

**THE CONCEPT OF AUTOCRATIC AND DESPOTIC LEADERSHIP IN
AFRICA: A STUDY OF *A PLAY OF GIANTS, WHO IS AFRAID OF SOLARIN?*
AND *FOREST OF PALM TREES*.**

BY

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FACULTY OF ARTS
DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE AND FILM STUDIES**

DECEMBER, 2015.

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PALM TREES.***

**A PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF POST-GRADUATE STUDIES, IN
PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF DEGREE
OF MASTER OF ARTS (M.A.) IN THEATRE AND FILM STUDIES.**

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CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that Nwagbo, Sobenna Collins with Registration number PG/MA/13/67303 has satisfactorily completed the requirement for the course work and project for the Award of a Master of Arts (M.A.) degree in the Department of Theatre and Film Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The work is original and has not been submitted in part or full for any Degree or Diploma of this or any other University.

DR FELIX U. EGWUDA
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APPROVAL PAGE

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my dear wife Barr. Mrs. Febechukwu Vivian Nwagbo (Nee Maduko). In you my ~~best~~ with God. I am complete.

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ABSTRACT

Leadership and governance are among the most observed and least understood phenomenon on earth. A call for a focus on leadership and governance is timely, important and no doubt topical, reflecting the world wide thrust towards political and economic liberalization. Throughout the whole world, there has been an urgent desire among various people and government for unity, justice, peace and stability. The resurgence of this desire is not only explicable through their political policies alone; but also it is reflected in the social and economic policies. In fact, most governments in Africa have been undergoing serious and deepening politico-economic crisis. These problems generated by political, social and economic instability and the prevalence of ethnic, communal and religious crises, call our attention to the concepts of leadership and governance in the continent. In other words, the staggering wave of violence, insecurity, economic recession, tyranny, autocracy, despotism, religious extremism, and non adherence to court orders are the attributes to the concepts of leadership and governance in Africa. Therefore, the quest for good leadership is a sine-qua-non for governance and sustainable development. This research is a critical analysis of the concept of autocratic and despotic leadership in Africa. Works by playwrights that addresses the subject of study are selected to highlight issues threatening leadership and good governance in Africa. The plays portray Africa's failures to have come about largely as a result of frequent leadership change, lack of ideology, policy reversal and weak institutional patterns. The research also examines the leadership selection process in Africa and that leadership selection process in Africa takes the imposition pattern and that African leaders have frequently come to their position forcefully with limited experience. Hence, the decline in moral and discipline caused by bad policies, eroded professional standards, ethics and weakened the system of governance. The research lays emphasis on leadership and governance in some African countries using selected Nigerian plays that highlight different dimensions and approaches of leadership and governance in Africa. Through its critical examination of the selected plays, this study will stir up critical debate in the area of discourse and encourage would-be leaders in Africa to embrace good leadership that will impact positively on Africans.

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CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The advent of democracy is often heralded as a progressive development in most countries, especially in a developing country like Nigeria. In our case however, there appears to be an uncomfortable correlation between democracy and an increasing divorce from purpose and logic on a national scale. The African system of government is largely populated by thugs and criminals in disguise, and characterized by all manner of perfidy; nepotism, factionalism, clique and line-ups which could also be called cabal. They operate in circle because when they succeed in putting one of their own in power, they all benefit from that government.

How does one appeal to the conscience of a man who is impervious to disgrace? This is a trait that characterizes not just our political system, but even average citizens, and that is why most of the citizens do not see anything wrong in applauding and glorifying our political leaders who are after looting our treasury and diverting public funds into their own private accounts. They come back to us with the same funds during campaign or election; giving out money, material things and food stuffs.

In spite of all these individual and collective failings, we are very quick to point fingers at our leadership, forgetting our own complicity in the matter. Like in Nigeria, the almighty naira rains supreme and we sing the praise of anyone who can throw a few coins our way, never mind that they stole it from us to begin with. Social mores and codes have been turned on their heads to the extent that the only shameful thing in our continent today is poverty.

Given that our police and Judicial institutions are completely ineffective in arresting the decay, the last effective tool of punishment we have is social exclusion and even that is fast slipping out of our grips. And the last bastions of that: our press our religious leaders, our parents and elders, fail when they rent themselves as praise-singers to the delinquents that hold an entire nation hostage.

We fail ourselves with the small daily acts of shamelessness that we subscribe to. We have turned into a world where a good name no longer has any value; the children of the criminals are being groomed to turn political office into criminal dynasties. This is one of the reasons why Chinenye Amonyeze in his play *Glorifying Folly* posits;

Folly stares us in the face each time we engage in unwholesome attitudes like selfishness, nepotism, indiscipline, bribery, unsanitary habits and cheating, to a few; erroneously assuming ourselves sagacious while in fact the inglorious act is pure buffoonery of the highest order. Folly inhabits every human being in this country and until it is identified and expunged, we will remain slaves to its wiles and caprices (iv).

Until that day when nepotism, shamelessness, factionalism and cabals are removed and or done away with in our political system, Africa as a continent may remain on the road to perdition.

1.2 Statement of Problem

Social development in Africa from prehistoric times up till now has been inhibited by bad leadership principles from African leaders. The need to address this rot tagged bad leadership in recent times has been a very demanding one. Several writers in Africa have over the years written a lot on leadership in others to address the rot -bad leadership- and the consequences that

come with it. This has invariably and consistently produced slow results but this study in its unusual approach attempts a critical examination on African leadership principles with close reference to the selected plays chosen for discourse. This as a result will stir up critical debate(s) in such a sensitive area like leadership.

1.3 Research Questions

The study hinges on the following research questions:

1. How does the study stir up critical debate in relation to the selected plays?
2. What the implications of bad leadership are as portrayed in the selected plays?
3. What the relevance of good leadership in government is as relayed in the selected plays?

1.4 Objective of the Study

Having in mind the above mentioned facts, this research would discuss in critical terms the sad and shameful nature of our political system where our leaders tune into fraudsters and cheats after winning elections; only for the masses to realize that their sweet and promising manifestos were mere speech making designed for show or public applause by mainly people who are in the same faction, choice or cabal with these public office holders, Aspirants and or leaders.

The objective of this study is therefore -

1. To highlight the role of leadership in good governance in Nigeria
2. To highlight the effects of bad leadership as portrayed in the selected plays
3. To stir up a critical debate in the area of leadership using the selected plays.

1.5 Scope of the Study

A lot of African dramatists and playwrights have also put up performances and written plays discouraging bad leadership in Nigeria and Africa in general. There are a lot to be discussed with regards to bad leadership, and or insincerity in governance in most African Countries especially Nigeria. This study tends to delimit its scope to the critical analysis of the African political space through the study of three (3) Nigerian plays. *A Play of Giants*, *Who's Afraid of Solarin?* and *Forest of Palm Trees*. This is perhaps why this study decides to go on this journey logically in critical terms using three prominent and unique Nigerian plays. This study is delimited to the critical analysis of Wole Soyinka's *A Play of Giants* (1st pioneer generation), Femi Osofisan's *Who is Afraid of Solarin?* (2nd post-war generation) and Tracy Utoh's *Forest of Palm trees* (4th post-millennial generation). These are well written African plays that focus on the political ills in some African Societies. They expose the manner in which leadership is abused and are perpetrated in Nigeria and some other African countries.

1.6 Significance of the Study

There are a lot of round pegs in square holes in African government where citizens do not consider the leadership quality of a political aspirant before adopting him/her as a candidate. The electorates are more concerned about the region or geo-political zone the candidate is coming from, and will only support the candidate if he/she satisfies a quest of specific zones. When elections are inconclusive, marred by violence and irregularities, results are still being announced and upheld in a typical African political space especially Nigeria.

This study is significant as it exposes and advocates against such political practices through its application of Juvenal satire in the critical analysis of the selected plays. The African populace may be enlightened about the dangers and hazards associated with such heinous

practices from our leaders who we have trusted with our mandates but they sabotage our future in return. By literary satirizing the activities of our political leaders, the people are informed and enlightened about the fundamentals of good leadership qualities. The negative effect of bad leadership as portrayed will serve as a warning to future would-be-leaders and also an insurance for a better African political space. The study will spur future researches and also provide references for future researches into this area of study.

1.7 Research Methodology

The nature of a study determines the research methodology it employs. This study employs Qualitative research methodology in analyzing and critically interpreting data used in the work. Due to the historical nature of the study, the discourse will employ the historical methodological style in gathering and analyzing of data for the study. Sam Ukala, in *Manual of Research and of Thesis Writing in Theatre Arts* states, Historical methodology entails the investigation of documented sources, such as books, journals, reports, films, video and audio tapes, archival materials as well as oral sources (12). He explains that this method is used to ascertain facts and occurrences in definite places and time. The methodology is necessary and it is applied to this study because of its relevance to the topic. Critical analysis of literary works in the area of political theatre which are directly concerned with governance, political philosophies, approach and mannerism of different political leaders are of great importance as they project and authenticate the methodology and claims of this research. The present situation of the continent and its historical facts are used to prove certain points in different aspects of this work because this work cannot be complete without them.

The researcher uses materials from Library, Interviews, Articles, Journals, Inaugural lectures, Internets, lecture notes, seminars, play texts and workshops as his major sources of

information which are cited, quoted and documented in order to authenticate and acknowledge the original sources of them. Nevertheless, some aspects of this work are based on common sense, intuition, inspiration, imagination and germinal ideas so as to be able to achieve the objective of this research.

1.8 Theoretical Framework

This study is guided by the Reader-Response theory as its theoretical framework. This theory does not designate any one critical theory, but rather a focus on the process of reading a literary text that is shared by many of the critical modes. M. H. Abrams believes "Reader-Response critics turn from the traditional conception of a work as an achieved structure of meanings" (265). This study adopts the reader-response model developed by the German critic Wolfgang Iser. In Iser's view;

the literary text, as a product of the writer's intentional acts, in part controls the reader's responses, but always contains (to a degree that has greatly increased in many modern literary texts) a number of "gaps" or "indeterminate elements." These the reader must fill in by a creative participation with what is given in the text before him (266).

This study is also guided by the Juvenalian Satire. Juvenalian Satire's goal is to provoke some sort of change because the government, societal structures, and power are presented as harmful and evil. In literature, any bitter and ironic criticism of contemporary persons and institutions that is filled with personal invective, angry, moral indignation, and pessimism could be tagged Juvenalian satire. The name alludes to the Latin satirist, Juvenal, who in the 1st century AD, brilliantly denounced Roman society, the rich, powerful, and the discomforts and dangers of city life. Juvenalian satire has been noted from antiquity for its wrathful scorn towards all

representatives of social deviance, some politically progressive scholars such as Abrams posits, "Horatian satire is gentle, urbane, smiling" aims to correct by gently and sympathetic laughter while Juvenal satire is biting, bitter, and angrily-spiced out with contempt and moral-indignation" (188).

The play as written by a playwright might be on contemporary or historic issues bordering on socio-political, religious problems, entertainment (farce) or children's moonlight story telling. According to Robert Cohen, in his book *Theatre and Drama*, "Drama could not begin without the disciplined construction of an orderly sequence of words and actions representing a real or imagined experience" (3). This goes a long way to show that the playwright's duties in the society are immeasurable. They write about the people of the noble, the middle and the lower classes. Everybody (high, middle and low class citizens) is expected to see himself on the stage as there can never be a rich man where there are no poor people.

Factionalism, Nepotism, egocentricism, corruption and mismanagement of public funds have eaten deep into the fabrics of our society (Nigeria). Nobody is left out; the political class, civil and public servants are all affected and or infected. We learn very little of these shameful anomalies on radio, television and newspaper every day, while a lot are being perpetrated on daily bases. This implies that only very little of the crimes are exposed. As a result, three Nigerian play texts. Wole Soyinka's *A Play of Giants*, Femi Osofisan's *Who is Afraid of Solarin?*, Tracie Utoh's *Forest of Palm Trees* are instrumental in exposing some of these inhuman act perpetrated by those in leadership positions and public offices in Africa.

