

**FOLLOWERSHIP AND POST-INDEPENDENCE DISILLUSIONMENT IN
SELECTED PLAYS OF FEMI OSOFISAN**

BY

OYEWUMI OLATOYE AGUNBIADE

B.A (Akungba), M.A (Ibadan)

MATRICULATION NO: 166043

**A Thesis in the Department of English, submitted to the Faculty of Arts
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of**

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

of the

UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN

June, 2019

ABSTRACT

Post-independence disillusionment, a condition whereby people are disappointed as a result of socio-political failure in post-independence Africa, is one of the motifs that preoccupy contemporary Nigerian drama. Existing studies on Femi Osofisan's literary works have approached this concern with a bias for scapegoating colonial and neo-colonial leaders as the cause of Africa's underdevelopment, while neglecting the role of the followership in the collective predicaments. This study was, therefore, designed to examine the representation of the complicity of followership in post-independence disillusionment in selected plays of Femi Osofisan and the dramaturgical devices employed to enhance the representation. This is with a view to establishing the contribution of the followers to their collective predicaments.

Robert Young's version of Postcolonial Theory was adopted as framework, while interpretive design was used. Nine plays of Osofisan were purposively selected for their representations of post-independence disillusionment from the perspective of the ruled. The selected texts were *Fires Burn and Die Hard (Fires)*, *Birthdays Are Not for Dying (Birthdays)*, *Love's Unlike Lading (Love's)*, *Esu and the Vagabond Minstrels (Esu)*, *Farewell to a Cannibal Rage (Farewell)*, *Aringindin and the Nightwatchmen (Aringindin)*, *Altine's Wrath (Altine's)*, *The Inspector and the Hero (Inspector)* and *One Legend, Many Seasons (Legend)*. The texts were subjected to critical analysis.

Actions and inactions of the followers in the selected plays demonstrate that ordinary people contribute significantly to post-independence disillusionment and underdevelopment. Lawal (*Altine's*), Ereniyi (*Inspector*) and Alowolodu (*Legend*), who are hitherto common people, are shown to behave and perform worse in leadership position than their predecessors. *Esu* and *Farewell* depict how relatively privileged few, who should champion the cause of the voiceless, betray their kinsmen through sycophancy and treachery, while *Aringindin* depicts the high handedness of vigilante groups whose victims are equally commoners. In *Fires*, setting ablaze of the market by Alhaja in order to conceal her dealing in contraband goods throws the rest of the market women in untold hardship. The corrupt practices of the business associates of Kunle Aremo's father in *Birthdays* also project the followers as being as corrupt as their leaders. Basse's usury practices in *Love's* depict the exploitation of the masses, while other characters' political apathy foregrounds insensitivity to their own predicaments. Dramaturgical devices are used in the plays to enhance the playwright's innovative representations of the dysfunctionality of post-independence Nigeria. In *Fires*, *Birthdays*, *Love's* and *Inspector*, aesthetics of masking, Orunmila motif and symbolism are deployed to expose the followers. Satire, paradox and irony are used in *Esu*, *Farewell*, *Aringindin*, *Altine's* and *Legend* to lampoon the followers for being as guilty as the leaders they accuse.

Femi Osofisan deploys satire, paradox, irony, among others, to portray the followers as complicit in post-independence disillusionment in Nigeria. These plays point attention to followership as a significant factor in post-independence development in Nigeria.

Keywords: Post-independence disillusionment, Femi Osofisan, Followership in Nigerian polity, Nigerian drama

Word count: 460

CERTIFICATION

I certify that this research work was carried out by OYEWUMI OLATOYE AGUNBIADE in the Department of English, University of Ibadan, Nigeria, under my supervision.

.....
Date

.....
Supervisor
Prof. M.A. Kehinde
Department of English
University of Ibadan.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the Almighty God, my savior, who keeps inspiring, instructing and favouring me in the journey of my life.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Let me begin by thanking God for the gift of life, wisdom, kindness and favour to me at all times.

I thank my supervisor, Professor Ayobami Kehinde, for your patience and guidance that turned this research work into a masterpiece. I thank you for impacting in me the ethics of thoroughness. I am proud to be associated with you and pray that the Lord continue to lift you up.

I am also grateful to the entire members of my family especially my parents: Hon and Deaconess Ereola and Olasegege Agunbiade, and my siblings—Brenda, Afolabi, Omorinsola, Olaolu, Doyinsola and Bunmi for their support and assistance throughout the course of my study. Many thanks to Taiwo and Kehinde Omojola; the duo with whom from our discussion the title of my research emerged. May you fulfill purpose in life in Jesus name. I also appreciate Dr. Toba Oluwasuji of University of South Africa, for encouraging me almost every day during this study.

In the course of writing this thesis, I have been privileged to share, discuss and get opinion of scholars and fellow research students which have helped a lot in shaping my view. I thank Drs Clement Ajidahun of the Department of English, Adekunle Ajasin University Akungba, Solomon Edebor of Afe Babalola University for their advice; Francis Amenaghawon, Adebisi Adelabu, Adeshina Afolayan, Solomon Olaniyan, Blessing Oboli, Idowu Adekunle and Bimpe Akinyele of University of Ibadan for their patience, advice and time to read through my work during the programme.

I equally thank Professors Tunde Omobowale, Nelson Fashina, O. Oha and Olutoyin Jegede all of Department of English, University of Ibadan and Professor R. A. Sanusi of the Department of European studies, University of Ibadan for their positive roles. I also commend the special friendship of Dipo Olukemi, Busayo Akinduro and Gabriel Okonoda throughout the duration of the programme. Finally, I thank Pastors Sola Ayegbusi, Johnson Oyekanmi, Biodun Kila, Matthew Famuwagun, Reverend Akerele, Mrs Maria Odeh, (Former DG FRCN), for their prayers and my colleagues at Radio Nigeria, Positive F.M Akure for your unquantifiable support, understanding and cooperation.

Oyewumi Agunbiade

Ibadan, Nigeria, 2019

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TITLE	PAGE
Title Page	i
Abstract	ii
Certification	iii
Dedication	iv
Acknowledgements	v
Table of Contents	vi
Chapter One: Introduction	1
Chapter Two: Review of Related Literature	29
Femi Osofisan's Social Vision	29
Femi Osofisan and the triadic blend of morality plays, humanistic plays and traditional African theatre	31
Femi Osofisan and the dialectics of sub-in-version	35
The conflict of ideology in Femi Osofisan's drama	49
Osofisan and the common man (Followers)	54
Trends of criticism in Nigerian drama	56
The concept of disillusionment	60
The concept of disillusionment in the African space: Sofola, Achebe, Gimba and Akporobaro's perspectives	61
Social commitment and African drama	69
Femi Osofisan and neo rationalist theatre	73
Satire as a social art	75

Chapter Three: Followership and Post-independence Disillusionment in Femi Osofisan's Drama	79
Chapter Four: Traditional Rulers, Musicians, Vigilantes and the Politics of National Failure in Osofisan's Plays	123
Chapter Five: Paradox of Humble Beginning and Irresponsible Leadership in Femi Osofisan's Plays.	145
Chapter Six: Summary and Conclusion	174
References:	182
Appendix:	192

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the background to the study, as well as making a case for the contribution of the followers to their collective predicaments. The chapter also presents the playwright Femi Osofisan and his background. The statement of the problem, research methodology, aim and objectives, significance of the study, theoretical frameworks and organisation of the entire work are other features that make up the chapter. This introduction thus paves way for the review of relevant literatures in the next chapter.

Background to the Study

From the colonial era, through gaining of independence and the years that followed known as post-independence period, the blame-game of backwardness in Africa has moved from one victim to the other. First were the colonialists who disturbed the idyllic stage typified as paradise on earth (Kehinde, 2011). Critics and the nationalists at this point adopted all possible means to redeem the glory of Africa by taking its leadership back from the colonials. Notable Nationalists at that point in time were Herbert Macaulay, Léopold Sédar Senghor, Gabriel Okara and others who used their intellectual platform to fight for their political freedom, while critical works and incisive essays from the likes of Hamidou Kane, Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Camara Laye, J.P. Clark, Eskiah Mphahlele, and others also pointed to the fact that Africans are capable to rule themselves while the colonialists were blamed for altering the existing peace of the land (Kehinde, 2011; Dasylva & Jegede 2004; Dasylva 2004; Ngugi 1969). However, not long after Africans got independence from the colonialists, the baton of the blame game shifted on the new African leaders who fought for independence in the 1960's, thus the mood of 'paradise lost' pervaded Africa. That according to Kehinde (2005), was a period:

When African writers have become more realistic than ever before. The writers now examine critically how Africans have been governing themselves and what they have made of their independence (224)

The height of this development in literary criticism is what is now described as "Post independence disillusionment" (Ravenscroft 1973). Capturing the import of this on the new leaders, Ime Ikiddeh (1986) argues that "this disillusion syndrome carries with it disappointment in unfulfilled hopes, anger, cynicism, even self contempt." In other words, African leaders few

years after independence disappointed the people as they had little or nothing to prove to them the realisation of their promises of regaining the paradise. Thus the neo-colonial African leaders became the black sheep that set African nations backward. This mishandling of trust which the African masses reposed in their leaders led to a complete downfall of African nations. This development has, as a result, incited the contemporary African literature which reflects social and political realities of the post independence era in which the coloniser has been replaced by political elite. Hence, African literature of the past two decades have transformed the theme of disillusionment where the coloniser was once the sole object of criticism, to that which African technocrats, cadres and government officials are depicted exploiting the masses they have promised to uplift (Ibrahim 1990:85).

These unpleasant and unexpected attitudes of the new Nigerian leaders and politicians are depicted in early works of African Playwrights. The likes of Wole Soyinka in *A Dance of the Forest* (1963), Bode Sowande in *Farewell to Babylon* (1979), J.P Clark's *The Raft* (1964) and in the Prose, Chinua Achebe in *A Man of the People* (1980), Ayi Kwei Armah in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1968), to mention a few, project what became of Africa after independence in terms of grabbling and plundering that characterized self rule after the departure of the colonials. The most resounding salvo on this blame game on the leaders that have enjoyed much critical comment over the years was fired by Chinua Achebe in his *The Trouble with Nigeria* (1984) where he emphatically submitted that:

The trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership. (He notes that) There is nothing basically wrong with the Nigerian land or climate or water, or air or anything else. The Nigerian problem is the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to the responsibility, to the challenge of personal example which are the hallmarks of true leadership (1)

Niyi Osundare (2015) and Abubakar Gimba (2008) among other critical minds have challenged this stand as misleading to critics, and confusing in that it has programmed the mind and attitude of the people/followers to a way of thinking that absolves them from guilt in their daily untoward behaviours which further contribute to the backwardness of the country. These scholars are of the opinion that such stand that leadership is the problem of the country needs be subjected to critical examination while critics and writers are to judiciously engage the postcolonial condition with a view to unraveling true cause of its disillusionment. One of them, Abubakar Gimba notes

with fervor that “our leadership is no more blameworthy than the foreman or the driver, nor is the followership in our country any less culpable than the gang of tree felling laborers or the hapless passengers” (Gimba 2008:19). He opines that the character which Achebe cleared of any culpability is all that is wrong with the people, noting that many of the followers in particular, have acquired the reprehensible character which has become a national albatross in the bid to rise to the level to which Nigeria has great ability. The common man therefore is not innocent in this explication. In fact, to him the people/masses/followers are presently the problem of Nigeria and the earlier Achebe’s statement is addressed, the earlier the way forward for Nigeria. Hence, he submits point-blank that: “I do not agree with Achebe and I want to warn you of the mesmerizing dangerous hold of his hypothesis, Achebe, no doubt, meant well but great men also go wrong.” (Gimba 2008:19).

Corroborating this just after President Mohammadu Buhari won the 2015 presidential election in Nigeria, Niyi Osundare in a lecture titled “Nigeria’s New Found Change and Lessons” warned that for the much-desired changes to take place, Nigerians must carry their fate in their hands. He explains that “for too long we have heaped all the blame of our political backwardness on our leaders hence time we began to take some responsibility for our tragic connivance in our woes”. (Osundare 2015:33)

This awkward development among the common people is however not limited to Nigerians just as corruption knows no geographical location neither is it ethnic bound but the different attitude to curbing it is what is multifarious as some tackle it while others romance it. Establishing this trend in critical thinking across Africa, Nduku and Tenamwenye (2014:9-10) in “Corruption: A Threat to Justice and Sustainable Peace in Africa” give a picture of this manifestation of corruption among the people in Kenya. They explained that in Kenya, citizens complain about corruption in the high offices but will comfortably cheat each other in the market place; public transport hikes rates at will without regard to the consequences on the most vulnerable. And in the revered legal profession, a young lawyer in Kenya revealed that in their early years of practice, they could not incorporate a company as fast as their colleagues because they had not realized that their colleagues had been tipping the clerks at the company registry.

This is just the same in Nigeria where everyone complains of corruption at the helm of affairs whereas none is blameless in our daily engagement with one another. A recent incident that validates this is the killing of the former Vice Chancellor of the Federal University of

Technology Akure, FUTA, Professor Albert Ilemobade by his domestic workers; gateman and Ex-driver in Akure, Ondo State on 22nd June, 2015. The duo connived to kill the former Vice Chancellor who hired them in an attempt to steal his SUV jeep. They succeeded but were eventually intercepted by the police. Similarly in Ekiti on July 7th, 2015, the Ekiti State Government ordered the arrest of the Ekiti Market Leader (Iyaloja), Chief Mrs Waye Osho for illegally allocating spaces in Awedele market to the tune of 93.8 million naira to traders who government asked to leave Oja Oba Market for Awedele market for renovation. The Iyaloja capitalised on the desperation of the 4,940 traders to bill them N19,000 per shop space and refused to refund the said amount when government intervened hence her arrest. These and many more have become every day experience as the dailies are filled on daily basis with the evils, actions and inactions of people against themselves in post colonial Nigeria. One question which one needs to quickly ponder on is drawn from the much quoted cliché that “Youths/Children are the leaders of tomorrow”. If truly leadership is our problem, why have we been unable to produce better leaders from among the people among which lie the youth and children which constitute the bulk of the led and followers since independence? Gimba (2008) puts it this way that:

Today’s leadership was yesterday’s followership. And today’s followership will be tomorrow’s leadership. Leaders do not fall from the sky, just as fruits on trees are not manna dropped from heaven: they grow on trees. Leaders are not little angels dropped on us from the sky: they are born and bred among us and by us. How could they be different from us? (30)

There is therefore the need to address the question of ‘the people’ or better say followership in nation building which perhaps will open up the solution to our backward status on the globe.

The major concern of this work therefore is to explore how the followers which post colonial literature strives to emancipate from the shackles of oppression are themselves through actions and in actions undoing themselves. In fact a whole lot of works have been replicated to arrive at the same conclusion that leadership has perpetually failed Nigerians and that they have rebranded the baton of the colonials to now oppress the people. These are obvious in the plays of Wole Soyinka, Kole Omotosho and Bode Sowande. However, much gap is left unfilled as little is done to also capture how the followers especially ordinary people have drawn back the wheels of change just as corruption being fought against at the helm of affairs is at times even more

pronounced among the masses being fought for below. Hence ‘our leaders (only) appear to suffer from a greater number of symptoms, and in aggravated forms, because their own deficiency syndrome malaise has attained a much higher stage than ours, the followers’ (Gimba 2008:135) who on daily basis perpetrate one act or the other which when summed up overshadows the leaders malaise and throws open our self exonerating blame game that has become our national pastime. Similar to this is the failure of the masses and electorate to hold accountable the leaders, lack of patriotism and even selling at paltry sums their votes for their belly during polls (Osundare, 2015). This is not unconnected with the West’s alleged ‘central place of witchcraft and divination procedures’ rampant in Africa as Mbembe (2001) in *On the Postcolony* puts it:

The idea of progress is said to disintegrate in such societies; should change occur- rare indeed- it would as of necessity, follow a disordered trajectory and fortuitous path ending only in undifferentiated chaos (4)

The foregoing thus points to a situation where it is now difficult to question notions and widely held misconceptions about the continent of Africa where Nigeria is a giant. There thus emerges another conflicting issue as Africa remains vibrant in its claim as mother of altruistic behaviour and personality (Sofola, 1973). Sofola maintains that the Altruistic moral personality is innate to the African man. According to Sofola this trend of evil (corruption) is foreign to Africa and is essentially imported. To him the African personality is borne out of the African culture:

Which is the mirror propellant propelling the Africans from within themselves to be what they are known and seen to be in our observed daily lives- altruistic men rich in humanity, sociality and unpolluted morality.” (xiv)

When one considers Sofola’s position and the contemporary African condition where killings, murder, betrayal, kidnapping have become quotidian realities one cannot but arrive at a mental struggle (conflict). A critical examination of this conflict no doubt in the current study is believed to offer solution to the root of disillusionment not only in Nigeria but also in the African space. To therefore say the foregoing is beyond or has escaped the grasp of literature will be untrue as there is hardly any aspect of human life that has not in time memorial been represented in the genres. In line with this, Achebe (1990) submits that:

Literature whether handed down by word of mouth or in print gives us a second handle on reality: enabling us to encounter in the safe, manageable dimension of make believe the very same

threats to integrity that may assail the psyche in real life; and at the same time providing through the self discovery which it imparts, a veritable weapon for coping with these threats whether they are found within problematic and incoherent selves or in the world around. (170)

Literature presents human beings not just the way they are but also how they can behave “to serve a pragmatic purpose which is usually didactic in nature” (Owonibi, 2009:99). Contemporary African drama has made this so possible as it obsessively reflects deep rooted social issues of the African continent. Establishing this, Owonibi (2009) affirms that:

African drama is essentially representational. It is a body of work through which one can understand the twists and turns in Africa’s development...apart from revealing the lines and contradictions in the present African societies, the modern African drama is a potent means of recording African experiences in its numerous dimensions. Therefore it has always been a realistic medium of expression of the different developmental stages of the African social consciousness. The modern African drama therefore could be seen as a realistic literature. (100)

Hence, African drama also stops at nothing to capture and uncover the actions and in actions of the people not mainly to project Africans in the bad light but to nauseate and force them to see the importance of change. Substantiating this, Edward Said in *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) maintains that “blaming the Europeans sweepingly for the misfortunes of the present is not much of an alternative but what we need to do is to look at the matters as a network of interdependent histories that it would be inaccurate and senseless to repress, useless and interesting to understand (Said, 1993:19). Hence, it is not enough for the African artist standing aloof, to view society and highlight its weaknesses. He must try to go beyond this, to seek out the sources, the causes and the trends (Ngugi 1969:69).

Therefore, committed African playwrights have variously made this the focus of their artistic creation with a view of tracing the causes and providing solutions to the problems. Commendably, Nigerian playwrights do not neglect their moral burden of creating literary works involved in addressing moral decadence whose implications manifest in different aspect and classes in the country. Femi Osofisan, a second-generation Nigerian playwright whose works stand tall in this delineation has deepened not just his vision (ideological content) but also his craft (aesthetic mould) in order to create plays that address moral decadence among individuals

and the society at large. Unfortunately Osofisan is more often than not perceived by critics as entirely a Marxist in his approach because one of the common trends in his works is his desire to use art to fight for the marginalized masses and to create a better society for all to live in (Akinyemi and falola, 2009:3). Osofisan is however a playwright whose ideological view point cannot be restricted to a particular cause as he targets every ill for the good of the society. To the current study, Osofisan's vision is seen as double headed as the playwright sees not the problem of the society from the political point of view alone rather he perceives the moral question as the yardstick for measuring the sincerity and credibility of individuals' commitment towards the advancement of their society (Ademeso, 2009:62). That is why in many of his plays he exposes the failure of the working class and masses and probes the causes of such failure. As a result, Osofisan had on different fora emphatically denounced the Marxist claim on his ideology. For instance in an interview with Ossie and Enekwe in 1978 in Awodiya (1993) when asked on his objective as a revolutionary writer, Osofisan replied that:

I am different to labels... I won't call myself a revolutionary writer because you know, this may be simply rhetoric, empty words or a mere propaganda stunt. I consider myself a very serious writer and I leave my works to define themselves and the audience to judge. But as to my aim in writing, and mainly for the stage, let me say I want desperately to get close to the spectator, to each and everyone I have trapped in the darkness or half light, to penetrate very close and intimate, like a knife in the ribs. I want to make that spectator happy but uncomfortable. I want to turn him open, guts and all, spice him, cook him in the filthy, stinking broil of history. I want him washed inside out, in the naked truth, and then I sew him back again a different man. I believe that, if we wound ourselves often and painfully enough with reality, with the reality all around us, if we refuse to bandage our sensitive spots away from the hurt of truth, that we can attain a new and positive awareness. (Awodiya, 1993:18)

Osofisan thus rejects the Marxist label because of its ability to obfuscate his entire commitment to everyone for change. The playwright explicates this in a recent interview when asked on his view on the dearth of scholarly works on his whips on the masses, (in response to increased moral decadence in the society), as against the bulk of works on his advocacy for the right of the masses. He (Osofisan) explains that:

The post colonial state is a state that has gone through colonial experience particularly British colonialism, it will be too much to expect that it is only one class of people who will need

reorientation... I think that it is pretty obvious that the goal is not just to free the masses but it is to create an equitable society where everybody is happy and when you want to do that it is obvious to tell the story just as you see it that the fault is not just with the rulers, the fault is with all of us...but to think that the masses are just innocent I think is wrong. So this is what I try to highlight in those works. I may be pointing more at the rulers or the ruling class but I have not idealized the working class just as I don't deliberately criminalize them, but you have to show that the worker is not a good worker just because he is a worker or peasant farmer physically good just because he is a farmer, if you are subjected to these various traumas you end up differently from what you expect. (Agunbiade, 2015:1)

Osofisan's audacious position above lays claim to the choice of his plays to be analysed in this study where the actions of the people towards themselves and government are to be examined as contributory to backwardness of Nigeria as against claims on leadership as our national albatross. These various elements are portrayed through business men and women, market women, musicians, vigilantes, clerics, couples, traditional rulers, the extremely poor, civil servants etc. The playwright re-presents real life where human beings unleash terror and harm on themselves. This is evident in *Fires Burn and Die Hard* (1990) where Osofisan examines the inhumanity of man to man among the masses as well as how the followers draw back the wheels of change (economy) of the nation. Alhaja who is the head of the Market Women Association engages in contraband goods against the law and when her son Leke discovers and alerted law enforcement agents, she sets the whole market on fire before the police arrived. Thousands of goods went on fire as many families and traders suffered for this but Alhaja kept mum even when the traditionalists demand one of the traders to carry the cleansing sacrifice for the market to be re-opened, she didn't volunteer. Osofisan thus show how the people engage in what will eventually have negative effect on them and then hide under leadership as cause of their problem.

Similarly, in *Birthdays are Not for Dying*, Osofisan depicts calamitous effect of greed by business men as business associates stop at nothing to kill themselves. Kunle and his father, the founder of a private owned establishment are killed by other members in the business who are rigid to change and very selfish. The business thus hit the rocks. This same trend is evident in Osofisan's most recent, *Love's Unlike Lading* (2012) where Osofisan highlights common ills associated with the masses which are capable of retarding national growth. Poignant is his swipe at the cruel act of usury where people lend money to neighbours and members of the public with

an unreasonable high rate of interest. The playwright berates this among the people. He further scolds traditional rulers who are to help facilitate the needs of the people from the government and also protect them but are bent on satisfying their stomach in *Farewell to a Cannibal Rage*. In *Aringindin and the Night Watchmen* he shows how the Watchmen and Aringindin sent to protect the people from robbers become the pest and the real thieves in the land.

As an astute critical observer of societal events, situations and history, Osofisan identifies the cause and the way out of this anomaly in *Esu and the Vagabond Minstrels* (1991). In this form of morality play, Osofisan pinpoints lack of compassion to fellow human beings prominent among the common man in Nigeria as critical and bedrock to the discourse of disillusionment. Osofisan further sees another thread of evil among the followers which is a paradox as some poor people who rose to prominence eventually become worse and hardly remember to alleviate the plight of the poor masses where they once belong. Osofisan depicts this untoward behaviour through his social vision of change in *The Inspector and the Hero* (1990), *Altine's Wrath* (1986), and *One Legend Many Seasons* (2001) where the major characters: Chief Ereniyi, Lawal, and Alowolodu respectively are all wretched at the onset of their lives and are critical of the leaders but on rising to prominence become torn in the flesh of the peasant farmers, their workers, and the public. Ademeso (2009) argues that:

The search for a good society does not necessarily mean that the common man is the most perfect man for the job. The poor man must be examined so that if he finds himself at the helm of affairs, he would not turn against the masses. (55)

Osofisan who shares in this line of thought thus presents his realistic characters that once were poor and expected to help alleviate the plight of the masses if providence bequeath them power and affluence, but the reverse becomes the order of the day, as they rose to prominence. The playwright's vision of change bears fruit when Alowolodu in *One Legend, Many Seasons* after being taken round by three ghosts to see his past, present, and the future that awaits him changed immediately and comes to the rescue of the poor and lower class. Osofisan thus in the plays presents the unusual about the followers (common man) which he believes will lead to the understanding of our backwardness. He therefore shows that the role of the followers and masses in causing change in post independence Nigeria is even more than that of the leaders. Osofisan understands that from among the followers/ people comes the leaders and almost often as seen in the immediate past president of Nigeria, Dr Goodluck Jonathan, that the leaders come from

humble background. The need therefore to extend the social vision of change to the followers/masses becomes imperative in contemporary Nigeria. The selected plays hence demonstrate that blaming the leaders sweepingly for the challenges of the present is not much of an alternative and of course misleading. What we need to do according to Edward Said (1993:19) is “to look at the matters as a network of interdependent histories that it would be inaccurate and senseless to repress, useful and interesting to understand.” The followers thus become a discourse in contemporary postcolonial Nigeria whose actions need be critically examined.

Followership and Disillusionment: making a case

A common feature in every human set up is the binary of the leader and the led, the boss and the employee, the landlord and the tenant to mention few. To borrow from the poststructuralists, one side of this binary often is privileged while the other often takes the tag of a stooge. The poststructuralists thus attempt to reverse the polarity to see the second in the light of the first for obvious dialectical reasons (*Barry, 1995:74*). Examining the followers takes cue from this as it re-examines the ideology of ‘post-independence disillusionment’ beloved of postcolonial theory. There is therefore a shift from seeing the leaders in postcolonial Africa as entirely the cause of the continent’s backwardness to understanding of deep rooted flaws of the followers/ people which on the whole contributes to their predicaments and backward status of the continent.

This study is therefore critical of the over-flogged discourse of leadership as the problem of Africa, while prescribing a new vista in the assessment of the continent’s backflip development by taking a cue from Abubakar Gimba’s *Letter to the Unborn Child* (2008:20), where rather than the leaders, the followers are indicted in emerging contemporary situations in Africa. This though may not enjoy much applause in the African literary space as it is contrary to established critical opinion bolstered by our foremost compatriot writer, Chinua Achebe who in his indignation and frustration with our backwardness wrote that: “The trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership” (Achebe, 1984:1). This however will not relieve African literature (Drama) of its unwavering position in the portrayal of the real slice of life as Kehinde (2008) puts it that “it is difficult for a Nigerian writer or any postcolonial writer to take...an inviolable ideological bent in a society which is in permanent state of flux and ideological doldrums” (334). The foregoing, therefore, reveals the need to re-examine the ideological standpoint of political scape-goat-ism in the bid to reorganise the African society

where all efforts to transform it have been futile. That is why the idea of disillusionment in African literature cannot remain intact and unscathed, hence the imperative of this study to philosophically account for conscious and unwitting actions of the people (followers) that have aided their dilemma.

This however does not leave the leaders out of the game as it is believed that today's leadership was yesterday's followership just as Gimba (2008:30) argues that "leaders are not little angels dropped on us from the sky: they are born and bred among us and by us. How could they be different from us?" This thinking as evident among the people could be examined in three categories. First, is the general moral decadence among the followers/ people which on the whole draws back the wheel of change in terms of acute lie, treachery, false love, greed, selfishness, lack of compassion for one another, wickedness, hatred, and lack of love. These are evident among the traders, middle class, vigilantes, priests, down-trodden, underdogs, robbers, farmers, fishermen, prostitutes, musicians and even traditional rulers who failed in their responsibilities to the people as portrayed in the characters of Femi Osofisan whose selected works are to be subjected to investigation along this line. Second is the working class who put forward bad attitude to government's work. This manifests in corruption and their careless attitude to duty where reverse remains the case in their own private establishments. Osofisan paints this attitude in an interview with Agunbiade (2015) thus:

They see the government as the enemy and so everything they can do is to sabotage projects of that government. You can see how that has continue when you look at people in their individual lives, who in their own private works you see how very committed they work and then compared to what they do when employed in civil service, you see the difference. I don't know if the proverb still exists. When we were growing up, the proverb was that you don't do government work and sweat (A kii se ise ijoba ka laagun). Government means an enemy and therefore if you don't correct that you can't have any development, in any way not Government sponsored programme alone. So, if you want a change your plans must be double headed towards those who are heading and those headed, but to think that the masses are just innocent I think is wrong. (1)

Still in this category are those who were one time very poor whom one will normally adjudge as promising in terms of alleviating the plight of the masses, if they can at all get into power or become rich, but otherwise is the case when they attain prominence. This is another

disappointment. Osofisan explicates this while reacting to the campaign strategy of former president Goodluck Jonathan which drew sympathy from the people as he paints his humble background in a way that signals a new dawn. He opines that:

When you are looking for votes you adopt any approach to get it. He grew up poor some voted for him because of that but I don't think majority voted for him because of that, we are not even sure if majority voted for him. That he came from a poor background is not a guarantee of moral uprightness. It is wrong to associate poverty and morality. This is what I am trying to say, that somebody is poor doesn't necessarily mean that person will be righteous or that he will know how to use power. (Agunbiade 2015:2)

Osofisan deploys this position in plays like *One Legend, Many Seasons*, *Altine's Wrath* and *The Inspector and the Hero*. The third manifestation could be described as the general sense of apathy to politics evident in refusal of the people to vote and potential leaders who refused to participate in governance (as seen in *Love's unlike lading*) or discouraged by their people while those who muster strength to venture in sometimes perform even more horrible. Similar to this is the failure of the people to ask questions; they just take things for granted. Niyi Osundare (2015) illustrates this thus:

When a ruler commands you to jump for no good reason and all you ask is how high? Next time s/he will ask you to sink below the surface of the earth. Unquestioning obedience is a symptom of delinquent followership; Nigeria has a life threatening bout of that disease. (33)

This is portrayed in Osofisan's *No More the Wasted Breed* (1983) where Biokun and Saluga challenged the gods who had taken the peoples' docility for granted by always demanding sacrifice and when they fail, the people are killed for defaulting. By this act, the gods knowing the people are now wise declared humanity free from being their appetite or food.

The foregoing brings us to the conflicting position of Achebe on disenchantment in the African space. Unfortunately, while firing the salvo against the leaders in *The Trouble with Nigeria* (1984), Achebe in his frustration seems to have quickly forgotten his position in *A Man of the People* (1966) where he describes the people's cynic submission, docility and notorious sycophancy as instrumental to the collapse of their society. Here is how Achebe puts it:

Overnight everyone began to shake their heads at the excesses of the last regime, at its graft, oppression and corrupt

government...The hitherto silent intellectuals and civil servants-everybody said what a terrible lot; and it became public opinion the next morning. And these were the same people that only the other day had owned a thousand names of adulation, whom praise-singers followed with song and talking-drum wherever they went. Chief Koko in particular became a thief and a murderer, while the people who had led him on - in my opinion the real culprits - took the legendary bath of the Hornbill and donned innocence. (166)

Achebe therefore reflects how obvious the people aid and abet corruption, graft, and oppression by judging the worth of the individual by how much he/she has corruptly stowed away and how much of that ill wealth can be lavishly donated to irrelevant causes (Etim, 2004:296). Arguably, according to Osofisan (2014):

The followership then in Achebe's judgment are the real culprits, the ones who egg on their thieving leaders...therefore the failure to find a redeeming possibility even among the people cannot but produce a deep pessimism, and hence a tragic view of life. (20)

One would therefore expect creative works to balance this obvious gap in representation of the society but the pendulum more often than not swings to the leaders as the problem. It is this concern that has moved theorists like Young (1990) and Mbembe (1992) to advocate an elaborate and different framework for thinking about postcolonial conditions. Robert Young therefore according to Syrotinski (2012) "was perhaps the first critic to link Derrida's work to postcolonial questions in his 1990 volume *White Mythologies*, where he claimed that Derrida had always challenged the founding assumptions of colonialist ideology, beginning with *Of Grammatology*, insofar as his meticulous analysis of the historical privileging of speech over writing in the Western metaphysical tradition" (411). The current study also adopt a meticulous analysis by privileging the followers' ills over the leader's defects as a way of challenging traditional assumptions of leadership as entire cause of Africa's backwardness. Derrida's (1968) claim in "Differance" that writing is not superior to speech substantiates this as he explains using the word 'differance' that:

The 'a' of differance, is not heard, remains silent, secret, and discreet, like a tomb. It is however a tomb that (provided one knows how to decipher its legend) is not far from signaling the death of the king (257)

Derrida hence is saying, trying to make speech inferior as 'a' is not pronounced in the word differance is like denying the presence of a tomb capable of engulfing an individual. In other

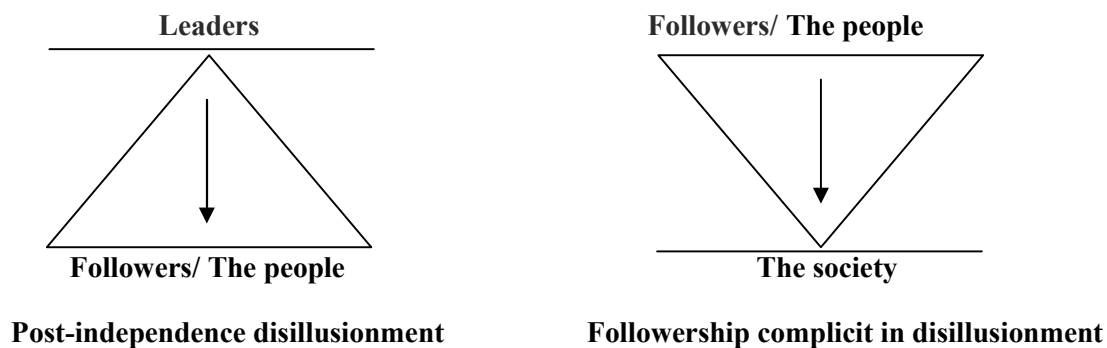
words, trying to deny the fact that the followers have contributed to their own disillusionment is like denying the presence of an obvious tomb big enough to swallow the society. Accordingly the evils, wickedness, oddity, and tragic connivance of the followers remain silent but that of the leaders because of their position is blown beyond comparison both in the media and literature. This seemingly backward and rethinking process different from the conventional concept of disillusionment in Africa according to Derrida (1981) in *Dissemination* is what has long been called Critique. Derrida avers that:

A critique of any theoretical system is not an examination of its flaws or imperfections. It is not a set of criticisms designed to make the system better. It is an analysis that focuses on the ground of that system's possibility. The critique reads backward from what seems natural, obvious, self-evident, or universal, in order to show that these things have their history, their reasons for being that way they are, their effects on what follows from them, and that the starting point is not a (natural) given but a (cultural) construct, usually blind to itself (xv)

Derrida substantiates this in an example that Copernicus can be said to have written a critique of the Ptolemaic conception of the universe, but the idea that the earth goes round the sun is not an improvement of the idea that the sun goes around the earth. Rather it is a shift in perspective which literally makes the ground move. Derrida describes this as a ‘deconstruction of the validity of the common sense perception of the obvious’ (Derrida, 1981:xvi). He corroborates that “Marx’s critique of political economy is not an improvement in it but a demonstration that the theory which starts with the commodity as the basic unit of economy is blind to what produces the commodity—namely labor” (xvi). Correspondingly, the critique of post-independence disillusionment, beloved of postcolonial theory could be described as a demonstration that the concept which begins with the leaders as the basic problem of post-independent Africa is blind to where the leaders emerge from—namely, the followers. No wonder Derrida in *Dissemination* (1981) reveals that “every theory starts somewhere, every critique exposes what that starting point conceals and thereby displaces all the idea that follows” (xvi). That is why Mbembe (1992) in *Provisional Notes on the postcolony* challenged the analyst to watch out for the myriad ways in which the followers (ordinary people) guide, deceive, and actually toy with power instead of confronting it directly. Therefore rather than throwing salvos at neo-colonials and global capital, Mbembe writes about the excess of the postcolony, including the connivance of the followers in service of state power.

Thus, what an examination of followership and disillusionment is out to show is that both the leaders and followers have collectively contributed to the nation's woes and predicaments. This fact however need not concede primacy of disillusionment to the leaders because the features which define post-independence realities (disillusionment) singularly should not be of the leaders as they are glibly made to appear in Africa and its literature. The need therefore to dig deep into the root of disillusionment as well as having a pragmatic representation of contemporary African society in African literature (Drama) becomes imperative in the investigation of the followers.

DIAGRAMATIC REPRESENTATION OF LEADERSHIP AND FOLLOWERSHIP COMPLICIT IN DISILLUSIONMENT



Note: Downward sloping arrow indicates seeds of disillusionment

Fig. 1: JUXTAPOSITION: DISILLUSIONMENT, LEADERSHIP AND THE FOLLOWERS—Model (Developed by the researcher)

Statement of the research problem

Investigations into literary studies on Africa reveal a dearth of works on plays that examine the faults and problems associated with the followers in the development of their countries. It is observed that instead of being critically balanced in the post-independence condition of Africa, scholars are quick to bring out leadership problem contained in plays in favour of the people. Although there are pockets of depiction of the faults of the followers in some works, they are not of major concern. For instance, Kehinde (2008) looks at the failure of academics and youths in the quest for true political leadership for Nigeria in post-independence Nigerian literature and describes the scenario as frustrated hope. Indeed followership has become a prime concern of social sciences but it is a subject too vast and vital to the social scientists alone. Take for instance Aluko (2010) delineates the characteristics of the masses who hide under the caption of common

man but perpetrates even more harm than the leaders. Similarly, Ogbonna, Ogundiwin and Uzuegbu-wilson (2012) berate apathy of followers in involving in the democratization process and advocate a curious, active, critical, interrogative and participatory followership as the harbinger of good governance.

Moreover, Femi Osofisan whose plays are analysed in this study has been variously described as Marxist oriented by critics, though he has disagreed with the label on a number of fora. For example Awodiya (1995:41) noted that “in spite of Osofisan’s label shyness, it is evident from his works that he is a Marxist writer who demands social change in favour of the oppressed and down-trodden masses in the society”. This view is also corroborated by Olu Obafemi and Biodun Jeyifo (Awodiya 1995:38 & Jeyifo 1987:13). Dapo Adelugba however argues that “although Osofisan espouses Marxian doctrines, I do not think that it would be adequate to describe his works as Marxist as many critics do, and are unable wholly to justify that description” (Awodiya 1995:39). In line with Adelugba (Awodiya, 1995), Obasi and Aloysius-Orjinta (2013) debunked the prevailing assumption noting that Marxist ideology is limited to some degree in Osofisan’s works as difference, departure and superiority are hastily read into his works. They observed that the dialogue are mostly intra class rather than inter class which negates the concept of labour struggle. They exemplify this with *Once Upon Four Robbers* (1980) stating that the encounters in the play between the robbers and the market women, the traders, customers and the soldiers clearly show that they all belong to the same class -the downtrodden (39).

It is, therefore, the impetus of this present study to partake of filling an observed critical gap by first carrying out a literary investigation against earlier scientific examination of the acts (treachery, wickedness, lack of compassion, selfishness, corruption) of the followers to themselves which have further deepened their predicaments and correspondingly affected the development of Nigeria. An attempt is thus made in this study to carry out a critical literary investigation of nine plays of Femi Osofisan to see if a paradigm shift from seemingly unending scholarly debate on leadership (as though such would bring good governance that has eluded the most populous black nation in the world) to critical examination of actions and inactions of the people/followers would help create the ideal society African drama aims at. The choice of Osofisan’s plays is to further establish that though his works espouse Marxist leanings, the playwright’s vision of change is entirely to all classes of the society and that he is objective in his

dramatisation of the plight of the masses as evident in his swipe on the followers in the selected plays. This work thus questions the sincerity of the unending scholarly debate on leadership as problem of Nigeria, as well as Nigerian playwrights, on paucity of plays that exemplify the ill actions of the followers and ordinary people which have become a common place in the Nigerian society.

Aim and objectives of the study

The aim of the study is to investigate the contribution of the followers to their collective predicaments using the selected plays of Femi Osofisan as a case study, with a view to:

- (a) exploring how some characters in the plays contribute to their own disillusionment and backwardness of their society.
- (b) inquiring into the link between poverty and bad leadership in selected plays of Osofisan. This is to establish the paradox that humble background is not a guarantee for transformative leadership
- (c) examining Osofisan's use of language and dramatic devices to portray the followers as complicit in post-independence disillusionment
- (d) interrogating the relevance of African Drama to National development.

Research questions

The following research questions will serve as a guide for the thesis:

- (a) How have the followers contributed to their own disillusionment and, in extension, to the underdevelopment of their society in Femi Osofisan's plays?
- (b) To what extent does Femi Osofisan deploy language and dramatic devices to fault popular opinion that leadership is the problem of Nigeria?
- (c) How relevant is African drama in correcting misconceptions on disillusionment in the African space?

Scope of the study

The thesis dwells on the dynamics of representations of the havoc of the people (followers) to themselves in post-independence Nigeria in the plays of Femi Osofisan. The analysis is basically delimited to the postcolonial theory. Moreover, the delineation of the followers basically covers the common people and to an extent those who rose to the middle class but whose actions now

betray their humble beginning. This however is to trace the paradoxical link between poverty and power. In other words, the texts are carefully selected to reflect both the ordinary man and the working class as against the leaders in post-independence Nigeria. Although followership flaws encompass failure of the followers to ask questions from their leaders on how they are governed, the current study is rather limited and concerned with the endemic nature of wickedness, greed, lack of compassion, treachery and apathy of the followers to politics which have become a commonplace among the people and how these contribute to their predicaments as well as become the actual obstacle to national development.

Justification of the study

The study becomes relevant as it subjects selected plays of Femi Osofisan chosen for investigation to a thorough academic enquiry in order to reveal the actions and inactions of the people that have contributed to the backwardness of Nigeria. This will be done by drawing evidences from the plays. The choice of Osofisan's plays on the faults of the people is further informed by the playwright's pragmatic representation of the followers/ common people and paucity of critical studies on issues raised on moral deficit of the ordinary man which are often sidelined and adjudged as contrary to critical opinion. In the same vein, the study becomes pertinent as it subjects the selected plays to thorough critical examination in order to show some contradictions and complexities in human behaviour which have been a common feature of the human society from time memorial. The choice of the playwright is also significant in the study as Osofisan is often described as a Marxist though he had rejected the label on a number of fora. This strange and unusual investigation of the common man will employ the postcolonialist stance. Robert Young and Achille Mbembe's model of postcolonial theory is to be deployed to explore the postcolonial conditions in an unusually close way in order to critically unveil the often idealized follower (common man). This scholarly enquiry is thus embarked upon with a view to finding out if post-independence disillusionment is solely brought about by the leaders or a combined effort of the leaders and followers where the followers have a big role to play just as today's leadership was yesterday's followership (Gimba, 2008:30)

Background of the author: Femi Osofisan

Femi Osofisan, universally acknowledged as one of Nigeria's foremost authors is a poet, playwright, novelist, journalist and essayist. Babafemi Adeyemi Osofisan was born on 16th June, 1946 at Erunwon, a village near Ijebu-ode, Ogun state in south-west Nigeria. His father trained as a teacher and was a multi-instrumentalist who could play the Organ, Guitar and Piano. He also composed songs. The frequent use of music and songs very crucial in Femi Osofisan's plays could therefore be traced to his father. Awodiya Muyiwa in *The Drama of Femi Osofisan: A Critical Perspective* (1995), outlines the different things that he believes must have influenced one of Nigeria's foremost authors. He explains that Femi Osofisan had a very ridiculous humble background as he was born into grief and a household of struggling men and women where premature death of immediate family members was rampant. Three months after the birth of Babafemi in September, 1946, tragedy struck in his household as his father died of hustler's poison (Awodiya, 1995:31). This dealt a big blow on Osofisan who had since been conscious of this loss. Attempt at filling the gap left by his father was also jeopardised as his uncle who was there for him also suddenly died in his early life. Osofisan himself also thought he would die early as revealed by his son Wale Osofisan in an interview with *The Punch* Newspaper on August 17, 2014 titled 'Dad thought he would die young'. Hence, according to Wale his dad Femi Osofisan deliberately kept a bit distance from his children at his early years "because he didn't want us to get too attached to him, only for us to lose him. He felt the trauma would be too unbearable for us. It was when he turned 50 that he told us".

Femi Osofisan's mother had to bear the burden of fending for all her children. This was not an easy task for her to accomplish as she battled bravely with harsh poverty, always toiling, paying with her wasting youth the wages of widowhood. Apparently, Osofisan's mother's passionate appeal and struggle for her children is represented in *The Inspector and the Hero* (1990) where the mother of chief Ereniyi suffered all through to ensure his son got enrolled for primary school. To realize his dream of good life and sound education, Osofisan had to live with and worked vigorously for different people at various towns during his elementary school days and trekked several kilometers on a dusty road in the forest to get to school. He recounts in *The Guardian* Newspaper (1983) that "as for breakfast, all I had was watery pap; and for both lunch and dinner, a bowl of soaked Garri with Salt in my left palm to sweeten it" (9). Despite all these Osofisan

determined to excel in life. He developed interest in Drama and this was kindled at the Government College Ibadan so much that by the time he left in 1965 he had shown sufficient interest in acting, writing and the language arts (Awodiya, 1995:3). He also studied Fine arts at the Government's College, a fact which tremendously had positively affected his dramaturgy as he utilizes all elements of fine arts in his dramatic structure. In 1966, he entered the University of Ibadan to read French, Language and Literature and his training in this subject area at Ibadan, Dakar and Paris between 1966 and 1974 brought him into contact with French literary scholars like Racine, Beckett, Feydeau, Sartre, Giraudoux, Anouilh and Artaud whose works had in one way or the other influenced Osofisan's art and ideological content. As a Journalist, Osofisan served as one of the foundation editorial board members of *The Guardian* Newspaper, Nigeria in 1982.

Research methodology

The study depends largely on primary and secondary sources. Nine Femi Osofisan's plays with pragmatic representation of the followers are purposively selected as primary sources. They are: *Love's Unlike Lading* (2012), *One Legend, Many Seasons* (2001), *Esu and the Vagabond Minstrels* (1991), *Aringindin and the Night Watchmen* (1992), *Fires Burn and Die Hard* (1990), *Birthdays are not for Dying* (1990), *The Inspector and the Hero* (1990), *Altines Wrath* (1986), *Farewell to A Cannibal Rage* (1986). The plays are purposively selected based on their relevance to the thematic construct of the study. For the secondary sources, the study depends on textbooks, essays and articles in journals as well as other Nigerian plays which have explored this subject. The theoretical approach to be used in the study is Postcolonial theory. Postcolonial theory is adopted because the concept of disillusionment is a viable discourse in postcolonial literary criticism. The theory combines multiple activities with a range of different priorities and positions such that it is impossible to assume that postcolonialism possesses a uniform framework. Its diversity is evident in its ability to accommodate the notion that leadership is the problem of postcolonial Africa and, at the same time as examined in this study, indict the followers for contributing to their predicament. The study therefore combines Robert Young (1990, 2001) and Achille Mbembe's (1992, 2001) model as a framework upon which the analysis is built. This will enable the study to relate the ill actions of the followers, to themselves and the nation, to African literature and then critically analyse the issues raised. The study will thereon anatomize the themes, characters and techniques of Osofisan in order to show the essence of his drama to national development.

Significance of the study

The thesis owes its significance to the deliberate examination of the conscious and unconscious actions of the followers which have further deepened disillusionment in postcolonial Nigeria. Though Critics have evaluated the ideology of post-independence disillusionment with diatribes on leadership as the source of the nation's problems, this thesis differs as it sees the real problem the other way round. The study therefore will in no small measure give insight on how the people and followers contribute immensely to their own plight. It thus seeks to verify if really "our self exonerating scape-goatism...and ever persistent cry over our leadership problem is like chasing the shadows of perceived thief, leaving the real thief breathing heavily amidst his chasers" (Gimba 2008:97). Hence, the study will philosophically rework (extend) our understanding of 'Inward looking'- a signifier of post-independence disillusionment to cover individual self examination for the country to really forge ahead. The study will further give insight on Femi Osofisan whose social vision does not idealise the followers over the leaders. This obviously will give a lucid understanding of the leaning of Osofisan contrary to the Marxist label critics often attach to him. The study no doubt will provide an alternative relevant framework for the writer and reader for the investigation of the ill role of the followers (common people) as contributory to their woes. In effect, the study brings a fresh insight to the discourse of disillusionment in the literary world. It will enable fellow researchers-students of literary studies as well as individuals to be intuitively engaged in literary studies.

Theoretical framework

This thesis is grounded on the theoretical framework of the Postcolonial Theory. The need to question some of the claims of postcolonial literature on post-independence Africa necessitates the choice of the postcolonial theory. Precisely, the postcolonial era realities of disillusionment which traces the problem of Africa to failure of leadership are to be examined to see if really leaders are the problem, with a compendium of evidence to show how the followers have contributed to their own disillusionment. In other words, the choice of the postcolonial theory lies in its ability to accommodate diversity in the interpretation of postcolonial conditions. The study combines Robert Young and Achille Mbembe's model of the theory as a framework for analysis.

Postcolonial theory is a heterogenous and broad-based approach to the criticism of literary text that was informed and became popular through the works of Gayatri Spivak (1987) *In other*

world, Homi Bhabha (1990) *Nation and Narration*, Bill Ashcroft (1989) *The Empire Writes Back* and Edward Said's (1978) *Orientalism*. These proponents according to Weate (2003) "made sure the fledgling child of postcolonial theory was weaned on a strict diet of Lacan and Derrida, with sporadic flourishes of Althusser, Barthes and Marx as treats for good behavior"(1). This gives precedence to the link Postcolonial theory shares with post-structuralism. That is why to an extent this study makes reference to Derrida's Post-structuralism with regards to binary opposition in view of the relationship between the leader and the follower. However, of importance is the fact that the evolution of Postcolonial discourse started with the development of colonialism. In essence, the theory started as a reaction to western hegemony and a conscious attempt to subvert Western conceived superiority over the 'third world'. The work of Frantz Fanon *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963) has often been described as the root of postcolonial Criticism (Young, 2001; Agunbiade, 2014). Fanon is of the view that if a colonised nation wants to be free of the shackles of colonialism, the first step is to reclaim their past before they can erode/refute those colonialist ideologies that have devalued and derided their cultural past and history.

