

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Background to the Study

African drama has social functions aside its entertainment use. A major function of African drama is to help preserve, chronicle, interrogate and make meaning from history. Africa's socio-political and economic history has so much to do with the direction of dramatic writing in the continent¹. Firstly, the era of nationalism just before and after political emancipation of most African countries between 1958 and 1963 was a time in which African writers were said to be in ecstatic mood. They desired to exhibit and defend African culture against Western rationalisation of colonialism. The dramatists who were mostly educated assumed the spokespersonship and cultural standard-bearing for their people and they seemed to have a foreign audience in mind. From the styles of Soyinka and Clark, among others of their generation, it seems they consciously wanted to prove themselves as brilliant dramatists and impress outsiders¹. As if form was an end in itself, there was over-emphasis on form at the expense of meaning¹. They produced works that suggested a context of culture conflict resulting from the choice to be made between traditional African culture and the new Western culture. The subsequent generations moved from this terrain into political satire as the new African leaders generally failed the aspirations of their people. Till date, African dramatists embraced history as their 'hero' despite all suggestions against such because the dire economic predicament of their nations, which has brought about an intolerable gap between the rich and the poor, the haves and the have-nots. They have decided and are really writing dramatic texts which expose the plight of the common people, peasants, and workers, among others from their ideological perspectives. It has become fashionable today for playwrights to align with the economically exploited, underprivileged masses of the society. In other words,

dramatists of Yerima's generation are using their art as a means of attempting to reverse negative socio-economic order in their nation so that economic equality and justice will prevail. To be able to achieve this feat, recourse to history is recurrent in their works.

The construction of dramatic literature is as old as the African continent itself and Nigeria is not an exception. Drama in Africa is radically different from the view point of the Greek Philosopher, Aristotle¹. Whereas Aristotle saw drama as linear and a tool for entertainment, African drama fuses both content and form from the traditional theatrical version with Euro-American dramatic traditions. Thus, two distinct modes appeared: the traditional theatrical forms in Africa which rely heavily on rituals and festivals as well as the modern African drama which has elements of the traditional theatrical practice in Africa and has the western oriented drama in script form. The concern of the present study is the modern African drama which not only reflects the contemporary society but still in its transitional stage¹.

Drama is an offshoot of rituals and festivals. It is an important literature genre and about the most concrete of all literature forms. It does not suffer the limitation distant intimacy of the prose fiction, the abstract nature of fine arts, the incomplete signification of music as well as the cryptic and esoteric language of the poetic form. Drama presents a story realistically via the actors to the audience. Drama is thus used to entertain, inform and educate people. One can notice that drama is about the most effective tool for mass mobilisation by the public and privately owned agencies. For example, a plethora of campaigns against AIDS, DRUG ABUSE, CHILD ABUSE and many others, are often presented in form of drama to both to educate, enlighten while at the same time provide entertainment to the people. Of all the expressive artists, the dramatist is in the best stance to reflect the society and to bring about positive social changes. This is because his work has a unique characteristic of presenting events in a vivid, picturesque and realistic manner. This helps to imprint social conditions realistically in the minds of the audience. His message is therefore immediate. The aristocrats

and proletariat, the young and the old, the educated and the non-educated enjoy and comprehend the message of the dramatist once it is presented in suitable language as the cast give life to the story cum message on stage.

Communal rites are integral part of most African traditional society. In preliterate Africa, re-enactment of some activities like hunting, warfare, and other events, are usually part of much bigger festivals. Some of these events are presented in dramatic format with the sole aim entertaining the audience. This does not exist in Africa alone as it occurs in ancient Greece also, where drama formed part of a bigger festival. Drama in classical Greece is reported to be the first recorded form of drama (5th century B.C). It is noted to have originated from the Dionysian religious rites, and also continued as a communal rite during the classical period. The drama makers of this age gave insight into the philosophical view and religious beliefs of the ancient Greece. The classical Greek plays treated life's basic problems with particular attention to details on one hand while attacking societal ills using legends and myths themes. This helped to ensure peace, equity and equilibrium in the society.

Coming into the medieval period, drama was used to further explain the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ through the representation of biblical stories during church meetings. Later on, drama expanded to dramatise the lives of saints and other biblical stories not captured in the Sunday's liturgy. In essence, drama, during the medieval period was used to bring about both the spiritual and moral growth of the people. Furthermore, drama and theatre also played important roles in the social lives of the people in the ancient Roman Empire. In England, Germany and France, playwrights such as William Shakespeare, Bertolt Brecht, among others, in varying proportions, employed their works to enable their respective countries exhibit their unique identities. The American industrial sector was radically but positively affected through the intervention of Arthur

Miller's *Death of a Salesman*. This play is believed to be single handedly responsible for the spirit of industrial revolution in America. In East Africa, Kenya to be more precise, a playwright, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o was arrested and incarcerated just because of the political and social temper which his play, *I Will Marry When I Want*, aroused in the audience after production. The play was written and presented in his native Gikuyu language; this assisted the audience, not only to understand the message of the play immediately but also to react appropriately to it. Ngugi was thus forced into exile eventually. The drama of any society, therefore, reflects and refracts the problems, aspirations, philosophy and cultural background of the people. It is arguably notable that dramatists can use their works to help to determine the future of the societies.

This they do not just by dramatising the ill sides of their nations but also by advancing the praise worthy aspects of their respective societies that are worth emulating or cultivating in a globalised context. They have also helped to ensure the continuity of their traditional and cultural heritage by promoting them in their plays. Each drama practitioner, therefore, tries from his or her uniquely creative perspective to utilise his art to illuminate his audience on the virtues and vices of his society. In addition to their thematic thrusts, each dramatist, in his or her own style of relaying his message, tries to dramatise his cultural milieu via the use of mythology, legends, lyrics, songs, dances, proverbs, riddles, and other home-grown expressions. In view of these, dramatists the world over are regarded as the conscience of their societies, and custodians of their ethical and cultural standards.

Dramatic endeavours have been channelled in Africa to do several things which can be subsumed under the following headings: drama in Africa instructs, by this we mean that drama helps us to learn understand ourselves, our community as well as life generally. Furthermore, drama enables us to both reflect on and refract on human actions and reactions. In addition, through dramatic performances, we become exposed to life. Moreover, drama

enables us to make good choices and discard wrong acts. Another major function of drama in Africa is that it is used for educational purposes. Among many things, drama is used as a school teacher to instil virtues as tolerance, cooperation, honesty, hard work, and selflessness in the society. Still performing the role of a school teacher, drama helps to forestall vices and promote virtues. Information and communication are essential parts of socialisation. Dramatic performances have always helped to inform the community about the policies and programme of the government especially in rural areas. In terms of social responsibilities like tax payment, dramatic pieces have been constructed to help sensitise people on the need for them to be up and doing in discharging their social responsibility. In addition to these, the medicinal function of drama has been established²⁰. Drama especially, tragedy helps in the purgation of emotions which is good to release pent up negative emotions thereby bring good health to drama audience. Moreover, dramatic performances are also used for the purposes of entertainment and recreation. People who watch dramatic performances derive pleasure from comic scenes. Aside the above discussed uses of drama, it has been noted that drama is a means of creating jobs thereby advancing nations' economy.

The source of drama in Africa has been severally situated by scholars in myth and ritual^{2,3}. That is drama is not new to Africans, unlike the prose fiction genre, drama like the other major genres of literature; prose and poetry have been used to reflect and refract on the lived experiences of the continent^{4,5}.

In addition, culturally speaking, there is no luxury of just doing art for its aesthetics in Africa; these very artistic works of African origin must serve to better the society irrespective of form and content. This utilitarian function of Orature is also transferred into modern African literature. Oral literature is distinguished from other forms of literature because it is a performed expression. By this, we mean that an oral literary expression exists as a performance, as a speech act accentuated and rendered alive by various gestures, social

conventions and the unique occasion in which it is performed. Essentially, oral literary forms have their existence and qualities in the act of performance. It is a speech act or discourse whose beauty of form and aesthetic effects derive from the process and act of its articulation or recreation orally. Stories and poems and songs are performances, dramatic acts and productions. The significance of performance in oral literature goes beyond a mere matter of definition for the nature of the performance itself can make an important contribution to the impact of the expression. The emotional tone, pitch changes, dramatic gestures, facial expressions, vocal expressiveness, rhythm of delivery, melody, pause-effects which the reciter can bring into play in the course of the performance are often lost completely in the written version which has no life or phonological-aesthetic possibilities^{14, 15}.

A second fundamental feature of oral literary creation is orality, the oral creation expressed through the narration: the audience-performance situation. A great many aesthetic effects derive from this: Some of these include:

- a. The completely unrehearsed, non-censored, and non-premeditated nature of the creation.
- b. The mass-audience. The artist addresses himself usually not only to one person, but to many. Unlike the writer, he has a specific immediate audience before him, and which reacts to him.
- c. The performance-audience and its aesthetics.

These qualities determine a major and unique feature of oral performance, and the arousal, stimulation of audience emotion, and the sustenance and retention of audience attention. This entails also the interest, and the satisfaction of the psychological-moral expectations of the audience. In essence, aesthetic experience in oral narrative performance is made up of three

inseparable components; captivation of audience, retention of audience, and the transfer of the cognitive experience to the audience. These are the three elements of triad^{14, 15}.

A third and more important of the feature of Orature is the personality of the raconteur. The personality of the performer not only recreates, but also mediates between the inherited core forms and his living performance and audience, colouring the received version with his personality traits such as his experience, religious beliefs, world view and narrative verve, verbal skill and the force of his memory and voice. Although he is a recreator, he is never an indifferent or objective creator. He manipulates the imaginative forms he has received by imposing his own family, clan or group or subjective reality and values on the materials he is recreating. In the case of legends or myths he may for personal reasons suppress or add materials, image-sets or clusters to heighten the sense of the heroic nature of the clan hero or twist or give different slant to existing materials. In the case of a purely entertainment performance, he can also transform and remould his received materials in accordance with the power of his imagination and memory. It is to be noticed that the personality of the oral artist comes to play and focus not only in terms of the historicity of his materials, but also the degree of his liveliness, inventiveness, and responsiveness to his audience and environment has a tremendous hold on his materials both qualitatively and quantitatively¹⁵.

Another vital feature of oral literature is the audience. The audience is often involved in the actualisation and recreation of any given pieces of Orature. The particular way in which this is so lies in the fact that the artist, is usually receptive to the audience-to reactions, expectations and cultural. Depending on the genre or personality of the narrator, the reactions and beliefs of the audience are woven into the story, poem or recitation. Arguably, unlike the written form, there is no escape for the oral artist from face to face contact with his audience, and this is something he can exploit as well as be influenced by. Essentially, oral performances are a creative process of interaction between the performer and his audience. While the performer

stimulates his audience through the code of suspense and the sense of the dramatic and the surprising, the audience is also for him an effective presence, which stimulates him^{15,16, 17}.

Aside the qualities bound up with the mode of performance of the oral work, oral literary forms have the following with which we can regard them as important literary creations:

1. Forms of oral literature are essentially imaginative, and artistically significant. The forms provide for preliterate societies a context, a medium for the exercise of their creative abilities.
2. Like written forms of literature, these oral forms manifest the artistic exploitation of the communicative resources of language such as diction, imagery, and sound patterns.
3. Oral literary forms like contemporary literature not only treat but also shed valuable insights into human nature and the universal theme of love, life, death, marriage, greed, jealousy, corruption and the problems of good and evil.

Although oral literature possesses a range of qualities which are external to written literature, most of the qualities which define the literary values of written literature are also the ones which are present in oral literary expressions. In fact, there is little or no difference in the kind of criteria which is used to evaluate the literariness of either type of creations. The following for instance, may be noted:

Just as it is in the written tradition, many instances of oral literary expressions are composed largely for the specific reason of communicating ideas, experiences and or information that are of value to many lives and man's relationship to the world outside him. The human interest of folktales and epics are obvious enough. Whereas short poetic sketches may express simple and definite ideas, longer narratives such as folktales, and epics delve into and express in a very terrifying manner the various impulses and passions latent in man. Many oral works

dramatise the effects of jealousy, hatred, excessive pride and the influence of the supernatural in human affairs¹⁴.

Oral literature, especially oral poetic compositions very often reveals a stylized use of diction and syntax. The words chosen, the order, rate and patterns in which they occur are very often different from normal mode of speech. This element of stylisation, which may be conscious or unconscious, imposes a peculiar artistic quality upon the given composition. These stylistic effects are also some of the factors which are responsible for the achieved aesthetic effects of the given oral literary artefact. As in the context of written literature, the choice of language, diction, and the kind of formal patterns utilised are very much determined by the formal generic framework being utilised, and by the stylistic conventions appropriate to this genre. Basically, the use of stylistic forms is the hall mark of a literary imagination. Indeed, for many critics of poetry the use of imagery- simile, metaphor, symbols, myths and subtle allusions- constitute the essence of a truly poetic imagination. African Oral Poetry, indeed, most prose narratives manifest this quality. Undoubtedly, the imaginative use of language is an insistent aspect of creativity of African traditional story tellers and poets¹⁵.

Thus, one can say that modern African drama informed by African culture is utilitarian, more socialised than based on the individual psychology; it is community-oriented and didactic for ethical and moral instruction. It draws on the beliefs, worldview, and folkloric heritage of Africans. Though crafted in European languages, African drama comes out uniquely African⁶.
7. The dramatic genre has become a major tool in the hands of Africans to chronicle the historical realities of Africa. An interested individual can have an understanding of Africa and its historical realities by studying African dramatic literature which dramatised the major historical landmarks in the continent. Events like the pre-colonial era, transatlantic slave trade activities, and colonialist domination, anti-colonialist struggles as well as postcolonial rupture being experienced by vast majority of African nations.^{8, 9, 10}.

Modern African drama is subsumed in the historical actualities on the continent. Though, modern African drama is not an historical textbook to be studied in history department of universities, it however produces a creative dramatisation of history in such a way that makes history come to life both to teach and to educate at the same time. The history of Africa can be easily subdivided into the Anthropological and Sociological phases: the anthropological phase explains the era prior to the contact between Africa and the outside world. The sociological era represents the periods when Africa has already established contacts with the world outside it, be it the Arabians, Asians Europeans and the Americans. The sociological era can be further subdivided into: the eras of slavery, colonialism and anti-colonialists and post-independence.

Ahmed Yerima has written volumes of work which surprisingly represent almost all the eras of African history. He has plays which cover the pre-colonial, colonial cum anti-colonial and post-colonial historical realities of Africa. For instance, while plays like *Attahiru* attempt to showcase the colonialist struggles in Nigeria, others focus on the post-colonial problems like religious bigotry (*The Bishop and the Soul*), academic corruption and insensitive leadership (*Kaffir's Last Game*), poverty and insurgency (*Little Drops*) as well as the problem of oil spillage and environmental degradation in Niger Delta (*Hard Grounds*)^{11, 12, 13}.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Critical studies of post-colonial literatures have focused overwhelmingly on prose fiction and poems while neglecting the fact that volumes of dramatic texts have explored post-colonial themes like pre-colonial experience, colonial sufferings and agitations as well as post/neo colonial ruptures and disenchantment^{4, 5, 6}. Also, critical appraisal of dramatic texts produced in the former colonial territories have been limited to first generation authors like Soyinka, J.P Clark, Ola Rotimi, Femi Osofisan among others, while little attention is given to younger

generation playwrights compared to the others of the first and second generations. Furthermore, critics of post-colonial literatures seem to have only focused on specific period of history covered by texts, not much has been done to look at all the phases of Nigerian history from the perspective of an author. Therefore this work seeks to study in one attempt the dramatic oeuvre of Ahmed Yerima using New Historicism and Postcolonial theories

1.3 Aim and Objectives of the Study

The study aims to situate the historical relevance of Ahmed Yerima's work so as to establish the fact that dramatic literature in Africa does not subscribe to the notion of art for art sake but that it is indeed an effective tool for reflecting and refracting on Africa's existential issues.

The objectives are to:

- i. situate selected Ahmed Yerima's plays within the context of colonialism
- ii. situate post-colonial themes in Ahmed Yerima's selected works.
- iii. critically examine the dramatic techniques employed by Ahmed Yerima to develop his thematic preoccupations and their implications for the Nigeria state.

1.4 Research Questions

The purpose of the study is to provide answers to the following questions:

1. what are the contexts of selected Ahmed Yerima's historical plays?
2. what are Ahmed Yerima's perspectives on themes dealing with post-colonial realities in Nigeria?
3. what are the dramatic techniques employed by Ahmed Yerima to achieve his purpose and their implications for the Nigerian state?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The work will promote an understanding of Yerima's plays by establishing a link between the dramagenre and historical realities via a rigorous application of New Historicism and Post-Colonial theories of African literature. Also, judging from the fact that concentrations of literary studies on African history have been on poetry and prose fiction, this study is a significant contribution to existing body of critical works especially, considering its in-depth historical and stylistic explorations. Moreover, as a literary- historical study, it identifies and comparatively examines the particular historical reality that is dramatised in the Yerima plays. Through this; the history of Nigeria can be properly understood. Most importantly, it will serve as a guide towards the overhauling of leadership selection process which will in turn bring about the much-needed peace and prosperity in the nation.

1.6 Scope of the Study

Through a careful study of the works of Ahmed Yerima, his works are grouped under the following headings: plays that fall under the precolonial discourse, those under the colonial/anticolonial discourse, and plays that dwell on postcolonial issues. Thus, his plays were selected for this present study based on thematic representations. Also, plays relating to colonial themes are further divided into two using the former protectorates prior to amalgamation of Nigeria in 1914. For example, *Attahiru* represents the Northern protectorate, *Trials of Oba Ovonramwen* represents the then Southern protectorate. We have also picked *Ameh Oboni the Great* as a representation of the colonialist temper in the Middle Belt of Nigeria. Also considered are some selected dramas written by Ahmed Yerima which explicate post-colonial realities in Nigeria. The unhappy situation of Post-colonial Nigeria according to the texts is as a result of the failure of government be it military and political rulers.

1.7 Limitation of the Study

As a result of want of space, time and resources, the present study has limited itself to just two aspects of many-sided works of Ahmed Yerima: historical realities and postcolonial themes. Even at that, not all his texts can be covered at this point. Thus a careful selection was done.

1.8 Operational Definition of Terms

Historical Realities: These refer to the peculiar events that have shaped Africa and often marked her separate from other continents. These include the history of slavery which the middle passage is a subset, colonialism as well the contemporary problems affecting the continent.

Dramatic Literature: This refers to the genre of literature primarily meant for the stage. However, for the purpose of our study, we will focus on the play-texts.

Sociological Era: the era in African history which encapsulate the experience of Africa after her contacts with the world outside it.

Pre-colonial Era: this speaks of the period in history that explains the life of Africans prior to the contact by Africa with other people.

Colonialism/Imperialism: this refers to the period when Africa came under the dominance of the other nations outside it.

Anticolonialism: this era details the various nationalist tempers in literature as it rallies joint effort against the imperial powers.

Post-colonial: For the purpose of the study refers to the period of time from independence till date in Africa.

Scripts-This explains the dramatic texts of Ahmed Yerima. We have limited our study of the work to their state as play-texts because texts often take on a new meaning when they are acted as directors often interpret plays differently.

Sociological Construct of African Dramatic Literature: This defines the philosophical and ideological construct of African literature which essentially makes it possible for it to dwell essentially on the lived experience of the common people on the street

Post-colonial Theory: This is the attempt by all formerly colonised people to write back to the imperialists. One it affords the colonised people to 'right' the wrongs of misrepresentation in colonialists' literature. Also, it presents the platform for home grown theory which allows for the cultural peculiarities of the formally colonised people to be given a prime of place both in literary theory, writing and criticism.

New Historicism: It is that kind of a literary theory whose agenda seeks an understanding of academic history through literary products and literary constructions through their social, economic, political and cultural setting.

Critical Textual Reading: This is the detailed analysis of the complex interrelationships and ambiguities (multiple meanings) of the verbal and figurative components within a work; stressing all kinds of information, whether internal or external, relating to the full understanding of a word or passage.¹ In this research, a critical textual reading will be done to examine the historical realities dramatised in the selected plays of Ahmed Yerima. Some of the realities include anti colonial struggles as well as postcolonial disenchantment.

Plot Structure: The plot primarily means the arrangements of events in a literary work. The events are so crafted to engender particular artistic and emotional ends. Plot can either be organic or inorganic. An organic plot is chronological in nature. In an organic plot also

called linear plot, the story starts from the beginning and there is a consistent movement in chronological order to the end of the story being narrated or acted. In the inorganic or episodic plot, the author decides to write in a non-chronological order. Some of the plot development tools are: suspense, foreshadowing, and digression. The researcher will study the plot structure of the selected plays in order to reveal substantial knowledge about issues of African dramatic literature and the portrayal of history.

Themes: The term refers to a central or main idea whether direct or indirect, which an imaginative work is designed to evolve and make persuasive to the audience or reader as the case may be. It is actually the essence of a work. Some post-colonial themes in Yerima's works include imperialism, anti-colonial agitation and post-independence trauma

Character and Characterisation: Characters refer to the persons in a dramatic or narrative work. They are interpreted by the reader as possessing particular moral, intellectual, and emotional qualities by inferences from what the persons say and their distinctive way of saying it – the dialogue -, or what the others or the writer say about them and from what they do – the action. Characters in dramatic texts can be humans mostly while others can be animals (Animal Farm) or ideals (Every Man). Whichever the case may be, they are meant to represent lived or perceived ideal of human beings. Characterisation on the other hand refers to the roles played by the characters in a play. The total construction of a character is often identified by what she, he or it does, says, thinks and or what others say about him, her or it. A particular character can be round that develops self of flat in that such does not grow psychologically in essence. The investigator will examine the role of major characters in line with the theories as it relates to issues of social, political and economic upheaval in contemporary Africa with a much bias for Nigeria.

Dramatic Techniques: These are specific, deliberate deployment of certain devices including language which an author uses to convey meaning. The literary techniques are the songs, dance, figurative languages, aside, diction, symbolism, imagery dramatic and situational ironies, soliloquies, dramatic monologues costume, and proverbs consciously put together in the selected plays which the researcher will utilise to generate a postcolonial reading of the selected Ahmed Yerima's plays.

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Endnotes

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Chapter Two

Literature Review

The chapter reviews the historical development of modern Nigerian drama from its roots in the oral traditions through the mobile theatre to the home video stage till the contemporary times. It further attempts an explanation of the postcolonial theory and its use to the criticism of modern drama in Nigeria. It reviews critically the scholarly works on Ahmed Yerima both to establish gap in them and to situate his works within the context of socio-economic and political realities in Nigeria.

2.1.1 The Dramatic Genre

The term dramatic literature implies something written with the purpose of being performed¹. Drama has distinctive elements like acting, directing, staging, costuming, among others¹. From the inception of a play in the mind of its author to the image of it that an audience takes away from the theatre, many hands and many physical elements help to bring to life. The questions now arise as to what is, and what is not essential to it. Is a play what the author thought he was writing, or the words he wrote? Is a play the way in which those words are intended to be embodied, or their actual interpretation by a director and his actors on stage? Is a play in part the expectation an audience brings to the theatre, or is it the real response to what is seen and heard? Thus, the distinction between drama that is being acted on stage or screen and the one that is in a text format. To preserve the intention of the playwright, this present study focuses on the play texts of Ahmed Yerima other than their live or recorded performances. There are two main types of dramatic literature, tragedy and comedy¹.

The study of modern drama often always begins with the classical drama of Greece, Rome and Egypt. Drama has grown from what it was then into various sorts depending largely on

ethnocultural milieus. It can be ascertained that drama is an essential tool for the study of historical realities of a people because of its closeness to the common and ordinary people of the world. Historically, the dramatic literature can generally be studied under the following headings: the classical or ancient period, the medieval, the renaissance, the 17th century, 18th century, the early 19th century, late 19th century through the 20th century and the contemporary times. The first and second world wars have tremendous impact on the lived experience of the people globally. This was translated into literature generally but more specifically to drama. In most plays of the 20th century, the protagonist seems to be left alone to forge his or her own values, if he can in a world in which the disparity between the ideal (what man longs for) and the real (what he gets) is so great as to reduce human condition to incoherence and absurdity. It was an attempt to capture the disillusionment of the era that made playwrights like Samuel Beckett to come up with the idea of the theatre of absurd which he foregrounds in *Waiting for Godot*. His exposure to France where he studied introduced him to the theme of victimisation at its extreme while the despair and defeat almost absolute¹. The play represents the total breakdown of communication among humans. He seems to have said that had interpersonal communication been allowed among humans, the carnage of the two world wars would have been forestalled. Aside him, still in the spirit of mourning the plight of humans, playwrights like Arthur Miller took recourse to an extreme form of comedy, farce to depict how low humans have fallen due the contradictions of the period. In his classic, *Death of a Sales Man*, he subtly claims that actually since the humanity of man having been brought lower than he could cope with is dead though while yet alive. His protagonist, because modern writers refused to use the term hero as they postulated that all that is heroic in man has gone with the wars, thus they rather use the term protagonist; Willie Lowman is a symbolic representation of humanity who has not only been stripped of honour and dignity but also brought low via the vicissitudes of the era. Another major voice

of the era is Bertolt Brecht, who leaned heavily on Marxist theory. He believes drama is meant to protest social and economic injustice. His drama has been severally termed drama of 'social -protest'. His plays that exemplified this idea are the *Three Penny Opera* and *Mother Courage*¹.

Unquestionably, as shown by African theatrical history, the traditional Nigerian theatre sprang from rituals and festival performances. It is said that ritual plays a huge role in masquerade theatre. Essentially, ritual has a strong connection to both performance and religion. Early Nigerian theatre, unlike most others, did not conform to the Aristotelian paradigm. This is due to the fact that Aristotle could never have predicted the complexity and cultural diversity of play¹. It becomes challenging to distinguish between drama and ritual in the traditionalist African context because, if the setting of the performance is taken into account, a ritual turns into entertainment once it is removed from its original setting or when the belief that underpins it has lost its potency². Drama developed from ritual, and, in certain instances, it is also a component of the ritual performance since there are instances when dramatic traditions have coexisted with rituals without any apparent conflict between their origins.

Whatever name we want to give it, theatre has always existed among Africans in some capacity. Both of these are derived from "festivals and religious rituals"¹. The continent of Africa has a strong dramatic heritage that cannot be contested. Dramatic performances were usually carried out by personalities wearing masques in the era before the colonial empire. In essence, masquerade theatre existed in Nigeria prior to the arrival of the Colonial Masters. Even though almost all of the areas or ethnic groups of what would eventually be called Nigeria had fallen under British rule by 1900, there really wasn't a Nigerian country until

1914. In 1914, the formerly separate Lagos, Northern, and Southern Regions were united and ruled as Nigeria³.

Before the introduction of colonisation, the dramatic genre was performed in these particular places or ethnic groups using a distinct form. These various groups used the dramatic genre to highlight the history of their lineages¹. Around 1700 AD, as a consequence of attempts to polish and enhance ceremonial and festival performances primarily for entertainment purposes, the professional Yoruba play began to develop².

Long before there were encounters with European colonisation, Nigerian communities were already comfortable using satire to engage with political and religious issues as well as leaders in their theatrical performances^{2,3}. Dramatic activities reached their pinnacle of artistic brilliance and richness during festivals when key myths and rites were performed by the whole populace³. This created prospects for the employment of puppets, disguised actors, and other tools in the treatment of purely sociological problems. The use of masks to portray characters assisted in releasing the persona from mental restraints and gave him a sense of a sacred purpose that, in reality, enabled him to stand out and be able to play a role that nobody in the community would dare challenge or quarrel with³. As we have already said, itinerant theatrical troupes played often to appeal to a broad audience after separating themselves from both court and religious traditions. The performers acquired a level of agility in their performances that enabled them to perform anywhere without being constrained by the court. They even went so far as to include parody routines about their previous clientele in their performances. For the delight of the people, they often parodied their previous rulers.

Up until the arrival of Christianity, which coincided with the resettlement of the freed slaves who were the first to convert to Christianity in Yoruba territory, the early masquerade performances persisted. The strategic role that Christianity played in altering the rules of

conventional theatre has been recounted in great detail⁴. The Church Missionary Society (CMS) of the Church of England established the first missions in Abeokuta in 1842, followed by those in Lagos and Ibadan to promote involvement by indigenous peoples^{4, 5}.

From 1866 until 1900, a plethora of social organisations were established and modelled after the Academy⁶. The Philharmonic, the Brazilian Dramatic Company, and the Lagos Grammar School Entertainment Society were a few examples⁴. Later, more organisations were founded, including the Breadfruit School Society, the Melo-dramatic Society, and the Ibadan Choral Society. When confronted with the challenge of evangelising a population that only spoke Yoruba, the church—in particular, the Roman Catholic Church—resorted to theatre and song to connect with the people in an attempt to effectively share the gospel. Upon their arrival in Lagos in 1867, the French Order of Catholic Priests (Societes des Mission Africaines) were likewise compelled to use stage plays as a means of effective communication, following the model previously established by the forerunners⁷.

The Philharmonic Society, the Lagos Grammar School Entertainment Society, the Rising Entertainment Society, and the Orphean Club were a few of the more prosperous ones⁴. These movements were also influenced by the Christian churches' creation of schools. In 1882, the 1881-founded St. Gregory's School produced Molière's *He Would Be a Lord*². As was previously indicated, a dispute between protestant churches in Lagos led to the founding of indigenous African churches⁷. However, it was the Native Baptist Church that left the Baptist Mission for the first time in 1888. In fact, the first organisation to forge a distinctive identity for itself was the First African Church Mission (FACM) or United Native African (UNA) Church, which was founded in 1891 and was led by William Cole. Following a similar approach were Bethel African Church under J.K. Coker in 1901 and the United Methodist African Church in Eleja. The Church of England was split apart by the UNA and

Bethel African Church. This church closure must be viewed in light of the cultural nationalist activities that were taking place among the educated African churchgoers⁷.

It has been said several times that the African Churches in the early 20th Century: already established themselves as theatre practitioners, either as performers or as authors of songs under the church's auspices, through their presentation of "Native Air Opera". Hubert Ogunde didn't start acting professionally until 1944, since there were no full-fledged theatrical companies in Nigeria at the time. Ogunde, who is a member of the Nigerian Police Force, started at the Aladura Church in Ebute-Metta, Lagos, one of the secessionist African churches⁷. Escape the cultural obliteration that the colonial administration was forcing upon them. The humorous depictions of the Europeans in the theatrical plays by Africans portraying British colonial officials, police, missionaries, and their families made the people laugh till their stomachs hurt. It is also reported that adult and juvenile European colonialists appear in the Ijele, Uzoiyi, Odo, Omabe, and Ikoro theatre productions in Igboland. The King and Queen of England, the Governor General of Lagos, the Resident and District Commissioners in the provinces and districts, together with law enforcement officials, are all included in dramatic performances, particularly in Ikoro. The performance may take many different forms, such as a visit by the monarch and queen of England to their people at Ngwa in Igboland or the formalities and etiquette followed to welcome them. These include both the giving and receiving of the welcoming speech¹.

Since this was the only means through which the populace could make fun of the colonialists, the European characters became a mainstay in the indigenous theatres of colonial Nigeria.

2.1.2 Nigerian Dramatic Practice

The Yoruba Mobile Theatre is one enacted in the Yoruba language which sourced from the society of masqueraders around the middle of the sixteenth century and succumbed to the influences of Islam and Christianity around nineteenth century. From the fading embers of the old mobile masquerade performances and the traditional Yoruba love of song, dance, festivals, and ritual sprang a brand-new and completely distinct theatrical style. This theatrical production, which has an operatic style, was inspired by a combination of prehistoric plays, church cantatas, and Aladura," or Apostolic churches, all of which were situated in Lagos during the first decade of the 20th century.

This theatre became Nigeria's most well-known theatre in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Oyin Ogunba, J.A. Adedeji, Martin Banham, Oyekan Owomoyela, Ebun Clark, Alain Richard, Dapo Adelugba, Olu Obafemi, Karin Barber, and Yemi Ogunbiyi were some of the theatres that performed in various locations across the nation, including secondary school auditoriums, town halls, village squares, and stages that were inventively created. The works of writers like Hubert Ogunde, Kola Ogunmola, Duro Ladipo, Oyin Adejobi, Moses Olaiya, Isola Ogunsola, Jimoh Aliu, Leko Ajao, and others all make up what is now referred to as the Nigerian Popular Theatre. It is a kind of Yoruba folk opera that first appeared in the early 1940s in south-western Nigeria. Mime, ornate costumes, vigorous drumming, powerful music, and folklore are all brilliantly combined. It was aimed at a local audience and included Nigerian themes, from historical tragedy to contemporary satire. The plays, which were only performed in Yoruba, may be understood and enjoyed by non-Yoruba speakers with the help of a translated synopsis. It has been said that Yoruba Mobile Theatre is the finest popular theatrical endeavour ever undertaken in Nigeria due to its engagement with indigenous issues and the employment of local symbols that cut through the country's multiethnic environment.

Indigenous themes and symbols used by the practitioners were a result of interactions between many cultures on a local and global scale between the Yoruba and other people they came into contact with via commerce, military conflict, and cultural engagement even before colonial influence. There is a reflection and weaving together of a myriad of cultural orientations characterised by a long history of migrations and exiles and the influence such on the cultural orientation of the people is essentially captured in their dramaturgy². With the production of the folk operas like *The Garden of Eden* and *The Throne of God*, Hubert Ogunde (1919-1990) began his theatre career in 1944. The success of these works led Ogunde to terminate his employment with the Police Force in 1945 and to establish a professional theatre company. That same year, he travelled with the company to different Yoruba communities where he staged his performances. According to Adedeji, Ogunde was able to enrich the Alarinjo repertory system with modification and adaptations in the organization and presentation of the pieces⁵. In 1946, Ogunde performed two plays: *Bread and Bullet* (1950), about the murder of the Enugu Iva Valley coal workers who were shot and died in 1949 for demanding payment of their wages, and *Hunger and Strike* (1945), a dramatisation of the general strike in Nigeria. In addition to the books already mentioned, he is the author of *Mr. Devil's Money* (1948), *Tiger's Empire* (1946), *Herbert Macaulay* (1946), and *Darkness and Light* (1945).

It is noteworthy that Ogunde composed nineteen plays between 1945 and 1950; thirteen of them had political overtones. By composing and producing plays that drove the British colonialists to give Nigeria absolute independence, he thereby contributed to the rhetoric of nationalists. In addition to this, the majority of his theatrical productions describe the immoral methods used to run Nigeria under colonial rule. Additionally, he was often restricted and fined by the colonial authorities just for using political satire in his plays. The ambivalence of the colonialists toward the scathing satiric works of Ogunde has also been

recorded. While on one hand they approved works such as Mr Devil's Money for public performances they went on to clamp down on them again on the other hand². In fact the government blamed Mr. Devil's Money for plunging Western Nigeria into crisis which eventually led to a state of emergency². Meanwhile, Ogunde undaunted by the stance of the white colonialists in response wrote another play titled, *Otito Koro* (Truth is Bitter). Such is the spirit of the Ogunde's theatre which is also a reflection of the popular theatre as a whole. Such plays are not only crafted for beauty and entertainment, they are also meant to serve in making the society a better place through a consistent engagement with the ills, foibles and weaknesses of the society².

However, we must quickly add that Ogunde did not begin the tradition of channeling theatre for entertainment and sociopolitical ends, it has been the tradition of indigenous Africans to utilise arts both for entertainment and societal purging⁴. Ogunmola, who came after Ogunde, is said to have substituted some serious drama for the dance hall aspect of Ogunde's work¹⁴. *Oba Moro* (Ghost-Catcher King, 1961), *Oba Waja* (The King is Dead, 1964), *Gbadegesin*, and *Moremi* were written by Ogunmola. He established the Mbari Mbayo Club in 1962, which later developed into a hub for training and honing artists in Osogbo town. A British man named Ulli Beier and Duro Ladipo worked together to bring the "myths of Sango and some other Yoruba deities to the international stage." As children, Ogunde, Ogunmola, and Ladipo all came from the same historical background. The trio not only had western education; they were also sired by clergymen. As a matter of necessity, the trio, because of their love for the cultural practices of their people had to leave the four walls of the church since Christianity was not prepared to put up with the indigenous ways of life of the people then. The theatrical adventures of these men help to validate one another⁴. The presence of women was also eminent in the colonial era of the theatre practice in Nigeria⁴. The first woman to found a professional theatre group used her drama as a conscience of the society.

Adunni Oluwole was however noted to use her drama to kick against the colonialists granting Nigeria independence. She believed politicians and nationalists were fighting for independence so they could plunder the resources of the nation unchecked. Adunni Oluwole started her theatre in a church in 1950 and used it as a tool for social and political reform. Around 1954, Adunni dispersed her group in order to create a political party. After returning from political activity, she passed away in 1957. Olufunmilayo and Ranko Mojisola Martins are emulating Adunni's actions. They belonged to the second generation of women to perform professionally on the go. However, they each started their own professional mobile ensembles in the 1980s. Mojisola Martins was stationed in Lagos, as opposed to Ilesa, where Funmilayo Ranko's theatrical project was situated. Due to the widespread acceptance that the mobile theatre gained throughout the 1960s and 1970s, the universities of Ibadan and Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University) accepted some of the dramatists⁴. Duro Ladipo's drama was one of the first productions of Nigerian popular theatre to be given the opportunity to perform in a studio. However, the station that was Western Nigerian Television (WNTV, now NTA) was largely responsible for his popularity. One of the effects of television on the popular theatre is in the reduction of a several hour play on stage to few minutes, mostly, thirty-minutes. The town of Ibadan saw the likes of Adebayo Faleti, Duro Ladipo and Moses Olaiya who created theatre series for the television.

This group of dramatists drew inspiration from the repertory of popular mobile theatre tradition. They all agreed without mistake that their fame came from the television platform³⁶. The transfer of theatres to stadiums is another development in this regard. For instance, in 1981, Efunsetan Aniwura was performed dramatically by Akin Isola at Olubadan Stadium in front of an estimated 40,000 spectators.

Although Duro Ladipo, Moses Olaiya, and Oyin Adejobi's theatrics dominated the airwaves in the 1960s and 1970s, other professional actors ultimately joined them, including Jimoh Aliu, Ojo Ladipo Papilolo, Ade Afolayan, Awada Kerikeri, Jacob, and Aderupoko. The production of well-known theatrical works in either standard English or Nigerian Pidgin English, or a combination of both, such as "The Village Headmaster," "The New Masquerade," "Mind Benders," "Koko Close," "Sura the Tailor," "Mirror in the Sun," "Samanja," and "Jagua," as well as "Samanja" and "Jagua," also joined the team. By the 1980s, almost every theatrical company still in existence that couldn't afford the then-popular trend of film production had to go to television. Despite the fact that only a handful of drama groups and practitioners were famous prior to 1980, the existence of about one hundred and twenty drama troupes was recorded by 1984 and the volume rose to almost one hundred and fifty towards the late 1980s in the movement having several thousands of dramas in their kitty⁸. For easy coordination, the various theatrical troupes formed themselves into an organisation known till date as Association of Nigerian Theatre Practitioners (ANTP) while Hubert Ogunde became her first leader. Under the leadership of Ogunde popular theatre rose to its peak although it began to decline toward the beginning of the late 1980s. It will suffice to conclude that the Traveling Theatre among the Yoruba was the common back cloth of what the Nigerian home video movement.

