A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF MUTATION AND ALLIANCE IN SELECTED PLAYS OF SOYINKA, OSOFISAN AND SALAMI-AGUNLOYE

BY

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A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES, AHMADU BELLO UNIVERSITY ZARIA, NIGERIA, IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIRMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (PhD) IN THEATRE AND PERFORMING ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE AND PERFORMING ARTS,

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ZARIA

JUNE, 2021

DECLARATION

I, Elisha Dareng RWANG, hereby declare that this thesis entitled **A Critical Analysis of Mutation and Alliance in Selected Plays of Soyinka, Osofisan and Salami-Agunloye** is written by me and that it is a record of my own research work. It has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree. All quotations are indicated and sources of information are duly acknowledged by means of references.

Elisha DarengRWANG ....
Signature Date

CERTIFICATION

This Thesis entitled **A Critical Analysis of Mutation and Alliance in Selected Plays of Soyinka, Osofisan and Salami-Agunloye**by Elisha Dareng RWANG, PhD/ARTS/01338/2008-09 (P16ARTP9027), meets the regulations governing the award of Doctor of Philosophy in Theatre and Performing Arts of Ahmadu Bello University Zaria and it is approved for its contribution to knowledge.

Professor Mohammed Inuwa Umar-Buratai---------- ----------
Chairman, Supervisory Committee Signature Date

Dr. Emmanuel Jegede ---------- ----------
Member, Supervisory Committee Signature Date

Professor Mohammed OmawumiBhadmus ---------- ----------
Member, Supervisory Committee Signature Date

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Head of Department Signature Date

Professor S. Abdullahi ---------- ----------
Dean, School of Postgraduate Studies Signature Date

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the Lord God Almighty, whose promises are “Yes and Amen!” and to my dear wife Rose, who waited at the fireplace, and with trembling lips in prayers for my success. Also, to our four loving children, Jireh, Nissi,Ammishaddai, and Sallem, though tender, have learned to bear with my absence from home throughout the period of this research.

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ABSTRACT

This work sets out to critically analyze selected plays by three Nigerian playwrights, towards challenging the misconception in the analytical frameworks that tend to consign playwrights and plays into fixed ideological or generational categories. It is the argument of this study that this pattern of criticism has always created a limitation in the study and understanding of plays and playwrights, given the dynamism of society, the creative process and the ever-evolving critical methods. Historical changes in every society have always compelled writers to redefine their aesthetic and ideological focus, hence the need to re-examine the trend and pattern of responses by playwrights in Nigeria within the period 2002 to 2011. The effort in the present research is to improve on the quality of criticism of drama in Nigeria, by challenging past notions and creating alternative paradigm. The study thus uses a qualitative methodology and bases its arguments on the New Historicists' and Cultural Materialists' theoretical frameworks. It seeks to prove that with the passage of time, artistic temperaments and philosophies of playwrights in Nigeriachangein response to social and political exigencies, irrespective of their ages and idiosyncrasies. Thus their ideo-aesthetics have become indistinguishable. This is the conception in the terms Mutation and Alliance in this study. The study critiques six selected plays, two each from Wole Soyinka, Femi Osofisan and IreneSalami-Agunloye namely; *King Baabu*;*AlápatàÀpáta*;*Tegonni: an African Antigone*, *Women of Owu*;*More than Dancing* and *Idia the Warrior Queen of Benin* respectively. It relies on content analysis to arrive at the findings that the selected playwrights in the selected plays are as equally revolutionary as they are mythopoeic. This study argues also, that the seeming ideo-aesthetic delimitations, which critics use to compartmentalize works according to given categories, have become outmoded. Thus, it concludes that the hitherto generational grouping of plays and playwrights as a critical method has been rendered obsolete by the present analysis. This study therefore, suggests that further studies and critical approaches to drama in Nigeria could be more rewarding when society's state of flux is considered to constantly redefine critical standards. Also, studies that will reveal more points of convergence in the plays of Playwrights in Nigeria through a deconstructive reading will enhance the quality of criticism than as they are thought to be in constant and fixated divergence.

CHAPTER ONE
GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This study sets out to do a critical analysis of plays of three selected playwrights in Nigeria, namely; Wole Soyinka, Femi Osofisan and Irene Salami-Agunloye, towards justifying mutation and alliance.It is the contention of this study that the critical criteria occasioned by ideo-aesthetics as well as generational grouping of playwrights and their works have been challenged by new trends in the Nigerian theatre landscape. This chapter opens the discourse by treating the preliminary issues, starting from the the background to the study, concepts of mutation and alliance, statement of the problem, aim and objectives of the study, research questions, justification of the study, scope of the study and methodology.

1.1 Background to the Study

Most critical approaches to modern drama in Nigeria usually subscribe to preconceived notions associated with generational grouping of plays and playwrights as basis and framework for analysis. Critics' application of polemics of generational divide in apprehending plays of Nigerian playwrights presupposes a fix dichotomy, which negates potentials for alternative critical perspective. Playwrights of the first generation for instance, are considered "mythopoetic dramatists" (Roscoe,1971:13), "animist metaphysicists" and playwrights of "cultural assertion" (Osofisan, 1978:152), (Ashaolu, 1978:180), (Nkosi, 1981:181), (Obafemi,2001:67), (Adelugba, Obafemi and Adeyemi,2004:153). Likewise, the second generation dramatists are represented as "political" (Etherton,1982:295), "radical" or "marxists" (Gbilekaa,1997:96) and "revolutionary" (Dunton, 1992:8), and (Obafemi,2001:168). Other critics have even argued for middle and third generation; "The New Voices" or the "Post-Osofisan generation", as a generation that pursues the ideology of

"individual survivalism" (Ademiju-Bepo, 2005:285), (Akoh,2009:271), (Asigbo and Okeke, 2010:8), (Rantimi-Jays,2013:66).

This over simplification and fixation in the manner of analysing drama in Nigeria according to generational categories is challenged, as new trends in theatre practice have redefined and are redirecting the critical engagement. It is most noticeable that the older playwrights, at least those still living, have remained active and have written into the twenty-first century. Therefore, the idea of the usage of the generational nuance in a manner, which presupposes plays or certain playwrights as being used and dispensed with, is reconsidered in the context of this study. In essence, this research interrogates the ideological interpretation of works according to generational patterns, seeing the manner that the dramaturgy of a particular playwright could change several times and align with multiple ideological strands given the historical changes of the moment. These are the ideas formed into the concepts Mutation and Alliance, which define the subject of our inquiry.

Theatrical activities in some regions of Africa during the pre-colonial period have been a function of oral performance. These have their origins in religion, rituals, festivals and ceremonies of the people. These performances have in most cases religious and in some cases, secular background and are put to use as the situation demands. This is the situation for instance with the *Egungun* Masquerade performance studied by Adedeji (1966). Other examples could be referenced throughout indigenous communities of Nigeria. For example, there is the Izon world view represented in J.P Clark-Bekederemo's *Ozidi*, the Igbo culture and tradition in the play of Sonny Oti,*The Old Masters*, and the Idoma folklore in S.O. Amali's *Onugbomuloko.* These forms of oral performances have proven to be the ferments that nurtured modern drama in the preceding decades and in this case, dramatic literature.

As the socio-political environment became complex during the colonial period likewise theatrical productions became modified to suit the changing political atmosphere. Most

residual theatrical forms assumed very dynamic nature both in content and style. Studies into the Yoruba folk opera or travelling theatre, which flourished during the colonial era for instance, also show how it evolved out of the ritual performance of the *Egungun* mask and also the *Alarinjo*performances. The *Alarinjo* performancesfor instance,showcased powerful indigenous tropes that found a necessary relationship with politics of the moment. In later years, as Etherton (1982:46) notes Hubert Ogunde's theatre,thatit had a religious background (Traditional Religion and Christianity).Also, that it followed the political developments during the colonial period. It later acquired a nationalistic outlook that remains a lasting precept to subsequent cream of dramatists that later emerged. The satiric and oppositional undertones imbued in the Yoruba popular theatre have become a virile tool for dramaturgy and inspiration for the modern playwright.

Accordingly, Ogunde mobilized the local audience through his drama while inculcating into them the nationalistic spirit that was already making waves at the national level. This conscious intoning of the political subject and theme is represented in the drama of Ogunde such as "Strike and Hunger", "Bread and Bullet", "Tigers Empire" among others. This trend is also found in the works of latter contemporaries of Ogunde in the popular travelling theatre genre such as; Kola Ogunmola, Duro Ladipo, and Moses Olaiya Adejumo. Obafemi (2001:16-17) notes the relationship between the statement and the structure, and the common matrix of these popular dramatists and their theatrethus:

> The subject of this theatre ranges between the ritual dramatization of the history, myth and the legend of the community (Ladipo's special area), the employment of satire to expose anti-social behaviour in the community (Ogunde) and the use of slapstick (in traditional Yoruba this is *Efe*) for theatrical purposes to entertain as well as to ridicule contemporary social ills (Olaiya in all his plays).

On the whole, Obafemi emphasises the overlapping significance of the craftsmanship of these practitioners as well as the entertainment and social function of the operatic theatre in the hands of the trio.

Most importantly, this pattern of transforming theatre into an instrument of socio-political engagement is noticeable in the pioneer drama and dramatists in English as studies have shown. This is widespread and is reflected in individual playwright and dramatist even from the pre-independence years. We have seen this political motivation early enough in the pre-independent play of James Ene Henshaw, *This is Our Chance* (1956). Adelugba (1989:63) asserts that:

> The plays of the medical doctor, James Ene Henshaw and his amateur players in Calabar...are also important in a review of pre-independence drama and theatre. Indeed many plays that were later to be written and published may have derived their inspiration from James Ene Henshaw's *This is Our Chance* the most popular of Henshaws Plays of the 1950s.

The effect of socio-political change on Nigeria's literary drama has presented variously and especially with the historical change. It has been proven that the pre-independent days and the early years of political independence provided an atmosphere of hope and promise which both the political class and the artist tenaciously held unto. This is always not divorced from the impact and success of nationalism, which preceded the declaration of political independence in 1960(Booth, 1981:37). The concern in this period wasabout the need for cultural assertion against the background of external challenges from foreign culture via religion and colonialism. These plays also demonstrated an elitists' reformist perspective to the development of the new nation state which they hope to nurture.

Owing to their training, home and abroad, the dramatists in Nigeria experimented with a variety of theatre craft and themes to press home the significance of their theatres to a growing Nigerian audience. The plays of Wole Soyinka took the lead in this case with a theatre tradition that is deeply rooted in the indigenous performance, evolving a format for "Total Theatre" (Adelubga, 1989:65). So, the early plays as noted above, along with trying to assert the significance of traditional African culture, also satirised the dysfunctional political system and the leadership that was just emerging for the country at that time. The dramatists resorted

to myth and ritual for ideological and aesthetic inspiration. Some of the plays of this period are *A Dance of the Forests* (1960), *The Strong Breed* (1963), *and The Swamp Dwellers* (1964) by Wole Soyinka. Others are *Song of a Goat and the Masquerade* (1964)by J. P. Clark;*Wedlock of the gods* (1972) and *King Emene* (1974) by Zulu Sofola, *Obaluaye* (1973) by Wale Ogunyemi and *The Gods are not to Blame* (1971) by Ola Rotimi.

The churning out of literarydrama in Nigeia expanded in the succeeding years with the production of cream of younger and exuberant playwrights by universiries abroad and in Nigeria. Like their older contemporaries, this succeeding crop of dramatists in Nigeria that emerged after the Nigeria's civil war in the late 1970s are as well, products of academic nurturing, locally and internationally (Adelugba, Obafemi, and Adeyemi, 2004:153). They too wrote and produced their plays in English, through which they engaged different socio-cultural and political themes. Their theatre is described by critics, mostly, by its disillusionment in the nation's leadership and by its materialist bent. They are seen mostly to imbibe a penchant for Marxist revolutionary philosophy of dialectical materialism. Their commitment to social change through class struggle therefore, has always been unequivocal. Gbilekaa(1997:172)asserts that:

> In using the theatrical medium to agitate for an egalitarian society based on socialist principle, and to arouse consciousness among the masses, to draw their attention to the inequalities and injustices that permeate the Nigerian society the revolutionary playwrights have taken up the challenge…They use oral tradition as a peg on which to hang the form of performance. In their bid to make firm political statement and present recipes for social change, all the radical playwrights...employ traditional aesthetic materials.

To some degree too, the second generation dramatists also tried to use the traditional idioms of folk theatre; myth, ritual, and to some extent, metaphysical consciousness almost in the manner of the first generation of playwrights. Obafemi, (2001:169) observes that:

> In spite of their differences in social vision from their predecessors, especially Soyinka, these dramatists, like most other dramatists in Nigeria writing in English, have nonetheless been influenced by the pioneering work of Soyinka. All of them have duly acknowledged this influence. But they have not limited themselves to Soyinka's

line of artistic expression. From the start, they have indicated their commitment to the employment of the theatre to effect social change.

Some notable playwrights of this phase and their plays are: Femi Osofisan with *The Chattering and the Song* (1977), *Once'sUpon Four Robbers* (1980), *Morountodun* (1982); Bode Sowande's *Farewell to Babylon* (1979) and *Tornado Full of Dreams* (1986); Olu Obafemi's *Night of a Mystical Beast* (1982); Tess Onwueme's *Desert Encroaches* (1983), *The Reign of Wazobia* (1992), *Tell it to Women* (1995); and Tunde Fatunde's *Oga na Tief Man* (1985) among others. These few playwrights stand out because there plays were published, performed and are being studied at various levels of scholarship.

The Radical spirit of the second generation playwrights is thought to be the ferment that precipitated the feminist discourse in literary drama especially in the plays of female playwrights in Nigeria, with a strong bias to women liberation and empowerment. Nevertheless, Rantimi-Jays (2013:65) argues on their radical posture that "the interests of the female playwrights are sharpened more by feminist ideology than anything else". That is why playwrights like Tess Onwueme, Stella Oyedepo and Julie Okoh, are easily grouped with the second generation playwrights. Although it could be argued that the debate on the role of women in socio-political life and as represented in the corpus of literary drama in Nigeria could have started with the first generation playwrights, starting with James Ene Henshaw. Wole Soyinka, J.P Clark, Zulu Sofola and Ola Rotimi all have portrayed women to various degrees of relevance that have equally served as subject of debate. Zulu Sofola's plays stood out as the first contribution coming from a female playwright. Her plays, *Wedlock of the gods* and *King Emene*, are examples of how she seeks to define the place of women in a complex ideological society like Nigeria. Feminists' discourse also featured in works of second generation playwrights mentioned above.

However, critics like Rantimi-Jays (2013) differ a bit on feminist discourse and the radical character of literary drama in Nigeria. Rantimi-Jays (2013:65) referring to female playwrights,

makes a sweeping remark that is pertinent to the problem of the present research. He states thus:

> I have decided to include the female playwrights who emerged after Zulu Sofola under the third generation dramatists because, aside from the fact that they were not visible during the period discussed (the Second generation), they were not entrenched with the hegemony of revolutionary aesthetics. Nevertheless, they are, at times, very virulent in the presentation of the feminist ideology.

This claim by Rantimi-Jays is the general notion and the pitfall that is associated with the criticism of the literary canon of drama in Nigeria. For example, Rantimi-Jays (2013:66) further claims that "the third generation of Nigerian dramatists is defined not by nationalism or mythopoetic ethos. They are not particularly interested in revolutionary aesthetics or Marxist cantos but in individual survival strategies". This negates the dynamic nature of the creative process and gives a shallow view of structure of literary drama in Nigeria.

The second generation of dramatists has since been joined by other younger cream of playwrights. The third generation is said to have emerged with a growing zeal and determination to use the theatre medium for socio-political change. These younger playwrights commonly described as "The New Voices" (Akoh, 2009:265) have equally created a phase of fledging dramatists who are concerned with the socio-economic and political fortunes of Nigeria and the desire to reflect this vision using their plays. Among these playwrights are Ahmed Yerima, Victor Dugga, Emmy Idegu, Alex Asigbo, Effiong Johnson, Irene Salami-Agunloye, Tracie Utoh-Ezeajugh, Bakare Ojo-Rasaki, Esiaba Irobi, Tor Ioorapuu, Julie Okoh, Ben Tomoloju, Emmanuel Dandaura, Diran Ademiju-Bepo and Backleys Anyakoroma, among others. These playwrights have varying number of plays to their credit.

One fact needs to be stressed here that with the changing socio-political environment of the twenty-first century, the earlier traits associated with each dramatist in the various groups, as ascribed by critics, have undergone some transformation and reformation. Obafemi

(2001:273) argues that the plays of the late 1990s and early 2000s have shown some changes and as conceptualized in this study therefore, mutation and alliance. He states that:

> It is in these plays that the lines of departure between the first generation and the middle generation dramatists become remarkably indistinct; where animist metaphysics and revolutionary consciousness coalesce to form a statement about the complexity of dialectical politics and vision in a transitional social economy.

This complex historical change had had its effects on the dramaturgy of the first generation dramatists starting with Wole Soyinka, Ola Rotimi and later J. P Clark-Bekederemo. Obafemi (2008:72) again asserts that:

> It is instructive of course that the historical and development processes in society, via post-colonialism and neo-colonialism have since compelled, inexorably, a greater radicalization of both politics and the form of the theatre of the first generation of literary theatre dramatist Soyinka, Clark and their runners up Ola Rotimi in particular.

Also, that "the emergent...dramatists have also gone ahead to redefine and redesigned their approach to and pursuit of radical practice, borrowing more from humanistic realism rather than Marxism". A close study shows that the latter phase of the second generation dramatists reveals a somewhat compromised approach to the dialectical materialism as they claim to be an alternative for the idealist vision in metaphysics, mythopoetic, and bourgeois reformist standpoint. Bamidele (1993:162-3), in this light too, observes that:

> In the meantime, it seems to me that persuasions towards a radical (Marxist) ideology in Nigerian theatre is (sic) a burnt out case. Some trends point to this conclusion. There is not yet a revolutionary public to listen to, and be activated by the slogan. The crusaders are not themselves committed ideologues by the fact of their being middle class, therefore bourgeois. The traditional idea of theatre as culture, therefore aesthetics and mythological, much prone toward distraction and amusement, is still cherished.

The second generation dramatists as Bamidele (1993:163) observes, is believed to have yielded to a more liberal and humanist's totality as much as accommodating a great deal of metaphysical poetics. Likewise, the older generation of playwrights too has demonstrated a shift in ideology and has experimented with socialist realism as could be seen in the plays of Wole Soyinka, *Kongi's Harvest, The Beatification of Area boy, A Scotch of Hyacinths, From Zia With Love and King Baabu.* Ola Rotimi has shown this shift earlier enough in the 1980s in

plays such as *Hopes of the Living Dead* and *IF, a Tragedy of the Ruled*. As observed by Rantimi-Jays (2013:66), the third generation playwrights, along with their penchant for social change albeit not Marxist inclined has deployed a good measure of ritual idiom and traditional aesthetics in their dramaturgy. What is much fascinating is the fact that this realignment in ideology and style is taking place across both the old and the new cream of playwrights, since some among the older generation remained active right into millennium, 2000.

These changing patterns in the literary drama have left critics speculating what the posture of the canon of literary drama will look like and what common ideological persuasion the literary dramatist of the 21st century will offer to society. Obafemi (2001:276) for instance asserts thus:

> It seems to me to speculate about the future trend of the theatre in Nigeria and Africa generally, that this simultaneous existence of the popular and the literary, the aesthetically deep and politically powerful will continue for a very long time to come. Obviously as the struggle for the replacement of the present decadent societies with others holding to more positive values progresses, the artist must give equal thought to the practical and poetic. His concerns must also relate to the spiritual needs of his society. The theatre is a field meshing the dialectical and the metaphysical, so long as the essence is mass social transformation.

Akoh (2009:269) also, posits that "with the interesting revision of artistic positions by older generation of playwright, an artistic wedlock may with time emerge between the old and the new playwrights". Inspite if all these, Idoko (2019:x) maintains that there still exist "ideological contestations" lack of clarity on the political dimension of Nigeria's literary drama within and between generations".

These changing patterns and shifts in trends are the concerns of this study. The objective is probes into what could be said to be the posture of the canon of dramatic literature in Nigeria. In view of the different tendencies and possibilities, the study postulates that the canon of literary drama of the early decade of the twenty first century (2002-2011) as a bricolage of ideo-aesthetics, bifurcations in artistic commitment that are defy the hitherto rigid

categorization of Nigerian plays and playwrights according to generation and ideology. Yet, with this possibility of convergence and or further divergences in aesthetics and ideology across the generations, there is the need for a study that should try to harmonise what "the old" and "the new" playwrights have tried to show in their dramaturgy in the early decade of the twenty first century. This search for a common ground is the motivation for this research.

1.2 Mutation and Alliance: Fluidity and Interface of ideasin Creativity

In creating concepts that capture or define the process of change being referred to in this research, this study adopts an inter-disciplinary concept of "mutation" to explain the manner in which creative artists, especially writers, have demonstrated fluidity in their creative oeuvres. The etymology of the word "mutation" is found in the biological science, which means a "sudden departure from the parent type in one or more heritable characteristic, caused by a change in gene or chromosome" (*The Encyclopaedia of Biological Sciences*). A more simplified, yet related meaning is that mutation is the act or a process of changing, a change or alteration in form or nature. In the context of this study, it implies in the same sensewa Thiong'o (1972:47) writes about the writer, his art and societal change. He states that:

> A writer responds, with his total personality, to social environment which changes all the time. Being a kind of sensitive needle, he registers, with varying degree of accuracy and success, the conflict and tension in his changing society. *Thus the same writer will produce different types of work, sometimes contradictory in mood, sentiment, degree of optimism and even world view. For a writer himself lives in, and is shaped by history* (Emphasis mine).

There are many factors that bring about these changes in the creative life of the artist and the product of the art. Some are natural temperaments and others, environmental factors. At other times, all of these contribute to the posture that an artist adopts at given moments. This has been the situation with the artists the world over. Thus, Lindfors, (2007:30), remarks that:

> Writers in each era have chosen forms appropriate for conveying a political message to a particular audience and have switched to other forms when environmental conditions have altered. *Thus in morphology as well as ideology, literary art has been responsive to the wind of change that swept across sub-Saharan Africa in the mid-twentieth century*. The intellectual history of a continent undergoing rapid cultural

> transformation can be discerned in the significant mutation such literatures manifest (Emphasis mine).

Though Lindfors' description is centred on the writer in the mid-twentieth century, this could be applied to all creative artists of the twenty-first century. The situation of the writer especially, is remarkably different because he expresses himself/herself in a medium more diverse and more flexible than all the other genres of the arts.

Wole Soyinka in an interview with Wilkinson (1992) expresses this feeling about the Nigerian writer when he asserts that: "the Nigerian writer is a creature in formation. Obviously we're bound to end up as hybridization" (1992:96).This explains in part "Alliance", which will be explained in details, shortly.

Furthermore, in a more detailed exposition, Soyinka explains the transient nature of the art. He states that:

> Whether we like it or not, in terms of effecting change, art does have its limitations. And I keep emphasizing that recognition of this limitation is not a negative or pessimistic view of art. For me it is a very positive one. Certain kinds of artistic production in my society are left to rot, deliberately. It's part and parcel of the persona of an art work that it is meant to vanish, to be destroyed in order to be able to reproduce itself. This is the organic nature of art (Quoted in Wilkinson, 1992:105).

Soyinka's explanation of this "organic change" is the fact that the changeability of the artistic process is linked to the challenges that each epoch offers to life and the artists as well. To borrow from Soyinka's words, "art is a perishable commodity which represents the continuum of human productivity" (Quoted in Wilkinson, 1992:105). Just as Sartre (1988:76) too argues; "...the milieu is in effect determinative: the milieu produces the writer". The complex nature of the society and its unpredictable and precarious consequences has created in the artist many more tactics of coping and effecting change in each generation. Ademiju-Bepo (2005:25) maintains a similar posture that:

> When collective progress appears stunted, the playwright has always responded with a new style which he explores to liberate his people from the insensitivity of the ruler to the ruled and the phenomenon called change.

This is how the creative process has developed to meet the yearnings of the society in all ages.

It should be stated then that, the mutation process in arts, especially with the writers, is both spontaneous as well an act of choice. The creative process is instinctive no doubt but other societal factors, which alienate the artist, are even more reasons for alternative style and which also solicit the commitment of the artist. Osofisan (2001:60) submits that:

> To the slave master any initiative that aims to break the chains of slavery is subversive and must be suppressed. So with the dictator, for whom the progressive artist is always a target...especially under military regime, whose laws are capricious and vindictive, and where even death sentences can be backdated against opponents, the dramatist who wants to survive and still keep doing his work is obliged to operate with tactics of cultural guerrilla. And it is in such a context that playwriting becomes an act of surreptitious insurrection.

That is why, regarding himself as a playwright and under such harsh conditions, Osofisan (2001:61) remarks that:

> …virtually all my plays have taken their inspiration from one immediate crisis or the other to the extent where, as I have explained elsewhere, it isnot me who choose the theme to write on. Rather it is the theme that chooses me.

Soyinka in the same light expresses the same feeling in his essay "The Writer in a Modern State" (1988:14)thus:

> In new societies which begin the seductive experiment in authoritarianism, it has become a familiar experience to watch society crush the writer under a load of guilt for his daring to express a sensibility and an outlook apart from, and independent of the mass direction. The revolutionary mood in society is particularly potent tyrant in this respect, and since the writer is at the very least, sensitive to mood, he respects the demand of the moment and effaces his definition as a writer by an act of choice.

It can be deciphered from these positions that the artist especially the playwright in Nigeria has the task always of surmounting real and perceived obstacles that will militate against the affective and effective goals of his craftsmanship. The adaptive mode of contending with this phenomenon becomes his or her ability to manoeuvre, using the instrumentality of the creative work. This is the process of "mutation" as conceptualized in this study. Creativity is made flexible, transposable and transitive in this context. It is made to acquire new dimension and is made amendable to epochal change.

The conception of alliance in this study is as conceived in any engagement. Dictionary.com (2017) defines alliance as “the merging of efforts or interest by persons, families, states or organizations”. It adds also that “it is simply the correspondence in basic characteristics or affinity”. Since there cannot be a deliberate “merging of effort” in dramaturgy, the key terms that summarize the conception of alliance in this study therefore, are “the correspondence in basic characteristics or affinity” that is associated with the taxonomy of the literary drama in Nigeria. The criticism of drama in Nigeria has initially been characterised by the vexed schism of the indigenous and the western theatre traditions. But a closer study shows that the taxonomy of the modern tradition in drama itself is more at the levels of the idealist or liberal humanists’ conception and the Marxist or radical approach, which by now have both absolved substantially the traditional (indigenous) aesthetics. It is these two notions that have engaged the perspectives of the critics of drama in Nigeria.

From the beginning, the aesthetics of modern theatre practice and ideological pursuits of dramatists have had reason to converge, creating a connection in the manner in which especially playwrights address their audience. It is notable also that with the complex nature of society, “the problems of humanity have become so political that there cannot be a unilateral Marxist or idealists’ way of solving these problems‘antagonistic’ ideologies are part and parcel of contemporary history in the making” (Bamidele, 1993:159). The playwrights thus, appear to have moved from one experiment to the other. Gugelberger (1985:9) contends that African literature as a whole “should use whatever is useful, modernist and or realist experimentation or its opposite, if it must be successful in promoting change”. The trend so far reveals the dexterity of the playwright in Nigeria to dilute orthodox Marxism with liberal humanism, as a hybridity in artistry that helps him/her cope with the challenges and complex sociology of the times.

All theatres whether Marxist or liberal humanist have served to express disgust for oppression, inhumanity, and repression of the rights of people in the human society. This is an informing factor also for the inner fragmentation in the philosophies behind the dramaturgy of each playwright. The fact that playwrights have been able to use their different ideological positions to canvas for societal transformation is also a testimony to alliance in dramaturgy.Hence, this is a strong meeting point for all forms of drama ideology in Nigeria. This fundamental commitment is of course without prejudice to the old and the new playwrights.As Prawer (1962:83) notes therefore, in studying the nature of drama in a complex social milieu, "the study of themes, situations and motifs, must be like all literary studies, keep itself aware of individual variation on the one hand and wider cross-connections on the other". These cross-connections are the corollary of alliances; what critics hardly consider in their critical approaches. This is the postulation in the concept of "alliance". Explaining this process further, Dapo Adelugba, in an interview with Ademola Dasylva (2003:249) remarks that:

> The question of old assumptions, I have argued, was a favourite twentieth century obsession and we can now see how, in the Avant-Garde and the Theatre of the Absurd, there is a bifurcation of the old dramatic genres of tragedy and comedy. *I believe such new questionings of old generic divisions are going to continue into the twenty-first century*...I argued that we shall continue to have both local and international varieties of theatre. I argued that while ethnic theatre is important, international theatre is also important and there is no need to disparage one in order to make a case for the other. So I argued that we must continue to have both ethnic theatre and the international theatre (Emphasis mine).

The alliances identified by this research therefore, are in two folds. The first is aesthetic and the second ideological. At the aesthetic level, it is a combination of the western and indigenous traditions as well as harmonization of the naturalistic and the realistic (Aristotalian and didactic) modes in dramaturgy. Bamidele (2001:75) encapsulates this conception in relation toOsofisanthus:

> Osofisan can be credited for achieving balance and striking the right note in the transformation of both medium and material. He does more than revive tales and

> myths by showing how myth can be used to formulate a new revolutionary vision for the issues of contemporary life...what Osofisan does is to reshape the traditional myth and folktale motif to communicate new ideas.

The above is the same craftsmanship that Gbilekaa (1997:100) acclaims Soyinka with; as holding so tenaciously the revolutionary principle as means of explaining events of contemporary society. In this context for example, myth becomes a political tool for cultural reorientation and rhetoric for change notwithstanding the debate on the extent of use. In recent times for instance, Soyinka's Ogunian poetics seems to have found expression in some plays of Osofisan; *Tegonni*...(2007) and *Women of Owu* (2006).Likewise, Osofisan's use of the *Orumila-Esu* mythopoesis is seen in Soyinka's *Alápatà Àpáta*(2011). This facile illustration is a lead into the proposition of "alliance" in this study as would be analysed using the selected plays.

At the ideological level, there is the synthesis of critical realism with socialist realism. Dialectical materialism is fused with idealists' belief in the essence of human struggle and survival. Critical realism protests the deteriorating condition of human existence as well as bringing to task all classes as responsiblefor the social crisis in the society. Socialist Realism on its part presupposes:

> The artist or writer's fundamental agreement with the aim of the working class and the emerging socialist world...Essentially, the socialist writer shows the changeability of the world in its contradictory concreteness. He adopts a historical materialist approach to the world and so has a positive vision in the revolutionary aspiration of the 'wretched of the earth' (Gbilekaa, 1997:82-3).

This explains the second extent of alliance. For once, dramatic conflict is seen as evolving from both the mythical and historical incidents and not only against individuals but also communities and forces of class difference (Vasquez, 1974:213). In both situations as noted by Fischer (1963:113), "true socialist realism is therefore also critical realism, enriched by the artist's fundamental acceptance of society as a positive social phenomenon. The artist's personality is no longer engaged in a romantic protest against the world that surrounds him"

only, but that the artist (in this context the playwright), also anticipates society, which needs to be altered through mass action by the proletariat and the establishment of a classless society. So, the playwright is no longer that neutral critic who satirises from a distance but has joined in the fight for the revolution. This also explains the conception of "alliance" as used in this study.

Mutation and alliance and the literary drama in Nigeria are therefore, the changes in trends and inter-relatedness of style, aesthetics and ideology in the canon of literary drama in Nigeria. Mutation and alliance connote the aesthetic and ideological undercurrents that shift and thus, connect the ideologies in the generational divide. These permutations of ideology in the creative oeuvre of dramatists as seen in the works of the selected playwrights and as could be related to many others, are no doubt inspired by the changing moments in the politics of the country. Thisphenomenon is likewise, triggering changes in experience, perceptions and the social vision of the dramatists in Nigeria as a whole.

This study thus, focuses on the plays that have emerged from the year 2000 to 2010,selected from three playwrights cutting across the generational divide and whose plays try to show this trend. Consequently, the study analyses selected works of Wole Soyinka, Femi Osofisan and Irene Salami-Agunloye, namely; *King Baabu* (2002), *Alápatà Àpáta* (2011), *Women of Owu* (2006), *Tegoni: An African Antigone* (9007), *More than Dancing* (2003), and *Idia, the Warrior Queenof Benin* (2008) respectively,to illustrate these mutation and alliance. This study attempts to make deductions on patterns of progression that could be identified in the discourse on the aesthetic and ideological commitments of the selected playwrights and as advanced in the plays being considered. This study also tries to identify what constitutes the social vision in these plays for the Nigerian society.

1.3 Statement of the Research Problem

Interpreting playwrights and drama in Nigeria according to ideological leanings and generational time lines is not only pseudo intellectual but is also inhibitive of wider meaning. Critical works on playwrights and drama in Nigeria have always associated playwrights and their works with one grouping by virtue of their age brackets, period of artistic budding and the thematic or ideological commitments in their works. However, the socio-economic and political changes witnessed on the political landscape in Nigeria in the past decades have continued to cause a reshaping of the philosophies and temperaments of the dramatists. With this fluidity of thoughts, style and choice of subject matter; hardly can any play by a Nigerian playwright be rigidly grouped. Therefore, this rather fix taxonomy of drama in Nigeria is challenged by mutation and alliance in aesthetic and ideological commitments of playwrights.

This study therefore, puts forward the argument that, with the changing socio-political environment, the ever dynamic theoretical trends and their attendant effects on dramaturgy, it isimpossible to sustain the debate on generational categories based on aesthetic and ideological peculiarities. The study thus,attempts an analysis of how Nigeria's politics and social life, coupled with the ever dynamic theoretical standards in dramaturgy have constantly reshaped the aesthetic and ideological focus of the playwright. Consequently, despite the assumptions that seek to divide dramatists and their works, a close study reveals a point of interface of ideology and aesthetics in their dramaturgy.

1.4 Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to critically analyse selected plays of Wole Soyinka, Femi Osofisan and Irene Salami-Agunloye, towards accounting for their mutation and alliance.

The specific objectives are:

i. To examine the elemental features showing mutation and alliance in the dramaturgy of the playwrights using the selected plays,

ii. To explore the intertextual resonance in the selected texts irrespective of their perceived differences,

iii. To identify the point of ideological convergence and divergence of the playwrights in the discourse,

iv. To explain the connecting social vision(s) of the playwrights in the selected plays.

1.5 Research Questions

The questions that guide the research's inquiry are:

1. What are elemental features of mutation and alliance in the selected plays?
2. How is the intertextual rendering of the selected plays providing a common ground for mutation and alliance?
3. What ideological postulations show the playwrights' concern in the selected plays?
4. What socio-poloticalissues helped to shape the playwright's creative vision?

1.6 Justification for the Study

Theatre critics in Nigeria have consciously or unconsciously created a divide and criteria for analysing drama in Nigeria through generational categories. This has equally created limitations in the understanding of works of playwrights as fixed categories. This study therefore, demonstrates that the art ofplaywriting is as dynamic as the society it portrays. Playwrights in like manner have demonstrated mutationand alliance so much to have bestridden rigid categorisation by critics. With this tendency, hardly is there a study that attempts to harmonise the ideo-aesthetic posture of both the old and new playwrights in the twenty-first century in a single discourse.

Thus, this study justifies itself as it unravels ways by which the dramaturgies of the selected playwrights have yielded to the dynamism of the acts of society. It also shows how this has brought about a reworking of the playwrights' creativity, reflecting dramaturgic alliance. This research fills the gap, which has been created by the limitations in the analytical frameworks

created by critics of the selected playwrights. The research therefore, departs from the other studies in a manner that it unifies the ideology of post-millennium playwriting in a single discourse relinquishing all hitherto generational groupings. The study further provides a paradigm and serves as stimulation, also a reference material into further studies in trends in contemporary drama in Nigeria.

1.7 Scope of the Study

The research focuses on six plays selected from three playwrightsadjudged first, second and third generations. They are so selected to create a balance. Two plays therefore, are considered from each playwright as primary sources namely; *King Baabu* (2002), *Alápatà Àpáta,* (2011) by Wole Soyinka, *Women of Owu* (2006), *Tegonni:* (*An African Antigone*) (2007) by Femi Osofisan, *More than Dancing* (2003), and *Idia, the Warrior Queenof Benin* (2008) by Irene Salami-Agunloye. All the plays are published between the years 2002 to 2011. The rationale for the selection of these texts stems from the fact that they reflect the changing trends of literary drama in Nigeria, during the period under study. Therefore, their commentaries as well as aesthetic and ideological relevance to the research problem are worthy references. The analyses of these plays reveal the aesthetic and ideological mutation and overlaps of commitment that is prevalent in the works of playwrights in the period under study.

The scope of the work therefore, is limited to the six play texts as primary sources. However, references to other play texts as primary sources also, based on the subject being considered, are of great merit to the study. The secondary sources provide a platform for juxtapositions that reveal the dialectics of the study's claim accordingly. These include critical works on the selected plays and other relevant materials that give additional information to the study subject. The close analyses of these selected texts lead to the realization of the objectives of

the study by situating the discourse in contemporary time and making projections for further study.

1.8 Methodology

This study is a library research. The research design therefore, is qualitative research method. Creswell (2014:21) defines qualitative research as a constructivist, naturalistic and interpretative perspective to research. It is an inductive process of shaping variables that are context bound. Qualitative research thus, is an exploratory research, which relies more on the content and context of study. Within the domain of qualitative research are among others, critical theory, discourse analysis, cultural studies and semiotics. Since the present research is a study in literature, it is subsumed within the foregoing spheres of analyses. This is a research in the field of dramatic literature or literary discourse, therefore, it is largely interpretative, and thus depends on conceivable data rather than figures as it is the case in quantitative research.

The sources of data are both from primary and secondary sources. The primary sources are first, the selected plays namely; *King Baabu* (2002) *Alápatà Àpáta*(2011) *Tegonni* (*An African Antigone*) (2007) *Women of Owu* (2006) *More than Dancing* (2003) and *Idia, the Warrior Queen of Benin* (2008), and other relevant play texts that are referential, and which juxtapositions are equally relevant to the subject of discourse. The secondary sources are critical works on the play texts being considered and other relevant materials that reinforce the discourse in this study. The research utilizes other library materials such as books (electronic inclusive), journals, unpublished Theses and Dissertations and the internet source to underpin the building up and the submission of this thesis.

The study deploys the content analysis approach which Creswell (2014:44) notesis a positivists' attempt to identify subjective meanings in the cultural domain. The study dwells

on the manifestation of the external and internal qualities of the texts as communicating meanings relevant to the subject of discourse. Content analysis is also seen as a "specific approach to themes, patterns and interpretations" (Edgar and Sedwick 1999:6). An Analysis of the text therefore, to elicit both its social and aesthetics meanings is the task in this research.Contentanalysis thus, serves as our frame of data analysis in dealing with the paradigms selected for the research study.

The research instrument for data collection is documentary observation, since basically this study is literary; its process entails collecting data from literary sources and harmonizing the information gathered into a single thesis. The research as a result, is analytical in nature. It brings to the fore; critical issues from both the primary and secondary sources,whichare considered to constitute and demonstrate mutation and alliance in the dramaturgy of the selected playwrights.

The Method of data analysis is textual, using *Ecriture*(text and writing)as a tool of analysis. Creswell (2014:22) explains that "qualitative approach to data collection and analysis, interpretation and report writing differ from the traditional quantitative approach. Purposeful sampling, collection of open-ended data, analysis of text or pictures, personal interpretation of findings all form qualitative method". The study therefore, uses a liberal literary procedure; *Ecriture* (text and writing), where the literary product is "depersonalized" into an "impersonal text" (Abrams, 2005:325). In this context, the opinion of the playwright is regarded as not more than a structure or a frame of analysis from where many interpretations intersect and provide numerous "sub-texts" (Kristeva, 1986:87) that is, deriving meaning in the text itself and in the "historical and social" texts/contexts.This is where; New Historicism and Culural Materialism also find justification as theoretical frameworksfor this study. The details ofthe application of these theories in this study are elaborated in Chapter Three, which deals with the theoretical framework of the study.

Stanley Fish's (1983)postulation on active readership further justifies *ecriture* as he privileged the reader over the author. Elaborating on Roland Barthes "Death of an Author" (1977), Fish avers that "the true writer is the reader" and that reading is not just discovering what text means but what it does to the reader (Cited in Eagleton, 1983:85). Barthes (1977:148) had argued that:

> A text is made of multiple writing, drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody, contestation, but there is one place where this multiplicity is focused, and that place is the reader, not, as hitherto said, the author. The reader is the space on which all the quotations that make up a writing are inscribed without any of them being lost; a text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination. Yet this destination cannot any longer be personal: the reader is not without history, biography, psychology; he is simply that someone who holds together in a single field all the traces by which the written text is constituted...the birth of the reader must be the cost of the death of the author.

This means that writing by its very nature is not a prerogative of the author or its meaning. A text is itself a re-writing of pre-existing texts. Therefore, in Barthes' "myth of filiation"; the idea that meaning comes from and is the property of the individual authorial consciousness is rebuffed. Meaning comes not from the author but from language viewed as a site for constant debate and re-interpretation (Allen, 2001:74). In the context of this research therefore, the data collected and analysed and the conclusion reached are from the perspective of the researcher and as corroborated by other bodies of knowledge not necessarily that of theplaywright.**1.9 Summary**

This study proposes that mutation and alliance connote changes, cross-connections in style and interrelatedness of ideology in the dramaturgy of the literary dramatist in Nigeria. The study is informed by the seeming fixed analytical framework that consigns drama in Nigeria to a one dimensional interpretative discourse. This method of apprehending plays of Nigerian playwrights has created limitation in their interpretation. Thus, in the present study, an attempt is made to analyse the selected plays as paradigms showing the interrelatedness in style and artistic commitment, not only of the selected playwrights but also collectively, the

contemporary dramatists in Nigeria. The research uses textual analysis as a procedure anchored on theories and existing discourses, which give credence to the arguement of the present study. Perspectives and highlights of these debates supporting the present study are discussed in the subsequent chapters.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.0 Introduction

Mutation and alliance in the context of this study are related to trends and changing patterns in the literary drama in Nigeria. There is quite a lot that has been written on trends and drama in Nigeria such as Etherton (1979, 1982), Ogunbiyi (1981), Nkosi (1981), Dunton (1991), Adelugba (1994), Gbilekaa (1997), Obafemi (2001), Inegbe (2006), Akoh (2006, 2009), Roy-Omoni, (2020) among others. This review is an attempt at critical statements on drama in Nigeria against contexts and styles that keep changing. The organic nature of the dramatic art allows it to change with the wave of historical change. The attempt in this review is to highlight existing studies that relate to subject of study and to identify the point of entry of the present research.

The review therefore, is divided into four sections. The first is playwrights and society: shifting paradigms; the second is intertextuality, artistic pre-occupation and the literary drama in Nigeria;the third is ideological interface and the literary drama in Nigeria; and the fourth is literary drama in Nigeria and social vision.

2.1 Playwrights and Society: Shifting Paradigms

Play wroughing in the modern world is a function of changing phasesof history. This history ranges from the pristine social context that each society is formed to background settings that are as a result of contact with the outside world. It is also as a result of production of new materials, which enlightenment and technology have brought to the society. The corpus of the creative efforts of the playwrights in Nigeria likewise is a reflection of this changing process of the modern society. This summation is the background which this review sets out to outline as patterns of paradigm shift in playwriting in Nigeria.

There are three lines of thought that are adopted here to explain the development of literary drama in Africa which can be applied to Nigeria. Fanon (1963:179) makes reference to a three-phase development of the creative writer in Africa and arues that the first phase was one of surrenderto the aesthetics of the colonialists by adaptations, translations and reproduction of popular European plays, music and dance. Fanon (1963:179) writes further that:

> In the first phase, the native intellectual gives proof that he has assimilated the culture of the occupying power. His writing corresponds point by point with those of his opposite numbers in the mother country, his inspiration is European and we can easily link up these works with definite trends in the literature of the mother country.

The second phase to Fanon was one of reawakening,which manifested in theatrical adaptation of Africa's history, legend, myths and folk tales in form of modern literature. This phase, Fanon explains, is more like the first as African creative writerstry to free themselves from the gamut of false assumption of western historiography. African creative writers are content to recall the history of their people through written history. In this renewed effort, "past happenings of the bygone days of his childhood will be brought up out of the depths of his memory; old legends will be reinterpreted in the light of a borrowed aestheticism and of conception of the world which was discovered under the skies" (Fanon, 1965:179).

The third phase produces what Fanon dubs "literature of just- before-the-battle"(1965:179). These writings, he argues, are a signal to the disenchantment that the African intellectual has about the modern bourgeois society. They are themselves not reaction *per se*. He therefore, sees them as not forming a serious phase for reckoning. His reasons are that although these writings are critical of the ills of society, they merely tossed them up for ridicule with no much proposition for action. He explains thus: "Sometimes the literature of the just-before-the-battle is dominated by humour and allegory; but often too, it is symptomatic of a period of distress and difficulty, where death is experienced, and disgust too. We spew ourselves up; but already underneath laughter can be heard" (Fanon, 1963:179). This presupposes the fact that these phases of literary activity are by all intent in the manner of critical realism, which

satirises the social structure as a prelude; to the final battle. These literatures are therefore, in the intermediary section, in the sequence to what Fanon calls “the final battle”. They are a link to the third and final phase.

The third phase is the move by the writer to searching and experimenting with residual resources for the reinterpretation and reorganisation of the hegemony of western influences on Africa’s way of life. This is the final phase which Fanon refers to as the “fighting literature”, “revolutionary literature” or “national literature” (1963:179). He remarks that:

> Finally, in the third phase, which is called the fighting phase, the native, after having tried to lose himself in the people and with the people, will on the contrary shake the people. Instead of according the people’s lethargy an honoured place, in his esteem, he turns himself into an awakener of the people; hence comes a fighting literature, a revolutionary literature, and a national literature.

Revolutionary drama or radical drama explains the context of Fanon’s anticipation and reference point. A revolutionary literature is that which struggles to restore the dignity of the oppressed people while ascribing the role of a revolutionary leader to the writer and in this context, the playwright. This is the summation of Fanon’s proposition in the third and final phase.

This reductionists’ posture of referring to a “final phase” is raising the problem that Marxist dialectics has posed initially, that all history must end in the triumph of communism as the ultimate utopia. There will always be the need therefore,to interrogate the limitation and prospects that Fanon’s proposition has created in this postulation. This is to allow an elaborate understanding of the development of literature especially drama in Africa. We have seen the fact that socialist systems have risen and fallen and there is no end in sight for capitalism. This also has created seemingly, a different phase of literary engagement that is questioning the claim for the ultimate triumph of socialism or the attainment of communism in the manner ofMarx’s dialectical materialism.

Etherton (1979:57), sharing a similar though as Fanon's, notes that the situation of modern play writing in Africa in any case is related to the challenge associated with the move toward an "internationalized theatre in Africa". This, he identifies as the reason for the rapid transformation of the indigenous arts into literature. Etherton writes further that:

> We cannot get away from the curious paradox that uniquely African performance skill can no longer serve as the form for mirroring contemporary society. Instead they are transformed into borrowed literary forms, despite the intention of the African governments to the contrary and their endless promulgation designed to revive the traditional cultures (1979:58).

Thus, the development of indigenous theatres into literature must be seen in the light of this deliberate effort of what Etherton(1979:58) describes as "the clear goal of raising the standard of drama (indigenous), that is of making it capable of conveying insights and perceptions which we associate with great literature".

Etherton in the same vein accounts for the trend of African drama to include transpositions of myths and legends, the adaptation of play-texts from another culture and another literary tradition into the African Milieu, and that African history in all its variousness is made drama. Thus Etherton (1979:65) notes that:

> The process of making drama literary, and particularly the writing of literary play-texts which seemingly show life as it actually is lived has also encouraged the writing of literary play-texts which bring the past to life. The starting point for the historical play is the same as for contemporary naturalistic drama: the movement away from the poetic drama of myth, legend and creation. It is shift from the re-creation of oral tradition in dramatic terms to the re-creation of a past contained in written histories.

This argument derives from the various indigenous performances that were largely oral, and associated with many ethnic categories of African communities gaining expression in the literary drama. This was the initial challenge facing the individual playwright; "how to use the traditional performance mode organically both as form and content, in developing new drama, rather than as mere exoticism and superficial decoration" (Etherton, 1979:58) and secondly to render it also as yielding to diverse social functions.

Lewis Nkosi (1981:176), in the same vein, notes of the development of African drama and all its aesthetic and ideological measuring, that:

> The evolution of artistic forms does not always resemble the unbroken line of parentage between father and son *(western influence and indigenous nurturing)*; it is not simply a question of previous forms predetermining new aesthetics forms in a kind of a seamless continuity. A decisive break may occur which cannot entirely be accounted for by what has gone before (Emphasis mine).

His remarks are a further reference,that new development in the socio-political landscape has influenced the modern playwright.Thisposition can also be extended toincorporate the spread of new materials, and technologies, whichall have profound bearing on changes in styles and artistic techniques of all literary artists. Nkosi therefore, argues that the prevailing situation has always tasked the writer to review the past situation and re-modify his/her argument. Thus in line with his views, this study submits that in dealing with the nature of growth of African drama, we ought to examine in particular a whole ensemble of social and economic conditions in which one type of drama especially the western oriented plays, comes into production, how it is consumed, interpreted and assimilated into African cultural system. The changing socio-political climate therefore, must be seen as inevitably changing the dramatic landscape, as Nkosi (1981:176)notes that:

> We are forced to conclude, therefore, that in Africa we are now faced not with a single, continues line of development, linking modern drama to traditional dramatic forms: but rather we are confronted by two phenomena which may touch but more often than not merely exist side by side.

In his view, we must then deal with the modern theatre as an ideo-aesthetic entity, inspired by certain necessities, both socio-economic and ideological, which simultaneously are making the crafting of certain type of African drama possible in the new social context.

The three arguments by Fanon, Etherton and Nkosi all allude to the various indigenous performances associated with many ethnic categories of African communities gaining expression in the literary drama. Above all, they suggest that drama is affected by the wave of

historical change in terms of socio-political, economic and technological impacts on the creative process.

In Nigeria, the indigenous performance idioms are moderated and given new and contemporary insights for a modern art theatre by both the old and the new generations of playwrights such that: “traditional performances with highly conservative or reactionary function are often made to appear radical in politics of the new nation-state” (Etherton, 1982:25). Herein lies the trend; first the development of indigenous performances as literature using the creation myths of indigenous African communities; second, the transposition of enduring literatures from other cultures and literary traditions into a specific African milieu and third, history is made drama in form of the literary drama to address the past and immediate frustrations of the society and as a safeguard for the future.