Postcolonial literature is however tri-dimensional in the sense that it is first, an intellectual movement aimed at 're-writing' the stereotypical assumptions foisted on the colonized people by their colonial masters during colonial era. This is evident in their attempt to redefine the identity of the once colonized and made inferior in the face of the colonizer. The second dimension has to do with anti-colonial struggle while the third has to do with the reflection of the realities that independence brought about. This tri-dimensional nature of postcolonial literature is emphasized in Kehinde (2005) where he explained that:

Initially, African Literature was a tool for celebrating the heroic grandeur of the African past, later it was used for anti-colonial struggle. Presently it is being employed as a veritable weapon for depicting the postcolonial disillusionment in African nations. (265)

The third phase, which is prominent in the theory's present-day discourse, is based on postcolonial era realities of disillusionment. This is simply the re-presentation of the failure of self rule after independence which is characterised with mishandling of trust by the Nationalists and new leaders that have now presented another colonialism known as neo-colonialism. Beyond this is an emerging reality where even the followers are indicted as complicit in post-

independence disillusionment as observed by Mbembe (1992 and 2001). The study is thus apposite at a period when debates around neo-colonialism and followership are at fever-pitch. The study therefore adopts Robert Young's and Achille Mbembe's model of postcolonial theory which seeks to explain not only the anti-colonial past, but also the globalised present, which is the selected playwright's concern for this study. Robert Young's model of postcolonial theory proffers a way of seeing things differently, in politics or language. Robert Young therefore deviates from the school of thought that the postcolonial theory studies the relationship between the colonised and the coloniser alone. This model is relevant to the emerging perspectives of realities explored in the chosen texts. In line with the texts chosen for this study, Robert J.C Young states that "the postcolonial specifies a transformed historical situation and the cultural formation that have arisen in response to changed political circumstances, in the former colonial power" (Young 2001: 57). Young thus "desires to create an affiliative community of interpretation and intervention such that 'postcolonialism as a theoretical discourse can operate as a kind of popular front for a whole range of different inter-related political movements'" (Young, 2004: ix). Robert Young therefore according to Syrotinski (2012) "was perhaps the first critic to link Derrida's work to postcolonial questions in his 1990 (2nd edition, 2004) volume *White Mythologies*, where he claimed that Derrida had always challenged the founding assumptions of colonialist ideology, beginning with *Of Grammatology*, insofar as his meticulous analysis of the historical privileging of speech over writing in the Western metaphysical tradition"(411). The current study is based on this frame to also meticulously analyse by privileging the followers' ills over the leaders as a way of challenging conventional assumptions of leadership as entire cause of Africa's backwardness. This deconstructive approach will in no small measure be a cynosure to rethinking postcolonial conditions just as Young's concern is "in no sense simply to present an alternative form of history but rather to elaborate a different framework for thinking about it." (Young, 2004: xii). In line with Young, this diversity is evident in its ability to accommodate the notion that leadership is the problem of postcolonial Africa and at the same time, as examined in this study, indict the followers for contributing to their predicament.

Similarly, the Cameroonian social theorist Achille Mbembe "insists on the need to extend and rethink postcolonial theory, saying that if it is to retain its relevance, it will need to respond with

greater urgency to the shifting priorities of contemporary global politics, as well as the complexity of everyday life in the ‘African postcolony’ (Syrotinski, 2012:413)

Mbembe’s position employed to complement the framework is a provocative challenge to African scholarship as Robins (2004:20) puts it that “rather than critique of neo-colonialism and global capital, Mbembe writes about the excess of the postcolony, including the connivance of the masses in rituals of state power”. Mbembe (1992:25) in cautioning the African critics insists that “the analyst must watch out for the myriad ways in which ordinary people guide, deceive and actually toy with power instead of confronting it”. He however attributes this to the postcolonial mode of domination which involves not only control but also connivance of the ruled with the ruler to perpetuate corruption and disillusionment. Mbembe (1992) describes these groups of people as sycophants saying:

Posts and palaces and public places have been filled with a large number of buffoons, fools and clowns at various levels, offering a variety of services-journalists, insiders, clerks, hagiographers, censors, informers, party hacks expert in eliciting votes of confidence, praise singers of any kind, courtiers, intellectuals in search of an official perch, middlemen . . . Their function is to preach before the fetish the fiction of its perfection. Thanks to them the postcolony has become a world of narcissistic self-gratification. But flattery is not just produced in order to please the despot; it is manufactured in a quest for profit or favours. The aim is to share the table of the autocrat, to 'eat from his hands'. Hence extraordinary deeds are attributed to him; he is covered in vainglory. Yet here flattery and denunciation are often one and the same: as no obstacle to the fabulous transfiguration of the fetish can be tolerated (21).

With the foregoing, Mbembe avers there exists a symbiotic relationship between the ruled and the ruler, one which is to the detriment of the postcolony. Mbembe (1992) thus argues that “the practices of ordinary people cannot always be read in terms of ‘opposition to the state’, ‘deconstructing power’, and ‘disengagement’. In the postcolony, an intimate tyranny links the rulers with the ruled”(5). To therefore idealise the people, to Mbembe, is uncritical as it has become apparent that there is a collusion, a conspiracy, and an almost domestic familiarity between them and the ruler which effectively water down the integrity of the ruled thus turning power-play into performance (Mbembe, 1992). Describing his quest for change in the postcolony as a frustrated hope, Mbembe (2001) concludes that “the idea for progress is said to disintegrate

in such societies; should change occur -rare indeed- it would, as of necessity, follow a disordered trajectory and fortuitous path ending only in undifferentiated chaos” (4). It is on this framework the analysis of Osofisan’s selected texts for the study is built.

The study in essence takes a look at the postcolonial literary condition. These writers who are disappointed at what their leaders have made the nations’ hard earned political independence from Europeans have consequently employed their imagination to reflect and refract their disillusionment. This is evident in Wole Soyinka’s *The Lion and the Jewel*, and J.P Clark’s *The Raft*. Femi Osofisan, is however different in his idea of disillusionment as his social vision is that which manifests the two sides of a coin in his swipe at both the leaders and the people. He has consequently rejected the Marxist label on his vision (Awodiya, 1993) by critics owing to some of his plays that hint at collective revolution against forces of oppression (neo-colonials).

This thesis by investigating emerging realities after independence in Nigeria thus sets out to state that the postcolonial theory is not intact without the incorporation of the followers’ defect as a trope as the people who the theory advocates their right are to be examined as manufacturers of disillusionment. This is just as Mbembe calls for a new form of writing that rejects both contemporary western theory and all antecedent African intellectual enquiry, thus pointing a way forward for a postcolonial theory to come that is ripe with potential (Mbembe, 2001).

It is in view of this that an underlying thinking in this study connects the workings of the Post-structuralists in their alignment and thinking over binaries, which in this wise is the relationship between the followers and the rulers with respect to post-independence disillusionment. It thus embraces the deconstructive operations of Jacques Derrida. Derrida in *Dissemination* (1981) throws light on the deconstructive reading that:

It is a form of what has been called a critique. A critique of any theoretical system is not an examination of its flaws or imperfections. It is not a set of criticism designed to make the system better. It is an analysis that focuses on the ground of that system’s possibility. The critique reads backwards from what seems natural, obvious, self-evident, or universal, in order to show that these things have their history, their reasons for being the way they are, their effects on what follows from them, and that the starting point is not a (natural) given but a (cultural) construct, usually blind to itself. (xv)

One other facet of post-structuralism relevant to the current study according to Peter Barry (1995:74) is its tendency to reverse the polarity of common binary oppositions like male and female, day and night, light and dark and so on, so that the second term, rather than the first is privileged and regarded as the more desirable. This thinking is well connected to binary opposition, where the first is superior and the other is inferior. This essay tilts towards juxtaposing these two opposing sides and consequently balances these sides of the coin by considering the possibility of a common ground in the opposing ideas which translates to the richness of dramatic metaphor in Osofisan's dramaturgy. In other words, the idea of the leaders being the problem of Nigeria is to be deconstructed to show on the one side how the followers had contributed to their woes and on the other side the fact that leaders emerge from among the people/ masses. By challenging this popular opinion, this study follows the logic of Foucault's position that "no discourse is fixed for all times, it is both a cause and effect" (Selden and Widowson, 1993:190). The current work thus strives to engage postcolonial texts of a perceived Marxist—Femi Osofisan through the critical lens of postcolonial theory.

The theory provides a framework for the analysis of the faults of the followers/ people as against preconceived notion of leadership as entirely the problem of Nigeria. This will help us to weigh the extent to which Osofisan has been able to balance his social vision in his dramaturgy.

Organisation of the study

This thesis is made up of six chapters. Chapter One consists a general introduction to the study where the background to the study is adequately fore-grounded. Also, the objectives, statement of the problem, significance of the study, methodology and organisation of the study are included. The idea of followership and disillusionment, and the theoretical frameworks are being introduced here. We are also introduced to Femi Osofisan, whose plays are analysed in this research.

Chapter Two of this research presents the review of relevant literature. It examines previous works on disillusionment in Africa generally and Nigeria in particular. It goes on to reveal the alignment of critics and writers on the noble role and function of African drama as it targets the contemporary realities of their enabling milieu. Hence, numerous texts in the form of essays and critical works and journals connected to this study will be accessed and reviewed so that the contributions of scholars towards this line of study will be used in foregrounding this study. It

also takes a scholarly interrogation into the conflict of ideology in Osofisan's drama in order to prepare the ground for Osofisan's criticism of the followers and ordinary people which the analysis of the study is to justify.

Chapter Three explores the contribution of the followers to post-independence disillusionment as key in Osofisan's vision of change to the society. This chapter discusses the structural aspect of Osofisan's dramaturgy with specific exploration of Nigeria's backwardness necessitated by acts of the traders, business men and women, and not the leaders. This will be exemplified in Femi Osofisan's *Love's Unlike lading*, *Fires Burn and Die Hard* and *Birthdays are not for Dying*. An awareness of the role of followership and common people in the selected plays therefore extends the existing frontiers of the knowledge in critiquing of Post-independence disillusionment in Osofisan's plays.

Why the struggle for national rebirth (change) has failed especially as occasioned by those who ought to be in the vanguard for such among the followers is explored as themes in Chapter Four. Osofisan's *Esu and the Vagabond Minstrels*, *Farewell to a Cannibal Rage* and *Aringindin and the Night Watchmen* are used for analyses. Osofisan's preoccupation with the dialectics of subversion and inversion with respect to language and style to expose the foibles of the people/followers completes the content of the fourth chapter.

The focus of Chapter Five is on the fate of the ordinary man who rises to prominence and thereafter unleashes the baton of oppression on the masses in postcolonial Nigeria. This paradox between poverty and power in contemporary Nigeria is to be examined as disenchantments in Osofisan's *Altine's Wrath*, *The Inspector and the Hero* and *One Legend, Many Seasons*. The chapter therefore traces Osofisan's stand that humble background is not a guarantee for transformative leadership. The chapter ends with an exploration of the relevance of African drama to National development as represented in Osofisan's selected plays

Chapter Six offers the summary and conclusion of the study while the appendix is an interview conducted by the researcher on Professor Femi Osofisan on objective dramatisation of his perception of the masses and followers

On the whole, this chapter has been able to introduce every aspect of this essay. Background of the study, the role of followership in post-independence disillusionment, research problem,

research questions, aim and objectives, scope, methodology, significance of the study, theoretical framework and organisation of the study are all detailed in this chapter which therefore paves way for the review of relevant literatures in the next chapter.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter presents a review of relevant literature. It examines the social vision of Femi Osofisan, as well as his critical perspective in African literature. It further looks into previous works on disillusionment in Africa generally and Nigeria in particular. It goes on to investigate the position of critics and writers on the noble role and functions of African drama as it targets the contemporary realities of its enabling milieu. The subject of disillusionment in Nigerian literature as well as critical positioning of followership as being complicit in post-independence disillusionment as employed by Femi Osofisan is also reviewed. It further subjects Osofisan's critics' claim of being Marxist-inclined to scholarly interrogation in order to prepare the ground for Osofisan's criticism of the followers/ ordinary people which the analysis of the study is to justify. Hence, numerous texts in forms of essays, critical works and journals connected to this study are accessed and reviewed, to establish the fact that the followers/ people have contributed to their own disillusionment as deployed by Femi Osofisan.

Femi Osofisan's social vision

African writers have proven to be committed artists as they have made social commitment and impeccable artistry the hallmark of their literary works (Odunbaku, 2014). The foregoing is in line with Achebe's admonition that writers should tackle problems facing the present day societies while warning that failing to do so would risk the writer becoming irrelevant in the society (Achebe, 1964). This definitely is one of the many things that have made Osofisan consistently relevant in the drama world. Osofisan's vision of change is however unique in that the playwright leaves no stone unturned in directing his message both to the leader and the follower. This is unlike some of his predecessors and contemporaries whose salvos for change are almost often targeted at the leaders. This uniqueness could be traced to Osofisan's humble background and commitment to hard work which gives him an edge in understanding the people especially the downtrodden, hence his experimentations that often upset orthodox acceptance. He describes his vision to the downtrodden as "to free the peoples' minds from their warped perception of themselves and the possibilities; free their capacity to innovate and create" (Osofisan, 1986:6). In other words, as far as Osofisan wants to defend the down trodden, he

believes they can rise above their humble background just as he worked his way up through hard work. Osofisan gives reason for this that:

If you want a change, your plans must be double headed towards those who are heading and those headed, but to think that the masses are just innocent I think is wrong. So this is what I try to highlight in those works. I may be pointing more at the rulers or the ruling class but I have not idealised the working class just as I don't deliberately criminalize them, but you have to show that the worker is not a good worker just because he is a worker or peasant farmer physically good just because he is a farmer, if you are subjected to these various traumas you end up differently from what you expect. (Agunbiade, 2015:1)

Osofisan in his plays exposes the ills of the followers which are similar to the evils of the leaders. This is essentially obvious in the play *Esu and the Vagabond Minstrels* where only one out of the four minstrels is found worthy of being compassionate. This same leaning runs through *Aringindin and the Night Watchmen* where the watchmen saddled with the responsibilities of watching over the community betrayed and preyed on their community. This could be described as why Osofisan had rejected the ideological label of a Marxist as it could becloud his critical social vision of change. This is however not to say that Osofisan is not a radical committed playwright who is perturbed with the failure of the rulers in post-independence Nigeria. Osofisan no doubt is unhappy with bad leadership characterized by corruption in Nigeria. For instance, his anger against bad leadership is reflected in *The Chattering and the Song* (1976) where he examines the confrontation between tyrannical power and revolution respectively through the despotic ruler Alaafin Abiodun and the young revolutionary group led by Leje and Sontri. Osofisan is noted for collective force against bad leadership but not shortsighted of the fact that a morally imbalanced/ sick people cannot demand their right. This is why his social vision of change leaves out no class, group or people as he rightly puts his aim on stage as:

To desperately get close to the spectator...each and everyone I have trapped in the darkness or half light, to penetrate very close and intimate, like a knife in the ribs. I want to make that spectator happy but uncomfortable. I want to turn him open, guts and all, spice him, cook him in the filthy, stinking broil of our history. I want him washed inside out, in the naked truth, and then I sew him back again a different man. I believe that, if we wound ourselves often and painfully enough with reality, with the reality all around us, if we refuse to bandage our sensitive spots away from the hurt

of truth, that we can attain a new and positive awareness.

(Awodiya, 1993:18)

What Osofisan has revealed here is his entire intent when writing which is to reach every member of the society for total transformation. We can see that he is bent on using the powerful tool of drama to reconstruct the conscience of his audience. So no matter what oral materials or unique style that Osofisan is experimenting, his goal is crystal clear and his social vision is at the fore of any of his writings which is what makes his dramaturgy worth exploring.

Femi Osofisan and the triadic blend of morality plays, humanistic plays and traditional African theatre

A critical examination of the content and artistic presentations of Femi Osofisan's plays will reveal more about the origin and growth of his social vision. Osofisan no doubt is a man of many parts as his background shows he is a restless researcher who experiments with different styles to convey his message of change to his society. Awodiya (1995) notes that:

Osofisan is perhaps best appreciated for combining local and universal thematic relevance ...when he is not creating something new, he is imaginatively adapting the styles of accomplished masters (207)

One of such unique features of Osofisan's plays is the contest between integrity and lack of it which explains his preoccupation with the English morality plays and the story telling technique of Traditional African Theatre. Osofisan does this successfully with the aim of providing change and nourishment to the famished morality of contemporary African personality. This trend is evident in such plays like *One Legend, Many Seasons, Esu and the Vagabond Minstrels, Birthdays are not for Dying*, where the playwright traces the root of disillusionment to the loss of moral uprightness. It is imperative to recall here that Morality play which played a great role in this experimentation was the third type of play developed in the medieval period after the Mystery and Miracle plays which were entirely dramatized by the church as inspired by the scripture (Dasylva, 1997:4). The church however vehemently opposed the theatre following the collapse of the Roman Empire in 47AD, believing it has pagan connections. But ironically the church necessitated the rebirth of drama in the middle ages. This is so because of the enduring impact which performance has on the human mind (Dasylva, 1997). Corroborating this Elbert Thompson in *The English Moral Plays* (1910) reveals that in the 12th and 13th centuries the

employment of anecdote by the early preachers gained its vogue as the preaching friars carried the church teachings to even the commonest man. There were stories in abundance on temptation, on good manners and bad habits, on the power of the virgin and on moral virtues.

These sermons in dialogue on allegorical themes became forerunners of the morality plays. Thus, it happened that the precept of the pulpit became the stock property of the theatre in that the sermon supplied the matter and the spirit of the moral play. The earliest of the extant English moralities is the *Castle of Perseverance*. This long play depicts the ceaseless struggle between sin and holiness. However, *Everyman* has remained the most popular in this category. It is an allegory depicting the sequel of a misspent life where the author selects from variety of possible characters; good and bad, the wild gallant whose career best served as warning. Everyman the protagonist is summoned by death. The appeal of Everyman to Fellowship, Cousin, Kindred, Goods, Strength, Discretion, Five wits, Beauty and knowledge to accompany him to the grave fell on deaf ears. All except the frail-looking but truthful Good deeds deserts him. Of equal success is John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* which deals with the trials of a type-Christian in his journey towards heaven. Osofisan although no longer a practicing Christian (Awodiya, 1995:37) is still very much influenced by Christianity which is evident in his experimentation with features of morality plays in order to pass his message to the society.

Looking at Osofisan's *One Legend Many Seasons* (2001), it is established that he combines the artistic and thematic features of *Everyman* and *Pilgrim's Progress* as Osofisan throws swipe at human wickedness more so among the common man through his leading characters Makon and Alowolodu. Alowolodu thus takes cue from the pilgrim's journey in *Pilgrim's Progress* as the three spirits take him through his past, present and future to effect his change of attitude to life.

According to Thompson (1910), "besides the plays that broached and debated the great public questions of Henry's reign, there were others that spoke the message of humanism." In so doing they did not altogether forsake the cause of morality. It was possible to exalt the dignity of secular learning which humanism is concerned about as a means to the higher end that the old time moralities directly attain.

The Humanist thus brought to the enrichment of the didactic drama new matter and a broader range of ideals which include allusion and even a new type of character which hastened the inevitable secularization of the age (Thompson, 1910)

Osofisan also experiments with the Humanistic play just as Awodiya (1995) maintains that “Osofisan’s creed lies in his humanistic faith: the belief he attaches to the power of human intellect” (41). To Osofisan, the freedom of the individual’s will is the quintessence of the very force of life. He thus treats religion not as capable of changing the society but capable of predicting and mapping out a line of action. For instance, he finds in Orunmila the god that predicts the future by citing the past as precedence. These are obvious in *Who is Afraid of Solarin* (1978), *Once Upon Four Robbers* (1980), and *Farewell to a Cannibal Rage* (1986).

The story of the humanistic plays foretells plainly and unmistakably, the disintegration of the moral play in the new and broader dramatic movement of the Elizabethan age. Thompson (1910) reveals that in the 16th century France, the junction was reached where morality gives place almost entirely to farce, a type of play more truly dramatic both in substance and form (388-401). In other words, the rule of allegory in literature had been long and its reach wide. Therefore, the representation of comic incidents from the lives of common people in brief, lively and entirely un-didactic spirit was inaugurated to evince human life in England in 16th century. Osofisan deploys farce in *Morountodun* (1982) as he explores the technique of comic opera in a revolutionary form. The devil as a concept is also very important in the drama of Osofisan. It is thus essential to establish the fact that the conception of devil shares origin in both the theological literature and Traditional African Religion. In the Miracle Plays, he appeared wherever the story demanded his presence; on the pageants, for example, representing the fall of Lucifer, the temptation of Eve, and Doomsday, while in the Moralities, he stood for the source of all evil, man’s great enemy as God was his great friend (Thompson, 1910).

However, according to Osofisan “in Yoruba context Esu can be very benevolent...Yoruba is Yoruba and Hebrew is Hebrew. We don’t have exactly the same case in the two cultures” (Agunbiade, 2015:3). Osofisan thus paints Esu as kind and could be benevolent in the African context as seen in his play *Esu and the Vagabond Minstrels* where Orunmila in unity with his messenger, Esu the trickster god tests the starving vagabond musicians by giving them the magic power to cure suffering people. This however could be described as Osofisan’s subversion and

inversion of the devil (Esu) as Esu is generally perceived in Africa (Nigeria) as the source of evil just as in Hebrew. Osofisan is however critical of this view saying “I think they just had to find equivalence for the Hebrew words while translating the Bible (Agunbiade, 2015:3). Another inference from this is that since Esu can be benevolent, it signals that some of the entirely characterised bad leaders are good, while some of the often idealised followers as seen in the vagabond musicians are bad and deepen the plight of their fellow human beings.

All these show how the allegorical was forced to give way to the concrete and how theological teaching was supplanted on the stage by comedy of manners. Although the abstractions of the old play were discarded by Elizabethan playwrights and though allegorical precept gave place to concrete presentation of real life, the debt of the secular drama to the moral play is greater than any tangible evidence can show (Thompson, 1910)

Osofisan’s blend of these various types of drama reveals his painstaking commitment to reviving his society. He is no doubt a great artist whose social vision takes root in his moral ideology of the society. That is why in a paper titled “Theatre in the Academe and the Question of National Development” (2001), he is of the opinion that Theatre Arts is the most rounded of the available Arts discipline that offers the most comprehensive training for students and national development. He submits that:

Our essential challenge is to prepare the student for full citizenship, to raise him or her to be a responsible, thinking adult in the community. The skills we give each and every one of our students therefore, for this task, are knowledge, and a deep sense of community which does not at the same time obviate their sense of selfhood. We also inculcate in the students a capacity for compassion, candour and integrity, plus the discernment and the courage both to speak out about, and to act upon their convictions...we try to sharpen their conscience against injustice and exploitation. We teach them how the world can change... if we refuse to shut our eyes to evil, if we do not allow ourselves to be cowed either by pain or intimidation, or discouraged by treachery and calumny (110-111).

Osofisan thus believes in the possibility of a humane world, provided we all combine and struggle to build it. And to realize this, he employs the medium of the stage where people of disparate talents and affiliations collaborate for success on the stage. His emphasis is thus on the acute sense of community exhibited on the stage which is to be emulated by the people for

national development. An insightful look at Osofisan's plays shows the engagement of Osofisan with Humanistic plays, Morality plays and the Traditional African Theatre. This blend which makes Osofisan a pragmatic playwright characterized his social vision of change as they all are geared at achieving an idyllic society through stage presentations.

Femi Osofisan and the dialectics of sub-in-version

One of the marks of a great Playwright is his ability to alter the norms and standards by which his audience views the world and at the same time attack those norms frontally (Hornby, 1986). Such mission in the theatre according to Hornby involves a great deal of conscious employment of metadramatic elements. Femi Osofisan no doubt fits the portrait of the great playwright as delineated by Hornby considering his experimentation with different forms and norms in the theatre genre. Buttressing this position, Awodiya (1995) submits that:

The real significance of Osofisan is his experiment with the African theatre. He obsessively creates new forms by mingling conventions with daring experiments...His dramatic structure is indifferent to orthodoxy; it is compact, assuming epic dimensions through the breaking up of dramatic forms and then re-assembling them into a quintessential Osofisan. (26)

Awodiya's position as a concise purview on the dramaturgy of Osofisan gives a background to Osofisan's reconstruction of consensus opinion, history and myth all in the bid to create a more desirable society. A critical look at this trait presents Osofisan as a playwright who is philosophically and aesthetically committed to a dialectic act of subversion and inversion in the theatre genre, a trend which pitches him on a vantage position to assess the role of followership in their predicaments. To begin with, the term subversion comes from the Latin *Subvertere*, meaning to overthrow and refers to a process or practice by which established values and principles of a socio-political system or set of rules are challenged and transformed (Anwar, 2015). When it comes to the subject of the Subalterns in postcolonial studies and Deconstruction, subversion becomes a powerful tool for the Subalterns upon which dominant discourses are subjected (Spivak, 1985). Inversion on the other hand is an act of changing the position or order of something to its opposite or of turning something upside down. Merriam Webster's Dictionary frames it as a "change in a position, order or relationship of things so that they are the opposite of what they had been." Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) provides an extensive

discussion on the workings of inversion in a social context where a reversal of the coloniser's monopoly on violence is considered necessary to break out of the master–slave dialectic.

A critical look at Osofisan's dramaturgy therefore reveals his deployment of the ideology of subversion and inversion. An attempt is therefore made here to foreground this act as quintessential of Osofisan in view of the current study where his works are to be critically examined to see how he structures his swipe at the ordinary people as against consensus opinion and works that idealise the masses at the expense of the leaders who are wantonly held as societal scapegoat.

First, Osofisan's earlier commitment to subversion of models in the theater genre could be traced to his materialistic dialectics as against his predecessor's metaphysical inclination and conception of drama. Like Bertolt Brecht, Osofisan's views challenge the undialectical conception of human history, values, traditions and norms. Through his plays he challenges the first generational Nigerian playwrights' "mythopoeic vision in order to show that history is alterable and that people can change their situation just as they are themselves changeable" (Onwueme, 1991:63). Osofisan therefore believes that human problems are created by man and can only be dismantled by man as against Soyinka's earlier belief that gods and in extension leaders are entirely responsible for most of humans' problems (Awodiya, 1993:44). Interestingly, Osofisan is a onetime disciple of Soyinka. Worried by criticism of his style as different from Soyinka, Osofisan in an interview with Muyiwa Awodiya explains the reason behind his inverted approach:

Of course, I think it is fairly obvious that I started off as his disciple but that is a long way back. There are things he has taught me which only he could teach. But I have moved beyond...we want to deal with immediate relevant problems of our society...to go to the roots of our present incoherence, to the palpable anguish. (Awodiya, 1993:19)

This departure therefore marked the beginning of the quintessential Osofisan as he began with the experimentation of different theater models and tradition. In effect the emphasis of Osofisan's plays shifts from examining the relationship between man and gods (like his compatriots Soyinka, J.P Clark and Ola Rotimi) to man in the society in conflict with community or morals; a preoccupation with society as a whole (Awodiya, 1993:20). Osofisan however

explains that contrary to his predecessors, his use of myth is to subvert illusion and preconceived opinion. He maintains that

I may use myth or ritual but only from a subversive perspective. I borrow ancient forms specifically to unmask them, to use theatrical magic to undermine the magic of superstitions. All these gods and their pretended inviolability...one is tired of them. We have been hearing of them for too long. (Awodiya, 1993:20)

Osofisan therefore sees the image of Ogun as deployed by Soyinka as celebrating warriors and power holders as well as the myth of violence. To Osofisan this builds false heroes as it sanctions the slaughter of the people as a heroic act, hence promoting the myth of power and destruction (Awodiya, 1995:76). He contends that we have had enough of Ogun images where violence is personified. According to Osofisan:

Obviously a lot of our people believe in Ogun and worship him. And, shielded largely from the “mysteries” of technology in modern world, they would attribute things like accidents on the route to the deity, who must then be propitiated duly. But a progressive artist should understand, but not encourage or promote that type of thing. We must begin to confront history at its empirical points. We must move our people away from superstition, and help them to analyse objectively, and hence master their immediate material condition. (Quoted in Awodiya, 1993:19-20)

In place of Ogun, Osofisan has invented the Orunmila motif which teaches about the exploration of knowledge and of science in the service of humanity; a motif which acknowledges the contribution of Doctor-herbalists, Architects, Engineers, the weavers, the sculptors etc, to society’s development. The Orunmila motif affords the playwright the ability to inform about the cradle of Yoruba civilization, the enduring institutions and structures which were invented by the people who were not warriors but scientists, builders, thinkers and philosophers as all these are contained in the Ifa divination corpus of Orunmila (Awodiya, 1995:76). Osofisan therefore does not use myth, ritual, festival, history and other traditional materials like his predecessors do; rather he uses them from the subversive materialist perspective to make them serve his egalitarian purposes. This is where Osofisan’s materialistic perspective of the society differentiates him even from his contemporaries. For example in *Morountodun*, Osofisan deploys history, myth and legend in a subversive manner. He revises familiar history by making Moremi to metamorphose into Titubi thereby denouncing her magnificent heritage, while in *Esu and the*

Vagaabond Minstrels we see Esu who is supposed to be the Yoruba dreaded god of mischief become a compassionate helper of man. Osofisan's reaction to this is noteworthy. First, he maintained that "all history is a matter of interpretation. So there is no true history or false history as every history is a mediated one" (Awodiya, 1993:46). Osofisan therefore faults some claims in Samuel Johnson's *The History of the Yorubas* considering Johnson's background. He laments that "gods of our people were almost invariably re-interpreted in Christian terms and Esu in particular is one of the gods who have suffered from this" (Awodiya, 1993:46). Similarly in a recent interview, Osofisan argues that in "Yoruba context Esu can be very benevolent" (Agunbiade, 2015:4). Osofisan therefore in the play strives to invert the notion about Esu in the Yoruba parlance.

Osofisan further subverts myth as he uses the gods as metaphors and not as deities in conveying his ideological viewpoint and social comment. For instance, in *No More the Wasted Breed*, he challenges the old custom of using human beings as sacrifice to the gods. In *The Chattering and the Song*, received history is revised while in *Once Upon Four Robbers*, consensus opinion is questioned.

This subversive dialectics is further seen in Osofisan's examination of the people's perception of magic and religion for egalitarian purposes. He thus subverts the people's interpretation of the traditional god Orunmila in his plays. As earlier explained, Orunmila is the Yoruba god of wisdom and divination who must be consulted by the people before they take important decisions affecting their lives, but Orunmila's priests and other charlatans have in their quest for wealth deceived the clients of Orunmila by extorting money and other material goods from them (Awodiya, 1995:68). Osofisan in *Who's Afraid of Solarin* (1978), an adaptation of Nikolai Gogol's *The Government Inspector* (1836), confronts this exploitation by bringing out the lies and depravity of the Ifa priests of Orunmila during their ill consultation. With the subversive use of satire, Osofisan exposes the priests and vandalises the extortionists' interpretation of Orunmila showing that such consultation could be used to dupe and defraud the people. He thus exposes Baba Fawomi the fake priest who asks the fraudulent councilors to procure certain foods in excess of what is needed as sacrifice to Ifa. What Osofisan therefore has done in *Who's Afraid of Solarin* is a deft subversion of credibility reposed in fake Ifa priests as well as wrong interpretation about Orunmila.

Osofisan's conscious act of subversion and inversion is also very prominent in his philosophical and ideological commitment. In this wise, Osofisan seems to align with the position of Bamidele (2000) where he maintains that:

Gone were the days when the preoccupation of history was with Kings and Queens. The real subject of modern history we are told (according to E.H Carr in *What is History?*) is the ordinary man in the street, his way of life, his interests, what he wears, how he gets about, what he eats, the condition of his life etc (79)

However, contrary to his predecessors' and contemporaries' conception of the ordinary man, Osofisan's materialist dialectics affords him the ability to critically examine the actions and inactions of the masses which unfortunately have made them contribute to their own predicament. To arrive at this, osofisan needs to subvert critical opinion which tends to idealise the ordinary people. This is not to say that Osofisan is against revolution in the land as in the Marxist creed of emancipating the people, but he has always maintained as expressed in Camus Maxim that "examine them from a purely humane angle" (Quoted in Awodiya, 1993:41). Buttressing this, Osofisan explains that:

Before you can make a successful revolution, it seems you have to first create the right type of men who would make that revolution. And without humanity, without compassion, without proper sense of decency, how can you have men who will believe in revolution.
(Awodiya, 1993:41)

Osofisan therefore reverses (inverts) his satirical swipe, rather than pitching it at the leader, he directs it to the masses accentuating that "*Esu and the Vagabond Minstrels* was written precisely to stir discussion about this trend" (Awodiya, 1993:41). Underscoring the reason for this preoccupation as displayed in *Esu and the Vagabond Minstrels* as against earlier plays, Osofisan submits that:

I hope I am still going to do more like it-- move away from the literature of banners, the literature of slogans and begin to explore the more psychological aspect of human beings and I suspect that as I go along, that charge of moving away from "revolution" and so on will become even louder. I anticipate. (Awodiya, 1993:40)

Osofisan buttresses his leaning with the fact that we have had some revolutions with many abrupt endings and recommendations in our political process yet we are still where we are. He therefore argues that:

Most of the literature we've written, as I said, are a literature of banners, of graffiti-like statements, of placards. In a sense, that is what *The Chattering and the Song* was making statements about, in highlighting the positions of Sontri and Leje in the Logistics of revolution. But ten years later, I can't be doing the same thing again, can I? A lot has happened in those ten years. (Awodiya, 1993:40)

Obviously the growing rates of wickedness, lack of compassion, indecency, robbery, lack of restraint and kindness even among the common people have become a source of concern for Osofisan. That is why in an interview conducted by Ossie Onuora Enekwe in 1978, Osofisan reveals his aim on stage by saying:

I want desperately to get close to the spectator, to each and everyone I have trapped in the darkness or half light, to penetrate very close and intimate, like a knife in the ribs. I want to make that spectator happy but uncomfortable. I want to turn him open, guts and all, spice him, cook him in the filthy, stinking broil of history. I want him washed inside out, in the naked truth, and then I sew him back again a different man. I believe that, if we wound ourselves often and painfully enough with reality, with the reality all around us, if we refuse to bandage our sensitive spots away from the hurt of truth, that we can attain a new and positive awareness. (Awodiya, 1993:18)

Osofisan therefore leaves no stone unturned in his drive for change in the society as both the leaders and the led do not leave his theatre without a swipe on their unbecoming demeanors which correspondingly are responsible for the backward nature of their country.

Osofisan's predisposition to subversion and inversion is not limited to his ideological leaning; he also deploys the trend in his dramaturgy which involves how he structures his forms and techniques as well as his language. This is not farfetched because Osofisan is a restless researcher with an assertive quest to expropriate various theatre genres in order to create unorthodox forms with an elastic structure and great stage adaptability (Awodiya, 1995). There is therefore no denying the fact that the traditional performance praxis and the Epic theatre have to a great extent influenced Osofisan's dramaturgy (Obafemi & Abubakar 2006, Adefolaju Eben,

2014). Osofisan however has evolved a theatre form that is entirely quintessential. He does this by dismantling and replenishing existing theatrical forms (Awodiya, 1995:43), in a way that is best described as a conscious act of subverting and inverting orthodox theatrical models and styles.

To begin with, Osofisan is unique in his conscious employment of metadramatic elements, an act which Hornby (1986:32) in *Drama, Metadrama and Perception* has described as a mark of a great playwright. This is so because according to Hornby such playwright “conceives his mission to be one of altering the norms and standard by which his audience views the world, and is thus more likely to attack those norms frontally” (Hornby, 1986:32). Such elements which Osofisan employs include role playing, play-within-the-play, role-switching and other meta-dramatic elements. Osofisan employs these elements in order “to shatter the illusion of the collectivity of the audience’s responses” and at the same time “to demonstrate the obvious political power involved in deconstructing assumptions of authority on stage” (Gilbert and Tompkins, 1996:250). By this, Osofisan strives to achieve his uniqueness as the audience is from time to time exposed to unfamiliar trends that defocalises and destabilizes their perception about characters and situations which entirely are a departure from Osofisan’s contemporaries’ or predecessors’ conception of the theatre.

In *The Chattering and the Song*, Osofisan makes generous use of role-taking and role-playing devices through which he not only reverses or subverts the established role of the legendary Alafin Abiodun but also exposes the fallacy of the received history. Instead of projecting the benign and peaceable disposition of the King, Osofisan indicts him for the crimes strategically ensconced in the annals of history. He achieves this by creating a fresh narrative out of an antiquated and dubious piece of history with a pure socio-political orientation (Anwar, 2015:503). Osofisan further employs the role playing and role reversal element which is a strong feature of the traditional African theatre in *Once Upon Four Robbers* (1980) as occasionally the audience ceases to be spectators to become characters as instructed by the playwright. Hence, they become participants in the play they have come to watch. In the play, the story teller plays the role of Aafa who also acts as the narrator. Characters are also invited from the audience to perform the role of judges when the play ends in a stalemate. This audience participation and theatrical construction that offers questions rather than prescription places Osofisan on a vantage

position to challenge his audience and as well empower them with a vision of the possibility of change which must begin with them (Awodiya, 1995:218). In Anwar's (2015) view "these role reversals signify the shifting and erratic dynamics of power relations in society and challenge or subvert any assumptions made on the basis of normative socio-political codes and models of power"(505). Another important function of this strategy of role playing and reversal as seen in *Morountodun* through Titubi and in *The Chattering and the Song* through Moka is the ability to discourage any idolisation of the working class and their revolutionary ideals which may possibly sponsor despotism if given the opportunity as they may turn to absolute monarchs and thus subvert all expectations their initial call for change raises (Anwar, 2015: 505).

Another subversive dialectic element that has helped distinguish Osofisan's dramaturgy is the play-within-the play technique. This is a device which carefully focuses the audience's attention, while paradoxically "fracturing assumed unitary sightlines" (Gilbert & Tompkins, 1996:250). The audience thus watches two or more events at once; one within another. The ensuing double vision (a vision which is at least doubled) according to Gilbert and Tompkins (1996)

Provides a way of re-visioning the entire spectacle as the audience watches the play *and* the play-within-a-play *at the same time* as it watches the actors watching the inner play. It follows that a play within-a-play always creates a dialogical tension between the various levels of performance: it mimics and reflects the original (either the original action or the original text) and it refracts the entire text's meaning (250)

The core of *The Chattering and the Song* is the play-within-a-play which revolves around the nineteenth century incident based on the farmers' rebellion known as the farmers' movement in the old Oyo Empire. The play re-enacts the historical confrontation in 1985 between Latoye, the leader of the revolutionary farmers' movement and Alaafin Abiodun, the king. The allegorical construction of the play which is facilitated by the inclusion of a play-within-the-play foregrounds issues such as social change and class struggle (Anwar, 2015:503). This inclusion, according to Ogunbiyi (1983:123), "introduces [another] level of action into the main action" of the play which ultimately becomes "a metaphor for the contradictions of existence in the equivocal relationship between actors and the characters they represent" or in other words between the conflicting ideologies they represent (Anwar, 2015: 503). This element of play-within-the-play as blended with the role reversal and role playing elements enables Osofisan to

subvert and reconstruct the role of the legendary Alafin Abiodun during the farmers' rebellion. According to Anwar (2015), Osofisan by "unmasking the hidden side of things [in *The Chattering and the Song*],...manages to create a fresh narrative out of an antiquated and dubious piece of history with a clear socio-political orientation" (503). What is significant here is the way Osofisan castigates the image of oppression in military rulers in the moulds of General Gowon, Babangida and Sanni Abacha in an ingenious frame by reconstructing familiar history. The effect of this is in case the reference to Alafin Abiodun is lost on the audience, the allusions to recent real persons, living or dead, being more intrusive than the actual figure from history will create a highly metadramatic effect (Anwar, 2015:504). This trend is also to be examined in the current study in selected plays of Osofisan to see how he structures the undoing of the common man by himself. This typical strategy of subversion which is a fundamental characteristic of radicalizing the familiar in Osofisan's dramaturgy is also deployed in *Morountodun*. Unarguably, this feature makes Osofisan's style aesthetically enriching and original.

Also worthy of note in Osofisan's dramaturgy is his restless quest to often subvert the primacy of theatrical ingenuity often credited to the Epic theatre by ensconcing the correspondence it shares with traditional African theatre. Osofisan thus employs a number of traditional performance devices and techniques to demystify the audiences' perception of the sacredness of the Epic theatre. Of importance is that the similarity the two theatre shares becomes obvious in their form and techniques as "they both share similar features in improvisation, informality, story-telling technique, role playing, reason and argument, metaphor and symbolism, music and song, and episodic scenes" (Awodiya, 1995:210). It is to be noted that the combination of these helps create the alienation technique (*verfremdungseffekt*) in Brechtian theatre which according to Brecht enables the audience to detach itself so that it may see familiar object in a new light (Eagleton, 1973:61). But in the traditional theatre, these devices help achieve audience involvement. In other words, the features which inspired Brecht's fundamental theory have their origins in the Traditional African Theatre. Ola Rotimi (1990) establishes this fact in a paper titled "Much Ado about Brecht" that:

The features which define epic theater are not singularly of Brecht's genius, as they are being glibly made to appear in the African world. Rather, it is clear that those features had existed in our African theatre tradition long before Brecht was born in 1898 (259)

Osofisan thus bears this in mind in his experimentations and as such sets out to subvert certain western theatrical ideals held sacred to the epic theatre and at the same time appraise traditional theatre in a way that foregrounds the fact that we have always have our own ways of doing things. The evidence of this is the success of many of his adaptations where indigenous traditional theatre ideals have replaced the Western to convey contemporary message. This subversion of formalist principle is obvious in *Once Upon Four Robbers* (1980) which is concerned with the social problem of armed robbery rampant in Nigeria at the time setting of the play. The story telling technique which in Epic theatre helps achieve alienation effect and elicits audience participation in plot and dramatic action is deployed to establish that these features exist in the African theatre tradition. In *Once Upon Four Robbers*, the story teller introduces the play by soliciting audience participation to answer “Aalo”. He continues with the story telling technique by saying: “Once upon a time, an ancient tale I will tell you. Tale ancient and modern. A tale of four robbers” (ix) With this device, Osofisan also achieves the effect of historical distancing in terms of time, which affords him the opportunity to show his audience that though the story is ancient, it is also familiar, while the purpose is for them to give a second thought to the tale as Osofisan indicates in the programme notes (Awodiya, 1995:211). The traditional African theatre is therefore used to realize themes of Osofisan’s plays like *Farewell to a Cannibal Rage* (1986), *Esu and the Vagabond Minstrels* (1991), and *Aringindin and the Night Watchmen* (1992). These plays are replete with singing, drumming, dancing and miming to reinforce the rhythm of the Traditional African Society.

Osofisan’s subversive dialectics could also be appraised in his use of the technique of demystification of the theatre of illusion. This technique according to Awodiya (1995:213) enables him to “dislodge the illusory world of art for reality.” This trend cuts across almost all of Osofisan’s plays. For instance in *Esu and the Vagabond Minstrels* (1991), Osofisan draws the attention of the audience to the pseudo and fictional make-up of theatre performance. In *Morountodun* (1982), some theatre secrets of the craft are divulged as dressing room action is brought into full glare of the audience through stage direction. The director’s remark to the audience at the end of the play is noteworthy:

...You must not imagine what we presented here tonight was the truth. This is a theatre, don’t forget, a house of dream and phantom of struggles...(Morountodun, 79)

The same is also deployed in *Another Raft* when Yemoso, one of the characters, tells the audience from the onset about the scarcity of and lack of stage illusions that:

I am here to warn you about a number of things. Some of you come to theatre, expecting to see a marvelous world of dreams. A magic world full of fantastic stunts and fabulous gadgets, machines flying dizzily through the air, like say in Arabian Night...Nothing you see will be real, or pretend to be. Nothing you here will be true. All is fiction, the story is false, the characters do not exist. We are in a theatre as you well know and we see no need to hide it (2)

This use of anti-illusionist technique which allows the making of conscious statements about the illusory nature of the theatre may make one think of Osofisan's drama as simply art-for-art sake, a corpus of work without a handful of message to the audience or reader. This however is not so as the playwright writes plays with endings which structurally elicits discussions and questions among his audience. In such open ended plays, Osofisan aims at no conclusion and where there is conclusion, they are structured in a way that the audience will reject it and be challenged to "make its own conclusions through exchange of ideas outside the fictive realm of the play" (Awodiya, 1995:214). For instance, in *Altine's Wrath* and *Birthdays are Not for Dying* Osofisan writes endings which he hopes that the audience will not accept and consequently debate because according to him in an interview with Sandra Richards in 1984:

I want endings which tell them that the theatre doesn't solve anything...because it is a fictional world. The problem has to be solved in the society ... But it won't be solved if we simply don't discuss it; we must discuss the thing and work towards solution.
(Quoted in Awodiya, 1995:214)

The same trend is at work in *The Chattering and the Song* as the stage direction says that "the play does not end" (56) as the actors dance in a movement of harvesting, chanting the farmers' anthem amidst the audience. This method of confrontation of norms and standards by which the audience views the world as evident in Osofisan's dramaturgy is what Richard Hornby has described as a mark of a great playwright (Hornby 1986:32).

Osofisan also embraces the structural techniques of Compressionism. This subverts all-inclusive theatre where many props, characters, locales and long time are involved (Awodiya, 1995). In *Another Raft* (1989), long period of dramatic time and multiple locales are reduced to two hours traffic of the stage. Dramatic components, characters, space and set are also limited in use. This

contrasts with Osofisan's predecessors whose plays involve a lot of dramatic components (Awodiya, 1995:209). That is why Osofisan's plays are more often staged today because the props, characters and other components can be easily accessed and improvised to reflect several settings. In *Another Raft*, a Raft adrift on the sea is the dramatic setting while the subject matter is the troubled state of the Nigerian nation. The raft is therefore represented by mats, the sea by the stage and the moon by a spotlight. The compressionist technique is also deployed in Osofisan's *Love's Unlike Lading* especially in the series of flashback in the play. For instance, when Tosan recalls Tariboh's campaign, the scene is made possible by framing Tariboh in a spotlight in a big Television screen brought on stage by the stage manager and his crew while his campaign jingle is played in the background (*Love's Unlike Lading*, 8). Also, the use of boards with inscription of the name of a place brought in by the stage manager is on many occasions used to announce to the audience a new locale. All these help compress the use of multiple sets and reduce re-arrangement of stage which will on the whole take time and in effect reduce the sustained tension of any play.

Osofisan has also demonstrated some level of subversion and inversion in structuring the language of his plays. This uniqueness is best appraised in juxtaposing Osofisan's diction with that of some of his contemporaries like Sowande, Omotoso and predecessors: Soyinka, Clark (Awodiya 1995). There is therefore a departure from orthodoxy in his language as he believes that English language can be tamed and imaginatively manipulated to accommodate its foreign environment. Establishing this contrast Awodiya (1995) maintains that:

The aesthetics of Osofisan's language lies in the simplicity but subtle phraseology of sentence structure and style. The language of his drama is ordinary and affable. It is not bombastic diction or jargon-plated syntax (as of his predecessors) but the prose vernacular of everyday life...whether he is writing about the tyranny of power, political violence, intellectual marginalization, dictatorship or armed robbery [common man], Osofisan is consistent in his sensitivity to language and his use of appropriate diction and faultless syntax which lead to a masterful control of his subject matter (252-253)

Osofisan is therefore creative in his use of language, and this accounts for the playwright's ability to structure his criticism of the actions and inactions of the ordinary people which have contributed to their own disillusionment. This however is not unconnected with Osofisan's

awareness of the social stratification of the society, hence his adoption of different varieties of English Language in representation of the different classes. The essence of this no doubt is to afford facile communication with each class he targets in his theatre. According to Awodiya (1995) one can identify five varieties of English registers in Osofisan's plays:

The main characters speak in the standard, formal English variety with appropriate modifications to suit particular situations. The gods, religious priests, kings or chiefs, who assert their authority swiftly and decisively, use lofty and elevated style, marked by a distinctive syntax and use of Idioms, imagery and proverbs. For the common man, graceful and uncluttered prose, where dialogue exchanges have the rhythmic pattern of everyday conversation is employed. The adroit use of pidgin or non standard English by type characters like messengers, servants, house-helpers or attendants. The use of untranslated and translated words and phrases from the indigenous African languages like Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo, to give special African effects and flavor to the dialogues and dramatic actions in the plays.

(244)

For the current study, the concern is on the choice of language employed by Osofisan in his representation of the followers, common man and type characters which occupy the third and fourth category in Awodiya's classification. This is imperative because for those who have all their lives believed that their entire problems are occasioned by the leaders and never for once considered the part they play in that set back, to now have a rethink, no doubt will require deft means of presentation where language must play a crucial role. Osofisan is aware of this and as such is very clever in structuring the language of this category of people. It is also noteworthy that this category of people constitutes a larger percentage of the society. Therefore, Osofisan pitches his tent with them and he is committed to adopting the appropriate diction to ensure they leave his theatre with a changed mindset devoid of their reprehensible conducts. He thus adopts linguistic clarity and accessibility of diction. His simplicity of language not only aids "authentic characterization but also makes it easy for the audience to be involved in the dramatic enactment on the stage" (Awodiya 1995:247). Since the variety of the English language adopted is theirs, the atmosphere unconditionally becomes theirs, and at that point, the wall between the stage and audience collapses to give room for audience participation. The result of this is the frequent

involvement of the audience in Osofisan's drama in terms of singing and even taking of roles which were not earlier planned.

Further, Osofisan's dynamic use of language takes after the simplicity of the folktale, while his dialogue is characterized with economy of words. For instance in *Esu and the Vagabond Minstrels*, the scene in which the banned and starving musicians discuss the possibility of the new government de-proscribing them employs economy of words to reveal the musicians' feelings about government especially its transient nature (Awodiya, 1995:224). Furthermore, for Osofisan's language to carry the weight of African experience and create a wide readership, he writes about the familiar, daily preoccupations of the people. He therefore chooses clear and familiar words which the people can easily recognize and identify with. Osofisan himself describes the reason behind this style of language as against using bogus diction that he writes:

In a language and style which most of our literate population will read with ease...(while his aim is) to discover an appropriate linguistic register for our literature in English, and also to create a public for it. (Osofisan, 1987:6)

To achieve this, Osofisan has to subvert the English language where some of its elements have to give way for foreign elements. The result of this is a mode of expression very close to African speech, where Osofisan uses the prose vernacular of everyday life to express indigenous experience in English language (Awodiya, 1995:225). He also combines translated and untranslated words and phrases from indigenous African languages to give special effect to the dialogue and dramatic actions in his plays. This lays claim to the preponderance of Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo languages in his plays, the overall essence of which according to Awodiya (1995:251) is to nativize and contextualize the language. That is why most of Osofisan's characters bear Yoruba names and the songs are mostly rendered in Yoruba language. The following are some Yoruba names in his plays. In *Twingle-Twangle: Twynning Tayle*, we have Esu, Baba Ibeji, Orunmila, Oluko wa, Sango, Weere, Akara etc, while "Iwori otura, Didun nile oloyin, and Okomitunmigbe" are Yoruba features of his songs in *The Chattering and the Song*. Other features of Osofisan's language include repetition, figures of speech, imagery, dramatic irony, proverbial expressions and symbolism all of which have helped in structuring his criticism of the common man and the working class.

This investigation of Osofisan's dramaturgy with a focus on his ingenuity to subvert, invert, blend, structure and alter forms and techniques is germane to the philosophical leaning of the current study as it confirms that there is synthesis of form and content in the dramaturgy of Femi Osofisan. In other words, Osofisan's expropriation and inversion of various theater genres to create unorthodox forms with an elastic structure gives him an advantage to proffer an alternative perspective through which contemporary society's ills could be addressed. That is why the present study strives to see how the common people as against the leaders have contributed to their own disillusionment in selected plays of Femi Osofisan. Awodiya (1995:218) submits that "no artistic revolution or new dramatic content can succeed if the structure within the revolution remains unchanged". That structure in this line of thought is the common people who in postcolonial literature are often shielded as innocent. While all attempt through art (literature) has been made without tangible change in the society, critics therefore are now of the opinion that since it is not an anathema to interrogate the people, it will hence be pragmatic to critically examine them with a view to knowing the role they have played and should play for the system to move forward.