In the subsequent chapters, the researcher exposes and analyzes in critical terms scholarly related concepts, ideas and related material to the topic of study.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Preamble

In a research of this kind, it is paramount that the researcher should extensively review previous scholarly documentations in the wider field to which the ongoing research belongs. Such an exercise helps the researcher to have a fundamental knowledge or the background of the study. The concept of political theatre, the concept of Satire, and Satirist and the society are discussed in this chapter.

2.2 The Concept of Political Theatre

A story is a product of connection that maintains a field of contact not only among people but also between people and places. To be part of a community is to be part of its story. In *Staging place: The Geography of Modern Drama*, Una Chaudhri writes "the mutually constructive relations between people and place. Who one is and who one can be is a function of where one is and how one experiences that place" (12). Just like Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species* as stated in Nibert O. Eze's *Theatre Workshop*; "the primary cause of behavior are heredity and environment" (35). For Chinua Achebe, the transition to a new kind of postcolonial world should not abandon the old and the repository of the old, the vital means to bring the old to meet the new, is the story. The story is our escort. A character in Achebe's novels *Anthills of the Savannah* says, "without it, we are blind" (4) "the story embodies a tradition that can adopt to the new. The problem Achebe confronts is that of preserving national and cultural identity in the face of the inevitable blinding of different cultures, yet preserving that identity in a way that does not reject and can benefit.

Grace Okereke notes that "All over Africa, important historical events affecting the destiny of nations have been fit subject of literary creativity among writers" (6). Okereke's position echoes what expressed earlier by the Kenyan writer Ngugi wa Thiongo who posits; "African literary works do not exist in vacuum, such literary artifacts are always conditioned by the events of respective society in which they occur" (15).

According to Joseph Ebegbule; "politics is the activity (negotiation, arguments, discussion application of forces, persuasion, etc) by which an issue is agitated or settled" (3). There is bound to be two groups here; people who believe and others who do not believe (opposition group). Most times, the opposition group is the oppressed group of people who will always say "no" to bad policies of government. Though, most times, Playwrights/dramatists (Wole Soyinka, Hubert Ogunde, Ojo Bakare, Femi Osofisan, Emeka Nwabueze) and so on are in the group. With the use of Satire, theatre artists write to satirize, criticize, mock, expose and fight against this bad government policies through Theatre for Development (TfD) and plays that will show the government and their ways of governance to itself. Sarah Jones on Wikipedia website opines;

Political theatre is a drama or performing art which emphasizes political issues in its theme or plot. It is exploring themes more universal and central to society itself, especially when the society defines itself as politically conscious (4).

This is usually done through the products of her art. Aristophanes is thought to be one of the greatest of his days and one of the earliest recorded writers of political satire. His plays are unequalled source of information about politics, personalities, morality, literature and everyday

life in Athens. Ossie Enekwe, citing Lay posits ðin Greece, occasionally particularly during times of political instability; theatre was used as political meeting placesö (18).

Analyzing modern Nigerian theatre developed in 19th century, Norbert O. Eze states in his article *The Evolution and Development of the Modern Nigeria Theater from Colonialism to Independence*

The modern Nigeria theatre like its counterparts in other European colonized nations developed as an extension of the western dramatic artí The result was the coming together by some elites to form clubs and organizations for the promotion of the theatre in western content and structure. This way, the seed of what becomes the modern Nigeria theatre was sown (155).

Regardless of these commendable efforts by these elites and to a great extent the love for money, politics was preferred to theatre so it was abandoned for it and that is why O. Ogunba asserts:

The theatre tradition did not last beyond the first decade of the twentieth century. Politics was already in the air in Lagos and in other parts of Nigeria, and many of the leading spirits behind the Lagos theatre movement, like Herbart Macaulay soon found politics more attractive than the theatre (74).

Where oral form characterizes literature in the pre-colonial era, the colonial engagement brought with it formal education that resulted in written African literature. During this time, the colonies had their first access to formal education and the immediate consequence of this was that the

colonized people were able to read and write. Therefore, the educated put their service towards the nationalist struggles for independence. This made Onuekwus to posit that;

Literature was one of the means through which Africans deconstructed the colonial engagement, i.e. colonial literature which was a product of colonialism, became a means by which African literary writers gave vent to their expression of protest against the colonial establishment and underlying these works is the colonial tension between the colonizer and the colonized people (22).

There are several works as there are writers from the continent devoted to the colonial engagement. Emeka Nwabueze's *When the Arrow Rebounds* (1964) and *Things fall Apart* (1958) are examples of works dealing with the colonial experience in West Africa. In East Africa, Ngugi Wa Thiogo's *Grain of Wheat* (1967) and *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* (1964) define the colonial struggle in his Native Kenya. In apartheid South Africa, Athol Fugard's *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* (1976) reflects sad experience of blacks in that country, while Tayeb Salih's *Seasons of Migration to the North* (1966) is an epitome of the colonial theme in Sudan. Eventually, the colonial tension in the continent gave rise to independence in several parts of Africa Starting from the late 1950s.

The departure of most of the Europeans left professional theatre in coma until Hubert Ogunde came to revive it in 1944. Ogunde was subsequently followed by some other notable Nigeria theatre Artists like James Ene Henshaw, J. P. Clark, Wole Soyinka, Ola Rotimi, Femi Osofisan, Zulu Sofola and Tess Onwueme.

Hubert Ogunde wrote in English and Yoruba more than anyone else, he created the awareness of the modern theatre tradition in Nigeria. Ogunde's plays contained religious, social and political themes most notable among his plays is *Yoruba Ronu* (Yoruba think) staged for the inauguration of *Egbe Omo Olofin* on February 28, 1964. As Egun Clarke puts it in his article, *Ogunde Theatre: The Rise of contemporary Professional Theatre in Nigeria (1946-72)*.

The allegory was easy for all to interpret. Oba Fiwajoye was obviously seen as Chief Awolowo, and the Oba's deputy who sold himself to his enemy as Akintola, whilst Yeye Illoba seemed to represent the person of the Saduana, Sir Ahmadu Bello (315).

Egun Clarke further states;

In the audience were chief Akintola and other prominent political figures; half way through the show Akintola realized that the play was a direct attack on his rule, and he walked out of the show (515-316).

Subsequently as Ogunde's theatre kept on satirizing the corrupt politicians, it was banned. Ogunde was undaunted as he churned out another play known as *Otito Koro* (Truth is Bitter). In the play he states:

í help me ask the worthless elder. Help me ask from the wicked one the evil doer thinks that other people talk about him. The evil doer runs away even when no one pursues him (Ibid).

The implication of the above statement is that the guilt of corruption on the part of the government makes it punish theatre artists who have the power to expose the politicians. This

proves Stephen Inegbe right in his article, *Drama and Theatre in Nigeria after Soyinka Trend, Focus and Development*, as he asserts;

In Nigeria, there is a reflection of life. Right from the pre-colonial, pre-literate day, theatre has been in existence and it is reflected in the people's festival rituals, mythology and other forms of social engagement (1).

In a similar manner, it is pertinent to assert that even recent and current playwrights are still being informed by one or two events that really took place in their different societies, for instance, Barclays Ayakoroma made it clear that he got the idea that informed his writing of *Dance on his Grave* from the rally with the tag "Rivers Women on the move" which was organized by a body known as Women in Nigeria (WIN) to mark the International Women's Day nationwide. There are talks on the need for women to take their pride of place; not to be relegated to the kitchen and to be equal to men in every facet of life. Also, Eni Jologho Umuko's *The Scent of Crudes Oil* took its idea from youth restiveness in Nigeria Delta, the horror and devastating consequences of bunkering, pipeline vandalism and hostage-taking (kidnapping) which almost became a tradition or normal way of living in this society. Relating this to the plays here in study and without much ado, it could be deduced that Wole Soyinka's *A Play of Giants* took its idea from the oppressive and exploitative nature of some African leaders immersed in geocentricism, corruption, rottenness and callousness, while Osofisan's *Who is Afraid of Solarin?* took its idea from the fraudulent action of politicians, especially those piloting sensitive government affairs. The situation is likened to hounding petty thieves while the big timers get away with their treasuring looting activities.

Since we have accepted that theatre can be used as a social and political change, and the audience as its target; either consciously or unconsciously, its objectives are derived from the condition of living in a particular society, the economics, political and religious situation of the given societies.

The medium of theatre, like other art forms, has never had much attention from the government and its agencies because it is considered an unserious business and a "time waster" therefore not capable of engendering development. Against the negative perception of the theatre it is difficult to conceive of it as capable of generating any form of development, both for individual and society, but the functions and manifestations of theatre in our society today have taken a very radical dimension, such that the entertainment value has received less emphasis. In view of this, Obuh posits, "One of the agents of socio-political change is drama and theatre" (19).

Drama is arguably the most creative mode of expression which conveys an idea that can be accepted as true. Drama's impact is also direct and more immediate than other forms of expression. The role of theatre and drama in modern times has gone beyond entertainment; its role now is conditioned by political issues, social forces and mere aesthetics diversion. It is at the service of life, it contributes to the development of the society as does engineering and economics. It is in this regard that Sofola states:

The function of the theatre is no longer in doubt, as people have come to realize the potency of the theatre in development. It has the power to influence thought and opinion and can serve as a popular and effective means of political propagation economic empowerment and cultural

diffusion. In fact, it is a medium through which the soul of man reaches out beyond itself to transform (2).

According to George Bernard Shaw "the material of the dramatist are always some conflicts on human feelings with circumstances; since institutions are circumstance, every social question finishes material drama" (631). This simply implies that human actions and reactions in the society constitute the major material from which drama is fashioned and which largely informs its mood of presentation.

A notable personality among those that followed Ogunde is Wole Soyinka, who writes political plays that expose the bizarre, insensitive and bestial nature of governance in contemporary Nigeria. The then playwrights did not find it easy as most of them were sent to exile just because they reflected the ills of the society. As a result of the writer's inability to avoid politics, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o stresses the fact that "every writer is a writer in politics" (Nwabueze, 127).

A writer has no choice whether or not he is aware of it, his work reflects on one or more aspects of the intense economic, political cultural and ideological struggles in the society. What he chooses is one or the other side of the battlefield. The side of his people or the side of those social forces and classes that try to keep his people down (127).

The above assertion makes it clear that no playwright writes in vacuum so the themes explored by the playwright must reflect the happening in the society.

Again, Ngugi wa Thiong'o in support of this view posits in his article, *The Satirist and Society* that:

Satire takes for its provinces a society and its purpose criticism. The satirist sets for himself certain standards and criticizes society when and where it departs from norms. He invites us to share the moral indignation which moves him to pour decision and ridicule on society's failings. He corrects through painful, sometimes malicious laughter (71).

Looking at the above assertion, mockery and laughter are the key words and they help and induce the feeling of shame on whomever they are directed to and that is why Ruth Benedict a cultural Anthropologist posits that:

Shame differs from guilt in that it is a violation of social and cultural values rather than personal values. Shame is an important tool for socialization as it is often used to regulate behavior and it is an important pillar of punishment in most societies (2).

A shameless society therefore, implies a complete breakdown of social values that compel individuals of that society to exercise some degree of responsibility towards each other. In view of this E. E. Ebo and C. C Nwosu citing Emma Dandaura in *Nigeria Theatre Journal* maintain;

A playwright is a member of the society so naturally, his artistic sensibilities are shaped and sharpened by the social economic conditions and political happenings of his time (44).

Shamelessness is the disease that has permeated every aspect of our consciousness, from our schools to our churches to our institutions of government. It is everywhere and it is destroying us as a people. Our students openly cheat in exams; our policemen openly terrorize and extort money from us shooting us at will when we dare to disobey, our religious men are

sycophants, our graduates are kidnappers, bureaucrats have turned corruption into an institution, our lawmakers give themselves unjustifiable pay increases rather than legislate, convicted criminals show up for their sentencing with an army of praise-singers, people with pending corruption cases in court are nominated as ministers, screened unjustly by unjust leaders and confirmed ministers, worst still, our name (Africa) is associated globally with fraud and all manner of criminality. Is it any wonder then that it is the very dregs of our society that have emerged to rule over us?