In the first and second categories, Etherton (1979:61) notes that along with the people’s myths, culture, morality, allegories and folk stories, the effort of the playwright is “to render arcane and dying rituals in a renovated popular story form acted out on stage”. Though this does not hold true of all rituals used in modern drama as some remained active in practice and especially in the psyche of their communities, hence the efficacy of its use by the modern playwright. This style of production has produced plays as Wole Soyinka’s *A Dance of the Forests* (1960), *The Strong Breed, The Swamp Dwellers* (1963),and *Dead and the King’s Horseman* (1975). His only adaptations before year 2000 are *The Bacchae of Euripides:A Communion Rite*(1973),Euripides’ *The Bacchae*and *Opera Wonyosi* (1981), John Gay’s and Bertolt Brecht’s *The Begger’s Opera* and *Three Penny Opera* respectively.

Awodiya (1995:56) also notes about Osofisan that “as a writer and critic with an articulate commitment to materialist, socialist and class perspectives, Osofisan combines a radical ideology with recognition of the importance of cultural tradition”. Femi Osofisan in some of

his playstherefore, weaves local material into his exuberant radical theatre while trying to make strong political statements with some of his plays. About Femi Osofisan's theatre particularly, Ogunbiyi (1981:36-7) asserts that:

> Eclectic as he is original, Osofisan has sought to reshape traditional Yoruba mythology and ritual in the light of contemporary realities to squeeze out of the old myth, fresher meanings, in the believe that man, in the last analysis, makes his own myth. Not content to merely expose the ills of the society, he dared to provide us with glimpses of his vision of a new society.

The emphasis in the above assertion can be referenced to in Osofisan's plays such as *Morountodun* (1982),in which he recreates the myth of Mormi to inspire social uprising among peasant farmers,*Who is Afraid of Solarin* (1978), an adaptation of Nicolai Gogol's play *The Government Inspector* that satirizes the ills of Local Government administration in Nigeria. *Another Raft* (1988) is a response to J. P Clark'sThe Raft;*No More the wasted Breed* (1982),is also a dialogue with Soyinka's *The Strong Breed*bordering on the significance of sacrificial death. Others are *Esu and the Vagabond Minstrels*(1988),a play that carries the moral lesson of charity among the less privileged; *Oriki of a Grasshopper* (1986), *Yungba Yungba and the Dance Contests* (1994), a commentary on Nigeria's quest for democracy; *Women of Owu* (2007), an adaptation of Euripides'*Trojan Women* thatportrays of the ills of sectarianism and war;and *Tegonni: An African Antigone* (2008), an adaptation of Sophocle's *Antigone,* which pushes forward for the right of oppressed groups in all societies.

Akinyemi and Falola (2009:11) have noted that in other texts in like manner, "it can be asserted that reincarnation of myths or their ritual coordinates in Osofisan's dramaturgy is like adaptation of texts in its entire ramification. They can serve the need of arts or literature, invaluably in terms of their regenerative potentials among other re-creative endeavours".

The above analogy holds true of the historical dramaturgy of Irene Salami-Agunloye. Doki (2006:85) posits that in most of her plays, "history is employed as a strong instrument of memory...history is used not only as a source of inspiration but also as a reminder". The

implication of this is that Salami-Agunloye uses women archetype in history so as to ignite a renewed spirit of doggedness, self realisation and assertion in the heart of the contemporary Nigerian woman. This is what we see in her plays *Emotan* (2001), where the strong character of Emotan, a never give up widow turrns into a woman activist. *The Queen Sisters* (2002) uses the story in history of two sisters whose character are in contrast, yet, convey a strong message of choice between docility and outspokenness.*More than Dancing* (2003) represents the modern woman in modern politics inspired by historical foremothersand trailblazers, and lastly, *Idia, the Warrior Queen of Benin* (2008)is a play about the Benin Queen mother in history who challenged the obnoxious tradition of killing queen mothers.

Soyinka's early plays no doubt have tried to assert the dignity and authenticity of African culture and tradition. With the struggle and attainment of political independence, his attention shifted to the ideologies associated with issues of self rule, the survival of the nation state and its economic fortunes. Thus, as Azeez(pg. 16 prgh. 1),notes, "independence came the way of Nigeria in 1960 with a crop of writers and a shift by the old towards a theatre of political and cultural relevance". The dramatic focus in this era also involves the rendering of the art to closely "reflect society as it is and not as it should be" (Etherton, 1979:63). This naturalistic posture according to Etherton has enabled the playwright to convey in his play, a critique of his society. The playwright therefore, has to now relinquish the outmoded conventions, which refer to another age to his own time, which he can face directly and transform. The idea of "a slice of life" is what dominated the plays of latter part of the independent years in the 1960s and the 1970s. This is seen in Soyinka's plays such as *Opera Wonyosi* (1981), *Madmen and Specialists* (1971), *Kongi's Harvest* (1965), *A Play of Giants* (1984)and most of his short revues inthe collection, *Before the Blowout*. Osofisan also has demonstrated a penchant for naturalism while maintaining his materialists' stance in plays such as *Chattering and the Song* (1977), *Restless Run of the Locus* (1975), *Birthdays are not for Dying* (1990), *Once upon*

Four Robbers (1991), *Aringindin and the Night Watchmen* (1992) among others. Also, Salami-Agunloye's *More than Dancing* (2003) and *Sweet Revenge* (2004) fall under this category.

Naturalism, according to Etherton (1979:65), is a means that playwrights have resorted to, to gain a wider audience for their theatre, in other words, to gain social relevance. They achieved this "by showing things as they actually are- apparently- people can see their lives in the drama as though in a mirror". It is not surprising therefore, that this mode of dramatic representation became a popular form of engagement for the theatre practitioner throughout the generations, assuming also a blend of realism. This is a common style with the second generation dramatists whose disillusionment with the self governing process allegedly brought about their radical departure from the myth making of the first generation. Yet, these realities of misrule and events of the civil war in Nigeria and others in the years ahead have caused a reworking of the theatre in the hands of the first generation playwrights as well. Akoh (2009:266) posits accordingly,that:

> Consequently, in the present state of affairs, playwrights of the older generations in order to remain artistically relevant to their environment, have either modified their artistic vision or totally abandoned it for a new one that is more germane to the times. While Soyinka has abandoned the lofty shrine of Ogun for the public proletarian space in his last two outings (*The Beatification of Area Boy* and *King Baabu*) Femi Osofisan has virtually defied being caged within the second generation (sic) aesthetic ideology of popular justice for which he was arguably the most prolific. Radical theatre therefore, has in his hands been remoulded or repackaged to meet the needs of the millennium.

Jeyifo (2006:91) in the same light, posits that the situation of military dictatorship that has entrapped Soyinka in the 1990s and which led to his exile has affected his belief and conviction in the strength of the masses and the working class in plays of this period and into the new millennium, 2000s. He notes that "the plays of this period are not only the most intensely political of Soyinka's plays; they are also notable in being unambiguously partisan on the side of the disenfranchised masses". This can be seen in three of Soyinka's plays, *A*

Scourge of Hyacinth (1992), *From Zia with Love* (1992),*The Beatification of Area Boy* (2002) and *King Baabu* (2002). In all these plays, Jeyifo believes that Soyinka appears to show a growing faith in the ability of the urban poor and the deprived of the society to liberate themselves from their degraded and intolerable conditions of life.

The generational debate on the corpus of literary drama in Nigeria has been seen also in terms of the dichotomy between the generations along those with the penchant for critical realism and others who are overtly committed to social realism. In the first category, one finds playwrights who only write to make critical comments on the ills of the society using the power of satire without any commitment to proffering means of how it can be changed. This is what is seen in Soyinka's plays such as *The Lion and the Jewel*(1964), *The Trial of Brother Jero* and *Jero's Metamorphosis* (1967), *A Play of Giants* (1984) among others. These plays ridicule the society and expose the weakness of its various institutions. Osofisan's *Restless Run of the Locust* (1975), *Midnight Hotel* (1985)and *The Album of the Midnight Blackout* (1994)fall under this category. The social realists,on the other hand,differ markedly from the critical realists in the sense that as much as they are critical of the social ills of the society, they try to solicit for a radical move for changing the society and mostly by a class based struggle that will ensure the overthrow of the oppressor class in the society. Osofisan's plays *Chattering and the Song* (1977), *Morountodun* (1982), *Once Upon Four Robbers* (1991) *Twingle Twangle the Winning Tale* (1995), *Aringindin and the Night Watchmen* (1992)among others are examples. Agunloye-Salami's historical plays *Emotan* (2001), *The Queen Sisters* (2002),and realistic plays like *More than Dancing* (2003)and *Sweet Revenge* (2004), though tailored along the feminist ideology, have the tendencies for class struggle (Okolocha 2014:59).

Along the foregoing line of thought, Inegbe (2006, parg.4) asserts that: "...since Soyinka, drama and theatre in Nigeria have witnessed two major literary landmarks; the Post-Soyinka

Nigerian literary tradition and the Post-Osofisan literary engagement each of these is unique in its explication of societal trend". A contradiction in these remarks, however, is soon to be found in this study shortly after, when he states further that "a new wave of dramatic and theatrical activities is brewing in the country. While the old has not given way and does not intend to do so, the new is fighting and it is succeeding in its fight for recognition" (2006:parg.12). This is consistent with Asigbo and Okeke (n.d: pg. 3) who observe that:

> Recent trend of a generation of playwrights is emerging on the Nigerian literary scene. This breed referred to as "New Voices" by Ameh Akoh appears to defy classification along the hard core ideological lines of socialism or capitalism. The recent or new breed of Nigerian playwrights appears to be towing the line of Norwegian playwright Henrick Ibsen who addressed pure socio-cultural issues of his generation.

Akoh (2009:269) likewise notes that:

> With the redefinition of their erstwhile artistic spirit especially of a conventional playwright like Soyinka, and toning down of orthodox Marxism in the hands of its most prolific spokesman in Nigeria, Osofisan, a meeting point is charted between critical realism and socialist realism in Nigerian theatre. This also may be responsible for why it is a bit difficult to put a name tag on the new playwrights who are interested in themes rather than the question of ideology.

The difficulty in finding a "name tag" as suggested in the above passage is the dilemma perhaps not only with the new writers, but with what is seen as a conflict of contemporaneous existence of the generations of "the old" and "the new" coupled with the ideo-aesthetic convergence that is most noticeable generally in the writings of the post-millennium 2000. With the continuous existence of the older generation of playwrights with the emergent, there appears to be no remarkable distinguishing features. Rather as Inegbe (2006, parg.15) remarks; "it is important to stress that as prodigious as this generation of playwrights are, there has not been any significantly marked difference in terms of subject matter and plot development from that of their predecessors". As a matter of fact, the new generation of playwrights has not "departed from the ways of their theatre forebears, exploring traditional idioms and nuances in their creativity to reach out to their targeted audience".All these positions are valid as this study would show subsequently.

Obafemi's (2001:172) opinion about the new generation playwrights is that "in spite of these writers' claim for simplicity, and their contempt for their predecessors' obscure styles, they lapse into moments of ellipsis and the obscure use of ritual and theatre materials in proportion quite similar to, say Soyinka's". This situation resonates in Tochukwu Okeke's (2009:100) description of what he calls the "paradigm shift in Nigerian drama". He argues that both theory and criticism of literary drama in Nigeria have demonstrated that the corpus or works of Nigerian dramatists have shown these shifts from historical accounts through ideological agitation to social commentaries. In the present however, "we have a mixture of all due mostly to societal influences".

All the analyses by the aforementioned critics however, have left out the intertextuality and ideo-aesthetic blend in the plays of these selected playwrights. Their analyses have only made a superficial reference to the tendencies for shifts which can be interpreted as mutation. Their analyses drew mostly from studying an individual playwright and not a composite study. This presupposes the fact that the cross-connection is not established to show the extent of alliance. Thus, what each of these studies offers therefore, are a projection or a reflection and possible similarities in the dramaturgy of the old and new playwrights. This review therefore, considers them as pastiches lacking in-depth analytical structure that show the sequence of mutation and layers of alliance as this present study proposes. This calls for a deeper search for these convergences and further divergences using Soyinka's *King Baabu* (2002), *Alápatà Àpáta*, (2011), Osofisan's *Tegoni* (2008) and *Women of Owu* (2006),and Salami-Agunloye's *More than Dancing* (2003) and *Idia, the Warrior Queen of Benin* (2008).

2.2 Intertextuality and Artistic Pre-occupation in Literary Drama in Nigeria

> Works of literature, after all, are built from systems, codes and traditions established by previous works of literature. The systems, codes and traditions of other art forms and of culture in general are also crucial to the meaning of a work of literature. Texts whether they be literary or non literary are viewed by modern theorists as lacking in

> any kind of independent meaning. They are what theorists call intertextuality (Allen, 2000:1).

The conception of intertextuality above by Graham Allen (2000) is formed against the background of poststructuralists' notion of non-stable meaning. Intertextuality in the context of this study therefore, expresses the power of relationality or influences, interconnectedness and interdependence in the modern cultural artefact. This presupposes the fact that all cultural artefacts, in this context literary drama, have their source texts from other texts both literary and non-literary. This is a foregrounding for a possible convergence of meaning in the creative works in modern time.

Intertextuality has been identified as one of the means that the arts have engendered a cross connection of creativity and meaning. Etherton (1979:61) notes that one of the enduring trends of dramatic literature in Africa generally and Nigeria in particular "is a transposition of enduring –and therefore, successful-play-text from another culture, another literary tradition, into the specifics of the African milieu". In Nigeria, virtually all the major playwrights have experimented with adaptation as a form of advancing meaning in their drama. This extends from translations, modification of earlier traditional performance modes such as myths, rituals, folk narratives, festivals, legends and history (both ancient and modern), and of classical plays and masterpieces from other cultures, giving them relevance in a new social matrix. This coexistence of traditions, cultural practices and religious motifs has served to fertilize the development of the literary arts, drama in particular.

The reference to adaptations only as means of intertextual engagement has limited the use of the term in many analyses besides raising the question of originality. Another term associated with this is "transposition" which broadens the use of the concept to include the struggle to employ pre-existing signifying systems for the purpose of articulating meaning. Kristeva (1984:60) expatiates the term thus:

> We shall call transposition the signifying process' ability to pass from one sign-system to another, to exchange and permutate them: and represent the specific articulation of the semiotic and thetic for a sign system. Transposition plays an essential role here in as much as it implies the abandonment of a former sign system, the passage to a second via instinctual intermediary common to the two systems and the articulation of new system with new representability.

There appears to be an apparent difficulty in articulating Kristeva's conceptualization of transposition as implying "the abandonment of a former sign system, the passage to the second", and later for her to mean also that transposition means "the articulation of a new system with new representability".

For the purpose of our context of reference, transposition might not imply any abandonment necessarily, but an incorporation of two worldviews in an attempt to give a single signifying system what would create meaning across varying cultures. What this means is that the transposed leads to exchange and permutation of aesthetic signs in a given context of representation within a culture or across cultures. For instance, most classical Greek tragedies of Aeschylus, Euripides and Sophocles are reputed as transpositions of mythical and epic narratives of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. Modern drama in Nigeria, in the same vein, has benefited from indigenous oral performance and the people's lore and perhaps also extant literary texts. Ogede (2011:6) re-echoing Soyinka from his *Myth literature and the African World* (1976) argues that:

> Imitation of texts or models-a major form of creative interchange-is the central means by which the works of African writers are nurtured and brought into being. African writers seldom work in utter isolation: nor do they have only Western models. Principally because an indigenous canon of literary works with a variety of styles and visions is vigorously being thrust into prominence in the continent, aspiring African authors have many local sources from which to draw.

Ogede (2011:xi) had earlier noted that:

> Contemporary African authors make common cause despite the radical novelty of experimentation that each one of them puts on display; even a casual reading of their works reveal the thematic and stylistic lines that join them. They read one another's works and take possession of each other's materials, often breaking through barriers of ethnic chauvinism.

Allen (2001:12) confirms this position about the literary artists when he avers that "authors of literary works do not just select words from a language system, they select plots, generic features, aspects of characters' images, ways of narrating, even phrases and sentences from previous literary texts and from literary traditions". This means beyond the semiotic semblance in literary works, the totality of structure of content and form also needs to be interrogated to understand the intertextual union of texts. The literary work therefore, in its nature of intertextuality according to Allen (2000:12), is:

> No longer the product of an author's original thoughts, and no longer perceived as referential in function, the literary work is viewed not as the container of meaning but as a space in which a potentially vast number of relation coalesce. A site of words and sentences shadowed by multiple potentialities of meanings, the literary work can now only be understood in a comparative way, the reader moving outward from the work's apparent structure into the relations it posses with other works and other linguistic structures.

This is similar to T.S Eliot (1888-1965) who had earlier justified this relationship as he contends that a text belongs to a larger pool of other traditions from where it draws meaning and to which it should be related to in critical inquiry. Barry (1995:28) notes ofEliot's notion of "Tradition and the Individual Talent" that "the best part of a poet's work" he says, "is not those which are most original, but those in which the voice of his predecessors can be most clearly heard speaking through him". Julia Kristeva (1980:35) also agrees no less that:

> Authors do not create their texts from their own original minds, but rather compile them from pre-existent texts, so that a text is a permutation of texts, an intertextuality in the space of a given text, in which several utterances, taken from other texts intersects and neutralise one another.

Intertextuality allows for the redeployment of works of art into a different culture or sign system. Harold Bloom (1975) in his seminal work on "Influence" has lauded the significance of borrowing on the continuity of the creative art and the survival of the artist. Bloom (1975:83) asserts that "the strong poet survives because he lives the continuity of an 'undoing' and an 'isolating' repetition, but he would cease to be a poet unless he kept living the continuity of 'recollecting forwards of breaking forth into a freshening that yet repeats his

precursor's achievement". Bloom's contention is that borrowing or deriving influence from older writers or creative writers generally does not in any way stand in the way of creativity. He rather thinks that there is a justification in which a particular work would want to create an older one. His argument simply, is that borrowing is a way that old writers and their points of view are recreated across generation and hence the reverberation of discourses throughout the ages.

In similar thoughts, Osofisan (2001:230) in an interview with Biodun Jeyifo pointed out this culture of borrowing, which Bloom articulates above. He states that:

> I am, I must confess, an incorrigible plagiarist from other narrators. Stories, as I see them, carry no passports; endlessly they travel across frontiers of space and of time. All we as story tellers can do is merely refurbish them, and renew them with our voices. I mean, what new stories can we tell nowadays, in this old age of humanity, what stories that have never been imagined before us? What fresh tales can we invent, however vast our talents, that no one else somewhere has narrated before our coming?

He therefore, concludes in these remarks, in relation to the above that:

> So I do not delude myself, and faithfully I acknowledge my influences. You see, when I come across a great work of theatre, I am seized at once with the passion to translate it, to reinterpret it, for our stage and for our time.

The literary work is thus, enshrouded in and is consistently a subject for intertextual inquiry. Elsewhere, this study cited adaptation as a dominant mode of intertextual engagement in the literary process. Julie Sanders (2005:19) sees adaptation as "reinterpretation of established texts in new generic contexts or perhaps, with relocation of an 'original' or source text's cultural and/or temporal setting, which may or may not involve a generic shift". In this case, a reinterpretation of a source text is sought for in a new cultural context and in the present context, as observed by Adeoti (2010:10):

> Adaptation clearly requires a revisioning of the source text and charging it with a new hermeneutic responsibility which may be similar to, or different in emphasis from the original text. Whichever way, the old text never remains the same in the new version. Clearly, a process of selectivity is involved, in which the new author remoulds the precursor text into new patterns, thereby multiplying the possibility of interpretation for the old and new texts...the adapted text as a multi-focal production needs to be approached with inter-textual sensitivity.

Adeoti (2010:10) in line with this intertextual harmony further notes that:

> A study of instances of adaptation in Nigerian theatre shows that continuous transformation and blending are noticeable in the domestication of motif that is endorsed by dramatists. The adapter tries to plant the source text firmly within his culture or within a hypothetical culture against which his Nigerian realities can be interrogated.

This is what it seems with contemporary literary drama in Nigeria. It has witnessed the transposition of creation myth into stage performance, for example Obotunde Ejimere's *The Imprisonment of Obatala* among others. There is also abundance of textual references to adaptations of classical Greek, English, French and German dramatic literatures in the corpus of literary drama in Nigeria. There are as well, local adaptations to make reference to, such as Duro Ladipo's *Oba Koso* as having a likely source as Wole Soyinka's *Dead and the King's Horseman.Ovonramwen Nogbaisi* by Ola Rotimi also resonates in Ahmed Yerima's *Oba Ovonramwen.* Others, present as dialogic interplay of creativity between playwrights, as seen in Wole Soyinka's *The Strong Breed* and Osofisan's *No More the Wasted Breed*, or between J. P Clarks *The Raft* and Osofisan's *Another Raft*.

Earlier, this study makes reference to adaptations of Wole Soyinka and Femi Osofisan and also incorporating the historical plays of Salami-Agunloye as forms of intertextual engagements. Adeoti's (2010) study on Soyinka, Osofisan and Yerima is a further espousal on the intertextual relevance of *King Baabu* (2002),*Tegonni*...(2008), and *Women of Owu* (2007). Wole Soyinka's *Alápatà Àpáta*(2011) apparently has its tributaries from Moses Olaiya-Adujumo's folk theatre, according to the playwright (*Alápatà Àpáta*, pp. x-xi). Therefore, it forms part of reference to intertextuality.

Yet, the interest in the present study is owing to the analyses in Adeoti (2010) which are on the thematic re-rendering of the various versions of the source texts, to show the limitation of tyrants and tyranny and also the evil of war. The study apparently leaves out the various levels of transposition of symbols and traditional or indigenous codes and their ideological

significance in this contemporary rendition of the source texts. This limitation in the intertextual reference demands an in-depth analysis that will reveal the correlation of indigenous and modern aesthetics in advancing the ideological stance of the selected playwrights.

2.3 Ideological Interface and the Literary Drama in Nigeria

There is no gainsaying that the term ideology has become loaded with meaning giving its application in the spheres of the social sciences and the liberal arts. But for the benefit of this espousal, let us try to explain ideology, taking a starting point from Eagleton (1983:14), who states that:

> The largely concealed structure of values which informs and underlies our factual statements is part of what is meant by 'ideology'. By 'ideology' I mean, roughly, the ways in which what we say and believe connects with the power-structure and power relations of the society we live in.

It follows then, from this definition, not all could be said of ideology in a single statement. But in summation, ideology points us to a set of values that lie beneath the outward statements or representations as is the case with all literary engagements. It is also the manner in which we want to promote the acceptability of these values as power-relation and within power-structure of society. This means that ideology, even though an illusory consciousness, yet, guides individuals and groups into polemics and eventually into power blocs seeking hegemony.

In every literary text, there is an internalised social or even material relation, which guides the production of each text whether a prose fiction or dramatic literature. Each of these genres informs a form of ideology by the convention(s) and ways it reaches its audiences in both content and form. This is the process that Eagleton (1978:54) describes as the placement of the literary art within the General Ideology. Eagleton explains that;

> A literary text is related to GI (General Ideology) not only by how it deploys language but the particular language it deploys. Language, that most innocent and spontaneous of common currencies, is in reality a terrain scarred, fissured and divided by the

> cataclysm of political history, strewn with relics of imperialist nationalist, regionalist and class combat.

The language of literature, so to speak, is not innocent rather it predicates the mood and also the action associated with the social consciousness that is produced by the historical realities of a given society. Ideology as contained in all arts informs people of their being in relation to others and in the manner of their material relations; that is the "haves" and the "have not", the "Oppressor" and the "oppressed", the "same" and the "other" in that order. Likewise, literature as a production of ideology reifies such relations within its language structure and aesthetic values.

It could be argued then that literature, and indeed drama, remains an ideological productionas long as the society remains trapped in the web of power play and discourse vis-a-vis the functionality of the art and drama in particular. To start with, right from the time the art became concerned with the affairs of man and his physical environment, art definitely assumes a posture in pursuance of ideology. Literature whether oral or written, must be seen as a product of an ideologically codified system because of its revelations and aspirations either as labour act, play, reflection of myth and fantasy or a processed and practiced medium of achieving desired goals. Literature pushes towards not passive receptivity but didacticism, spiritual and also emotional encounters. All thatis seen in ideology isapower-play betweentwo or more competing and or conflicting viewpoints.

The literary text therefore, gives us certain socially determined representations of the real situation of society "cut loose from a particular real condition to which those representations refer" (Eagleton, 1978:74). It is in this context that ideology is attributed to literature to refer to the life aspirations of man and his living condition, caught in the cross-fire of material contest. Yet, in all these, it makes no pretext to denote concrete situations. This is where philosophers of ideology see it at some point as a "false consciousness which blocks true

historical perception, a screen interposed between men and their history" (Williams, 1977:55). The conception of ideology has always brought to question the relationship between the ideological and the historical as the real object of the text. It has been argued too that the presence of history in a literary text is not merely as a "historical text" but that it is precisely to herald ideology as present and perhaps as distorted by the measurable absences in a text (Macherey, 1990:216-17).

History therefore, is present in a literary text just as in any other art, as a disguise, which lends credence to ideology and which must be unmasked, because as Eagleton (1978:69) argues, "ideology is not just the bad dream of the infrastructure; in deformatively 'producing' the real, it nevertheless carries the element of reality within itself". This has correlation with Althusser, (cited in Counsell, L. and Wolf, L. 2001:37),who explained that; "I believe that the peculiarity of art is to make us see, make us perceive, make us feel something which alludes to reality...What art makes us see is ideology from which it is born, in which it alludes". That is why literature is seen as a formation within the dominant ideology which is the same with Eagleton's General Ideology. Eagleton (1978:54) explains that:

> A dominant ideology formation is constituted by a relatively coherent set of 'discourses' of values, representations and beliefs which realised in certain material apparatuses and related to the structure of material production, so reflect the experiential relations of individual subjects to their social conditions as to guarantee those misperceptions of the 'real' which contribute to the reproduction of the dominant social relations.

Simple reservoirsof general ideology are the traditions of a people. Folk songs, folktlales, proverbs, myths and legends of a community are epitome of what the people hold strong as their grand norms and values. A formation of a dominant ideology therefore, appropriates any one or more of these ideologies into other sets of acceptable cultural signs that mediate other levels of behavioural patterns. For instance, popular cultures such as music, drama, literature and film are all part of dominant ideology mediated by general ideology.

Within the dominant ideology, literature is a mediating "apparatus" which "interpellates" by constituting individuals as social subjects. Its function is to produce and maintain the prevailing order and impose on individuals a conception of themselves as social subjects. This proposition is Athusserian in its nature, as Athusser states that:

> In every case, the ideology of ideology thus recognises, despite its imaginary distortion, that the 'ideas' of a human subject exist in his actions, or ought to exist in his action, and, if that is not the case, it lends him other ideas corresponding to the actions (however perverse) that he does perform(cited in Counsell and Wolf, 2001:39).

This is explained in the same Athusserian terms that "there is no practice except by and in ideology" and that "there is no ideology except by the subject and for the subjects". This is a consistent claim, which Althusser makes that both the writer and the reader are themselves subjects and therefore, ideological subjects. He stresses further that the author and the readerof a textboth live 'spontaneously' or 'naturally' in ideology (cited in Counsell and Wolf, 2001:40). It is logical therefore, to say that all authors, playwrights and directors are ideological subjects who write to canvas for ideological positions from an equally ideological subject; the readers or audience of a performance.

Other arguments have emerged in the twenty first century that seem to reject the idea of committed art and pushing forward for a non-ideological literature or better still, advocating for a coalition of ideologies in literature. An example is GaoXingjian, the winner of 2000 Nobel Prize for Literature, who gave a lecture in 2001, titled "The case for Literature" where he advocated for what he called "cold Literature". Xingjian's argument is a proposition that takes us right back to the age that the art must be savoured for the sake of its aesthetic feel and for the satisfaction of the individual's spiritual need only. Three issues stand key in this proposition, which need to be highlighted. Firstly, that literature is for the gratification of the spirit of the individual only; secondly, that literature should be devoid of ideology; and thirdly, literature needs not be committed in any respect. Though our concern is the place of ideology in writings of the twenty-first century and by extension, the literary drama, it will be

rewarding to review Xingjian's arguments in this intertwined relationship between aestheticism, commitment and ideology and how they lead us to his proposition on the ideological in literature generally.

Xingjian's argument is rooted in the premise that the starting point of literature is when one talks to himself. The use of language is therefore, secondary to the art of producing literature. Languge, he feels, is deployed to make the experience of the individual literature at face value. At this moment also, there is no question of utility, just the fact that the individual wants pleasure and self consolation in writing. To this end therefore, literature, he adds, must be seen as inherently, man's affirmation of the value of his own self; and whether it has impact on society or not, that is not determined by the writer's wishes. However, what the society makes of literature is by its own intuition. Xingjian (2001:596) asserts that:

> Literature is neither an embellishment for authority or (sic) a socially fashionable item, it has its own criterion of merit: its aesthetic quality. An aesthetic intricately related to the human emotions is the only indispensable criterion for literary works. Indeed, such judgements differ from person to person because the emotions are invariably that of different individuals.

His view therefore, is that literature should not be concerned with politics as regrettably that is what it has been in the preceding century. Literature, he notes, has been used in the service of ideology, which links it more to politics at the expense of pleasure. Literature, he maintains, is purely the matter of the individual, a portrayal of the state of the mind and for the gratification of the intellect only. Anything besides this is only incidental to it.

On literature and ideology, Xingjian asserts that literature transcends ideology, national boundaries and racial consciousness in the same way as individual's experience basically transcends any –ism. This is explained in the fact that man's existence and condition of living are superior to any theories or speculation about life. Therefore, ideology, politics, ethics and customs must be seen as extraneous restriction placed on literature to tailor it as decoration for various frameworks of analyses. This is what makes literary works to fluctuate like fashion,

always premised on what is the latest; "that is, whatever is new is good"(Xingjiang, 2001:597).These are the kind of works that will necessarily yield to the general market movement. However, he feared that if a writer's aesthetic judgement will have to follow the general trend, it means the suicide of literature. Thus, he argues that:

> The denial of a denial does not necessarily result in an affirmation. Revolution did not merely bring in new things because the new utopian world was premised on the destruction of the old. This theory of social revolution was similarly applied to literature and turned what had once been a realm of creativity into battle field in which earlier people were overthrown and cultural tradition were trampled upon. Everything had to start from zero...the history of literature too was interpreted as a continuing upheaval (Xingjian, 2001:598).

Ideology in literature in the twenty-first century onward, as observed by Xingjian, has come to an end or perhaps needs to come to an end. Therefore, all revolution in literature and literature of revolutionary struggle are yielding to new form of aestheticism, which is compelling it to address the urgent needs and demands of individual human existence. Xingjian, (2001:608) notes that:

> The new century has already arrived. I will not bother about whether or not it is in fact new but it would seem that the revolution in literature and revolutionary literature, and even ideology may have all come to an end. the illusion of a social utopia that enshrouded more than a century has vanished and when literature throws off the fetters of this and that -ism it will still have to return to the dilemmas of human existence. However the dilemmas of human existence have changed very little and will continue to be eternal topic of literature.

Despite this denial of ideology in literature, and looking at the question of society and the existential nature of the human needs as necessary componential in literature, one is forced to conclude that Xingjian's proposition is all the same ambivalent. What is more, that in trying to shun ideology and all shades of consciousness in literature, Xingjian (2001:599) appears to have aligned with Ideology after all, when he argues that "literature does not simply make a replica of reality but penetrates the surface layers and reaches deep into the inner workings of reality; it removes false illusions, looks down from great heights at ordinary happenings, and with a broad perspective reveals happenings in their entirety". This raises the question of whether ideology is non-existent in the literature of the new century 2000. Xingjiang has

raised an initial problem of the secondary place of language when one speaks to him/herself in his ideal literature. Yet, the contradiction in this claim is that one speaks to him/herself in a language anyhow. Alternatively, is Xingjian proposing a different variant of ideology that does not necessarily emphasise the notion of class consciousness and its attendant call for social utopia? Is that what should be sought for in the corpus of literary works in the new twenty-first century? These are the questions that will guide our search for ideology in the character of mutation and alliance in the literary drama in Nigeria.

Similarly, Xingjian's third proposition of non-committed literature, which this espousal wishes to look into, appears to be raising more questions arising from his concept of "cold literature". He postulates that:

> Cold literature is literature that will flee in order to survive, it is literature that refuses to be strangled by society in its quest for spiritual salvation. If a race cannot accommodate this sort of non-utilitarian literature it is not a misfortune for the writer but a tragedy for the race (2001:597).

Elsewhere, he had noted that the relationship of the writer and the reader (audience) is always one of spiritual communication and there is no need for them to meet or to socially interact. It is a communication that is simply through the artistic work. Therefore, literature remains an indispensable form of human activity in which both the reader and the writer are engaged in voluntary relationship, which is ephemeral and thus, literature has no duty to the masses. A writer, in Xingjian's opinion, does not write as the spokesperson of the people. His voice is purely the voice of the individual speaking to himself or herself and for himself or herself. Xingjian argues that once literature is contrived as a hymn of the nation, the flag of a race, the mouthpiece of a political party or the voice of a class or a group then it becomes susceptible to being deployed as a tool for propaganda. This equally means that literature that is used in this manner has ceased to be literature in praxis but has become an accessory for power and profit. This is also an accusation of ideology in literature.

Literature has been used as a tool for engagement in the last century and several of these cases have been made for literature. This precisely is the point that Steven Ungarmakes in the introduction to Jean Paul Sartre's*What is Literature* (1988:3-4). He remarks that for Sartre, the intellectual's activist role extends to the call for action expressed by the concept of praxis.

Sartre (1988:37) himself asserts that:

> The committed writer knows that words are action. He knows that to reveal is to change and that one can reveal only by planning to change. He has given up the impossible dream of giving an impartial picture of Society and human condition. Man is the being towards whom no being can be impartial, not even God.

This activist dimension of the writer accounts for *literature engagee* (literature of engagement) in Sartrean conception. It is thepersistentappeal for young and the oppressed, for whom it is imperative to act in and on history to do so in the writer's precepts. Contrary to this posture of Sartre, Xingjian's (2001:594-5) contestation is vehemently echoed in this passage below that:

> In the century just ended literature confronted precisely this misfortune and was deeply scarred in by politics and power than in any previous period, and the writer too was subjected to unprecedented oppression. In order that literature safeguard (sic) the reason for its own existence and not become the tool of politics, it must return to the voice of the individual for literature is primarily derived from the feelings of the individual and is the result of feelings.

For him, the writer writes to challenge the society only and the writer has no need to inflate his ego by becoming a hero or a fighter, not even an idol to be worshiped because the feats of a hero are achieved beyond the scope of literary works. Therefore, engagement in literature is out of place.

The debate on the literary drama in Nigeria as an ideological project has been argued at two different wave-lengths that show the inevitability of ideology in all artistic productions. Ahmed Yerimah (2009:8) for example, explains that contemporary drama in Nigeria remains a product of multiple ideological influences and consciousness. He puts forward two suggestions to advance this thesis. First, he notes that there is what he calls the "communal

concept of ideology, which is the mixture of the western concept blended with traditional belief system which forms the basis and concept of communal co-existence" and second, the "individual or the self-ideological position, which is a resultant effect of the individual within society, formed as a reaction to both the western and the communal ideologies". The concern of the artist in any of these cases is with the "material" or in other terms, the "real". It is the first pointer and the concern in apprehending literary drama as a functional art. This has also been explained in the concept of committed art. It is a known fact that earlier positions advocating for ideologically free art have been debunked by thinkers like Barzun (1975), Plekhanov (1953), Sartre (1988), wa Thiong'o (1972), among others. They have argued that there is no such art for its own sake. That all art is partisan, aligned and therefore, committed. Thus, in pursuing his art, the Nigerian dramatist has tried to relate drama and the role it performs in the society in which and for which it is created. Akoh (2006:6) notes that:

> Ideology and aesthetics have always occupied a central place in the discussion of African writing generally; and they will continue to beg for our attention as long as the discipline called literature exists and as long as, following Althusser and Foucault, there remain incongruence in societies.

Of course, there is the inseparability of aesthetic and ideology, since aesthetics presupposes the deployment of language or the totality of the signifying system and as it has been advanced elsewhere in this study, the specificity of certain language in literature connotes ideology. In line with Akoh's view, the literary dramatist has tried to show this incongruence in the society by using different aesthetic forms. That is why the ideals of the realistic dramatist, which dominates all the phases of literary drama in Nigeria, are either classified as bourgeois, serving the interest of the ruling class, or revolutionary, serving the interest of masses and therefore, the oppressed class.

However, Tochukwu Okeke (2009:96) observes that "the contemporary dramatist writing from there different backgrounds, have been able to challenge policies that are not masses friendly. They have also fought for the enthronement of equity and justice". Thus their

respective plays while still being categorised as bourgeois, agitative, propagandistic, historical and critical, are all specific and are united in their quest for social change. Okeke (2009:98) thus concludes that the "dramatist in the 21st century is influenced by too many factors such that while one cannot say that he has dispensed with ideologies, these ideologies exist as long as there exist human beings".

It has been argued likewise, by critics like Biodun Jeyifo (1985) that no matter how the African creative writer tries to deny the presence of ideology, they cannot all the same hide the fact that there is a hidden class war in all their creative works. Using Wole Soyinka's *The Road* as an example, a metaphysical drama of the idealist kind, Jeyifo (1985:17) states that "it is important to note that this collective self-celebration, this sub-cultural narcism is itself an expression of class war, a war which is waged not only for the material sustenance of life but also for self-expression and authentic existence". Therefore, even in the most metaphysical cum liberal humanist plays, one should expect to see at play, the forces of injustice, which drive class consciousness as much as this is overt in the revolutionary plays.

Ideology is seriously linked to commitment in the arts generally. It speaks about the artist's paying attention to social reality in his art, which cannot be ignored. The playwright inNigeria has understood early enough that the absence of this human content and the question of injustice cannot be downplayed in the present time. Neither has the Nigerian playwright been able to break loose from the practice of aesthetic feel in their works. The bottom line is that both the aesthetic and the ideological in Nigerian dramatic literature are capable of conveying a revolutionary concern and a case for the self emancipation. As a result of the dynamic nature of society therefore, what is reactionary in the years past is capable of conveying progressive values in the present and likewise what is revolutionary today could be obsolete the next day and consequently, seen as reactionary in a given context of historical development of society. Yerimah (2009:15) notes accordingly that:

> As his (the playwright's) society moves very fast facing challenges of influences, he too writes fast creating new works which find solutions to the challenges thrown at society. He cannot afford the luxury of having one ruling ideology guiding his writings. He must evolve with the society finding themes and plays from the action whether good or bad of society. In no time his plays are numerous because the subject matter changes so does the topicality of the plays.

This review concludes therefore, that in all critical attention paid to individual playwrights, there must be room for the understanding of shifts and transitions in their works. No playwright has astatic style, both in aesthetic and ideological dimensions. Thus, all that is observed about a playwright, his ideology and social vision, is temporary because playwriting is responsive to societal change. This also justifies a review of the social vision that the Nigerian playwrights have had for the society, whether individually or as a group. Yet, we make exception to say that group ideological leaning or social vision could just be a consensus opinion rather than fixated forms of categorisation, hence our application of the concept of alliances in this study.

2.4 Nigeria's Dramatic Literature and Social Vision

Every creative endeavour has an overriding goal and moral lesson ithopes to project. In the dramatic art, one of Aristotle's six elements of drama "thought" approximates the understanding of social vision in drama. Social vision largely relates to the thematic preoccupation in a literary text or dramatic production, the social statement, also the manifesto or proposal in artistic terms, for socio-economic and political order. Obafemi (1996), in describing the nature of commitment in the development of drama in Nigeria, notes that the Nigerian dramatists, both indigenous and the modern dramatists of English expression, all have relatively common thematic preoccupation, which overlaps in their theatres and creative works. He, however, notes that a thin line of separation is to be found in "visions" projected in each work. Obafemi (1996:9) illustrates with the fact that:

> The popular theatre practitioners offer a celebratory vision aiming at achieving a socio-cosmic harmony. While the older playwrights in English (Clark-Bekederemo, Rotimi, Soyinka, and Sofola) propose a metaphysical vision, Soyinka goes further to

> evolve a revolutionary vision based on the myth of Ogun. The second generation playwrights (Osofisan, Omotosho, Sowande and Onwueme) reveal their penchant for the designated use of the theatre as an instrument for social change and the awakening of social consciousness.

This illustration could not have summarised the social visions of these playwrights and their drama to date. But perhaps for the convenience of purpose and the scope, which Obafemi uses this schema; it could be accepted as methodology for further expansion on social vision and drama in Nigeria. The argument of this study is hinged on the fact that the social milieus, which necessitated this critical theory, have altered severally therefore, creating new works with different social vision. Even the older playwrights, who are still living and have written to the period under study, have had reason to refocus their dramaturgy in the changing face of history.

At the dawn of democracy in Nigeria in 1999 into the year 2000, more voices have emerged on the theatre landscape coupled with the old writers that are living and have been writing till date. The manner in which "free market of ideas" is witnessed in the political circle is the same in the sphere of dramatic production. Adeoti (2007:3) corroborates this with the fact that, the social vision of drama in the twenty-first century Nigeria reflects the nature and character of conflict of the Nigerian state, especially in terms of power access and resource accumulation: "The polity addressed in these plays is the post-independence Nigeria, with its unstable politics on account of prolonged military rule". This analysis points to the link between histories and transitions in Nigeria's body politics and its influence on the temperament of the Nigerian playwright. Since our concern is with dramatic literature, let us try to review this postulation using empirical studies onour selected playwrights' works, starting with Wole Soyinka.

2.4.1 Wole Soyinka's Dramaturgy beyond Tragic and Metaphysical Vision

Wole Soyinka's creative works are a compendium on Nigeria's political struggles. His period of active theatre practice coincided with the period of nationalism and agitation for

independence. In his works also, he has in many ways tried todepict the contradictions that come with self rule consequent upon flag independence. Till date, Soyinka's art is still commenting on the corporate existence of the Nigerian. His social vision in drama therefore, has been presented variously in his plays. Soyinka's dramatic oeuvres are attempts to use the theatre medium to mediate on the misgivings and the tensions of the moment. Thus, he uses different theatrical artistry to intervene in the socio-economic and political development of his time. Soyinka's plays are represented by his earlier critics as, either embedded with the traditional motifs or intended to be interpreted through the playwright's metaphysical poetics. Eldred D. Jones (1973:64), however, notes that Soyinka is a serious dramatist in the Aristotalian sense whose plays deal with things that matter in the life of his immediate society. These things, he adds, are things that are worth troubling about, that are concerned with the eventual "fate of man in his environment; the struggle for survival; the cost of survival; the real meaning of progress; the necessity for sacrifice if man is to make any progress; the role of death-even the necessity of death in man's life". Jones (1973:64-5) argues further that:

> Even though Soyinka is not trying to write classical tragedy, his vision of the world seems to be essentially tragic. Where the neo-Aristotalian poetic would have stipulated a hero with nobleness of status, Soyinka's hero is a man of quite ordinary status, his tragedy arising from dogged adversity of fortune in the face of total effort.

Thus, on a large scale, Soyinka' social vision remains interpreted through a commitment to a metaphysical, tragic epistemology and bourgeois ideology. This is the position of wa Thiong'o (1972:55) and Jeyifo (1985:12) among others. Katrak (1986:12), however, notes that:

> Most critics of Wole Soyinka's works recognize his significance but do not grasp the nature of his reliance on the Yoruba world view, his creative reinterpretation of myth and ritual for a dramatization of contemporary reality. The central purpose of tragic drama-communal benefit-has been missed by critics who fail to look beyond the animist themes to the social concerns...Despite a predilection for the metaphysical in his plays, the dramatist never loses his overriding concern with society, with the value of the protagonist's self-knowledge for his people.

Criticism on the preoccupation of Wole Soyinka as noted by Katrak is lopsided if not insufficient. The analyses of his social vision are most often represented by prejudices associated with these ritual and metaphysical concerns.The same is with his choice of individuals as tragic heroes and spearheads for the salvation of their community. Osofisan (1978:156-7) asserts that the social vision in the works of Wole Soyinka (which he and his contemporaries in the Marxist school reject) is very much on the known thematic underpinning typical to works of the first generation playwrights. The themes of his plays revolve around "liberal humanism", "individual heroism", "collective tragedy and reversal through ritual", among others. This pattern of criticism has left most part of Soyinka's social vision to a lopsided critical criterion that consigns it to metaphysical interpretation. Etherton (1982:252), however, contests that although:

> His (Soyinka) left-wing African critics accuse him of a reactionary sensibility and intellect; yet his political activities, for which he has suffered imprisonment and exile, seem to stem from a deep concern for the common man seen as mercilessly exploited by tyrants, bureaucrats and opportunists.

Unfortunately, too, hardly is the attempt to project Wole Soyinka's vision along the Marxists' revolutionary concern, which is mostly associated with Post-Nigerian civil war playwrights. Adeniran (1994:51) notes that "indeed because of his (Soyinka's) unusual fascination with myth and ritual, many have considered his works as lacking adequate political content". This is the misunderstanding that characterises earlier criticism of not only Wole Soyinka's works but of other playwrights that pursue the themes of cultural relevance and traditional imperatives in drama. Ironically, notions like these are different from what July (1981:488) thinks of the works of Soyinka. He notes that:

> While still a student in England, Soyinka had already begun to speculate on the role of the writer particularly the playwright, in searching out the essential idiom in traditional African drama. He saw it as more than writing on African themes, more than use of obvious African imagery; that was mere pastiche. What he sought was an understanding of the aesthetics of traditional art, not some frozen anthropological curiosity to amuse a foreign audience, but a living medium, vital to the demand of a modern African theatrical expression.

Umukoro (1994:14) agrees no less that despite his use of the traditional motif, Soyinka's works still offer relevant commentary on socio-economic and political issues of Nigeria and the global community at large. He writes further that: "with Soyinka, we are on firmer ground. In all his works, Soyinka deals with urgent contemporary socio-political problems in Nigeria and Africa as a whole. These include fraud and corruption". In other words, Umokoro is of the firm view that Soyinka, along with his other contemporaries, while using the traditional motif, are yet as;

> Politically committed as their younger compatriots in fact, the two groups of Nigerian dramatists are moved by similar motives and actions. They both show in their works that the present condition of their society is bad and that there is a way to change it for the better. What distinguishes them is the ideology and vision which is proposed to safeguard the future and these are no more than variation of the same subject (1994:15).

This means that the changing socio-political climate is inevitably changing the social vision of the playwright on the one length and on the other, it is equally uniting them. That is the fact that the playwrights are united by a common goal to influence change in the society. Therefore, their social vision too is not static and without other political and ideological affinities in this contemporary society. About Soyinka in particular, Ramya (2016:44) notes that:

> His social concerns are the result his leaning on the past which could also provide solutions to the present socio-political, cultural and individual priblems. If looked in totality, is (sic) works reveal that Soyinka was appalled at the different aspects of the post-colonial African society. His works seem to be a search for authentic values in a degraded society.

It should be stressed that plays could deploy traditional idioms yet be actively commenting on the socio-political issues of the moment. This has been very akin with Wole Soyinka that Katrak (1986:10-11) asserts:

> Any variations in this essential continuity of Soyinka's vision are in tune with the changing times and with Soyinka's own involvement at different times in Nigerian history, and with his country's fortunes. The external events and the artist's own internal development fuses in Soyinka's consistently darkening vision, both with regard to Nigeria's future and the future of humanity as a whole.

This explains the tragic vision and the metaphysical strides of Wole Soyinka that is most maligned by his left-wing critics. However, Davis (1980:148) posits that despite his metaphysical engagement with ritual and traditional idioms, Soyinka "is equally concerned with defining the experience of drama in relationship to revolutionary, or liberating social consciousness".She cites Soyinka as postulating that "in the experience of theatre, revolution and ritual, the individual first loses a sense of individuation to community, either of audience, cultural value or mythic consciousness". Consequently, it can be argued that in their tragic and metaphysical outlook, Soyinka's plays are projecting revolutionary vision.

The tragic vision in Soyinka's works is the most criticized by his left-wing critics. The aesthetic and social relevance of his tragic vision has always been misinterpreted as anti-revolutionary and a bleak visionary statement of the playwright for the survival of his society (Osofisan,2001:19). Nevertheless, Moore (1971:48), contesting this view, writes that:

> All Soyinka's tragic plots centre upon death, an attempt through their action to evaluate that death is for those who survive. Thus Soyinka restores to the word 'tragic' its proper weight of meaning- for the tragic death is not that which is casual, incidental or is out of reason, but that which is invested with significance for the community of those who witness it.

Therefore, the one who dies in Soyinka's tragedy-a carrier or his tragic hero, is equally a revolutionary hero who dies for and on behalf of his community. Others may die as retribution or appeasement for their wrongs. All these form part of the ritual of passage or the rite of propitiation, which Soyinka tries to explain in *Myth Literature and the African World* (1976). These formulations of tragedy are encrypted into the tragic epistemics of Soyinka.

Accordingly, a review of Soyinka's artistic poetics and artistic commitment shows that the aesthetics of tragedy is part of his coming to terms with the revolutionary mood, which is unfortunately, thought to be far apart from his social vision. Soyinka's explanation is that tragedy is the ritual of passage, a process, which invokes its price of social progress that the

society needs to pay in a new post-colonial nation state. Thus, Jeyifo (2004:45) posits that in most of his creative works:

> Soyinka also established these idiosyncratic features through which he would, in his latter, more mature essays elaborate what is perhaps the central element of his entire critical theoretical project: the elaboration of a distinctively African literary modernity through a poetics of culture and revolutionary tragic mythopoesis of which is also neo-modernist.

Msiska (1998:1) argues further on this social vision, that for Soyinka, "writing is inextricably linked with the effort to recreate a just and democratic society in post-colonial Africa" and therefore, when one considers the writings and personal life experiences of Wole Soyinka critically, it will reveal that he is more to the left than a reactionary idealist. Soyinka though had tried to distance himself from any ideology as noted by Iji (1991:20-21) and Katrak (1986:9). However, Msiska (1981:5) contends that:

> Politically he (Soyinka) remains a liberal democrat with a strong Marxist revolutionary bent, making him a bit difficult to pin down at times. Whatever he is and is not, he remains a relentless campaigner for human right and a strong opponent of all manner of dictatorship, including religious fundamentalism, both Christian and Muslim.