The conflict of ideology in Femi Osofisan's drama

To establish Osofisan's criticism of the followers, exploring his indifference to revolutionary ideals becomes imperative in the current study considering critics' perception of his ideology. Divergent views and works continue to trail the arguments on the critical positioning of Femi Osofisan whether he is a consummate Marxist oriented playwright or not (Obafemi & Abubakar 2007, Awodiya 1993). For instance, D. S. Izevbaye observes that, "Osofisan has very strong sympathy for Marxist ideas about politics and society and believes that a country like Nigeria needs revolutionary stance on the part of writers," while Biodun Jeyifo asserts that "Osofisan is unquestionably, a man of the left, a radical writer and a critic who has embraced a class approach to the production and reception of literature in our society" (Quoted in Awodiya, 1995:38). However, for Osundare "what one can talk about in Osofisan's plays are tendencies, not hard-and-fast or a clear-cut ideological stance...tendencies that, range from liberal through the radical to the revolutionary" (Awodiya, 1995:38). While Dapo Adelugba argues: "although Osofisan espouses Marxian doctrines, I do not think it would be adequate to describe his works as Marxist as many critics do, and are unable to wholly justify that description...I would rather say that his

work is proto-Marxian” (Awodiya, 1995:38-39). The playwright himself has on many fora strived to dissociate himself from the Marxist label. For instance in an interview with Awodiya in 1987, Osofisan explains that “the mere fact that one discusses class issues doesn’t automatically mean a Marxist orientation” (77). He maintains that:

I keep emphasizing this because I don’t want to be put in the wrong company. There are too many charlatans and anarchists among us, using these terms quite freely. So the fact that I talk of class formations doesn’t itself mean that I am or I’m not a Marxist. If the critics feel I’m Marxist, then you know, we must refer to other elements in my work. (Awodiya 1993:77)

Despite this, critics still maintain that Osofisan belongs to the left. For example Awodiya (1995:41) notes that “in spite of Osofisan’s label shyness, it is evident from his works that he is a Marxist writer who demands social change in favour of the oppressed and down-trodden masses in the society”. Obasi and Aloysius (2013) which the current study toes after however disagree that Marxist ideology is limited to some degree in Osofisan’s works contrary to the views of his numerous readers and critics who see him as a consummate Marxist (36). It is on this note that this work tends to clear the air on conflicting notions on Osofisan’s philosophical leaning and in extension by analysis contribute to existing literature on the dramaturgy of the playwright. Obasi and Aloysius-Orjintas’ “The Limitations of the Marxist ideals in the plays of Femi Osofisan: A Study of *Once Upon Four Robbers* and *Morountodun*” (2013) is apposite here and canonical in the present work as it maintains that, though Osofisan is a Marxist writer who demands social change in favour of the oppressed and the downtrodden in the society, the texts lack Marxist spirit to significant degree (38).

Obasi and Aloysius-Orjinta (2013) further observe that dialogue in the selected texts are intra-class rather than inter-class, a structuring which negates the concept of labour struggle and Marxist doctrines where dialogue is between two opposing forces. They buttress their position with some characteristics of Marxist oriented plays that:

Marxist play/drama deals with class analysis. To this end, Marxist themes center on the “haves” and “have nots” in which there is a palpable gulf between the rich and the poor or between the upper and the lower class. Marxist texts point out the inhuman conditions of existence in a capitalist system which results in tensions between the upper and the lower classes. These create the necessity

for change. Such a change or revolution is usually violent in Marxist plays. Marxist plays are also replete with characters with leadership qualities rather than mere charlatans. Such characters or protagonists must be ready to survive the confrontation with the forces that exist within the dangerous terrain of transformation. Marxist literature avoids the issue of religion but rather deals with concrete history (facts) and not myth or guesses. Myth and history are not subverted in any way for purposes of clarity. Thematically, Marxist plays are devoid of ambiguities and contradictions. It should not convey multiple interpretations to the audience but uses direct statements. Problems propounded by Marxist texts should be forthcoming with the attendant solutions. Moreover, dialogues in Marxist plays are inter-class rather than intra-class. In effect, dialogue is between two social forces or classes – the oppressed and the oppressor; between a dominant class and a toiling class.

(Obasi and Aloysius-Orjinta (2013:43-45)

It is on these tenets that Obasi and Aloysius Orjinta (2013) based their examination of selected plays of Osofisan to ascertain the degree of Marxist spirit latent in them.

On his part, Bhadmus (2004:73) posits that “difference, departure and superiority are often hastily read into Osofisan’s works” According to Obasi and Aloysius-Orjinta (2013), these hurried assumptions are made by critics as a result of what Norbert Oyibo Eze (2009-10) describes as “commitment to predetermined schema, which hardly affords the critics the opportunity to treat individual plays as unique literary creation, and those that depart from the tradition” (39). Meanwhile plays are to be well read, examined and analysed in order to accurately determine their ideological bent. Adeyemi (2000) also surmises that Osofisan’s plays are “fond of identifying problems without proffering solutions to them, while throwing the equations back to the audience to find the solutions themselves”. Dwelling on *Once Upon Four Robbers* which centers around the debate on the public execution of armed robbers in Nigeria, according to Obasi and Aloysius-Orjinta (2013), Osofisan “advances the argument that it is in fact the society that is criminal minded. He rationalizes that there is no reason behind executing armed robbers while neglecting fraudulent civil servants, corrupt law officers, politicians and profiteers, but he stops short of prescribing an alternative solution” (39). Ukaegbu (2008) also faults Osofisan for creating fictional women in his plays who fail to transcend the culturally constructed patriarchal myths and stereotypes that locate them always on the margins of the society. Citing *Morountodun*, for instance, Ukaegbu observes that Osofisan creates a woman character (Moremi) that “is unable to rise above the human frailties she berates in others, noting

that although these shortcomings are found whenever unproven polemics and self-preservation collide.” He concludes that the effect is that, “in *Morountodun*, Moremi’s action is debilitating and hardly enhances her revolutionary credentials” (65).

Using the theory of dialectic materialism, Obasi and Aloysius-Orjinta (2013) establish their position by embarking on a critical exploration of Osofisan’s *Once Upon Four Robbers* (1991) and *Morountodun* (1982). They maintain that in “*Once Upon Four Robbers*, dialogue in the text is intra-class because no character or group of characters can be designated as representative of the dominant class” (57). According to Obasi and Aloysius-Orjinta, “the encounters in the play between the robbers and the market women, the traders, customers and the soldiers clearly show that they all belong to the same class – the down trodden” (57). The soldiers whose images in the play are created as pro-establishment are contradicted by their activities as guards keeping watch over the market. The implication is that they are rather portrayed as toiling men. In a true Marxist text, conflict is waged between two social forces; between a dominant and a toiling class (Obasi and Aloysius-Orjinta, 2013:39). They also observe that the use of charm by the robbers to dispossess the market women of their wealth promotes spiritual and subjective experience. This accordingly annuls labour on the part of the robbers as well as denies the market people of consciousness, for Marxism thrives on interrelationship between two opposing social forces. The historical world for Marx is the product of human industry or activity (Obasi and Aloysius-Orjinta, 2013:39). Labour, therefore, requires that everything man needs is not made available by nature in ready-made form but he is to work hard to satisfy his needs.

One of the major Marxist flaws in *Morountodun* (1982), according to Obasi and Aloysius-Orjinta (2013), “is the attempt by the playwright to create a woman character or a heroine that is unable to accomplish the revolutionary aesthetics demanded of her as the chief protagonist in the play” (58). Titubi therefore was neither consistent nor persistent in her struggle to defend her people against the revolting peasant farmers. The characters also, according to Obasi and Aloysius-Orjinta (2013:39), vacillate as well as oscillate in their deeds and behaviours without being firm in their struggle. For instance, Titubi (Moremi) plans to join forces with the peasants, the Superintendent raises propaganda against the State while Isaac and Buraimoh decamped from the farmers struggle and aligned with the oppressor. The point of departure is that Osofisan, according to his critics, believes in collectivity as a strong instrument to fight against the

oppressor but the flirtation of his characters in the play undermines his Marxist ideal and labour struggle (Obasi and Aloysius-Orjinta, 2013:39). This is so as the use of poison by the Ugbo warriors robs the Ife people of consciousness, an act which negates labour struggle (Obasi and Aloysius-Orjinta, 2013:39).

Obasi and Aloysius-Orjinta (2013) however conclude that like Marx, Femi Osofisan hopes for an egalitarian society. He is without doubt,

A Marxist and a radical writer whose plays, according to Muyiwa P. Awodiya, “are revolutionary in that they propose radical political alternatives for the present social orders and who uses literature as a weapon of social change”. However, the point of departure as established, from the analysis of the plays: *Once Upon Four Robbers* and *Morountodun*, is that the playwright falls short of and/or negates Marxist doctrine to certain degree. This is in contra-distinction to the popular view that Femi Osofisan’s plays are complete Marxist ideology (Obasi and Aloysius-Orjinta, 2013:39).

It is from this point that the present study seeks to critically contribute to existing knowledge on the dramaturgy of Femi Osofisan by partaking in filling an obvious gap which previous works are yet to occupy. The question therefore is, if Marxist indices are limited in the perceived Marxist plays, what does Osofisan’s social vision suggest? The current study thus establishes where Osofisan wants an immediate change which is among the followers (a departure from revolution against the leaders) which will in effect translate to the entire society. This thesis therefore establishes that Osofisan is not a consummate marxist as he has created a space for the interpretive envisioning of his readers. Osofisan hence remains relevant in contemporary discourse on followership. Gimba (2008) observes that it is time we have a re-think on causes of our political, national and individual backwardness noting that “today’s leadership was yesterday’s followership” (30). He adds that: “our self exonerating scape-goatism...and ever persistent cry over our leadership problem is like chasing the shadows of perceived thief, leaving the real thief breathing heavily amidst his chasers” (Gimba 2008:97). Osundare (2015) corroborates that “for too long we have heaped all the blame of our political backwardness on our leaders hence time we began to take some responsibility for our tragic connivance in our woes”(33). Consequently, Ungar (2011) posits that citizens should not expect good leadership without good followership. Gimba and Osundare therefore observe it is time we begin to critically examine ourselves. They are of the opinion that the common man and followers often

hide under the notion of poverty but when providence simply bequeath them wealth or they suddenly rise to a position of leadership, they quickly forget the class from which they emerge and count it no wrong to unleash harm on the common man. These among other behaviours, actions and inactions of the people are daily seen to be contributing to their backward status. Osofisan is aware of these and ably represents this rare side of the people in his plays. In other words, Osofisan refuses to idealise the masses in his plays. He is pragmatic and hence scripts them exactly the way they are in real life. As much as he wants them emancipated, he goes ahead to show like the proverbial pig that often returns to its mess, how the masses continues to emasculate themselves. This thinking which negates Marxist tenets to a great extent abounds in selected plays of Osofisan in the current study. At the same time, it is in variance to the popular opinion that Femi Osofisan's plays are completely Marxist oriented. The current study thus partakes in filling an obvious gap in the existing knowledge on the dramaturgy of Femi Osofisan. It will in effect be a canon in rather uncritical circles where a wholesale attribution of Osofisan's works is subsumed under Marxism.

Osofisan and the common man (Followers)

Femi Osofisan unarguably devotes dedicated attention to the representation of the common man in his plays (Awodiya, 1995:143). The veracity of this claim lies in the fact that his inclination to the plight of the common man has made many critics to holistically adjudge him a Marxist playwright (Awodiya, 1993:18). Osofisan however is a pragmatic playwright who is entirely conscientious in his representation of the people and more importantly the common man. In his classification of the characters in Osofisan's plays, Awodiya (1995) maintains that Osofisan's characters can be separated into four constituent groups. According to Awodiya:

The first group comprises the ruling class characters like kings, councilors, politicians, soldiers, police, elites. The second group is composed of priests, Alfa, Alhaja, Alhaji. The third group contains the gods and mythical ancestors like Olokun, Yemoso, Elusu, Obaluaye...The fourth and final group is the common man. The characters here include the middle class, the down-trodden, the underdogs, robbers, farmers, fishermen, traders, slaves, prostitutes and musicians (121)

These four groups of characters as depicted in Osofisan's plays reflect the composition of the Nigerian society where 80% of the people occupy the group of the common man. Obviously, this is indicative of Osofisan's interest in the common man. The concern however is the shaded

interest of critics in analysing Osofisan's representation of the common man as many critics are only quick to see the revolutionary side of his dramaturgy. This however is not farfetched as the remaining 20% which are characters of the ruling class, religious priests, personages and the gods are parasitic on the ordinary people who they are to lead politically and spiritually (Awodiya, 1995:142). Osofisan like Arthur Miller therefore turns to accentuate the common man, the down-trodden and ordinary people on the stage (Awodiya, 1995: 143). In other words, Osofisan sets present-day society on stage and draws its characters from the middle class and underdogs "like Frank Wedekind who focuses his attention on creatures from the lower depths of the society like robbers, prostitutes, beggars, fishermen, slaves, peasants, farmers and women whose actions are dictated by the simplest animal instinct" (Awodiya, 1995:143).

Osofisan however is not myopic in his presentation as his affinity with them could have made him one-sided in portraying only the plight of the ordinary people. Instead he balances his representation to give the reader the real slice of life as seen in his society. The bitter pill however in his dramaturgy is as much as he wants the ordinary people emancipated and regain their destiny, Osofisan "strongly believes that the oppressed exhibit the trait of 'dog eats dog' because they do not fight for true causes but selfish needs" (Ademeso, 2009:60). Ademeso maintains that "what some oppressed people try to avoid is the immediate pain afflicted on them by their oppressors, they too want to oppress the people below them" (60). No wonder Awodiya (1995) is of the opinion that "no artistic revolution or new dramatic content can succeed if the structure (people) within the revolution remains unchanged" (218). Consequently, in a rhetorical manner, Ademeso (2009) asks that "how can collective force work when there are people with selfish motives outnumbering the few committed ones?" (60). In other words, if the collective force is strong and determined, the society will move forward and be better for the collective good of all. The obvious therefore is that there are some bad eggs even among the ordinary people whose actions are retrogressive to the good of the society and in effect deepen the plight of the down-trodden. Odekunle (1991) substantiates this as the common man and working class occupy the fifth category in his classification of forms of corruption where we have Political, Economic/ Commercial, Administrative/ Professional, Organised Corruptions. As the fifth in the category and tagged "Working-Class Corruption", Odekunle "submits that in almost all respect the perpetrators in this category are similar to the Administrative and Professional typology of perpetrators of corruption except for their status which include artisans, messengers, account

clerks, market women and the like.” Obviously the classification shows that no category of people can be exonerated from perpetrating corrupt acts as the acts manifest in the various forms by different classes of people. Osofisan therefore in *Who’s Afraid of Solarin* (1978) reveals that ordinary members of the society also connive with leaders to perpetrate evils. Lamidi and Lemomu are professional beggars employed by the Chairman to gather information for him about rumour-mongers and troublemakers in the council area. These hired professional beggars are paid for their services. They are however cleverly corrupt just as their employer. They refuse to release information which they have got about their much awaited uninvited visitor until Chairman and other Councilors ‘oil’ their ‘dry palms’. Lemomu and Lamidi inform them that Solarin has been around for days and that he stays with the pastor. This makes them fidget. Osofisan goes a little step further in *Esu and the Vagabond Minstrels* (1991), as only one of the five starving musicians who Esu has promised wealth, provided they bestow a magical gift of healing on a truly needy recipient, chooses to help without demanding for material reward. The other four are entirely demanding, corrupt and desire immediate gratification for any act of kindness they extend to the down-trodden. The story line which reminds of the biblical Good Samaritan in Luke chapter ten unmistakably presents the playwright’s vision (message) of compassion and kindness which accordingly will guarantee a humane and egalitarian society. Osofisan thus enjoins artists, peasant farmers and especially the revolutionaries to have a re-think in their actions and in extension shun selfish materialistic enrichment but make it a must to help the underprivileged (Awodiya, 1995:110) as seen in *The Chattering and the Song* and *Esu and the Vagabond Minstrels*.

Trends of criticism in Nigerian drama

An indubitable reason for the uniqueness of African Drama is no doubt its parade of outstanding variety of stories covering the African history and which are coming from pens of modern African writers of plays. Nigerian drama shares in this position with the production of notable plays by playwrights that have come to be revered as pillars in African drama. Nigeria therefore has rich source for great drama. This is so because the deep traditional and cultural values, customs and artistic configurations, pre-colonial ways of life, colonial experience, neo colonial predicaments and current serious problems in Nigeria provide materials for significant plays. As Afolayan and Adeseke (2012) opines, this is evident in:

the plethora of published and unpublished dramatic works that presently adumbrate the literary, dramatic and theatrical landscape of the country, and also in the innumerable stage, radio, television and video productions of these and other play scripts and dramatic creations by professionals, academic and amateur groups (108).

However, Nigerian drama refers to plays written by Africans on colonial and postcolonial African experiences. Succinctly, Nigerian drama is anchored on the experiences of her society which can be in the recent past or based on contemporary events. It is a literature that recounts the socio-political and communal happenings in her society. Several critics like Odun Balogun, Gbilekaa (2001) among others have argued that Nigerian drama have witnessed steady development especially since Independence from the ‘cold art’ of Gao Xingjian (594-601) to current aesthetic, philosophical and psychological preoccupations that are dominant in Nigerian recent times (Adekunle, 2013; Dasyiva, 2004; Afolayan and Adeseke, 2012)

This growth or change becomes more observable in the corpus of Nigerian drama after Nigeria gained independence as the nation’s new status informed its organising topicality and motif. For instance, according to Dasyiva (2004:112), “the colonial effort at stifling and/or outlawing indigenous African belief systems is among other things, captured in Wole Soyinka’s *Death and the King’s Horseman* (1975).” Hence, the colonial experiences initially were inputs for the development of the Nigerian drama. It will also suffice that the church, Roman Catholic Mission (RCM) also succeeded in injecting Christian values through the introduction of Miracle, Mystery and Morality plays of the mediaeval period into the dramatic culture of the people. This influenced the late Chief Hubert Ogunde who founded the first Yoruba travelling theater in the 1930’s. These influences are obvious in Ogunde’s early plays like *Ruwanda* and *Zaire’s* liturgical plays. With Ogunde’s artistic maturity, social and political consciousness other plays came to being. These are *Strike and Hunger* (1945), *Bread and Bullets* (1951) and *Yoruba Ronu*. Ogunde’s unique style of long musical opening, stock cultural dances, acrobatic display and direct audience participation has come to be known as “Ogunde Tradition” (Ogundeji 1987, 1988, 2003). All these influences: the medieval plays and the traditional cultural experiences later went a long way in facilitating development of the Nigerian drama.

Moreover, Nigerian drama still expresses and preserves ageless values and at the same time reflects the change and innovation of its communities. It is therefore still culturally based and

derives its strength from traditional sources. This is observable in the works of Nigerian dramatists who write from their ethnic base and exploit the resources of their ethnic tradition for thematic ideas, stylistic mechanisms and other linguistic influences (Awodiya, 1995:67). One of the playwrights whose drama has consistently espoused this blend of the traditional and the modern is Femi Osofisan who transmits through his plays the value of the Yoruba traditional life (Awodiya, 1995). The traditional Yoruba life is poignant in some of his plays like *Morountodun*, *The Chattering and the Song*, *Esu and the Vagabond Minstrels* and *Once Upon Four Robbers* where he deploys the Orunmila motif. Similarly, the use of festival, a feature of the Yoruba life is dominant in the plays of Wole Soyinka. He deploys its theatrical element as an overall structural device which provides him the framework for such plays as *A Dance in the Forest*, *The Strong Breed*, *Kongi's Harvest* and *Death and the King's Horseman* (Awodiya, 1995)

Also, the Mbari club, brainchild of Wole Soyinka and the University College Ibadan established in 1948, marked the beginning of a new cultural attitude in colonial Nigeria as Ibadan became a beehive of cultural activities both in visual art and drama performances. Soyinka's *A Dance of the Forests* (1960) is an example of plays of that period where the playwright expresses concern on the certainty that seem to threaten the survival of the "Half Child". This is metaphoric as the playwright sees a failed future for the newly independent country. In the same spirit, other Nigerian playwrights, the like of J.P Clark with an indigenous tragic spirit came up with his trilogy *Song of a Goat*, *The Masquerade* and *The Raft* (1954) and Ola Rotimi *The gods are not to Blame* (1968) among others are vociferous on the African leaders who after independence reneged their promises to the people and at the same time took up the baton of the initial oppressors.

Another set of Nigerian playwrights emerged shortly after military incursion into Nigeria's political life in the mid 1960's. This group, according to Dasylva (2004:113), "emerged in response to the nation's strange psychosocial idiosyncracies". Their works thus challenge the unseemly and dictatorial rule of the then military. Bode Sowande's *Afamako-The work force* (1978) and *Flamingo* (1982), and Tess Onwueme's *The Reign of Wazobia* examines among other things, the themes of exploitation and corruption.

Thus, Nigerian drama is a product of the changes of experiences of the Nigerian people. Historically, the drama has translated from traditional to the literary. J. P. Clark as quoted in

Ogunbiyi (1981) in his essay “Nigerian Theatre and Drama: A Critical Profile” stresses that the traditional bifurcates into religious and secular form while the literary stems into modern and contemporary works. Akoh (2009) observes that (Nigerian) drama kicked off from the traditional, cultural and mythological. For instance, Soyinka encapsulates the lofty shrine of Ogun and her mythology (this is found in *Ogun Abibiman*) while Femi Osofisan has succeeded in his experimentation of locating a universal cultural correspondence between the Brechtian epic dramatic form and Yoruba folkloric narrative form. His plays include *The Chattering and the Song* (1977), *The Midnight Hotel* (1986), *A Restless Run of Locusts* (1975), *Once Upon Four Robbers* (1980). This is also evident in other African plays like Francis Imbuga’s and Ngugi wa Thiongo’s earlier plays such as Ngugi’s *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* and John Ruganda’s *Betrayal*.

Meanwhile, the present day Nigerian drama is being ideologically, stylistically and consciously overhauled to fit the preoccupation of modern African times. It is a body of literature for the market place, masses, and very sensitive to the conflict within the society. Most of the characters are either reflecting an individual in the society or group of people. For instance, Brother Jero in Soyinka’s *The Trial of Brother Jero* is a reflection of the religious circle in the Nigerian society. He represents various men of God who pose as miracle workers and promise their victims instant promotion while so many havocs such as wife snatching and false prophecy are their regular hobby. Sometimes, the writer’s use of the entire drama is an allegory of a person in real life, a group of persons in the society or even for the entire Nigerian society.

The Nigerian drama also has been a medium through which people evaluate the performance of the ruling class (neo-colonials). It remains a tool for appreciating or condemning the class as it has become a means to mobilise the people to support or reject a particular government. Afolayan and Adeseke (2012) buttressed this that “theatre practitioners have refused to bulge in their antagonistic reactions to unsavoury political realities. They continue to respond to their immediate socio-political environment which has experienced instabilities that have often truncated the people’s dream” (112). This is evident in plays of Wole Soyinka (*Opera Wonyosi*), Ola Rotimi (*Hopes of the Living dead*), J.P Clark’s trilogy, Olu Obafemi (*Suicide syndrome*) among others. This trend in the plays has therefore on a number of occasions influenced the people ideologically to react to situations in their enabling milieu.

Similar to this is a more recurrent trend in Nigerian drama where instead of casting aspersions on the colonialists or the neo-colonialists, critics are more critical and inward-looking at the operations and activities of the masses who always are seen at the receiving end. Femi Osofisan stands out with this trend as a number of his works analysed in the current study espouse this leaning. Besides being often regarded as a Marxist which Osofisan himself has refuted, such works to be analysed portray the playwright as a well rounded artist who is not misguided by general belief and always ready to use his art to tell the truth. He thus remarks that “I may be pointing more at the rulers or the ruling class but I have not idealised the working class just as I don’t deliberately criminalise them” (Agunbiade, 2015:1). In other words, Osofisan just as a few others like Ahmed Yerima are all out in the contemporary Nigerian drama not to romanticise or present a partial purview of the happenings in the society but to show how it is, especially the role everyone has played and ought to play in remoulding the destiny of Africa. For Osofisan, this trend is evident in plays like *Esu and the Vagabond Minstrels* (1991), *One Legend, Many Seasons* (2001) while we have same theme in Yerima’s *The Sick People* (2000) and *Hard ground* (2006). In a more precise way, the current trend tries to look at how the people has contributed to their own disillusionment in terms of actions and inactions of the people/ followers that further plunge them in the pool of disappointment rather than the colonialists and the neo-colonialists (leaders) often treated as the cause of Africa’s/ Nigeria’s backward development. This trend is what the current study is to explore as followership and post-independence disillusionment in Femi Osofisan’s plays. To therefore conclude here that Nigerian drama is a definite response to the happenings in our environment is to be precise. It is also not inappropriate to say it is a response to the distress brought about by colonialism and neo-colonialism as these are running themes not only observable in the drama but on which other ills in Nigeria grow out.

The concept of disillusionment

In his book *The Writer’s Situation and Other Essays*, Jameson (1950) relates the emergence of disillusionment as an artistic concern to Europe. The term thus became familiar in the twentieth-century literature especially since it typifies the frustration man encounters in his attempt to come to grips with the sordid realities of his disordered social context (Agho, 1993). These sordid realities include the destructive advances made in science which predates the war years of the thirties and the stultifying effects of the war. All these contributed to the enthronement of despair as a literary theme. Corroborating this, Jameson (1950) notes that:

Every advance the scientists make in their exploration of the universe pushes us inexorably a little farther from what we used to believe about ourselves and the world we imagined we live in...not content with driving us underground, with making the duration of our lives uncertain, science has driven each of us, solitary, into the darkness of an atomised world. (148-149)

The experience of the world war alongside revolution in the world of science therefore greatly increased insecurity and fear in Europe. Writers of this period who though belong to an earlier generation include Charles Dickens, Balzac and Leo Tolstoy and were versatile in handling this theme in such works like *War and Peace*, *Anna Karenina* and others like *Bleak House* and *Hard Times* (Agho, 1993). The works even by their titles show efforts by their authors to come to terms with the unfolding varying realities of that time. Development further shows the enthronement of existentialism in the work of the average European artist as they could not but reflect the tension and stress of their society in their works; hence existentialism became popular in the 1940s and 1950s. Thus the dominant writings of the age: the philosophy of Sartre, the metaphysics of Heidegger and the novels of Camus express in philosophy and literature what post-war European people felt in their bones—the awareness that the traditional and familiar world of moral and social values had collapsed, that life was “absurd”, and that God was not in his heaven and ultimately that all was not well with the world (Agho, 1993). Despair and disillusionment therefore grew hand in hand as both being an artistic concept became increasingly popular in the twentieth century owing to the traumatic effects of the industrial age and world war on the writers. However, in the African context, despair and disillusionment as literary themes are products of African experience both of imperialist subjugation and contemporary realities, one of which has come to show the followers as responsible for some of their predicaments.

The concept of disillusionment in the African space: Sofola, Achebe, Gimba and Akporobaro's perspectives

From the period of independence to the present-day Africa, the blame-game of backwardness has passed from one victim to the other. At the height of colonialism for instance, Africans who see themselves at this point in the shackles of oppression yearned for freedom, hence the convergence of both the nationalists and writers in groups with incisive writings to dismantle the formation, oppressive and dehumanising activities of the colonialists. Works that embody this

concern have often been appropriately characterised as anti-colonial struggle. However, in the wake of independence, the song changed as the supposed ‘Heralders’ of peace and development who fought for independence took over the baton of oppression from the colonialists to become what has now been appropriately regarded as the neo-colonialists. Incisive works that trailed this dash of hope is now what is also known as literatures of post-independence disillusionment (Agho, 1995). Moreover, recent happenings in the African space are beginning to tilt the critical judgment to a more perceptive look at the trend of backwardness in the continent. That is why some writers are beginning to examine the place of the common man in terms of his contribution to the advancement or backflip nature of his immediate environment. A holistic review of the different periods and disappointments in the African milieu is what the selected critics—Sofola, Achebe, Gimba and Akporobaro represent in the current review. An obvious thread that however links the awareness of these critics is the continued disappointment and frustrated hope that characterize the different phases, period and people they address. Disillusionment therefore has come to be regarded as indicator of the mood of the writers of these periods and according to Agho (1993:2), “it is the earliest purveyor of the tradition of committed literature in Africa”. Agho (1995) further avers that:

In African literature of the colonial and post colonial eras, disillusionment as a literary theme has assumed the position of a touchstone; it has become a more or less celebrated theme. Nowhere else has this prosaic concern been intensely concentrated as in the (drama) genre (23)

Ime Ikiddeh (1986) makes this clear in a remark that “this disillusion syndrome carries with it disappointment in unfulfilled hopes, leading to mixed reactions of frustration, anger, cynicism, even self contempt” (37). It therefore becomes of utmost concern in the present study to examine the reason for this preponderance of pessimism by focusing on a selected number of critics and their works in order to thin down an otherwise broad topic to a manageable scope which at the end will help us arrive at the essence of this thesis.

Johnson Sofola’s *African Culture and the African Personality* (1973) is a work which deserves close attention for many reasons, hence it comes first in this exploration as it provides a concerted swipe at the West as the entity to blame in the backwardness of Africa. Sofola’s stay in and experiences in the Western societies plus the fact that he studied the social structure and life

of these communities afforded him a unique opportunity of knowing the values and way of life of the Western people. He has thus been able to make a comparative study and observation with his African society. Sofola is known to preach to the African student colleagues in America to return to their countries regardless of the financial attractions that foreign societies offered; hence he is an ardent believer in the development of the African continent. In his book under review, Sofola traces the seeds of disillusionment in Africa and precisely in Nigeria to the activities of the colonialists poised at influencing the behaviour of the Africans negatively. Sofola therefore believes 'Africans are Altruists who are their brother's keeper' but now have been corrupted by the 'West's idea of individualism' (Sofola, 1973:82).

According to Sofola, the first seed of disillusionment spread by the West is the bastardization of the indigenous culture. This began with the influx and influence of the Christian missionaries towards the end of the second quarter of the nineteenth century. Sofola (1973) observed that:

The missionaries are undoubtedly agents of Western civilization in Nigeria, and indeed in Africa or any other non-European areas of their penetration. They deliberately or otherwise sought to impose the Western culture upon the traditional cultures (13)

Buttressing this he recalled that it was only in 1926 that there were some attempt made in having some consideration and appreciation for the culture of the areas penetrated (Sofola, 1973:13). This is so because it was at the International Conference of Christian Missionaries at LaZoute, Belgium that there was decided change in emphasis by all missions from outright condemnation to general sympathy towards African customs (Sofola, 1973:13). The West in their thinking was to bring a better way of life and in that wise the Western education and Schools were introduced. This thus created a separation of education from homes and age groups where oral tradition was prevalent. The effect of this according to Sofola was that a bulk of the African Culture (oral tradition) gave way for the Western education. Meanwhile, within the oral tradition were essential moral values and customs that help to sustain the society.

Individualism is another seed of disillusionment which Sofola identified as sown into the African continent by the West. This to him has infested the concept of community and togetherness in the African space just as some now ostracize themselves from the rest of their broadly based

family and define their family to include “himself, his one wife and their children” (Sofola 1973:15).

Colonial propaganda has also been identified as the beginning of seeds of distrust, lies and dehumanization. Sofola while writing on “The Pillaging of the African Culture—Factors and some Outcomes” in *African Culture and the African Personality* (1973) recalls “the deliberate propaganda mounted by the colonial powers who found it necessary and essential to paint Africans’ achievement of old in dark perspectives in part justification of the imperial pretensions and concomitant economic exploitation” (Sofola 1973:22). As a result, the accomplishments of the forest states of Oyo, Benin, Ashanti and Dahomey that could not be rejected as proof of Africa’s maturity were maligned instead of being appreciated. Similarly, the African Chiefs and Kings were condemned by the Imperialists for continuing to trade in slaves when the slave buyers and encouraging market which sometimes dishonestly organized raids themselves and tricked so many Africans aboard their ships were trying to stop it (Sofola, 1973:23). In Sofola’s opinion, this most barefaced violence (acts of slavery and deceit) prepared the ground for the wickedness and dehumanisation later experienced in Africa and its politics.

The harshest of the series of violence to which the Africans have been subjected (and hence disillusioned) is colonialism and Imperialism (Sofola, 1973:39). Imperialism is “the practice, the theory and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan centre, ruling a distant territory while Colonialism which is almost always a consequence of imperialism is the implanting of settlements on distant territory” (Said, 1993:9). These two practices are the chief tools employed by the West to exploit Africans. The nature of the exploitation, both economic and social, and the fate suffered by the Nationalists who confronted it face-to face according to Sofola reveal the violence involved. It is therefore important to note here that the main cause of both colonialism and imperialism is economy. As Europe had a breakthrough in commerce and industry, the need for raw materials and labour became necessary, hence; the building of territories, which later became colonies in Africa to explore the region for their utmost need. The activities however involved in realizing this goal were dehumanizing to fellow human beings. The notion that the West brought civilization is thus questionable as Africans have their organized ways of doing things, while Western education was mainly introduced to facilitate the West’s occupation of the region (Sofola 1973:41). These ill behaviours which later began to manifest in the government of

the new leaders could only be traced to the colonialists as the structures they left in place were to be latter built upon. That is why the likes of Leopold Sedar Senghor and Johnson Sofola have traced the backward nature of Africa to the West, noting that Africans are people of altruistic personality as against the selfish and evil inclined nature of the West (Sofola, 1973).

Moreover, as time goes on critical minds began to do a rethink on the state of the African continent. As such, incisive works of literature and essays began to emerge to question the belief that the colonialists were entirely the problem and cause of disillusionment of the Africans. Chinua Achebe in his *The Trouble with Nigeria* (1984) is quintessential in this regard though his foremost work, *Things Fall Apart* (1958) contradicts his position. It is however believed that the writer (Achebe) who is the conscience of his society has responded critically to emerging realities of his time. As a result, Achebe in *The Trouble with Nigeria* without mincing words indicts Nigerian leaders as the real cause of the backwardness of Nigeria. He puts it this way:

The trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership. There is nothing basically wrong with the Nigerian character. There is nothing wrong with the Nigerian land or climate or water or air or anything else. The Nigerian problem is the unwillingness and inability of its leaders to rise to the responsibility, to the challenge of personal example which are the hallmarks of true leadership (1).

Achebe no doubt from the above is of the opinion that despite the raped and agonising experience Nigeria had in the hand of the colonialists, it is not enough for its leaders to fail the people. Achebe's stream of thought no doubt dovetails into Sofola's position in *African Culture and the African Personality* (1973) that Africans are people of altruistic personality hence for Achebe, departure of the colonialists should give room for the praxis of the true African culture and personality. Achebe therefore believes that Nigeria is not beyond change if only its leaders can rise to responsibility and challenge of personal example. Buttressing this, Achebe opines that:

Nigeria can change today if she discovers leaders who have the will, the ability and the vision. Such people are rare in any time or place. But it is the duty of enlightened citizens to lead the way in their discovery and to create an atmosphere conducive to their emergence. If this conscious effort is not made, good leaders, like good money will be driven out by bad" (*The Trouble...*, 1-2)

Achebe goes further to cite some changes experienced at the emergence of Murtala Mohammed as the president of Nigeria. To many it is believed his government will cause change and instantly after becoming president sudden changes were observed on the street as public servants resumed 7:30 AM, traffic jam vanished on the street in Lagos but unfortunately Murtala was assassinated. As the title of the first chapter in Achebe's *The Trouble with Nigeria* reads "Where the problem lies", Achebe believes the change rests in the hands of our leaders. He notes that "Nigeria has many thoughtful men and women of conscience, a large number of talented people" (2). He therefore asks "why is it then that all these patriots make so little impact on the life of our nation?" (2). Rather than being rhetorical, Achebe answers this question in the chapter titled "Leadership, Nigerian Style" by describing the nation's patriots as selfish and not passionate enough for the development of their country. He thus cites Azikwe and Awolowo's statements before independence to corroborate this stand. According to Achebe (1984),

For Azikwe in a solemn vow in 1937 he pledged that "Henceforth I shall utilize my earned income to secure my enjoyment of a high standard of living and also to give a helping hand to the needy" while Obafemi Awolowo on his ambitions said: "I am going to make myself formidable intellectually, morally invulnerable, to make all the money that is possible for a man with my brains and brawn to make in Nigeria" (11)

Thoughts of this sort in Achebe's view are likely to produce aggressive millionaires than selfless leaders of their people (11). That is why through literary works; post independence Nigerian writers are admonishing fellow country (wo)men to avoid the tendency whereby, all the woes and misfortunes of the country are attributed to the colonials. Rather as Achebe puts it "they should consider the impacts of the neocolonial rulers, their fratricidal avarice and the in-grown machinations on the problem of the country" (Achebe 1984:357)

Achebe's position however has received critical remarks which in the current study will serve as a guide to a new vista on disillusionment in African literature. Abubakar Gimba's *Letter to the Unborn Child* (2008) remains formidable in the corpus of critical works championing a perceptive look into the ill role of the followers in national development. Gimba's *Letter to the Unborn Child* (2008) which obviously is a reaction to Achebe's *The Trouble with Nigeria* (1984) unequivocally pinpoints this as it opens with a swipe at our foremost compatriot writer that:

Achebe's declaration is a convenient absolution, to pass our failures as individuals and groups with shared interests to some others, to the exclusion of ourselves. A veritable convenient advertising billboard for a soothing public declaration of our individual self-innocence, and a condemnation to the gallows for those whose excesses are an exact mirror of ourselves, but who only have the misfortune of sitting in the front row. (19-20)

Gimba in this piece is however not absolving the leaders but doing what exactly is expected of a critic when despite all attempt at solving a puzzle the same remains the result. He thus through *Letter to the Unborn Child* takes us on a perceptive journey to unravel actions and inactions of the followers which on the whole builds up and surpasses the evils of the leaders. Gimba therefore believes only the unborn child is guiltless in the assessment of the backflip nature of the African nation. To those who in their thinking have idealised the followers or masses, Gimba reminds them that:

Today's leadership was yesterday's followership and today's critical followership will be tomorrow's leadership. Leaders do not fall from the sky. Just as fruits on trees are not manna dropped from heaven: they grow on trees. Leaders are not little angels dropped on us from the sky: they are born and bred among us and by us. How could they be different from us? (*Letters...*, 30)

Arguably, Gimba is calling for a more critical examination of our national and societal problems. Gimba therefore wants African writers of literature to have a rethink in their creative output based on the daily evils also perpetrated by the common man and civil servants. He explains that officials of the judiciary, media, health sector, police and academics are all corrupt while the Anti-corruption agencies are corruption personified:

The nurses, pharmacists, doctors and health sector workers are not alone in this conversion of opportunities into miseries for others...the office aides or assistants do it. The clerks do it. Staffs of the registry and accounts departments of institutions do it. So do the police, the customs, the immigration departments and schools; though the majority do so only very minimally, since they are rarely in contact with the public (Gimba, 2008:28)

Gimba goes further to scrutinise the so-called masses, the poor and common man and concluded that everybody has contributed to this disillusionment as they too have not been spared being soaked in the effluence of our putrescent values. In his words:

Indeed, the labourers, the passengers are the real problem. For our country, *the real problem is the followership*. All of us simple. We are, individually, the problem with Nigeria. *The character which Achebe cleared* of any culpability is all that is wrong with us. Many of us, followers in particular, have acquired the reprehensible character that has been our national albatross in our bid to rise to the level to which we have great ability. We, individually, vary in the degrees of our character delinquencies. But, it has now become so dominant, contagious, and almost endemic as a culture, defying age, gender, ethnic group, religious belief, and social as well as economic divides. (20)

As a matter of getting the unborn child ready, Gimba in his letter tells the unborn that with the state of mess in the land s/he no doubt is the hope that Africa awaits. The unborn therefore is not to be scared at the realities s/he is to meet but be well armed with the needful to cause a change.

In other words, according to Gimba:

the letter is to help you unveil a fundamental error in our perception of the problems and, consequently, our flawed strategies to deal with them; to enable you to understand us and help us in our preoccupation with specks in other people's eyes, which has made us forget the many in our own selves; and assist you to help save us from the dangerous spell under which we seem to have fallen, an opium-like addiction, in the form of Chinua Achebe's hypnotic hypothesis, which states that our problems are squarely those of leadership (150)

Gimba no doubt reflected the actual reality on the followers but fails to highlight more specific actions of the followers which are contributory to the nation's disillusionment. This is what the current thesis unravels especially through characters and their preoccupations in the selected plays of Femi Osofisan.

However, this trend of disillusionment as trailed from the colonialists through the post-independence African leaders and now to the followers leaves much to be desired. In fact if through the ages none of these groups can be absolved of the blame game, then something is wrong somewhere. That is why Akporobaro (2005) submits that "Man is instinctively selfish and evil natured" (66). He adds that:

The instinct towards altruism is statistically less than that towards saint-hood and whether we are conscientised to be good we continue to fall to the state of our evil nature because that is the natural state of man. (66)

All these show that man naturally tends to behave evil. In the same vein, Diana Fritz Cates in an article titled “Wickedness” in *Annual of the Society of Christian Ethics* (1992:258), argues persuasively that “some related sort of unreflected, unbalanced, and unrestrained desire for ‘more’ is at the root of wickedness.” She also describes this as a natural human desire which however “becomes problematic when it goes unchecked by critical self reflection, unbalanced by the pull of sympathy and unbound by self control” (Cates, 1992:254). Cates further maintains that:

This simple desire becomes problematic when we want this “more” so badly that we become willing and able unjustifiably to diminish the good of anyone who stands in our way. It becomes especially problematic when we lose sight of the original object of our desire such that we come to desire destruction for its own sake.
(254)

Cates (1992) no doubt opens our vista of thought to the fact that ‘desire for more’ has been the root cause of our national and global disillusionment. This when sampled across age and strata remains constant and becomes relevant to the present study just as everyone is indicted in this quest for “more” and “self.” To look at this trend among the people, the masses and the followers become imperative in order to at one side substantiate the fact that man is naturally evil natured (Akporobaro, 2005:66) and on the other hand posit that our disillusionment is not only occasioned by our leaders but by all of us, thus the need for all to embark on self-examination towards sanitising our society.

Social commitment and African drama

Despite the seeming divergent opinions on the role of writers and the place of the creative enterprise, it is obvious that most writers acknowledge the socio-economic significance of literature to the society, especially in the deployment of its resources which indubitably are of quotidian benefits to the society. Consequently, in Africa, the socio-historical reflections have continued to be the hallmark of African literature. This is so because the experiences and activities of pre-colonial period through the colonial and postcolonial periods cannot but prick the writer’s consciousness. This is why African literature is functional and not created in a vacuum but one which the critic is interested in understanding the social milieu and extent of the writer’s response to it (Kehinde, 2005:87; Olowonmi, 2008:59). Ngugi (1981) captures this functionality of African literature when he posits that:

The product of a writer's imaginative involvement is a reflection of the society: its economic structure, its class formation, its conflicts and contradictions; its class power political and cultural struggles (72)

The critic is therefore interested in the extent to which the literature aims at curbing social malaises and not only to which it is portrayed. The 21st century Africa no doubt is plagued with variety of societal ills which have posed challenges to the continent's development but at the same time provided African literary writers with inspirations. What this signals is that African literature cannot be detached from the African social realities. In its functionality, as a reflection and refraction of social realities, African literature is further reputed for addressing various issues that have come up since colonialism till date. For instance, a playwright may decide to re-create history and therefore interweave it to his own making. He may therefore write with regard to suitable societal norms of his times and put reality directly into words. This literary construct describes the concept of social realism. It inherits most of its main principles from the Lennist-Marxist ideology as it presents a true and faithful reflection of life. It is a stage in the development of realism, intimately related to the scientific analysis of social history.

To therefore establish a distinct identity for African Literature, the second congress of Negro writers and Artists held in Rome 1959, according to Kehinde (2005), "laid a firmly realist and committed basis for African literature" (88). The sub-committee on literature, after examining the responsibilities of the black artist towards his people, advocated the expression of the reality of his people long obscured, deformed or denied during the period of colonization (Kehinde, 2005:88). Simon Gikandi (2001) dwells much on the genesis of social realism in African literature. In his words:

In 1967, a group of prominent African writers met in Stockholm, Sweden, to discuss the role of the writer in the modern African nation...The artist had, after all, been an ally of politicians during the nationalist struggle, while becoming a writer had been one of the most important sources of legitimacy for the political class in Africa. For this reason, then, the African writers who were gathered at the historical Stockholm conference did not seem to make any distinction between art and politics; they had gathered to take stock of their situation within their respective polities and in relation to the then great dream of Pan-Africanism; they were not there to mourn the possible split between the artist and the political establishment, but to figure the character of the writer's commitment after decolonization (1)

Following the injunctions of the committee seriously, most African playwright according to Kehinde (2005) “started writing in varying degrees about the colonial enterprise in Africa and later the post independence (neo-colonial) situation in Africa”. The same instinct that impels the writer to expose the painful and sordid realities in society manifests itself in the need for such situations to be changed. The critical climate has thus come to favour literary works that acknowledge and dwell on socialist realism in that the writer is no more only influenced by the society but now influences it (Chidi Amuta, 1986:40). Socialist Realism therefore indicates the writer’s commitment to the cause of society as an intellectual leader, poised at exposing his societal drawbacks through his writings and at the same time stating appropriate actions that are conducive to facilitate change. Buttressing this, Olorunfoba-Oju (1999) submits that:

The artist intervenes in the aesthetic process by bringing to it a philosophical/ ideological perspective (by) examining the condition of man critically and ideologically with a view to presenting causative factors in society, that is, how situations in society are historically determined and how the future can be acted upon. (216)

There is thus an emphasis on what the Artist/Playwright should suggest for the society for a change as they are often seen as visionaries upon which the masses can rely in carving out their tomorrow. It is therefore correct to submit that the modern African drama is a socialist drama. It is one of social and political commitment. Kehinde (2012) posits that:

In the issue of commitment in literature and the need for maintaining a nexus between the utilitarian and aesthetic thrust of literature, one observes that what scholars believe should engage the interest of literary artist is the textualization of the vicissitude of their periods and place with a view to explaining them and recommending plausible panaceas” (30).

There is thus the deliberate attempt of a particular playwright to showcase the peculiarity of the experiences of her people. As a result, most African drama underscores the unavoidable conflict within the society which could either be colonial or postcolonial. For instance, the conscious rejection of the white lords is a central theme of plays within the spectrum of colonialism while post independence plays see African independence as fantasy and imposition. Similarly, all the postcolonial African plays reflect the unending social relationships which are marked by continuous frustrations, betrayal of public confidence, calamity, exploitation of the masses by the

ruling class, class conflict, among others. For instance, the post Mau Mau plays in Kenya; the post-apartheid plays in South Africa and post-biafra plays in Nigeria are socialist realist plays where the writer unmask the oppressor, raises his voice against the hero-proletariat, offers a diagnosis to the condition of social crisis and serves as a social crusader as well as political propaganda (Adekunle, 2013:12). All these in essence confirm the utilitarian function of African drama where the playwright is seen as a moralist and the “righter of wrongs” (Osundare, 2007:12.) Corroborating this, Fashina (2009) states that:

The interface of drama with African society has consigned its activities to more relevance in influencing human social behaviour and the transformation of human thought and reason. It does this through the redefinitions of its theory and practice as an instrument of social enlightenment and transformation of African society. (4-5)

One of African playwright that stands out in his commitment to overhauling the enmeshed African society is Femi Osofisan. Osofisan’s theatre identifies with the ordinary people, the downtrodden masses who are perpetually under the crushing jackboots of the draconian ruling class in Nigeria and beyond. He however does not idealise the masses as his dramaturgy has consciously also exposed the undoing of the masses which had contributed to their entire disillusionment. This is a unique feature in Osofisan’s theatre as it presents an unbiased view to understanding and solving contemporary socio-political and economic issues. As a social crusader and a committed member of the society, he spreads his artistic tentacles to explore, reflect and refract various social vices which the Nigerian society has been overwhelmingly plagued. The reflection of such degenerated aspects of the society is crucial to Osofisan as an artist who is deeply in love with his society. This is so because he is optimistic that the prevalent social problems in the society can be overcome (Ajidahun, 2013). Although, UK Prime Minister, David Cameron has described the country as ‘fantastically corrupt’ (Nigeria is fantastically corrupt..., 2016), Osofisan as a social crusader employs his literary dexterity to satirically depict corrupt practices in a bid to stopping them from proliferating uncontrollably. That aspect of his work which is least examined, which is his whip on the masses forms the focal point of the current study. This in other words is reactionary as Osofisan is more often than not perceived as a Marxist, although he has on different fora rejected the label. The current study as an eye opener will therefore bring to fore new vistas on the social commitment of Femi Osofisan’s plays.

Femi Osofisan and neo rationalist theatre

With the unprecedented growth of post-independence African Drama, there have since been criticisms bothering on its classification (Dasylyva, 2004). As a result, Ogunba (1977) identifies three broad categories into which modern West African plays can be placed. First in the category are Propaganda plays which involve politics and ideology. Second are plays expressing culture-Nationalism or plays expressing preference for new cultural integrationist vision and finally the Satiric plays. Dasylyva (2004) however faulted Ogunba's classification noting that "it was only relevant at the time it was first suggested way back 1971" (114). Dasylyva maintained that new dramatic forms and plays have emerged, thereby making such classification no longer relevant, appropriate and applicable (114). Consequently, Dasylyva (2004) puts forward a new classification with four categories. These are: Culture plays, which shows concern about dislocated social values or culture decadence; National plays which is concerned with political struggle and nationalism; Rational plays which is an admixture of both Cultural and National plays; and lastly Neo-rationalist plays. Neo-rationalist plays according to Dasylyva (2004) are plays that draw their materials from African loric tradition to pursue nationalist objectives. It is in this category that Dasylyva's delineation locates Femi Osofisan's dramaturgy. This form of theatre embraces the new form of writing that departs almost completely from the norm of writing that the first generation of writers which include Wole Soyinka and J.P Clark are known for (Dasylyva, 2004:119). According to Dasylyva, "this rather novel theatrical experience deliberately subverts the essential syntax of cultural beliefs" (119). Dasylyva's position no doubt justifies the present study where Osofisan's dramaturgy is pitched against popular critical opinion where the working class and ordinary people are idealised while leaders/ rulers are consciously made society's scapegoat. Dasylyva's delineation of Neo-rationalist theatre thus subverts popular opinion about the African theatre. Dasylyva maintained that playwrights in this category "embark on a pragmatic replacement of the orthodox myths, legends, tales and the supernatural forces that peopled the extant world with a new order of reality and new myths that are capable of serving mankind not just privileged class" (119). He submits that:

Though cultural icons constitute largely the raw materials for neo-rational plays, they are deliberately ruptured, demystified, demythified and made to perform raw functions. (119)

Dasyuva (2004) observes that playwrights in this category constantly draw materials and inspirations from the rich African philosophical hermeneutics and loric tradition blended with their exposure to Western education. Contemporary African Drama which has come to be known as Modern African Drama thus benefits to a large extent influences from this dual exposure (Dasyuva, 2014:120). Dasyuva further affirms that Osofisan represents this group of playwrights in that “besides his pioneering role in evolving this unique dramatic form he remains to date, the most ideologically consistent as playwright, dramatist and director in this category” (164)

In other words, Osofisan stands tall in this classification because of his restless quest to providing alternative perspective to viewing and solving society’s contradictions which is essentially different from that of older writers like Soyinka and Clark (Awodiya, 1993:15).