This is why Emeka Nwabueze cautions that "The committed artist must engage in using his art to make his audience conscious of the shortcomings of his society" (123). In support of this assertion E. E. Ebo and C.C. Nwosu citing George Anaso in *Nigeria Theatre Journal* opine that, "A writer writes without seeking to please anyone or the government, but to expose social ills" (44).

Dwelling on the playwright's inability to be political and in stating further the role of a theatre artist in a Bunkum and or Humbug society like ours, Samuel Ayedime Kafewo states; "if politics is concerned with sharing power and resources, theatre should be concerned with who gets what and why" (93). The term political Apathy should not be found in a theatre artist's dictionary and that is why Kafewo in citing Augusto Boal maintains that:

All theatre is necessarily political because all the activities of man are political and theatre is one of them. Those who try to separate theatre from politics try to lead us into error and this is a political attitude (12).

Unfortunately, most of the African leaders, especially Nigerian leaders do not pay attention to what our playwrights and theatre Artists project, they rather, find a way of making the

environment uncomfortable for the theatre artists. Referring to this, E. E. Ebo and C. C Nwosu citing George Anaso explain;

Part of the problems of the developing countries is that most of their various leaders do not seem to pay attention to the works of their literary artists. For this reason readers tend to be insensitive to the works of art, especially the literary arts where much is exposed about the social economic, cultural and political life of the country (44).

This has been the major problem confronting the theatre artists. Many of them have been sent to exile on many occasions. According to the Encarta Encyclopedia;

In the early 1990s African theatre continued to thrive despite (or perhaps because of) the often extremely hostile political and economic circumstances many of the best playwrights went to exile (including Wole Soyinka, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o and Seno'o Agabota Zinson), (105).

As if this is not enough, the scarcity of fund impeded the establishment of professional theatre companies. And the more lucrative nature of politics forced some of our theatre artists to bow out and join politics although prominent ones like Wole Soyinka has up till date rejected doing this because people like him are aware of the fact that it goes beyond the more or the less lucrative nature of it. These have been the problems bedeviling the theatre practitioners in the country and if theatre artists should bow easily and join politics, the implication is that the political scenes of Africa which is gloomed with the stinky mind of corruption, egocentricism, nepotism, factionalism, rottenness and callousness will become more or less culture without anyone coming up to fight in the manner in which theatre artists and dramatists do.

2.3 The Concept of Satire

Satire is described in Encyclopedia Americana, in its more frequent sense as a literary manner in which the follies and foibles or vices and crimes of a person, mankind or institution are held up to ridicule or scorn with the intention of correcting them. It explains further that this manner may be present in many art forms and may employ many methods (398). But the 12th volume of Chambers Encyclopedia sees it as an attitude of mind and the kind of art produced by it which emerges from sheer denunciation with reproof. It tells us here that; satire aims to wound the offender by destroying his self esteem and so armed him and that it increases its force by appealing to the indignation or laughter (476).

According to Wikipedia encyclopedia, the word, satire is derived from the Latin word, *satura* implying a medley; dish of colorful fruit contending that it is strictly a literary genre found in graphic and performing arts as well as in printed word. In satire, human or individual vices, follies, abuses or shortcomings are held up to censure by means of ridicule, derision, burlesque, irony or other methods ideally with an intent to bring about improvement (i).

Quintilian says that it is a wholly Roman phenomenon, *Satura tota nostra est*. Here satire is a strict literary form but the term soon escaped from its original narrow definition (1).

However, Robert Elliot's contention in Wikipedia Encyclopedia is that:

As soon as a noun enters the domain of metaphor as the modern scholar has pointed, it clamours for extension and *Satura* which had no verbal, adverbial or adjectival form was broadly burdened by appropriation from the Greek word for *Saxyr* (Satire) and its derivation (2).

Robert in his view tries to make it very clear that the extension of satire from the Greek word *-satyrø* and its Latin form *-Saturaø* was as a result of its entrance into the domain of metaphor. Going by this, one can infer that in its contemporary sense it is found in many artistic forms of expression which include plays, commentaries, and media such as song lyrics.

A distinction is made between the direct and indirect satire. The direct satire is seen as are attack and didacticism in which satirists buffet their opponent fact to face. The indirect satire on the other hand is connected with narrative and dramatic representation where the victim is put into ridiculous situation to display his folly. Though satire is comic, its purpose is not to invoke mere laughter but laughter for corrective purposes. The modes of satire are identified under the names of their great Roman practitioners-Horace and Juvenal. Abrams in differentiating these modes asserts that *øHoratian satire is gentle, urbane, smilingí Aims to correct by gentle and sympathetic laughter while Juvenalø's satire is biting, bitter, angry, spiced out with contempt, moral indignationö* (188).

In the 19th century, Byion and Thackeray were fine satirists and satire in America was influenced by the English and before the revolution in America, satire dealt chiefly with political struggle but Mark Twainø's prose represented the general trend of American satire up to the 20th century in which the fictional narrative particularly the novel was that through which satire found its chief which in the modern world (417).

Holman and Harmon said that there was a notable concentration of attention on Horation satire in the comedy of manners of the restoration age. In the 20th century in England, writers like Shaw, Coward and Huxley maintained the satiric spirit in the face of the gravity of naturalism and the earnestness of symbolism (448).

In England, since 1841, punch has maintained a high level of comic satire while the New Yorker has since 1925 demonstrated the continuing appeal of sophisticated Haratian satire. All these, including the motion pictures, the graphic art and political cartoons have all been instruments of satiric comments on human affairs.

2.4 The Satirists and The society

In most African countries where corruption, impropriety, rottenness, egocentricism and moral laxity are dominant, the satirist sees himself as an instrument through which the aforementioned trends can be curtailed. This he achieves through the use of literary criticism. Ngugi illuminates the significance of satirists to society.

Satire takes for its provinces a society and its purpose criticism. The satirist sets for himself certain standards and criticized society when and where it departs from norms. He invites us to share the moral indignation which moves him to pour derision and ridicule on society's short falls to meet its needs. He corrects through painful, sometimes malicious laughter (71).

The satirist, therefore play the role of a playwright whose duty is to look at society reflecting on materials gathered from it in his work. Suffice it to say therefore that the satirist is the spokesman of his society as his duty is to use his knowledge of society and expressive power to ensure a remodeling through the use of either inventive or ridicule.

Alexander Pope in his essay, *"To Fortesque"*, unveils the prerequisite for the employment of satire when he observes that: "satire is my weapon but I am too discreet to run amunk and tilt at all I meet, I only wear it in the land of Hectors, thieves, super cargoes, sharpers

and directorsö (69). According to him, when a society is librated from all social vices, the use of satire will not be necessary and vice versa. Alexander Pope in this essay wears the garment of every satirist. Even satirists in antiquity used their satirical weapons because it was necessary. Alexander Pope's view however is in line with what Ngugi termedí òcriticize society when and where it departs from normsö (71). Most satirists believe vehemently in the effectiveness of ridicule as a vital satiric tool. This is because they believe that ridicule hurts the offender and puts him in the stream of bashfulness.

R. C Elliot in one of his essays stressed on the significance of laughter. According to him, satire is more efficacious and tends toward seeking solutions to the anomalies and short comings inherent in society when it sues laughter as its effect on the offender is usually hurting noting that:

In society in which high value is placed upon the opinions of others, ridicule well clearly by a potent deferent to deviate behavior; the more a person fears shame, the more he will avoid situations which might bring upon him the bad name conveyed by public mockery. These sanctions are institutionalized over the world in an extraordinary variety of ways (69).

This however channels our minds on the view of most satirists. In the primordial period in history, precisely in France, one of the greatest dramatists and famous comic writer, Moliere states the purpose of comedy thus:

The purpose of comedy is to correct vicesí and nothing reforms the majority of men better than the portrayal of their faults. To expose

everyone, laughter is to deal them a mighty blow. People easily endure reproofs but they cannot at all endure being made fun of (46).

In most of Molière's comedies, he tries to correct the vices of people through his comic depiction of their vices. He pinpoints the vices that need correction before his society can experience that sense of regain of reestablished equilibrium or resurrection into a full mature society.

This therefore implies that those corrupt public officers, clergymen and other perpetrators of vice who are seldom moved by law or conscience when publicly ridiculed become frightened and filled with turmoil. If such persons can be moved to have a change of heart for fear of further ridicule, it means that satire has achieved its aim. The question now lies in how efficacious laughter or ridicule has been in curbing social vices embedded in our society since the stand of most satirists is on the relevance of ridicule as a remodeling tool. The second question is how do satirists know when they are proffering solutions to societal problems when they incessantly use ridicule or laughter as their major weapon.

Most satires are written in prosaic form having their reflection in novels. T. M. Aluko in his novel *One Man One Wife* satirizes the antiquated norms as well as modern ones something ridiculing the both in the same proportion. At the meeting of the tribal elders, the struggle for supremacy between the traditional and Western culture or belief is brought in a humorous tone. Here, the pastor from Idase and the Bible Jeremiah had been discouraging the people from worshipping the mighty *Shonponna*;

That was a flagrant affront to the mighty and majesty of the god of small pox. Baba, Son of Ogun Model, and high priest of *shonponna* was

warning the Aboh that unless Bible Jeremiah and his mad Christian follower cleared out of the village, *shonponna* would surely visit Isoloø in the next dry season (99).

Here, Aluko satirizes the two contrasting religions using ridicule as his major satiric weapon. Another impressive thing T. M. Aluko did is the consideration of the relevance of the two satiric forms when he employed the Juvenalian Satire by unleashing a direct attack upon native institutions and customs. He openly portrays traditional rulers like the Oba and the village chiefs as slothful, egocentric and dishonest.

Northrop Frye in his book *Anatomy of Criticism* equally states the requirements of satire for satirists. According to him, "these are two things essential to satire one is wit and humour founded on fantasy or a sense of grotesques or absurd, the other is an object of attack" (224). Frye here explains that the pre-requisite to achieving result when satirizing the ills of society is to employ the two satiric forms. Aluko is in line with Frye's view that is why in his novel, *One Man One Wife*, he never failed to combine the opulent use of ridicule and the direct satiric approach.

In *The Trial of Brother Jero*, Soyinka satirizes the ills of society, by ridiculing the political class, using religious hypocrisy as his satirical tool. Brother Jero and his fellow prophets represent many political leaders that crop up in most African states whose main object is to profit themselves at the expense of the masses. He uses humour to satirize the egocentric and deceitful nature of the political class in our society.

JERO: I am glad, I got here before any customer, I mean worshippers well, customers if you like. I always get the feeling every morning

that I am a shop keeper waiting for customers, the regular ones come at definite time (63).

From the primordial period to this contemporary period, most researches and even satirists have been dwelling in the territory of the Roman satirist, Horace except for few who dwell in the Juvenalian domain. This is because of how efficacious they feel laughter is in curtailing the excesses of evil does in society. This totally disagrees with because of the prevalence of social vices in our society despite the incessant use of laughter. Suffice it to say that if a little consideration is given to the Juvenalian satiric form and its subsequent combination with the dominant form (Horatian satire), society will experience change or reduction in societal anomalies; that is why the researcher is vehemently in support of Frye's view of the two satiric modes as effective weapons to restructuring society.

CHAPTER THREE

THE SYNOPSIS OF THE SELECTED PLAYS

3.1 Preamble

The difference but similar patterns of thoughts and issues bothering on leadership, governance and the kinds of approach given to them by African leaders are clearly exposed and discussed extensively in the three plays here in study.

3.2 Synopsis of *A Play of Giants*

The play opens with three of the dictatorial African leaders; Kamini, Kasco and Gunema who are planning to get a life size group sculpture of the crowned heads in their likeness. They have the intentions of making their status part of other statues that would be placed at the U.N building in silhouette. Their discussion on power and governance is interrupted by the presence of the Chairman of the Bugara Central Bank who brings the news of the refusal of the World Bank to grant Bugara country the demanded loan based on the ground of unsatisfied conditions to which the Bugara President, Life President Dr. Kamini, responds that the Chairman should go back and agree to what so ever conditions put forward by the World Bank even at the expense of the Bugara people's body and soul.