The history of the theatre in Nigeria has been in phases, one from the oral traditions to the mobile theatrical adventures, to the television and then to the cinema and home videos in such successions. It was at the television stage that long dramas were reduced to the 35mm and 16mm cinema format. While Nigerians did not enter into professional film production until about the 1970s, whereas the British imperialists have been using the film mode since 1903³. The first set of film makers among the indigenous Nigerians were supported by the

expertise of the likes of Francis Oladele, Bankole Bello, and Ola Balogun who had earlier lived and studied overseas⁴.

Ade Afolayan's *Ija Ominira* (The Fight of Freedom), one of the early and later decades' indigenous cinema production highlights, is one such example. In a similar spirit, Ogunde started to consider a career in film production after approximately three decades of theatrical performance. These stages saw the entry into the cinematic medium of Moses Olaiya's *Are Agbaaye* (World President), *Orun Mooru* (Heaven Has Heat), *Mosebolan*, Ogunde's *Jaiyesimi* (Let the World Rest), and *Aye* (The World). With *Ayanmo* (Destiny) and *Aropin N'teniyen* (Human's Desire for Your End), Ogunde really produced the biggest body of cinema produced on either 35mm or 16mm in Nigeria to date. In addition to these, he also acted in Bruce Berford's *Mister Johnson* (1990) as Brimah⁴. It is important to note that not all Nigerian filmmakers at the beginning participated in the travelling theatre tradition because there were numerous other films made by Nigerians, such as Jab Adu's *Bisi: the Daughter of the River*, Eddie Ugboma's *Tori Ade*, *Omiran*, *The Rise and Fall of Dr. Oyenusi*, *The Boy is Good*, and *Death of the Black President*. Unfortunately, the film business had to collapse by the middle of the 1980s despite the efforts of the travelling theatrical performers, who had a significant impact on it⁴.

A plethora of factors such as the improvement in the audio-visual technology, the ill-advised economic policy of the then administration have been identified to cause the fall of film industry in Nigeria. It was this fall of the film mode in Nigeria that gave birth to the making of home-video-films like *Ekun*, *Asewo T'ore Mecca*, and *Aje Ni Iyami*. Others include *Are Agbaye*, *Ore Adisa* and *Asale Gege*, *Agba Man* and *Return Match*². Coupled with other factors, the economic crunch which made theatre patronage in the cities to dwindle made the less affluent theatre practitioners in Nigeria to take recourse to the production of video

cassette, a cheaper mode of film production and this is the beginning of the rise of the home video film making in Nigeria⁶.

Alade Muyideen Aromire is the first theatrical professional to convert a live videotape recording of a stage show for home viewing on VHS media. When he created his first production, *Ekun*, in 1984, he accomplished this. Due to the very positive response from the Yoruba audience, he temporarily screened it in a number of big and smaller cinemas in Lagos before making it accessible for home viewing⁶. Stage performances and Nigeria's movie culture were killed out as a result of the rise of home videos. Simply put, stage productions vanished entirely to make way for the home video-film mode, which has dominated the entire landscape since the 1990s and continues to do so today with the addition of Satellite TV stations, online software like YouTube, and the most advanced technology of our time, Netflix. Seeing the financial success of the home videos which had hitherto been the exclusive preserve of the Yoruba, the Igbos who were residents in Lagos moved to join their Yoruba brothers in the business in 1992. Arguably, the first home video in Igbo language, *Living in Bondage* by Kenneth Nnebue, which was a big commercial success also turned out to become a box office hit. The profits gained by the *Living in Bondage* producers encouraged Igbo electronic market merchants in Onitsha, Anambra and Idumota, Lagos State to swarm into the home video production sector in anticipation of a speedy return on their investment. True to their desire however is the fact that while their expectations were met, the negative result is the mass production of video-films many of which are substandard. The aim is not quality but financial gain. In the same vein, almost all the makers of television soap opera both in Yoruba and English languages rather than the earlier practice of selling their productions to the Nigerian Television Authority packaged them into home video format for commercial purposes. The noted shortcomings in the production of home videos

notwithstanding, the contemporary Nigerian populace were still buying and watching locally produced video-film.

The industry of home video making became a magnificent force by the year 2000 so much so that Western film critics were attracted to it. Popularly named Nollywood, the video film industry in Nigeria was believed to be the third largest of its kind in the world as it creates not less than two hundred home videos monthly as at 2005^{6,8}. The world famous Nobel Lauriet Prize Winner, Wole Soyinka, founded a theatre company called “Orisun Theatre Company”, as a tool for producing his own plays, when he picked up a teaching job at the then University of Ife, now Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife. It is worthy of note that it is the literary culture of this period that birthed the very first generation of Nigerian Theatre⁸.

While we agree with scholars on this note we must add that Professor Wole Soyinka not only dominated the Nigerian dramatic space but the globe in its entirety, for over fifty years clinching almost all the available awards in literature. He got the highest award in 1986 as he won the highly coveted Nobel Prize for Literature. As a man of many parts, Soyinka is the first Nigerian and indeed black man to distinguish himself in every literary genre. He is a poet, novelist, critic, essayist, autobiographer, and playwright and movie director. Undoubtedly, Soyinka is an acclaimed cultural and political activist. Wole Soyinka while serving as a script-reader, actor and film director at the Royal Court Theatre between 1957 made a- three experimental piece using a group of actors he had organised. Unarguably, Wole Soyinka has become noted to be the finest and most discussed black playwright^{6, 8}. As a cultural activist, the bulk of his works are rooted in the Yoruba mythology, having Ogun, the Yoruba god of iron and war as his patron/muse. It must be however added here that the presence of Ogun and myth in Wole Soyinka’s works is purely to serve as a means for him to achieving his goals for writing. He uses myth means creatively, not that he transposes it

wholesale into his works^{6, 8}. Alongside Wole Soyinka is Ola Rotimi who has been adjudged one of the best historical dramatists in Africa⁸. *Kurunmi* which dramatises the nineteenth Century wars among the Yoruba kingdoms was performed in 1969, though published as a play-text in 1971. With the production of *Ovonramwen Nogbaisi* on stage in 1971 we have a quintessential documentation of the tragic fall of the last traditional ruler of Benin kingdom before the eventual collapse of the kingdom to the British imperialist in 1897. His other works include *Hopes of the Living Dead* (1988), a stage representation of inhuman treatment of lepers at the leper's colony and their brave opposition to the exploitation. In his argument for historical plays, Ola Rotimi is of the opinion that as a playwright, his duty is to teach Africans their own history while at the same time project some Africa's heroic figures to Africans for them to emulate⁸. One of the major influences on his plays is his belief in equity, justice, fairness, religious tolerance, and gender equality. It is his philosophy that drama should be used to give a voice to the voiceless in the society^{6, 8}. He actually sees himself as the champion of the downtrodden in the society⁶.

Quite arguably, the very first female drama practitioner in Nigeria is Zulu Sofola (1935-1995). She is an eminent member of the first generation of the Nigeria's literary dramatist. Zulu Sofola has already become actively involved on stage productions since the 1960s, though she published her first work in 1972. Interestingly, hers are works that transcend gender warfare as they have been used to valorise African ways of life. Many feminism inclined critics of Zulu Sofola have complained about what they consider as wrong representation of women in her works⁸. A few others have defended her by stating that Zulu Sofola's thematic thrust is really the suffering of the female gender in the contemporary times taking cues both from the traditional African environment and the holy Bible. Her first play, *The Disturbed Peace of Christmas* was commissioned for performance by a girls only school located in Ibadan in 1969.

The performance was a success and this prompted the second play she titled *Wedlock of the Gods* which came on stage in 1971. Among her dramatic works are: *King Emene* (1974), *Old Wines are Tasty*, *The Deer and the Hunters Pearl* (performed 1976), *The Wizard of Law* (1976), *Memories in the Moonlight* (performed 1977, published 1986), *Song of a Maiden* (performed 1977, published 1991), *The Sweet Trap* (performed 1975 but in published 1977). She also wrote *Lost Dreams and other plays* (contained *The Love of the Life*, *The Operators*, and *The Showers* 1982), *Eclipso and the Fantasia* (performed 1990), and *Queen Omi-Ako of Oligbo* (performed 1989) and many others⁸.

Other female playwrights included in this study emerged after Zulu Sofola with the third phase of drama practitioners because aside the fact they were largely unknown while the second generation writers wrote, they were not involved in the Marxist and populist tempers of the era. This notwithstanding, these female playwrights were uncompromisingly vocal in their call for non gender biased society. Among several of such female literary dramatists are Tess Onwueme, Julie Okoh, and Stella Oyedepo having well over thirty-six drama texts to her credit. Feminism has been identified as the main inspiration for the dramatic works of these female playwrights⁸.

The strategic role the audience play in the appreciation and success of theatre has been argued severally⁸. However, as important as the audience is to the success of theatre, there has been a continuous dip of turnout of audiences since the advent of home-video films. The university communities have continued to patronise theatre unlike the world outside. Myriads of reasons have been adduced for the poor patronage of theatre in the contemporary time⁸. While the universities theatre troupes perform not for profit; troupes outside the ivory tower continue to suffer because the performers need proceeds from their art to survive⁸.

2.1.3 The First Generation of Dramatists in Nigeria

What can be referred to as the first serious and significant generation of playwrights, including Wole Soyinka and JP Clark, emerged as a result of the well-developed intellectual events at Nigeria's top university, the University of Ibadan, between 1958 and 1965, particularly at the then Mbari Centre⁶. The most notable writer was Wole Soyinka, who had written and performed some of his works in England before moving to Nigeria in 1960. Around this period, other dramatists, including Wale Ogunyemi, Zulu Sofola, and Samson Amali, also started to write. Ola Rotimi is another name that should be included in the first generation of literary playwrights in Nigeria, despite the fact that he was a Yale University student at the time this movement started.

In 1960, shortly after arriving from England, Wole Soyinka founded the Masks in Ibadan. He acquired people from *Player of the Dawn*. Because members of the group came from practically every region of the nation, he thinks that the 1960 Masks were a theatrical incubator that would grow into some form of permanent National theatre. The theatrical endeavour functioned as a vehicle for both the presentation of his plays as well as plays by other African writers, as well as for the promotion of his own study into African theatrical styles. Drama critics in Nigeria generally held the opinion that Soyinka's works had already garnered a long and thorough list of critical analyses with countless different approaches, to which it would be difficult to add anything⁸. However, newer and more interesting angles continue to be developed in his work. It is not surprising that he has traversed the dramatic geography of Nigeria and, in fact, the whole world for over a century, winning almost every literary honour along the way, including the famous Nobel Prize for Literature in 1986. Soyinka is described as the first multifaceted literary character from Nigeria and Africa who made a name for himself across all literary genres⁸.

He is a dramatist, novelist, critic, essayist, playwright, director, and autobiographer. He is active in both politics and culture. Over the years, he has worked as an actor, director, and script reader. Soyinka has made a name for himself as one of Africa's best and maybe most talked-about playwrights. Studies of his works have developed a dramatic aesthetic while taking into account both his philosophical and materialist viewpoints. While Ogun, the deity of iron and battle, has had a significant effect on some of his works, others are based on Yoruba mythology. Even though mythology has a significant influence on Soyinka's writings, he rearranges it to better serve his theatrical needs. He thinks that, in an effort to benefit society as a whole, authors are free to choose pertinent components of myth and even artistically alter some of those features. He has said on several occasions that he draws a lot of his inspiration from Yoruba customs. Many Nigerian playwrights and actors of the era received their theatrical training in Nigeria at Masks, while Soyinka himself rose to fame as an African playwright in English by fusing the ritualistic aspects of Yoruba culture with all that is good in the English-speaking world.

His theatrical performances are separated into scathing comedy, serious philosophical plays, and tragedy because of the prolific output and variety of Soyinka's work as well as for ease of comprehension². His play often includes topics and ideas that include the sociopolitical environment in which man lives as well as his own lived experience. Complexities of being, salvation, betrayal, cultural survival, waste, corruption of power, and ruin of human potential, among other topics are all included in the generality of the subject frames and themes of Soyinka's writings. He has also received accolades for his innovative role in the growth of television drama. He relocated to Obafemi Awolowo University, formerly the University of Ife, where he founded Orisun and the university's guerrilla theatre unit. These theatres made an effort to create hybrid programming that combined literary and conventional theatrical principles. While his guerilla theatre performed satirical revues to denounce the immoral

actions of the Nigerian government at the time. They performed in public parking lots and market areas without warning. His *Before the Blow Out* and *Eti Ke Revolu Wetin* feature some of the most notable plays of the Guerrilla Theatre movement⁶.

Although some of Wole Soyinka's contemporaries are just as good as him in terms of quality, his works still stand out among the first generation and those that followed as distinctive literary and dramatic output. One of Soyinka's collaborators, John Pepper Clark, is a well-known author in both the dramatic arts and other literary genres. Both a poet and a playwright, he is skilled. He was a part of Soyinka's 1960 Masks and the Mbari Centre. He also served as editor of the *Black Orpheus* journal, which also included some of Soyinka's early writings. In order to create a professional theatrical group in Lagos, he founded the PEC Repertory Theatre. In Southern Nigeria's Ijaw culture, with which Clark is extremely familiar, the spectacular adventure of Clark is based⁸. His work often explores themes of vengeance, retributive justice and its excesses, protest, brutality, corruption, cultural nationalism, and colonialism via an amalgam of native African indigenous imagery with those of Western literary tradition. It has been noted several times and rightly that both the traditional and the contemporary are nearly always skillfully merged in Clark's plays, including in their topics, attitudes, and methods, much as they are in many of Soyinka's early plays. In essence, *Song of a Goat* (1961) and *The Masquerade* (1965) are his first two plays, and they have elements of Shakespearean and ancient Greek theatre, as well as Ijaw folklore and T.S. Elliot's lyrical plays. Some critics contend that despite the characters in his works being unable to escape the inevitable fate brought on by the laws of nature or society, his works cannot be classified as tragedies. It is frequently claimed that J.P. Clark's works are either an imitation or a derivative of Classical Greek drama on the one hand, or a blending of indigenous African traditions and modernist tempo on the other⁸. They believe that the characters' lack of alternatives did not qualify them as tragic figures. The late Ola Rotimi is placed behind the

writing team of Wole Soyinka and J.P. Clark. In the United States of America (USA), Ola Rotimi was still a student at the University of Boston when Wole Soyinka started his work with the 1960 Masks. Prior to the end of the 1960s, he did, however, return to his native Nigeria, where he became more prominent in the literary and theatrical scene there.

In his writings, Ola Rotimi often examined the history and cultural practises of Nigeria. Simply put, Ola Rotimi's plays included elements of conventional theatrical performance. In order to achieve both meaning and dramaturgy, he used enchantment, proverbs, a brazen translation of common Yoruba proverbs, music, dance, songs, mime, and performed tales. His first collection of plays, *To Stir the God of Iron*, which was premiered in 1963, and *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again*, which was staged in 1966 and published in 1977, were both performed while he was still a student in the theatre departments of Boston University and Yale University, respectively. His most well-known drama, *The Gods Are Not to Blame*, which was first performed in 1968 and subsequently published in 1971, was written when he was employed at the Institute of African Studies at the then-University of Ife. Oedipus Rex from Sophocles has been compared to *The Gods Are Not To Blame* on several occasions as an adaptation or reimagining. He founded the Ori Olokun Theatre Company in Ife, much like Wole Soyinka, with the goal of using it to produce theatre that is really African. He wanted to get rid of the colonial theatre of Wole Soyinka and J.P. Clark that was being imported in bulk on a European and imperial scale. His remarkable artistic achievement with the Ori Olokun theatrical group was born among the ivory towers of the university, an environment that is so "unfriendly" to the traditional indigenous theatre. The late Ola Rotimi dedicated his creative endeavours to the examination of the traditional and indigenous theatrical efforts of the people of Nigeria at a time in the nation's history when homegrown African artistry has lost its pride of place to Euro-American traditions. With the presentation of *Kurunmi* in 1969, Ola Rotimi is undoubtedly one of the most renowned historical playwrights. The book from 1971

dramatises the historic Yoruba conflict of the eighteenth century and its main characters. In addition, his play *Ovonramwen Nogbaisi*, which was staged in 1971 and published in 1974, is a dramatic portrayal of the terrible demise of the last emperor of the Benin kingdom immediately before the empire fell to the British colonial force in 1897. His 1988 play, *Hopes of the Living Dead*, which chronicles Harcourt White's achievement and the bravery of the colony's residents in the early 1930s, was first produced. Since so many Africans, in his view, are unaware of our history, he believed that historical plays were strategically important for us to comprehend our past in detail. They were not trained correctly or at all, which is part of the reason for this. He thus set out to compose his plays with two goals in mind: first, to authentically teach history, and second, to draw lessons from history for the present age. He thought that the heroic figures in history had a lot to teach us about how to live for ourselves. His play's main themes include tolerance for all religions, justice, and gender parity. His work is primarily concerned with illuminating the root causes, harmful effects, and remedies for societal injustice. *If: A Tragedy of the Ruled*, which was originally staged in 1979, and *Hopes of the Living Dead*, which was published in 1988, are two of his plays that lucidly explain his philosophical ideal of theatre outside of its historical importance. He champions the rights of the ordinary man and the oppressed in Nigerian society in these two famous works⁸.

The first feminine voice in the literary stage of Nigeria is Zulu Sofola. She is an outstanding personality of the first generation of Nigeria's literary dramatist. In as much as her first publication did not appear till about 1972, she was already established writer and whose works have been staged since the 1960s. She has received a plethora of attacks from feminist critics who have a great difficulty at categorising her works as feminist. They believe her works defend African cultural patterns that are anti women largely⁸. A number of her critics protest that Zulu Sofola's female characters are poorly projected in most of her plays. They go further to argue that, in Sofola's works, women education is not taken as important at

such critical points while men are favourably drawn. Her vision, they conclude is anti-female. The bulk of her work draws inspiration from indigenous African cultural traditions and the holy Bible⁸.

Wale Ogunyemi is not less than the top four dramatists of the first generation listed above, despite the fact that he is ranked last in this research. His plays were first written in Yoruba, his native tongue. He has been referred to as the most native of all the literary playwrights who write in English on Nigerian soil, which is debatable. He was a committed supporter of Yoruba traditional religion and social and cultural perspectives, as well as an active member of Wole Soyinka's theatrical company. Wale Ogunyemi was praised for his proficiency in a variety of theatrical genres. Along with having a solid understanding of European theatrical conventions, he is also well-versed in all the well-known foundations of traditional African performance. His uncommon skill in fusing traditional Yoruba ceremonial play with Euro-American theatrical convention has made his work not only stand out in its own right but also become a source of inspiration for other dramatists⁴. Additionally, he has received accolades for being one of the first Nigerian playwrights to have their works televised. Studies suggest that he led his contemporaries in the application of traditional Yoruba myth and history. This is due to his extensive, ongoing research into the numerous facets of Yoruba culture. Ogunyemi created a business named Theatre Express with the help of two of his friends, following in the footsteps of his contemporaries. This theatrical group was widely recognised for performing plays at municipal events and bringing theatre to unexpected locations, such as markets. He, unlike other Nigerian playwrights of the first generation, was significant in both the renowned Yoruba Mobile Theatre and the thriving literary theatre of the time⁹. In addition to being a stage version of D.O. Fagunwa's book, Ogunyemi's most well-known drama, *Langbodo*, was also Nigeria's submission to the 2nd Festival of World Black Arts and Culture (FESTAC 77). His plays' main thematic focus is the pursuit of national harmony. His

Esu Elegbara, which is a reworking of different tales about the Yoruba trickster god, demonstrates his mastery of adaptation. Both the Ijaye War and Kiriji dramatise Yoruba life in the midst of nineteenth-century civil conflicts. The Sign of the Rainbow and Eniyan, which are adaptations of the mediaeval Everyman, were also published by Ogunyemi⁹.

Largely, two distinctive features of the first generation of writers one the penchant to merge foreign and home-grown dramatic features and the knack for the use of theatre to better the lot of the downtrodden in the Nigeria society. This is a foundation that other generations have not been able to rid themselves of its influence. They also have continued to rely heavily on the blending of Euro-American dramatic traditions and indigenous theatrical forms with the same aim of attaining a better society.

2.1.3 The Second Generation of Nigerian Literary Dramatists

The immediate period after the Nigeria civil war produced a distinct group of dramatists often called the second generation of playwrights in Nigeria. The disillusionment created by the civil war among others factors are the only factors that caused the marked difference between the new crop of drama practitioners and their predecessors⁸. While Wale Ogunyemi functions eminently as a member of the first and second generations of Nigerian literary drama practitioners as the pioneer of the Orisun theatre, the mobile theatre and a part of the initial television, Akinwuni Isola, and Femi Osofisan easily emerge as the most vocal voice of the second playwrights. Ab ignitio, inspired by the likes of Femi Osofisan, the post civil war playwrights, because of their ideology rejected popularity outside the shores of Nigeria by not publishing their works with Western publishing outfits. It is held among them that publishing their works by foreign publishers is another way to further subjugate themselves and their people to former colonial masters' whims and caprices. An eminent personality among the

post civil war playwrights in Nigeria, Akinwumi Isola, chose to write in Yoruba, his mother tongue, all in an attempt to 'decolonise' his work and his people.

The second generation of Nigerian playwrights, unlike the writers preceding them were sympathetic with the downtrodden so much so that they channeled their dramatic endeavours to the services of the poor masses. Although the post war playwrights following in the footsteps of their predecessors use myths as well, they only have moved a step forward to creatively bend myths with a clear message of calling for equity, justice and fairness in the scheme of things in the nation. Furthermore, the second generation of dramatists tilted toward the left by adopting the Karl Marx's ideology both in their production of drama and the explication of existing corpus. The productivity of Osofisan's mind and pen is without class among Nigerian dramatists. He has authored well over four dozen plays and has not announced his retirement from writing. A few of his pen children are "*Oduduwa Don't Go!* (1968)", "*Behind the Ballot Box* (1967)", "*A Restless Run of Locusts* (1975)", "*Once Upon Other Robbers* (1984)", "*Morountodun and Other Plays* [with *Morountodun, Red is the Freedom Road and No More the Wasted Breed*] (1983)", "*Farewell To A Cannibal Rage, and Midnight Hotel* (1986)", "*Another Raft* (1989)," "*Two Short plays* [containing *Altine's Wrath* and *The Oriki of A Grasshopper*] (1987)". From the 1990's he published "*Birthdays Esu and the Vagabond Minstrels* (1991)", "*Aringindin and the Nightwatchmen* (1992)", "*The Album of the Midnight Blackout, and Ire Ni!*", "*Nkrumah-Ni!...Africa-Ni!*", and "*Tegonni, An African Antigone* (1994)", "*Are Not For Dying and Other Plays*" [containing *Birthdays Are Not For Dying, Fires Burn and Die Hard and The Inspector and the Hero*] (1990)", "*Yungba Yungba and the Dance Contest* (1993)". He also published "*Twingle-Twangle*", "*The Oriki of A Grasshopper and Other Plays*", "*A Twynning Tayle*", and "*The Engagement* (1995)". "Others include *Fiddlers on a Midnight Lark* (1996)", "*One Legend, Many Seasons* (1996)", "*Making Children is Fun* (1996)", "*The Play of Kolera Kolej*"; "*Many Colors Make*

the Thunder-King (1997)", "*Reel Rwanda!* (1996)", "*Ajayi Crowther*", and "*Women of Owu*" which all came about in 2006^{6, 7, 8}. Others include "*Mammy Water's Wedding*", "*A Sanctus for Women*", and "*Arede Owo*", being a drama text in Yoruba language.

Another eminent voice of the second generation of literary dramatist is Bode Sowande whose dramatic productions draw copiously from the Yoruba mythology. He also injects and infuses traditional music and stage technology into his dramatic performances. He is the acclaimed founder of the Odu Theme, being a professional drama troupe based in Ibadan. This company of his produced dramas for both television and stage performances. Using the Odu Theme as a platform, Bode Sowande has taken his plays on tours of Europe, America and around Nigeria for live performances⁸.

Akanji Nasiru is another major figure whose contribution cannot be ignored among the post civil war Playwrights in Nigeria. He has published over a dozen classics to his credit: "*Our Survival* (1985)", "*The Bold Choice* (1987)", "*Come let us Reason Together* (1987)", "*Love and Strife* (1991)", "*Citizen Andrew's Dilemma* (1991)", "*Man in a Well* (1991)", "*Let's Find an Answer* (1991)", "*Alatise* (1992)", "*What Lies Beyond Six* (1992)", "*Ajosee Wa Ni* (1992)". He recently added "*The Irepodun Plays* (2005)" and "*Let's Find an Answer and Other Plays* (2006)".

It is important notice that aside the aforementioned post civil war Nigerian Playwrights there are many more whose ideological inclination is not only radical but Marxist in outlook, some of these are Kole Omotosho who authored among others "*The Curse* (1976) and *Shadows in the Horizon* (1977); Tunde Fatunde the writer of *Blood and Sweat* (1983), *No More Oil Boom* (1984), *No Food, No Country* (1985), *Oga Na Tief Man* (1986), *Water No Get Enemy* (1989), and *Shattered Calabash* (2000); Rasheed Gbadamosi who wrote *Echoes from the*

Lagoon (1973), *Behold, my Redeemer* (1978), *Trees Grows in the Desert* (1991), and *3 Plays*; Olu Obafemi the writer of *Naira Has No Gender* and others”.

A unique group emerged among the second generation of Nigerian playwrights whose distinctive feature is the employment of the indigenous languages in Nigeria in the writing and production of their plays for the main purpose of among other reasons to ensure that the masses are sensitised in order to take their destinies in their hands as government seems to be insensitive to their plights. Famous among the group are “Akinwunmi Isola, the authour of *Efunsetan Aniwura: Iyalode Ibadan, Koseegbe, Olu Omo, Abe Aabo, Madam Tinubu: the Terror of Lagos*, and *Iku Olokun Elesin*; Adebayo Faleti who authoured *Bashorun Gaa, Sawo Sogberi, Fere bi Ekun, Idaamu Paadi Mikailu, Omo Olokun Esin* (a Yoruba version of Soyinka’s *Death and the King’s Horseman*), and *Ogun Awitele*. Samson Amali also made some attempts at writing in Tiv language with *OmugboMloko*”^{11,12}.

Succinctly, though the second generation of dramatist followed the trend of blending Euro-American drama practices with African cultural and historical realities they however tend to lean heavily on Marxist theory. They are of the view that the peaceful posture of the first generation will not be able achieve the objective of ensuring an egalitarian society except there is a mass action/revolution against the state and her oppressive agents. They dwell more with Bertolt Brecht than Ogun. This period also boasts of more female voices than the first generation.

2.1.3.2 The Third Generation of Nigerian Literary Dramatists

Uniquely standing in their own class is a breed of literary drama practitioners who neither follow the nationalistic path trod by the first generation of Nigerian Literary playwrights nor the leftist temper of the second generation of dramatists In fact, they have criticised their predecessors for writing plays that may not be easily understood by the teeming uneducated

masses. Members of the third generation of literary dramatists in Nigeria essentially are only interested in the coping strategies employed by individuals in the midst of discussing a myriad of reoccurring issues affecting neocolonial ever changing continent of Africa or the nation of Nigeria^{6,8}.

The largest percentage of the playwrights in this era started their literary dramatic careers around the 1980s with an aim of experimenting with a novel form however by 1990; their experimentation has become a veritable tool and strategy of challenging their predecessors to a certain extent. In an attempt at what they called 'emancipation' for the individual in a disenchanted world, a plethora of burning issues which were streamlined into coping mechanisms for the individual were robustly discussed in their work. It is the believe of the writers of this era that, to achieve collective emancipation unlike the first and second generations of playwrights who believe in the common liberation of the people, that a group of people cannot be truly liberated until the individuals who made up the community of people have been emancipated. Female dramatists who published at this time raised their voices to the highest volume while assiduously using their works to promote the course of their fellow females in the society. Eminent members of the era are Tess Onwueme, the authour of "*A Hen Too Soon* (1983), *Broken Calabash* (1984), *The Dessert Encroaches* (1985), *Ban Empty Barn, and other Plays* (1986), *The Reign of Wazobia* (1988), *Legacies* (1989), *Tell it to Woman: an Epic Drama* (1995), *Riot in Heaven: Drama for the Voices of Color* (1996), *The Missing Face* (1997), *Shakara: Dance-Hall Queen* (2000), *Then She Said It* (2003), *What Mama Said: an Epic Drama* (2004), and *No Vacancy* (2005)".

Tess Osonye Onwueme is perhaps the most well-known modern Nigerian female literary playwright. She has received several honours, including the 2009 Fonlon-Nichols Award and the 2008 Phyllis Wheatley/Nwapa Award for Outstanding Black Writing. 71 She also

clutched numerous other awards, including "the Martin Luther King, Jr./Caesar Chavez Distinguished Writers Award." 71 She was selected for the Public Diplomacy Specialist/Speaker Programme at the US State Department in 2007. Currently employed at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, Onwueme has the title of "Distinguished Professor of Cultural Diversity and English," a post she first acquired in 1994.

Another distinguished voice among the contemporary female literary playwrights is Professor Julie Okoh who has authored among many *In the Fullness of Time* (2001), *Mary, Model for all Woman*, *The Mannequins* (1997), *Austerity, Mask* (1988), *In Search of Jesus, The Nativity, Edewede* (2000), *Aisha* (2005), *Who can Fight the Gods?*(2002), and *Closed Doors* (2007). Julie Okoh serves as a Professor of dramatic arts in the Theatre Arts Department, University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria ^{6,8}.

While the aforementioned authors have fully established their presence in the literary dramatic space, Solomon Igunare, Alex Asigbo, Makinde Adeniran, Greg Mbajiorgu, Akpos Adesi, Chris Egharevba, Benedict Binebai, John Iwuh, Victor Dugga and others are fast making their voice to be heard in the dramatic milieu in Nigeria. The researcher has noticed that Ahmed Yerima and Tess Onwueme who seem to be most vocal voices of this generation's literary dramatists are focused mainly on educating the Nigerian populace to begin to chart new ways to circumvent the harsh social political and economic realities of the contemporary Nigeria^{6,9}.

The success story of the playwrights in this generation is not complete without the institutions of higher learning both home and abroad. While a number of these dramatists chose to publish their works without a stage trial, others such as Ben Tomoloju and Makinde Adeniran have staged their plays rather than publishing them. The volume of dramatic work and dramatists in this age is difficult to determine because just as the likes of Ben Tomoloju and

Makinde Adeniran, Chukwuma Okoye who has written a large body of plays including *We the Beast* that won the 1993 Association of Nigerian Authors Prize for Drama, *Poison*, and *Time*, have decided to publish only a very few of them. This makes it not only difficult to determine the volume of work and work producers but also it makes it difficult to follow the volume of available dramatic materials and dramatists of this age to be able to canonise them.

It is worthy of note that probably because the majority of the literary playwrights of this era are University dons there has been a tremendous rise in the number of universities and other higher institutions of learning offering Theatre Arts, Performing Arts, Film Studies, Dramatic Arts as Courses both at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. The list cuts across Federal, State- and Privately-owned Universities⁶. The teachings and research efforts at these Ivory Towers complement immensely the activities of the National Troupe of Nigeria as well as the efforts of the State Councils of Arts and Culture to perform plays regularly both to the academic communities and the wider Nigerian societies. The joint efforts by the Universities, the National Troupe and various State Council of Arts and Culture to resuscitate live stage Theatre performances however, have not been able to collectively match up to the classical performances of the Yoruba mobile theatre or puppet theatre of the Hausa tribe both in form and in patronage. Contemporary literary dramatists are presenting dramatic texts that deal with Nigerian historical realities like the country's civil war, the ethno-religious crises in parts of the country, the militancy and insurgences and the endemic corruption within the polity and the nation's social, economic and political upheavals. The plays of this era are providing effective outlets for feminist temper. The literary dramatic productions of this age are drawing copiously from the works by established writers through adaptation^{2, 6}.

The third generation of writers chooses to write in very simpler and easily accessible language. They focused more on the plight of individuals and survival mechanisms in the age

of biting social, economic and political conditions. They are although mostly university dons like their predecessors both in the first and third generations, they however unlike them are not keen at staging their plays. This is partly because it is not economically viable to do so.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

2.2.1 Postcolonial Theory

The post- in postcolonial, as widely explained by its theorists, does not necessarily mean after (as to have the syntactic notion of after-colonial), but it is an arbitrary construct that expresses a continuum - nonetheless heavily semantically punctuated by the colonial as its prime essence. Aside from the simplistic view that postcolonial theory is a collection of responses by former colonised peoples to their recurrent or protracted colonial experiences in the form of narratives, poetry, treatises, dramas and dialectics. Literary critics have conceived the theory in a variety of ways. Their ideas can be classified as belonging to one of two paradigms: positive or negative. From a utopian/positive perspective, postcolonial theory is a tool of resistance through which any exploitation and discriminating practices, irrespective of time and location, can be challenged⁸. Postcolonial philosophy, on the other hand, is often seen as nebulous, cynical, and mystical by sceptics. The idealistic view point or positive view is grounded in activism, with the Imperial power vociferously writing back to right the wrongs of the past and contemporary time¹². Within the geopolitical boundaries of East and West, North and South, postcolonial viewpoints develop from colonial testimony of Third World countries and discourses of "minorities." They intervene in modernity's ideological discourses that aim to offer a hegemonic "normality" to 'nations', 'tribes', communities', and 'peoples' uneven development and heterogeneous, often disadvantaged histories¹².

Far beyond other 'post-' terms, 'post-colonial' is a highly sensitive historical and geographical term that draws attention to a whole epoch in the relationship between the West and the

developing world, an epoch that played a key role in institutionalizing and strengthening the metro pole-periphery, center-margin dichotomy. We are speaking about a term that conjures up images of gunboats and mortars, conquests and dominions, a term whose 'name' and meaning are laden with historical baggage and modern worries¹³.

In contrast to the positive viewpoint of postcolonial theory, those who oppose it claim that it lacks capacity to produce understandable and coherent ideas¹². Aside this it has also been rejected by others because it is seen as foreign to former colonised homelands¹⁴. Worthy of note is the fact that though postcolonial theory seeks to correct the wrongs of colonialism, it has become trapped in imperialism itself^{12, 13}. Notwithstanding the plethora of controversies surrounding the original views about postcolonial theory, it has become effective in the studying, analysing and understanding literary constructs by former colonised persons. It has successfully challenged and refuted colonialism. Not only that, it has been growing and is still growing significantly with a large corpus of exponents, scholars and theorists interacting with it globally¹².

The main goal of post-colonial criticism is to reconsider colonialism from the perspective of the colonised, to assess the economic, political, and cultural effects of colonialism on both the colonised peoples and the colonising powers, to examine the decolonization process, and above all, to take part in the political liberation goals, which include equal access to material wealth and contestation in all its forms¹³. While the early anti-colonialism voices emphasised the necessity to develop or return to indigenous literary traditions in order to free their cultural legacy from imperial dominance, other voices favoured acculturating Western ideas for their own cultural and political objectives. Furthermore, while the early anticolonial authors like Ngugi Wa Thiong O' chose to write in their own mother tongues, others like Chinua Achebe have creatively incorporated items from the African milieu into colonialist

languages as English, French among others⁷. A large number of African Playwrights including Ahmed Yerima have continued to follow the example of the likes of Soyinka and Achebe by their creative use of myths and African legends. In essence, almost all post-colonial plays have made a transition of using primarily African forms, which they have supplemented with Western-derived influences ⁷. Part of the endeavours of postcolonial literary criticism is to examine the relationship between differentiation in culture and literary constructions. In other words, one of the vocal points of post colonialist studies is to determine the influence of social, political, economic and cultural and historical experiences on literatures of the formal colonised people^{12,13,14}. Significant in its purpose is the attempt and actual undermining of the universalist claims once made on behalf of literature by the imperialists¹⁴. A psychiatrist from Martinique has been credited to be the father of post-colonial criticism when he opines in his classic that the most strategic way for the colonised people to possess a voice and identity is for them to reclaim their historic and cultural heritage while the second most important step is for them to erase the imperialist ideology through which their heritage has been degraded¹³. It is reported that the purpose of the postcolonial criticism is to confront and challenge colonial construction about Africa¹⁴.

Being a specialised theory, Postcolonial theory has a myriad of terms and terminologies which have been variously extensively discussed ^{8, 12,13,14}.

The fight for independence from colonial authority by several countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America (today more often referred to as the "tricontinent" than the "third world"), and elsewhere gave rise to both postcolonial literature and criticism¹⁴. The groundbreaking post colonialism works *Discours sur l'le colonialisme* by Aimé Césaire and *Black Skin, White Masks* by Frantz Fanon were both published in 1950. Additionally, *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe was published in 1958. *The Wretched of the Earth* by Frantz Fanon followed

George Lamming's *The Pleasures of Exile* in 1961¹⁴. Possibly the Havan Tricontinental of 1966's publication of the magazine the Tricontinental served as the birthplace of post-colonial philosophy. This was seen as the first academic coalition of the three continents' peoples against global imperialism¹⁴. The ground-breaking book *Orientalism* by Edward Said was out in 1978. The *Postcolonial critic* by Gayatri Spivak and Bill Ashcroft, *The Empire Writes Back* by Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, and significant works by Abdul Jan Mohamed, Homi Bhabha, Benita Parry, and Kwame Anthony Appiah are among more recent works. In essence, post colonialism still finds inspiration in the anti-colonial battles of the colonial past. Many of the traits often associated with post-colonialism, such as "diaspora, transnational migration, and internationalism," were present in anti-colonialism. Comprehensively, the term postcolonial, covers all the cultures affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonisation to the contemporary time on account of the "continuity of preoccupations" between the colonial and postcolonial periods.

Postcolonial criticism has embraced a number of aims: most fundamentally, to re-examine the history of colonialism from the viewpoint of the colonised; to determine the economic, political, and cultural impact of colonialism on both the colonised peoples and the colonising powers; to analyse the process of decolonisation; and above all, to participate in the goals-of political liberation, which includes equal access to material resources, the contestation of forms of domination, and the articulation of political and cultural identities¹⁴. In order to exorcise the ghosts of imperial dominance from their cultural history, the founding voices of anti-imperialism emphasised the need for fostering or reviving local literary traditions. Others argued for modifying Western principles to suit their own political and cultural objectives. The Marxist criticism of colonialism and imperialism, which has been applied to their indigenous settings by philosophers like Gayatri Spivak and Franz Fanon, provides the essential basis for postcolonial thinking.

Gender, race, ethnicity, and class are all areas where postcolonial discourse is at war. In fact, we must avoid the risk of seeing either the "West" or the "tricontinent" as identical entities capable of conflict. Such a tight antithesis ignores the reality that gender discrimination and economic divides exist both in the West and in colonial countries. Many observers have noted that labour exploitation happened in Western nations just as much as it did in the regions they conquered. In the same way, colonialism largely benefited a small fraction of the population of imperial states. In this sense, colonialism is a phenomenon that exists both inside and beyond the borders of imperial states. As a result, postcolonial discourse has the potential to encompass and be closely related to a wide range of conversations taking place within the colonising powers that address different types of "internal colonisation," as it is addressed by minority studies of various kinds, including African-American, Native American, Latin American, and women's studies. The primary currents of "Western philosophy, literature, and ideology" have all been questioned by all of these discourses. African-American critics like Henry Louis Gates Jr., African-American female authors and poets, commentators on Islam, and even theorists like Fredric Jameson are all integral parts of the many postcolonial endeavours.

