subjected to

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torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment". Sometimes, one may argue that no crime is so great as daring to excel. When all Nigerians are subjected to inhuman and degrading treatments, it becomes a crime if they refuse to liberate themselves. They perish for lack of knowledge. The knowledge in this context is to know the truth that can set them free. The history of freedom has always been trailed by violence. But task-masters have always labeled the struggles for freedom when the truth is known as crime. Ronald Reagan says "One way to make sure crime doesn't pay would be to let the government run it". This is the essence of this thesis – to let the government realise that, in the words of Theodore Roosevelt, "The unforgiveable crime is soft hitting. Do not hit at all if it can be avoided; but never hit softly". Critics define crime as gross violation of human law, in distinction from a misdemeanor or trespass, or other slight offence. Consequently, any aggravated offence against morality or the public welfare or any outrage or great wrong, any great wickedness or sin; iniquity as contained in these two texts which occasion crime, is crime. According to critics, crime is not a homogenous category of conduct. It is a label used to describe a diverse range of conduct that occurs within society that has one feature in common; it is conduct that is prohibited by the state and this prohibition is enforced with the threat of sanction. However, as earlier stated, crime can be said to fall into two categories: that which is *mala in se* and that which is *mala prohibitia* – the crime committed by the result of one's action and that prohibited by the state. When the state becomes the cause of a crime, moral justice demands that those managing the affairs of the state be punished.

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CHAPTER FOUR

The Gods Are Not To Blame and the Philosophy of Being

What may be called the literature of freedom has been designed to induce people to escape from or attack those who act to control them aversively. The content of the literature is the philosophy of freedom, but philosophies are among those inner causes which need to be scrutinised. A person behaves in a given way because he possesses a philosophy, but one infers the philosophy from the behaviour and, therefore, cannot use it in any satisfactory way as an explanation, at least until it is explained. The literature of freedom contains materials designed to induce people to act to free themselves from various kinds of intentional control. It does not necessarily impart a philosophy of freedom; it induces people to act, (Skinner, 1972: 29).This ambiguity, in everyday language, is usually considered a flaw because it is equated with a lack of clarity and precision. In literary language, however, it is considered a source of richness, depth and complexity that adds to the text's value. The complexity of a literary text is created by its tension, which, broadly defined, means the linking together of opposites. In its simplest form, tension is created by the integration of the abstract and the concrete, of general ideas embodied in specific images. Tension is also created by the dynamic interplay among text's opposing tendencies, that is, among its paradoxes, ironies and ambiguity. This is one critical angle at which *The Gods Are not to Blame* is going to be analysed textually. The play opens with the rhythm of Ògún, the Yoruba god of iron and of war. Then the narrator appears, regards the shrine of the Ògún from a distance. This suggests the degree of the respect he has for the gods, and the kind of affinity the people have towards their gods, and begins to narrate the story of a boy who is destined by the gods to kill his own father and marry his own mother. However, the tension sets in when the people who do nothing without consulting their Gods refuse to enquire of their Gods, immediately, to know the reason for the "mission". Instead, in their distress, even when they know that, Ọbàtálá, who creates the boy, "has a way of consoling the distressed", they device a means to avert the mission of their gods; they decide to take the life the boy and alter the gods' plan. "Priest of Ògún ties boy's feet with a string of cowries meaning sacrifice to the gods who have sent boy down to this earth", (Ọlá Rótìmí, 1975:5). Years later, the mission of the gods metamorphoses into a curse: the boy kills his father and marries his mother. The story ends with the boy, now a man, plucking out his own eyes and going into self-exile with his children born to him by his mother.

What will likely attract the attention of a critic, first, in this story, is the action of King Adétusà and his chiefs, who are believed to have a good knowledge of their custom and their

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gods. It is their custom to divine the mission of every newly born child in the land by consulting Ifá. The divination of Ifá for this boy is criminal: murder and incest. At hearing this divination, the King and his chiefs take a decision to kill the boy as a way of averting the crimes. They refuse to consult Ifá again for a way to avert the crimes, knowing full-well that it is very un-Ifá to predict doom without proving ways or a way of escape. Quoting Bolaji Ìdòwú, Dasylva says, in a case of this nature, "the Ifá Oracle", the medium of Ọ̀rúnmìlà, the divinity who serves "…as witness of all secrets connected with man's being and as one who is in a position to plead with Olódùmarè on behalf of man so that unhappy issues may be averted or rectified", (Dasylva, 2004: 135). After all, one of Ọbàtálá's appellations is "smaller *Òkìtìbírí, a-pá-òjò-ikú-dà* – The great changer, who alters the date of death", (Dasylva, 2004: 135). They accede to the responsibilities of the gods. They send the boy to die. Dionysus declares:

> You alone made sacrifice for your people, you alone the role belongs to a king like these gods, who yearly must rent to spring anew, that also to the fate of heroes, (Dasylva, 2004: 142).

The conclusion of an archetypal Yoruba person to these actions of King Adétusà and the people of Kújúje, is disrespect and dishonour for divinity – a sacrilegious crime. In the first instance, an elderly person, in this context, the gods believed to be all knowing, send a gift to the custodians of tradition. But because the King and his chiefs are indifferent to the gift, they do not merely reject it; they offer it a sacrifice to the gods. They, who are humans, can distinguish between what is good and bad. Perhaps they think that "Ọbàtálá, God of all Creation", has gone insane, and, therefore, does not know what is right. They insult His omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent qualities, on the excuse that "dying" will stop "the awesome will of fate". This is a pointer to a popular Yoruba saying that, *Ọmọdé bù ìrókò ó bo ojú wo ẹ̀yìn; ó rò wípé ọjọ́ tí a bá bú olúwéré ni olúwéré n pani* (a child abuses the ìrókò tree expecting an instantaneous consequence; of course, olúwéré is not hasty in his reprisal). Years later, King Adétusà "met a rough death" perhaps for being a party to the indiscretion of the chiefs of Kútúje, and the people of Ìkòlú, "taking advantage of death in the palace, attacked Kútúje":

> They killed hundreds,
> They seized hundreds,
> They enslaved hundreds more,
> And left behind in the land of Kútúje
> Hunger, and thirst, and fear.

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In the introduction to his monograph: *Leadership of the Organized Private Sector (OPS) in Nigeria: A Historical Perspective*, (2002), Professor Gabriel, O. Olúsànyà agrees that Nigeria has, indeed, experienced huge deficit of good governance. "Good leadership has eluded the country, especially in the area of national governance and management of public office", (Olúsànyà, 2000: iii). This is what Ọlá Rótìmí has represented in his *The Gods Are Not To Blame* where he ascribes the challenges being faced by the people of the country, primarily, to bad governance. The challenges begin with the indiscretion of the leaders of Kútúje and their refusal to ask Ifá for solutions to what they perceive as a problem. These indiscretion and refusal degenerate to carnage. According to B. F. Skinner, in his book, *Beyond Freedom and Dignity*, "Man's first experience with causes probably came from his own behaviour: things moved because he moved them", (Skinner, 1972: 5). The leadership of the land of Kútúje pretends to be wiser than Ọbàtálá. They irrationally reject his present and send him back to the gods as sacrifice even when obedience is what the gods ask for, and not sacrifice. Now, the rain of disaster falls on all roofs and bodies. "Whoever the rain sees, on him it rains." and now, the people call for sacrifice. "To what gods have we not made sacrifice…Sòpònná, the god of poxes, Ẹ̀là, the god of Deliverance? What god? Sàngó, the god of thunder and rain fall, whose showers can help wash away the evil in the soil…"and, perhaps to help in restructuring the power sector. "What god have we not called upon to help us…?" (Ọlá Rótìmí,1975:15)Skinner posits that, what we need is "a technology of behaviour", (Skinner, 1972: 7). First, the instructions of the gods must be obeyed. What the gods say is that, this boy, "he will kill his own father and marry his own mother" (Ọlá Rótìmí, 1975: 5). But, for Ọ̀rúnmìlà, it "is the winnowing spirit which distils wisdom from chaos, prophecy from uncertainty, harmony from disjunction", (Yerima, 2009: 29). Therefore, it is very unthinkable and un-Yoruba that the Ifá oracle, which is the last resort of the people, could ever fail to provide a solution to any problem "'under the sky'", (Dasylva, 2004: 135). The message of the gods is clear enough; the boy will kill "his own father" and marry "his own mother". In Yoruba, it is an essential paradox for God or the gods to ask somebody to kill his own father and marry his own mother. This mission can be accomplished in various ways. One of these ways is suggested in the text in Ọdẹ́wálé's statement: "…it may be that my father died of a broken heart thinking about me and where I was. If it is so, it comes back to the same thing: I killed him", (p. 60). If it is marrying one's mother, in Yoruba every successful child (male or female) is the husband of his or her *own* mother. After all, Ifá does not say Ọdẹ́wálé will raise children by her *own* mother.

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Language, given to man by God or, in the context of this play, the gods, becomes a tool in the hands of a good playwright to raise the action in a play from the ordinary to the special. It allows the good reader to connect his thought, his human consciousness to the thought of his society and the dramatist. In a good tragedy as the one under study, language allows the reader to envision the picture, both the negative or positive nature of the action and expression. Discussing Longinus and his concept of the beauty of language, Bíódún Jéyìfò explains:

> For the former (Longinus), the sublime happens when the great, lofty thoughts find perfect expression in form, style and rhetoric. As Longinus put it, 'sublimity is the echo of a great soul'. By this he meant that sublimity is achievable only by a rare order of artistes who both have the capacity for great, lofty thought and feelings and are gifted with the powers of expressions to give these rarefied thoughts and feelings perfect, unsurpassable formal expression, (Jéyífò, 2004: 164).

Taking a deconstructive analysis of the word "own" in the context of its usage, one is forced to ask: What is that ligature that makes Ọdẹ́wálé the son of Adétusà and Ojúọlá bearing in mind that his (Ọdẹ́wálé) mission is to "kill his own father" and "marry his own mother"?

The word *own* is an adjective often used for emphasis to mean belonging to oneself, individual or personal. Realistically, no contemporary Ọdẹ́wálé can accept Ojúọlá and Adétusà as his own parents. In any Yoruba setting, nobody will accept the parents who supervise one's death as his parents. Biological factors are not sufficient to evidence one's paternity and maternity. Occurrences and events have shown that not all mothers are mothers; not all fathers are fathers. It goes beyond biological factors alone. To be a father or a mother involves so many other factors such as protection, nurturing, caring, love, etc. The very popular tale in the Bible about the two harlots who take their case to King Solomon, provides an insight to this view. One of the children is dead; the other is alive. Both harlots claim ownership of the living child. But because the King does not have any biological proof to determine whose child is living, he bases his judgment on non-biological factors and plays on care, affection, attention, and love. He commands that the living child be sliced into two and be divided between the harlots. The true mother (who, except according to the story, may not necessarily be the biological mother of the living child but for her care, love and natural affection) begs that the child be given to her mate while the second one insists that the child be sliced. King Solomon then commands that the living child should be given to the woman who shows motherly love and attention, and not for any biological reason. In *The Gods are not to Blame*, when Queen Ojúọlá hears that the boy is to be killed, she only "sinks to the