Dasyuva (2004) however acknowledges the canonical works of Awodiya who is an authority on Osofisan’s dramaturgy but not without some reservations. He opined that Awodiya’s attempts to locate Osofisan’s dramaturgy without reference to a theatrical framework of which an antecedent exists in the Brechtian epic tradition is a little disturbing (Daslva, 2004:165). While the present review admits that Osofisan’s dramaturgy exhibits some elements of Brechtian aesthetics of epic theatre as they share correspondences which include vision of salvation of the society, episodic plot structure, use of alienation effect and at times collective heroism, it however departs from Dasyuva’s position that Osofisan is a consummate Marxist in his ideology. Though Dasyuva (2004) maintains that Osofisan is a Marxist without a party membership card as Brecht was (166), the present study observes that this could be misleading just as Osofisan himself has debunked such hypothesis noting that

the mere fact that one discusses class issues don’t automatically mean a Marxist orientation. I keep emphasizing this because I don’t want to be put in the wrong company. There are too many chalartans and anarchists among us using these terms quite freely. So the fact that I talk of class formations doesn’t itself mean that I am or I’m not a Marxist. If the critics feel I’m Marxist, then you know, we must refer to other elements in my work. As I said I am indifferent to these labels. I don’t see how else one can understand the historical process of society than from the class perspective...it’s just that the way this is then interpreted nowadays is that one has to be careful. These are orthodox interpretations and very rigid interpretations which I distance myself from. (Awodiya, 1993:77-78)

The foregoing thus shows that Osofisan not only rejects the Marxist label, he also refutes the claims that his works are entirely class oriented thereby calling critics attention to other elements in his works. Osofisan substantiates this in another interview with Agunbiade (2015) when asked on claims by critics that he idealises the common people. Osofisan emphatically submits that

if you want a change your plans must be double headed towards those who are heading and those headed, but to think that the masses are just innocent I think is wrong. So this is what I try to highlight in those works. I may be pointing more at the rulers or the ruling class but I have not idealised the working class just as I don't deliberately criminalize them, but you have to show that the worker is not a good worker just because he is a worker or peasant farmer physically good just because he is a farmer, if you are subjected to these various traumas you end up differently from what you expect. (1)

The current study thus observes that though Osofisan's works exhibits some elements of revolutionary theatre, it is not enough to categorize the playwright as belonging to the left.

Osofisan as such is a neo-rationalist playwright who is inclined to subverting the indispensable syntax of cultural and conventional belief with a new order of reality that is capable of unveiling and re-presenting the exact situation of the society and at the same time proffering a viable solution to society's contradictions. This is what the present study aims at with an alternative perspective of critically examining Osofisan's works through the contributions of the followers to their predicaments.

Satire as a social art

One of the artistic creations that African playwrights have deftly deployed in addressing the ills in their society is satire. Satire according to Vaughn (1935:174) is "the mode of writing that utilizes wit and humour to criticize or ridicule human institutions and behaviour with a view to correction or improvement". On his part Abraham (1981) defines satire as

...the literary art of diminishing a subject by making it ridiculous and evoking towards it, an attitude of amusement, contempt, indignation or scorn. It differs from the comic in that comedy evokes laughter mainly as an end in itself, while satire derides, that is, it uses laughter as a weapon and against a butt existing outside the work itself (167).

Interestingly, Satire is an age-old artistic phenomenon because the ancient Greeks consciously employed it to deride unwholesome tendencies in humans. It is also an integral feature of traditional African society as it serves both entertaining and instructive purposes. In other words, apart from playing the role of an entertainer, the artist uses his artistic creation to instill truth into people's consciousness in any given age. It is also true that when anomalies and contradictions become too glaring in any society the literary artist feels called upon to rectify such anomalies found in the society using art as a weapon (Obuh, 2007). This no doubt is the truth behind the traditional festival still practiced in Ondo town, Ondo state till date called *Opepee* during which anyone whether king or subject found to have defaulted in moral status in the previous year is brought to ridicule in songs, proverbs or folktale. Satire as such is of immense benefit to the society as the satirist makes fun of the evil or foolish behaviour of people, institutions or society in general for the purpose of effecting a change in behaviour and attitude of the concerned.

From the beginning of literary history, artists were reputed to have been using satire. The Greek and Roman artist are not left out of this as far back as the 7th century B.C when the poet Archilochus is said to have reigned as the first Greek literary artist (Obuh, 2007:3). And among the Romans we have the likes of Horace and Juvenus whose satiric works and ideas have continued to shape and influence the minds of contemporary artists. Satire is also an integral feature of literary artists' work in the middle ages. A notable example of such writer is Chaucer. Moreover, in the 18th century to recent time satire has become more prominent with writers like Spencer, Pope, Swift, Soyinka and Armah. These groups of writers were pragmatic in using their works to expose and ridicule the anomalies of their society.

Critics have categorised satire into two namely, Formal or Direct and Informal or Indirect Satire. In the formal satire, according to Abrams (1981:276), the satiric *persona* speaks out in the first person. For instance "I" may address either the reader (as in Pope's *Moral Essays*, 1731-35), or else a character within the work itself, who is called the Adversarius and whose major artistic function is to elicit and add credibility to the satiric speaker's comments. Two types of formal satire are commonly distinguished, taking their names from the great Roman satirists, Horace and Juvenal, that is Horatian and Juvenalian Satire (Abrams, 1981:276). Each is defined by the character of the persona whom the author presents as the first-person satiric

speaker, and also by the attitude and *tone* that such a persona manifests toward both the subject matter and the readers of the work (Abrams, 1981:276).

While Horatian satire is gentle, smiling and fairly sympathetic, the Juvenalian on its part is biting, angry and bitterly contemptuous of corruption. Roland Paul, asserts that Horace's work is inhabited by fools whose folly are signified in that they bring punishment down upon their own heads. For that of Juvenal, he maintains, is inhabited by Knave and Crooks whose knavery consists in the damage they do to others (Obuh, 2007:3). Horatian satire chooses mild mockery and playful wit as a means to an end. He says: "Although I portray examples of foolery, I am not a prosecutor and I do not like to give pain, if I laugh at the nonsense I see about me, I am not motivated by malice" (New Encyclopedia Britannica vol. 23, 5th ed. 1985:182). Raman Selden writes approvingly in support of Horatian satire by saying: "Horace's satires are full of self revelations, self scrutiny and self irony. He does not pretend himself as a remote and self righteous preacher, but rather as a familiar and fallible". (Selden, 1978:16).

Abrams (1981:276) further explains that "In Juvenalian satire, the character of the speaker is that of a serious moralist who uses dignified and public style of utterance to decry modes of vice and error which are no less dangerous because they are ridiculous, and who undertake to evoke contempt, moral indignation and hatred at the aberration of humanity". While Horace's benign and undogmatic satire is founded upon a sense of achieved social order and personal satisfaction, one can suggest that Juvenal's indignant and authoritarian satire is based upon a sense of social disorder and personal dissatisfaction (Obuh, 2007:5). Meanwhile, indirect satire according to Abrams (1981:277) "is cast in some other literary form than that of direct address to the reader". Abrams explains that "The most common indirect form is that of a fictional narrative, in which the objects of the satire are characters who make themselves and their opinions ridiculous or obnoxious by what they think, say, and do, and are sometimes made even more ridiculous by the author's comments and narrative style" (277)

From the foregoing, it is therefore stating the obvious by describing satire as a social art just as satirists employ the art of laughter and humour to mock and ridicule human actions and societal ills in order to sanitize the society. Obuh (2007) lists some creative works from Europe and Africa both in prose, poetry and drama where the writers have employed satire as a weapon to ridicule and attack ideas and people's ways of life and society. In European literature for

example, Aristophanes' *The Birds*, Moliere's *The Misanthrope* (a play) Shaw's *Arms and the Man* (a play), Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tale*, (a collection of narrative poems) Jonathan Swifts *Gulliver's Travel* (a novel), are creative works which are satiric in tone and intention. In African literature, Ayikwei Armah's *The Beautiful Ones are not yet born* (prose), Mongo Betis' *The Poor Christ of Bemba* (prose), Fedinand Oyono's *The House Boy* (prose), Soyinka's *Trials of Brother Jero*, and *The Lion and the Jewel* (all plays), Rotimi's *Holdings Talks* (a play) are satiric in one form or another.

Moreover in contemporary Nigerian literature, Femi Osofisan is a renowned second generation playwright who is pragmatic in his use of art to express the prevailing social reality. The endemic corruption, political deficit and moral decay of Nigeria has baptized and committed Osofisan to righting the wrong and restoring the disorders of his country through the use of satiric elements. By attacking and mocking the Nigerian society, Osofisan certainly uses his artistic creation to bring about social change. In the current study, the use of these satiric elements especially in criticizing the followers is to be examined with the view of balancing the often lopsided criticism of Osofisan's plays which tilt towards the deficit of the ruling class while idealising the common people/ followers.

Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed related literatures to this study. It discusses previous works on the origin and concept of disillusionment, establishing links between it and prevailing social realities in contemporary Nigeria. Femi Osofisan's social vision, commitment to representation of the ordinary people, as well as his style of inverting and subverting models, are also well examined to foreground Osofisan's criticism of the followers and ordinary people which the analysis of the study justifies. The review goes further to examine the popular opinion that Osofisan is revolutionary-inclined in his plays and observes that such claim requires a rethink in view of scholarly works that place Osofisan on the fence. The entire review thus acknowledges prevailing works and at the same time identifies gaps which this thesis occupies in the corpus of African Literature. Therefore, this research work examines the followers and common people in Femi Osofisan's works to show how the masses have contributed to their own undoing. Osofisan thus through the selected plays has given a new and balanced portrait to the subject of disillusionment in African literature.

CHAPTER THREE

FOLLOWERSHIP AND POST-INDEPENDENCE DISILLUSIONMENT IN FEMI OSOFISAN'S DRAMA

This chapter explores the role of followership in post-independence disillusionment in Femi Osofisan's *Love's Unlike Lading*, *Fires Burn and Die Hard* and *Birthdays are not for Dying*. It is observed that Osofisan wants a rethink in African drama as against over-concentration on the notion that leadership is entirely Nigeria's and in extension Africa's problem. Osofisan's prognosis is optimistic that by this act, postcolonial Africa will be correctly mirrored while the less sensitive minds will not be erroneously misled to conclude that our backwardness is only orchestrated by the leaders and not a chain effort involving both the led and the lead (Osofisan, 2012; Agunbiade, 2015). By underscoring where the common people/ followers have gaffed, Osofisan faults the one-sided jeremiad fictional accounts of postcolonial Africa given by his predecessors and contemporaries. The chapter therefore discusses the philosophical and structural aspects of Osofisan's dramaturgy with specific exploration of Nigeria's backwardness necessitated by acts of the traders, working class, and business men and women. It also examines Osofisan's objective dramatisation of the plight of the masses in view of conflicting notion on his ideological leaning. The chapter therefore dwells on Robert Young's (2004) and Achilles Mbembe's (1992) position on meticulously rethinking postcolonial conditions by challenging conventional assumptions. An indepth examination of the actions and inactions of the followers and common people as analysed in the selected texts therefore foregrounds a paradigm shift in the understanding of post-independence disillusionment in Africa and precisely in Nigeria.

Followership as complicit in Post-independence disillusionment in Osofisan's *Fires burn and die hard*, *Love's unlike lading*, and *Birthdays are not for dying*

The notion that ordinary people and followers contribute to their own predicaments in contemporary African discourse as against popular opinion that leadership is Africa's problem, is not a strange phenomenon. As a matter of fact concerns of the people have been a motif in African literary discourse (Mbembe, 2001; Gimba, 2008; Oripeloye, 2009; Osundare, 2015). Similarly followership has become a prime concern of social sciences but it is a subject too vast and vital to the social scientists alone. Take for instance, Aluko (2010) delineates the characteristics of the masses who hide under the caption of common men but perpetrates even

more harm than the leaders. Similarly, Ogbonna, Ogundiwin and Uzuegbu-wilson (2012) berate apathy of followers in involving in the democratization process and advocate a curious, active, critical, interrogative and participatory followership as the harbinger of good governance. However, literature which seeks to finding solution to myriads of problems confronting the society by means of reflecting and refracting the society has stopped at nothing to examine these variegated human contradictions which from time memorial have constituted shackles in the emancipation of the people. Thus, for Africa, the quotidian realities and checkered experiences have become a common place in its literature. Moreover, being a reflection and refraction of social realities, African literature addresses various issues that have come up since colonialism till date. Once it was a tool for celebrating the heroic grandeur of the African past, later it was used for anti-colonial struggle but now it is being employed as a weapon for depicting the postcolonial disillusionment in African nations (Kehinde, 2005).

While leadership problem is key and dominant in academic effort at salvaging contemporary Africa and Nigeria from its backward nature some writers and critics have risen to contest this popular opinion (Gimba, 2008; Ademeso, 2009). This is so because it is argued that “it is difficult for a Nigerian writer or any postcolonial writer to either take a definite Kantian art-for-art’s-sake position or an inviolable ideological bent in a society which is in a permanent state of flux and ideological doldrums” (Kehinde, 2008). To therefore investigate the people which often have been idealised in academic enquiry is to invert an ideological trend in order to aptly unveil the true source and portrait of disillusionment in contemporary Nigeria. Osofisan and his selected plays stand tall in the present study as Osofisan—a restless researcher leaves no stone unturned in his quest to present the people/ followers, especially business people and the working class in how they have contributed to their own disillusionment, a situation which according to Gimba (2008) is nonetheless expected in leadership just as today’s followers are tomorrow’s leaders. The ordinary people therefore are not absolved from corruption and actions which have deepened the nation into a quagmire just as Odekunle’s (1991) classification of corruption lucidly highlights ordinary people and working class among its five major sub-divisions of corruption. Odekunle’s framework which summarizes the United Nation’s Organization’s typology of corruption has in the working class sub-division market women, artisan, messengers, account clerks, and the like.

Femi Osofisan's *Fires Burn and Die Hard*, *Birthdays are not for Dying* and *Love's Unlike Lading* translate this transmutation of blame game of leadership to the followers in an unusually eclectic manner to pragmatically evince that no one is left out but all is instrumental to the situation we find ourselves in present day Nigeria and in extension Africa.

In *Fires Burn and Die Hard*, Osofisan takes his examination to the market place to unravel inhumanity of man to man at the lowest divide of the society through a dire act of one woman which in effect the entire market women suffers for. The play opens with some of the over ten thousand market women in the house of the President of the market Women Association, Alhaja Olowoseun in preparation for the opening of the new market built by government in place of the old market set ablaze by unknown arsonist. This same Alhaja is however involved in trade in contraband goods; a secret trade which other market women like Temi the treasurer who hold Alhaja in high esteem are unaware of.

It will suffice to buttress at this juncture that community market is one of the indices of economic development in any given area (House-Midamba & Ekechi, 1995). Kiteme (1992) substantiates this view that "the last four decades of Kenya's exploding population growth have simultaneously witnessed economic revolution from (a solely agricultural subsistence economy to) the market towns and an extensive network of internal trade" (136). This trade according to Kiteme is dominated by the market women entrepreneurs who sell farm products and food commodities. By contrast in West Africa and Nigeria precisely the renowned female market trade has existed for more than two centuries (Robertson, 1976; Vlahos, 1972). As Clarke (1972) rightly observes during his visit to Yoruba-land in 1850's, the women folk were keenly involved in practically all forms of economic activities that were conducted in the emirate (Raji, Olumoh & Abejide, 2013). It is therefore relevant to state that Ilorin women obviously accounted for the massive economic growth witnessed by Ilorin Emirate during the 19th century and indeed up to the era of the British rule (Gavin, 1977). These trading activities were all conducted in the major market centres at Oja-Oba, Gambari market, Oja Gbooro, and other indigenous markets in pre-colonial Ilorin (Raji, Olumoh and Abejide, 2013).

The obvious therefore from the foregoing is that commercial engagement of rural market women and traders who constitute the masses are inextricably intertwined with the socio-economic activities and daily lives of the people just as trading has remained the main occupation of the

women folk in every part of contemporary Nigeria. As such the market women in Osofisan's *Fires Burn and Die Hard*, as Temi the treasurer will reveal not only supplement the food supply but also provide assistance and financial benefits for several community causes such as education of children, family clothing, improvement of family housing and direct and indirect payment of government taxes (*Fires burn...*, 87,91).

Denotatively, the foregoing gives a background to the havoc the razing of the market in *Fires burn and die hard* wreaks on market women and in extension the community and its economy. Alhaja's perpetration of this dastardly act is obviously a sheer act of wickedness borne out of her dealings in contraband goods. Though the identity of the goods are not revealed, it is known world over that contraband items are illegal and forbidden goods brought into a country which could be very dangerous while those who deal in such evade custom duty and taxes which if paid are part of funds meant for building infrastructures and other basic amenities. Further, Alhaja's involvement in contraband in addition to her known trade shows her unreflected, unbalanced, and unrestrained desire for "more" which Cates (1992) describes as the root of wickedness. Cates argues that this becomes problematic "when we want this "more" so badly that we become willing and able unjustifiably to diminish the good of anyone who stands in our way" (254). This exactly is what Osofisan shows in *Fires Burn and Die Hard* as Alhaja sets the entire market ablaze when his son Leke discovers she deals in contraband and runs to security agents to report. Alhaja explains thus:

ALHAJA: But Leke would not understand! Profit is a demanding creed. The morals of the market are quite rigid, but they are the same as the morals of the mosque or church! Leke arrived unexpectedly that day from school. The foolish girls he met in my stall allowed him to enter the hidden rooms of the back, and he saw the goods. That was it! When I turned he was furious shouting Conraband! Conraband! Conraband! But I didn't understand what his reputation which he started sobbing about had to do with it. I tried to calm him but he wouldn't stop...I had a lamp in my hand, there was no electricity that night and I was alone. I'd sent the girls away in anger...and suddenly the idea came to me. The lamp! Yes, the lamp! Set the place ablaze, before...Rapidly, I found a rag, dipped it in the oil and threw it into the stall...that's how it began. I went to watch from a distance. And then, I saw the fire catch into neighboring stalls. Then the explosions one after another. I began to run... (*Fires...*, 91-92)

This being the confessional statement of Alhaja after continued persuasion by chief Ogunye representing the Ifa priest, that the new market will not be opened the following day. The market women have earlier parked in their goods to the new market for it to be opened the following day but when Ifa is consulted, indications emerged that much havoc will be wreaked on the new market by the gods until the arsonist of the old market is fished out and the necessary rituals are carried out. According to Chief Ogunye:

One of you! One of your women was responsible for the destruction of the old market...ifa says it was a deliberate act...and Ifa warns strongly that this unknown woman will soil the new market unless she is first purged of her crime before moving in. she has offended the gods of the land, the gods of the market unless she confesses and the appropriate rites are conducted, she will carry a curse along with her which will destroy you all. For the gods are truly furious and determined to wreak vengeance tomorrow (*Fires...*, 79-80)

Despite all these, Alhaja refuses to own up. In a sympathetic but revealing manner, Osofisan shows how wicked human beings can be to themselves even at the lower part of the society as Alhaja feigns innocence. Alhaja however insists that Chief gives the details on why the market may not be opened the next day.

ALHAJA: Baba you are the worthy servant of Ifa...tell us what is happening at the palace? Why do our Chiefs want their wives at the market to perish in anguish? Baba, when the fire destroyed our goods in the other market, it was through the skin of our teeth that we managed to struggle through and survive. And what didn't we suffer every one of us. Months and months of untold privations! Of humiliations great and small. Of dodging shamefully from creditors! But we survived and do you know what sustained us through it all, what made us pull through? One thin flicker of hope, set alight by the Governor's promise that one day, tomorrow a brand new market will spring up... And now at last that dream has come true! We've been there baba! We've taken the keys of our stalls...most of us we have had to go and borrow money to equip our stalls again... The women, my poor women will laugh again...after the tears of those many months. Baba please! Please don't kill our joy... (76)

This act of pretence and ill attitude is what Akporobaro (2001) describes as the evil nature of man. Of course it is not only found among the leaders but also among the followers (masses) from which the leaders emerge. Osofisan's representation is no doubt a factual presentation of the quotidian realities of the Nigerian society where often public infrastructures are suddenly set ablaze. Attempts to cover up shady deals often resulted in the destruction of public buildings,

thereby making the generality of people suffer untold hardship. We have thus seen numerous fire incidents in Nigeria since 1970. Notable places like Independent National Electoral Commission, (INEC) offices, Nigerian Telecommunications (NITEL) buildings at Lagos, the Cocoa House, the Defense Headquarters and some ministries in different states of the federation have all been gutted by fire (Osifo, 2002). There have also been cases of markets set ablaze by perpetrators in the bid to loot the goods in such markets. In the case of public infrastructures set ablaze, many of these have been traced to officials who did such in the bid to cover up their wrong doings in the office.

Osofisan affirms in an interview that *Fires Burn and Die Hard* belongs to a detective series where he writes about all kinds of criminal things in the society which are still happening till date (Agunbiade, 2015). Osofisan buttresses his ideological viewpoint with the wanton scarcity in markets and how people fix unjust prices. Osofisan thus shows in *Fires Burn and Die Hard* that some of such hikes in prices are neither caused by market forces nor government authorities but they happen through unreflected actions of some traders as demonstrated by Alhaja. Osofisan explains that:

This is what traders do as they don't care about who suffer or doesn't. It is good for the individual trader but what of those who are buying. Generally that is what happens with traders as they try to create artificial scarcity where there is none. This is what I am revealing in the market. (Agunbiade, 2015:2)

When one logically links the dramatic slice of events in *Fires Burn and Die Hard* with recent happenings in the Nigerian economy, one would conclude that Osofisan is a literary prophet whose dramatic vision is relevant till date. The economic recession being witnessed in the country substantiates this as dollar exchange rate to a naira within the space of a year doubled. The impact of this is mostly felt by the ordinary man who has no option than to buy goods whose prices have correspondingly doubled while their take home or earnings continue to reduce and in the case of civil servants many remain unpaid for five to seven months. Shockingly, prices of locally produced goods which are hardly affected by rise in exchange rate of dollar have also snowballed to the extent that the price of palm oil rose in three folds in the Nigerian market. This got to the point in November/ December 2016 when kings in Ondo and Ekiti States (Nigeria) began to call for immediate slash in prices of commodities by traders as life becomes unbearable for the people. Ewi of Ado Ekiti and his Iyaloja with Deji of Akure were in the fore front of this,

(*Vanguard Newspaper*, Nov. 29, 2016 & *Daily Trust*, Dec. 15, 2016) while in Akure at the peak of the hardship after consultation with the traders, Oba Aladetoyinbo Aladelusi sent his task force to auction some commodities of traders who refuse to beat down prices of Food stuffs and palm oil at Isikan market. According to Oba Aladetoyinbo:

I wonder why a bag of rice will be sold for between N21,000 and N23,000, 20 litres of palm oil now sells for between N20,000 and N21,500, a rubber of Garri now sells for N200, when other communities sell same for N16,000, N10,000 and N100 respectively (*Daily Trust*, Dec. 15, 2016)

The act is said to have sequel the monarch's dialogue with the traders just as the commodities where cheaper in neighbouring communities. But as Osofisan asserts in an interview: "the traders don't care but only interested in crude application of the principle of making crude profit" (Quoted in Agunbiade, 2015:2). While this is likened to Alhaja's involvement in contraband in *Fires burn and die hard*, an act which negatively affects the economy; in the contemporary, the market women and traders thus by hiking the prices of commodities are undoing themselves and deepening the poverty level among themselves as the ordinary man finds it difficult to put food on his or her table or think right. This is a situation which in effect may lead to crime and other social evils as a way to solve their immediate problem. This corresponds to the negative effect of burning down a whole market where economic activities take place. Osofisan reveals this pathetic experience in *Fires Burn and Die Hard* through Temi the treasurer of the Market Women Association. Temi recounts that "when the other market burnt down, it was as if life just ended for most of us, until we saw the new market begin to spring up, brick by brick" (*Fires...*,85). Even Alhaja in pretense reveals what the other market women go through:

ALHAJA: When the fire destroyed our goods in the other market, it was through the skin of a teeth that we managed to struggle through and survive! And what didn't we suffer, everyone of us months and months of untold privations of dodging shamefully from creditors (*Fires...*, 75-76)

As earlier fore-grounded, one of the indices of development in any given area or location no matter how small, either town or village is the location of a market where people come to buy and sell either on daily basis or on specific dates. Similarly in mapping of most cities, the market remains one of the most obvious just as other locations are described in relation to the market. Hence, market is an institution that indicates development in a certain area. Therefore ruining,

this age-old revered institution is a de-development which a whole lot of people like Alhaja have perpetrated. Alhaja's act is also represented as a metaphor to some untowards acts of the working class which have led to the total collapse of their working place as seen in the destruction of some edifice in the bid to cover up some secrets especially in the civil service. The most prominent in Nigeria is the Independent National Electoral Commission, INEC, often gutted with fire in order to sabotage any act of getting through in verifying election results. This same people and their children eventually suffer the corresponding effect of their ill acts when eventually an unqualified or someone who is not the people's choice is illegally declared winner in a rigged election. The discourse of post-independence disillusionment therefore can no longer remain unscathed or intact as it is that leadership is the problem of Africa. This is what Osofisan has shown that pockets of ills also by the people (followers) and in this context traders and metaphorically some workers have tainted them as contributing immensely to their own undoing and at the same time backwardness of the Nigerian society.

Osofisan however takes a step further in *Birthdays are not for dying* to unravel sheer wickedness among business men. This time the playwright dabbles into the intricacies of corruption and treachery in a group of business men in a way that substantiates Adegbulu's (2010:12) position that "every socio-economic category (not minding the class of those involved) is adequately represented in the business of corruption." Osofisan therefore takes a look at the moral vacuousness of individuals in business, as well as the unabashed attempt in some quarters to justify corruption as a common social practice, from a vantage point of perpetrators and accomplices (Osofisan, 1990). Unlike Alhaja in *Fires burn and die hard*, who unleashes havoc on fellow market women, Kunle Aremo in *Birthdays are not for dying* is a raging protagonist who on a cleansing mission to his family's company is pitched against a cartel of filthy men. He is put into a difficult psychological circumstance and disillusioned by the sterling discovery of massive corruption in the company. Osofisan through Kunle's mission therefore unveils the different complexions of corruption perpetrated by business men and women in their various dealings. Paradoxically, Kunle's problem is to begin the day he clocks thirty as indicated in his father Gbadegesin's Will that he is to take over the chairmanship of his father's company at age thirty. His mother also warns him against the decision as he clocks that age noting that his father's associate will kill him as they killed his father the moment they know his intension:

MOTHER: You were only the son of the company chairman. You were heir apparent, but as long as you were not of age, and you were not on the board, you posed no threat to them. They could fondle you and play with you as they played with toys. But I have known these men all my life. I was there when your father was putting the company together. You are simply no match for them. For as soon as they learn of your decision tonight, everything will change. They'll come out in their full colours, loathsome and vile. And they'll get you. (*Birthdays...*, 9)

Osofisan as his usual trend in many of his didactic plays deploys the theme of treachery in *Birthdays are not for dying*. This betrayal of trust and allegiance obviously has become a source of concern in contemporary Nigeria. The story is still fresh of two childhood friends (Ifedayo and Damilola) who went all the way from Owo, Ondo state to Lagos in 2009 to buy a vehicle but on their way back Damilola Olusolade (a civil servant with Radio Nigeria) who accompanied his friend and has also taken some rebate from the motor dealers, on their way back strangled Ifedayo the owner of the vehicle and took ownership of the vehicle (*Vanguard Newspaper*, Oct.10, 2010). This same betrayal of trust could be inferred from the murder of former Vice Chancellor of Federal University of Technology, Akure FUTA, Professor Albert Ilemobade by his domestic workers; gateman and ex-driver in Akure, Ondo State on 22nd June, 2015. The duo connived to kill the former Vice Chancellor who hired them in an attempt to steal his SUV jeep. They succeeded but were eventually intercepted by the police.

This commitment has become a repeated theme in Osofisan's plays as seen in *Once upon four robbers* where robbers even betray themselves as Major betrays his gang by taking possession of the money they collectively looted. The same is the story in *Birthdays are not for Dying* where Gbadegesin (the father of Kunle) is killed by his best and trusted friends who betrays him (37). This act however does not go without its attending negative effect as Osofisan's social vision proposes retribution and nemesis for treacherous characters. In *Birthdays are not for Dying*, the five other members of the company: Chief Samuel Seminiyi, Major Peter Ajala, Counsellor Lekan Bamgbade, Honourable Fakunle and Alhaji Nassir Kofoworola killed Gbadegesin, the father of Kunle in the bid to take over the company. They did not stop at this but are also after the life of Kunle if he insists on becoming the chairman of the company. But Kunle a lonely crusader insists on doing as his father has written in his Will, more so to clean up the company. On the pay back date which happens to be Kunle's thirtieth birthday, the old men all pretend to

celebrate with him by presenting their gifts. However, the moment Kunle announces himself as the company's chairman, the bestial cord in them breaks out as Osofisan subtly appropriates the ensuing scenes to reveal the different ill-actions and inactions of business men and women. Osofisan's deployment of the post-structuralist thrust in this piece is essentially an unusual way to deconstruct the over flogged postcolonial strand of argument that leadership is the problem of Africa. He thus wittingly pinpoints where the people have goofed in their little but significant everyday life. First is Honourable who challenges Kunle to relinquish his new position saying "Your father made a stupid blunder by willing his position to a dumbclot like you, the least damage you could do is let us buy off those shares from you...what rubbish!" (34). Without hesitation, Kunle announces Honourable's dismissal from the company stating that:

KUNLE: For a week now I've been studying the company's accounts. The accountant, the lawyer, I must say have been most helpful. They helped me discover quite a number of things. As you know my father was illiterate. He let a number of things pass, he never did bother with statistics. But I do. And I have found out how you, Honourable, have made it out so cleverly, that the soap company which is our subsidiary, pays you alone a sum of five thousand naira every week. Not directly, of course. We pay it to one Odedare Enterprises. And Odedare Enterprises is registered in the name of one person I assume I don't have to disclose? (*Birthdays...*, 36)

To show how pathetic this surreptitious act of stealing from a friend's company is, Honourable's reaction does not carry any air of remorse; instead it shows how ingrained this habit is among individuals in business:

HONOURABLE: Fraud! Fraud! What is fraud, tell me! Is it what everybody does or not? Every bloody rich man in this country got his wealth by what you call fraud! And you know it! So what have I done wrong? (*Birthdays...*, 36)

As action rises, kunle reveals the predatory instinct in Alhaji, another business associate of his father. He describes him as "a completely heartless rogue who could plunder a friend without compunction" (38). His own penalty is a public disgrace in the newspapers and later in the television. Alhaji's reaction to this is an attack with a magical ring on Kunle's chest. This marks the beginning of Kunle's death on his birthday which supposed to be a day of joy.

For Chief who is another prominent member of the company, Osofisan reveals one of the oddities that transpire between business men and women which is intentionally allowing their children to marry each other in the bid to cement their friendship for profit purposes. This is the

story of Kunle whose father contracted his marriage with Bose the daughter of Chief. However, before marriage, Bose has an affair with another boyfriend on a trip to London. She gets pregnant but this is concealed by both parents all in the name of their business but unknown to them Kunle knows that Segun is not his biological son but keeps mum and waits till he clocks thirty to free himself. This unholy contract thus backfires as Kunle later rejects Segun as his son. Chief however is the most unscrupulous among the members. His offence includes “associating openly with a political party which is in gross contravention of company’s regulations” (41). The penalty of this is instant dismissal. But a more grievous offense of Chief is the building of a shop for his mistress—Madam Feyisope and continued payment for her medical bills in Switzerland from company’s account (42). Chief, obviously, like many do today is set to milk the company dry based on the relationship that exists between the two families. Another trait Osofisan identifies in this pool of disillusionment is insubordination and brazen insolence. This is perpetrated by Major who wants by all means the new chairman to relinquish authority as seen in most business engagement today where partners are killed for the other to inherit the entire business. Osofisan portrays this as Major cajoles Kunle to sell out his share in the company:

Listen I know that you are intelligent and all that, but you know nothing about how we operate. I mean you are only a baby. You don’t expect us to take orders from you. (*Birthdays...*, 26)

This obviously lays claim to why we hardly see people pool funds together for businesses in this part of the world compared to the West where there is more socio-economic development because of the sanctity of trust. This lack of trust can be traced to the increasing rate of unemployment as two or more people cannot trust themselves with the little they have to put forward a business, hence the blame again goes to the government for not providing jobs which when provided cannot even go round. Osofisan therefore structures an inversion in his dramaturgy, a situation that calls for a rearrangement and a rethink by the African man in order for his country to move forward. As a restless researcher, Osofisan as seen in these plays is subjecting many claims on our backwardness to examination especially the wanton blame-game on leaders whereas in the immediate domain of individuals we have failed and witch-hunted ourselves just as Kunle in this murder mystery is killed.

Away from the perpetrators, Osofisan further unveils another aspect of disillusionment among the followers in *Birthdays are not for dying* which is the role of an accomplice. Here, Osofisan

presents those in whose presence various atrocities are carried out without them making any pragmatic attempt to stop such perpetrators. He has however shown through this matrix that both the perpetrator and the accomplice are culpable. As such all those who witness harm to fellow common man without doing anything to stop or track such are as well guilty of such offence. This is where Councillor belongs in *Birthdays are not for dying*. He seems to be the only glimmer of hope for Kunle in the prevailing tense atmosphere as he is discovered to be the only clean man in a cartel of filthy men. Kunle thus wishes to partner Councillor in rebuilding the crumbled company:

But you alone, Councillor, your hands are clean. We combed through all the records. Not a single blemish against your name, in all of your fifteen years in the place. (*Birthdays...*,45)

As event unfolds Kunle however discovers that Councillor in spite of his seeming uprightness is worst among the other four men. He is not himself corrupt but lacks the moral courage to challenge the corrupt. This is in consonance with Mbembe (1992) where he cautions African critics “to watch out for the myriad of ways in which ordinary people guide, deceive, and actually toy with power instead of confronting it” (25). Kunle remarks thus:

You are just no better than them. Your hands are clean, you don't steal money yourself, but you'll do nothing to stop those who dip their fingers in the wallet behind everybody's back. You're an accomplice, sir, as guilty as the rest. With people like you, nothing will ever change. You're born to fold your arms behind your back and close your eyes and connive at crime. (*Birthdays...*, 47)

Subsequent scene confirms Kunle's position on councilor as the worst of the men just as he launches a fatal attack on Kunle with a magical weapon, same object he intends as Kunle's birthday gift. Councilor is thus a diabolical character more dangerous than a known enemy. Kunle's adulterous wife who should have rescued her husband at such crucial moment however perfects his death by poisoning him after suffering from the effect of Councilors mysterious attack. Kunle dies and at the same time the company ceases to exist as all members are legally dismissed. The men therefore contribute to their undoing (disillusionment) just as the commercial hub is ruined, Kunle's bright future is untimely dashed and the society's local economy drops. One will therefore wonder in the prevailing situation if the claim that Africa is the mother of altruistic behaviour and personality according to Sofola (1973) is not questionable. Where are the “altruistic men rich in humanity, sociality and unpolluted morality?” (Sofola

1973:xiv). Now “everyone plunders whether from friends or strangers or the government!...The winner takes the loot; the loser goes to the gutter or into the asylum” (*Birthdays...*, 38). How then will this kind of system produce transformative leaders? That is why Edward Said in *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) maintains that “blaming the Europeans sweepingly for the misfortunes of the present is not much of an alternative but what we need to do is to look at the matters as a network of interdependent histories that it would be inaccurate and senseless to repress, useless and interesting to understand” (19). Hence, it is not enough for the African artist standing aloof, to analyse society and underscore its weaknesses. He must try to go beyond this to seek out the sources, the causes and the trends (Ngugi, 1969).

In the continued search for the source, cause and trend of this disillusionment, Osofisan throws another swipe at the growing business of usury in *Loves unlike lading*. With allusion to biblical stand point, Osofisan wittingly condemns the act of usury which is lending of money at exorbitant rates of interest to individuals for business. The playwright sees this as the cause of many failed businesses and suicidal acts whereas the lenders live large over the collateral and ceased items of the debtors who often default when they are to pay back such loans and the accumulated interest. The story line presents Alhaji Fowosanu, a business man and Bassey a usurer. The conflict begins on a background of the abduction of Tariboh, an ardent man and change crusader who ventures into politics because of the feeble majority where he belongs. But his vision is met with disappointment as he is kidnapped and needs a huge amount as ransom. Basiru, Alhaji Fowosanu’s brother who happens to be Tariboh’s friend approaches his brother for money to get Tariboh released but was shocked as Fowosanu says his account has been frozen. Fowosanu however suggested rescuing the situation by visiting the usurers, (known as Sogundogoji in Yorubaland, that is, double interest loan providers, *Love’s...*30) who he hates with passion, for loan pending the time his account will be unfrozen or his goods on sea will arrive. Unfortunately his son Lassy leads them to Bassey who also has been waiting for such a day to rubbish Fowosanu for his hatred for the business of usury. Osofisan describes how kind hearted Fowosanu is as his name connotes: “One that helps others with his money,” when Basiru reminds him how he has always railed against usurers for the kind of interests they extort:

FOWOSANU: I know. But I can’t let that splendid young man down now, can I? Or his poor wife in there! Not if I can help it. So I’ll take the risk. Here, this is my card. Call Lassy to take you and

Boma to the Kariola market to look for one of these money lenders, and when you get there, call me. We must get your friend out today! (*Love's...*, 31)

Fowosanu is thus quintessential of a Good Samaritan as recorded in the bible (Luke 10:30-36) just as he is selfless and willing to alleviate the plight of fellow human being. Osofisan no doubt puts forward the character of Fowosanu to challenge the contemporary Africans who are warped in greediness and selfish attitudes rather than interested in the well being of their neighbor and in extension development of their immediate society. Bassey the usurer agrees to lend Fowosanu the money but not without some questions to boost his ego of having the like of Fowosanu who has criticised his business coming to his rescue. In his words: “we both remember what you have said about us and our kind of trade on many occasions. So why have you suddenly changed your mind?” (*Love's...*,33). Buttressing the authorial standpoint, Fowosanu retorts:

You know I can never change my mind. This trade you practice is wicked. No God-fearing man should make his living by exploiting the misfortune of others the way you do...I've never lent out money using the guise of friendship and trust to make people sign all sorts of dubious contracts. Knowing all the time that it is all just a sordid trick to bring ruin on them in the end...you make people commit themselves to bonds which seem totally harmless. But just let the repayment be late for a day, even an hour, and you pounce on the hapless debtor and seize all his property! Everything he has spent his whole life putting together, without compassion! Ah, I tell you, your greed and your heartlessness, you usurers, will take you to hell! (*Love's...*,33-34)

Though Bassey gives reasons behind the high-handedness of usurers which include risking their money to people who don't have collateral, who may disappear abruptly from their rented apartment without leaving any address behind and people who suddenly remember they have other debts to settle, wife to feed, children fees to pay when they get the money without considering paying back (*Love's...*, 34). Fowosanu however insists those reasons are not enough to warrant such burden and that it is a sin to live by usury for which God will surely punish them (34). Although Osofisan (born into a Christian family) is no longer a practicing Christian, however the influence of Christianity on his works is quite apparent as they bear biblical references just as seen in the current play (Awodiya, 1993:75). A look at the following verses of the Bible substantiates this in *Love's unlike lading*:

And if thy brother be waxen poor, and fallen in decay with thee; then thou shalt relieve him: [yea, though he be] a stranger, or a sojourner; that he may live with thee. Take thou no **usury** of him, or increase: but fear thy God; that thy brother may live with thee. Thou shalt not give him thy money upon **usury**, nor lend him thy victuals for increase. **Leviticus 25:35-37.(KJV)**

If thou lend money to [any of] my people [that is] poor by thee, thou shalt not be to him as an **usurer**, neither shalt thou lay upon him **usury**. **Exodus 22:25 (KJV)**

[He that] putteth not out his money to **usury**, nor taketh reward against the innocent. He that doeth these [things] shall never be moved. **Psalms 15:5 (KJV)**

An intensive look at these verses reveals the source of an unwavering theme in the plays of Osofisan which is his constant message of compassion and mercy to fellow human beings. The same is enunciated in *Love's unlike lading*. Fowosanu eventually falls prey of Bassey as he fails to return the money on the stipulated date. The consequence is ominous while only an act of compassion from Bassey could save the situation; Bassey however declines mercy insisting on allowing the law to take its due course. Fowosanu has earlier given as surety his family house at Ebute-Meta, Lagos as requested by Bassey as the only property he is willing to take if he defaults and the implication by custom is that no one gives out his ancestral home and lives (*Love's...*, 36-37). Logically, Fowosanu is to die as event unfolds. The money however is sorted out and even doubled thereafter but Bassey insists on taking over Fowosanu's ancestral home all because the money is not brought at the due date. It is at this point that Osofisan begins to reveal the agonizing and heart-rending experience some people undergo in the hand of usurers like Bassey. He thus shows how some poor and ordinary people never want other people in their shoes to progress while also wanting to bring down those who have attained higher status in their society.

Osofisan is mindful and at the same time vociferous at reflecting this quirk as the real contemporary disillusionment as against popular opinion on leadership deficit as our national albatross. This is bolstered especially with his choice of characters which are from the lower divide of the society and whose actions are not motivated by the ill actions of their leaders. Osofisan therefore presents an alternative engagement paradigm in the discourse of disillusionment as this trend of reversing the binary in a philosophical blame game setting where the people and the led are made to see the part they play in their disillusionment are sumptuous

in Osofisan's plays. As the play enters a climax, Osofisan further anatomises the mind of the average man who is warped with greed and selfish acts to show how dangerous such can be. This is revealed as Bassey drags his debtor to the customary court to invoke the wrath of the law. Fowosanu after many pleas upon which Bassey refuses to budge however reveals the deep rooted reason why Bassey wants him dead:

FOWOSANU: it's my life he wants, and I know why. On many occasions in the past, people to whom he lent money would run to me for help, when they could not pay back on time. And I would give them money to bail themselves out and stop him from seizing their property. That's why he hates me. (74)

Osofisan's examination of this trend is apposite with contemporary developments as according to Ademeso (2009), Osofisan "strongly believes that the oppressed exhibits the trait of 'dog eats dog' because they do not fight for true causes but selfish needs" (60). Ademeso (2009) further avers that "what some oppressed people try to avoid is the immediate pain afflicted on them by their oppressors, they too want to oppress the people below them" (60). Bassey is quintessential of this. In his case, he aspires to be in position of affluence so that he can control the lives of the people below him. Osofisan buttresses this act of wickedness through his dramatic persona in a heated conversation with Bassey:

FOWOSANU: Yes, I confess I loathe people like you, but you know it's not because you are poor as you claim, or because of where you come from! It is rather because you make your poverty an excuse to rip off other poor people and ruin their lives without compunction. Only evil people will choose to live that way. Go on, do your worst! I am ready to hand the house over to you and face the consequence! (*Love's...*, 86)

Bassey has earlier confirmed this wickedness in a conversation with his daughter Tumini who is now in a love relationship with Fowosanu's son, Lassy. Bassey reminds Tumini of how Fowosanu has on many occasions bail out his debtors tending towards destroying his trade of usury and as well sending him on hunger strike (*Love's...*, 57). While Fowosanu helps Bassey's debtors when they run to him by lending them without interest to pay off their debt and more so to alleviate the plight of the common man, Bassey does not care and of course takes delight in ruining fellow common man as he confiscates their property when they are late in paying back their loans. Bassey thus leaves them worst than they are when they approach him in the first

instance. He is thus quintessential of the people who exhibit the ‘dog eats dog’ syndrome, those who takes joy in the fall of other common men more so that it raises their social status or brings in money to their pocket. Bassey further boasts over a kind man’s good gesture that in the open court, before everybody, Fowosanu is going to grovel and crawl and beg for mercy:

BASSEY: He’ll weep blood! And then, in my magnanimity, I’ll let him go—provided I am in a good mood of course! Otherwise he’ll lose his family’s ancestral home and end in total disgrace. (63)

However, at the court, a dramatic twist of event suddenly brings justice to the favour of Fowosanu. Like Shylock in *Merchant of Venice*, a very dramatic and comical customary court setting turns out to place Bassey in a dilemma. To establish that love for one another rules the world while mercy and compassion is a must for all to overcome human contradictions, Bassey is made to regret his arrogance. Apena who is the customary court Judge has earlier been hinted by Boma, the wife of Tariboh that the contract does not include the land. Bassey therefore is only entitled to the house. So he is reminded at the point where Fowosanu is to sign a document to cede the house to Bassey. Apena intones:

Sorry, I was going to forget. Now, Mr Bassey, there is something here, which this clever young woman brought to my attention. The agreement, as it states, gives you full rights over the house...But not over the land, does it? (87)

Bassey becomes confused but soon begins to think of other means to have his way. His other option which is to forfeit the house and collect his earlier rejected money even without interest backfires as he is told such act is equivalent to committing perjury based on the oath he has sworn. As Bassey considers his last option to let go and give up everything, he is further deepened in a quagmire as Tosan, the defendants lawyer challenges him thus:

TOSAN: Only if the court forgives you, sir. For there is another thing! You have cleverly violated another existing law in Lagos, which says that if anybody, either directly, or indirectly, attempts to take the life of any other citizen, the intended victim will be entitled to seize one half his property; while the remaining half will be forfeited to the state. You are now accused of being guilty of this crime—it was a wicked plot against the very life of the defendant. I’ll advise you therefore to beg now for mercy of the Apena, for it’s the only thing that can save you now (89)

Though Bassey prefers to die than to beg, Apena the customary judge however intervenes by pardoning Bassey on one condition, which is to allow his (Bassey's) daughter to marry the boy she loves (90). Tumini and Lassy are both daughter and son of Bassey and Fowosanu who Bassey will never allow marrying but he rescinds at Apena's proposal more so at Fowosanu's plea that Bassey should forget the past and let the marriage take place. "Let it unite our families" (*Love's...*, 90), he says. Fowosanu adds "I believe we have both learnt our lessons from this unfortunate incident. I have been wrong in the way I treated you. But these children, I see, will end the rift. Here, this is my hand. Please give these children your blessings" (*Love's...*, 90). The legal outfit which is to prosecute thus becomes a marriage registry for connubial blessings as Tumini marries Lassy while Tosan marries Basiru, Fowosanu's brother. Love and compassion thus settles the contradictions as indicated in the lyrics that opens the play:

I've brought you a story
 Some strange matrimonies
 And hot acrimonies:
 But Love has a way
 Always wins the day
 Oh there'll be such fun today

Love is unlike lading
 Which one wins from trading
 Nor is it like bidding
 On the stock exchange
 For foreign exchange
 Your heart's what you give away! (6)

Very significant in Osofisan's revelation through *Love's Unlike Lading* is the rift among the common people, the followers and the masses which makes them unable to team up to demand their right from their leaders. The lack of love, unity and proliferation of wickedness can therefore be described as the bane of disillusionment among the people. Ademeso (2009) establishes this by asking that: "how can collective force work when there are people with selfish motives outnumbering the few committed ones?" (60). The likes of Bassey who is preoccupied with milking dry other poor people, Alhaja in *Fires burn and die hard* who after razing the market sympathises with other market women and the board members in *Birthdays are not for dying* who killed both the chairman and his son are epitomes of common men and women in business and the civil service who will stop at nothing in pointing accusing fingers at the leaders

as the cause of Nigeria's backwardness and suffering of the masses. Meanwhile, they perpetuate more havoc in their own sphere of influence.

Actually, the domestic strain in the three plays is merely a statement that traders, working class, business men and women which occupy the economic hub of the society have also been submerged in the cesspit of corruption just as seen among the rulers but Osofisan is quick to show that these untoward attitudes are not motivated by the leaders as many are forced to believe but carried out by the people themselves and more so to their own disenchantment. The philosophical strain of the plays with the characters of Alhaja in *Fires burn and die hard*, Bassey in *Love's unlike lading* and board members in *Birthdays are not for dying* have also shown that everyone is in one position of leadership or the other. Logically a failure in this little responsibility equals to a failure in a state or national responsibility. Hence, we all carry with us in the words of Gimba (2008:135) "deficiency syndromes." It is just that the leaders appear to suffer from a larger number of symptoms and in different complexions because their own deficiency syndrome has reached a much higher stage than the traders, business men and women, civil servants etc which are the followers. That is why Gimba (2008) submits that "we want our leadership to emerge with a star-like brightness of decency, while yet the followership is moving towards becoming an insatiable cauldron of a self-centred black-hole" (20). He adds that "many of us have acquired the reprehensible character that it has now become dominant, contagious and almost endemic as a culture defying age, gender, ethnic group and social as well as economic divides" (Gimba, 2008:20) as we see in the characters of Alhaja in *Fires burn and die hard*, Bassey in *Love's unlike lading* and, Alhaji, Chief, Major, Councillor and Honourable in *Birthdays are not for dying*. This exactly is what Osofisan deploys in the three plays and have been identified as a unique contribution of the plays to the subject of disillusionment in African literature. Osofisan's literary dexterity is however most glaring as Alhaja and Bassey in *Fires Burn and die hard* and *Love's unlike lading* are both gender and demographic figures through whom perpetuation of economic woes on fellow ordinary men and women are visibly shown.

It should be stressed that the contemporary African playwright is preoccupied with an unrelenting passion for socio-political re-engineering. This becomes particularly imperative in view of the disappointments of the ruling class, following independence and now the disenchantments emanating among the ruled. Osofisan as a restless researcher is both

philosophically and aesthetically involved in this. Osofisan therefore is not blind to the deficiency of postcolonial theory in its conception of disillusionment in the African space as he plays x-ray the grounds of the possibility of the theory as seen in the plays under examination. Osofisan hence in this matrix, to use the much quoted Derridian phrase “reads backward from what seems natural, obvious, self-evident, or universal, in order to show that these things have their history, their reasons for being that way they are...and that the starting point is not a (natural) given but a (cultural) construct usually blind to itself” (Derrida 1981: xv). Fashina (2009) substantiates this when he submits that “the Marxist dogma about social conflict seem to blind the early postcolonial critic from the reality of the more meaningful ‘intrinsic’ theories of textual interpretation.” (76).

Osofisan therefore, after many years of reflecting and refracting the situations of his society in a dramatic mode, has re-assessed the society in the prevailing plays and has come out with what Derrida describes as the deconstruction of the validity of the common sense perception of the obvious (Derrida 1981: xv). Common sense in this wise is the wanton attribution of our problem to the leaders. The result of this is that the idea of disillusionment in African literature cannot remain intact and unscathed, hence the need to philosophically account for conscious and unwitting actions of the people (Traders, business men and women, civil servants, etc.) to themselves and the nation that have aided their dilemma. One may therefore infer from the foregoing that in projecting the selfishness, wickedness, greediness, treachery, lack of compassion and corruption of the business class and working class in postcolonial setting like Nigeria, Osofisan has challenged the one-sided jeremiad fictional account of postcolonial Africa where leadership is wantonly held culpable of the backwardness of African nations.

Followership and disillusionment as explored in *Fires burn and die hard*, *Love's unlike lading* and *Birthdays are not for dying* through the deconstructive process thus becomes a post-independence engagement paradigm for examining postcolonial conditions. This paradigm shift from seemingly unending scholarly debate on leadership (as though such would bring good governance that has eluded the most populous black nation in the world) to critical examination of actions and inactions of the people obviously seems to be capable of repositioning African drama and in extension African literature for a better representation of the African society. It is therefore contended that the empathy generated through this new vista on disillusionment is a

unique contribution of the plays to the discourse of post-independence disillusionment in Nigeria and in Africa.