Questioning and reevaluating the literary and cultural canon in Western institutions through what is informally referred to as "multiculturalism" has been one of these endeavours, or rather one point of confluence of numerous postcolonial projects. In explaining the rise of multiculturalism, it has been suggested that a new "postmodern" generation of activists from the 1960s came into power in American universities. The year 1968 saw left-wing uprisings against the elements of liberal humanism: Western democracy, rationalism, objectivity, individual autonomy. These were all considered to be slogans which concealed the society's actual oppression of blacks, working-class people, gays, women, as well as the imperialistic exploitation of third world countries. These oppressive ideas, according to radicals, were

embodied and reproduced in the conventional canons of literature and philosophy which we offer to our students: the literary tradition from Homer to T. S. Eliot and the philosophical spectrum from Plato to logical positivism. Some scholars suggest that this reaction against the Western mainstream tradition was fostered largely by the rise of French literary theory, which insisted that the text was an indirect expression and often a justification of the prevailing power structure. This structure was inevitably a hierarchy in which the voices of minorities, women, and the working classes were suppressed. These voices now had to be heard.

The central conservative argument against multiculturalism was advanced by Allan Bloom, Arthur Schlesinger, and others. It assumed, firstly, that in the past there existed a period of consensus with regard to the aims of education, political ideals, and moral values; secondly, that this consensus, which underlies the national identity of America, is threatened by the cacophonous irreconcilable voices of multiculturalism. Multiculturalists respond that this past consensus is imaginary: the educational curricula adopted at various stages both in the United States and elsewhere have been the products of conflicting political attitudes. In late nineteenth-century America, conservatives, who desired a curriculum that would foster religious conformism and discipline, were opposed by those, like the pragmatist John Dewey, who wished to stress liberal arts, utility, and advanced research. In 1869, President Charles W. Eliot of Harvard initiated a program of curricular reform, amid much controversy. Disciplines such as history, sociology, and English itself struggled to gain admission into various liberal arts curricula. In 1890 the Modern Language Association (MLA) witnessed a heated debate over the relative merits of the classics and the moderns. And the 1920s and 1930s saw a struggle to make American literature part of the English programme.

The final presumption of conservatives is that "timeless truths" are somehow communicated via great literature. In actuality, it is widely believed that history should be studied as an

objective intellectual investigation rather than as therapy. However, using such terminology is equivalent to rejecting the traditions of Hegelian thought, Marxism, existentialism, historicism, hermeneutic theory, and psychoanalysis, all of which have made an effort to place the concept of truth in historical, economic, and political contexts. Many thinkers have countered that the use of "timeless truths" has really always served political purposes. The development of English literature was ideologically driven from the start. Poetry, according to academics at Oxford University, is the only thing that can save a technological civilisation. Literature was created to serve as a defence against dogma that is rationalist and ideological. Literature was meant to promote empathy and a sense of community among all social classes, to inform people about their obligations, to foster a sense of national pride, and to instill moral principles. And it was determined that the English language played a crucial role in the imperialist drive. There have been arguments made in favour of using English as the primary language of instruction in India, for example. We won't comment further on these arguments other than to point out that they show how deeply European self-image constructions, based on the Enlightenment project of reason, progress, civilisation, and moral agency, were predicated on the positing of various forms of alterity or "otherness," based on polarised images like superstition, backwardness, barbarism, moral incapacity, and intellectual poverty. The English literary tradition continues to serve as a foundation and a standard of value in many parts of the world, including the United States, where the study of English literature frequently outweighs that of American writers. Texts from other traditions are frequently "incorporated" and viewed through analytical perspectives intrinsic to the English heritage. English continues to have a significant impact on language, literary, legal, and political ideas in India, where it was adopted as the official state language in 1835, replacing Persian (the language of the previous rulers, the (Mughals)). Writers like the Kenyan Ngugi Wa Thiong'O have produced significant works like *Decolonising the Mind* (1986) and essays with titles like

"*On the Abolition of the English Department*" (1968) in profound recognition of this interdependent relationship between the literary canon and cultural values. Many authors, most notably Chinua Achebe, have grappled with the choice between using their native tongue to convey their cultural context and experience accurately and using English to appeal to a far larger audience. It should be highlighted too that what commonly passes as "English" is Southern Standard English, spoken by the middle classes in London and the south of England. The English spoken not just in other parts of England but also in other parts of the globe has been successfully marginalised by this form of English. Today, there are several dialects of English spoken in numerous nations, and only lately have these literary expressions received institutional recognition. Now, some of the important people who have contributed to postcolonial criticism and theory may be analysed in relation to these numerous disputes.

Frantz Fanon was a key thinker and activist in the third-world resistance against colonial tyranny and one of the most influential figures in revolutionary philosophy in the 20th century. Fanon, who was raised in the French province of Martinique, battled against the Nazis while studying to become a psychiatrist in France. His French and Martinican upbringing exposed him to the problems of racism and colonialism. His instructor, Aimé Césaire, a pioneer of the so-called negritude movement that favoured cultural segregation over integration of blacks, had a significant impact on him. *Peau Noire, Masques Blancs* (1952), which was later translated as *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967), was one of Fanon's works that examined the psychological ramifications of racism and colonialism.

While Fanon was employed in Algeria as a psychiatrist in 1954, the Algerians rose up in revolt against French control. The National Liberation Front was the driving force behind the bloody war for Algerian independence. Fanon oversaw the Front's periodical and participated

in the uprising until his death in 1961. The country did not become independent until 1962. *Les Damnés de la Terre* (1961), which was later retitled *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963), was Fanon's most extensive and significant study on the Algerian and African revolutions. This now-classic work used a Marxist analysis to examine the prerequisites for a successful anti-colonial revolution, which was slightly changed to take into account factors unique to colonised countries. It also explained how class and race are related. Indeed, Fanon emphasises the stark contrast in historical circumstances between the African bourgeoisie, which emerged as the successor to colonial control, and the European bourgeois class, a former revolutionary class that overthrew feudalism. Fanon highlights the drawbacks of nationalist emotion in a crucial chapter titled "The Pitfalls of National Consciousness," arguing that although it played a crucial role in the fight for independence from colonial control, it ultimately turned out to be an "empty shell." The concept of a single country disintegrates into pre-colonial conflicts based on race and tribe¹⁴.

Fanon blames the shortcomings of what he refers to as the national middle class, the bourgeois class in the subject country that assumes power after colonial control, for the lack of national consciousness and true national unity. This class is underdeveloped because it lacks economic power or expertise and does not participate in labour, production, or creativity. This class's perspective is so limited that it connects "nationalisation" with the transfer of unequal benefits that are left over from the colonial era to the local population. In other words, the national bourgeoisie claims the benefits that the colonial authority formerly enjoyed for itself. In fact, according to Fanon, the "historic mission" of the new bourgeoisie is to act as a middleman between its own country and imperial capitalism. Because she identifies with and caters to the Western bourgeoisie, from which she has fully internalised her teachings, this bourgeoisie is historically immobile. The oversold promise of African unification also dissolves into the regional, racial, and tribal warfare that existed before

colonial control since the indigenous bourgeoisie is incapable of providing intellectual, political, or economic leadership or enlightenment. Of course, colonial powers make full use of these distinctions and, for instance, support the separation of Africa into "White" and "Black" Africa (located north and south of the Sahara, respectively). While Black Africa is seen as inert, harsh, and savage, White Africa is said to have a lengthy cultural past and to be a part of Greco-Roman civilization. Unlike their Western counterparts, whose chauvinism donned the guise of democratic and humanist values, the national bourgeoisie of each of these areas assimilates the racist colonial philosophy that has long been taught by the Western bourgeoisie. However, unlike their Western counterparts, the African bourgeoisie is devoid of any humanist ideology^{12,13,14}.

Overall, Fanon makes two points and comes to two conclusions: first, the bourgeois stage in the history of developing nations is an utterly pointless period. According to Marxist theory, the emergence of the bourgeoisie is undoubtedly a crucial turning point in the development of socialism and a society without classes. Communism does not just overthrow capitalism; rather, it recognises the enormous gains gained by the bourgeoisie over feudalism in terms of economics, law, politics, and society. Marx said that communism's goal was to meet the bourgeoisie's expressed but unfulfilled promises of freedom, democracy, and equality. The national bourgeoisie of colonised countries has none of the virtues of its Western counterparts, in stark contrast to the rich and revolutionary contributions of the Western bourgeoisie; it came to power in the name of a limited nationalism that hardly concealed its pursuit of its own interests. As a result, it has to be resisted and defeated with the help of "honest intellectuals" who really want revolutionary change for the general populace. Second, a swift transition from national awareness to political and social consciousness is required. This is Fanon's way of saying that the humanistic inclination that frames social and political requirements must be added to nationalist sentiment¹⁴.

Fanon discusses the significant linkages between the fight for liberation and other aspects of culture, including literature and the arts, in another chapter titled "On National Culture," which was initially presented as a presentation in 1959. According to Fanon, colonialism completely upends the cultural existence of a conquered nation. Additionally, every effort is made to persuade the colonised person to acknowledge the inferiority of his culture, the absurdity of his "nation," and, at the very least, the jumbled and flawed nature of his own inherent makeup. Any civilization that is subject to colonial rule is a "contested culture," and its annihilation is actively pursued. There are no new efforts or innovations in the original culture; instead, it adopts a defensive position and adheres rigidly to "a hard core of culture," which is associated with resistance to the colonial oppressor.

The pressures brought on by colonial exploitation, such as poverty, starvation, and cultural and psychological emaciation, have an impact on culture. Literary themes of hopelessness and resignation, once couched in florid traditional expression, give way to stinging denunciations of the occupying power and hard, realistic exposure of the conditions of life as "national consciousness" among the people grows. Tragic and poetic styles are replaced by novels, short stories, and essays. Even the reading public today has changed. Formerly writing for the oppressor, the intellectuals now speak to their own people. We can only talk about national literature—literature that adopts and investigates nationalist themes—when national awareness reaches a particular degree of development. Because it challenges a whole people to battle for their continued existence as a country and heightens national consciousness, this literature is a work of conflict. Literature helps the country articulate its identity and the ideals at issue in the economic battle; thus, it is more than just a structural result of that conflict.

Literature undergoes a lot of significant modifications. For instance, in the oral tradition, tales, epics, and songs that formerly followed rigid formulas have been infused with fresh conflicts, updated conflicts, and storylines. For instance, the epic made a comeback in Algeria as a genuine form of entertainment that once again acquired cultural significance. The conventional ways of telling stories were also challenged: rather than dealing with tired themes, the storyteller started again to give his imagination free rein, telling new and timely stories, interpreting the vast array of current political and psychological phenomena, and presenting a new kind of man—one unencumbered by colonialism. Notably, but not only in Algeria, such literary advances often resulted in the colonial power's systematic detention of the storytellers.

Fanon's main argument is that the "nation" is a prerequisite for culture in the context of colonial dominance. The country assembles the different essential components required for the development of a culture. The most comprehensive and evident cultural expression of it is a colonial people's fight to reclaim their country's sovereignty. It is this fight that creates a set of relationships between men that are essentially different, distinguished not just by the end of colonialism but also by the end of the colonised man. In his writings, Fanon emphasises the fact that since culture expresses "national consciousness," we cannot simply skip over the stage of national identification as we move towards an understanding of our role in humanity as a whole. According to Fanon, the existence and flourishing of international consciousness lie at the very heart of national consciousness.

At the conclusion of his book, Fanon emphasises that developing new policies based on the unity of humankind—not just for the colonised but also for former colonisers—and for humanity as a whole, rather than imitating Europe, is the way forward for the colonised countries of Africa and other parts of the world. Africans must thus turn a new page in order

to develop new ideas and attempt to launch a completely new nation. A large portion of what Fanon writes about African countries also holds true for the majority of other colonial areas, such as the Indian subcontinent and most of the Middle East. He offers a revealing counterbalance to certain Western aesthetic attitudes that have insisted on separating literature from its social and political contexts, or at the very least, on staking out an autonomous domain of purely literary analysis that might be supplemented by considerations of context as long as its borders remain unaltered. His account of culture and national consciousness implicates political struggle in the very fabric of literary production. This kind of theory, in a sense, assumes the luxury of political stability or stagnation as well as the luxury of marginalising literature. In a culture where literature has no direct influence on politics, there may be good reason to view the literary sphere as a comparatively autonomous and self-enclosed domain. Due to its general isolation from the political and economic spheres, this sector may accept the most "radical" viewpoints. In other words, we may be as subversive as we want since it doesn't matter in poetry. Due to poetry's cultural marginalisation, its connections to the established political system are very subtle and difficult to perceive. However, Fanon's account serves as a reminder that there are societies around the world, including portions of the Middle East, the Indian subcontinent, and Yugoslavia in recent years, where literature frequently plays a direct and significant role in politics, not just as an effect but also as a cause¹⁴.

Even though he is best recognised as a literary and cultural theorist, Edward Said, another significant proponent of postcolonialism who hails from the East, has introduced wider perspectives on the subject. Three overarching imperatives have been incorporated into Said's thinking. The first is to identify the cultural position and responsibility of the intellectual and literary critic. Said's formulations in some areas, which are influenced by Foucault, gave crucial impetus to the so-called New Historicism in the 1980s, which was partly a reaction

against the tendency of American adherents of structuralism, post structuralism, and deconstruction to either isolate literature from its various contexts or to reduce those contexts to an indiscriminate "textuality." Said's personal beginnings—or beginning," as he would prefer—have defined a third, more urgent political commitment: an effort to shed light on and make sense of the Palestinian people's fight for independence. While some saw him as a role model for the politically active academic, others thought his project was nonsensical. The three sentences mentioned above will be the focus of this analysis of Said's writing.

Beginnings, Edward Said's first significant work, was published in 1975. Concentrating on "What is a beginning? Said explores the historical implications and many interpretations of this idea. Said makes a distinction between "origin," which is supernatural, legendary, and privileged, and "beginning," which is secular and humanly made, drawing on ideas from the Italian philosopher Giambattista Vico's *New Science* (1744). A beginning, particularly as it is expressed in most contemporary thinking, fosters orders of dispersion, adjacency, and complementarity, whereas an "origin," as in classical and neoclassical philosophy, is endowed with linear, dynastic, and temporal grandeur, centrally commanding what arises from it. According to Said, the beginning is the development of difference from pre-existing traditions, the beginning of its own technique, and the first step in the purposeful manufacture of meaning. If the beginning includes such a subversive action, it must be supported by an initial logic that both permits and restricts what is appropriate. Said makes the case that the novel is the most significant effort in Western literary culture to give beginnings an authoritarian role in experience, art, and knowledge by drawing on the ideas of Vico, Valery, Nietzsche, Saussure, Levi-Strauss, Husserl, and Foucault. Beginning is an attempt to gain knowledge and art using "violently transgressive" language in postmodernist literature⁸.

Given their expose of the hierarchical and sometimes repressive structure of language, Said situates Foucault and Deleuze within the "adversary epistemological current" that runs via Vico, Marx, Engels, Lukacs, and Fanon. He redefines writing, after Foucault, as the act of "taking hold" of language, which entails starting again rather than using language in the manner prescribed by tradition. In fact, doing so is the "method" of "beginning," which seeks difference and participates in an "other" manufacture of meaning. It is an act of discovery. Fighting institutional specialisation, ideological professionalism, and a hierarchical system of values that favours conventional literary and cultural explanations and disfavors "beginning" criticism is the duty of the intellectual or critic. The promotion of non-coercive and social action rather than authority should be the goal of criticism¹⁰.

However, Said contends in *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (1983) that critical theory has retreated into a "labyrinth of textuality," betraying its "insurrectionary" roots in the 1960s. Said believes that the "principle of non-interference" and the triumph of the ethic of professionalism, which he associates with the rise of Reaganism, have led even the "radical" factions of the intellectual establishment and traditional humanists to sell out. He sees contemporary criticism as a vehicle for publicly reaffirming the values of culture as understood in a Eurocentric, dominating, and elitist sense. As a result, criticism has successfully presided over its own (paradoxically) cultural marginality and political irrelevance, losing touch with the resistance and plurality of community life. Said is battling the idea that the "text" is so immune from the "world." In a variety of ways, he successfully redefines the text as "worldly" and as having implications in actual social and political conditions: the most significant aspect of a text is the fact that it was produced. The particular circumstances of a text's creation are what determine its ability to generate meaning; they impose restrictions on its own interpretation by acting in predetermined ideological and aesthetic contexts. Texts have a unique voice that interacts with the shapes of their intended

audience. Texts also displace and displace other texts, making them primarily truths of power rather than democratic interchange. Said dismisses conceptions of the discursive position as one of democratic equality or political neutrality, following Foucault, and instead compares it to the relationship between a coloniser and a colonised person or an oppressor and an oppressed person. Simply put, in Said's opinion, texts are a system of forces created by imperialist culture at some human cost in their many manifestations. According to Said, who is influenced by Foucault, culture is what defines the many notions of "home," "belonging," and "community"; everything beyond this leads to anarchy and homelessness. Said, echoing Arnold, whose ultimate identification of culture with state authority he rejects, suggests that the role of cultural and literary analysis in contemporary times is to stand between the dominant culture and the totalizing forms of critical systems. It is within this outright opposition that Said hopes to carve out a space within civil society for the intellectual and critic, a space of "in-betweenness." Said describes this in terms of the concepts of affiliation and filiation, the former of which refers to an acquired loyalty to a system of values that is critical awareness, and the latter of which refers to a prior voluntary and partly historically driven commitment.

Said contends that a lot of modernist literature sought compensatory connection with something larger than the confines of their initial place in the world after experiencing the failure of filiativities. Joyce and Eliot provide examples, both of whom cut their initial links to family, ethnicity, and religion in order to associate themselves, from an exile position, with more expansive perspectives of the world. The kind of critique that Said promotes differs specifically from other cultural practises as well as from totalizing systems of thinking and methodology. This "secular" critique challenges the creation of large-scale hermetic systems by focusing on regional and global issues. In order to advance non-coercive knowledge in the interests of human freedom and to define potential alternatives to the dominant orthodoxies

of culture and society, it must resist every kind of tyranny, dominance, and abuse. Vico and Swift are significant examples of the opposing posture, in Said's opinion. He saw Swift as anarchic in his perception of the variety of alternatives to the status quo, but the same could be said of himself.

In *Orientalism* (1978), Said develops this idea further by looking at the extensive history of "Western "constructions" of the Orient. Renan transferred authority from sacred, divinely authorised texts to an ethnocentric philology, which diminished the status of both Semitic languages and the "Orient." This heritage of orientalism has served as a "corporate institution" for understanding the Orient, validating perspectives on it, and exercising control over it. The Orient is essentially a creation of Western discourse, a way for the West to define its culture and defend its colonial rule over Oriental peoples, and this is at the heart of Said's critique. Said focuses on the contemporary history of American, French, and British interactions with the Islamic world. Given his important treatment of Orientalism as a discourse, he aims to demonstrate that it is a language with internal consistency, motivation, and capacity for representation based on a relationship of power and hegemony over the Orient rather than to demonstrate that this politically motivated edifice of language distorts a "real" Orient.

The book also makes an effort to show how Orientalism is only one complicated illustration of how all speech, even that which has been shrouded in an air of innocence, is steeped in political and intellectual ideologies. Thus, "liberal cultural heroes" like Mill, Arnold, and Carlyle all have opinions on race and imperialism that are often disregarded¹⁴. Said aims to investigate the clichés and distortions through which Islam and the East have been eaten using a wide variety of examples, from Aeschylus' play *The Persians* through Macaulay, Renan, and Marx to Gustave von Grunbaum and the *Cambridge History of Islam*. The exotic

sexuality of Oriental women, the idea that Islam is a heretical copy of Christianity, the idea that Islam is a singular phenomenon, and the idea that Islam is a civilization incapable of innovation are some of these stereotypes. Said claims that the electronic postmodern world fosters dehumanised depictions of the Arabs, a trend that is both exacerbated by the Arab-Israeli conflict and keenly felt by Said himself as a Palestinian. He does this while also addressing America's twentieth-century interactions with the Arab world.

Said, who is a member of the Palestine National Council, tries to provide the American reader with a historical perspective of the Palestinian experience and struggle in *The Question of Palestine* (1979). *Covering Islam* (1981) tries to show how media portrayals "produce" Islam and continue the long-standing Western self-definition process by reducing its believers to anti-American extremists and dangerous fundamentalists. The ideas discussed in *Orientalism* are successfully continued in Said's later book, *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), which investigates the power dynamics between the Occident and the Orient in more detail. The breadth of Said's interests enabled him to examine the intersection of relationships between literature, politics, and religion from a global rather than a national or Eurocentric perspective, making him unusual among cultural critics.

Aside the above reviewed theorists of postcolonialism is Gayatri Spivak who was educated at both Indian and American universities; one of her teachers at Cornell was Paul de Man. She is known for her translation of, and lengthy preface to, Derrida's *Of Grammatology*, and her central concern with the structures of colonialism, the postcolonial subject, and the possibility of postcolonial discourse draws on deconstructive practices, the feminist movement, Marxism, and Freud. In her influential and controversial essay "*Can the Subaltern Speak?*" (1983), later expanded in her book *Critique of Postcolonial Reason* (1999), she addresses precisely this issue of whether peoples in subordinate, colonised positions are able to achieve a voice. A

“subaltern” refers to an officer in a subordinate position; the term was used by the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci to refer to the working masses that needed to be organized by left-wing intellectuals into a politically self-conscious force. The term as Spivak uses it also insinuates the ‘Subaltern Studies Group’ in India, a radical group which attempted to articulate and give voice to the struggles of the oppressed peasants of the Indian subcontinent¹⁴.

In broad terms, Spivak sees the project of colonialism as characterized by what Foucault had called “epistemic violence,” the imposition of a given set of beliefs over another. Such violence, she says, marked the tenuously formulated, far-flung, and heterogeneous project to represent the colonial subject as Other. Spivak suggests that this epistemic violence, perpetrated in colonised nations, was a corollary of the epistemic overhaul in Europe at the end of the eighteenth century, of which Foucault speaks; she is both extending Foucault’s own argument and situating it within a larger, global, context, suggesting that the narrative of political and economic development in Europe was part of a broader narrative that included imperialism and the definition of Europe in relation to the colonial other. Certain knowledges in both Europe and colonised countries were subjugated or regarded as inadequate. Spivak uses the British reformulations of the Hindu legal system as an example. Spivak actually quotes from Thomas Babington Macaulay's infamous "Minute on Indian Education" (1835), in which he claimed that the imperialists must make every effort to create a class of people who will serve as their interpreters with the millions of colonised people they rule—a class of people who are Indian by blood and colour but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect. And to that elite, they might delegate the task of improving the nation's vernacular languages, enriching them with scientific terminology appropriated from European nomenclature, and gradually transforming them into effective channels for disseminating information to the vast majority of the population ¹⁴.

Given that they are still being used in the present world's modified imperialist economy, these statements are all the more terrifying. The only difference in approach is the new rulers' names. The epistemic violence that was codified in the imperialist legal project was also codified in the goal of cultural imposition, according to Spivak. Her main argument is that this violence was a result of the endeavour to create one account and description of reality as the normative one, and that it may have even been its fundamental cause ¹⁵.

However, as Spivak has previously shown, this homogeneous endeavour was really diverse in and of itself, as Foucault had noted about its activities in Europe. She also emphasises how irretrievably diverse the colonial subaltern subject is. She thus rejects the idea that oppressor and victim are in absolute conflict with one another. She claims that even radical intellectuals who advocate for the downtrodden successfully romanticise and essentialize the other; it's possible that she believes the intellectual is responsible for the ongoing construction of the other as the Self's shadow ¹⁴. The temptation is tremendous to merely see the other as a reflection of oneself; one example may be a European feminist imposing her feminist viewpoint on women in colonial places, a practise that can ignore the fact that oppression and freedom are both culturally distinct. Such a dichotomous contradiction ignores and reinforces how colonial and radical discourses are mutually supportive of one another. Even the Subaltern Studies Group in India, according to Spivak, has been polluted by an essentialist goal in certain instances, such as in their attempts to define subaltern perception on pages ninety-five and ninety-seven. Spivak wisely points out that while essentialism and positivism are opposed in many radical discourses, including those of feminism. She goes on to say that a strict binary opposition between positivism and essentialism is false and suppresses the murky cooperation between essentialism and positivism ¹⁴. The realisation that the concept of essence permeates Hegel's work, the contemporary pioneer of "the work of the negative," and

is acknowledged by Marx as persisting inside the dialectic lends credence to her claim in this regard.

In this chapter, Spivak tells the moving tale of Bhubaneswari Bhaduri, a young lady from India who committed suicide in 1926 after failing to carry out the political killing that had been entrusted to her. She scheduled her suicide to occur when she was menstruating, according to Spivak, to avoid the traditional explanation for her actions—that she had become pregnant. According to every piece of evidence gathered throughout the inquiry, this suicide was a subaltern, ad hoc reworking of the social text of sari-suicide. However, when Spivak asked the girl's nieces about the event, they described it as a lose-lose scenario. This breakdown in communication so alarmed Spivak that she vehemently asserted (in her first draught of this article) that the subaltern does not talk because she cannot speak. While she corrects herself, she continues by pointing out how Bhubaneswari's own freed grandchildren actually contributed to her silence since one of them immigrated to the US and rose to the position of CEO in a multinational corporation. As a result, Bhubaneswari pushed for national independence. The New Empire employs her great-grandniece. The subaltern has also historically been silenced in this way. The new empire and new imperialism have gone worldwide, and Spivak is arguing that collusion within their networks and processes is inevitable. Even radical intellectuals are involved in the muzzling of subaltern voices, notwithstanding Spivak's recognition that the speech of the subaltern girl was created to speak in her own text ^{15, 16}.

Spivak's position is not wholly negative, however. We need to work on "unlearning" in certain ways, admitting our involvement—and sometimes even complicity—in the things we scrutinise and cast doubt on. In other places, Spivak discusses the beneficial concept of calculated essentialism, wherein we might use essentialist terminology in a self-aware

manner for real-world, political reasons. She offers some recommendations in this article that might help one avoid taking an ambiguous stance or offering just a derogatory judgement. She contends that although intellectuals acknowledge the significance of the economic sector, they do not give it any kind of absolute or final explanatory authority. According to her, access to citizenship and voting rights would assist in mobilising the underclass on the protracted path to hegemony ¹⁶.

Like Gayatri Spivak, Homi Bhabha develops postcolonial theory by incorporating elements of poststructuralism into discussions of colonialism, nationalism, and culture. These ideas challenge the idea of fixed identity, undermine binary oppositions, and place a strong focus on language and discourse, as well as the power dynamics they are entwined with, as the foundation of our understanding of cultural occurrences. The act of extension itself is used to show the boundaries of these ideas and the changing nature of their application, unlike Spivak's extension, which just extrapolates poststructuralist concepts to colonial subject matter. In an effort to characterise the relationship between coloniser and colonised, Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of "dialogic" (signifying the mutuality of a relationship) is borrowed by Bhabha from Derrida. He also draws on Frantz Fanon's revolutionary work on colonialism and Benedict Anderson's book *Imagined Communities* (1983) to define the concept of "nation".

Bhabha's work challenges ideas of identity, culture, and country as coherent, unified entities with a linear historical history. The concept of "hybridity" is crucial to this challenge. A person who is "in between," or situated in between two cultures, is what is meant by hybridity. The idea is embodied in Bhabha's own life, as it is in the lives of many intellectuals from former colonial powers educated in Western institutions. Bhabha was born into a Parsi community in Bombay, India, and received his education there as well as at Oxford

University. He later taught at universities in England and America before accepting a position at Harvard.

In his influential essay "The Commitment to Theory" (1989), Bhabha makes an attempt to refute recent claims that literary and cultural theory (including deconstruction, Lacanianism, and the various post-structuralism tendencies) has at least one fatal flaw: it is embedded in and complicit with a Eurocentric and Imperialist discourse, and as a result, it is shielded from the real issues, the historical needs, and the tragedies of third-world peoples¹⁷. According to Bhabha, this dichotomy between theory and politics is a mirror version of the "ahistorical Orient-Occident polarity of the nineteenth century, which unleashed the exclusionary imperialist ideologies of self and other in the name of progress. It is a "mirror image" since, in the contemporary setting, it is Western philosophy itself that has been depoliticized, not the Orient. When he questioned if theorists must necessarily polarise in order to polemicize, Bhabha questioned this dualism. He continues by questioning if the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised must continue to be reversed by thinkers and ideas.

As imperialism enters a "neo-Imperialist" phase, Bhabha himself feels unafraid of its ongoing ambitions. He claims that there has been a noticeable rise in a new Anglo-American nationalism that more often manifests its economic and military might in political actions that demonstrate a neo-imperialist disrespect for the riches and sovereignty of people and nations in the developing World. Bhabha uses the 1982 conflict between Britain and Argentina over the Falkland Islands and the 1991 Gulf War as contemporary instances. He continues by pointing out the significant hegemonic effects that such economic and political dominance has on the information systems of Europe and America, their mainstream media, their specialist institutions, and academia as a whole¹⁷. Here, it is implicitly acknowledged that the Euro-American ideology of political supremacy will have some influence on academic

institutions in the Euro-American region. However, the issue posed by his statement as it relates to the "new" languages of theoretical criticism in the West is whether Euro-American theory's interests inevitably align with the West's hegemonic status as a power bloc¹⁷. Such a claim further asks the question of whether the language of theory, particularly that established by Europe and America, is not just another scheme of the culturally privileged Western elite to create a debate of the Other that solidifies its own power-knowledge equation¹⁷.

When Bhabha questioned what the function of a socially committed theoretical perspective might be once the cultural and historical hybridity of the postcolonial world is taken as the paradigmatic place of departure he did so from the specific perspective of postcolonial discourse. In order to answer this, Bhabha starts by rejecting the idea that "theory" and "activism" are in contradiction since, in his view, both are forms of communication that produce rather than reflect their sources of inspiration. In other words, political ideas cannot be categorised in advance as genuine or false, forward-thinking or intransigent, bourgeois or leftist, before the precise circumstances in which they develop, according to Bhabha's explanation, which draws on insights from the British cultural critic Stuart Hall. In this regard, they are made clear by the ambiguity and hybridity of the emerging process itself. This is a method of recognising the influence of literature, its metaphorical nature, and its rhetorical discourse as a useful matrix that defines the "social" and makes it accessible as a goal and a means of action. Bhabha is using the term "writing" in a Derridean sense here to denote the intrinsically metaphorical nature of language and discourse and their inability to make statements that are absolutely clear and unequivocal because they are made up of a vast network of signifiers, and any given position is shaped by what is outside of it. This externality contaminates any assumed internal coherence of the position itself with its diversity and ambivalence. Bhabha quotes J. S. Mill's article "On Liberty," which said that knowledge and a particular political perspective can only emerge via constant introspection

and confrontation with opposing viewpoints at each step of their development. According to Bhabha's interpretation of Mill's perspective, politics is a type of discussion and conversation; it is dialogic not by merely acknowledging other points of view and then avoiding them, but rather by realising that one's own perspective, as well as one's own limitations in the context of those limitations, are always tainted with ambivalence. The thing that is actually public and political is the discursive ambiguity of the topic of enunciation itself. This kind of political "negotiation," in Bhabha's opinion, goes beyond upending the essentialism or logocentrism of an established social, economic, and political system in the interest of an abstract free play of the signifier ¹⁷.

Hence, the language of political critique is effective not because it maintains rigid oppositions between terms such as master and slave but because it overcomes the given grounds of opposition and opens up a space of translation, a place of "hybridity" which engages in the construction of a new (rather than preconceived) political object and endeavour. Such a language will be dialectical without recourse to a teleological or inspired history. Thus the event of theory becomes the negotiation of contradictory and antagonistic instances that open up hybrid sites and objectives of struggle, and destroy those negative polarities between knowledge and its objects, and between theory and practical-political reason. Bhabha notes that there can be no crude, essentialist opposition between ideological mis cognition and radical fact. Between these, therefore are historical and discursive differences. Hence our political priorities and referents — such as the people, class struggle, and gender difference are not there in some primordial, naturalistic sense. Nor do they reflect a unitary or homogeneous political object. All of this makes us recognise, in the mind of Bhabha, that the issue of social, political and economic commitment is rather complex and complicated. This should not lead, however, to quietism or inertia, but to a demand that issues of organisation are theorised and that socialist theory itself is highly structured ¹⁷.

Bhabha uses the 1984–1985 miners' strike in Thatcher's Britain as an example of this lack of overt dissent. Initially, this battle would have been referred to as a "class struggle" according to conventional language. However, when miners' wives were questioned about their responsibilities in the society and the family, they started to question and even criticise aspects of the same tradition they seemed to be supporting. According to Bhabha, this situation demonstrates the strategic importance of the hybrid moment of political transformation, in which the terms of the struggle were rearticulated as "something else besides, which contests the terms and territories of both" rather than "neither the One (unitary working class) nor the Other (the politics of gender). Finding a middle ground between gender and class is consequently necessary. Stuart Hall's recommendation that the British Labour Party work to forge a socialist alliance among progressive forces that are widely dispersed and distributed across a range of class, culture, and occupational forces is seen by Bhabha as an acknowledgement of the "historical necessity" of his own concept of "hybridity."

Bhabha views the initial query, "Is critical theory "Western," as a description of hegemonic power and ideological Eurocentrism. He recognises that a lot of European thinking employs the metaphor of otherness to retain the effects of cultural difference after embracing the chasm. The Other text will always remain the exegetical horizon of difference and will never be seen as the driving force for articulation. The Other loses its power to represent, oppose, and highlight its own institutional and oppositional conversation as a result of being examined and shown. Critical theory has done this by mimicking relationships in which dominance is the norm. Bhabha, however, prefers to draw a distinction between the dominant conception of critical theory's past and its conceptual capacity for development and progress. He mentions Althusser, Lacan, and Foucault as providing new perspectives on history, production relations, and the contradictory nature of subjectivity. He observes that many

poststructuralist views are fundamentally opposed to enlightenment, humanism, and aesthetics. They amount to nothing less than a critique of the new moment¹⁷.

The idea of cultural differentiation, which emphasises the ambivalence of even Western cultural authority in its own moment of enunciation or articulation (as opposed to cultural "diversity," which embodies a received and static recognition), is what, in Bhabha's view, has led to such a revision of the history of critical theory. The binary opposition between the past and the present, the traditional and the modern, is problematized by this idea of difference. It accepts the recognition that civilizations are never wholly monolithic or just dualistic in their relationships with one another. It represents a recognition that the differences in writing may span the process of cultural articulation. According to Bhabha, the covenant of interpretation never only involves two people talking to one other. The "Third Space," which he described as representing both the basic circumstances of language and the special connotation of the speech, must be traversed by these two "places." Although it cannot be represented independently, this Third Space provides a framework for and references a dubious process that has the potential to challenge our understanding of the historical identity of culture as a force that homogenises and unifies, authenticated by the earliest Past, preserved in the national tradition of the People. Therefore, we must acknowledge the "hybridity" of all cultural expressions. According to Bhabha, Fanon realised that people who bring about revolutionary change are sometimes those who have a hybrid mentality. Bhabha uses the battle for independence in Algeria as an example, pointing out how, ironically, many aspects of the nationalist culture that had resisted colonial cultural hegemony were destroyed at the time of the struggle for freedom¹⁷.

Bhabha concludes by arguing that theoretical acceptance of the split-space of articulation may pave the way for conceptions of global culture based on the transmission and inscription of cultural hybridity. The weight of culture's significance is carried by the in-between area. We may avoid polarity politics and emerge as the other parts of ourselves by investigating this Third Space. Bhabha has an interesting understanding of difference, seeing it as the embodiment of ambivalence rather than unending relationality. He effectively creates the same binarism he tries to avoid by insisting on the need of recognising the ambiguity of enunciation¹⁷.

One issue with Bhabha's argument is that it is naively based on Derrida's idea of difference, which is an abstract concept in and of itself. Even Bhabha acknowledges that his own "Third Space" cannot be independently represented. He goes even farther, denying that it could ever express itself and allows it to bask in transcendence. The key takeaway from Bhabha's thesis is that political activities can never be completely theorised in advance since they must always be adjusted to local circumstances and opportunities. However, this understanding is partly diminished by the statements it is forced to make about how language works, which are much broad and less precise. Because the concept of hybridity contains the roots of whatever polarisation it was meant to overcome, it is insufficient for understanding the varied nature of political commitment, which is often not characterised by a simple blending of two characteristics like class and gender. Last but not least, Bhabha lays forth a number of strategic targets: Who really asserts that "culture," "subjectivity," or "truth" are unproblematic unities? The long tradition of Marxist thought, which has seen truth as institutionally grounded and as itself the formalised projection of various ideologies, has already abrogated the so-called opposition between ideological error and truth that Bhabha's notions of ambivalence and hybridity are intended to overcome¹⁷.

In addition, Henry Louis Gates, Jr., arguably the most well-known contemporary scholar of African-American literature, has sought to outline an African-American literary and critical heritage as well as to promote and establish this heritage in academic settings, the general public, and the media in an effort to validate and advance postcolonialism. His efforts to combine methods from contemporary literary theory, such as deconstructive and structuralist conceptions of meaning, with forms of interpretation inherited from African literary traditions have been at the heart of this project¹⁷. Gates, who was raised in West Virginia, attended Yale and Cambridge University and has taught at Yale, Cornell, Duke, and Harvard, where he now serves as Chair of African-American Studies and is in charge of the W. Institute for African-American Research founded by E. B. Du Bois. He has contributed to the founding of African-American periodicals and published a number of ground-breaking anthologies, including *Black Literature and Literary Theory* (1984), *"Race," Writing, and Difference* (1986), and *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature* (1997). *Figures in Black: Words, Signs, and the "Racial" Self* (1987) and *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism* (1988) are two of Gates' significant publications. One of his objectives in writing these writings is to reframe the concepts of race and blackness in light of poststructuralist theory, seeing them as outcomes of signification networks and cultural diversity rather than as essences. The integrative and assimilative aspect of Gates' work has drawn criticism; leftists see him as brazenly compromising with the mainstream, white, aristocratic Anglo-American and European traditions. However, his work has impacted and has similarities with the writing of critics like Wahneema Lubiano and Houston A. Baker, Jr.

He performs a sharp investigation of the idea of race in essays like "Writing, 'Race,' and the Difference it Makes" (1985) and draws attention to the explicit or implied racial presumptions that underlie Western literary and philosophical traditions. Gates admits that race has been a "invisible quality" in twentieth-century literature and ideas, at best just subtly

apparent. But this wasn't always the case, he says. Metaphors like "national spirit" and "historical period" were often utilised in the study of and production of literature by the middle of the nineteenth century. Hippolyte Taine, a French literary critic, first proposed "race, moment, and milieu" as the fundamental standards for assessing any piece of art¹⁶. According to this idea, Gates served as the "great foundation" on which later ideas about "national literatures" were built¹⁷. Race was the earliest and richest source of these master faculties, which are the foundation of historical events. Taine had discovered the special nature of the "intellect and the heart" in race. Gates admits that Taine's uniqueness was not in conveying these concepts of race, which were "derived from the Enlightenment, if not from the Renaissance," but rather in their "scientific" application to literary history. According to Gates, the development of "national" literatures "coincided with the common intellectual premise that 'race' was a 'thing,' an ineffable quantity, inexorably determining the form and contour of thought and feeling⁹⁹. Furthermore, the "dubious pseudo-science" of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries often serves as the foundation for discussions on race. In these contexts, race masquerades as an objective word of categorization but is really only a cliché.