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ground, in sorrow" while King Adétusà "consoles her, in his grief". Both mother and father allow Gbónkà to kill the innocent boy in "the evil grove". One may argue that both parents submit to the killing of the boy because of their stewardships to the gods. However, one may have a counter-opinion that, particularly King Adétusà, being the Second-In-Command to the gods, has the right to ask Ifá for a solution to the criminal divination. When, at later part in life, Ọdẹ́wálé is given similar divination that he has been cursed to kill his father and marry his mother, he asks Ifá what he can do not to fulfill the curse. Ifá warns him not to run away or make any attempt to run away; for to run away is more dangerous. King Adétusà and his wife do not ask Ifá for the solution to the divination. Instead, they ask the special messenger of the palace, Gbónkà, to kill the boy as a way of averting the danger. This resolution has a negative influence on the destiny of the child. At latter part of the child's life, it changes the "mission" of the gods for the boy to "a curse". Taking pity on the boy, Gbónka refuses to kill him. Instead, he drops him in the forest where he is found by a hunter, Ògúndele, and his wife, Móbìkẹ́, who nurture the boy to adulthood and success, and give him the name, Ọdẹ́wálé. It is at this stage of his life that the child realises whom he is: a bearer of a curse to kill his "father" and then marry his "mother". But, as a right thinking man, he sees this divination as unthinkable because he thinks Ògúndele and his wife, Móbìkẹ́, are his own parents. He decides to abscond so as not to carry out this will of fate. In the course of this, Ọdẹ́wálé kills his father, Adétusà, and marries his mother, Ojúọlá. It could be argued, then, that if Ọdẹ́wálé had realised from the beginning whom he is as the adopted child of Ògúndele and Móbìkẹ́, he would not have run away from home to commit these crimes. Or if Ọdẹ́wálé had grown up in the palace with his parents, King Adétusà and Queen Ojúọlá, he probably would not have killed one and marry the other. It then be argued that, both Ògúndele and Móbìkẹ́ are accomplices in the crimes committed by Ọdẹ́wálé, just as Adétusà and Ojúọlá cannot be exonerated. Ọdẹ́wálé runs away from home because he does not want to kill his father, Ògúndele, and marry his mother, Móbìkẹ́. This curse could then be viewed as the consequence of the crime of insubordination by Adétusà and his wife, Ojúọlá. The boy fulfills the curse of killing his "father", Adétusà and then marrying his "mother", Ojúọlá, against the mission of killing his "own" father, Ògúndele and marrying his "own" mother, Móbìkẹ́. The success of this twist in fortune is established on Ọlá Rótìmí's creative employment of language to task the intellect of his readers.

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Kúrunmí: A Metaphoric Nominalization

> Ilé ni à nwò kí á tó sọ ọmọ ní orúkọ (It is the home we consider before we name a child).

Scholars have observed that the structural system that governs both the writing and interpretation of literary texts is the system of rules and codes, which has been consciously or unconsciously internalized. It tells one how to make meaning when one reads literature beginning even from the title. However, "Some of these rules and codes are taken for granted…and our individual literary competence is determined by how much of the system we have internalised", (Tyson, 1999: 222). This, however, is not to conclude that any two competent readers would necessarily agree in their interpretation of a particular text, but that both interpretations would be guided by the same structural system of interpretive rules and codes. What is referred to as the structure of literature is actually the structure of the system of interpretation brought to it. The effort is to unearth this structural system and provide evidence for how it operates. Perhaps the best way to acquaint one with the structural system is simply to describe some of its major components such as: the convention of distance and impersonality, naturalisation, the rule of significance, the rule of metaphorical coherence, and the rule of thematic unity, and relate them to the text under study. The convention of distance and impersonality is an assumption one makes as soon as he sees that he is reading a literary work, even if that work is in form of non-literary writing such as letter or a journal. As soon as he realises that he is reading a literary piece rather than a literal letter or journal, he is influenced by that assumption to apply literary essence and values with which the piece is constructed to it. He consciously or unconsciously becomes initiated into the literary world that constructs the work, and this creates a fictional distance that carries with it a kind of impersonality that would not be present if he knew he was reading a factual account of human being's personal experience.

Naturalisation is the process by which one transforms the text so that the strangeness of its literary form, which he does not see in everyday writing, makes sense in terms of the world he lives in. A deep reading of Kúrunmí informs one's sensibility of the metaphorical implication of the protagonist's name, Kúrunmí. One begins to appreciate the beauty and strangeness of the literary language even as he translates it into an idea he understands. The rule of significance is the assumption that the literary work expresses a significant attitude about some important problem, and so one pays attention to what it says in ways that one would not do with other kinds of writing. The rule of metaphorical coherence requires that the two components of a metaphor (the vehicle, or the metaphorical term, and the tenor, or

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subject to which the metaphor is applied) have a consistent relationship within the context of the work. For instance, the protagonist of the play is Kúrunmí. Kúrunmí in Yoruba means, "Death has ruined me or Death ruins me". As a Yoruba man, Kúrunmí knows the significance of this name; he knows that with this name as a scarlet letter, he has a "curse", yet Kúrunmí refuses to change this name until the calamitous significance attached to this name becomes the force that necessitates the disastrous fulfillment in his life and the carnage of his people. The rule of thematic unity is the chief reason why there is a rule of metaphorical coherence; for the rule of thematic unity is a good reader's expectation that the literary work has a unified, coherent theme, or main point. Of course, it is because one expects a literary work to have thematic unity that one almost always manages to find it or, more precisely, construct it when one interprets the text. There is a tendency to create thematic unity by means of certain procedures, which include, among others, (1) theme as a binary opposition (good versus evil), (2) theme as the resolution of a binary opposition (good conquers evil), and (3) theme as the displacement of a binary opposition by a third term (good-versus-evil is absorbed by an all-encompassing nature) as represented in this text, Kúrunmí. The intention of Kúrunmí is good: tradition must be protected. His dogged pursuits of an identified course of action as well as a commitment to righting a perceived wrong, are articulated in the character of Kúrunmí. But, the metaphor of his name, Kúrunmí, which comes in form of rebellion against the society, absorbs this good intention, and Kúrunmí ruins many. Olú Ọbafẹ́mi says,"…Kúrunmí's rebellion against the state – against Àtìbà and Adélú who are Sàngó's descendants – is a rebellion against the source of his own being," (Ọbafẹ́mi, 2001: 99). The play draws its subject from the Yoruba history at the dawn of colonialism in the late nineteenth century. Aláàfin Àtìbà has died. As tradition demands, he is to be buried with his first son, Àdàlù. But before his death, the Aláàfin had told his chiefs to make his son, Àdàlù, as the heir to the Aláàfin's throne. It is this contradiction that *Kúrunmí* rises to correct. This leads to the death of many. There is the presence, to a large extent, of the affective possibilities in Kúrunmí's character. He falls greatly into the passion and fascination of Ọlá Rótìmí who consequently demonstrates it by naming his residence at the outskirt of Ile Ife town after the generalissimo of the Ọ̀yọ́ Empire. "It is called 'Kúrunmí's Hideout'", (Oyèlẹ́yẹ and Ọlátẹ́jú (eds), 2003: 260). The fundamental subject projected here is that whatever understanding a reader gets of any literary work is based on the interpretive strategies he brings to the text. He creates the world he sees by projecting onto it structures of consciousness. Individuals' responses to any literary text are really products of the interpretive community to which they belong. Literature is an integral part of every human

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society from which it develops. Thus, Kúrunmí, by its form and content, is an indicator of the morphology and nature of a Yoruba society. Kegan Paul, in his *Fact in Fiction – The Use of Literature in the Systemic Study of Society*, (1986) posits that drama, "to be sure, is a social product, but it also produces society" because of its normative effect on its member, (p. viii). Max Weber, in the discussions of scientific methodology, takes this opinion to a deeper perspective when he says plainly that the absolute infinitude of this multiplicity [of objects and events in the world] must be ordered by the observer, according to the ideas he brings to the object of his scientific enquiry. Scientific enquiry, however, is both rare and recent in human affairs. It appears therefore that drama of this magnitude has always been, not falsification of reality, but a necessary ordering of it. "Real" reality cannot be apprehended as it is: an infinite, equally existent number of discrete and ever changing entities and events. To see the universe in those terms might be accurate, but would be impossible to absorb, and meaningless in human terms.

> A selection of events on the basis of chronological sequence, causality, and value judgments has always been necessary; that is to say, information about reality has been presented to and by the human species in the forms of narrative fiction known to us as History, the Law, Religion, Epic Poetry, the Novel …the Drama", (Kegan, 1986: vii).

In one sense, everything is fiction; in another sense, fiction is reality. The play opens on Kúrunmí standing before the shrine of Ògún, the god of iron "pouring libation on it from a keg of palm-wine in his other hand" cursing: "He who plots evil against Kúrunmí, Lord of Ìjàìyè, Ògún, let the earth burst, burst open and swallow up his body." However, the writer who knows better, warns that Kúrunmí has been willed to ruin his people, hence his name, Kúrunmí. In other words, like Ọdẹ́wálé, he has a curse on him; he cannot run away from it. The gods have willed that he will kill his own people. He cannot do anything not to carry out the will of the gods…. Nothing. To run away would be foolish. "The snail may try, but it cannot cast off its shell" (Ọlá Rótìmí, 1975:54). It is a great crime to fight against one's tradition. Tradition, of course, has a lot to do with the earth. The earth, among the Yoruba race, is the mother of any tradition and not the people. It is whatever the earth wants as tradition that the people must adopt. The Yoruba words or expression that best captures tradition is *Alálẹ̀ Ilẹ̀*. The term tradition even falls miserably short in defining the sacred semantic core of what *Alálẹ̀ Ilẹ̀* really is. Some foundational spirits, ethereal, invisible – eternal guardians of the ancient order believed to have been occupying the stead since "Ọbàtálá, God of Creation", created the earth. Therefore, each *Alálẹ̀ Ilẹ̀* (or, for the purpose

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of this study, tradition) of every portion of the earth occupied by man, has its own preference and laid down principles which form the ritual.

The old Ọ̀yọ́ had been sacked and destroyed by the forces of the Sókótó Caliphate, forcing the Aláàfin of Ọ̀yọ́ to move his capital southwards to the present day Ọ̀yọ́. By the mid-nineteenth century, the much reduced Ọ̀yọ́ Empire had succeeded in re-establishing itself secure on this new site; suggesting that a new tradition has been established. Aláàfin remained ruler of the Empire and the representative or the voice of the new tradition. But for defence, he depended on two major Yoruba towns: Ìbàdàn and Ìjàyè. In recognition of their importance, the ruler of Ìbàdàn was named Basọ̀run, or Prime Minister, of Ọ̀yọ́, while the ruler of Ìjàyè, Kúrunmí, was named Àrẹ-Ọ̀nà-Kakanfò, or Generalissimo. Aláàfin (Àtìbà), sensing that he was to die soon, summoned his leading chiefs to get them acknowledge his first son, Àdèlú, as his successor contrary to the tradition of the "Old Ọ̀yọ́", which required the Àrẹ̀mo or Crown Prince, who enjoyed great influence while his father ruled, to commit suicide on the Aláàfin's death. Ìbàdàn supported this move on the excuse that the New Ọ̀yọ́ is a new town with a constitution without precedent among the old towns of the Ọ̀yọ́ Empire. Ìjàyè, however, opposed it reflecting its own position that it is contrary to tradition.

The ways of man are not like the stagnant pond, still, quiet, sleeping yet breeding noble mosquitoes causing deadly malaria. Man flows like a stream gushing into new channels. When storms shake the earth, when earthquakes shake the earth man changes, bends, adapts else the stem will snap. "We came to this land and the past was no more, (Eghagha, 1998: x). Meanwhile, the present is:

> When the gaboon viper dies,
> Its children take up its habits…
> The plantain dies,
> Its saplings take its place…
> The fire dies, its ashes
> Bear its memory with a shroud
> Of white fluff.

Àdèlú will be king after his father, Àtìbà. All the important chiefs in the kingdom have accepted the new tradition on the basis that "time passes and the ways of men must change with time". But *Kúrunmí* is not comfortable with what he describes as "pervasion and disgrace", (p. 17):

> Kúrunmí: We have tradition, and tradition is tradition. Time may pass but the laws of our fathers, tested and hallowed by the ways of men, live on. That is tradition.
> Olúyọ̀lé: Tradition adapts.
> Kúrunmí: To what?