However, the Chairman's response to the President as touching the printing of the Bugaran currency by its central Bank, saying that such printing would make no difference to toilet paper makes him to be severely punished by flushing the toilet on his head at the feet of the dictators.

The leaders further go on with their discussion as the Ambassador comes in to inform them about his idea on where to place the leader's statue. They all agree to this and go on with their power discussion emphasizing on the importance of Voodoo. This conversation is closely

followed by the issue of the speech to be read, who to get it prepared, who to edit it and the importance of reading it to the hearing of the leaders present before the final or actual reading at the UN. The sculptor is the next victim in the land of Kamini who deals badly with him through the hand of the task force specials for saying that Kamini's statue does not worth being at the face of currency but rather sit in Madame Tussaud Chambers of Horrors.

The fourth leader Joins the scene at later and of part one, General Barra Tuboum of Nbangi-Guela, who Kamini calls Alexander the Great. After short discussion on rebellion and war, the Honourable Mayor of Hyacombe and his Party come in, proceeds by Professor Betey. His arrival changes the point of discussion to imperialist conspiracy, calling themselves names like Alexander, Napoleon and all sorts. The mayor comes in with golden keys.

The second part of the play begins with the launch organized by Kamini for other African leaders with the Secretary General introduced, as is a top civil servant, who misses the dreaded anger of Kamini when he says that the sculpture supposed to be statuettes, small in size and put it on shelves like that of Beethoven, Shakespeare or Lenin and later distributed in copies. The sculptor is seen with bandages all over from head to toe, the handiwork of Kamini's Task Force specials.

Further conversation continues as two Russian and American delegates each arrive at little interval before Betey run in alarming that coup has been staged in Bugara. Not long after, Task Force specials are asked to position the weapon including missiles of Bugara to be used in destroying UN, fueled by the news that the Secretary General has escapes and they believe that the delegates have a hand in the coup. This is followed by the aggression of some people who

gang up outside the embassy protesting (singing) that Kamini should leave (hand-over). The play ends with shout from Kamini Fire! Fire! Shoot! Shoot!.

3.3 Synopsis of *Who's Afraid of Solarin?*

Osofisan in a farcical manner presents a group of corrupt and fraudulent local government employees who are paralysed by fear as they await Solarin, the public complaints commissioner. Solarin is not physically presented on stage, only his silhouettes are.

In the local government presented in the play, virtually all the government officials and their operatives are corrupt and fraudulent without any exemption, right from the Chairman of the local government council Chief Gbonmiayelobiojo (AKA JDG) even to the professional beggars on the streets like Lamidi and Lamonu. That is why all of them are apprehensive of the impending official visit of Solarin. Consequently the Chairman summons a meeting of the council to decide how they can present the coming of Solarin which will spell doom for them.

This meeting exposes the corruption and fraudulent practices of the various arms of the Council as the meeting turns out to be a forum where confessional statement that border on their corrupt acts are revealed at the slightest provocation. Here it is revealed that even then, the Chairman of the Council distributes goats and mirrors to entice the electorate. His wife has just opened a boutique with donation from the people of the town. To him, ñno one is to take any bribe at all except with specific clearance from meö (160). He is fully aware that all the responsibilities for expenditure in the Council will naturally fall on him as he orders that all files on UPE contracts be burnt before the arrival of Solarin.

The hospital is not good either. The Doctor in-charge shirks in his responsibility and the hospital suffers irremediably from congestion when government votes a lot of money for its

development but the funds are diverted into private purses. Yet the Doctor says he has no skeleton in his cupboard.

Even the judiciary is not left out, the Chief Magistrate orders the poultry attendants to take some of the fowls from the OFN poultry to his house for dinner. He goes ahead to reveal he is a member of a cult.

This exposes the absurd situation that is prevalent in our society among the highly placed officials of government. The poor are usually at the receiving end. They suffer the consequences of the reckless spending made by the elite class. The price control officer does nothing but to soar the price of goods. She sends her men to raid the market and goods confiscated end up in her home.

The Chairman and his officials look for a way of hiding their fraudulent practices. They decide to engage the services of Baba Fawomi an Ifa priest who according to the Yoruba tradition is supposed to be an epitome of wisdom, decency and discipline but turns out to be all embodiments of greed and dishonesty. The Ifa priest is aware of the predicament in which the government officials are, and he decides to take advantage of the situation and use it to serve his own selfish interest. The Ifa priest agrees to help them prevent Solarin from coming. To do this, he demands five cows each from the people for the sacrifice plus ten goats, of the home-grown type all black and fair. He also asks the price control officer to bring sixteen fowls strong limped, home raised chickens and seven bales of white cloth by each of them *sanyan* with attractive design for the actual ceremony. Besides, the Ifa priest drinks greedily and that is why he drank the liquid soap in wine bottle brought by Polycap thinking it is wine.

The play also satirizes religious hypocrisy in the society as Pastor Nebuchadnezzar is overcome by his fear of Solarin because he embezzles the church money. He wears a talisman round his waist. As the play progresses, the Chairman engages the service of his security operatives who pretend to be beggars. In a particular scenario, the beggars inform the Chairman that Solarin has arrived the town. In actual sense, the stranger is not Solarin but one Isola Oriebora, a Lagos rogue who runs from his landlord on account of his debts and the attempt to be probed. On his way, he is attacked by robbers. He eventually finds succor and comfort in the vicarage in the town. As soon as he realizes that he is being mistaken to Solarin, he quickly assumes the role of Solarin, the Public Complaints Commissioner.

Pastor, in whose vicarage Isola lodges with has no choice but to accommodate the stranger since he too has just stolen church money. The stranger deflowers the pastor's daughter, Cecilia and a wedding is hurriedly arranged. All the corrupt officials in the council use the opportunity to give their generous donations to the Lagos rogue (the stranger) this is an attempt to bribe the commissioner from probing them.

The Chairman and his corrupt colleague are jolted when the true identity of the stranger is revealed through his diary and finally through the letter he gives Polycap. The Chairman is surprised that a young man like that can outsmart him in spite of his thirty years' experience in politics in which he has experienced probation from three different governors with nothing implicating to show for it. He therefore promises to retire since the younger crooks have taken over. Meanwhile he sacks the two beggars for giving him false information.

3.4 Synopsis of *Forest of Palm Tress*

In a town known as Ighayo which is, described as a non-descript rural backwater in the country, emerges a National hero, a straddling foreign-based footballer who scored the decisive, winning goal in the finals of Olympic games. This remarkable achievement brings not just the Champion to limelight, but his community and his country of large.

The Country prepares to receive her Olympic heroes, as Ighayo town prepares to receive her worthy son and to host the outside world. This community is divided into other clans, everybody wants a better share of this achievement as Ebo who is from Obi village and a cousin of the footballer claims that every other person should keep off so that the indigenes of Obi village will send a delegation to the federal government and host the world their own way without the interference of the other clans of their community.

Ebo is not the only one who is aggrieved over the situation in their community especially as it concerns the forest full of palm trees and how who becomes their King is chosen and that is why Pa Dele makes it clear that although he does not share most of Ebo's sentiments, yet there is no denying the fact that we are operating on a time-lease in this town. He goes ahead to state, we must initiate a proper reassessment of our political structure, economic distribution, social and cultural policies. Many of our communities are being marginalized (136). Mama Yinka seconds this declaration by pointing out how women are being marginalized in their socio-political dispensation as she is the only woman in the King's cabinet and the reason why she is there is because she is the leader of Ighayo Women Association.

As they are all pouring out their grievances, the King reminds them that no matter what their grievances and differences are, they should all project a united front as most of the people

who will be coming into their town have their diverse reasons. As he states; "some are coming to spy. To discover our weaknesses, and pry into the gaps in our walls" (140). At this stage, most people are still in support of him until he states categorically that the issue of forest of palm trees cannot be discussed. The King is compelled to shift ground by the degree of his subjects' insistence on discussing and hopefully settling the issue of the forest of palm-trees hence; the King resignedly says "very well if this is the wish of the people. A leader must respect the wish of his followers. I can only implore you, to exercise temperance" (142), and then he goes ahead to say "each member of this cabinet, represents a section of this town. Let each representative state their case" (142).

It is at this juncture that they remind him that not all the communities in the town have a representative in his cabinet as they go into another level of argument on who is the rightful owner of the palms trees, who discovered it, who and who works day and night to make sure it is beaming, who benefits more, who doesn't and who ought to benefit more than the others. At this point, the King tries to bring them back by telling them that what they need most "is unity, peace and progress" but he makes the mistake of personalizing the government by saying "my government, is committed to respond to the genuine demands of the people" (146), before he could finish, the agitation for a new King starts and the King willingly admits to step down from his royal position in order to give peace a chance and urges the community to go into the difficult task of rebuilding, from the ruins of prolonged hostility.

On the day of the actual celebration as "football victory has translated into social, political and economic victory for our town" they have already set up apparatus to resolve their differences as elections will be conducted for the choice of the next King. The news of their

Champion son not gracing the occasion is enough to discourage their celebration and their resolution to settle their differences in peace unity and progress.

3.5 Some Major Themes in *A Play of Giants*

3.5.1. Dictatorship

A Play of Giants embodies in no small measure dictatorship as the play centers on some set of tyrannical or dictatorial African leaders at the bag in an Embassy in New York. They believe so much in dictatorship by acquiring so much powers, and showing brutality of power and dehumanization. They are ruthless and have no room for freedom of humanity. This is clearly seen when Kamini confronts the Bugara Bank Chairman for comparing the value of Bugara currency to that toilet paper, as a punishment Kamini puts him right inside the toilet and bends his head in the manner that he will be getting the taste of shit as they flush the toilet.

Kamini mismanages the resources of the nation believing he has the ultimate power and that is what he asks the Bank Chairman to offer Bugara's body and soul for a loan.

These leaders give no room for self-expression and exploit helpless masses. They derive pleasure in wars, "we fight, we kill or we die" that is their philosophy. They see themselves as being born to rule and refer to themselves, especially Kamini, as Life President. They acquire power through any available means, even through Voodoo and imprisons the ones who dare to challenge their authoritarian rule.

We see this in Gunema as he puts the man he suspects of plotting against him in cell and while the man is in cell, he continually has sex with his wife and later hangs the husband and wife. Similarly, Gunema kills El-Colonel Aranja because the colonel visits him after he dreams of a Coup d'état planned by the colonel.

This dictatorial approach is seen in Kasco when he says 'power is we. We have Ze-power'. He goes ahead to say 'there are persons, individuals who are born with the imperial sign here (he taps his forehead) on head' (11). Little wonder then these dictators abuse the powers they possess as they oppress innocent citizens.

Kamini also subjects the sculptor to serious brutalization just because 'he told him he does not understand' (30), and for telling Gudrum the naked truth that the President's status should 'go into the chamber of horrors' (28). So Kamini orders the Task force special to descend on him. He turns the sculptor to a statue and his body is covered with bandages from head to toe as a result of the kind of beating he receives from Kamini's special task force.

3.5.2 Corruption and Political Intimidation

Corruption is also a dominant theme in this play as it is prevalent in the corridors of power. Imagine a President of a country (Kamini) travelling out of his country along side the Chairman of Bugara Bank so he can take as much amount of money as he so wishes. Having spent or squandered the country's money he orders Bugara Bank Chairman to agree to any terms given by the World Bank as long as they get the two hundred million dollars loan just for him to keep lavishing as he wishes.

However, fear is another prominent theme in this play as seen in not just the subjects but also in the self acclaimed giants. Fear is induced in the readers as we wait impatiently to see the punishment for the sculptor for speaking the truth right before Kamini knowing the kind of leader he (Kamini) is. The Bank Chairman also realizing his mistake panics in fear and terror as he is whisked to the toilet.

Again when Kamini puts Russians the US delegates and other under house arrest; fear encapsulates them on seeing the heavy war weapons Kamini brandishes in order to destroy the UN building. Their exhibition of fear is humourously presented as Tuboum on hearing a dull explosion dives beneath the nearest chair while Gunerna pleads to leave the embassy premises. Fear is also seen in the 1st and 2nd Russians when they learn that professor Betey records their speeches and knowing the kind of person Kamini the life President is, they melt in fear. We also notice fear in the leaders themselves as they panic when the news of the coup in Bugara is announced. These are the same leaders who create an aura of awe and fearlessness about them who begins to exhibit fear.