Indeed, race has become a motif of ultimate, irreducible distinction between civilizations, linguistic groupings, or practitioners of certain belief systems, although being a fabrication, it has been given the "sanction of God, biology, or the natural order." Race is the most arbitrary kind of distinction because of how it is used. The metaphors of race have been made to seem "literal" by writers in numerous European traditions by making them appear not only "natural," but also "absolute and essential." They have also added fixed and finite categories to these discrepancies¹⁷. However, it doesn't take much contemplation to see that these fictitious categories are just that—figures of speech. According to Gates, no human is fundamentally a black or red person. No one is white, yellow, or brown, either. These expressions are arbitrary constructions that do not accurately reflect human reality.

Gates engages in a deconstructive interpretation of Enlightenment philosophy that shows its "neither side" in response to the dispute over "the nature of the African" that has been raging across Europe from the Renaissance and through the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment, according to Gates, employed the absence and presence of "reason" to delimit and circumscribe the very humanity of the cultures and people of colour which Europeans had been "discovering" since the Renaissance. He points out that after Descartes, "reason" was privileged among human characteristics, and writing, especially after the advent and proliferation of the printing press, was taken as the "visible sign of reason." Black people were immediately demoted to a lower rung on the Great Chain of Being, as a direct result of the Enlightenment's drive to organise all of human knowledge¹⁷.

Through a number of influential authors, Gates examines an "extraordinary sub discourse" of European philosophy and aesthetics. The "sub discourse" was predominantly characterised by the elevation of writing, the outward manifestation of reason, as the "principal measures" of black people and their potential for advancement¹⁷. Sir Francis Bacon, on the other hand, looked to the arts as the ultimate yardstick of a race's place in nature. According to Bacon, the differences between the lives of civilised and savage nations resulted not from the land, the climate, or the race but rather from the arts. A few years later, Peter Heylyn, who was mentioned by Gates, said that Black Africans have "little Wit" and "lack completely" the application of reason. Learning to read and write was strictly the domain of the master on the one hand, and was against the law for a slave on the other. Literacy, the mastery of reading and writing, was closely associated with political rights, and writing was converted into a commodity. The relationship between liberty and communication was clear to see. By 1705, the Dutch explorer William Bosman had turned Peter Heylyn's prejudice into a belief system, the conviction that, given the choice by God, blacks had chosen gold while whites in Europe

and America had chosen the other option, which is the ability to read and write. God also said that black people shall always be white people's slaves as retribution for their greed⁹⁹.

According to Gates, David Hume is responsible for endorsing Enlightenment philosophical reasoning and lending support to Bosman's story. In a piece of writing by Hume that Gates also criticised, Hume said that black people were clearly of a lower order than white people and that one sign of this difference in "nature" was that black people lacked access to the arts and sciences¹⁷. Gates thought it was predictable how rigid Hume's viewpoint had become. According to Gates, in an essay from 1764 titled "Observations on the Feelings of the Beautiful and the Sublime," Kant extrapolated from Hume's remarks to assert that there is a fundamental difference in intellectual ability between black and white races, directly linking having a black skin tone to having no common sense. Kant based his claims on black people's lack of published literature. Thomas Jefferson's assessment was hardly any more helpful. He said that he had never before discovered that a black person had expressed an idea that went beyond simple oral storytelling. He passionately refuted the idea that black people could write poetry. Gates also summarises Hegel's criticisms of the paucity of black history and literature in an all-too-brief manner. Gates notes that Hegel was emulating Hume and Kant, and that all of these authors held the belief that there is a "absence of memory," or communal, cultural memory, among black people.

Gates skillfully outlines the linkages between reason, writing, history, and humanity stated or indicated by these philosophers, from Vico to Hegel, when he claims that without orthography, the workings of reason and intellect would not find a way to be communicated to the outer world. He goes on to assert that history will cease to exist once memory and the intellect are absent, and that humanity will cease to exist altogether once history is absent^{16,17}. Gates notes a shift in the visibility of race as a concept in twentieth-century literature and

theory, away from Taine's "race, moment, and milieu" and towards the New Critical focus on the "language of the text," where race was bracketed or suspended along with other purportedly "extrinsic" features. The Anglo-American was the fortress in which Taine's standards sought shelter, according to Gates, but it continued to be latent in concepts of "canonical cultural texts that comprise the Western tradition in Eliot's simultaneous order." In other words, the Anglo-America is a body of literature whose writers claim to have shared a 'common culture' derived from both the Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian traditions. Therefore, even this reductive formalism, which ostensibly excluded information not accessible in the text "itself," was predicated on a canon, a "republic of literature," whose society was entirely white and often male. In the writings of Southern Agrarians/New Critics like I, Gates finds racism. Allen Tate and A. Richards¹⁷.

According to Gates, claims that Anglo-African literature didn't exist (from the Renaissance forward) led to the development of the genre. The early slave narratives drew on the same tropes associating blackness with silence, such as the trope of the "talking book" (where a book is seen as "talking" only to whites and as being urged to speak to blacks), because the need to record an authentic black voice as evidence of the blacks' humanity was so fundamental to the emergence of the black literary corpus. According to Gates, these stories made up the first black series of texts, which impliedly alluded to another chain known as the "metaphorical Great Chain of Being. Simply by producing memoirs that critiqued the established order of Western society, these authors were subtly criticising the chain's figure. In a series of inquiries, Gates aims to understand how the black subject articulates a complete and adequate self in a language where being black denotes absence. As it addresses the text of Western letters in a voice that "speaks English," he further wonders whether writings by black people can actually make, mark, or mask the blackness of the black face. In a similar vein, he seeks to confront the use of theory by black critics, a subject that is only briefly

covered in this essay. In order to uncover the hidden power and knowledge linkages behind ordinary and academic uses of the term "race," Gates contends that it is essential to reread the ideas of difference embedded in the trope of race. He argues that using modern critical theories to explain these ways of inscribing racial difference would help to demystify complex and opaque ideological relationships as well as theory itself¹⁷.

Gates provides a more in-depth account of his own engagement with contemporary European and American literary theories and his use of these in analysing black literary traditions in the Introduction to his classic, *Figures in Black*, which is arguably the most succinct statement of his overall endeavour as a black critic. He also places his endeavour within the broader historical development of African-American literary criticism. Making use of a phrase used by Levi-Strauss and Derrida, Gates freely admits that he engages in "a sort of critical bricolage," or making do with the materials already at hand—materials that may have been created initially for different purposes—rather than beginning from scratch. Gates is concerned about whether black critics can "escape a mockingbird relation to theory, one destined to be derivative" and mechanically imitative because of this very requirement (as it is obviously impossible to start over). His argument is that much of the Western intellectual legacy is rooted in racism. Are we not justified in having doubts about a debate in which Africans are used as symbols of absence? Can black critics "escape the supposed racism of so many theorists of criticism, from David Hume and Immanuel Kant through the Southern Agrarians later known as the New Critics"? The conundrum is similar to one posed by many feminists and other oppressed groups: Can the oppressed ever stop using the oppressor's language, preserving the fundamental ideas and expansive worldview it contains? Can the language of marginal groups even be articulated in Derridean terms without referencing the syntax and lexicon of the places of dominance and power? When describing how certain black critics (like many female critics) vigorously oppose the union of logocentrism and

ethnocentrism in much of Western aesthetic discourse, Gates used Derridean language. However, Gates points out that other black critics did not consider the racism of the Western critical tradition to be an adequate excuse for our inability to theorise about our own work. He also notes a resurgence in interest in theory brought on by the realisation that careful textual reading has been heavily "repressed" in African-American literary criticism, necessitating an examination of the black text's basic language¹⁷.

In contrast to just applying theory, Gates describes his personal use of it as a practise of change. He claimed to have developed a method for transforming black writings into a new rhetorical domain rather than applying modern literary ideas to them. One might presume that "these" has an intentionally unclear antecedent. The ideas and the texts will both be "transformed," then. According to Gates, only through such critical activity can the "profession"—which is presumably the profession of black criticism—reengineer itself far from a Eurocentric notion of a hierarchical canon of texts, which is primarily composed by white, Western, and male authors. This will enable the profession to support and encourage a truly comparative and pluralistic notion of the institution of literature. According to Gates, using theory to understand the language of a black text is an effort to respect the authority of tradition and the black work of art and to produce better meaning structures than are otherwise conceivable. The challenge for an Afro-American literature critic, according to Gates, is to translate literary theory into the black idiom, renaming principles of criticism when necessary but especially when naming indigenous black principles of criticism and using these to explain our own texts ¹⁷. This is how Gates summarises this overall endeavour.

Gates claims that in order to problematize the works of black literature, he drew on variations of formalism, structuralism, and post-structuralism. In essence, he wanted people to read the book as a literary framework rather than just as a record of black experience. According to

Gates, there are four stages that roughly correspond to his own development and can be used to chart the relationship between the development of African-American criticism and contemporary literary theory: the first was the "Black Aesthetic" phase; the second was a phase of "Repetition and Imitation"; the third was "Repetition and Difference"; and, finally, "Synthesis"^{16,17}.

The Black Aesthetic theorists of the first stage attempted both to resurrect "lost" black texts and to formulate a "genuinely black" aesthetic, and were persistently concerned with the fact that except there is writing, there could exist no repeatable sign of the workings of reason and by extension of mind. Without memory or mind, there could exist no history. Without history, there could exist no 'humanity,' as defined consistently from Vico to Hegel¹⁸.

Gates notes a shift in the way race is seen in literature and theory from the 20th century, away from Tame's "race, moment, and milieu" and towards the New Critical emphasis on the "language of the text." Race was bracketed or suspended, much as other purportedly "extrinsic" characteristics were. However, it was still part of the concept of "canonical cultural works that form the Western heritage in Eliot's contemporaneous order. Gates observes that the Anglo-Americans served as a haven for Tame's standards. In general, this refers to a body of literature whose writers are said to have shared a "common culture" derived from both Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian traditions. This means that even this reductive formalism, which claimed to omit information not legible in the text "itself," was predicated on a canon, a "republic of literature" whose people were exclusively white and most often male. In the writings of Southern Agrarians and New Critics like I. A. Richards and Allen Tate, Gates identifies and denounces instances of racial injustice.

According to Gates, claims that Anglo-African literature did not exist (up until the Renaissance) led to the development of the genre. The earliest slave narratives drew upon the

same tropes associating blackness with silence, such as the trope of the "talking book" (wherein a book is seen as "talking" only to whites and as being urged to speak to blacks). This need to record an authentic black voice as evidence of the blacks' humanity was crucial to the origin of the black literary tradition. Such stories, according to Gates, made up the very first black chain of literature, which signified implicitly another chain, the metaphorical Great Chain of Being, because the authors were invoking the chain's figure simply by publishing autobiographies that critiqued the established order of Western culture. The first of Gates' questions concerns how the black subject articulates a complete and sufficient self in a language where blackness is a sign of absence. The second concerns whether writing can conceal the blackness of the black face that addresses the text of Western letters in a voice that "speaks English" due to the very "difference" it creates and marks. Such inquiries often focus on how black critics employ theory, a subject that is only briefly covered in this article. In order to expose the covert relations of power and knowledge inherent in common and academic uses of the term "race," Gates continues, it is essential to problematize the ideas of difference inscribed in the trope of race and to take discourse itself as our common subject in Africa, both at home and in the diaspora. He argues that by using modern theories of critique to explain these inscriptional techniques (of racial difference), it is possible to demystify complex ideological relationships and even theory itself.

Gates provides a more in-depth account of his interaction with modern European and American literary theories and how he used them to analyse black literary traditions in the Introduction to his book *Figures in Black*, which is probably the most succinct statement of his overall endeavour as a black critic. He also places his endeavour within the larger historical development of African-American literary criticism. Making use of a phrase used by Levi-Strauss and Derrida, Gates freely admits that he engages in "a sort of critical bricolage," or making do with the materials already at hand—materials that may have been

created initially for different purposes—rather than beginning from scratch. Gates questions if black critics can ever transcend a mockingbird connection to theory, one that is bound to be derivative and mechanically imitative, despite the fact that it is obviously impossible to start again. His argument is that much of the Western intellectual legacy is rooted in racism. The question arises, however, as to whether black critics genuinely possess the tools necessary to circumvent the purported racism of so many critics' ideas, ranging from David Hume and Immanuel Kant to the Southern Agrarians (later referred to as the New Critics). Is it not reasonable for us to be wary of a language in which black people are seen as symbols of nonexistence? The problem is similar to the ones that many feminists and other marginalised groups have proposed. Is it feasible that one must demand that the oppressed continue using the oppressor's language without preserving the fundamental ideas and big-picture worldview it contains? Can the language of marginal groups even be articulated in Derridean terms without referencing the syntax and lexicon of the centres of dominance and power? When describing how some black critics—like many female critics—resist the basic concept of theory, Gates uses Derridean language. However, this resistance is a constructive response to the way that most Western aesthetic discourse combines logocentrism with ethnocentrism. Gates points out, however, that many other black critics did not share his opinion that the Western critical tradition's discriminatory nature was an adequate excuse for our inability to theorise about our own activity. He also notes a resurgence in theoretical interest brought on by the realisation that careful textual reading has been "repressed" in African American literary criticism; as a result, much theory is motivated by a desire to examine "the very language of the black text."

In contrast to just applying theory, Gates describes his personal use of it as a practise of change. He made an effort to apply modern literary ideas to black writings while also attempting to alter them by recasting them in a different rhetorical context. The antecedent of

"these" is assumed to be intentionally unclear, meaning that both the theories and the texts will be "transformed." Gates believes that only through such critical activity will the "profession—which is presumably the profession of black criticism—be able to reengineer itself away from a Eurocentric notion of a hierarchical canon of texts, which is largely composed by white, Western, and male authors, and foster and sustain a truly comparative and pluralistic notion of the institution of literature¹⁹. In order to value the integrity and tradition of the black work of art on the one hand and to create deeper meaning structures than are otherwise feasible, Gates emphasises the need to apply theory to investigate the language of a black text. In summarising this overall endeavour, Gates suggests that the challenge for an Afro-American literature critic is to translate literary theory into the black idiom, renaming critical principles as necessary, but particularly indigenous black critical principles, and using these to explicate our own texts¹⁹.

Gates claims that in order to defamiliarize the black text, he drew on variations of formalism, structuralism, and post-structuralism. He wanted readers to see the work as "a structure of literature" as opposed to just a plain account of black experience. According to Gates, the progression of African-American critique and modern literary theory can be mapped out in four phases, which roughly correlate to his personal progression. The "Black Aesthetic" phase came initially, followed by "Repetition and Imitation" and "Repetition and Difference" phases, and ultimately "Synthesis"^{18, 19}.

The first generation of Black Aesthetic theorists focused on the form and purpose of black literature in relation to the broader political fight for Black Freedom. They also aimed to revive "lost" black writings and develop a "genuinely black" aesthetic. Gates claims that the focus he placed on the "language of the text," a hitherto suppressed issue in African-American criticism, was his own radical invention. His involvement with formalism and

structuralism sparked the second stage of his growth, "Repetition and Imitation." After seeing that a more critical approach to theory was necessary, Gates' work entered the "Repetition and Difference" stage, when he used theory to understand black texts while simultaneously subtly criticising the theory itself. The last phase of Gates' work, "Synthesis," entailed a continuous focus on the black language as a source field for situating an Afro-American critique theory that was both self-contained and connected to other current theories^{18, 19}.

According to Gates, examining the relationship between a black book and its "critical field" entails developing an implicit theory of the genesis and character of Afro-American literature. This theory, which is put forth in the current book and elsewhere, basically holds that black literature has been produced as a defiant response to and counter-exemplification of claims that the absence of a black literary tradition denotes the black person's inherent mental inferiority to the European since its origins in the seventeenth century, at least through the New Negro Renaissance of the 1980s. Black writers, who have been stereotyped as stupid and unfeeling, have tried to "write themselves into existence" by telling their own stories in order to establish a sense of self that exists primarily in words; the language that had previously marked them as nonexistent was now used to declare their presence.

However, it may be argued that these actions tacitly embrace the racist words and function within the racist worldview that is allegedly under discussion, essentially building a literary legacy in reaction to claims of its absence. As Gates has previously hinted, such unintentional collaboration results in a "dead end." In an article from 1988 titled "Talking Black: Critical Signs of the Times," Gates describes the intellectual development of the nineteenth-century pan-Africanist Alexander Crummell. Crummell, who fell victim to the "tragic lure of white power," never lost the conviction that learning the master's language was the only way for black people to advance into civilised society, enjoy intellectual freedom, and achieve social

equality. Nevertheless, Gates insists that his fellow black critics redefine theory from within their own black cultures, refusing to accept the racist premise that theory is something that only white people do while also warning Crummell against the error of accepting the empowering language of white critical theory as ultimate. He asserts that although critical theory belongs to all of us, critics are also descended from the black vernacular critical tradition. According to Gates, black critics must use their unique black structures of thinking and emotion to create their own languages of critique, employing the black language to firmly establish their ideas. The only way for those critics to avoid the prospect that utilising theory could just be another type of intellectual indenture, a mental slavery, is by donning the enabling mask of blackness and speaking that discourse, the language of black difference¹⁸.

While it might be argued that the parameters of Gates' investigation tend to some extent to reinforce the subordination of black critique to the languages of contemporary critical theory, the question of what sort of language is accessible to black critics is one that is really problematic and is addressed in these writings. For instance, referring to the "language of black difference" essentially transposes a hypostatization of difference itself into the field of black studies. Why base an "alternative" language on a metaphor that is often abstract even in its own context? Gates uses the word "theory" as if studying "it" would instantly restock black studies. But contemporary ideas don't all use the same terminology, and their claims and discoveries often diverge significantly. The recently favoured idea of "difference" is essentially the most recent reification promoted by late capitalism's aesthetics; as it is used by many current theorists, it is severed from its philosophical past and its relationship to the idea of identity. Why should the project of black criticism embrace these categories, which date all the way back to Aristotle (who was both a slave owner and a proponent of slavery)?¹⁹.

Why even mention them as a place to start? Even if using the "master's" language for one's own purposes may be the only option, we may start from a place that is more meaningful than the meaningless and overused abstraction of pure "difference." At the level of theoretical reflection, doing this successfully simulates Cromwell's tactic of adopting the master's clichés and critical vernacular in response to the major Enlightenment assertions about blacks. To be fair to Gates, he does a good job of articulating the issues with any critical application of so-called "theory." And he uses local African idioms and customs to influence his own endeavour.

In essence, it should be noted that the post- in postcolonial, as widely explained by its theorists, does not necessarily mean after (as to have the syntactic notion of after-colonial), but it is an arbitrary construct that expresses a continuum - nonetheless heavily semantically punctuated by the colonial as its prime essence. Aside from the simplistic view that postcolonial theory is a collection of responses by former colonised peoples to their recurrent or protracted colonial experiences in the form of narratives, poetry, treatises, dramas and dialectics. Literary critics have conceived the theory in a variety of ways. Their ideas can be classified as belonging to one of two paradigms: positive or negative. From a utopian/positive perspective, postcolonial theory is a tool of resistance through which any exploitation and discriminating practices, irrespective of time and location, can be challenged¹⁸. Postcolonial philosophy, on the other hand, is often seen as nebulous, cynical, and mystical by sceptics. The idealistic view point or positive view is grounded in activism, with the Imperial power vociferously writing back to right the wrongs of the past and contemporary time¹⁸. Within the geopolitical boundaries of East and West, North and South, postcolonial viewpoints develop from colonial testimony of Third World countries and discourses of "minorities." They intervene in modernity's ideological discourses that aim to offer a hegemonic "normality" to

'nations', 'tribes', communities', and 'peoples' uneven development and heterogeneous, often disadvantaged histories^{17, 18}.

Far beyond other 'post-' terms, 'post-colonial' is a highly sensitive historical and geographical term that draws attention to a whole epoch in the relationship between the West and the developing world, an epoch that played a key role in institutionalizing and strengthening the metro pole-periphery, center-margin dichotomy. We are speaking about a term that conjures up images of gunboats and mortars, conquests and dominions, a term whose 'name' and meaning are laden with historical baggage and modern worries¹⁶.

In contrast to the positive viewpoint of postcolonial theory, those who oppose it claim that it lacks capacity to produce understandable and coherent ideas^{17, 18}. Aside this it has also been rejected by others because it is seen as foreign to formal colonised homelands¹⁹. Worthy of note is the fact that though postcolonial theory seeks to correct the wrongs of colonialism, it has become trapped in imperialism itself^{18, 19}. Notwithstanding the plethora of controversies surrounding the original proponents of postcolonial theory, it has become effective in the studying analysing and understanding literary constructs by formal colonised persons. It has successfully challenged and refuted colonialism, not only that it has been growing and is still growing significantly with a large corpus of exponents, scholars and theorists interacting with it globally¹⁹.

Post-colonial criticism embraces a number of aims: most significantly, to re-evaluate the narrative of colonialism from the view point of the colonised: to determine the economic, political, and cultural impact of colonialism on both the colonised peoples and the colonizing powers; to analyse the process of decolonization; and most importantly, to participate in the goals of political liberation, which includes equal access to material wealth, contestation of all forms of domination, and the articulation of political and cultural identities¹⁹. While the

early voices of anti-colonialism emphasized the need to evolve or return to home grown literary traditions in order to redeem their cultural heritage from imperial domination, other voices advocated an adaptation of Western ideas for their own cultural and political ends¹⁹. Furthermore, while the early anti colonial authors like Ngugi Wa Thiong O' chose to write in their own mother tongues others like Chinua Achebe have creatively incorporated items from the African milieu into colonialist languages as English, French among others^{18,19}.

A large number of African Playwrights including Ahmed Yerima have continued to follow the example of the likes of Soyinka and Achebe by their creative use of myths and African legends. In essence, almost all post-colonial plays have made a transition of using primarily African forms, which they have supplemented with Western-derived influences^{19, 20 &21}. Part of the endeavours of postcolonial literary criticism is to examine the relationship between differentiation in culture and literary constructions. In other words, one of the focal points of post colonialist studies is to determine the influence of social, political, economic and cultural and historical experiences on literatures of the formal colonised people²¹. Significant in its purpose is the attempt and actual undermining of the universalist claims once made on behalf of literature by the imperialists²¹. A psychiatrist from Martinique has been credited to be the father of post-colonial criticism when he opines in his classic that the most strategic way for the colonised people to possess a voice and identity is for them to reclaim their historic and cultural heritage while the second most important step is for them to erase the imperialist ideology through which their heritage has been degraded²¹. It is reported that the purpose of the postcolonial criticism is to confront and challenge colonial construction about Africa^{19,20,21}.

Being a specialised theory, Postcolonial theory has a myriad of terms and terminologies which have been variously extensively discussed^{20, 21}.

2.3 Postcolonialism in African Literature

Experiencing colonialism has altered the lives of well over 70% of the world's people²². Essentially, both imperialism and neo-imperialism have contaminated and refocused human history. Though the concept of imperialism dates back to the dawn of human civilisation, it was only in the second half of the nineteenth century that it became widely recognized²³. Imperialism gets its name from the Latin term *imperium*, which can signify power, authority, command, dominion, realm, and empire. In other words, imperialism refers to a powerful nation's strategic mode of extending its control, dominance, and influence by subjugating other states²⁴. Imperialism's closest synonym is colonialism. Old empires like the ancient Romans, the Indian Moguls, and the Ottomans are some of the few recorded ones²⁴. Since we have noted that imperialism is as old as humans²³. One is now left with a question of what could have inspired human minds with the desire to dominate others²⁴. This study did not set out to provide answer to the question.

It does, however, seek to locate, among other things, postcolonial themes in Ahmed Yerima's Drama. Historians have documented the single longest period of colonialism between 1450 and 1950²⁵. This documented European nations' imperial occupation of various parts of the world. All of Africa, India, the West and East Indies, and the Americas were colonised²⁶. Despite the fact that Italy, Portugal, France, and other countries were involved in the scramble for Africa at the time, Britain appeared to be the largest imperialist of the era. Unquestionably, postcolonial theory/literature is an attempt by formal colonised nations, particularly those colonised by Britain, to document their experience prior to, during, and after colonialism through prose narratives, poetry, drama, music, and dance, among other modes. Thus, this section of the work seeks to review postcolonial theory, which will be used to analyse the selected plays written by Ahmed Yerima. This section of the study is an

exposition of postcolonial theory. It investigates the theory in light of what scholars have said and are saying about it.

2.3.1 New Historicism

New Historicism, which has been severally described as almost the greatest ground-breaking critical movement, came into being existence in 1980¹⁶. It came into being because of the critical philosophy of Stephen Greenblatt a literary critic, theorist and scholar of global standing, who created this exact term New Historicism for the first time with an aim to promulgate new critical approaches for reading the texts of the Renaissance era¹⁶. In other words, despite the fact that German authors like Herder helped launch historicism at the end of the eighteenth century, the movement persisted in the nineteenth century thanks to historians like Dilthey, R.G. Collingwood, Hans Georg Gadamer, Ernst Cassirer, and Karl Mannheim ¹⁷. While literary historians like Sainte-Beuve and Hippolyte Taine made the decision to view literary texts as unquestionably influenced by their historical context, Hegel and Marx, who themselves had an unparalleled impact on historicist thinking, articulated very deliberate historical modes of historical analysis³⁰. There is a plethora of things that we classify as "New." Historicism is not fundamentally new; rather, it is a return to particular analytical focuses that have been fostered by earlier historical traditions³⁰.

New historicism as a critical approach is a disruption of the extreme formal and verbal critical canon and intransigence of close textual analysis of a work at the expense of extrinsic value embedded implicitly in its intrinsic part¹⁶. Unlike, Formalists and Structuralists, New Historicists believe that to pinpoint only linguistic and stylistic features of a piece of writing is to see one side of the coin, whereas a text finds suitable explanation only when the circumstances of its construction are also reviewed³⁰. Essentially, New Historicism is an approach to literary criticism and literary theory which is built on the principle that a literary

work should be considered a creation of its time, place and circumstances of its composition rather than as an isolated production of an individual talent³⁰.

While he was teaching at the University of California, Berkeley, one of the clearest voices of New Historicism, Stephen Greenblatt helped to found a journal called *Representations*, in which some of the earlier important New Historicist criticism appeared. As we have mentioned earlier, however, it was his introduction to *The Power of Forms in the English Renaissance* that spurred the growth of the New Historicism. In this introduction, Greenblatt differentiated what he called the “New Historicism” from both the New Criticism, which views the text as a self-contained structure, and the earlier historicism which was monological and attempted to discover a unitary political vision. Both of these earlier modes of analysis, according to Greenblatt, engaged in a project of uniting disparate and contradictory elements into an organic whole, whether in the text itself or in its historical background the earlier historicism, moreover, viewed the resulting totality or unity as a historical fact rather than the product of interpretation or of the ideological leanings of certain groups. Such a homogenising procedure allows the unified vision of historical context to serve as a fixed point of reference which could form the background of literary interpretation³⁰.

In contrast with this earlier formalism and historicism, the New Historicism questions its own methodological assumptions, and is less concerned with treating literary works as models of organic unity than as “fields of force, places of dissension and shifting interests, occasions for the jostling of orthodox and subversive impulses.” New Historicism also challenges the hierarchical distinction between “literary foreground” and “political background,” as well as between artistic and other kinds of production. It acknowledges that

when we speak of “culture” we are speaking of a “complex network of institutions, practices, and beliefs”³⁰.

Greenblatt elaborated his statements about New Historicism in a subsequent influential essay, “Towards a Poetics of Culture”. He begins by noting that he will not attempt to explain the New Historicism but rather to place it as a practice. What distinguishes it from the positivist historical scholarship of the early twentieth century is its openness to recent theory; Greenblatt remarks that his own critical practice has been informed by Foucault, as well as anthropological and social theory. He proposes to locate this practice in relation to Marxism, on the one hand, and post-structuralism, on the other. Citing passages from the Marxist Fredric Jameson and the post-structuralist Jean-Francois Lyotard, Greenblatt questions the generalisations made about capitalism in each passage. Both writers are addressing the question of the connection between art and society³⁰.

Jameson, seeking to expose the fallaciousness of a separate artistic sphere and to celebrate the materialist integration of all discourses, finds capitalism at the root of the false differentiation; Lyotard, seeking to celebrate the differentiation of all discourses and to expose the fallaciousness of monological unity, finds capitalism at the root of the false integration. History functions in both cases as a convenient anecdotal ornament upon a theoretical structure, and capitalism appears not as a complex social and economic development in the West but as a malign philosophical principle.

Greenblatt further charges that both Jameson and Lyotard are trying to provide a sole, hypothetically acceptable answer to the question of the relation between art and society. Neither of these theorists can come to terms with the apparently contradictory historical effects of capitalism. Jameson treats capitalism as the agent of exploitive discrepancy, and Lyotard treats it as the agent of monological totalisation^{14,16,30}.

In contrast to these reductive theories, Greenblatt advocates a critical practice that would recognise capitalism's production of a powerful and effective vacillation between the establishment of distinct discursive domains and the collapse of those domains into one another. It is this restless alternation that creates the distinct power of capitalism. Greenblatt wishes to move beyond literary criticism's familiar terminology for treating the relationship between art and society: allusion, symbolism, allegory, representation, and mimesis. We need to develop, he urges, terms to describe the ways in which material is transferred from one discursive sphere to another and becomes aesthetic property, a process which is not unidirectional because the social discourse is already charged with aesthetic energies^{29,30}.

The New Historicism is marked by an operational self-consciousness, rather than the old historicist faith in the transparency of signs and interpretative procedures. The New Historicism will view the work of art itself as the product of a set of manipulations, the product of a negotiation between a creator or class of creators, equipped with a complex, communally shared repertoire of conventions, and the institutions and practices of society. The general movement here is away from a mimetic theory of art to an interpretative model that will more adequately account for the unsettling circulation of materials and discourse that is the heart of modern aesthetic practice^{16,17,30}.

There are some problems with Greenblatt's arguments as stated above. To some extent, the allegedly unifying models from which New Historicism would distinguish itself are straw targets. The best New Critics engage in intricate analyses which acknowledge the contradictions and tensions in a given literary text. And the best Marxist critics do not engage in naïve reflectionist theories of the connection between literary or philosophical texts and their historical contexts. Lukacs' *The Young Hegel*, for example, does precisely the opposite, situating Hegel's work within a complex network of economic and political

discourses in a manner that exposes reductive liberal-humanist accounts, treating complex notions such as contradiction and totality on a high intellectual level. Greenblatt's characterisation of what he takes to be the Marxist perspective violates his own New Historicist principles by treating it in isolation: clearly, the statements of a critic such as Fredric Jameson should be taken within the context of a vast tradition of Marxist thinking which has indeed recognised the complex and contradictory nature of capitalism. Jameson's own formulation of a dialectical criticism at the conclusion of his Marxism and form is a highly articulate testimony to the non-reductive and genuinely complex character of his Marxist thought, informed as it is (or was at that time) by Hegelian concepts. In fact, Greenblatt's own characterisation of the distinctive feature of capitalism as the oscillation between totalising and fragmenting tendencies is as reductive as the positions he impugns; moreover, this insight is already contained in the work of previous Marxist thinkers. Finally, there appears to be absent in Greenblatt's formulation of the New Historicism any assessment of its connections with the earlier forms of historicism discussed at the beginning of this chapter. Some theorists' historicism was everything but a belief in the openness of signals and interpretive processes. It should be noted that when Greenblatt refers to the earlier historicism in both of the articles discussed above, he is not thinking of the historicism descended from Hegel or of individuals like Gadamer and Dilthey, but rather of the historical literary scholarship that came before the New Criticism and was carried on in the work of individuals like Dover Wilson. The connections between the earlier lines of historicism (as opposed to positivist historical scholarship, which is anything but positivistic) and Greenblatt's version of historicism remain unformulated in the second article, which, as we have seen, Greenblatt refers to as the positivist historical scholarship of the early twentieth century^{14,30}.

Despite these criticisms, Greenblatt's own books—such as *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* and *Shakespearean Negotiations*—serve as exemplary representations of the critical methodology he promotes. For instance, the earlier book examines the intricate processes by which identity was developed in the sixteenth century amid conflict between a number of organisations, authorities, and ideologies, including political, religious, home, and colonial ones. Additionally, as was already said, New Historicists have fundamentally reevaluated how the Renaissance and other historical eras are seen as a whole. They do this by challenging accepted analytical paradigms and reviving the study of literature within its cultural surroundings. As a result of its refusal to adopt a predetermined set of viewpoints, New Historicism has been particularly valuable because it has drawn on ideas from Marxism, feminism, structuralism, and post-structuralism. In turn, critics from a wide range of viewpoints have used these ideas to challenge New Historicism. The work of Michel Foucault may now be used to investigate some of the core ideas of New Historicism^{14,30}.

Foucault, along with thinkers like Jacques Derrida, had a significant impact on a variety of literary ideas in the later part of the 20th century, including what is often referred to as cultural studies. He had a significant influence on queer theory as well as the Stephen Greenblatt-founded New Historicism. Foucault was the son of a doctor and was born in France. In his first two books, *Madness and Civilization* and *The Birth of the Clinic*, he challenged the institutions of medical practise. *The Order of Things* and *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, two of Foucault's subsequent works, provided a characterization of the growth of knowledge in the modern Western world. These investigations were a corollary to Foucault's examination of power, its execution, and its distribution. In fact, the central theme of most of Foucault's works was the methods with which modern civilization creates and controls human subjects through institutions such as hospitals, prisons, education, and knowledge. The article "What is an Author?" questions and examines the idea of authorship

and, in insights adopted by the New Historicism, argues that analysis of literary texts could not be limited to these texts themselves or to their author's psychology and background but instead needed to take into account the larger contexts and cultural conventions in which texts were produced. In *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison and The History of Sexuality*^{14,17}. Foucault provided in-depth analyses of the institutions of sexuality and imprisonment, respectively.

In the piece titled "What is an Author? In the institution and practise of literary criticism, the idea of the author plays a key role, as noted by Foucault. Foucault observes two trends in current literature that militate against this elevation of the author, and in reality, "man and his work" is a "fundamental critical category." The first is a perspective on writing that is free from the requirement of expression—from the need to articulate the ideas and feelings of a person—and is typified by authors like Brecht. This "reversal," in his words, turns writing into a play of signs that is controlled less by the meaning it conveys than by the signifier itself. At this point, Foucault is starting to sound poststructuralist. The relationship between writing and mortality is the second subject. Writing has historically been thought of as a way to defeat death and achieve immortality by preserving heroic and noble deeds, as in epic tales. But according to Foucault, this idea of writing as a means of avoiding death has been altered by modern civilization. Writing today involves the voluntary erasure of the self and completely effaces the writer's unique features, wiping away all indications of his unique identity. Writing leaves a hole in which the topic vanishes forever.

In large part because of two events, according to Foucault, the implications of Barthes' declaration of the author's demise have not been thoroughly investigated. The first of them is a viewpoint that essentially substitutes the privileged position of the author with an equally privileged status of the work, and it may be ascribed to formalistic, New Critical, and certain

structuralist approaches. According to this viewpoint, criticism is concerned with a work's architectural forms and structural elements, which are examined for their underlying links. However, Foucault contends that any straightforward description of the "work" as a singular thing must be rejected if we are to reject the word "author" as denoting any cohesive entity systematically underlying the text. Does, for instance, a writer's whole body of work qualify as his "work"? Where do we draw the line between a piece of writing that is part of an author's "work" and one that is not?

The second idea that has prevented a thorough investigation of the author's "disappearance" is the idea of *écriture*, or writing, which indicates a signifying system made up of connection and difference and expresses a rejection of the idea of a straightforward, self-contained personality. While acknowledging that this idea is a fairly comprehensive effort to detail the circumstances of any writing, Foucault accuses it of quietly maintaining the author's presence. According to Foucault, this post-structuralist idea of writing just transfers the empirical traits of an author to a transcendental anonymity. The notion that difference, which is so crucial to this concept of writing, is raised to a transcendent position is implicit in Foucault's claim. As a consequence, the idea of writing is elevated to a primal rank, and the play of representations that was formerly condensed into an image of the author is now expanded into a neutral greyness. Thus, the author's privileges essentially return the religious idea of concealed meanings needing interpretation into critique^{14,17}.

We should investigate the void created by the author's removal. According to Foucault, an author's name does more than only serve as a proper name among others; it oscillates between the poles of designation and description. For instance, when we refer to "Aristotle," we are not only referring to a single individual but also to a number of titles, such as the creator of the ontology or the author of the *Analytics*. Shakespeare's name would serve a

different purpose if it were shown that he did not write the sonnets that are credited to him. Therefore, the author's name is more than merely a linguistic component that may serve as a sentence's subject and be replaced by a pronoun. The name has a purpose: it organises texts into categories and establishes connections between them. In a nutshell, an author's job is to describe the presence, spread, and functioning of certain discourses within a society³⁰.

Four key components of the author's function are suggested by Foucault. The first characteristic is its integration with the legal and property systems that governed discourse: speeches and books were given genuine authors to the degree that discourse was deemed offensive. The transgression qualities always inherent to writing became the compelling necessity of literature only when a system of rigorous ownership and copyright laws was created in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The authorial function does not always work uniformly in all speech, which is the second characteristic. For instance, older literature from Western culture, such as fables, folktales, and epics, was accepted without regard for the writers' identities. Only when the author's name was used as a source in the Middle Ages were works that claimed to be scientifically accurate accepted as accurate. But in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, a completely new idea emerged: scientific texts were now accepted on the basis of their merits and their place within a coherent, anonymous system of established truth. As a result, the author's function as a gauge of veracity was no longer relevant. However, literary discourse was only accepted if it included the name of the author as well as the time, place, and circumstances of its composition. Today, literary works are entirely controlled by the author, with the exception of a few fields of study like genre or recurrent textual motifs.

The third property of the author-function is that it is a sophisticated process that aims to create the logical being that we refer to as an author rather than emerge somehow spontaneously. The characteristics of a person that we choose to be important in defining him as an author are psychological projections of our approach to managing texts, always more or less in an intriguing passage. According to Foucault, Christian exegesis has a major influence on the conventional approaches employed by literary criticism to define an author (to ascertain the configuration of the author from existing works). Foucault quotes St. Jerome, a Church Father from the fourth century who created the first Latin translation of the Bible (the Vulgate). A text, for instance, referring to events after the author's death could not be included among his works. Jerome had proposed four criteria for determining the authorship of several texts by the same person: consistency of quality across the works; coherence of doctrine and absence of contradiction between works; consistency of style; and historical congruity. According to Foucault, the methods used by contemporary criticism to define the author are strikingly similar: the author is a principle of unity in writing, necessitating the explanation of any inconsistencies in quality; further, the author serves to resolve the conflicts that arise from a collection of texts; and finally, the author is a specific source of expression that is manifested equally well in a text, in letters, fragments, and draughts.

The fourth and final characteristic of the author function is that it does not bear a simple reference to an actual person who speaks in a given text; obviously, in a novel narrated in the first person, the "I" need not refer directly to the writer but to the "second self." The author-function arises out of the scission, the "division and distance" between these two selves. Furthermore, this phenomenon is not limited to books or poetry; according to Foucault, this plurality of egos characterises every speech that sustains this author-function.