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Tìmí: To time.
Kúrunmí: Whose time?
Olúyọ̀lé: Life's time.
Kúrunmí: Your idea.
Tìmí: Life's truth.
Kúrunmí: Dog's shit.
Olúyọ̀lé: We're human.
Kúrunmí: And so?
Tìmí: We change.
Kúrunmí: Welcome.
Olúyọ̀lé: Tradition must change with man.
Kúrunmí: Go give your robes to your slaves.
Tìmí: Why?
Kúrunmí: Times change.
Olúyọ̀lé: Very well then. We have sworn to make Àdèlú king, and king he must be.
Kúrunmí: Not over my people.
Olúyọ̀lé: Ìjàiyè is part of Àtìbà's kingdom. You are a Chief of Ìjàiyè today because Aláàfin Àtìbà, the Supreme Head of the kingdom, made you so.
Kúrunmí: I thank Àtìbà.
Tìmí: Àdèlú is his son, and once Àdèlú is king he will be your king.
Kúrunmí: Over my dead body.

In his vitriolic sentiment, Kúrunmí evolves a rather elaborate metaphoric fable to manifest his passionate hatred for the whole idea:

When the tortoise
Is heading for
A senseless journey,
and you say to him:
'Brother tortoise,
brother tortoise,
when will you be
wise and come back
home?'
The tortoise will say:
'Brother, not until
I have been disgraced.
Not until I have been disgraced.
Not until I have been disgraced.
Disgraced.
Disgraced.
Not until I have been disgraced.

Kúrunmí's strong will couched in this dramatic irony "Over my dead body" is the bastion of tragic epistemology in the play. As he puts it emphatically: "Go! Tell the world: Kúrunmí will never prostrate himself to shoot a deer with a father one morning, and then squat with the

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son in the evening to shoot a goose! Never…never…I say n-e-v-e-r!" (p.21). It reflects his determination to do all he alone considers most appropriate to do. Àdèlú becomes king. To register his difference, disagreement and insubordination, Kúrunmí, having the options between "peace and war", "Grabs the bowls containing gunpowder and bullets…" crosses to Ògún shrine, deposits the bowls at the foot of it to tell the all-seeing god that "war has come" – a decision he takes without consulting the gods. He rejects also the warning that, "The land is not quite ready for war". But the dog that will stray will never acknowledge the screeching of his master. *Kúrunmí* forces his chief warrior to get the land "ready for war" ignoring the "quite" in the warning. In his confusion subsumed in reason, his chief warrior asks: "How"? *Àtùlẹ ni ìmú aṣọ tọ́; ẹni kò tójú àtùlẹ ; yíò se ararẹ l'ófò.* (Patching makes a garment last; one who does not attend to the patching of his clothes will find himself at a loss for clothes). Kúrunmí, because he sees himself a warrior, disregards the counsels of his chief of defence, and leads his people to war unprepared. He forgets that *agada kò mo orí alágbẹdẹ* (The sward has no respect even for the man who smiths it). It is only obedience that is better than sacrifice. It is true that to make people *mad* is part of being a good leader. An individual's hurt feelings run a distant second to the good of the service. This is what Kúrunmí applies by emphasising only "Gunpowder and bullets" as the "gifts from Àdèlú" to incite his unprepared warriors by adding: "He dares us to a fight".

Leadership cannot be a popularity contest. Trying not to offend anyone, or trying to be liked by anyone, will set one on the road to unevenness and mediocrity. Leaders who are afraid to make people angry are likely to waver and procrastinate when the time to make tough choices comes. Leaders who care more about being liked than about being effective are unlikely to confront the people who need confronting. They are unlikely to offer differential rewards based on performance. They will not challenge the status quo. And inevitably, by not challenging tradition, they hurt both their own credibility and their organisation's performance. "Kúrunmí will never prostrate himself to shoot a deer with a father one morning, and then squat with the son in the evening to shoot a goose! Never…never…I say n-e-v-e-r!" He declares war without consulting with the people on the excuse that some people have broken tradition when he (Kúrunmí) refuses to adhere to the tenet of his own tradition: consulting the gods and the people before declaring war. Some of his warriors "burst into his presence menacingly", startling Kúrunmí and his sons. Kúrunmí says some incantation to prevent them, but "Incantations won't help now" because when a man places himself "far above his people, he is ready to gamble with their lives". The best way to set

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oneself free from such a leader is to challenge his authority. Silence, it is often said, makes tyrants to grow more powerful. "You have gone too powerful, my lord", Àmódù alleges Kúrunmí. "It is better to be loved than feared", Fanyaka adds. Yet, seeing that ugly side of this leader, Àmódù repeats, "You have grown too powerful, my lord". Even when Kúrunmí asks: "I lead wrongly?" Àmódù's answer is simply: "You have become too powerful, my lord". In the same vein, for emphasis, Epo adds: "You are even Chief Priest to all the gods; look at them, Sàngó, Ògún, Ọya, Ọ̀rúnmìlà. All of them, the gods of our fathers, are now your personal property":

> Akiọ́lá: Like clothing, you use them to your taste; tired of one, you pass it to your brother Pópóọlá, who now owns the Egúngún cult.
> Àmádù: You have grown too powerful, my Lord.
> Fanyaka: Landed property,
> Kúrunmí
> The farms,
> Kúrunmí.
> The air we breathe,
> Kúrunmí.
> The gods of our fathers,
> Kúrunmí
> "Kúrunmí, Kúrunmí, Kúrunmí! Abah!"
> Àmódù: "Your power chokes us, my lord".

These five warriors are projected as contemporary Ministers, Senators or Members, House of Representative, voted to represent the people. But, like the tragedy of today's politics, Kúrunmí, with cheap talks and some gifts, deprives them of their lives and the lives of the multitude they claim to be fighting for or representing:

> Sons of our father! True bravery, this! Indeed, the blood and fire of our fathers have come to life again. Àràwọlé, bring gifts for these bold sprigs of our fathers", and they, "prostrating themselves in gratitude", give thanks and leave after drinking themselves to insignificant personages.

Effective leadership is exercised across a full spectrum of responsibilities, and also over time. Across an entire organisation, involving a wide variety of people, races and languages engaged in a multitude of tasks (both concurrently and in sequence), the leader must speak high performance and ensure the welfare of his people. But instead, the representatives of the people who claim to be fighting for the welfare of the people, easily succumb to bribery and gullibility. For instance, "Àmódù, with calabash of palm-wine in one hand, scampers to Ògún's shrine and pledges or in this context, renews his blind allegiance and stewardship to

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the "Àrẹ" (or President): "From this day on, as before, it is Are Kúrunmí I will serve, it is Àrẹ Kúrunmí I will die for". Àsegbé leaps excitedly after Àmódù, "I swear too, that from this day…and the men all chorused in unison: 'Nothing shall separate us from oneness with Kúrunmí'. "They all lean forward and grab the sward, sanctifying their oath" – an oath to lead the people to doom. Whatever happened to the popular axiom, "Don't do the crime if you can't do the time"! This leads directly to a growing disregard and disrespect for the law, thus propelling the critical mind to ask: Who indeed is the criminal?

It is high time the system of justice in this country was repaired. Entirely, too many criminals get off for nonsensical reasons such as the infamous "nolle prosequi" of section 211, subsection (1) article (a),(b), and (c) of the *Nigeria Constitution 1999*, which vests, on the Attorney-General, the power to "institute public prosecutions…and, as corollary, …the power to discontinue any criminal proceedings by entering a nolle prosequi in any court of law in Nigeria". In other words, the Attorney-General has power to determine who is a criminal and who is not. Subsection (3) of this section, however, adds a rider: "In exercising his powers under this section, the Attorney-General…shall have regard to the public interest, the interest of justice and the need to prevent abuse of legal process", (Àkàndé, 2000: 315). Kúrunmí takes a unilateral decision to lead his people to war unprepared, yet he thinks he has the favour of the gods whose piety he has desecrated. *Àìmọ̀ ètè, àìmọ̀ ẹ̀rọ̀ ni ọmọ ìyá mẹ́fà fi kú sí oko ẹrú ẹgbàáfà* (ignorance and lack of proper planning make six brothers die in service of pawns for the interest on a loan of 12,000 cowries). He is *Kúrunmí* (death ruins me). His name suggests that he has been willed to ruin his people. In his experience as a worthy leader, Collin Powell says, this will is all about habit and attitude: "If you are going to achieve excellence in big things, you develop the habit in little matters. Excellence is not an exception; it is a prevailing attitude," (Harari, 2002: 146). This is where Kúrunmí gets it wrong. He declares war.

> Death came calling.
> Who does not know his rasp of reeds?
> A twilight whisper in the leaves before
> The great Àràbà falls? Did you not hear it? (Ṣóyinká, 1975)

Consequently:

> They killed hundreds,
> they seized hundreds,
> they enslaved hundreds more,
> and left behind in the land…
> hunger, and thirst, and fear, (Ọlá Rótìmí, 1975).

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Regretting his irrational, egocentric and egoistic action, Kúrunmí laments that he losses thousands in the war. "Thousands…best warriors too…River Oṣẹ̀ flows on, deep red with the blood of our men…thousands of our men…it flows on". It is at this point that reason demands that he quarries his decisions and actions. Thus, Kúrunmí wants to know whether he is wrong in his decision of going to the war without proper planning. The answers are boldly written all over Ìjàyè land: his best warriors have died; his five children have been maimed, and the "people are all over the town stealing food!" "They are hungry". For the first time, he realises that it is his "fault" that the people have been ruined. He admits: "When a leader of men has led his people to disaster, and what remains of his present life is but a shadow of his proud past, then it is time to be leader no more", (p. 93). He drinks poison and dies. The death that his destiny carries to ruin his people, is also the same death that ruins him. Kúrunmí has been overwhelmed by his temper, power and skills that he fails to understand, not only the connotation of his name, but also his popular note which he dances to each time he sings it:

When the tortoise
Is heading for
A senseless journey,
and you say to him:
'Brother tortoise,
brother tortoise,
when will you be
wise and come back
home?'
The tortoise will say:
'Brother, not until
I have been disgraced.
Not until I have been disgraced.
Not until I have been disgraced.
Disgraced.
Disgraced.
Not until I have been disgraced.'

Conclusion

In his study of *The Gods are Not To Blame,* Dasylva (2004) opines that tribalism is a tragic weakness in both Ọdẹ́wálé and Kúrunmí. He, however, quickly adds that tribalism can be cured "given the right approach". Ọdẹ́wálé or Kúrunmí has "a curse" on him. He has been "willed" to "kill", and nothing can be done not to carry out this will of the "gods". To run away would be foolish. "The snail may try, it cannot cast off its shell. Just stay where you

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are." That is the final instruction. If he runs away, Ọdẹ́wálé will still kill. If he stays, Kúrunmí will ruin.

> Fight my people, fight.
> It is hard to seize a man in his own home.
> It is hard to kill a man among his own people.
> A horse never fails to run homewards.