These mutation and alliance or otherwise alteration and transitions in Soyinka are what must be sought for continuously in hisdramaturgy. Affirming this view, Jeyifo (1988a) remarks that a close scrutiny of Soyinka's ideas in his essays like "Drama and the Idiom of Liberation", "Who's Afraid of Elesin Oba?", "The Autistic Hunt" and "Barthes, Leftocracy and other Mythologies", Soyinka as well as being a mythopoeist has also proved something of a "mythoclast, a debunker of parodists of myths and mythologies". Jeyifo therefore, admits that:

> The most discernible thread of this principle in Soyinka is his almost perpetual insistence that the literary, creative use of myth and ritual does not necessarily or inherently involve epistemologies which are static, ahistorical retrogressive. More pointedly, Soyinka even makes the point in "Drama and Idiom of Liberation" that the ritual matrix is inherently an idiom of change and revolution (Editors notes to *Art Dialogue and Outrage*).

These are some of the views of Soyinka's critics on his revolutionary disposition, which compel a little re-examination of postulations made by him on the revolutionary subject in his works.

It is a known factthat what Soyinka (1988:43-4) postulates as "revolution,as idiom of the theatre",as he explicates using *The Bacchae of Euripides…* is that:

> …as you will observe, an imagination exploration of the human revolt against deathness, stagnation, the lack of renewal which runs contrary to man's visceral identity with the nature around him: an exploration which is taken to the ultimate extremism of the expression of the Life Force through a superman arrogation of the right to existence of the other.

Though this posture of his has remained debatable, yet, this study must give a close look to some of these views to find premise, which forgrounds the argument in its analysis. The search therefore, for this revolutionary social vision in Soyinka's plays as attempted by some critics is considered below.

Ogunyemi (1978) attempts an exposé of Wole Soyinka revolutionary vision in his traditional plays using *The Strong Breed*. In a comparative study of Soyinka and the Black American dramatist and poet, LeRoi Jones (Imamu Amiri Baraka), Ogunyemi posits that both playwrights are revolutionaries in their social vision. He notes that Soyinka regards drama as "a revolutionary art form" (Soyinka, 1975:59-130); also, LeRoi Jones insists that black theatre "should be an act of liberation" (Jones, 1971:32). In their poetics, the two playwrights are known for their doggedness to break the status quo by the artistic power at their disposal.

In comparison of Jones play *Dutchman* with Soyinka's *The Strong Breed*, Ogunyemi (1978:25-6) opines that "in both plays as we see the democratizing quality in part of the characterization, the use of art form for definite purpose, the element of protest and iconoclasm that seem the distinguishing feature of black of African art". The idea that runs in the plays of the two playwrights according to him is that the confining chain, which limits the

liberty of the black man, must be broken at all cost. Thus the "status quo" receives the hard knocks in the two playwrights' quest for the total liberation of the oppressed people. Ogunyemi adds that "these are the ideals for a new revolution found in the ideology and works of the two playwrights".

Similarly, Acholonu's (1984:12-16) comparative study of Soyinka and Beckett reveals that both playwrights have represented the poor at varying degrees. For Soyinka particularly, she argues that looking through his plays, the less privileged people are located at the centre of the conflict. In *Madmen and Specialists,* they are "tramps", in *The Swamp Dwellers,*it is the beggar who isa "disillusioned" character, "sordid" and "disgusting". By this usage and characterization, Acholonu explains that it is a way that both playwrights intend to allude to "the entanglement of man, which there is no escape".

In *The Swamp Dweller*, she asserts that in comparison with Beckett's four characters that populated the play *End Game,* it is short of the "living dead". Acholonu subscribes to Soyinka's representation of the less privileged in her conception of his revolutionary posture. She argues that compared to Beckett, whose "man is helpless and incapable of changing the fate to which nature has confined him", Soyinka too "sees little hope for mankind since as a result of his evil tendencies man has brought doom upon himself, he can *however* save himself by denouncing evil..." (1984:17) (My Emphasis). Affirming this, Soyinka is quoted as saying:

> Those who want to believe that man is constantly improving, they are free to do so. For me the evidence is overwhelmingly against, but I take the position that it is again a question of struggle. One begins by acknowledging the negative, depressing reality and so has a choice, either to lie down and die or to fight it. So therein lies what is sometimes referred to as a paradox (Quoted in Wilkinson, 1990:103).

This is just in the manner of Brecht who sees both man and society as changeable.

Acholonu's proposition has been criticised by like Osofisan's (2001:20), who argues that the lumpenproletariat is always the focal point of Soyinka's attention on the oppressed. This slims the optimism that this category of people can serve as agent of change. The contestation thrown by this criticism therefore, subjects us to the search for an able, conscious and enlightened working class that will sustain the argument for change and a revolutionary vision in Soyinka's *King Baabu* (2002) and *Alápatà Àpáta*(2011).

Prakash (2000) in a comparative study of Soyinka and the American playwright Ed Bullin notes that Nigeria just like any other African country, under dictatorial regimes had a similar experience with the Afro-Americans in the era of "white supremacists" leaders. Therefore, the fight for human dignity and liberty, which thematically characterises his analytical frames of reference; *Kongi's Harvest* and *The Night of Beast,* clearly shows that suffering and the question of liberty are not confined to any particular group of nations. It is a part of the human predicament that is essentially the same across the globe.

Thus, in the works of the two playwrights "one finds that their gifts are essentially dramatic and that their aesthetic sensibilities have been shaped by social consciousness, their political awareness, strong revolutionary nationalistic fervour and their espousal of the respective racial and cultural identities and traditions" (Prakash, 2000:61). Prakash argues further that their literatures expectedly are literatures of an oppressed people, expressive of how two cultures across the Atlantic though divided temporally by spatial frontiers react to forces of oppression, to liberate the human spirit from the tangles and fetter of daemonic forces as a social, political and historical necessity.

In the two plays, Prakash states that the playwrights portray a society in transition-a society passing through revolutionary times. In *Kongi's Harvest* particularly, Prakash observes, the people are organised to fight the repressive rule of Kongi, which has replaced the traditional rule of Oba Danlola. They therefore, rise against his obnoxious reforms even at the risk of

losing their lives. Daodu's imprecations against oppressive regime like Kongi's are rather those of a representative voice of "the forces of life" against "the forces of death". He concludes that both *Kongi's Harvest* and *The Night of Beast* have a revolutionary nationalistic social vision. Also, that Soyinka's revolutionaries turn against an oppressive dictatorial regime while Bullins sets his revolutionaries against the repression of the white American Government. All the two representations are a fight for freedom and recognition.

The weakness of this study, however, is that it rules out the possibility of the ultimate triumph of the revolutionary movements in each of the cases analysed. In Soyinka's *Kongi's Harvest* in particular, Prakash notes that Daodu's fate at the end of the play remains confusing though he admits that Soyinka portrays him as the kind of force, which society can rely on for its salvation. Secondly, that"Kongi" seems not to have been dethroned in the end. This means that the struggle continues just as Ogungbesan (1978:180) notes particularly in his analysis of dictatorship *a la* Kongi, that "dictators rise and fall, but Kongism has never been dethroned in black Africa. Kongism is the dogmas on whose alter human beings are sacrificed". The question, however, is whether Soyinka's revolutionary vision precludes a triumph of the struggling people. This has been answered in part by Jones (1973:114) who asserts that:

> Daudu's more dramatic revolution fails, and in this Soyinka is consistent with his avoidance of grand dramatic ending in which evil is put down and a brand-new regime of good succeeds. But the point has been made. Daudu (with the help of Segi) has led an assertion of life against the death principle that Kongi represents. Although it is unsuccessful, the mere assertion keeps hope alive that this principle is still there, and can reassert itself, and in due course might prevail.

This proposition in Jones' analysis puts Soyinka permanently in the pessimists' vision that dictatorship cannot be overthrown in all the settings of his plays. Nevertheless, when one turns to Obafemi's (1996) projection, one finds reason to question further whether this notion has remained a permanent trait about Soyinka's vision. Obafemi (1996:140-1) notes that a 'heightened sense of involvement' which soon manifested in Soyinka's political activism is strongly evident in *Kongi's Harvest*. In this play, Obafemi contends that Soyinka shows an

outright rejection of all forms of political charlatanism and oppression pointing to the urgent need for a more positive, more dynamic revolutionary vision for the country. This informs the subject of inquiry for the present research, to investigate into the maturation of this vision of revolutionary struggle, under a similar dictatorial regime as represented in *King Baabu* (2002) and subsequently *Alápatà Àpáta*(2011).

Jeyifo (2006:91) argues that the situation of military dictatorship that has entrapped Soyinka in the 1990s and which led to his exile has affected his belief and conviction in the strength of the masses and the working class in plays of this period and into the twenty-first century. He notes that "indeed it is symptomatic of this condition that the plays of this period are not only the most intensely political of Soyinka's plays, they are also notable in being unambiguously partisan on the side of the disenfranchised masses". Thus the ambivalent posture of his earlier political plays toward the working class according to Jeyifo is replaced in three plays of that period;*A Scourge of Hyacinth* (1992), *From Zia with Love* (1992) and *The Beatification of Area Boy* (2002). In all these plays, Jeyifo believes that Soyinka appears to have shown a growing faith in the ability of the urban poor and the deprived of the society to liberate themselves from their degraded and intolerable condition of life. This poses the proposition in the present study, to verify using *King Baabu* (2002) the extent of this revolutionary vision in his plays of the twenty-first century.

In the same manner, Eze (2015) has attempted an analysis of Soyinka's *The Bacchae of Euripedes*:*The Libation Bearers*(henceforth *The Bacchae of Euripides*), strongly disagreeing with Marxian critics, led by Abiola Irele *et al,* that Soyinka's social vision rest squarely within the confines of tragedy, metaphysics and ritual motifs. He thus postulates that Soyinka through his indigenous aesthetics has asserted his strong commitment to the struggles of the common people. Eze (2015:98) argues that:

> Although ritual, especially *ogunism* , exerts a huge influence and, no doubt constitutes a major master code for interpreting plays like *The Bacchae of Euripedes*...the religious elements in this transnational play merely serves as a camouflage for the exploration of class struggle. Class consciousness, though expressed through religious symbolism, is given much force and weight in the play from its beginning to the end that it seems to me to be the principal theme of this play.

From *The Bacchae of Euripedes,* therefore, Eze's analysis explains how the masses come to the discovery that their position in the Theban sociology is not given but changeable. This conditions them to remain steadfast and push ahead until they over throw the status quo. This is done through a mass revolution with the aid of Dionysos who serves as the revolutionary hero, the force, which comes to give impetus to the struggling-downtrodden until their final liberation is achieved.

Thus, Eze contends that inspite of its tragic and mythic veneer; Wole Soyinka's social vision in *The Bacchae of Euripides* is imbued with Marxist ideology. In Eze's analysis, the contradiction, revolution and change in the text follow predictable dialectical pattern and never as a result of accidental happenings. The unequal social formation-the division of the society into the classes of the oppressor and the oppressed (Pentheus versus the slaves), creates mutual hostility that brought about the annulment of the classes in the world of the play. Eze's analysis, to a large extent, illustrates the argument on the revolutionary stride of Soyinka. The present study, however, advances further, to use the framework of critical realism as well as social realism to buttress the new revolutionary vision in Soyinka's *King Baabu* (2002) as separate from that which is subsumed within mythic and archetypal discourse.

Similarly, in other plays of Wole Soyinka, which could be termed the pure comedies like *The Lion and the Jewel*, *The Jero Plays* (*The Trial of Brother Jero and Jero's Metamorphosis*), and most of his short revues, one finds this serious concern for change and pertinent questions bordering on moral and social transformation being treated. Yet, most times, his social vision in these plays is being overlooked. Priebe (1980:79) notes that a comic play like *The Trial of*

Brother Jero is often dismissed as a rather conventional farce, "saved somewhat by the effective interplay of pidgin and conventional speech, but ruined by weak ending". Thus this criticism of *The Trial of Brother Jero* is likely to be extended throughout all of Soyinka's comedies without them being linked to his philosophies of ritual and revolution.

On the contrary, Davis (1980) makes us understand that virtually all plays of Soyinka are founded on ritual. Essentially, Soyinka conceives ritual as that drama that necessarily incorporates all to develop social consciousness. Therefore, ritual is a dynamic and complex process for change. She explains further that Soyinka finds in the Ogun myth (just as he would find in other myths) a prototype for the description of the revolutionary process in drama. On the basis of this association, Soyinka sees ritual experience as typical of human acts in which change is achieved through the re-telling of the mythical story through the human vehicle. Davis (1980:151) writes that in this analogy, "Soyinka suggests that drama effect change through the incorporation of recognisable rite, and in addition, he theorizes that dramas effect change through the use of universal rituals, audience participation and satire".

When one considers Soyinka's comedies or satirical plays therefore, one finds the interplay of contemporary recognizable patterns of social behaviour enshrouded in archetypal representations. Thus, in his comedies just as the tragedies, the combination of the spacio-temporal and the archetypal essences are at play. This makes Davis (1980:153) to conclude that:

> Soyinka's theory of drama is then of value for its contribution to both dramatic theory and dramatic criticism. The contribution to dramatic theory is the development of an approach to drama which does not only focus exclusively on tragedy, (but) utilizes an inclusive concept of ritual, and treats a broad range of social and psychological processes within the dramatic experience.

It must be stressed that, it is very difficult or rather complex to try to evaluate Soyinka's comedy without reference to his series of political and social satires, which have bestridden all formalist categorisation. Msiska (1998:29) observes that a number of Soyinka's texts cannot

be easily categorised as either comedy or tragedy because there is a "transgeneric" or an in-between habit that fosters the conflicts in these plays. He remarks that Soyinka "uses this two-part structure to transform our view of what we have been watching; a first part satiric, comic and done in human terms; a second part tragic, mythic and aware of forces and perspective beyond human terms". Nevertheless, Msiska (1998:27) posits that:

> Clearly, Soyinka has the undoubted ability to offer serious social and political commentary through a variety of satirical styles and, as such, critics who claim that he is difficult to read perhaps would do better to start with his comedies and satires. Nor would one agree with Ngugi's observation that Soyinka leaves the masses as pitiful comedian on the road; in fact, he shows them imaginatively reading and adapting to the different languages of power, showing that though they may be marginal, they are not always simply victims.

This apparently underscores the playwright's social vision in virtually all his comedies. The audience see themselves and identify their struggles through the mediumship of the archetypes embodied in the comic plays. Liwola (1996:35) contendsthat:

> Much of Soyinka's playwriting falls largely in the mode of traditional explication on particular instances. On the other hand, the thorough-going historical man; that is, the modern man, not only chooses to often exclude the sublime pattern and models of myth but also prefers to creatively confront and engage them in material practice.

As suggested earlier, besides Ogun, one of the Yoruba myths believed to have been represented in Soyinka's plays, though with varying significance, is *Eshu-Elegba* (*Esu*). *Esu* is a deity in the Yoruba pantheon of gods. He is depicted variously as being evil, mischievous, tricky, witty and elusive. Joan Walcott (1962:348) writing on *Esu* notes that:

> He is the principle of chance, and uncertainty...By postulating *Eshu-Elegba*, the Yoruba compensate for the rigidity of their social system on the one hand, and externalize responsibility for any disruption that might occur on the other...Thus the autonomous *Eshu*, a creature of instinct and of great energy and power; serves a dual role as a rule-breaker, the spanner in social works, and beyond this he is a generating symbol who promotes change by offering opportunities for exploring what possibilities lie beyond the status quo. He is also a satirist who dramatises the dangers which face men and the follies to which they are prone.

This description of *Esu*, places him in the same garb with *Ogun* who Soyinka sees as possessing dual nature of creativity and destructivity. In *Esu* too like *Ogun*, we see a revolutionary who defies the status quo and also an artist who demonstrated to man the act of

self preservation through satire. This is what entails in Soyinka vision in his comedies and satires. For the purpose of this espousal, this review will take a look at the social vision of Soyinka in three pure comedies that is *The Trial of Brother Jero, Jero's Metamorphosis*, *The Lion and the Jewel* and one Comic Tragedy, *The Road.*

Priebe (1980:80) argues that Soyinka casts his comedies in the manner of the trickster story common to communities in West Africa. That he uses the hero trickster *Esu* known for his "shrewdness and cunning...than steadiness and industriousness, as in European tales". Thus he adds that in the Yoruba setting, *Esu* is seen though mischievously, also as a mediator between men and the gods. Therefore, the role that Jero plays in *The Trial of Brother Jero* as that of a prophet and a counsellor of his church members is linked very much to his archetypal counterpart. Like *Esu*, Jero lives by outwitting others.There are times when his tricks get him into trouble but in the end he is in control of things. This is where we see Soyinka's political concern in this play. Priebe (1980:83-4) notes that:

> The political machinations of Jero are exactly what we would expect of a trickster, though the opposite of what we would wish for in a politician. Like *Eshu*, Jero is extremely interested in money, as demonstrated by the fact that he sacrifices Chume for the one pound, eight shillings and nine pence he owes Amope. But money is only a means to power that Jero enjoys the manipulation of people. Now we expect a politician to manipulate people, but for social rather than personal ends. *Eshu* and Jero are completely asocial, and their actions serve only their own vanity.

So, we conclude that in this play, the social satire parallels the political satire. The change motive of the playwright is inverted through the negative portrayal of Jero, the comic protagonist. In this protagonist, the audience sees the nature of the religious as well as political leadership; the new Nigerian nation it aspires to, since the play could have been written prior to Nigeria's political independence.

The same scenario is represented in *Jero's Metamorphosis* where the difference in the Prophet Jero in *The Trial of Brother Jero* and the present play is the change from the priestly

vestments in the former play into regalia fashioned in military style with all it effects. Msiska (1998:19) posits that:

> In this context, Soyinka sought to foreground the political subtext of *The Trial of Brother Jero* more overtly by having Jero deliberately modelling himself on the military leadership which had seized power from a civilian government in 1965, and we are told in *Jero's Metamorphosis* that the large uniformed figure at the battery of microphones, in a picture on the wall in Jero's office 'indicates that Jero's diocese is no longer governed by his old friends the civilian politicians'. In keeping with the changed times, Jero describes himself as an Office General, arguing that he may as well be one since it is the fashion of the day.

In this play, Soyinka tries to demonstrate that the change of government in the post-independent Nigeria is more of a vicious circle, where the relay baton is exchanged among the same cream of corrupt politicians represented by Jero and his friends. In the *Jero plays* therefore, the society is being indicted for the acceptance of "ethical contamination or transvaluation" that is easily passed off as progressive cultural hybridity (Msiska, 1998:19). Thus Msiska (1998:21) concludes that "with the Jero plays, Soyinka had begun to evolve a satirical style, which explored the potential for a grotesque extremity of corrupt post-colonial power".

In *The Lion and the Jewel*, Wole Soyinka's social vision is seen in the personalities of two protagonists who represent two moral orders. First, we see in Lakunle a subtle character, though he is represented as a progressive, yet, his comic character has an underlying pathos for a man of a split personality. The two separate halves endeared him to his audience as a man of progress as well as an anti-hero of the same progress in the real sense of it. Elred Jones (1973:48) describes Lakunle's duality of character, noting that he is engaged in doing violence to his 'true nature'. Although he loudly denounces the Bale for his backwardness; chief among the Bale's sins being his practice of polygamy, Lakunle secretly envies the man all the same. Lakunle's speech in criticism of Baroka demonstrates both the real Lakunle, which he himself tries to suppress and the alter-ego, which he holds in front of himself.

The second protagonist is Baroka, the Bale of Illujinle. Though hardly comical in his representation, yet, holds a queer character, which conveys the satirical import about his role. Soyinka portrays Baroka as a backward retrogressive who would do anything to retard the development of his community. He does this to satisfy his selfish and egoistic nature of monopolising power at the expense of his subjects. The crux of the conflict in the play is embodied in the two personalities, Lakunle and Baroka. In the quest for the playwright's search for an ideal vision, Jones (1973:47) asks rhetorically:

> What would happen to the village of Ilujinle if by a kind of magic, the Bale and Lakunle were to change places and the latter was able to put his ideas into practice? There is little doubt that the result would be total confusion. Viewed in this way, the play would be seen to be not a contrast between progress and reaction-represented by Lakunle and the Bale- but between a muddled-headed sloganeering, and a hard-headed conservative.

Judging Soyinka's social vision from the conflict of the play therefore, Jones (1973:47) concludes that it is clear then that this ridiculous figure in the person of Lakunle does not represent any kind of progress. He is just but a self acclaimed prophet. Just as he himself follows a false trail, he cannot lead society to the needed progress. Lakunle is therefore, not quite different from Baroka who from the onset is resistant to development.

Soyinka's play *The Road* falls under the category, which Msiska (1998:29) describes as "Tragic Comedy". In the same manner, Jones (1973:99) asserts that "*The Road* treats an essentially tragic theme without solemnity; it looks death in the face without losing its humour". The play according to Jones (1973:87) by its nature of crafting apparently defies narrow classification; its mood ranges from the near tragic to the hilariously comic; it contains biting satire as well as religious mystical speculations". We appreciate Soyinka's social vision in this play through the eyes of Professor whose role combines the rogue, the mystic pundit and a supposed revolutionary hero. Nevertheless, it is along with other characters like Samson, Tokyo Kid, and Kotonu among others, that we see the satirical humour in this tragic play.

Professor like Lakunle in *The Lion and the Jewel* is a seeker of "the Word" which represents progress in the guise of searching for the cause of death or its alternative, the source of life. Ironically, despite his much psychic talks about death, Professor has always been the beneficiary of each accident that occurs. It provides business for the spare part shop, the AKSIDENT STORE, which is his brain child. The social vision in the play thus is seen in the dual character of Professor who sees death as both tragedy and business. This is the manner that the society accepts the cruel carnages, which follow the collapse of social infrastructure. The play also satirises the inability of the intellectuals to proffer meaningful solution to the disturbing social menace. Jones (1973:91) posits of the tragic and or social vision in the Professor thus:

> The character of the Professor is an enigma. Soyinka probably wants it to remain so, and it is therefore, probably vain to look for a psychological unity in him. Most people take him for a madman and he certainly displays disorientation with his surroundings which is one of the manifestations of madness.

Jones (1973:98) sums up that "in a situation like this there seem to be no hope for the top of society, which is manned by false teachers, preoccupied only with their own vanity and well-being".

The social vision in all these comic plays represents what Soyinka sees of the society in transition from the early days of political independence through the years of self rule. The contradictions that followed the misrule in both the civilian and military regimes informed the playwright's criticism of the failures of the political class and his scepticism of the leadership vision provided by the intelligentsia. Like Jero, Lakunle, Baroka and Professor, the elite class has failed to provide a promising leadership vision for the society just like in the worlds of the plays they exist. It is necessary therefore, to look for a leadership style that will fit a society that has travailed in the tricky hands of civilian and their military collaborators along with ill focused educated elite. However, with the passage of time it is important to inquire a new vision in the present dispensation in an equally comic satire. Therefore, in his representation

of the*Esu* leitmotif, Soyinka demonstrates in the play *Alápatà Àpáta*, a new conundrum to the leadership question in the present day society. This is a departure from his metaphysical penchant. The exploration in this study seeks to further this discourse subsequently.

On the whole, it is sufficient to note that in both Soyinka's satirical and tragic comedies, the search for the playwright's social vision/ideological posture,though contentious, will continue. Afoloyan (2017:168) has made it clear in his examination of Soyinka's ideology and social vision in A *Play of Giants* and *King Baabu* "that the plays are not formulated around any clear ideology but only exhibit Soyinka's vision (sic) afford the playwright to extricate himself from repercussions of a failed prescribtion. This subjects the movement towards utopia to a constant review".

2.4.2 Osofisan: From RadicalismtoConservative-Radicalism and MoralJustice

The dramaturgy of Femi Osofisan has been dynamic from inception. It is not a simple task therefore, to categorise the social vision in Osofisan's plays by mere formalist's analysis or by ideological and philosophical assumptions. Reading through his plays or reviewing it in performance and connecting all to his critical essays, Osofisan has had reason to transit in style and philosophy. Thus Biodun Jeyifo (1988b:230) has observed early enough that:

> Everyone knows that Osofisan is unquestionably a man of the left, a radical writer and critic who has embraced a class approach to the production and reception of literature in our society. And yet in some of his journalistic pieces, Osofisan has launched a vigorous attack on leftists and has consequently received much from them. Correspondingly, and consistent with his leftist convictions, Osofisan has advocated for, and defended art that is anti-elitist, popular and accessible while at the same time he has defended high standard of literary expression and superior canon of artistic taste.

This controversy raised by Jeyifo about the literary approach of Osofisan's artistry is a pointer to the playwright's penchant for alternative style. Judging from Jeyifo's views, Osofisan has from the beginning shown a tendency for being both a radical dramatist and an aesthetician. This is deduced from his self confessed obsession with grandiosity of literary tradition and

expression and the move toward a "high art" (Quoted in interview with Awodiya, 1986). According to Jeyifo (1988b:231), there is no gainsaying that "to be obsessed with these issues is to considerably, if not fatally, complicate one's revolutionary conviction". Sandra Richards (1996:25) corroborating this fact avers that although Osofisan loudly proclaims his rejection for example, of Soyinka's obscurantist's worldview, she draws attention to the fact that "we should note that both men at times flatten the complexities of the other's vision, thereby producing misreadings that allow them to score certain ideological points". Osofisan in particular is notably the progenitor of what he calls "Alternative Tradition".This essay, explains the fluidity of his social vision, and at the same time, asserts the differences in his writings and those of his older contemporaries. Nevertheless, Muyiwa Awodiya notes that Osofisan throughout his plays has maintained a social vision that attests to his ceaseless fight against corruption, oppression and injustice and has been a champion of social equality towards a classless and egalitarian society. This has earned him the recognition as the leading figure of the radical school or the revolutionary writers in Nigerian theatre (Osakwe, 2014:13).

In his introductory notes to his *Excursions in Drama and Literature: Interviews with Femi Osofisan* (1993), Awodiya notes that one significant thing about Osofisan's drama is not necessarily about its philosophical content as it pertainsto the radical posture of revolt, but that it is so much to be noted by it restless search for fairness in a world of abandoned justice. That as well, the drama of Femi Osofisan demonstrate how the myths of rebellion are re-enacted to confront betrayal of the aspirations of the society. It also represents the pervasive squandering of human material resources and widespread political corruption that has trailed the Nigerian society from the days of it political independence to the present (Awodiya 1993:13). Consequently, it is to be expected that in a typical revolt strategy, the playwrightregisters his

protestations, using different approaches and thus, also altering his social vision, so long as the forces of oppression and corruption themselves keep changing forms and locale.

The aesthetics of revolt or radical aesthetics presupposes a non-conformist's ideology and it is bound to mutate and adopt novel ideas or in some cases incorporate conventions that were hitherto considered reactionary. Okechukwu Mezu (1978:96) has confirmed this argument in his philosophy of "Revolution and the Arts". Mezu posits that "revolution is a dynamic process and is ever evolving. This explains why what was revolutionary poetry thirty years ago may today be considered by some as a reactionary philosophy". In radical dialectics therefore, both the writer or the creator and the subject created are not absolute but they are precisely phenomena, which respond to changing political, economic and social forces. Along this argument therefore, Awodiya (1993:13) contends that little wonder the theme of social revolt dominates in Osofisan's plays as they equally continue to change form. He notes that:

> Social revolt dominates the themes of Osofisan's plays as he employs his characters to enact his revolt and to embody his vision of salvation of society. The emphasis of the drama shifts from examining the relationship between man and God (like his other compatriots Wole Soyinka, J. P. Clark and Ola Rotimi) to man in Society, in conflict with community, government, politics or moral, a pre-occupation with society as a whole.

As argued elsewhere in this study, while accepting the attempt at radicalism and novelty in the dramaturgy of Osofisan as compared to his older compatriots, it is wrong to assume that the preoccupation with myth and metaphysics associated with Soyinka, Clark and Rotimi, precludes the concern with society and conflicts of contemporary time. Just as Osofisan himself in an interview with Enekwe (1978), acknowledges that the ubiquity of *Ifa* motif in his plays is a demonstration of the fact that there is a fantastic range of knowledge, which can be recreated from tradition. He sees tradition therefore, as "a rich soil for enriching our present world" (Quoted in Awodiya, 1993:29).

However, we accept Awodiya's postulation above to the extent that Osofisan's plays offer a recipe for change through revolutionary struggle; yet, this in itself has assumed different dimensions as far as the creative oeuvres of Osofisan are concerned. In the manner of Marx and Cabral, Osofisan believes that revolutionary "ideas are not fossils, that they must grow according to history and context and be reintegrated into our own circumstances and be thoroughly indigenised that is, before it can be useful tool for us" (Quoted in Awodiya, 1993:37-8). This is the reason why Osofisan justifies the fact that throughout his plays he has tried to do different things in different plays yet, all towards the same ideal.

As mentioned earlier, Osofisan just like Soyinka has been accused by his left-wing critics as being ambivalent in his commitment to his revolutionary tenets. His attempt at interrogating the hitherto sanctioned Marxist's principle in his plays has been read as ambivalence. Osofisan confirms, that in his latter plays, he certainly questions not only the evil forces but also those who claim to be fighting for the betterment of the society. He argues further in an interview with Awodiya (1993:39) that:

> I think I have become a bit mature. But if that is what is seen as ambivalence then, maybe, that is what maturity is. Certainly one can defend ambivalence in society as we are in, filled as it is with so many contradictions. A society as complex as our own, not even obeying any kind of political precedence or scientific law or any such thing. Every day a theory is disproved here; the actions of the people have been totally impossible to a stream-line! In such situation, the claim of ambivalence must be inevitable.

Expatiating on this, Osofisan admits that his latter posture seen by his critics as ambivalence is rather a way of looking at life and reality and the challenges that confront the artist in terms of socio-political change. Radicalism or revolutionary aesthetics to him of course, is the re-examination and the restatement of the context of continuous survival of society than static sloganeering. He stresses, for example, that in his supposedly less revolutionary plays heralded by *Esu and the Vagabond Minstrels* as compared to *The Chattering and the Song*, there is a change, which may continue in his artistry. He states:

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

This is where it could be argued thatthe latter plays of Osofisan, as would be illustrated in this study, are not only the indices of mutation but that there is also an alliance of ideology in them.

The exploration of man and his psychological state of being supposedly is what has for long been construed as a distinguishing feature between the writings of the liberal humanists and the materialists. This likewise designates Osofisan with his contemporaries in the Marxist school. Nevertheless, in the context of the present study, this has to be applied with caution because of the contestation that is inherent in our thesis statement. However, Osofisan's admittance of this fundamental shift in radical aesthetics and ideology to a rather conservative radicalism, enshrouded with aestheticism, prompts an in-depth analysis of his other new strides. In an interview with Awodiya (1993:78), Osofisan confirms this middle consciousness in his arts stating that:

> I don't believe at the moment that all those who call themselves Marxists or Socialists have all the solution to our numerous problems. I don't believe either that those who are conservative and right wing, that none of them has some good ideas that we can borrow, or dialogue with. So this is the reason why I must be open-minded.

Thus Awodiya (1993:143) concludes that:

> Osofisan is now aware that to achieve his objectives of a better society, he really has to do just more than sloganeering and shout solutions. Instead of a literature of angry voices (*Radicalism*), he has to employ all kinds of strategies to achieve his aims. For instance, rather than denounce the traditional institutions as he used to do before, he now accommodates them and uses them more often than not , as vehicles to convey his messages to the people (*Conservative Radicalism*). In fact there is now an increase in the use of traditional African materials in Osofisan's plays-because the people still believe in, and have respect for, these traditional institutions (My Emphasis).

It is thus, safe to advance from this point to say that while Osofisan has maintained a radical stance in some of his plays, he has all the same remained conservative in his approach. His

grounding and insistence on the application of Yoruba culture and tradition in the face of changing socio-economic and political environment of contemporary Nigeria have further proved this transition (Richards, 1996:xv).

In all his attempts to address issues and realities of the time, Osofisan has out lived the narrow conception of his work as radical political sloganeering to a search for moral justice. To him, morality is what has eluded human's consciousness regardless of one's ideological leaning. Whether a communist or capitalist, the virtues of kindness and compassion are recommended as hallmarks that define human continuity. In this then, his plays take up moral situation in the society in an ethical challenge at the frontiers of moral discourse in a post-colony. Bamidele (2001:72) points out that:

> The events of the post-colonial years have given rise to new morality in national politics and personal behaviour. The experience of the recent past, corruption, social unrest, conflicts of materialism in transitional societies, questions of empowerment and in spite of the above, the presence of hope in the people, are issues of concern not only to the social scientists but also for the playwrights.

This appears to be behind the new vision of Moral Justice, which Osofisan in his later plays seems to pursue.

Akoh (n.d:24), however, cautions that Osofisan's new social vision from popular justice to his new humanism may not be a complete departure from his hitherto Marxist leaning. He argues that Marxism itself is humanist in its postulation even in search for popular justice. Nevertheless, Akoh draws attention to the fact that the shift from popular justice (revolution) to moral justice is to a more cunning methodology rather than with the might of physical weapons. Akoh (n.d: 29) thus explains Moral Justice as "the interplay of moral and the political with the sanity of the former being offered as panacea to all facets of man's life". He explains further that:

> Osofisan combines Christian love with revolutionary socialist humanism but the totality of it all bears a direct relationship to his concept of a true African value system, the African's view of himself, his society and his definition of the purpose of

> his own art. He therefore, emphasizes the need for man's reconciliation of the environment with himself and the moral force which reject him (Akoh, n.d: 30).

Here, in the analysis of some of Osofisan's plays we see the transition, in *Morountodun* (1982), and through the character of Leje, that even though violent revolution is needed to assert popular justice, yet, if not managed with "cunning and compassion" (1982:54), it can consume the vectors of change themselves. This is an echo of moral justice as it shows concern for the revolutionary as much as the oppressor.

In his play *Esu and the VagabondMinstrels,* as mentioned elsewhere in this review, Osofisan demonstratesthis major shift, from revolutionary concern to moral justice. This has been demonstrated using the myth of *Esu*, which the playwright believes compassion only rather than greed or violence could guarantee society's regeneration. This is very much in contrast with *Once upon Four Robbers*, where the playwright, using the same myth emphasises violence as a means of combating the oppressor. Likewise, in *Twingle-Twangle a Twyning Tayle,* Osofisan's proposition is that humanity stands to gain from a humane spirit of self sacrifice. Akoh thus, concludes that in his (Osofisan's) latter vision of moral justice, he seems to suggest that:

> Apparently, in the present 'cross-road' condition of African and the Third world countries, only humanistic approaches can conquer the oppressor and liberate the people. Therefore, while in his early years Osofisan argues that unconditional emancipation of society is a fantasy and dangerous trend, in his later (and more mature) years he believes this emancipation is a possibility after all through subtle manoeuvre, cunning and compassion. Whether in *Tegonni*, or *Reel, Rwanda!* Or *Many Colours make the Thunder King,* Osofisan focused on the humanistic, than the pugilistic, side of man's nature in the pursuit of freedom from apparatus of state dictatorship in the post-colony (n.d. 32-3).

The social vision in Osofisan's plays is expressive of the playwright's aesthetic and ideological mutation. The nature of transition and thematic preoccupation of these plays attest to the incongruity in the socio-political and economic life of the people itself. It would not be out of place therefore, to say that Osofisan has grown to reconfigure his authorial ideology and aesthetic sensibilities to reflect the changing times. He has been quoted as saying "history

is always changing, everything's contingent, there is never any end really, everything keeps shifting (Quoted in Morosetti 2007). This is one reason that calls for a reappraisal of his dramaturgy in the recent times. In this same interview with Morosetti (2007), Osofisan avers that:

> I have always had problems with critics who are locked into a rigid unbending view of history, whose minds have been frozen by ideology, and have stopped being human beings and turned instead into parrots and marionettes. But that is where the artist has his triumph in the end over ideologues and thugs.

Olorontoba-Oju (2009:421) contends then that some of Osofisan's recent statements may seem a confirmation of the change in ideological perspective of the playwright and therefore, his social vision.It will be wrong also to assume that his (Osofisan's) vision will feature consistently in all plays. From the plays highlighted above, it is only *Tegonni* that is part of our present case study. The preoccupation of the critic, however, is on the concern with the clash of interest between colonialism andthe fight for self determination. The present study nevertheless, looks further into two titles by the same playwright; *Women of Owu* and *Teggoni*. Incidentally, all the plays are set in the pre-colonial and colonial conflicts of their times respectively. The study seeks to find the relationship betweenthese historiographies and the struggle among the emancipated people in the present dispensation; that is the civil rule. Since it has been proven severally, that, histories of all times have influenced the present, the significance of the representations in these plays therefore, underscores the lesson history has on human society, hence the appropriateness of this social vision to contemporary society. This is where this study differs from the previous studies.

2.4.3 Revolutionary Consciousness and Social Vision in Salami-Agunloye's Plays

Hardly have critics believed that revolutionary poetics in drama and theatre in Nigeria does include works by female playwrights whose preoccupation leans towards the feminists' ideology. Prejudice against feminist playwrights such as expressed by Rantmi-Jays (2013:65), earlier cited in this study, that the female playwrights after Zulu Sofola "were not entrenched

with the hegemony of revolutionary aesthetics" forms the background for this section of the review. Being one of the female playwrights that have emerged after Sofola, it is rewarding to locate the revolutionary consciousness and the social vision of Salami-Agunloye's dramaturgy. Reactions to criticism such as Rantimi-Jays' have been expressed in the larger sphere by post-industrialist and post-capitalist thinkers who for example accuse Marxism of neglecting in its framework of analysis, other classes who toil yet, are not recognised in the spectrum of Marx's working class. These critics claim that women, like other oppressed classes for example, are totally underrepresented within Marxism. Along the same argument, Umar-Buratai (2002:36) argues that:

> It would seem also that while women are portrayed to be absolutely 'marginalised' the basis of this presumptive position is either consciously oblivious of the role which women have had (sic) played in the formation and transformation of their societies or it actually seeks to nullify it in order to create the necessary space within which, alone, this contest could be launched and pursued anew and over entirely new unrelated agenda.

This, among other reasons, has put to question the whole prospect of Marxism as expressed by the New Left movement. Such opinions are for instance,expressed by Roland Aronson (1985:87) that, "in spite of its sheer appeal as a system, and in spite of its claim to be comprehensive, Marxism becomes increasingly reductive and sterile in trying to account for the decisive concerns of our time".Chidi Amuta (2007:508) expressing in like manner, the misgivings of the New Left avers that:

> The main source of doubt have come from such developments as the welfare state, the cold war, nuclearism, ethnic-racial conflicts, nationalism and feminism within post-industrial Western societies, developments which tend to dull the centrality of the class struggle almost to extinction. The extent of this crisis is so deep that the New Left in Europe has been forced (from its academic and polemical exchanges on the matter) to admit that like capitalism, Marxism, and in fact the leftist alternative is caught in a deep crisis.

Critics like Terry Eagleton, however, are quick to disagree with this in his seminal work *Why Marx was Right* (2011). Eagleton (2011:169) in what seems an apologia for Marxism in an era of discourse on the so called claim of the collapse of ideology or the end of history argues that

right “from the time of Marx, to the era of the ‘Third World’ woman has been a symbol of the proletariat...for Marx, the proletariat is not just a class of workers but a class bestowed with the power of revolutionary, solidaristic fervor”. Eagleton therefore, argues further that many radical movements have emerged outside Marxism and there may be a point in expanding the scope of the working class to include people in the informal sector.

As stated earlier, the post-Marxist critics of the New Left have asserted the question about sexuality, feminist politics and assumptions as some of the significant worries that Marxism overlooks. However, Eagleton(2011:216) draws attention to the fact that Marxism has inspired three of the greatest political struggles of the modern age, all of them with revolutionary intent. They are; resistance to colonialism, emancipation of women and the fight against fascism. He adds that Marx’s proposition suggests that all suffering can ultimately be resolved through class struggle. Going by this thesis therefore, Eagleton concludes that it is impossible to say that the scope of Marxism is too narrow rather; the struggle to earn human freedom needs a large-scale integration of revolutionary concerns that will dissolve into a single revolt of a “class of classes”. No doubt as noted by Eagleton, Marxism has inspired revolutionary changes around the world, which in the currency of its appeal has incorporated new shades of radical options. Amuta (2007:509) argues that:

> The New vista of revolutionary change that emerges is essentially a collaborative one, what Aronson calls a radical pluralism in which workers as a conscious minority align with other groups created by capitalism in its negating logic. In Africa, the alliance would include the urban poor, students, progressive intellectuals, the peasantry, progressive army cadres, progressive women’s organisation etc. Taken together, this group constitutes, in a demographic and political sense, the vital majority who are carrying the burden of imperialist hegemony and capitalist exploitation in Africa.

It could be argued from here then that there is apparently, nowhere and nohow the quest for revolution and the liberation of the oppressed segment of the society, whether of Marxi-Engel or Marxi-Lenin, that would likely overlook the feminist struggle. This is because like all revolutionary struggles, feminism in itself is a revolution. It is seen as a product of

accumulated grievances occasioned by unwarranted social inequality and it is therefore, an act of resistance that would ultimately usher in change. This is quite similar to Evwierhoma's (2002:40) view, which argues that "feminism attempts to win for women full rights and powers both in context of class and in dominant political system". This consciousness is what needs to be consistently sought for in all feminist plays.

One of the most unprecedented developments in the literary drama of Nigeria of the late 1990s to the 2000s is the geometrical increases of female voices. This is not unconnected with the fall out of the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing China in 1995. This global quest for the liberation of women has caused an upswing in local ferments for female activism, which traverse all fields of human endeavour. This is one reason among others why female voices in drama have demonstrated more penchants for not only liberation of all women but also for greater inclusion and participation in politics and social life. Creative works of female authors and playwrights reflecting feminists' ideology along this line of global reform have as well tried to fight for women's right in a society thought to be divided by injustice instituted by lopsided social relations and administered by patriarchy. Salami-Agunloye (2007:196) notes of her plays thus:

> Protest Theatre or Theatre of Revolt has become popular in Nigeria as an avenue to express the struggles and aspiration of the oppressed masses. I see the idea of revolt as a radical aspect of theatre which can be used in the service of feminist change. In most of my plays I have used elements of the theatre of revolt as a weapon to 'dismantle the master's house', seen in the women's move to overthrow men politically.

The revolutionary consciousness expressed in the above quotation has been expressed differently in the corpus of Salami-Agunloye's plays. For the purpose of this study, a few studies based on the plays considered are here reviewed. There are critical works that have been done on Agunloye-Salami's *More than Dancing* such as Oyelade and Lateef (2009), Awuawuer (2009), Idoko and Ademiju-Bepo (2009), Ebo (2009), Paul (2010), Rashhed (2011), Okolocha (2015), among others. While *Idia, theWarrior Queenof Benin* has been

attempted by Adeyongo (2008), Domkap (2009) and Agunloye-Salami herself (2007). This review intends to see what all these approaches have to offer on Salami-Agunloye's social vision and to locate the point of departure of the present study.

Oyelade and Rasheed (2009) have identified harsh traditional practices and social norms in patriarchal societies as some of the concerns that Salami-Agunloye treats in *The Queen Sisters* (2002) and *More than Dancing* (2003), as factors militating the advancement of women in both traditional and modern societies. This study pays attention to tradition, which is always accentuated to the state of taboo to complete the circle of domination, oppression, cohesion and eventual subjugation of the women. In the traditional society, for instance, they identify two taboos, which act as the hubris of Ubi, the main character. First, her demand of the royal tribute is seen as high headedness; and second, her alleged bed wetting is used against her to neutralise her stubbornness. These according to Oyelade and Rasheed are obvious limitations, which face women, represented by Ubi in the *Queen Sisters* to diminish their revolutionary tendencies.

In *More than Dancing*, Oyelade and Rasheed still see these taboos serving as ready weapon in the hands of some male chauvinists to edge out women in politics and other power contest. Uyi, the husband to Nona the major character, objects that "no menstrual woman" (pg. 46) will touch his food as a Bini chief. Therefore, he will need the attention of his wife at home to take care of the domestic need of the family. This obviously limits Nona active participation in politics. The two analyses of Salami-Agunloye's plays point out the fact that women are under constant oppression of the men in a patriarchal society and the women are quickly gaining consciousness to rise against male domination. However, in the study no serious attempt is made to explore and demonstrate how these women have used their collective strength to subvert the Male order and to wrestle power in the arena of politics dominated by

men. The study therefore, is limited in presenting the structure of collective struggle in a typical revolutionary drama.

Anwuawuer's (2009) study of*More than Dancing* admits that Nigeria's socio-political and economic life is dominated by men. The society, he contends, is constructed on institutions, which the male dominated society uses to manipulate and perpetuate their dominance of women in politics and economic life. These constructs are to be found mostly in the cultural prejudices against women. Besides these, Nigeria's political culture is characteristically violent, full of intrigues and other mischievous deals. These have put women at a disadvantage in political contests. Thus, Anwuawuer critiques *More than Dancing* (2003) from a liberal feminist's perspective and sums up that Agunloye-Salami represents women as active agents of social change. Women just like men, can contribute meaningfully to society's development when fully concientized, empowered and motivated. He sees "*More than Dancing* as a new consciousness by women to challenge the male establishment and it's (sic) chauvinism after taking a critical assessment of their position in national polity" (2009:343). Although Anwuawuer identifies collective struggle as a potent weapon in the hands of the women in their final liberation, his attitude to the play is that of a mere propaganda that could be experimented as a pedagogy. Contrary to this critical position, revolutionary play portents a praxis, which makes the audience of the play, want to live out the prescriptions of the playwright. Anwuawuer's analysis does not reinforce this radical dimension of the play.

Idoko and Ademiju-Bepo (2009) argue that contrary to Chinweizu's theory of the "Anatomy of Female Power" (2005), women remain at the receiving end when it comes to politics. Men, they contend, "have dominated the political space for so long that women now have to struggle (or re-negotiate) to gain access to the space of politics" (2009:206). They therefore, see the play in light of a social and political propaganda, which is first, to discourage the poor impression people have about women in politics and seeking also to liberate and mobilize

women into taking active role in politics and governance in Nigeria. Although they faulted the play as not to have move out of the local political space in its relevance, they, however, admit that it is a strong statement on the emancipation of women against physical and perceived marginalization.

Also, the authors argue that woman's inclusion and adequate representation can bring about radical change in the power structure of the country's national politics. In the same study, Idoko and Ademiju-Bepo see Emotan in the play *Emotan* as a revolutionary. However, they see fault in the aesthetic construction of Emotan as compared to Nona in *More than Dancing*, as a docile and vulnerable tragic heroine all the same. They also claim that Salami-Agunloye deploys much of Aristotalian form in achieving the heroic essence in *Emotan*. This apparently places the tragedy in the play in their opinion, more of the common man in the manner of Author Miller than a collective tragedy of the common people. Their study pays more attention to the central characters in both plays neglecting the thrust of collective action in any revolutionary play. This is where the present study differs especially from their study of *More than Dancing.*

Ebo (2009) attempts an analysis of two plays of Salami-Agunloye based on Nigeria's contemporary politics; *Sweet Revenge* (2004) and *More than Dancing* (2003). He admits that the playwright is influenced by feminist ideology in which consciousness lies the power of dissension to obnoxious status-quo. Thus he defines feminism "as ideology of revolt against centuries of oppression, subjugation and discrimination, which have placed women in a subservient state in our male dominated society" (2009:395). Ebo's analysis draws attention to the fact that a feminist theatre such as Salami-Agunloye's is definitely an artistic representation of situations or conditions that call for radical political action. It therefore, raises the necessary consciousness to achieving the needed goal. This he believes is the motive behind the crafting of the two plays.

The ideology of revolt which Ebo argues for in *Sweet Revenge*(2004) and *More than Dancing* (2003) is a stance typical of a social drama, which fights and rebels against social ills that people would want to eradicate from the society. It tries to offer alternative that is acceptable and as a common good. Thus he sees the quest for self-identity in a repressive environment as constituting the dominant theme in *More than Dancing* (2003). In this plays, Ebo asserts that the playwright uses revolutionary characters and situations to question those assumptions and beliefs that militate against women empowerment and the achievement of their full potentials in the society.

In *More than Dancing* particularly, Ebo criticizes the position of the party,which the playwright depicts as having a women majority population, yet, treats them with disdain. This is seen as not only sexist, retrogressive and discriminatory but an impediment to the socio-political progress and empowerment of women in the party. He thus, portrays the playwright as showing that, while the women would need to revolt against this male dominance in party politics, they must do it with tact along with their male counterpart and using the none-violent means while keeping their roles as wives and mothers. Ebo therefore, concludes that the ideology of revolt in these two plays is not against men per se, but rather against the obnoxious practices against women perpetrated by some men all over the world. This study shies away from a truly women-centred revolution, which is thought possible withoutthe men. A women-centred revolution is possible giving histories of women revolts and uprising in Nigeria.

Evwierhoma (2011:31-4) makes an analysis of Salami-Agunloye's three plays *Emotan* (2001),*The Queen Sisters* (2002) and *More than Dancing* (2003). In this study, she sees Emotan the central character as a strong advocate of women participation in socio-economic and political activities outside the home. She is thus an epitome of woman revolutionary leader who dies for the cause of women. In the *Queen Sisters*, she sees Ubi, as a trailblazer

whose views that were condemned by the traditional Bini society, as inspirational for women liberation today. Evwierhoma asserts that although Ubi's revolts in the play are easily considered messianic in the face of the struggle to liberate the women in the palace, her revolutionary role must be seen from the point of self affirmation first before fighting the cause of the others.

In *More than Dancing,* Evwierhoma concludes that the play is an agitation propaganda, which is meant to raise women consciousness to active action. Women in this play, according to Evwierhoma, are made to "confront the socio-political challenges that faced them for generations past and still continue to face them. Women are seen to affirm themselves on the field as politicians, activists and at the home front as wives, mothers and sisters of the men folk". This study reveals the revolutionary tendency of women even though it is limited in the sense that it insists on male partnership, which relies on a version of feminism. The present study differs in the sense that it sees the revolution in terms of the rise against the patriarchal institution of dominance and not against men. Therefore, with or without men the women are capable of attaining their gains in a revolution such as the one purported in *More than Dancing*.

Paul (2010) argues that Salami-Agunloye in the play *More than Dancing* is canvassing for female participation in Nigeria's politics. In this play, he stresses that Nigeria's political situation is presented as one in which patriarchy reigns supreme. Only men control all the resources and political fortunes of the country at the expense of the women. This posture of political domination is one that has equally subjugated and oppressed the women in Nigeria's political circle. Thus, Paul feels in this play, Salami-Agunloye "attempts to rekindle the revolutionary consciousness of the Nigerian woman to rise up to the challenges of her time" (2010:117). His analysis, however, fails to illustrate the revolutionary posture of the play. It

only pays more attention to the limited participation of women in Nigeria's politics while canvassing for increase access for the women folk in the political arena.