Political Apathy and docility as the undoing of the common man in Osofisan's *Love's unlike Lading and Birthdays are not for Dying*

Politics is too important to be left to politicians...government is prone to crime and a government devoid of citizen's control is a potential criminal—(Ayoade, 2010:56,5)

A whole lot of works have been replicated to arrive at the same conclusion that leadership has perpetually failed Nigerians as leadership in Nigeria is attributed for being corrupt, self-serving, politically personalizing, policy illiterate, and mostly clueless about how to provide political good (Ogbonna, Ogundiwin and Uzuegbu-Wilson, 2012). However, the general citizenry who these scholars and works strive to emancipate are disenchanted and present a strong feeling for political resentment demonstrated through political docility and apathy (Awude, 2017; Ogbonna et al, 2012:68). Yakubu (2012) instantiates this in an examination of democracy and political apathy in Nigeria between 1999 and 2011 and concludes that political apathy manifested itself in Nigeria during the period in “decline to register, the refusal to vote, failure to protest against rigging and failure to assist security agencies with useful information”(1). Similarly, Awude (2017) contends that apathy towards politics and leadership and entrusting the leadership of the nation into the hands of miscreants while praying for a better nation is like “eating a deadly food and praying to God for healing” noting that “there are some things we can better control with our involvement rather than with our prayers.”(30). This is another complexion of disillusionment which the current study has identified. If leadership and politics are therefore really deficient as enunciated by many scholars (Achebe, 1984; Ayoade, 2010; Ogbonna, Ogundiwin and Uzuegbu-wilson, 2012), it obviously cannot be abandoned to correct itself as this will remain unrealistic. This is why Young (2001) suggests a different framework for thinking about emerging postcolonial conditions, one which is capable of creating an affiliative community of interpretations, interventions and challenge conventional positions which are monolithic in nature. It is with this view that the discourse of disillusionment and politics is engaged in the selected texts.

Osofisan in *Love's Unlike Lading and Birthdays are not for Dying* examines these all inclusive and very important subjects of Politics, Leadership and followership to especially unravel the

deep rooted cause of this disillusionment. Osofisan in this exploration identifies apathy to politics and docility on the part of the ordinary man/ follower as part of his undoing. Basiru and Boma are quintessential of this oddity in *Love's Unlike Lading*. Basiru who is apolitical is the best friend of the crusader and gubernatorial candidate, Tariboh; while Boma, Tariboh's wife is also disenchanted with anything politics but both are always quick to complain and blame the leaders. Tariboh despite all odds dabbles into politics, risking his life because of those he describes as "feeble majority...other animals in the forest...those who don't want to be eaten by wolves, who just want to live a decent life" (23). Basiru and Boma however decisively abandon Tariboh because of the interest he has in politics. Osofisan in this sordid but realistic slice of the contemporary African society shows how those capable of transforming the society shirk their responsibility and at the same time discourage the courageous. This is buttressed in the conversation between Tariboh and Basiru when the former challenges the latter to drop his misconceptions about politics noting that though it involves risks but it is for the feeble majority and the good of the society (23). Basiru declines saying:

BASIRU: As for me, you will never persuade me to take any interest in politics. I've given up. I've come to the conclusion that nothing's going to change, at least not in our life-time! So I'm just going to enjoy what is left of it. (23)

Basiru further maintains that all he wants is to live his entire life without complications. Tariboh however is quick to ask him some rhetorical questions that:

Do you really believe that this is enjoyment? With all this poverty around us? The streets unsafe, the roads like death traps, our hospitals no better than mortuaries? Or the light never working...Everything upside down, as Fela said? (23-24)

Tariboh thus enjoins Basiru to forget about the complications and make up his mind to contribute meaningfully to the society. He contends that joining politics is imperative of him because "the government that should protect all of us is incompetent, corrupt and vicious and that those of us that should get involved and try to make a difference run away from complications" (25). Tariboh in this context is prophetic as Basiru eventually becomes the one to bear the complications he detests, the moment Tariboh is kidnapped. Basiru obviously did not enjoy his life all through the play as planned as he is in the forefront of getting money to pay the ransom requested by the kidnappers. He takes most of the insults reeled out by Basse the usurer on his brother Fowosanu in the quest to get the ransom paid, runs all the errand, and bears the headache

of dialoging with the kidnapers. Boma on her part abandons her husband—Tariboh—in Port-Harcourt and runs down to Lagos because of the commitments involved in Tariboh’s gubernatorial ambition. On arrival to Lagos she complains to her friend Tosan that:

I was just tired of Port Harcourt, especially of my husband and his endless money problem...So I decided to run away here to Lagos to catch some fun...All I want is a husband. Not a public figure who belongs to everybody. But it’s like a rage inside Tariboh. He’s the proverbial angry young man, burning to change the world. (7)

Boma ordinarily as her friend—Tosan—feels should be thinking of how to become a future First Lady of the state house (a position she eventually assumes as Tariboh wins the election) but she is not, owing to the present challenge and risk involved in the political process. Osofisan through the twists in the play shows that Boma should be the number one supporter of her husband Tariboh in his bid to becoming the governor of his state, but she is not there for him preferring jamboree to matters of utmost importance. Like Basiru, she also suffers for it as she cannot continue to enjoy her holiday the moment she hears of Tariboh’s abduction. The following lines capture her mood while in company of Basiru to plead for money from Fowosanu for Tariboh’s ransom:

BOMA: [*Throwing herself at his feet*]. Sir, please, in the name of God! Please help me! I cant just imagine my husband in the hands of these criminals! What he must be going through! I must get him back as soon as possible! A loan sir! Any interest at all! We’ll pay back, I swear! Anything you can do to save my poor Tariboh, please...[*Breaks down sobbing.*] (*Love’s...*,27)

As a trained lawyer, Boma also has to visit the customary court Judge, Apena, ahead of the court case between Fowosanu and Bassey (borne out of the debt incurred by Fowosanu for the release of her husband, Tariboh) to plead on behalf of Fowosanu in such a way that the interpretation of Bassey’s contract only means he can claim the house and not the Fowosanu’s ancestral land (*Love’s...*,87). Osofisan’s portrayal of the apathy of the duo of Basiru and Boma is apposite in that at the end they both regret their attitude as Tariboh wins the election. Osofisan’s swipe at those who detest politics but go about complaining about the process is evident in Tosan’s response to Basiru that: “Tariboh will no longer take advice from people like you who complain and complain about the sorry state of things but who will never do anything about it. Perhaps, because you are too scared to get involved.” (*Love’s...*,47-48)

Worried by how the people have shortchanged themselves in the political process, the General Overseer of one of the leading churches in Nigeria—Redeemed Christian Church of God, Pastor Enoch Adeboye—on January 6th, 2017 challenged all his members to as a matter of urgency become card carrying members of one political party or the other. In his annual charge to his pastors, he submits:

When you get home, tell members to join a political party. Join a party and become a card-carrying member of any party. Just join any party. We shall decide issues right from ward level. If you are not active at ward level you will do what they plan and say at the top. When holding meeting at ward level to choose delegates, be there. (*Tribune*, Jan. 7, 2017)

Adeboye obviously has weighed the cost of the ignorance of the people who leave politics for ruffraff and the incompetent that only seek votes from the masses but in turn inflict them with hardship and policies that plunge them into mischief. That is why Awude (2017) observes that “the pool of politics could be dirty, yet we must, even with our ‘white garments’ step in and make it clean though some of us might get some stains here and there in the process.” Awude further argues with respect to some faithful belief that ‘politics is dirty’ saying “if we have to run away from politics because it is dirty and that some believers in it compromised in the past, my question is have we stopped going on pilgrimage because some who went in the past absconded?”(29). This is what Osofisan is saying in *Love’s unlike lading* with respect to Basiru and Boma’s ill inclination about politics. The conflict revolves round Tariboh’s positive attitude to politics and ambition to lead his people, while the message is to the people to have a rethink on the concept of politics and government.

Angered by this development especially in his assessment of the 2015 General Elections in Nigeria, Osundare (2015) concludes that the people have been “apathetic about their necessary political action and have conceded the power of absolute power to their rulers who in turn have abolished the people and elected themselves” (33). Osundare (2015) thus contends that for the desired change Nigerians clamour for to take place:

We the people of Nigeria must carry our fate in our own hands. For too long we have heaped all the blame of our political backwardness on our leaders. Time we began to take some responsibilities for our tragic connivance in our own woes. (33)

Osundare's position is substantiated with the role of Basiru and Boma who in *Love's unlike lading* deserted Tariboh when he needs them most for moral support in the struggle to bring change to their state. The same can be inferred also from the kidnappers who take joy in abducting Tariboh, the crusader, who can be described as belonging to the same social divide as themselves and who ventured into politics to address some of the issues that brought them into kidnapping. Osofisan thus condemns act of kidnapping, and ransom taking, especially of the vulnerable which has become rampant in contemporary Nigeria. Osofisan is vociferous of this as implied in Tosan's reaction to Tariboh's abduction that: "let them choose the right targets. Not people who are themselves also victims" (41).

Osofisan however goes further in *Birthdays are not for dying* to unravel the place of docility on the part of the common man as his undoing in postcolonial Nigeria. Kunle Aremo as presented in the play is a dogged man ready to sanitise his father's company symbolic of Nigeria but his efforts are met by a broken home and pessimism from his mother. Kunle neither has the support of his mother nor that of his wife in his crusade. Kunle's mother wants his son to sell off his stake in the estate not because she benefits from the corrupt practices of the old men but because she feels the task of sanitising the estate is beyond Kunle's power. She is chicken-hearted and docile unlike Tariboh in *Love's unlike lading* who stops at nothing even in the face of abduction to become governor of his state, a position from which he will ably sanitise the state. As loving as Kunle's mother is, her pessimism about the sanitising mission of Kunle did not help Kunle. An instance is when she said:

When you meet your own share of it at the meeting you're attending tonight, it will be me, Bose and Segun, your poor son, who'll be carrying the coffin...they will get you am telling you. They're bastards, and they'll get you. (8-9)

Kunle's wife, Bose, who also has been discovered of her unfaithfulness to the marriage, is even more ardent about the futility of challenging the filthy old men:

Go to your meeting, toad! They will take you and squash you under foot till your belly bursts. And no one will be there to collect your scattered bits. I won't even shed a drop for you! (20)

Also, Kunle's last hope which happens to be Councilor turns out to be the worst. He knows about all the corruption in the company but will never oppose or reveal the perpetrators in order for them to face the consequence. Kunle thinks Councilor is innocent of the corrupt practices in

the company and has even extended the hand of partnership to him to rebuild the company but he refuses, rebuking Kunle for sacking the old and corrupt men. Osofisan thus reveals him as an accomplice, another form of disillusionment which is least reflected or criticised in African literature and criticism:

KUNLE: You are just no better than them. Your hands are clean, you don't steal money yourself, but you'll do nothing to stop those who dip their fingers in the wallet behind everybody's back. You're an accomplice, sir, as guilty as the rest. With people like you, nothing will ever change. You're born to fold your arms behind your back and close your eyes and connive at crime. And that's how you will die, conniving and pretending to be blind! (47)

Councillor therefore is not a perpetrator but an accomplice in the perpetuation of post-independence disillusionment. He is in extension docile, “not heard, remains silent, secret, and discreet, like a tomb. It [He] is however a tomb that (provided one knows how to decipher its legend) is not far from signaling the death of the king” (Derrida, 1968:257). As Derrida avers, Councillor initiates the death process of Kunle with a deadly birthday gift:

COUNCILLOR: Good! I brought you a gift, you courageous man! Let's test the strength of your galloping mouth. Take! (*He brings out his present, rips off the wrappings and thrusts it violently at Kunle...Kunle is seen to leap backward with a scream, his eyes filled with terror*) (48).

Coming in at the scene with a bad news of the death of her son—Segun, who is a product of her promiscuity, Kunle's wife—Bose completes the process by pouring Kunle a poisonous drink since he has disowned being the father of Segun. The lone crusader is thus killed unfulfilled because he lacks the necessary support to carry out his sanitizing mission.

Osofisan from the foregoing unmistakably shows that for the common man to be docile, pessimistic or avoid issues of politics in an era that is essentially political is as simple as shortchanging and undoing himself (Bamidele, 2000). Fowosanu's attitude to Tariboh's abduction is typical of the kind of spirit and attitude Osofisan wants the people to exhibit in relation to politics. Despite his financial mess, Fowosanu ensures Tariboh is released even while he Fowosanu goes into an embarrassing debt. In his words “I can't let that splendid young man down now, can I? Not if I can help it. So I'll take the risk. Here, this is my card. Call Lassy to take you and Boma to the Kariola Market to look for one of these money lenders... We must get

your friend out today” (*Love’s...*, 31). The two plays, *Love’s unlike lading* and *Birthdays are not for dying*, further establish how important politics and leadership are for the common man and the need for the people to have a rethink in their attitude to the subject of leadership. Osofisan has also metaphorically shown through *Birthdays are not for dying* that people that are apolitical and docile to change are accomplices both culpable as perpetrators of evil to the ordinary man as seen in the character of Councillor who is aware of all the corruption in the company but refuses to partake in it, question it or expose it.

This reflection is apposite in contemporary Nigeria where apathy to politics is at peak, where the common man complains on daily basis but fails to support a change agent who nurtures a political ambition like Tariboh, where at polling units they sell off their votes at paltry sums, and where voters card are not collected at electoral offices as Yakubu (2012) observes. It is thus noteworthy to conclude in the words of Awude (2017) that “majority of us will never hold office, but still we have an important role to play...we must educate ourselves on the stances of the candidates, *be involved in the process* and vote accordingly” (70) (emphasis mine)

Deconstructing the binary opposition of Leadership-Followership as the bane of Nigeria in Osofisan’s *Fires burn and die hard* and *Love’s unlike lading*.

This question of ruling class is not mathematical. There are some people among the ruling class you will be happy to associate with, who are extremely good and better than some of the people you know among the lower class, who because of their poverty their mind has been changed and warped—**Osofisan**

(Quoted in Agunbiade, 2015:4)

One of the theoretical phenomena that African writers and critics regardless of their ideological inclination have benefitted consciously or unwittingly from is the Post-structuralist phenomenon which contends that interpretation depends on the interpretive envisioning of an individual reader of any given text (Obafemi, 2008:166). By this, the writer believes that the real work begins when he or she drops the pen as the critic finishes it with infinite possibilities of interpretations. This study takes cue from this as it re-examines the ideology of ‘post-independence disillusionment’ beloved of postcolonial theory in Femi Osofisan’s selected plays. The study also takes cue from Weate (2003) which asserts that the fledgling child of postcolonial theory was weaned on a strict diet of Lacan and Derrida as treats for good behavior” thereby establishing the link between postcolonial theory and, deconstruction, beloved of Derrida. The study therefore

shifts from seeing the leaders in postcolonial Africa as entirely the cause of the continent's backwardness to understanding of deep rooted flaws of the people which on the whole contribute to the backward status of the continent. Young (1990) establishes this in *White Mythologies* while linking Derrida's works on deconstruction to Postcolonialism where he claimed that Derrida had always challenged the founding assumptions of colonialist ideology. Post-structuralism, a style of thought which embraces the deconstructive operations of Jacques Derrida and binary oppositions of Structuralism provides a framework that makes this possible. This is as the post-structuralist literary critic is engaged in the task of deconstructing the text and theory in an unusually close way to create meaning. One other facet of post-structuralism relevant here according to Peter Barry (1995:74) is "its tendency to reverse the polarity of common binary oppositions like male and female, day and night, light and dark and so on, so that the second term, rather than the first is privileged and regarded as the more desirable." Consequently, in the present study we have the leader and the led/follower placed side by side, however rather than privileging the leaders as the cause of Africa's problem, the polarity is reversed so that the people/led/followers are investigated. This 'deconstruction of the validity of the common sense perception of the obvious' (Derrida, 1981:xvi) is what is examined in Osofisan's *Fires burn and die hard* and Love's *unlike lading* as the playwright is observed to reverse the polarity to undermine popular conception.

The revelation is apt in *Fires burn and die hard* where the ruler and government is presented as kind, loving and interested in the welfare of the followers as against popular opinion on leadership being the pest on the followers. Osofisan depicts this in the quick intervention of the governor to forestall what would have become a recurrence of calamitous incidence on the people. Alhaja, who is representative of the people/followers, has set fire on the old market when about being discovered for trading in contraband goods, an act which has brought untold hardship on the entire market women and in extension the entire community. Their goods are burnt to ashes while many of the women that have been supportive of their husband can no more live up to that responsibility as poverty rises in the land. There is also no place anymore to engage in trading as expressed by Temi:

TEMI: But ...oh my God! Which woman could have done such a thing? Who among us could have been so heartless as to have set fire to...oh God help me! I am going mad! (*Fires...*, 83)

The governor however in its magnanimous gesture speedily comes to the rescue of the people to build a new modern market which costs 14.9 million for the market women as trading is pivotal to the economy of the state. The market is to be commissioned in less than twenty-four hours when information gets to the governor from the palace that the gods are angry and will wreak havoc on the market except the arsonist of the first market owns up. Though such revelations are regarded as superstitious in secular settings, as a lover of his people, the governor immediately summons an emergency meeting headed by his representative to carry the message of Orunmila to the market women. The team comprises the governor's representatives—Dr Ibrahim, a secretary—Mrs Peju and Chief Ogunye, representing Kabiyesi (the King) and the Chiefs from the palace. The deconstruction of the idealisation of the followers/ common people begins in the following conversation as the Chief reveals why the market will not be opened, while Alhaja the arsonist pretends she is innocent. Even Temi, the Treasurer of the market women is confused:

CHIEF: Well...one of you! One of your women was responsible
for the destruction of the old market

TEMI: No! Impossible! It's a lie!

CHIEF: Ifa never lies, my daughter!

ALHAJA: But...how? By an act of carelessness?

CHIEF: Ifa says it was a deliberate act.

TEMI: You hear! It's getting more absurd!

ALHAJA: Surely that can't be true, Baba? Why would any woman
do such a thing?

CHIEF: Ifa did not say why. But it's the truth. The world changes
everyday; it brings strange things...

Obviously, Orunmila must have revealed the exact arsonist but such intractable issue must be handled with utmost sense of wisdom as deployed by Osofisan. As such, Orunmila's position is gradually conveyed to the people. Ibrahim and Chief however have to hit the nail on the neck:

IBRA: But let's get straight to the point. The real problem now is
this: that same woman, the arsonist, is also moving with
you into the new market. She has been assigned a stall.

CHIEF: And Ifa warns strongly that this unknown woman will soil
the new market unless she is first purged of her crime
before moving in. she has offended the gods of the land, the
gods of the market. Unless she confesses, and the
appropriate rites are conducted, she will carry a curse along
with her which will destroy you all. For the gods are truly

furious, and are determined to wreak vengeance tomorrow!

(79-80)

The binary opposition which always tilts to favour the people/ followers is therefore questioned to show that both leadership and government could be very benevolent to the people and at the same time help advance the well being of the people and society's development. The governor with due respect for tradition and because of his love for the people obviously will not want to see another calamity; hence the need to stop the commissioning of the market as explained by Dr. Ibrahim:

IBRA: The decision of the governor is not to open the market. To leave it as it is now. Government has a responsibility to prevent a catastrophe at all costs. We can't take a risk. (83)

Alhaja—the arsonist however presses on, noting how much preparation the women have put in place for the commissioning especially with the new goods already bought and placed in their stalls ahead of the much awaited day. The governor's representative nevertheless stands on the fact that the market cannot be opened as directed to avoid the impending wrath:

IBRA: Suppose you say, nonsense, it's all superstition and some disaster then happens? No ruler will ever take that kind of risk! No, madam, I think the governor's right. Nobody goes in again till this thing is resolved...Which do you prefer, madam? That goods perish, or that, by some kind of default, it is human beings who perish? Just suppose we allow you in, even to fetch your things, and when you are in there, something terrible happens? Like say, a wall collapsing? Or another fire starting, or something we haven't imagined? Even if you don't believe in the gods... I myself, I confess I am quite sceptical about these things... (84)

The revelation in the play is real and reflects what is obtainable in a society where peoples' minds are warped with greed as seen in Alhaja, who will not carry the information on suspension of the commissioning to the displaced over ten thousand market women in less than twenty four hours to the opening ceremony of the new market but is ready to risk their lives and property just as she razed the old one. The benevolent act of the governor in quickly coming to the aid of the people to build a modern market of 14.9 million and avoiding a recurrence of havoc sharply contradicts Alhaja's malevolent act in a binary to authenticate Osofisan's position in drama that "it is obvious to tell the story just as you see it that the fault is not just with the rulers, the fault is

with all of us” (Quoted in, Agunbiade, 2015:1). The blame game on leadership as the trouble with Nigeria and in extension Africa is thus deconstructed to show that everybody has contributed to our stinking disillusionment.

This trend is further substantiated in Osofisan’s *Love’s Unlikely Lading* with the character of Bassey—the usurer. Bassey is not in a confrontation with any leader and neither is he at variance with the government but has chosen to pitch his battle with Fowosanu an easy going business man. Bassey even challenges his daughter, Tumini for abusing government and rulers saying, “What is your business in it” (55) but he is ready to wrench life out of Fowosanu. Osofisan shows through Bassey what Akporobaro (2005:66) means when he says “Man is instinctively evil natured”. For Bassey, all he is interested in is just to enrich himself to the detriment of another member of the society. Osofisan therefore shows how detrimental this could be through his alter ego, Fowosanu who is benevolent to other members of the society. Bassey issues usury with the intension that the debtors will not pay back before the due date so he could take over their properties which will earn him more money. But Fowosanu is often approached by such debtors to come to their rescue. This act thus makes Fowosanu an enemy to the usurers. Fowosanu similarly gives scholarship to children of indigents as confirmed by Bassey’s daughter Tumini:

In school I knew some of the girls he helped. Students who were really destitute, and who’re not even from Lagos. His scholarships were open to everyone. (57)

Bassey’s grouse which is quintessential of any wicked person is that such an act of benevolence from the likes of Fowosanu is detrimental to the usurers business. He maintains it boosts the ego of Fowosanu to drop alms on the palm of the poor so Bassey is set to reverse the trend as Fowosanu falls in his trap after borrowing from him to pay the abductors of Tariboh, a friend to his (Fowosanu’s) younger brother—Basiru. Bassey thus boasts to his daughter Tumini saying,

So imagine my daughter, imagine that the table is suddenly turned upside down, and the donor finds himself being treated as the beggar? Ehn? If one can make someone like Fowosanu feel like that for once, that he is the one receiving alms from you, what do you think that would do to his ego (59)

While many are praying for more people like Fowosanu in their community, Bassey wants a total annihilation of such people. Obviously, why many people have fallen victims of the antics of

their domestic workers and neighbors in contemporary Nigeria cannot be far from such evil inclinations as that of Bassey. The murder of the former Vice Chancellor of Federal University of Technology Akure, FUTA, Prof. Albert Ilemobade by his driver and gateman on *22nd June, 2015* is not unconnected with motives like that of Bassey. The duo, after killing Ilemobade, steal his SUV Jeep but are nabbed on their way to sell it. These are ordinary people being paid and fed by the deceased. They are therefore in the words of Derrida (1968) “silent, secret and discreet like the (proverbial) tomb” as they eventually swallowed their innocent boss. Bassey’s wickedness is further seen as he refuses to let go the agreement between him and Fowosanu even after the money has been doubled. Tosan reflects this that,

TOSAN: Everybody we know, practically every one of influence has been sent to beg him. Sheri and I have been everywhere—Chiefs, his fellow traders, every one! And so, I think, has Basiru. But the wicked man won’t listen to anyone. He just insists on the contract! (67)

Fowosanu, tells why he hates people like Bassey that “it’s not because you are poor as you claim...it is rather because you make your poverty an excuse to rip off other poor people and ruin their lives without compunction” (86). What Osofisan therefore has shown is that blaming the leaders sweepingly for our national albatross is not much of an alternative but what we need to do is to look within to address the foibles of the common man/ followers which in Derrida’s words is likened to “a tomb that (provided one knows how to decipher its legend) is not far from signaling the death of the king (Derrida, 1968:257).

The deconstructive reading of the two texts (*Fires burn and die hard* and *Love’s unlike lading*) has question the popular opinion where leaders are entirely blamed for the problem of their society. It has shown that the people’s moral deficiency have equally contributed to their society’s backwardness and their disenchantment as seen in the characters of Alhaja and Bassey. This however does not concede primacy of disillusionment to the people (followers) but has shown that it is a matter of interdependent histories especially when one considers the degeneracy of the political class, and the disgusting corruption as contrasted in other plays of Osofisan like *The Chattering* and the song (1977) manifested in *Alafin Abiodun* and corruption of the Councillors in *Who’s Afraid of Solarin* (1978).

The foregoing therefore, according to Barbara Johnson (1980:210), has “destroyed the claim to unequivocal domination of one mode of signifying over another” which in this context is the domination of leaders over the followers as the problem of Nigeria. It also substantiates Derrida’s claim on binary opposition as quoted in Englishbiz article (2009) where he buttresses the elevation and the demotion of every two sided concept in life that “within any particular culture, one ‘side’ of each binary pair tended to be valued or judged in a more privileged light as if one half of each binary pair were somehow ‘culturally marked’ by a kind of ‘presence’ that made it more highly valued whereas its binary opposite was ‘marked’ by a kind of ‘absence’ that rendered it the less highly valued part of the binary pair.” This exactly is the situation of things in post-independence Africa where the leaders are wantonly judged in a more privileged light as the cause of society’s backwardness while the people are culturally marked by a kind of absence that render them less valued part of the binary pair.

This investigation in addition has unraveled certain relationship unperceived by the playwright—Osofisan, between what he commands and what he does not command of the language and characters he uses and has also attempted to make the not-seen accessible to sight (Derrida, 1976:158,163). The foregoing, like Young (2004) posits has elaborated a different framework for thinking about contemporary postcolonial condition. It therefore, reveals the need to re-examine the ideological standpoint of political scape-goat-ism in the bid to re-organise the African society where all efforts to transform it have been futile.

Osofisan’s objective dramatisation of the plight of the masses in *Fires burn and die hard, Birthdays are not for dying and Love’s unlike lading*

The need to subject to critical examination the conflicting claims on the philosophy of Femi Osofisan becomes imperative in the current study. This is necessary to facilitate a better understanding of the ideological leaning of the playwright, more so to establish whether he idealises the masses or not. For instance, Biodun Jeyifo asserts that “Osofisan is unquestionably, a man of the left, a radical writer and a critic who has embraced a class approach to the production and reception of literature in our society” (Awodiya, 1995:38). However, for Osundare “what one can talk about in Osofisan’s plays are tendencies, not hard-and-fast or a clear-cut ideological stance...tendencies that, range from liberal through the radical to the revolutionary” (Awodiya, 1995:38). On his part, Dapo Adelugba argues “although Osofisan

espouses Marxian doctrines, I do not think it would be adequate to describe his works as Marxist as many critics do, and are unable to wholly justify that description” (Awodiya, 1995:38-39). Obasi and Aloysius-Orjinta (2013:36) further disagree that Marxist ideology is limited to some degree in Osofisan’s works contrary to the views of his numerous readers and critics who see him as a consummate Marxist. Osofisan’s *Fires Burn and Die Hard*, *Birthdays are not for Dying* and *Love’s Unlike Lading* are therefore examined to find out the philosophical inclination of the theatrically fertile playwright—Femi Osofisan.

First, it is observed in the plays that dialogues are intra-class, rather than being inter-class as obtainable in revolutionary plays where dialogues are between two social forces or classes—the oppressed and the oppressor; between a dominant class and a toiling class. In *Fires Burn and Die Hard*, conflict begins within the same class and precisely same family as Leke discovers his mother, Alhaja’s involvement in contraband goods and goes to report to security operatives, an act which makes Alhaja to eventually raze the entire market. This contradicts Marxist’s dogma because they are both part of the masses. Osofisan therefore shows that if there is to be any revolution at all, considering the dastardly act of Alhaja, such revolution is to begin within the family, which is the smallest unit of the society. The only element of dialogue between different classes in the play is that between the governor and the market women. The governor through his representatives refuses to commission the newly constructed market after being informed by the traditional society that the gods are to wreak havoc on the people in the event the market is opened. This however is for the good of the people. As such, the ruling class is projected in a good light to have built the new market for the traders and forestalling imminent danger on the people. These are features which previous works on Osofisan and Marxism are yet to identify. For Osofisan, the revolution is to begin in the family which now is becoming the shadow of itself as the parents who are to be in the vanguard for institutionalization of the moral code have shirked their responsibility. When this is addressed at the smallest unit of the society, obviously a new dawn is certain in Africa. At the same time, Osofisan departs from wanton attribution of our failure to the leaders with the virtuous act of the governor which contradicts Marxist alignment of plays.

Similarly, the dialogue and conflict in *Love’s unlike lading* is entirely between the same class. Osofisan, by this, has shown that within the followers there also exists another class-like

structure where one is the oppressor and the other is the oppressed as seen in the conflict between Fowosanu and Bassey and other debtors who are at the mercy of Bassey. Bassey according to Fowosanu “makes his poverty an excuse to rip off other poor people and ruin their lives without compunction” (Loves..., 86). He lends them money in a contractual manner with the intention of eventually taking over their property and even lives when they fail to meet up the obligations. Again, the same is seen between Tariboh, the crusader and the kidnappers who happen to belong to same class. The kidnappers are ordinary people who are senseless to have kidnapped a crusader whose intension is to transform the society. Looking at this in an inter-textual manner with *Once upon four robbers*, one may be right to say Osofisan is asking another poignant question which is “why are they hunting for people of same class like theirs and not the dominant class?” These instances indisputably and explicitly give an inkling of the exact place and group where Osofisan will want to see a revolution.

To also bring out class issues in *Birthdays are not for dying* is a difficult task. The conflict in the play obviously has made many critics to hastily read class into the play but an intensive investigation reveals Kunle and all other five members of the company belong to same class. Kunle’s mother and Bose his wife are presented as pessimists as all through they give him no iota of encouragement in his resolve to sanitise the company. They therefore lack the collective spirit required for a revolution. The play further lacks Marxist temper because no solution is proffered to the problem of corruption as presented in the play. This is so because one of the indices of Marxist’s plays is that problems presented are accompanied with attendant solutions (*Obasi and Aloysius-Orjinta, 2013:37*). Kunles’s death thus brings the play to a stalemate as he lives behind no heir while other members have been sacked.

Moreover, Osofisan, according to his critics, believes in collectivity as a strong instrument to fight against oppressors (*Obasi and Aloysius-Orjinta, 2013:39*) but he falls short of this claim in the plays under study. This is evident in *Love’s unlike lading* where Tariboh’s wife, Boma and Basiru his best friend desert him in the early days of his struggle to become governor. The veracity of this is also seen in *Birthdays are not for dying* where Kunle’s wife and mother fail to muzzle up support for him to topple corruption and bring down the hyenas of his father’s company. Instead Kunle’s mother constantly tells him “They will get you” (*Birthdays..., 9*) and really they get him. Lone crusaders thus seem prominent in the plays as against what is obtainable in a real Marxist play. While Tariboh succeeds as a lone crusader in *Love’s unlike*

lading, Kunle fails in the same in Birthdays are not for dying. While critics could infer the playwright is suggestive of a collective struggle in Birthdays are not for dying, one still finds no room to place the aura of pessimism that dominates the play by those who are to support in such struggle as optimism is the spirit in any collective struggle.

Also, the burning of the entire market by Alhaja and deepening of the plight of the poor market women contradicts the concept of labour struggle in an ideal Marxist play. The use of lethal weapon and poison by Councillor and Bose, Kunle's wife on Kunle to kill him in Birthdays are not for dying also negate labour struggle as it denies him of his consciousness and pitches the play faraway from Marxism.

The foregoing therefore confirms Osofisan's position as revealed in an interview with Awodiya (1993:40) that he has "considered moving away from literature of banners, literature of slogans to the exploration of more psychological aspect of human being." Osofisan recalls that most of his earlier literatures are "of graffiti-like statements, of placards... that is what The Chattering and the Song was making statements about, in highlighting the positions of Sontri and Leje in the logistics of revolution. But ten years later I can't be doing same thing again, can I? A lot has happened in those ten years" (Awodiya, 1993:40). This therefore makes it clear why Osofisan on many fora has rejected the Marxist label noting that the fact that he talks of class formation does not itself mean that he is or not a Marxist. He states that other elements in his works must be considered before making hasty conclusions (Awodiya, 1993:77). It is in view of this that the present investigation is made and concludes that Osofisan is an objective playwright. This is so because he is unbiased in the dramatisation of the plight of the masses in his plays. It also observes that the kind of revolution that exists in the plays is within the lower class. This indifference to Marxism is suggestive of where Osofisan wants an immediate change (revolution) which will in effect translate to the entire society—a rethinking that authenticates the popular phrase that, today's followership is tomorrow's leadership.

The foregoing therefore substantiates Bhadmus (2004:73) position that "difference, departure and superiority are often hastily read into Osofisan's plays," hence the continued claim by critics that he is a Marxist. As seen in the selected plays, Osofisan is indifferent to these claims as these are hurried assumptions based on predetermined schema which has denied the critics the opportunity of examining individual plays as unique literary creations (Eze, 2009-10).

Aesthetics of defective followership in Femi Osofisan's selected plays

Femi Osofisan experiments with various styles and techniques of dramatic presentation to unveil the true portrait of the followers and common people. In the plays under study, he deploys the elements of realism by reproducing a convincing real life situation of the common man on stage with settings usually in the sitting room, bed-room and court room. The themes also deal with everyday domestic issues while the plays condemn in strong terms the widespread wickedness, oppression, selfishness and corruption raging among the common people. In *Love's unlike lading*, *Fires burn and die Hard* and *Birthdays are not for Dying*, Osofisan places ordinary recognizable characters and convincing real life situations on the stage to create an illusion of reality that engages his audience with an intention to reconstruct consensus opinion about the people. The actions and inactions of characters in business, like Alhaja, Bassey, and Kunle's father's business associates are mainly for pedagogic reasons—a significant feature of the realistic plays as well as the morality plays. As such, the plays tend more towards anatomizing through arts the moral behaviour of man especially the contemporary unbecoming everyday situations among the common people like usury, acute lie, pretense, corruption etc, with the aim of correcting them. The audience and readers therefore find re-presented in an unusual way their everyday engagement on stage which shows their contribution to their nation's backwardness.

To absolve himself from the continued claim by critics that he idealises the common man, Osofisan combines the aesthetic values of the literary mask and Orunmila motif in the presentation of his characters. Virtually all the major characters are in mask (pretense). The value of the iconic and symbolic African mask in concealing is thus deployed for metaphorical purposes. This feature of masking, according to Mowah (2002:96), allows for a reworking of the materialist dialectics in Osofisan's plays.

The characters of Alhaja in *Fires burn and die hard*, Bassey the usurer in *Love's unlike lading* and Kunle's father business partners in *Birthdays are not for dying* are all masked men and woman who show the false appearance of civility and charm while concealing their evil inclination. Alhaja, the leader of the market women who has razed the old market is seen all through *Fires burn and die hard* sympathising with other market women whose goods are burnt and hopes dashed. Also, in *Love's unlike lading*, Bassey the usurer lends with pretense to help

other common people while deep within is his intention to destroy them by confiscating their more expensive property or even take their lives any moment after the contractual date as seen in his litigation with Fowosanu. Similarly, Kunle's father business partners—Alhaji, Major, Chief, Councillor and Honourable—all pretend to celebrate with Kunle on his birthday with different kind of gifts. This occasion of maturation however turns bitter for Kunle the moment he announces his intention to become president of the company (as indicated in his father's Will) as the bestial cord in the old men breaks out of their mask of civility.

Osofisan's use of mask in crafting the characters is symbolic in the sense that it helps project the fact that in postcolonial Africa the common man is least examined as playing a role in the backwardness of his country. They are often conceived as innocent and idealised, while works that investigate this group of people are scarce. Osofisan by using mask substantiates this but goes further to deconstruct such claim in his deft and subtle use of the Orunmila motif.

The Orunmila motif in Osofisan's theatre is drawn from the African indigenous culture and aesthetics—for rhetorical strategies, structural mechanisms and sometimes for ideological purposes (Awodiya, 1995:66). Orunmila is the Yoruba god of wisdom and divination who must be consulted by the people before they take important decisions affecting their lives. The Orunmila (Ifa) divination process is thus reposed with research, exploration of knowledge in the service of humanity, education and logic of human reasoning (Awodiya, 1995:69). Osofisan deploys this motif to unveil the ordinary man (follower) who conceals (masks) his unbecoming behaviour in a façade which is detrimental to society's progress but is committed to blaming the leaders for his community's backwardness. It is on this motif that Osofisan's *Fires burn and die hard* is crafted as Alhaja's evil and pretense would have brought a bigger havoc on the entire community if Orunmila is not consulted in line with tradition before the opening of the new market. Alhaja is discovered (unmasked) after the king and elders have consulted Ifa before inaugurating the new market. Orunmila's demand of confession by the perpetrator occasions the unmasking of Alhaja the arsonist, a situation which brings the rising action to a denouement. It however takes the intervention of the governor and the delegated chief before Alhaja confesses at a very crucial moment to avert the wrath of the gods.

The same Orunmila motif is deployed in *Love's unlike lading* through a folktale as Tosan's father insists before his death that all his daughter's suitors must engage in a contest (which is

presented as a folktale) where they must swear to an oath (a juju amulet) that they will never propose to anyone in the event they choose a wrong casket in the midst of three caskets (gold, silver and bronze). Tosan's access to his father's fortune is further attached to the success of the contest. Basiru's victory by choosing bronze among other very influential and rich suitors from all works of life, who failed, is ironical and at the same time a metaphor to the main plot where general attention on leaders as the cause of Africa's backwardness is to be shifted to the ordinary people. This is so because Tosan the bride did not expect Basiru will win the contest more so it is a quarrel that leads to Basiru's venturing into the contest (*Love's...*,50). While other suitors go for the gold casket and silver and never considering the bronze, Basiru's choice of the Bronze casket is symbolic of the need for a paradigm shift in our perception of reality. Tosan's father kept the symbol of victory in the Bronze casket because he knows man is easily drawn to all that glitters. Similarly, because the ills of the leaders are always blown in the media and easily known they are often the ones blamed for Africa's backwardness.

The contest therefore is a metaphor to the main plot where Bassey, the usurer, is hell bent to taking the life of Fowosanu for his benevolence in salvaging poor debtors from his (Bassey's) claws. Bassey who is representative of the common business man is therefore contrasted as a bronze which while compared to gold is worthless but very dangerous as a secret tomb. Therefore with the Orunmila motif, Osofisan is able to divest the ordinary business man of his mask and self exoneration by "penetrating very close and intimate like a knife in the rib, turn him open, guts and all, washed inside out, in the naked truth and then sews him back a different man" (Osofisan, Quoted in Awodiya, 1993:18). Again, the Orunmila motif is deployed to demystify wrong interpretations about Ifa where charlatans exploit the divination process for selfish interest. Osofisan faults this ill inclination with Basiru's choice of the right casket as Tosan and Basiru are bosom friends and better for each other than other suitors. Thus, Orunmila is established as the truth finder.

In extension, the motif as deployed in the search for a responsible husband for Tosan is suggestive of Osofisan's call for a return to culture and tradition of seeking the face of the divine being in choosing a life partner for marriage (*Love's...*52-53). This obviously sequels the growing rate of divorce and battery among couples. Here lies another root of disillusionment because the family being the smallest unit of the society is expected to mould and produce credible individuals to develop the society (Gimba, 2008). The failure of the family thus is the

failure of the society. The folk song: “A Song for Lasting Happiness” (*Love’s...53*) upon which the contest for Tosan is crafted in which the efficacy of Gold, Silver and Bronze are demystified helps reveal the ideal suitor—Basiru—who happens to be a friend other than a shylock as seen in the array of earlier suitors who failed the contest. The folksong portrays Bronze as:

Unlike gold that looks so clean/And unlike silver with all its sheen,
Bronze is shy but deep within/So much force inside, yet so
serene—
Indeed:
It gives friendship worth your trust/ And with assurance that will
last,
So lend a hand to those in pain/ and a happy life will be yours gain.
(*Love’s...53*)

Again, Osofisan structures an inversion by giving attention to bronze rather than gold which moneywise can buy hundreds of bronze. It thus shows appearances are deceptive in the choice of a suitor just as it tells the suitor to never look down on anybody as the least expected suitor could be the best of all.

Another integral feature of Osofisan’s aesthetics in portrayal of disillusionment is the use of satire to show how the common man is deeply involved in undoing himself. Osofisan employs the two types of satire (Horacian and Juvenalian), to represent his characters. While Horacian satire is gentle, fairly sympathetic and brings punishment down upon self; Juvenalian is biting, bitterly contemptuous of corruption and inhabited by crooks whose knavery consists in the damage they do to others. Alhaja’s act of burning the market in *Fires burn and die hard* dwells on Horacian Satire to show that some ordinary people and traders who engage in acts and businesses that militate against society’s development are not oblivious of the fact that they come to suffer from such acts. Osofisan similarly criticises some business men and women in the mould of Juvenalian satire as he represents such poor people like Bassey the usurer in *Love’s* unlike lading who exhibits the dog eats dog syndrome, whose pride is milking dry other poor members of the society.

The language feature of Osofisan in his investigation of the common man is also significant. This is imperative because for those who have concluded that their entire problems are occasioned by the leaders and never for once considered the part they play in that set back to now have a rethink, will require deft means of presentation where language must play a crucial role. Osofisan is aware of this and as such is very clever in structuring the language of this category of

people to ensure they leave his theatre with a changed mindset devoid of their reprehensible conducts. He therefore adopts linguistic clarity, accessibility of diction and well thought-out prose, where conversations have the rhythmic pattern of everyday dialogue. This is obvious in the three texts examined. Osofisan's use of the indigenous language—Yoruba—is noteworthy to drive down his message unmistakably to the ordinary people. He however translates them to English in the footnotes for people who cannot read Yoruba. For instance, words like Sango (p.45), Agbegilodo (p.30) are translated in the footnotes in *Birthdays are not for dying* while Sogundogoji (*Love's...*,30) meaning double-interest loan provider and all the Yoruba songs by Tosan's suitor—Madaki (Mo rotolo kan- p.43) and the one sung at the court (Ogboriefon- p.78) in *Love's unlike lading* are translated in English. When compared to his other plays like *Morountodun*, and *The Chattering and the Song*, it is obvious Osofisan deliberately softens his language to carefully portray the serious matter of disillusionment among the common people in the selected plays.

Symbolism is another significant tool of communication employed in Osofisan's dramaturgy to portray disillusionment among the followers. Three aspects of symbolism as identified in the plays include symbolism of characters, places and objects. The characters of Alhaja in *Fires burn and die hard*, Bassey in *Love's unlike lading* and Kunle's father business partners in *Birthdays are not for dying* personify the poor, market women, working class and business men and women. Their names too are symbolic and show that disillusionment cuts across tribes and religions. Bassey is from the eastern part of Nigeria while Alhaja Olowoseun is from the west, Yoruba land. They both exhibit the dog eat dog syndrome of engaging in inflicting harm on other poor people of their society. Alhaja is a Muslim, while Bassey is a Christian, both of the major religions practiced in Nigeria, showing this untoward acts cut across members of different religions. Also with respect to sex, the most brutal characters, Alhaja in *Fires burn and die hard* and Bassey in *Love's unlike lading* are woman and man, of both sexes. This is indicative that both men and women are in the acts of undoing each other among the common people. And with respect to age, the filthy old men in *Birthdays are not for dying* have shown that age is not a limitation in the perpetration of evil at the lower divide of the society.

Characters of Fowosanu in *Love's unlike lading*, Kunle in *Birthdays are not for dying* and Leke—Alhaja's son in *Fires burn and die hard* are also symbolic of the fact that Osofisan does

not altogether condemn the ordinary people as he shows through them his social vision of change which has to begin among the common people and masses. Leke exposes his mother's involvement in contraband, Fowosanu comes to the rescue of the common man at the mercy of Bassey by lending them money without interest to unfetter them from Bassey's devilish trade of usury, while Kunle is bent on sanitizing his father's company even with his blood by relieving the old men of their job in the company. Osofisan by so doing imbues in Kunle, in *Birthdays are not for dying* and Leke the son of Alhaja in *Fires burn and die hard*, the right principles and spirit of change which must begin from the younger generation.

Osofisan's structuring of symbolism with respect to places is obvious in the use of sitting rooms and bedrooms as settings in the plays symbolise the family unit which is a small unit of the society where Osofisan believes a new orientation and rectitude is to be championed as against the current ill behaviours emanating from the family. The three caskets (gold, silver and bronze); Tosan's picture and necklace placed in the bronze casket in *Love's unlike lading* are symbolic objects to show not all that glitters is gold and also the role the common man can play in transforming his society. Basiru's victory and choice of the bronze casket while other influential men fail is a message to the common man to know that being at the lower divide of the society does not mean he does not have a role to play in transforming same society. Their idleness, docility and continued harm to other ordinary people thus become their undoing, a thinking which in Osofisan's dramaturgy is seen as a least examined cause of post-independence disillusionment.

Imagery is another overriding device employed in the plays by Osofisan. Images of the market as a centre of economic activities, where buying and selling takes place dominate the plays. Osofisan's focus on the market is borne out of his philosophical sympathy with the poor and the downtrodden whose main occupation is trading. This is buttressed by Alhaja in *Fires burn and die hard*:

ALHAJA:... Our people have always been a trading people. Our towns flourish, or die on the fortunes and misfortunes of commerce
(p.70)

The image of destruction of such an economic hub is therefore heartrending, especially when one considers the perpetrator who happens to be the leader of the market women. The entire market women therefore go into suffering for the selfish act of one trader. Similarly, in *Love's unlike lading* we have the image of the money lenders' market supposed to be a place of succor and

refuge for the poor man but people like Bassey through usury have made it a funeral place where property and lives of borrowers are forfeited in the event they default on the refund date. Also the image of the failed company in *Birthdays are not for dying* shows how dangerous it has become for the common man to engage in business with another man in contemporary Nigeria as all the five partners in Aremo's company are completely corrupt. This gives the reason for proliferation of one-man business (Sole trade) in Nigeria and why many business involving partners have failed due to lack of trust and love. Meanwhile, no tangible economic development can be attained through a one-man trade compared to a conglomerate. This lack of love is the thematic construct upon which Love's *unlike lading* dwells as Osofisan has both ideologically and aesthetically shown in the contest between Fowosanu and Bassey that love is a significant key for progress and development in any society.

Osofisan also embraces the structural technique of Compressionism. This subverts all-inclusive theatre where many props, characters, locales and long time are involved (Awodiya, 1995). The Compressionist technique is deployed in Osofisan's *Love's unlike lading* especially in the series of flashbacks on Tariboh in the play. For instance, when Tosan recalls Tariboh's campaign, the scene is made possible by framing Tariboh in a spotlight in a big Television screen brought on stage by the stage manager and his crew while his campaign jingle is played in the background (*Love's...*, 8). His heated conversation with Basiru on the relevance of politics and why people must not shy away from it (*Love's...*,22) and his eventual victory at the polls (*Love's...*,92) are other flashbacks in the play. Also, the use of boards with inscription of the name of a place for instance, Lagos (*Love's...*,6, 20, 31, 40, 72) brought in by the stage manager are on many occasions used to announce to the audience a new locale. While *Birthdays are not for dying* and *Fires burn and die hard* are composed in one act, that is, they are One Act Plays set in sitting and bed rooms. All these help compress the use of multiple sets and reduce re-arrangement of the stage which will on the whole take time and in effect reduce the sustained tension of the plays compared to other full-length plays of Osofisan. All these compressed action and sets are geared towards arresting and sustaining the attention of the audience, composed virtually of the followers.

One other significant aesthetic feature employed by Osofisan in the portrayal of disillusionment among the followers is the self-confessional attribute of his characters. This lends credibility to

the testimonial nature of the dialogues. Alhaja eventually confesses of her crime of burning the old market in *Fires burn and die hard*: “No, it’s the truth, I confess it all now. I did it...let me unburden my heart of this terrible guilt” (*Fires Burn...*, 89). Bassey also confesses to his daughter Tumini that he wants the downfall of Fowosanu for always rescuing his debtors by helping them pay their debt while he Bassey forfeits the collateral he would have confiscated from the poor debtors (*Love’s...*, 63). This artistic feature of self confession helps to a great extent to reflect disillusionment among the people as they are caught in the web of undoing one another and engaging in actions that enhance the backwardness of their country.

Moreover, Osofisan’s aesthetics of change for societal development is best appreciated in his subversion of a heated court proceeding to a connubial convergence in *Love’s unlike lading*. Bassey’s lawsuit against Fowosanu ends in the marriage between Tumini (Daughter of Bassey) and Lassy (son of Fowosanu), and Tosan and Basiru, a situation that resolves the rancor between both the plaintiff and defendant. This structuring of hot acrimonies resulting in strange matrimony is a unique aesthetic feature of Osofisan’s dramaturgy that allows a reworking of the materialist dialectics where love is placed over law. This is the underlying philosophy of *Love’s unlike lading* as Osofisan preaches love among the ordinary people as the solution to their disenchantments. This dramatic matrix thus becomes a strong strand to instantiate Osofisan’s stance on the discourse of disillusionment, a paradigm shift from conventional indices of investigating contemporary disenchantment.

Conclusion

This chapter explores followership and post-independence disillusionment in Femi Osofisan’s *Love’s unlike lading*, *Fires burn and die hard* and *Birthdays are not for dying*. It is observed that Osofisan wants a paradigm shift in African drama as against over-concentration on the notion that leadership is entirely Nigeria’s and in extension Africa’s problem. With specific interest in actions and inactions of business people, working class and common people, Osofisan shows the less examined causes of backwardness in Nigeria. The foregoing also validates Osofisan’s objective dramatisation of the plight of the masses. It is therefore contended that the empathy generated through Osofisan’s stance is a unique contribution of the plays to the discourse of post-independence disillusionment in Nigerian drama and in extension African drama.

CHAPTER FOUR

TRADITIONAL RULERS, MUSICIANS, VIGILANTES AND THE POLITICS OF NATIONAL FAILURE IN FEMI OSOFISAN'S DRAMA

This chapter examines Femi Osofisan's representations of the reason why struggle for national development in Nigeria has failed especially as orchestrated by those who should be in the vanguard for change at the lower divide of the society. Osofisan in *Esu and the Vagabond Minstrels*, *Farewell to a Cannibal Rage* and *Aringindin and the Nightwatchmen* diagnoses Nigeria as an entity with particular attention to traditional rulers, musicians and vigilantes to see if they have contributed to the backflip development in Nigeria. It is observed that Osofisan in the plays decisively unmask the actions and inactions of traditional rulers, musicians and vigilantes that have deepened people's disenchantments instead of alleviating their plight. The revelation is a sad commentary on African literature as it opens up a lacuna where those who ought to be lampooned are idealised. An examination of Osofisan's dialectical deployment of dramatic metaphor and inversion of theatre ideals and popular opinion which aids this revelation completes the chapter.

Traditional rulers in pre- and post-colonial Nigeria: an overview

Before the advent of the Europeans, societies in Africa had evolved political administration with executive, legislative and judicial powers in the different domains (Ojo, 1976). In Nigeria, traditional rulers, like Obi, Emir, Oba, Ogbuefi and the like, were in control of the administration of their respective communities, providing the leadership on which the era survived (Kehinde, 2008). For instance, according to Oloko (1976), the traditional ruler under Benin Kingdom was at the head of a well organised system of government. Though the system was not sophisticated, the machinery of government was organised enough to manage affairs, resolve tension and administer justice in the society. The advent of colonial rule, however, ushered in a transformation in the role of traditional rulers as the colonialists who imposed their hegemony on traditional rulers usurped their sovereign authority in order to exploit the natural resources of Nigeria and in extension that of Africa to meet the industrial needs of the capitalist metro poles (Aidelokhai, 2008). The traditional rulers therefore lost their heroic grandeur while the development was meant to enable the colonialists perfect their exploitation through the use of the traditional rulers. Chieftaincy institutions were, however, maintained but basically for colonialist

interest (Crowther, 1978). The traditional rulers therefore performed roles that were completely opposed to the wishes and aspiration of the colonised societies.