Then what is the right approach? One of the pivotal moments in Colin Powell's career was prompted by none other than Mikhail's Gorbachev, the Soviet leader who, more than anyone else, was responsible for the dismantling of the U.S.S.R. In the spring of 1988, National Security Advisor, Powell and Secretary of State, George Shultz, flew to Moscow to prepare for President Reagan's visit to Soviet Union. During their first meeting, Gorbachev looked across the table at Powell and, through his translator, delivered an unequivocal message: "General, I'm ending the Cold War, and you're going to have to find yourself a new enemy". In his years as a public speaker, Powell often built this story into his speeches. Once he confessed to a cooperate audience - with a good dose of self-effacing humour – this was unwelcome news from the Soviet premier. The first words that came into his mind, he told his audience, were, "But I don't want to find a new enemy!" He had invested twenty-eight years in this particular enemy. It was painful, he lamented, realizing that "everything I had worked against no longer mattered." The project of finding a new cause – of starting all over again – was daunting. But as Gorbachev moved ahead with his purposeful unraveling of the Soviet empire, Powell acknowledged that he had no choice: he had to give up his tired-and-true adversary. Even harder, he had to protect his own sense of self-worth, purpose and mission. Just because his enemy was disappearing, it did not mean he was disappearing. A decade later, Powell told his audience that the lesson he took away from this episode was: "Never let your ego get so close to your position that when your position goes, your ego goes with it" (Harari, 2002: 146). As leaders, Ọdẹ́wálé and Kúrunmí are wrapped up in what they do. Despite their many virtues and likeable qualities, they have their ugly sides, too. Ọlá Rótìmí speaks of Ọdẹ́wálé:"Here is a man who feels uneasy because he has been made king of a community he does not consider his own, ethnically". This realisation and sense of insecurity drive him to excesses. He has already killed someone who had derided his mother's tongue: "I can bear insult to my person, brother", he says, "but to call my tribe bush, and then summon riff-raff to mock my mother tongue! I will die first". *Kúrunmí*, displaying similar egocentric and egoistic side of his character, boasts:

> Go! Tell the world: Kúrunmí will never prostrate himself to shoot a deer with a father one morning, and then squat with the

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son in the evening to shoot a goose! Never…never…I say n-e-v-
e-r! (Lifts the idol which he is molding, dashes it to the ground.)

In mockery of this madness, Aláká says: "I am glad to see that your youthful, hot temper is still with you, my brother. Scorpion! One that must not be vexed!" However, at the end, Ọdẹ́wálé regrets: "My people, learn from my fall. The powers would have failed if I did not let them use me", and bears the punishment prepared for the crime he commits. That makes him a true and worthy leader who takes responsibilities for a failed establishment or state. Kúrunmí is adored for similar display of dependable leadership: "When a leader of men has led his people to disaster, and what remains of his present life is but a shadow of his proud past then it is time to be leader no more. (Drinks poison from calabash bowl)".This conclusion is to demonstrate how Nigerian plays enhance a more objective insight to the concepts of crime and punishment, and serve the artistic catalysts of socio-political reordering.

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CHAPTER FIVE

Contemporary Reality and the Philosophy of Neo-rationalism

> Against the inert silence which autocrats seek to impose upon their subjects, the disserting artist can triumph through the gift of metaphor and magic, parody and parable, masking and mimicry. – Ọ̀ṣọ́fisàn

Neo-rational drama, even though made up of plays that draw their materials from African loric tradition to pursue nationalist objectives, does not follow the usual conventions associated with Wọlé Ṣóyinká or John Pepper Clark Bekederemo's dramaturgy. Dasylva observes that this rather novel theatrical experience deliberately subverts the essential syntax of cultural beliefs. The crop of playwrights in this category favours Marxist-Socialist ideology not so much for its party dogmatism but in the theatrical spirit and mode of Brecht, (Dasylva, 2004: 164-5). Fẹ́mi Ọ̀ṣọ́fisàn represents this group of playwrights. He draws his materials and inspiration from rich African philosophical hermeneutics and loric tradition, and the contemporary reality of his immediate society. At the same time, since he is exposed to western education, more often than not, up to university level, there are huge influences of western dramatic forms and traditions in his works. His dual exposure has immensely contributed to the rich and unique hybridism (African and European) of what has now come to be known as neo-rationalist drama.

The choice of Fẹ́mi Ọ̀ṣọ́fisàn's plays in this chapter, is largely due to the fact that, besides his pioneering role in evolving this unique dramatic form, he remains, to date, "the most prolific and the most ideologically consistent as playwright, dramatist and director in this category", (Dasylva, 2004: 164). He pioneered this dramatic form, at least, in Africa. In *Excursion in Drama and Literature* (1993), a book of interviews with Fẹ́mi Ọ̀ṣọ́fisàn by Múyìwá Awódíyà, Ọ̀ṣọ́fisàn is described as a second generation Nigerian playwright who provides an "alternative tradition different from that of older writers, especially Wọlé Ṣóyinká and J.P Clark". (Awódíyà, 1993). Dasylva also identifies the basic distinguishing characteristics that make Ọ̀ṣọ́fisàn's drama different from those of his contemporaries. The significant thing about "Ọ̀ṣọ́fisàn's drama is not so much its philosophical content as its posture of revolt: its restless search for fairness in a world of abandoned justice," (Dasylva, 2004:13). This provides an explanation as to the reason enacted myths of rebellion is common to all Ọ̀ṣọ́fisàn's plays. It is a rebellion pitched against all manners of betrayal. A rebellion that informs Ọ̀ṣọ́fisàn's deliberate subversion of loric traditions suspected to facilitate such betrayal of trust, and perpetration of oppression, is present in virtually all his plays. A

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rebellion that is akin to Brecht's social vision in his Epic drama. A social vision that reduces kings and the high to buffoons and satiric butts, while riff-raffs, beggars, local tramps are elevated to a heroic pedestal. Dasylva captures the essence of Ọ̀ṣọ́fisàn's dramaturgy: "His plays project a rebellion that rejects discrimination against the common…." They are a good example of the "European influence on contemporary African dramatic form - the epic theatre." (Dasylva, 2004:13).

Moróuntódùn and the Dilemma of the Downtrodden

The distinction between law and equity remains a strong factor to articulate to a reasonable conclusion the fact that the criminality of an action should not be viewed solely on the action per se, but primarily on the antecedents of the action. In defence of this proposition, this chapter attempts a strong distinction between crime and its antecedents to x-ray the events in Moróuntódùn (1982) with effects and nuances of contemporary reality. The play opens in the present with actors making up, trying costumes, reading script, rehearsing gestures, miming some of the later actions in the play. Now, the director enters, passing instruction: "Play opens in five minutes". But while the actors prepare, he addresses the audience:

> May be you remember? Illiterate farmers, whom we had all along thought to be docile, peace-loving, if not even stupid, suddenly took to arms and began to fight against the government! Two, three, four … seven months! And the war was still hot and bitter. Farmers dying, policemen falling, soldiers going and not returning. Were they all not our kinsmen? If we could not speak about the war in the east because of stiff decrees, would we also be silent about the one in the west? And suppose another should start in the north? Well, we decided not to be silent…. We decided to go and rouse people up by doing a play on the subject…. May be you remember, the civil war was raging in the east of our country, but this play has nothing to do with that. It deals with another war, the one that was later to be popularly known as the Àgbẹ́kọ̀yà uprising, in which ordinary farmers, in the west of the country, rose up and confronted the state, (p. 6).

Here, a question imposes itself upon the critical enquiry of a critical soul with enunciating effect. Why has the writer chosen to rouse people up with this kind of play, which has the capacity to incite the type of people described above by Marie Corelli against the authority, knowing full well that they dominate the population of the nation? The answer may not be far-fetched. By its very nature, literature strives to achieve the ideal in all human conditions. To achieve this lofty height, it uses a critical lens to examine situations, which exist in a society with a view to drawing attention to deficiencies and lapses in human endeavours.

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Like pictorial art, it is apparently universal – a sociological truism that, what is found universally must be of some social use. To know the literature of a society is to know what sort of stories are produced, and more significantly, to find in this mirror, a reliable image of a number of hard social facts.

To a greater extent than is generally realised, the lessons of socialisation are thought by presenting a series of fictional actions and the consequences. The inference, which may never have been formulated, but is justified empirically by the universal use of the method, is that a fictional model is an effective guide to action, whether through imitation or avoidance. The didactic utility of the literature of initial socialization is a key to the values of the society, which produces it. It is intended to influence behaviour to conform to the norms, and this confirms what the norms are.

Fiction can give two types of information about society: first, its specific information about whether a social constitution or custom exists or existed in society which produced the fiction: the state of technology, the laws, the proscriptions of religion, and so on. The second one, and more important, is the information about values, norms and exceptions in society, which may be inferred from attitude of the characters in fiction and their behaviour. To achieve this, Eghagha, says, it uses a critical lens to examine situations which are in the society with a view to drawing attention to deficiencies and lapses in human endeavours since society itself is an "agglomeration of the hopes and aspirations of the people", (Eghagha: 2003:1-2). Ọ̀ṣọ́fisàn himself dwells more on this view when he enunciates that:

> Art, born of society, comments back on that social matrix, and by commentary I am implying here both the possibility of consolidation and erosion, of reaffirmation as well as contradiction. Sooner or later therefore it must collide or collude with authority, whether of state or shrine, or pulpit or classroom. Everywhere, whether in the close intimacy of domestic life, or the expansive space of social being, no hegemony is sacrosanct to the probing impertinence of art. (Ọ̀ṣọ́fisàn, 2001: 108)

Annotations are not always constructive. In the process of serving as a mirror, art brings out the unsavoury with a view to correcting them. Therefore, it can be argued that Ọ̀ṣọ́fisàn decides to rouse the people because, as a revolt theatre,Moróuntódùn recreates the Mọ́remí myth to suit the imperatives of contemporary Nigeria: the urgent necessity to deploy the energies of the past to defeat the forces of oppression and injustice. The play reflects the typical contemporary Nigerian society, calling for "a necessary Africanisation of Marxist ideals in order to make Marxism relevant to the reality of our existence as a people",

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(Dasylva, 2004: 166). Revolt theatre, as earlier mentioned, has a compelling claim, particularly, on the mindset of the common audiences because they are easily influenced to uprising when they observe any form of discontent in a play. When the dramatist rebels against the conventions, morals and values of the social organism, and against the conditions of existence, his argument raises a standard within the audiences who do not hesitate to react as relevant. Therefore, as Perrine observes, fiction expands one's minds or quickens one's sense of life, (Perrine 1982: 3). This reality is captured in Yerima's *Hard Ground* (2005):

> Baba: So, it is your right to kill?
> Nimi: If we have to, Baba…. Poverty stinks, and if another man holds the soap, and won't let you have it, then nudge him slightly and collect it. For you need a good bath to become a decent perfumed human being like him.
> InyingIfáa: Nudge him to death if necessary?
> Nimi: If necessary, and often by any means we can lay our hands on. (p. 6).

At this level of human existence, resistance and disenchantment become the reason the oppressed have to defend their integrity and natural right to life. Dasylva says, "What is needed…is the call to action… 'The carrion'", which is somewhat grounded within the matrix of the popular anthem, distinctive future of any race cramped within the dilemma of inhumanity:

> Awake compatriots from juggerbeds
> Or the Army forever may reign
> Arise compatriots reject the shreds
> That gown and space may know no pain
> Arise compatriots unbind the shacks
> We do ourselves a favour so bright,
> Should we resist the hounds with tact
> Or chaos and carnage shall come to berth, (Dasylva, 2006:105)

Dasylva further pushes this resolute stand as he incites the rejected race whose fertilities have been drained to reasonable responsibility in his 'Globalization', "my sweats, my tears; their milk and tea my starved soul; their tarred roads", (Dasylva, 2006: 82). This advocacy highlights the sense of anomie caused by neo-colonial and technological developments that benefit only a selected few, leaving the majority condemned to poverty or crime. The distinction between law and equity remains a strong factor or fact to articulate to a reasonable conclusion that the criminality of an action should not be viewed solely on the action *per se*, but, primarily, on the antecedents of the action. Equity, according to J. H. Farrar and A. M. Dugdale in the book, *Introduction of Legal Method* (ed.) (1990) is fairness; right judgment; principles of justice outside common law or statute law, used to correct laws when this would

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apply unfairly in special circumstances, (Farrar and Dugdale, 1990: 34). Law, on the other hand, is seen as the rule made by authority for the proper regulation of a community or society, or for correct conduct in life. In other words, while law, by nature, is concerned with classes of sets of persons and events rather than individuals and individual instances, equity is "a supplementary system which caters more for the exigencies of the particular case", (Farrar and Dugdale, 1990: 34). The principles of equity are more "clearly tied to considerations of morality and the conduct of the particular litigants than those of law", (Farrar and Dugdale, 1990: 34). Cesare Beccaria, in his essay on "Crime and Punishment", says:

> If we look into history we shall find that laws, which are, or ought to be, conventions between men in a state of freedom, have been, for the most part, the work of the passions of a few, or the consequences of a fortuitous or temporary necessity; not dictated by a cool examiner of human nature, who knew how to collect in one point the actions of a multitude, and had this only end in view, the greatest happiness of the greatest number.