3.5.3 Political Revolution

Again, Revolt/Rebellion are clearly seen as major themes as Bugara citizens come together to revolt against the leadership of Kamini with shouts of ðout, out, out, Kamini out, out, assassin butcher, cannibal etcö (69), and then the army takes over the government through coup d'etat. All the African leaders typified in the play got the power through coups and they are military heads of state except Gunema.

3.6 Some Major Themes *Who's Afraid of Solarin?*

3.6.1 Greed and Bribery

Osofisan's *Who's Afraid of Solarin?* is an embodiment of sociopolitical themes ranging from Greed, embezzlement, bribery/corruption deception, betrayal, forgeries and even mistaken identity.

Greed is seen in virtually all the characters in this play as they care more about what they would gain despite how much they have acquired through foul means. It is surprising that there is hardly a character in this play that is free from Greed! Is it the Pastor? The same pastor who

diverted church fund and is willing to do anything just to make sure he doesn't bring out the money and that he is not implicated to the extent of giving away his daughter to Isola the self acclaimed complaint commissioner. Is it the lawyer? Who claims that the amount of money someone brings determines who wins a case in their court, or Ifa Priest who knows he has no spiritual power but pretends to have just to get as many material things as possible from his victims or even the Chairman who orders that a whole building should be burnt just to cover up their level of looting. Can the two beggars (Lamomu and Lamidi) be left out when they are busy stealing from the Ifa Priest as the Ifa Priest steals from the Pastor? Not even the price control officer is to be spared as she only goes to the market to confiscate people's goods only for these goods to be taken to her place for consumption. The questions now are; why are they doing these? Are they not being paid as Government workers? They get their pay and allowance at the end of every month but they are simply greedy like most of us in the civil service in Africa today.

Again, there are themes of bribery and corruption which are the most widely used terms each time the issue of the Nigerian political system is raised. Imagine a situation where all the government workers who mistake Isola as (Solarin) the public complaint commissioner decides to go and meet him with their bags and pockets loaded with brown envelopes filled with new naira currency to the extent that one of them gives twenty different envelopes filled with cash. The truth is that the amount of money spent to cover up a crime goes a long way in exposing the enormity of the crime and for one to understand the degree of corruption being perpetrated in this local government, one only needs to look at how willing they are to offer anything in order to escape Solarin's wrath and that is why the Chairman offers his wife. The society is actually rotten to the bone.

3.6.2 Deception and Betrayal

Deception and Betrayal are also dominant themes in this play. The character of the Ifa priest is immersed in deception and that is why he takes delight in deceiving the Chairman and his workers by collecting so much money and other costly items and even animals as sacrifice in order to prevent the coming of Solarin when in actual sense he isn't doing any spiritual consultations. Polycap the Chairman's house boy betrays his master (although his master isn't aware of this) by selling his way of life to the man mistaken as public complaint commissioner knowing fully what the implications could be. For him, "them be thieves proper! And should be dealt with" (37).

3.6.3 Embezzlement

Embezzlement could also be seen as a major theme in the play because both the Chairman, the Pastor and the rest of them embezzle public funds as though it is their birth right. For the Chairman to cover up his own, he orders that a whole building be burnt down. The Pastor employs the services of the Ifa priest and is willing to submit his daughter to the supposed public Complaint Commissioner, just to be on the safe side knowing fully well that he embezzled church funds.

3.6.4 Political Hypocrisy

The theme of hypocrisy is well accentuated in the play. These politicians give the false impression of themselves. They play some gimmicks to their cohorts and subjects. For instance, Mrs. Abeni Mailo, the Price Control Officer in defense of her religion refuses to take part in the oath taking which is to be administered to the councilors;

í what's all this about Baba Favoini? Let me remind you that I, Abeni, second daughter of the late renowned organist and lay preachers Reverend Dorosimi, I am a staunch Christian. I belong to the rank of the first Apostolic Movement of the Lagos bar beach. My Bible, bought in London, was blessed ten years agoí if he thinks he can intimidate me Abeni Mailo, daughter of Rev. Durosimi, by bringing an Ifa priest here, he is only deceiving himselfí I do not believe in juju (4).

It is obvious she is trying to avoid the oath because she is not free. The Pastor in the play is a hypocrite who preaches salvation in the church but diverts the church funds for his selfish reasons.

3.6.5 Political Insincerity and Injustice

Another noticeable theme in the play is the theme of unfaithfulness of leaders to their subjects. The leaders forget their promises when they take the oath of office. For instance, the Chairman says 'I mean, I'm not thinking of myself, but the good reputation of our town which I swore to defend when I took office' (7). Also, the theme of fear and cowardice can be seen clearly when the Chairman and the Councilors are fidgeting at the mere news of the arrival of a stranger. They finally fall prey to the stranger's trickery despite their claim of bravery and wisdom.

The theme of injustice permeates the play especially with the regards to our judicial system. The Chief Magistrate imprisons men like him, not because they are guilty of any crime but because he is interested in their wives. This theme is made clear as Baba Fawomi reminds the chief-magistrate of his adulterous life, 'what of the one going to be born next year by that

women whose husband you've thrown in Jail? (15). What an adulterous and inhuman act of the Chief magistrate. Question now is; can Judiciary still be seen as the last hope of the common man?

3.7 Some Major Themes in *Forest of Palm Trees*

The themes of deception and unfaithfulness of our leaders are evident in the fact that the money that is released for the project of combating erosion in the town is not accounted for and thus is why Ebo says!

í The Councilor brought some surveyors who inspected the sites, took down notes and left. That was the year ago. Later, some Journalists came took photographs of the erosion site, interviewed our King, and some of the townspeople and left. Three years after, nothing has been done about it (138).

Before Ebo's statements, Pa Dele, makes it clear that the money that will be used for this project has already been released and its surprising that nothing has been done about it. In the face of deception and unfaithfulness, the theme of embezzlement strives since it is obvious that the said erosion project money has been diverted into a private purse as against what it is released for.

3.7.1 Political Marginalization and Tribalism

We could identify the theme of marginalization in the fact that Mama Yinka is the only woman in the King's cabinet and the only reason she is there is because she is the leader of Ighayo Women Association and that is why one would be compelled to ask; are there no capable women in this community? Although this question would not cross the minds of the cabinet

members and the King because it is more or less a deliberate act to relegate the women folk to just being seen and not heard. This is why Mama Yinka declares 'we need voices, to project the hopes and aspirations of our women who make up 65% of the population of this town' (136).

Again, the theme of tribalism is clearly stated in the play when the character of Ebo is seen agitating and clamouring that other clans should stay away from their own clan since their own direct brother is the Champion as he states;

'Champion is from Obi village we, the indigenes of Obi village will send a delegation to the federal government. We are the ones organizing a reception we have not invited any other village to take part. I do not know when it became the fashion for the whole of Ighayo town to take interest in a matter that concerns Obi village' (125).

3.7.2 Egocentrism and Political Revolution

The theme of egocentrism is portrayed in the character of Corp. Audu who slaps Olisa, calls him a bloody civilian and goes ahead to tell him 'if you provoke me, I will shoot you and make a report' (121). All because Olisa tries stopping him from harassing Tinu who is his elder Brother's fiancé. Corp. Audu also exhibits this trait when he threatens Ebo in their King's place right before the King and his cabinet members when he says;

'if you persist in this, I will contact my colleagues at the seat of power to put a few strings and get me appointed as the sole administrator of this town' (135).

Perhaps, if he is made the Sole Administrator, he will be killing people who dare to challenge his authority.

We also see the theme of revolt when Yallabai the King says that; "my government, is committed to respond to the genuine demands of the people" (146) and then his cabinet members rebuke him for personalizing the government and revolt against him immediately with the shouts of "yes! A new King. Yes! A new King" and even when he says "please my people, let us dialogue" they change to "No! We want a new King, No! We want a new King" The King bows to their will by stepping down immediately.

3.7.3 Peace and Unity

Finally, there are themes of Peace and Unity. These are clearly exemplified in the character of Mama Champion who, despite what she goes through in the hands of the people in this community and even in the hands of brothers, sisters and relations after the death of her husband, she is willing to accept and share the success her son's footballing career has brought to not just her family but to the community at large. These themes are clearly seen in the King (Yallabai). How he handles the situation in this community and when it becomes imperative for fresh elections to be conducted, he steps down honourably. Yallabai's character is encapsulated in peaceful ways of handling disputes and differences. This is evident in most of his statements, in one of which he says, "Please my people, let us not squabble what we need most, is unity, peace and progress" (146).

CHAPTER FOUR

REFLECTION ON SELECTED PLAYS

4.1 Reflections on *A Play Of Giants*

Byron Kadawa, to whom this play is dedicated to, is a representation of many thousands whose contribution to the nation of their birth was brutally cut short by Idi-Amin. He led his theatre troupe to the festival of Black and African Arts (FESTAC) in Nigeria, 1977. This play makes use of satire as a means of political/social criticism.

In this play Soyinka discloses his intention not to hide Idi-Amin and other buffoons. In satirizing these characters, the playwright presents them as essentially a bunch of hollow men characters that feel important because of the level of power at their disposal, but are unable to disguise their emptiness and aridity in spite of the power they wield. The playwright satirizes these characters as intellectually and morally arid, politically ignorant and culturally impotent.

The protagonist Kamini, being the representative of the consortium of despots, is depicted as a stark illiterate not only through his speech but also through his actions. Despite his claim of many titles, both deserved and undeserved, he cannot speak grammatically correct English. For instance in the second page of the play Kamini says:

Gudrum very good friend of African leaders. She writing booking about me with many photographs. She calling it the Black Giant at play. It show Kamini very Jovial family man. Big uncle to everybody in country (2).

There are copious displays of his incompetence in almost all his speeches. His fellow Despots, Kasco and Gunema also make a lot of grammatical mistakes in expressing themselves in English.

Kamini, who enjoys the title of life President is also seen as intellectually hallow, who in spite of his years of reign has not fully grasped the economic and political phenomenon on his country. This becomes evident when he fails to understand the Central Bank Chairman's explanation that currency is not printed arbitrarily but needs corresponding economic backing. This leads to a merciless punishment of the Chairman. Kamini as a representative of tyrannical leaders is portrayed as a gullible character who can easily be deceived. This contracts greatly, the intellectual disposition a leader should exhibit. He is taken as a play thing by the Russian envoy. He is so gullible as to believe the Russians are his friends and that they will support him in his bid to have his status exhibited at the UN secretariat.

He is presented as vain and vulgar person who does not understand the codes of social ethics. He is so ill mannered, uncultured and abuses people in filthy words that would make any descent blackman turn crimson with shame. While conversing with his fellow despots on the issue of subversive he says:

KAMINI: I catch any Kondo, I make him smell his mother's cunt (2).

In another scene where he confronts the Bugaran bank Chairman for comparing the value of Bugara currency to that of toilet paper, Kamini exclaims:

KAMINI: You saying Bugara currency only worth shit paper? Is that what I hear you say just now?

As a punishment Kamini says:

KAMINI: Today, I make you eat good Bugara shit (7).

And he goes ahead to do it.

Kamini is revealed as an uncultured leader who lacks courtesy. He stoops so low to using vulgar terms and phrases like "this syphilitic bastard talking worse than imperialist propaganda" (7), to humiliate the Bugara central Bank's Chairman and to the sculptor he says "common Makongo carver" (30). In saying and doing all these and also in humiliating the Embassy sculptor reveal vulgarity which is not expected of a leader at the most sensitive office in the society.

Again, his low social ethics is further revealed, when after eating, in full glare of everybody, Kamini shows all the signs of having dined well, picking his teeth and belching from time to time (35). Through these, the so-called "Giants" have been cut down to the size of dwarfs who are lower intellectually, politically and even morally than what they portray.