According to Foucault, certain writers, like Homer, Aristotle, and the Church Fathers, hold a trans-discursive position since they created not just books but also ideas or traditions that allowed for the proliferation of new works. But according to Foucault, the nineteenth century gave birth to yet another kind of writer that is different from those who established science or wrote canonical religious works: those who started discursive practises. He claims that Marx and Freud are the best illustrations of such pioneering writers since they both created the limitless potential of discourse. They not only allowed for the adoption of a certain number of notions and parallels by subsequent writings, but they also made room for deviations from their own assumptions. According to Foucault, there is a fundamental distinction between the pioneers of science, who trace all the way back to antiquity, and the solely contemporary thinkers who start conversations. A science's origin is on an equal footing with its subsequent developments, even if the starting act may have been nothing more than the discovery of a single instance of a more widespread phenomenon. A discursive practise's beginning, in contrast, casts a shadow over and is inevitably unconnected to its subsequent growth. A study of Galileo's works, for example, could change our understanding of the history, but not the science, of mechanics; however, a re-examination of the works of Freud or Marx can change our understanding of psychoanalysis or Marxism, respectively. According to Foucault, practitioners of such discourses invariably return to their origins, seeking a refined understanding of the founding texts. Such returns, according to Foucault, tend to strengthen the enigmatic link between an author and his works; they are a crucial component of discursive practise and create a connection between the central and intermediate writers.

In this short article, Foucault proposes that the work he has done might point in a variety of directions. It might serve as the foundation for a typology of speech that would look at more than just the grammatical and logical aspects of talk. Additionally, as the author-function may demonstrate how speech is constructed on the basis of social interactions, it might encourage a historical examination of discourse. Last but not least, the idea of the "subject" should not be completely abandoned but rather reexamined in terms of its purpose and place in discourse. In fact, the subject has to be deconstructed from its creative function and examined as a nuanced and changing discourse function. The author-function is only one of several potential subject descriptions, according to Foucault. He maintains that it is simple to envision a society in which conversation will spread without the necessity of a creator. Conversations would take place in pervasive anonymity. Rather than the tiresome queries who is the genuine author? And do we have evidence of his uniqueness and authenticity? We will continue to obnoxiously ponder issues such as, "What are the modes of existence of this discourse?" As well as inquiring into its origins, sources of control, and potential positions for the subject within it. The idea of "discourse" is joyfully evoked in his own book as the new throne of the transcendental³⁰. Foucault is precariously perched on the exact abyss at whose edge he imagined Derrida's concept of writing.

In the first section of *The History of Sexuality*, titled "We the Other Victorians," Foucault critiques the traditional "repressive hypothesis," which holds that sexual speech and practise still often displayed some frankness at the start of the seventeenth century. But after his "bright day" came the "monotonous nights of the Victorian bourgeoisie," when sex was constrained within the heterosexual bedroom for reproductive reasons and sexuality was restricted to the home. The claim is that "Modern Puritanism" enforced its three commandments of taboo, nonexistence, and silence. According to Foucault, this explanation of contemporary sexual repression first seems to be accurate: suppression is timed to

coincide with the growth of capitalism, becoming a crucial component of the bourgeois order. The underlying rationale behind this is that sexual activity, which involves losing oneself in pleasure, is incompatible with the need for widespread and intense effort. Foucault responds that his understanding of the relationship between sex and power as one of repression is supported by the chance it affords us to speak out against the oppressive forces at play and to engage in a (professional) discourse about sex. The grandiloquence of a language that claims to expose the truth about sex, alter its economics within reality, undermine the law that rules it, and alter its trajectory has thus been combined with this purported suppression. The two phenomena, repression and discourse, reinforce one another, according to Foucault³⁰.

Doubts are raised concerning the historical accuracy of this repressive theory, the relationship between power and repression, and the involvement of the sexuality discourse in the act of repression itself, according to Foucault. He clarifies that his goal is to place the repressive theory into a larger economy of discourses about sex in contemporary society, not to disprove it. He wants to identify the system of knowledge, power, and pleasure that supports the conversation about human sexuality. His own argument is that, rather than being subject to a process of restriction since the end of the sixteenth century, the discourse on sexuality has instead been subject to a mechanism of increasing incitement; that the methods of power used to exercise control over sex have not adhered to a principle of rigorous selection but rather one of disseminating and implanting polymorphous sexualities; and that the desire for knowledge has persisted in creating a science of sexuality.

Foucault's main premise is that bourgeois society did not reject sex but rather activated a vast apparatus for creating authentic discourses about it. It also aims to define the universal reality of sex. The goal was to include sex in an organised system of knowledge and a

pleasure economy. Sex, by telling the truth about itself, reveals to us the hidden truth about who we are and how it contributed to the formation of the subject. The science of the topic has, in fact, centred on the sex issue. The spread of sex discourse has been specifically crafted to meet the needs of power. According to Foucault, the search for who we are has brought us to sex in the last several centuries—to sex as history, as meaning, and as discourse. The West effectively annexed sex to a field of rationality after being immersed in binary oppositions (body/soul, flesh/spirit, instinct/reason) that relegated sex to irrationality and brought us almost entirely—our bodies, our minds, our individuality, our history—under the sway of a logic of concupiscence and desire. This reasoning gives us the "master key" to who we are since it views sex as the foundation of our psyche and reproduction as the very process of life^{14,30}.

In his declaration on power, which serves as the foundation for his arguments on sexuality, Foucault makes his understanding of power clear. He denies the "juridical-discursive" concept of power that is commonly held. This idea of authority is seen as blatantly restricted and authoritarian since it is primarily legalistic, founded on the declaration of the law and taboo. According to Foucault, such a notion of power, which derives from the evolution of monarchical authority and the idea of right, ignores the very factors that make power so powerful and widely accepted. He contends that new forms of authority function by technique rather than by legislation, by normalisation rather than punishment, and by control rather than by right. Power also has to conceal at least some of itself in order to work properly. According to Foucault, power is not a collection of structures and procedures that guarantee the submission of the populace of a certain state. Additionally, it is neither a strategy for repression nor a generalised kind of dominance exercised by one group over another. These are only the final configurations that power may take. The basic presence of a central point, or a single source of sovereignty from which subsidiary and descendent forms

might emerge, is neither necessary nor sufficient as a source of authority. Power is also not something that can be acquired, taken, or distributed. Furthermore, the fundamental conflict between rulers and the ruled is neither binary nor all encompassing^{14,30}.

So what is it? In the first place, according to Foucault, power must be understood as the variety of force relations that are inherent in the domain in which they arise and that form their own organisation, as the support that these force relations find in one another, thereby forming a chain or system, and finally as the tactics by which they are implemented. Power, according to Foucault, is everywhere, not because it encompasses everything but rather because it originates from everywhere. It is only the overall result of all of these mobilisations. Foucault's seeming decoupling of political agency from the workings of power would be criticised by a traditional Marxist analysis. But he describes power structures as purposeful and objective. He accepts the fact that no authority is ever used without a set of goals and objectives. However, this does not imply that it is the consequence of a particular subject's decision or choice. He also acknowledges that where there is power, there is also resistance, but that opposition is never outside of power. Foucault emphasises that there is no one site of tremendous resistance, no rebellious spirit, no origin of all rebellions, and no unadulterated revolutionary law. Instead, there are several resistances, each of which is unique. Only the strategic realm of power relations is capable of supporting these resistances. However, this does not imply that they will always lose, according to Foucault. Although Foucault acknowledges that there are sometimes significant radical ruptures, they tend to be transient and movable points of resistance that have the effect of causing cleavages in a society, shattering unities, and causing regroupings. The sites of resistance cut through social strata and personal links, much as power relations weave a "dense web" via apparatuses and institutions. A tactical codification of these places of resistance is what makes revolution possible³⁰.

In essence, new historicism is an approach to literary analysis that considers the historical context of a piece. Since New Historicism just reflects a return to certain analytical attempts made possible by earlier traditions of historicism, the concept is not fundamentally new. All systems of thinking, all phenomena, all institutions, all works of art, and all literary texts must be located within a historical context. This is the most strategic of New Historicism's objectives and traits. In other words, historical writings or phenomena cannot be isolated from history and studied independently of history. According to New Historicists, the form and substance of texts are dictated by their unique historical conditions as well as by their unique placement in time and space. As a result, we cannot apply the same presumptions and methodologies to Soyinka's analysis that we do to Shakespeare's because their social, political, and economic contexts will have a significant impact on how they view truth, art, and politics and how their works will ultimately be interpreted by readers. To put it another way, literature must be understood in the framework of culture as a whole as well as in the settings of other discourses spanning politics, religion, and aesthetics³⁰.

A second characteristic of historicism is the belief that history sometimes operates in accordance with observable rules, providing predictability and explanatory capacity. Hegel's and Marx's ideas are particularly prominent in this regard. The idea that civilizations and cultures separated in time have different values and beliefs gives rise to a third issue: how can the historian 'know' the past? How can the historian go over her own worldview's limitations and wide range of presumptions and ideas to develop an empathic knowledge of a different culture? How can we resist imposing our own cultural biases, as well as our own goals and objectives, on writings that have been historically alien to us?

Numerous historicism proponents have provided numerous solutions to this conundrum. They propose a distinction between "meaning," which includes what the author meant or

intended by his specific use of language, and "significance," which includes the subjective evaluation of the text according to the values and beliefs of the critic. Their positions aspire to be "objectivist," effectively denying the historical and context-bound nature of knowledge. They went on to suggest the idea of "horizonfusion," in which we both accept that what we refer to as the "text" is really the result of a tradition of interpretation (with no "original" meaning) and that our own viewpoint is influenced by the same history we are trying to evaluate. By acknowledging these constraints, we may start to empathetically blend our own cultural worldview with that of the text³⁰.

A historical view of texts as culturally and socially determined, which places less emphasis on authorial intention and agency, can easily result from the historical interpretation conundrum. On the one hand, this view denies history any constitutive role in the formation of texts. Therefore, many twentieth-century views, like Russian Formalism and New Criticism, are in opposition to the fundamental principles of historicism. The aim of structuralism is the synchronic study of language and literature, which is generally ahistorical. However, structuralism differs from rigorous formalism in that it places the literary text into the larger code, sign systems, and registers of other discourses rather than isolating it. Its goals are consistent with historicism in this regard. Additionally, certain structuralism adaptations place a high historical emphasis on language's role as an ideological phenomenon. Hermeneutics and reader-response theory, which are obligated to take into account the multiple interpretations that a book could have for the readers of distinct historical periods have been influenced by historicism in the process³⁰.

The New Historicism which arose in the 1980s was a vehement reaction against both the formalists' view of literary text as somehow autonomous and Marxists views which ultimately related texts to the economic infrastructure. It saw literary text not as somehow

unique but a kind of discourse situated within a complex of cultural discourses- religious, political, economic, aesthetic- which both shaped it and, in their turn, were shaped by it. If there was anything new about this procedure, it was its insistence, drawn from Foucault and poststructuralism, that 'history' itself is a text, an interpretation, and that there is no single history. It also rejected any notion of historical progress or teleology, and broke away from any literary historiography based on the study of genres and figures, in the same way, the 'culture' in which New Historicism situated literary texts was itself regarded as a textual construct. Therefore, New Historicism refused to accord any kind of unity or homogeneity to history or culture, viewing both as harbouring networks of contradictory, competing, and unreconciled forces and interests³⁰.

Perhaps the most well-known way that Foucault influenced the New Historicism was his 'super structural' contextualization, which saw history itself viewed as a discourse and a text rather than as a literary and cultural phenomenon. In fact, Foucault's vocabulary of power, which is seen as acting in diffuse and heterogeneous ways without obvious appurtenance to any specific agency, triumphed over the language of economics. As a consequence, New Historicists tended to see literature as one discourse among many other cultural discourses, insisting on interacting with the whole complex locally and refusing to make categorical generalisations or declare a firm political position. As literary theorists, New Historicists have come under fire for their presumed ideological ambiguity and political quiescence, as well as for unquestioningly adopting Foucault's nebulous and nonspecific idea of power that floats outside of political and financial agency³⁰. Additionally, they are criticised for their arbitrary connections between literary works and other cultural discourses. Despite these reservations, New Historicism has maintained a significant influence since the 1980s and may have contributed to a much more widespread concern among formerly liberal-humanist and New Critical academics with the larger cultural patterns and forces within which literature operates.

This is possibly because it seems to open the possibility of accommodating social context from a non-committed perspective.

The apparent philosophical indefiniteness of the New Historicists may be questioned, as can their unthinking acceptance of Foucault's rather abstract and disembodied idea of power that floats outside of political and economic activity. They have also been charged with using arbitrary criteria for connecting literary works to other cultural discourses in their research. Despite these reservations, however, New Historicism has had a significant impact since the 1980s and has possibly contributed to a more pervasive concern among formally liberal humanists and New Critical academics with the larger cultural pattern and forces within which literature operates. This is perhaps because it seems to open the possibility of accommodating social context from a non-committed perspective. Having said that, it is passionately interested in both placing literary works within power structures and seeing them as playing a significant role in power struggles between different social and political authorities³⁰.

Significantly, many New Historicist critics have embraced literature's revolutionary potential. Using Raymond Williams's terminology, some in Britain in particular have referred to themselves as "cultural materialists"³⁰. This runs counter to Renaissance literature and ideas. Greenblatt's work also focused on this specific time frame. In groundbreaking books like *Radical Tragedy*, critics like Jonathan Dollimore proceeded to reevaluate Shakespeare's work and those of his contemporaries³⁰. These works reject critical orthodoxies like art ordering the chaos of reality, essentialist and providentialist readings of texts, the Bradleyian notion of tragedy as Hegelian reconciliation, the criterion of coherence whereby discontinuity is viewed as artistic failure, and acknowledging the increasingly historical and ideological functions of drama.

The liberal-humanist idea that Shakespeare is a timeless, all-knowing genius was also contested in the book *Political Shakespeare*, edited by Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield. Instead, the political significance of William Shakespeare's writings is highlighted, covering a wide variety of topics including the subversion of power, sexuality, and colonialism, as well as contemporary receptions and appropriations of Shakespeare in theatre, cinema, and education¹⁰⁰. A potent re-evaluation of the New Historicism was developed in *Alternative Shakespeares*, which was released in 1985 and included a variety of writers. Challengers of the liberal-humanist language of character analysis, artistic coherence, and harmony included Catherine Belsey, Terence Hawkes, Jacqueline Rose, John Drakakis, and Francis Barker. These researchers highlighted the ways in which Shakespeare's plays build meaning, develop the human subject, and interact with more significant structural and ideological concerns by drawing on a wide variety of ideas, including psychoanalysis, structuralism, Marxism, and feminism^{14,30}.

In conclusion, these research projects have not only challenged popular perceptions of the Renaissance but also shown how questions presented in the context of the Renaissance have ramifications for theory itself. For instance, any effort to portray the culture of any era as a homogenous or cohesive entity was seen to be undermined by the intricacy of the cultural processes of the Renaissance. Jerome McGann and other critics have extended New Historical concerns to other historical eras, like Romanticism. Now, it is possible to examine some of the key New Historicism beliefs as they are expressed in two significant declarations by Stephen Greenblatt and as they are put into practise by the person who may have had the most impact on this critical disposition, Michael Foucault^{14,17 30}.

In practice, New historicists consider any texts as cultural construct, which belong to other disciplines of knowledge. This suggests that text is rooted in cultural heritages because it is a

cultural concept³⁰. Moreover, New Historicism seeks a historicisation of text and then ascribes sufficient significance to the cultural context of its construction, meaning, influence, its interpretation and scrutiny³⁰. In essence, a literary production is formed and realised in cultural circumstances, not in vacuum. New Historicists again points out that New Historical critical approach emphasis what they term the political reading of the text because any texts, according to them, apart from being a cultural construct, reveals political, social, religious and economic conditions of the given era³⁰.

It has been observed however that, New Historicists do not evaluate a text bereft of its aesthetic qualities, yet they submit that there is no dissimilarity between literary and historical texts¹⁰¹. Through its aesthetic attributes, a literary text renders artistic pleasure which is the pivotal purpose of any literary texts. Be this as it may, literature is never a substitute for sociology, history, psychology or political science because it has its own justification and aim which is to creatively reproduce the lived experiences in literary formats. While, meter, rhythm, symbols and imagery enhance the aesthetic pleasure for the consumers of literary productions, literary products with first class figurative language but lacking in its social relevance too cannot render aesthetic delight which is its sole aim³⁰. Thus, a great literary produce is one where content, context and form interplay creatively and with a balance. To be able to explain this balance, a hybrid of literary canon of sort, New Historicism coined a term 'Cultural Poetics' to provide a guide for literary studies since literature is a part and parcel of culture and reveals each and every aspect of it⁹⁹. It works on an assumption that literature depicts 'world view' but world view should not be mistaken with the utopian representation of socio-cultural situation, rather, the manifestation of both harmony and diversity should reflect in literary produce because subversive voices contrary to the dominant power politics are constantly being raised and superseded³⁰. Thus, the relationship between literature and history is dialectic because literature always represents whatever happens in the society

through the use of various techniques like figures of speech, characters and characterisation, different narrative methods, poetic methods and dramatic techniques among others³⁰. Therefore, African literature can be said to be historical, this is in the sense that various historical events of the continent are being creatively crafted into different literary productions. Whereas, post-colonial literature accounts for all literatures of formally colonised people globally, Africa inclusive, by emphasising the influence of imperialism on the colonised as it affects their daily lives and as such presented in their literature. New Historicism on the other hand, engages literature as having a universal quality of being a product of the milieu that produced it. So, whether there is a history of colonialism or not, literature is perennially 'handcuffed' to history. The nexus of Postcolonialism and New Historicism is therefore the fact that while the latter accounts for the impact of history on literature, the former narrows history to colonialism and its impact on the life and literature of the colonised. African history is too much a burden that African playwrights cannot ignore^{14,17,30}. They are perennially confronted with the negative impact of the Atlantic slave Trade, colonialism, as well as post-colonial ruptures. The ever-mounting trauma of lived experience of today's world both within and outside the continent is too overwhelming for any writer to ignore. Therefore, the need for the use of New Historicism to investigate African literary works.

The theoretical descriptions of tragedy proposed by Aristotle for the Greek stage which were based on the dramatic works of Aeschylus and his contemporaries had been challenged by the formulations of Horace and Longinus whose own were vehemently contested by Shakespeare and his contemporaries too. A globally accepted theoretical postulation either on literature, drama or even tragedy has become almost impossible by the formulations of Bertolt Brecht, Samuel Becket among others.

Whereas in Aristotle's view point, the playwright is well better off, while choosing a theme, to look to mythical materials which fantasised reality rather than to history which maintains fidelity to actuality. Putting this in another way, Aristotle believes that it is much more rewarding for a writer to either imagine or create a story than to draw inspiration from real historical events.

In contrast to this, Karl Max and Hegel, claimed that for one to classify a work of tragedy to be a truly tragic work, it must draw from real historical happenings. This is so because only plays that are based on history will mirror the conflicts of mortals and the immortal beings who are either more or less unaware of the social and historical foundations of the tragic situation. The current researcher agrees absolutely with New Historicists however that history provides the background needed for literature to come about and therefore agrees with Wole Soyinka in view of this that , playwrights are to be and they actually are at liberty to pick and choose any and every segment of history they believe will not only boost their creative endeavour but also enhance a fresh interpretation both for the enjoyment and education of their audience. History would have been useless had it been that we do not have lessons we can draw from it both for now and the future.

An important thing to foreground here is that history textbooks are essentially different from historical plays. Also, to create a line of difference between history materials and historical drama, some theoretical establishments have been formulated. These have pointed out that historical dramas though have drawn copiously from history are purely creatively produced by the playwright who has employed various methods to fabricate a distinctive text from history which serves as the main raw material. With the help of theory, we have been given tools to delineate between historical plays and history. We can identify both the points of contacts and the points of departure between the two.

Incidentally, the playwright being investigated has described the playwrights, in one of his plethora of published critical essays, as both a bard, a prophet, and a monarch. He asserts that a creative writer can be seen as a bard because of his duties as the custodian, not owner, of the oral traditions and the one who can perform it with or without notice. He serves as prophet-seer to his people because he can foresee and predict impending events, either good or evil, looming on the society wherein he operates. Furthermore, he is of the opinion that the society is the producers of these monarchs because they came to being by them and since they come by the instrumentation of the society, they not only can feel and see the burden of the society in a personal way, they also carry it in such ways that it becomes personal and private to them. The creative gifts they possess make them rulers of sort and they rule and reign among their peers by the word power they wield. Many a time, they fell flat in the pursuit of their fate given duty, and a in a number of times they soar. In either case, these society made monarchs continued to keep working at their destiny with a certain hope that a time will definitely appear that their vision of a prosperous and peaceful society will become a reality. Among the creative king-ruler in Nigeria are Wole Soyinka, Femi Osofisan, Ahmed Yerima. They are so described because they continue to invest their creative prowess and word powers into the service of the society^{31,32}.

The marked difference between history and literature must be noted although both seemingly appear as one and the same. Literature and history though have a mutual relationship they are essentially not the same. The two disciplines can be said to mutually interdependent. However, more often than not, whereas, history thrives on accuracy, drama, which is more or less creative, seeks to always engineer an effect on the audience. This, though has been said to create a quarrel between drama and history, it does not because, the audience who more often have a full knowledge of history can create a line between history which they collectively own and drama which is a brain child of the author who only borrows materials

from their property, history. Historical otherwise called chronicle plays have many sided functions. The main purpose of historically inclined dramas is to challenge history, governance and politics. Another duty of historical play is to ensure that that subjects which would have otherwise been long forgotten are brought to fore so that the living can draw lessons from them. For instance, the strategic role performed by some of William Shakespeare's history inclined dramas like, Richard II, Richard III, Henry IV, and other tragic dramas like Macbeth, and Hamlet in assisting us to understand the real history of Anglo-Saxton England, Scotland, and Denmark among others cannot be underrated¹⁴.

It is as we remember these drama heroes that the real historical events and personages long gone become fresh or new to us. We must not forget to note that although, classical Greek mythological playwrights such as Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides are not in the domain of history inclined dramatists as part since their works have severally provided us with the much needed wealth of knowledge of the social, political, philosophical, economical and spiritual total life of the ancient Greeks. Almost all the plays that came from ancient Greece were set in Thebes apart from a few such as Eumenides, as such, since Thebes is a real existing city, the strategic historical and cultural roles of the dramatic endeavours of the time on the ancient Greece history cannot be brushed aside. Quite interestingly, the concerted efforts of modern drama of August Strindberg such as *Master Olof*, *Magnus the Good*, and *Gustav Vasa: The Wonder Man of God* has severally been interpreted as a creative and an intelligent method of selling portions of ancient Swedish history to the entire globe at large. Though not too obvious, the reason for the interpersonal relationship among the trio of characters in Paul Claudel's debatably best play, *The Satin Slipper*, is to tell the story of the renaissance Spain^{14 16}. Coming closer home, here in Africa, our most revered Wole Soyinka has given the whole wide world an aspect of the old Oyo cultural ritual practice through his classic, *Death and the King's Horseman. The Trials of Dedan Kimathi*, co-authored by the

duo, Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Micere Mugo' is a theatrical effort at ensuring that the inhuman practices of British imperialism and the Mau Mau uprising of the 1950 Kenya remain in the perception or memory of the world^{26, 27, 33}. It is however assumed that the audience who goes to the theatre to see such plays as these can easily relate the plays to the historical events and figures the plays re-enact. While making a case for history inclined plays, we have to add that chronicle plays have taken several steps above mere documentation of historical events. This is so because while attempting to historicise, some levels of modification would have taken place to history so that history can have an enjoyable value on stage. In the process of transforming history as a raw material to a dramatic piece, much creative and intellectual effort would have been employed by the playwright which in turn would have distorted history just to fit history into the aesthetic fancies of the dramatists whose intention is to secure the attention of the audience through the foundation of history to the real message he likes to pass across³³.

Whereas, drama has been severally conceived as the genre of literature which re-enacts an imaginary action and or event, on stage, it can however also be a record of real lived experience of a people which is being reproduced on stage for current or a future audience. The thoughts and position of the current investigator is that although a drama text can consist of imaginary materials, a pocket of real events and personalities will always be found here and there in the overall play. The playwright often uses fictional elements like songs, dance, costumes, characters which often replicate real historical situations to create a sense of reality which the audience can relate to in his play. Sequel to this, every playwright who desires to utilise historical materials must seek not only to observe but also to uphold the fundamentals history which will enhance an objective though critical and fresh dramatic produce eventually. One of these is the fact that certain facts and figures of history which his people hold sacrosanct must not be distorted in order not to incur the wrath of the same people he tries to

reach. Although, the playwright seems to enjoy certain unwritten code that ensures they have freedom just like their colleagues in other genres of literature to tamper with history to enhance their creativity and service to the society. The capacity of each drama practitioners to creatively and objectively bend history that separates one dramatist from another even when both have employed the same historical material in their works. We can immediately cite examples of some certain history dependent plays in Nigeria^{21, 27, 33}.

For instance, Enwinma Ogieriaikhu's *Oba Ovonramwen*; Ahmed Yerima's *The Trials of Oba Ovonramwen, Attahiru, Erelu Kuti and Ameh Oboni the Great*; Ola Rotimi's *Kurunmi, Ovonramwen Nogbaisi, and Hopes of the Living Dead*; Wale Ogunyemi's *Ijaye War and Kiriji*; Wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman* among several others did not just uncritically recount historical happenings, they have also with great mastery interjected such materials with creative dramatic fundamentals³³.

Our aim, drawing from the views of New Historicists and Wole Soyinka, is to investigate a carefully selected dramatic works of Ahmed Yerima based on re-enactment of specific historical events discernible in the plays we have selected for scrutiny. The explicit occurrence of historical realities in the selected drama texts has supported and stimulated our choice them a of them, Therefore, African playwrights in an attempt to proffer solution to the problems common people live with seem to be perpetually handcuffed to/by history. This has made the study of African drama fairly predictable. It is often always about how an author has employed history for the betterment of the contemporary time³³. This is the reason that African drama is easily studied using theories like New Historicism that give allowance for the social, economic and political context from which literary works emerge^{25,27&33}.

Ahmed Yerima has enjoyed much state patronage and support in his creative sojourns. He was not only commissioned by the Oba of Benin to write *The Trials of Oba Ovonramwen*, he enjoys full support of the same. The purpose of the play is the hundred years commemoration of the 1897 *attack* of the Benin kingdom by the British colonialist. The Sokoto Caliphate appointed a former president of Nigeria, Alhaji Shehu Shagari both to help him with historical materials and to ensure he enjoys relative comfort as he writes *Attahiru*. Contrary to this, the case of *Ameh Oboni*, was different from the others as he never enjoyed any patronage or support from the reigning Paramount Ruler of Igala kingdom the Attah of Igala Land, when he sets out to write *Ameh Oboni, the Great*^{27,33}.

It is vital to note this item of information so as to establish the height of *objectivity* found in the historical content of the selected chronicle plays. Just as we have earlier noted in the current research work, *The Trials of Oba Ovonramwen* re-enacts the ordeal of the Benin Paramount Ruler in the hands of the British imperialist administration sometimes around the last decade of the nineteenth century³³.

When Yerima sets out to write *The Trials of Oba Ovonramwen*, a number of the people who are directly linked to the story are still living and thus are on ground both to verify and valid any claims. Distortion of any sort will be vehemently objected.

Since the audience mostly owns or are largely aware of the historical material, playwrights often have to depend on some of revered or direct descendants of the historical figures for information while he further establishes his findings with materials from archives and libraries in an attempt to weave a story out of the loom of history³³.

In order to follow this trend, Ahmed Yerima, as part of his preparations to writing *The Trials of Oba Ovonramwen*, not only consulted the personal library/archives of the reigning Benin Potentate (Omo N'Oba Erediauwa I), he personally interviewed some randomly selected Benin people to get real facts about Oba Ovonramwen, his subject. In fact, in spite of these, the Oba of Benin, just to ensure fidelity to actuality, he assigned his younger brother, Prince Edun Akenzua and Osayande Ugiagbe, the then director, Edo State Arts Council to closely work with Ahmed Yerima. Furthermore, despite the fact that Yerima already has the library and archival documents at his disposal, the then Sultan of Sokoto personally endorsed him and ensured that he got the full support of the entire Sokoto Caliphate. This led to the appointment of a former Nigerian President, Alhaji Shehu Shagari, who also doubles as the Turakin of Sokoto. This goes further to buttress the already stated fact that the people/audience are the original owners of history and that they will do anything possible just to ensure truthfulness and objectivity and sympathy to their history^{26, 27}.

The case of Ameh Oboni, the Attah of Igala is much different from the other two history inclined plays in that, Ahmed Yerima had to take recourse in accounts given by the people on the streets as he had no palace or official support from the reigning Attah of Igala. Although he was informed and encouraged by a few key men from the kingdom it was only on a personal and private scale. An example of such men is Chief (Dr.) Danjuma Uteno Achor, a high chief of Igala kingdom, was the one who not only informed Yerima about the story of Ameh Oboni but also gave him much needed support with validation and authentication of facts from existing documents. Quite unlike the other monarchs who supported that their predecessors be enacted as tragic heroes on stage, the reigning Attah of Igala as at the time the play was to be written who actually took over the kingdom after the demise Ameh Oboni in 1956 and some eminent people of Igala Kingdom did not share such idea about their immediate past King because, to them Ameh Oboni, the immediate past

Attah is a disgrace and shame for his committing suicide. This sort of attitude has been in existence prior to his demise, most people in the community who conspired with the colonialists ignobly represented by J.D. Muffet, now alive have continued to ensure that no honour whatsoever is accorded Ameh Oboni in the historical annals of Igala.

The reason for the success attained by Yerima at the employment history just like his predecessors and contemporaries can be traced to among factors which include the fact that the cultural and traditional history they have been enacting in their works are really neither past, passed away, far away, long gone, forgotten nor desirable than the present. The so-called past stubbornly has continued to live and even reinvent itself. For example, the care and efforts put in place by the Oba of Benin and the Sultan of Sokoto at ensuring the celebration and proper recognition of Oba Ovonramwen as well as the almost disdain with which Ameh Oboni was treated by most people in Igala land points largely to the fact that history to Africans is not a past thing. History is very much alive and fresh²⁷.

The theoretical descriptions of tragedy proposed by Aristotle for the Greek stage which were based on the dramatic works of Aeschylus and his contemporaries had been challenged by the formulations of Horace and Longinus whose own were vehemently contested by Shakespeare and his contemporaries too. A globally accepted theoretical postulation either on literature, drama or even tragedy has become almost impossible by the formulations of Bertolt Brecht, Samuel Becket among others¹.

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Incidentally, the playwright being investigated, Ahmed Yerima, has described the playwrights, in one of his plethora of published critical essays, as both a bard, a prophet, and a monarch. He asserts that a creative writer can be seen as a bard because of his duties as the custodian, not owner, of the oral traditions and the one who can perform it with or without notice. He serves as prophet-seer to his people because he can foresee and predict impending events, either good or evil, looming on the society wherein he operates. Furthermore, he is of the opinion that the society is the producers of these monarchs because they came to being by them and since they come by the instrumentation of the society, they not only can feel and see the burden of the society in a personal way, they also carry it in such ways that it becomes personal and private to them. The creative gifts they possess make them rulers of sort and they rule and reign among their peers by the word power they wield. Many a time, they fell flat in the pursuit of their fate given duty, and a in a number of times

they soar. In either case, these society made monarchs continued to keep working at their destiny with a certain hope that a time will definitely appear that their vision of a prosperous and peaceful society will become a reality⁴. Among the creative king-ruler in Nigeria are Wole Soyinka, Femi Osofisan, Ahmed Yerima. They are so described because they continue to invest their creative prowess and word powers into the service of the society.

The marked difference between history and literature must be noted although both seemingly appear as one and the same. Literature and history though have a mutual relationship they are essentially not the same. The two disciplines can be said to mutually interdependent. However, more often than not, whereas, history thrives on accuracy, drama, which is more or less creative, seeks to always engineer an effect on the audience. This, though has been said to create a quarrel between drama and history, it does not because, the audience who more often have a full knowledge of history can create a line between history which they collectively own and drama which is a brain child of the author who only borrows materials from their property, history. Historical otherwise called chronicle plays have many sided functions. The main purpose of historically inclined dramas is to challenge history, governance and politics. Another duty of historical play is to ensure that that subjects which would have otherwise been long forgotten are brought to fore so that the living can draw lessons from them. For instance, the strategic role performed by some of William Shakespeare's history inclined dramas like, Richard II, Richard III, Henry IV, and other tragic dramas like Macbeth, and Hamlet in assisting us to understand the real history of Anglo-Saxton England, Scotland, and Denmark among others cannot be underrated²⁶.

It is as we remember these drama heroes that the real historical events and personages long gone become fresh or new to us. We must not forget to note that although, classical Greek mythological playwrights such as Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides are not in the

domain of history inclined dramatists as part since their works have severally provided us with the much needed wealth of knowledge of the social, political, philosophical, economical and spiritual total life of the ancient Greeks. Almost all the plays that came from ancient Greece were set in Thebes apart from a few such as *Eumenides*, as such, since Thebes is a real existing city, the strategic historical and cultural roles of the dramatic endeavours of the time on the ancient Greece history cannot be brushed aside. Quite interestingly, the concerted efforts of modern drama of August Strindberg such as *Master Olof*, *Magnus the Good*, and *Gustav Vasa: The Wonder Man of God* has severally been interpreted as a creative and an intelligent method of selling portions of ancient Swedish history to the entire globe at large. Though not too obvious, the reason for the interpersonal relationship among the trio of characters in Paul Claudel's debatably best play, *The Satin Slipper*, is to tell the story of the renaissance Spain³³. Coming closer home, here in Africa, our most revered Wole Soyinka has given the whole wide world an aspect of the old Oyo cultural ritual practice through his classic, *Death and the King's Horseman*. *The Trials of Dedan Kimathi*, co-authored by the duo, Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Micere Mugo' is a theatrical effort at ensuring that the inhuman practices of British imperialism and the Mau Mau uprising of the 1950 Kenya remain in the perception or memory of the world. It is however assumed that the audience who goes to the theatre to see such plays as these can easily relate the plays to the historical events and figures the plays re-enact. While making a case for history inclined plays, we have to add that chronicle plays have taken several steps above mere documentation of historical events. This is so because while attempting to historicise, some levels of modification would have taken place to history so that history can have an enjoyable value on stage. In the process of transforming history as a raw material to a dramatic piece, much creative and intellectual effort would have been employed by the playwright which in turn would have distorted history just to fit history into the aesthetic fancies of the dramatists whose intention is to

secure the attention of the audience through the foundation of history to the real message he likes to pass across³³.

Whereas, drama has been severally conceived as the genre of literature which re-enacts an imaginary action and or event, on stage, it can however also be a record of real lived experience of a people which is being reproduced on stage for current or a future audience. The thoughts and position of the current investigator is that although a drama text can consist of imaginary materials, a pocket of real events and personalities will always be found here and there in the overall play. The playwright often uses fictional elements like songs, dance, costumes, characters which often replicate real historical situations to create a sense of reality which the audience can relate to in his play. Sequel to this, every playwright who desires to utilise historical materials must seek not only to observe but also to uphold the fundamentals history which will enhance an objective though critical and fresh dramatic produce eventually. One of these is the fact that certain facts and figures of history which his people hold sacrosanct must not be distorted in order not to incur the wrath of the same people he tries to reach. Although, the playwright seems to enjoy certain unwritten code that ensures they have freedom just like their colleagues in other genres of literature to tamper with history to enhance their creativity and service to the society. The capacity of each drama practitioners to creatively and objectively bend history that separates one dramatist from another even when both have employed the same historical material in their works. We can immediately cite examples of some certain history dependent plays in Nigeria. For instance, Enwinma Ogieriaikhu's *Oba Ovonramwen*; Ahmed Yerima's *The Trials of Oba Ovonramwen, Attahiru, Erelu Kuti* and *Ameh Oboni the Great*; Ola Rotimi's *Kurunmi, Ovonramwen Nogbaisi, and Hopes of the Living Dead*; Wale Ogunyemi's *Ijaye War and Kiriji*; Wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman* among several others did not just uncritically recount historical

happenings, they have also with great mastery interjected such materials with creative dramatic fundamentals³³.

Ahmed Yerima has enjoyed much state patronage and support in his creative sojourns. He was not only commissioned by the Oba of Benin to write *The Trials of Oba Ovonramwen*, he enjoys full support of the same²⁷. The purpose of the play is the hundred years commemoration of the 1897 attack of the Benin kingdom by the British colonialist. The Sokoto Caliphate appointed a former president of Nigeria, Alhaji Shehu Shagari both to help him with historical materials and to ensure he enjoys relative comfort as he writes Attahiru⁴. Contrary to this, the case of Ameh Oboni, was different from the others as he never enjoyed any patronage or support from the reigning Paramount Ruler of Igala kingdom the Attah of Igala Land, when he sets out to write Ameh Oboni, the Great.

It is vital to note this item of information so as to establish the height of objectivity found in the historical content of the selected chronicle plays. Just as we have earlier noted in the current research work, *The Trials of Oba Ovonramwen* re-enacts the ordeal of the Benin Paramount Ruler in the hands of the British imperialist administration sometimes around the last decade of the nineteenth century. When Yerima sets out to write *The Trials of Oba Ovonramwen*, a number of the people who are directly linked to the story are still living and thus are on ground both to verify and valid any claims. Distortion of any sort will be vehemently objected.

Since the audience mostly owns or are largely aware of the historical material, playwrights often have to depend on some of revered or direct descendants of the historical figures for information while he further establishes his findings with materials from archives and libraries in an attempt to weave a story out of the loom of history.

In order to follow this trend, Ahmed Yerima, as part of his preparations to writing *The Trials of Oba Ovonramwen*, not only consulted the personal library/archives of the reigning Benin Potentate (Omo N'Oba Erediauwa I), he personally interviewed some randomly selected Benin people to get real facts about Oba Ovonramwen, his subject. In fact, in spite of these, the Oba of Benin, just to ensure fidelity to actuality, he assigned his younger brother, Prince Edun Akenzua and Osayande Ugiagbe, the then director, Edo State Arts Council to closely work with Ahmed Yerima. Furthermore, despite the fact that Yerima already has the library and archival documents at his disposal, the then Sultan of Sokoto personally endorsed him and ensured that he got the full support of the entire Sokoto Caliphate. This led to the appointment of a former Nigerian President, Alhaji Shehu Shagari, who also doubles as the Turakin of Sokoto. This goes further to buttress the already stated fact that the people/audience are the original owners of history and that they will do anything possible just to ensure truthfulness and objectivity and sympathy to their history³³.

The case of Ameh Oboni, the Attah of Igala is much different from the other two texts history inclined plays in that, Ahmed Yerima had to take recourse in accounts given by the people on the streets as he had no palace or official support from the reigning Attah of Igala. Although he was informed and encouraged by a few key men from the kingdom it was only on a personal and private scale. An example of such men is Chief (Dr.) Danjuma Uteno Achor, a high chief of Igala kingdom, was the one who not only informed Yerima about the story of Ameh Oboni but also gave him much needed support with validation and authentication of facts from existing documents. Quite unlike the other monarchs who supported that their predecessors be enacted as tragic heroes on stage, the reigning Attah of Igala as at the time the play was to be written who actually took over the kingdom after the demise Ameh Oboni in 1956 and some eminent people of Igala Kingdom did not share such idea about their immediate past King because, to them Ameh Oboni, the immediate past

Attah is a disgrace and shame for his committing suicide. This sort of attitude has been in existence prior to his demise, most people in the community who conspired with the colonialists ignobly represented by J.D. Muffet, now alive have continued to ensure that no honour whatsoever is accorded Ameh Oboni in the historical annals of Igala³³.