In the dialogue between Superintendent and Alhaja in *Moróuntódùn*, Ọ̀ṣọ́fisàn enunciates the above statement that the criminality of an action should not be viewed solely on the action *per se*, but primarily on the antecedents of the action:

> Superintendent: Listen to me. The peasants out there are not more than a thousand strong. Let's say, even two thousand. Two thousand men, armed mostly with crude dane guns, machetes, bows and arrows. What's all that before the awesome apparatus of the State? Before our well-trained and well-equipped fighting squads? A wall of vegetable! So why have we not been able to crush them?
> Alhaja: Are you asking me?
> Superintendent: You should know, Alhaja. After all, these rebels are of your 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!
> 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 frippery. And so, at last, they are coming for the reckoning.
> Alhaja: And that is why you are paid, isn't? To stop them. Not to stay hear gloating at their imagined grievances.

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The definition of law is better appreciated in this dialogue. The correctness of the conduct can be determined by the authority that makes the law. This justifies the claim and complaint earlier made that with the operational principles of law, justice is not certain. The law as made by few individuals, sometimes fails to achieve adequate justice in the particular case. As demonstrated in the dialogue above, the police have been represented as the instrument of oppression by the few individuals who are at the mercy of affluence against the multitude subjected to eternal poverty. They (the police) are paid to continually subject the common to poverty. Ọ̀ṣọ́fisàn, however, seems to be asking if the police or the few political dictators can ever win the war against the masses. The reason he gives is that, the masses are solidly united by the greatest force in the world: hunger. They are hungry, their children die of kwashiorkor. Yet, they read it every day; they watch it every day; and they hear it every day what politicians make of their own taxes, sweat and tears. They are dying! It is at this stage of their existence that Claude MaKay incites them in his poem: "If We Must Die" that, since they have been condemned to death, they should die more honourablly, and not like hogs, hunted and penned in an inglorious spot! Oppression is the exercise of authority or power in a burdensome, cruel, or unjust manner. It is an act or instance of subjugating, the state of being oppressed, and the feeling of being heavily burdened, mentally or physically, in this case, by troubles, adverse conditions, and inhumanity of man by man. It is the systematic, socially supported mistreatment and exploitation of a group or category of people by another. Oppression is the experience of repeated, widespread, systemic injustice. In the case of the society articulated in the play under study, it is extreme and involves the legal system (as in slavery, apartheid, or the lack of right to vote, which is done in form of rigging) – a tyrannical society breeding violence. However, this form of oppression operating in Nigeria, is seemingly acceptable oppression to characterise the everyday processes of subjugation in what seems a normal culture. Seemingly acceptable oppression is embedded in unquestioned norms, habits, and symbols, in the assumptions underlying institutions and rules, and the collective consequences of following those rules. It refers to the vast and deep injustices some groups suffer as a consequence of often unconscious assumptions and reactions of well-meaning people in ordinary interactions, which are supported by the media and cultural stereotypes as well as by the structural features of bureaucratic hierarchies and market mechanisms:

> …here, farmers cannot eat their own products, for they need the money from the market. They tend the yams but dare not taste. They raise chickens, but must be content with wind in their

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> stomach…. And then when they return weary from the market, the task man is waiting with his "bill", (Ọ̀ṣọ́fisàn, 1982: 66).

The burning question is, can this man-created menace be eliminated by getting rid of the rulers or by making some new laws as oppressions are systematically reproduced in the major economic, political and cultural institutions? Two facts remain fundamental: first, bad leaders breed cruel ones to succeed them. Hence, Nigerians should not be surprised if, at a point in our socio-political history, political murder becomes a legal crime in this nation. In other words, anyone who kills for political reasons and in favour of the politicians, might, one day, enjoy judicial excuse and security. Second, while specific privileged-groups are the beneficiaries of the oppression of other groups, and thus, have an interest in the continuation of the status quo, they do not typically understand themselves to be agents of oppression. They ask, although not waiting for the oppressed, answer which can only be nothing but crime:

> So in what way are we responsible for the farmers' uprising? 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?" (Ọ̀ṣọ́fisàn, 1982: 9).

The fertile soul sees such cruelty as transient – a welcome betrayal of the significant political madness and administrative incompetence and diabolism manifesting in the use of hegemonic violence as a source of 'death' and destruction. It is within such understanding that Dasylva describes them as: "home-grown tyrants, political mercenaries…murderers of our motherland; agents causative… suffocating children(s) trapped on bare backs of mammy mothers…" (Dasylva, 2006:26-7). Their credulities manifest in their crude politics of oil, roads, rail and air-ways. Education betrays their inhumanity and hatred for knowledge. Their quests and sinister motives to stockpile wealth, attain political power with a passion not to relinquish it, yet not for the just purpose of having it, reflect in inflation and inflated budgets, contracts, "causing curses of mangled bodies, ghastly victims of daily carnage…home-grown tyrants, all!" (Dasylva, 2006:26-7). The head line of *The Nation* newspaper of July 9, 2010, boldly reads: "50th Anniversary Party Budget Slashed to N6.6b." The initial budget for this party was N10 billion. The first sentence under this caption reads: "Apparently bowing to public opinion, the President has slashed the cost of the Anniversary celebration… to N6.6 billion." And who gets what:

> Office of Secretary to the Government – N3.324b
> Ministry of Foreign Affairs – N600m
> Ministry of Information N1.72b

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Ministry of Culture and Tourism – N720m
Ministry of Women Affairs – 105m
State House Banquet Hall/Defence House – 215.5m
National Sports Commission N120m
Federal Capital Territory Administration N97m
Ministry of Aviation N2.25b,(*The Nation* newspaper, 2010, July 9).

Yet, the governor in *Moróuntódùn*, who artistically represents the Nigerian political class, still articulates with meanness, vitriolic sentiment and disregard for the dying souls whose hands work for this money: "… you must pay your tax … Pay your tax! Pay your tax!" equally when he sees that, "our roads have been so bad for years… Even your Excellency had to make your trip here by helicopter. Your council officials and akodas [touts] harass us minutes to minute and collect bribes from us", (Ọ̀ṣọ́fisàn, 1982: 64). They go and build mansions in the city. Ministers, Senators and Members House of Representatives are representing the people in their houses bought in Dubai. President Barack Obama's salary is $400,000 per annum. A Nigerian Senator collects N48 million per quarter. At the end of the year, each senator's haul will be in the neighbourhood of $1.7million. Each of the 360 members of the House of Representatives will receive N35 million; that's $300,000 per member per quarter. At the end of the year, each member of the House would have collected $1.2 million. Past surveys of salaries and benefits of public office holders from the Baltic to the Bahamas, the Americas and the Far East and everywhere else, have shown that Ministers and Federal Legislators in Nigeria are the highest paid in the world, despite the position of the country as one of the poorest countries in the world in terms of per capital income, security, infrastructure and living standards. On the other hand, regrettably too, Nigerian workers are grouped among the least paid in the world. The Nigerian minister earns more than his American, British or German counterpart, and of course, enjoys pecks of office those ones cannot even dare dream of – for doing next to nothing! A large chunk of the annual budget ends up as salaries and allowances in the pocket of this small percentage of Nigerians. For example, of the N3.1 trillion budgets for 2009, N1.3 trillion or 42% ended up as remuneration for just 17,500 individuals in a nation of over 150 million people. "We have no electricity, and we still drink tanwíjí from the stream….We protested and your police mounted expeditions to maim us and reduce our houses to ashes", (Ọ̀ṣọ́fisàn, 1982: 64). Little wonder they are described as: "home-grown tyrants, political mercenaries…murderers of our motherland; agents causative…suffocating children(s) trapped on bare backs of mammy mothers…" (Dasylva, 2006: 26-7). And when "we protested … your police mounted expeditions to maim us and reduce our houses to ashes", (Ọ̀ṣọ́fisàn, 1982: 64). That is the

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first crime which degenerates to another crime: "Illiterate farmers… all along thought to be docile, peace-loving… even stupid, suddenly took to arms and began to fight against the government!"(Ọ̀ṣọ́fisàn, 1982: 64). Two, three, four … seven months! And the war is still hot and bitter. "Farmers" dying, policemen falling, soldiers going and not returning. It is the clarion call of Claude McKay:

> If we must die, O let us nobly die,
> So that our precious blood may not be shed
> In vain; then even the monsters we defy
> Shall be constrained to honour us though dead!

It is also the yearnings of Yerima:

> …Poverty stinks, and if another man holds the soap,
> and won't let you have it, then nudge him slightly and collect it.
> For you need
> a good bath to become a decent perfumed human being like him…. Nudge him to death if necessary?
> …and often by any means we can lay our hands on? (Yerima, 2005: 11)

Many of the prescriptions made by the dramatists cited above, may be considered criminal in that they incite the oppressed to revolt or crime. However, this consideration should be built upon the standpoints of some other considerations relative to time, place, the people and other circumstances involved. The time, the place, the people and the sufferings involved in this country are better captured in Títùbí's discussion with her mother:

> That was when I began to ask questions. Questions. I saw myself growing up, knowing no such suffering 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. They tend the yams but dare not taste. They raise chickens, but must be content with wind in their stomach. And then, when they return weary from market, the tax man is waiting with bill … 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… receive our bodies… (p. 66).