Similarly, Rasheed (2011) attempts a comparative study of Iyorwuese Hagher's *Mulkin Mata* and Irene Salami-Agunloye's *More than Dancing* in what he calls the "Leadership question". The study argues that the bad leadership exhibited by men especially on the continent of Africa and its attendant violence and strife is the stimulation for the urgency for an alternative in the women's regime. He submits that while Hagher is of the view that violent opposition and women's uprising against men is the means to gain power and to administer it upon an equally predatory man, Agunloye-Salami advocates for subtle and peaceful power shift from the male dominated party politics in a democracy to an equal participation with the women in politics and governance.

His comparison of the ideology in the two plays is that, Hagher's *Mulkin Mata* provides the first alternative to the use of women in power, which employs a revolutionary tenet in the garb of coup d'état, sex denial and coercion. Salami-Agunloye's *More than Dancing* provides a systematic approach for education, self realization and partnership with men, which he finds more suitable for the women's course. Thus Rasheed (2011:98) concludes that: "while *Mulkin Mata* is towed along the Marxist revolutionary approach as propounded by Karl Marx, the case is not the same with *More than Dancing*. Salami-Agunloye's approach is far more realistic in approach". Rasheed's submission on *More than Dancing* as a non-revolutionary play is contested by the present study. His attempt to force in a comparison ends with a weak contrast that calls for a re-examination of Salami-Agunloye's *More than Dancing.*

Okolocha (2014) asserts that Agunloye-Salami in *More than Dancing* has employed historification to address the long-standing history of gender-based inequality in politics and governance in Nigeria. She writes further that:

> Salami's re-enactment of women's historical struggle for political relevance situates the contemporary quest for struggle for political justice as a continuation of the past struggle led by the foremothers of women liberation. The continuing constitution of Nigeria's political arena as a male territory is the social injustice that Salami contests in *MTD* (2014:59).

Thus Okolocha believes that*More than Dancing* is an attempt to invoke the revolutionary consciousness of the Nigerian woman and to remove the gender imbalance instituted by a long standing culture of women subjugation. She therefore, advocates for a collective resistance, resocialization, perseverance and sacrifice as the character of the struggle to correct the political imbalance that has kept the women subjugated for decades in the political arena in Nigeria. Okolocha concludes that "*More than Dancing* illustrates that contemporary women are becoming increasingly self-aware and are redefining their identities in Marxist terms, taking up arms against situation of injustice in politics" (2014:75).

This analysis is relevant to the present study to the extent that it points to the revolutionary posture of the play. However, it lacks the theorization and character dynamics that illustrate the class-based struggle in the play. This is what we attempt to look at in this study.

In the play *Idia, the Warrior Queen of Benin*, Salami-Agunloye's social vision tends to shift from her commitment to collective struggle to individual heroism. There appears to be an ambiguity in the penchant of the playwright in what she sees as ideal model of the feminist struggle in *Idia, the Warrior Queen of Benin.* One of her motivations as a playwright is the fact that she is convinced that history has not been fair to women. As such, Salami-Agunloye (2007:195) says as a playwright, she has taken the challenge to revisit the women in history, "to foreground women in history by rewriting history using dramatic texts". By this she has equally taken the challenge to engage in a radical step to project a vision of change in contemporary time.

On the play *Idia, the Warrior Queen of Benin* in particular, she writes that "in *Warrior Queen* I present another strong female character in the person of Idia, a historical figure who

confronts Portuguese traders...Idia is displayed as a woman of valour who single-handedly wages war against an enemy nation when the men were reluctant to go to war". This proposition by the playwright conflicts with many analyses, which her critics tend toapply to this play with regards to her revolutionary vision. Though there is an apparent paucity of critical works on this play, a few consulted reveal the justification for the above assertion.

Adeyongo (2008) for instance,maintains that the intention of the playwright is to present a revolutionary masterpiece. The theme of revolt therefore, dominates the play and this can be easily deciphered from protest motif and revolt in the actions of first, the Oba Esigie andsecond, Queen mother Idia. The King's move for a constitutional review, repealing the law that sentences all queen mothers to death at the enthronement of their sons as Obas of Benin marks the first act of revolt against the customs and traditions of the kingdom. Second, the Oba has also instituted a law enthroning his mother and henceforth, all Queen mothers as Iya Oba, with a palace in Uselu. All these are not without the prompting of the Queen mother and her team of market women who promise to speak out against the obnoxious tradition of killing Queen mothers in the kingdom.

Adeyongo's analysis suggests that with the opposition from the council of the Oba Esigie on one side as custodians of tradition(the patriarchal regime) and Oba Esigie with his supporting chiefs and the protesting women on the other, the stage is set for the revolution. Adeyongo (2008:169) writes that:

> This decision by the Oba does not go down well with some chiefs who believe that Oba Esigie is not only mature (sic) enough to rule the great Benin Kingdom but is also transgressing and trivializing the tradition of the people...Oba Esigie, Chief Oliha and Ologbosere however believe that the law on Queen mothers is obsolete, obnoxious and counterproductive. It is a tradition that is no longer beneficial to the people and denigrating. They believe that no tradition is static and that: 'laws are made for man and not man for the law. When the snail discovers splinters in its shell it changes its abode'

This supposedly marks the play as radical and revolutionary in the opinion of this critic.

Going by the unfolding of the plot of the play, the resolution of the whole conflict seems to depend on the lone character of Idia, the Queen mother. The collective character of a typical revolutionary play is downplayed by the playwright. Furthermore, the aristocratic vitality of the conflicts betrays the collective benefit in any revolution. This is the contestation in the present research, to show the ambiguities in the playwright's representation in this play and therefore, interpret it as elitist and bourgeois in ideology. To further show that there is a mutation in the playwright's radical commitment to a liberal humanist concern despite her claim for revolutionary ideals.

Domkap's (2009) analysis of *Idia, the Warrior Queen of Benin* is from a directorial point of view, which he experienced in the process of staging the play and oneother, *Sweet Revenge* by the same playwright. This means that the critic is approaching the analysis of the play in performance rather than from a literary analysis. Nevertheless, Domkap (2009:271) admits that:

> The interpretative function of play directing substantially aims at projecting the social vision of a playwright and that of the play director. A director's cardinal goal through the dramatic text therefore, is to deliver to the public (audience) issues for social reflection with the view of igniting social reaction and change.

Apparently, this submission while aligning with goals of any interpretive exercise, is also asserting the critic's commitment to and commentary on the social vision of the playwright. The director as a critic in this context acknowledges that the social vision of Salami-Agunloye in this play is nothing other than social change.

As a director therefore, Domkap asserts that his task is to project the ideological and philosophical postulation of the plays he is putting on stage vis-s-vis their social implication. Thus, he comes to the conclusion that the primary objective of the feminists, whose ideology runs through the play, is the drive for "the struggle for equal participation, equal opportunities, empowerment and social justice for women" (2009:273). He argues further that "the themes

of *Sweet Revenge* and *Idia, the Warrior Queen of Benin* highlight and attempt to correct the perception and impression carried by society that a woman is docile and passive to social/political issues and can only do well in domestic matters". This means that his directorial approach to the plays just like the playwright's, is to project the motif of revolt that will lead to the overall revolutionary intent of the playwright in the two plays.

On *Idia*... particularly, Domkap believes that the highpoint of the conflict in the play is Queen mother Idia's rise against the tradition of the Benin Kingdom. The act of revolt is consummated in the series of plots that show that:

> In alliance with her son the Oba Esigie, Idia fights for life. Instead of answering the call to death, Idia answers a soldier's call to duty. While most men are afraid to face the enemies and run into hiding, Idia, in an extraordinary act of heroism confronts the Idah warriors and saves Benin Kingdom.

The act of revolting against her death sentence and the heroism exhibited by Idia in becoming the saving grace for the Benin Kingdom as a woman is supposedly, the emphasis of this director/critic. This presupposition in itself is in conflict with revolutionary action, which does not rule out the possibility of death. Like Kinjeketile in the play with the same title by Ebrahim N. Hussein, Kimathi in the play *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* by Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Micere Mugo Githae, both revolutionary heroes laid down their lives for the triumph of the revolution. Again, the lone heroism of Idia in battle portrays her character as of legendry and of mythical quality rather than a revolutionary heroine. This also challenges the tenets of a socialist realism. These arguments form part of the contestation in the present study, suggesting a mutation in Salami-Agunloye's ideological focus beyond the ideals of socialist revolution.

2.5 Summary

This review contends that from the dramatic performance and literatures of dramatists in Nigeria and given their intertextualities, one gets an insight into the playwrights' shifting preoccupations, ideology and social visions. For instance, althoughSoyinka appeared to have

demonstrated quite enormous revolutionary social vision, not much of his works have been subjected to this interpretation, hence the concern in *King Baabu*. Also, while Osifisan has demonstrated a mutation from radicalism to radical humanism, not much of this is reflected in critical works. Salami-Agunloye's revolutionary penchant, too, seems to have mutated into a bourgeois kind.

A few attempts at this line of analysis have only shown limited or better still, an ambivalent posture of the playwrights. Wole Soyinka's new social vision shows a transition in his creative effort at affecting society ultimately in *Alápatà Àpáta,*which is yet another approach that brings him in contact with Osofisan's aesthetic ideology of *Orumila-Esu*. The same with Femi Osofisan whose dominant Marxist posture seems to have given way, aligning his dramaturgy in *Women of Owu* and *Teggoni* with Soyinka's Ogunian poetics. Similarly, Salami-Agunloye's Marxist's feminism in *More than Dancing* among other plays appears to be yielding to a liberal humanist ideo-aesthetics in *Idia*... just as noted with Osofisan.

Consequent upon all these, this research seeks to establish in the succeeding chapters that, the socio-political changes of the recent past could account for the realignment of thematic as well as ideological preoccupations of the selected Nigerian playwrights. Also, that revolutionary and class based struggles are represented in the works of the older playwrights like Wole Soyinka, and the newer playwrights like Irene Salami-Agunloye. Likewise, liberal humanist's ideology is noticeable in the works of hitherto radical playwrights like Femi Osofisan as well as newer playwrights like Salami-Agunloye. Thus, the next chapter explains the underpinning theory, which is used subsequently to guide the analysis of the selected texts.

CHAPTER THREE
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.0 Introduction

Theory is very important in any critical engagement. Theories form the bases on which critics hinge their analyses for the purpose of finding corroborations in other analytical frameworks and for replicating the same process, or generalising findings if possible. Literary criticism has gone through processes of debates, thesis formation and counteractions. Right from Plato's critique of mimesis in *The Republic* and Aristotle's defence of poetry in*The Poetics*, the relationship between theory as a schema for justifying not only the art of poetry but the formation of analogies for rigorous explanation and validation of processes has been established. In achieving a successful textual analysis therefore, a chosen theory would need to be deployed as a proposition that will lead to providing the basis for the critical judgment of the works under analysis.

Criticism is formed against set principles that over the years have made the appreciation or apprehension of literary texts possible and acceptable. The logic has always been, to provide a universal explanation of content and context of a literary text. This proposition about the extent of the use of theories has also been disproved in so far as there is no process that can bring about one universal truth in any interpretation of literary work. However, a better explanation of theory in criticism is the quest to bring about consensus readings that approximate the meaning in a given texts and certain contexts.

Peter Barry (1995:34) in explaining the relationship between Literary Theory and Literary Criticism submits that:

> Every practical procedure (for instance in literary criticism) presupposes a theoretical perspective of some kind. To deny this is simply to try to place our own theoretical position beyond scrutiny as something which is 'commonsense' or 'simply given'...Hence it makes sense to speak of theory as if it were a single entity with a set of underlying beliefs, as long as we are aware that doing so is simplification.

Thus, this study demands that we use a theoretical framework that would undergird the argument of this research. The underpinning theories for this study therefore, are New Historicism and Cultural Materialism. These theories have been used interchangeably but are better applied simultaneously because of the thin line that unites the conceptions of the two theories. Yet, a very important emphasis of this theory that is not missed out is the fact, as explained by Parvini (2018:246), that "both New Historicism and Cultural Materialism were marked in their initial insistence, by boldness and originality: a willingness to take on and challenge current orthodoxies".For this reason, these concepts are here explained separately, to later merge into a synthesis of one framework that is operational in our analysis.

3.1 New Historicism

New Historicism is a critical method, which started in the 1980 by Stephen Greenblatt, Louis Monstrose and Catherine Gallagher in the United States of America. Their workcollectively, as pioneer study in this area, "points toward a historical critique of representation, one that takes into consideration the context of literary works as fundamental to their interpretation" (Castle, 2013:121). In other words, their concern is with literature and the art in general as integral structure of other social practices. Through this complex process of interaction, Greenblatt *et al* believe that both literature and history in particular; make up the general culture of an era. Therefore, New Historicism proposes a parallel reading of both literary and non-literary texts to arrive at the ultimate meaning in the criticism of a text. Furthermore, New Historicism started out of poststructuralists' emphasis on deconstructive reading. For the purpose of clarity, it would be beneficial for this study to explain the basic assumptions of the poststructuralists and the way in which poststructuralism has found deconstruction rewarding

in its operations. First, deconstruction is briefly explainedas a concept as it will come to apply as a methodology in poststructuralists' criticism.

Deconstruction

This concept and or theory is best explained in Jacques Derrida's method of "difference" (1974:46), which connotes a dual meaning of difference and defer(rance). In this term, Derrida stresses that the meaning of a word is found in its differentiation as well as its suspension- the "missing" referent, which creates the absence that is crucial to the process of signification. Drawing from Heidigger's hermeneutics, Derrida formulated a critique of "Presence" in which paradoxically, the "being there" of things and their essence, are revealed to be nothing more than an absence, the deferral of meaning in a process of endless signification. To put it simply, language in which all texts are subsumed, "is haunted by this absent presence, in which meaning is decoupled from reference, and the signified of any sign is constantly deferred or supplemented (by signifiers) along a signifying chain" (Castle, 2013:29). This could be summed up in line with Pierre Macherey's view (1990:217),which declares that "the text says what it does not say". He explains further that:

> The speech in a book comes from a certain silence, a matter which it endows with form, a ground on which it traces a figure. Thus, the book is not self-sufficient; it is necessarily accompanied by a certain absence, without which it would not exist. A knowledge of the book must include a consideration of this absence.

The silence of a text is as a result of the absence that inhabits it or is present with it. In the final analysis, Macherey resolves that the text or a speech act, actually has nothing more to tell us and that our understanding in this case has to do with the investigation of the "silence" that is doing the speaking.

Derrida's deconstruction, it must be stressed, came up as a major critique of structuralism whose main focus is a reductionist representation of meaning in the "centre"; the material

signified, which draws its meaning from abstract signifier. To the structuralists' therefore, there is the inseparability of the two, which exist in a continuous, interrelated and interdependent relationship. Contrary to this, deconstruction or deconstructive reading first drew attention to the "decentring" of the text as a "subject" where "individual subjects were seen as marginal to and effects of a signifying systems rather than controlling them...thus the established critical hierarchy could be challenged" (Webster, 1997:114). This is the idea of "decentring" of the text, which will be explained further in poststructuralism. Ifatimehin (2017:81), reechoing Bello-Kano (2016), summarises therefore that:

> A deconstructive reading interprets a text against itself. It also transforms contexts into texts by perceiving them as unfinished products thereby subject to a reading, a contestation. Deconstruction is 'what happens in the process of interpretation and within a context. This means every text, every interpretation would have its own 'deconstruction'' there is no centre in the meaning of a text neither are there definitions in interpretations. A reading of a text can hardly be encapsulated within a nutshell for deconstruction characteristically unveils a continuous proliferation of texts and contexts.

With this summary of what deconstruction is and what deconstructive reading portends, the exposition can also briefly consider poststructuralism and its relationship with deconstruction, and above all, how this interrelationship foregrounds New Historicism and its application in the context of this study.

Poststructuralism

Poststructuralism on its part is a combination of several strands of postmodernists' philosophy. Its emergence as reaction or refinement of structuralism is hardly distinguishable. However, this theory stands out in its proposition that makes it distinctively an appealing critical method over structuralism. Webster (1997:114-15) notes that:

> One of the central tenets of poststructuralism is that whereas structuralism emphasises the underlying structure of meaning in a fairly secure, foundational way, meaning in poststructuralism is always temporary and in a state of flux, never stabilized or rooted in any way...it may temporarily acquire a particular meaning as a reader interprets or 'activates' it, but this is never more than a particular and relational meaning as a text is caught up in new and different cultural web".

This proposition resonates withDerrida's concept of "difference". Thus, for the poststructuralists, there is always a cultural context that will warrant a given interpretation to a text. The situation in which a particular meaning is attained might be just limited to it or would better still, spark up other discourses. In the poststructuralists' methodology therefore, and as explained by Barry (1995:70-71), deconstructive reading entails reading the text beyond the facile presentations of its referrals. He adds that "it is often called 'reading against the grain' or 'reading the text as it cannot know itself'". Also, that a deconstructive reading in the poststructuralist way is "reading to uncover the unconscious rather than the conscious" dimension of a text, subjecting it against other variables it failed to accommodate.

New historicism therefore, according to Webster (1997:116), "is formed as a methodology for reading texts in relation to history". He avers further that:

> This is achieved by turning away from an apparently stable, fixed history which formed a kind of a of backcloth to the alternative workings of the artist's mind to a past which was uneven, fragmented, even unfinished so that history is a site of conflict which is ongoing, not a stable form of containment.

By implication, the idea of a unified world view in canonised literary texts and critical methods, which hitherto serves as "golden rules", is made to yield to the changing phases of history. This suggests the "centre" in structuralists' criticism,is that which appropriates meaning in the critical process, thereby calling for the "decentring" of meaning through deconstruction. The New Historicists just like the Poststructuralists value the multiplicity of meanings in place of a singular meaning, which is often tight to convention of the "centre" in structuralism, which the poststructuralists reject.

The sum total of the New Historicists' proposition is that the text and historical events are mutually parts of the same process of unfolding history. The reading of the text therefore, takes into account in equal weighing, the context of history just as history too is read as a dynamic process, acquiring other interpretations like the text. This relationship is what Louis

Monstrose describes as the "the textuality of history and the historicity of the texts" (quoted in Barry, 1995:172).

3.2 Cultural Materialism

Cultural Materialism, on the other hand, is a refinement of New Historicists' methodology with close emphasis on political changes and responses through the literary text. It is the British variant of New Historicism with strong emphasis on socio-economic and political changes of a society. Graham Holderness cited in Barry (1995:182) describes it as "a politicised form of historiography". That is, it is the study of historical and cultural materials through the agency or politicised framework of the present, which the literary work has in some way helped to appropriate. Cultural materialism seeks to establish four cardinal objectives in literary criticismnamely; to establish the historical context of a text, its theoretical method, its political commitment and the textual analysis. Alfred Barry (1995:184) posits that in criticism:

> The result is that cultural materialism is much more optimistic about the possibility of change and is willing at times to see literature as a source of oppositional value. Cultural materialism particularly involves using the past to 'read' the present, revealing the politics of our own society by what we choose to emphasis or suppress of the past.

In the context of the present research, the hitherto analytical frame of reference that appropriates playwrights and their works into the canonicity of generational or ideological groups is equated to a fixed historiography in the literary drama in Nigeria. Mutation and alliance therefore, refer to departures and the changing trends in dramaturgy, which itself are a response to the changing process of history. Furthermore, play texts, which form the paradigms for this study, are noted to be either adaptations of other source texts or are historical plays. These theories therefore, allow the analysis to view the case studies in light of

the various histories that necessitated the crafting of each of these plays at their respective times. This juxtaposition of historical antecedents and the textwill then provide the justification for the shifts in ideo-aesthetics and social vision of the playwrights in each case. Ifatimehin (2017:83), reechoing Reinelt and Roach (1999) and also Barry (1995),underscores this view thus:

> The 'New Historicists paradigm suggest a continuous interaction between canonical texts by "great writers and the everyday cultural experience'. By implication, New historicism encourages a deconstructive reading of texts in the context of social realities. Characteristically, 'the New historicist situates the literary text in the political situation of its own day, while the Cultural materialist situates it within that of ours'

This study argues therefore, that just like the historical process itself, dramatic productions mutate with history and therefore, cannot be seen as locked up in some categories of fixed historiography. Abrams (2005:192) notes of this relationship that:

> New Historicism rejects the fallacy of mainstream criticism which views literary texts as autonomous body of fixed meanings that cohere to form. But on the contrary they see literary texts as consisting of diversity, of dissonance voices, and these voices express not only orthodox but also subordinate and subversive voices of the era in which the text is produced.

This position affirms the views of New Historicists as well as Cultural Materialists that history is not a homogeneous and stable pattern of facts. The events, which serve as the "background" to the literature of an era and which literature can simply reflect, or which can be adverted to are very much related. As such, the changes that occur in history affect the aesthetics and ideological focus of a playwright and his works. This accounts for mutation and alliance.

This study therefore, approaches the analysis of mutation and alliance in the selected texts using these functional outlines of the theories as provided by Barry (1995:179,186) first in the manner of New Historicists;

i. Juxtapose literary and non-literary texts, reading the former in the light of the latter,

ii. Try to ‘defamiliarise’ the canonicity of literary text detaching it from the accumulated weight of previous literary scholarship and seeing it as new,

iii. To approach the discourse in the postructuralists’ pattern that every aspect of reality is ‘textualised’ and those social structures which have predetermined ‘dominant discursive’ practice need to be supplanted.

Likewise, in the Cultural Materialists’ plane, the analysis will:

i. Read the literary text in order to enable us to recover its cultural and materialists’ contexts for social contests,

ii. Analyse selected paradigms in this study to re-appropriate the previous assumptions about them and

iii. To read the texts in a way that will free them from closure and conservative cultural and social assumptions of canonicity.

These theories thus, align with the fact that dramatic literature is a form of culture production that is shaped and reshaped by the wind of historical change. The cultural artefact therefore, in this context, the dramatic text needs to be re-examined along the major concerns of societal change. This is the position of Raymond Williams’ Culture Theory: “The Base and the Superstructure” model, which forms the basis of Cultural Materialism. Williams (1989:85), states that “culture is a whole way of life and the arts are part of a social organization which political and economic changes clearly, radically affect”. Williams (1977:54) asserts further that:

> What can then be seen as happening, in each transition is a historic development of finding new meanings, new forms and new definitions of the active values of literature to be seen, not as tied to the concept, which came to limit as well as to summarize them, but as elements of a continuing and changing practice which already substantially, and now at the level of theoretical redefinition, is moving beyond its old forms.

It surfices therefore to draw a conclusion from Branningan's (1999:Absract) view, that "New Historicism aims to show that each era or period has its own conceptual and ideological framework that the people of the past did not understand…in the same way that we do now". For a proper understanding of the cultural ideas in any stage in history therefore, the Cultural Materialist's approach needs to be applied. This is because "Cultural Materialism", he says, "aims to show that our political ideological systemmanipulates images, texts of the past to serve their interests, and that these images and texts can be interpreted from alternative and radically different perspectives".

3.3 Summary

The process of applying these theories in the analyses of the selected texts in the present study providesparadigms illustrating mutation and alliance as departures and radical breaks with conventions in the dramaturgy of the selected playwrights. It also shows the divergences and convergences of the ideo-aesthetic visions of the playwrights irrespective of hitherto ideological or generational grouping. These theories helpto highlightthe fact that changing moments in the historical conditions of the society are informing the deconstruction and a re-historicization of the dramaturgy in the selected texts and against their new cultural contexts. This argument isapplied to neutralise the rather fixed canonisation of literary dramatists and their works in generational or ideological categories, as this"myth" has to be reinterpreted in light of a new social order.

CHAPTER FOUR

MUTATION AND ALLIANCE: REVOLUTIONARY AND ANTI-REVOLUTIONARY DIMENSIONS

4.0 Introduction

Our foundation for textual analysis is premised on the New Historicists' and Cultural Materialists' predication thatthe art of interpretation must be placed within historical contexts.This is necessary, if the immanent meaning is to be understood against the changes that come with historical movement, which thereafter, alter perceptions. Certainly, these changes come with new significations and postulations that confer to the works of an artist, new meanings in the new historical situations. It is in this historicists' proposition that Akoh(2006:94), paraphrasing Murphy (1991),posits that:

> ...every writer necessarily 'grows' – aesthetically or ideologically or both – just as the society of the writer itself grows. In its growth or changing status, the society provides new content as a result of reality's ever readiness at offering new materials from which the writer investigates with unceasing zest and exploration. And since form and content are inseparable, the 'new' writer only needs to respond critically to his predecessors rather than canonise them.

Our analysis in this chapter therefore,looks at what changes the society has produced and which have impacted on works of our selected playwrights namely, Wole Soyinka, Femi Osofisan and Irene Salami-Agunloye in that order. Although the ideo-aesthetic shifts in the works of these playwrights differ, one significant fact that unites them is that the mutation in their plays are as a result of the individual playwright's artistic conviction that is shaped by the changing realities, which history has provided. This is common to each writer of every period. The writer's earlier views, however, may not necessarily be abandoned but in his or

her ideo-aesthetic reforms, he or she presents or reflects the same persisting social contradictions of society with a new approach to addressing them.

The task in this chapter is to analyse the selected texts within the ambience of historic movement. History has provided the playwright, a rich source of material circumstance to engage with as well as reappraise his or her previous stance. More than any other thematic concern, the preoccupation with contemporary socio-economic and political contexts for contest and human confrontation has been in the lead in forming the concerns of the Nigerian playwright. Sometimes too, there is the inevitability of falling back to the past in a manner of intertextual discourse to ratify the artist's position. In a typical liberal humanists' view therefore, the playwright is convinced that human nature is paradoxically changing yet, not fully changed. Human beings are sure to find themselves changing and at the same time, revolving in the same circle of contradiction. As Adeoti (2010:8) would argue, "to the liberal humanists, human passion, emotions are ever recurring in history and literary works depict this recurrence from one epoch or society to another. This implicates a greater valuation for 'continuity' upon which the aesthetics of adaptation is founded". Perhaps not only adaptation, but all recourse to the past and dialogue with canons of both myth and realism, must be seen in light of this postulation.

Pursuant to the first and second objectives of this study namely: to identify the features and patterns of mutation and alliance in the selected plays and to highlight the intertextual resonance(s) in these plays, this chapter in the first instance, attempts a critique of three out of the six selected plays from the three playwrights under study. They are:*King Baabu* by Wole Soyinka, *Tegonni (An African Antigone)* (henceforth *Tegonni…*) by Femi Osofisan and *More than Dancing* by Irene Salami-Agunloye in that order. Thus, we bear in mind the research questions guiding our inquiry that is first, what are the elemental features explaining mutation

and alliance in the selected plays?And second, how is the intertextual rendering of the selected plays providing a common ground for mutation and alliance?

As stated earlier, two of these paradigms are adaptations; these are *King Baabu* and *Tegonni…*bothcomment on the military era in Nigeria. *More than Dancing* is a commentary on return to Nigeria's democracy. Athough not a direct adaptation, the play finds its argument reinforced by archetypal representation, as history is cast simultaneously with the virtual world of the play. An apparent uniting concern in these three plays furthermore, is the move towards liberation or revolution through credible leadership and social transformation, which lifts the oppressed people out of their conditions of despair and moral strangulation. This also, interrogates the ideological projections in the plays as one of the objectives this study seeks to prove by*ericture,*(text and writng).

The critique of of each of these selected plays considers each playwright under a particular socio-political condition in contemporary time, which supposedly, informs the crafting of his/her plays. The effort of each playwright is also seen as focused toward addressing the need of the moment. These analyses are delt with under different subject matters that point tomutation and alliance. Furthermore, the analysis is hinged on the revisionism of the New historicists and Cultural materialists, which stresses the dual reality ofsituating the prevailing circumstances in both history and politics of time past and time present. Hence the need to contextualise this discourse according to subjects that justify our inquiry.

4.1.1Revolutionary Manifesto and Counter-Revolutionary Manifestations in Soyinka's Plays

The revolutionary manifesto in Wole Soyinka's *King Baabu* is not divorced from the much touted Manifesto of Communist Party from which Karl Marx and Frederick Engels are quoted to have stressed the relationship between the working class and the bourgeoisie. The dictum of

the Manifesto of the CommunistPartyactually is drawn from Marx who in 1848 wrote for the workers league (a secret society cum political party) that:

> The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle. Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild master and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed stood in constant opposition to one another, carried an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended, either in a revolutionary reconstruction of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes (1848:14).

Engels therefore, explains in the preface to the German edition (1883) that the basic thought running through the manifesto is that economic production and the structure of society of every historical epoch are necessarily arising from, and constitute the foundation for the political and intellectual history of the epoch. That consequently, (ever since the dissolution of the primeval communal ownership of land) all history has been a history of class struggle, of struggle between exploited and exploiting, between dominated and dominating classes at various stages of social evolution. Also, that this struggle, however, has now reached a stage where the exploited and oppressed class (the proletariat) can no longer emancipate itself from the class which exploits and oppresses it (the bourgeoisie), without at the same time, forever freeing the whole society from exploitation, oppression and class struggle.

At the heart of the proposition of the Manifesto of the Communist Party is the cause for struggle incumbent on the working class and for the liberation of itself and the whole society from the oppressor. At the same time, it means that there is no justification for the working class to fight against its internal exploitation and oppression without bearing the burden of the overall consequence this would have on the society. Within this nexus of relationship is the formulation of “revolution”, the fight for all, by all and against the oppressing class. This is often extended to mean revolutionary aesthetic or revolutionary poetics in the arts.

The manifesto of revolution in theatre practice generally, presupposes that theatre of any kind could serve as instrument of socio-economic and political transformation. This could be

achieved through enlightenment and mobilization of the society against forces of oppression, economic exploitation and unjust discrimination. In this case, the theatre through its (re)presentations is unequivocal about these injustices and rises radically against the status quo, while advocating for freedom of all. Chima Osakwe (2014:8) explains further that:

> A play in which characters representing opposing ideological positions are locked in a class struggle, especially between an oppressive state or the oppressed masses, is revolutionary if it concludes with the oppressed characters winning their legitimate demands and are likely to be living happily henceforth even if the liberation did (sic) not result in the downfall of the government.

He states further that:

> As primarily understood here, a play is revolutionary so long as the oppressed characters are actively involved in the process of liberation, whether or not their effort is successful. That means that rather than continue thinking of themselves as victims and simply lamenting or bemoaning their fate the oppressed are clearly depicted as fighting back. The technique of fighting back may comprise only action, words or both, but it must be such that we get the impression that the underprivileged are not willing to accept oppression with stoic resignation (2014:9).

The cause to fight back continually is the emphasis of the present analysis, which responds to our first objective, placing Wole Soyinka's *King Baabu* on a different pedestal from his preceding revolutionary efforts. A little example from two plays will help to drive home the point, which suggests this call for continuous struggle in *King Baabu*.

The effort at a revolutionary reading of Soyinka indicates that the playwright's dramaturgyseems tobe evolving with the realities of the time. Example could be cited with, not only his old play like *The Swamp Dwellers*(1964)but also a latter play,*Beatification of Area Boy*(2002).Set in the1960s,*The Swamp Dwellers* tackles the exploitative nature of the capitalist political economy that was taking roots in the newly independent Nigerian state in the early 1960s. Jones (1973:39) describes the scenario surrounding *The Swamp Dwellers*, noting that:

> The village in the swamps which is the setting of the play seems to be poised on the edge of change. It had survived within its strictly sanctioned borders without much threat from outside influences but now these outside influences have begun to make steady encroachments so that a point of near crisis has been reached. The drain of the

> youth away to the city no less than the predatory swamps threatens the continued existence of the village.

This apparent rural to urban drift, which the illusions of political independence promise, is what triggers Igwezu's discontent coupled with his economic and social circumstances. Igwezu's protestation of his exploitation by his twin brother, Awuchike, who is well established in business in the city could not liberate him and his likes, who despite their toiling in the community, have remained trapped in the exploitation of absolute rulers in the garb of religion and tradition. The revolutionary emphasis in *The Swamp Dwellers* is as summarised by Jones (1973:41) thus:

> This play is sometime seen as a rebellion or at least a questioning of the tradition by the young –this element is certainly there- but the influence of not-so-young beggar from the outside of the society should not be minimized. That he is a threat to the established order is seen as in the unspoken antagonism between himself and the pillar of the old order- the Kadiye...his mechanical gift of money is worthlessly spurned by the begger who 'turns his bowl upside-down' when the Kadiye's servant offers to drop a coin in it.

Or that:

> When Igwezu challenges the priest and subjects him (in the manner of the begger) to a series of questioning, he is challenging the whole conservative basis of life in the village by which the Kadiye, acting on behalf of the serpent, sets the bounds of human conduct, and swallows their offerings with little regards to their fates (Jones, 1973:44).

But more than the questioning of tradition, the revolutionary manifesto in this play extends to the interrogation of the distribution of wealth, which endows others and leaves many pauperised in the same society of material and labour relations.

The major criticism in *The Swamp Dwellers* just like other plays in the same group mentioned elsewhere in this study concerns the inability of the playwright to raise the struggle for liberation from the plain of individual heroes to that of collective struggle. The ultimate weakness also, of the revolutionary act of the beggar and his protégé Igwezu is clearly seen as Igwezu leaves the village because he has challenged the basis of its existence and must not be there when the people will call for the blood of their adversaries. This is seen as a negative

reaction from someone who ordinarily should be the revolutionary leader. Igwezu acquires the revolutionary spirit from the beggar but he does not develop above that to have a counterrevolutionary spirit.

Comparatively, in a play like *Beatification of Area Boy* Soyinka formulates a new manifestowhere the strengthof the proletariat is sourced as a recipe for revolution in contemporary time. Set at the peak of the military era of the late 1990s, Soyinka expands his scope, evolving a more committed collective mass, which stands against the brute force of dictatorship at that time. Yet, despite the gains in class suicide in characters like Sanda and Miseyi, the oppressed class could not bring down the status quo. As Akoh (2006:74) rightly asserts about Sanda:

> Soyinka discards with the destructive aspect of Ogun (common in previous plays) and presents us with his resoluteness and benevolence in Sanda. Hitherto, his Ogunian characters, heroes and anti-heroes never joined or organised the people against the establishment (which they themselves are part of). In this new garb, Sanda becomes the pathfinder in his exploration of alternatives to uncritically accepted status quo and accordingly acts as a buffer against the continued emasculation of the weak, the unprotected and the beleaguered.

For Sanda to achieve the feat of providing exemplary leadership to this oppressed community, he first of all empties himself of his personality, of the sense of achievement of a university graduate. This is seen as a welcome development, having abandoned his class and risking his life to lead an offensive against the common enemy. Miseyi, who also abandons her class, strengthens Sanda's resolve ultimately. Class wise, the duo ordinarily do not belong to this group of the 'rejected' of society. Their revolutionary efforts also could not be rated above the consciousness, which Soyinka through his "beatified Area boy" Sanda provides for the oppressed class in this play. The spirit of counter revolution is not well fertilized in his protagonist class of the oppressed.

The postulation of revolutionary manifesto in Soyinka's works could best be summed up in Akoh's (2006:76) remarks as drawn especially from *Beatification of AreaBoy* but which is

extended a little more in the present study, making suggestion into the search for our first objective that:

> Although the revolution may not be seen as complete, one can say that the play initiates the beginning of equipping the masses with weapons for confronting their bizarre conditions. If Soyinka through his satirical punches in this play has not been able to bring the 'mighty' down from their seats, we would agree with James Gibbs that he has at least made them squirm and begun to empower those of 'lower degree'. The ending of the play confirms the new Soyinka in a clearly ideologically defined position on the side of the mass of the people.

So, Miseyi expresses fear for the continued presence of the military, which may mar their future revolutionary plans for the "Marokos" of their nation and the world.Nevertheless, Soyinka assures his audience through Sanda that "they (the military) won't always be there" (Soyinka, 2007:103).

The culmination of this revolutionary struggle appears to have been resolved in *King Baabu*. The persistent battle with military dictatorship, which is now history, and perhaps not with civilian dictatorship, which the former is quickly metamorphosing into, is re-enacted in this play. Nevertheless, it is the contention of the present study that in *King Baabu*, Soyinka does not only express enormous revolutionary tendency, but has also introduced a counter-revolutionary spirit. This development is an advancement of the playwright's dramaturgy, contrasting his past representations of tragic heroes, anti-heroes or weak revolutionary heroes to rounded revolutionary characters in a revolutionary struggle.

The question then is how does Soynka progress from this individualistic revolutionary praxis, both in aesthetic make-up and in ideology? Could the eventual privileging of the lower class and their triumph in the present play by Soyinka provide one of our basic elemental features of mutation and alliances in ideology? This couldgradually lead to the basic distinguishing feature of his mutation and alliance in the present play under study. With these objectives in

mind, the study engages in the critique of Soyinka's *King Baabu* towards responding to our first and second research questions.

4.1.2 Synopsis of *King Baabu*

King Baabu opens in the fictional state of Guatuna in front of the residence of the former Chief of Army Staff, late General Uzi (lately deceased), obviously now being occupied by General Basha Bash following a recent military coup d'état and change of government. Maariya engages her beloved and adversative husband, Basha Bash, in a crucial dialogue, which borders on her obsessive ambition of becoming the First Lady. She thus prompts her husband to take over power from his Commander-in-Chief. This is against the background of discontent and resentment Maariya shows on the appointment of her husband, Basha Bash, as Minister of Agriculture in the newly established revolutionary government of General Potipoo. This impresses negatively upon Basha who outrightly rejects his wife's proposal. She, on account of this, threatens to expose him to his aides who she says will be interested to know how 'their General leaks into his pants'. With this, Basha is therefore, blackmailed by his wife into a sudden obsession with getting rich, using public funds. Yet, his strategy is too slow for the highly materialistic and power-mongering wife, Maariya.

Nevertheless, Maariya's plot seems preserved for the meeting of the Supreme Council for Advance Redemption (SCAR), the highest policy-making and policy-implementation body of the state of Guatuna. Typical of all military regimes in Nigeria, SCAR has a largely military membership with filters of civilian members. In this case, the religious', royalty's, and organised labour's interests all are respectively represented by the Divine Order of Prelates Ecumenical (Dope), Royal Estates Nominal and Traditional (Rent), and Recognised and Organised Union of all Trades (Rout). With feebleminded General Potipoo presiding and assisted by Basha Bash, Chief of Army Staff and Minister of Agriculture, the Council takes reports from officers and members. Basha betrays his excessive greed, not only through his

melodramatic physiognomy, but more by his attempt at personalising the huge budgetary resources allocated to his pet programme Operation Feed the Stomach. Two somewhat perceptive officers, Shoki and Kpoki, sense Basha's insidious motives and raise alarm leading to a unanimous clamour for accountability and auditing, beginning from his office as Army Chief,which late General Uzi once occupied. Basha, in the interim, is able to convince the Commander-in-Chief, General Potipoo, that such huge allocation is needed in their bid for democratisation and making theirs the last military government in Guatuna, especially as he promises the latter a fair deal in the share of the loot from fertilizer allocation, by 'fertilizing his Saudi account'.

The meeting, however, comes to an abrupt adjournment just as the vote for the proposed audit is about to be ratified because of a phantom report of an insurrection that threatens both the nation and the life of General Potipoo. Unknown to all, the report is the contrived handiwork of Maariya, who wants to save her husband from the imminent probe and as well hasten his ascension to power. Thus, Potipoo is whisked into 'safe hiding' and Basha assumes control as the Commander-in-Chief. By this, Maariya automatically realises her long-standing ambition of becoming First Lady. But before Potipoo is escorted into his hiding, he is manipulated into signing the recommendation for the accelerated promotion of some officers, preparatory to becoming civilians, on retirement.

In an attempt to douse the public outcry for democratic governance, Basha Bash transforms himself into a monarch after taking power as King Baabu. It is in this spirit of democracy, and in order to carry along 'those western busybodies', that Baabu's coup against his principal, General Potipoo, had to be bloodless – again, with Maariya's recommendation. Ironically, on assumption of full control of the reins of power, Baabu unleashes his personal inimical programme of personal wealth, *Pax Baabunia*. Baabu dynasty of hereditary monarchy, are all

under the new guise of 'reinventing Africa'. His son, Biibabae, automatically becomes heir apparent to the throne. This means the investment of more resources on personal security and survival, the implementation of which yields one evil after another. Paradoxically too, he becomes prisoner to his self-machinations as he now operates according to the whims and caprices of court philosophers, marabouts, and pseudo-intellectuals like Tikim, who are more loyal to the spirit of wealth and thus, give Baabu's emptiness a veneer of seriousness.

King Baabu's unpopular revolutionary government, all through its life span, has to contend with opposition from General Potipoo who lives in the mountains with a handful of dissidents helping him to stage a comeback. With the help of his two sons, Potiplan and Potiplum, and dissident officers, Shoki and Kpoki; also, Rout, Dope and Rent, all who have taken to a renewed ideological stance, Potipoo is able to stage a counter revolution. Meanwhile, Baabu's sexual urge and orgy degenerates into more oddities and obscenities until, overpowered by the rhino powder, he is 'overdosed' by sexual indulgence and dies from it. In the end, Potipoo's triumphant entry with his new counterrevolutionary vanguard signals a new dawn for the state of Guatuna (Adapted from Akoh, 2006).

4.1.3 Revolutionary Dimensions in*King Baabu*

King Baabu is based on a revolutionary attempt by an oppressed community, firstly, within the ranks of the ruling class itself and secondly, the masses, that is, the working class and the peasants. The initial revolutionary effort is succeeded by two other counterrevolutions, making it a three-phased revolutionary statement. This schema is situated in the plot of the play as first, the overthrow of former president; General Rajinda by General Potipoo and his cohort General Basha Bash; second, the ousting of General, later, President Potipoo by General Basha who later becomes King Baabu; and then third, a counterrevolution by Potipoo, which results in the fall of King Baabu.

From the day of political independence 1960 to date, Nigeria has witnessed a total of six military coup d'états, which resulted into change of governments. These can be categorized further in two; that is from civilian government to military rule and from military rule to another military take over.*King Baabu* depicts these scenarios and how sometimes they happen in quick succession. In the case of military to military take over, which has always been by lower ranks against their superior officers, the mutineers see their action as revolutionary. These actions are a result of accumulated grievances occasioned by structural inequalities that characterise the society and replicating itself in the formations of labour and governance. This validates a class war, which is informed by the discontent from the lower ranks. Typical of any revolutionary play, as Osakwe (2014:4) would put it, that:

> Revolution is a terminal signal of rejection by the under privileged of the unjust social order that oppresses them. This question of unjust economic disparity and unequal political privilege among the various members of any society is also 'social Question'.

In the play, we are not immediately exposed to the reason for military take over and over throw of the government of Rajinda. However, it is inferred from the disposition of General Potipoo and Basha, the heroes and anti-hero of the play, that they are officers who are committed to duty but appeared marginalized in the scheme of things. The following dialogue between Maariya and her husband, Basha Bash, reveals this conflict, which hints on the probable motive behind the coup.

> **Maariya:** Early in the morning for you to shake out your empty piss-pot and put some solid ideas in it. Are we going to die pauper?
>
> **Basha:** Die pauper? I hear you say 'die paupers' you early morning pestilence on a man's peace? Or my hearing dislocated by all the shooting and death screaming and grenade bursting from throwing Rajinda's gover'ment? You telling me this pinnacle of achievement not deserved long repose of mind? Is this summer of our contentment not dully earned and richly deserved? (*King Baabu*, pg. 1).

This clearly shows that reward lies beneath every act of gallantry in the military circle. The absence of this is what pushes the subordinate to seek justice. As Basha insinuates, he thinks

his acts of 'shooting', grenade and 'busting' is richly rewarded and thus, well deserved by his attainment of the 'pinnacle' of his professional rank as Chief of Army Staff. Even though his ambitious wife, Maariya, feels otherwise when she retorts that the whole matter is to be rich "whether deserved or not is nobody's business" (*King Baabu* pg. 1). This is where social question in this play conflicts with acquisitiveness.

On the other hand, the same revolutionary character is again inferred about General Potipoo from Maariya who re-echoes her husband's eulogising of his personality. Maariya, despite her sarcastic disposition, could not agree less with her husband when she orders Fantasimu to hang the portrait of General Potipoo in replacement of the former president's. She says:

> Throw it on the rubbish heap. His time is past and he's lucky to have left with his skin in one piece. Throw it out and hang the picture of our new Commander-in-Chief, General Potipoo, a man, as my dear spouse General Basha was just saying, a man of vision and character and valour and compassion and what else, for whom my husband is ready to die the death of a thousand cuts. He said it this morning. He says it every day (*King Baabu*, pg. 10).

We get further confirmation of Potipoo's character from his maiden address to his Supreme Council. He is shown to be open-minded and desires forthrightness in governance. He says:

> **Potipoo:** Now that the Divine Ruler has seen fit to place the reins of this nation in our hands we must move to earn the trust of the people, and of God. The Supreme Council for Advance Redemption-note, by the way that the word Military is missing in that title for the first time, in thehistory of coup d'état in this nation... (*King Baabu*, pg. 11).

In later remarks, Potipoo raises some important concerns, which his revolutionary government is sure to tackle. The two most urgent demands are to permanently institute democracy and stamp out corruption. In his words he says:

> ...Democracy is the language of the world, and we have chosen to learn to speak it. We may stammer a little at the beginning, but with God's help, and the guidance of our civilian members, we shall become fluent in his new language. Our mission is nothing less than a revolution (*King Baabu*, pg. 12).

Again he asserts:

> Thank you comrade Rout, thank you. And now to business. First item on our revolutionary agenda is Eradicating Corruption! Now, if we must clean up

> corruption, we must begin from within our ranks. We must take the lead. I propose therefore that all officers assigned to political and administrative duties must begin with public declaration of their assets. (*Deafening silence*.)you understand what I mean-bank accounts local and foreign, business interests, property, stock and shares etc. etc.Any comments, gentlemen? Gentlemen! (*King Baabu,* pg. 12-13).

From the foregoing, it could be seen, the resoluteness and assertiveness in General Potipoo's character, typical of revolutionary leaders. We can link this then to the motive behind the coup in this play. This is to say in the first instance, despite the incidents that unfold in the play, we can isolate these characters and their motives to pin down the revolutionary manifesto in *King Baabu.*

Military regimes despite their claim for liberation always suffer the crisis of legitimacy. As a result of this, they have always found allies in the civilian population to consolidate on their legitimacy. Besides this, there is the seeming concern that the struggle ultimately must be the preserve of the people. This reality however, has most times been abused by various military regimes in Nigeria as well asin other parts of the world. This is the fact that Soyinka tries to represent in the play. In the opening scene of the inaugural meeting of the supreme council, SCAR, the stage direction subtly drives home this point:

> *Inaugural meeting of SCAR, Supreme Council for Advance Redemption.General Potipoo presiding. Representatives of the civilian 'legitimizing' bodies- the President of the Recognised and Organised Union of All Trades-in Mao suit and cap; President of the Divine Order of Prelates Ecumenical; and the President of Royal Estate Nominal and Traditional-both in full regalia. The Heads of Services are in full service uniform, encrusted with ribbons and medals...*

This composition is an acknowledgment of the fact that real power belongs to the people. This is echoed in the dialogue that followed the declaration of democratic intention of the new government of General Potipoo.

> **Rout:** Power to the people!
>
> **Tikim:** Long live the people(*King Baabu* pg.11).

Idealy, all leaders are representative of the people and they hold the trust of power on behalf of the people and for their wellbeing. However, later revelations show that these people's representatives are constructed as amenable to and most often also, as appendages for exploitative intents. This is why the notion of "legitimizing" is being interrogated in this context as it will later come to change the narrative of the revolutionary intent of the play in Baabu's government.

It is acknowledged still, that in this and other events of the play, the people are in their various collective temperaments as workers, represented by a Workers Union, as the peasantry represented by their natural rulers, and as religious faithfuls represented by their religious heads. That is why, in trying to throw their lot for the audit, which is to precede the anti-corruption fight of the new revolutionary government, the people's representatives make it clear that their opinion must represent the wishes of the people. In this dialogue, the three representatives of the people make it clear that:

> **Rout:** As representative of the Recognised and Organised Labour Union, I support the necessity of an audit as the minimal condition of our continued cooperation.
>
> **Dope:** We risk further loss in our dwindling congregation if it became known that we fail to support the principle of accountability. Give us something to take back, that's all we're asking...
>
> **Rent:** Our crowns are at risk. The Army has made life difficult for traditional rulers. If we dont't return to our subjects with something tangible...the people are angry, very angry...
>
> **Rent:** Amen. This is our chance to regain some reputation with the people. We're sorry but, our palaces may be bunt over our heads if they learn that we fail to support even this level of accountability (*King Baabu,* pg.19).

The confirmation of the strength of the people is seen in their reaction to successive change of military regime in all guises despite the efforts of their leaders to convince them otherwise. The crowd as a chorus rebuffs their representative saying:

> **Crowd:** Enough of Army rascals,
> Down with Rajinda

Down with Potipoo,
Away with Basha Bash.
Down with the Army
Long live Democracy (*King Baabu pg.*41).

In another encounter, the people have cause to raise doubts at the counter-revolutionary government of King Baabu despite all the entreaties of their representatives. As a matter of fact, they are smart to question the complicity of their leaders as well. This too is heard from their voices thus:

Crowd: Hey, that's comrade Rout.
Let's hear what he has to say.
Why should we? He's sold out.
Silence for Comrade Rout!
No way. Out! Out! Out Rout Out
Out! Out! Out, Rout! (*King Baabu,* pg. 42).

The actions of the people say it all as the people extend their verbal courage to physical action aimed at subverting Baabu's obnoxious government. The following stage direction explains the strong will of the people:

The crowd begins to throw missiles. Fantasimu rushes him to a corner of the balcony while his aides ready their sub-machine guns. Maariya quickly steps forward, dodging missiles and fielding them off with trays and royal insignia
(*King Baabu,* pg. 46).

It is thus, to suggest that the crafting of the play despite its satiric import as a critical realism, yet, has a serious revolutionary implication. This is the argument of Akoh (2006:26) that:

> The alliance between socialism and realism (socialist realism in particular) is fore-grounded on (sic) the revolutionary movement of the proletariat. This is because any regime that is posed on war or dependce on the oppression or confusion of the people must necessarily tend towards suppression of realism as is common with military and dictatorial civilian regimes in Africa.

The feature of alliance therefore, in this playas it is being sought for from our first objective is in the dual nature of the play as both a critical realism and a socialist realism.