The reason for the success attained by Yerima at the employment history just like his predecessors and contemporaries can be traced to among factors which include the fact that the cultural and traditional history they have been enacting in their works are really neither past, passed away, far away, long gone, forgotten nor desirable than the present. The so-called past stubbornly has continued to live and even reinvent itself. For example, the care and efforts put in place by the Oba of Benin and the Sultan of Sokoto at ensuring the celebration and proper recognition of Oba Ovonramwen as well as the almost disdain with which Ameh Oboni was treated by most people in Igala land points largely to the fact that history to Africans is not a past thing. History is very much alive and fresh²⁷.

Furthermore, in order to tell the story of colonialism from the view point of the colonised, the social and cultural values of the people are presented with much reverence theatrically. This now further brings sympathy for the people whose traditions were desecrated by the proud imperialists. This seriously accounts for the minute detailed attention given to ensure that accurate facts of history are secured, faithfully interpreted and respectfully enacted on stage.

Our aim, drawing from the views of New Historicists and Wole Soyinka, is to investigate a carefully selected dramatic works of Ahmed Yerima based on re-enactment of specific historical events discernible in the plays we have selected for scrutiny. The explicit occurrence of historical realities in the selected drama texts has supported and stimulated our choice them.

An important thing to foreground here is that history textbooks are essentially different from historical plays. Also, to create a line of difference between history materials and historical drama, some theoretical establishments have been formulated. These have pointed out that historical dramas though have drawn copiously from history are purely creatively produced by the playwright who has employed various methods to fabricate a distinctive text from history which serves as the main raw material. With the help of theory, we have been given tools to delineate between historical plays and history. We can identify both the points of contacts and the points of departure between the two³³.

Furthermore, in order to tell the story of colonialism from the view point of the colonised, the social and cultural values of the people are presented with much reverence theatrically. This now further brings sympathy for the people whose traditions were desecrated by the proud imperialists. This seriously accounts for the minute detailed attention given to ensure that accurate facts of history are secured, faithfully interpreted and respectfully enacted on stage^{27,33}.

The selected historical plays for this study all have one theme in common among other themes; the infiltration of colonialism on African soil and the fierce resistance by Africans to it. Part of the many evils of imperialism is the termination of the imperial authority and independence of African traditional rulers. The unbridled thirst for power sponsored by a biased sense of racial supremacy over the natives of Africa was a major reason for the colonial authority's representatives' misbehaviour in the then colonial Africa. Drawing instances from the texts, while we see the Acting Consul-General James Phillips refuse to respect the admonition of the Benin Monarch, J.D. Muffet was rebellious towards Attah of Igala, Colonel Frederick Lugard on the other hand while attempting to show military superiority over Sokoto Caliphate, singlehandedly reversed every standing agreement with

Sokoto and went on to declared that he had conquered Sokoto thus his right to establish colonial rule for Britain.

2.3.2 Modern African Drama

Is it really justifiable to name African Drama? Attempt at defining African drama has been problematic and has brought about heated argument among scholars just as there has not been any agreed definition for African literature¹. For centuries, some theoretical propositions have been made which bordered often around linguistic, cultural, thematic oratorical concerns¹⁰². In fact, a conference was held in the 1962 at the then Macarere College in Kampala Uganda just to attempt to find an acceptable definition for African Literature nothing significant came out of this venture and the subsequent ones. Some scholars argued that African work is one written in any of the African indigenous languages³. Others proposed that it should be able to either 'adapt', 'adopt' or 'adept' the African cultural milieu¹⁸. In other quarters a work can only be considered if it is written by an African, while yet others conclude that no work can be named African except it reflects and projects the unique historical realities and contemporary existential issues in Africa. Generally most definitions have one form of weakness or the other for instance, if African literature is only the one which relays African history and experiences, though in terms of content it may be right, but the broader issues of language and authorship are neglected¹⁰⁵. Also, certain historical realities like slavery and colonialism have not only affected Africa alone. Furthermore, scholars who lean on language may not be totally correct because, though we have much African work in indigenous languages there are countless others in foreign languages which have been creatively crated to accommodate Africa^{18,20}.

From all indications, we can deduce that attempt at defining African literature may be futile; therefore, scholars have however suggested guideposts or approaches through which African

drama or literature in general can be studied. These include regional approach which caters for the specific regional cultural, social and historical experiences. Thus, it generates terms like West African drama, Anglophone West African and Francophone West African Drama. The political approach has come up with terms like Commonwealth African Drama among others. The historical approach has divided the continent into three major historical epochs: pre-colonial African drama including the festivals and rituals, the colonial African Drama. Under this period anti colonialist drama like the Negritude's drama is subsumed. The final subdivision of African drama using the historical method is the post-independence African drama. Thematic approach is also important to the study of African Drama. One of the most important guideposts to the study of African drama is linguistic or tonal approach although it has generated much debate too. On one hand, scholars believe that any African literature or drama written in any of the former colonial languages is dead on arrival^{18,19,20}. Others have gone ahead to indigenise the former imperialist languages to suit their purpose^{20,34}. It must be noted that African drama must be politically correct. Playwrights must write to right the wrongs in the society. Also, they should be aware that there are at least two kinds of audience/readers of the African drama: the direct audience/reader that is the people of African descent who understand the nuances of African social, political and cultural environment. There is also the indirect audience/reader that is non-African population who depends on footnotes among others to understand and appreciates dramatic work from Africa

2.3.3 Cultural Signifiers in African Drama

Essentially, Literature does not exist in vacuum. African drama is not an exception. It is a child of two worlds. It has its root in the social cultural African ways which are transmitted into African oral traditions while its language is foreign English, French or Portuguese.

In order to be able to project the cultural heritage of African drama, extensive work has been done by scholars of African Drama^{5,18,24,28}. The cultural signifiers of African Dramatic literature can further be discussed under the following headings:

Ethical and Moral Nature of African Civilization

Unarguably, African drama is an informal evening fire-side schools in which elders and parents teach the young ones ethics, morality, and the culture of the community. The interconnectedness of African drama and morality is demonstrated by the Igbo Mbari tradition. In it Ani, the Earth goddess combined the roles of the guardian angel of creativity and of the moral order of the society. Thus modern African drama inherited its didactic culture from the African Oral traditions.

Utilitarian Function of African Drama

There is, essentially, no art for art sake in Africa. Every dramatic work has a social function. Rites of passage are celebrated with drama. *Death and the King's Horseman* by Wole Soyinka is based on the ritual suicide by the King's Horseman after a king's death among the Yoruba people. The play emphasizes the power of self sacrifice for the common good

Social Cohesion

African dramatists have been nurtured in a society in which the sense of community is very strong. A cardinal point for understanding the African view of humankind is the belief that I am, because we are, and since we are, therefore I am. Dramatic constructions in Africa have been and remain an affirmation of faith in one's cultural ideas. Social cohesiveness is very important to Africans because they believe that the earliest act of civilisation was the establishment of a cooperative, interactive, human community. African Drama is highly socialised. It does not focus on the individual much. It is this communal spirit which informs

plays like Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman*, in which the community seems to be the protagonist struggling against Western intruders to maintain its cultural practices. The focus on society with its attendant social criticism in African drama is in the African tradition.

Defense of African Culture

African playwrights, in affirming their faith in their native culture, defend it against alien encroachment and prejudices. The Negritude asserted their Africanity to fight against colonial prejudices. One example of the defense of the indigenous African culture against the invading western one is expressed in Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman*.

African Mystical Life

Largely, Africans are a spiritually minded people. It has been affirmed that essence and atmosphere of an African village life is permeated with mysteries¹⁰⁹. It also holds true also of city life. As a result of this, the supernatural plays an important part in African dramatic literature. Wole Soyinka exploits the Yoruba pantheon in his dramatic endeavours. Mostly, his works are centered on Ogun. Ogun is the Yoruba deity in charge of iron and metallurgy. He is an explorer, artisan, hunter, god of war, and guardian of the road. Ogun is also the septuple god of lightning and electricity; Orunmila, the sky-god, and essence of wisdom; and Esu, the god of chance and disruption²⁰.

African Folklore

Folktales, proverbs, myths, and legends, all parts of the rich African folklore, are very much alive and they infuse modern African drama with motifs, themes characters, and techniques. Dramatists like Ngugi Wa Thiong O' use mythical characters to criticize contemporary society. Myth is used to portray the selfishness and meanness of modern African rulers. Generally, African playwrights are students of their folklore for example; Soyinka researched

into Yoruba oral traditions between 1959 and 1961²⁰. Through this, the knowledge gained gives African playwrights the confidence to operate from their cultural, economic, political, spiritual and historical milieu.

2.3.4 Ahmed Yerima: *The Man and His Drama*

Born on the 8th of May, 1957 in Lagos, Professor Ahmed Yerima attended primary and secondary schools in Lagos, Nigeria. He proceeded to the University of Ife where he obtained a Certificate in Drama and a Bachelor of Arts degree. He moved on to the University College, Cardiff for a Postgraduate Diploma in Theatre Arts in 1982. It was between 1982 and 1986 that he attended the Royal Holloway College, University of London for an M Phil/Ph D degree in Theater Studies and Dramatic Criticism. He specialises in playwriting and acting.

He began to write as a teenager in secondary school. His first play, titled, *The Man's Daughter*, was written while he was in form three. The production of "*The Man's Daughter*" prompted him to establish his own drama group, the Georgian and Victorian Drama Group. His formal training in theatre arts began with Professor Wole Soyinka. He also learnt from the likes of Doctors Yemi Ogunbiyi, Laide Adewale, Kola Oyewo, Toun Oni, Peter Fatomilola and Gboyega Ajayi who were his senior colleagues.

It was through Soyinka, he learnt that the playwright is relevant only when he contributes to positive changes within his society. This then forms the basis of his focus. He believes his works should be to right the wrongs in his society. He creates and re-creates that all may be well with and in his society. In an attempt to be relevant to the society therefore, Yerima makes "man" the focus of his stories. Yerima also sees man in the society as being central to things. He believes man is complex and that he has issues. These make him a two- face being. To Yerima, the society is a kind of a multi culture thing. He does not subscribe to the ideal of monolithic Nigeria even at the ethnic tribe level.

Furthermore, Yerima believes in the cultural context of a story. That is literature, to him does not exist in a vacuum. There is always a history behind any creative enterprise. To foreground this cultural background, however, there is the necessity for historical links because it essentially set up the thematic thrust of a writer who in creating stories just passes comments on the personalities and events around him. He, therefore, sees himself as a traditional oral performer who goes to the village square to narrate his story under the moonlight to the satisfaction of his audience. The oral performer in Africa does not have to offend anyone. As such, once he is done with his performance, everybody claps and he goes home with joy.

Aside these, Yerima imaginatively locates his stories in the various Nigerian cultures to give so as to it a touch of reality. Moreover, most of these stories are robustly enriched in the native languages of the tribes involved and more often than not, there are traces of the playwright's depth of knowledge and understanding of the cultural practices of the personalities in the setting of such plays. When this is the case, Yerima either critiques or condemns out rightly a specific cultural practice or an individual foible. This is particularly done to ensure an ever dynamic and progress making society.

Arguably, Yerima is about the only playwright who has written plays that have to do with the Yoruba, Hausa, and Igbo, Igala, and Edo cultures. The way he develops his dramatic personages, themes and style is an indication that Yerima has a firm grasp on an appreciable number and aspects of culture proverbs, wise-sayings, norms, moral ethics and etiquettes, religious practices including rites, rituals and festivals and expressions. It is the creative combination of all these that made him outstanding among his contemporaries like Femi Osofisan, Wale Ogunyemi, Bode Osanyin, Zulu Zofola, Bode Sowande, Cosmish Ekiye and so on.

While he became the Deputy Artistic Director of the Nigerian National Troupe in 1991, it was in 2006, that he became the Director General of the Nigeria National Theatre. During his tenure in office as fully fledged Director, he led the National Troupe to several memorable performances within and outside the shores of Nigeria. It is worthy of note that he indeed led the National Troupe to perform at the world intellectual property organisation in Geneva Switzerland. Aside this, he also had the opportunity to be the one to lead the National Troupe on international outings to countries like Ghana, Mexico, United States of America, Germany, Venezuela among many others.

He is both a prolific and an internationally acclaimed author. Yerima has more than twenty-seven published play texts out of which many have been staged successfully. He has also won awards both in and outside Nigeria. One can confidently agree that he has published dramatic texts beyond his own immediate ethno cultural group. His works largely bring to the fore not only the influence of culture on the lived experiences of people in Nigeria, they in fact also dramatise almost all the aspects of their daily lives ranging from politics to religion, trade and commerce among others.

Whereas some have classified him as second generation dramatist others are of the opinion that he belongs to the third generation³¹. His mode of utilising myth, history and culture can possibly qualify him as a first generation writer though only in practice, but if we consider his age, we may comfortably put him in the second generation as Olu Obafemi and Femi Osofisan. However if we consider his preoccupation he is either a third generation or a representative of all the generations. His is a preoccupation with very burning national issues.

Almost there is no major event that has happened or that is happening that has not caught his attention. He has written about incessant strikes by university dons, insurgency, insecurities, religious bigotry, lottery, resource control Niger Delta unrest among several others. He stands

so uniquely in his own class has a dramatist who has creatively created a distinctive drama from history past, current issues and imagination. Despite this he is intelligently in touch with realism³¹. Professor Ahmed Yerima is a widely acclaimed realist^{31,32}. As a playwright who subscribes to social realism, he uses his art to reflect and refract on the existential issues of the contemporary times specifically in Nigeria and generally in Africa. The treatment of themes by Yerima is alluringly distinct from other playwrights. For instance, drawing from a few of his play-texts like *Otaelo*, *Little Drops*, *The Sisters*, *Mojagbe*, *The Lottery Ticket* among others, one notices a critical mixture of indigenous poetic tradition including chants, proverbs, music and dance giving his works a unique African oral performance flavour. On another instance, he weaves mythology, poetic structures and folklore to create a distinctive African dramatic works. Largely, Yerima draws copiously from contemporary dramatic forms and global realities to produce a progressive vision for humanity^{31,32}.

Arguably, Ahmed Yerima has been situated among Africa's realist Dramatists^{31,32,34}. Realist writers are the ones who are preoccupied with the existential events in their milieu. As far as they are concerned, there is no room for arts for beauty, and every work of art must be made an agent of positive change. The bulk of earliest criticism of Ahmed Yerima's works is more or less thematic in nature³¹. Scholars have tried to elucidate on the preoccupations of his work. Severally, the themes of his works span religious corruption, socio political instability among others¹. One of the perennial problems of Nigeria is associated with oil. Oil exploitation and exploration in Nigeria has caused aches and pains. Aside the humongous corruption connected to it, the loss of lives, violence, dirty politics as well as environmental degradation it has brought about are part and parcel of what Nigeria has to grapple with. The attendant issues around the petrol dollar industry in Nigeria have been widely studied in Ahmed Yerima's plays too^{113, 114}. Such studies tried to locate the causes and effects of misrule in the Nigeria oil sector without an attempt to see Yerima's views on the possibilities

of solution to the problems. This negates Yerima's stance as a liberal humanist who seeks to make life better for humans.

Aside the thematic studies of Yerima's works, some scholars have gone ahead to do stylistic study of his plays. One of the oldest linguists to have studied his works employed the use of Pragmatism to analyse the use of proverbs in selected plays of Yerima. It was discovered among other things that the use of proverbs by Ahmed Yerima is to project the flora and fauna of the immediate setting of his works. Therefore, proverb use to him essentially is a tool for achieving an end^{6,7}. One major gap these studies have is the fact that while concentrating on the use of proverbs as a cultural conveyor belt, they have neglected the other veritable vehicles of cultures too. These among others include wise sayings, code of ethics, religion and figurative expressions.

In the same vein, in a bid to attempt a linguistic study of Ahmed Yerima's plays, a few scholars have employed politeness principle in their scrutiny of his works. Drawing copiously from his works, they have submitted that more of negative politeness is utilised in the plays of Ahmed Yerima than positive ones. It was further concluded that praise poems are however used to as a face save mechanism to keep a character's positive side²⁰. It has been noticed that while the thematic study of the plays by Yerima employed sociological theory of African dramatic literature, almost nothing has been done concerning the use of the Postcolonialism and New Historicism to engage his plays.

A few examples of some of his published play texts include *Attahiru* (1998), *The Sick People* (2000), *The Sisters* (2001), *Dry Leaves on UkanTrees* (2001), *The Lottery Ticket* (2002), *Yemoja* (2002), *Otaelo* (2003), *The Angel and other plays* (2006), *Erelu-kuti* (2006), *Hard Ground* (2006), *Aetu* (2007), *The Wives* (2007), *Akubata* (2008), *Tuti* (2008), *Mojagbe*

(2008), *Ajagunmale* (2010) and several others . It is worthy of note that one of his plays, “*HardGround*” won the Nigerian prize for literature, in 2006, and ANA/NDDC, J. P. Clark Drama Prize in 2006. It was after the awards that the play went on a successful tour of the country. These are only some of the several achievements of Yerima both as a scholar and a dramatist make him prominently outstanding among his colleagues.

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Chapter Three

Methodology

This chapter seeks to introduce the research design and or the method used by the researcher in data gathering for the research endeavour. It employs the theories of New Historicism of African Literature which essentially claims that literature is to be studied as a representation of the social and cultural milieu that produced it. Two, it employs the postcolonial theory of African literature whose crux is to analyse the negative influence of imperialism on the social, economic and political construct of formal colonised territories and its final impact on literary productions of the formerly colonised nations. The theories allow a comprehensive postcolonial and new historical reading of the selected plays of Ahmed Yerima. The researcher employs qualitative method for the critical textual analysis of selected Ahmed Yerima's plays alongside the plot structure, themes, characterisation and other dramatic techniques employed by the author both to dramatise history and to interrogate postcolonial issues.

3.1 Research Design

The current research effort is content analysis of the selected Ahmed Yerima's plays while Qualitative method is used for critical textual analysis of the selected plays of Ahmed Yerima.

Using qualitative research method to reach the ultimate goal, the researcher used content analysis in arriving at the results. This methodology is significant to the study because it enables the researcher carry out a content analysis of the texts. Content analysis method is a thorough and methodical scrutiny of the contents of a particular body of materials with the aim of collating repeated patterns, thematic thrusts, or biases^{1, 2}. Content analysis studies various forms of *human communication* including books, newspapers, texts, and films as well as other forms in order to discover certain patterns, ideas, or biases². In this study, the

qualitative research will be carried out on selected Ahmed Yerima's plays. The method is designed to identify specific characteristics from the content in the human communications verbal and nonverbal in the selected plays. In engaging in a postcolonial and new historical reading of Ahmed Yerima's plays, the researcher will examine the verbal, visual, behavioural patterns of the characters in relation to the themes and literary techniques employed by the author in the plays to replicate social, economic and political realities of his society.

Research design is the procedure for collecting; analysing, interpreting and reporting data in research studies². In finding the presence of postcolonial themes and historically relevant events in the selected plays, the researcher used textual analysis of the selected plays and library research.

3.2 Population of the Study

The population of the study is well over thirty dramatic texts of Ahmed Yerima.

During the course of reading the primary texts and other research materials, qualitative and substantial notes will be taken on the important points found in them that will resonate with the subject of post-colonial themes in African dramatic literature. Notes and highlights will be made in the primary texts and critical reading materials. Comprehensive work will be done in the chapter four.

3.3 Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample size of the study is only a selection of Ahmed Yerima's plays that have historical affinities and postcolonial themes. This is so because the focus of the study is to identify Ahmed Yerima's use of real historical realities to dramatise postcolonial themes. The selected plays include,

1. *The Angel and Other Plays*
2. *Attahiru*
3. *The Bishop and the soul with thank you Lord*
4. *Ameh Oboni, the Great*
5. *The Trials of Oba Ovonramwen*

While *Attahiru*, *The Trial of Oba Ovonramwen*, *Ameh Oboni, the Great* represent plays that adapted actual historical events and personalities, the other texts, *The Bishop and the Soul with Thank You Lord* and *The Angel* exemplify various treatments given to myriads of postcolonial themes like, environmental degradation, religious bigotry, lottery, abuse of power among others. The choice of the three historical plays can further be justified because of their reach, while *Attahiru* represents the north of Nigeria, *The Trial of Oba Ovonramwen* represents the south, *Ameh Oboni* is standing for the middle belt of Nigeria. This will afford us the opportunity for a robust comparative study of history, actual historical events and personalities who lived at different climes and times.

3.4 Method of Data Collection

The method employed to gather data for this work is a close reading of the selected texts. The selected texts will be subjected to critical literary analysis deploying the theoretical framework in a textual discussion to establish historical realities and postcolonial discourse in selected Ahmed Yerima's Plays.

3.5 Method of Data Analysis

The study will apply New Historicism and Postcolonial theories in the analysis of the selected texts.

Endnotes

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Chapter Four

Results and Discussion of Findings

Research Question One: What are the contexts of selected Ahmed Yerima's historical plays?

4.1.1 Colonialism and New Historicism as the Contexts of Ahmed Yerima's *Attahiru, The Trial of Oba Ovonramwen* and *Ameh Oboni, the Great*

Colonialism is the practice by which powerful nations seek to advance their own economic interests by harnessing poorer nations. Our aim, drawing from the views of New Historicists and Wole Soyinka, is to investigate a carefully selected dramatic works of Ahmed Yerima that are based on the re-enactment of specific historical event of colonialism discernable in the plays we have selected for scrutiny. The explicit occurrence of historical reality of colonialism in the selected drama texts has supported and stimulated our choice of the texts.

In order to tell the story of colonialism from the view point of the colonised, the social and cultural values of the people are presented with much reverence theatrically. This now further brings sympathy for the people whose traditions were desecrated by the proud imperialists. This seriously accounts for the minute detailed attention given to ensure that accurate facts of history are secured, faithfully interpreted and respectfully enacted on stage.

In an attempt at capturing historical reality in Africa in his works, Ahmed Yerima has been able to be preoccupied with some troupes in the historically inclined selected plays. Some of the major features of colonialism that preoccupy Yerima in the selected historical plays include: destiny, conviction, patriotism, allegiance, arrogance, authority, prestige, rage, selfish ambition greediness, dishonesty, deception, self promotion among others.

The themes of self-promotion, greediness are vividly presented in the character of Acting Consul-General Phillips in *The Trials of Oba Ovonramwen*. His singular reason for insisting

on coming to Benin at such an untoward period is just for selfish reasons. It has nothing to do with the Empire that he represents;

The Home Office will be proud of me after the expedition. They could confirm me Consul-General with all the powers I need to establish a government in Benin. They might jolly well tell Moore to go to India or give him a desk at the Home Office¹.

He was willing to destroy the Oba of Benin, his kingdom and even another white person just for him to be made a full Consul-General so he can be controlling the vast economic and political land scape of the entire Benin kingdom. The avarice that propelled Phillip is represented in Chief Obaseki too. Though, he is a senior Benin chief and a business partner of the Oba, his greediness, selfish ambition made him an easy tool in the hands of the colonialists against his own people. Unlike other Benin people, Carter submits that it is personal ambition that propels Obaseki's 'appetite for preferment'. Being a greedy, disloyal and dishonest business man, Obaseki, who

'will sell anything (including his own people), once the price is right ...becomes the most reliable and helpful Chief to the (colonialist/enemy) government'¹.

Another theme well developed in the texts is trust. This is a complex in that the Europeans who desired alibi in Obaseki are aware that he cannot be fully trusted. Though his unbridled lust for money has made him a ready tool for them against the Oba, yet the same reason makes him unlikely for the job because, should the Oba bring more money to the table, Obaseki 'will sell anything. Once the price is right'¹. Such wicked Carter and Burrow are even sceptical of Obaseki. It is ironical that wicked and destructive men like Burrow and Carter are looking for trustworthy evil men they can deploy in their bid to destroy the Oba of Benin.

The themes of loyalty and trust are also engaged in Attahiru. The issue of trust and loyalty are brought up in the camp of the colonial officers when Morland, expressed his doubt over the trustworthiness of Mohammed Al Tahir Aliyu who is being considered for the job of

infiltrating the camp of Sultan Attahiru. Mohammed Aliyu, is a prince of the Caliphate who could have been the Caliph had Attahiru not been picked. The Europeans planned to play on the fact that he was eyeing the throne too to win him over to their side against the sultan. Just as we noticed earlier, the complex nature of trust and loyalty was considered in the plays. Whereas the monarch who gravely need the loyalty of their own people do not get it, the Europeans who do not mean well for the people were able to secure loyalty from some the key men in Sokoto, Benin and Igala kingdoms. In fact, the strategic need for trustworthy and loyal men are much more pronounced in the enemy camp. The supposedly faithful men at the colonialists' camp are real traitors at their various home kingdoms. While Benin has men like Obaseki, Igala kingdom has Gumuchi, Sokoto has the late Caliph Abdul- Rahman to whom Mohammed Al Tahir Aliyu is a replacement. If the imperialists succeed in destroying Africa, Africa must be blamed to an extent.

Driven with the aim to deposing the Benin monarch, the imperial officers deceitfully engaged Obaseki so as to bribe some of the Benin chiefs and coerce the incorruptible ones just to implicate the Oba in the death of certain Britons.

‘He must come in un-armed. My men shall mingle with his party, if we see one single weapon, something that suggests it, we shall attack. Understand?’

Obaseki: I understand. I do not want any suspicion; his arrival must be of an Oba. He must not suspect anything’¹.

Yerima was able to establish the interconnectedness of the themes, for example the British officers were able to lure Obaseki into their plot because of his crass desire to become the Oba on one hand and his uncontrolled pursuit of money. Thus, the Empire through deception played on his weaknesses to get him into disloyalty toward his friend, king and business partner and as well as the entire Benin kingdom.

‘Of course, you know I do not want to tamper with your tradition and custom. There has to be a change, as in Lagos, Opobo, and the change among the Itsekiri people

after the fall of Nana. The Bini people are not the same. That type of change will be different. The Oba's power is supreme... Not when he is deposed ...Then who will lead? The Bini people are used to having a leader... The answer to that depends... we will need the services of tested hands like you... I am ready to be of service. My plantations are ready to trade with you. I understand the market. I have traded with the Itsekiris for long now. I am a powerful and loved Chief and I can help the British Empire prosper in trade and governance. But who am I to rush you into a decision? It is entirely at your discretion and we all know how wise you are. Chief Dore tells me that so many times when we meet at the trade stations¹.

Aside the above mentioned, Geography, religion and political domination were also explored in the plays. For instance, part of the troubles Attah Oboni has is the fact that though he is

‘a muslim, the core north does not consider him a true muslim while the British also sees him as a persecutor of ‘innocent and God-fearing Christians like ... Gumuchi’¹.

The Attah referring to these issues submits

‘The white men trust the core Hausas. We in the middle belt are a problem of Geography’¹.

In the two statements lie the heavy burden that middle beltans have borne till date. When elections and population censuses come, the core north wanting to better her chances will welcome the middle belt as being muslims and Hausas however when it comes to sharing political and economic benefits the core north looks elsewhere. The Attah continues

‘...They want to use us ...they want me to discard my past, my tradition and live the life of what they call a true Muslim ...that type who will be controlled by the so-called true Muslim of the core north. The ones the white man can trust, because of his white Rawani, he does not care for excesses of the white man and his Queens. Because of what they have told the white man, he is no longer comfortable to work with me. And my son helped to fuel this dislike for me and our ways. (chuckles) My son indeed’¹.

Like we have Attah Ameh Oboni lamenting the disloyalty and treachery he is facing, Oba Ovonramwen, does same. Whereas, we see the monarchs living up to expectation as leaders, Obaseki, Al Tahir Aliyu as well as Gumuchi are utter disappointments to the trust reposed on them by the people. Moreover, the tragic fate of Attahiru stands on an interplay between prophecy and colonialists, Ameh Oboni's fall rests not only on disloyalty from his ‘son’, but also on his innate weaknesses as well as European conspiracy. It is errors that brought the wrathful decree of the gods on him. That of Oba Ovonramwen lacks the input of the gods as

they have no hands in his fall. He however is a victim of internal insurrection and external aggression.

The selected historical plays for this study all have one theme in common among other themes; the infiltration of colonialism on African soil and the fierce resistance by Africans to it. Part of the many evils of imperialism is the termination of the indigenous authority and independence of African traditional rulers. The unbridled thirst for power sponsored by a biased sense of racial supremacy over the natives of Africa was a major reason for the colonial authority's representatives' misbehaviour in the then colonial Africa. Drawing instances from the texts, while we see the Acting Consul-General James Phillips refuse to respect the admonition of the Benin Monarch, J.D. Muffet was rebellious towards Attah of Igala, Colonel Frederick Lugard on the other hand while attempting to show military superiority over Sokoto Caliphate, singlehandedly reversed every standing agreement with Sokoto and went on to declare that he had conquered Sokoto thus his right to establish colonial rule for Britain.

The mindless brutality with which Britain killed Sokoto military men as well as their leader, Attahiru, which is the common backcloth for the play, Attahiru, is much played down than the heightened tone with which he enacted the *Trials of Oba Ovonramwen* which has a protagonist entombed within limitations of humans. Generally, the natives perceived the demolition of Oba of Benin's palace, the murder of Sultan Attahiru by British military men as well as the suicide of Ameh Oboni as a sacrilege, a desecration of the worst sort. Whereas, *The Trials of Oba Ovonramwen* and *Attahiru* dramatise the destruction of self-government in traditional Africa right at the inception of imperialism which also spelled the ruin of any form of resistance against colonial aggression and oppression in Africa, Ameh Oboni on the other hand enact the last phase of the termination of the same.

Just a short while before Nigeria gained independence, the traditional potentate and spiritual leader of Igala kingdom, Ameh Oboni, turn out to be the ultimate object of the imperial manoeuvrings, mindless brutality and absolute obliteration of established social, political and spiritual organisations of the natives. Following the paths, he believed to be honourable in such circumstance, Ameh Oboni, while not ready to relinquish the governance and control of his kingdom to the colonialists chose rather to sacrifice his own precious life by committing suicide. This however is not exclusive to him because several other African traditional rulers had previously done the same. Some traditional monarchs who committed suicide rather than ceding the destinies of their people to strangers, British colonialist in this case include but not limited to the following: Oba Ovonramwen of Benin, Nana of Itsekiri, Jaja of Opobo and many more before him.

By choosing to take his own life, Ameh Oboni can be said not only to have attained heroic status but also have attained the realm of the immortals. He transcended the conspiracies of the imperial powers, whose ambition is to both disgrace and destroy the traditional and cultural heritages of the people, to immortalise himself in the hearts of the Igala people, though, some of his subjects do not see his act of suicide in this fashion.

Quite interestingly, it should be noted that just as it happened in real life, the colonialists did not succeed alone in the case of Ameh Oboni. The imperial powers had to partner with the politics of Northern Nigeria in order to terminate his reign. This was vividly captured by Yerima in his work.

The portrayal of Oba Ovonramwen by Yerima is largely different from that of Ola Rotimi. While Ola Rotimi focuses on the powerplay that brought the Oba to the throne as well as well as the people's attitude to it. This includes the chief's conspiracies against his enthronement too. Yerima, probably, because he got the bulk of his historical evidence from the palace

dwells much on the Oba's emotional state towards the end of his rulership. Yerima inadvertently seem to become sympathetic towards the traditional ruler and thus an advocate of his. This notwithstanding, both Ola Rotimi and Yerima have upheld the monarch's innocence in the murder of the Acting Consul-General James Phillips and his company in their respective works.

When Oba Ovonramwen was intimated about the white men's insisting on visiting the Kingdom at such an untoward time, he only makes a plea to his chief saying:

"...a white man my people the word is caution."¹

He further admonishes his chief thus:

'One does not offer to share with his teeth the meat that he forbids. The white man's ways are different. If we do not want war, then let us treat them with care, giving them no reasons to stay in Bini.'¹

The conciliatory tone with which he speaks, reveals volumes about his nature and his inability to hurt a fly. Both archival and theatrical materials have exonerated the Oba from the murder of the imperialist officers.

Having seen the evils of imperialism on the colonised soil, the question one is tempted to ask is, what exactly is the reason for imperialism? The answer is really not farfetched, the inordinate desire to have control of the economic power of the colonised is the singular reason for colonialism. However, in order to have the control of a people's economy, it is only strategic to either subdue or destroy their political leaders. The destruction, either directly or remotely of Attahiru, Oba Ovonramwen and Ameh Oboni is a calculated attempt at gaining sway over their trade, commerce and economy. This claim of ours is supported by Lord Lugard's discussion with Abbas-the blind beggar in Attahiru,

'This is not a religious war. It is a war of the superiority of wills. I have the machines and guns; you have what I need to trade with, so if one of us is stubborn or refuses to cooperate

then a little nudge is needed. But, you all get excited with your charms, amulets, and religion; you refused to be our friends'¹.

Aesthetically speaking, though Yerima conducted much historical research in order to write his plays under investigation, he not only shows it off in the plays but also ensures to inject robust imagination which causes the works to be first class literary material on the one hand and a historical document on the other. Succinctly, we have such reason to consider the plays fictional-historical or dramatic-historical works. An instance of performance aesthetic injection to historical material is found in *Ameh Oboni*, wherein Yerima employs folk ritual, dance and music often used in most African precolonial communities as part of their rites of passage for the dead. While Attah Ameh Oboni journeys from the world of the living to join his ancestors, 'Ajamalede Masquerade'¹ was brought in to ensure smooth connection between the late monarch and his ancestors.

Structurally, the texts under investigation are crafted in such a way that ensures free flow of presentation. While *Attahiru* and *Ameh Oboni* both open in the palace, *The Trials of Ovonramwen* opens in the Oba's prison cell at the top of 'a British yacht'. One reason for this could be because the play, being in flashback technique, begins from the very end unlike the other two. With much heart ache, the Oba, recalls the circumstances that led him to prison. While in cell, he chooses to narrate his own story by himself because in his words, it probably will 'never be written well if I don't tell it'¹. He claimed his story will either not be told at all or be distorted because according to him,

'... He, the white man, desired my Empire and envied my position and wanted my throne'¹, anyone who envies and longs to have what the other person has at all cost is capable of any wrong doing including the distortion of facts and figures. Yerima's Oba Ovonramwen assumes the position of a griot telling his own story from his own viewpoint and in his own words,

'I 'Oba Ovonramwen, son of Adolo. Here in subdued glory with the white man's feathers fluttering like a peacock unsure of what weather of the day to spread its wonderful, colourful wings. Here I am, posing for the white man's jeers [...] He desired my empire and envied my position, and wanted my throne. [...] Here I am aboard the British yacht in leg irons'¹.

Having, given us this account, events in the play begin to come chronologically with a view to explaining the circumstances and events that culminated in the arrest and incarceration of the Oba before his death. Clearly, from the plot account, it can be deduced that the colonial masters represented by the Acting Consul-General Phillips insisted that he was going to visit the kingdom-the Oba at such a time of the year when the kingdom does not receive or entertain visitors. It is a taboo for the Oba to come out to see anybody at this time that the imperialist desires to come and visit him. The period is set aside to celebrate the Ugie festival and the Oba being the spiritual leader of the people is supposed to be indoor to perform certain rites, this makes it spiritually a taboo for him to see any guests.

Unlike in *The Trials of Oba Ovonramwen* where the King is the first to be seeing in the texts, Attah Ameh Oboni, did not feature in the play until the third scene. At the opening scene, we saw Adigede-Attah, Okolo and certain palace functionaries coming in to stop the palace musicians who were playing the 'Odechi' music on the account that 'the Attah is yet to wake up'¹.

The act of stopping the 'Odechi' music at the first scene as well as the king's ill health as reported and his attendant absence at the initial scenes of the play portend a looming tragedy. The first physical appearance of the monarch is when he was consulting with his Diviner, Ohioga. The consultation with the oracle has to do with the repeated dreams the former has been having consistently for seven days. According to Attah, the dreams are actually a message to him. However, the reader will discover that the dreams are not just delivering a message to the king but also preparing their minds for something horrible which cannot but happen. Aside the stopping of music, the oracular consultation gives a broad insight into the

inevitable in the play and unlike in the case of Oba Ovonramwen there is nothing to either sympathise with or advocate for in Attah Ameh Oboni, he is the architect of his own doom, a tragic hero per excellence. The use of the revelatory dimension of which dream is a part of is generally common to the three monarchs. Dreams not only present the three monarchs as having predictive capacities, it also helps in preparing the minds of the monarchs for the impending disaster that is to befall their various kingdoms.

Ameh Oboni's dream, even without the interpretation of his Ohioga is very vivid and explicit. The core of it is that his tragic end was signed and sealed because of his foibles, why, he was supposed to spend nine days at Egwola's palace during coronation ceremony, he spent only four days just to please the British Resident Officer. Two, he was supposed to appease the anger of his first wife according to the command of the gods for sending her away but he refused and the gods counted it as disrespect. The final straw that broke his camel's back was that he sent two Ohiogas away during the prediction session of the coronation ceremony. As a result of these, Ohioga, while delivering the verdicts of the gods state that 'the gods are angry and have chosen you (Attah) for their sacrifice'¹. The kind of sacrifice/death the gods demanded from Attah is not ordinary, it 'is the type that mingles with shame...Bad Death!'¹. Even the dreams predict that his death will be so shameful that it will involve the connivance of some of his people and the white man. In fact, 'the very few people who will stand by (him) in his times of tribulations...'¹ will have to desert him 'when the centre can no longer hold' The centre can no longer hold because Attah's 'ears (have been) blocked by pride'¹.

Like Attah Ameh Oboni, Oba Ovonramwen also had the same dream for seven whole days nonstop, though he recounts his dreams at the end of the play, unlike Attah Ameh Oboni who recounted his at the beginning of the play. While narrating his dream on the last day he recounts:

“I had another dream last night. This time I saw my father, Adolo. With a sweet and gentle smile, he hugged me with a reassuring grip. He beckoned me to follow¹.”

Of the three monarchs, Caliph Attahiru’s dream seems most elaborate. Though, he also narrates it to his spiritual adviser, Mallam, like the other three, he goes further however to involve his own son, Mai Wurno, unlike the others while he narrates his dreams:

‘Always it starts in the early hours of the morning. There is smoke, heavy smoke. It is at the battlefield. Dead warriors litter everywhere. Then images of my ancestors appear in a circle round me. They pass the flag from one hand to another. As they chant, la ilah illallah, I watch them helplessly stretching my hands as Caliph Atiku gives it to Muazu, then to Caliph Umoru, then to Abdul-Rahman and, as he passes it to me, the flag falls, dripping blood. In all the smoky confusion, Dan Magaji tries to help me pick it up, but he is tripped by a white pebble, he too, falling on his sword. The dream subsumes me in thought’¹.

Three key messages are succinctly passed to the reader of the play; one the mention of the Caliphs before the current one is to assert that the Attahiru’s ascension to the karaga’ of Sokoto is correct by lineage. Two, the prediction of his demise, on the battle field, as a warrior-monarch, in the hands of the British soldiers metaphorically represented as white pebbles is noted. Thirdly, that the flag, which was blood-stained fell foreshadows the downfall of the Caliphate.

Anyone interested in numerology will agree that the number seven is spiritually significant. In the Bible for instance, the number seven represents completion, perfection of things. It represents inevitability of events. It means almost the same thing in African cosmology. That the three monarchs had a particular dream each for seven days is important because it represents the fact that they are helpless in the matter at hand either guilty as charged or innocent. The message brought by each of their dreams is similar and was fulfilled with digital precision.