Like Ọdẹ́wálé, Títùbí comes to see suffering and she feels suffering. She lives in the forest among simple folk, sharing their pains and anguish…. "Tears are falling freely from her eyes" because she can no longer bear the repugnance of what she sees. The people, those who are fighting to live, console her in their own heavy language: "Our men fall, but we do not mourn" because the road to freedom is red, it is bloody! They console her by the hard bone truth: "Water fertilise the earth, blood the spirit of the race", "we struggle, our dirges wash us

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clean"; "We're older than pain and betrayal"; "We own the earth, we are the earth itself", (Ọ̀ṣọ́fisàn, 1982:67). They have been hurt beyond pains and pangs. They are no longer afraid of death as they are of life. To them, death is the only route to life, and living is the only death they have. They need to live. They need life. The only way they can live is to die! If they refuse to die, they can never live. Poverty is just the best synonym for death. Marie Corelli captures it better as she asks in her *Sorrows of Satan*, (1895):

> Do you know what it is to be poor…really poor, downright, cruelly, hideously poor, with a poverty that is graceless, sordid and miserable? Poverty that compels you to dress in your one suit of clothes till it is worn threadbare, that denies you clean linen on account of the ruinous charges of washerwomen, that robs you of your own self-respect, and causes you to slink along the streets vaguely abashed, instead of walking erect among your fellow- men in independent ease, this is the sort of poverty I mean. This is the grinding curse that keeps down noble aspiration under a load of ignoble care; this is the moral cancer that eats into the heart of an otherwise well-intentioned human creature and makes him envious and malignant, and inclined to the use of dynamite. When he sees the fat idle woman of society passing by in her luxurious carriage, lolling back lazily, her face mottled with the purple and red signs of superfluous eating, when he observes the brainless and sensual man of fashion smoking and dawdling away the hours in the Park, as if all the world and its millions of honest hard workers were created solely for the casual diversion of the so-called 'upper' classes, then the good blood in him turns to gall, and his suffering spirit rises in fierce rebellion, crying out 'Why in God's name, should this injustice be? Why should a worthless lounger have his pockets full of gold by mere chance and heritage, while I, toiling wearily from morn till midnight, can scarce afford myself a satisfying meal?', (p. 1)

Poverty of this magnitude is death in disguise. To kill in order to save oneself, then, is justice. Section 33, subsection 1 on Fundamental Right of the 1999 *Constitution* states that: "Every person has a right, and no one shall be deprived intentionally of his life, save in execution of the sentence of a court in respect of a criminal offence of which he has been found guilty…."Poverty as a feature of oppression in Nigeria, is a direct result of the economic mandates and tendencies of capitalism – a deprivation of rights. A capitalistic economy is inherently impersonal and concerned exclusively with profit. In the ubiquitous drive for profit, oppression becomes the relationship between few members of the aristocratic class and the multitude of the proletariat as the former who dominate the employers' group try to maximize profits by minimizing wages. Thus, the primary cause of poverty is oppression. Not only does capitalism require a marginal labour force of the unemployed to depress

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wages, but recently it has shown its need to eliminate employees and produce internationally to reduce costs. Thus the working class finds itself in periodic poverty due to oppression for three main reasons: unemployment, layoffs, and subcontracting. Competitive capitalism demands a definite level of unemployment to reduce wages. A base level of unemployed workers increases the demand for lower level jobs. This lowers the acceptable wages as workers are forced to choose: either no work or whatever work they are offered, regardless of how low the wages are. The irony is very interesting. Capitalism as an economic force, takes away the worker's pre-industrial ownership of the means of production. The advent of industrial capitalism ended the system of craftsmanship and divorces the worker from the means of production. This leaves workers with only one asset to sell – their labour power. As represented in this play, Nigerians are forced to sell their abilities. Capitalism has managed to devalue that capacity by producing an artificial excess of workers and an artificial shortage of work. This assertion is true, not simply leftist dogma. There is plenty of works to be done in Nigeria, but not all of them are profitable. When too many people are employed and wages rise as a result, capitalistic enterprises become less profitable. At a certain point, all profit would be lost to wages. Long before this point is reached, however, an employer must un-employ some of its workers in order to remain profitable. This is the predominant trend in the banking industry under the disguise of restructuring. Yet, in few years, another president is coming to restructure this restructure. The rich get richer; the poor get poorer. Thus, capitalism has the mechanism, which creates unemployment built into its very fundamental principles. Full employment cannot be attained in a competitive capitalistic economy, and workers are thus oppressed into poverty by the economic system itself. Yet, it the right of every Nigerian to sustain his life. The Nigerian constitution states that every Nigerian has the right to protect his right – his life. Section 34 – (1) of the 1999 *Constitution* states as follows: "Every individual is entitled to respect for the dignity of his person, and accordingly:

i. no person shall be subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment;
ii. no person shall be held in slavery or servitude; and
iii. no person shall be required to perform forced or compulsory labour.

"Section 33, – subsection (2) article (a)" states that "a person shall not be regarded as having been deprived of his life in contravention of this section, if he dies as a result of the use, to such extent and in such circumstances as are permitted by law, of such force as is reasonably necessary – for the defence of any person from unlawful violence or for the defence of property. "Section 42 – (1), (a)" states that,

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> A citizen of Nigeria of a particular community…shall not, by reason only that he is such a person – be subjected either expressly by, or in the practical application of, any law in force in Nigeria or any executive or administrative action of the government, to disabilities or restrictions to which citizens of Nigeria of other communities…are not subject.

Writers are compelled witnesses to the truth of their own sets of norms. They necessarily reflect their own time, which is the justification for using their fictions to study the facts of their society. They are bound to do so, and cannot choose to do otherwise:

> Art, born of society, comments back on that social matrix, and by commentary I am implying here both the possibility of consolidation and erosion, of reaffirmation as well as contradiction. Sooner or later therefore it must collide or collude with authority, whether of state or shrine, or pulpit or classroom. Everywhere, whether in the close intimacy of domestic life, or the expansive space of social being, no hegemony is sacrosanct to the probing impertinence of art, (Ọ̀ṣọ́fisàn, 2001: 108).

In defence of themselves (right, life, liberty, dignity and property) illiterate Nigerians… all along thought to be docile, peace-loving… even stupid, suddenly take to arms and begin to fight against the government! Two, three, four … seven months! And the war is still hot and bitter. "Militants" or Bokoharam dying; policemen falling; soldiers going and not returning. Who indeed are criminals?

Neocolonialism and the Entrenchment of Mediocrity: A Study of *Red is the Freedom Road*

Introduction

One of the legacies of the colonial period in Africa was the tradition of authoritarian rule backed up by wide-ranging emergency and security laws and non-recognition of individual freedoms. Many independent African nations have followed this pattern with leaders, who bitterly criticised the abuse of human rights by colonial power, being guilty of much the same conduct. Such criticism is no more than propaganda to discredit colonialism as being incompatible with human rights and democracy in order to win international sympathy for their cause. Ọ̀ṣọ́fisàn, in most of his plays, is always concerned about the widespread corruption engendered by successive political systems in his country (Nigeria) where a cycle of failed civilian governments and subsequent military coups have become the norm. His concern with class oppression and social injustice lies at the heart of most of his play. This is to suggest that art is a strong weapon, or in his parlance, ideological "assassin". This, one

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could argue, was what Ọlá Rótìmí had in mind when he said of *The Gods Are Not To Blame* that, foreign powers like America, Russia, France, England, etc., who represented the gods in the play, are not to blame for the disasters experienced in this nation, (Dasylva, 2004: 138-9). Instead, he locates the root cause of the nation's calamity in her "lingering mutual ethnic distrust which culminated in open hostility. The frightening ogre of tribalism stirs in almost every form of our national life", (Dasylva, 2004: 138-9). So long as this was allowed to continue and disharmony flippantly incited, so long should the external powers remain inculpable for seizing upon Nigeria's ethnic and tribal disunity for their own exploitative interests. In other words, as Dasylva puts it, "there is no use looking for scapegoats for faults that were, and still are, ours", (Dasylva, 2004: 138-9). The examples given of the actions in Moróuntódùn, tend to reinforce this analysis. The use of emergency powers is not necessarily improper or an unjustifiable abrogation of some individual freedoms if they are implemented within an acceptable constitutional framework. No one would seriously wish to deprive a state of the necessary legal weapons with which to tackle a genuine emergency situation. However, it is the basic assumption in this chapter that freedoms of individuals need constant protection as they are the cornerstone of every society. Indeed, some freedoms are so fundamental that they are never liable to abrogation nor derogation for this would otherwise undermine the rule of law. Thus, while it is not appropriate to place rigid controls on government action in times of emergency it is absolutely necessary to retain genuine safeguard against unwarranted abuses of individual freedoms. This means that, a balance is required between the interests of the State and the rights of individual. The Nigerian experience, as chronicled in the selected plays of Ọ̀ṣọ́fisàn, however, shows that, to date, the scales have been generally heavily weighted in favour of the State. The State, in this context, is the person or the few people who are in power. For instance, Àkànjí, the last hope of a race, has been taken captive with his people. He is separated from them so as to deaden the humanity in him. The people, in their lamentations, cry onto him:

> Our masters have become more cruel with us. Each day their whips cut deeper into our skins. They harness our women to their chariots; feed our children to their gods. The men have waited long enough for you. Now the suffering multiplies. They're beginning to lose hope. You have done nothing,"
> (Ọ̀ṣọ́fisàn, 1982: 121).

Challenged by this compassion subsistent appeal, Àkànjí devices some intrigues to save his people; he pretends to be a part of his own enemies who enslave his people and make him Basọ̀run by playing to the tunes of his captors, and beating his own mother. This could be

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adjudged the height of slavery or servitude when the oppressors take advantage of the weaknesses, simplicity or ignorance of a people to unleash terror on the same people. Yet, an issue arises here. Àkànjí has been justified as a leader who has the will and love of his people at heart. Events in the past have demonstrated the humanity he represents and the affectionate ideal he stands for. But he has some challenges now: he has his people to save; he has his title to defend. Basọ̀run in the society represented here is such equivalent to a Generalissimo. It is an exulted position attained not by compliment but by feat. For instance, Àkànjí admits that the task of a Basọ̀run is in the "deed". Thus when the King brings his people to him and tells him that they are his people, Àkànjí refuses to accept them as his people. "I do not recognize them", he says. Then he likens them to "slaves…anonymous" entity who do not deserve the sympathy of someone in the service of royal diadem. To establish his claim, he has the second task to contend with. He is faced with the challenge to "whip" his "own mother". Psychoanalysts have defended his actions as the unconscious. Freud argues that traumatic experiences left their mark on the individual despite the fact that the individual is not aware of these experiences. The idea of unconscious determination of behaviour flies headfirst against the idea of free will, and is quickly jumped on by positivistic criminology. Freud postulated the existence of a three-part personality (an idea going back to Plato) consisting of *id*, *ego*, and *superego*, which operate in constant conflict with one another (primarily between the id and superego), producing the basic problem of guilt, which requires the use of one or more defence mechanisms. The id is a part of the unconscious that contains all the urges and impulses, including what is called the libido, a kind of generalised sexual energy that is used for everything from survival instincts to appreciation of art. The id is also kind of stubborn, for it responds only to what Freud calls the pleasure principle (if it feels good, do it), and nothing else. The ego is the only part of the conscious personality. It is what the person is aware of when he thinks about himself, and is what he usually tries to project toward others. The ego is dominated by what Freud calls the reality principle (an orientation to the real world in which the person lives). It is continually trying to mediate the demands of the id and prohibitions of the superego. The superego is a part of the unconscious that is the voice of conscience (doing what is right) and the source of self-criticism. It reflects society's moral values to some degree (how much the person wants to fit in), and a person is sometimes aware of his own morality and ethics. But, the superego contains a vast number of codes, or prohibitions, that are issued mostly unconsciously in the form of commands. The superego is also somewhat tricky, in that it will try to portray what it wants the person to do in grandiose,

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glowing terms, what Freud calls the ego-ideal, which arises out of the person's first great love attachment (usually a parent).