The revolutionary intent of the playwright thus, is woven along the technique of critical realism and socialist realism. Here, the temperament of the playwright combines critical realism through satire and socialist criticism in its radical vent. The play therefore, easily emits

dramatic twists and ironies, which lead ultimately to its climax. Yet, this is not without the compelling movement of history, which in the new historicist's approach; we intend to subject our analysis to politics and historic movement. The second objective of this study is to be sought for in the contradiction that global revolutionary movements offer us and that is re-echoed as a circle of human folly. This also justifies the essence of the play as an adaptation as explained further in the next section of the study.

4.1.4 Counter-revolutionaryManifestations in*King Baabu*

The concept of counter-revolution or counter-revolutionary is used in two senses. The first implies that which goes against the revolutionary tenets and the second, refers to the action at reasserting genuine revolution or that, which supplants a de facto revolution. The argument here is guided by Vasquez's (1973:121) submission that all revolutions are at the same time the expression of sharp intra or inter class contradictions and radical attempts at resolving those contradictions. Vasquez stresses the fact that when they succeed, revolutionary movements constitute a historical leap. However, and unfortunately too, that it should be noted, historical time flows more rapidly, containing in it, as Marx (1867:231)postulated, the "seed for its own destruction". This means that the claim at any revolution is not without the imperfection that will trigger yet another round of revolt against the status quo.

In line with these thoughts, Vasquez(1973:121) therefore, notes that throughout history, and for one reason or the other, revolutions are not always free from tragic twists. He stresses as a matter of fact that historically revolutions are not always victorious; they sometimes plunge into catastrophe or defeat. When a revolution heads inexorably towards its death, its failure means death, a tragedy for it subjects. It thus, ends in its own specific way, by absorbing through all its pores the substance of tragedy. To this end, conflicts within the context of

every revolution define their purposes and could ultimately, destroy any possibility of derailing its cause or leads to the tragic end of its heroes.

King Baabu (2003)is an adaptation of Alfred Jarry's *Ubu Roi*,a historical-politcalsatire. Soyinka from the onset, subtitles his play "a play in the manner-roughly- of Alfred Jarry". Jarry's Ubu Plays,as they are alsocalled, are a collection of his childhood creative effort apparently in ridicule of a totalitarian or better still, a fascist regime in France of 1896. From this analogy, there seems to be a universal trans-historical dimension to tyranny as represented by both Soyinka and Jarry and perhaps other playwrights on these themes (Adeoti, 2010:26). This is also the point Iji (2014:87) makes when he remarks that:

> With regards to its adaptation *tour de force*, Soyinka's *King Baabu* takes its bearings from various sources. It is a particularly savage metamorphosis of Faustian forces, manifestly a Mephistophelian burlesque comedy of unsurpassed post-modernist dramatic sensibilities, in Nigerian costumes. Soyinka's copious debt to Alfred Jarry's *King Ubu*, itself a parody of Shakespeares's Machbeth, both in characterization or thematic rendition or plot construction, is unconcealed.

This line of influences runs from English renaissance poet and playwright, Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Fautus* (1588) to Shakespeare's crafting of *Macbeth*, (1623). Later, German romantic poet and dramatist, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, adapts Marlowe's play as *Faust* (1808/1832), a poetic play. All these are reminiscences of the recurrence of human folly, greed through bizarre inhuman machinations. When situations like these present themselves in literature of contemporary time, we must reckon with the fact, as Adeoti (2010:22) notes that:

> There is a kind of cynicism/pessimism underlying the similarity of human experience in the universe. When an adaptation portrays vices in a contemporary society, what is being said is that such vices already treated in the pre-text persist in spite of the passage of time and human claim to progress and civilization. In that regard there is a cynical conception of the march of human history with much movement and little progress.

It suffices therefore, to say that situations like these always call for an urgent and radical step, which the society must resort to in order to salvage the decay in human progress

hence,writers' desire to always put across revolutionary consciousness. Nevertheless, efforts at revolution have always been met with ironic twists where the supposed vectors of revolution themselves transform into revolutionary tyrants and anti-people in the manner ofRussia's Joseph Stalin, China's Mao Zedong, Germany's Adolf Hitler, Italy's Benito Mussolini, Libya's Muammar Quaddafi, Zaire's Mubutu Sese Seko and North Korea's Kim Jong Un. In this case there has to be counter-revolution that will reassert the true revolution. This is the case with Wole Soyinka (1988:43)who in the present play, tries to address especially, these recurrences or in his well known term, the "cyclic repetitiveness of human stupidity". Herein lies the first counterrevolutionary manifestation, as it is represented in play *King Baabu,* which culminates in the palace coup d'état staged by Basha Bash against Potipoo.

Basha's counter-revolution is nurtured within the apparent context of Potipoo's feeblemindedness coupled with the crass ambition of his wife, Maariya. When finally, she conceives the idea of Basha's takeover, she does that in the guise of the revolutionary spirit,which Potipoo's government enjoys. She believes that what is made to reflect the protection of the revolutionary government is what will definitely appeal to the people. She says:

> **Maariya:** As Chief of Army Staff you are in charge of troop movement. So? You take-troops-your-elite-troops-to-put-down-the-REBELLION! And of course your other duty is to ensure the safety of your Commander-in-Chief, not so? So you replace the guards-whom you will accuse of being still loyal to that deposed bastard husband of Moriya, Rajinda, and thereby you-make-him General Potipoo-a-virtual-prisoner...
> From virtual prisoner to prisoner for real. You find him a comfortable dungeon and then...
>
> **Basha:** You're saying...you want me to take over power? I depose Potipoo you mean?
>
> **Maariya:** Late, but the penny finally drops. The nation needs its redeemer. Is Potipoo a better man than you? Just because he went to Sandhurst and West Point while you came up through the ranks. But that's where you have the

> advantage. The troops know you. It's not so long since you were their sergeant major. You are what is called the soldier's soldier (*King Baabu,* pg. 23).

She convinces her husband further with a sense of confidence that he has the full cover of the Rapid Disposal Corps who are to serve as his counter force. The same goes to the working class. She says:

> **Maariya:** As long as there is dirty work to do, their commander Bhieu will back you, you just tell them which way you want them to jump, and they'll jump. And then we've got Rout. Once you have the workers, you have the people (*King Baabu,* pg. 25).

At various times between the years 1990 and 2000, the various military governments in Nigeria have had cause to establish extra forces such as the National Guard and Department of State Services. All these were used to counter the activities of the armed forces of the country and to facilitate the fascist tendencies of the supposed "messianic" military governments. The logic was, where the might of the people could not be counted upon and the armed forces were not to be trusted, the government resorted to a counter force.

In the end, Maariya's scheme pays off. Just like Basha, Rout also yields to her demands. The following dialogue between Maariya and Rout shows her mission is accomplished. She has succeeded in turning the table against Potipoo leading to a counter coup.

> **Maariya:** Thank you. Go and spread the word among the workers. Don't forget the farmers and other peasants. And the market women. Use the internet. Spread the word to allthe students. We need everybody to demonstrate in favour of Army audit. Otherwise, Potipoo will overrule Basha and eliminate all progressives on the council.
>
> **Rout:** (*takes envelope*) Madam's thoughtfulness is deeply appreciated by the masses. This will enable us to start mobilization immediately. Our workers have been waiting only for this moment. When labour sneezes, watch even the Army catches cold (*King Baabu,* pg. 26-7).

The counter-revolution of Basha therefore, does not come to us as a surprise as he adequately makes his move to be seen as a noble act of salvaging the country. This is the same manner successive military governments in Nigeria's history have always claimed. He announces the

precarious moment (though in a virtual sense) the country is in. This is a way of pushing down the throat of his fellow officers his ascendancy. In this exchange with Kpoki and Shoki, Basha raises a false alarm saying:

> **Bash:** Gentlemen, gentlemen, officers and gentlemen. The government escaping a very narrow escape.
>
> **Kpoki:** From what?
>
> **Basha:** From treachery, and butchery, from stratagems and mayhem, from catastrophe and apostrophe. We would all have meet butchery in our bed or else butchery would have met us on the road. We were for the high jump, from Potipoo downwards fortunately, we have able to spirit away the Commander- in-Chief, General Potipoo, to safety for his own safety. In the meantime, he place us in full charge of all troops and troop movements in order to put down the insurrection
>
> **Shoki:** (*scornfully*) Do you mean we now take orders from you? (*King Baabu*, pg. 33).

All the arguments and insinuations are brought to a climax as Basha orders Kpoki to go and instantly, make a broadcast to the nation about the change in government. He affirms this saying:

> **Basha:** The nation is needing message of reassuring. News of an attempted mutiny is dangerous for our programme of transition to democracy. Minister for Public Enlightenment nearly ready with speech...wait till you see fine speech. Tikim read me some sentence-very full of democracy and how we fight all danger to democracy and fighting corruption up and down and right and left and so on and so forth. Make the people very happy when they hear it-Brigadier...
>
> ...Go on Brigadier, I think you will like the speech. It gets signature of General Potipoo himself at the bottom, so everything is as saying goes, very legitimate. We have promised there will be no more coups in the nation, and there is no coup, only a change of government...

He finally announces:

> **Basha:** So, just to avoid any misunderstanding, my humble self is the new Head of State and Commander-in-Chief of Armed Forces. And looking after Ministry of Petroleum. As Chief Officer Commanding, which I make you now do the duty of broadcast to the nation to let our people know that everything is under control. Is right? I think General Potipoo has peacefully resigned, of his own free will... (*King Baabu,* pg. 34-5).

The conduct of Basha in government as "King Baabu" ironically, says it all that the motives of his coming to power are contrary to the liberation he promises. He institutes a false

benevolence, which he uses to muster support for his illegitimate government. His actions are rather reactionary and oppressive in nature as well as anti-people. In the precepts of his wife, he distributes generously, the country's money.He urges the people to spend freely, to eat all the food he has provided for them to celebrate his coming to power but promising them that "Papa Baabu going to make you work for it later, you bet!" (*King Baabu,* pg. 49). This is more in the fashionof the "Udoji Reform" of General Yakubu Gowon in the 1970s, which impels government to dole out money to citizens as goodwill to ganer support for the then Military regime.

Baabu's clamp down on or rather crack down on the banking sector under his regime demonstrates his high-handedness. He deliberately misreads the economic and financial control of the banks as "economic sabotage", which has to be dealt with by decrees made to act "retroactively" (*King Baabu,* pg. 50-1). This implies tackling offenses committed even before the time the government assumes power or that the law is promulgated. This is an allusion to a similar scenario, which Soyinka painted in his play *From Zia with Love*(1992)where the military government of General Babangida in the 1990s promulgated a decree to punish drug offendersunder his regime. Mowah (2001:16) observes that "in *From Zia with Love*, the essential feature of post-colonialism is the preservation of the apprehension of salutary values through the contextualization of hypocrisy and false-hood legitimized by diabolical retroactive laws". This anti-patriotic act is sealed finally by the confiscation of all the banks under Baabu's regime.

The antics of Baabu's regime are anti-people and therefore, counter-revolutionary. For instance, his insensitive treatment of the common people who come to petition him on their plights is one scenario that shows this. His ridiculous handling of the petitioner who comes to complain of his being thrown out of his house is rather callous. He describes the victim's sleeping outside with his family as symbolic of his government efficiency. He says, just like

his government, which operates in the open-air, any activity in like manner is justified as in his words, "...then we already reach the Promised Land" (*King Baabu,* pg. 56).

The extortion wreaked on the groups of marabouts, cult priests, and crystal-ball gazers and oriental mystics by Dope and Rent speaks much of King Baabu's rippling oppression. For subjects of a state who come to render services to the president, to undergo suchill treatment in the hands of people who are supposedly, their representatives, is quite contrary to revolutionary tenets. The following exchange explains this scenario:

> **Dope:** Down! Down! Where do you think you are? (*The***Marabout***slips***Dope** a *bulky envelope, while the***Oriental Mystic***does the same to***Rent**. *Both look at each other and reach an instant understanding.*) These two go first. Everyone else Back!
>
> **Rent:** Keep them in line while I usher in these two will you. Can you manage or shall I summon Fantasimu?
>
> **Dope:** I have lots of experience with rebellious congregations. Go ahead. (*To crowd*.) We're all brothers and sisters in spirit, but that's no reason for us to get so carried away that we forget all moral decorum. And *procedure*! Let me remind you all that we have a Ministry of Fee-nice, to which you have to pay some respect. There is a little matter of an audience fee, right? To the best of my knowledge, none of you has settled it. That is not nice, is it? I shall therefore settle myself at this little table and you can all come up nicely with your envelopes, which of course shall be used to determine in what order you arrive here, and thus, in what order you shall have audience with His Majesty Pa Baabu (*King Baabu,* pg. 57-8).

Finally, the inhuman act of torturing prisoners and amputation of citizens'hands in an effort to suppress their right to dissent is contrary to the principle of revolution. It is expected that under a revolutionary government, the welfare and rights of the citizens are the ultimate goal because the government thrives by the will of the people.Ironically, the people's right to express themselves in a democratic process, as it is in the case of the Mayor and the people of Batwere is met with brutal sanctions as expressed in the play. In the history of Nigeria, pro-democracy advocates and civil liberty actors have been sentenced to death and otherswere lucky to have their death sentence commuted to life imprisonment as a way to show amnesty. The cases of late Ken Saro Wiwa and the seven Ogoni leaders, late Shehu Musa Yar'adua,

late Chief M.K.O Abiola under the Abacha era in the 1990s cannot be forgotten in a hurry. These acts of repression of the opposition negate the goal of revolution and it is therefore, counter-revolutionary.

Conversely, when one considers yet another counter-revolutionary step, especially that which brings down the government of King Baabu, there is reason to feel that Soyinka has tried to resolve the complex question of class contest and ideology. This also projects a new social vision in his dramaturgy. The third and fourth objectives of the study, which border on the ideological posture of the plays considered and the social vision of the playwright are treatedfrom this point of the analysis. On the ideological temperament of the play, Soyinka dispenses with the contestable old question of the "hidden class war", which Jeyifo (1985:11) makes us believe exists in some, if not all of Soyinka's plays. In like manner, Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1972:65) draws attention to the fact that one problem with Soyinka's literature is the fact thatthey are populated with merely fictional and mythic characters. He sees them therefore, as not convincing enough to depict the sensuousness of class struggle, but that if in any attempt at all, they are also faceless and undefined. On the contrary, Onoge (2007:473) argues that imagined characters are not "free-floating individuals" but that characters who populate a writer's fictional world whether they are real or imagined belonged to social classes "since Marxists hold that the working masses are the true makers of history, the images of the masses contain in literature are crucial signal of a writer's standpoint". This is the thrust of the argument in the next phase of Soyinka's counter-revolution in *King Baabu.*

Elsewhere, this study has tried to argue for the strength of the working class, the masses and the oppressed, as represented in their representatives Rout, Rent, and Dope. This has further been proved by their action for or against the people. In the present state of conflict to counter Baabu's oppressive regime, the trio have shown a renewed consciousness to join forces in the

revolt to overthrow Baabu's government and to institute the rule of the people. Rout, when confronted on his role in the oppressive regime of King Baabu, confesses:

> **Rout:** It was a gross misreading of the historic forces at work, nothing less than bourgeois deviationism and criminal adventurism. I am not afraid of self criticism and I submit myself, if needed, to revolutionary justice...I have tried to make amend. I have mobilized the proletariats for the final onslaught on the monster. This alliance between the suffering masses, workers, and peasants and the progressive intellectuals will lead to a definitive installation of the dictatorship of the proletariats and the end of militarist interventionism (*King Baabu,* pg. 87).

Even Potipoo the leader of the counter-revolution is surprised at the sudden change and determination of Rout. Rout has just told them that "the people are ready. The workers are on the move. The petroleum workers will blow up the pipes and provide a wall of fire to consume Baabu's forces. "You shall witness a popular uprising that will go down in history books." (*King Baabu,* pg. 86). The reactions that follow confirm the resolve of the people for a counter-revolution:

> **Potipoo:** (*to Potiplum*) Does that mean he's now on our side?
>
> **Potiplum:** He's here he found his way here.
>
> **Rout:** Our alliance is an alliance of common purpose. I wish to make it clear that the workers will not abandon their dialectical destiny.

This sets the tone for the series of revolts that follow in this play. One that makes an immediate impact on even King Baabu himself is the encounter with the representative of the banking sector. In his encounter with tyrannical Baabu, leader of the bankers and representing the The Sankofo Bank makes it clear that they are already complying with Baabu's directive to reform the banking sector. But his firm opposition to Baabu's weird request for cash withdrawal from the banks is a testimony to a revolt of the workers to counter him. He states:

> **Spokesman:** ...Your Majesty, let me state here again and clearly the banking sector is more than prepared to play its role in the programme for national recovery...but we have our account to our share holders and investors. We must know how much we're contributing here and there and then know how to justify it to those who own the bank. (*King Baabu,* pg. 55).

His reference to the shareholder and the people who own the bank is very much credited to the will of the people. He shocks King Baabu in the end with his defiance on the matter when he announces their collective resolve this way:

> **Spokesman:** King Baabu, I speak for all of us in this. None of us here has the power or authority to sign an open cheque (*King Baabu,* pg. 55).

Although this is at the expense of his life, his actions bespeak the resilience of the working class in their revolt against the oppressive regime of King Baabu. This is the ferment that creates the consciousness that Babuu's dictatorship could be demystified. King Baabu himself becomes weary and complains to his marabout and mystics:

> **Baabu:** ...Pa Baabu coming straight to the point. The Kingdom of Guatuna facing threats from left and right.Too much dissenting and opposition and complaining. And demonstration and so on and so forth spite of democracy and bountifulness King Baabu bring to the nation Uprising here and there...too many enemies wanting to topple crown (*King Baabu,* pg. 58).

King Baabu's assurance of this impending uprising is not unconnected also to among other things, the internal wrangling and rebellion in his camp. Two perceptive and dissident officers have resolved finally to join ranks with the counter-revolutionary force of Potipoo. At the heat of the insurrection, Potipoo's counter-revolutionary force waxes stronger. Despite its occasional setbacks and Baabu's momentary victory, the duo announces:

> **Shoki:** The pig is rotten.
>
> **Kpoki:** I'm quitting the sty.
>
> **Shoki:** I'm with you. Let's find Potipoo (*King Baabu,* pg. 69).

Meanwhile, Baabu assures us that the insurrection he faces is a communitarian type, from his address to the lifeless body of the rebel leader shot by his soldiers. He mocks at the body saying "...So my friend, where now all your revolutionary chatter, you Chairman Mao and Marx Brothers and Fidel Castro all roll in one? (*King Baabu,* pg. 72). This construction of King Baabu's stream of consciousness bespeaks the nature of class war in the play. Furthermore, Baabu in seeking confirmation from Tutor-Motivator demonstrates the fact that

his camp represents the oppressive class. He makes sure that his son and heir apparent, Biibabae, comes up with this class consciousness and most especially, imbibes his oppressive traits. Baabu inquires from the child's mentor, "...Come on Tutor-Motivator, how goes the upbringing and training? How he reacts to lower classes and all that riff-raff? He takes to cracking whip on whimpering peasants?" (*King Baabu,* pg. 81). This is how Baabu wishes to perpetuate his oppressive rule.

In the final analysis, Baabu's fall signals the triumph of the oppressed class over the oppressor. Dope's and Rent's emergence at the last scene of the play to announce King Baabu's death is very significant to the plays revolutionary ending. Theduo clear the suspense by letting us know that they are responsible forwhy and how Baabu dies. Their premonition of King Baabu's death is as good as the prediction in the puzzle of the mystic that "...when the crown is conjoined in the union of woman and beast...End of *Pax Baabunia!*".Above all, Maariya's remarks recapitulating the whole episode, gives credence to the counter-revolution. She puts thus:

> ...Hey my Sauna Bath, wake up, wake up! Potipoo and Sons Limited are out in the field, counter-attacking, you hear? We nearly fell into their hands but they took your son and heir apparent prisoner. You hear me, Biibabae has been taken Prisoner! So if you die there is going to be problem with succession. Wake up, you hear me, wake up! (*King Baabu,* pg. 104-5).

This is a final signal for the triumph of the counter-revolution. The entrance of the leaders of the counter-revolution Potipoo, Potiplum, Potiplan, Shoki and Kpoki joining the other three, Rout, Dope and Rent climaxes it all. With Baabu's forces being led in as prisoners the play shows that the counter-revolution is a confirmation of Soyinka's resolve on the ideology as well as thestrength and also the triumph of popular uprising in Nigeria. This is the manifesto he presents for ending all forms of dictatorship.

4.2.1Popular Revolution, Socialist Humanism and RadicalIndividualism in Osofisan's Plays

The plays of Femi Osofisanhave often been interpreted on a large scale, as representing a Marxist aesthetic ideology of revolution through class struggle by the working class. This also involves the peasants and all classes of the oppressed in the society. Osofisan's works have shown the playwright's commitment to the liberation of the oppressed through mass awareness and popular revolt, which demonstrates the collective will of the people. His penchant for the liberation of the masses in his earlier plays puts him forward as a frontline advocate of radical drama among his contemporaries of the post-civil war drama in Nigeria. The dramatic technique in the corpus of Osofisan's plays are characterised by what can be described as a didactic mode couched in an initial rejection of purely humanistic vision to the problems of society. His plays therefore, are known to represent his staunch rejection of all tragic modes of representation and his consistent questioning of all deterministic and fatalistic view of history. In a nutshell, Osofisan's early plays and including some of his essaysare an outright propaganda for popular justice through popular revolution.

In the latter part of his artistic productivity, Osofisan demonstrated so much fluidity that his critics have raised doubt about his fidelity to his earlier Marxist revolutionary penchant. In particular, parts of his artistic creations are noted to have developed with his maturity in age, experience and better understanding of the limitations in his earlier ideological commitment. To an extent too, all these have called for a restructuring of some of his plays like *Aringindin and the Nightwatchmen* and *Altine's Wrath* to drive home this point.This hypothetical review of Osofisan's dramaturgy prompts our search for the first objective of this study; finding the features that define the character of Osofisan's mutation and alliance in the play *Tegonni, an African Antigone*. A look through his earlier plays would suffice our proposition.

In Osofisan's early radical plays like *Chattering and the Song* for example, he demonstrates so much faith in violent revolution, which he believes will lead to the birth of an egalitarian

society. This play is well known to be among the leading plays that express the disenchantment, which the dramatists views the self governing process of the late 1960s to early 1970s, which was fast degenerating into worst form of oppression of the less privileged by corrupt civilian and military dictatorial regimes. In this play, Osofisan raises hope that the oppressed masses can liberate themselves through violent revolution.

Thus, it is seen in a group of radical youth represented byLeje, Sontri, Mokan, Yajin and Funlola,that the only option to end dictatorship is to launch a violent revolt. In a play-within-a-play, the playwright uses Latoye, the epitome of a revolutionary leader, to launch an attack against Alafin Abiodun and his cohorts. By the commentary in this play, like many others in this fashion, Osofisan leads us to see that a popular revolution against the oppressor in this age of violent oppression of the masses could only be matched with yet,equally violent reaction from the oppressed. Nevertheless, some critics like Akoh (n.d) have raised questions about the success of the revolutionary approach at the end of this play against later manifestations in the playwright's latter dramatic oeuvres. Akoh (n.d:26) notes that:

> Although Osofisan, by this success, may be interrogating so-called empty leftist revolutionary slogans that are unconnected to the material circumstance of the local environment, while at the same time pontificating that the defeat of authoritarian regimes is a possibility and demystifying tragic static history, it is instructive to note that this period of violent revolution is only tenable in pure Marxist aesthetic theory than praxis...At the end of the play (which according to the playwright really does not end), we understand from the mouth of Leje that since it is highly disastrous to match the dictator's weapons, some form of subtlety is needed: 'But seasons change, oppression and injustice resurface in new forms, and new weapons have to be devised to eliminate them'.

An observation like the foregoing quotation is one among the debates that triggered various revaluations of Osofisan's works, to show how this mutation in ideology and aesthetics have redefined the playwright's creative production.

The events of the mid 1990s in Nigeria and the world over have greatly reshaped the general perception in terms of political and ideological commitments. It has been argued for instance

that the dismantling of the Berlin Walls in 1990 that was later followed by the collapse of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) in 1991, ended the period and decades of cold war. This is not without its impact on ideological commitments as many hitherto writers and critics of the left are thought to have renegotiated their positions in discourses (Illah, 2002:3).In line with this claim, it should be noted too that the vibrancy with which radical playwrights in Nigeria pursue their theatres has renewed itself in the face of challenging socio-political and economic downturn. Therefore, the seeming failure of the realization of the much talked about revolution as foretold by Zolberg (1966: 60) "stems from a fundamental lack of confidence in the ability of the oppressed group to manipulate its environment in order to achieve desired goals". This is additional reason for mutation in the playwrights' dramaturgy. Coupled with this is the growing vitality of the state apparatuses of capitalist control. All these have caused the realignment of the playwright's artistic production. It is further argued that the hydra-headed character of military dictatorship, the unsuccessful attempts at institutionalizing democracy have prompted Osofisan to devise "new weapon" to fight the new state of despair or injustice in the Nigerian society.

Osofisan for instance, in the play *Esu and the Vagabond Minstrels* has in the light of the above, fully toned down his fiery revolutionary tactics of violent revolt to deploying a technique of advocacy on compassion, humanism and cooperation. He has been quoted several times from his prefatory notes to this play to have made his intention in this play known. Here cited in part, Osofisan (1988:10) states that:

> ...this play is on a theme as simple as that-COMPASSION, a sentiment now considered a sign of weakness or 'effeminacy' in today's macho world of tough American gangsters, super-Bonds and Supermen, and Kung-fu experts. Just see what our world has become, with kindness out of date. Sadly, the road toward 'civilization' and 'development takes us daily farther and farther from our humanity. But should this be so?

In the foregoing remarks, Osofisan clearly represents a society that has degenerated into a blood thirsty arena of various contests, whether for the right or wrong reasons. In this situation therefore, it is hardly possible to justify wrong from right or good from evil as acts of inhumanity are justified on the grounds of pursuance of the general good of society. So, what Osofisan has successfully done in this play is to call for a "self regeneration" through compassion (Bamidele, 2001:74). This according to Akoh (2006:100), implies Osofisan's ideological shift from "popular justice to socialist humanism".

Thus, in this play, Osofisan reincarnates *Esu* as a man, who comes to bestow magical gifts of healing to an indigent group of musicians in the persons of Redio, Epo, Oyinbo, Sinsin, Jigi and Omele. They are to use this magical gift to be of help to their society. He promises them wealth if they do that faithfully. But in a typical materialistic conscious society, which the minstrels find themselves in, all the other five, except Omele appropriate the gifts for their selfish interest, helping only those who can pay for their services. Omele, the only selfless one among them, helps a pregnant woman and leprous couple and contracted the disease. He bears the scorn and rejection from his other friends for his actions. However, on Esu's return, only Omele is found to be faithful; consequeenly, he is rewarded and the other greedy lot are punished.

In examining the implication of the conflict and its resolution in this play, Osofisan's resolve is to abandon the motif of revolt and violent confrontation, andhe replacesthem with the welfare and concern of the less privileged. He therefore, questions subtly, if given the opportunity,could the less privileged of the society, take care of themselves, avoiding all means of exploiting their fellow oppressed? It turns out to be that oppression after all is not only akin to the rich and the ruling class. It is human nature, which all society must be weary of. Thus Akoh's (2006:101-2) submission is instructive that:

> The play exposes the loss of both individual and collective psyche of post-war Nigeria and generally 'postcolonial' Africa, and the attendant materialist quest which has come to overwhelm public life. Osofisan's humanist offer can only be found in the Esu myth and the unravelling of the need for man's regeneration through trials. For in the end, it is only evident that compassion only, rather than graft or even violence... can combat aggressive materialism.

From the foregoing plays namely, *Chattering and the Song* and *Esu and the Vagabond Minstrels*therefore, we have seen that the dramaturgy of Femi Osofisan has shown alliance with different ideological persuasions. It is very clear that his very early plays have demonstrated the inevitability of revolution through violent struggle. Much later, Osofisan saw the need to redirect his revolutionary inkling to advocating for a humanist perspective to the question of survival. Thus, within the thesis of this study is the proposition that, further diversity in Osofisan's ideo-aesthetics is revealed in *Tegonni...* It is argued that in this play, Osofisan's socialist humanism has bifurcated into a new form ofcollective struggle that accommodates mysticism, metaphysics and individualistic heroism. This therefore, suggests his ideological alliance with liberal humanism. With this proposition, we launch a further search of these features of mutation and alliance of Osofisan's dramaturgy in *Tegonni.* As an adaptation also, our second objective is equally soughtfor in the manner in which the intertextual rendering of the play provides a common ground for these mutation and alliance.

4.2.2Synopsis of *Tegonni…*

The play *Tegonni...* is an adaptation of Sophocles' *Antigone*, one of the trilogies of *Oedipus the King*. In this play, Osofisan domesticates the Theban setting of the source text into the culture of the Yoruba society of the South-Western Nigeria, during the colonial time. The play opens with the boat of Yemoja, the water goddess, and her attendants; richly dressed signifying the celebratory mood the play is situated in. The action of the play, however, starts at the public square of Oke-Osun, a Yoruba town set in the 19th century. The square provides

cross-roads that lead to the town's central market, the King's palace and another, up to the hill where the colonial district officer (D.O) resides.

Tegonni, the princess of Oke-Osun proposes to marry a white man, Captain Allan Jones, the District Officer. This decision comes as a respite after Asipa; obviously, a prince breaks up his relationship with her. This disappointment comes as a result of Tegonni's insistence on joining the guild of sculptors. Since then, no man "would propose to marry her". Her stigma, being not only the effrontery to encroach into a male dominated profession, considered an aberration and a taboo for a princess, but also daring to marry a white man from the "land of the ghosts".

Although Chief Isokun is the only chief and male citizen who openly defends Tegonni on her chosen career as a bronze smith and carver, nevertheless, he receives her choice to marrying a white man with mixed feelings. Therefore, in his thinking, as a high standing chief in the palace and custodian of the people's tradition, he must not be seen to have identified with this rebellion of the princess. He thus, plans to quietly sneak out of town on the day Tegonni is to be formally wedded. According to Chief Ishokun, he foresees the marriage to be "a tragic error" and that no one accepts it except Tegonni's friends. He firms his position by the fact that he has consulted the *Ifa* oracle about the matter and "each answer has been like a riddle". Chief Isokun in the end, however, accepts to support Tegonni's marriage after so many entreaties from her friends.

Tegonni's marriage is not only a disaster bit; also, itopens the floodgate for other misfortunes that follow. Her bridal train, while dancing to the palace to pay homage to the tomb of her late father for ritual of blessing of the deceased, runs into a tragic barricade. Armed soldiers deployed by the colonial governor from Lagos, Carter Ross, have orders to keep guard on the corpse of Prince Oyekunle, which is condemned to rot in the open at the public square. The

governor has accordingly pronounced stiff sanction for anyone who attempts to carry out the rite of passage by burying Prince Oyekunle. This is a way to punish the corpse of rebellious Oyekunle, who raised an army in alliance with Dahomi Kingdom against the British, who sought to install his brother Adeloro as the next king at his expense.

On discovering the humiliated corpse of her brother, Prince Oyekunle, Tegonni defies the orders of the governor by performing the rite of passage on her brother through a symbolic burial. Tegonni averts abomination at the risk of her wedding plans. Not even the consequences of that action will deter her. The governor has vowed to keep to his plan that Oyekunle's corpse shall be fed to the vultures as a lesson for the living. Tegonni feels different about it. She believes her brother deserves the last respect of burial despite the governor's orders that "anybody who attempts to bury him shall be summarily executed. "Repeated executed without trial" (*Tegonni*, pg. 40).

An incident turns for the worse in an ironic twist, as Captain Allan the D.O, set for his wedding, receives a letter from the Governor, Carter Ross. Flanked by Reverend Bayo, the Reverend of the native South-American Baptist Church in Oke-Osun and Allan's surrogate father, the D.O. confides to Bayo that the letter he is in receipt of is a letter conveying Governor Carter Ross' message of victory over Oyekunle and the allied forces. Furthermore, that the embattled Princes Oyekunle and Adeloro are both dead in the war. Governor Ross thus, plans to cite a punitive example with Oyekunle's corpse. While Adeloro who the British supported will be buried with full honours, Oyekunle's corpse will rot under the sun. The task of carrying out these orders ironically rests on Allan.On his wedding day, unfortunately, he will "see to it that these orders are carried out". Meanwhile the governor who has come to attend Allan's wedding is shocked by the turn of events. Oyekunle is buried and the person who flouts his orders is Tegonni, the betrothed of his protégée Allan Jones. Faced with this

dilemma, Carter Ross is left with the only option of supervising the enforcement of the order of executing Tegonni himself.

Staked to face the gallows, yet, Tegonni and her friends are resolved to fight for their freedom in the hands of the Governor. To this end, the girls vow never to yield to any pressure from within or from without. In order to save Tegonni who the governor has sentenced to death, Chief Isokun, Rev Bayo and the elders broker an understanding with the governor to have Tegonni apologise for her offence. But to their chagrin, Tegonni refuses to apologise. Rather, she opts for the death sentence.

In what appears to be an after thought, the Governor pardons Tegonni's friends Faderera, Kunbi and Yemisi while still retaining Tegonni. This turns out to be his undoing as the freed girls go to mobilize a mob of *Egungun* masquerades, masked in bronze masks and leafy branches. The girls' mask appearance terrifies the guards holding Tegonni, who immediately drop their guns and flee. On account of this mob action, Tegonni regains freedom and has to be taken into hiding in the sacred grove for safety.

Tegonni's sudden mask appearance at the residency quakes Carter Ross. In what appears a duel of supremacy, Tegonni subjects the governor in a moment of humiliation as she holds him to ransom using his gun. The Governor who gives commitment to leave the town with his troops on a deal however, reneges as soon as he regains his gun back from Tegonni. At this point, Tegonni suffers her turn of bashing in the hands of Carter Ross. Just before long, Allan enters. His presence nonetheless, only complicates the scenario as Carter Ross blames his ordeal on Allan who he describes as a "weakling".

To strike a balance at resolving the standoff involving Tegonni and Allan against Governor Carter Ross, the Governor demands that Tegonni must apologise publicly for her wrongs and renounce her marriage with Allan. Allan on his part is scheduled to leave for England on the

next available ship at Lagos. In an elaborate ceremony, which will announce Tegonni's apology, Tegonni fights back with a deafening speech. She stands her grounds not to apologise. Coincidentally too, Allan changes his mind on his planned journey to England. He comes back timely to meet the jubilant crowd celebrating Tegonni's triumph over the Governor. The beleaguered Carter Ross chokes from the spell of the women shielding Tegonni as they cheer her to victory. He is, however, rescued by the whiskers and helped to safety. Before the celebration dies down, there are gun shots, which bring down Tegonni and a couple of women. This tragic suspense marks the end of the play. In the epilogue of the play, Tegonni is, however, raised by Antigone who leads her and her retinue to Yemoja's boat suggesting her continuity in the life beyond.

4.2.3 Socialist Humanism and Individual Radicalism: Intertextual Resonance in *Tegonni…*

This play is set in the colonial period. Its message, however, is concomitant with the dreadful rule of the military regime of the late 1990s, which has failed to yield to the pressure of revolts. From the play, the message appears to show that while the oppressor would need a human spirit to reorder his draconian rule, the oppressed would require even more of this humanity to be able to pay the supreme sacrifice to salvage themselves. Osofisan (2007:107) in the first appendix to the play text states that:

> *Tegonni, an African Antigone* is situated in this era of imperialist expansion, and the main confrontation is between a princess of Yorubaland, in present-day Nigeria, and one of British colonial governors. But my concern in writing is more than that. Using the well-known format of Sophocles' ***Antigone***, *I have constructed a play that re-examines the issues of race relations and personal courage*. But above all, my concern is also to look at the problem of political freedom against the background of the present turmoil in Nigeria-my-country where various military governments have continued for decades now to thwart the people's desires for democracy, happiness, and good government (Emphasis added).

Osofisan sustains his belief in communal struggle of the oppressed against the oppressor in this play. The historiography of the colonial era in this play conveys the deep seated racial

segregation, socio-political and economic domination that is associated with it. In the present time, the reality of neo-colonial domination is at the centre of the discourse, where the power shift only represents its prototype in colonialism. The power relation in the post-colony is obviously cast in the mould and pattern of colonial domination. The repressive laws in post-independent states in Africa in general, whether in military or civilian garb, create a narrative of inhumanity of man to fellow man. The quest for liberation, therefore, as it was with the nationalists in the colonial era, must be replicated through a popular revolt. Osofisan's (2001:54-5) opinion is largely on the military in particular. He presents this option lucidly when he asserts that:

> Clearly if we are to escape from this wasteful and tragic cycle, there must be a revolution: the soldiers must be made to climb down from the saddle of power; the lower classes empowered; and an enlightened leadership, composed of the population, must be created to replace the present usurper.

Yet, he is quick to add also that:

> It is quite easy to make these prescriptions; what is hard is how to bring them to fruition. It is clear however that not all revolutions must be violent or bloody. And in my opinion, one vital prerequisite to the task of salvaging of our country is a committed educated class.

It suffices in this proposition that Osofisan is advocating for more than the usual communal insurrection. By canvassing for a determined revolutionary leadership in the educated elite he forecasts equally, people of vision, extraordinary talents who will rise to act upon history and their environment that is ladened with the weight of deprivation. This ironically has been one of his major quarrels with Soyinka and his compeers. Perhaps a peep into Osofisan's polemics would help clarify our argument.

Osofisan's first point of conflict with the Soyinka'sgeneration of playwrights and their works is their archival attachment to history, myth and traditional world view. But for its theatrical grandeur, which he claims to be fascinated with, Osofisan "rejects" the logic with which for instance Soyinka applies this worldview to explicate the present dispensation. The metaphor

of waste and tragic allusion in Soyinka's plays is what according to Osofisan informs his point of departure. Osofisan (2001:6-7) notes that:

> In all of Soyinka's writing, you will always find the tribute to a man of vision, who is endowed with extraordinary energy and talent, but who ends up being defeated by negative, antagonistic forces. These men are the metaphoric incarnation of this tragic generation...They are all, you will find, the same repulsive, histrionic personae, the ones who boldly accept to act upon history and the environment, who try to revise the routine text of tradition and phenomenon, but are in the end overwhelmed by their hubristic daring...They are all the same recognisable archetype, the obverse face of Ogun, that other side of talented and tragic waste, of dynamic but subverted vision, of destructive energy of wasted man. And I repeat- beyond the individual failure of these heroes, beyond their tragic fall and damnation, Soyinka their inventor intends a much wider reading of larger failure of the societies to which these figures belong, and of which they are so tellingly the visible symbols.

The point needs to be made quickly, that Osofisan's "rejection" is tentative as well as ambiguous. The reason being that his major concern is with the fact that these communal carriers are always "those who are victims, the ones who are the objects of exploitation in the society, who are repeatedly called upon to 'sacrifice' when thing go amiss" (Osofisan. 2001:17). In other words, he accepts this proposition in so far as this individual could emerge from the elite class not from the class of the oppressed group of the society.

In summary, Osofisan's quarrel with Soyinka and his compeers is with lone heroes and the tragic end of heroic deeds and by extension, of society at large. There is also the failure to accept that the problems of society are caused, not by some indeterminate factors, but rather by certain oppressor or ruling classes and therefore, making them susceptible to change. This perhaps is enough background to subject *Tegonni* to a deconstructive reading, to show Osofisan's mutation and alliance with the same ideo-aesthetics he tries to reject initially. In the New historicists's anology, we turn in Osofisan's drama,a "derivative" of Greek society that is conservative but that hopes to canvassfor an ideological position of the playwright in the present time. This intertextual rendering of the play informs a contradiction or, better still,

a common ground for alliance with a supposedly conservative ideology. This is what the present analysis sets out to prove subsequently.

In the world of the play, the war of classes is represented by the white colonialists as the politically superior and the oppressor. Their laws therefore, subdue the black race and its institutions and make them inferior. The colonised are the oppressed that are under the domination of the oppressing white colonialist and his laws. This can be equated to all military decrees, which came into force when there is a takeover of power. Tegonni's allusion to this in retrospect is instructive. She reminds the Governor, Carter Ross that virtually all the deals, which the colonised entered with the colonial masters have ended up putting all the people as subservient to the colonial masters. She cites as example, "like the one you struck with my father, and he ended up wiping your boots?" (*Tegonni*, pg 87).

This statement speaks in retrospect about the series of pacts that the colonised communities entered with the white colonialists, which take away political power from indigenoustraditional institutions. The direct rule, which became operational in the southern part of Nigeria, is an example. In this situation, natural rulers ceded their political powers to the colonialist at their own peril. Tegonni tells the Governor "You conquered us. So you make the rules. We know our lives are in your hands we've resigned our selves. What more do you want from us?" (*Tegonni*, pg. 59). That is why with all her material condition as a princess Tegonni and perhaps all the royalty, not one has risen above the ebb of colonial subjugation. She further confirms her class in the same conversation thus; "that is one problem, Governor. You talk only to kings. Try the commoner, sometimes" (*Tegonni*, pg 59).Tegonni's sarcastic reminder in another encounter with Carter Ross further presses home the point that under situation of repression people automatically lose their rights. The Governor threatens her

saying; “Listen, I’m the Governor, a British officer symbol... of the Empire----” Tegonni replies:

> **Tegonni:** And I am just a little African primitive, from a lost village in a jungle. I represent no power and no empire. Just a small girl, tired of being trampled upon by invaders like you, whom we have once welcomed as friends, but tricked us into signing off our freedom.Just because you have guns... (*Tegonni*, pg.86-7).

This feeling of oppression is not quite different with Bayo’s, the Reverend gentleman who cautions the D.O. Allan Jones that the colonial Governor’s repressive laws are already stirring a revolt among the native. Bayo does not mince words for example in telling Jones about the Governor’s plan to desecrate the people’s rite of passage in the case of his treatment of Prince Oyekunle’s body. He states that “He (the Governor) must know himself! What he is planning to do is an abomination! We do not leave human bodies to rot in the sun like the offal of beasts. Your governor’s starting something whose end none of us can predict!” (*Tegonni*, pg.41).

The foregoing exchanges portray the rebellious character of Tegonni,which signifies her objective class conciousnessand which runs through the play. As a princess and for choosing to be a bronze carver, Tegonni does not only prove herself an Iconoclast, but also a rallying point for the oppressed people. Her choosing a trade puts her with the working class leading other women to their destiny. As her friend Federera recalls, “...you’ve not only grown to be the best in the profession, but you’ve also helped train other women, so that we now have our own Women Guild of Carvers and Casters” (*Tegonni*, pg. 56). With an aura of a revolutionary leader, Tegonni bears the plight of her class, promising to live for the liberation of the oppressed. Yemisi and Kumbi’s interaction with Chief Osokun puts this in perspective as the girl’s belief in Tegonni’s revolutionary leadership qualities. The girls early enough in the play, persuade Chief Isokun:

Yemisi: Stop quibbling, baba, it's not in your character to! Tegonni has always been different, and you've loved her for it! You alone, remember, stood by her when she returned from the palace in Ife, and announced she wanted to be a bronze caster and carver. The whole town said—*Eewo*! No woman has ever joined that profession, least of all a princess! But you alone, you said she should be left to follow her wishes.

Isokun: Yes I did and---

Kunbi: All your life baba, even before you joined the Oba's council you have always stood for progress! For change when the old ways proved to be outmoded. So how can you forsake Tegonni today? (*Tegonni*, pg.13).

At the centre of this exchange is the quest for change, for progress and liberty of the oppressed people. Even though this encounter is coming at the hills of Tegonni's marriage, it further reveals the structure of conflict that the play is hinged on among others.

Tegonni's act of carrying out the rite of passage on her brother; that is the symbolic closing of the eyes of Prince Oyekunle and spraying of sand on his eye lids is an act of defiance and therefore a revolt against the oppressive order. Not even the knowledge of the sanction imposed by the Governor, Carter Ross, could deter her plans. She makes this clear when she and her friends are arrested and brought before the Governor. In this dialogue, the Governor questions Tegonni and she answers boldly, which indicates that in spite of the law, she feels a duty to her brother.

Gov: You knew my instruction? And the penalty for breaking them?

Tegonni: He was my brother, Governor.

Gov: You dared, you! You flouted my orders!

Tegonni: He was my brother, white man (*Tegonni*, pg.48).

It is the thinking of the Governor of course that whatever rights the colonised subjects think they have, whether divine or temporal, these are subject to the dictates of the superior power of the coloniser. The colonised in fact do not have any rights just like Chief Isokun asserts in a similar moment of depression, telling his colleague to note that when it comes to the governor

"we do not complain. We are a defeated people, and we know we have forfeited our rights to respect" (*Tegonni,* pg.61). Kunbi expresses the same feeling of despair at the receipt of the news of the death of Prince Adeloro and how the Colonial governor plans to honour him at the expense of his "rebellious" brother. Kunbi says:

> You see my friends! This is the language of our defeat as a people! Adeloro will be buried well. The one who licked the Governor's boots shall be allowed to go to the grave with honour. But the one who opposes him, who stood for his right will be fed to the dogs... (*Tegonni*, pg. 69).

The motif of revolt is well-embedded in the character of Tegonni. The strength of her character is explained in the conviction of the elders of Oke-Osun that taming her might mean the end of the revolt she is championing. The elders resolve that in their proposal to the Governor, they will have Tegonni apologise publicly for her conduct. That they feel will mark the end of the revolt. This is to them, a better idea than for the governor killing her. In the words of the First Elder:

> A public apology like that, Gomina! Think of it! Surely it will work even more effectively for your purpose, than killing her? Her death, as you know, could turn her into a heroin, and spawn even more rebels that would cost you a lot of time and energy to suppress. But on the other hand, if she were made to renounce her own act in public, the humiliation alone would deter others for a long while (*Tegonni*, pg. 63).

This scenario is reminiscent of the act of subduing revolutionary heroes in like manner as represented in other African drama. It brings to mind Hussein's Kinjeketile in the play *Kinjeketile* and wa Thiong'o's and Micere Mugo Githae's Kimathi in the play *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi.*Like the situations in both plays also, the refusal of the heroes to renounce their acts of revolts is the force that sustains the revolt. Likewise, with Tegonni, her response is simply "never, Mr Governor! Tegonni will never apologise" (*Tegonni*, pg. 64).

Ideologically, it suffices that Tegonni cuts the picture of a revolutionary leader.However, in an exceptional manner the playwright has not envisaged, though she issituated in the context of communal revolt, yet, her daring nature stands her out from the chorus action. Her

individual will for sacrifice puts more questions on her role in a collective action. This is the point that this study needs to investigate further. This study now sets out to critiquethe implication of Osofisan's humanism; whether Tegonni's radical humanism,as it results into individual heroism in the play, does amount to ideological mutation and alliance with liberal humanists' ideology. This informs our response to the third research question; what ideological postulation does the playwright project in this play?

4.2.4 Radical Humanism and Individual Heroism in *Tegonni…*

Osofisan's *Tegonni…* represents a fusion of his radical aesthetics and mythic motif. His dramaturgy is well known to imbue in myths, fresh meaning to reinforce his radical commentary on contemporary issues. His style therefore, is said to be that which adapts the mythic element into a subversive tool where the powers in the myths are rendered to achieve the intentions of the playwright. He demystifies the myths in a radical manner to achieve the revolutionary intent in his plays (Awodiya, 1995:56-7).

Nevertheless, in the present play, this experimentation seeks to delineate that the quest for humanist concern could be explored within Osofisan's radical aesthetics. Elsewhere, this study explains that Osofisan's humanism is that which takes into account the Manichean dichotomy of good and bad but which favours good as it is embodied in a "Christ-like" love and compassion. This kind of love is sacrificial even unto the point of death for the sake of those it is meant for. This humanistic spirit is the struggle to regenerate a new man and by extension a new society, which is devoid of violence, yet, with a readiness to pay the ultimate sacrifice that is strongly advocated for. Bamidele (2001:74) describes what he sees in Osofisan's humanism as:

> The arrival of new man who is rational, socially committed and selfless in his concern for humanity is created from the *Esu* icon and idiom. It suggests a solution to national problems besetting the post-independent nations of Africa. The picture of a post-colonial society where man has lost moral conscience demands a spirit of regeneration so that man develops more understanding, conscience and compassion.

Although the comment above refers to the playwright's posture and commentary in the play *Esu and the Vagabond Minstrels,* there is a strong reason to see that this reinterpretation of myth is replicated in *Tegonni*. Osofisan's intention in the play *Tegonni* is to attempt a mythic reconfiguration of Tegonni in the image of *Esu* his patron god, who though a trickster, yet, is also a compassionate mediator.

The fight against dictatorship is for the playwright, one that almost demands personal sacrifice as it is the case with Antigone in the source text*Antigone* by Sophocles, and Tegonni in the present text. Individuals who have the courage to fight this dreaded monster called dictatorship are not only called to lead the fight but to lay down their lives for the cause. In a deconstructive sense, Allan Jones epitomises a humanist who conveys Osofisan's sense of sacrifice in the play. Jones ordinarily belongs to the oppressor class, yet, he is one that has committed a class suicide. His unprecedented decision to marry a black native is an aberration of his class quality. Jones justifies this position by drawing our attention to the equality of all races. He makes this clear to the Governor that his marriage to Tegonni makes her as free as he is. He says, "I am saying that she's no longer a colonial subject, General! She has the same rights now under the law as you and I" (*Tegonni,* pg. 90). By this statement Jones has faulted the Governor's decision to kill Tegonni. His humanistic character is best explained as he is more daring like Tegonni to tell Carter Ross that "If you carry out the execution sir, I swear it to you, I will fight you till the end of my life! I will never rest till you have paid for it" (*Tegonni,* pg. 90).

In times of conflict that demands the shedding of blood there are more humane means of overcoming the inhumanity in people. Jones is of the view that Carter Ross' approach to the situation is out-dated. In this dialogue he tells Governor Ross:

> **Jones:** You only think in terms of war and conflict, general. Of order and command. But that's not the only relationship possible between races!

Gov: You fool the Empire brought you here, damn it, and you swore an oath to serve it!

Jones: I know the oath I swore. And it is no betrayal if the people come to see us as friends and not masters!...(*Tegonni*, pg. 91).

Jones does not mince words in telling the Governor, Carter Ross, that he is fast losing command by his bloodthirsty rules. Despite all he thinks of his firmness as the Governor, Jones sees him as lacking humanity. In his humanistic nature therefore, he tells the Governor that he needs to change style of command because, as he tells Ross; "always, all your orders lead to death, my general!" (*Tegonni*, pg. 92).