However, in post-independence Nigeria, the role of traditional rulers varies though with different administrations (Ukase and Abraham, 2016). In political administration, the traditional rulers have been given limited authority to serve as link between rural people and the government. They thus function as instrument of state control at the local level (Axel, 1998). Tenuche (2005) maintains that “in an effort to entrench the position of the dominant elite groups through informal, social and political networks, the traditional rulers are being effectively incorporated into the Nigerian state power structure by successive government” (319). Hence, special privileges are consistently accorded traditional rulers like appointing them as Chancellors of Federal Universities and chairman of both foreign and national commercial ventures among other favours. These privileges and favours have gotten into the heads of many traditional rulers and eroded the responsibility they owe the people that repose dignity in them (Obuh, 2002; Onyerionwu, 2007). Yol (2010) in a fuming rage maintains “they have remained agents for the perpetuation of neo-colonial status, thereby thwarting the process of development in the country” (8). The position of the paramount ruler therefore in most societies has become highly contentious among elites as it creates access to state power (Tenuche, 2005). Ukase (2011) puts it this way that:

Hitherto traditional rulership meant service to the people but unfortunately all that has changed. Traditional rulers currently enjoy wealth, influence, power and prestige, and like politics, it has become a do-or-die affair...regrettably too many traditional rulers have become partisan politicians. (39)

From the foregoing, with respect to the loss of their heroic grandeur to the Colonialists and with the fact that the traditional rulers have become docile in their responsibility to their subjects, one can adequately pitch the traditional rulers in post-independence Nigeria faraway from the leaders they claim to be. It is observed that they cannot take a firm political decision over their domain without government approval. To therefore describe them as followers in the garb of rulers or toothless bulldogs is not faraway from the truth. The question however is, how well have they performed in their supposed role as traditional rulers? Response to this is what the drama of Osofisan has done with an incisive but constructive criticism of the role of the traditional rulers

in post-independence Nigeria in *Farewell to a Cannibal Rage* and *Aringindin and the Night Watchmen*.

Traditional rulers in the cesspit of treachery in Osofisan's *Farewell to a cannibal rage* and *Aringindin and the Nightwatchmen*

It is an indubitable fact that one of the most prominent preoccupation of drama in the society is in its function as a tool for social change (Ademeso, 2009). For this unique role of drama to therefore remain relevant at all times, drama obviously especially African drama must remain unbiased in its commitment to thoroughly overhaul the society. It is within this matrix that Osofisan directs his incisive criticisms to authority figures, imperialists, artists and the womenfolk in his plays (Obuh, 2002). The traditional rulers referred to as Obi, Emirs, Oba, Ogbuefi in the different tribes of Nigeria are highly revered beings since time memorial in traditional Africa as they head their different domains. Even with the loss of their heroic grandeur during the colonial era, they still command a high level of respect as they now serve as links between the democratic rulers and the people. They can therefore influence and be influenced. Divergent opinions are however emerging as regards their role in nation building in post-independence Nigeria. For instance, Kehinde, (2008) rhetorically asks: “what is their worth in the governance of post-independence Nigerian societies?” and concludes they are political failures and another frustrated hope in terms of the expectation of their people from them (351). Similarly, Onyerionwu (2007) observes that “the lack of leadership credibility which now haunts our traditional societies has made sure that a once quasi-divine institution now lies in tatters, losing all claims to dignity and integrity and becoming the exclusive preserve of charlatans and pretenders” (48). Osofisan however examines these positions in *Farewell to a cannibal rage* and *Aringindin and the Nightwatchmen* in view of the norms of Yoruba society which demands the Baale, the symbol of power and authority to protect his people (Obuh, 2002).

In *Farewell to a cannibal rage*, the future of a promising union between Olabisi and Akanbi is threatened by the seed of deceit and intrigue sown by the Baale of Ilo to for pecuniary reasons some years back which creates enmity between both families of the intending couple. Unknown to the lovebirds, the father of Olabisi—Atanda killed Folabi the father of Akanbi. The untold becomes known at the point where both are to meet their families as Akanbi's uncle—Adigun as well as Olabisi's mum—Titi insist they cannot marry. Baale is responsible for this bitterness

borne out of his greed for wealth. Olabisi's mother, Titi recalls the incident: "It is a sad story. Your father and Akanbi's had long been friends. It became even proverbial, their intimacy. Then one day a stranger came to the village...everybody trooped out to meet him. But as soon as I saw him and the gleaming teeth of his escort, I knew trouble was afoot" (147). Osofisan's depiction of the stranger in this play is highly commendable as he explores both the loric and the literary in a dramatic matrix that establishes the inevitable interface between creativity, myth and history. Hence, Osofisan concurrently runs two scripts: one literary and the other loric—a folktale, with a single aim of exposing and ridiculing the actions and inactions of the traditional ruler in betraying his loyalty to his subjects by stimulating the trouble that precipitates the death of two friends. The stranger's request as sent by the government is a vast area of land for farming. The government, according to the stranger, is to develop new model farms which will turn every member of the community to millionaire. According to Titi, he therefore, "undertook a tour of the land to pick a suitable place for his projects" (148). The stranger finds Atanda and Folabi's land most suitable and fertile for cultivation but the duo will not give up their land, the land of their ancestors. The trouble therefore begins with the stranger's soft but poisonous remark to the Baale that:

I shall not force you, even though I have the authorization from the government. All I say is this: this is a huge project. Many of your people will become very rich. You especially, Baale, who have been chosen to be the sole agent of the fertilizers. Will you allow this two terrorists and agitators to halt your people's progress? (148).

Baale's desperation grows as he is ready to do anything to get the land for the stranger because of the pecuniary gains that await him from such act. So he gives no thought to the stranger's suggestion to use women as a tool to get rid of the two friends. Baale's plan is well hatched as his agents lie to Folabi and Atanda separately that their wives have become infidels. Osofisan thus exposes Baale for accepting to be the sole agent of fertiliser distribution in the domain and the one who employs the twin evils of money and women to ensnare and ruin his subjects.

This representation of traditional rulers obviously is reflexive of some contemporary traditional rulers who have shirked their responsibility of service, protection of human rights and duties they owe the people for pecuniary purposes. The play portrays the traditional rulers in post-independent Africa as selfish and only wanting to nourish their pockets instead of the people

they are expected to oversee. Osofisan portrays the linking role between government and the people which the traditional rulers now represent in postcolonial Nigeria as more hazardous to the people if it brings no good to the immediate poor and common men in their domain. The result of this ingrained action not only manifests in the death of Folabi and Atanda, it goes far to the next generation to affect their children as both Olabisi and Akanbi's love affair reaches a stalemate.

Osofisan's blend of the loric tradition in *Farewell to a cannibal rage* once again confirms him a restless researcher who aims at certain effect (Awodiya, 1995). Osofisan's deployment of the folklore of Simbi and the legendary handsome man (god) has often been treated by many of his critics as a warning by Baba Soye to Olabisi over her indiscriminate love for Akanbi (Obuh, 2002). This study however departs from such strings of un-sustained commentary borne out of the denouement of the play as Olabisi eventually marries Akanbi while both of them wrestles with their past, defeats it and clinches with a new dawn. It is thus observed that the god (the legendary handsome man) who Simbi elopes with and eventually kills Simbi despite all caution is a personification of the stranger as sent by the government to the village of Iloto. Simbi thus personifies Baale and the age long reverence the traditional rulers share with their subjects until they lost it. According to Baba Soye:

Simbi was her name and she stood in her stall like a queen of noon. Simbi the maiden who will fall for no man! Even now, ringed round her stall a circle of suitors sing her praises. But Simbi with her head in the air, Simbi will look at no mortal man! I ask of you, what kind of woman is this, who scorns high princes and the richest men?...The bravest and the handsomest came courting, but always to each and everyone, Simbi cried: I am not in love...Then suddenly one day, a god walked into the market...wore the richest damask. His sandals gleamed with flash pearls. A startled hush fell upon the women. Never was a man so handsome...then in a flash Simbi was after him, imploring, pleading sobbing! Simbi the once-proud queen of noon (140-141)

Simbi's story obviously is a metaphor for the Baale's treacherous act as it reinforces Osofisan's argument that the traditional rulers have fallen from their erstwhile quasi-divine estate not only by the colonial occupation but also by being greedy as Simbi is, by rejecting other amiable

suitors while he the Baale betrays Folabi and Atanda over their lands but embraced the government for selfish interest.

The situation however is not the same in *Aringindin and the Nightwatchmen* where Osofisan presents an alter ego to the Baale in *Farewell to a cannibal rage*. As a satirist, Osofisan's conscience is not beclouded; hence his criticism is constructive targeting the two sides of the coin of every situation. Osofisan therefore in *Aringindin and the Nightwatchmen* re-examines the traditional rulers with a prescription of how an ideal traditional ruler should relate especially in handling delicate matters. In *Aringindin...* the traditional ruler is faced with recurring robbery attacks on his subjects. Baale is disillusioned as all efforts to protect lives and property of the people is daily being thwarted by the armed and dangerous robbers. It is however disheartening that he who supposes to be the most powerful security resource in the community, which is Aringindin, is the one behind and responsible for the robberies, all because he wants to take over the leadership of the community. Consultation with Orunmila through Ifa reveals this, but Aringindin gradually with his prescription of Vigilantism which Orunmila opposes, grows wings and popularity even more than the traditional ruler—Baale. Aringindin further gathers tough human currents against the Baale including Kansilor. The Baale however insists that Aringindin's request for arms and vigilantes is not for the good of the town. In a rage with Kansilor, Baale laments:

BAALE: This town is getting tired of you and your kind! I repeat as before that this is a town and not a battlefield: we are civilised here! As long as this cap rides on my head, and as long as these feet wear the beaded sandals of our ancestors, no bullet will be allowed to fly about recklessly here. Crime will be investigated and punished according to the law (137)

The Baale therefore understands he occupies a vital position in the town which makes him responsible to the people so he tries his best to fulfil this purpose. He knows the intrigues and secret plots of Aringindin as revealed by Orunmila but contends that:

We cannot flee from our responsibility to speak the truth and stand by it. The oracle was clear yesterday—Increase the night guards, give them arms, as Aringindin requests, and you grant the power of arbitrary death. And who knows a long journey may then begin for us into a season of darkness. Our task is to be the beacon of light and yet to suffer to be singed by it. (139)

The Baale in *Aringindin...* thus contrasts that of *Farewell...* to a great extent especially in showing what is expected of the ruler even in a very difficult situation. Instead of betrayal, we see loyalty, selflessness and commitment. Though Baale in *Aringindin...* shifts ground for Aringindin's scheme as the situation turns dismal and life for him becomes miserable, we soon see the negative impact as Aringindin suddenly turns the market to detention centres while Ayinde foils his other intentions. Baale's eventual abdication and death though painful is however a metaphor for our traditional rulers to be courageous enough to quit the scene if they reach the point of irrelevance. It is thus noteworthy that his abdication paves the way for the process and actions that lead to the end of Aringindin's evil scheme and machination. He is such an epitome of the ideal traditional ruler needed in contemporary Nigeria and in extension Africa, who is selfless and always ready to take steps towards alleviating the plight of the common people. Osofisan has shown that only few of such exists while a whole lot of others in their pretentious effort are exposed and condemned in *Farewell to a cannibal rage* in a swipe to awaken them to their responsibility.

Tunes and Lyrics of disillusionment in Osofisan's *Esu and the vagabond minstrels* and *Farewell to a cannibal rage*

How can anyone fight a thief when musicians live in his kitchen making sweet songs of his swindles and hailing the rogue as a hero? You are all traitors, you singers! You help to betray our people! (Osofisan, 2003: 126)

Music like any other art is an age-old dominant means of expression ideologically imbued to influence the way people behave (Okuyade, 2011; Okafor, 2006). Artistes and musicians over the world from time memorial have therefore employed this medium either to entertain or satirise individuals and contemporary situations. In impoverished postcolonial Nigeria, while some musicians explore the music genres as counter-hegemonic alternative culture, other musicians have used it to reel out tunes and lyric of disenchantments to the people. These musicians according to Mbembe (1992) are sycophants, buffoons, clowns and fools whose function is to preach before the fetish the fiction of its perfection. In *Esu and the vagabond minstrels* and *Farewell to a cannibal rage*, Osofisan laments how musicians who emerge from economically marginalised social context after independence use their art to betray the people and as well occasion the backwardness of the country. He conceives music as an art capable of pulling down the tyranny of some leaders but is disillusioned with how the artistes have become pawns in the

hands of their pipers. *Esu and the vagabond minstrels* particularly has a metaphorical relevance to the Nigerian coup of 1983 led by Major General Muhammadu Buhari and Brigadier General Tunde Idiagbon which dramatically sent the elected civilian government of Alhaji Shehu Shagari packing on abuse of power and sycophancy among government officials (Ademeso, 2009). The bane of the play is that some musicians (sycophants) are in the employ of the government to sing praises at the detriment of the suffering masses. They however reap the harvest of their evil seeds at the arrival of the new government as explained by two of the minstrels, Epo Oyinbo and Sinsin:

EPO OYINBO: The band has been proscribed. They said we play too much for the politicians. We were banned, and all our assets seized (24)

SINSIN: No one could have known that times would change like this. That the feasting would end, the dancers would go to prison. And we, the singers, so many times decorated, would turn to vagabonds (27)

Osofisan shows no sympathy for the artistes but scolds them the more for their selfishness and crass greediness, a departure from the communal spirit and humanism upon which they are raised. In other words, it is obvious they emerge from economically and marginalized social context but their sycophancy has brought them opulence and at the same time make them pest to the people they ought to sing for their freedom. Indicting these groups of ordinary people (followers) as contributing to their own predicament and backwardness of Africa, Mbembe (1992:37) asks: “why does the population apparently collude with its government; how can it laugh at the antics of its rulers and yet at the same time join in celebrating them?” It is therefore so pathetic that many of the musicians have lost their senses of reason to pecuniary purposes to the extent that there now exist an intimate tyranny linking the rulers to the ruled (musicians) (Mbembe, 1992).

Unfortunately, many of these musicians who sing praises of the oppressors and politicians do not see any wrong in what they do. They see it as their art and as much as it brings them money; they are least concerned with its implication on the people at the lower divide of the society. Osofisan sees these kinds of musicians also as thieves just as those they sing their praises are. The notion is that they do not sing the plight of the marginalized, poor and suffering masses which Osofisan believes if done will draw the attention of the rulers to the followers’ plight and as well motivate

them to initiate developmental projects. Since they do not engage in these, but rather praise the bad rulers who in turn dole-out notes at their tunes and lyrics, Osofisan sees them as thieves and parasites. This is the message in the minstrels' conversation with Old man, who opens their eyes to the weight of the impact of their songs:

JIGI: We were hungry. Please forgive us. We do not normally live by stealing

OMELE: The times are desperate. We've not eaten for days...

OLD MAN: Those are fine words, such as I seldom hear from human beings. But I know you: You used to eat in abundance. Yes! at the feasts of the wealthy ones you sang the praise-songs, while their victims perished at the door.

SINSIN: We were earning a living, like everyone else! Sir we did not make laws, we only try to live by them

OLD MAN: You learned to live
Like pests. Feeding on other pests. (31-32)

A critique of this sort enables the drama genre not only to condemn such acts but also to open the perpetrators' eyes to the ways they too have in their art aid the dilemma of others and backwardness of their country. The ensuing act of the vagabond minstrels in the play shows they cannot give what they do not have as only Omele among the five minstrels is adjudged a real human being with human feelings while others: Jigi, Sinsin, Epo-Oyinbo and Redio are imbued with greed and selfishness. This is so because unlike the biblical Good Samaritan, except Omele, all the other four minstrels are reluctant to help anyone who cannot in turn make them rich after the old man gives them the lyric power to help suffering and unhappy people at no cost. One would then ask what kind of songs such musicians will reel out if not tunes that will further dampen the communal spirit but enrich their pockets? Osofisan however answers the question with the character of Fatai and Folawe in *Farewell to a Cannibal Rage*. The duo who are formerly couples, have to part as reality of the defect of their songs dawns on Folawe, the wife. Osofisan in this piece x-rays the life and actions of the swindlers, parasites and politicians who the musicians sing their praises. The character of the minister millionaire, the chief and patron of artistes, Chief Owombe is anatomized viz a viz the misplaced priority of some musicians as Fatai challenges his wife's decision to quit the band and marriage:

FATAI: One of our biggest outings and you were not to be found.
Chief Owombe was the host, and he had invited down some of the

richest men from Lagos. We played all night and by cockcrow they were still spending, spraying money down our foreheads. We came away with perhaps the largest earnings any group of musicians has ever made from a single night's performance. But my wife and lead singer, you were somewhere else! (124)

While the likes of Fatai lives fat on sycophancy and wasteful spending of the politicians, some members of the society pay for it as they are cheated, abandoned and swindled. As this reality dawns on Folawe, she quits the union with Fatai just as the boy from the city opens her eye in a stream of rhetorical questions:

FOLAWÉ: The boy from the city. He opened my eyes to other horizons... He asked me: are you happy? Of course I was. See, I was dancing! Then he asked whom are you singing for? Why do you and your husband drum and dance for the parasites of our society?...why do you compose songs to thrill them, you who come from the poor? Why do you hail chiefs and landowners and forget those who work the land? Our patrons have always been the wealthy. We sing for those whose purses are heavy, who at the sound of their names, open their bulging pockets like a floodgate (125-126)

Folawe however retorts "should we not play for them as our fathers did before us? Are musicians to go hungry?" (126). It is at this juncture Osofisan's diatribe makes a u-turn to painstakingly unravel the source of riches of some wealthy but dangerous men who albums, solos, singles are waxed to their praise in the African society through the boy from the city who obviously is the alter ego to the playwright:

Chief Owombe has bought the lands around, the lands that were our fathers' farms. Chief Owombe used to be minister in the government. But how did his salary make the minister into a millionaire?...When the chief has stolen from a family, when he has taken their land or stream, he marries a woman from the family and all the angry tongues are stilled: for how can you fight a thief when he's a generous son-in-law? How can anyone fight a thief when musicians live in his kitchen making sweet songs of his swindles and hailing the rogue as a hero? You are all traitors, you singers! You help to betray our people! (126)

Obviously some members of the society who ought to be in the vanguard for change like the musicians through their art have in their selfishness and greediness deepened the peoples' plight. According to Mbembe (1992) "their function is to preach before the fetish the fiction of its

perfection...but flattery is not just produced in order to please the despot; it is manufactured in a quest for profit or favours.” (21) This revelation gives credence to the extension of the frontiers of the inward looking approach of the Modern African Drama, postcolonial theory and literature in general, where rather than wantonly criticising the leaders, the followers too are examined so they can identify where they have also erred and make amends.

Osofisan however is quick to show in *Farewell to a cannibal rage* that there is gradually a departure from such wanton praise of the looters as Folawe divorces Fatai because of his commitment to self-enrichment through tunes and lyrics of disillusionment. This is evident in her parting words to Fatai—her husband after series of altercations on the relevance of artistes to governance and Fatai’s reluctance to desist from reeling out panegyrics to the rich because he inherited the skill from his ancestors:

FOLAWAWE: I’m going away, I’m going to make a new life for myself...The real works of beauty, Fatai they are the cities we build on justice. The food we put into hungry mouths. The hand we give to the downtrodden to lift them up to their feet. The shoulder we give to the poor to lean on. If your father had lived in our time of fracas and thieving, Fatai, he would not have danced for rogues. (124, 127)

This development is likened to the new wave of music that rented political space in the late 70’s and early 80’s as the likes of Fela Kuti and his Afrobeat, Ayinde Barrister, Sunny Okosun lambasted authorities and dared the gun and imprisonment. Fela, for instance; through his albums: *Perambulator*, *I.T.T (International Thief Thief)*, *Jen wi temi*, etc, according to Olaniyan (2004) in *Arrest the Music! Fela and his rebel art and politics*; becomes the “indisputable voice of the urban masses, students, and youth generally, who saw him as a fresh alternative to the ethnically anchored local panegyric forms and their thoughtless celebration of the corrupt nouveaux riches” (50-51). With the death of Fela, Sunny Okosun, and Ayinde Barrister, only few remain like Lagbaja, Beautiful Nubia that are vociferous in their criticism of leadership defect except for promulgation of religious music with moralistic messages. The ideological messages of the plays are therefore still apposite as a satire to contemporary musicians who live large on millions paid them by present-day politicians at the expense of the suffering masses. The representations are symbolic as this oddity cuts across the two sexes as Jigi and Sinsin in *Esu and the vagabond minstrels* are female musicians while Epo oyinbo and Redio are men and in

Farewell to a cannibal rage, Fatai is a man. With respect to the change Osofisan wants in the music industry, Omele in *Esu and the vagabond minstrels* is symbolic of male musicians while Folawe in *Farewell to a cannibal rage* is symbolic of female musicians to be in that vanguard.

Vigilantism in Nigeria: a critique of Osofisan's *Aringindin and the Nightwatchmen*

I don't just question any longer only the people I consider evil forces, I also try to question nowadays even those who claim to fight for the betterment of this society—**Osofisan** (Awodiya, 1993)

The oracle was clear yesterday—Increase the night guards, give them arms, as Aringindin requests, and you grant the power of arbitrary death. And who knows a long journey may then begin for us into a season of darkness—**Osofisan** (2002)

Through the ideological lens of dramatic metaphor, Osofisan in *Aringindin and the Nightwatchmen* examines the proliferation of vigilante groups in Nigeria in the late 20th century and its consequences. Osofisan's deployment of dramatic metaphor, which, according to Cash (2012) "is a complex device used by playwrights to draw a comparison between two seemingly dissimilar things, image or event" also affords the playwright opportunity to unveil certain elements in the society believed to be patriotic but entirely are destructive to society's development. Evidently, *Aringindin and the Nightwatchmen* is an adaptation of Brecht's (1941) *The Resistible rise of Arturo UI* set in the 1930's gangster-ridden Chicago where an influential man runs a fraudulent security outfit claiming to protect retail shop owners by asking for money to keep them safe from the thugs breaking up their stores. But unknown to them, the hoodlums are actually the powerful man's men. The dramatic metaphor in the play is a reference to Adolf Hitler in power in Germany whose governance is likened to an economic wolf in the dress of a humanitarian lamb. However in *Aringindin and the Nightwatchmen*, Osofisan examines through his protagonist the contradictions behind the emergence and institutionalisation of vigilante groups in the '90s especially how a system meant to afford law and order grows to perpetuate crime.

The inability of the Nigerian police to control the increasing wave of crime according to Nwaeze (2010) leads to proliferation of vigilante groups in contemporary Nigeria. Smith (2004) also posits that "vigilantism in Nigeria is a response to ambivalence, discontent and disillusionment about authority of the state" (429). In Pratten (2008) account, by the late 90's Oodua People's

Congress (OPC) has already been institutionalized in the west, Bakassi Boys in the East, while Hisba or Sharia implementation committee has began operation in the North; all with a mandate to dissipate crime in the various regions. For instance by 1998, the year the Bakassi Boys was formed, according to Human Rights Watch/ CLEEN (2002), Aba has been divided into eight zones controlled by organized criminal gangs. In addition to armed robbery, the gangs reportedly ran protection rackets, extorting money from business people and traders as well as attacking their customers (Meagher, 2007) as in Brecht's (1941) *The Resistible rise of Arturo UI*. This applies to the Bakassi Boys known for their strict code of conduct in dealing with robbers as their activities become increasingly bound up with thuggery, extortion and unjust killing of individuals (Meagher, 2007). Similarly, the OPC members are cited as both perpetrators and victims of human rights abuses (Human Rights Watch, 2003). These dilemmas, therefore, highlight the irreducible ambiguity of vigilantism in Nigeria.

In *Aringindin and the Nightwatchmen*, Osofisan not only anatomises the activities of vigilantism in Nigeria but also goes deeper to unravel the least examined reasons behind formations of such groups. With the character of Aringindin, a onetime soldier, the playwright demonstrates how what is presented to be in the interest of the society could also be a means to swindle the members of the society. The increasing rate of crime in the community is linked with the weakness of the state police and restraint of Baale, the traditional ruler to accent to Aringindin's suggestion of forming a vigilante group. Shops are looted while the security guard, Lamidi is slain by the robbers (124). The Baale is however cautious as the oracle has warned of the consequence of vigilantism in the community. According to Baale:

The oracle was clear yesterday—increase the Nightguards, give them arms, as Aringindin requests, and you grant the power of arbitrary death! And who knows, a long journey may then begin for us into a season of darkness! (139)

Aringindin who is later discovered as the head of the robbers with his accomplice, the elected Kansillor, continues to mount pressure on Baale because of their hidden agenda. In one of the confrontation between Kansillor and Baale who is now aware of their intention to unseat him, Baale distinguishes between a town and a battlefield noting that the former remains the status of his domain without the vigilante group:

BAALE: Thank you but let me return the warning too, which you can carry along to Aringindin your blood thirsty friend. This town is getting tired of you and your kind. I repeat as before that this is a town not a battlefield: we are civilized here! As long as this cap rides on my head, and as long as these feet wear the beaded sandals of our ancestors, no bullet will be allowed to fly about recklessly here. Crime will be investigated and punished according to law, and our lives will continue to run the rhythm of regulated seasons, just as prescribed by the oracle! (137)

Baale however succumbs to pressure to institutionalise vigilantism in the face of repeated robbery attacks and wailing of his subjects especially when Ayinde the most learned and critical of Aringindin is almost lynched by the traders (146). Incongruously, Aringindin who the oracle foretells of his ill-intention becomes a celebrity in town even as his accomplice, Kansillor facilitates a commendation letter from the central government in Lagos. This leads to the abdication of Baale. Osofisan therefore shows that human beings can go to any extent to tarnish the image of someone with good intention in the bid to put up their ulterior plan. He further reveals that not all the initiatives in the society as seen in Aringindin's proposal for a vigilante group are mainly for the benefit of the society even in a democratic setting. Osofisan succeeds in this as Ayinde the school teacher who can no longer contain his dissatisfaction with the development while reading Aringindin's commendation letter gives the people a shocking revelation of Aringindin and Kansillor's plan to take over power the following day:

Aringindin is our hero: he has made our nights safe, chased away the robbers who would steal even our dream! But let me ask you, what is the price we pay for this safety? Answer me? We sleep safely, but everywhere Aringindin's decree surrounds us like iron fences!...Let him take his reward, and let him also be retired! Disband the nightwatchmen!...Things are happening which, in our innocence, will soon turn this place into a virtual prison yard! Unless you take my advice now (159)

Ayinde further challenges Kansillor to tell the town what him and Aringindin plans for the following day (160), while Oluode who has been sent as spy by Baale among the nightwatchmen completes the revelation:

OLUODE: You Kansillor, and you Aringindin, you know what you have planned to start tomorrow! Power! Your plan is to seize power here, completely from midnight. It's all laid out! There will be roadblocks on the major highways and around the market. And detention centres and more. You have planned to impose a levy on

all the traders and farmers after you would have put the Baale under house arrest (161).

A scripted robbery attack by Aringindin's men rocks the venue of the revelation as Ayinde is murdered while his girlfriend Yobi, the daughter of Kansillor is whisked off. Although Aringindin is later crowned king, but then it has become clear to the people that he is their problem hence like a goat he himself goes to the slaughter's slab to meet his inevitable end.

Osofisan's diagnosis of vigilantism in Nigeria has thrown up many revelations to the public square. He obviously does not condemn vigilantism but questions some of the almost often ulterior and arcane motives and personalities behind such groups. His examination also shows through Aringindin that some members of the society, like ex-service men, retired civil servants and other common people are in the business of drawing back the wheels of change in their respective communities. Who among the people would have imagined that Aringindin's complaint about rise in crime is the beginning of his deft machination to take power and that he is the kingpin of the robbers? That is why Osofisan in an interview with Agunbiade (2015) submits that "appearances do not always tell the truth...just because he has been complaining, we don't ask, why is he complaining? Perhaps he is complaining because he is not one of those enjoying the ilabe—corruption" (5).

The recruited night watchmen of Aringindin also betray their community by becoming armed robbers as against the reason of joining the group. This is sad and a disillusionment to the highest order which shows how lopsided things are in contemporary Nigeria and in extension Africa. The likes of Aringindin are also shown to still exist in Nigeria waiting for opportunities to further deepen the plight of their fellow countrymen. This revelation aided by the deployment of dramatic metaphor clearly shows hidden motives behind some acts of benevolence and contrasts it with the challenges of leadership in a matrix that reveals that wanton and cursory criticism of leaders without examining the milieu upon which they operate will not help identify obstacles to progress in Nigeria rather will help maintain status quo.

The play also confirms that no human community exists without a problem but contends that solutions must be critically considered as recourse to vigilantism in the play does not go down well with the people just as in Nigeria where it becomes the foundation for many uprising as Bakassi Boys culminates into militancy in the Niger delta while sharia in the north forms basis

for Boko Haram group that is terrorising the country. With a deft hold on metaphor, Osofisan who is a visionary playwright in *Aringindin and the Nightwatchmen* shows that the prevailing condition of Nigeria not only degenerates from the leaders but involves a deliberate effort of some of the followers.

Followership and the dialectics/ aesthetics of sub-in-version in Osofisan's selected plays

One of the marks of a great playwright is his/ her ability to alter the norms and standards by which his audience and readers view the world and at the same time attack those norms frontally (Hornby, 1986). Such mission in the theatre according to Hornby involves a great deal of conscious employment of metadramatic elements. A critical look at the selected plays of Osofisan in this study shows Osofisan fits the portrait of the great playwright as delineated by Hornby considering his expropriation and experimentation with different forms and norms in the theatre genre to drive home his message. Buttressing this, Awodiya (1995) submits that "Osofisan's dramatic structure is indifferent to orthodoxy; it is compact, assuming epic dimensions through the breaking up of dramatic forms and then re-assembling them into a quintessential Osofisan" (26). An overview of this trait in Osofisan's plays presents him as a playwright who is philosophically and aesthetically committed to a dialectic act of subverting and inverting theatre ideals which is apposite to the current study.

To begin with, the term subversion comes from the Latin word "subvertere" meaning to overthrow and refers to a process or practice by which established values and principles of a socio-political system or set of rules are challenged and transformed (Anwar, 2015). Inversion on the other hand is an act of changing the order or position of something to its opposite or of turning something upside down. Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963) provides an extensive discussion on the workings of inversion in a social context where for instance a reversal of the colonisers' monopoly on violence is considered necessary to break out of the master-slave dialectic.

An attempt is therefore made here to see how Osofisan has skillfully deployed the ideology of inversion and subversion in his depiction of the fault-lines of the traditional rulers, musicians and vigilantes who are often idealised in African literature and its milieu. The attention is first drawn to Osofisan's deployment of Orunmila motif in *Aringindin and the Nightwatchmen* to divest the idealised mask of Aringindin, an act reflexive of his earlier commitment to subversion of models

in the theatre genre. This is known as Osofisan's materialistic dialectics as against his predecessors' metaphysical inclination and conception of drama (Awodiya, 1995). With the Orunmila motif rooted in Ifa divination corpus which is noted for exploration of knowledge, Osofisan challenges the undialectical conception of human history as Baale reveals that: "The oracle was clear yesterday—Increase the night guards, give them arms, as Aringindin requests, and you grant the power of arbitrary death. And who knows a long journey may then begin for us into a season of darkness" (139). Osofisan, therefore, in *Aringindin and the Nightwatchmen* depicts how human problems are created by man and can only be dismantled by man as against first generation playwrights' mythopoeic vision manifested in Wole Soyinka's earlier belief that gods and in extension leaders are entirely responsible for most of humans' problem (Awodiya, 1995).

Osofisan also subverts myth as he uses gods as metaphors and not as deities in *Farewell to a cannibal rage* to depict how traditional rulers betray their people through covetousness. The folktale of Simbi who elopes with a god who comes in human form to the market is a metaphor to the entire story where the Baale because of pecuniary gains (promise of being made sole agent of fertilizers by the big government in the city) desecrated his community with the blood of two friends. Osofisan in this matrix establishes the fact that the traditional rulers have the power to resist external influence wanting them to betray their subjects. The god (handsome man) in the folktale tells Simbi in a song to desist from following him: *Dehin O, Simbi Dehin* (142) but she refuses to go back because of her lust for the handsome stranger. Similarly, in the main plot, the officer from the big government tells Baale "I shall not force you, even though I have the authorisation from the government" (148) but Baale because of what he will gain throws caution to the wind. The handsome man/ god kills Simbi, while Baale causes enmity between Atanda and Folabi over their rich lands which government wants. This leads to the gruesome death of the two friends. Here is a ruler who is to ensure the well being of his people but now the one destroying them. The god in this wise is not to blame because he cautioned Simbi who is adamant just as the officer from the government gives Baale a caveat. gods which are often idealised therefore are subverted, made unsacred to show they are not to be entirely held responsible for human shortcomings as this study has shown and signals too that critical assessment of situations are needed before apportioning blame to leaders and government.

Osofisan's swipe at the musicians, vigilantes and traditional rulers is made possible by his inversion of popular opinion which often idealises these groups of people while the political rulers are indiscriminately satirised. He thus employs satire in the play, but contrary to his contemporaries' notion on satire as a tool to criticise the rulers, he deploys it to chastise the followers. This is more pronounced in *Esu and the vagabond minstrels* where the minstrels are later assessed and satirised one after the other by those they have deceitfully helped with the power given to them by the old man (*Esu...*,81-84). While in *Aringindin and the Nightwatchmen* Ayinde employing the elements of Horacian Satire is vociferous in lampooning Aringindin, Kansillor and, Oluode who is a spy among the night guards. We see this when he challenges Oluode to disclose Aringindin's plan to take over the town from Baale:

AYINDE: He is afraid, can't you see! A man of his status and reputation. What is it that would make someone like Oluode tremble like this? Courage! All it needs, Oluode is a little dose of the courage that earned you your name (180).

Osofisan, therefore, reverses his satirical swipes rather than pitching it at the leaders; he directs it to the masses.

A predisposition to subversion and inversion is also obvious in the selected plays in how Osofisan structures his forms and techniques as well as his language. The traditional African performance praxis and Epic theatre to a great extent inform this. He has however evolved a theatre form that is entirely quintessential by subverting and inverting these orthodox theatrical models and styles. This is made possible by his employment of metadramatic elements which include role playing, play-within-the-play, role switching and other elements which according to Hornby (1968) helps alter and attack the norms and standard by which the audience views the world and at the same time according to Gilbert and Tompkins (1996) demonstrates the obvious political power involved in deconstructing assumptions of authority on stage (250). In *Aringindin and the Nightwatchmen* and *Farewell to a cannibal rage*, Osofisan's deployment of the elements of play-within-the-play helps unveil Aringindin and the Baale's (*Farewell...*) contribution to the backwardness of their community. In *Aringindin...*the folktale which is a short play on the Elephant and the Tortoise is a metaphor for the main plot where Aringindin represents the Elephant who is toppled by the tortoise who represents the people. This shows total destruction awaits the follower or members of the masses who is in position to alleviate the plight of his

people but instead betrays them. Similarly, in *Farewell...* the folktale of the handsome god, who comes to market which Simbi falls in love with in the face of earlier suitors, is a play within the real play to show how the traditional ruler (Baale) because of lust betrays his subjects. The audience therefore watches two events at once, one within another. This ensuing double vision according to Gilbert and Tompkins (1996):

Provides a way of re-visioning the entire spectacle as the audience watches the play *and* the play-within-a-play *at the same time* as it watches the actors watching the inner play. It follows that a play within-a-play always creates a dialogical tension between the various levels of performance: it mimics and reflects the original (either the original action or the original text) and it refracts the entire text's meaning. (250)

The aesthetics of inversion in the selected plays can also be appraised in Osofisan's use of the techniques of demystification of the theatre of illusion. This technique, according to Awodiya (1995), "enables Osofisan to dislodge the illusory world of art for reality" (213). In *Esu and the vagabond minstrels*, Osofisan in the introductory note to the play draws attention of the audience to the pseudo and fictional make-up of the theatre performance while reacting to the stage managers position on lack of costume: "Come on, what are costumes? What are props? Are they not just embellishment? It is the story we want, not so?" (14). The same in *Farewell to a cannibal rage* as the narrator interrupts frequently to add a new character. This is seen in the inclusion of Folawe, a new character, to challenge Fatai's commitment to praising the politicians to the detriment of the poor people (124). The swapping of roles and costumes openly before the audience in *Farewell...* (130-131) also inverts theatre ideals where actors change costume behind the curtain. All these give credence to Osofisan's reaction to popular opinion on leadership as the only cause of disillusionment in African drama. He therefore subverts and inverts such positions through all means at his disposal on the stage.

Similarly, Osofisan employs the structural techniques of Compressionism. This subverts the all-inclusive theatre where many props, characters are involved. Dramatic components, space and set are also limited. This is obvious in *Esu and the vagabond minstrels* when Ade one of the actors at the onset says "if you don't mind our doing it, without costumes and the necessary props" (14). The narration also reveals how limited the space and set are:

The sitting arrangements now must be such that, except for the open space at the centre, there is no real separation between the players and the assembled audience. Players not directly needed on stage or in the orchestra, should mix with the audience (15-16)

Also in *Farewell to a cannibal rage*, the narrator announces to the actors that because of lack of props they, the characters will be the scenery by simulating the props:

NARATOR: *Scenery. Décor. Background. Location. The look, I don't know what the theatre people call it. But I'll show you what I mean. You see, this story I'm going to tell you takes place in a village at the foot of a hill. Well we can't have a real hill here now, but we can simulate one figuratively with our bodies and so on. That's the background I mean. Whenever a scene is about to begin, I'll announce the location, where it is to take place. And then you'll all try and create that environment for us. Figuratively. The symbolic elements. The commonest sights. The sounds. Just enough to give us the proper framework (99-100)*

As the play goes on, one of the actors is seen with a knife, cutting a round hole in one mat which they hold up to represent the sun (100). All these subversion and inversion of the known theatre ideals are deployed to aid and facilitate the message of the play while also concurrently showing how lopsided things have become in the society.

The language employed in realising the themes of the plays has also undergone some level of inversion. There is a departure from orthodoxy as Osofisan believes the English language can be tamed and imaginatively manipulated to accommodate its foreign environment. The language used is therefore ordinary, affable and simple. It is not bombastic or jargon-plated. This is imperative because for those who have all their lives believe that their entire problem are occasioned by the leaders and never for once considered the part they play in that set back, to now have a rethink, no doubt will require a dexterous means of presentation where language must play a crucial role. This is lucid in *Farewell to a cannibal rage* when Baba Soye, the Ifa priest tells Olabisi that “when ifa speaks to the young, he discards incantations. But careful! The voice of the oracle, even in fable, is still a kernel of wisdom-seeded fruit” (145). In other words, the folktale of Simbi and the handsome god deliberately told in simple language is for Olabisi to have a facile understanding of why she may not marry Akanbi whose uncle murdered Olabisi's father through the evil plan of the greedy Baale.

The simplicity of language also makes it easy for the audience to be involved in the dramatic enactment on the stage since the language employed is that of the audience. The atmosphere therefore unconditionally becomes theirs and at that point the wall between the stage and audience collapses to give room for audience participation. In *Farewell to a cannibal rage*, the audience joins the handsome god to sing “Dehin o, Simbi dehin” (142) throughout the folktale. Again, in *Esu and the vagabond minstrels*, the audience is called upon to participate in the play as Old man engages them:

I am going to throw the question to the audience and let their fellow human being decide. (*To the audience*). You! Don’t just sit there and let an injustice be done. Say something! Should Omele return the disease or should he keep it? Speak up we need your answers to decide! Yes, you sir and you madam? (90)

The ordinary language used, therefore, affords easy interaction between the stage and the audience.

Osofisan’s use of his indigenous language, Yoruba, is also noteworthy in driving down his message unmistakably to his audience. The audience by this is elated, quickly identifies with the message and accepts it for change. They do not see the message as foreign but one emanating from their culture. For instance, all the Yoruba songs in *Aringindin and the Nightwatchmen*, some of which are: “Ejeka sise o (147), Emi ni a oni yo fun (155), and Erin Karele o, ko wa joba (185)” are all translated at the glossary page as well as all the Yoruba words and phrases. The same goes for the Yoruba songs by the minstrels in *Esu and the vagabond minstrels*: Esu o, Esu (31) and Obangiji Oba tolaye (79) which are all translated on same page. The beauty of this is the ensuing audience participation evident in the singing of the songs by the audience.

Finally, to establish that followership defects cuts across both sexes, Osofisan through symbolism in *Esu and the vagabond minstrels* and *Farewell to a cannibal rage* presents both male and female musicians who betray the people through their songs. Fatai in *Farewell...* is a man, Epo Oyinbo and Redio in *Esu...* are men while Sinsin and Jigi are women in *Esu...* who for pecuniary purposes sell their conscience. For the new dawn Osofisan wants in the music industry, he presents in *Farewell...* Folawe, a woman and Omele, a man in *Esu...* who are both devoid of selfishness and willing to use their art to alleviate the plight of their fellow suffering

human beings. It is however noteworthy that those to pioneer this new dawn are very few compared to other followers who perpetuate the old order.

While all attempts through art (literature) has been made without tangible change in the society, Osofisan has committed his art in a dialectical way to subvert and invert both ideologically and aesthetically some theatre and popular ideals for a way forward in Nigeria and Africa. The outcome of these is his criticism of the idealised and less criticised people in the society like the traditional rulers, musicians and community security men (vigilante). The revelations in the three plays obviously throw up a lacuna in the criticism of African literature which only can be bridged by conscious deconstruction of assumptions of authorities on stage and ability to alter the norms and standards by which the audience views the world. This is what Osofisan achieves in the plays and by this fits the portrait of the great playwright delineated by Hornby (1986)

Conclusion

This chapter, through the analysis of three plays—*Esu and the vagabond minstrels*, *Aringindin and the Nightwatchmen* and *Farewell to a cannibal rage*—gives credence to the need for a paradigm shift in African literature from unrestrained criticism of the leaders to a careful examination of the followers especially those who claim to fight for the betterment of the society. The revelation in the plays obviously is a sad commentary on postcolonial Nigeria as traditional rulers, musicians and vigilantes who occupy sensitive and revered positions and are to be in the vanguard to better the lots of the people are found betraying the masses for pecuniary purposes. Osofisan's ability to invert and alter popular opinion and some theatre ideals makes the works appealing. As a build up to the previous chapter, the discourse of disillusionment in African literature obviously cannot be intact until its frontiers are widely open to accommodate incisive criticism of anomalies from certain idealised personalities in its genres and the society. The overall end of it is that there will emerge a criticism that is cycloramic in nature which will certainly shake up the entire continent with no one left out to arrive at the idyllic society the literature has always envisioned.

CHAPTER FIVE

PARADOX OF HUMBLE BEGINNING AND IRRESPONSIBLE LEADERSHIP IN FEMI OSOFISAN'S *ALTINE'S WRATH, THE INSPECTOR AND THE HERO* AND *ONE LEGEND, MANY SEASONS*

This chapter examines the representations of the ironic twist of fate of the ordinary man who rises to prominence and thereafter unleashes the baton of oppression on the masses in postcolonial Nigeria. This paradox between poverty and power in contemporary Nigeria is to be examined as disenchantments in Femi Osofisan's *Altine's Wrath, The Inspector and the Hero* and *One Legend, Many Seasons*. This is with a view to situating the thematic and ideological concerns of Osofisan that humble background is not a guarantee for transformative leadership (Agunbiade, 2015) as well as Abubakar Gimba's (2008) position that "today's leadership was yesterday's followership" (30), hence needless the wanton criticism of leaders while idealising the followers. The rationale of the chapter therefore is to establish that the common people have pivotal role to play in transforming the country with respect to their attitude to politics and leadership. Obviously one cannot deny them access to power, just as popular opinion prefers them to the elites and aristocrats but as will be observed in the selected plays, some common men seem to come into power with a rapacious zeal to loot the treasury. The chapter therefore presents Osofisan as an avant-garde playwright pioneering a new dawn in the discourse of disillusionment and African drama. The chapter concludes with an examination of the relevance of African drama to national development.

Humble Beginning and Irresponsible Leadership: A Paradox in Osofisan's *Altine's Wrath, The Inspector and the Hero* and *One Legend, Many Seasons*.

The search for a good society does not necessarily mean that the common man is the most perfect man for the job. The poor man must be examined so that if he finds himself at the helm of affairs, he would not turn against the masses.—(Ademeso, 2009:55)

Rather than retrieving the positive impact of their experience with history, they undignifiably succumb to the negative infertility of the experience—(Mowah, 2002:104)

The socio-political temperaments in Osofisan's *Altine's Wrath, The Inspector and the Hero*, and *One Legend, Many Seasons* have ironic dimensions as the plays evince the absurdities and hypocrisy that characterise the life and attitudes of the common man in contemporary Nigeria.

Osofisan captures the incongruous and ludicrous state of our social life in an incredible manner that creates concern in the soul and laughter on the face. Unlike other plays where Osofisan traps the common man in the darkness or half light and penetrates very close and intimate like a knife in the ribs (Awodiya, 1993:18), Osofisan in the selected plays instead adopts a novel approach by identifying the one-time common man who providence brings to prominence and leadership but now inflicts hardship on the followers and other common people. Osofisan perhaps takes cue from Aime Cesaire play, *The Tragedy of King Christophe* (1963) to establish similar trend in the Nigerian context. The play which is about Haiti's 1971 independence and the years that follow presents the eponymous character—King Christophe—and his governance as a stark warning to African and Caribbean leaders regarding the use and misuse of power as Christophe who is once a slave re-inscribes himself in the new Haitian society not as a liberated “slave” but as a self-conscious master as he assumes the role of an oppressor. This inconceivable paradox is evident in Osofisan's *Altine's Wrath* as Lawal, a onetime wretched man rises to become the Permanent Secretary in a ministry invested with power over allocation of land. The main conflict in the play is between Lawal, his dumb wife and the farmers. Lawal's ministry has taken over the lands of some villagers including Malam Audu and Mr Onene who represent the landless landowners often displaced when government forcefully acquire kilometers of land for development purposes. In their case, the poor men's lands are taken over five years without compensation. Similarly, “their houses are demolished, their farms and crops destroyed by the ministries' Bulldozers” (*Altines*, 15) as explained by Dr Aina, Lawal's old classmate who intervenes to alleviate the plight of the farmers. However, unknown to the farmers, their land documents are intact in the house of Lawal who keeps dribbling them to go to one Local government or the other. Dr Aina's plea for the farmers' and Lawal's response below show how inconceivable the hatred of Lawal, a onetime poor man is to the poor farmers:

AINA: I know, Lawal am not accusing you. That's not why we've come here. These poor people have been suffering a lot these days. In fact, they can tell you themselves, if you will just listen

LAWAL: (*Quickly*) No, no need, I know all about it. The poor people always have a long catalogue of complaints. They're the only ones who suffer. Nobody else, but as I told you, I have appointment (*Altines... 16*).

Further revelations, according to Mr Onene, show that the lands are cut into plots and given to rich people. Osofisan further takes a swipe at the activities of government ministries with respect to award and execution of contracts. Lawal is caught in the web of corruption as he aids and abet corruption in the ministry. In fact, he collects twenty percent from every contract which he saves in Altine's—the eponymous character, his dumb wife—bank account. Lawal calls this illegal gratification saved for his retirement “the harvest of his long years at work” (*Altine's*,...33). This is revealed in his conversation with his crime partner, Alhaji Maikudi who challenges him—Lawal—on behalf of his partner on the role Lawal plays for taking such a huge twenty percent for contract facilitation:

LAWAL: He knows! Of course, he knows! You both know that in my position as PS, I am selling myself cheaply by agreeing to come in with you for only twenty percent. Or is it not me who'll ensure you win the contracts, not only with us, but with other ministries?

ALHAJI: Yes that's true, but all the same

LAWAL: And as for the technical side, who's in charge of that in the ministry? Not me? Answer! You know, for instance, that you'll not need to pay for any feasibility studies any more. I'll just pass you the Consultants' Reports to copy and submit. That is what I used to do for Waterson Associates, before their greed got them into trouble. And as for the machines you will require for the projects, who hires them out? Is it not my ministry? And am I not the one who decides the rates of payment? (*Altine's*...24)

Finding it difficult to comprehend what has become of Lawal, Dr Aina reminds Lawal of his onetime human right activism:

AINA: But Lawal when we were in school you fought against this kind of thing. You were one of the champions of the poor, of the masses, the underprivileged...my God, Lawal! Is this the same Lawal I know? What happened to you? You have grown completely rotten. (17-18)

Lawal's response to this challenge presents the hypocritical posturing of some poor people as Lawal is entirely faraway from who Dr Aina uses to know just as his utterance reflects what power can make of a onetime humble man:

LAWAL: Rotten, what did you say? And that to me. Listen, men like me, we control this place! We turn and the entire society turns with us! We snap our fingers and women far more important than you fall on their knees in obeisance! ...look here woman, you are no longer in school, and you had better wake up. Rotten! I own companies! Lands! Houses! Cars and horses! ...women like you and better than you kill themselves to get into my bed! Wake up. We've left school, and the rain is ended! We've come to the age of fire and thunders where only people like me beat their chest!
(*Altine's...18*)

To establish that the mechanism of oppression in human life is fashioned by human beings and can only be shattered by human beings, Osofisan takes us back into Lawal's humble beginning. The climax of the play which manifests the title of the play aids this shocking revelation as Altine—Lawal's wife—who feigns being dumb all the while speaks of Lawal's betrayal, corruption and poor beginning. In an attack on Mariam, Lawal's mistress, who now fronts as Lawal's wife, Altine laments:

Darling this, Darling that. But you don't know, do you, how many years it took me to mould him into a "darling"? From a thin little stick of a boy, all gaunt, with his ribs showing like the aftermath of a civil war? So wretched and always so frightened then! Tell her, Lawal, how you were when I met you! How I tended you and sewed you together, always sacrificing myself, always bowing my head, refusing to listen to the screams of my own inner needs! All so he could become your "darling" one day, Mrs Harlot!
(*Altine's...31*)

The revelation does not end there as Altine shifts to Lawal to further enumerate her suffering on him and show how ungrateful he is. She reminds him:

All those years, you went to the university and I had to slave to pay your fees, and maintain the children, as well as your aged mother-Allah preserves her memories, the good woman! She was the one who first called me, months after you came home with your degree. She sat me down one evening to discuss it how you had changed totally, and how she could no longer recognize you. (31)

When one considers these twists of Lawal's humble beginning; his hypocrisy as the champion of the plight of the oppressed and his mess at the cockpit of power, one cannot but be lost in a paradoxical web which reflects the dilemma African playwrights and critics now find themselves in the face of emerging realities among common people on the continent. Like the biblical

question by Prophet Isaiah “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” (Isaiah 6:8), Africans are daily asking rhetorically “who is capable of leading us?” as those with humble background supposed to bring recourse to the plight of the poor masses and common people have proven worse than the elites. This is what Osofisan means in an interview with Agunbiade (2015) when he recounts the presidential campaign logistics, semantic and slogans of former president Goodluck Jonathan who using his humble beginning among other things said he went to school without shoes to arouse sympathy and compel votes for his candidacy. Osofisan is of the opinion that when one is looking for vote one adopts any approach to get it while Jonathan is not any less culpable of this. Osofisan enunciates that:

He grew up poor, some voted for him because of that but I don't think majority voted for him because of that, we are not even sure if majority voted for him. That he came from a poor background is not a guarantee of moral uprightness. It is wrong to associate poverty and morality. This is what I am trying to say, that somebody is poor doesn't necessarily mean that person will be righteous or that he will know how to use power. (Agunbiade, 2015:2)

As that saving personality becomes a scarce commodity even among the common people and one time poor but now affluent people, Ademeso (2009) suggests that:

The man who will lead the society out of its predicament does not have to be a poor man alone; but if a rich man, with a pure heart, and full of compassion for humanity is available, the revolution could start from there (55)

This exactly is the bottom line of osofisan's canon in *The Inspector and the Hero* and *One Legend, Many Seasons*, as he digs deeper into the alluring and hypocritical façade of the common man and followers to show needless the quest for a one time poor man to rule his people. Though many critics (Awodiya 1995, Mowah 2002) have appraised *The Inspector and the Hero* as Osofisan's swipe at politicians and leadership deficit in contemporary Nigeria, it is however observed that the restless dramatist in the play rather embarks on a subtle, deft and surreptitious critique of the common people and followers through an inverted lens of perception. As such the successful politician—Chief Ereniyi Eson and his wife Aduke's rise from obscurity to prominence is anatomised with the aim of presenting an alternative engagement paradigm to the over flogged criticism of leadership in Africa. The play begins humorously with the couple's

affectionate recollection of the antecedents to their present opulence and power. It is at this conversation that we are introduced to the formative years of Chief Ereniyi Eson who just resigns from the Customs service for his gubernatorial ambition. The scene which is at his sitting room is at the end of a lavish party thrown to celebrate the nomination of Ereniyi as his party's governorship flag bearer. In a tête à tête with his wife, we are brought into the knowledge of Ereniyi's humble beginning as he thanks providence for his odyssey from shame to limelight,

ERENIYI: I see all these stars, and I ask myself, is it really true? Is it true? That me, only yesterday a poor, wretched village boy, with jiggers in my feet, rags on my back, and if I'm lucky, one meal of garri soaked in water and now...now...(97).