Using this id-ego-superego model, the basic cause of crime is over-socialisation, leading to an overly harsh superego, which represses the id so harshly that pressure builds up in the id and there is an explosion of acting-out behaviour. This pressure build-up in the id contains both silenced and repressed urges as well as a kind of frustration called, guilt for impulsive actions which did manage to slip out. Guilt is a very common problem because of all the urges and drives coming from the id and all the prohibitions and codes in the superego. There are a variety of ways an individual handles guilt, and these are called defence mechanisms. Àkànjí has two major challenges. First, he has been exulted to the post of Basọ̀run. Second, he has been incited to kill his people. While he sees the second challenge as the only means to bring the freedom his people need, he acknowledges the loftiness of his present position as Basọ̀run, which the unconscious drives him to defend. As an avenger, Àkànjí does not have to pretend to be who he is not. Like Ọdẹ́wálé, he is a butterfly who thinks himself a bird. The people who make him are wise. Apart from his pretence, Àkànjí has another choice. He is untamed, meaning he is more crude, wilder and messier. He can take a gladiator stand against his oppressors, and die like a true gladiator. For instance, as Basọ̀run, he has the opportunity to incite mutiny. But he does not. Instead, Àkànjí pretends to be against his people, a stand he finds difficult to defend in the play. He is asked to whip his own mother; yet he finds freedom in this servitude. Hitting his pregnant wife he "turns to his mother" and says:

> Woman, that slave there has a child within her, a child only two months old. She has been done much violence already. But not half enough. The child within her is threatened. If you want to save it, listen to me carefully. I shall count to three. At the third count, if you're still down and not up, I shall start using my whip. I shall not repeat. One…Two…

He raises the whip slowly. Painfully, the old woman drags herself up; comes forward. In her own grief and misconception of an action devised to set her free, his mother curses him and "falls dead". This explains why his people refuse to appreciate his line of reason. Although, language scholars may stand in his defence on the basis of effective communication disconnect. Communication has a number of functions in language. Communication creates, or should create, a natural understanding and agreement between the speaker or writer and the listener or reader. In order to achieve this, however, specific purposes should be identified and adhered to. An effective communication can create an enabling environment for a peaceful coexistence among people. It fosters amicable relationship between a business

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organisation and its management, and by extension, any existing union and other various unions that constitute pressure groups in the country. Effective communication can bring about a quick resolution of such conflicts as parties involved reach a compromise. It is at this juncture one begins to appreciate the difference between language and communication. Language produces communication, yet communication goes beyond the spoken words. Language and communication are closely connected and this close connection is so self-evident that one can safely say that the two concepts are inseparable. Language serves as the vehicle of communication. Communication, by definition, can be regarded as the sharing or transmitting of one's ideas, some information, feelings, thoughts, etc. with others. Communication, however, goes beyond just the transmission of ideas or information. To communicate in the real sense of the term, requires that the message contained therein be taken in and well-understood by those to whom it is directed. It involves giving, receiving or exchanging information, opinions or ideas by writing, speech or visual means, so that the message communicated is completely understood by the recipient(s). In a nutshell, the effectiveness of communication, in any form, rests entirely on its impact on the audience and how far it has succeeded in eliciting some expected response from the recipient or the recipients. Disagreements often arise between these various groups as a result of conflicting interests. In the text under study, there is absolute brake in communication between Àkànjí and his so-called people. If the only language he speaks is not understood by his own people, it passes for justification to conclude that they are no more a people. As such, the society is bound to strive in servitude. However, Àkànjí is to be blamed for this break in communication. As a rescuer of his people, Àkànjí should have taken advantage of the power vested on him as Basòrun. It is often said that, if a child's hand has not reached for the sward, he does not investigate the death of his father. Àkànjí has suffered too long to speak in vague language to his people when he knows the power in the spoken words. What does he want to pretend for? As Basòrun, which, in the contemporary terms, means second-in-command, he can plan a coupe with his command and overthrow the government. He has the support of his people. Revolution in the interpretation of modern dramatists in a situation like this, is by violence. Only politicians employ pretence not the oppressed. If a critic tries to argue in his defence, that pretence would have saved him and his people, such may need to justify his position by also proving why he (Àkànjí) has to die the way he dies.

The Nigerian society is not such that requires the likes of Àkànjí. It needs a revolutionist not a pretender. Ṣóyinká is sinking in old age; time has eroded Enahoro; Gàní has gone; Bẹ́kọ́ has

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become a historical figure in the struggle for freedom; Fẹlá fell by forceful fingers he fed. Nigeria rulers dealt with them all. Institutions created to protect them incarcerated them because they fought for the freedom of the oppressed and the oppressors. These people fought without pretence. They took a stand, revolution, and defended it. It is, however, ridiculous and ignoble that, the ideals they lived for, the principles they were killed for are what their killers, in their insanity, kill themselves to have today without any sense of gratitude to those who struggled for it. The question spills from the groaning heart of Atilọ́lá in his "Mosquito" as contained in his collection of poems, *Camel in the Eye of a Needle and other Poems,* (2009): "What an ungrateful insect they are?" The tension becomes intensified in second stanza: "You feed on my blood, sucks my sweat/Yet you are not satisfied/Defiant blood driller! Breaker of joyful dreams!" (pp. 10-12). The fertile soul sees such cruelty as transient – a welcome betrayal of the significant political insanity and administrative incompetence, and diabolism manifesting in the use of hegemonic violence as a source of death and destruction. Instead, Àkànjí pretends and feigns a foe. This excuses why his people refuse to see with his own mind. His request for the chance to explain his plan, is denied because their mindset has been impoverished and deadened. "Words will wash wounds!" they tell him, because, the only language of revolution they, as the oppressed, understand is violence not pretence, (Ọ̀ṣọ́fisàn, 1982:127). Títùbí, who once thought that pretence could solve the problems of the oppressed, became the advocate of violence at the end of Moróuntódùn. (Ọ̀ṣọ́fisàn, 1982: 65). Àkànjí becomes the source of his mother's death because of his pretence. Ìbídùn, his wife, loses their child in the womb because she refuses to appreciate Àkànjí's pretence. Unlike Ọdẹ́wálé or Títùbí, Àkànjí refuses to submit to people's perception, but to his own will to do what his conscience describes as good. He addresses his people seeking their forgiveness:

> My people, will you forgive me, when the tale is told? Give me tonight, one night only, and all will be well. [in a thundering voice] Warriors! …[Immediately a terrific clap of drum and war-trumpets bursts out. Àkànjí mounts a platform and, unmoving throughout, watches the Dance of the Soldiers. WARRIORS, bare from the navel upwards except for the golden shoulder plates and charmed necklace, dance unto the stage, chanting war songs. In one hand they hold a spear, in the other, a slender gourd of magic herbs. The anklets and wristlets are not gold but silver. The dance recounts an historic battle fought long ago, and won through after many had fallen. An exulted shout greets the victory].

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They are celebrating the emergence of a new order, a new regime; they are celebrating their freedom in sight. But, events take strange. Àkànjí soon, consciously or unconsciously, finds himself in the mess, in the evil or colonialism he has often fought against. He stands on the throne where his task masters stood to colonise him and his people. What, therefore, he accuses his oppressors of becomes the same vice he is accused of:

> 2ND SOLDIER: And tyranny will come again?
> IST SOLDIER: After the shedding of blood.
> 2ND SOLDIER: After the killing and rekilling.
> IST SOLDIER: Till the fire is kindled again.
> 2ND SOLDIER: Till the darkness falls again.
> (Shouts and screams continue)
> IST SOLDIER: Never an end to agony. To pain and oppression.
> 2ND SOLDIER: Never an end to longing. For peace that never comes.
> IST SOLDIER: And hope is ever failing.
> 2ND SOLDIER: All over the world, regardless.
> IST SOLDIER: Falling, ever falling. Hope is fallen.
> … (BASỌ̀RÚN is lifted on the shoulders of the deposed KING, as the torches dance out, leaving the two SOLDIERS exactly as before.)
> 2ND SOLDIER: Yes, the torches. First you have the torches.
> IST SOLDIER: Flames on the gathering darkness
> 2ND SOLDIER: But the darkness falls, regardless.
> IST SOLDIER: Ever the same pattern.
> 2ND SOLDIER: The first ecstasy of welcome.
> IST SOLDIER: The later withering of hope.
> 2ND SOLDIER: The short season of harvest.
> IST SOLDIER: The bitter harmattan unending.
> 2ND SOLDIER: The same pattern as always.

Ọ̀ṣọ́fisàn says the initial title of *Red is the Freedom Road* is "You have Lost Your Fine Face". This suggests that the face which initially represented humanity and love for the people when the politicians are campaigning for power, has now been lost. Thus, the new but ugly face now bears oppression, wickedness and hatred for the people. Ọ̀ṣọ́fisàn's caustic portraits of a dystopian culture also reflect deep distress at Nigeria's failure to foster a more democratic society after it had officially cast off the shackles of colonialism.

Conclusion

Under the sub-title "Social Injustice and the Cult of Mediocrity" in *The Trouble with Nigeria*, (1983), Achebe opines that,

> We have displayed a consistent inclination since we assumed management of our own affairs to opt for mediocrity and

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> compromise, to pick a third and fourth eleven to play for us, (Achebe, 1983:20-1).

This metaphor of a third or fourth-eleven can be literally applied to the process of selecting a national football team in Nigeria. When the colonial rulers quit the stage, African politicians jostled for their positions. In the words of Ghanaian writer, Ayi Kwei Armah, in *The Beautiful Ones are Not yet Born* (1968: 80), this was not out of hatred for colonialism but love for it. His insightful presentation of the politician can also fit into the Nigerian situation. He says:

> And they who would be our leaders, they also had the white men for their masters, and they also feared the masters, but after the fear what was at the bottom was despair. What they felt was love. What they felt for their white masters and our white masters was gratitude and faith,(Ayi Kwei Armah 1968: 80).

He then poses a significant question: "How long will Africa be cursed with its leaders?" In other words, those who gained access to power wanted to do the oppressive things which the colonial rulers did. Achebe, more or less, echoes the same view in *A Man of the People* (1966:144) where he writes:

> The people themselves, as we have seen, had become even more cynical than their leaders and were apathetic into the bargain. "Let them eat"', was the people's opinion, "After all when the white men used to do all the eating did we commit suicide?" of course not! And where is the all-powerful white man today?

Their fight, therefore, was for the colonials to quit so they would take over. Across the continent, nationalists took over the mantle of leadership as new leaders in the postcolonial states. In Ghana, the 'Osagyefo', Dr. Kwame Nkurumah took the oath of office in 1958 as Prime Minister. Because of his vigorous anti-colonialist campaign and how articulate he had been on the social condition of the continent, it was expected that post-colonial Ghana would serve as ideal country for the rest of Africa. Within nine years, Nkrumah was overthrown in a coup. In Nigeria, independence was attained in 1960 after a vigorous political struggle. With Tàfáwá Bàlewà as Prime Minister and Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe as President, the nation was expected to conscientiously confront its socio-economic problems. However, the situation gets worse. Examples of mediocre leadership are present in such works as Ọlá Rótìmí's *Our Husband has Gone Mad Again*, Achebe's *A Man of the People*, and Samson Amali's *The Leaders*. Mediocre leadership refers to leaders that are not good, a second-eleven type of leadership. *Not good* is defined in terms of inability to comprehend the enormity of the problems confronting a society, or inability to proffer solutions to the problems. It also refers

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to inferior manner of reasoning or apprehending the dynamics and responsibilities of leadership.

Red Is The Freedom Road tells the story of a politician who wants to be the leader of his people. However, at a point in time, he becomes handicapped by greed and autocratic tendencies. He allows himself to be conscripted into a group with the sole purpose of fighting for the oppressed only to find himself an oppressor. This is located in the actions of the WARRIORS, who rush in, in a clamour of noise, with BASỌRUN hoisted, wounded and bleeding, on a shoulder. Some of the SOLDIERS are carrying torches, lit. DRUMMERS BASỌRUN mounts the platform. As he begins to speak, a crowd of CIVILIANS can be seen joining the group, also carrying torches, with drums, flute, etc). Àkànjí does not hesitate to garb himself in this web of almightiness indicated by the stupidity of a people. Assuming the much adored post, he addresses speaks:

> I, Basọ̀run, I am thunder! And my words are flame! (Hails) say, I, Basọ̀run, by my arms, by the strength of my muscles, I, Basọ̀run, I am King!! (Shouts of 'Kábíyèsí' etc. The former KING, stripped down, is led forward to the platform where he kneels. The BASỌRÚN places his left foot on his head to acknowledge his surrender.) Tonight is the night of freedom! Freedom, my brothers! Let the torches speak for me! (Then follows the Dance of the Torches, accompanied by drums. The stage is of course now totally dark except for the torches whose movements rapidly become erratic). All slaves will be free. There will be none among us in claims! All captured shall return to their homes. There will be no detentions. I, Basọ̀run, now King, I am speaking with my mouth. Ours is a mission of peace. Let the torches speak for me!