In his humanist vent also, Osofisan moralises the subject of violent revolution in the words of Antigone when she tells Tegonni "Freedom is a myth which human beings invent to torch their egos. In the end, it comes to the same thing, men and women slaughtering one another to the applause of deluded Worshipers" (*Tegonni*, pg. 96). Antigone uses this as a parable to urge on Tegonni in her struggle to liberate her people under the despotic Carter Ross. As far as she is concerned, revolution means nothing if it does not preserve the life and wellbeing of its beneficiaries. This throws a big challenge to all government, which comes in the name of the people but who in the end will only thrive by oppressing the very people who struggle to to install them. Antigone Says:

Antigone: I told you I've learnt from history! Go and look down the ages, my dear. Human beings throw off their yokes, only for themselves to turn into oppressors. They struggle valiantly for freedom, and in the process acquire the terrible knowledge of how to deny it to others (*Tegonni*, pg. 96).

Osofisan uses this parable to drive home the point in his play *Esu and the Vagabond Minstrels*. In the end, we reason with Osofisan that although a socialist revolution is nowhere near in sight, the democratic governments that the people toil for, sometimes at the expense of their lives, must cater for their needs. It must benefit the masses in a welfarist sense as it were in an ideal revolutionary state.

Paradoxically, from the beginning of the play, Antigone hints the theme of death that is associated with Tegonni's wedding and subsequent adventures in the play. As she meets Kunbi, Faderera and Yemisi who are preparing to lead Tegonni to her husband, Antigone gets to know that Tegonni is preparing for her wedding. But as a mythic character imported into the play, Antigone has a premonition of the episode that will overwhelm Togonni, which very much resembles her own experience. Antigone inquires:

> **Antigone:** Tegonni! Where is she?
>
> **Yemisi:** Back in the compound there. Preparing for her wedding.
>
> **Antigone:** And for her death? (*Tegonni*, pg. 16).

Antigone foretells her feeling about the wedding, which Chief Isokun earlier describes as "a tragic mistake", and the fact that the unfolding events will lead to Tegonni paying the price with her life. As the play unfolds, more actions of Tegonni show that she is prepared to die for the cause of justice, which even the Governor, Carter Ross, confesses that "death, I can see has made you reckless..." (*Tegonni*, pg. 59).

Tegonni's will to die is in the manner of Ogunian heroism. Thus, we see Tegonni as fated for her catastrophic end. She is ideologically represented in the manner ofEman in Soyinka's *The Strong Breed*. Like Eman, Tegonni is an artist cum teacher. She is possessed by a daring spirit to carry the burden of liberating her people. Soyinka (1988:26) conceives Ogun in these terms:

> Ogun, for his part, is best understood in Hellenistic values as a totality of the Dionysian Apollonian and Promethean virtues. Nor is that all. Transcending even today, the distorted myth of his terrorist reputation, traditional poetry records him as 'protector of orphans', 'roof over the homeless', 'terrible guardian of the sacred oath'; Ogun stands for a transcendental, humane but rigid restorative justice...The first artist and technician of the forge, he evokes like Nietzsche's Apollonian spirit, a 'massive impact of image, concept, ethical doctrine and sympathy'.

Tegonni is therefore, inadvertently cast in the image of Ogun, the patron god of all whose trade relies on Iron. She is a bronze smelter and carver. She is also a teacher, a protector of the

feeble and a vanguard of justice. As much as the playwright thinks of her more like Esu, she all the same exhibits Soyinka's Ogunian revolutionary character. In a typical carrier's image Tegonni confesses to Chief Isokun that her life means nothing if it is not to redeem her people; she says "I want to live I want to go on living! But if the cost of that will mean the death of our people, then I am willing to die" (*Tegonni,* pg. 78). Ironically, this is what Osofisan (2001:16) notes about Soyinka's carriers, which he inadvertently projects in Tegonni. To them he notes:

> Death is thus no closure, for it empowers new life; just as decay is a requisite prelude to fresh germination. It is therefore logical that, if this ritual is to achieve its fullest meaning, the very best blood must be shed, and the sacrifice itself chosen from among society's strongest stock.

This does not, however,make any difference with his view of this supposedly, outmoded routine ritual of renewal if:

> ...it is then possible to extend this, and say in modern societies where these rites are no longer formally celebrated, the people run the risk of eventually poisoning their own resources, and perishing, unless we find somebody who of his own volition takes upon himself the abandoned role of communal carriers and sacrifice himself to purge our accumulated burden of sin and filth (Osofisan, 2001:16).

By this assertion, Osofisan makes known to us his feelings about the ritual of death in the manner of Soyinka's carriers. It is certain that Chief Isokun, informed by the playwright's kind of knowledge describes Tegonni to the governor this way:

> **Isokun:** That is because you do not know her. Right from childhood, she's always been like that, a problem child. She's a gift from our mother Yemoja, and such children are never bound by the normal rules the rest of us live by. It's the goddess inside them, they can't be controlled. It's what drove her for instance to choose a white man, of all available suitors, for husband—– your son Gomina! (*Tegonni,* pg. 62).

In light of the foregoing also, Tegonni makes it clear to her friends that she will want to accept death alone and does not wish that any of them share the same fate with her. She says:

> **Tegonni:** My friends, let's be sober for a minute thought. I want all of you to think again about this seriously. You don't really have to stay with me, if you wish. I was the one who started it, and I am ready to pay alone...we don't all have to die—– (*Tegonni,* pg. 66).

Tegonni does not hide her inner will to die in the face of this struggle to free her people. Chief Isokun persuades her to give up and apologise to the governor, but her response coveys her willingness to die. Her conversation with Chief Isokun reveals this:

Isokun: But you can, my daughter. These words come out of the lips of love—

Tegonni: They are not the words I need! How can you call it love, when you sap my will?

Isokun: It is your will to die which I am against.

Tegonni: I am not afraid to die... (*Tegonni*, pg. 78).

Osofisan constructs Tegonni, a lone hero notwithstanding the revolutionary character of this play. In a character similar to Ogun, Tegonni takes the initiative to tackle the governor, Cater Ross, in a gun duel. Ogun, it will be recalled in a Yoruba myth distinguished himself in a similar selfless heroic manner. In a primal drama of the gods, he led the other gods after clearing a path with his metallic sword (Soyinka, 1988:28). Similarly, Tegonni's adventurous lone appearance with a bronze mask in the residency is reminiscent of this heroic act of Ogun. She leaves behind her followers and tries to accomplish the revolutionary act alone. Tegonni says of her mask as she laughs at the governor who demands to know how she mysteriously enters the residency "A mask— its powers are unbelievable! It can get you past the meanest guards" (*Tegonni*, pg. 85). This statement also advances the metaphysical essence of the conflict in the play.

Osofisan's ideo-aesthetics reveal that mystic powers combined with temporal will of the individual,will lead to the ultimate triumph over the oppressor.Above all, this effort requires also, individuals who are willing to die, whether they are from the privileged class or from the oppressed class. Tegonni represents the latter in the context of this analysis, a construct,which Osofisan rejects in his treatises. In essence, his ideological posture in this case is not different

from Soyinka's in *The Strong Breed*,hence this study posits their aesthetic and ideological alliance.

4.3.1Women's LiberationandRevolutionary Politicsas a Paradigm of Transition in Salami-Agunloye's Theatre

The ideo-aesthetics of Salami-Agunloye's plays cut across the polysemy of feminism. Like most feminists plays, the themes of her plays revolve around the demystification of patriarchal institutions that perpetuate the culture of male domination. These plays also advocate for the liberation of women from oppressive social structures that limit their visibility and rights to be heard and seeking greater access for women in socio-economic and political spheres of life. The first two major plays of Salami-Agunloye show two growing emphasis of the playwright, which she has continually developed with the changing social environment. These two issues are women's economic empowerment and political participation.

In *Emotan*, Akoh (2006:156) notes that "two major issues are of interest to the playwright, namely Emotan's success in mobilising women to be less dependent on their husbands by trading at the Oba market, and more importantly, for helping her brother Okoro Ogun, ascend the throne of his father". Although the playwright seems to advance the message of the sacrificial manner of Emotan's struggle as a female figure, yet, at the heart of the material dialectics in the play's conflict are these economic and political contests, which place Emotan as the central character. In this play therefore, the playwright through Emotan puts forward the proposition to all women in their quest for liberation that no matter their aspiration they must strive first for economic independence. They must use that too to support their husbands and also develop their homes. Her character portraiture in the play as a simple market woman is of significance in the playwright's propaganda on self reliance and political resilience. Thus Evwierhoma (2011:32) submits that:

> Emotan advocated the participation of women in activities outside the home, especially income generating one. She accounts for women playing central roles in political leadership, especially as 'king maker', as she is a power to be reckon with where her (sic) Oba Ewuare's Kingship is mentioned; even in present times. She typifies a woman who rises above the ashes of widowhood and negative socio-cultural forces to ascend the peak of politics in the Kingdom.

In the play *Emotan,* therefore, Salami-Agunloye makes her audience know that there is a strong relationship between politics and financial autonomy. When a woman is financially independent, she can command a sense of confidence, wrestle or speak back to power. Yet, the playwright's intention is far above that. She intends that women should have the ability to participate in political matters if possible, be able to install a government that will benefit them by their initiative. Lar's (2011:24) observation of this objective in this play therefore, is that, "if at the centre of Emotan's endeavour is the desire to return Ogun to the throne, then the playwright has partly realized that aim". However, as it turns out in the end, Ogun wins back his throne from usurpers but Emotan ends up as "the sacrifice". The success of the will of women to wrestle power is thus affirmed in this play. It, however, leaves us with the dissatisfaction that the woman once again, is sacrificed at the altar of man's life prospects and ego. Nevertheless, the consistent quest for woman-centred revolution appears to be a litmus test that would be perfected in subsequent plays.

TheQueen Sisters seems more radical in Salami-Agunloye's woman-centred revolutionary strides. In the prefatory note to the play, the playwright makes known her intention as usual, to include; "using drama to question the role of women" and also "correcting female marginalization" supposedly in all societies. However, the end of the play leaves many questions to be answered relating to whether the playwright has succeeded in representing an ideal model for women liberation in both characterization and approach to women's emancipation.

The conflict in the play *The Queen Sisters*is apparently crafted from a historic fact, which revolves around two sisters.Ubi is more radical and assertive whileEwere is docile and peaceful.All are married to the Oba of Benin. Ubi's entrance into the King's harem has caused a revolution regarding how women must conduct themselves in relation to one another. Her privileged position as the King's youngest and favourite wife emboldens her to take radical steps to revolutionalised issues of cultural and economic dominance by the male order even to the extent of requesting for a share of the annual tribute. As observed by Evwierhoma (2011:33):

> Ubi becomes controller in the Harem apportioning sleeping rights with the King, often rotated among all wives. Oba Ewuare obliges her role especially as she is the last wife of the King...Ubi's capacity to influence and control Harem politics is commendable. The Harem is an avenue of rivalry, strife and tussle to please the King. When Ubi centres herself in the affairs of this space, fraught with intra-gender hatred, we see other *Iloi's* or wives attempting to locate themselves in this locus of affection. But she does not stop at the Harem as her influence soon spread to the city. She looks down on certain traditions, assaults chiefs, creating problems felt to be beneath her status.

On the other hand, her sister, Ewere, who is brought into the Harem by the device of Chief Osuma to checkmate her sister's excesses, apparently by her contrastingcharacter, finds herself pitched against her sister's intrigues. Ubi frames the duo; Ewere for attempted murder of the Oba while Chief Osuma faces execution for rape. But with a change of mind, Ubi confesses to framing her sister and Chief Osuma. With this turn of events, Ubi is by the King's pronouncement, banished to the evil forest. On account of her bedwetting as well, she is ostracised while her sister, Ewere, is beatified till date with the feast of "Ugie Ewere",which is used to commemorate her good virtues. Thus, the debate on this attempt at a woman-centred revolution is raised by critics like Akoh (2006:158) whose argument berates the revolutionary intent of the playwright concerning the two sisters as pivotal characters and models. He posits that:

> Thus, at end of the play, one is eulogized and immortalized, the other condemned, even to date. If the playwright's privileging of good over evil that is her message as is obvious, then she, in essence, is saying that reserved, obedient and peaceful women as

> Ewere are the ideal today. And if this is so, there is an apparent contradiction in the playwright's purported mission expressed earlier (*in the introductory notes to the play*). Ewere does not represent that radicalism (Emphasis mine).

Azuike (2011:49) also notes that:

> The denouement of Salami's *The Queen Sisters*, is as disappointing as the start is exciting. The end of the drama can best be described as an anti-climax of the series of gripping events, which have, hitherto, held the attention of the reader, spellbound...It is highly improbable, indeed very absurd to discover that a woman who has defied all orders and has trespassed into the socio-political arena reserved for men would be banished from the palace for as trivial offence as bedwetting. Salami, we may quickly add here, may have been documenting history for the purpose of posterity, however, she did create in Ubi, a strong, magnificent advocate of matriarchy rather than passive supporter of patriarchy. One would have expected her to carry this through to the end.

Justifiably, Ubi's radical steps have created an unprecedented uneasiness in both the Harem and the entire Benin Kingdom. Unfortunately, for Ubi, the society is not ready for her kind of reformation. Thus as Evwierhoma (2011:33) would suggest, "as a radical she existed before her time". With the sentencing meted on her therefore, she is seen as a necessary "sacrifice" that unlocks the hitherto no-go areas for a woman in traditional, political and economic life of not only the traditional Benin Kingdom but the society at large. Thus for Azuike (2011:50), "the world needs more women like Ubi to direct the affairs of women and to lead them away from centuries of marginalization and male domination to new era of socio-political, economic and educational empowerment of all women".

This controversy in the conflict of the ideal revolution or women centred revolutionary characters in *Emotan* and *The Queen Sisters* could have necessitated a play, which strikes a discordant tune or at best strikes a balance in Salami-Agunloye's radical drama. The need to blow hot and cold, and to lift the strangle hold of the "sacrificial lamb" off the woman in contemporary politics becomes the immediate focus in Salami-Agunloye's future plays. She therefore, seeks to instigate women to assert their rightful place in politics by reaping from the sacrifices they make in the power game. Thus, while we accept that historic details serve as a soapbox for commenting on the present predicament of women by the playwright, these facts

are ameliorated by the dynamics of contemporary politics and ideo-aesthetics finesse of the playwright.

In *More than Dancing* therefore, we seek a more ideologically focused play. In its materialists' bent as proposed by the playwright, we expect quite unquestionably, a play in the manner of the post-war radical dramatists of Nigeria, pushing for ideo-aesthetics of collective struggle. Eventhough formed along the feminist concern, our interrogation of this play goes beyond feminism. We seek to justify the objectives of the study by first identifying the features that explain the dramaturgy of our selected playwright as a revolutionarydrama while maintaining her feminist ideology. Secondly, we seekto know how the historic trappings of the play invigorate intertextuality. Thirdly, what ideological concern this play is projecting and lastly, what social vision it holds for the Nigerian society.

4.3.2Synopsis of *More than Dancing*

The play opens with a scene at the mini-convention of the ruling United People's Liberation Party (UPLP). Madam Bisi Adigun, the party's woman leader, comes forward to interrupt a dance session performed by women groups. She challenges all women present to reflect on the tradition of seeing women as mere dancers at political rallies and party conventions while the men occupy every position of relevance in the party's hierarchy. Madam Bisi throws a contention that the men, through a clever manoeuvre, have always used the party's funds to advance their dominance and control of the party at the expense of the women. She urges the women therefore, to look inwards at reordering their concept of political participation beyond tokenism to presenting themselves for political positions.

With this challenge, the dice is cast, as the women in the party move further to re-strategize for the imminent political contest in the party that will herald their resolve as not only a politically conscious group but also as a power bloc. They therefore, resolve to put forward

the candidacy of a woman in the next general election. While the women debate on the choice between Professor Nona Odaro and Hajiya Aisha, the two women have settled for a private consensus between them. Hajiya Aisha steps-down for Prof. Nona. This decision receives a wide acclamation from the other women party faithful and consequently, Professor Nona Odaro is presented as the women's consensus candidate for the UPLP.

This outcome is no doubt an onerous task for Professor Nona who in her self-confessed remarks admits that "I love politics but I am inexperienced in political intrigues. I hate the intrigues in politics. I am not a smooth talker. I am not crafty in any way" (*More than Dancing*,pg. 16). Nevertheless, Prof Nona is not deterred in any way by her self-limitation. She rather regains strength in her dream as she is encouraged by the exploits of a cream of historical foremothers; Princess Inikpi of Igalaland, Queen Amina of Zazzau, Queen Idia and Emotan of Benin Kingdom, Moremi of Ife, Queen Kambassa of Bonny, Madam Tinubu and Fumilayo Ransome-Kuti of Lagos, Gambo Sawaba and a host of women from the Aba Women war of 1929. All are led by fictitious Mama Nigeria. Nona thus, answers the call as she is startled from the subconscious "...I am ready! Here am I. I am ready to go all the way" (*More than Dancing*,pg.29).

The men of the UPLP on their part are not resting on seeing that they give a checkmate to the women's contest for the presidency. Their ploy is provoked by the apparent intimidation from women's questthat is guided by sound professionals and women groups. These women are determined to end what they call "men's oppressive rule from within and outside the party". The men therefore, plan to explore two options. The first option is to explore calling Madam Bisi, the woman leader, to see if they can negotiate with her to dissuade Nona from contesting for the presidency. Also, her role is to see to it that Nona concedes to the vice presidential

position. The second option, which some of the men however, find repulsive, is to destabilise Nona at the home front.

The men resort to the second alternative as they could not have their way through Madam Bisi. Uyi Odaro, Nona's husband, makes a sudden retreat from the strong support he gives his wife from the beginning. Uyi promises to throw in his support for his wife when elected. When she asks him if he can cope, Uyi replies, "Of course I will try. It's not easy, though" (*More than Dancing,* pg.47). However, there is a sudden twist when the men's group pays him a visit to convince him to withdraw his stance for the sum of five million and later twenty million Naira or he accepts to be the running mate of their presidential candidate, Alhaji Bawa. Uyi who rebuffs all these offers is however, in a fix as he ruminates over his colleagues' claim that his personality will be submerged in Nona's when elected as president. The men claim, Uyi will then play a second fiddle. There is a sudden change of attitude with Uyi. He becomes hostile to Nona's aspiration. His disagreement with his wife over flimsy issues at home like dog feeding only inflict pains on Nona's frail nerves. This conflict comes to its peak when both husband and wife walk out on each other over the unsettled quarrel.

Nona's presidential aspiration suffers a temporary setback as a result of her depression at the home front. She shows more sign of despondency and loss of morale in continuing with the struggle. It takes her friend Ameze to restore her confidence to continue with her aspiration for the office of the president. Nona regains additional spur from women groups who volunteer cash donations to support the campaign for woman presidency. This gesture does not only inspire Nona, it also creates the financial independence that leads to the women's successful outing in the party's primary elections. The victory of the women's presidential candidate continues into the general elections. Nona is now reconciled with her husband. She takes the lead as election results filter in from media source.

4.3.3Class War and Party Politics in*More than Dancing*

It worths less attention reiterating Marx and Engels position from The Manifesto of the Communist Party, which explains the existence of class war in all human society. What is certainly worth stressing, and that is often being overlooked, is the fact that this doctrine goes with the fact that the modern capitalist society "has not done away with class antagonism".Instead, "it has but established new classes, new conditions of oppression, new forms of struggles in the place of old ones" (Marx and Engels, 1848:14). In the context in which Marx and Engels conceived this class war, the proletariats and the bourgeois representing the oppressed and the oppressor classes are pitched in an endless class war, which is sometimes hidden and at other times open. But in the modern capitalist societies, other forms of unequal and oppressive relations have since replaced these classes of the oppressed and the oppressor.

In the world of Salami-Agunloye's play *More than Dancing*, the nature of class war is defined by these new forms of dichotomy; the men and the women are in contest for political power. Nevertheless, these classes respectively retain the character of first, the oppressor bourgeois, few in their composition, holding the monopoly of power and economy. The second group is the oppressed, who are the working class, the artisans, the market women and the peasant farmers. They are the majority struggling to have access to economic and political power. Mazi Madu, the Secretary of the party, speaking from the men's camp, raises alarm on the composition of the women's camp, and tells his colleagues that:

> In their caucus group, there are a lot of professional women. Omzele is a medical doctor; Boma is judge, Ebele is a reputable market woman. Azira is a petroleum engineer; Alero is a chartered accountant; Garos is a top computer engineer; Aisha is a diplomat; they have many lawyers, university lecturers, accountants, nurses, computer analysts, engineers, fashion designers, market women, farmers, women in purdah and many others. They have mobilized women from all works of life, literate and illiterates, poor and rich all that is really dangerous (*More than Dancing,* pg.32).

More than Dancing is set in Nigeria at the height of political campaigns for the general elections. The conflict of the play is situated within an intraparty tussle for the party's presidential flag bearer in the general election. The men in the party by their disposition are the few who constitute themselves as power brokers, and who by their economic power have continued to dominate the women from within and outside the political party. The opening of the play sets the tone for the class war, which the playwright intends. The stage direction reads:

> *United People's Liberation Party's (UPLP) mini-convention is in progress. The men are gorgeously dressed and seated on the top rows while the women are seated on the lower rows. Women dance groups from various regions are seen coming into dance one after the other...when they finish dancing, each group is given two bags of rice, a bag of salt, a carton of maggi cubes and two wrappers* (*More than Dancing,* pg.1).

This description clearly showsthe disparity in the economic status of men as compared to that of the women. The men by virtue of their dressing and where they are seated in the party's convention are depicted as bourgeois. Their dressing reflects the life of affluence and their occupying of the "top row" of the seating arrangement typifies the VIP treatment given to the very few privileged members of a political party in Nigeria. Their positions are enhanced by what they own within and outside the party.

On the other hand, the women are the underdogs. They occupy the "lower row" in the sitting arrangement. They are less noticed except for their coming out to dance to entertain at the pleasure of the dignitaries. This lopsided treatment of the women reflects the oppression meted on their lot in the party's politics. They are by this design confined to the lower ranks of the party and no wonder, Madam Bisi, the party's woman leader, takes notice of this and breaks the silence. She says:

> **Bisi:** Stop the drumming! Stop the dancing! Stop immediately. Stop I say!!! Enough is enough!! Year in, year out, primaries come and party elections go. All we do is dance. Is dance all we can do? Is that all we are meant for? Look at the entire dancing troupes, how many men do you see? The men have since stopped dancing. Look at the high table (*points at the top row where the*

> *dignitaries are seated*). How many women do you see up there? The seats are filled with men. Where are the women? Where are the women I ask? Look at us (*points at the lower seats*) applauding the winning team. Look at us (*pointing at the dancers*) dancing and collecting two bags of rice and one bag of salt, and one carton of maggi cubes and two wrappers to be shared among thirty five women!...

As far as Madam Bisi is concerned, all these gestures of handouts to the women and the sitting arrangement and the doctrinaire pattern of making the women to dance at the party's convention always, are all part of the scheme to perpetually keep the women in subordinate position. That is why, in her opinion, the party has been turned into a party for men, dominated by them and safeguarded by the same men. This is the reason why virtually all the key positions of the party are reserved for the men.She continues:

> Men are chairpersons, secretaries, vice chairpersons, treasurers, public relation officers, financial secretaries and so on. They are members of the board of trustees. Then, we are remembered as women leaders. We are supposed to be a United People's Liberation Party; the liberation is for only men not for women. Yet, when it is time for election, women are mobilized to vote... (*More than Dancing*, pg. 1-2).

Alhaji Sani's response to Madam Bisi merely confirms the deep-seated oppression that exists in the party. The politics of moneybags has always predetermined the position to be occupied between the men and the women in the power game. Sani claims that the political space is an "empty stage set for any actor male or female". At the same time, however, he intimidates the women that "politics cost money" (*More than Dancing* pg. 3). This insinuation is an affirmation of the men's political superiority. Their perceived claim to monopoly of resources has always raised the bargain for political power out of the reach of the women. The same show of arrogance and oppression of the women is in display in the dialogue between Ebele, Femi and Bisi, a follow up to Alhaji Sani's posture:

> **Ebele:** Alhaji, enough of that. You can no longer scare us with that. It is already a time-worn tale. We have heard it over and over again. Money is no longer a barrier to us. We are equal to the task.
>
> **Femi:** (*Sarcastically*). Really? That's interesting. I will love to see a good display of money as women come out to contest for positions. Madam Bisi, don't lead these women astray. Money is a defense. It answers all things.

> **Bisi:** Very well, my able national treasurer. We are aware that money is might. We also know there is God mightier than money. In him we trust. He will help us. You dare us (*More than Dancing*, pg.3).

Class war in the play therefore, is patterned along oppressive structures set by men politicians and party members with a few exceptions. The men's oppression of the women is the type that relegates them to the background of the mainstream of the party's politics. The women, despite their numerical strength and also their professional skill are expected to be silent and be content with what the men offer them in the scheme of things. The men are intimidated psychologically by the women's numerical strength as well as their own inertia and therefore, will want to put up a fight to cover for all these. Just as Okolocha (2014:69) argues that "the men are afraid that women might indeed make better leaders and demystify the superiority of men. Women constitute a political threat that makes it imperative for the men to keep them in the background or out of politics entirely".

In summary, the nature of class war in politics as adumbrated above is that in most political situations "the men cannot see themselves being governed by women no matter how intelligent, how industrious, and how progressive they may be. As far as the African man is concerned, (*as it is always being assumed*), it is the prerogative of men to rule and women to carry out instruction" (Okoh, 2002:114-15) (My Emphasis). However, this is not to be for long as the women have garnered the support of the other women and some men too, and are poised to revolt by asserting their might in the party's politics.

The revolt in this play marks a new consciousness, which the women, supported by a few men who believe in social justice are using to institute an egalitarian rule. Salami-Agunloye thus, structures this women revolution in line with Fanonian consciousness of liberation through sacrifice and collective struggle. This supposedly, underpins the larger ideological mutation

represented in the present play, which also addresses the third objective of this study. A further explanation of this is made in the next section of this study.

4.3.4 Sacrifice, Collective Struggle and Liberation in *More than Dancing*

Within the framework of New Historicist's methodology, the study borrows a bit of Frantz Fanon's concept of liberation to buttress on issues of sacrifice and collective struggle portrayed in the play *More than Dancing*. Fanon's concept of liberation is tight to his theory of decolonization of colonial and neo-colonial Africa. In his opinion, modern African states (like Nigeria) are unfortunate by-products of global capitalists who initiate the African people into their midst as unequal partners. Inequality therefore, is the hallmark of all colonial and neo-colonial societies and consequently the quest for equity.

The tenet of New historicism expressed in Fanon's postulation therefore, is that history is both transition and replication. This implies that as much as events in history are being faced out, soon enough, they are noticed again in aspects of the socio-political and economic life of the people.

Fanon contends that by the end of colonialism, the realities of the contemporary independent state speak volumes about unequal relationship in communities as reminiscent of that in the colonial formation. A very important aspect of Fanon's treatise is that this unequal relation engenders a new oppressor and oppressed relationship with its attendant physical, structural and mental violence. Fanon (1965:63) asserts that:

> Today, peaceful coexistence between the two blocs (*coloniser and colonised*) provokes and feeds violence in the colonial territories. Tomorrow, perhaps we shall see the shifting of that violence after the complete liberation of the colonial territories. Perhaps we will see the question of minorities cropping up. Already certain minorities groups do not hesitate to preach violence method for resolving their problems and it is not by chance (Emphasis mine).

Following Fanon's prediction, we can safely say that new forms of antagonism patterned in the same mould of oppression and nurtured by the same kind of violence have emerged. In the

context of our analysis, it may not be the colonials versus the colonised, but the men group pitched against women in contemporary party politics. The various forms of domination explain the violence that Fanon feels must be crushed with a corresponding violence, which will liberate both groups from common ruin.

Thus, for Fanon, liberation comes with it, sacrifice of a sort, or risk taking and the determination to free others who are willing to join in the struggle and equally, those not at all willing to. In all these, therefore, collective struggle is unavoidable. Yet, this must be channelled by a revolutionary leader- a political leader as well, whose role serves as an educator in effecting the transition from individual to group liberation. The transition of course is to be brought by a revolutionary praxis. For this reason, the committed educated elite should be the vanguard of the liberation struggle through sacrifice and should also take to the duty of imparting knowledge to others.

Salami-Agunloye creates in the characters of Prof. Nonaghosa Odaro and Hakeem, portraits of ideal revolutionary leaders. Incidentally, the two belong to different camps but are united in the objective of collective struggle to liberate the oppressed groups. Nona's self confession of her limitation in political intrigues, love for her family and career, notwithstanding her acceptance of the mantle of leadership in Movement Three, shows how much she is ready to sacrifice for the oppressed groups. She states that in spite of all these competing demands, the love she has for her country and empathy for the oppressed groups who have reposed so much confidence in her is enough motivation for her to make the sacrifice. Besides, Nona gets additional inspiration from Mama Nigeria, a flow from her stream of consciousness that for her to succeed, she tells Nona to:

> Plan ways to building confidence in the women. With determination, women can reach the highest level in governance. You have to start somewhere. You have to mobilize dedicated people who are ready to make sacrifices and go all the way with you. Map out good strategies and move ahead (*More than Dancing*, pg. 86).

The above counsel by Mama Nigeria underscores the need for collective struggle, which this play is all about. The character of collective struggle in this context knows no gender boundaries, just as Hakeem suggests to his men group. He says:

> Don't you know that if policy decisions and laws are made for the benefit of all members of society, the extent to which the government body is able to carry everybody a long will be determined by the degree to which its decisions will be appropriate and meet the needs of the entire nation? You see, my friend, the proper representation of women and the inclusion of their perspectives into the decision making process will inevitably lead to solutions that are viable and satisfy a broader range of society (*More than Dancing,* pg.36).

Conversely too, therefore, it suffices, using Nawal el Saadawi's viewin her introduction to her book,*The Hidden Face of Eve*(1980) that "it is no longer possible to escape the fact thatthe under-privilege status of women, their relative backwardness, leads to an essential backwardness of society as a whole".She goes on to suggest that a society that will imagine "an all women control" excluding the men will stunt its growth in like manner as the one oppressing the women.

In the following exchange involving Sani, Nona, Femi and Hakeem, the playwright sets the right tone for revolt and collective struggle in the play. The disdain for the women in the group is shown physically and psychologically and therefore, calling for the same measure of reaction.

> **Sani:** You are not ripe enough to lead. Your time has not come. Wait for your time. Don't jump the gun.
>
> **Nona:** What an insult! How long does it take to mature for leadership? Yet we call ourselves United Peoples Liberation Party! Look here Alhaji Sani, we cannot talk of liberated party until our women are emancipated from all forms of oppression. We cannot say we are a democratic party until people see in, practical terms a radical turn around in the condition of women generally and that they have been empowered to have access to all aspect of governance as equal partners with other members of the society.
>
> **Femi:** Really? Is that so?
>
> **Hakeem:** It is so, Femi. Women, my advice to you is not to end up talking but also to back your words with action. Let us see a demonstration of this new consciousness in practical terms (*More than Dancing,* pg.4).

The collectivism in this struggle goes beyond the women. True liberation is measured when everyone in the society is involved. This is the point that Nona makes when she alludes to their party as a "United People's Liberation Party". For her there is no denial that what the party stands for contradictsits praxis. The marginalization of women in the party has been made structural in that they are seen as naturally unfit to lead. This has been argued by critics like Okolocha (2014:64), that reaction such as Sani's is as a result of deep seated traditional views, which "makes it clear that patriarchal views are reluctant to embrace change and that men consider the public sphere of politics as their domain...it also illustrates gender imbalance in patriarchal systems."

Contrary to this notion, however, Nona will always advocate for a collective struggle, which is all encompassing and will lead to true liberation. Accordingly, there is no how the women can think of liberating themselves alone without the partnership of their men counterpart. Such a revolution may not stand the test of time. In this regard, the political education has to be extended to the men. The playwright intends that this new stride of the women, besides gaining the needed success in the battle ground must also have the necessary acceptance subsequently with the men. In Nona's words, she reiterates that:

> UPLP is for all of us, male and female. Remove the women from it, the men will be stranded. Remove the men and the women will be nowhere too. I quite agree with you that we cannot stand on our own. The same also goes for the men. We need one another. However, we must present our own candidate now is our turn to lead. We have been faithful followers all these years (*More than Dancing,* pg. 8).

For this reason, also, she rejects Alero's proposal that the women form an all women party to wrestle power from the men. She shows her resentment thus:

> God forbid! Nigeria is a country made up of men and women. Our reason for desiring to rule is not because we want to install a government that is anti-men. No! We believe in equality and equity. People will get what they deserved because they qualify for it not because of their sex. Our government will be a human faced one where no woman or man is oppressed. We will work to leave a legacy that will last through ages (*More than Dancing,* pg. 9).

This pattern of collective struggle clearly contrasts for instance with that parodied by Iyorwuese Hagher in his play *Mulkin Mata* (1991), a title pattern after Harrison and Simmon's *Aikin Mata*,(1966),itself an adaptation of Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* .

In *Mulkin Mata*, translated from Hausa language to mean "women's rule", Hagher subtly satirises the excesses or rather the utopian dictates of radical feminism, which feels that an all women revolutionary government with role reversal both in sex and gender terms will be a panacea for the oppressed women in modern politics. The dissenting voice and partnership, which women like Hassana Diakite, a member of the Women's Revolutionary Government (WRG), holds, ought to have been a food for thought for the women in creating balance in their revolutionary government. In the argument of critics like Akoh (2006:138) therefore, the play:

> Although a metaphor of good and bad government, it is apparent at the end of *Mulkin Mata* that the playwright berates the hasty and violent approach of radical feminism. For failing to employ a dialogic process, which will culminate in a synergy of roles, the revolutionary ideals only end at the level of utopian revivalism.

So, to a large extent then, that one-sided revolution in this play in the words of Umar-Buratai (2002:40), "may not alone be faulty, but the essence of the movement becomes overtly a celebration of the ascension to power of the opposite sex". This is because it is simplistic and acting in total disregard to collective success and social development.

At the end of *More than Dancing*, Salami's proposition pays off in the context of drama. The sacrifices of Nona, the women groups and of their resources pave the way to political success. Selected men that form a common front with the women in this political coalition have demonstrated that a greater advantage is assured when a liberation struggle, in like manner will utilize all resources equally and irrespective of gender. Nona wins her political party's ticket to fly the party's flag in the general election. Sonsare announces to his men's group in a tone that heralds a new dawn in our national politics. He says:

Sonsare: The women have mobilized the whole nation. They are on national television, radio, the whole town is booming with "Professor Nona for Presidency". Alh Bawa's posters have been replaced with Nona's posters, Right now they are at the stadium celebrating Nana's victory. Imagine we have less than twenty- four hours to election. What do we do?

Balat: It's too late. You can't stop them now; the women have fooled us. In fact the chairman, some governors and some members of the national Assembly are there with them in the stadium. Ambasadore Odaro is solidly behind his wife again. He is the one fanning and cheering her up
(*More than Dancing,* pg.101-2).

The women have paid the supreme price of sacrifice without being victims in the end. Nona's victory is a victory not only for the women but also for the nation and all those who believe in social justice. In a nutshell, a truly liberated society is the one that toes the path of equality, equity and social justice. Social justice in the context of this play spells a just condition for social living and political contests. In all these, is the recognition and protection of the rights of all. This is the vision that Salami-Agunloye projects for women and the society in her play.

In summary, we contend that the temperaments of the playwrights in handling issues bordering on contemporary politics of Nigeria have reshaped their philosophies in various ways. Soyinka has shown a mutation from his erstwhile nihilistic view of society to a quest for revolutionary alternative in *King Baabu.* Osofisan's *Tegonni* shows that while the playwright is still inclined to his radical aesthetics of collective struggle, his ideology has come to domesticate the role of Promethean heroes in the mission to liberate society. Likewise, Salami-Agunloye in her play *More than Dancing* has shown that women can wrestle power in party politics and governance through collective struggle of the proletariats. Her vision for women liberation and empowerment has advanced from women serving as the sacrificial objects to women becoming actual beneficiaries of their struggles.

The contention in this section of the chapter is that there is an ideo-aesthetic mutation and alliance in the dramaturgies of our selected playwrights as illustrated in the foregoing analyses. To prove our thesis further, there is the need to investigate a little more into how far

this mutation and alliance in the dramaturgies of our selected playwrights have manifested in other plays sequel to the foregoing. The next phase of the analysis attempts a critique of plays produced not later than ten years from those analyzed in the last section. The attempt is to find consistency in this claim for mutation and alliance, which itself could be in the inconsistencies in which the playwrights handle their materials. The next section of the chapter therefore, makes a case for mutaton and alliance beyond the ideals of revolution, which this study identifies as further response to socio-politcal change. With this, the analysis in the next section turns to *Alápatà Àpáta* (2011) by Wole Soyinka, *Women of Owu* (2008) by Femi Osofisan and *Idia…*(2007) by Irene Salami-Agunloye.

4.4.0 Mutation and Alliance beyond the Ideals of Revolution

This section is conceived as a sequel to the proposition in the earlier part of this chapter that every playwright grows in his artistic output, which is equally influenced by the historical movement of society. The present analysis thus aligns with the fact that the wind of historical change comes with different perception of society and consequently, different forms of signification. The playwrights' receptiveness of social change is in the manifest reordering of their creative works. In this case therefore, it is argued that the elemental feature of mutation may not be found necessarily, in the continuity and consistency of the playwright's ideo-aesthetic productivity. That is to say, in terms of content, form and ideology there is bound to be inconsistencies and diversity in their creative pursuits. This is what is responsible for possible convergence in points of view and ideologies in the form of what this study chooses to call alliance.

Furthermore, it is argued in this section of the chapter that politics more than any other subject has remained a consistent factor that shapes the drama in the twenty-first century. This is the position generally with African literature, which dramatic literature is a part of. Thus, about

African literature, we cannot agree less with Lindfors (2010:22) who opines that “indeed, one could not argue that they have been generated and shaped by the same forces that transformed much of the African continent during the past hundred years. Writers have served not only as chroniclers of contemporary politics, but also as advocates of radical change”.

Like the drama of the last century therefore, drama in Nigeria has continued to draw from the traumatic socio-political and cultural changes called upon by the combined years of civil and military misrules. These experiences, needless to say, have their attendant psychological effect on society. There is no gain saying also, that part of the shock the Nigerian state had to face in the early decades of the twenty-first century is the unfolding of events arising from her return to civil rule from 1999 through the period under review (2010). There have been the persistent questions of leadership succession made rife by democracy, civil unrest, and insurgency, ecological and national questions among other issues. This period is part of what is more acceptably echoed as the post-military engagement in literature as a whole and theatre in particular.This period has shown so far, what appears to be the broadening and/or the narrowing of interest of the playwright in these issues. This is not without a corresponding mutation in the dramaturgy, especially of our selected playwrights. The analysis in this sectiontherefore, sets out to look at each of the selected playwrightsunder study here,against their respective backgrounds of past plays or better still, against the antecedents of their social vision and the formulation of new paths for the development of the Nigerian state.

In line with the research objectives, this section of the study seeks to explain further, the features and character of mutation and alliance in the remaining three of the selected plays. Itthus, categorises the discourse into subjects that address other dimensions of mutation and alliance by the selected playwrights. In a New historicists’ and Cultural materialists’ approach, the juxtapositon of history and the literary text, as well as the textagainst itself, allows for an effective dialogue withextant canon of literary drama in Nigeria. In this

sense,the ideology being pursued by the individual playwright will suffice our proposition in this study. There is no doubt also, that ideo-aesthetic make-up of a play both in content and form advances the playwrights' social vision. All these are what this section of the chapter sets out to inquire.

4.4.1 Wole Soyinka's *Alápatà Àpáta* and the Leadership Question

The play *Alápatà Àpáta* forms part of Wole Soyinka's corpus of comic satires. Like most of these comic satires therefore, Soyinka tries to deploy his well known technique of weaving into play, the trickster motif for political and social commentaries (Priebe, 1980:79). Yet, with a slight modification on the trickster leitmotif, he makes almost similar commentary on the social and political life of the contemporary Nigerian society with his satirical jibes. It is the argument of this study that like his past satires where Soyinka directs his satirical barbs mostly on the leadership, which plays tricks on the followership (*Jero Plays, The Lion and the Jewell, The Road* for example), in the present play, the leadership question is revisited.But unlike these plays, Soyinka questions leadership beyond the nihilistic view. He holds society accountable rather, for playing tricks at leadership more than the leadership playing tricks at it. A little example from the *Jero Plays* will suffice to advance this argument.

Elsewhere, this study makes reference to *Jero Plays* as conveying Soyinka's social vision and a narrative on Nigeria's leadership question with all its attendant malaises. The leadership style, both civil and military, from the early years of self rule, to later years of neo-colonial self contradiction, shows the charlatanry with which the cream of leadership succeeds itself. In *The Trial of Brother Jero* for instance, despite his priestly calling, Jero sees no problem in profiting from the "flock" under his care. He sees them as "customers" rather than "sheep" under his pasture. With this mind-set he works at exploiting the less privilege such as Chume and Amope his wife, by evading the debt he owes Amope and by mentally strangulating Chume with false teaching. So, in this play, just as Jones (1988:83) sees it, Brother Jero is an

uncouth leader and a false prophet “his people look pathetically to him for leadership and he replies with deceit”. This is the same characterwhich the political class shows on attainment of power. Both elective and appointed public offices are used for profiteering rather than for the welfare of the citizens.

With the same antics, Jero now transformed into military regalia, in *Jero’s Metamorphosis*, could not resist the temptation of exploitation as he brings both the lowly and the highly placed under his exploitation. He manipulates his environment by creating dreams that can be fulfilled, only with the aid of his machination as a prophet. With this act of trickery, Jero comes closer to his higher stake, the military regime. His final transformation into a self-styled military dictator is the height of his political manoeuvrings. This is where he finally finds fulfilment in his acts of trickery, and so, as he asserts himself, “after all, it is fashionable these days to be a desk general” (*Jero’s Metamorphosis,*pg. 92). In the military regime just like the civilian rule, the euphoria of power and being in office is placed above commitment to duty. This is what Soyinka projects in *The Jero plays*.

Thus, in *Alápatà Àpáta* it appears that the extremities and the tricks of the political class have hardened the citizenry that has become accustomed to the game, to have applied it to its erstwhile-manipulators. The psychological war between the rulers and the ruled has created a reversed form of psychological torture where the rulers now become susceptible to the antics of their erstwhile manipulated lots. Nevertheless, this does not imply in any way the attainment of the socialists’ dictatorship of the proletariat, even though Soyinka seems to make allusions pointing to these seeming acts of revolt in the play. However, the concern in this section of the study is with how the playwright interrogates leadership succession especially by retired civilian and/or military figures. This study also aims at showing how the followership dictates these entire schemes, consciously or unconsciously.

4.4.2 Synopsis of *Alápatà Àpáta*

The play *Alápatà Àpáta* is set in a hill country side, by a cross road in an imaginary village ofOrita Mefa. The play is largely based on mistaken identity. It showcases Soyinka's satirical commentary on leadership based on opportunism and society's misdirection. Àlàbά, Alápαtà a retired butcher resolves on a complete retirement, of total rest. Thus, he sits on a rock all day in keeping with his work-free retirement principle. This move is greeted with suspicion by the public who contemplates Àlàbά's solitary act as sinister tricks of *Esu* or at best concealing some expensive mineral deposit in the rock.

Àlàbά Alápαtà's retirement programme seems obstructed by a traffic of people, who either will not refrain from taking him for the master butcher that he was or from their gazes of his new sitting position. His imagination leads him to the feeling that the signboard, which directs people to the butcher's hamlet where he lives appears to be giving the wrong impression that he is still active in business. As he plans to take down the signboard, this initiative is suppressed by his friend, the school teacher's view that it could better be modified to reflect Àlàbά's present status. Yet, this plan would not go farther than to further complicate issues, which inappropriate accents presuppose about the personality of the retired butcher. Overwhelmed by his ignorance of Yoruba accents, Àlàbά innocently misleads the student-painter assigned by the teacher to design a new signboard in his honour. The boy writes on the signboard "Alápatα Àpáta*"* (ruler of the rock) instead ofAlápαtà(the butcher). This index opens up the series of other incidents of mistaken identity that follow in the play.

Meanwhile, various groups including the military, the governor, the religious all have varying interests in the rock and whatever treasure that lies beneath it. Unknown to Àlàbά therefore, a mischievous land speculator has since negotiated for the exploration and possible exploitation of the supposed mineral "Titanuranium X. Used in space rockets" (*Alápatà Àpáta* pg. 14), by signing a deal with foreign investor. This pact yields a part payment for the speculator who

could not prove his claim beyond a mere suspicion of Àlàbá's continuous sitting on the rock. The Pastor too is not different. He too has been nursing the ambition of acquiring the "treasure mine" perhaps for a different reason. By holding vigils to dislodge Àlàbá and his evil forces from the rock therefore, the Pastor believes he can set his church on it as enshrined in the Holy Scripture.

The military on its part could not restrain its gullibility in the phantom mineral at "Abà Alàpátα". Thus, under the guise of "OPERATION LONGATROAT", they lay siege to take over Àlàbá's rock in a swoop of the military's "Special Task Force Operation" style. This operation is hitched by the confusion in the tonal representations and assumptions in the words AlápatàandAlàpátα (Bucher and Rock) respectively. The armed sentry is detailed to the latter, which presupposes a quarry site but appears to have missed their destination to the former as misconstrued from Àlàbá's accent on confirmation. The troop meets its waterloo in that confusion as their General, at whose instance they are detailed, and the most muddled in the ensuing scenario, orders them to immediately move to the appropriate site to cordon it off. The troop scampers out in this panic state so as not to attract further, the wrath of the General.

Dàaníẹ́lébo the Governor also, is not deterred by what he sees as the discreet disposition of his friend Àlàbá on the supposed mineral deposit underneath the rock at Aba Alápατα. He decides now to take the fight headlong with the guidance of his spirit medium- The Figure in Red. Armed with cash, charms and ammunition, Dàaníẹ́lébo stages a comeback to pacify or scare Àlàbá to submission and thereby yielding to his demand for the supposed treasure mine. Being unable to convince Àlàbá to yielding, he decides as a last resort, to launch his arsenals, which he hides under his garments and by muttering incantation as well. By coincidence, Dàaníẹ́lébo's invocation and that of his spirit Medium matches with Omo, Àlàbá's son's inadvertent appearance, face painted from his painting escapade. This results into a scare that dislodges both Dàaníẹ́lébo and his Medium from the scene.

Àlàbά, by the insignia of the newly designed signboard and his friend, the teacher's publicity through the media, acquires a new status. The retired butcher is now a "Chief" by mistaken identity. This feat though accidental, naturally brings him the chastisement of the traditional council, which construes him as an impostor. The warped report of Àlàbά's escapades with the military and Dàaníẹ́lébo the governor has mistakably also, esteemed him as courageous and an astute patriot of his village. For this reason, therefore, the village's traditional council which earlier fines Àlàbά heavily for his unrepressed act of impersonation asAlápatαÀpáta (ruler of the rock), now rescinds its decision. Rather, in a reversal of fortune and by the King's command, Àlàbά is confirmed with the same title, amidst loud acclamation and generous donations from the same public, which misconstrues him as being diabolical. Thus, the Teacher says "the accident of the accent is vindicated" (*Alápatà Àpáta* pg. 182).

4.4.3Questioning Leadership beyond the Stereotype in*Alápatà Àpáta*

This section of the study pursues our first research objective. The interest is to inquire conversely, the character of mutation and alliance in the present play, since our conceptualization presupposes change and permutations in ideo-aesthetics. Thus, we apprehend the above subject from the stand point of New Historicism and Cultural Materialism, bearing in mind that changing fortunes of history mediates aesthetics and ideology, present in any literature. Consequently, it is the argument of this research that the persistent question of leadership in Soyinka's dramaturgy is present in *Alápatà Àpáta,* yet, with a different reconfiguration and perhaps also a new ideological focus. What parameters depict this in the present play? We attempt to first apprehend this, away from Soyinka's stereotypical representation of leadership in his previous comic satires. Subsequently also, the ideology that this new aesthetic dimension exhibits will be explained in line with our study objective three.

Stereotypical leadership portraiture in almost all of Soyinka's comic satires has always been in the character of *Esu-Elegba*. *Esu,* as simply called is often thought of in a Judaeo-Christian conception as a malevolent trickster deity, known for his intrigues, mischief and rancorous disposition to his victim. *Esu* is therefore, dreaded by both human and the spirit world. But as argued elsewhere in this study, *Esu*, just like *Ogun*, has a dual nature of both destructive as well as creative essences. He is also known for his revolutionary act of altering the cause of events for good as well as for the worse depending on how he is implored or invoked in the process.

The nature of *Esu* is that, as an *orisa*, he possesses an individual, as much as he inhabits a community. Since he is considered an ambivalent trickster-god, it means therefore, he can wilfully manipulate his victims or on the other hand, his victims could manipulate him into their situations and desires. Just as what Karin Barber (1981:734) makes us understand about the Yoruba *orisa* that "the intimate personal involvement of devotee and *orisa* is mutual. The *orisa* possesses the devotee; but the devotee also, in a different sense 'possesses' the *orisa*. Many *orisa* mount certain of their devotees...the devotee's face, voice and movements change as the *orisa* enters and empowers her or him". This could be read conversely too, when the individual mounts the *orisa*. Thus, Barber (1981:724) maintains that: "relationship between humans and *orisa* are in some sense a projection of relationship between people in society". She continues:

> I would like to suggest that if the Yoruba see the *orisa*'s power as being maintained and augmented by human attention, this is because they live in a kind of society where it is very clear that human individual's power depends in the long run on the attention and acknowledgement of his fellow-man.

It will not be wrong to say that Soyinka, in *Alápatà Àpáta,* just like his other comic satires, extends this belief and relationships with their symbolic import in his plays. This is partly explained in our earlier expose of *The JeroPlays.*

The interpretation of leadership quality and its inadequacies as represented in the present play bespeaks Soyinka's resort to the alternative character of *Esu* and humans' relationship. By implication, rather than seeing *Esu*'s trickster machination as embodied in a lone protagonist, we are directed to appreciate the alternative view in the people around the hero. Àlàbά is the pivotal character. In his personality, Soyinka finds a rallying point for all the conflicts that ensued in the play. Our attention is drawn to the *Esu* motif in this play from the description in the opening scene, which suggests that the action of the play takes place at crossroads. This is enough to generate the needed anxiety that drives the play. Accordingly, we get the real intent in the exchange between the farmers who point to the fact that Àlàbά's sitting at the cross-road portends a sinister motive for him and the passers-by. Thus the Second Farmer says it all:

> **2nd Farmer:** And what is there on earth into which Esu cannot transform himself` into? Whose body can he not occupy—man or woman? Whose identity can henot borrow when he wants to sow confusion? *Esu Lά-à-lú*. (*Voice and body beginningto intone*) Is Esu not contrary one who threw himself into a burning house and still complained he was freezing? He sat in the palace courtyard but kept screaming that the space was too small for him, then he squeezed himself into the palm kernel and finally trenched himself into contentment. Ah, *Esu Ẹlégbara*, I beg you, don't mess around with my peace of mind... (*Alápatà Àpáta* pg. 22-3).