Through the use of songs and poetic renditions, the author is able to not only foreground the mood but also to fashion the characterisation of Attah Ameh Oboni and Caliph Attahiru.

Severally, Yerima has been criticised for not attaining a robust presentation of characters and plot in some of his plays especially *Attahiru*. He however may be exonerated of such accusations on a few counts which include the fact that the time when Caliph Attahiru reigned in Sokoto did not afford such traditional royal kits critics are looking for in *Attahiru* because firstly, the British annexation of Sokoto Caliphate happened around the same time. In addition, Attahiru is not just a monarch but also a soldier who assumed office as a monarch only to lead his subjects in a war where he and his warriors died. The need to capture the atmosphere of external aggression, internal insurrection and resistance to both did not allow for the creation of an elaborate royal glamour that characterise precolonial Africa in *Attahiru*. In the play *Attahiru*, we see the psychologist in Yerima as he delves into the mental state of the protagonist in the face of myriad of crises that have been prophesied about a century earlier.

Yerima however got lauds for attaining credible character presentation and well-developed plot in *The Trials of Ovonramwen*. This is said to have positively impacted the overall pace and development of the play. In summary, the three plays, *The Trials of Oba Ovonramwen*, *Attahiru*, and *Ameh Oboni, the Great* are clear re-enactment of the immediate past social and political realities in Nigeria. They recreate the evils of colonialism, the connivance of the indigenous people as well as the resistance put up by the people as personified by their monarchs.

They afford the opportunity to make the record straight on colonialism. Firstly, on the main purpose of colonialism in Africa. Unlike the much reported stories by the British Empire who claimed Africa was ‘ a heart of darkness’ that need Christianity and civilisation, according to Yerima as dramatised in *The Trials of Oba Ovonramwen* for example, the main reason for colonialism in Benin particularly as well as Africa in general is the blind pursuit of power to

take absolute control of the vast economic resources of the colonised without any recourse to the welfare of the people and respect to their social, political and cultural constructs.

Furthermore, the revolutionary stance of Caliph Attahiru is an authorial statement which corrects the popularly held notion that held opinion that the northerners in Nigeria did not revolt against the imperialists at any time.

History as captured by Yerima in the plays are not just for entertainment but have been deployed to correct wrong opinions and to make points that if we heed them, Nigeria will not only be restored as the giant of Africa but a global pride.

Conclusion

The major point raised by the author through his creation, Caliph Attahiru is to tell the nation that we do not need a Christian, Muslim or a Traditionalist as our leader. The kind of leader we need is neither a southerner, a northerner nor a middle beltan, but

...a man as Caliph. A man chosen by the light..., who will carry the flag ... past the white man's threat. A man who will stand shoulder to shoulder and eyeball to eyeball with white man'¹.

The 'white man' here is a metaphor for every of our national and regional problems. The man or woman must be the best among the best that is to be chosen by light. He must be fearless and unperturbed in the face of danger. His singular mission is to the nation whose flag she or he must carry. No personal flags, no regional flags, no ethnic flags, but the national flags.

Research Question Two: What are Ahmed Yerima's thematic perspectives to the post-colonial realities in Nigeria?

4.2. Post-colonial Themes in Selected Ahmed Yerima's Plays

Introduction

The harsh lived experiences of Nigerians after independence are a common springboard of Nigerian literature. Nigerian playwrights have continued to reflect and refract on the social, political and economic ruptures that have characterised the nation since independence in 1960. The purpose of this segment is to investigate the postcolonial themes that are brought to the fore in selected Ahmed Yerima's plays¹.

The zeal and hope of self-determinism with which the nationalists fought the imperialists begin to wane because the atrocities of the indigenous 'militicians' who seized the reins of power in Nigeria almost triple that of the colonialists. Thus, the desire for the tiger to display its tigritude died an abrupt death. The overbearing drive to display the rich cultural heritage of the empire also collapsed. In fact, the empire has no one to write back to outside the country as the oppressors are now among the kith and kin. While the first generation of Nigerian playwrights engaged the imperialists, the second-generation deployed Marxism to fight the internal oppressors, the third generation of playwright that Yerima belongs have continued to focus on the individual with the intention of dramatising the effects of the post and neo-colonial disenchantment on them. They are also very much interested in scrutinising the coping strategies individuals have employed. It has also been noticed that, somehow, Nigerians not only suffer at home, they are also been harassed and persecuted abroad and our playwrights have also captured this in their works¹.

Thus, the selected plays for investigation in this wise have on their discussion table problems being faced, as well as strategies being employed to mitigate them by individuals both at home and in exile. The plays selected to discuss Ahmed Yerima's treatment of postcolonial realities in a thematic exploration of the selected plays are qualified for such because of their fidelity to the actuality of post-independence disenchantment and neo-colonial realities in Nigeria.

The inspiration behind the plays are the economic, social and political realities of the post and neo-colonial Nigeria. Paramount in their engagement is the rupture that affects all the fabrics of the nation's life. The post-independence Nigeria has been mainly characterised by avarice, embezzlement of public funds, budget padding, poverty, un/underemployment, ethnic and religious crises, labour unrest, incessant strikes by Universities and Polytechnic lecturers, insurgency, militancy, insecurities, money laundry, high mortality rate, low life expectancy, oil spillage, environmental degradation, resource control, gender bias, child/human trafficking, child labour, religious corruption and hypocrisy as well as harassment and death outside the shores of the country.

4.2.1 Social, Political and Economic Realities as Post-Colonial Discourse In *The Lottery Ticket, Kaffir's Last Game, The Sisters and Mojagbe.*

As a result of the plethora of troubles Nigerians face at home, they make recourse to mass exodus from Nigeria in search of 'greener pastures abroad. *Kaffir's Last Game* is an exploration of the strained relationship between Nigeria and South Africa as well as the various forms of attacks being faced by Nigerians overseas using South Africa as a spring board. The play portrays the traumatic experience of Nigerians under the then military junta led by late General Sani Abacha. The idea of people leaving Nigeria en mass began during the military era because dissenting voices to dictatorship were either jailed, killed or banished.

Thus, to escape such dehumanising experience, most Nigerians who could afford it though not voluntarily had to leave Nigeria. This trend has continued till date as almost everyone wants to 'japa' that is migrate from Nigeria. The play thus is Yerima reacting to the unhealthy relationship between Nigeria and South Africa. The protagonist, Professor Omobusola is a representation of the voice of human rights activists speaking from exile. Not minding Nigeria's effort at helping South Africa out of the oppression of the then Apartheid regime, South Africans have continued to maltreat Nigerians in sequences of xenophobic attacks. While some were maimed, others were disposed of their properties, some others were brutally murdered

The Sisters unravels the arrogance and deceitful nature of the life being lived by the members of the upper class in Nigeria. In the play the transiency of life, power wealth and social and economic stratification are brought on stage. *Mojagbe* is a dramatic representation of the effect of power abuse, a major dent on the democratic rule on the soil of Nigeria. *The Sisters* exposes the trauma women go through in such a male dominated polity like Nigeria. Women in such milieus are seen as pieces of furniture and are so grossly marginalised in the scheme of things.

Incidentally, the plays selected to be investigated as discussing the tragedies of postcolonial Nigeria are all single-act play-texts. While all the plays have episodic plot, only *Kaffir's Last Game* does not. In all, the construction of the stories is void of complexities that can make comprehension difficult. Whereas, events in *Mojagbe*, take place in a period spanning days and in different locations, the other plays observe the classical unities of time, action and place. The plays afford Yerima a golden opportunity to rouse the would-be reader to re-examine government attitude toward the suffering of the populace and moral decadence in the society with a view to fighting the gradual loss of value for human life.

Although, drama is full of make believes, there are pockets of intrusion from the authour to poke the reader back to the reality and seriousness of the issues on stage in order that the purpose of the plays might be achieved. Various methods are used by the playwright to achieve this feat in the selected plays for post/neo-colonial discourse. In *Mojagbe* for instance, the concept of African total theatre was revised. The play being set in the pre colonialist era utilises much music, rituals, chants dance, costume, and traditional Yoruba royal paraphernalia all in a bid to ensure the reader sees the seriousness of the issues at stake. The use of public address mechanism intimating the reader of the arrival, delay, departure and even cancellation of certain flights is a strategic methodology deployed to bring truism in *Kaffir's Last Game*. *The Lottery Ticket*, on the other hand employs tools as jingles on radio among others to ensure readers are forced to see the reality of the events being dramatised.

Mojagbe is not considered a chronicle play since it does not enact any concrete historical event. The core of the play terms of is imaginary. *Mojagbe* is a fictional comment by Yerima on the leadership problem in the post-independence Nigeria, this is in spite of references to real villages and towns. Communication between the dead and the living in order to resolve a problem is deployed as a technique in *Mojagbe*. This method is congruent with the cosmology of the Yoruba that allows for a relationship between the world of the dead, the living and the unborn.

At the very beginning, Nana in *The Sisters* comes with the intention to switch on the light in a dark room. Globally, light represents life while darkness is often a metaphor for death. Her coming with light is a symbolic transfer from death to life because the play is essentially about death. The death of the president brings gloom and darkness ambassador's children reuniting speaks of liveliness. Basically, the room wherein the play is sited functions as the presidential mourning room as a result of the sudden death of the president of the nation which has thrown the nation into a mourning mood. The death of the president is thus the

propeller for the plot of *The Sisters*. Enacted in the play are the activities that take place up until the day prior to the president's burial. In the author's words:

“The president's death provides an occasion for the sisters to come to grips with... realities and to re-examine their lives after all the disappointments and misfortunes they have been through¹”.

Essentially, Yerima postulates that an occurrence of death is such an occasion for the living to reevaluate their actions and reactions.

The Sisters is a moving single-episode drama having continuous action from start to finish. The story in *The Sisters* is woven around four daughters of a dead ambassador. As we will discover in other texts that Yerima aptly portrays classism and its evils in his works. *The Sisters* portrays Funmi, the eldest of the daughters who doubles as the first lady of the nation as using her access to power and resources of the nation for personal purposes. She deploys national means to summon her siblings, who have not been seriously part of her life while her late husband the president lived and she, the first lady. She now realises the need for her sisters to be around her in her moment of sorrow. The meeting of the four sisters gives platform for them to give vivid account of their ordeals in the hands of men. It is a revelation of the inhuman treatment that women go through in the hands of men.

The play, *Mojagbe* exposes the evil effects of misappropriation of power both on the powerful and the oppressed. The play opens up almost like William Shakespeare's *Macbeth* with four women, as the play claims, who possess witchcraft powers, all dressed in their spiritual office regalia and carrying oil lamps on one hand and staves with bells on the other. The play is set in a fictitious state under the Old Oyo Kingdom. Quite unlike the general believe that witches are evil, Yerima, infused the witches with constructive powers in *Mojagbe*. Essentially, they are the defenders of the masses and freedom fighters for the

oppressed under the despotic and oppressive rule of Mojagbe. They are seen ab initio invoking the Layewu spirit, the Death Masquerade to kill Mojagbe, the oppressor of the innocent people. The leader of these four women opined that killing Mojagbe will ‘give our people respite that they need’. Drawing inference from the precolonial political administration at Oyo, the populace in *Mojagbe* in collaboration with the king-makers put a white calabash on the king’s throne. The king is supposed to commit suicide because the message is that he has failed his people. *Mojagbe* who knows the implication of the white calabash for him rather than act accordingly begins to rain insults on his chiefs

‘...and here you all are, the only ones who could have sent such messages of death to the king, my once trusted friends, handpicked by me’¹.

Seeing that the king is not perturbed by their lack of welfare, the people, in order to register their displeasure with him organised protests which Abese in his account states

‘Kabiyesi ...it is the women. They have all come from the market led by Iyaloja and the elders of the conclave. They refuse Prince Esan to be beheaded at the market square. Half of them are naked’¹.

Rather than pacifying the protesters, Mojagbe, in anger orders his supreme military general to massacre the defenceless people ‘...Insolence! Insubordination! Balogun, take a few palace soldiers and cut them all down’. This recalls the recent killings of the innocent protesters during the ‘end sars’ protests among others. While *Mojagbe* dramatises events that have become almost synonymous with Nigeria since independence leadership insensitivity and abuse of power/office, *Kaffir’s Last Game* which does the same thing has gone further to look at the problems being faced by Nigerians who are being ‘forced’ out of the country by leadership failure and oppression outside the shores of the country. It uses the xenophobic attacks on Nigeria to explicate the wickedness that Nigerians endure in exile. It also raises two pertinent questions which are: should activists remain and fight for equality in Nigeria who

should they continue to go outside in order to fight oppression? Safety is not fully guaranteed both home and abroad although, exile promises better prospects.

Kaffir's Last Game which has two characters essentially is about the unscheduled meeting between Benjamin Omodele Omobusola, an eminent professor of Political Science from Nigeria and his erstwhile South African student Mbulelo Kwandebela Makwetu. Mbulelo came to study Political Science in Nigeria under the tutelage of Professor Omobusola during the then apartheid regime in South Africa. On his return home, he joins the Youth Wing of African National Congress which though was the main opposition to apartheid has now become the ruling party in South Africa. Mbulelo urged his former teacher not take the eighty-thousand-dollar lecturing job in South Africa because his departure from Nigeria will deal a deadly blow on the political agitation at home. Aside this, Mbulelo believes if his professor remains in Nigeria, he will be able to publish new books about the political impasse at home from an eye witness account.

However, to professor Omobusola, the South African job is God sent to liberate him from poverty after thirty years of unrewarded but meritorious service to his fatherland. The revered professor is about to start earning in a year far more than he ever earned in all his thirty years in Nigeria put together. Whereas, Mbulelo has risen to become a major political leader in South Africa, his teacher is now a disgruntled retired university don who has run away from his home country. Though the meeting between Mbulelo and Professor Omobusola is unscheduled, it proves a sufficient mirror for reflecting on the myriad of post/neo colonial leadership, political and social economic challenges which include brain drain, youth unrest, dictatorship, systemic collapse and structural decay being faced by both South Africa and Nigeria. In the same line of *Kaffir's Last Game*, *The Lottery Ticket* examines the avarice, corrupt practices, violence and religious malpractices through the characters.

4.2.2 Realities of Religious Malpractices As Post-Colonial Discourse in *The Angel and The Bishop and The Soul*

Corrupt Practices in the religious cycles is another major postcolonial theme that Yerima dramatises in some of his works. Religion and the nation of Nigeria are inseparable. Almost every aspect of our national life is permeated with religion. For instance, at every state function there is the official opening and closing prayer which are often taken by Christian and Islamic clerics. Even right inside our state houses not to speak of campuses are chapels and mosques. Every year governments both at the federal and state levels sponsored delegates on holy pilgrimage to Israel and Saudi Arabia. To say the least there is a national mosque and a national ecumenical centre at the Federal Capital City, Abuja. Although, the constitution of Nigeria claims that Nigeria is a secular state, yet the same constitution recognises Christianity and Islam. At the individual level, three religions are often practiced simultaneously by most people. Meaning, the Nigerian people have been living with African Traditional Religion, Christianity and Islam. There have been intermarriages of practitioners of the religions. Whereas, some people stay clear of any of the three religions, others practise one or two of the three.

In spite of the overbearing influence of religion on Nigeria, one of the major problems Nigeria has had to battle incessantly is religious hypocrisy, bigotry and intolerance. Radicalism and fanaticism coupled with illiteracy and poverty have enhance the spate of religious clashes we have had recently. The issue of Muslim-muslim ticket was almost turning the country to shreds as some people feel they have been side-lined in the scheme of things. Why all these debates around religion are going on religious leaders and practitioners have continued to use religion to exploit unsuspecting masses. Many Nigerians have had to part with their hard-earned money while many lost loved ones and properties to corrupt religious leaders. Yerima however does not seem to bother much about violent religious

clashes but on the hypocrisy of some religious practitioners who against the tenets of their religions have chosen the path syncretism while others display an open disregard for the African Traditional religion That is the popular thing among many practitioners of religion in post-independence Nigeria.

Since we have identified religion as a burning issue in postcolonial Nigeria that Yerima gives careful attention to, we also engage this phenomenon to establish the extent to which Yerima is in tune with postcolonial realities in his works.

It is evident that religion is a major aspect of Nigeria worst affected by corrupt practices. Thus, it a main thrust of Yerima's post-colonial themes. One of the main issues of the theme of religion as is dramatised by Yerima is the hypocrisy or insincerity of most religious practitioners. According to the examined texts, both Christianity and African Traditional Religion are guilty of practitioners' duality and inconsistency. Majority of religion adherents are only practising it just for them to use it to satisfy their material needs. Most of the characters who profess Christianity in the plays being investigated are also practising secretly tenets of African Indigenous Religion to get their problems solved. They neither believe in 'though he slay me, yet will I trust in him'².

nor 'If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up². Which they quote copiously to preach to others.

In the same vain, characters who carry chieftaincy titles that are associated with African Traditional Religion go to church so that they will not be labelled pagans. Such characters view Christianity fashionable and more socially acceptable thus cynics like Kaka in *Uncle Venyil* will be going to church in spite of their disbelief in the power of God. Kaka is a good

specimen of Nigerians who go to church just to show off their newly acquired dresses and to ensure they are buried by the church at their death. Another wrong selfish reason for rich and well to do people going to church and supporting the church financially is noted in Otunba, Gabi and Tundun in *The Angel* and *The Mirror Cracks* respectively. Their own purpose is to secure a permanent seat in the church both for themselves and their family members.

Furthermore, morality forms another recurrent theme in the selected Yerima's religious plays. Although morality or what is moral can be relative, there are basic human ethical standards that all humans are expected to uphold. For instance, incest which is a major ethical concern in the plays being investigated is a taboo to almost all religions in the world. To become guilty of such is considered a grave offence that not only has terrible consequences while the offender is alive, it is believed to have adverse results even in after life. On sighting Chief Gbadegesin's swollen corpse, Baba Ajabge and Ifagbayi who are steeped in the traditional African ways immediately conclude that he must committed a grave abomination while alive. In *The Mirror Cracks*, Supo is evil on moral grounds. Also, Bishop Daku, Gabi as well as Tundun, and Kaka in *Uncle Venyil* are all frauds; In *The Wives*, Chief Gbadegesin is a hypocrite. Chief while alive held a high office in a traditional secret society yet he professed to be a Christian publicly.

Internal corruption is another theme that is explored by the religion inclined works. Much like the economic and political climes, the religious cycles are also bedevilled by mega corrupt practices. For instance, as the plays exposed, a typical Nigerian post-colonial cleric unlike the white missionaries will rather pursue promotion into higher offices and placement into a money-spinning assembly than engaging in evangelism, soul-winning and discipleship.

In *The Twist*, Reverend Noah, claims:

'Noah: In my parish, what amazed me was how ... men, deacons, church workers, were willing to give up their souls for positions. [...] Those who had joined the

secret cult and lost the elections, came dejected, they came to make confessions of their trials...'¹.

In post/neo-colonial Nigeria, money has become the god for many people. People will even use God to make money rather than use money to serve and worship God. Naira other than the Biblical command of rescuing the sinner from everlasting damnation is now the pursuit of many Christians as well as their leaders.

Aside the lust for money by some religious leaders. The plays also comment on the acts of regard for people's social, economic and political class and gross disregard for Biblical doctrines. For instance, the Bible never states that polygamy is a sin for Christians aside the fact that monogamy is a requirement for anyone who aspires to be a Bishop or Deacon. The refusal of the church to bury Anthony in *Uncle Venyil* on the ground that he is a polygamist is hypocritical when the same church in *The Mirror Cracks* proceeds to bury Supo who embodies evil. Supo does not only a liar by showing a Christian character before his parents as well as their friends and associates, while is actually a killer and rapist. The Bishop himself, when he gets to know that Supo committed the sin of fornication with a minor does not stop the burial process because of his hypocritical consideration for the social status of Supo's parents.

Yerima explores the practice of religious gambling in *Uncle Venyil*. The character, Kaka in *Uncle Venyil* embodies syncretism in religion; she yields to the much forcefully repressed African traditional religious beliefs and rituals as it becomes glaring that Christianity as portrayed in the play cannot deliver her son from imprisonment.

Succinctly, in the plays, Yerima is teaching that all religions are equal. He presents characters who direly need supernatural assistance and are overtly focused on where nothing comes from initially only to be forced eventually to seek help in places they once maligned. It is part of the decolonialism temper of the post-colonial playwrights to seek to place Africa at all

levels and fronts on equal pedestal. In fact, Yerima gives more honour to African Traditional Religion because almost all his characters in the religion inclined plays got solution, they seek in other religions in the African Traditional Religion.

The plays under review have corroborated the fact that part of post/neo-colonial problems that Yerima examined in his play is religion as it is being practised in the post -independence era. The playwright however submits through his works that no sinner will go unpunished that even the reward for their evil begins while here on earth.

Proverbs, folkloric traditions as well-known religious concepts are deployed by the author to propel his storylines in the plays. The plays under investigation are mono act plays. All equally have main and sub plots which are sustained by single setting each. The classical unity of time is also observed in the plays.

The Angel is set in the living room of Otunba, who is seen praying to “Father” for his wife, Rachel, to be healed from a kidney disease. Reverend Noah is also seeking for a miracle amnesty for his son who has been condemned to death by hanging in *The Twist*. The setting of *The Twist* is the sitting room of Chief Ojuolape who is first presented while making arrangements for a befitting burial for his late son, Dolapo. The beginning scene of the play presents Revd. Noah stepping into Chief Ojuolape’s living room to solicit for mercy for his son who is sentenced to death by hanging for killing Otunba Ojuolape’s son. The plays portray the various reactions of people to death especially the trauma associated with the death of a beloved one. It is only in *The Bishop* that we have initial actions taking place on stage, in the other plays much is reported and acted. Rachel becomes ill because Christopher died two years earlier in *The Angel*. Ambassador Gabi in *The Mirror Cracks* is presented putting final touches to the burial arrangement of his son Supo who passed on while on a

peace keeping mission outside the country. Supo's death is reported by a sixteen years old girl.

That religion in post/neo-colonial Nigeria is only a means to an end is tragic. It is a coping strategy for many who see religion as an escape route out of existential complexities. *The Angel* portrays an Otunba on his knees praying frantically to 'God' for his sick wife.

'Otunba: '...Father, do something. Can't you do something to help her get better? [...] Send something, Send us a miracle, Father, save Rachel ...save my beautiful jewel'¹.

Unlike Otunba who staunchly believes in God's ability to heal his wife, Rachel, in *The Angel*, Kaka, though, keeps praying incessantly for the release of her son, Venyil, from detention. Kaka does not really believe in miracles or God's intervention. For the average person in post/neo-colonial Nigeria, religion is the shelter much needed for solace in the face of harsh post-independence realities. Religion is not much about pure worship and love for God but a tool or coping mechanism. In fact, for people like Kaka, the church is a veritable avenue to display their wealth and show off her new dresses. To an extent, the Kaka of the post-independence Nigeria cannot be blamed because the religious houses have failed to practice the doctrines they preached. For example, Kaka justified reveals the fact that the church as instructed by God should be taking care of widows and the less privileged but now are exploiting them. Kaka was angry that the church made her sell her fattest goat to buy a piece of cloth the church should have bought for her. Thus she withdraws her contribution to the church as a way of punishing the church.

'Kaka: ...God! So I have resolved to punish the church for making me sell my fattest goat. I have the money, but I shall pay a naira every Sunday until Venyil is out of prison, and I have a good reason to wear the dress to church to glorify God. But if I should die before Venyil come[s] out, or I finish paying the balance of their money is in the old snuff tin under the bed. I want to go to the gate of heaven singing, not explaining to God how I sold my goat and still kept the money from the church...'¹.

African Traditional religion is unconsciously represented in biased light. For instance, Iyagana who is Bishop's paternal aunt hypnotises Bishop with her spiritual powers. In *Uncle Venyil* too, Venyil, in an attempt to seek revenge crosses into African Traditional religion that is said to animalise him

'Kaka: '...at the compound, my son became an animal. With one swift move, like an eagle, he perched on a white cockerel. And in a wild dance, he went to the ancestral shrine, where like a lioness, he bit off the head of the cockerel. He drank the blood, oh God, my son drank the blood of the dying cockerel, still jerking, still twisting. Then wildly he bathed himself, Boyi and the shrines in blood. Boyi started to beat his little drum first in one slow rhythm, you should have seen my son dance. Gradually, he started to spin like one possessed, until he fell, exhausted, [...] my son. He is theirs now. They will initiate him into their cult'¹.

Much contrary to reality wherein we have an overwhelming population professing one religion or the other in post/neo-colonial Nigeria, the plays under study have very minimal quantity of characters. *The Twists* has two characters; Revd. Noah and Otunba Ojuolape. *The Wives* has seven people. *The Mirror Cracks* has eight characters. Uncle Venyil has a somewhat large amount of characters. Aside about thirteen visible people, there are the drummers, the dancers and the people under masks. In spite of the fact that the play has a slightly large amount of characters, the core of the play rotates more about Kaka, her two children: Venyil and Zwan, as well as Boyi the young drummer boy.

Sociologically, almost every level of the society is ably represented in the plays' character construct. While the plays attempt to convey such a message that is generally common and thus use almost similar methods, a degree of diversity is observed in the settings. Except *Uncle Venyil* with characters pulled out from the lower wrong of the society. Other plays that depict the theme of post-independence tragedy in religion deployed characters typical of upper-middle social, political and economic societal class. This gives rise to a claim that Yerima's dramas exhibit clear cut classism that exist in society. His are works that allow all levels of the society sufficient representation. For instance, a play that focuses on issues around the

proletariats, characters who are part of the working class are the ones brought to handle it. Matters affecting the upper class are role played by members of the same class. Thus, in his plays, there are diplomats, professors, traditional rulers, herbalists, teachers, dancers, musicians, beggars among others.

The social and economic class of Yerima's characters in religion focussed dramas and the observance of classical unity of time in them are the reasons we can give for the lack of much development of the characters aside what is already presented at the initial stages of the plays. Almost all of them are stock characters who have similar titles they carry in real life because of their taste for avarice and materialistic tendencies. They are all or either Bishop, Reverend, Chief, Otunba, and Ambassador among others. These titles are the exclusive preserve of the members of the upper class only. They are class markers.

4.2.3 Reality of Internal Oppression As A Post-Colonial Discourse in *Hard Ground*

Nigeria's Niger Delta has been arguably considered the Africa's biggest swamp and world's third largest. The massive deposits of high-quality gas and oil which have on one hand fetched billions of dollars for Nigeria have on the other hand brought woes to the host communities. It is an irony that the world's third largest wetland has become a hard ground in Yerima's words. The interplay of gross ineptitude of the government at all levels, the corruption of traditional leaders as well international conspiracy which brought squalor on Nigeria is best noticed the Niger Delta as the people are perpetual victims of environmental degradation, oil spillage, water pollution, crime, murder poverty among others. Militancy, kidnapping of both foreign, oil bunkering, pipelines vandalisation, oil theft, are among the people's reaction to their suffering. The government wanting relative peace in the region broker peace through amnesty programme while also giving the contract of pipelines protection to an erstwhile militant leader. These have not in any way brought the required

peace. Subsidy removal, resource control, on shore-offshore dichotomy, scarcity of oil and attendant issues that have continued to plague the entire nation are spill overs from the inability of the Nigerian state to intelligently manage the entirety of the Niger Delta³.

Ahmed Yerima's *Hard Ground* takes a detour from the stand point of the other dramatic texts that engaged the petrol dollar industry/Niger Delta crises by looking more to the internal factors that lead to the crises rather than the initial look on the roles of the international community. The play does not attempt to exonerate neither the international community nor the government in the trauma of the people of the oil rich region but it allows for a more encompassing look at the causes, effects and the ways out of the problem. Thus, in essence, the major concern of the text is to expose the corrupt practices and internal aggression against the region

By internal aggression, we mean a shift from the perennial blaming of the white imperialists for the problem of Africa but a look at the trauma of the indigenous 'militicians' oppressing their brothers just as the whites did during the colonial era. The work focuses more on corrupt practices by Nigerians as the major causes of all the problem of Niger Delta. A corrupt practice involves any and every act taking an undue advantage of any opportunity to serve the interest of the people for personal gain. The corruption that Yerima claims to be the cause of Niger Delta is not the one perpetrated by the government or neo-colonial masters but unfortunately by the very few privileged people of the region themselves.

The story of the play is woven around Nimi's household that encompasses both the privileged and the downtrodden. The conflicts in the play revolve around Baba and Mama on one side, Nimi, his father and Nimi's uncle, Inyingifaa on another side. Further from the home front, the text explores the various group clashes among so called militants. An instance is seen when Don, Nimi's group leader and hero in conjunction with other group members passes a

death penalty on Nimi for allegedly leaking the secrets of the gang to the security agencies. Nimi himself reveals how he had earlier had a gun battle with the Canoe Boys. In the same vain, some people who visited Nimi at home also attempted killing him. While Mama's brother and Pikibo are both murdered by the Don, Nimi kills the Don before he realises the Don is his father. As such, just as the issue of Niger Delta has remained unresolved, the conflict in the ends without solution. The practice of not resolving crises/conflict in a play by the authour is a dramatic technique that gives room for the reader/audience to adjudicate on the unresolved issue because they are regarded as the supreme judge. The method also affords the playwright the opportunity to look away from the over discussed role of government and multinational oil firms in the suffering of Niger Deltans into critically examining the roles played by the ordinary people in the suffering own their kith and kin.

Considering the unresolved nature of the end of the play. The playwright has been able to actively engage the audience in asking very pertinent questions as: Who exactly are the militants including those who lead them? Whose fight are they fighting? How come a few individuals have stupendous wealth while the overwhelming majority scavenge for food in the supposed richest region in Nigeria? These questions enable the reader to really look beyond the surface into interrogating the inhabitants of the region whose stock in trade is to collaborate with self-serving outsiders to impoverish the innocent people. We can draw an inference from the text that, Yerima is not only calling attention of the reader to the home grown causes of the Niger Delta problem but also to the reasons for the problems that Nigeria and Nigerians have had to grapple with since independence.

The text is Yerima encouraging Nigerians to begin to look into the family unit in an attempt to discover the real cause of Nigeria's post-independence crisis. It is a challenge to both the leaders and the led at the oil rich Niger Delta in particular and in Nigeria generally. The fact

that the conflict in the play is not resolved is a call for action. Also, the text insists that the problem of the region is home grown.

An example of domestic colonialism is found in Nimi's family where greed for money is at the root of corruption. Baba, Nimi's daddy. Both dominates and colonise Mama and Nimi her son. In his struggles for dishonest oil money, Baba not only alienates Mama, but also involves in hostage -taking, pipelines vandalisation and some other nefarious activities. He mortgaged and jettisoned the wellbeing of his family in his efforts to make money. It was revealed by Mama that Baba, by raping her puts her in a family way. As a woman, this shows that she is not just a victim of the oil crises in the region but also a victim of home-based colonialism by the ruling colonialists in the Niger Delta region. Continuously, Mama, like many other women or down trodden is being repressed and oppressed by the indigenous colonial powers who claim to be fighting for her interests.

If the evils caused by the lust for money had been limited to husband and wife relationship alone it could have been a little better, but the monster extends its ugly head to father -son relationship too. Through deceit, Baba lured Nimi, his only son into militancy in order to get rich. Through threats, bribes and disguised actions, Baba was able to sustain his oppression of Nimi and other unsuspecting children. He both promotes hatred and encourages the youngsters to engage in self-destroying activities. Other adults in the family are of the same sort as Baba. Inyingifaa, Nimi's uncle is notorious for illegal dealings in arms and ammunition. He provides gun to young adults including Nimi, to kill and wound people just for his own economic advantage. Inyingifaa, an indigene of Niger Delta does not want the crises in the region resolved because his arms dealings would have terminated with any such resolution. Inyingifaa is an unscrupulous business man who will do just anything for money. In Mama's words he is 'a traitor' who will 'sell his own blood if the price is good' because 'he measures everything in terms of money.'

The indigenous oppressors, in addition, employ use of isolation to subjugate ordinary people so as to ensure the crisis remain unresolved because they profit heavily from it. Having recognised the fact that he has been isolated from resources, Nimi goes to join the bloody fight in order to position himself correctly not because of his desire to help the region or to champion the cause of the subalterns like Mama, his mother.

The leaders of Niger Delta; traditional and political merchandise the common the heritage of the people out of selfishness. The children of the region, whose future has been mortgaged, now take to crime and violence as survival strategies. Militancy and allied crimes are the coping strategies for the young people of Niger Delta. While Re-enacting the height of violence against the youth of Niger Delta, the texts laments this feeling of alienation that forces the young adult into crime through the character portrait of Nimi. Although quite young, Nimi seems to be fully aware of the state of affairs in the region and how it affects young adults like himself.

‘NIMI: The school you sent me to was made up of waste land and poverty. And even as a child, you smell it and you quickly learn that nothing is free, unless you ask for it, and when they refuse to give you, you grab it, and that is what we are doing. Boys first growing up fighting for bean cakes and puff puff. Then, gradually, we were forced to become men overnight. Asking for our rights’¹.

Yerima, speaking unambiguously through Nimi, shows that adults, parents, particularly fathers, have been unsuccessful in their responsibility of taking care of their children. The fathers do not provide even a basic need like food which is paramount for all round growth, thus making the children vulnerable to crime in order to make a living for themselves. This assertion is enacted in Baba who abandons his family to chase oil money in Niger Delta creek. This further reinforcing an assertion that Niger Delta crises is not only caused by the government and the international community, but also by an interplay of internal factors as parental irresponsibility.

Aside the family, other agents of socialisation like the school, have also contributed to the unending crises of the region. The school for instance does not provide the enabling environment for the children to grow into normal responsible adults. The school may however be exonerated because probably the funds provided for the school is not enough or has been embezzled by the leaders of the region who will rather amass illegal wealth at the expense of providing a decent education for the children. They will rather use the young people as political thugs to get to political offices as Nimi puts it;

‘TONYE: (Pours him another glass) The politicians’.

NIMI: They created us. They gave us the reason to find our place. . . .First, we were errand boys, and so we got guns and money. We started to ask questions; they had no answers. We all knew what they looked like before they got into power. We dumped them. They gave us no respect, because of the crumbs they gave us while they keep the chunk. . . . We fight only for ourselves. Our lives in our pockets. Our songs are for ourselves’.

This conversation reveals that the reason there are militants and violence in the region is partly because the leaders of the region use the youth as thugs in order to get to office and when they get there , they embezzle the fund meant among other developmental projects while only giving the youths crumbs. This accounts for the reason for the dearth of visible development in the region in spite of the large volume of revenue coming into the region. Aside family, school and political leaders, the texts also indicted the economic and business leaders in the region in the crises of the region.

Chief Tomfort, is a representative of the corrupt business community in the region whose activities further worsen the troubles in the region. He has enriched himself by stealing the common patrimony of the community. He then deploys discriminating generosity to achieve cheap popularity. He, according to Tonye ‘built his own army’ of small children whom he equips with guns ‘while all his children were sent abroad’

Furthermore, the text argues that the crises in the region is caused and encouraged by corrupt elements indigenous to the region by enacting the activities of some very old elders who by the virtue of age are now supposed to be preaching peace for social, economic and political growth of the region continue to sing songs and beat drums of war to innocent children while they are actually siphoning money budgeted for developmental purposes into their own private use. They lie to the children that the root cause of their woes the oil companies and the Nigeria nation.

‘NIMI: Why does Mama cry? There are younger boys and girls than me in the struggle. Children who believe in the cause. First, you listen to what the elders say about the struggle. Even when in primary school. . . then it sounds right to join the struggle, first as a boy of a group, then as the eye or a spy. By the time you are halfway through primary school, you carry guns for the boys, and by the time you are eleven, these days of automatic guns, you become an expert’¹.

These so-called elders, who have been deceiving the children to believe that the reason for the crisis is external to region have also been luring them into violence that claims their lives while they continue to acquire illicit wealth. The elders, Baba/the Don, Chief Tomfort, Inyingifaa, who have lured the children into danger and death, have never for once appeared at the frontline of battles. For example, the Don takes advantage of the ignorance of the people, particularly the youths. He engages bribery to secure their loyalty so he can continue to enrich himself. He is being regarded as a hero by his naïve “disciples,” like Nimi. The fact that youngsters like Nimi are so willing to obey him reveals that they are ignorant of the real reason for the war. The Don’s brutality is revealed by Mama when she declares that the Don ordered the murder of her brother ten years earlier for disobeying his instructions.

In addition to lies and alienation, violence is also being used by the internal corrupt leaders to oppress the people for their own selfish ends; politically, economically and or socially. Succinctly, the text, *Hard Grounds* elucidates that the bloody fight by the self-style ‘freedom fighters’ is only geared to further enrich themselves contrary to the popular claim that they

are to defend the interests of the masses of the region. For instance, the bloody clash between Nimi's gang and the Canoe Boys is never for the enjoyment of the people but a promotion of the vested interests of the leaders of the two gangs.

The worst hit by the post-colonial corrupt practices as portrayed by the text is the family. When trouble break out while oil wealth is being pursued, the family ties suffers great strain. The family that should shelter and protect becomes the epic centre of violence and brutality.

'INYINGIFAA: My business stopped. My shipment could not pass through. No one wanted my guns. I was told that the big men had established another route and another source. My men were killed. Paraded on television that they were caught bunkering. But I never meddle in oil, only gun. Now the lives of my boys must be avenged. (He brings out a dagger, moves towards Nimi, determined to hurt him.)¹.

Through stage direction, the reader is shown the degree to which the family has suffered collapse because of mindless pursuit financial gains. Inyingifaa without thinking about the blood connection between him and his nephew, Nimi, is about to kill him to avenge for a setback in his arms deals. Nimi himself attempt Father Kingsley's life just because he suspects that the cleric is leaking secrets of his crimes to the police.

Despite the fact that the play is physically set in Lagos, at Baba's home, the authour has been able create Niger Delta Geography via his careful selection of words like

"muddy land of periwinkles and mud-skippers that glide every day searching for food," "soft marshy ground," "deadly swamp," "murky water," "little villages separated by salty water," and "black oil under the ground"¹.

The bulk of events in the plot is reported and not acted on stage. For example, Mama reported that though Nimi was sent to Niger Delta in order to learn his mother tongue. Whereas, Yerima could be criticised for setting the play in Lagos and not Niger Delta, a more critical look at this will establish the fact that in order for the text to foreground the corruption and duplicity that characterise the crises in the region. For instance, while the combatant youths are made to believe that the main enemies of the region are outsiders, the

real oppressors are the indigenes. Furthermore, it is a paradox that those who really are fanning the embers of war are living large in cities far away from the battle field in the South-South.

The play is separated into five major episodes. The play completely departs from the established idea of act as it uses light as well as characters entry and exit to mark the beginning and ending of an episode

Aside setting, Yerima deploys character presentation to further reinforce his themes. In fact, characterisation is injected with both irony and paradox to showcase the corrupt activities, interior subjugation, and domestic displacement in the post-independence Nigeria that Niger Delta crisis is only a microcosm. Mama reports that ten years earlier Nimi, is asked to go to the village so he can learn both his mother tongue and their culture that he might become well rounded. Ironically, he returns to Lagos as a 'monster' created essentially by the same society that should have cultured him into a perfect gentleman. Nimi himself claims that no one can

'...grow up in our ways (Niger Delta) . . . and not feel what I now feel, unless you want to . . . pretend that all is well'¹.