One however finds it inconceivable that Ereniyi, a onetime wretch journeys through series of hurdles to become a murderer, smuggler and hardened fraudster in governance. His corrupt conducts of fronting Aduke—his wife like the scrupulous madam Tortoise of Soyinka's *A Dance of the Forest* whose biggest asset is her sex to perpetuate evil and corruption in the Customs office is unraveled with the criminal investigation of Inspector Akindele and his team into the death of Kuyinu, a staff at the Customs office. Inspector Akindele's encounter with Ereniyi is a battle in which concerted wits and total determination to force each side's point of view help in sustaining the thrust of the play. While Ereniyi claims Akindele cannot even with evidence submerge him and his ambition to become the next governor as he has paid his dues to life while languishing during his formative years, Akindele insists justice must take precedence and that Ereniyi is not the kind of Governor the people needs (*The Inspector...*, 32).

Ereniyi is further revealed as an archetype of the common man/ follower who sees politics and leadership as an avenue to loot the treasury and amass wealth. Hence, when struggling their intention is never to look inward to later in life alleviate the plight of those who are now in their one time shoes but they nurse along the line their bitterness for the society. Osofisan confirms this with Ereniyi's embittered expression about his childhood experience, which he—Ereniyi notes as the reason why he must become the next Governor. He recalls that:

From a wretched village urchin, yes! That is where I came from. I was one of those born with jiggers in our toes, big as footballs. Sometimes with craw-craw on my head. Itching!...and when it pained too much, we scrubbed out the craw-craw with sand... We wake up early in the shivering dawn, tie a rag to our waist, and trek

in a file down to the stream four to five miles away. That is where our history of worms comes from. It's from the infested stream which we drank from, and washed in, with our germs and jiggers (*The Inspector...*, 129)

Ereniyi also recounts how his mother struggles, taking him through villages to ensure he goes to school. He recalls his rejection based on his tattered appearance and map of craw-craw all over his face and head. And how his mother has to abandon her dignity by dancing and begging for favours before the school authorities. He frames it more somberly when he laments:

ERENIYI: There were times she could not find the school fees and they would throw me out for a week, a fortnight, sometimes even a month. And she would gather her rags together again and come to grovel on the classroom floor... Yes that's where I've come from, from the very depth of humiliation... All through school I bore the nicknames in silence..."Omo mama elekun" son of the sniveling mother. "Omo ejowo sahh", "Omo Tisa e gba mi" (131)

Osofisan in an unusual manner identifies this humble beginning as a cause to the rampant plundering in the coffers of the government by those least expected to perpetrate these vices. He sees the poor man as piling up his anger, his disillusionment, and his unhappiness thereby waiting for the opportunity to swindle in an outfit or office that is lucrative. No wonder, Osofisan contends in an interview with Agunbiade (2015) saying "that somebody is poor doesn't necessarily mean that person will be righteous or that he will know how to use power" (3). This is a deconstruction of the popular opinion that idealises the common man as capable of transforming the society with the thinking that he or she will have feelings for the people. Osofisan buttresses that this is not always so in Ereniyi's revenge remark that:

I survived it all, storing it up in my breast, swearing one day I would avenge it! Everything! That those people would fall on their faces one day and worship that same woman they were humiliating! That's how I survived, by hiding, and hoarding my dreams! I have dreamt of her placing her feet on the heads of those arrogant boys one day, of her pronouncing sentence, and of them begging in their broken voices! (*The Inspector...*, 131)

Ereniyi, like Lawal in *Altine's wrath* who once is a champion for the plight of the masses, betrays the common people who simply would have been cajoled to vote him being once in their shoes. Candidly as intended, Ereniyi is on the verge of realising his dream when investigation into his scam, corruption and murder of Kuyinu commenced. Through fictitious names and

several secret bank accounts, Aduke his wife is revealed as transacting numerous shady businesses including smuggling of contraband goods into the country. Surprisingly most of her business associates like Alhaji Gao and Dr. Peterson through whom her questionable deals can be exposed die in mysterious circumstances (*The Inspector...*119).

With these criminal acts by the Ereniyi's, one may be erroneously led to conclude that Osofisan is putting forward a blanket prognosis that everyone with humble beginning is bound to be a corrupt leader. This obviously is not so as Osofisan in same play pitches Ereniyi against Inspector Akindele and his Assistant—Coral in a moral contest. While they all have humble beginning, Inspector Akindele and Coral choose the right path. Akindele resists bribery offered him by Aduke to stall the prosecution as he tells about his background:

AKINDELE: No madam, it's murder. It cannot be done...you think money is all that matters...because he rose from poverty! And me, me also, where do you think I came from? Look at me! Do you think I had no mother too who had to learn her special dance, who picked her stores from the left-overs of markets? If everyone who was born poor were to make that an excuse to murder and plunder! (*The Inspector...*, 137-138)

To affirm that there are still good heads in the force and society who though have humble beginning but responsible, Inspector Akindele explains why he joins the force:

AKINDELE: That is why I joined the force, madam to fight it the little way I can. No one has to live compulsorily by the rules of beasts... That boy, Kuyinu, whom you all seem to have forgotten, he died, you know! Do you think he too, he had no strong dreams impelling him to live? He had a young wife, a child, all the foundation stones of a future he believed in... (*The Inspector...*, 139)

Akindele's position finds expression in Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1972) when he argues that:

In order for the struggle to have meaning, the oppressed must not in seeking to regain their humanity (which is a way to create it) become in turn oppressors of the oppressors but rather restorers of the humanity of both (21).

As such for Ereniyi and Aduke, rather than retrieving the positive impact of their experience with history, they shamefully succumb to the aridity of the experience. However for Akindele, this is not so as he bluntly challenges Aduke's offer of bribery in a paradoxical statement that:

I don't wish to forget poverty, because that's where I come from and I cannot forget. I can't turn my back and join the ranks of those who cheat, and steal shamelessly from public funds. Those who have sworn to serve their country but prefer to plunder it to build their own private fortunes. That is why I joined the force madam, to help bring them to book, people like your husband! To help equalise the fight a bit, even if only a little way, between you greedy exploiters and thieves, and the downtrodden on the other side, who are your victims! (*The Inspector...*, 143-144)

If humble beginning therefore is to be a catalyst for transformative leadership and development, many rulers born poor have failed as seen in the characters of Lawal, Ereniyi and Aduke who cannot measure up to Akindele in his decision to sanitise his society. That is why Ademeso (2009) maintains that "the poor man must be examined so that if he finds himself at the helm of affairs, he would not turn against the masses" (55). Osofisan in the prevailing texts obviously has not crucified the common people but seeks a new orientation devoid of wanton attribution of their failure to the leaders. This he situates with Inspector Akindele's position that if everyone born poor are to make that an excuse to plunder, what would have become of our society? Osofisan thus believes a rethink on this situation will occasion a rebirth where we will have more of the likes of Inspector Akindele, Omele as in *Esu and the vagabond minstrels*, and Leke who reports his mother's involvement in contraband in *Fires burn and die hard*.

Osofisan's examination takes a new dimension in *One Legend, Many Seasons* as he makes recourse to the supernatural having exploited all human angles in his revelation of vices in the society. This revelation also distinguishes Osofisan as he directs his diatribes at persons in private practices instead of endless criticism of rulers in governance. The piece also puts forward Osofisan's position that entrepreneurs and well to do members of the society must complement government efforts to overhaul the society from its present state. The play being an adaptation of Charles Dicken's *A Christmas Carol* (1843) centers on Alowolodu's personality whose social being is constructed around his material life. Alowolodu, though has a humble beginning is stingy in spite of his wealth. The story which has a season setting of Christmas period begins in an office where Alowolodu shares with his late partner, Makon. Alowolodu is indifferent to the

season which is characterised with happiness and sharing of gifts. He is also presented as extremely mean not only to his nephew Rotimi but also to his clerk, Dedeke. He does the same to poor people as revealed in his conversation with two Philanthropists who seek his financial support for the common people during Christmas. This category of people according to the Philanthropists are “several workers that have lost their jobs, armies of school leavers who roam the streets, unemployed, unfed, unclothed and homeless children” (*One Legend...*, 8). But to their amazement, Alowolodu who is expected to identify with common people’s plight because of his humble beginning referred them to the government saying:

ALOWOLODU: But we have a government, don’t we? Answer! Why is it Mr Alowolodu who must feed the hungry?... if you can’t make your government work and face up to its responsibilities, why is it Mr Alowolodu who must now pay for the negligence? And then all these charity homes, what are they there for? I don’t spend money making myself happy at Christmas, and I don’t get desperate because of that. So why should anyone especially if they haven’t got money? Besides I already pay taxes (*One Legend...*, 9)

At the height of his fuming outrage with the Philanthropists, Alowolodu expresses his wish for total annihilation of the poor. In his reaction to their appeal for fund to avoid the death of the poor, Alowolodu avers that if they (the poor) die:

The number of the poor will go down, and the city will become cleaner and safer. And people like you will no doubt find more responsible business to do (*One Legend...*, 10)

Surprisingly, Alowolodu is surrounded with an aura of love as disposed by his clerk, Dedeke and family and his nephew—Rotimi but Alowolodu repays them with wickedness. This meanness is further revealed as he pays Dedeke a salary less than a hundred naira, reluctant to grant him Christmas holiday, insisted he resumes early on Boxing day and failed to allow him leave early on Christmas eve. He is also aware of Dedeke’s sick child, but does not do anything about it. This wickedness can further be explained in his conversation with his nephew Rotimi when Alowolodu said:

The world is going mad, I pay this stupid clerk of mine less than a hundred naira per week, hardly enough to feed himself and his family. And yet there he is saying ‘A happy Christmas! That is why I blame the government! It doesn’t starve the citizens enough! All this SAP nonsense! What we really need instead is GRIEF and

SUFFERING! SORROW, TEARS AND BLOOD, as the musician put it! Maybe then we'll all learn to be sober! (*One Legend...*, 7).

To Alwolodu the poor must remain poor, never happy and even be annihilated. Osofisan has therefore shown through Alwolodu the attitude of many people to the poor. He shows in Alwolodu an ingrate who despite his poor background is unhappy with the poor. He is therefore taken through a transformative voyage involving supernatural characters and a spiritual cleansing through the subversion of reality. Osofisan as an African playwright according to Oripeloye (2009) “knows the importance that is attached to those invisible elements within the African cosmology” (108). As such, the dramaturgy is laced with spiritual odyssey piloted by three supernatural beings (ghosts) namely: Osetura (Spirit of Christmas past), Orekelewa (Spirit of Christmas present) and Orisanla (Spirit of Christmas yet to come) to complete Alwolodu’s transformation from evil to good. Earlier, Makon’s ghost (Alwolodu’s late partner at work) visited to inform him of the agonies he—Makon—is passing through because of his wicked life on earth and that for Alwolodu to avoid such at his demise; he must receive the three ghosts. Osetura, the spirit of Christmas past takes us into Alwolodu’s past, revealing his humble background and how people have extended love to him in the past especially during Christmas. A panorama of his choice of loneliness from his childhood days is unveiled on a certain Christmas in a:

Long mud building, roofed with corrugated iron, most of which had turned brown with rust. The walls were cracked, the windows broken and the few doors were swung loose from their hinges... Everywhere was covered with dirt and dust, with cobwebs and the droppings of lizards. Since the beginning of the Christmas holidays, no one had come to the school. No one, that is, but a lonely, little boy...there the boy was all alone, forgotten by his friends. (*One Legend...*, 21-22)

Though Alwolodu is saddened by the reminiscence and wishes to turn back the hands of the clock but according to Spirit of Christmas past it is “too late” (22). He is further taken in the spirit to Pa Olasore’s office where he served his apprenticeship. The spirit makes him relive the kind attitude of Pa Olasore during Christmas to his staff as he releases them early on Christmas Eve with a party:

OLASORE: Hello boys! No more work today! It’s Christmas, Kola! Ebenezer (Alwolodu)... let’s close the office...Now let’s

begin! Call everybody! Tell my wife and her friends to bring in the food and the drinks! And set up the music. it's Christmas! (24)

Alowolodu becomes happy and wants to dance and wine with the people but is stopped by Osetura noting, that was his past. Looking through his past, Alowolodu becomes remorse and determines to change. Similarly, the spirits of Christmas present and Christmas yet to come both show Alowolodu his present life and what will happen to him if he dies in his wicked and miserly attitude to life. This marks a turning point in the life of Alowolodu as he wakes from his spiritual odyssey on Christmas day, full of thanks that he has time to make amends:

ALOWOLODU: What! It's Christmas day! I've not missed it! My God! My God! So those spirits all came in one night! Ah thank you, God, for giving me this chance! I'm going to change my life!
(56)

Osofisan has also shown through Alowolodu that the question of our nation's backwardness deserves an eclectic approach. Taking a departure from conventional and popular belief, he x-rays the ordinary man with a vision into their future while also anatomising the onetime poor who now wishes the total annihilation of the poor. The life of Alowolodu therefore shows there could be more wicked people in the society than the known rulers. Osofisan is also of the view that if private individuals as seen in Alowolodu could have a positive attitude to the development of the society and not leave it alone for government while being concerned with their profit, Nigeria and in extension Africa will move forward.

As seen in Chief Ereniyi in *The Inspector and the Hero*, Lawal in *Altine's Wrath*, and Alowolodu in *One Legend, Many Seasons*, it is obvious that Osofisan has deconstructed the common sense perception about leadership. Although in the plays, the characters who rise to prominence are obsessed to corruption, the dramaturgy reads backward from what seems common, understandable, or universal, in order to show that these things have their history, and that the critique of leadership in post-independence Nigeria to use the much quoted Derridean phrase "is not a natural given but a cultural construct usually blind to itself" (Derrida, 1981:xv). Osofisan has thus shown that absolving the followers as contributors to our backward slide is not objective as many rulers today both in politics and business are onetime poor individuals (followers) who over the years nursed evil in their hearts towards the polity and even perpetrated surreptitious crime along the line to prominence. Little wonder, instead of turning the table for good for the

poor when they get into political positions, they performed paradoxically woeful. Power thus intoxicates them and makes them oblivious of their background showing therefore that one is poor today does not guarantee one will be a better leader tomorrow. The foregoing should no doubt tilt Critics to considering Gimba's (2008) position that "Today's leadership was yesterday's followership" (30). With these in mind and prolific literary productions, it is contended that an in-depth assessment of the followers/ common people and what is expected of them at the tender age will help address Nigeria and Africa's de-development. Osofisan achieves this in setting out the plays understudy as bringing his audience/ readers to the past life of his major characters is indicting, showing that they too (audience/ readers) already carry seeds of disillusionment which must be purged. Alowolodu's transformation in *One Legend, Many Seasons* so gives us a ray of hope on the condition that incisive works like this is capable of showing us the gravity of our actions and inactions which will lead to self transformation in the common man.

Innate wickedness as root of Africa's disillusionment in Osofisan's *One Legend, Many Seasons, Altine's Wrath and The Inspector and the Hero*

Human beings are still individuals whether they are poor or rich as they are with individual characteristics...There are some people among the ruling class you will be happy to associate with, who are extremely good and better than some of the people you know among the lower class, who because of their poverty their mind has been changed and warped.—**Osofisan** (Agunbiade, 2015:3)

When one considers the position of Sofola (1973) and Akporobaro (2001) on the place of altruism and wickedness in the African space, one cannot but remain in a state of dilemma on the way forward for Nigeria and in extension Africa. For Johnson Sofola in *African Culture and African Personality* (1973), moral personality is innate to the African man, while Africa remains vibrant as mother of altruistic behaviour and personality. Sofola substantiates that the African personality is borne out of the African culture which,

Is the mirror propelling the Africans from within themselves to be what they are known and seen to be in our observed daily lives—altruistic man rich in humanity, sociality and unpolluted morality (xiv)

Similarly, J.J Rosseau (1920) in "Discourse on the Arts and Sciences" in *The Social Contract and Discourses* (1920) avers that the arts and sciences are responsible for the moral degeneration

of mankind who are basically good by nature. Rousseau believes that the earliest solitary humans possess a basic drive for self preservation and a natural disposition to compassion or pity. Upholding this position further in “The Discourse on the origin of Inequality” in *The Social Contract and Discourses* (1920), Rousseau says:

I think I've shown that man is naturally good. What then can have depraved him to such an extent, except the changes that have happened in his constitution, the advances he has made, and the knowledge he has acquired? We may admire human society as much as we please; it will be none the less true that it necessarily leads men to hate each other in proportion as their interests clash, and to do one another apparent services, while they are really doing every imaginable mischief (205-205)

Although Rousseau has given his opinion on “The Discourse on the Arts and Sciences” saying “it is full of warmth and force; it is wholly without logic or order, of all my works, it is the weakest in argument and least harmonious” (Rousseau, 1920:7), it however provides a groundwork to broaden our horizon on such a classical discourse on the nature of mankind more so to pitch Sofola’s position on Africa at a vantage position as it absolves Africans from being wicked thereby attributing their ills to the civilization brought in by the West.

However, a critical look at contemporary realities in Africa as reflected in Osofisan’s *One Legend Many Seasons*, *Altine’s Wrath* and *The Inspector and the Hero* reveals a wide gulf between Sofola’s position and what is now obtainable in Africa. Buttressing this paradox in Africa, Akporobaro (2001) submits that:

The instinct towards altruism is statistically less than that towards saint-hood and whether we are conscientised to be good we continue to fall to the state of our evil nature because that is the natural state of man (66)

Trailing same path, Mbembe (2001) in a fuming rage in *On the Postcolony* maintains that:

The idea of progress is said to disintegrate in such societies (Africa); should change occur, rare indeed, it would as of necessity, follow a disordered trajectory and fortuitous path ending only in undifferentiated chaos. (4)

Cates (1992) however departs and faults Mbembe’s position on Africa, thereby growing the contentions on the natural state of man. Cates in an article titled “Wickedness” in *Annual of the Society of Christian Ethics*, argues persuasively that wickedness is a universal natural and human

phenomenon that cuts across continents, people and tribes. She submits that over the world “some related sort of unreflected, unbalanced, and unrestrained desire for ‘more’ is at the root of wickedness” (258). Cates further maintains that:

This simple desire becomes problematic when we want this ‘more’ so badly that we become willingly and able unjustifiably to diminish the good of anyone who stands in our way. It becomes especially problematic when we lose sight of the original object of our desire such that we come to desire destruction for its own sake (254)

Cates delineation above no doubt encapsulates corruption which has become our national albatross in the mould of wickedness. To therefore unravel the root of this evil in order to pragmatically address it becomes imperative to the present study. It is this thinking blended with the neo-rationalist drive of Osofisan that have resulted in the production of plays that are reflexive of the root cause of our national and global disillusionment. Osofisan therefore in the plays understudy subverts the essential syntax of popular belief to arrive at a conclusion that our disillusionment is not only occasioned by the West and our rulers but by all of us, thus the need for all to embark on self-examination towards sanitising the society. This position is obvious in *The Inspector and the Hero* as Osofisan throws swipes at Chief Ereniyi who is representative of politicians with humble beginning. Osofisan shows that the seed of wickedness is in-grown in Ereniyi who right from his tender age has been nurturing how to plunder and destroy people in order to rise to prominence. He achieves this by surreptitiously killing Kuyinu his subordinate at the Customs office in order to amass funds through smuggling for his gubernatorial ambition. Ereniyi’s desire therefore in the words of Cates (1992) “becomes so problematic that he is willing and able unjustifiably to diminish the good of anyone who stands in his way” (254). This inherent wickedness in Ereniyi is revealing when he recalls his humiliation and that of his mother before his classmates in an attempt to appease the teacher for defaulting to pay his school fees. He said:

I survived it all, storing it up in my breast, swearing one day I would avenge it! Everything! That those people will fall on their faces one day and worship that same woman they were humiliating. That’s how I survived, by hiding and hoarding my dreams! I have dreamt of her placing her feet on the heads of those arrogant boys one day, of her pronouncing sentences, and of them begging and begging in their broken voices! (131)

The same is presented in *Altine's Wrath* as Osofisan examines a onetime poor man, Lawal who rises to become a senior civil servant. Lawal who now detests the poor is seen to once fight against corruption while in school and holds high the plight of the masses and underprivileged (*Altine's...*, 17). His inconceivable acts no doubt confirms Akporbaro's (2001) submission that "man is instinctively selfish; knowing the good as Saint Paul remarks in the Bible but persists doing evil" (66). Lawal, a onetime crusader therefore knows the good and what the peasant farmers desire—that is, their confiscated land—but refuses to give them and continue to use his supposed dumb wife to thumb stamp contracts on his behalf so he will not be discovered. Lawal, forgetting his background even makes bold to say that:

The poor people always have a long catalogue of complaints. They are the only ones who suffer. Nobody else...we shouldn't plan the town anymore because of wretches like these? (*Altine's...*16-17)

Lawal's life therefore gives us a background to wickedness in the public service and that it is not only orchestrated by those born with the silver spoon but also by those with poor beginning who now prey on the poor thus exhibiting the dog eat dog syndrome.

Prodding further to the root and solution to disillusionment in Africa, Osofisan having exploited all human perspectives in his experimentation makes recourse to the supernatural in *One Legend, Many Seasons* with the story of two wicked friends—Makon and Alowolodu who though are rich entrepreneurs but mean to both staff and their immediate community. Makon's untimely death and his wandering spirit's visit to Alowolodu marks the beginning of the play. Makon comes to beg his friend Alowolodu to quit being wicked and embrace a life of benevolence just as his ill actions while alive has denied him access to a peaceful life after death. Makon therefore roams about in pains and chains noting:

That is what still binds me to earth. It's the chain I made for myself when I was alive. The chain of not-caring. Of loving only oneself. It is a chain that comes when you think that making money is more important than caring about other people. But you never know this when you're alive, that you are making a chain for yourself which you will carry after you are dead...Now I have to travel many, many long distances in atonement! Aaaaah!...Oh why, why? When I was alive, why did I walk past so many other people with my eyes turned down? (*One Legend,...*13-14)

For Alowolodu to therefore not experience same excruciating pain like his friend Makon, he has to be visited by three strange spirits namely: Spirit of Christmas past, Present and Christmas yet to come. These spirits are to take him on a spiritual odyssey for reformation (purgation). Osofisan shows through Alowolodu's spiritual odyssey that everyone has got a level of wickedness which can be expunged only if one comes to the awareness of such evil act as present in him or her. Alowolodu who never sees anything wrong in his ill act to his staff—Dedeke, who he short pays and not bothered about his family's welfare; same with his cousin Rotimi who he maltreats; changes to a nice man after seeing the implication of his wickedness. The description of wickedness in Alowolodu is appalling to the extent that he almost suffocated the Spirit of Christmas Past when he feels tired and disappointed in himself after being taken round to see his past evil life. The narrator presents the incidence this way:

ALOWOLODU: Oh God! Oh God! That's enough, Sprit! Show me no more! *[Reaching forward suddenly, he seizes the pointed cap and covers the spirit's head. The spirit begins to drop to the floor, with a cry. As he falls, lights die off the scene... (27)*

No doubt, if Alowolodu could do this to a spirit in the spirit realm, how much more will he do in the physical? The message is lucid as Osofisan has shown that if during a process of reformation one is caught perpetrating a greater offence, it signals such ill act is not acquired but innate and inherent. The spirit also recalls that Alowolodu's greediness for wealth makes him remain unmarried as his erstwhile girlfriend—Aduke dumps him for lack of feelings for human beings. In her words:

ADUKE: Money isn't everything or what use is the money if we have no time to enjoy it...I am worried how this obsession for money has changed you... You will grow rich one day, I can see. But I am not sure you will still be a human being. So good-bye my darling, and good luck to you (*One Legend...*, 27).

With the visit of Spirit of Christmas yet to come, Osofisan presents a check on the inherent trait of wickedness in Africans. Knowing well the importance attached to those invisible elements (spirits), Osofisan launches into the future and after life of man as a way to correcting his present. Alowolodu's sojourn into his future is the most shocking of these spiritual odysseys and revelations as he is made to hear what people will say about him when he dies and how his clothes and belongings will be sold. According to his neighbours after picking Alowolodu's items:

MAMA REKIA: He only cared about himself when he was alive. Why shouldn't we help ourselves to some of his things when he is dead? Will he be needing any of them now? (52)

BABA JOJU: Oh someone had put it (his shirt) on him, and he was going to be buried in it. Can you imagine! But I took it off him, and replaced it with an old one. Where he's going I am sure he won't be worrying about elegance there! (53)

Alowolodu is later taken to a grave yard where he sees the Dedeke's mournfully burying their handicapped child. To Alowolodu's surprise he hears the Dedeke's vowing to continually bring flowers to commemorate their late son every Sunday but a particular grave is comparatively ridiculed as lonely with no one to mourn the bearer who has all the riches while alive but was mean to people (*One Legend...*, 54). Alowolodu on hearing this requests the spirit to let him have a look at the name on the gravestone of the man so described. Discovering the grave belongs to him, he breaks down. This shocking reality marks a new dawn in the life of Alowolodu as he screams to stop his bad behaviour and states his resolve to be kind and forever be humane:

ALOWOLODU: What: it's me! No! No! No! Spirit, please don't do this to me! Listen, I am no longer the man I was! I swear to you, I've changed. I can change Spirit! You know I can live a new life! I tell you now, I shall love Christmas and look forward to it, and try to think of it all the yearlong! And every time people are rejoicing, and there is a celebration, I shall join my fellow men, and try to be happy with them! Yes! I will live in the past, the present, and the future! I will always remember the lessons that they teach! Oh please help me! Help me rub out the writing on this stone.

As this transformational voyage brings a spiritual cleansing to Alowolodu, Osofisan is suggestive of an inward looking approach which is futuristic in examination of postcolonial realities in African Drama. This he believes will present a holistic way in addressing backwardness in Africa. The audience and reader infer this thesis as the narrator concludes that Alowolodu who is happy to wake on Christmas day from his spiritual sojourn quickly begins to right his wrongs. He increases the salary of Dedeke, goes to church, sings on Christmas, sends a big ram to Rotimi's family (his cousin) and gives the Philanthropists he once derides a sumptuous amount of money to take care of the needy. The narrator explains further that:

He became a good friend and master. He became the best old man that the city knew. Some people laughed at him, but he didn't care,

because he was happy in his own heart. People said he knew how to enjoy Christmas and other festivals better than any other man that lived. (63)

The skillful presentation of *One Legend, Many Seasons* which leaves room for a change in behaviour of the principal character—Alwolodu is very significant to the thematic concern of this work as Osofisan ideologically presents that though man is instinctively wicked, he also has the tendency to change if he is confronted with the reality of the implication of his ill actions. The narrator puts it this way when he concludes that:

NARRATOR: Let it be a lesson to all of us, so we can live a happy and prosperous life. For there is an Alwolodu in all of us, whom we must expel (63)

Osofisan has therefore taken a giant leap in his research into the African society in the foregoing to show that not only the leaders have occasioned our backwardness, just as it is not only the followers but everybody as man is instinctively wicked (Akporobaro, 2001). It is also noteworthy that Osofisan's artful dexterity to adapt Charles Dicken's *A Christmas Carol* to the African space in *One Legend, Many Seasons* further substantiates the thesis that wickedness is a global phenomenon. He buttresses this with a perceptive journey into the humble beginning of a successful politician—Chief Ereniyi in *The Inspector and the Hero* to show that greediness, wickedness and corruption do not just jump on a politician but that it grows with him or her either consciously or unconsciously from childhood to adulthood. The same is presented in the civil service in *Altine's Wrath* to deconstruct and criticise crusaders and activists in the mould of Lawal Jatau who claim they are vanguards for the plight of the common man but later fail them when they become public servants. He concludes in *One Legend, Many Seasons* that “for there is an Alwolodu in all of us, whom we must expel (63). Alwolodu in this context implies greediness, wickedness, evil, corruption, hatred etc. This connotes the innateness of tendencies to cause disillusionment in whatever position one finds himself. Osofisan therefore in the plays has open up the frontiers of the characteristics of disillusionment in African drama and literature by tracing the root of a concept that has now come to be described as the portrait of Africa to a universal phenomenon—a trait inherent in everyone. It hence manifests in followers who later become the rulers but can be checked “because the machine of oppression in human life is created by human beings and can only be demolished by human beings” (Owonibi, 2009:102). Osofisan has therefore shown that addressing these anomalies will require our conscious

awareness that we all have a role to play in the development of Africa and at the same time have contributed to where it is now. Therefore passing the buck will not end the blame game but self examination and accepting one's fault with a view to changing from such ill acts will help address our backwardness. Osofisan through the plays is also suggesting a voyage through fiction where a blatant depiction of implication of the people's ill actions are represented just as Alowolodu experienced in *One Legend, Many Seasons* as a way forward to changing the mindset of Nigerians and Africans. This is observed as Osofisan's recipe for socio-economic and political reconstruction in Nigerian and African milieu.

African Drama and National Development in Osofisan's *One Legend, Many Seasons* and *The Inspector and the Hero*

The selected scenes of everyday life in families, villages, communities, social structures, micro and macro societies in African drama reveals that there are lessons to be learnt from cultural tenets embedded in such dramatic pieces. The utilitarian art of the dramatic arts are thus encompassing and because of its capacity to communicate, teach and make social comments, visionaries manipulate the medium as a change agent.

—Uto-Ezeagbu and Ogbonna (2013)

Among the three genres of literature: Poetry, Drama and the Novel, at the disposal of the African literary artist, the drama genre has come to be revered for its immense contribution to moral and national development. The indubitable reason for this uniqueness is no doubt its parade of outstanding variety of stories covering the African traditional life and history. The deep traditional and cultural values, customs and artistic configurations, pre-colonial ways of life, colonial experience, neo-colonial predicaments and present serious problems in every corner of life on the African continent provide rich source of materials for significant plays. That is why Dasyuva (2004:114) in his assessment of African drama concludes that "African drama has come of age." It is also noteworthy that African drama remains an unbiased medium in the reflection and refraction of the African society as it stops at nothing to satirise both the oppressed and the oppressor, the rich and the poor, Aristocrats and common people. As such, hardly can one attend a university convocation in Nigeria without a segment handled by the theater arts department of such institution or a theater troupe to address issues of utmost national interest (Osofisan, 2001). African drama is therefore a medium through which "one can understand the twists and turns in African development as it is always eager to present the vivid picture of the African condition in

a socio political terrain” (Owonibi, 2009:100). This finds credence in the Theatre For Development (TFD) project, a programme in the arts department which evinces drama’s vital contribution to the process of National development. According to Osofisan (2001) in TFD projects, students are taken along to rural or peri-urban communities to live for a while. Osofisan further explains that:

They gradually discover, through subtle interrogation and observation, what are the community’s most pressing social and community health problems and, using their theatrical methods as well as the dramatic traditions of the people, help their hosts to dramatise their problems. The aim of course is to see how these problems can be tackled and solved. But even if they are not solved, (which will be a tall hope within the short period of activity), the interaction between the students and village folk is always a thrilling experience (114).

Such programme obviously according to Osofisan (2001) “proves to be a most splendid means of building and enhancing not only community relations, but also national cohesion” (114).

However, an exclusive preserve of the African drama which has rubbed off on its contribution to National development is in its playwright’s dependence on inspiration from African traditional culture which in the past maintained codes of conduct which shaped human existence. Utoh-Ezeagbu and Ogbonna (2013) puts it this way that:

The African drama is saturated with cultural elements and since culture is regarded as a way of life of a group of people, which is embodied in their language, dressing (costume), body designs (make-up), religion and norms of behaviour, belief system, art, morals and general worldview, hence, the Nigerian playwright took a trip to the past, with the aim of unearthing the rich culture, philosophy, folktales, poetry and other art forms, which the colonialists had tried to bury under the guise of colonization, to comment on national issues. (19)

The features of harmonic rhythm and heroic grandeur that characterised the traditional societies are therefore being considered by contemporary playwrights to address deep seated and emerging issues. It is contended that violations of norms, values and codes in the traditional life attracted sanctions and disciplinary measures as each man knows the traditional ethos and respected it (Utoh-Ezeagbu and Ogbonna, 2013:14), hence the need to harness the ideals of such period to arrive at the idyllic society Nigerian/ African drama envisions. Consequently, the

traditional and cultural norms have formed the basis for which stories are told and woven into tales as seen in Soyinka's *The Lion and the Jewel*, Ojo Bakare Rasaki's *Rogbodiyan* and Fred Agbeyege's *The King must dance naked* where messages of change are metaphorically reeled out.

Committed African playwrights have therefore variously made the loric tradition the focus of their artistic creation with a view to tracing the causes and providing solutions to the myriads of African (Nigerian) problems. Like most leading Nigerian dramatists, Femi Osofisan stands tall as his dramaturgy often draws inspiration from traditional culture with a touch of the devices of oral literature for far more purposes than any other Nigerian playwright (Awodiya, 1995:56). The effective manner in which these devices are aesthetically and philosophically deployed for national development in Osofisan's plays demands attention. This study therefore seeks to establish Osofisan's use of folktales, Mask and Orunmila motif as legacies of traditional African culture that needs be holistically expropriated to address deep seated problems especially as orchestrated by the common people in Nigeria and in extension Africa.

Folktales according to Akporobaro (2001) "are traditional stories that are usually transmitted in an oral form...an imaginative recreation of experience designed to entertain and to instruct the audience morally" (105). Folktales often follow the principle of retributive justice as "even if the good characters are not always rewarded, the crafty, the selfish and evil characters never go scot free at the end" (Akporobaro, 2001:105). This precisely is the message in Osofisan's *One Legend, Many Seasons*; a piece which is a sad commentary on the actions and inactions of the common people, which have contributed to the backwardness of the nation. Osofisan adopts most of the devices of characterisation, audience participation, plot, narrative technique, entertainment and the didactic purpose of the folktale in the play. The Tortoise regarded as the traditional carrier of some African oral folktale and philosophy is the protagonist in the "story of Ijapa the Tortoise and Eliri the mouse" crafted in a story-within-a-story framework in the play. Osofisan's employment of the folktale is very significant to the thematic concern of the play as it helps in unmasking the protagonist—Alowolodu whose attitude betrays the common man in inconceivable manners.

The folktale begins with the unanimous agreement of all the animals in their kingdom to have a big drum to balance and accompany their poetic cadence during their festivals. All animals agree

because each time they gathered to celebrate “however important or joyful the occasion, the animals never danced because they had no drum to supply the music” (*One Legend...*,38). So they arrive at a historic decision that they will make one big drum that will belong to all of them together. To achieve this, Ikoko the Hyena suggested to the assembly to ask each animal to cut a little portion of his or her ear and bring it. They will sew all the little pieces together and make the skin for their drum (*One Legend...*, 40). All the animals except Ijapa—the tortoise, is pleased because none considered he has no ear among all the animals. Ijapa therefore leaves the gathering deeply wounded more so because those who fail to bring their share will not be allowed to dance to the drum when it is made. For this reason, Ijapa surreptitiously begins to find one or two animals to connive with to stop the plan of the entire animals. All the animals he contacted declined except Eliri—the mouse who agreed because he too like Ijapa has just a little ear which if cut may change his physique entirely. While persuading Eliri, Ijapa said:

Do you know that it is your ears that allow you to be noticed at all among the animals? But now, if you cut one of them, how much of you will be left? Besides if we make the drum and the animals begin to dance, don't you realize you could be trampled to death! So my friend what will be your gain in it all? (*One Legend...*, 42)

This is how Ijapa sowed the seed of deceit and anti-community in Eliri the mouse who later paid for it in a painful way. Ijapa however has earlier learnt the art of drumming from Baba Ode the hunter. He therefore sees himself as the most capable to drum the new community drum but the problem remains how to approach the drum for he did not contribute his ear. Subsequently, the annual Oro day where there is enough feasting and merriment is celebrated but no drumming accompanied it. This is when the animals realised their short coming of not anticipating a drummer who will beat their new drum. After seven days, Ijapa can no more contain his state of helplessness; hence with Eliri he comes out of hiding, approached the drum and begins to play, reeling out melodious tunes. And all over the world the animals tramped out at midnight to the sound of the drum and the song: “Kuruje, kuruje, Jenjenkuruje” (*One Legend...*, 44) but the closer they are to the big drum, the lesser they hear the song and drum which becomes mysterious. Ijapa and Eliri therefore become a mystery as they disappear before the animals get to the drum. All attempts by the Cat, Dog and Civet Cat failed until Ikoko the Hyena suggests they make a similar drum plastered with Shea butter gum to get the perpetrators stuck. This is how the villains are caught the third day.

The folktale which is a metaphor to the real play presents a moral lesson to the protagonist—Alowolodu—who isolates himself from the good things that a community or social organisation undertakes. Alowolodu who has a humble beginning in the play betrays the common people when he rises to prominence by being mean and inflicting havoc on his staff and relatives. Alowolodu detests the Christmas season characterised with giving and merriment. He also hates the poor as he rebukes Philanthropists who seek his support to alleviate the plight of the poor. He even advocates total annihilation of the poor to have a clean society (*One Legend...*,10). He is therefore crafted in the frame of Eliri who despite having a little ear shirks his responsibility to the society in an anti-community attitude. In the judgment meted out by the animals after weighing the matter:

About Ijapa, they had only one word—Praise! “Here is someone who has no ears.” But in spite of that he still risked his life to go and learn how to drum from human beings. He loves his country. He must be rewarded with the highest honours! (*One Legend...*,47)

However, Eliri is cursed for not participating in the development of his community. Some among the chiefs recommended the death penalty for Eliri saying:

For even if his ears were tiny, were they not still ears? If he was not out to cheat, he should still have cut a little part of it and brought it as instructed, but the Oba and the elders finally decided that some other punishment than death should be given Eliri. So they put an eternal curse on him that henceforth, none of his offspring would ever grow big, but would always be smaller than other animals. (*One Legend...*,47)

Osofisan concludes in the play that “all the good things that a community or social organisation, that we belong to, all the things they undertake to do to benefit everybody we should put our hands into it, and try our best there” (*One Legend...*, 47). Adding that, “the habit of doing my-own-apart does not become a good person!” (*One Legend...*, 47-48). As earlier expressed; the crafty, the selfish and evil characters in folktales never go scot free at the end (Akporobaro, 2001:105). This exactly is the lot of Eliri the mouse who is placed under eternal curse. Osofisan in the play therefore reaches out to the audience and readers the beauty and ideals of the community spirit to national development. Eliri like Alowolodu declines to help his community and is doomed. The essence of the folktale is further established in the play-within-the-play framework as after listening to the folktale as narrated by Orekelewa—the Spirit of Christmas

present—Alowolodu is jolted to reality and changed from being malevolent to being benevolent. Osofisan through the play is therefore instilling in the African man the community spirit which is part of the traditional society which over time has been jettisoned but capable of stemming down the tides of wickedness which has become the root of our national albatross and disillusionment. Through drama, Osofisan has hence conscientised the common man who hardly thinks he has a role to play in national development to have a rethink in areas of voter apathy, misuse of public property, and lack of patriotism—as seen in *Eliri the smallest of the animals*. Elements of folktales are thus deployed metaphorically and in a subversive manner to satirise the often idealised common people and followers for the development of the nation. The metaphor therefore drawn from this matrix (play-within-a-play) is that there is a little role the common man has to play in terms of integrity, loyalty and patriotism which if he or she shirks will keep drawing back the wheel of development in Nigeria and extension Africa.

Another legacy of the traditional African culture which Osofisan is revered in its holistic expropriation to address emerging and deep seated problems in Africa is the combination of the literary mask and Orunmila motif in the crafting and divesting of his characters. While the literary mask affords him the ability to craft the characters, the Orunmila motif aids his revelation of the pretense of the characters. The significance of the iconic and symbolic African mask in concealing is thus deployed for metaphorical purposes. This feature of masking according to Mowah (2002:96) allows for a reworking of the materialist dialectics in Osofisan's plays.

In *The Inspector and the Hero*, Osofisan deploys both the literary and traditional masks for both philosophical and aesthetic purposes. Chief Ereniyi, the gubernatorial aspirant who just retired from the customs service and his wife Aduke are shown to be in mask of pretense as they perpetrate grave havoc on the people despite their humble beginning. Ereniyi's humble background is thus subjected to critical investigation with a view to showing that “the poor man must be examined so that if he finds himself at the helm of affairs, he would not turn against the masses” (Ademeso, 2009:55). Osofisan's use of mask in crafting the character of Ereniyi is symbolic in the sense that it helps project the fact that in postcolonial Africa the common man is least examined as playing a role in the backwardness of his country. Chief Ereniyi has sworn to himself in his tender age to do all within his reach through both foul and crook means to make

money. He realises this at the customs office through corruption by using his wife as a front and also killing a staff—Kuyinu who stands on his way to acquire money for his governorship ambition. While being interrogated by Inspector Akindele, Ereniyi who has denied killing Kuyinu recalls how he conceives his dream when students make jest of his poor mother who cannot afford to pay his school fees. He puts it this way:

The burst of laughter and mockery— I survived it all, storing it up in my breast, swearing one day I would avenge it! Everything! That those people would fall on their faces one day and worship that same woman they were humiliating! That’s how I survived, by hiding, and hoarding my dreams! I have dreamt of her placing her feet on the heads of those arrogant boys one day, of her pronouncing sentence, and of them begging in their broken voices! (*The Inspector...*, 131)

Juxtaposing this statement of revenge and using his humble background as selling point at the polls to the common people brings the whole idea of Ereniyi to a paradox which Inspector Akindele reacts to that:

Your heart is too full of bitterness. You’re going in only for revenge. Not for service. Half of the people wont survive even your first year in office at this rate! And it’s the more reason why I must stop you (132)

Osofisan is aware that the common man is often conceived as innocent and idealised. He therefore substantiates this by using mask but goes further to deconstruct such claim in his deft and subtle use of Orunmila motif. Combining the traditional mask with the Orunmila motif, Osofisan forces the confession of Ereniyi to the killing of Kuyinu and other offences in the customs office. The traditional mask borne out of the Egungun tradition is a medium for invoking the presence of the ancestor or to impersonate. The mask therefore in Egungun rites is a localizing device for the departed soul (Adedeji 1978; Garba 1988). Garba (1988) puts it clear that:

It should be stressed that the Egungun mask does not represent the ancestor, nor is it meant to, the mask is the ancestor made physically present. The difference is important because the mask, in traditional belief, is not thought of as an image of the ancestor but as the ancestor himself (87)

Therefore, from the existence of this prior form of physical incarnation a dramatic form of presentation developed as “communication with the ancestors is harnessed at both a practical and conceptual level, to produce the poetic license for theatrical expression” (Garba, 1988:51). It is this feature of the Egungun mask and Orunmila motif—which upholds knowledge, science and research as contained in the ifa divination Corpus/ process) that Osofisan harnesses in the Bojula mask that aids the confession of Ereniyi the villain. Dapo Bojula is one of the sergeants that accompany Inspector Akindele with a commission to facilitate the confession of Ereniyi via a mask made for him by the theatre department which entraps the physical appearance of Kuyinu whom Ereniyi has denied killing. Ereniyi thinks he has perfected his crime by killing and silencing every witness so he cannot be rubbished ahead of his election. As a result, he demands a witness: “someone bold enough to come forward, to dare mount the witness box and point accusing fingers at a man who would be his next governor. Show me the man and then let’s see if he can’t be bought!” (134). It is to this challenge that Inspector Akindele calls out Sergeant Dapo Bojula in the ensuing conversation:

AKINDELE: Yes, you thought he was dead, didn’t you? You thought you had killed him, but he lived! We put him in hospital, and luckily, he survived. Chief your ambitions are ruined...(*The Inspector, ...135*)

ERENIYI: (*Scared now*): No! no! He was dead! I know he died

AKINDELE: You wish to see him? Ehn! (calls) come in Mr Kuyinu! Come in (from the kitchen, Kuyinu limps in)

ERENIYI: (*Scared*) Kuyinu, You! You! No! it’s a ghost (135)

KUYINU: (*Hoarse*) I... I didn’t die, Chief (*coughs*)...Your car didn’t quite (*coughing*) quite finish me! So it is you (*coughing*) who...who are finished now! You’re finished... (136)

ERENIYI: (*Screaming*): I killed you! I killed you once, you stubborn goat! I killed you and I shall kill you again! Till you die (*he lunges forward at Kuyinu and slaps him violently. As he does, the mask on Kuyinu’s face fragments, revealing behind it the face of Bojula*) (136)

ERENIYI: (*taken aback*): What...what’s this? You’re not Kuyinu?

BOJULA: No, chief. I may as well confess. It was a mask made for me by the theatre department at the university (136)

It is the deployment of the device of the traditional mask as shown above that aids the confession of Ereniyi who initially denies the crime. The mask thus as in Egungun rites brings to life the dead Kuyinu which makes Ereniyi to confess. Osofisan therefore expropriates the features of Orunmila motif as a metaphor in the service of the traditional mask. The ideal of Orunmila as truth finder and corpus of knowledge is therefore deployed as Ereniyi is discovered in the play. The mask thus functions as a tool for disguise, impersonation and confession. It is moreover a didactic tool as it helps unveil the villains and ordinary people who have perfected their crime in a way that they think can never be discovered. More so with the mask, the paradox of humble beginning and irresponsible leadership is easily identified. Osofisan's *The Inspector and the Hero* no doubt is prophetic of former president Goodluck Jonathan's campaign tactics of humble beginning and the eventual governance adjudged the most corrupt so far in Nigeria. Osofisan in an interview with Agunbiade (2015) comments thus:

Relating your question to the campaign slogan of former president Goodluck Jonathan, yes you know when you are looking for votes you adopt any approach to get it. He grew up poor, some voted for him because of that but I don't think majority voted for him because of that, we are not even sure if majority voted for him. That he came from a poor background is not a guarantee of moral uprightness. It is wrong to associate poverty with morality. (2)

Osofisan with the deployment of folktale, mask and Orunmila motif has shown how relevant African drama is to national development. This is with regard to its deft way of exposing the least addressed issues in the society through both its (drama) ability to reflect and refract situations and events as orchestrated by the people. It is therefore contended that everyone is in mask while only another mask afforded by the theatre can divest the human mask of pretense as seen in Ereniyi. Similarly, the employment of folktales with retributive ending in Nigerian drama is believed to help strike the cord of change in the followers. It is therefore of utmost importance to national development that dramatic literatures that are culturally entrenched with traditional norms and values are staged frequently in any found space for the people because of the potency of drama to spur the mental, intellectual, moral and even spiritual development of the Nigerian and African people (Utoh-Ezeagbu and Ogbonna, 2013:29). The foregoing thus presents Femi Osofisan as an avant-garde playwright who expropriates all theatre devices—both traditional and modern—at his disposal to comment and address emerging situations for the society to move forward.

Conclusion

This chapter through the analysis of Osofisan's *Altine's Wrath*, *The Inspector and the Hero*, and *One Legend, Many Seasons* unravels one of the deep-seated root of disillusionment in Nigeria and in extension Africa. With a deft hold on paradox—a literary device with statements that are self-contradictory but which, on closer inspection, is found to contain a truth reconciling the conflicting opposites (Cuddon, 1977)—the study has been able to draw a link between poverty and power in Nigeria to show that humble beginning does not guarantee responsible leadership as many onetime poor fellows are shown to have betrayed that trust. The study further depicts that the tendency to be corrupt is innate, a universal phenomenon and not an exclusive preserve of the Africans or the leaders just as today's followership is tomorrow's leadership. The chapter therefore establishes that the common man has a pivotal role to play in transforming the country with respect to their attitude to politics and leadership. They are to be conscientised to see leadership as a means to serve and develop their society and not to loot the treasury as seen in Lawal in *Altine's Wrath* and Chief Ereniyi in *The Inspector and the Hero*. The role of African drama in national development is fore-grounded with the need to reconsider the ideals and features of our traditional societies which helped maintain peace, order and love. The ideological and aesthetic deployment of the traditional and literary mask, Orunmila motif and folktales in the plays to anatomise, satirise and reform the often idealised common man on stage confirms the capability of African drama in causing a dramatic change not only in Nigeria but also in Africa. The chapter concludes that Osofisan is an avant-garde playwright pioneering a new dawn in the discourse of disillusionment and African drama.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This study examines the representations of the followers in African drama within an emerging canon that deepens literary commitment and incisive engagement of the enabling milieu. Situated on faulting consensus opinion that idealises the followers and common people but wantonly criticises the leaders as the cause of Africa's backwardness; the study positions African drama on a vantage position in its truthful depiction of the Nigerian and African societies. Femi Osofisan is showcased in the study as representing emerging and dynamic sensibilities of his age as the plays analysed afford the opening up of the frontiers of disillusionment which in African literature has come to be understood as the hallmark of leadership deficit. Therefore a paradigm shift from unending scholarly debate on leadership to critical examination of actions and inactions of the followers who become tomorrow's leaders is put forward to see if this would help address the blame game syndrome and create the idyllic society African drama aims at.

The study first explores followership as complicit in post-independence disillusionment as portrayed by Femi Osofisan in *Love's unlike lading*, *Fires Burn and die hard* and *Birthdays are not for dying* as the ills of ordinary people and followers especially in undoing themselves are captured. This manifests among the traders, working class, business men and women who stops at nothing in their sharp practices and wickedness to disillusion one another. Osofisan shows through the plays that he wants a rethink in African drama as against the one-sided jeremiad account that leadership is entirely Nigeria's problem. His presentation of Alhaja in *Fires burn and die hard* is exemplary as she, the leader of the market women single handedly razed an entire market, feigns innocence and later sympathises with the market women. Similarly, Basse's dastardly acts in usury in *Love's unlike lading*, by lending with the intention of eventually taking over the lives and property of his debtors is condemned while the corruption of filthy men in the company of Kunle Aremo's father in *Birthdays are not for dying* shows how many businesses with prospects have dwindled and sole proprietorship has made Africa remain backward. By therefore underscoring where the common people have gaffed, Osofisan faults the one-sided jeremiad fictional accounts of postcolonial Africa given by his predecessors and contemporaries. Osofisan believes that a diehard representation of leadership deficit and utter neglect of the observable role the followers/ common people have played in drawing back the

wheel of progress will continue to wrongly portray contemporary reality in Nigeria while less sensitive minds will be erroneously misled to conclude that Nigeria and Africa's backwardness is only orchestrated by the leaders. The need for this paradigm shift is established in *Fires burn and die hard* when the governor hastily intervenes and comes to the rescue of the market women whose stalls are razed by the inferno ignited by Alhaja, the head of the market women. The governor after building a new modern market for the women also heeds to the warning of the traditional rulers to postpone indefinitely the commissioning of the market which according to them will attract the havoc of the gods because Alhaja who razed the first market is moving in with the women into the new market. That is why Osofisan in an interview with Agunbiade (2015) surmises that the question of the ruling class is not mathematical adding that "there are some people among the ruling class you will be happy to associate with, who are extremely good and better than some of the people you know among the lower class whose mind has been warped" (3).