Gudrum a Scandinavian female journalist who is also known as Kamini's mistress helps in boosting Kamini's ego rather than correcting his excesses. She is a representative of the educated, political friends who are versed in the world of politics, aware of the abuse of power by dictators but because of self interest, praises the dictators rather than correct them through constructive and critical journalism. In the beginning of the play, she is presented as "a stout, florid and rather repulsive Nordic type" gazing in obvious adoration at Kamini (xi). She joins hands with the despots in the play to condemn the activities of subversives and goes on to refer to them as:

GUDRUM: "near-do-wells" Effete youngsters who hang around the cafes and wine-bars and disco joints, useless to themselves and to their nation (2).

So full of praise for the most notorious leader in African history that she writes a book for him *The Black Giant at play* which shows Kamini as "every very Jovial family man. Big uncle to everybody in country" (2). This negativity becomes more pronounced when she is seen as being in support of the arbitrary use of power by these despots. In her conversation on the activities of subversives, she says:

GUDRUM: "A continent of the future, which Africa is, does not need their type. They would only contaminate its soul, its history (3).

Gudrum, though not physically involved in violence but through her actions is not different from the other despots who regard human lives as insignificant. When the sculptor confides in her on the most appropriate place for the sculptor, the *Madame Tussand's chambers of Horrors* (28). She reports this to Kamini. The next thing seen of the sculptor is that he is "swathed in bandages from head to toe. Only his arms appear uninjured. His eyes barely peep out through a mummified face" (40). This is as a result of the merciless beating received from Kamini's guards.

Gudrun can thus be seen as one of the characters who add fuel to the flame of power thirst of these despots. Her stay beside Kamini as a woman is not to contribute positively to the overall moral of the characters but to further reduce the little they have by praising their excessive abuse of power. Her position as a woman is further degraded by her role as Kamini's mistress. As a mistress, her integrity as a woman is greatly diminished because since she is not legally married to Kamini, she can be seen as a mere plaything who surrenders her body to Kamini whenever the latter demands.

The play also employs humour as a means of sociopolitical criticism. *A play of Giants* is humorous and at the same time, witty. The characters appear to be serious as they speak but they are only humorous. Their words elicit sympathetic laughter in the audience. Kamini is very humorous, so also is his constant reference to himself as Life President, El-Haji, Kamini with a lot of titles from university from all over the world. Whenever he is not properly addressed, he does not hesitate to offer correction. When he is called 'Mr. President' he quickly corrects the person by saying; 'Dr. Life President' (38).

He is also fond of consciously transforming serious issues to lighthearted one. On the issue of the Russians relation with Bugara, the Russians try to explain their unflinching support for Kamin and his government despite denying Bugara 'atom bomb'. Another country which they have equally denied the bomb is Cuba Kamini says:

KAMINI: 'It is very bad you don't give Cuba atom bomb Cuba helps us in Africa. Cuba is my friend I like Cuba. I like Fidel Castor very much. He nice man. In fact, if Fidel Castro is a woman, I will marry him, but he must first shave of his beard. Why he wear like that? Make him look like guerilla' (62).

He diverts from the use of atomic bomb to give a description of Castor's beard. This is ludicrous and at the same time incongruous. Another scene that is humorous is seen in the action of Brother Despots. When Kamini puts Russians, the US delegates and others under house arrest; on seeing the heavy war weapons, Kamini brandishes in order to destroy the UN building, their exhibition of fear is humorously presented. Tuboum on hearing a dull explosion 'dived beneath the nearest chair' (63). While Gunema pleads to leave the embassy premises. He says!

GUNEMA: í I think, if the functionaries come back, then we
your brothers can go. So we go now I think, yes?
(65).

So eager to leave the premises are they, that their actions evoke laughter: leaders who create an aura of awe and fearlessness about them are suddenly afraid because of a little explosion.

The play is so replete with humour such that in every page, there is always a speech or stage direction that will make the audience laugh of the pitiable condition of these characters. Humour is also used to present comically, the use of despotism and tyrannies which these hollow characters exhibit. Tuboum's change of name from Alexander to a Jaw breaking-õBarra Boum Boum Tuboum Gbazo Tes Tes khoro diozoö (18), lucidly is satirical and equally humorous.

Again; the play uses *symbols* as a means of sociopolitical criticism. The playwright employs emblematic symbols as a means of satirizing the so called õGiantsö in the play and exposes their moral intellectual and political aridity. An instance of this is Kamini's attitude when going to answer the call of nature. Soyinka describes the entire process thus:

Kamini has taken off his Jacket. He lays it very carefully over the back of his chair. He unbuckles his belt and moves towards the toilet door. Kamini is seen lowering his trousers, then his bulk onto the toilet seat, remaining visible from the waist up through the door (32).

This scene is symbolic. According to Hodgson, õThe Greek used nakedness for the purpose of degradation, the phylaxí show god and heroes, Zeus and Oedipus ludicrously undressed with erect phalluses. Nakedness reduces man from god-like to animalö (118). Animals unlike man do not have this in-born inclination to hide themselves when answering nature's call.

It is only man that has such tendencies. Except for children, man generally does not expose his secret parts to the full glare of the public unlike animals. Kamini's display of his nakedness in the full glare of the public symbolizes him as an animal and also as a child who is not ashamed of being seen naked.

Another symbol used to express Kamini's childishness or a child in the guise of a fully grown man, is in the presentation of the Babushka doll to him by the Russians. The Russians visit to his embassy to negotiate the possibility of exhibiting the status of Kamini and his fellow despots but they make it clear that exhibition of their own national hero will precede those of Kamini and his brothers. Kamini is then presented with a Babushka doll by the Russians as a mark of their solidarity to his government. Presenting Kamini with a doll merely symbolizes him as a child and it also symbolizes him as an ignorant character who does not understand the language of diplomacy. This symbol is highly satirical as it represents Kamini as physically big but intellectually "Manikinö. The purpose of the doll is highlighted by the first Russian.

FIRST RUSSIAN: í Tell the over grown child (45).

In addition to this, the title of the book his mistress Gudrum writes on him is also symbolic. The title; "The Black Giant at Play" symbolizes him as relishing joy from pleasure and luxuries rather than the affairs of the state; a child who is found of playing.

The giants in *A Play of Giants*, is used symbolically to refer to the characters who are not taller than the normal human size but because they exercise great power they are referred to as "Giants" in terms of despotism. Kamini could be seen also as a symbol of a typical African leader who rather than save the people from economic, political and social impediments heightens their problems the more from the beginning to the end.

Professor Batey is a symbol of hypocrisy and as a representative of the academic class, he is supposed to uphold justice and equality but he is seen promoting mediocrity, sectionalism and dictatorial rule in Africa. From one of his speeches, Professor Batey says:

PROF. BATEY: í The problems of Bugara was purely economic as a socialist, I saw that only too clearly (23).

This hypocrisy is a clear reflection of the fact that some Africans who are privileged to come in contact with those in power are blinded by the happenings in their own country and this singular action goes a long way to cause chaos. Honourable Major of Hyacombe is also an extension of this hypocrisy as seen in the play when he says:

MAYOR: í Now we find four of you. My heart is bursting. All leaders who have given us our pride of race. You who have uplifted us from the degradation of centuries of conquest, slavery and dehumanizationí (22).

In this play, the main characters are presented as symbols of oppression but in presenting them as they really are, the playwright exposes them as being arid, ignorant and impotent politically, economically, morally and even culturally. In spite of the power they wield, they are seen to be crying like the protagonist in J.S Elliot's poem "Hollowmen" "Remember us- if at all-not as lost violent souls but only as hollowmen, the stuffed men".

Finally, our reflections demonstrate the fact that *A Play of Giants* is significant in the way the explanation of the contemporary problem of tyranny, abuse of power and the excessive craziness for materialism in the modern society are portrayed, as political reality. The play is written in the Oil Boom era which plunged Nigeria into her present predicament of despotism,

bribery and corruption, materialism and the abuse of power by the established military government.

Soyinka is a seasoned playwright who is interested in seeing his society rid the plagues that have befallen it over the years. According to Ogunde, he says that one has a strong suspicion that the tendency of the African writer to act as the very bulwark of his country's moral, economic and political health arises out of a subconscious imperative to play the role of those whom he has succeeded. Suffice it to say that though *A Play of Giants* was written in the mid 1980 the reality which it portrays still roams at our faces. If we submit then that the play is apocalyptic, we will not be wrong, because, Africa still lingers in the throes of bad leadership. It is expected that with many of the countries in the continent now democratized, the situation ought to have changed for the better but we have a common situation where dictators have only changed their garments but not their behavior. As a depiction of political reality, his aim is to use the medium of satire in arousing people to be aware of the negative concept and negative attitude towards an existing obnoxious situation.

4.2 Reflections on *Who's Afraid of Solarin?*

In this play Osofisan makes no attempt to conceal the fact that the play is an adaptation of Gogol's *The Government Inspector*, though the style, theme and language of the play are altered with a view to heighten the humorous effect in the entire play. The Government inspector ordinarily shows Nigeria the way it reeks corruption, insincerity and concealment of truth and diversion of government funds. Osofisan has however, increased the number and raised other issues in the play which relate directly to the Nigerian political system and the entire Nigeria society and the entire Africa.

The impending visit of the public complaints commissioner to the local government gets the council officers jittery and apprehensive of what will become of them if the reputedly strict and no-nonsense commissioner should really visit and discover all their fraudulent acts just like that. Their meeting in Gbonmiayelobiojo's sitting room at the beginning of the play is thus to find a way to forestall the occurrence of such a dangerous visit. Various options are considered and weighed thoroughly before they agree to send for Baba Fawomi, an Ifa priest, to help them use spiritual powers to cancel the visit of Solarin, whose name alone sends shivers down the spines of every one of them. Baba Fawomi only plays on their intelligence because it is obvious he has no power of divination as he claims to. Yet he is smart enough to keep all of them following him and he is the one who discovers at the end that Isola is only a fake and not the original commissioner. Isola like Hlestackovs plunders them so much when he discovers that they must have mistaken him for a very important government personality. He collects so much money, promises to marry Cecelia and elopes before the truth is discovered. Bamidele Lanrele cites Osofisan in *Excursions in Drama and Literature* as he comments on his play *Who's Afraid of Solarin?* that it is, "an adaptation that I've tried to make relevant to our own local government system which has just been established, and in which there's a lot of corruption" (27).

Osofisan blows up what appears to be a subtle sense of humour in *The Government Inspector* as he throws everybody into raucous laughter by the satiric characters, situations and statements he creates. Lanrele says, "if Gogol's *The Government Inspector* is comic Satire, *Who's Afraid of Solarin?* is a tragic satire" (76).

The humour in the play is achieved through various means as the creation of caricatures of Nigerian politicians' wrong use of English words and the extremely amusing manipulation of

Baba Fawomi, the Ifa priest. It is amidst the tears of laughter that the audience will catch some reverting statements about the level of corruption of the local council officials and this makes Lenrele to further comment that Osofisan is ða playwright who is fond of covering the realities of our social and political life with mock laughterö (78). The academic background of the Price Control Officer for instance is revealed in a most humorous manner, öí No sir, thatø not how it happens in political science! Ask anyone in the faculty. They will tell you about me before I withdrew from the university with the Senateø adviceí ö (8).

While the fact that the speaker is a university dropout thrills the audience to laughter, the salient truth that this is the breed of leaders who rule the country has been exposed and that this is the way each one of them rattles on about his situation and personality. Hence, *Who's is Afraid of Solarin?* raises the vital issue of leadership as the one of the problems of Nigeria, and indeed, the whole of Africa. When leaders are made of school dropouts and religious whores, to say they are corrupt will then be an understatement.

All the council executives in the play are caricatures of their equivalents in real life. Mrs. Mailo typifies the half-illiterate, half educated Nigeria women politicians who pride themselves on their influence and family heritage while the types of Miss Animasanm throws moral to the dogs and uses -bottom powerø to get whatever they need. Gbonmiayelobiojo, the council Chairman is no better in his speech and manners. The Chief Magistrate who should be the foremost person in uprightness and law keeping is most profane and immoral among the lot. Oriebora, Pastor Ifagbemi, Lamidi and Lamomu are all absurd and queer characters who have greed and gain as the reason they do whatever they do in the play: this is what most of our leaders and associates have at the back of their minds as their priorities.