The 'ways' he refers to are the lies, deceit, selfishness, violence, jungle justice, poverty, family disorientation, parental irresponsibility, crimes among others'¹.

4.2.4 Reality of Gender Inequalities as a Post-Colonial Discourse in *Hard Ground*, *Mojagbe* and *The Sisters*

A major theme in the selected plays of Yerima is gender inequality. The text, *Hard Ground* portrays the oppression of women in the Niger Delta crisis. Mama is the most suppressed in the text. At least Nimi is able to lay hands on some level power. Mama's voice is never heard. She does not initiate any action except to report the action of others either which are done against her or not. She suffers rape, one of the worst crimes against womanhood. Her health also suffers as she catches cold. Mama represents the teeming population of those who have lost everything to the crisis in the region. Her pride, that is virginity, is lost to her rapist husband, both her brother and son's pregnant 'wife' are gruesomely murdered by Baba, her

husband. The only remaining source of happiness she has, Nimi, also becomes a 'monster' in the struggle

All the women in *The Sisters*, like Nimi in *Hard Ground*, suffer one form of abuse or the other. Starting with Funmi, the wife of the late President, she experiences the pain of separation from her siblings. While the President was alive, he never allowed her to enjoy the company of her sisters. Despite the fact that the President was the one responsible both for the death of Taiwo's husband and her being hospitalised, Funmi could not visit her to commiserate with her on the demise of her husband because the President did not permit her. Marriage to the President was like imprisonment for Funmi. Little wonder that that the President's death has not brought much sorrow to her like Taiwo when her husband was murdered. The eldest of the sisters, Nana got a most inhuman treatment from ambassador her father and his legal wife while they treated her a domestic staff rather than as a proper member of the family. She wasted the first forty years of her early life serving as maid to her own father and half-sisters. It is only after ambassador dies that her true identity as ambassador's first daughter is revealed.

In the play *Mojagbe*, women are not more than pieces of furniture that men can acquire, use and discard. The Monarch, Mojagbe does not have any regard for women at all. He kills women and uses them as sacrifice at will. He kills his first wife and mother for ritual to attain immortality. He extends his wickedness to his new Olori as he uses his evil power to block her so she will not be able to conceive and have a child.

Mojagbe: And that one, too. She now wants children ... I see her drinking concoction and whispering incantations in my room before coming to bed. Often she cries out in her sleep. ...¹.

Having done something to prevent his wife from having children, Mojagbe is happy that the woman is sad to the extent of having nightmares and weeping in her sleep.

Olori: The Baba that I saw said as long as your man, Isepe, lives, my womb is sealed.
(Crying).... Why would he want to stop my children from coming? ¹.

Olori's efforts to have children makes her to consult a traditional medicine man called Baba who makes her drink some herbal medicines. This is a subtle comment on the problem that childlessness causes in marriages in post-colonial Nigeria. It is clear here just as in many homes that the cause of infertility is Mojagbe, yet, the wife, Olori, is the one being bothered and is making effort to remedy the situation. The woman is often blamed for infertility in the home. This is craftily captured in the play as a part of society's injustice to women in post-independence Nigeria. Aside the older women, younger women also suffer the fate of their elders in the hands of Mojagbe. Mojagbe treats Motunrayo, a slave girl, as a sex tool just to satisfy his inordinate sexual desires aside the fact that she assists the priests at the shrine.

Away from the domestic scene, Mojagbe takes his disregard and violence against women to fever heights when he orders his slaves to rape protesting women.

Mojagbe: Take six strong and virile slaves. Let them loose amongst the half-naked women.
And if they desire older women like my mothers' here, they can have them...¹.

It is to be noted however that in spite the fact that women have and are still being oppressed by men, women in the plays just as their counterparts in real life still continue to desire men. For instance, Olori in Mojagbe and Funmi in spite of the horror they both call marriage, depend on being not only married but being married to leaders to provide high class status identity for them. Being married to men like the President and Oba Mojagbe basically provides some level of economic, political and social benefits.

4.2.5 Reality of Migration As Post-Colonial Discourse in *Kaffir's Last Game*

A major strategy for dealing with post-colonial trauma is for Nigerians to migrate from the country. While there are unwholesome situations pushing Nigerians from homeland, relative conducive atmosphere abroad is pulling Nigerian to itself. Thus, the idea is a push and pull situation. Recently, there was an outcry against the mass exodus of medical personnel from Nigeria in fact some people have called for a legislation to regulate the mass movement of skilled professionals from the country. The movement of people from Nigeria cuts across all professions. While a university professor is honoured globally, the case with Nigeria is different as government's continued neglect as caused many bright brains to travel out of Nigeria. Professor Omobusola's total remuneration in Nigeria for his thirty-five years of meritorious service is far less than what he will earn just for a year in South Africa.

The play however hints on the fact that all is also not well with Nigerians abroad because they are often victims of attacks. An example is the Xenophobic attack that has been recurrent against Nigerians in South Africa. In addition, either home or in any other African country, *Kaffir's Last Game* derides the fact that the political class has maximised their offices to arrogate jumbo pay for themselves while the nations intelligential is left with paltry sum. Mbulelo's pay from all indication is much higher than his professor's pay. However, the relative peace, security and enabling environment have continued to pull Nigerians out of the country just as misrule and corruption have been pushing them out.

Research Question Three: What are the dramatic techniques employed by Ahmed Yerima to achieve his purpose and their implications for the Nigerian state?

4.3.1 Characters and Characterisation as Technique in Selected Ahmed Yerima's Plays

Considering characters and characterisation, Yerima shows mastery towards the development and presentation of the monarchs. *Attahiru*, *Ameh Oboni* and *Oba Ovonramwen* are not just the protagonists of the plays they are also eponymous characters in that the titles of the plays are their names. The protagonists although are not unfamiliar to the various communities. However, Yerima defamiliarises these characters by engaging psychological analysis of the characters on stage. In fact, the protagonists assume a much larger than life status in the plays than they really were in real life. The three of them are able representatives of the traditional stools prior to, during and to an extent the post-colonial rule in Nigeria. They all showed great care for their subjects while offering to pay the ultimate sacrifice for the continuity of their people. They all faced and fought both internal insurrection and external aggression with fortitude. They are also a challenge to the present crop of leaders in Nigeria to put the welfare of their people at heart and be ready to make necessary sacrifice to ensure peace, progress and prosperity in the nation.

The protagonists each can also be regarded as tragic heroes. A tragic hero is one who rises from grass to grace and falls eventually because of his tragic flaws and their interplay with the divine and humans. For example, Attah Ameh Oboni, according to Ohioga was first a 'man before you (he) you became a god', thus he fulfilled the first quality of a tragic hero. The flaws that the gods and humans conspired with against the Attah include the fact that he did not complete the number of days required for his coronation. He spent only four days when he was supposed to spend nine days. He cuts the days by five days at the instance of the British Resident Officer. It is this same officer who is remotely responsible for his death. Just

like the Biblical king Saul who failed to obey Divine instructions because of the people. Furthermore, his first wife, Iyawo, who was supposed to be in the palace during the coronation rites was not there because Attah had earlier sent her away. When Ohioga instructed him to send the woman a gift according to the commands of the gods, Ameh Oboni refused. His refusal to send his first wife a gift is considered 'disrespect of the gods'. Also, rather than being patient to listen to nine Ohiogas during the prediction session of his coronation ceremony, he heeded 'a grievous advice' that told him to send the other two away because the first seven have predicted the same thing. With these errors in place, the gods who justly passed a death sentence on the Attah probably moved some of his people to 'connive with the white masquerade' to terminate his 'royal dance'!

On another hand, Caliph Attahiru's case does not obey the general classical rule of tragedy. It follows the path of Ola Rotimi's *The Gods Are Not to Blame* in that the fall of Sokoto Caliphate was prophesied about a hundred years earlier before Attahiru's time. Who then is to blame for the death of Attahiru and his soldiers? We cannot blame him for standing up to defend what he believes to be true and just. Probably, he chose to fight rather than face humiliation that Oba Ovonramwen faced. Yerima deserves accolades for the presentation of Oba Ovonramwen. He could have chosen to distort history to suit the present Oba of Benin who commissioned and gave him official support to write the play. Though, Oba Ovonramwen did not die to attain divine status like the other two, his humiliation draws so much sympathy from the reader who has been able to identify with his helplessness in the face of the white imperialists who not only have the human and material resources to destroy him but also unbending desire and the support of some Benin people to bring him down and capture the Oba. The humiliation of the Oba is the humiliation of Africa, her culture and dignity. The death of Ameh Oboni and Attahiru is the decimation dissenting voices against colonialism, recolonialism and neo-colonialism.

Yerima's portrayal of his drama personages is real. They have so much semblance with average Nigerian citizens they represent either from the upper ruling class or the lower working class. Even the language use by these characters are real. They have titles and costumes that correspond with their professions, inclinations occasion in the society. For instance, all clerics in Yerima's plays answer their preferred titles, Bishops, Reverend among others. Yerima also focuses more on dialogue as a way of presenting issues in these plays other than a robust development of appearances. The method of making a character to play many roles at different times is deployed in the two-character play, *Kaffir's Last Game*. The professor and his former student often switch roles or play many roles so as to engender the satirical presentation of the issues being enacted. For example, the student and his former teacher play the roles of musicians by singing together, while Mbulelo both takes the lead and the backup at the same time. The piece of song is a ridicule of inhuman state policies and the tendencies of the political leaders in Africa to perpetrate themselves in office even when they have no achievement visible to justify their continued stay in office.

Satire more often does not permit round characters as the flat characters make the message much clearer, Toun, in *The Sisters*, a second daughter of ambassador is a major caricature of a character who even with her age and profession of faith in Christ lacks the capacity for personal decision. Toun is ambassador's second child from his legally married wife. She is about well above fifty years old. She is both a divorcee and a school manager. She is a school administrator and a divorcee. Her constant confession of faith in Christ does not cure her of being conceited. She cannot mobilise her faith for any good her insincere elder sister, Funmi for support and almost everything is appalling. Apparently, she does not have any ability for autonomous thinking because she is always quick to agree with her even more phony sister when it comes to decisions. Little wonder that she was rebuked by Taiwo for not having any

personal ground on any issue as she is ever supportive of Funmi on every issue even it is clear that Funmi is obviously mistaken.

Taiwo: 'Please for once Toun agree with yourself. Be your own person, and speak up. Say what you feel'¹.

Probably, she is enjoying some financial benefits from Funmi because most Nigerians are so called sycophants or praise singers for always praising rich people to high heavens even in the face of an obvious misbehaviour so as to secure their favours

The last daughter of Ambassador, Taiwo, is also the representative of the rational minds as well as the mouth piece of the defenceless in the society. She is said to be fifty-three years old, a legal practitioner, a novelist, a poet and also a bold person. Taiwo's husband, Joe, who was killed about years earlier by Funmi's husband, was accused of participating in a failed coup. Taiwo recounts that her late husband was arrested by the police late in the night while she herself was shot in the fracas of the arrest and as a result lost her pregnancy. She states further that the gun bullet affected her pelvis and her legs, thus she has since been confined to a wheel chair. Taiwo, serving as the conscience of the play takes up the duty of unveiling the foibles of each of her siblings as well as their men. The eldest child of ambassador, Nana, is illegitimate. Though she was thought to be a maid, she turned out to be ambassador's first child. Probably because of the identity of a maid that she had carried in the play, she turns out to be passive and docile. About forty years of her life was spent serving as a maid in the same family she is the first child. Now, she is sixty-two years old. Despite the fact that she does not have much formal education, Nana provides the much-needed moral support for her siblings. In fact, she is referred to as a rock which means she is almost everything if not everything to the sisters

'Nana: It is funny how we pick all this sadness,

Taiwo: How profound. Nana, how long have you been with us? You always said and done the right things. Always.

Funmi: She has been my rock' ¹.

Whereas, *The Sisters* portray the corruption and hypocrisy of the haves in the society against the moral uprightness of the have nots, *The Lottery Ticket* exposes that the greed, fraud and evils of the proletariats in the society can be worse than those of the ruling class whom they often blame for their predicament. Essentially, the play *The Lottery Ticket* argues that majority of the lower-class members are devoid of human compassion. There are seven characters in *The Lottery Ticket* which depict some faces corruption among the masses of Nigeria: An uneducated fifty years old woman, Mama Lizi, operates a local eatery. She is depicted as a sturdy woman who is not only passionate about her trade but also willing to venture into any money-spinning endeavour. Her daughter, Lizi, eighteen years old provides helping hand to her mother at the shop. Although, she claims to be a Christian she is involved with Danger, a well-known criminal. Lizi who trained as a seamstress is a little more intelligent than her mother. Then the sixty years old Landlord, who is a retired public servant and the owner of the building Mama Lizi and Lizi are living in. He partners with Mma Lizi and Lizi in their food business. He is presented as a very covetous, dishonest and wicked fellow. He will rather have money than save human life. The law officers in the play are Yellow Fever, a traffic officer, and Sagent, a police officer. The corruption of security agencies in post-colonial Nigeria is exemplified in the characters of Yellow Fever and Sagent. These law officers collect bribes from offenders to free them. Yellow Fever having being bribed by Mama Lizi colludes with her to tell a lie about Danger's death. Sagent states that if he gets bribed, he will cover up the circumstances that brought about Danger's death so as to exonerate the suspects.

‘Sajent: Now, now. I want una to know say I be gazetted Police Sajent. If not to say book don spoil we country, I for don be ASP or even DSP, but na as God want am so. Dis case simple, but e fit hard. All dey for una hand. If una see me well, na as una talk and wan do am, na so gofment go take hear am.

Landlord: ... Oga Sajent, how much you wan?

Sajent: Good una get sense. Each dead body na three hundred naira. Say I come look for them, two hundred naira¹.

The corruption in the Nigeria Police is endemic as it flows from the officers to their men. The embodiment of the corrupt practices in the Nigeria Police in the play is the Sajent. He has a monetary value for every crime and he charges suspects accordingly.

‘Sajent: Wait, den say I write the report, another two hundred naira. One thousand-naira na him I go collect for dis case¹.

The other two personalities in the play are Danger and Baba Tailor. The former is hardened criminal who engages in robbery and violent attacks on innocent people. As a young man of just twenty years, Danger is the metaphor for the consequences on the social decadence on the youth of postcolonial Nigeria. Living up to his name, Danger has no regard for human life apart from Lizi he fondly calls ‘sweet potato’. As such, the singular person he listens to is Lizi. He is loosed with prostitutes and kills at will for money.

‘Danger: ‘Na not-nine-not self even tug go dey use. I fit just hold the telefon say make dem wet one man with petrol, or burn one opponent shop. I tell you tief na tief. As politics dey go nuclear, na so tug work go go nuclear. As my man dey swear oath to chop Nigeria for Aso rock na so me too go dey swear to chop de man’¹.

The system that transforms an innocent young man into ‘ Danger’ finds ready job for him as an arm wielding thug being used to wound, kill and destroy political opponents or business competitors. Being an intelligent person he is able to discern that the oath of office taken by Nigerian politicians is an access “... to chop Nigeria for Aso rock...”¹. Aso Rock is a

metaphor for political offices in Nigeria. The only reason for vying for political offices in Nigeria according to Danger is for looting the treasury. The play proffers that a collective effort is needed to end social, political and economic problems in the country when Danger's death comes by the people rising against him collectively.

The last and only morally upright personality in the play is the seventy years old sickly man called Baba Tailor. His winning the Tuba Cola Lottery is a poetic reward for his integrity. Though he is good hearted, his health has greatly deteriorated. His ill-health can mean two things: it represents the poverty level in the country and secondly, it is a metaphor for fragile almost dead morality and high ethics in Nigeria. The need for preservation of one's rightfully acquired property in the face of crass greed in the environment is heightened as all the other characters thought he has died and begin to plan how to pick his ticket. When he revives, the first thing he asks for is his ticket, 'Wey my ticket? Where I put am?'¹.

4.3.2 The Use of the Nigerian Pidgin English

The use of language by Yerima is a catalyst for dramatising faces of tragic occurrences in post-colonial Nigeria. The popular Nigerian Pidgin English is the means of expression in the play *The Lottery Ticket*. This is the only realistic language that the calibre of people in the text actually use in real life. Essentially, any important message meant for the ordinary people on the streets of post-colonial Nigeria should either be in their mother tongues or the pidgin English.

Both the markets and streets are represented in a creatively realistic manner with the use of flexible language and popular music. An example of the discussion among Mama Lizi, Lizi and Landlord evokes the common knowledge of business, finance, and relationships among the ordinary Nigerians on the streets.

‘Mama ‘Lizi: But Tuba Cola people get sense. Dey wan sell plenty, den dem go give people one hundred thousand naira. See wayo. Dat one na money? Dey don make millions well well, den dem go give us only hundred thousand. Everybody na tief for dis kontri. Dey just dey punish poor man’¹.

‘Landlord: ‘Madam na money o. Nobody force anybody. Na you get your money, na you drink am.’

‘Mama Lizi: ‘Ha Oga Landlord. You wey God don bless. You get house for Lagos, you dey collect money, wetin you wan take hundred thousand naira do?’

‘Landlord: ‘I go take am marry your Lizi. I don old, I need small girl wey go dey rob my back till I die’¹.

‘Mama ‘Lizi: Heeh, so na your hidden agenda be dat? Men self, wayo full una head.

Lizi: God forbid.’

‘Landlord: ‘Wetin God wan forbid? E good say since my wife run commot for house run follow that yeye 419 boy wey god don soda him yansh, e good say make I sit down dey look ayanyan? ...Lizi good. Na you go bury me.’

‘Lizi: ‘I say God forbid. I no go bury oldman. God forbid! No be me go do replacement wife for you. You dey forget say I train as tailor’¹.

The discussion helps to unveil the Landlord’s hidden love for Lizi and both Mama Lizi and Lizi’s reaction to it. He claims he will use The Lottery Money to marry Lizi and establish her in her tailoring business.

‘Landlord: ‘...Na him I dey talk, if you gree my own, when I win I go pay your dowry. We no go go church. I go drive Electrician commot the shop wey dey Ebute-Metta. I go put you there. I go buy you Tokunbo sewing machine and your mama no go pay rent again.’

Mama Lizi already falls for the trap set by landlord using money however, Lizi, who is already in love with Danger is not bothered. After purchasing eight packets of lottery tickets, the landlord begins to make advances to Lizi because he believes he will win the ticket’.

‘Lizi: (Lizi walks to him) Make I bring your food?’

Landlord: Yes Sugar!

Lizi: Na as you chop am yesterday?’

Landlord: Yes honey!

Lizi: Water? Or Tuba Cola?’

Landlord: Tuba Cola, Orange Banana of my nose'¹.

The landlord having realised that his chances of marrying Lizi is not there he begins to discourage Lizi from following Danger, her suitor.

'Landlord: Lizi wetin you think? No dig hole wey rabbit no dey. I be sure banka make you follow me o. you wan suffer follow that tief tief boy. Man wey dem dey call Danger na man? person?')'¹.

Aside the comic discussion among Landlord, Lizi, and her mother, there is an even more hilarious one among Landlord, Mama Lizi, and Baba Tailor. In spite the fact the dialogue centres around death, death is discussed in a comic tone.

'Baba Tailor: I sick no be small.

Landlord: Na die we even hear.

Baba Tailor: I die, but God no call am my time. I see death, na man. I see my mama and papa, dem dey call me. Adolfo come. Na him I remember my shop. I say I still get mission and I refuse to follow them'¹.

In the ensuing conversation Mama Lizi asked why Baba Tailor refused to die as he says heaven is utopia so as to escape the suffering of the earth. Her assertion is justified because Baba Tailor is suffering from multiple terminal illnesses like diabetes, arthritis, hypertension and heart problem. In her words again

'Mama Lizi: I say wetin come remain for life for you? If Doctor tell me say I get all dis sickness and my mama dey call me for heaven, I for kuku stay'¹.

As far as she is concerned, she will rather die and remain in such a blissful territory described by Baba Tailor than remain on earth, particularly in Nigeria and suffer pain as a result of poor medical care'¹.

A higher dimension of comedy is introduced to the discussion by landlord when he gives his own analysis of the causes of the ailments Baba Taylor is suffering from. In fact his comment elicits laughter from everyone present at the scene.

‘Landlord: ‘See heen, diabetes na wen bigman don chop many sweet things. Atiritis na wen bigman sidown dey drive moto dey chase women. Which moto you get, pass pasenja for molue bus? Herpatension na wen you wori for account wey dey London, you wey be say na ajo you dey do. High blood na wen life sweet bigman and everything wey him dey do na highlife, e chop leg of chicken, he chop woman leg, wash am with odeku (All laugh at Landlord’s analysis)’¹.

It is sarcastic when they begin to taunt Baba Taylor as a wealthy man to have been suffering from the illnesses purportedly meant for the rich. Baba Taylor however cuts in sharply to tell them how neck deep he is in debt both to the hospital and some food sellers. On a serious note, the interpretation given by landlord is actually poor people’s views on the mentioned illnesses.

The use of language Yerima assigned to Danger is much more real than the others as his speeches make one to feel what goes in car parks or markets where personalities like Danger are found. His speeches are full of slangy expressions which most of his hearers are familiar with, for instance,

“Oga Landlord. Alaye Baba, my rice and beans dey your hand this morning o”¹.

All he is doing is to hail the landlord so as to get money for breakfast from him. Truth to the calibre of people in *The Lottery Ticket*, the use of Pidgin English is most appropriate.

4.3.3 The Incorporation of Nigerianess into the Standard Variety of English Language

The question of language and Modern African literature is answered by Yerima in these plays. Although, African writers have been forced to inherit imperialists' languages like English, French, Portuguese among others. While some playwrights like Ngugi Wa Thiong O' in the spirit of decolonisation refused to write in colonialists' language, majority of other have decided to incorporate the materials from their native cultures into the lexicon of the colonialists' language as used in their works. Some playwrights have been magnanimous to give some form of definition to the local terms used; others did not buy such idea. Yerima does both. In *Ameh Oboni*, Yerima does not have any section to explain the meaning of terms like 'Odechi', 'Gaabai' du' and some whole sentences written in Igala language. However, in *Attahiru*, he sets a section aside to explain some terms he picked from Hausa language. Aside this, he brilliantly uses language as a device to create tragic atmosphere in the three plays. Not only this, language is effectively used for character development. For instance, the protagonists who are the personifications of their different peoples' cultures and traditions use proverbs, wise sayings, anecdotes and figurative expressions that show how deep and vast their knowledge in the ways of life of their people is. They are also given to interior monologues that give credence to their rights to the thrones. The colonial officers in the plays are all given to superficiality in their understanding and approach to the total way of life of the people. For example, Muffet was referred to as 'the white fool wrapped up in ... cloak of stupidity'.

This is a sum of the language use, attitude and behaviour of the British colonial officers in the plays.

In contrast to the language use in *The Lottery Ticket*, both *The Sisters and Kaffir's Last Game* deploy the standard variety of English language to match up with the class of people in them.

Although, the three plays discuss similar issues of corruption and leadership failure as tragedies of post-colonial Nigeria, the use of language has separated *The Lottery Ticket* from the other two, *The Sisters* and *Kaffir's Last Game*. The use of language in the two plays is imbued with much metaphors, imagery, symbolism, sarcasm, allusion, poetry, as well as philosophical inclinations. Yet, pockets of class difference are noticed in the language deployments of characters in the plays with standard variety of English. For instance, while the well-educated daughters of ambassador discuss in elevated English language, their maid turned eldest sister whose choice of language is pidgin. In addition, language use in *Kaffir's Last Game* does not only reflect educational and social levels, it reveals the physical backgrounds of the personages in the play. As such Afrikaan and Yoruba feature extensively in the play. Being satiric plays, with an intention to mock social vices like insincerity, avarice, corruption misuse of office and privileges which are essential part of post-colonial realities in Nigeria, sarcasm is a strategic tool utilised in *Kaffir's Last Game* and *The Lottery Ticket*. Yerima is to be praised for his approach to language use. In spite the fact that he has to present characters with different levels of linguistic competences, his diction is essentially easy, simple and accessible.

4.3.4 Language As Psychological Marker in Selected Yerima's Plays

Generally, Yerima's language in his plays is an infusion of traditional items from Nigerian culture into English language. His English language is laden with parables, imagery and metaphors from the indigenous Nigerian society. Religion inclined plays that we have selected for study are not exception to this rule although pockets of creative and necessary variations are being noted. The variation noted however is the use of language to both interrogate and explicate the mental state of the characters. For instance, Venyil's report of his detention experience to Kaka his mother is done in almost an illogical language so much that his mother cannot make any sense out of it.

‘Venyil: (Lost in thought, as if in a trance) He was always there ... like a watchful hungry wicked vulture ... he was always there. As if they wanted you to know who your “Father punisher” was. His icy photograph adorned every room. I saw it, and hated him. I saw it until I transferred my pain to the thought of hurting him one day. I lost my being, my humanity, in the kicks of their boots. For exchange, I gained this animal you see before you. I wanted so very much to die sometimes, and yet, his face kept me going ... my bile ... the strand of life ... cocoon in the shell of my own self-destruction.’¹.

‘Kaka: I am sorry, son ...’

‘Venyil: And at nights, for the nights were worse, the cold air brought in the ghosts. For a long time, I did not know them, neither did they bother to speak with me. But we were always there. Keeping a cold watch of each other. I, the living, they, the dead.’

‘Kaka: I am sorry, son ...’

‘Venyil: Then one night we could not take it any longer. We started to talk. They had wandered into my world, and I was the guest in the valley of cold existence. Ah, Mama ... I saw the nakedness of the mind’.

Kaka interjecting the account of her son’s suffering with “I am sorry, son” shows the mental torture she is going through herself as she hears her son recount his dehumanising experience in jail. Venyil is revealed as a person almost breaking down mentally due to his experience in incarceration.

Inconsistency and incoherence are notable features of the conversation between Otunba and his family doctor, Tela in *The Angel* after the death of Rachel, his wife.

Otunba: She hates white (He walks past Tela, opens the door to the bedroom, and comes out with a coloured wrapper. He covers her up.) She hates white. There. She lies like a rose flower.

Tela: You need to eat.

Otunba: (Lost in thought) We got married on a wet day, you know? It rained that day as if it was not going to stop. As if all the angels in heaven were praying at the same time. It rained also each time she had our children. (Pause. With tearful voice) I heard it even rained the day Christopher, our son, was buried. (Chuckles, still in pain) Christopher and water. He never liked water when he was a baby. Each time he would struggle and fight his mother and aunties before having his wash. And there he was, buried in a wet grave, on a wet day. And he could not even say a word. (He begins to cry. Tela watches him for a while and goes to him.)

Tela: It is okay.

Otunba: It started after Christopher's death; you know?

Tela: What? Otunba: Rachel's sickness. It started after we received news of his death. It killed a part of her. He had always been her favourite. She hated the twins because they gave so much problems at birth. They even tore her womb as they came out. She gave him her love, her time ...everything, and when he died, it was as if she had willed her own death too. She blamed everybody for his death¹.

Otunba's speech turns disjointed as he jumps talking about his late wife's dislike for colour white to their being married on a wet day, giving birth to their children on raining days, Christopher's phobia for water despite being born on a wet day and his burial inside a watery grave and finally to Rachel not liking her set of twin because of the difficulty she encountered while giving birth to them. The issues raised are not connected at all. He however can be forgiven for his illogicality as it turns out that he is mentally disturbed by the pain his wife goes through for two years on the sick bed and her eventual death. The inconsistency noted in Otunba's discussion with Doctor Tela is born out of a great attempt to repress deep seated pains in his heart. Language use for Yerima is both sociological and psychological.

The contradictions of the tragic situation of post-colonial Nigeria is further alluded to in *Kaffir's Last Game* and *The Lottery Ticket*. This shows that both the well enlightened and the members of the lower class of post-colonial Nigeria are fully in the know about the horror that religious practitioners have brought on the nation with lies, deceit, fake miracles, threats thefts hypocrisy among others. This excerpt from *Kaffir's Last Game* speaks volumes about a country well known for prayers and corruption globally.

Professor: ...We in Nigeria are a very prayerful people. Even a former president of ours wondered how, with the bad economy and all, the country still survived. It was prayers.

Mbulelo: Prayers. That is a new one on me¹.

The fact that we pray and yet could not solve basic existential problems is made reference to in *The Lottery Ticket* “Na as Muslim dey beg, Christian dey beg”¹. Lizi further derides the materialistic tendency of Nigerians as they only often pray for material things other than spiritual needs. She gives an account of an incidence during a typical Sunday service where a particular person who is believed to be spirit possessed begins to prophesy to warn a particular car owner about a looming danger. As she calls the car number, the displeasure of everyone present at the service including the clergy man was not hidden because they thought the numbers called were for lottery. Every individual in the play, *The Lottery Ticket* aside Lizi is ready to murder just to obtain the lottery ticket. The lust for money makes Mama Lizi willing to lure her daughter into marriage with her landlord, just because she does not want to continue to pay rent. Her justification for such an indecent act is that to her it is a ‘business’ for her to trade her only child’s happiness for monthly rent.

Mama Lizi: Lizi if oga Landlord serious, say I no go pay rent, abeg make you give am eye small.

Lizi: Mama!

Mama Lizi: Na business me I dey’¹.

4.3.5 The Use of Spiritual Theatrical Aesthetics in Selected Ahmed Yerima’s Plays

Spiritual theatrical aesthetics helps to enhance the mood of the plays. Precolonial Africa is rich in rituals and spiritual practices and for playwrights to faithfully present Africa, ritual and drama in African world are inseparable. For example, in order to establish the fact that Attah Ameh Oboni is divine, a ritual has to be carried out by Ogbe, a palace chieftain, to wake him from sleep. To wake the Attah from sleep, Ogbe, will have to stay

‘by the door of the inner chamber. (He) Ogbe prostrates with his head on the ground three times, towards the door way’¹

before he recites the panegyric of the Attah. This is not exclusive to Igala alone as most communities in Africa venerate their monarchs as gods.

4.3.6 The Fusion of Classical Greek and African Concept of Tragedy in Selected Yerima's Plays.

Yerima marries both the classical concept of tragedy with that of Africa. For example, only the killing of the Don is acted on stage, every other tragic event in the play is reported. This is an example of the classical tragedy in the play-text. The killing of the Don itself is shrouded in the dark. The idea of African tragedy as deployed in the texts involves the whole community suffering the repercussions of any tragedy. Thus, the calamity that befalls Nimi's family is essentially a regional or largely a national tragedy. Now that Baba is dead, Mama and his 'monster' of a son automatically become liabilities if not menace to the nation. Though, the crisis is in the Niger Delta region, it is a testament of the failure of post/neo colonial Nigeria because of corruption.

Technically, the text successfully deploys African total theatre technique. The dramatic method involves the use almost every performatory mode elements, such as bringing the masquerade on stage, music, dance, and folktale. For example, in the stage directions 'Tingolongo, a fearsome masquerade, dances into the stage'. Aside the use of total theatre tradition in Africa this bringing Tingolongo masquerade on stage is another dramatic method often called 'Deus Ex Machina'. This refers to the practice of bringing a supernatural force to solve the problems of human characters. It is clear from this text that Nigeria has to look away from blaming outsiders for her problems.

4.3.7 Plot As Technique In Selected Ahmed Yerima's Plays

Unlike Attahiru which has a rapid episodic plot development that starts immediately the Sultan becomes intimated with the reason for the letter from Fredrick Lugard, the then British High Commissioner, Ameh Oboni does not start proper plot development till the third scene as Attah is stirred from sleep because of a nightmare that has reoccurred till the seventh day nonstop. Moving away from the dilemma of a tragic inevitable fate, Attah is seeing as the fourth episode opens making a traditional political appointment: he appointed Chief Idirisu Ukagidi as the head of Dekina district, the Gago of Dekina. Going forward, the sequence of events is a departure from being organic. Drawing inference from Ukagidi who 'promise(s) with the god's guidance to be loyal ...to the end'.

Attah expresses his displeasure-'fear' over the disloyalty of some of his 'sons', that is his beaded chiefs, who he claims

'strip (him) me naked with their tongues at the tea dinners with the District Officer and then ...coat (him) me in beautiful robes of praises ...to pour insults on at their white man's palace¹.'

From hence, we begin to see some of the conspiracy among be the white colonialists represented by D.O. Muffet, the Northern Muslim hegemony and some Igala officials toward the destruction of Attah Oboni and his kingdom. Gumuchi, an Igala man representing Igala kingdom in Kaduna has defected to the imperialists camp. The northern Muslims did not welcome the Attah 'as a true Muslim'. The Attah also read a book written in the Hausa language which

'described the glory and might of the British Empire, and how they conquered Niger area. He goes further to narrate about great kings like Ovonramwen of Benin, Nana of Itshekiri, and Jaja of Opobo. Great kings whom the British Empire fought, trapped and dragged out of their kingdoms in chains, with soldiers guiding them to faraway lands, to die'¹.

He however in conclusion says that ‘I put myself in their places, and swore never to let it happen to me’¹.

This is enough to prepare the mind of the reader to the fact that Ameh Oboni was ready for anything but humiliation from the British imperialists and their cronies. ‘If need be’, (he says) I am ready to die fighting’¹.

Aside the much-reported cases of connivance by the Attah, we see the D.O. Muffet in his office at Idah dictating a letter to his secretary. The letter which is meant to be sent to the Governor is an indictment on the Attah of Igala Land. All that Muffet wrote about were unverified accusations from ‘God- fearing’ Damuchi, as well as the Council of Emirs and some so called ‘well-meaning members of the Igala community’

After the meeting between Muffet and the Ameh Oboni, it became clear that the British Empire would have no regard for African cultural traditions. Since they were not able to substantiate all accusations against the monarch of Igala people, he was warned to be kinder to animals because he killed a goat at the Ocho festival. It was customary for him as the Attah to be the first to kill animal during the festival. The Attah considered this laughable and placed a curse on those ‘who have a hand in the downfall of Igala land!’ And ‘(All the crowd chant in one loud voice: ‘Oyeh! Oyeh! Oyeh!’)

The next major event in the play is the attempt by Muffet both to humiliate and then kill Ameh Oboni. He however could not fulfil his mission before Ameh already ‘won the battle’ by committing suicide. Much of the speeches made by Attah already prepared the minds of the reader to the fact that he was ready to take the courage way, by killing himself, rather than facing humiliation of incarceration and forced exile like the monarchs from the Niger area.

4.3.8 Foreshadowing as Technique in Selected Plays of Ahmed Yerima

The use of foreshadowing is another major linguistic feature of *The Sisters*. Yerima loves to prepare the minds of his readers to the essence of his stories right from the start. For example, the reader's mind is made ready for the call for pity by the former first lady when really there is none because she has not planted the seed of mercy for the harvest of empathy she wants. Taiwo's poem, while the play opens, gives an abridged account of what the plot of the play is.

'Taiwo: 'Dark embers of my inner soul That drink lobes of sadness pour. Melting, pelting ...dropping drops of tears Wrapped once in stately glory, Now naked in cloves of sorrow ...pity! (Pauses, looks around Oh the drink lobes of the rich and powerful Must now tilt to pour out ...pour out The innocence of a shaded life Now searching for pity Where there is none...pity!'¹.

Taiwo narrates the sorrow she felt while her husband died and she was hospitalised. It became worse because the President who ordered the killing of her husband is not only her sister's husband but none of them visited her while she was in the hospital as a result of the gun bullet injuries she sustained in the process. Now, Funmi wants her siblings to comfort her at the demise of her husband, the late President. Taiwo sees the President's death as a victory for her

' Taiwo: I am sorry again. Besides, I did not want anyone to share in my supreme moment of glory. God had handed over the moment to me, and in triumph, I scribbled ...death ...oh death ...which breaks through the mighty walls ...of Egypt. Treks down the well-paved road to Jericho only to snap the neck of the almighty'¹.

Since Taiwo has been a specimen of the elevated kind of language used by elites in Yerima's *The Sisters*, Mbulelo and Professor Omobusola will prove the same in *Kaffir's Last Game*.

' Mbulelo: I am sorry, but let me get this clear ...you mean that you a Professor of Political Science trained at Oxford, London and Cambridge lost your wife to a lottery ticket?

Professor: No, to an America Professor. My God these American people ...'¹.

'Mbulelo: Permit me to cut in, Professor. The Americans are not a people. They have lost that status and description. They are just Americans. If you think of them just as Americans, then their action will never hurt. Look at Libya. Even now they want to tell President Mandela who to shake or visit. I tell you they are not a people'¹.

The discussion between the two is not innocent. It has political undertone. It serves as a ridicule of Americans and a mockery of their perceived misbehaviour both within America and in the continent of Africa. Reference is made to the fact that America has continued to use aid as a bait to get African leaders to do only their biddings. As any African nation who is friendly with a country that America hates always faces sanctions from America.

'Professor: They also did that to us. And our government cannot stomach their political machinations and intrigues also. The African [p]residents, no matter what aids they get, must begin to assert themselves'¹.

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Chapter Five

Conclusion

5.1 Summary of Findings

Colonialism is a historical reality in Ahmed Yerima's *Attahiru*, *The Trial of Oba Ovonramwen* and *Ameh Oboni, the Great*

Post-colonial Themes in Selected Ahmed Yerima's Plays include, corruption, leadership failure, religious hypocrisy, gender violence and migration.

The dramatic techniques deployed by Yerima in the selected plays are characters and characterisation, plot, creative use of language foreshadowing and the fusion of Greek Classical notion of drama and the concept of total theatre in Africa.

5.2 Conclusion

In this thesis, we have discussed the historical realities of colonial oppression, anticolonial efforts and post-colonial corruption and rupture as depicted in the selected Ahmed Yerima's plays. Through the analysis of thematic preoccupation and dramatic techniques in the plays, we have shown that sufferings have always been the experience of Nigerians right from the precolonial era till date. Thus, the engagement of Yerima with historical realities in Nigeria is geared toward sensitising the nation to the causes and possible solutions to her problems.

An analysis of the texts has not only indicted the colonialists, and the indigenous leaders in Nigeria but the followers as well in the perennial crisis the nation has ever been plunged into. Subsequently, the manifold perceptions that Yerima offers on the persistent Nigerian crisis call for new and concentrated efforts within Nigeria as whole at offering lasting solutions to

the country's crises generated by a conspiracy of the international community, leadership failure and corruption of followership

5.3 Recommendations

1. We recommend that political leaders should be made to go through literary historical materials so as to garner inspiration for selfless leadership.
2. We recommend that the Nigerian citizens all be given a reorientation about the need to put the nation's interest above the personal gains in order to collectively solve the recurrent post-colonial problems.
3. We recommend that a creative fusion of home-grown and foreign based methods be sourced in the attempt to find lasting solutions to the existential crises the nation is facing.

5.4 Contributions to Knowledge

1. The study brings to the fore the need to revisit history in the attempt to solving national problems
2. The study introduces the use of New Historicism to the study of Ahmed Yerima's works.
3. The study discovers the need to fuse home-grown tools with foreign ideas to solve national problems.
4. The study calls for collaboration of all citizens in order to solve the recurrent problems in Nigeria

5.5 Suggested Areas of Further Studies

1. The work calls for further studies on the images of women in historical dramatic works.
2. The work suggests further studies on the use of foreign literary theories as they can also help to put African texts on global class.
3. The work calls for further studies on the roles of language and techniques on the overall success of literary dramas
4. The works calls for further studies on the roles of historical realities on literary productions
5. The study calls for further research on the theme of exile in African dramatic literature.

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