Explaining further the complicity of followers in post-independence disillusionment, Osofisan identifies two sets of people in the undoing of the common man; that is those who perpetrate evil against fellow common man (perpetrators) and those in whose presence various atrocities are carried out without them making any pragmatic attempt at stopping such (accomplices). We therefore see perpetrators of these evils (hatred, corruption, lack of compassion) against one another in the portrait of Alhaja in *Fires burn and die hard*, Major in *Birthdays are not for dying*, and Bassey in *Love's unlike lading* while the likes of Counsellor in *Birthdays are not for dying* and Basiru in *Love's unlike lading* are presented as accomplices of atrocities against the followers and common man. Basiru's ill action is further revealed in his apathy to politics as he initially abandons Tariboh his friend during Tariboh's ambition to become the governor of the state. The worst scenario is Boma—Tariboh's wife abandoning him by travelling to enjoy herself with her friend Tosan in Lagos in this crucial period. Meanwhile, they all complain about the government in power but fail to rise to responsibility by doing the needful. This is what Osofisan sees as the real disillusionment in postcolonial Nigeria where electorates shirk their civic responsibility of registering and voting during electoral process.

To structurally and aesthetically uncover the ills of the followers, Osofisan deepens his dramaturgy to employ the devices of symbolism, imagery, mask and Orunmila motif. The names

of Alhaja in *Fires burn and die hard* and Bassey in *Love's unlike lading* are symbolic and show that these untoward acts cut across tribes and religions. Bassey is from eastern Nigeria while Alhaja Olowoseun is from the west—Yoruba. Alhaja is a Muslim, while Bassey is a Christian, showing this untoward acts cut across members of different religions. With respect to sex, the most brutal character Alhaja and Bassey are woman and man. This is indicative that both men and women are in the acts of undoing each other among the common people and followers. Images of the market as a centre of economic activities, where buying and selling takes place dominate the plays. Alhaja confirms this when she recounts in *Fires burn and die hard* that “Our people have always been a trading people, how can the Oba and the chiefs wish to delay the opening of the market, hold up the very life source of our people” (p.70). The image of destruction of such an economic hub is therefore heartrending. Similarly, in *Love's unlike lading*, the image of the money lenders' market supposed to be a place of succor and refuge for the poor man but now a funeral place where property and lives of borrowers are forfeited is painted.

With respect to the literary mask and Orunmila motif, Osofisan makes recourse to the African loric culture and aesthetics where the Ifa divination process is reposed with research, education and logic of human reasoning (Awodiya, 1995:69). He deploys Orunmila motif to unveil the follower who conceals (masks) his unbecoming behaviour in a façade which is detrimental to society's progress but is committed to blaming the Leaders for his community's backwardness. The manifestation is dramatic in *Fires burn and die hard* as Alhaja is discovered (unmasked) as the arsonist after Orunmila is consulted before inaugurating the new market. The same obtains in *Aringindin and the Nightwatchmen* where Aringindin is exposed by the oracle as the main enemy of the people, but just as in contemporary society where the people fails to embrace a rethink about themselves, the people disregards Baale's prognosis and begins a long journey into a season of darkness. The same motif is deployed in *Love's unlike lading* with recourse to a folktale and reverence for Orunmila as Tosan's suitors engage in a contest where they must swear to a juju amulet before choosing between three caskets—gold, silver and bronze. Basiru's victory by choosing bronze among other very influential and rich suitors is ironical but a metaphor to the main plot where general attention on leaders (gold) as the cause of Africa's backwardness is shifted to the followers/ ordinary people (the bronze) who Bassey the generous but wicked usurer represents. Also, without the literary mask and Orunmila motif the revelations about Ereniyi in *The Inspector and the Hero* will not have been possible. Therefore, with the

Orunmila motif, Osofisan is able to divest the followers of their mask and lampoons them in his satirical attack.

Chapter Four examines the reason why struggle for national development in Nigeria has failed especially as orchestrated by those who should be in vanguard for change at the lower divide of the society. Our traditional rulers, musicians and vigilantes role in the awkward development of Nigeria is presented in a shocking matrix in *Esu and the Vagabond Minstrels*, *Farewell to a cannibal rage* and *Aringindin and the Nightwatchmen* to show how these group of people have betrayed the hope reposed in them by the people who they claim to protect and fight for their plight. This is a sad commentary on Nigeria as traditional rulers are concerned with pecuniary gains; the musicians become sycophants in the service of the rulers while the origin of increased robbery has now been traced to the proliferation of vigilante groups among the people in the 90's. The least representation of these malaises in African literature and lack of incisive criticism on them calls for attention and that is why Osofisan makes them of utmost concern in the prevailing plays. Bridging this lacuna is what the analyses achieve with the dialectical deployment of dramatic metaphor, inversion of theatre ideals and popular conception.

Chapter Five x-rays the ironic twist of fate of the follower who rises to prominence and thereafter unleashes the baton of oppression on the masses in postcolonial Nigeria. This is with a view to unravel the root of disillusionment and at the same time situate the need to extend its frontiers to cover emerging realities in the African space. Achieving this authenticates Osofisan's thematic and ideological concerns that humble background is not a guarantee for transformative leadership. This is seen in the paradox between poverty and power in contemporary Nigeria as analysed in Osofisan's *Altine's Wrath*, *The Inspector and the Hero* and *One Legend, many seasons*. A pensive look at the characters of Lawal, Ereniyi and Alowolodu in the respective plays who are initially poor but rise to prominence and later unleash havoc on the followers/ common people show there is the need for a return to truthfulness which is the hallmark of a genuine literary artist/ writer. This is so as the plays reveal a level of biasness on the part of some writers especially those of the mythopoeic tradition headed by Wole Soyinka with respect to their disenchantment to African leaders while forgetting that yesterday's followership is today's leadership. The chapter further delves into the classical discourse of wickedness upon which corruption grows to conclude that everyone both the leader and the follower has got an iota of

this evil, thereby making it innate but that we also have the power to live up to personal example or let these vices entirely ruin us. Osofisan substantiates this when Alowolodu the villain in *One Legend, many seasons* changes to an altruist after his transformative spiritual odyssey. The chapter concludes with the relevance of African drama to national development as it contends that every human being both the leader and the follower is in mask while only another mask afforded by the theatre can divest the human mask of pretense as seen in Ereniyi in *The Inspector and the Hero*. It also gives credence to the genres parade of folktales with retributive ending which is believed to help strike the cord of change in Nigerians.

The study has also been concerned with the need to extend the frontiers of post-independence disillusionment beloved of postcolonial theory to accommodate the excesses and defects of the followers as contribution to their country's development deficit. It therefore sets out to see if postcolonial theory remains intact as Mbembe (2001) contends just as the people who the early postcolonial theorists advocate their rights and idealise are examined as manufacturers of disenchantments. Toeing the path of Fashina (2009), the study avers that the Marxist dogma about social conflict seem to have blinded the early postcolonial critic from being balanced in their critique. The study therefore extols the commitment of Femi Osofisan as an avant garde playwright poised to bridging the lacuna between postcolonial theory and texts, and lived experience as the texts intuitively engage the common people and followers in their contribution to their country's development deficit. The study in essence therefore validates Robert Young's (2001) desires of creating an affiliative community of interpretation and intervention such that "postcolonialism as a theoretical discourse can operate as a kind of popular front for a whole range of different inter-related political movement" (ix), which in this wise includes examination of the excesses and defects of the followers.

The foregoing also observes that Femi Osofisan is an objective playwright who is unbiased in the exploration of the plight of the masses. The aura of pessimism which dominates *Birthdays are not for dying* and apathy to politics in *Love's unlike lading* are against revolutionary ideals of collective struggle. Osofisan's identification of the ill roles of the common people and followers as a paradox in the Nigerian milieu and his deliberate salvos at them in the plays analysed water down his supposedly Marxist spirit and obviously a minus to consensus opinion on his

philosophical standpoint. Osofisan reacts to this when he said in an interview with Agunbiade (2015) that:

If you want a change, your plans must be double headed towards those who are heading and those headed, but to think that the masses are just innocent I think is wrong. So this is what I try to highlight in those works. I may be pointing more at the rulers or the ruling class but I have not idealised the working class just as I don't deliberately criminalize them, but you have to show that the worker is not a good worker just because he is a worker, or peasant farmer physically good just because he is a farmer, if you are subjected to these various traumas you end up differently from what you expect (1).

However, rather than entirely having a class oriented society as of Marxist aesthetics where we have the ruler as the oppressor and the ruled as the oppressed, Osofisan in the prevailing works has shown that within the followers/ ruled exists another class-like structure where one is the oppressor and the other the oppressed. This is seen in the relationship that exists between Bassey and his debtors in *Love's unlike lading* as Bassey's intention with usury is to ensure the debtors never pay back so he can take over their property and leave them more disillusioned than when they approached him. The same is exemplified in *Fires burn and die hard* with the character of Alhaja who becomes an oppressor over other market women whose shops she razed in the bid to avoid being caught in dealings in contraband goods—an act which in its entirety is a minus to the nation's economic development.

Osofisan is therefore a restless avant-garde playwright who dares canonised playwrights' and writers' opinion which has obfuscated less sensitive minds especially in view of emerging realities in Nigeria and Africa. Gimba's (2008) warning on the mesmerizing dangerous hold of Achebe's hypothesis in *The trouble with Nigeria* (1984) that "the trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership" (1) is thus put to test in the prevailing plays of Osofisan to show that "Achebe no doubt meant well but great men also go wrong" (Gimba, 2008: 19). This need for a rethink in commitment in African literature is also identified in few plays of Ahmed Yerima especially in his *The Sick People* and *Hard Ground*. The foregoing therefore calls for a pertinent question on the position, responsibility and commitment of the African writer. Stewart (2002) opines that this can be addressed in the redefinition of commitment in African literature as,

Today's social situation obligates the writer to examine his position in the world and his responsibility to other men. I believe it obligates the writer to approach his work in a committed way. To resist the temptation of compromise and conformity, the writer (Playwright) must be devoted to the autonomy of literature. The honest writer must stand inside society-not in the shadows of the periphery-and he must tell the truth (1).

It is this truthful depiction of the society that necessitates an alternative appraisal/ engagement of the post-independence condition of Nigeria as against wanton criticism of the leaders. This however does not concede primacy of disillusionment to the followers and the common people as Osofisan in the plays under study is not out to nail them to the cross but preoccupied to changing them with a mindset that today's followership is tomorrow's leadership. As such a character stands out among the followers in each play to prove that the expected change is possible among the followers. This is observed in Omele in *Esu and the vagabond minstrels* who distinguishes himself among the minstrels and Leke the son of Alhaja who runs to the police to expose her mother's involvement in contraband in *Fires burn and die hard*. Also the trait is evident in Kunle Aremo the lonely crusader in *Birthdays are not for dying*, in Fowosanu in *Love's unlike lading*, in Ayinde in *Aringindin and the Nightwatchmen*, in Inspector Akindele in *The Inspector and the hero*. While we have the likes of Altine in *Altine's Wrath*, Alowolodu in *One legend, many seasons* and Folawe in *Farewell to a cannibal rage*, all of them bolstering the hope of an idyllic society. Osofisan is therefore objective and true to his art by showing that there still exist among the followers altruistic men and women rich in humanity and unpolluted morality capable of pioneering a sanitised Nigeria.

The overall impression from this thesis is the need for an alternative engagement paradigm in the criticism of African drama and literature from wantonly criticising the rulers without remembering they are once followers and common people. The incisive criticism of the actions and inactions of the followers therefore becomes imperative for criticism to be objective as contended by Stewart (2002). The benefit becomes lucid with the encompassing power of drama as a didactic media just as play scripts have the advantage of being acted live on stage to excite and grippingly transform its targeted audience. It is thus imperative that the plays understudy be converted into films for fundamental changes in the society just as Utoh-Ezeajugh and Ogbonna (2013) posited that "dramatic literatures that are culturally embedded with traditional norms (folktales) and values should often be orchestrated on stage and any found space for the people

because of the ability of drama to ignite the intellectual, mental, moral and even spiritual development of the Nigerian people” (29).

The study therefore concludes with a prognostic comment that African playwrights have dwelt much on the problem of leadership in Africa to the utter neglect of followership deficit. It is therefore high time the contemporary playwrights reconsidered their over concentration on leadership as the entire problem of Africa as Osofisan has pioneered. It is believed that by this act, the real portrait of Nigeria and Africa will be clearly mirrored as against misleading the less sensitive minds to conclude and reproduce the blame game syndrome that the colonialists and leadership are entirely the cause of Nigeria and Africa’s backwardness. Therefore in place of the one-sided jeremiad fictional accounts of the postcolonial Africa given by the playwrights we would like to see plays which stress the place where ordinary people and followers have gaffed and the role they are to play in developing Nigeria and Africa rather than totally idealising them.

In sum, this thesis has open up the frontiers of disillusionment not only in Nigeria and the African literary space but also on the global front. It is contended that the gains of the study will not only enable fellow researcher students of literary studies as well as individuals to be intuitively engaged in literary studies but on the whole will help achieve the idyllic African society African drama targets.

REFERENCES

- Abrams, H.M. 1981. *A glossary of literary terms*: London: Holt, Reinhart and Wiston Ltd.
- Achebe, C. 1964. The role of a writer in a new nation. *Nigeria Magazine*. 81.06:157
- _____. 1966. *A Man of the People*. New York: Anchor Books
- _____. 1984. *The trouble with Nigeria*. Oxford: Heinemann Books.
- _____. 1990. *Hopes and impediments*. New York: Anchor Books
- Adeagbo, D. Is it safe to trust anybody? Blood stained hands: How Man, 36, killed childhood friend to possess his vehicle. *Vanguard Newspaper*. Oct. 10, 2010.
<http://community.vanguardngr.com/m/discussion?id=4565467%3ATopic%3A79842>
- Adedeji, J. 1978. Alarinjo: the traditional Yoruba travelling theatre. *Theatre in Africa*. Eds. T. Ogunba and I. Abiola: Ibadan University press. 27-51
- Adefolaju Eben, A. 2014. The theoretical postulates and creative outputs of Femi Osofisan. *European Journal of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities* 2. 2
- Adegbulu, F. 2010. Nigeria's (Unholy) wedlock with corruption: can death put them asunder? *The Journal of International Social Research* 3.12. 9-25
- Adekunle, I. 2013. Dictatorship and democracy in Niyi Osundare's *The State visit* and Bode Sowande's *Long Story*. Diss. English, Arts. University of Ibadan, Ibadan.
- Ademeso, A. 2009. National development and the concept of compassion. *Emerging perspectives on Femi Osofisan*. Eds.T. Akinyemi & T. Falola. Eritrea: Africa World Press. 53-63
- Adesanmi, P. and Dunton, C. 2005. Nigeria's third generation writing: Historiography and Preliminary Theoretical considerations. *English in Africa* 32.1.7-19
- Adeyemi, S. 2000. The Dictating currents and the questioning of tyranny in Africa: an intertextual study of Femi Osofisan's *Yungha-Yungba and the Dance contest*. *Mots Pluriels* 13.
- Afolayan, S. and Adeseke, A. 2012. The aesthetics of alienation in modern Nigerian drama: a marxist reading of Obafemi's *Suicide Syndrome*. *European Scientific Journal* 8.11. 108-124
- Agho, J. 1993. Disillusionment and alienation in the Novels of Ngugi wa Thiongo, Ayi kwei Armah, Alex la Guma and Sembene Ousmane. Thesis. English, Arts. University of Ibadan. Ix+284.
- _____. *Standpoints on the African Novel*. Ibadan: Sam Bookman

- Agunbiade, O. 2014. Representations of the media in selected contemporary Nigerian Prose fiction. M.A Research Project. University of Ibadan. Vi+ 121.
- Agunbiade, O. 2015. Unpublished interview with Femi Osofisan. Ibadan. 31st May, 2015.
- Aidelokhai, D. 2008. An evaluation of the relevance of traditional rulership institution in the Nigerian state: a case study of Edo state. *The Social Sciences* 3.2. 164-173
- Ajidahun, C. O. 2013. Femi Osofisan tackles graft and corruption: a reading of his socially committed Plays. *Tydskr.letterkd* 50.2. 111-123.
- Akinyemi, T and Falola, T. 2009. *Emerging perspectives on Femi Osofisan*. Eritrea: Africa World Press.
- Akoh, A. 2009. Post-military literary engagement in Nigeria. *Nebula* 6.4 264 – 272.
- Akporobaro, F. 2001. *Introduction to African Oral literature: a literary-descriptive approach*. Lagos: Princeton Publishing Company
- Aluko, J. 2010. Anti-Corruption: Leadership/Followership dimension and its implication for National development. *Nigeria World*. Retrieved Jul. 22, 2015, from <http://nigeriaworld.com/articles/2010/jul/191.html>
- Amuta, C. 1986. *Towards a sociology of African literature*. Oguta: Zim Pan-African Publishers
- Anwar, N. 2015. Femi Osofisan's Subversive Metatheatre in *The chattering and the song*. *International Journal of Arts & Sciences* 08.01: 499-511
- Armah A. K. (1969): *The Beautiful Ones are not yet born*. London: Heinemann
- Ashcroft, B. Griffiths, G and Tiffin, H. 1989. *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Postcolonial Literature*. London: Routledge
- Awodiya, M. 1993. *Excursions in Drama and Literature: Interviews with Femi Osofisan*. Ibadan: Kraft Books.
- _____. 1995. *The Drama of Femi Osofisan: a critical perspective*. Ibadan: Kraft Books Limited.
- _____. 2002. *Femi Osofisan: Interpretive Essays II*. Lagos: Centre for Black and African Arts and Civilization.
- Awude, D. 2017. *What's God's business with politics?* Ibadan: Kraft Books Ltd.
- Axel, H. 1998. *Igbo traditional rulers: chieftaincy and the state in southeastern Nigeria*. Afrika Spectrum
- Ayoade, J. 2010. Nigeria: Positive Pessimism and Negative Optimism, a Valedictory lecture delivered on September 17, 2010, Faculty of the Social Sciences, University of

Ibadan

- Bamidele, L. 2000. *Literature and Sociology*. Ibadan: Stirling-Horden publishers.
- Barry, P. 1995. *Beginning theory: an introduction to literary and cultural theory*. New York: Manchester University Press.
- Bhadmus, M. 2004. Ambiguity of modernist drama and theatre: the examples of Brecht and Osofisan. *African and World Literature* 4. 57 – 75
- Cash, J. 2012. The Drama teacher. Retrieved 21 July, 2017 from <http://www.thedramateacher.com/dramatic.metaphor/>
- Cates, D. 1992. Wickedness. *Annual of the Society of Christian Ethics* 12: 251-262
- Cesaire, A. 1969. *The tragedy of king Christophe*. Trans. Ralph Manheim. New York: Grove
- Clark, J.P. 1964. *Song of a Goat, The Masquerade, and The Raft*. Ibadan: Oxford Univ. Press.
- _____. 1991. *Wives Revolt*. Ibadan: University Press
- Clarke, W. 1972. *Travels and Explorations in Yoruba land, 1854-1858*. Edited with an Introduction by J.A. Atanda. Ibadan University Press, Ibadan.
- Crowder, M. 1978. *The story of Nigeria*. London: Faber and Faber Publishers.
- Cuddon, J. 1999. *Faction, Paradox. The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary History. England: Penguin Books*
- Dasyilva, A & Jegede. O. 2004. *Studies in Poetry*. Ibadan: Brown Communication Nigeria
- Dasyilva, A. 1997. *Dramatic literature. A critical resource Book*. Ibadan: Sam Bookman.
- _____. 2004. *Studies in Drama*. Ibadan: Stirling- Horden Publishers Limited
- Derrida, J. 1968. Differance. *Theorie D' Ensemble*. Editions Seuil. Retrieved Jul 15, 2015, from <http://projectlamar.com/media/Derrida-Differance.pdf>
- Derrida, J. 1976. *The exorbitant question of method. Of Grammatology. translated by Gayatri Spivak: Johns Hopkins University Press*
- Derrida, J. 1981. *Dissemination*. Britain: The Athlone Press Ltd.
- Eagleton, T. 1983. *Literary theory: an introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing
- Etim, S. 2004. A Man of the people: A serious indictment of Post-independence Africa. *Emerging perspectives on Chinua Achebe I*. Ed. E. Emenyonu. Africa World Press
- Eze, N. 2009-10. How marxist is Osofisan's *Once Upon Four Robbers?* *Nsukka Journal of African Languages and Linguistics* 5 & 6: 121 – 127.

- Fanon, F. 1963. *The wretched of the Earth*. New York: Grove Press.
- Fashina, N. 2009. Of what sex is the text? a new reading of gender characterization as a trope of harmony, cooperative principle and joint heroism in Gabriel Okara's *The voice*. *African Study Monographs* 30. 2: 71-87.
- _____. 2009. Alienation and revolutionary vision in East African post-colonial dramatic literature. *Ufahamu: A Journal of African Studies* 35.2:1-30.
- Freire, P. 1972. *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Hamondsworth: Penguin books
- Garba, H. 1988. Mask and meaning in black drama: Africa and the Diaspora. Thesis. English, Arts. University of Ibadan.
- Gavin, R. 1977. The impact of colonial rule on the Ilorin economy, 1897-1930. *Centre Point Journal* 1, Univ. of Ilorin
- Gbilekaa, S.E.T (2001) "The Development of the theatre of radical poetics in Nigeria" in Rotimi, Ola (ed) *Issues in African Theatre*. Ibadan: Humanity Publishers. 9-23
- Gikandi, S. 2001. Theory Literature and moral considerations. *Research in African Literature* 32.4: 1-17
- Gilbert, J. and Tompkins, H. 1996. *Postcolonial Drama: Theory, Practice, Politics*. London: Routledge
- Gimba, A. 2008. *Letter to the unborn child*. Ibadan: Kraft books Limited.
- Guerin W, Labor E, Morgan L, Reesman J and Willingham J. 1992. *A Handbook of critical approaches to Literature*. 3rd Ed. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Hornby, R. 1986. *Drama, Metadrama and Perception*. London: Associated University Press.
- House-Midamba, B and Ekechi, F. 1995. *African Market Women and economic power: The Role of Women in African economic development*. Westpoint, CT: Greenwood Press. Xix+214
- Human Rights Watch (HRW/CLEEN). 2002. The Bakassi Boys: the legitimation of murder and torture. *Human Rights Watch Reports* 14.5A: 1-45.
- Human Rights Watch. 2003. The O'odua peoples' congress: fighting violence with violence. *Human Rights Watch Reports* 15.4
- Ibrahim, H. 1990. The Violated Universe: Neo-colonial sexual and political consciousness in Dambudzo Marechera. *Research in African Literatures*. 21.2:79-90
- Ikiddeh, I. 1986. Ideology and Revolutionary Actions in the Contemporary African Novel. *Studies in the African Novel*. Eds. S.O. Asein & A.O. Ashaolu. Ibadan: Ibadan University press. 37-56

- Jameson, S. 1950. *The Writers situation and other essays*. London: Macmillan Ltd.
- Jeyifo, B. Femi Osofisan as a literary Critic and Theorist. *The Guardian Newspaper*. Feb. 28, 1987:13
- Johnson, B. 1980. *The critical difference: essays on the contemporary rhetoric reading*. USA: Johns Hopkins University Press
- Johnson, S. 1973. *The History of the Yorubas*. Ed. Obadiah Johnson. London: Routledge and K. Paul
- Kehinde, A. 2005. Rethinking African Fiction in the era of globalization: a contest of text and context. *Journal of the Nigerian English Studies Association* 11.1: 87-100
- _____. 2008. Post Independence Nigerian Literature and the quest for true political leadership for the Nation. *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa* 10.2: 333-360
- _____. 2008. Rulers against Writers, Writers against Rulers in postcolonial Nigerian Fiction. A paper presented at the CODESRIA 12th General Assembly Cameroun, held between 7th-11th December, 2008
- _____. 2011. Two of a kind: thematic, ideological and aesthetic convergences in American and African Literatures. *Impressions* 5.1. Retrieved Jun. 1, 2015, from http://impressions.org.in/jan11/ar_avobamik.html
- _____. 2012. The socio-historical context(s) of twentieth-century Anglophone novels. *Papers in English and linguistics (PEL)* Vol. 13: 25-49.
- Kiteme, K. 1992. The socio economic impact of the African Market Women trade in rural Kenya. *Journal of Black Studies* 23.1: 135-151
- Mbembe, A. 1992. Provisional notes on the postcolony. *Africa: Journal of the International African institute* 62.1: 3-37
- _____. 2001. *On the postcolony*. Beckerly/ Los Angelis/ London: University of California Press
- Meagher, K. 2007. Hijacking civil society: the inside story of the Bakassi Boys Vigilante group of South-eastern Nigeria. *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 45.1: 89-115
- Mowah, F. 2002. The Mask and African reality in Osofisan's *The Inspector and the Hero*. *Femi Osofisan: Interpretive Essays II*. Ed. M.P Awodiya. Lagos: Centre for Black and African Arts and Civilization.
- Nduku, E. and Tenamwenye, J. (Eds). 2014. *Corruption in Africa: a threat to Justice and sustainable peace*. Geneva: Globethics.net 14. 9. Retrieved Jun. 20, 2015, from www.globethics.net/publications

- Ngugi, W. 1969. Satire in Nigeria: C. Achebe, T.M Aluko and W. Soyinka. *Protest and conflict in African literature*. Eds. C. Pieterse and D. Munro. London: Heinemann. 56-69.
- _____. 1981. *Writers in politics: essays*. London: Heinemann Educational Books.
- Nwaeze, R. 2010. Vigilantism and crime control in contemporary Nigeria: a study of Udenu local government area of Enugu state. Diss. Sociology and Anthropology, Social science. University of Nigeria. i+72
- Nigeria is fantastically corrupt. *Vanguard*. May 10, 2016.
- <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2016/05/nigeria-15-fantastically-corrupt-uks-prime-minister-david-cameron/>
- Obafemi, O. 2008. *Politics and aesthetics: essays in Drama, Theatre and Performance*. Ilorin. Haytee Press and Publishing co. Ltd.
- Obafemi, O and Abubakar, A. 2006. Fabulous Theatre: A Re-assessment of Osofisan's Revolutionary Dialectics. *Portraits of an Eagle*. Ed. Sola Adeyemi. Germany: Bayreuth African Studies. 153-166
- Obasi, N and Aloysius Orjinta, I. 2013. The limitations of the Marxist ideals in the Plays of Femi Osofisan: a study of *Once upon four Robbers* and *Morountodun*. *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences* 3.9: 36-41
- Obuh, S. 2002. Story-telling techniques in Osofisan's *Farewell to a cannibal rage*. *Femi Osofisan: interpretive essays II*. Ed. M.P Awodiya. Lagos: Centre for Black and African Arts and Civilization.
- _____. 2007. Satire as a social Art: the comparative study of Ola Rotimi's *Our Husband has gone mad again* and Osofisan's *Midnight Hotel*. Retrieved Nov. 20, 2015 from http://www.bu.ac.th/knowledgecenter/epaper/july_dec2007/StanleyObuh.pdf.
- Odekunle, Femi. 1991. Illustrations of types, patterns and avenues of corruption in Nigeria: a typology. *Perspectives on corruption and other economic crimes in Nigeria*. Eds. Awa U.Kalu and Yemi Osibanjo. Lagos: Federal Ministry of Justice. 93-99.
- Odunbaku, A. 2014. Two sides of the coin in the dramatic metaphor of Femi Osofisan. Diss. English, Arts. University of Ibadan. Vi+75.
- Ogbonna, E., Ogundiwin, A. and Uzuegbu-wilson, E. 2012. Followership imperative of good governance: reflections on Nigeria's second chance at Democratization. *International Affairs and Global Strategy*. 4: 65-80
- Ogunba, O. 1977. Modern Drama in West Africa. *Perspectives on African literature*. Ed. Christopher Heywood. Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books.
- Ogunbiyi, Y. 1981. *Drama and Theatre in Nigeria: a critical source Book*. Lagos: Nigeria Magazine.

- _____. 1983. Towards a more relevant Nigerian Drama and Theatre. *Beyond Kurunmi: Notes and Critical Comment on Ola Rotimi's Kurunmi*. Ed. Tunde Lakoju. Zaria: Tunde Lakoju. 111-144
- Ogundeji, P. 1987. Trends and issues in Ogunde dramatic tradition. *Review of English and Literary Studies* 4.1
- _____. 1988. A semiotic studies of Duro Ladipo's *Mythico-historical plays*. Thesis. English, Arts. University of Ibadan, Ibadan
- _____. 2003. Forms of traditional Theatre Practice in Nigeria" Introduction to A.O. Dasylva's *Dapo Adelugba on Theatre Practice in Nigeria* (interview) Ibadan: Ibadan Cultural Studies Group, University of Ibadan, Ibadan.
- Ojo, J. 1976. The changing role of traditional rulers in the Nigerian political set-up. *The Indian Journal of Political Science* 37.4: 115-126.
- Okafor, O. 2006. *Legitimising Human rights NGOs: lessons from Nigeria*. Trenton: Africa World Press Inc.
- Okuyade, O. 2011. African china, Nigerian popular music, national development and the search for musical idiom. *Journal of Music Research in Africa* 8.2: 50-59
- Olaniyan, T. 2004. *Arrest the music! Fela and his rebel art and politics*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press
- Oloko, O. 1976. *Nigeria 20 basic problems yet unsolved*, Lagos, Apapa Printing Press.
- Oloruntoba–Oju, O. 1999. Themes, Tendencies in literature and criticism: A short introduction. *The English language and Literature in English*. Ed. A. Efurosibina. Ilorin: Department of Modern European languages, University of Ilorin.
- Olowonmi, A. 2008. The writer and the quest for democratic governance in Nigeria: transcending post-independence disillusionment. *The Journal of Pan African Studies* 2.3: 55- 67
- Onwueme, T. 1991. Visions of myth in Nigerian Drama: Femi Osofisan Versus Wole Soyinka. *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 23.1: 58-69
- Onyerionwu, E. The sick throne: Ngozi Nkoro's modest community drama. *Vanguard*. Oct. 25, 2007: 48
- Oripeloye, H. 2009. Re-ordering Humanity: Femi Osofisan's Backward glance in *One Legend Many Seasons*. *Emerging Perspectives on Femi Osofisan*. Eds. T. Akinyemi & T. Falola. Eritrea: Africa World Press.
- Osifo, M. 2002. The Metaphor of self-sacrifice in *Fires burn and die hard*. *Femi Osofisan Interpretive Essays II*. Ed. M.Awodiya. Lagos: Centre for Black and African Arts and Civilization.

- Osofisan, F. 1977. *The Chattering and the Song*. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press
- _____. 1978. *Who's Afraid of Solarin?* Calabar: Scholars Press
- _____. 1980. *Once Upon Four Robbers*. Ibadan: Heinemann.
- _____. 1982. *Morountodun*. Ibadan: Longman Nigeria
- _____. Leaving but not parting. *The Guardian Newspaper*. Dec. 4, 1983: 9
- _____. Publishing and Pain. *The Guardian Newspaper*. May 31, 1987:6
- _____. 1990. *Birthdays are not for dying and other Plays: Fires burn and die hard, The Inspector and the Hero*. Ikeja: Malthouse Press Ltd.
- _____. 1991. *Once Upon Four Robbers*. Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books Nigeria
- _____. 1995. *Twingle-Twangle: A Twynning Tale*. Ikeja: Longman Nigeria
- _____. 2001. *Insidious Treason: Drama in a Post colonial State*. Ibadan. Opon ifa Readers
- _____. 2001. *One Legend, many seasons*. Lagos: Concept Publications Ltd
- _____. 2001. Theatre in the academe and the question of national development. *Literature and the pressures of freedom*. Ibadan: Concept Publications Ltd.
- _____. 2002. *Seasons of Wrath: Altine's wrath, The Engagement, Flood*. Lagos: Concept Publications Ltd
- _____. 2002. *Major plays 2: Esu and the vagabond minstrels, Aringindin and the Night watchmen, Red is the freedom road*. Ibadan: Opon Ifa Readers
- _____. 2003. *Major plays 1: Many colours make the thunder King, Farewell to a cannibal rage, The oriki of a Grasshopper*. Ibadan: Opon Ifa Readers.
- _____. 2012. *Love's Unlike Lading*. Lagos: Concept Publications Ltd
- _____. 2014. The Audacity of Tropes: Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe and, the rest of us. Congregation Lecture at Igbinedion University, *Okada*. Nov 27, 2014. 1-31
- Osundare, N. 2007. *The writer as righter*. Ibadan: Hope Publications Ltd.
- _____. Nigeria's new-found 'change' and lessons. *The News*. July 01, 2015: 33.
- Owonibi, S. 2009. The Political Consciousness in African Literature: A Critical Analysis of some Selected Plays of Femi Osofisan *Emerging Perspectives on Femi Osofisan*. Eds.T. Akinyemi & T. Falola. Eritrea: Africa World Press.
- Pratten, D. 2008. Introduction. The politics of protection: perspectives on vigilantism in Nigeria. *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 78. 1: 1-15.

- Raji, A., Olumoh, A., and Abejide, S. 2013. Women and their role in the economy of Pre-colonial Ilorin, Northern Nigeria. *Arabian Journal of Business and Management Review* 3.5
- Ravenscroft, A. 1973. Novels of disillusion. *Readings in commonwealth literature*. Ed. Williams Walsh. London: Oxford U.P. 186-205.
- Robins, S. 2004. The (Third) world is a ghetto?: looking for a third space between “postmodern” cosmopolitanism and cultural nationalism. *CODESRIA Bulletin* 1-2: 18-26
- Rousseau, J. 1920. The social contract and discourses. Trans. G.D Howard Cole. New York. J.M Dent and sons
- Rotimi, O. 1985. *Hopes for the living dead*. Ibadan: Spectrum Books
- _____. 1990. Much ado about Brecht. *the dramatic touch of difference*. Ed. Erika Fischer-Lichte. Germany: Gunter Narr Verlag Tubingen. 259
- Said, E. 1993. *Culture and imperialism*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Selden, R. 1978. *English verse satire (1590 – 1765)*. London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd.
- Selden, R. and Widdowson, P. 1993. *A Readers guide to contemporary literary criticism*. New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf
- Smith, D. 2004. The Bakassi Boys: vigilantism, violence, and political imagination in Nigeria. *Cultural Anthropology* 19. 3: 429-55
- Sofola, J. 1973. *African culture and the African personality*. Ibadan: Heinemann.
- Sowande, B. 1979. *Farewell to Babylon*. Ibadan: Longman
- Soyinka, W. 1963. *A Dance of the forest*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- _____. 1963. *The Lion and the Jewel*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- _____. 1969. *The trials of Brother Jero*. Kenya: Oxford Univ. Press.
- Spivak, G. 1985. *Subaltern Studies: deconstructing historiography*. New Delhi: Oxford U.P
- _____. 1988. Can the Subaltern Speak. *Marxism and the interpretation of culture*. Eds. Carry Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg. London: Macmillan
- Stewart, G. 2002. Literature: Compromise and Commitment. Retrieved Jan. 15, 2018 from <http://southerncrossreview.org/20/stewartessay.htm>
- Syrotinski, M. 2012. ‘Genealogical misfortunes’: Achille Mbembe's (re)writing of postcolonial Africa. *Paragraph* 35.3: 407-420. Retrieved Mar. 10, 2019 from <http://eprints.gla.ac.uk/74847>
- Tenuche. M. 2005. A report on Benue valley conflict assessment, Kogi state of Nigeria. Bepress. Retrieved Jul. 20, 2017, from http://works.bepress.com/marietu_tenuche/5/
- Thompson, E. 1910. *The English moral plays*. Connecticut: Weimar.

- Ukaegbu, V. 2008. Mythological and patriarchal constraints: the tale of Osofisan's revolutionary Women. *Portrait of an Eagle: Essays in Honour of Femi Osofisan*. Ed. Sola Adeyemi. Kenia: Moi University. 184 – 5
- Ukase, P. 2011. Traditional rulers and partisan politics in Nigeria since independence. *Journal of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences*, Nigerian Defense Academy 6
- Ukase, P. and Abraham, V. 2016. The political economy of land and chieftaincy disputes in contemporary Africa: examples from central Nigeria. *International Journal of English, Literature and Social Science* 1.1: 29-40
- Ungar, R. 2011. Don't expect good leadership without good followership. *The Policy Page*. Retrieved from <http://trueslant.com/rickungar/2010/04/19/dont-expect-good-leadership-without-good%E2%80%99followership%E2%80%99/> on 27, Oct. 2011.
- Utoh-Ezeajugh, T. and Ogbonna, K. 2013. Cultural imperatives for peace and security in African drama: Ogonna Agu's *symbol of a goddess* and Sonnie Ododo's *Hard Choice* as paradigm. *Creative Artist: A Journal of Theatre and Media Studies* 7.1. 12-31
- Vaughn, J. 1935. *Drama A. Z: A Handbook*. New York: Fredrick Ungar Publishing Co.
- Weate, J. 2003. Postcolonial theory on the brink: a critique of Achille Mbembe's On the postcolony. *African identities* 1.1
- Yakubu, A. 2012. Democracy and Political Apathy in Nigeria (1999-2011). *European Scientific Journal* 8.20
- Yol, J. 2010. The role of traditional rulers in community development: a case study of Guma local government area of Benue state, Nigeria. Diss. Sociology, Social science. Benue state University. i+60
- Young, R. 1990. *White Mythologies*. London: Routledge
- _____. 2001. *Postcolonialism: an historical introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

Electronic Databases and Internet sources

- <http://dailyindependentnig.com/2015/07/police-arrest-ekiti-market-leader-n93-8m-scam/>
Retrieved on 1st Aug. 2015.
- <http://thenationonlineng.net/ex-futa-vc-ilemobade-found-dead/> Retrieved on 5th Jul. 2015
- <http://www.punchng.com/feature/famous-parents/the-recent-results-of-the-mayyoung-femi-osofisan-son/> Retrieved on 10th Jul. 2015
- <http://www.englishbiz.co.uk/downloads/binaryopposition.pdf> Retrieved on 16th Mar., 2017.
- <http://tribuneonlineng.com/adeboye-orders-rccg-members-join-political-parties/> Retrieved on 10th Jan. 2017
- <http://www.vanguardngr.com/2016/11/ekiti-residents-jubilate-womens-leader-forces-prices-goods/>
Retrieved 30th Nov. 2016

<http://www.dailytrust.com.ng/news/women-entrepreneurs/deji-of-akure-begs-market-women-to-reduce-food-prices/176094.html> Retrieved 17th Dec. 2016

APPENDIX

INTERVIEW WITH FEMI OSOFISAN

This interview of Femi Osofisan was conducted by Oyewumi Agunbiade at the Department of Theatre Arts, University of Ibadan on 31st May, 2015 (1:00PM). Before the interview, I have on many occasions engaged Professor Femi Osofisan in discussion relating to his works of which he readily obliged me for more information to enrich my research.

AGUNBLADE: Prof, the general opinion is that you write to fight for the right of the masses; it is however obvious that in your works you also whip the masses as response to increased moral decadence and their foibles. How do you view this as many seldom work on this aspect of your writing?

OSOFISAN: I think that it is pretty obvious that the goal is not just to free the masses but it is to create an equitable society where everybody is happy and when you want to do that it is obvious to tell the story just as you see it that the fault is not just with the rulers, the fault is with all of us anyway. And I think that the post colonial state is a state that has gone through colonial experience particularly British colonialism, it will be too much to expect that it is only one class of people who will need reorientation. It is also obvious that with the kind of mental alienation that the British /colonialists usually intend on the colonized people, everybody will be affected not just the rulers, workers and rulers will be affected equally. And so in the process, colonial power for example, what you find is the people develop all kinds of attitude to work, to government work and to government officials. This attitude is often negative to development because they resist cooperation with the government and its projects. Government in quotation here is the enemy you know. That is of course not something that cannot change but will change when only if the government that comes takes a different attitude from its predecessor. Unfortunately what you find is that the new government takes after the colonials and policies they put in place were just the same policies as the white who were there. Therefore since there is no fundamental change of attitude in the government that left and the one that had taken over the attitude of the workers remain the same. They see the government as the enemy and so everything they can do is to sabotage projects of that government. You can see how that has continue when you look at people in their individual lives, who in their own private works you see how very committed they work and then compared to what they do when employed in civil service, you see the difference. I don't know if the proverb still exists. When we were growing

up, the proverb was that you don't do government work and sweat (A kii se ise ijoba ka lagun) . Government means an enemy and therefore if you don't correct that you can't have any development in any way not Government sponsored programme alone. So if you want a change your plans must be double headed towards those who are heading and those headed, but to think that the masses are just innocent I think is wrong. So this is what I try to highlight in those works. I may be pointing more at the rulers or the ruling class but I have not idealized the working class just as I don't deliberately criminalize them, but you have to show that the worker is not a good worker just because he is a worker or peasant farmer physically good just because he is a farmer, if you are subjected to these various traumas you end up differently from what you expect. It is of course a pity that so many years after independence one is still talking of colonialism and all the like but it's the mentality that is the problem. That mentality has not been addressed consciously and change will do that.

AGUNBIADE: In *Fire Burns and Die Hard*, we see the masses eventually suffering from the ill action of Alhaja who burns her shop with the whole market as her son Leke alerted the police of her Involvement in contraband goods. Prof are you trying to deploy the Yoruba proverb that “kokoro ton jefo ara efo lowa” (that is, man is the enemy of himself). And in this case, that the people themselves are the cause of their woes contrary to views that their leaders are responsible for their problem?

OSOFISAN: First of all am not writing to prove any proverb right or wrong. I am not too worried about proverbs. And I think am a bit uncomfortable with the word, the masses. That is a very big and general term. Let's just say the market women and they are suffering. First before going to your question, I like to say, you just don't need to go to the market, you see what has happened with the fuel shortage. I have sold in the market before and close to market women. It's a principle of our market here that you create shortage in order to make profit. And once there is a shortage people will fix their price. It seems to be a general law in the market and has not been questioned so I just write. This is what traders do as they don't care about who suffer or doesn't. It's good for the individual trader but what of those who are buying. Everybody seem to accept it anyway, generally that is what happen with traders as they try to create artificial scarcity where there is none. They just withdraw the goods, hide them and make their money. This is what I am revealing in the market, not that Alhaja wants to destroy the market but a crude

application of that principle of making crude profit not from the supply but deliberate restriction of supply. And to be more specific here regarding your question, contraband today is wide spread in the market. A lot of the wealthy people in the country are involved in this. You know how we say it “Isale oro o legbin” (there is no wealth whose source is not dirty) we seem to have accepted it. This is what has happened. She sells contraband and in most case the police will know it but as long as she gives them their cash no one is going to care. Unfortunately now she is going to be caught and discovered and in the attempt to cover up she burns the entire market. You must also know that the play belongs to a detective series where I wrote about all kind of criminal things in the society which are still happening till date. These are ongoing stories.

AGUNBIADE: what is your view about people who initially were poor, with humble background and promising but eventually when they got into power they misbehave as we see in *The Inspector and the Hero* and *Altine’s Wrath*? And how can you relate this with high expectation of the people from former President Good luck Jonathan?

OSOFISAN: There I think nothing is unusual about that because becoming rich doesn’t mean becoming morally right. In fact process of becoming rich I will say most of it is through immoral acts; those who can act fast on the stock exchange, who steal other people’s investment. And relating your question to the campaign slogan of former-president Good luck Jonathan, yes you know when you are looking for votes you adopt any approach to get it. He grew up poor some voted for him because of that but I dont think majority voted for him because of that, we are not even sure if majority voted for him. That he came from a poor background is not a guarantee of moral uprightness. It is wrong to associate poverty and morality. This is what I am trying to say, that somebody is poor doesn’t necessarily mean that person will be righteous or that he will know how to use power.

AGUNBIADE: No doubt the central theme in *One Legend Many Season* is wickedness of man to man. Are you trying to show how inevitable this has become even among the led, the ruled and the working class with your main characters Alowolodun and Makon?

OSOFISAN: human beings are still individuals whether they are poor or rich as they are with individual characteristics. This question of ruling class is not mathematical. There are some people among the ruling class you will be happy to associate with, who are extremely good and

better than some of the people you know among the lower class, who because of their poverty their mind has been changed and warped. So people are still individuals, you still have to get their measures before you know who is who. And specifically the characters are not government workers as you could see meaning that once you make money your god or priority, either you are a public servant or not Jesus Christ will fly away. You lose the moral balance.

AGUNBLADE: One of your most criticized plays is *Esu and the Vagabond Minstrels*; what really inspired your writing the play?

OSOFISAN: First of course is the level of theatricality. There are debates on why theatre in English was not flourishing while Yoruba theatre was flourishing. This was the time Ogunde was still very much around. We noticed that anytime those travelling theatre came round the whole place will be filled up and yet we do our English plays with less audience. So the question was on whether it was because we are doing our plays in English that is why we were not having much audience. I was arguing against that, that it is not the language that makes the theatre popular or unpopular. It's the kind of theatre you do and you know this kind of argument you can only prove it by doing it. And I decided to write a play that will prove that and my reason for this principally among other reasons was that at the time this was before Nollywood came, the most popular cultural activity as at that time was the Indian films. Everybody love Indian films and yet the films were not in Yoruba either. They were in Hindi and some other Indian languages and yet you will love them. Of course they had subtitles but the subtitles were in English. Even when you go to the film house there will be somebody sitting beside you who had probably watched the film twenty times, who doesn't really speak English at all who will tell you the entire story. Why? The audience doesn't speak English or Hindi and yet watch the film and enjoyed it. This was my starting point and I said I will write another play that will be as popular so that was the point on theatricality, which is to write the play that will be in English and that will also be popular. I just simply looked at the things that made the Indian films popular you know: music, songs, dancing and some simple plot and I put them on stage. There was also the question of Esu argued about. You know Esu in Yoruba Pantheon has been wrongly translated as Satan in the Bible but Esu is not. In Yoruba pantheon we don't have a god as evil as that which was why many people even bore that name Esubiyi, Esugbami etc but when the Christians now began to

translate it as satan everybody wanted to run away. So this was one of the points I wanted to show.

AGUNBIADE: Permit me to come in here Prof., then what is the real Esu in Yoruba context?

OSOFISAN: Well Yoruba is Yoruba and Hebrew is Hebrew. We don't have exactly the same case in the two cultures. But I think they just had to find equivalence for the Hebrew words while translating the bible. In Yoruba context Esu can be very benevolent in fact when the script was being typed the typist had about four Christian fellows with their Bibles praying for him. The noise went round the campus that you mustn't go and watch it. This was a big challenge to us because the head of department got a bit worried, came to me and asked why don't we change the title? But I said no we won't change it let us see how it goes and incredibly we performed three nights nonstop.

AGUNBIADE: The Old man in the play eventually described Omele who used his power kindly on the pregnant woman and leper "the only one worthy to be called a human being". Do you mean a critical mass of Nigerians have lost that spirit of humanity?

OSOFISAN: That is your subjective view any way, but certainly you can see without much prove that quite a lot of them have lost it but don't forget that the others challenged him and even it's a parable, a folktale, there is big lesson for everybody. As we see in Omele as he becomes a hero but if you are the one will you do as Omele did? Somebody gave you one chance to make it in your life, will you just give it out to anybody. So it is easy to make decision when you are sitting on the fence and just watching but suppose you are the one actively involved. Moreover, there are still kind people around, recently you see the case of the woman who found about ten million dollars at the airport and returned it to the owner.

AGUNBIADE: In *Farewell to Carnibal Rage*, are you saying that our traditional rulers also contribute to the nation's problem as evident in the role the Traditional rulers played in the play by causing rancor between two friends and their eventual death all in the name of giving over their land to the white men who requested for the land for farming? Can you also link the role the Afeniferes played by endorsing former president Goodluck Jonathan during the campaign of last presidential election?

OSOFISAN: That they are traditional rulers don't make it a law against them that they mustn't have their own political preferences. So traditional rulers do have their own preferences and I am one of those who will support that. But if you make a certain decision you must prepare for the consequences. The traditional rulers you can't say in blanket that they are the ones responsible for all our problems. Some of them certainly are, but I haven't generalized to that extent. And about the two friends the piece is basically trying to show that many of our laws are not working not because infrastructure is bad which it is but also because the insight, what we believe in, and what we pass on is all different.

AGUNBIADE: in *Aringindin and the Night Watchmen*, Ayinde the School Teacher instead of sympathizing with the Traders over carting away of their goods by the robbers lambasted them saying: "the traders created scarcity and inflation, so that swelling bank notes may continuously glut their bloated stomachs..(142), are you saying here that some Nigerian traders are "vultures" as Ayinde described feeding on their fellow human beings just as evident during oil scarcity as marketers sell at exorbitant rates to make fortunes?

OSOFISAN: That one trader is like that doesn't mean that other traders are like that, it just show that some traders are like that. Each person's integrity is what you have to really take care of. So like I have earlier said I have not generalized.

AGUNBIADE: Still on *Aringindin and the Night Watchmen*, in the play we see Aringindin, the respected ex-soldier eventually being discovered as the root of the village's problem. What message are you trying to pass to your audience here and is there still hope for a good leader in our country?

OSOFISAN: Yea, I think that shows you how careful we have to be. This is what I am saying titles, appearances do not always tell the truth. Professor so so so and so because of that, naively you give him everything assuming that because he has reached certain level of scholarship he therefore has reached the same level of morality or wisdom. I think this is what we have been doing we don't screen well or look at the credentials of people, we just automatically put them there as the saviour just because he has been complaining. We don't ask, why is he complaining? Perhaps he is complaining because he is not one of those enjoying the "ilabe" (benefitting from corruption) or his wife is not there or something, and then as soon as he is given that power he

now shows his true colour. Again and again am saying that appearances are deceptive, even sometimes when they are genuine, when people are genuine in their talks or attitudes, they may not take the right steps and it is important in that case because we have so many cases since independence; radicals, Marxists, then they get into government and they turn round and become the opposites. So we really need to examine these things carefully.

AGUNBLADE: In *No More the Wasted Breed*, the docility of the people to question their leaders and authority is examined. After thirty four years of the text, do you still see the Nigerian masses in the light of this? That is, the inability to question their leaders just as Saluga did by charging Biokun to challenge the gods who had brought evil on them.

OSOFISAN: I won't call it docility, they are indoctrinated into it .They just don't ask enough questions. I have made this point again and again, people tend not to ask questions and just take things for granted so they end up badly. This is why we have not made so much progress.

AGUNBLADE: In *Love's Unlike Lading*, which of the Shakespeare play do you adapt, and the message of love is an inevitable theme in the play, how would you describe the place of love in our country Nigeria especially among the ordinary people?

OSOFISAN: We have *Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *The Merchant of Venice*, so not just one play, the two are mixed. And regarding the theme of love, these are shakespeare's play dealing with love you know but I wasn't really trying to deal with love as such but I will say there is love in the country otherwise how do we sustain ourselves. Just like anywhere else some of this love is hypocritical some of it is just for business, to win contracts. But love should be eternal.

AGUNBLADE: Thank you very much for answering the questions.

OSOFISAN: It's been a pleasure. Thank you too.