Àlàbά is not Esu as he is ironically thought to be. The complainant is the one under the spell of Esu and not his suspect.

Retirement means for Àlàbά a moment of total disconnect from his work life and finding rest and if possible, play advisory role if and only when it presents itself. However, it is ironical as we gather from this dialogue involving the Teacher, the Trader and her friend, the culpability of society in hatching their kind of leadership at any given time. This is also attributed to the meddlesome nature of *Esu* in people or people in *Esu* as expressed earlier in the above passage. In their dialogue, they say:

> **Trader:** Oh yes, the signboard is certainly striking. Much better than the old one.
>
> **Friend:** One must give credit where credit is due.

Trader: Same goes for debit. The spelling spell debit.

Teacher: Sorry I don't get you.

Trader: The spelling...

Friend: My friend here is trying to tell you that although the painting casts a spell, the spelling causes a fainting spell (*Alápatà Àpáta* pg. 102-3).

It is in the Teacher's final response that we understand that the "spell" which ordinarily is referring to the error in the accents on the inscriptions on the new signboard is inducing a metaphysical dimension to the overall conflict of the play. He says:

Teacher: A-ah, cast a spell is right. We are all under a spell since last night, and you are fortunate to come under the spell. Soon the spell shall overwhelm the entire nation and abroad. And we owe it all to the spell cast by Alápatà himself...Ladies, this retirement of our *Suya* Master will prove the catalyst of much that is yet to come. This is the beginning. We shall prove that, simply by doing nothing, a man can still make his mark. Indelibly, Àlàbá the Butcher will achieve more through inactivity than anyone ever did in active office. It's all a matter of genius (Soyinka, pg. 103-4).

The foregoing remarks hold a lot about both the thematic thrust of the play and as well, the ironic configuration of its conflicts. This will be looked at in detail. However, the allusion to knowing that everyone is under a "spell" underscores the active role of the people in determining the course of unfolding events. The Teacher explains that like the "carnival spirit" (*Alápatà Àpáta*, pg. 102), the people's will to direct their destinies is echoed in this metaphoric representation. There is little wonder then that even Àlàbá has come to accept that the society has played a trick at him and he accepts it as an act of fate. In his words as he describes his situation:

Àlàbá: (*Sighs*) I keep saying I'm a retired man but see what fate had been keeping in store for me. The wives of Generals– some of them were my best customers, you know, those ones who never haggled over the price of meat– well they used to complain that their husbands were not allowed to retire, even with all that RTD after their names. They kept their uniforms spick and span, hanging in their wardrobes, with camphor balls, all shinny with medals and ribbons. I'm beginning to think that *Ifá* has decided that this should also be my fate. Before I retired, I use to put animals out of their pains. Now it seems I am fated to put people out of their misery. Always on call, one way or the other, even without my knives and apron. I am beginning to think it's on account of

this rock. No matter what, I accept my fate. So, what is the problem?
(*Alápatà Àpáta* pg. 119-20).

In Nigeria's historical context, the retired personnel have found themselves back into the circle of leadership positioning both in civil and the military regimes. Persons retired from active service have been called upon to assume active leadership roles in politics, public service and traditional leadership institutions. Cases to illustrate these are many. For instance, there are cases where past military personnel are called upon to take leadership as traditional rulers or in elective and appointed positions in democratic rule, including governorship and office of the president. Likewise, retired personnel from the civil service are equally "recycled" in various positions during military regimes. This practice points to the hypocrisy of society and the double standard with which leadership is maintained. Dàaníẹ́lébo makes this clear in his encounter with Àlàbά. He believes that even in retirement, there is still power. That is why he thinks Àlàbά's retirement cannot be any different from that of people before him. Dàaníẹ́lébo cites the example of the Military General, his mentor, who is contesting both power and wealth with him, and even the supposed treasure he hopes for under Àlàbά's rock. He says:

Dàaníẹ́lébo: Yes, but you didn't know. He was here this morning. The General who came to attack your rock. Like you he pretends to be retired, but he keeps putting back his uniform, changing from military to civilian and back to military, to monetary and bribery and chicanery and giving me trouble. He came here looking for something, at crack of dawn...
(*Alápatà Àpáta* pg. 135-6).

The scenario painted above depicts the Nigerian situation where there is hardly any difference between civil rule and military dictatorship. The two have blended almost perfectly. Of course, by the invitation of the society, the retired soldiers have resurfaced as key players in democratic rule, contesting for relevance with the civilian actors. The irony in all these is that the society is left at the peril of the leadership she has curled for herself. Where it concerns the coming back of the military in civilian garb, the repercussions have been grave, not quite as different as under the military dictatorship. This is captured in Àlàbά's words when he says,

"what else can one expect, governor? You can take soja-man out of uniform, but you cannot take uniform out of soja-man" (*Alápatà Àpáta* pg. 138).

Like the General, Àlàbά himself acknowledges that his predicament is the making of the people who would not want him to retire but to find space to serve them in one way or the other. Perhaps it is in this paradoxical character of active retirement that one finds him in active service nevertheless. He says:

> **Àlàbά:** Every one told me not to retire. They asked me, where will office workers go to buy their *Suya*, and even the ground meat for *beefibogas* and *hamubogas* that are becoming popular with the younger generation? They said it could lead to student riot. 'Àlàbά' they said, 'you're the expert, your fame is the fame of the village. You put us on the world map—in fact, but for you, no one would know we exist...'(*Alápatà Àpáta* pg. 162).

This is a reminiscence of society's short-sightedness that the best human resources are very scarce to come by and therefore, the very few known "experts" must be reinvested into the circle of leadership. In this euphoria too, is this excerpt dialogue and eulogy of Àlàbά's exploits, which further explains the people's complicity in the misguided quest for leadership:

> **1st Student:** Dàaníẹlébo—you turned his *juju* to water. Son of Alóngé, we salute you. Ultimate Icon.Living legend. We are behind you all the way. Count on our solidarity. As for the decadent, reactionary, parasitic monarchs who trooped here to pay homage—don't trust them. They are simply jumping on the bandwagon. *A luta continua*!
>
> **Farmer:***Tó tó fùn.* Honour to whom honour is due. We mistook the presiding deityit is not *Esu*, but our own *Òrìsà-oko*, god of plenty. With the defeat of the locus in khaki, then their clone, Dàaníẹlébo, we foresee a bumper harvest (*Alápatà Àpáta* pg. 173).

These among other praises showered on Àlàbά are a further parody of how society collaborates against itself to perpetuate the return of messianic despots and sit-tight leaders. In this case Àlàbά is hardly to blame because the people in their follies create not only the "King" that he is never one, but also a "god" in him.

Osofisan makes similar allusion in*Aringindin and the Nightwatchmen.* In this play, the people who invited Aringindin and his band of vigilante thought they have found a lasting solution to

their problems. Little do they know that they have succeeded increating a monster that will annihilate their collective resolve. Thus Osakwe (2014:177), paraphrasing Banham and Plastaw (1999), opines that as contemporary commentaries on dictatorship, there is a consensus in Soyinka's and Osofisan's vision when one considers their latter plays namely *King Baabu* and *Aringindin and the Nightwatchmen*. He goes further to write that in these plays:

> ...like several of Osofisan title, *Aringindin*is bold in its vision and is an instance of 'more recent writing' from Africa that 'has turned to requiring ordinary people to play their part in forging the future and resist the urge to look for and follow apparent heroic leaders who time and again fall victim to the lure of power'.

This is not different from what Soyinka infers in the dialogue between Àlàbά and the Teacher. In this exchange, the playwright remarks that both fame and economic conditions make leadership attractive. Thus, the retired person would naturally yield to the slightest invitation to the reins of power.

> **Teacher:** Fame is a drug. Public adulation, even where you have a rented crowd, is oxygen to many. Why do you think boxers return to ring again and again after they have retired? Or retired generals**—**like our own local commodity?
>
> **Àlàbά:** I hear some of them retired broke. They never learnt to manage their resources.
>
> **Teacher:** Deeper, my dear Emeritus. The reason goes deeper. They cannot bear to be out of the lime light, that's the truth. The word is—relevant. They want to remain relevant... (*Alápatà Àpáta* pg. 37-8).

Thus, Soyinka's *Alápatà Àpáta* is crafted as a commentary on leadership and the collective resolve of the society. The playwright envisions a society where the collective will of the people could be misdirected, even in moments that the ultimate choice resides with them. He therefore, throws this up as a parable, drawing our attention to the fact that the judgements or misconceptions people hold about themselves, ultimately lead to the kind of leadership they get. We see this warning sign as one among many that society needs to heed to at the return of democracy in this new era of politics in the twenty-first century.

4.4.4 Satirical References of Revolutionary Consciousness in*Alápatà Àpáta*

The ideology that Soyinka projects in this play borders on revolutionary consciousness also.Looking at the play thematically, it can be deciphered that the play's conflict boders on leadership and the collective will of the people. The people are perceived as consciously or unconsciously pushing their destinies by their collective will. Under democracy, this is thought to be the case and therefore, their choice of leadership is equally thought to be well deserved. Ideologically, it is the argument of this study also that, while Soyinka projects the strength of the common people to chart a cause for their common good, this is not without punches on the pitfalls of such zealousness. Once more, unlike most of his previous comic satires, he assigns an active role to the common people. The class of commoners include the working class, which itself comprises mechanics, commercial motorcyclists (Okada), traders and office workers. Others include students and peasant farmers. All these form the moving force for the play's conflict. Nevertheless, Soyinka satirical depiction of this revolutionary or class consciousness, rather questions the authenticity of the desired goal(s) as much as the vectors of change themselves. These contradictions are nuanced by the playwright through linguistic features and Characterisation.

In the context of the present analysis, the playwright's creation of revolutionary conscious community is determined largely by the characters' application of parlance reminiscent to an ideological group. This use is all the same, replete with all the ironic tendencies. The Mechanics and the Students on arrival at the scene of Àlàbá's retirement abode are in conflict with whether or not his disposition constitutes a cause for the group of like-minds. In this excerpt, the First Student and First Mechanic are in agreement that what they have at hand constitutes an aggression of the oppressor. This is how they put it:

> **2nd Student:** All on top of the Rock? I do admit it does look eccentric. But it's not a crime.

1st Student: It develops into one. Agent provocateur—that's what they do--incite criminality, even where none is intended.

1st Mechanic: Tank you. (*Triumphantly*) You see? Dis na university student wey know wetin be wetin.
(Thank you. As you can see, this is an intelligent university student)(*Alápatà Àpáta*, pg. 47).

The first student explains his position to his comrades on what he sees as provocation in this case. In his thoughts, he suspects that government, a perceived enemy of the common people, knows that the workers and students living outside the university campus will always pass through that same path. Thus, Àlàbá's presence there is a trap to witch-hunt all equally perceived enemies of the state. They argue further:

2nd Student: Wait-wait-wait. You're going too fast for me. Trap them into what?

1st Student: Subversive talk. Union activism.Revolutionary plans. Comrades, it is good thing we ran into you—or, more like, you ran into us. It's time to mobilize. The government wants to undermine the solidarity between workers and students. The movement for the unity of intellectual and manual labour is terrifying them in their corrupt and decadent offices, so they set up spy points and recruit spies from least expected places. Ex-butchers! What next?
(*Alápatà Àpáta*, pg. 49).

So for him therefore, there is nothing left than a collective uprising, which the students and the workers must stage to enforce and embark on what he calls "checking government excesses. Encroachment on people's rights" (*Alápatà Àpáta,* pg. 49).

Theseconjuctures bring to question, what constitutes a genuine cause for struggle in the sight of the oppressed communities? It does appear that the appearances of incongruity and individual fears are creating false consciousness and therefore, breeding ideological busybodies, claiming to be championing the people's course. First Student who seems to be the mouthpiece of the supposed ideologues is already poised to stir up a mass action against an illusion, which he perceives as enemy of the common people. In the following dialogue, he berates his fellow student thus:

1st Student: Are you not a union leader?

2nd Student: Of course I am.

1st Student: Then think like one! We must live up to our electoral manifesto—student vigilance. Eternal vigilance. You're the PRO. Our two portfolios are critical to checking government excesses. Encroaching on people's rights. We must call a Union congress at once (*Alápatà Àpáta*, pg. 49).

The fact that matters of state have become central to Students Union activities calls to question what Student unionism is really out to achieve. This is made worse by the character of the issue in contention. For the group to act on a mere suspicion is rather retrogressive.

However, the call for the students and workers' partnership to fight a just cause is presented as a welcomed development. The playwright seems to posit that despite the seeming confusion in the ranks of the revolutionary conscious groups there are those who are still well guided by sound principles. These very elements remain the hope of the rest of society in the face of challenges against issues of common good. So, as much as they conceive the disposition of Àlàbά as constituting a threat, yet, as others would differ, there is the need to involve the wide spectrum of society in tackling all societal menace. This is revealed in this exchange between the Mechanics and the Students.

1st Mechanic: the provocation is unacceptable. *A Luta Continua*.

1st Mechanic: Motor mechanics dey right behind you.
(The Motor Mechanics are in solidarity with you)

1st Student: Backward never.

2nd Mechanic: (*Shrugs*) All right, we'll move. But let's spread the solidarity net wider. We need public support.

2nd Student: that makes sense (*Alápatà Àpáta,* pg. 51-2).

Their idea of "the solidarity net" is the corporate presence and cooperation of all civil societies; religious groups as explained by Second Mechanic and as supported by the others:

2nd Mechanic: The church for instance, and the mosque. We ran into the cleric this morning. He's been organizing vigils.

1st Mechanic: Na now you begin talk. Dat reverend go take care of the devilish voice snatcher, we go deal with dere government counterpart.
(You are now making sense. That reverend will take care of the devilish voice snatcher while we take care of their government accomplice).

2nd Student: (*Now fired up*) *Venceremos*. Victory is assured
(*Alápatà Àpáta*, pg. 52).

It is noteworthy that only at this point does this group of "revolutionary" minded people are in agreement on this very matter, which they see as of their common interest. All their misgivings have dissolved into hope and assurance of victory replacing their differing positions on the myth of Àlàbá's disposition.

At the closing of the play, Second Mechanic is even more assertive that the solidarity of the masses has paid off since Àlàbá, who they have earlier misconstrued as their enemy proves to be a comrade in the struggle against all oppressive forces after all. Even in this ironic state, Second Mechanic is positive that despite their slow pace in bringing down the terror of all oppressive regime, they have nevertheless, realized their goal by attracting the much needed solidarity of all against the perceived common enemy. The band has attracted more followership than ever. He puts it this way:

2nd Mechanic: The world knows it now. Even the moribund institution called monarchy, has finally understood. Too bad they beat us to this visit, but we couldn't rally our members together in time. What matters is that we are finally together in solidarity! Their coming here is a free confession of their class suicide. We are closer than ever to proletarian victory.
(*Alápatà Àpáta*, pg. 174).

In this remark, even though a parody of the inconsistencies of the present state of traditional institutions in Nigeria's national politics, Soyinka nevertheless, seems to affirm his renewed ideological belief that a greater success is achievable when all these groups come together in a stronger and more objective solidarity than just hyping the achievement of lone heroes.

It is thus to be stated that, Soyinka's satirical gibes are not without the potential to instigate a true sense of mass action. The foregoing dramatic representations have proven Soyinka's

social vision that, beyond the rhetoric of revolution, there are indeed sufficient grounds for the solidarity of the common people against the oppressor and if their common good must be achieved. The playwright therefore, draws attention to the need to eschew all forms of lip service and parochialism when it comes to the demands for social justice. This is the case and consciousness that the playwright seeks to make through this satirical play.

4.5.1 Myth and Revisionism in Osofisan's Dramaturgy

The dramaturgy of Femi Osofisan is best known for its faithful reliance on change in its most materialistic essence and the triumph of the struggles of the working class. Thus, even in the context of his experiments with indigenous tradition, Osofisan has never missed a moment to exonerate his plays from a blind attachment to myth. He is most often quoted therefore,as saying, he demystifies these myths instead to give them fresh meaning that will make them comprehensible and productive in the process of attaining a socialists' commonwealth. The utilitarian import of myth thus, has been consistent with Osofisan even into the latter phase of his career in the twenty-first century.

It is equally noted however, that the "contingent" nature of history and events of recent past have posed serious challenge to the dramaturgy of the once vibrant far left revolutionary dramatist and critic, that his recent outlooks in drama and his essays are described as a near apostasy. On myth particularly, which interestingly has formed part of his constant "quarrels" with Wole Soyinka and his cohort in the cultural assertionists' school, Osofisan's new posture poses new debate as to his fidelity to radical ideology and aesthetic in drama. It is along this line of argument that Oloruntoba-Oju (2009:418), commenting on two of Osofisan's plays, argues that:

> ...notwithstanding the explicit denunciation of myth, some of Osofisan's dramatic outcomes tend to come at loggerheads with a number of ideological postulates that presumably power the dramaturgy. For example, while change and the possibility of revolutionary change is an ideological purport, the sense of fatalism is frequently and contradictorily present in some of the plays.

The above remarks are being made as critique and a rereading of Osofisan's *Once Upon Four Robbers* and *Chattering and the Song*. On these two plays, Oloruntoba-Oju posits further that Osofisan's tales of oppression of the poor by the poor and his new belief in "nothing changing" or the "ambivalence of history" is perhaps informing his new approach to myth. In line with our study objectives one, two and three, this analysis proposes a critique of Osofisan's play *Women of Owu*, an adaptation of Euripides' *Trojan Women*.

In the present context, Osofisan's attempt to subvert the mythic import in this intertextual reasoning is hitched by ambivalence more or less. There is rather, the deployment of the full essence of mythology for both aesthetic and ideological impacts.This discourseequally responds to our second research question; how this intertextual resonance is providing additional ground for mutation and alliance in the context of this play. Also, Osofisan's fatalistic view of society has become full blown tragic sequence in this play; a move away from mere suggestion or seeming pessimism of the revolutions in nearly all his plays.This projects a new social vision for contemporary society, justifying objective four of this study. A cursory example from his past plays will suffice to prove our proposition. We therefore, look back briefly at *No More the Wasted Breed* and *Morountodun.*

The play*No More the Wasted Breed* is purposefully, a unique play in the corpus of Osofisan's plays in that it sets out to challenge the mythic or ritual world view of Wole Soyinka in the play *The StrongBreed*. In this play, Osofisan deliberately breaks with the mythic essence and ritual world view, which places humans in an inescapable dilemma of transcendental guidance of supernatural being. In declaring his rejection of this "injustice" particularly in the ritual of communal guilt and cleansing through the carrier medium, Osofisan creates Biokun an alter ego of Soyinka's carrier. Biokun assisted by an equally radical friend, revolts against the pronouncement of the gods, which compels him to yield to the ritual of cleansing and penance in order to free his community from the wrath of the water goddess, Elusu. Freedom and

respite come to Biokun and his community when the god Olokun, realizing the excesses of his wife, the goddess Elusu, consigns her to death by depriving her of worshipers. Olokun also revives from death Saluga, Biokun's friend, and pays compliments to the two fishermen as being masters of their own destinies before retiring to the sea.

There are two major contestations in this play that Osofisan throws to Soyinka's mythic world view, which are simply represented as the fallibility (sometimes even vulnerability) of the gods and the changeability of fate by man's inner will. In these two conceptions as they both concern divinity and humanity, are found the demystification of myth in Osofisan's radical ideology and aesthetics in this play. This is more like the explanation given by Richards (1996:14) on this play when she posits about the gods that:

> When they appear on contemporary Nigerian stages, the *orisa,* or divinities, are usually signified as numinous presences who temporarily invade or possess human beings in order to communicate with the community as a whole. Here they are depicted as vain, querulous mortals. Hence, a process of demystification is begun for those who believe in traditional religion.

This further explains the break with tradition in a typical traditional African performance in which the presence of the gods, like in the pre-colonial past is usually handled with respectful solemnity. The gods' presence and their pronouncements thus, signal a critical stance to received tradition and thus, no human agency can contest that. Yet, in this revisionist sensibility of Osofisan, the gods are not only questioned but are also made to yield to human altercation.

In *Morountodun,* Osofisan reconstructs the popular Moremi myth and legend to suit his revolutionary vision in this play. He redirects the narrative to reassure his audience that it is possible for the oppressed group of the society to defeat the forces of political oppression, corruption and social injustice. The legend is based on the encounter of ancient Ife, which was threatened by the frequent onslaught of its Igbo neighbours. Queen Moremi abandoned her wealth and aristocratic luxury to infiltrate the enemy's camp. By so doing, she was able to

study their war strategies. She then came back home and relayed all to her people and thereby leading them to victory.

In Osofisan's text *Morountodun,* the Moremi myth is perfectly woven along with the Agbekoya (Famers reject Tax) uprising of 1969. In this play, aristocratic Titubi is reconstructed as the Moremi of her time. She thus, like Moremi, allows herself to be captured by the farmers so as act as a spy in the peasants' ranks at the instance of the government agent Salami. But unlike Moremi, instead of Titubi to report her finding about the peasant to the government she is working for, she chooses to empathise with the plights of the peasants. She is thus ideologically transformed for the farmers' cause. In her remarks, Titubi who is later renamed Morountodun (One who brings sweetness), says "I am not Moremi! Moremi served the state, was the state, was the spirit of the ruling class. But it is not true that the state is always right...Let a new life begin"(*Morountodun*, pg. 70). In line with this argument therefore, Awodiya (1995:58) posits that:

> The ancient Moremi myth has thus been refashioned in the typical strategy of subversion which is a fundamental characteristic of radicalizing the familiar in Osofisan's dramaturgy. In the Moremi myth, Moremi served the ruling class. But in the refashioned myth, Osofisan makes the modern-day Moremi (Titubi) serve the ruled.

In essence, the application of the mythic in this context reminds all that though myths play a role in shaping human perception, it is nevertheless not sacrosanct. Therefore, as myth itself offers us a wide range of truths to choose from, it is also not impossible to reject altogether, certain class of truths in a particular myth.

In the present analysis of the play *Women of Owu* therefore, we attempt an exposé of the limitations in Osofisan's myth revisionism, presenting a case fora major feature of his mutation and alliance with liberal humanists' ideology in yet another adaptation. In the present play, it is argued that Osofisan's radical reconfiguring of myth has failed to surface in this transhistorical context. It is argued further that because the historic realitiesof

contemporary time have continuedto pose new challenges to humanity, the revision of myth too has also become inadequate to meet up with the playwright's revolutionary quests as it were in the earlier plays. This appears to have induced an ideological mutation to a near resurgence to myth and with a fatalistic vision of society just in the manner of thethe early plays of the older generation of playwrights.

4.5.2Synopsis of *Women of Owu*

In the play *Women of Owu*, Osofisan re-enacts the historical fall of the city of Owu Ipole to the allied force of Ijebu, Ife and Oyo, at about 1821, after seven years of siege. The once prosperous city is fated to fall when obsessed with fame and success, led wars; annexed Apomu Market abducted and sold other Yoruba kin into slavery including Iyunloye, the wife of an Ife artist Maye Okunade, turned, warlord. The allied forces swooped on the city after it has opened its gates to gain respite from draught, famine and a strange fire that has entangled the city. All men left in the town including male children have been "slaughtered" by the rampaging Allied Forces; only the women and female children have been spared and made captives.

Anlugbua, the founding deity of Owu Ipole, who disguises as an old man, appears to two women sent to fetch water. He seeks to find out why nobody called him when the ravaging soldiers were unleashing havoc on the city, why no priest offered any sacrifice to conjure him to defend them. Disappointed by the turn of events, Anlugbua retires with a despondent feeling that Owu will never rise again and perhaps marking the end of his existence as an orisa. He says "I ask you—without worshipers what is a god? Who will venerate us? Who sings our praise among these ruins?" (*Women of Owu*, pg. 9).

Queen Irelu Afin leads the other women in bemoaning their loss. Her words of lamentation recapitulate the anguish and the extent of despair the women of Owu find themselves in. She

recounts her tales of woe as a queen whose betrothed daughters have all been violated in her presence and all her male children slain by the allied forces. Her husband is still at large having escaped from the city before its final desolation. He is later found and executed by the allied forces.

In a reunion of mother and son, goddess Lawumi confides to Anlugbua that the predicament of the city of Owu is her divine prompting. She tells her son, Anlugbua, that she has to punish the city because they have demonstrated arrogance toward their kinsmen of Yoruba descent. They have also shown disdain for the laws ordained by the gods. For their follies and to avenge the gods therefore, Lawumi eggs on the allied forces against the city of Owu. Yet, for their excesses too, Lawumi seeks Anlugbua powers to join forces with her so as to punish the allied forces as well, for the cruelty and acts of sacrilege they have demonstrated in vanquishing the city of Owu. Having convinced him on the role he is to play and those of other gods, Anlugbua obliges his mother Lawumi to be part of the retaliatory mission on the allied forces.

Meanwhile, at the orders of the commanding Generals of the allied forces, Gesinde the herald staff officer conveys the decision of his principals to share out the women in their captivity. All the women therefore, including Irelu are shared to the generals with the exception of Iyunloye whose husband the Maye, has requested to take her personal delivery. Princess Orisaye, the mentally ill daughter of Irelu who is a votary of Obatala, the god of purity, is to be taken by Balogun Kusa. In her grief and consequent prophetic premonition, she expresses the doom that awaits Balgun Kusa for daring to violate the betrothal of Obatala. Her declarations also reveal the impending doom that awaits the allied forces, which confirms also the inevitable wrath which the gods have purposed to revisit on the allied forces.

Odumaadan's appearance with her child, Aderogun, creates a moment of hope for the survival of Owu Ipole, but that is soon dashed by the cruel death sentence on the child by the Generals of the allied force. After losing her husband in the war, Odumaadan has been shared off in the manner all the other women have been taken. But as she makes her final preparation to join her surrogate husband, she is being admonished by Irelu, her mother-in-law. Irelu charges Odumaadan to stand strong to raise Aderogun as he is "the only one left now of his father's lineage." (*Women of Owu*, pg. 42). But before her last wish is considered by Odumaadan, Gesinde appears with instructions to carry out the execution of the child. This is done by the smashing of the child's head against the Araba tree, to avoid the taboo that goes with shooting an infant or cutting his skin with the blade of a sword.

It is the turn of Maye Okunade to take vengeance on his wife, Iyunloye, for the pains she has caused him when she "elopes" with Prince Adejumo. Irelu is to be pacified, now that the woman who has caused Owu Ipole much pain, by bewitching her son to the anger of the Maye will die. But against the advice of Irelu, who warns Maye Okunade to refrain from any form of contact with Iyunloye if he must kill his erring wife, Maye Okunade could not resist the charm of Iyunloye. To the chagrin of Irelu and the women of Owu, Gesinde comes in at the closing of the play to report that Iyunloye has regained the heart of the Maye Okunade and she rides with him triumphantly in his caravan as they leave the shores of Owu. At the end of the play, Irelu dies but not until she has performed the ritual dance of passage for the dead.

4.5.3TheLimitation of Revisionism and the Resurgence of Myth in*Women of Owu*

In pursuit ofour study objectives, a reflection on our research questions is necessary. First, what are the features of mutation and alliance in thisplay? Second, what is the significance of the intertextual rendering of the selected play? Third, what ideological postulation does the playwright pose in the present play? Since our argument is that there is a mutation to a new

ideo-aesthetics, we seek to establish this through critiquing the limits of Osofisan's myth revision as a chief tool for radical aesthetics of subversion in his revolutionary plays.

Osofisan's ideo-aesthetics of myth revision is so much applied to his plays in a generic sense without a second look at the inner contradiction that exists in the process. This has cultured his audience to look at the use of myth in his plays in a "subversive" sense. They are to see myth just as mere "metaphor" than a return to primordial moments of cultural indeterminacy; "a dance backwards into the womb of primal chaos" (Osofisan, 1982:398). This has been one reason for a prolonged quarrel between Wole Soyinka and Osofisan in their essays, "Drama and the Revolutionary Ideal" and "Ritual and the Revolutionary Ethos..." respectively. Soyinka contests the fact that the use of myth in his Ogunian paradigm is as equally, a metaphor as Osofisan's own self acclaimed deployment of the Orumila paradigm in his plays.

The pertinent question that needs to be asked here is whether there is any myth which is made more effective or less effective by the way it is applied. Isidore Okpewho's (1979:204) explanation of myth and its uses has debunked such categorisation to posit that "myth is myth and is capable of mystifying, notwithstanding sundry claims to use of myth as 'metaphor' etc". Likewise, Bhadmus (2002:101) in a deconstructive reading of Osofisan's claim for "alternative tradition" posits that:

> As an alternative to the quandary of liberal humanist drama, he (Osofisan) proffers aesthetic of surreptitious insurrection...his return to tradition in a way is a return to the 'ritual aesthetic' and spiritual invocation of primordial presence and essence. Though he argues that in his own effort to speak to (and for) the masses, revolt surreptitiously against terror and opposition, he requires a different motif of revolution. Curiously, however, Osofisan turns further inward for the alternative.

In the light of the above arguments therefore, Osofisan's choice of myth as an alternative is a futile journey as myth could not have in any way offered an alternative different from the essence it has always served in all aesthetic and ideological formulations whether in a mythopoeic sense or in a revolutionary praxis. So, for Osofisan to resort to myth as an alternative, Bhadmus (2002:101) argues that "Osofisan confirms his immersion in the

traditional conventions of playmaking in spite of his'critique of mimesis'. All the elements he turned to are predominantly properties of language and therefore mimetic; they are imitation and representational of some things than themselves".

This study proposes therefore, the fact that myth by its nature, mediates perception and in so far as truth is reducible, though not necessarily to a constant given, myth revision or subversion invokes a contestation in Osofisan's dramaturgy. That is why whether we look at the use of myth in its metaphysical perspective or in the construct of radical aesthetics, we will have to in the final analysis, agree with Bhadmus'(2002:101) postulation that "there is no significant difference between the magic of superstition and the magic of theatre, which all artists, particularly dramatist evoked in representation. Inadvertently, they all reinforce one magic with another multiplying the possibility and even the mystification".

The centrality of myth in the present play stems from the thematic thrust of fate that constantly comes in conflict with human will. As it is with Greek tragedies, one of which incidentally, sources the present play, human conflict is guided by fate, which in its essence finds validity in mythology. Like most societies in the world of African literature and performance, the city of Owu is founded by a guardian deity, Anlugbua. Hisrelationship with that of the other *orisa* reinforces the transcendental nature of relationship in the play. The relationship in the play permeates humans and their metaphysical agencies. This nexus of relationship affirms the inseparability of the gods and humans or humans and gods' relationship that establishes the universe of the play. Thus, Osofisan through Anlugbua's threnody makes us understand that the world of the play is mediated by this cosmic harmony:

Anlugbua: (*Softening*).
Listen, this city was very dear to me.
I was there when your grandparents built up
The little old village of my father into a fortress,
And called it Owu.
I Anlugbua,
Great grandson of Oduduwa, progenitor of

The Yoruba race.
Together with my uncles
Obatala the god of creativity,
Orumila the God of wisdom
And Ogun the god of metallic ore,
We came down from our house in heaven
And lent our silent energies
To the labour of the workmen.Unseen, of course.
Then Esu bore our wishes up to Edumare,
The Almighty Father, and
Slowly the bricks and the stones and the clay
Grew into a city enclosed within two walls
And a moat around it like a girdle: Owu,
The safest place in the entire Yorubaland.
But now I return to see—the unimaginable!
A city reduced to rubble.
How did this happened? (*Women of Owu*, pg. 5).

By creating this world view, the understanding of the role of the gods is framed on the ontological construct, which subsumes the material and the non-material world. This situation firms our belief in a non-existentialist sense rather than in existentialism. The myth essence here becomes inevitable, much more foregrounded rather than being demystified.

The protective will of the gods is well known in the mutual relationship where the mortals look up to the gods for their protection just as the gods look up to their worshipers for continuity. In the present play however, the relationship suggests that Osofisan places the deities above their worshipers in a much more benignant hierarchy rather than a symbiotic one. The dependency, which is created in the aesthetic construct of the play, hardly allows the ideological deviance, which Osofisan could have intended in his revisionist's approach. This can be inferred from the dialogue between Anlugbua and the women:

Woman: Maye besieged our city for seven years,
Because of a woman, and would not go away!
For seven full years, the people of Owu
Suffered and refused to open the city gates.

Woman: Seven years without rain they were, seven years
Of fail harvests. All those terrible years
Where were you Anlugbua?

Anlugbua: You did not send for me! You know

The oath I made forbade me to return
Here, unless you sent for me (*Women of Owu,* pg. 7).

Anlugbua accepts that the deliverance of the people is equally for his benefit as he asks the women in a more soliciting tone saying "I ask you—without a shrine, without worshipers what is a god? Who now will venerate us? Who will sing our praise among these ruins" (*Women of Owu,* pg. 9), this is just a part of Osofisan's way of denigrating the gods in his "subversive" sense. A more elaborate reference to these charges also is made in Erelu's words to the women of owu when she addresses the women on their predicament. She says:

Erelu: The gods are not worth much! They lie and lie all the time
and deceive us! They will take all our sacrifices,
Wear us down in supplication, but they have their own designs
On us all the time! Did we not pray enough? Did we not offer
Sacrifice upon sacrifice! Yet see what they have made
Of our city! The gods are not worth much respect!

Chorus: Careful Erelu! We beg of you, restrain yourself. A word
Against the gods, and even worst things may still come upon us!

Woman: It's already happening: see! The palace is on fire again!
(*Women of Owu,* pg. 61).

Yet, in the foregoing dialogue, the immediate counter from the women shows their collective and unflinching faith in the gods more than Osofisan would have demeaned the will of the gods in this play. The consequence is that the resolution of the play's conflict is reeled in through this metaphysical encounter more than a revolt against it. Lawumi, the goddess, confides this fact to her son, Anlugbua, pointing to her divine will in the tragic fall of Owu when she says:

Lawumi: Good, let the Owus eat that superiority now!
They sacked Ife, army, and took back
The Apomu market. But that is their undoing,
Because I led them on. I made them attack
The ijebu traders at the market too.
Yes, I made sure of that! Recklessly!
They looted the stalls of Ijebu, killed many
And sold the others into slavery! And of course
As I expected, the Ijebu rose in response
And sent their dreaded army up against the city.
That was the beginning of the story

Whose consequence you see now before you! (*Women of Owu*, pg. 19-20).

Osofisan in this play obviously, attempts to revise Euripides' story by questioning the protective role of the gods. This revision of the Greek myth does not depart very much from the intent of its source text, which as observed by critics that "the Greek nobility, led by the circumstances they found themselves as portrayed by the character of Hecuba in Euripides play, have repeatedly questioned their faith in the traditional pantheon of gods and their dependence on them" (https://www.ancient_literature.com/greece_euripides_trojan.html).

This is more or less a bourgeois lamentation over their loss of their grip of power and thus, questioning the objective bases of their partnership with the gods. The gods live to protect the state and therefore, the ruling class. The loss of the city of Owu Ipole, is a loss more for the house of Oba Akinjobi as read through the wailing of Irelu, than for the collective class of peasants of Owu. This obviously relegates to the background, the quest for revolution and the ultimate liberation of the "wretched of the earth" whose plights do not count in this situation.

Similarly, Osofisan undergirds his text with a mythology of prophetic annunciation reminiscent of the curse on the house of Laius in Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*.This is an ideological depature,as prophesy serves as a seal to all human fate and subdues the cause to struggle to liberate one's self. Like Sophocles' text, the unfolding of the sequence of happenings and perhaps their resolution is as much as attributed to the hubristic nature of man as it pertains to fate as the ultimate drive in human interaction. In this case therefore, there is little or nothing that the person or people concern can do to salvage the situation. In trying to exonerate herself from the guilt of abandoning her husband for instance, Iyunloye draws the attention of all to the act of fate which culminates into the tragic malady of the city of Owu. She tells Maye:

Iyunloye: Since you are looking for blame, why not start
With this woman here? She it was after all who mothered the man
Who captured me. Ask her, and she herself will confess that
At his birth, the priests ordered his immediate

Execution. They warned that he was evil,
That if he was left to grow up, he would bring disaster
To Owu. They said he would seduce a woman, and through
That act caused the death of many. But she chose instead
To hide him and nursed him to manhood.
So who but her's to blame? It may be the weakness of a loving
Mother, but I am the victim of it: I have been the helpless
Tool of fate, used in spite of myself to fulfil a prophecy
(*Women of Owu,* pg. 51).

Of course in this case, Iyunloye is crafted just exactly like Helen in Euripides' text who is under the spell of the goddess Cypris. So, "the gods are not to blame" as it is the case in both Ola Rotimi's play text with the same title and its source text *Oedipus Rex*. In a typical revolutionary construction, this ought to be challenged in both ideological and aesthetic dimensions. It is rather unfortunate that the city of Owu falls to the allied forces just as it has been prophesied. There is no evidence of resistance to the gods or their handiwork, ultimately, in the attack by the allied forces.

Adumaadan likewise, laments her loss, expressing in the same terms that show that both fate and human frailty account for the tragedy in the play. She makes this clear to Erelu that as mother-in-law, she plays a role in her misfortune, having lost her husband to the war, which is fated by Erelu's hubris. Erelu's decision to secretly raise a cursed child provided the metaphysical basis for apprehending the tragic epistemology in the present play. This is made explicit in Adumaadan's confession as she tells Erelu her mind:

Adumaadan: Well, his brother's death does not move me.
Right from birth, that man brought the curse of the death with him
From heaven. But, against the priest's instruction, you refused
To have him destroyed. Now it is he who has destroyed
Us all, exactly as predicted. Because of you,
Because of your pride which you disguised as mother's love,
Now I am a widow about to be mated with the very man
Who murdered my husband (*Women of Owu,* pg. 40).

This additional background evidence attests to the playwright's admissibility of fate and by this also, he reneges from his revolutionary act of challenging myths. He has always done this

obviously, by privileging resistance and acts of humans' free will over passive submission to fate. This can be easily referenced to in his play *No More the wested Breed*.

It could therefore, be justified from the foregoing, that Osofisan's foregrounding of myth and mythic sensibilities in the present play, far outweighs his known pattern of challenging or reconstructing myths. In the present context, the play portrays a downward spiral in the playwright's dramaturgy, which by its ideo-aesthetic configuration negates its revolutionary vitality. The limitation of Osofisan's myth revisionism has yielded the play apparently in a non-revolutionary character. This is a major feature of his aesthetic as well as ideological mutation. Furthermore, this study also argues that the artistic vision in this play could also point to the playwright's nihilistic view of contemporary society whose changing fortunes have continued to task its corporate resolve. This forms the focus of the next section of this study. This study therefore, seeks to answer the research question on what constitutes the ideological postulation in osofisan's fatalistic view of society and also what social vision this holds for contemporary society.

4.5.4 Osofisan's Neo-Fatalistic View of Society in *Women of Owu*

There is an inseparable relationship between myth and the social vision that an artist wishes to project about thesociety he or she is mediating. Myth, as explained in this study, speaks of man's means of coming to terms with his fears, the truth of his circumstances and his wishes. Many theories therefore, have affirmed the significance of myth in literature whether oral or written. This study advances from one of such relationship, which stresses that myth is the meeting point of history and reality and from where we can safely say also, is the social vision, which each artist wants to project about his society. Onwueme (1991:59) opines:

> From my own perspective, I understand myth to be the affirmation of history and reality as informed by beliefs, customs and events which have attained such unquestionable absolutist, and transcendental value that have become entrenched in the life of a people in a given ethos. This means that for such a people, the present is

> guided by faith or truth enshrined and inherited from the past to ensure its sacredness and acceptability.

There are quite elaborate discourses on myth and the extent of its use and which by implication points to the social vision in each. This study does not wish to resume this debate but will however, reemphasize that there is a meeting point for all playwrights who use myth for social statement, whether he or she is a mythopoetic or a revolutionary playwright. It is a fact that "they both invent myths as tools to unravel the uncertainties and realities of their present from the past in order to understand their essential identity and existence" (Onwueme, 1991:59-60). In essence, they both share a vision that history is an alterable phenomenon that is given also to the mind-set that the society approaches it with.

The two schools of thought may only be slightly distinguished by the fact that the mythopoeists see change from a ritualistic and often metaphysical dimension, while the revolutionaries see it from a Marxist's materialist sense. For the mythopoeic dramatists, this tendency for change resides ultimately with the metaphysical powers, with just little or nothing the human society can do to influence it. This is a fatalistic vision; always made to look repetitive, revolving in a vicious circle, tragic and with a sense of gloom, which the revolutionary dramatists are opposed to. The revolutionary dramatists from whose ideology Femi Osofisan's plays have been interpreted largely; see social reconstruction as possible and achievable through humans' rejection and conscious change of history by rising up to all oppressive forces.

Equally too, as historical changes have proven to be in a state of flux, there cannot be a static way of looking at history or men in history. Each historical epoch is marked by specific events. These events have also formed the social conditions that alter a people's consciousness, by extension, the playwrights' consciousness also, who now seek new means to interpret these changes, sometimes in the most radical manner. Onwueme (1991: 60) argues

that "since each historical epoch is marked by specific event and changes that characterised it, it follows that norms, values and social institutions are constantly being recreated to suit the peculiar need of people in specific period or epoch". Onwueme's (1991:61) view of the dynamic nature of history makes her to conclude therefore, that:

> We must acquire an attitude of questioning the social condition, circumstances, mode of production, and political and cultural undertones dictating and influencing the outcome of events in any given period of history. Thus, since history is a dynamic process, the social conditions and traditions which inform that history can be interpreted, and reinterpreted, altered, and manipulated to accommodate a new social vision a new social organization.

Although Onwueme's remarks are made to justify the critique on the revolutionary posture of Osofisan's plays, it is here again applied in a deconstructive sense using the New historicists construct. In this section of the study therefore, we pose the argument that, similar historical factors that have necessitated Osofisan's radical rejection of the fatalism in the works of his precursors; Soyinka *et al*, could have radically informed his acceptance of fatalism in the present environment, which informs the crafting of the play, *Women of Owu*. Similar position is argued by Bhadmus (2002:94) that "Osofisan's theatre suffers from some of the inadequacies of the 'old drama', hence the ambiguities in popular radical tradition".Citingexamples from Osofisan's *Morountodun*, Bhadmus asserts that "he (Osofisan), foregrounds tragedy on the scale he criticizes. The structure of his plays is derivative and replicatory, reinforcing not his departure as he (and his critics) would claim". This is the proposition of "Neo-fatalism", which this study argues for, in *Women of Owu*, towards justifying the ideological mutation and social vision in the play.

Osofisan builds the conflict in *Women of Owu* around the subject matter of war and its consequences. The play comments on a modern historic incident; the Iraqi war, which the playwright says, it recalls in him the gruesome manner the allied forces of Ijebu, Oyo, and Ife, vanquished the city of Owu. In his description of the historic war in the prefatory notes to the play, Osofisan (2009:vii) remarks that:

> These Allied forces, determined that the city must never rise again, reduced the place to complete rubble, and set fire on it. They slaughtered all the males, adult and children, and carried away the female into slavery. Owu was never rebuilt.

In the opening of the play, it is not only reported that the war is executed successfully on Owu, but also that the playwright intends that the beginning or the end of the war is only the cycle of other wars that would take place without any respite. Osofisan therefore, toes the path of Soyinka in his earlier plays,as he speaks through the goddess, Lawumi, to register his protest and invoking vengeance on the allied forces. Lawumi requesting the partnership of Anlugbua, says:

> **Lawumi:** I want their return journey to be filled
> With grief: human beings, it is clear learn
> Only from the suffering and pain.
> Already Esu has promised me there'll be
> Such confusion at the crossroads.
> They'll never find their way...
> You my son can make
> Their journey even more agonizing...
> Send them your shafts of lightening
> Wherever they gather, and pound them
> With awesome thunderbolts.
> Let everyone of them perish
> Till human beings everywhere learn
> That the gods are not their plaything.
>
> **Anlugbua:** Then it shall be done as you wish (*Women of Owu*, pg. 21-2).

Much later into the play the princess Orisaye reveals in a prophetic declaration, the calamity that will befall the Allied Forces. As she comes under the influence of the spirit of Orumila, she foretells the future that will befall the allied forces. She tells Gesinde what she has already expressed to the women, how their lives will be entangled by war on account of Owu. Of particular note is the fate of the war commanders. She says:

> **Orisaye:** Save your breath, I am not going to tell you, although
> Everything is here on my palms, including your future, swine!
> Tell Balogun Derin, the gods have decided his fate
> His home is only three weeks of trekking away from here,
> But tell him, it's going to take another seventeen years
> You hear? Seventeen whole years before he reaches it!
> And they'll be years of wandering and suffering and
> Fighting without respite... (*Women of Owu*, pg. 32).

A life of war and continuous fighting is the same fatalistic vision Wole Soyinka states about the Nigerian society in his independence play, *A Dance of the Forests.* Soyinka through the Forest Head and Historian says:

> War is the only consistency that the past ages afford us. It is the legacy which new nations seek to perpetuate. Patriotsare grateful for wars. Soldiers have never questioned bloodshed. The cause is always the accident your Majesty, and war is the destiny... (*A Dance of the Forests*, pg. 57).

Ola Rotimi expresses a similar tragic vision in his historical play *Kurumi*, where he laments the ravages of fratricidal war between the Oyo and Ijaye forces.

The lesson to be learnt from these three plays is that the bitterness acquired from any war is recycled as another form of war whether physically or psychologically. In the case of Soyinka's and Rotimi's texts, this fatalistic view of the Nigerian society is the denouement witnessed in the history of Nigeria's civil war. In the context of the present play, it is argued thatcoupled with the fact of the Iraqi war, which provides its initial impetus, myriad of Nigeria's internal conflicts are fostering a new sense of gloom in contemporary time. As Dung (2012:69) opines of Osofisan's *Women of Owu*:

> The play derives its theme from the contemporary events in the post military Nigeria when the demise of General Sani Abacha paved way for the restoration of democracy in 1999. A culture of impunity and insurgency has bedevilled the nascent democratic experience. To this extend (sic), the play presents the dramatic articulation of Osofisan's new postulation of post-military engagement in Nigeria.

Incessant civil unrests since the return of democratic rule in 1999 till date as expressed in the spate of sectarian conflicts, insurgency and militancy in the northern and southern parts of the country, are enough to induce in the playwright renewed sense of fatalism. Thus, the tragic view of society is read in Osofisan's dramaturgy in a manner in which Rotimi has expressed in *Kurunmi* through the words of Ibikunle when he laments thus:

> **Ibikunle:** Battle...I have seen battles, my brother...I know the horrors of battle, my brother. And I know too that, of all battles, the battle against one's own blood brothers, is the most horrible and most heart-breaking (*Kurunmi*, pg. 50).

Amongst Osofisan's plays, it is in the present play that the playwright shows little or no faith that the collectivity of the masses are able to show resistance or liberate themselves. Osofisan's revolutionary vision in his past plays has shown a character of questioning and rising against all forms of oppression, also challenging conventional or traditional views, which perpetually subjugate the people's consciousness and therefore, right to dissent. It is evident however, that in the present play, the incident of war or defeat in war forms the bulk of Osofisan's commentary on hopelessness of life in moments of violent conflict. The play equally exposes the playwright's despair in what more is left in the hands of his erstwhile revolutionary heroes. The city of Owu falls, with virtually all the male inhabitants wiped away. The death of Aderogun, the only surviving male child, smothers the last ray of hope that the city of Owu had. It would be recalled that Erelu describes him saying "that boy's his only son, I repeat if he lives we do not die. And one day therefore, he will grow up and remember and we will be fully avenged" (*Women of Owu,* pg.43). It is unfortunate that the boy does not live to give Owu that hope. The bleak future of the people is expressed by the chorus leader when she asks the following questions rhetorically, "will the horror never end? See they've crushed his head O Anlugbua, and now they bring the bathed body to us! O when will the horror end?" (*Women of Owu,* pg.58).

The play exposes the vulnerability of not only the common people, but all segments of the society who do not carry arms. In this context, the reference to arms manifestly speaks ofweapons of mass destruction. In the face of this battle for supremacy, the "gun carrying" assailants no matter the cause they set out to achieve have alwaysheld sway. This is the point that the women of Owu make when they narrate their despondent state of mind to Anlugbua as victims of the "gun carrying" allied force:

Woman: How we needed you all the time!
It was war, such as we had never known before:
The Allied Forces came with weapons they call guns

Guns, Anlugbua! Deadly sticks
Which exploded, and turn a whole battalion
Into corpse. Rags upon rags of bleeding flesh!

Woman: Against the terrifying guns, Anlugbua,
Your people had only their blades and incantations.
Where were you? (*Women of Owu,* pg. 8).

The predicament expressed in the above dialogue leaves no one in doubt that the situation of arm accumulation and weapons of mass destruction has redefined the effectiveness of armed struggle even for the most revolutionary minded. Osofisan's lossof hope in arms struggle accounts for the acceptance of defeat in this play to a near passivity. In the following dialogue, Osofisan further expresses this sense of gloom:

Anlugbua: Well, it's all over now.
The Allies have got what they wanted.
I've come too late.

Woman: Too late to help us. But
Not too late to witness our final rout.

Woman: Not too late to relish this massacre they call war.

Woman: Nowadays,
When the strong fight the weak, it is called
A liberation war
To free the weak from oppression.

Woman: Nowadays, in the new world order, it is suicide to be weak.

Anlugbua: It's very sad, my dear women! But
Still, with all your tears, I Anlugbua,
I am the real loser here.
Gods do not cry. But that only makes the pain deeper still
(*Women of Owu*, pg. 9).

Contrary to what Ajidahun (2012:12) has expressed as his opinion of the revolutionary tenets in Osofisan's plays that "the will to survive, therefore, belongs to man and not the gods',no forces on earth can stop the movement of a people determined to fight against oppression and injustice".This opinion appears to explain only the theoretical commitment to Marxists revolutionary ideals. But in the face of contemporary reality even the far left socialist states have been subdued by the super powers. This perhaps might not be seen as calling for total

resignation on the part of the oppressed countries rather; it could also be instigation for a larger arms conflict that could annihilate humanity in due course. This is the state of tragedy that Osofisan fears for humanity in this play.