The works of Osofisan is often the melting point of various issues of social, political, historic and mythical concerns. The totality of his works reveal a deep concern for the effectiveness of the machinery of running society that is intricately linked to its source. This is why Joyifo says that there is, "Remarkable similarity between the structure of many of the plots of Osofisan's plays and the symbolic structure of prototypical dilemma tale of traditional African folklore" (89).

Aside making jest of individual politicians, *Who's Afraid of Solarin?* is a statement on the Nigerian government of the time, the government policies and their insincerity of purpose. The councilor for cooperatives jokingly asks the Councilor for Education.

COUNCILOR FOR COOPERATIVES: And what of you; is it the burden of
plunder from the UPE buildings project
that keeps you stunted? (2).

Later, the playwright supplies information in the footnote of the play that:

The Universal Primary Education project started by the Federal Nigerian military Government in 1976 is to make primary education free and compulsory for all Nigerian children. The programme became controversial because of the enormous costs and allegations of official corruption involved in the exercise (7).

While *Who's Afraid of Solarin?* Is not a chronicle of the bad policies of the Nigerian government of the time; it mentions two central ones; the universal primary Education project mentioned above and the "Operation Feed the Nation" another failed project of the same

government. Hence, in the midst of jesting and mock laughter, salient national issues are brought up and they eventually become thought provoking.

Isola is discovered to be a fake just when it becomes late and the real Public Complaints Commissioner arrives. The Public Complaints Commissioner of Ogun, Oyo, and Ondo States of Nigeria when the play was written is Dr. Tai Solarin, a man known for his sternness and severity where justice and obedience to the laws are concerned. This play was written to honour him hence the titling of the play after him though he is a faceless character. In the world of this play therefore, true and conscientious people do not exist in the physical but in the imagination, a kind of voice of conscience scourging the corrupt official for their graft and misdeeds.

Who's Afraid of Solarin can be read as a critique of the Nigerian government and leaders of the time considering the way the play tackles the dual issues of corruption and unqualified leadership with precision. The significance of these ample treatments of leadership issues in the play lies in the fact that the same handling is traceable to Osofisan's other plays.

In this play, we also have gross misrule, massive plundering of the local Government Council treasury and lack of concern for the populace. The play also reports on the government disregard for human life, lack of basic social amenities and insensitivity towards the corruption, negligence of duty and hypocrisy permeate the life of virtually all the characters in the play. The public officers in the play exude characters that can be summed up in the words of Polycap, the Chairman's houseboy:

POLYCAP: Them be thieves proper! That is what they were discussing.

How them go deceive you so you no go find out before you

go away! In the name of God no spare these wicked robbers at all at all (37).

The word *themø* spoken in a synthesized English Language common among lower class Nigerian societies, refers in a collective term to the people in government, especially those whose responsibility it is that the masses are adequately represented and cared for in government. *Themø* is ambiguous and represents a group of people, what native English speakers will write as *theyö*. This ambiguity is for identification purpose, it specifies that there are more people involved. The character Polycap represents, the working class of the society, working daily for a group of corrupt leaders which he regards as *í thieves proper!ö* (37).

The politicians in Osofisanø *Who's Afraid of Solarin?* are the same with the politicians in Nigerian political landscape of 1999 till date (the period of civilian government). This situation is not different from what obtained since independence in 1960. There is no distinction between the well educated and the less-education politicians, they all struggle to outdo one another in grounding the nationø economy.

4.3 Reflections on *Forest of Palm Trees*

The ongoing campaign for environmental protection in the light of climate change and global warming, make it necessary to access the human treatment of the environment as portrayed in this play *Forest of Palm Trees*, it is clearly stated in the play that one of the reasons the three villages that make-up Ighayo town have been in enmity with one another is the issue of how bad their environment is being treated hence Ofor says:

OFOR: í We cannot continue to ignore the plight of our people.

Our lands are eroded, our roads are unapliable, pipe born

water and electricity are nonexistentí The elements that attract development to a town are not in placeí Erosion has destroyed a whole community in our town and rendered the inhabitant homelessí

It is most painful knowing that the money that would be used for erosion project has been released long time ago, and one or two persons in this town diverted it into their own private pockets. Besides the lack of ecological conscience expressed in this play, it also demonstrates the hierarchies of oppressions that characterize modern day Nigeria especially, when one is as poor as Mama Champion prior to her son becoming the Champions, hence she says:

MAMA CHAMPION: í who would have believed that I, Urewuchi, the wretched widow; the witch who killed her husband; the mad woman who picked food from the dustbin to feed her childrení I, Urewuchií I have raised son who is known all over the worldí (128).

There is another form on hierarchy of oppression in this play as portrayed by the King. A situation when a King wakes up one morning and barns a particular village indefinitely from participating in the town's meeting as members of the King's cabinet with no obvious reasons. This is why Ofor notes in one of the deliberations thus:

OFOR: But your highness, some small communities in this town do not have representatives in this cabinet.

And then the King in reply says:

YALLABAI: Such communities must have had representation in the last cabinet I dissolved!

Again women marginalization which is also a form of oppression is seen in the fact that King Yallabai has only one woman in his cabinet and the women (Mama Yinka) would not have been there if not because she is the leader of Ighayo Women Association.

It is pertinent to assert here that this play should even be applauded for including a woman in the King's cabinet because a play like *Ayakoroma's Dance on his Grave* debunks such an idea and that is why King Olotu says, "No woman, stop making fun of state affairs. You think these matters are for eggheads?" (17). One may begin to ask, why did he make such a statement? Who are the eggheads? He said this just because his wife Alaere (the Queen) says to him "we want to have a voice! We want adequate representation" (17). It's obvious that the eggheads are the woman according to this play *Dance on his Grave*.

Uto's Forest of Palm Trees tries as much as possible to address the issue and politics of favoritism in Nigeria and that is why there is a heated argument on who should benefit more from the forest of palm trees hence Ebo says:

EBO: "First and foremost, the forest of palm trees belongs to our village and to our relations in neighbouring community. The land where the palm trees grow, belongs to us. Yet we are not the people enjoying the benefits of the forest" (142).

This is similar if not the same with the agitations of most people from the Niger Delta region concerning Nigeria oil and that is why the federal government in the recent past came up with the issue of amnesty which encapsulates so many things which most people from that part of the country benefited from and are still benefitting from it up till date.

This play in an attempt to address the issue of divergence in our country Nigeria uses the character, Corporal Audu to the people who are claiming ownership of the foremost of palm trees (which in Nigeria would be our oil) "the forest of palm trees doesn't not belong to your villages. Nobody planted the palm trees, they are gift from Allah" (145).

The implications of imperialism is also noticed clearly when the news that the Champion can no longer grace an occasion which is celebrated in his honour and has taken so much to organize for the reason which goes.

YALLABAI í we all know that our son works for the whiteman in a foreign land. The time the whiteman gave him to spend in our country, has elapsed. He has to go back to the whiteman and continue to be a worthy ambassador of this towní (150).

The author of this play herself has revealed the contentious issues that have culminated in Niger Delta region in a sordid situation by capturing the events like a movie camera would. The people have become pauperized through the gross mismanagement of these resources by those who do not feel the effects of oil spillage in the region but benefit immensely from oil exploration. Thus while Niger Deltans continue to suffer environmental degradations those who benefit from the oil continue to luxuriate in opulence.

To paint the picture of our situation in Nigeria very clearly, the character Ebo says:

EBO: í we all nursed a common dream: that of a land, and a people, freed from socio-political oppression, fear, greed, suspicion, competitive hatred and parochial attitudes. A community not of different tribal entities, but of individuals, free to journey to those heights of which they are capable. A community, where land, food and wealth are accessible to all... We should have been living together in peace and harmony. But we now turned and started fighting each otherí (135)

4.4 Comparative Analysis of the Selected Plays

There are several converging and diverging aspects of the three plays here in study that need to be logically examined in critical terms. The playwrights in their roles as societal crusaders have ably explored the society highlighting the archetypal attributes that are common among our political leaders and in our political structure.

Soyinka's *A Play of Giants* is a classical satire on serious sociopolitical themes as it reflects clips and snatches of the dictatorial rule of military government which have beset Africa in the dim past. It highlights the extremities of power drunk dictators who held sway and terrorized their subjects with object cruelty. As a classical satire it distorts the names of the real life characters without any change. The author wittily parodies the origin of the names of the objects of attack. President El-Haji Idi Amin of Uganda is masqueraded as Kamini President Macia Ngume of Equitorial Guinea is replaced with Guinea, President Mobutu Seseko of Congo

Kinshasha is paraded as Barra Boum while Toboun and Emperor Jean Baptiste Bokassa of the Central African Republic is represented as Kasco.

In the same vein, Femi Osofisan's *Who's Afraid of Solarin?* is described by the author as a classical satire. It reflects the personality of Dr. Tai Salarin who fought vehemently against egocentricism, bribery and corruption, and improprieties when he was offered the post of public complaint commissioner for Ogun, Oyo and Ondo states, a King of Official Ombudsman for the whole of the Western states of Nigeria. Osofisan in his first Tai Solarin memorial lecture in July 27, 2004 described Solarin thus:

It was Solarin alone who refused to play his role according to that immoral government script. He took the business of his assignment seriously as a long awaited challenge at least to purge the society and the government bureaucracy of its post. He became an avid hunter of the rogues of power. In the full glare of the public, he exposes the cupidity of those who are supposed to be serving us but who are busy stuffing their own pockets instead (:1).

It is obvious that the idea behind Utoho's *Forest of Palm Trees* is from the Niger Delta region where insecurity, flooding and other life threatening ordeals were in their full force and the federal government was reluctant in attending to their needs despite the fact that the oil that sustains and boasts our economy is coming from this region with its negative effects on their environment.

Egocentricism is portrayed in the three play as one of the reasons why most of our political leaders submerge themselves in what Esiaba Irobi in his play *Nwokedi* regarded as

“Festival of foolishness” (15). It is evident in the three plays; Kamini in Wole Soyinka’s *A Play of Giants* is represented as a character that is so self-centered that he can give his body and soul in order to get anything he desires for himself. This is revealed in his lines; “I say what I care about body and soul. If they can loan Bugara the two hundred million dollars I give them body and soul. Go back and agree to any condition they want” (5).

Another example of egocentricism is obvious when Kamini says: “I think its time to make new Bugara currency” so I am thinking, is time to change the picture on our currency am thinking I use photo of that statue for the currency” (32). Here, his major concern is himself. He wants to be the most famous citizen of Bugara even when the masses languish in destitute.

Epitomes of egocentricism are also obvious in Femi Osofisan’s *Who’s Afraid of Solarin?*. The Chairman considers himself the all in all and too proud of the fact that three different governors have probed him in his thirty years of service without finding any meaningful evidence to bring him to book. In order to cover up his evil acts in the local government he orders that a whole building be burnt down. Also when he finds out that he and his colleagues have been manipulated by the supposed public complaint commissioner, he expresses bitterness not because of the evils they have been doing in the local government but because (a whole him) with thirty (30) years experience would be toyed with and manipulated by a young man like Isola and that is why he say;

ISOLA: “Ah, Gbonmiaiyelobiojo, you’ve grown senile. Your brain is nothing but sawdust. Thirty years in politics and no one could outsmart me! Not one police officer could find me! Three governors, three probes, and not the

slightest shred of evidence against me. And now, a simpering little pump comes up and makes a fool of me!... (68).

Again egocentricism is clearly portrayed in Utohø *Forest of Palm Trees* using the characters Ebo and corporal Audu. Ebo being a cousin to the Champion becomes so full of himself and his clan that he wants everybody to keep off as he and the other members of Obi village host the federal government and welcome their Champion brother forgetting the fact that prior to this boy becoming the Champion his mother (Mama Champion) was suffering in the village right before him (Ebo) and he did nothing to change the situation, now he wouldn't even allow the press men to interview and take a snapshot of mama Champion all because he is so much concerned about projecting himself and identifying as Champion's cousin. This is why Pa Dele says to him:

PA DELE: Your uncle's son indeed! I know your type like father like son. So, Champion is now your cousin eh? When his mother was struggling in object poverty to raise him up your father treated them like rot, and would not even identify with them. Events have taken a different turn now and you have suddenly discovered you have a cousin. Bravo! (127).