It is at this point that the playwright's attention is shifted to the competence and ability of the men who offer themselves as leaders in the political scene. Àkànjí represents the greedy Nigerian leaders who delight in condemning their predecessors, but refuse to immune themselves against the syndrome of political dictatorship. His purpose for submitting to the demands of his captors is to be able to save his people. Eventually, Àkànjí becomes initiated into the pleasure of his oppressors, and he is unable to manage his ego. He has placed his ego above his original intention. This justifies the reason why his people do not understand his intention. His warriors argue:

> IST SOLDIER: Flames on the gathering darkness. But the darkness falls. But the darkness falls regardless.
> 2ND SOLDIER: Yes, darkness will fall.
> IST SOLDIER: All over the world, regardless.

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IST SOLDIER: O when will men learn the truth? Wait not the only means of dialogue.
2ND SOLDIER: Nor can peace be won by warriors.
IST SOLDIER: No prosperous harvest from battlefield.
2ND SOLDIER: But corpses only. Stench and horror….
IST SOLDIER: And the willing of widows, of children abandoned.
2ND SOLDIER: Hunger and horror, disaster and death. When will men learn the simple truth?
IST SOLDIER: You cannot trap cocoyam when you plant blood. All feel flounder when the road runs red. The flower must wither in its season. O when shall we learn?
2ND SOLDIER: Men falling. Men dying. Flames on the world all over. Forever anthems of grief.
IST SOLDIER: Hope dying. Night falling. Tears in the world all over.
2ND SOLDIER: But when will the world learn the truth?
(A THIRD SOLDIER runs across, laden with goods.)
3RD SOLDIER: What are you doing? The looting today is going to be the richest.
IST SOLDIER: Is that so!
2ND SOLDIER: In that case, what are we still doing here?
(They run out hastily. Lights)

Apparently, the focus of this dissertation is crime and punishment. However, because of the objective point of view at which the subject has been considered, there is a need to dwell more on the leadership glitch as a way of excavating the true cause of crime in the Nigerian society. The type of democracy practiced in Nigeria is really a form of fraud and scam – a great crime – committed against the Nigerian people. Perhaps it was why the former Nigerian President, Olúsẹgun Ọbásanjọ́, put it in 2007 as a "do-or-die" system of government for many potential politicians who may have learnt from him. It is obvious that the reason most people decide to explore the political commerce arena is motivated by greed and personal aggrandisement. Reports have it that a large chunk of the annual budget ends up as salaries and allowances in the pockets of this insignificant percentage of Nigerians. For example, according Sànúsí Làmídò Sànúsí, the former Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria, out of the 2009 annual budget of N3.1trilion, N1.3 trillion or 42% ended up as remuneration for 17,500 individuals in a country of over-one hundred and fifty million people. If this is the case, what is left for social and economic development? What is left to construct roads, improve education and healthcare, water and electricity; regards to economy and welfare of the people? Yet, they label some people rebels, criminals and militants even when they know that these rebels, criminals and militants are of their own (Nigerian politicians) "creation", (Ọ̀ṣọ́fisàn 1982:24). Yerima says, "Poverty stinks". Therefore, "if another man holds the

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soap, and won't let you have it, then nudge him slightly and collect it. For you need a good bath to become a decent perfumed human being like him", (Yerima, 2005: 11). Seeing crime within a broad spectrum of cultural and historical variations, one discovers that it constitutes the intentional commission of an act usually deemed socially harmful or dangerous and specifically defined, prohibited, and punishable under the criminal law. Section 80 subsection (2) of the *Nigeria Constitution 1999* states that:

> No moneys shall be withdrawn from the Consolidated Revenue Fund of the Federation except to meet expenditure that is charged upon the fund by this constitution or where the issue of those moneys has been authorised by an Appropriation Act, Supplementary Appropriation Act or an Act passed in pursuance of section 81 of this Constitution

According to reports, "each Senator will pocket 720 million Naira in four years, while each House of Representative member will get 540 million Naira. These sums do not include the approved pay by RMAFC which they also collect. Apart from being criminal, it is obscene, in a country where a huge chunk of the population lives on less than 1 US dollar per day. Senate President Bùkọ́lá Sàràkí gets 250 million Naira per quarter; Deputy Senate President Ekweremadu gets 150 million Naira, and each of the eight remaining principal officers 78 million Naira". Okey Ndibe describes this pathetic situation as "A Feeding Frenzy". Musikilu Mojeed and Elor Nkereuwem christened it "An Assembly for Looting" saying "Considering that Nigeria minimum wage stands at N5, 500 a month, each Senator's quarterly allowance "will pay for 2,909 workers earning the minimum wage."

Reuben Abati, in his "Nigerian Legislators!" writes in 2007:

> I believe that they are over-paid and under-work. It is members of the Lower House that are in the news this week, but the Senators are no different. N27.2 million per quarter, and now they want more! And what do they do? The only time Nigerian MPs suddenly become vocal and creative is when they are hustling for jumbo pay and allowances. This is the case not only in Abuja but also in the states, where the members of the Houses of Assembly are perpetually fighting the Governor to give them more money. They insist that no one should blame them because they can see the Governor and other members of the Executive taking 'their own share,' so why should they be excluded? In states where there is peace between the House and the Executive, it is usually the case that the Governor, to put it in their language, 'knows how to settle.' (*Leadership Newspaper*,2007: 5)

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The irony of this, however, is that he (Àbàtì) became part of them; speaking to favour them. The government under which he served was described as one of the most corrupt governments in Nigeria. This is the sad Nigerian story. Yet, so much money for what? What kind of legitimate work can anybody do in Nigeria that will fetch a salary, the type the MPs are asking for in three months? These are the same lawmakers who are mostly absent. Their standard lie is that they are busy with committee meetings, but in reality most of them are busy chasing contracts in government departments of peddling influence around town, or busy harassing companies and MDAs over which they exercise overnight functions. In his prophetic perception of things, Dasylva writes that it is "Better to die a Pauper/Buried in some broken infamous line" than to waste energies to call the Nigerian "leaders" into benevolence.

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CHAPTER SIX

General Conclusion: Positive Attitude to Leadership… the Eradication of Crime

In Nigeria, there have been moments of socio-political turbulence, decay or challenges, the suffocating and life-in-death period of military rule, with its philistinism, and the experiences of democratic rule with its betrayal, boorishness, vulgarity, deceit and disgraceful performance by the political gladiators. These have inevitably provoked literary works of certain fervour, tone or attitude, which have generated powerful critical studies on topical issues. But as it is universally maintained in the literary parlance, good works of art will continue to attract questions, opinions, arguments and views about what obtains in the society of its fruition. This thesis, given the thematic preoccupation, the dialectics of crime and punishment of selected plays, seeks to explore the issues of crime and punishment in the Nigerian social and cultural contexts as reflected in the selected plays of selected contemporary Nigerian dramatists, with the aim to demystifying them. Thus, at a fundamental level of critical investigation into the inner movement and high points of literary history, this thesis has been deliberately designed to project the vices in the Nigerian leadership arena with the singular intent to suggest some solutions rather than attack the leaders. Beginning his paper "Of War & Madness: A Symbolic Transmutation of the Nigeria-Biafra War…" Iniobong Uko says "It is around 40 years now since the civil war in Nigeria ended, yet its ugly scars on the Nigerian mind and soul remain visible and glaring," (Uko, 2008: 49). It is not only seen; it is also felt everywhere in this country. It is a war in progress, and the defective healing process of the wounds on the Nigerian psyche from this war has resulted in an extensively terrible, hideous situation of very ugly appearance. As stated in previous chapters, the purpose of literary writings is to reflect the humanly conducive social environment anticipated by every human being as a way of establishing it. It is a compartmentalising habit of thought, which periodically selects aspects of human emotion, phenomenal observations, metaphysical intuitions and even scientific deductions and "turns them into separatist myths (or truth), sustained by a proliferating superstructure of presentation idioms, analogies and analytical modes", (Richard Smith, 1976: 1). Thus it may be argued that contemporary Nigerian literary authors, who essentially focus attention on colonial and postcolonial Nigerian experiences, have done that unconsciously or consciously in consideration of sequence. The literary works produced preoccupy with political struggles with nationalist objectives either in colonial era as represented in Ṣóyinká's *Death and the King's Horse Man* or postcolonial era as represented essentially in the works of Ọlá Rótìmí and Ọ̀ṣọ́fisàn. Appropriately, it is not only mechanistic but represents a technology of artistic

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attitude and culture – an influence of the muse to right the wrong in their society. Ṣóyinká evolves a rather elaborate metaphor to describe this:

> You must picture a steam-engine which shunts itself between some rather short-spaced suburban stations. At the first station it picks up a ballast of allegory, puffs into the next emitting a smokescreen on the eternal landscape of nature truths. At the next it loads up with a different species of logs which we shall call naturalist timber, puffs into a half-way stop where it fills up with the synthetic fuel of surrealism, from which point yet another holistic world-view is glimpsed and asserted through psychedelic smoke. A new consignment of absurdist coke-lures it into the next station from which it departs giving off no smoke at all, and no fire until it derails briefly along constructivist tracks and is towed back to starting-point by a neo-classic engine, (Ṣóyinká, 1989: 45).

Drama has served a wide variety of functions at different times and in different places. It is designed to delight and to construct. Sometimes, the purpose of drama has been considered to be primarily the first of these, sometimes the second, but generally, at least, some degree of both has been present. Often, during the military dictatorship years, writers had to develop survival strategies, covert and subtle means to convey their messages. They achieved this by using innuendoes and re-creating characters out of folklore and mythology. In a word, they became cunning. This approach is deliberate as Ọ̀ṣọ́fisàn argues:

> But by surreptitious tactics, the voice of protest in a one-party state cannot be pressed to the public ear. When the state in question is, in addition, under the iron grip of military dictatorship, and one too that is stridently intolerant of criticism and composition, protest in whatever form becomes a gamble with danger formulate with especial cunning, (Ọ̀ṣọ́fisàn, 2001: 50).

Nigeria has experienced a huge deficit of good governance. This is due to the existence of an unpatriotic and morally bankrupt political class. The tone of Nigerian literature suggests that the writers want the nation's politicians to develop a positive attitude to leadership. With all the three genres of literature, Nigerian writers have been vigorous in their criticism of the leadership style of the political class. The audience is expected to infer or deduce the correct values, which a leader should have from the portrait given by the writers. There are no prescriptions nor are there rigid compartmentalisations in the works of the writers. However, there is a consensus that the average Nigerian deserves good and enlighten leadership. The politicians and civilians have so far been unable to provide credible leadership to the people. In drama, all the playwrights – (particularly) Ọlá Rótìmí, Wọlé Ṣóyinká, and Fẹ́mi Ọ̀ṣọ́fisàn –

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whose plays are considered to have been critical of leadership patterns in the country, have consistently and dramatically presented a world in which leaders have little or no respect, whatsoever, for the people whom they claim to lead. The people themselves do not have any faith in their leaders. The central characters are not all political leaders, but they represent leadership at different levels, leadership at clan level, at family level, and at socio-cultural level. The point being made is that the type of leadership witnessed at the lower rung of the society is a reflection of what transpires at the peak of the hierarchy. Sometimes, they are military men who have seized power and attempted to or succeeded in imposing their will on the people. Often, the effect is disastrous, both on the people and the leaders themselves. Its strong passion is the satisfaction of its own inordinate greed and ambition. This corruption degenerates into poverty, procreating criminals. This study identifies two types of criminals: the political class and the masses, with the former factorial of the latter. When people face crises, they revert to crime to survive. Hence, all the texts seem to argue that while crime is an act that is deemed by statute or common law as public wrong, failure to act deemed by rational and moral judgment as public wrong, is also criminal. Of course, dramatic literature has the capacity to impact directly on an audience when the play is performed. This important feature of drama makes it stand out from the other genres.

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