Osofisan's neo-fatalistic view of society as represented in this play echoes his ideological mutation away from his radical belief in the effectiveness of violent revolution. He also demonstrates the challenges that arms conflicts engender in contemporary time, which logically discountenances his erstwhile trust in violent revolution or arms struggle for liberation. The proposition in this play suggests that human beings like the gods have constituted themselves as agents of their self-destruction. Anlugbua exclaims "Poor human beings! War is what will destroy you as it destroys the gods" (*Women of Owu*, pg. 67).By this premonition, and until the trend is reversed, humanity is doomed to the circle of endless war. The absence of the tendency to reverse this trend in this play reinforces a nihilistic and as well, a fatalistic ideology in Osofisan's dramaturgy.

4.6.1 Salami-Agunloye's Historical Plays and the Feminist Propaganda

There is no doubt that history has been formulated into an advocacy tool for the service of feminism in the dramaturgy of Irene Salami-Agunloye. To a large extent, one aesthetic value that remains consistent in the works of Salami-Agunloye, no doubt, is the foregrounding of women in history. Through her dramatic tropes, history is rewritten to confront gender imbalance and also by ideological means, deconstruct gender codes and constructs encrypted on culture and tradition. This is done with the understanding that all these reactionary constructs that tend to perpetuate male dominance and women's marginalization derive their legitimacy from historical reference points. Patriarchy and all its offshoots in all spheres of life are believed to be products of tradition and by implication, history. This, the feminists believe has sustained the lopsided representation of women by male and some female writers.

So, by the same historical token, the feminist playwright hopes to reshape meaning in certain historical experiences. Salami-Agunloye (2007:95) posits that:

> In an attempt to situate myself within the male-dominated literary space, I have resolved to rewrite the negative stereotypical portrayal of women in texts written by men. In doing so I am constructing new identities for the female characters or heroines whom I use as mouth piece to buttress my feminist view points and engaged in criticism of the social order.

The dramaturgy of Salami-Agunloye can be assessed to have passed through the the various stages of feminists' objectives, which the Nigerian feminist writers have pursued. In all attempts, they have tried to lift their works from the plains of ephemeral wishes to concrete social projects. Thus, as Nwanya and Ojemudia (2014:60) have argued that "the Nigerian writers especially the dramatist (sic) develop progressively from drama of conscientization to drama of positive action. From feminists (sic) propaganda to feminist realism and from theorising to practical experimentation". It is well understood that the feminists' ideology in drama is propagandistic in nature. It has become part of the several agitation propagandas identified byGeorge Szonto (1978). For him "if propaganda is one form of activated ideologies then theatrical texts and their presentation are among the media within which ideological activity may be witnessed by audience and by readers"(1978:14).

As stated earlier in this study, Salami-Agunloye's plays are set out to inspire women to active action against all impediments that stand their way to progress. Yet, at the centre of her argument is also the fact that while women struggle to achieve success through selfless sacrifice, the ultimate recognition of this feat is when they share in the fortunes that come with those struggles.

So far, it is established in the previous analyses of Salami-Agunloye's plays that the struggle of women in the realm of politics is capable of projecting them to reckoning. They are not only to be seen as "King makers" but that they have the potential to wrestle power from men by asserting their importance as a formidable power bloc. This is the culmination in *More*

than Dancing. Yet, one may want to ask, what further propositions lie beyond the specifications in this revolutionary ideals highlighted in the last play analyzed?

Inthe play *Idia, the Warrior Queen of Benin* (henceforth *Idia...*), Salami-Agunloye steps further her proposition from a hypothetical trope in *More than Dancing,* to the historic plain. In *Idia...*, she dramatises this quest for power shift/sharing with some degree of historical empiricism. Like her earlier plays, she continues with the vision of revolt, collective struggle and female "heroism". However, unlike the other plays, "heroism" in the present play is almost "Promethean" in Salami-Agunloye's radical handling of the subject matter of war. This explains the level of assertiveness, which the playwright proposes for the achievement of women's rights and emancipation. Furthermore, as it will be illustrated in this study, that the struggle for power and the maintenance of power in the play, as well as the personality of Idia could have pushed forwardan idealists' ideology rather than the communitarian manifesto, which the playwright attempts to project in her plays. This forms part of the contestation in the present analysis as it is thought to demonstrate mutation and alliance.In line with our objectives of the study, we set out to identify these features, find the ideological persuasion of the playwright and her social vision. Thus we contextualize the discourse in Salami-Agunloye's preoccupation within revolutionary politics, heroism and quest for equity.

4.6.2Synopsis of *Idia*…

The play *Idia...* dramatises the life of the legendary Queen Mother, Idia, and the mother of Oba Esigie of Benin kingdom. The play depicts Idia's protest against the Benin tradition, which sanctioned the killing of Queen Mothers as soon as their sons ascend the throne of Kingship. Set at about 1504AD, when Osawe her son is crowned Oba of Benin with the title Oba Esigie, Idia as the mother of the newly enthroned King, has just limited time to live. She is troubled that she must go the way of the Queen mothers before her. Idia resolves to speak

against the obnoxious tradition of killing Queen mothers. Her decision to rise against this tradition opens the way for series of revolt that lead to some reforms during the reign of her son Oba Esigie. These reforms are later to change the course of history of the entire Benin kingdom.

Inspired no doubt by his mother's radical opinion, Oba Esigie almost unilaterally announces the establishment of the office of the *Iyoba* (Queen mother) of Benin Kingdom, the first of its kind. With this declaration, the Oba clears all doubts about the hinted plans he has to spare the life of his mother, Idia, against the demands of tradition. This action does not go down well with his council of chiefs. The chiefs led by Chief Ozomo, view Oba Esigie's decision as not only arbitrary but also a move to desecrate the age long traditions of their great forbears. Their grounds for contesting the King's pronouncement are that first, allowing the Queen mother live violates the tradition of the land and second, having the office of the Queen mother means power sharing of some sort, as Chief Ozomo observes "...Queen Idia is a powerful queen, politically and diabolically. She has a strong influence on her son. We would end up being ruled by a woman if she lives" (*Idia*, pg. 18).

Meanwhile, as the council of chief deliberates over the king's reforms, it is confronted by a mob of protesting market women who comes to register its protest over the plan killing of Queen mother Idia. Led by Sogie, the women delegation demands that the life of Queen mother Idia be spared and "henceforth, no Queen Mother will lose her life on account of her son's ascension to the throne of Benin" (*Idia*, pg. 25). Trapped in-between the decision to allow the King's wishes or honour for their tradition, and coupled with the demand by the women, the Council of Chiefs settles for a concession of having the Queen Mother live. They, however, attached a condition; that she operates her private and official life strictly from her palace at Uselu and never to set her foot in Benin.

The conflict in the play takes a new turn when Chief Oliha, an erstwhile supporter of Oba Esigie's reforms, now turns foe of the Oba and the Queen Mother Idia. Chief Oliha yields to Oba Osigie, his father-in-law's blackmail that his beloved wife Imaguero is unfaithful. Following insinuations that Imaguero flirts with Uke, the Oba's servant, Oliha could not hold his anger. He attacks Imaguero and in the scuffle, she knocks her head against the door panel and dies from the shock. Aminghen, Imaguero's co-wife and Oba Esigie's daughter, pays dearly for her father's excesses. Chief Oliha slays her with a cutlass to slight her father, Oba Esigie, for standing his way by meddling with his family affairs. Oliha defies all entreaties and moves by Queen Idia to placate his wounded heart. He thus, declares war against Benin Kingdom from Ida, after seeking alliance with Attah Igala and his warriors.

The stage is all set for battle but the camp of Oba Esigie of Benin is jittery. There appears not to be any preparedness on the part of the Oba and his chiefs. Idia mobilizes all forces within and outside of Benin to confront Chief Oliha and his ally, Attah of Igala. Meanwhile, Idia summons the Portuguese traders, Marcus and Alffonso, to warn them against proselytizing the subjects of Benin Kingdom including her son, the Oba. Idia stands her ground that the peace options proposed by the Portuguese traders contradict their principle of justice since they are the ones selling the weapons to Benin. In the end all, she begs the Portuguese to leave and to allow Benin kingdom execute the impending war its own way if they cannot offer any assistance.

Against the counsel of the Chiefs, Idia takes up the challenge to lead Benin Kingdom to battle against Oliha and Attah Igala. Her decision to go to war is disdained by the Council of Chiefs who is apprehensive of any victory in the war. But Idia is not deterred by the chiefs' scathing and discouraging remarks. At the battle ground, Idia's strategy proves the saving grace for the Benin warriors. She personally deploys her war techniques, which prove successful to the amazement of Chief Oliha and his ally, the Attah of Igala.

At the end of the play, Benin warriors under the command of Queen Idia emerge victorious from the war. Chief Oliha is killed while Attah of Igala is captured and brought to Benin as a war prisoner. Idia triumphantly leads Benin warriors home. She is received with great jubilation. The Chiefs who earlier spite her courage to go to war now come to pay their loyalty to the Warrior Queen of Benin. Idia is thus, eulogised as a woman of valour and great wisdom throughout the Kingdom.

4.6.3Patterns of Revolt in*Idia...*

The play*Idia...* is an agitational propaganda,which sets out to confront all encumbrances militating against the progress of women in contemporary society. The playwright sees these as embedded in age long traditions, which are as well entrenched in aspects of the life of a people. The revolt against the tradition of killing Queen Mothers in the old Benin kingdom forms the bone of contention and the leitmotif around which the playwright builds the conflict of the play. As it is the practice in most pre-colonial societies in Africa, tradition is put forward as a world view that is perfect and must not be questioned. The greatest challenge posed to tradition in the present play therefore, comes from the custodians of the tradition themselves; Queen Mother, Idia, and her son, Oba Esigie. Their contestation to this tradition thus, underscores the choice of point of entry for the playwright. It presupposes a revolt recipe that is conceived to start from the strong hold or the "base" itself. It is adequately insinuated from the opening monologue that Idia has reconsidered this tradition and has come to the conclusion that tradition and whatever it portends must remain in the service of men who made it. This is summed up in one of her proverbs that "No matter how sharp a Knife is, it cannot cut its handle" (*Idia*, pg. 2). This point of view is further consolidated in her dialogue with Iyesogie (Sogie):

> **Sogie:** My Queen, you know our tradition very well. It is rigid, it is unshakable, it is unchangeable. Our tradition is like leopard's spots, they cannot be washed off. Tradition must be obeyed if we must move ahead peacefully.

> **Idia:** (*Raising her voice, she rises from her seat*) No, Iyesogie. For a long time I thought so too. I used to believe that tradition was unchangeable, but now I think you are wrong. Tradition does not and should not dictate the pace of our individual or national progress; we are to determine it...
> (*Idia*, pg. 3).

The foregoing thoughts are similar to the Fredrick Engel's (1848:423) long used dictum, which states that:

> Active social force work exactly like natural forces: blindly, forcibly destructively... The social character of the means of production and the products of today react against the producers, periodically disrupts all production and exchange, act only like the law of nature, working blindly, forcibly destructively.

This is to say that so long as people do not see their oppression as informed by these social forces, for so long, they will continue to act on them as natural forces. But when people see these oppressive phenomena as manmade and rise to end it, it then marks the end of oppression and the beginning of people determining their destinies. This is the point Idia makes finally to stamp her resolve to revolt permanently at tradition. She says:

> **Idia:** No Iyesogie, I say no, not any more. The last of the Queen mothers destined for death, died with the death and burial of Oba Ozulua's mother. I Idia will not die. I refuse to die... Let it be known today that I, Idia, the Queen Mother, refused to ceased shining, I stand to question our tradition I demand for my life. Why must I a woman die simply because I am the mother of the reigning King? Is it because I have been fortunate enough to bring to life a prince who is also fortunate to have ascended the throne of great Benin Kingdom?
> Tell me Iyesogie, is it a crime? (*Idia*, pg.4).

For Idia, her revolt is not only against tradition, but against all form of laws that subjugates the woman without the least consideration of her contributions, but for the mere fact that she is a woman. Her revolt against this tradition as well is a revolt against victimization of women and all oppressed groups in the society.

In the case Oba Esigie, he sees his position of authority as an avenue to launch his radical reforms, which are a revolt against the tradition, which has held the people captive and stagnate their progress. As far as he is concerned, a review of the laws of the land, even if seen as sacrilegious, so long as it is in the service of humanity, and for the continuity of the society,

it is worthwhile. Oba Esigie breaks with tradition in the first place, not to consult with his Council of Chief to enforce his reforms. He explains his stance thus:

> **Esigie:** I stand to be judged by posterity for turning around an obnoxious law. A law that is irrelevant in our time. A law that demands the death of a loyal and innocent citizen. Do we kill a person simply because tradition demands it? A water pot is not thrown away simply because a rumble is heard in the sky (*Idia*, pg. 11).

His revolt against the traditions of his people, thoughconsidered ultra vires by his Council of Chiefs, is nevertheless radical. This is because he seeks new measures that will make the society of his time relevant to the developments around them. His first point of call therefore, is the laws, which are empowered by tradition. Thus Oba Esigie justifies his action with a solemn declaration saying:

> ...As long as I remain the Oba of Benin, I will continue to review and discard obsolete and obnoxious traditions and replace them with more contemporary ones that are of contemporary relevance to us. The old will have to make way for the new. Laws are made for man and not man for the laws...
> (*Idia*, pg.13).

This decision by Oba Esigie reminisces the argument posed by Tewfik Al-hakim in his play *The Sultan's Dilemma* (1999), where absolute rulers are faced with the choice between the law that protects and that which destroys in the service of the state. Using the conundrum of "the sword which imposes and yet exposes you and the law which threatens and yet protects you" (*The Sultan's Dilemma*, pg.125), the Cadi asks the Sultan to make a choice that will justify him in future as a just King. Of course, the Sultan chooses the path to honour when he offers to liberate himself by going through the rite of manumission via public auction as well as allowing the condemn prisoner have his life. These are ways, which Al-Hakim argues for the right to life in the play notwithstanding the position of the law. The only law that is worth maintaining is that which guarantees the rights of its citizens, to life and continuity.

Salami-Agunloye has also put forward the quest for the revolt against all patriarchal orders in the society. Patriarchy is one ideology, which tradition nurtures against the physical and

psychological development of the woman or the female gender. Simone Beavoir (1952:xviii) explains patriarchy in binarists' sense of "self" and "other" relationship where "humanity is male (self) and man defines woman (other), not in herself but as a relative to him; she is not regarded as an autonomous being" (Emphasis mine). In other words, the woman is able, just because it is thought that the man is naturally able. What a man is unable to achieve therefore, is equally thought as being beyond the scope and capabilities of the woman. Thus, the "self" is always pivotal to human experience and human limits.

The revolt against the aforementioned mind set is seen in the encounter between Idia and Chief Ologbose. With the proposal of war in their hands, Ologbose, speaking on behalf of the Benin chiefs, expresses fear that the war cannot be prosecuted due to lack of preparation. The absence of Chief Ologbose from the Kingdom as the war commander is the reason for the lack of preparation and which means that the Kingdom is not ready for the war. Queen Idia's view on the contrary surprises Chief Ologbose. The exchange runs thus:

> **Idia:** War? (*Shrugs her shoulders*) War then it must be.
>
> **Ologbose:** (*Surprised and shocked at the Queen's quick response*) Your Majesty, why are you hasty in your decisions? We are not ready for war, our soldiers have not been to war for a long time now, they are not battle ready (*Idia*, pg. 65).

In the end, Idia reveals her inner will, which contradicts Chief Ologbose's thoughts on the war at hand. She breaks with tradition and declares:

> ...Lazy fools. When the cock crows, the lazy man sighs. I will leave this battle to none but myself. I will fight the battle myself and bring down Chief Oliha and his allies. They will drink their own urine and eat their own faeces (*Idia*, pg. 66).

This revolt against male dominance in the sphere of warfare expresses the playwright's attempt at demystifying war as it relates to female gender. The challenge, which Idia sustains until the end of the play, demonstrates Salami-Agunloye's propaganda for female heroism.

The play demonstrates revolts against the tradition, which prohibits women from entering the royal court. As a sustained belief, this tradition has naturally edged out women in the politics and administration that go on the palaces. Chief Ozomo's firm resistance to the Oba's decision to usher in the protesting market women into the palace shows how deep seated this patriarchal norm is instituted in the tradition of Benin Kingdom. Ozomo exclaims, "What? Bring in women into the royal court? Your Majesty, is that part of your reform?" (*Idia*, pg. 24). He reaffirms this position, and as corroborated by Chief Iyase, that this is definitely a new practice. The encounter that follows confirms the playwright's motif of revolt using the women's intrusion into the palace as a protest statement both in words and in action:

> **Iyase:** Now women, when did you become part of decision-making arm of the Benin kingdom? Are the Chiefs incompetent to do so?
>
> **Sogie:** With all due respect, I dare say that in this matter, we are dissatisfied with your decision to kill yet another Queen mother. We've had enough; we will be silent no more. We will shout our discontent for the entire world to hear.
>
> **Women:**No to the killing of our Queen mothers.
>
> **Iyase:** this is unimaginable. It is baffling. Women challenging the laws of the land? What do you know about our tradition? Who invited you here in the first place? This is a slap on the face of royalty. What is your business in this matter? (*Idia,* pg.25).

The series of questioning by Chief Iyase show how daring the women are in confronting this age long limitation. For him also to admit that this action of the women constitutes "a slap on the face of royalty" is also to say that the women have broken down the barrier to their corporate progress.

The play *Idia...*demonstrates a revolt against colonialism as an oppressive institution. Omolara Ogundipe-leslie (2010:35-36) posits that the African women share affinity everywhere in the world, through the history of intuitive domination by the erstwhile colonisers. This has to do with a tradition of feudal, slave-based sociology and its concomitant poverty and ignorance, which colonialism signifies (Ogundipe-Leslie, 2010: 542-43). It is for this reason that the

African woman is always thought of as being the most unfortunate. Ogundipe-Leslie, re-echoing Mao Tse Tung, alludes to the metaphor of "Mounting on the back", which suggests that African women have additional burden bearing down on them being products of larger colonial oppressive society. Citing Tse Tung, Ogundipe-Leslie asserts that some "extra-colonial" mountains lie very high, which she says African women have to cross. These include the cultural strangulation around them, and belief systems among others, which are being accentuated by colonialism.

So, in their fight for equity, feminist playwrights like Salami-Agunloye are conscious of huddles which the colonial factor poses to society. Women especially, in their struggle to secure an egalitarian society, have to struggle also to surmount these "mountains". Among these factors mediated by colonialism is religion; Christian or Islamic beliefs, which corroborate or accentuate patriarchal views in African societies. In the present play, Salami-Agunloye shows a total revolt against colonial mentality as portrayed by the role of the Portuguese traders represented by Alffonso and Marcus. Using Idia as her authorial voice, the playwright rejects the negative role the Portuguese traders and the missionaries are playing in transforming African societies for the worst. Idia addresses Alffonso and Marcus:

> **Idia:** Whitemen, your God says 'thou shall not kill' yet you bring us guns so we can fight and kill each other. Your Holy book says, 'do not partake of strong drink', yet you sell us liquor so that we can drink, get drunk, lose our sense, and make it easy for you to cheat us. You say your Bible admonished us to love our neighbours as ourselves, yet you always create an impression that you are superior and we are inferior. White men you are not truthful, you deceive us. Go! Go! You have overstayed your welcome
> (*Idia*, pg.68-9).

The major cause of discontent here and consequently, a revolt against colonial domination is the question of inequality. Inequality fostered by religion reinforces oppression of all kinds. Idia appropriately describes this as the impression of superiority and inferiority complexes transported into other aspects of life of the African as a colonial legacy.

The patterns of revolt in this play show the playwright's commitment to the liberation of women and the society at large. The plot therefore, cuts across revolts against issues bodering on tradition, gender imbalance, constitutionalism and colonialism. Yet, these are not without contradictions, which further project the dramaturgy of Salami-Agunloye as evolving consciously or unconsciously, with novel ideology. The questions one would ask for further investigation are; is the revolt motif explored in this study necessarily implying collectivism as the playwright tries to project in most of her plays? Is the pursuit of power and political ends not prompting a refocusing of the playwright's ideology? These questions lead us into the next section of this analysis towards justifying our study objectives. At the heart of this proposition is that mutation and alliance are possible end results in *Idia...*asdifferent from the playwright's earlier ideo-aesathetic reasoning.

4.6.4 Politics of War, Heroism and Reactionary Tendencies in *Idia...*

Political consciousness dominates the preoccupations of Salami-Agunloye in this play. The intent of the drama as crafted from the historic deeds of Queen Idia is to project a sensitivity that African women from history have been able to penetrate the realm of politics by dismantling barriers set against them by tradition and other social constructs. Thus, Queen Idia serves as the playwright's ideal model. However, in an attempt to register this point, the playwright's over reliance on historic details towards impressing on the ascendency of women comes into conflict with her ideology of collective struggle. This no doubt translates into ideo-aesthetic variation, which the pursuit of political gains has engendered in the artistic productivity of Salami-Agunloye. Raymond Williams (1977:95)argues that the arts, reifies history and in this process, much of historical details are mediated upon, of course, not at the expense of aesthetic and ideological commitment. He writes:

> Thus the arts can be said to 'reflect the real world, holding 'the mirror up to nature', but every term of such a definition has been in protracted and necessary dispute. Art can be seen as reflecting not 'mere appearances' but the 'reality' behind these: the

> ‘inner nature’ of the world, or its ‘constitutive forms’. Or art is seen as reflecting not the ‘lifeless world’ but the world as seen in the mind of the artist.

The imminent contradiction in the present play therefore, which by now one can sufficiently address as a political propaganda is the interface between politics, legendary and theatre. The idea that women’s cause and politics should not mix is extremely ancient. Part of these old views is what makes politics among women to be frequently regarded as a trespass on the public domain of power. On the contrary, Salami-Agunloye (2011:86) argues that both the educated and uneducated women from history have proven that women have exerted political power. Her reference is to legendary figures of the past that have influenced the political lives of their kingdoms and led war campaigns. She posits further that “in the situation of war, conflict, and oppression, even humble women have risen to deliver their lands”. Unfortunately, this seems to be the threshold of the point of contradiction.

When one considers the relationship between the aesthetics of heroism in African literature both oral and written, it seems not to favour the ideology of collective struggle. Lar (2011:76), for instance, posits that heroism in literature generally comes with some physical, moral and intellectual qualities:

> These virtues include personal charm and charisma, nobility of character and action, and unusual display of gallantry and valour in warfare. Some heroes are of noble birth. The hero is often an embodiment of certain cherished societal values and ideals. His superiority over other men is something marked by supernatural circumstance of birth and breeding.

It thus becomes a little weird that such heroism could be configured into the aesthetic of collective struggle. Ebrahim N. Hussein’s experiment in *Kinjeketile*and Ngugi wa Thiong’o’s and Micere Mugo Githae’s own radical play *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* have not proven sufficiently, that such legendaries sit well in the construct of revolutionary aesthetics. The overbearing influence of a legendary figure naturally dims the supposed glamour of collective struggle. Thus, the success of the struggle implies the success of the hero just like his or her fall becomes the end of the struggle. This is part of the problem that Salami-Agunloye’s *Idia*...

seems to pose in her attempt to collectivise her political advocacy for access to power for women.

The egotistical character construct of Idia in this play sets the tone for the conflict of identity and interest, which the playwright wishes to achieve. As a heroine who stands to lead her society into a new dawn, Idia seems engrossed more with her self-worth and personal achievements than that, which brings her into the reorientation of communal struggle. Her commitment to the change she hopes to bring to Benin Kingdom is motivated mostly by her past exploits. A bit ofher thoughts as she addresses her friend and confidant Sogie who is also the leader of the market women, runs thus:

> **Idia:** ...Iyesogie, look at me, am I not Queen Idia, the mother Oba Esigie? With great prowess; I assisted my son Osawe, to outsmart his brother Aruhan, the giant prince with great might but with little wisdom, to win the competition set for for them by the Kingmakers in order to determine their competence for the throne. My son Osawe emerged victorious, ascended the throne and became Oba Esigie. I, Idia, assisted my husband in many ways, helped him prepare for his many battles, gave him wise counsel and support, which culminated in his many victories at the war front, both internally and externally. In the harem, I taught the *Iloi*, the Oba's numerous queens, many skills, songs, and dances so as to help them overcome boredom and strife I was neither caught in adultery nor was ever disloyal in any way to my husband, Oba Ozulua. Tell me Iyesogie, for which of these do I deserve to die? What crime have I committed where did I go wrong? (*Idia,* pg. 3).

This narcissistic portraiture of Idia contrasts with Titubi in Osofisan's *Morountodun* for instance, who after admiring her aristocratic background and physical outlook concedes to class suicide to lead the peasants' revolt. This is not the temperament that Idia takes to. Her desire to bring about change in the system she finds herself in is to come by the same individualistic feats, which she makes reference to in the foregoing passage.

The play *Idia*... celebrates individualism rather that collective action. A typical scenario that demonstrated Idia's lone heroism is after she has taken the decision to lead the battle against Chief Oliha and his ally, Attah of Igala. Idia's approach to the war is rather individualistic as she rebuffs all options that bring her plans into the mould of collective resistance. Her earlier

discountenance of Chief Olobose's call for adequate preparation points to her individualism. Little wonder then, that when Olobose could not convince her further, she declares "I will leave this battle to none but myself. I will fight the battle and bring down Chief Oliha and his allies" (*Idia,* pg. 66). Idia's rejection of the market women's proposal to join her in the battle field further attests to her individualistic character. In this dialogue for instance, Iyesogie's and Runa's suggestions are instructive:

> **Iyesogie:**Your Majesty, long may you reign. The entire market women have sent us to greet you and congratulate you on the bold steps you have taken. We are solidly behind you; and are ready to follow you to the battle front. We are strong enough to; we will fight by your side and go with you all the way.
>
> **Runa:***Iyare*! *Iyare*! Your Majesty, Mother of our land, *Iyare*! We will not disappoint you. Some of us will accompany you while others will stay at home and pray for you...

Yet, with this proposal, Idia's position is disappointing as she shows a deviation from her trust for collective struggle, thereby making the women feel that their role in this battle is not needed.

> **Idia:** I have always counted on your support and would count on it. However, this time none of you will accompany me, I do not underestimate your strength in battle, but I need you at home to take care of the home front. As you have rightfully observed, the men have become self-centred. I will rely on you to be my eyes and my ears while I am away (*Idia,* pg. 83).

There is no doubt therefore, that this individualistic character of Idia finally manifests in the battle. Her exploit in the battle is rather extraordinary, which leaves much to be desired in the playwright's portrait of a revolutionary heroine. It should be noted that as a revolutionary heroine, her role is most appreciated when she operates in tact with others. As the commander of the army notwithstanding, her Promethean quality negates the principle of collective will. Ologbose's eulogising of Idia makes us believe that Idia could have fought this war alone. He says:

> **Ologbose:** Idia, mother of all, crafty in battle, mighty like a rock, commander of ten thousand army, the battle field (sic) is empty without you. *Iyoba* of Benin Kingdom, Master in the art of war. Your Majesty, I must commend you yet for the way you comported yourself at the battle front, I like your

> independence, your display of courage in the face of many discouragements, your ability to operate alone on your own. You were beholden to no man, and victim to none. I will miss your leadership role at the battle front (sic)
> (*Idia*, pg.93-4).

It is inferred then from these compliments that the playwright's vision of political leadership is totalitarian in nature. The suggestion she makes by the character disposition of Idia is part of it.

Furthermore, this authoritarian vision is revealed in more structural terms in the leadership style of Oba Esigie. Although this play is set in a feudal monarchy of the fourteenth-century Benin Kingdom, the political setting of the period nevertheless, provides for balance of power through the Oba's Council of Chiefs. Oba Esigie's unilateral decisions and reforms have come under severe criticism from his chiefs. The enforcement of these reforms nevertheless, is well acclaimed by the playwright. This is due to the fact that it signifies the actualization of power sharing and the fight for the rights to life for all oppressed groups. Yet, this move falls short of the principle of collective responsibility. Thus the action of the Oba is seen as autocratic. His pronouncements have little or no regard to the views of his council. When one considers the following speech, which he makes to his council at the heat of his clash with the chiefs, he declares:

> **Esigie:** I am Oba Esigie, son of Oba Ozulua the ruler of this Kingdom. I am in charge here and I'm responsible for this Kingdom. I do not need any assistance. I am capable of taking decisions that will influence the entire Kingdom positively. I do not require your consent to pass a law, my word is law. The Benin kingdom runs a monarchical government. So from today on, no King ascending the throne will lose his mother again. So let it be documented. In three weeks' time, the new Iyoba of Benin, Queen Idia, will be duly installed
> (*Idia*, pg. 14).

This is the major reason for the conflict in the play. This conflict, which historically besets the Kingdom until the end of the reign of Oba Esigie, raises question about the constitutionality of the Oba's action.

In the early part of the constitutional dispute that ensued in this play, Chief Iyase has cause to disagree with Oba Esigie when the Oba asserts that "I am Oba Esigie, son of Oba Ozulua, I control the entire Benin Kingdom. Every citizen of this Kingdom is subject to me and must obey my command whether he like it or not". On this claim, Chief Iyase who is the Prime Minister challenges the Oba saying "Your Majesty, I beg to disagree with you there. I wish to remind the Oba that our role in this Kingdom and in your court is to act as checks on any of your excesses..." (*Idia,* pg. 7). This opens the debate, which interrogates the Oba's decision and therefore, the playwright's political vision in the play. In this situation, the conflict is turned between what is moral and ethically right and what constitutes the law hence, Chief Iyase's clampdown on the Oba's reforms, saying "I refuse to be part of this unlegislated, unilateral decision" (*Idia,* pg. 10). It can be deduced from the resolution of the play therefore, that by allowing the position of the Oba to hold sway, the playwright confirms her sympathy for dictatorship over the rule of law. Her ideology in this play, while being radical in its outlook is equally bourgeois in praxis. This presupposes the playwright, more in the liberal humanist view rather than being socialist in character.

This analysis concludes therefore, that Salami-Agunloye's penchant for access to political power through corporate struggle is compromised. The idealistic import of this play poses a challenge to apprehending it as ideologically tight to socialists' realism. While the aesthetics of the play favours the dictates of revolutionary theatre, typical of all radical drama, the ideology in the play sets aside the significance of collective struggle and collective responsibility. It advocates for a benevolent kind of dictatorship that is radical, yet, bourgeois in it sociological make-up. This amounts to a substantial mutation and alliance in the playwright's dramaturgy.

4.7 Interfaces, Crosscurrents and New Dimensions in Dramaturgies of Soyinka, Osofisan and Salami-Agunloye

The summation of the analyses in this chaptercould be explainedas conveying Soyinka's, Osofisan's and Salami-Agunloye's Ideo-aesthetics crosscurrents and new dimensions. From the foregoing analyses, the selected playwrights in this study have shown by their dramaturgies, different mutation as well as different levels of alliance in aesthetic and ideological make-ups. This study has shown through the various analyses that within the period under study, Nigerian playwrights, going by the example of the selected playwrights, have shown more dynamism in their approach to contemporary issues. The flair for electictism with which our selected playwrights apprehend the practical issues of life in these plays reveals a near coalescence in terms of aesthetics and ideology. This study argues that the politics of the moment whether military or civilian, has compelled a radicalization of dramaturgy in the hands of these playwrights. These radical breaks with convention peculiar to individual playwright or as a group, as illustrated in this study, point to growth in consciousness and therefore, mastering the strategies of coming to terms with realities of contemporary time.

Soyinka's penchant for mythmaking in his mythopoeic tradition has been weathered successfully by a resort to critical and socialist realism in his social and political satires. His clash with the follies of both leadership and the led in modern Nigerian society has no doubt created the inkling to redirect the minds of his audience to the unnatural causes of their misery. At the same time, he seeks to propose a materialists' consciousness on how to end these causes of human misery. Revolutionary and democratic options are proposed. Thus we see in Soyinka's *King Baabu*, a sudden change and a strong belief in the power of collective struggle, which must be used to end the oppression of military dictatorship. This is against the lone heroes in his previous plays who usually, with a messianic duty, will seek to redeem the people from their predicaments. Almost in the same manner, Soyinka dispenses with the absolutism of mysticism, rituals and metaphysical interferences in this play. The fall of King

Baabu could not be salvaged by his mystics and ritual invocations as war strategy. This does suggest that ritual in this play is used in a sense, as an existentialist aesthetic make-up rather than an ideological essence.

In *Alápatà Àpáta,*Soyinka continues with a materialist ideology towards the search for good leadership. In this satirical comedy, Soyinka gibes the structure of followership for abusing their collective will and thereby instituting opportunistic leaders in their societies. He thus, rejects a divided and misdirected energy, which portends a woeful failure in the people's quest for leadership. The playwright therefore, in the manner of the post-war dramatists, proposes a solidarity movement that will aid in ushering in a truly people's oriented leadership.

In the same manner, a sense of mutation and alliance could be averred from Osofisan's dramaturgy, that while maintaining a revolutionary inclination in the play *Tegonni…*, Osofisan has introduced compassion to neutralize the violent posture of his earlier radical plays. The revolutionary struggleadvocated by Osofisan in *Tegonni…* is non-violent, messianic and sacrificial in nature. He calls for self sacrifice from the committed elite, while also demanding if possible, physical intervention through acts of heroism and doggedness as seen in the character of Tegonni. To this end therefore, if a society must liberate itself from the shackle of tyranny, as proposed by Soyinka in *King Baabu*, the people must rise as an oppressed mass, to fight for their liberation. Again, Osofisan like Soyinka in his earlier playsenvisions that human struggle must take into account also the metaphysical and mystical interventions, which have liminal essence. The revolutionary heroes must on account of this create the right leadership by praxis and must be willing to lay down their lives for the struggle, like Tegonni in the play *Tegonni*…

Osofisan turns to a tragic vision in *Women of Owu* to caution the society against what inhumanity of man to fellow man can breed. Like the tragic epistemology in the early works

of the first generation dramatist, Osofisan argues for a metaphysical dimension toward understanding the mystery of human misery. Like the tragic vision in the earlier works of the first generation dramatists therefore, Osofisan's fatalistic vision in *Women of Owu* points further to his ideo-aesthetic mutation. In the manner of the dramaturgy of his older compeers in the pioneer school, tragedy is now for him a didactic weapon for purging human excesses.

Agunloye-Salami's ideo-aesthetics of women liberation has shown greater commitment to collective struggle in tackling issues of socio-economic and political emancipation of women as oppressed groups. Her argument is that women emancipation is best realized through collective resistance and self sacrifice. This she depicts through the doggedness of her women movement in party politics as presented in *More than Dancing*. However, in her play *Idia*... Salami-Agunloye demonstrates a mutation from the ideology of collective struggle. While it is clear that she maintains a radical posture towardsreforming tradition and reactionary laws in contemporary society, Salami-Agunloye diverges to a social vision that is aristocratic in ideology. This apparently, conflicts with her earlier posture of collective struggle, collective responsibility and egalitarianism.

Like Soyinka and Osofisan in *King Baabu* and *Tegonni* respectively, therefore, Salami-Agunloye believes that sacrifice is a core value in all liberation struggles as seen in her earlier plays. In *More than Dancing* however, she questions a sacrifice that makes women the victims and calls for self assertion. She thus rejects victimhood in revolutionary struggle for collective success. In this play again, just like Soyinka in *King Baabu*, Salami-Agunloye reasons that women as oppressed groups, through their combined efforts can overthrow all tyrannical forces in modern politics. However, while Soyinka and Osofisan situate their liberation struggle within the consciousness of fight against military dictatorship in *King*

Baabu and *Tegonni…* respectively, Salami-Agunloye in *More than Dancing* pitches her fight against forces of oppression in a democratic dispensation.

There is no gainsaying therefore, that the tense atmosphere of the dying days of military regime in the late 1990s and the rebirth of democracy in the 2000s have caused a realignment of the ideology and aesthetics in the dramaturgy of Nigerian playwrights irrespective of their hitherto generational grouping. It is clear that the plays of the older playwrights like Wole Soyinka have continued to show mutation that embrace materialistic as well as socialist ideology as seen ultimately in *King Baabu* and *Alápatà Àpáta*. Also,Osofisan who is seen as the arrowhead of the radical playwrights of Nigeria's post-war era has proved that his concept of "alternative tradition" is ever evolving.In the play*Tegonni…*, he adopts the humanistic as well as the metaphysical postures of the pioneer dramatists. Likewise, the new generation playwrights, as seen in feminist playwrights like Salami-Agunloye, have demonstrated a good flair for radicalism through Marxist ideology like their forerunners in the post-war school. *More than Dancing* remains one of Salami-Agunloye's advancement in that regard. However, her ideological mutation in *Idia*... shows her close alliance with the aristocratic and bourgeois postures of the earlier plays of the pioneer dramatists.

This research has therefore, contested the exegetical process that confines the criticism of plays according to fixation in ideologies and generational peculiarities. The mutation, which playwrights in Nigeria have shownin their works in the early decades of the twenty-first century, has radically diminished the rigid confines of generational grouping, be they aesthetic or ideological parameters. The ideological and aesthetic contents in the works of the playwrights in Nigeria have shown an interface or better still, a coalescence, which has rendered obsolete the old critical criteria of generational grouping.

4.8 Summary

This chapter argues that within the span of ten years, the selected playwrights for this study have shown different mutation and alliance in their artistic productivity. It is apparent that Soyinka's dramaturgy has demonstrated a mutation from a revolutionary satire,which attacks the leadership in *King Baabu* to a satirical comedy that brings to task the followership in the quest for good leadership. The play *Alápatà Àpáta* interrogates the people's will toward achieving the quality of leadership that they so desire. In this play, Soyinka also envisions a society that can be better by solidarity, which goes to show how this same collective will can serve as a point of strength to the people.

Osofisan's display of faith in the strength of revolutionary heroes as he depicts in *Tegonni…*, bespeaks his renewed vision of extraordinary valour of lone heroes in a manner similar to Ogun in Soyinka's earlier revolutionary plays. Similarly, his use of myth in the play *Women of Owu* deviates from his penchant for the revision of these myths. His dramaturgy now turns gradually to a philosophy of life as being tied to fate. Myth, therefore, contrary to his revisionist strategy, now serves as a fundamental pillar of understanding reality and life as it is. Osofisan in this play projects a tragic vision for a society that will not learn from the circle of violence that is threatening human existence. Osofisan's renewed belief in myth, and purgative import of war and fatalism in *Women of Owu* brings him in close alliance with the ideology of the pioneer playwrights.

Lastly, Salami-Agunloye in *More than Dancing*has shown that women are capable of revolutionalising politics of oppression by their collective strengths. Their background experience as a group of working class gives them an edge to subdue all obstacles standing their way to social progress.*Idia*... marks the highpoint of her propaganda of women liberation and empowerment. In this play, her rejection of victimhood and asserting women's right through revolt against all impediments is made more manifest. But while her proposed methodology for this change is radical, the ideology projected is aristocratic in nature. Thus,

this play marks a turning point in Salami-Agunloye's revolutionary vision of collective struggle.

CHAPTER FIVE
CONCLUSION

5.0 Introduction

This chapter is the conclusion of the study. It comprises the summary of the study, key findings of the study, contribution to knowledge and conclusion. In the research's quest to make significant statements as its findings, a recapitulation of the whole research design is made in the summary. This is followed by an outline of findings, which emanated from the series ofcritical analyses of the selected texts and against the theoretical framework chosen for the study. The study is made complete by its contribution to knowledge and conclusion.Thus, the final section of this chapter captures that accordingly.

5.1 Summary of the Study

This section summarises the present research's effort at challenging the critical processes that analyse works of Nigerian playwrights according to generational categories. It is noted that

critics have relied on the background knowledge of developments and advancements occasioned by social relevance of plays to continuously, consign works of playwrights to critical criteria that lump up plays in generational timelines or ideological categories. The nomenclatures and/or rigid delimitations explaining this critical process have created a problem in assessing works of Nigerian playwrights, seeing that socio-economic and political changes in every society are compelling radical artistic changes. This has its impact too, on the critical enterprise.

This study argues therefore, that the flux of historical movement has informed ideo-aesthetic mutation within works of Nigerian playwrights and alliance across works of these playwrights. Hence, the study conceptualizes the terms to mean the changes in trends and inter-relatedness of style, aesthetics and ideology in the canon of literary drama in Nigeria. Mutation and alliance represent ideo-aesthetic undercurrents that shift and thus, connect the philosophies in what was seen hitherto as generational divide.

The study's statement of problem thus, points to the fact that bifurcations and convergence of ideo-aesthetics are necessitating an "artistic wedlock". This is fast diminishing the relevance of criticism of plays by Nigerian playwrights, along generational categories because the method is being challenged by mutation and alliance in the dramaturgy of playwrights in Nigeria.

The expediency of evolving a new critical paradigm that would illustrate these advancements and interfaces in the dramaturgy of playwrights in Nigeriainforms our scope of the study. Six plays are selected for analysis. To form a balanced analysis, two plays were selected from three playwrights, chosen from each of the generations supposedly. Thus, Wole Soyinka's *King Baabu* (2002) and *Alápatà Àpáta* (2011),Femi Osofisan's *Tegonni* (2006)and *Women of Owu* (2007),alsoAgunloye-Salami's *More than Dancing* (2003)and *Idia...* (2008) all produced

between the years 2002-2011were selected for a critique towards demonstrating mutation and alliance in contemporary Nigerian society.

The aim of the study is to critically analyse the selected plays to bring out the basic elements that explain these mutation and alliance. To do this effectively, four objectives were outlined to help in achieving the aim of the study. The objectives are as follows; first, to identify the features of mutation and alliance, second, to explore the inter-textual resonance in the selected plays, third, to identify the ideological convergence and/or divergence in the selected plays and fourth, to explain the connecting social vision in the works of our selected playwrights. Accordingly, four research questions were asked to corroborate the research objectives and to guide the inquiry.

This study justifies itself by stating that, past critical criteria have only created limitations to the understanding of the work of Nigerian playwrights in fixed ideo-aesthetic categories. The effort in the present study thus, breaks away from such reductionists' analytical framework by apprehending the selected paradigms across materialists' and idealists' ideo-aesthetics frameworks. The study thus, stands out as a critical study that brings together works of the selected playwrights as a contestation against canon formation.

The literary orientation in this study necessitated the adoption a qualitative research methodology. Qualitative research design is exploratory and it relies more on the content and context of study. By adopting a qualitative methodology in this study, relevant sources both primary and secondary have helped in shaping the present researcher's views. The analysis is therefore, done from the point of view of the researcher. Conceivable data from the researcher's reading and interpretations and as corroborated by wide range of discourses from secondary sources formed the basis of the research's argument and conclusion.

In trying to find justification for this study, an extensive literature review was carried out in the second chapter, to ascertain the knowledge background that the present study is related to. The review was done according to four interrelated areas.The study reviewed literatures on playwrights and society: shifting paradigms, intertextuality and artistic preoccupation, ideological interface and literary drama in Nigeria, to firm the theoretical and conceptual references of the study. The review considers also, Nigeria's dramatic literature and social vision. Three sub-headings were further splited here to justify, using empirical studies, the knowledge gap that this study aims at filling. Critical works on our selected playwrights were reviewed under the subheads; Soyinka: Beyond Tragic and Metaphysical Vision, Osofisan: From Conservative Radicalism to Moral Justice and finally, Revolutionary Consciousness and Social Vision in the Plays of Salami-Agunloye.

In the final analysis, it was established that the criticism of works of our selected playwrights are done with a preconceived notion and ideo-aesthetic bias of generational timelines. This limits interpretation of emerging works of our selected playwrights, especially within the period under study hence, the need for a new critical paradigm.

The theoretical framework underpinning this study was selected, bearing in mind the fact that just as the society advances, the creative and production processes are also made dynamic in theory and practice. Consequently, interpretation too, needs to fluctuate with the dynamic nature of society. New historicism and Cultural materialism were theories used to locate our analysis in the context of present day socio- economic and political realities. The proposition in this theory foregrounds the process of juxtaposing the text against history and vice versa. With this, the process of criticism simultaneously explains the text seen as explaining history and history also is interpreted as part of the text.

In analysing the selected texts, the study deployed*Ecriture* (text and writing) as its tool of analysis. In this process, the position of the playwright is not more than a framework, which instigates multiple readings of the text. This critical procedure privileges the reader's view more than the author's point of view. This study relied on deconstruction also as an additional tool of analysis.Reading against the grain was deployed to identify points of contradiction in the selected plays. The study critiqued three plays in succession, in Chapter Four. In this chapter, Soyinka's *King Baabu*, Osofisan's *Tegonni*, and Agunloye-Salami's *More thanDancing*were analysed in the first instance to justify the revolutionary posture of the selected playwrights. The second phase of the analysis in this chapter discussed Soyinka's *Alápatà Àpáta,* Osofisan's*Women of Owu*and Agunloye-Salami's *Idia*... with the same aim, yet, highlighting the points of divergence and convergence, within and across the dramaturgies of the selected playwrights. All these were done under various thematic headings that infer instances of mutation and alliance in the respective plays.

The contention emanating from the analytical chapter is that the works of older playwrights like Soyinka, middle generation playwright like Osofisan and latter generation playwrights like Salami-Agunloye are all, as equally revolutionary and as well idealistic in their ideological preoccupations. There is therefore, no fixed ideo-aesthetic delimitation to apprehending the works of our selected playwrights, within the period under review. It is this statement that this study puts forward and concludes by way of highlighting its key findings and contribution to knowledge.

5.2 Key Findings

At the end of this research, the study established the following findings:

1. That contrary to past assumptions about playwrights and their plays, the elemental features showing mutation and alliance in the dramaturgy of playwrights in Nigeria bestride the narrow categorisation in terms of aesthetics and ideology. The dramaturgy

of the older generation playwrights who were hitherto seen as “mythopoeists” and conservative, for instance,have manifested a socialists materialist dialectics similar to the ideo-aesthetics of the second-generation post-war dramatists. This is illustrated with Wole Soyinka’s *King Baabu* and *Alápatà Àpáta.*Likewise, Osofisan’s temperament in *Tegonni*, demonstrates his renewed penchant for sacrificial death of titan heroes in the fashionofSoyinka’s erstwhile messianic heroes. Similarly, the themes of war and fatalism in *Women of Owu* have brought him in close alliance with the tragic vision in earlier works of pioneer dramatists. Lastly, Agunloye-Salami’s radical posture in *More than Dancing* is similar to the post-war ideology, contrary to the notion that feminists’ drama is not entrenched with Marxist revolutionary aesthetics,held by such critics as ‘Rantimi-Jays (2013). Her ideo-aesthetic mutation in *Idia*... on the other hand, brings her in alliance with the bourgeois ideology in the early plays of pioneer dramatists.

2. The inter-textuality in the selected plays demonstrates that the predicaments of contemporary society are reoccurring in the circle of humanity’s failure to learn from history. This phenomenon is analysed in the adaptations of Alfred Jarry’s *Ubu Roi*transposedasSoyinka’s *King Baabu,* Euripides’*Trojan Women* asOsofisan’s *Women of Owu*and Sophocles’ *Antigone* sourcingOsofisan’s *Tegonni*. Soyinka’s *AlápatàÀpáta,* and Salami-Agunloye’s *More than Dancing* and *Idia*... all have provided additional grounds for “intra-cultural” inter-textuality. Similarly, Soyinka’s *AlápatàÀpáta* and Osofisan’s *Tegonni* have in common the *Ogun* and *Esu* mythopoeia. Agunloye-Salami’s playslikewise use historical source texts as tool for social commentary. These inter-textual indices are common grounds demonstrating mutation and alliance.

3. The ideological commitments ofthe selected playwrights, given the analyses in this study, show that all the playwrights have penchants for materialist's as well as metaphysical themes. In the first instance, their philosophical approaches in the plays considered demonstrate their inclination for socialist ideals of revolt, collective resistance and equity. On the other hand, their plays are equally replete with idealists' aesthetic ideologies that accommodate myths and metaphysical dimension to life's experience. This is occasioned by the historical change in Nigeria, which has created a new sense of reality cutting across both the new and old generation playwrights.
4. The playwrights considered in the present study share common vision forthe society. In the present dispensation, their social vision is one of optimism based on the condition of communal strength as survival strategy. Nevertheless, it is also construed from our case studies that the selected playwrights are sounding words of caution all the same in their proposition. In the selected plays for instance, it is suggested thatthe society is likely to plunge itself into the dark days of despotic rulers even after its liberation from military rule. Hence, the sense of caution in *AlápatàÀpáta* and *Idia...* and also that of gloom in *Women of Owu*.

5.3 Contribution to Knowledge

i. This study demonstrates that there are limitless interpretative criteria for apprehending drama in Nigeria giving their interrelatedness. Havingused New Historicism and Cultural materialism in this study,Post-modernism and Anti-theory for instance, are further literary theories providing bases for the proposition in the present research. Thus, criticism stands to gain more by open reading of texts than foreclosing meaning in fixed critical methods.

ii. The literary drama and indeed all arts in contemporary time, by the nature of their production, are necessarily related by ideology therefore, by no means can ideology delimit the interpretation of works.

iii. It is established in this study also that criticism is a continuum. Dramatic texts are part of historical movement and histories of all times are themselves texts. This relationship is inseparable as it has continued to reshape meaning in dramatic literature and should affect the critical process likewise.

iv. Finally, it is the submission of this research that the social vision of playwrights in Nigeria is a project towards the same goal, which is change. This is in spite of the playwrights' aesthetic and ideological flair at given moments.

5.4 Conclusion

This study concludes that there are no limits to the critical criteria for the apprehension of works of playwrights in Nigeria. The argument of the study stems from the fact that both the creative enterprise and the critical genre are parts of the society's state of flux. Consequently, there are limitless and perhaps open ended analytical procedures in this post modernists' era that have dislodged the erstwhile reductionist analytical frameworks. The analysis in this study forms part of such breaks with canon formation in a critical sense. The analyses in this study are set apart as radical departures from the conventions that seek to compartmentalize playwrights and their works as products of fixed generational categories. Ideo-aesthetic shifts in the dramaturgy of playwrights in Nigeria have compelled the present inquiry.

It is suggested also that the study has succeeded in bridging the debate on social relevance that surrounds the works of earlier playwrights and the younger generation of playwrights. This study, in a sense, has disputedthe rather illusive dividing contours that delimit the apprehension of works by aesthetic and ideological commitments of playwrights. At this point

and given all the forgoing arguments in this research, the study philosophises that there are no generational traits delimiting the works of playwrights within the period under review. The works of older playwrights such asWole Soyinka, who until the second decade of the twenty-first century have produced contemporaneously with the middle and younger generation of playwrights like Femi Osofisan and Salami-Agunloye among others, have shown this.

Since the purpose of all objective criticism is wider interpretation and meaning generation, this study has evolved a new critical paradigm, which subjects works of playwrights in Nigeria to no particular ideo-aesthetic category. Thus, no playwright is to be seen as endlessly belonging to any class and therefore, needs not be perpetually interpreted along given aesthetic and ideological concepts.

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