Also, corporal Audu is so full of the establishment that he represents and that is why he feels he can intimidate or even kill anybody that dares him and goes free. When he (Corporal Audu) attempted intimidating Tinu right before Olisa who intervened but received the slap of his life with the warning which goes:

CORP. AUDU: You bloody civilian! If you provoke me, I will shoot you
and make a report (121).

These three playwrights also give us a blueprint of how corrupt our leaders and most people in our corridors of power are. They are able to tell us that corruption has really eaten deep into the veins of not only our political leaders but also the masses.

In Utoho's *Forest of Palm Trees*, we see citizens who are not political leaders but are given the opportunity to oversee erosion project and three years after the money for the project was released, nothing was done and the disheartening aspect of it is that nobody wants to admit he or she knows what happened to the money. Ebo who is delegated to Liase with the councilor of the community and to ensure that the construction is carried out, denies knowing what has happened to the money as he says:

EBO: í The money was duly handed to the councilor. I tried to monitor the progress of the project. The councilor brought some surveyors who inspected the site, took down notes and left. That was three years ago. Later some journalists came, took photographs of the erosion site, interviewed our King and some of the towns people and left. Three years after nothing has been done about ití (139).

And it is unfortunate that the councilor is not present in the meeting although I can bet that even if he is in this meeting, he would have told a story that would point at the fact that he knows nothing about the project money. These are the kinds of people that would threaten to kill our leaders from the comfort of their homes by claiming they are corrupt.

In *Who's Afraid of Solarin?* apart from the grassroots politicians, the Pastor, Baba Fawomi and Isola, the fugitive from the city are symbols of corruption. An example of this is seen when the grassroots politicians mistook Isola for the real Public Complaint Commissioner. His level of corruption becomes justifiable when he dances to the tune of the grass root politicians during their offering of bribe to him. The corrupt act becomes obvious when the councilor for cooperative gives him the highest number of envelopes, he could not help expressing his feelings when he says:

ISOLA: Fifteení sixteení twenty envelopes! And all filled with new notes!! I will write my report straight away. What a wonderful town! What high moral standards! Such devoted and hardworking officials. The federal cabinet will be reshuffled without delay to include such patriotic citizens (76).

The Pastor and Baba Fawomi (the Ifa priest) also present how corrupt and ready our ordinary citizens are in giving and collecting bribe when the Pastor diverts the church fund into his private pocket stoops as low as calling on the Ifa priest to come and carry out some divination which will stop him from being implicated. The Ifa priest on his own side knows he has no spiritual powers (and even if he does) yet he collects money and costly items from these corrupt politicians with the promise of making sure that Solarin does not step his feet on their local government. This simply means that a good number of average Nigerian citizens are corrupt and willing to collect and give bribe just that they have not seen the opportunity to.

Soyinka's *A Play of Giants* also illuminates the penetrative nature of corruption not only in the veins of the tyrants but also those under them. This is captured by Kamini when he is discussing with Tuboum, 'I do that too but sometimes they bribe the guards and smuggle out their families. There is so much corruption one man cannot supervise everything' (20).

The efficiency of spiritual aid is not left untouched in these plays. In the content of their exquisite pieces, they have successfully beaten a vital drum in our ears about the indispensable nature of spiritual aid in not just politics but in everything we do and that is why Mama Champion in *Forest of Palm Trees* says.

MAMA CHAMPION: 'This is the time to be happy. The time to roll out the ancient drums and make merriment. Who would have believed that I, Urewuchi, the wretched widow; the witch who killed her husband; the read woman who picked food from the dustbin to feed her children; I have raised a son who is known as over the world. A son who is going to be honoured by the Federal Government (128).

She exposes the need to be faithful and to believe in divine power. In *A Play of Giants*, Soyinka reflects the use of spiritual aid, voodoo in the character of Gunema. He uses it as a mirror to supervise the activities of his subjects. Through this, he monitors not only those who are loyal to him but also those who have evil plans against him. When the later is spotted through his voodoo supervision, they face the consequences of his wrath. The effectiveness of voodoo is confirmed by Gunema thus:

GUNEMA: My subjects, they are very careful how they plot against Benefacio Gunema. When I look at each one of my ministers, or army officers, he knows I am looking into the heart, into the soul of his village. He knows that I see through his head, into the head of his wife, his children his father and mother (17).

Gunema epitomizes a diabolical individual who lacks the charisma to rule but who relies on supernatural powers. His passionate outburst and fixation on the power of his voodoo is shown almost throughout the play.

In *Who's Afraid of Solarin?*, Osofisan equally unveils the Chairman's dependence on Baba Fawomi, the Ifa priest (who they all believe has spiritual powers) when the message of the probe by Solarin, the public complaint commissioner came to him. His over dependence on spiritual aid becomes pronounced when he, the Chairman says. "I forget to mention it, but no one's going to move one pin from this place until Baba Fawoni comes (7). When the Chief Magistrate and the councilor for cooperative express their shock, he explains how exigent Baba Fawoni's presence is when he says! "This is a serious matter and we have to treat it emergently" (7).

Another interesting aspect of their converging views is the use of humour which is a satirical device. The character Ebo in *Forest of Palm Trees* is made jest of using humour as the journalists come to interview and snap the family of the Champion, he parades himself as the most important member of the family even beyond the Champion's mother and younger brother. But he ends up making a mockery of himself.

Most of the incidents in the other two plays are humorous as they bring out unbearable laughter from the readers. In Osofisan's *Who's afraid of Solarin?*, the zeal of the Chairman and his councilors to liberate themselves from the wrath of the assumed public complaints commissioner, makes the readers laugh profusely. They are all seen encapsulated in curiosity on who will enter first. The situation at this point becomes more notoriously comic, most especially when we notice Isola's shout as he collects their envelopes. Their striving to outdo the other in the number of envelopes submitted is equally humorous as it makes the readers laugh. Another aspect in this play is when they were reading the letter sent to Cecilia by Isola through Polycap.

In Soyinka's *A Play of Giants*, Kamini's miscomprehension or rather inability to understand what the Bugara Bank Chairman meant in his statement about printing Bugara currency, is in itself humorous as it makes the Chairman get a punishment he does not really deserve. Kamini who claims to be the icon of knowledge finds it very difficult to distinguish between the etymological dictionary meaning of toilet paper and its meaning in monetary economics. This inability induces a lot of laughable sequence in the minds of the readers.

Gullibility is also seen as one of the aspects of their convergences in that, despite what and when Kamini claims to be, he is easily manipulated and deceived by the Russians as they take him to be a child in the guise of a fully grown man and that is one of the reasons they present Bubushka doll to him. This symbol is highly satirical as it represents Kamini as physically big but intellectually òmanikinö.

This is seen in Utoh's *Forest of Palm Trees* in the character of the King who steps down like an extremely weak King. Just because he says òmy Governmentí ö (146). And then a

motion is moved for a new King and he steps down, although he has always been soundly so weak and flexible, but also peaceful.

In Osofisanø *Who's Afraid of Solarin?* It could be argued that the characters are all blind folded by their level of corruption, looting and the immense desire to avoid the wrath of Solarin but then, gullibility is a trait in all of them since none of them could express doubt or even question the personality of the supposed public compliant commissioner. We all know that there are more authentic ways of identifying a federal or state government staff member especially one in the caliber of Solarin the public compliant commissioner. Not even the Chairman with his thirty years experience could be exempted from this and he even admits it when he says, "Í your brain is nothing but sawdustí The younger crooks have taken over the trade and they will stop at nothing. Iøm going on voluntary retirementí ö (68).

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Summary

Our reflections demonstrate the fact that the three plays are significant in the ways in which they explore contemporary issues of tyranny, abuse of power, political instability, ecocentricism, corruption, embezzlement, greed, marginalization, trickery and fraudulent nature of our political system is. The situation can best be described as a bombastic political posturing or an oratorical display not accompanied by conviction; speechmaking designed for show or public applause.

In this study, Soyinka's *A Play of Giants*, Osofisan's *Who's Afraid of Solarin?* And Utoh's *Forest of Palm Trees* are used as primary data to reveal the huge nature of crimes and life threatening ordeals in our nascent society. While Soyinka's *A Play of Giants* avails us of the opportunity to delve into the past and perceive vividly, the tyrannically, collusiveness, egocentric, authoritative, barbaric self and dishonest attributes of African political and military leaders and the adverse effects of their bastard actions. Osofisan's *Who's Afraid of Solarin?* Gives us a clear historical view of how upright a man known as Tai Solarin could be in the society cocooned in all sorts of vices. He focuses his ever probing search light on symbolic local government council as the world of the play, to expose the amazing magnitude of corruption in our public sectors.

However, Utoh's *Forest of Palm Trees* uses a small town to capture the situation in the Niger Delta region as it affects the country's economy, our expectations and over reliance on our natural resources and how we fight ourselves to death after we have collectively won the battle against external forces and domination. Utoh tries to address the issue of peaceful co-existence,

women empowerment and environmental consciousness, while Soyinka examines the abuse of political power and relates it to economic and social brutality which African leaders possess. Osofisan's ability to portray succinctly a debased and corrupt political system justifies the relevance of his theatre to the realities of our time. He frowns at corruption, injustice and oppression the society so, all attempts must be made to resist them or else the life of the nation will remain in danger.

5.2 Conclusion

Although this research limits its research questions to only few questions, it will be pertinent to note that in those few questions are locked virtually at the convergent and divergent issues in our socio-political system and this is why it will be note worthy to state categorically that this research is borne out of the zeal to explore, satirize, and analyze logically in critical terms the bunkum or humbug nature of our political system.

From the whole exegesis, it can be inferred that a theatre artist is a political critic. This assertion owes to the fact that the theatre artist/playwright does not act or practice in a vacuum, rather, he/she makes use of the raw materials drawn from the society. This is because he/she is the custodian of the moral conscience of his/her society and therefore, cannot steer away when these moral codes are being violated by a group of individuals or corrupt politicians. In fact, the word corruption nauseates the theatre artist because it is an act which deviates from the formal rules of conduct governing the actions of someone in a position of public authority because of personal motives such as wealth, power or status.

Again, in Nigeria's nascent democracy, the creation of some bodies-Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and Independent Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences commission (ICPC) is a confirmation that corruption, tyranny, mismanagement and

diversion of public funds, egocentricism and fractionalism are on the high increase in the society. It is important therefore, to thoroughly look for an alternative means through which these societal problems could be exposed, curtailed or absolutely eradicated.

The contemporary dramatists should not just emulate playwrights like Soyinka, Osofisan, and Utoh in the treatment of socio political issues, but they should also employ creativity in subsequent works so that their uniqueness will be obvious irrespective of the fact that their priorities remain the same. They should not be discouraged by the unrepentant attitude of politicians just like Hubert Ogunde who despite the political turbulence in the society of his time mocked and exposed the ills in the society right before the politicians who perpetrate them.

It is observed that the so called democracy in Africa does not eliminate the spirit of autocracy and despotic leadership role in the governance of their people. It is expedient that several other professional bodies should join forces with the Theatre Arts Practitioners to bring sanity to the democracy in Africa in order to avoid the entire continent falling into abyss.

5.3 Recommendations

- ❖ Contemporary African playwrights are encouraged not to be deterred from satirizing bad leadership among African leaders.
- ❖ African playwrights are encouraged not to shy away from reflecting how barbaric, dishonest, and discouraging autocratic and despotic leadership are in their creative works.
- ❖ Academic conferences, symposiums, seminars, and workshops where plays like the ones studied could be discussed, could be a viable platforms to discourage bad leadership tendencies among would-be leaders.

- ❖ Creative works like plays in Africa could be used to highlight some African core values that discourages autocratic and despotic leadership especially for would-be leaders.
- ❖ African plays could serve as a political commentary on leadership in the continent.
- ❖ African playwrights could portray dramatic characters with high moral leadership values in their plays as a model for would-be leaders.
- ❖ African plays could be employed as a viable tool to uphold and sustain some social structures that discourage autocratic and despotic leadership style and promote good governance.

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